Discourse in ESOL research and design:
the basic units

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Abstract

Despite the importance of the speech act as an analytic category, a general comprehensive definition of it that allows for methodical definitions of particular acts has not been provided. As a consequence, large areas of language use are often treated inadequately, both in learning research and in course planning. Among other problems, applied linguists presuppose different dimensions in discourse and their codings of utterances are insufficiently reliable. Therefore, valid comparisons regarding their empirical results or their design proposals are often impossible.

The lack of definitions ESOL work requires is intimately associated to a defective understanding of the nature of acts. Existing classifications separate akin acts and group diverse ones together. To clarify the confusions, it is necessary to distinguish sharply acts which make present, create or modify knowledge from acts that set deontic conditions, *ie* acts like defining, classifying and generalizing from acts like ordering, requesting and inviting. The first kind, which are referred to here as dissertation acts, are not a subtype of illocutionary acts, as has previously been considered. Rather, they constitute a category at the same hierarchical level.

The distinction is shown to be fundamental following the same approaches that Strawson, Austin, Searle and Widdowson used to establish the sentence, the proposition and the speech act as independent units. The discussion leads to two general definitions of illocutionary and dissertation acts, which postulate a fixed number of parameters for each. Sets of conceivable values for every parameter are also delimited. Hence, a given combination of values determines a particular act, and all possible acts are determinable.

The systematic framework thus produced suggests spiral research and teaching programmes which, at different stages, focus on speech act elements, speech acts and speech act combinations. These would allow analysts and students to discern the global organization of a discourse from its final results. They might also lead to a better understanding of its linguistic realization.

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PART III

Tables and Illustrations

If you believe, as I do, that the basic unit of human linguistic communication is the illocutionary act, then the most important form of the original question will be, 'How many categories of illocutionary acts are there?'

John R. Searle, 1976

Preface

At some moment, in the course of studying what happened in a classroom where English was being taught, I realized that some of the concepts which guided my work were confused and, therefore, the data I was recording could not be reliable. I soon found the same problem in another context, the analysis of certain pieces of scientific prose which my English students had to read. When I began to think about the matter, I came to see that its clarification would require a revision of the sources of such concepts. I also envisaged that this would, for a period at least, be somewhat removed from my initial concerns. However, as the concepts are central to language teaching in various ways, I decided to pursue the exploration: its results should not only indicate how to carry out classroom and prose studies with more confidence, but could also suggest better ways of doing my work as a course designer and teacher.

I believe the decision, which led me to write this Ph.D. thesis, was a fortunate one. The substantive contribution of the research reported is a modest one: it shows that a group of entities previously considered a subclass of another group constitute a sundry category. Nevertheless, it shows a principled, economical and comprehensive manner of stating the hundreds of functions of utterances EFL researchers and designers are interested in. Furthermore, the discussions that establish the distinction clarify a number of important issues in our field.

One way to put forth the main theme of the thesis is to say that the elements we need to define a definition, and distinguish it from an identification or a generalization, are essentially different from the elements necessary to define an invitation, and distinguish it from an order or a request. This simple statement implies contradictions to very common assumptions underlying research programmes and educational curricula. This is the principal reason it was necessary to revise our sources; the distinction had to be strongly argued for.

Another way of expressing the central idea is to state that the domain of exposition and argumentation and the domain of personal interaction are governed by relatively independent principles. If this is not established clearly, one can easily attribute principles of one domain to the other. In fact, this kind of invalid judgement is the source of the unreliability mentioned in the first paragraph. Of course, it can be argued that the two domains interrelate in actual discourse, but it is necessary to establish their autonomy before we can ask any questions about their interrelations.

The complexity of discourse recognized in the previous paragraph provides the background to manifest a second reason for undertaking the revision: to show that theory and analysis can not only be useful, but are sometimes necessary. Applied linguistics is distrustful of abstraction; and this is understandable, because research (even in neighbouring areas, like second language acquisition) often presupposes a relevance to language teaching which it does not necessarily have. However, without a careful consideration of our basic conceptual frameworks, we will always be at the double risk of not profiting from the full potential of good ideas and of multiplying mistakes.

I have, on the whole, found satisfaction in the scrutiny of arguments. But even if the task has not always been intrinsically gratifying, it has provided other dividends. A proper exposition of my claim, that there are two fundamentally different speech act types, required an examination of three units commonly employed in discourse analysis: the utterance, the sentence, and the proposition. Placing the two acts in relation to these units produced a framework that allows one to locate a wide variety of studies *vis-a-vis* each other, in terms of their scope, and to assess their internal validity with relative ease.

If we note that a syllabus is a text that has to be realized as discourse in the classroom, one could also describe the framework as a tool to generate the content of the text and to give form to the discourse. In fact, the final chapter indicates possible ways of using the framework for such purposes.

The sources I have revised are writings in applied linguistics and in philosophy of language. But sometimes the points of reference are, naturally, taken from linguistics, and I know my thinking has been influenced by that of other persons interested in language working in different fields, such as the his-

tory of beliefs or the sociology of political institutions, although I cannot show precisely how. For this reason, there was no unified background knowledge upon which I could rely, except that which is present in common academic English.

I have, therefore, not used any technical terminology at the beginning of any chapter, except that already presented or developed in previous ones. I have also attempted to give the meanings of those terms that it has been necessary to introduce, if not always by defining them succinctly, at least by establishing distinctions between them and exemplifying their application. This has resulted in some sections being perhaps a little lengthier than some readers would prefer. I request their patience.

Due to various events that affected the course of my life, I had to postpone the completion of this work on several occasions. But, whenever I have been able to devote my attention to the issues it deals with, I have enjoyed the benefits of discussing them with wonderful friends, such as Guy Aston, Virginia Swisher and Devon Woods. In those periods I have also had invaluable support from The National Autonomous University of Mexico, The British Council and the Hornby Trust Foundation.

I am particularly indebted to Henry Widdowson. In 1977, he saw both the strengths and the weaknesses of my early thinking on discourse and gave me the best advice I could have had about ways of pursuing my academic interests. As this thesis supervisor he has been serious, clever and sympathetic.

The conditions under which I worked at the University of London have been excellent and the environment at the Institute of Education has been very stimulating.

Throughout, I have had the invaluable model of Matilde Luna's intellectual achievement.

For all these reasons, I knew I had to finish, and am glad I have.

I wish to thank Mary Elaine Meagher and Martha Rico for helping me produce the final version.

PART I

Chapter 1

INADEQUATE CATEGORIES

This is a thesis in the area of discourse theory. It specifically deals with a central theme in this area: the units of discourse analysis. Its purpose is to distinguish one such unit from the others and, in the process of doing so, clarify the others.

This chapter introduces the whole thesis. It stresses the importance of discourse analysis in language teaching. It also presents the justification for undertaking a study on discourse units: analysis is valid only to the extent that identification is reliable. And it outlines the stucture and content of the dissertation.

The chapter can also be regarded as the first one in a series of three, which discuss validity problems in important research. They reveal that analyses often compare entities which are not commensurable. Thus, they show a better understanding of the nature of such entities is needed, and indicate the main issues that have to be solved. In this way, they delimit the subject matter of the following chapters, which are grouped in another two parts.

Discourse analysis and language teaching

Discourse analysis had a leading role in a revolution that gave birth to ways of teaching that emphasize communication[1], and which today encompass most English as a foreign language operations. In the early and mid 1970s, together with error analysis[2], it actually caused a rejection of approaches and methods that concentrated on the repetition of isolated phrases or sentences representing grammatical patterns. And, since then, it has promoted innovation, by indicating new territories to enter and new elements with which to operate.

The point of discourse analysis is to recognize in language levels of organization different from grammar. For a discourse analyst, in applied linguistics, knowing a language is not only being able to compose grammatically correct sentences. It is, above all, being able to use the language. Being able to use it to say that this is so, that that is such and such. And being able to use it to invite, insult, protest, request, forgive... to perform acts. Being proficient is being able to say and being able to act.

Discourse analysis, thus, requires basic units of analysis different from the sentence. Actually, two such units have been used, sometimes besides the sentence and sometimes instead of the sentence: the proposition and the illocutionary act, which correspond to the saying and acting referred to above.

A fourth unit

I claim that a fourth unit is needed. I call it 'dissertation act'. It seems to me one must distinguish sharply between illocution and dissertation. Ordering, requesting, inviting — these are illocutionary acts. Asserting, hypothesizing and formulating a question are dissertation acts. Definition, classification, generalization and so on are kinds of assertions, that is to say, dissertation acts.

The proposal being made is that dissertation acts are not subtypes of illocutionary acts, as has been considered in philosophy and in applied linguistics. Rather, they constitute a category at the same hierarchical level.

Discussing the above proposal will involve reviewing the approaches that were followed originally to establish the proposition and the illocutionary act, as units distinct from the sentence. It will, too, imply revising the elements that are used to define acts and the kinds of relationships that are postulated between units in the same category and among units belonging to different categories. And, of course, it will also require a consideration of problems in the area that have been raised by other researchers, which include some related to the validity of the very idea of illocutionary act.

Reappraisal: a need

What is the justification for an applied linguist's devoting his work to such theoretical issues? An answer to those questions has already been hinted at: the issues concern matters which have been central to the language teacher's thinking about language for the past twenty years; it is reasonable to expect that improvements in our views about these matters will have important consequences for our teaching. If, for example, it is shown, as I intend to do in the second part of this thesis, that sentences, propositions and acts are relatively autonomous among themselves, then the case for presenting the student with and engaging her in language where the different kinds of units are at interplay will be strengthened. In terms which are perhaps simpler for those in the field, the necessity of authentic language will be underlined; it will be shown that it is logically impossible for someone to fully grasp what a sentence is if the relationships which it has with the proposition and the act that normally accompany it are eliminated. By the same token, the warning — by Widdowson (1990) — not to equate second language acquisition with the acquisition of a second grammar will be supported. At the same time, however, the reasons that have led teachers to isolate the units at certain points will become evident. In other words, the consideration of a sentence in its own terms, a legacy of old methods which has persisted in actual practice, in spite of its having been rejected in theory, will cease to be justified only on the wisdom of eclecticism and will become a principled activity. That is, a combination of ways of teaching that emphasize communication and ways that focus on grammar will be suggested in a coherent manner. But the suggestion will also include foci on propositions and acts.

In brief, from the theoretical reflection possible further steps in the direction of our present approaches and possible corrections to them will emerge. There is another answer, which focuses more on the present and less on the future. It is perhaps a little more specific, too. Propositions and illocutionary acts seem to be widely used, both implicitly and explicitly, in activities that condition (and are often part of) language teaching operations, such as the design of courses and materials. However, their potential remains underexploited, and decisions are frequently based solely on the basis of practical considerations. So, for example, when a programme is being devised, only those acts that can be named with ordinary words are included; in fact, as has been pointed out (Flowerdew 1990), large

areas in the domain of acts are often ignored or treated inadequately. It would, indeed, seem that we need a comprehensive definition of the illocutionary act. I believe we do not yet have one because we have not delimited its nature, and that distinguishing the dissertation act from it, will allow us to do so.

The problem of clarity: the case of writing studies

The underexploitation of the basic units is manifested in different ways in different areas of application. Let us take the evaluation of learners' writing as an example. Holistic assessment by experienced teachers is very often the most valid form of marking students' essays. In fact, this type of judgement must be the ultimate operational definition of text quality in educational settings, i.e. it must be the external referent in predictive validity studies of other measures. However, it is not always completely reliable, and sometimes it leads to two comparable pieces of work being assigned different grades by the same teacher. It would seem that the criteria that underlie the assessment are not applied consistently. Another problem in this area is that, for certain purposes, *eg* certification, it may be necessary to ensure equivalence of markings by various teachers, which the subjective nature of the evaluation does not guarantee. For these reasons, as well as for others concerning the diagnosis of student difficulties and the judging of large numbers of essays, it is desirable to make the underlying criteria explicit or, perhaps even more so, in order to achieve both validity and reliability, to define systematic marking procedures which correlate highly with holistic measures. Although it could be argued that such goals had not been perceived very neatly in the field of foreign languages until relatively recent years[3], and not been formulated succinctly before Péry-Woodley did so in a review article published in 1991, it is also possible to show that, at least since the early 1970s there have been discussions in this direction (see *eg* Hunt 1970).

In spite of the time that has elapsed, the results are not very satisfactory. To see why, let us recall that, inspired by apparently successful work in mother tongue studies (such as O'Hare 1973 and Combs 1977), there was, during a first period, an attempt to characterize good writing in terms of syntactic complexity. This, of course, faced the problem that sometimes simple writing is good writing (Coombs 1986). Looking at the matter from a discourse analysis point of view, we can say that the analyses those studies depended on, in fact, disregarded what

students said and the acts they performed, and, therefore, could not reflect the overall organization of a text and, in turn, could not correspond to any holistic assessments. In other words, there was a lack of correspondence between the aim of the research and the conceptual scheme that served as the basis for analyzing the data.

Although more recent research does not exhibit such gross mismatches between purpose and perspective, they are not completely free from the problem. Péry-Woodley, who thinks that now "the elaboration of a coherent framework and of relevant analytical tools is an essential task", takes propositional relations as the manifestation of act structure (1991:78). As will be shown in other chapters (mainly those of part II), according to the philosophical investigations that gave origin to the notions of proposition and act, their association cannot be that of one manifesting the other; it follows from this that neither could relations in the domain of one be an epiphenomenon of structures in that of the other. We see that even someone who is aware of the effect of conceptual confusions on the analysis entangles the fundamental concepts in the area. This would seem to indicate a need to review the creation of the notions and their establishment in the field of applied linguistics, referring in particular to relations.

The problem of comparability: the case of conversation studies

Another area of application is the study of conversations in which learners participate. In the late 1970s, E. Hatch claimed that syntax develops out of conversation (Hatch 1978a, Hatch 1978b). This lead to various works on how learners talk among themselves (*eg* Scarcella and Higa 1981), how teachers talk to them (*eg* Long and Sato 1983) and how they talk with teachers (*eg* Ellis 1984) and with other people outside the classroom (*eg* Long 1983). Among other results, these works show how an incipient syntactic construction by a learner can be completed by her interlocutor and then be retaken by her, sometimes to expand it further, thus the final horizontal construction being, as it were, the product of vertical building.

Let us borrow a recent summary of the main hypotheses in this area in order to complement the view of how grammar can grow from conversation. De Fina *et al* (1992:14-5) say that, in a conversation where learners take part, linguistic and

interactional modifications will occur, and that these will: a) allow them to understand what is said, b) provide feedback on their own linguistic production, c) offer them opportunities to modify their developing grammatical system, and d) direct their attention to new grammatical patterns which they will later internalize.

It might be convenient to extend this line of thinking a little. What happens when somebody attempts to communicate in another language could conduce to learning, but the wrong interactional conditions might be obstructive of learning. The logic that explains the first point can lead us to see the second one. If the learner is not allowed to interrupt his interlocutor, will he be able to take her utterances and build on them? If there are not enough links to his previous knowledge, will he understand what is being said? If there is no need to agree (or disagree) about what is being proposed, will he get sufficient feedback on his linguistic production? If he cannot afford to be wrong, will he really have opportunities to modify and develop his grammatical system? And if the content of the discourse is not interesting and demanding, will there be any reasons to pay attention to new grammatical patterns?

Research on conversation could obviously open exciting developments in teaching technique. It could, for instance, show us how it is convenient to focus on grammar or which forms of feedback are more effective. However, before detailed recommendations of these sorts could be really useful, they would have to be related to a global view of conversation dynamics, because the elements of conversation may take on different values depending on the conversation they are part of. It has been shown, for example, that modifications which sometimes seem to help the learner, such as those which occur when someone asks for a clarification, can also be an indication of a frustrating and pedagogically undesirable interaction (Aston 1986).

Looking at the matter from a complementary angle, we do not know when the identification of error, *ie* negative feedback, counts as an invitation to attempt a grammatical variation and when it closes the conversation. We do not know, either, when focusing on a grammatical pattern counts as a change of topic that precludes further clarifications about the original content of the conversation and when it is a simple interruption. In other words, we cannot tell how conditions assign value to elements in discourse.

Unfortunately, at this moment it is not easy to conceive the global view that we need to interpret discourse elements and to study the effect of various interventions in discourse. The bases to construct such a view are not very reliable. In the research literature, sometimes it is not even clear if what is being identified with similar names is one phenomenon, various phenomena of the same sort or very different phenomena. Pica (1987), for example, distinguishes finely between a clarification request and a confirmation check (although both are forms of asking the interlocutor to provide additional information that will ensure comprehension). By contrast, Ellis (1992) includes under requests a wide variety of acts which are often distinguished from these, such as orders.

Actually, researchers have compared and contrasted units which should belong in different taxonomical levels without being sufficiently aware of it. This can be illustrated by a recent review by Kasper and Merete (1991) of methods used in studies specifically concerned with speech acts performed by or addressed to non-native speakers of a language. Here, acts like the expression of an emotion or the provision of embarrassing information, are taken alongside requests and disapprovals. That is, very general categories, like requests, are assumed to be comparable to more specific categories, like the provision of a particular type of information.

What is also wrongly assumed to be comparable is the nature of the acts. That is, not only the levels, but also the branches of the taxonomy are confused. This is worrying. The founder of the philosophical school I referred to earlier, J.L. Austin, had already distinguished illocutionary acts (which have a social or civil effect) from acts that have a psychological effect — which he called "perlocutionary" acts. Moreover, he explicitly warned his readers not to define the former in terms of the latter (Austin 1962: 101-104). The point he was making is that illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts are unrelatable at the basic level of their definitions, although, of course, they interplay in discourse. In other words, perlocutionary acts are not (sub)types of illocutionary acts, as Kasper and Merete's comparison presupposes.

Fundamental character of problems

It could be replied that perhaps the only problem is that Kasper and Merete, or the authors they review, were not very careful at certain points. There are some

grounds for such a reply. For example, when they delimit their scope, they exclude "Studies addressing conversational management, discourse organization, or sociolinguistic aspects..." (p. 216), in order, one would imagine, to deal only with what they suppose are pure speech acts. And yet, they classify acts precisely according to features of conversational management and discourse organization. One of their first groupings is into initiating and responding acts (pp. 226-8). Furthermore, their classification is not always rigorous: they include complaints in the first group and promises in the second, and, surely, complaints can follow other acts and promises can initiate exchanges.

Here, it is convenient to note one type of issues that must be addressed in the kind of basic revision I am advocating. Do we want a basic classification of acts like promises or complaints to depend on their positions in a discourse (or in a discourse structure), *eg* on whether they are initiating or responding acts? The last remark in the previous paragraph indicates that we probably do not; we want to allow for the possibility of acts to occur in different structural positions, and find out empirically which ones they actually occupy. This shows that it is necessary to reflect upon the notions behind our classifications, because they may preclude us from seeing important phenomena, or enable us to do so.

Going back to Kasper and Merete's review, the comparison mistakes might be due to carelessness. But that is not their only cause. They reflect some fundamental problems which are also exhibited in the work of other authors. Let us take, for example, Austin's caution sign not to confuse illocution with perlocution. As I will show in a later chapter, this seems not to have been noticed by Brown and Yule (1983) either. Theirs is a rather careful work, and it is considered a key text in the discourse analysis literature. Therefore, one wonders if the importance of the distinction between illocution and perlocution is not perceived because it was not stated with sufficient strength. I believe this might well be the case, and I think that what Austin's legacy lacks is a properly delimiting general definition of the illocutionary act, which can be systematically related to specific definitions of different illocutionary acts. This would prevent the misidentification of perlocutionary acts as illocutionary acts.

The problems underlying the mistakes mentioned produce uncertainties, and these, in turn, can cause a reluctance to depend on any analytic scheme at all:

...no attempt will be made to follow any particular theory of discourse or to utilise any specific descriptive framework. Politzer (1980) has argued that for pedagogical purposes discourse analysis needs to be 'motivational' rather than 'structural' and that this requires a higher level of speculation than most discourse analysts encompass. In line with this view, the descriptions offered are eclectic, drawing on techniques from different approaches according to whatever seems best suited to throw light on the developmental process itself.

(Ellis 1984: 101)

Unfortunately, although studies where theory has this role can be insightful — and Ellis's is insightful —, they cannot be replicated because their analyses of data cannot be corroborated:

This framework is designed to provide a basis for discussion, *not to code* the interactions...

(Ellis 1984: 102. My emphasis.)

If data are assigned to categories, but not coded as belonging in them, how does someone else, beside Ellis, know when some datum should be counted as what? In other words, if there are two different interpretations of the same data, one by Ellis and one by another person, how do we know if he or she made a simple mistake (that can be corrected) or if she is right and the enquiry is, in the first place, misguided? And, if the assignment of features of different types of interactions in the classroom is the basis for comparing and contrasting those types, as in Ellis's work, what do the comparisons mean?

Sometimes, conclusions can be granted by insuring comparability through experimental control. This is, for example, what Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1987) achieved by defining requests only in operational terms:

We identify as a request sequence all the utterance(s) involved in the turn completing the dialogue in the DCT [Discourse-Completion Test]. For example:
"Judith, I missed class yesterday, do you think I could borrow your notes? I promise to return them tomorrow."

(p. 17)

The cost is high, though: a size issue is introduced. Sequences consisting of different numbers of acts will be considered as equal, and acts, properly, will not be recorded. In the example above, the promise which is part of the request sequence has been missed; and the whole sequence is taken as comparable to sequences without a promise.

There is another problem here. The control measure might interfere with what is being observed, and, in the words of Kasper and Merete (1991), it:

> ...might well preclude access to precisely the kinds of conversational and interpersonal phenomena that might shed light on the pragmatics of IL [interlanguage] use and development.

(p. 245)

In other words, experimental control cannot substitute for theoretical clarity. If we are interested in the possibility of generalizing experimental results to real life, we must tell how experimental and real life conditions are related and, therefore, we must be able to study directly some real life discourse.

The points that have been made about writing evaluation research and conversational studies can be generalized to any other areas where discourse analysis is applied. The analyses can be relevant only to the extent that they are valid, and their validity depends on the quality of the systems of analysis employed. But the fact is that, at present, even rigorously developed systems, and no matter how carefully they are applied, yield inconsistent codings. They all introduce level, branch, or size problems. Moreover, there are always examples of utterances which express obviously similar sentences (or parts of sentences) and which have evidently similar intentions and results and are, yet, coded differently, as well as examples of utterances different in those respects which receive the same coding; instances of this mistake in Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) analysis, which were noted by Edmonson (1981: 68-69) will be commented in the next chapter. And even when an acceptable degree of reliability is achieved, this seems to be at the cost of limiting the range of application too much (Flowerdew 1990).

Inconsistency or inapplicability of seemingly good act-based systems has led several researchers to question the very point of using acts as units (see *eg* Brown and Yule 1983). A number of apparently insurmountable problems have been raised, such as establishing how many acts there are in a given subcategory (for a review of such problems, see Flowerdew 1990).

However, as will be shown in the third part of this thesis, the formulation itself of the questioning has been partly affected by the same confusions that underlie the problems. For example, in more than one occasion it has involved adducing, as negative evidence, a failure to recognize as illocutionary acts entities which do not at all belong in the category, such as perlocutionary acts (see above). So, the questioning is not really an argument to abandon the idea of acts, as might seem to be the case, but has to be taken as an argument in favour of clarifying the confusions.

Conclusion

In sum, useful pedagogical recommendations and evaluation schemes could be derived from discourse studies, if we had a global view of discourse dynamics that told us which elements counted as what when. But before we can conceive such a view, we require theoretical clarity about the units we employ to analyse discourse, in order to guarantee that observations be replicable by different researchers and comparisons be meaningful across different situations.

In particular, work on the nature and the defining elements of speech acts is needed. It ought to consider them *vis-a-vis* sentences and propositions and it ought to deal with relations among speech acts. That need is what justifies this thesis.

It can be added that it is not very likely that scholars in areas other than applied linguistics will do the work. Philosophers became interested in speech acts because they showed aspects of matters that were already important to them. Among these, we can mention the relationship between truth and meaning, which we will touch upon in the second part of the thesis. Other such matters (which we will only mention here) include willful rule governed behaviour and intentionality itself. Once speech act theory had made a contribution to the study

of these matters, it ceased being a major philosophical area. Furthermore, when aspects of it are reconsidered it is not with the type of aim we have, namely to produce valid, reliable, and useful schemes to study discourse empirically or design syllabi.

To take another example, linguists who study units larger than the sentence, led perhaps by an interest in co-reference, deal mainly with the propositional domain of discourse, and consider speech acts only marginally, without seeking a comprehensive and systematic account of them. The same can be said about scholars carrying out psychologically oriented studies on comprehension or production. On the other hand, social scientists (such as political sociologists) who have enriched their views with the notion of speech acts, do not regard the acts as units for detailed codings of discourse; rather, they use the notion in general discussions of properly sociological themes, such as the constitution of collective agents.

Structure of the thesis

The last comments indicate that a good strategy to begin the work we need to do could be to locate sources of difficulty in our field with more precision. This is the strategy I followed. I first identified problems in two research areas of applied linguistics: classroom interaction and specialized language.

The following two chapters, which, together with the present one constitute Part I of the thesis, are dedicated to those two areas. Chapter 2 considers the kinds of coding conventions required for classroom research and discusses the methodological decisions the researcher has to make. It shows the practical need for distinguishing utterances from sentences and these from propositions and acts, and it singles out one of the key problems in the area: determining how many acts can be performed simultaneously with one utterance.

Chapter 3 presents general issues in specialized language research, such as the use of everyday names as technical terms to identify the acts of argumentation and exposition. These issues are made manifest in the study of one particular act, definition. The discussion shows the need to distinguish acts from act relations and from act compounds, and it stresses that a central goal of theoreti-

cal research in the area is to establish the defining elements of acts. The view of discourse embodied in the proposals is projected to identify new areas of research, with foci on text constellations and delayed comprehension.

At certain points in both Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, the importance of the research problems for teaching practice is noted. For example, it is shown that the distinction between illocutionary and dissertation acts could be very useful in distinguishing ESP (English for Specific Purposes) from general English courses in terms of discourse objectives. At the level of more basic pedagogical decisions, it is argued that the systematic view of acts advocated will allow us to properly define the target communicative competence of a course (as opposed to merely listing final performance repertoires for it).

At the end of these two chapters, I claim that the problems identified there can only be solved if the distinction between illocutionary acts and dissertation acts is well established first. Part II of the thesis, which consists of chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7, proves the two are indeed separate, basic types.

Chapter 4 simultaneously presents a summarized review of the approaches that have been followed to establish discourse analysis units and a synthesis of the arguments that distinguish dissertation from illocutionary acts following each approach. Chapter 5 is a detailed discussion of the arguments according to the first approach, the one Peter Strawson followed to distinguish the sentence from the proposition — and, later, John Searle used to distinguish the illocutionary act from both, the sentence and the proposition. Chapter 6 develops, also in a detailed fashion, the arguments according to the second approach, the one which allowed John Austin to present and explore the idea of illocutionary acts. And Chapter 7 follows the approach used by Henry Widdowson to introduce the idea in the field of applied linguistics.

At various moments, it is noted that the discussions of Part II relate to important notions for applied linguistics, such as the etic/emic distinction. It is also shown that their results could be incorporated into some of the common language teaching frames of reference, for example, in a distinction between situational and contextual language teaching. Their potential relevance to teaching practice is also indicated, *eg* as the basis of guidelines for devising classroom games.

Part III is devoted to implications and applications of the distinction and the arguments that establish it. It consists of three chapters. The first one, Chapter 8, concentrates on illocution, and depicts it as deontic intervention. It ends with one general definition of illocutionary acts which has the form of a formula that can be transformed into particular definitions of different acts, by substitution of its elements.

Chapter 9 concentrates on dissertation, and treats it as epistemic intervention. The elements of dissertation are represented in another definitional formula, which, like that for illocution, allows for a systematic and comprehensive coverage of particular acts.

These two chapters, 8 and 9, solve the two central, theoretical problems that were identified in chapters 2 and 3, and they answer the most important objections to speech act theory in the discourse analysis literature. They also note how the notions of illocution and dissertation developed here could be used in the classification of classroom activities and exercises.

Chapter 10 is devoted to research and design proposals which stem from the two general formulae of the previous chapters. It outlines an ambitious programme to study speech acts comprehensively and it shows how to overcome the kinds of validity problems and confusions that have been mentioned here, *eg* in relation to conversation analysis. It also presents three syllabus organization principles, that would allow us to make micro, intermediate and macro specifications, by concentrating, respectively, on speech act elements, speech acts, and speech act sequences. The chapter ends with an exposition of ideas on teaching methods and approaches, which derive from the syllabus design proposals and which take into account the several observations about teaching that were made throughout the thesis. Their aim is to improve communicative teaching and incorporate reflection into this type of methodology in a principled (rather than an *ad-hoc*) manner.

The epilogue contains some comments on the benefits theory and analysis have had here.

Chapter 1 notes

1. In broad terms, communicative language teaching defines situations in which the student has to use language in order to achieve goals (or pretended goals) which mirror those of participants in communicative exchanges outside the classroom. Activities in this kind of teaching typically include conversations where students adopt different situational roles, such as those of successful salesman, lost tourist, or angry wife. They often also include solving problems, cooperatively or competitively, by obtaining and providing information which in the beginning is distributed differentially. (Most of tje positions that initiated this comunicative approach are expressed in Brumfit and Johnson 1979.)

2. Error analysis aimed at accounting for students' systematic errors in terms of productive grammatical rules (Corder 1967) which constitute an 'aproximative' (Nemser 1971) or 'interlanguage' (Selinker 1972) system. As Pery-Woodly (1991) has put it, the importance of error analysis is that it presented the learner as an agent, rather than as a mere recepient of language learning.

3. Perhaps the first article which has the objective validation of holistic evaluation as its main concern, in the field of foreign languages, is Homburg 1984.

Chapter 2

PROBLEMS IN CLASSROOM DISCOURSE RESEARCH

In Chapter 1, I showed we need a general, comprehensive definition of the illocutionary act from which definitions of particular acts can be derived systematically. This lack has caused large areas in the domain of acts to be ignored or treated inadequately, both in research on language learning processes and in activities that directly condition language teaching, such as course design and student evaluation.

I also indicated that the problem of defining the illocutionary act in the way necessary for EFL work is intimately associated to the problems of identifying its nature and establishing how it relates to sentences and propositions. Besides, I claimed that a key step in the solution of these problems would be to sharply distinguish illocutionary acts from dissertation acts.

In order to show the enquiry has to be led in the direction of this distinction and to raise the types of questions that shall have to be answered, I will, in the present chapter, consider the kinds of technical tasks and methodological difficulties with which the analyst of classroom discourse is faced. I will do so mainly in reference to a particular classroom experiment reported in Long *et al* 1976. The discussion will be introduced by a brief note about the development of classroom interaction research before the experiment. Other complementary observations, on certain related points made by various authors at the time of the experiment or since then, will be presented afterwards. Finally, the topics signalled will be related to syllabus design and the conception of teaching activities.

Classroom research

In the mid 1960's, classroom observation was introduced in language teaching re-search, mainly by a small number of teacher trainers interested in adapting Flanders's 1960 interaction analysis system[1] for its use in the language classroom (see *eg* Moskowitz 1967 or Rothfarb 1970), as is shown in Allwright's comprehensive assessment of the fields development (Allwright 1988: 85).

The first descriptive schemes consisted of single short lists of categories exclusive of each other. A list would typically include one category for interventions that initiate a series or cycle of exchanges and another for interventions that follow up other interventions. In one scheme, Bellack's, these are called 'soliciting' and 'responding', respectively (Bellack *et al* 1966). Examples of these are the utterances numbered, for present purposes, as (1) and (2), which are taken from the experiment corpus referred to.

(1) Teacher: Do you know anything about elephants?

(2) Student: They are big.

Lists could also include a category for interventions that set the scene and open or close interactions. In the same scheme, this is called 'structuring'. An example of it is:

(3) Teacher: Today we are going to discuss whether man is completely different from other animals or not.

Often a scheme would group aside comments together with non-verbal reactions. For Bellack *et al*, these are 'reacting'. An example is the laughter that followed (2) in the corpus transcription (not included in the fragment above).

The application of those early systems made applied linguists realize some important biases of the methods that were being followed by language teachers. Thus, for example, they could see that students had very few opportunities to practise the production of questions or the comprehension of answers. This revealed that the study of classroom interaction could not only contribute to un-

derstanding learning, but might well be absolutely necessary for developing a sound knowledge of teaching.

The systems were, indeed, so important in the constitution of classroom research as a field of applied linguistics that, as will be evident below, traces of them are still present in other systems. But they had severe limitations. Some of these can easily be seen in the examples given above. Different kinds of reactions were not distinguished and, therefore, their potential value as linguistic input (or output) could not even be considered. Likewise, the conflating of opening and closing interventions could not allow a researcher to even raise the question of whether students could understand or perform openings. In more general terms, the schemes provided impressions of the classroom's atmosphere and some data that seemed to indicate the type of skewed tendencies mentioned (in relation to questions and answers); but they did not really record linguistic activity, which should be the object of study for a language classroom analyst.

In the mid 70's, often under the influence of functional linguistics, which in some cases was rather indirect, coding systems became a little more sensitive to language use. Thus, Barnes and Todd (1975), for example, grouped categories under the headings 'social skills' and 'logical processes'.

The Xochimilco study

It is in this context that the study mentioned earlier was conducted. It was carried out[2] during the final months of 1975 and the early months of 1976 at the Xochimilco campus of the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (Autonomous Metropolitan University), in Mexico City. Its initial aim was to compare the quantity and quality of student language production in two kinds of situations: when the whole class works at the same pace under the teacher's direction and when the students work in small groups at their own speed. But soon a second focus of attention developed: *how* to describe teacher's and student's utterances. In fact, this question became at least as important as the first aim[3]. It is for this reason, and because I have direct knowledge of the study, that I wish to concentrate on it here.

At first, two existing coding systems were applied to data gathered under experimental conditions. These were Bellack's, which has already been mentioned, and Moskowitz's, which is another single list system and consists of seven categories for designating teacher behaviour, two for student behaviour, and three for silence, confusion and laughter (Moskowitz 1967). Although their use yielded interesting results[4], it was found that they did not capture the variety of acts students were performing, and a brief examination of the transcriptions indicated that it was precisely here that important differences between the two classroom situations might lie. Therefore, the team decided to construct a new coding scheme, which was called Embryonic Category System (ECS), in order to show the intention of stimulating its growth. As will be evident, the work had a strong speech act orientation.

Unlike Bellack's or Moskowitz's schemes, the ECS had three lists of categories: 'pedagogical moves', 'social skills' and 'rhetorical acts' (Long et al 1976: 144-145). The first heading grouped 17 categories, including, for example, 'student focuses discussion' and 'student asks for clarification'. The second heading comprised 13 categories, among which were 'student competes for the floor' and 'student invites participation by other students'. The last heading had 14 categories, which include 'student hypothesizes' and 'student classifies'.

The following excerpt exemplifies the application of the system. It is taken from the transcript of a discussion on the differences between man and animals produced by a pair of students in the absence of a teacher.

> 241 S9: Um. Yes./Because um the animals don't um um the animals um don't change the environment of the earth um...
>
> P14/P10,R3

The figure on the left (241) numbers the intervention within the sequence transcribed. The next label (S9) identifies the student speaking. The codes at the right below the intervention belong to the ECS. Here, the comma is used to indicate that P10 and R3 occurred simultaneously and the diagonal to show that P14 occurred previously. (Which specific categories are represented by P10 and R3 is not relevant for the discussion being introduced here.)

The results[5] obtained from the application of the ECS showed important differences between the two classroom situations, and thus indicate it was a good idea to compare them in terms of the numbers and kinds of acts performed. They also indicate the distinctions presupposed by grouping acts in separate lists are crucial.

The value of a system like the ECS, in turn, shows that the kinds of analysis problems which are faced when using it merit special attention. We now turn to these.

The issue of multiple coding

The comma and diagonal conventions exemplified in the coding of intervention 241 reflect the following methodological decisions: an intervention may consist of one or several utterances; for every utterance at least one coding category must be applied; more than one category can be used to code an utterance if, and only if, they belong in different lists. These decisions, in turn, imply a position with respect to the problem that utterances in free-flowing talk often seem to realize more than one kind of act at the same time.

The problem is of considerable importance: if an utterance realizes two acts, and only one category could be applied to it, then either of the two acts may be coded. Inconsistencies of that sort are found, for example, in the application, by Sinclair and Coulthard, of a coding system[6] (1975) which was to become the pivot for the development of an important approach to the study of spoken discourse in general (Coulthard and Montgomery (1981). Let us take, for instance, two very similar utterances, which are identified here as (4) and (5).

(4) You're shouting out though.

(5) Somebody's shouting out at the back.

(In Sinclair and Coulthard 1975: 93-94)

The authors considered 4 as a comment, while 5 was taken to be a directive. According to Edmondson (1981: 68-69), the divergence of identification arises

because Sinclair and Coulthard's categories are defined mainly in terms of structural positions. (5) is the head of an opening move, but (4) is the post-head element in a follow up move. The fact that both acts count as a request to stop shouting (Edmondson 1981: 69) cannot therefore be captured by the analysis. It might be convenient to recall, as an aside note, that in Chapter 1 we saw a prior reason for having structure-independent definitions of basic categories: to allow for empirical verification of which positions the categories actually occupy.

Now, recognizing Edmondson's point would not completely solve Sinclair and Coulthard's inconsistency. Defining 'directive' in such a way that it can be applied to (4) independently of its position (which is the solution suggested by Edmondson) does not automatically make the definition of 'comment' inapplicable to the same utterance. Moreover, the proposal requires answers to two further questions: why keep the definition of 'comment' in structure-dependent terms and make that of 'directive' structure-independent? Why, indeed, not treat both (4) and (5) as comments, rather than both as directives? What is being asked can perhaps be approached from a slightly different angle: is it not that each utterance is simultaneously a comment and a directive?

In other words, the coding inconsistency seems to reveal that discourse develops in two parallel dimensions, and that comments belong in one and directives in the other. Sinclair and Coulthard's approach could, then, have two problems: defining acts in terms of structural positions and dealing with two dimensions as if they were only one.

What is being focused on is the number of basic units of analysis. Sinclair and Coulthard's system has only one unit, namely, the act; the ECS has three: the pedagogical move, the social skill, and the rhetorical act. How many units are needed?

Let us suppose we used a scheme with two units, developed *eg* after Barnes and Todd's distinction between social skills and logical processes. Let us further suppose that there really were three parallel dimensions in classroom discourse. What would the consequence of our system choice be? We would, of course, have the same kinds of inconsistencies we have noted above, but their effects would be multiplied. We would sometimes record a third type act as a first type act and others as a second type act; and we would sometimes miss it altogether.

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And what would the consequence of the opposite mistake be? What would happen if we adopted a three unit system and there were only two dimensions? We would then count more acts than we really had. This, I now believe, was an unfortunate source of error in the Xochimilco study. 'Student uses evidence to challenge an assertion', which belongs in the pedagogical acts list, for example, sometimes was the second count of an act which should have been registered only[7] as 'student contradicts', a category in the social skills list.

Having either less or more basic units in a system than there are dimensions in discourse will, then, distort any statistics we obtain from its application, because it will produce inconsistent identification of the categories instantiated.

Related issues

The question about the number of basic acts is related to the issue of determining which acts are mutually exclusive. As has been made explicit above, we want it to be possible for acts in one list to occur simultaneously with acts in another. By the same token, we want only one act from any one list to occur at a given moment.

There are good methodological reasons for linking the number of basic acts to exclusion principles. The categories of a coding system must be precisely relatable to their exponents. This requirement, which is part of a very influential statement by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975: 15-16) on the criteria a coding system must satisfy[8], should not need any further substantiation. If it is not observed, codings are subject to the kinds of objections I raised in Chapter 1.

Now, if categories within a single dimension are not mutually exclusive, then they cannot be precisely relatable to their exponents, as I have shown with the help of various examples. Conversely, if two categories are not mutually exclusive, then they must belong in different dimensions. Hence, one question it is advisable to ask when devising a system is: which categories are mutually exclusive?

But the number question is also related to an ontological issue: determining the nature of the acts our categories represent. The names of the lists in the ECS,

or those in Barnes and Todd's scheme, reflect an intention to group together acts which have some basic point in common. In accordance with this intention, the ECS lists 'student hypothesizes' and 'student makes an observation' under the same heading, namely 'rhetorical acts'; likewise, it lists 'student initiates discussion' and 'student focuses discussion' together, under 'pedagogical moves'.

The intention is, of course, sound. An ontologically valid taxonomy is necessary before we can make meaningful generalizations. It does not make much sense, for example, to predicate anything about Bellack's 'reacting' acts, because they mix incomparable entities, like laughter and aside comments.

Moreover, a proper taxonomy would allow us to make linguistically interesting observations, because they would reflect significant choices. To illustrate the point negatively, let us take two categories from the ECS. 'Student makes explicit reference to other's contribution' and 'student encourages other' are both listed under 'social skills', as if they represented alternative options for the speaker.

Although the merits of ontologically valid taxonomies are clear, and perhaps obvious, these are not easy to devise. To show the problem, let us consider two more pairs of categories from the ECS. Are 'student jokes' and 'student avoids discussion', both listed under social skills, really comparable? Are 'student initiates discussion' and 'student concludes', a pedagogical move and a rhetorical act in the system, basically different? It would be impossible to answer such questions now. We need to know what the point of social skills is, what rhetorical acts are by nature, what pedagogical moves could in essence be. But that knowledge is at present unavailable.

A question we should ask before devising a coding system is, then: what is the nature of our basic categories? And if the units in case are acts, the question would take this form: what is the point of our basic acts?

The act question requires that two other units be considered: the sentence and the proposition. Although these are not explicitly given the status of basic units in coding schemes such as Sinclair and Coulthard's model or the ECS, they must be taken into account in any discussion that attempts an answer. The very notion of act cannot take more than a vague shape if it is not opposed to that of sentence. This is, indeed, what Austin does at several points of the work that in-

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augurated speech act theory (1962); see, for example, page 20, or note 1 on page 6. This is also what Searle (1969: 24) and Widdowson (1978: 22-23) do, more clearly and succinctly. The point is that, as Sinclair and Coulthard (1975: 28-30) show, using different terminology, sentences of the same kind, *eg* interrogative sentences, can be used to realize different acts, *eg* an order or an offer of help, as in (6) and (7), which are fabricated.

(6) Boss: can you come here?

(7) Boy scout: can you manage?

In other words, there is no one to one correspondence between types of sentences and types of acts. It is this lack of correspondence which gives sense to the distinction and makes it necessary. But, if the opposition between sentences and acts makes sense, it must be because they are alike in some respect. And their sameness lies precisely in their both being units of discourse. As Widdowson (1978-23) points out, they both are used in reports, *ie* in answers to questions like 'What did he say?'

A question we would, then, do well to keep in mind when devising a basic framework for understanding discourse is the following: how do sentences and acts stand in relation to each other? This will be specifically addressed in Part II of the thesis.

From a conceptual point of view, it is as necessary to include the proposition as the sentence. By a proposition is meant the association of a referent and a predicate. Thus if my uncle's name is José, both (8) and (9) (which are fabricated) express the same proposition.

(8) My uncle is eating.

(9) José is eating.

In fact, as Strawson (1950) showed, there is no one to one correspondence between sentences and propositions, and therefore, the meaning of a sentence cannot be equated to a proposition. We thus see how the notion of sentence is brought into sharp focus when it is opposed to that of proposition. Likewise, the

contrast between propositions and acts enlightens the latter, as can be seen in Searle 1969: 24 or in Widdowson 1978: 23, from which the following possible reports are taken:

She promised that her husband would return the parcel tomorrow.

She mentioned in passing that her husband would return the parcel tomorrow.

Here, we have the same proposition: that her husband would return the parcel. But we also have different acts: 'promise' and 'mention', in Widdowson's terms. Thus, we see that an act should not be confused with the so called content of an utterance, and that in its description we must specify who is committed to what kinds of things because of the utterance. This will be kept in mind throughout the thesis and developed properly in Chapter 8.

One reason I see, from the coding problems perspective, for considering sentences and propositions alongside acts is that categories often are, inadvertedly, compounds of features belonging to the three units. Let us consider some categories in the ECS. 'Student reformulates previous own or other's assertion' is used to code utterances such as the second one in the following pair taken from the Xochimilco corpus (final part of intervention 150 and intervention 151):

(10) Student 4: for man if man transforms the conditions

(11) Student 5: well man can transform nature

Clearly, the point is that (11) and (10) express the same proposition with different sentences. This must definitely be captured, but using the said category to do so may be misleading in two ways. On the one hand, an assertion is an act, rather than a sentence. On the other hand, while (11) is truly an assertion, (10) is a hypothesis. In other words, the fact that the reformulation involves changes from an affirmative to a conditional sentence and from an act of asserting to an act of hypothesizing are lost in the coding.

Those types of changes need not be of concern to any given investigation, of course. But if they were, we would do better to simply register (11) as expressing

the same proposition as (10). The point is that, in any case, an awareness of the act, the sentence and the proposition as different units of discourse would result in much better descriptions of our data.

Other two categories in the ECS are 'student asks for information' and 'student asks for information about the target language'. They are supposed to be the labels of different acts (in the pedagogical moves list). That is, they are supposed to be co-hyponyms, in the same way that 'student asks for clarification' and 'student clarifies' oppose each other. But, if we consider the two categories from the point of view of a framework that includes propositions, we will then see that they are both the same act, *viz* a request, but the propositional arguments involved belong in different semantic spheres. Putting it in another way, if we were to use hybrid categories consciously, 'student asks for information' should be a superordinate and 'student asks for information about the target language' should be one of its hyponyms.

Speech acts and language teaching

In this light, it can be useful to make two points more directly related to teaching. As is well known, one central concern of communicative approaches has been to devise syllabi in terms of speech acts (often referred to as 'functions'). However, the results often exhibit the same types of problems that have been considered here.

It is not uncommon for the organization of a syllabus to suggest given speech acts have common features when they do not actually share any. This occurs, for instance, when a lesson's objective is really to teach sentences with the verb 'to be' and the lesson is labelled "Introductions and descriptions". Among other problems, this confuses the equative and the ascriptive uses of the verb.

Another undesirable effect of syllabi constructed on the basis of current views can be to direct students' attention to the linguistic realization of proposition features while they are apparently being shown the way speech acts link in coherent discourse. This happens, for example, with lessons on giving directions, which are often supposed to teach the student how to request information and

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how to answer requests, but in fact are only devoted to place names or space prepositions.

What is perhaps more important, as the nature of acts is not well understood, there is no guarantee that the aims of the discourses they constitute will be well conceived or evaluated. Using Barnes and Todd's terms, if we expect our students to show their social skills while performing a given activity, but this really demands more attention to logical processes, we can mistakenly conclude that the students are not profiting from the lesson.

This kind of misjudgement is shown, *eg,* in comments by Ellis (1984: 107-109) about an episode involving a beginner student. The teacher's goal was to familiarize the pupils with the Green Cross Code. After explaining the basic regulations, and apparently because questioning was unsuccessful, she invites Anan to mime how to cross the road. Ellis's transcription of the episode shows Anan understood the explanation perfectly well:

12. *T.* Yes, but why can't you see?
           (*The Portuguese boy is*
           expected to imagine chairs
           representing cars.)
13.   *P.* Two cars.
14. *T.* There's two cars.
15.   Right.
16.   So what do you do?
17.   What do you do?
18.   *P.* Walk.
19. *T.* Walk, yes.

(Ellis 1984: 108)

We can see he was able not only to apply in his miming the knowledge he had acquired, but also to give reasons based on it. Although his verbal answers were one word utterances, they count as descriptions of the situation features that are relevant with respect to the code. Yet, Ellis's opinion is very negative. He thinks the teacher has not been able to communicate the content she is interested in because of her "dominating, interrogating style".

It is not very difficult to explain why I and Ellis see something different in his transcription. In another lesson which is highly regarded by him (1984: 112-113) nothing half as complex as understanding the Green Cross Code is required. Here the propositional density is very low, the vocabulary is very limited and most of the students utterances are mere repetitions. However, the episode could be described as a rich social interaction. It involves the teacher negotiating a change of activity, ordering certain actions, and offering and giving kitchen utensils. Moreover, the students agree, comply, request and receive. It is this which calls Ellis's attention. And it is this which the first episode does not have.

In short, in both cases Ellis observes one dimension of discourse and is unaware of the other. It is, of course, possible to make the converse mistake, *ie* to see only explanations, descriptions and reasons, and disregard requests, offerings and agreements. In fact, this is a major problem when teaching and exposition are conceived as synonymous.

It is important, then, to understand the nature of acts, so that different dimensions of discourse can be recognized and teaching can be adequately focused.

Summary of basic questions

In this chapter, I have discussed some methodological decisions required by classroom interaction research, which are exemplified by the diagonal and comma conventions in the coding scheme developed at Xochimilco. I have shown that such decisions embody basic theoretical positions, *eg* about the sameness in nature of the acts in a list.

This discussion indicates that empirically based analyses of classroom interaction might be essential to understand learning and teaching. But it also demonstrates the need to deal with a question prior to analysis: how to describe teacher's and student's utterances.

My aim has been to raise the questions we must answer before we can devise adequate schemes: How many basic kinds of acts are there? What is the nature of each? How do acts, sentences and propositions relate to each other?

It is unfortunate that those questions have not been discussed sufficiently, because their answers determine the kind of analysis that can be produced and condition the degree of validity that can be attained. The lack of good answers results, for example, in unreliable frequency counts. It also causes us to inadvertedly mix simple and compound categories. And it means teaching can easily be misguided.

The following chapter will point to some answers to these questions. It will also pose some complementary problems. This will lead to a direct confrontation, in the second part of the thesis, of the basic issues involved.

Chapter 2 notes

1. As Chaudron (1988: 14-15) points out, under the influence of sociological investigations of group processes, Flanders (1960) developed a system to register the "social meanings" of classroom interactions and the classroom "climate", using labels such as 'direct' or 'indirect'.

2. The members of the Xochimilco research team were Michael Long, Leslie Adams, Marilyn McLean and Fernando Castaños.

3. It is of interest to note that other researchers had in the past also found the descriptive problem occupying a great part of their attention (see Jarvis 1968, Nearhoof 1969, or Wragg 1970).

4. Thanks to the application of Bellack's and Moskovitz's systems, it was shown that some of the effects that tended to be attributed to classroom organization might actually be due to the type of task or the teaching style (Long et al 1976). Although perhaps this was not made sufficiently explicit, it means the latter variables were as worth investigating as the former.

5. The analysis made possible by the ECS shows, first, that the total number of acts performed by students in the small group condition was significantly greater (p.01) than the number performed by students in the lockstep condition. Furthermore, the quantitative difference was significant for each of the three major act classes established (p.01, p.05 and p.05 respectively). Secondly, the variety within two classes of acts, pedagogical moves and social skills, was also significantly greater (both at the p.01 level) for the small group situation. However, there was as much variety of rhetorical acts in the lockstep situation as in the pair work.

6. Sinclair and Coulthard's 1975 system is an attempt to model the structure of discourse. Its categories are treated as names for constituents of larger units, and these form a hierarchy of five 'ranks': 'lesson', 'transaction', 'exchange', 'move' and 'act'.

7. The observation about pedagogical moves duplicating acts in the social skills list of the ECS does not imply a rejection in principle of multiple coding; it merely points to a danger that has to be avoided — by properly establishing the number of lists and carefully defining the acts in each list.

8. According to Sinclair and Coulthard (1975: 15-16), the categories in a coding system must be comprehensive, unequivocal and finite in number. In addition, there must be at least one impossible sequence of categories in the type of discourse they describe.

Chapter 3

THE STUDY OF DISSERTATION ACTS IN THE CONTEXT OF ACADEMIC LANGUAGE RESEARCH

This chapter has two purposes. The first one is to expose the problems that researchers have had defining dissertation acts, *ie* acts like classification and identification, which have been of particular interest to analysts of academic discourse. The second purpose is to examine a definition of definitions.

The two purposes are interrelated. An initial consideration of the problems will indicate what should be aimed at when attempting to define an operation such as definition. The discussion of its definition will, in turn, provide a framework to state the main problems precisely and will also point to a possible solution.

The argumentation will lead us to appreciate the need to establish certain distinctions before devising schemes to code academic discourse. It will show, for example, that the origin of some problems is the confusion of acts and act relations, namely, of categories such as 'observation', on the one hand, and 'exemplification', on the other.

The discussion will also raise the question of whether dissertation acts are illocutionary acts or not. At this point, the elements in the definition of definitions will be contrasted to the standard characterizations of illocutionary acts.

The chapter will, thus, contribute to indicate the topics that ought to be dealt with when attempting to establish the nature of acts. It is, therefore, complementary to Chapter 1.

An additional outcome of the deliberation is the identification of new research themes, the main ones being text constellations and delayed comprehen-

sion, whose understanding could improve the teaching of English for Academic Purposes significantly.

ESP research: early developments

Scholars interested in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language have distinguished academic English from general English at least since the forties.

In this decade, Michael West began recording the differences in the frequency of occurrence which the most common English words have in scientific prose and in texts written for a wide public.

With time, researchers interested in this kind of work divided scientific texts by area and also studied history and law texts. Later on, they counted not only words, but grammatical structures as well. The aim was to identify the most basic and most important linguistic elements for all learners.

In the sixties, the aims were inverted: instead of concentrating on the characterization of a word or structure by recording the domains in which it appeared, the emphasis was placed on the description of a variety of English by identifying its frequent words or structures. Rather than identifying common core English, statistical studies now had the purpose of establishing specialized Englishes. This trend, which developed until the mid seventies, repeated the history of basic English corpora delimitation; initially, the aim was to describe broad varieties — *eg* 'technical English' — and, with time, the object of study was more narrowly defined — *eg*, as 'medical English'.

Among the works produced during the first part of the period, the following can be mentioned: "A list of professional words commonly used in technology and engineering" (Sarma 1966); "English words and structures in Science and Maths" (Owens 1970); "Some measurable characteristics of modern scientific prose" (Barber 1962). It can also be said that *A course in basic scientific English*, by J. Ewer and G. Latorre (1969), perhaps the best known English for Specific Purposes textbook of the time, was based on frequency counts of both the lexis and the structures of scientific English (see Ewer and Latorre 1967).

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In the second part, publications included: "A study of engineering English vocabulary" (Puangmali 1976); *Some syntactic properties of English law language* (Gustaffson 1975); "Introduction to a paper on the language of administration and public relations" (Hughes 1974). Again, research in this current was sometimes conducted specifically to provide a basis for materials development; a good example is an analysis of the vocabulary and structures in a large corpus of texts for medical students performed by M. Horzella et al (1977).

One would have thought that a central concern in the following years could have been to combine the interest in comparing the language of different disciplines, implicit in the studies of the fifties, with the interest in describing in detail aspects of the language of one discipline, shown in the early and mid seventies. Surely, this would not have been too ambitious an objective, given the increase in the number of applied linguists and the progress in computational hard- and software. However, interest in frequency studies decayed very considerably for a number of years.

Later work

Probably nowadays the two most important schools of thought in specialized language research and teaching for specific purposes design are those represented by Trimble 1985 and Swales 1990. The former is often referred to as grammatico-rhetorical approach or University of Washington EST Program. The latter is identified with genre analysis.

As shown below, both, the grammatico-rhetorical approach and the genre analysis schools, declare that the relationship between discourse purpose and dissertation act sequencing is one of their central concerns, although dissertation acts are not referred to with the phrase "dissertation act" — in fact, the word "act" is not used at all by Trimble or Swales —.

For Trimble: "Rhetoric is the process a writer uses to produce a desired piece of text. This process is basically one of choosing and organizing information for a specific set of purposes and a specific set of readers" (1985: 10). The rhetorical process is modelled as a chart with four levels (1985:11). The first level consists of objectives, which are exemplified by "detailing an experiment" and

"presenting new theory". The second level comprises general functions that develop the objectives, and include, *eg* "reporting past research" or "stating the problem". The third level is one of specific functions that develop the general ones, and it covers "definition" and "classification", among other acts.

For Swales: "A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some communicative purposes ... Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived on comparable rhetorical action" (1990: 58). Actually, this author has two kinds of purposes in mind. As they are not explicitly distinguished, it might be convenient to call them 'cognitive' and 'social'. The first, which are somewhat akin to Trimble's objectives, are what the following remarks are about:

> The [oral] presentation may report on work in progress or offer a preliminary trial of new ideas.
>
> (Swales 1990: 178)

> ...in certain genres ... the writer has the right to withdraw from the contract to consider the reader because of an overriding imperative to be 'true' to the complexity of subject matter or to the subtlety of thought and imagination...
>
> (Swales 1990: 63)

What I am calling social objectives can roughly be conceived as relating to the addressor's identity and position in a research community. A conceptualization of this sort is behind the following statements:

> The first significant point to emerge is that the public story as told in the drafts is a reversed, rather than revised, version of what actually took place within the confines of the laboratory.
>
> (Swales 1990: 118)

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... we are far away from a world in which power, allegiance and self-esteem play no part, however much they may seem absent from the frigid surface of [research articles] discourse.

(Swales 1990: 125)

Swales's concern for relating purposes and acts can be seen in his main model, which is called "Create a Research Space (CARS)" and, like Trimble's process chart, is hierarchically organized. Its version for article introductions consists of moves like "establishing a territory" and "establishing a niche", and these are constituted by steps like "making topic generalization" and "counter-claiming" (Swales 1990: 141).

Studies stemming from the Washington Program, developing in the genre analysis school or having a combined origin in both traditions have carefully yielded some interesting results on several topics[1]. However, in Trimble 1985 there is no observation on the relationships between purpose and particular functions, one of the tradition's supposedly central concerns. In Swales 1990 there is little on the relationships between social purposes and steps, most of it contained in the CARS model, and nothing on the relationships between cognitive purposes and steps. In fact, after the quoted declarations, the word "purpose" disappears from both texts, and is not found in their indexes.

I think the problem is not lack of awareness about purposes. Swales, in particular, distinguishes genres like abstracts, theses, monographs, and presentations, implicitly but clearly, on the basis of cognitive purpose, as the fragment on presentations quoted above shows. The problem is, very probably, the link between purpose and functions or steps. And this, in turn, is almost surely the consequence of unclear notions about functions and steps as dissertation acts.

Trimble's and Swales's notions are vague and, inadvertently, mix acts with elements of propositions, as well as features of larger and more complex discourse units. Trimble, for example, has "physical description" and "visual-verbal relationships" alongside "instructions" and "classification" (1985: 11), whereas Swales has "making topic generalization" together with "reviewing items of previous research" (1990: 140).

The problem is revealed in the conspicuous lack of explicit allusions to acts. This is probably a conscious decision, given that there is an obvious influence of speech act theory and speech act theory based discourse analysis in both cases, manifest among other traces[2] in the use of terms like 'presupposition' (Trimble) and oppositions like 'cohesion and coherence' (Swales). It is difficult to hypothesize why 'act' has been avoided, but the reason could well be a distrust of speech act coding.

The distrust of specialized discourse coding would be understandable. As I will show below, when it was used extensively it was at least as unreliable as coding of classroom discourse has been. And scholars in the grammatico-rhetorical and the genre traditions might have wished to avoid the problems un-reliabitity implies. There is some (negative) evidence for this, in Trimble's and Swales's texts[3], in that they present no analysis of all the functions or steps in a discourse fragment, nor give any indication as to how this could be carried out.

But the rationality of the distrust does not remove the limitation. Not being able to identify all the acts in a discourse implies not being able to verify, falsify, or even conceive, findings like the following[4]:

> Sequences of descriptive observation, descriptive generalization and definition are far more frequent in introductory mechanics texts than in texts for intermediate students. This is consistent with their aims. The former are designed to present the basic principles of physics and establish a link between them and the world. The latter have the objective of developing sophisticated tools and techniques.

This is the type of conclusions which would be expected from investigations based on the assumption that purpose and rhetorical action are related. But this type of conclusions requires that categories like "descriptive observation" or "definition" have a clear meaning, and neither the grammatico-rhetorical nor the genre schools can provide such a meaning. Descriptive observation and definition are speech acts, and both schools have avoided the notion of speech act.

The point is that if we are interested in the relationship between discourse organization and discourse purpose (or any other aspect of discourse) we will at some moment have to define the basic units that are organized.

Act definitions: the missing link

What happened between the earlier developments and the later work in specialized language research? For a time, speech acts became the centre of attention.

In 1975, a very influential article by Henry Widdowson put in doubt the usefulness of quantitative information on the occurrence of elements of the language system. (He still questions[5] the claims of analyses supposedly based only on quantitative data, which have increased again in recent years.) He proposed that the aim of research about technical and scientific English was the qualitative explanation of how the linguistic elements are used in discourse (Widdowson 1975: 4). One of his main points was that "the description of discourse and the interpretative strategies of language users ... should not be distinct" (Widdowson 1975: 9).

For many the proposal meant research ought to concentrate on two problems I would, *a posteriori* and using my terminology, formulate as follows: 1) the relationships between dissertation acts and sentences (or aspects of sentences); and 2) the combination of acts in discourse. This was due mainly to the impact of a previous article by the same author which states that:

> There seems no reason why (scientific varieties of English) should not, in course of time, be represented as types of discourse consisting of certain   combinations of such acts as definition, classification, generalization, qualification, and so on.
>
> (Widdowson 1973: 98)

The potential for studies focusing on acts seemed to be enormous. There was also much hope that in a relatively short period of time they would yield important descriptions of academic English. This hope seemed to be well founded, because results started to appear, specially in connection to question 1, even if not always by applied linguists who, like Widdowson, wished to relate their views directly to speech act theory. For example, Selinker and Trimble (1976) showed that in scientific reports the past and the present tenses tended to be used to express, respectively, particular observations and generalizations.

As a consequence of the insight an awareness of acts provided, very few applied linguists today would consider that the frequency distribution of any linguistic element constitutes relevant information on its own; to be significant it must be accompanied by a characterization of the element's use, as is shown, *eg* in studies by Pettinari (1983) or Salager (1986). Nevertheless, the actual study of acts in academic discourse did not progress. I am covinced that the cause was a lack of adequate definitions for the acts.

To see the problem, let us consider two examples of definitions used in the mid-seventies:

> SPECIFIC. Gives more specific information about something that was stated in a general way.
> EXPLANATION. Previously stated information is explained in a more abstract manner (for example: relating information to a general principle) or more concrete manner.

> (Meyer 1975; quoted by Widdowson
> and Urquhart 1976: 25)

When working with categories of this sort, it is possible for a researcher to achieve a high degree of consistency, say between two codings of the same text, provided that they are done within a short period of time. But if the system is used again after a few months the basis for the agreement is forgotten. I have experienced this in my own research and I have wit nessed it in the work of others.

What happens is that, at a certain point, one may distinguish clearly items that are 'more specific' from items that are 'more concrete'; but if that is done only on an intuitive basis, then, at another point, the classifications could easily be reversed. Thus, an utterance which may have been identified as the realization of SPECIFIC might later be coded as EXPLANATION.

The lack of precision is largely a consequence of the way categories were often set up: starting with a list of category names taken from what might be called 'everyday academic metalanguage', and then providing lexicographic definitions for them. As is generally the case with everyday words, those terms stand for amorphous configurations of elements. Furthermore, they are used on different occasions to refer to different sub-configurations of elements. That is,

they are not only amorphous, but variable as well. The result is, naturally, a 'system' that does not meet the requirements of exhaustiveness and mutual exclusiveness one would demand from the sort of classification it is supposed to be.

The difficulties that arise when one starts with names and then provides definitions of categories is also noted in Mitchell 1980, a systematization of requests and offers. The author says there is no reason to suppose that a set of lexemes from English, or any other language, has divided the semantic field of speech acts in the most convenient way for applied linguists. To start with, sometimes the performative and the reporting verbs do not even come in corresponding pairs.

To put it briefly, the analyst who uses everyday terms as categories and does not define them technically is at the mercy of their everyday variability. What we want is a set of features which can be varied systematically, so that each variation gives us the definition of a different category, and so that, therefore, we obtain a proper classification system.

I believe that to look for such features it is a good strategy to consider in more depth attempts to define one discourse operation which has been regarded as an act and which has received great attention: definition. This will be done in relation to a proposal which, I think, has considerable explanatory power.

Defining definitions

Between 1977 and 1988, I carried out several studies on definitions, some of which are published (*eg* Castaños 1982). In this period of time, I had the fortune of discussing the theme with four applied linguists who have contributed to its understanding, Larry Selinker, Louis Trimble, Henry Widdowson and John Swales, as well as with many teachers, students and colleagues. I have summarized what I learnt as follows:

What academic writers usually regard as definitions are utterances which combine elements I and II in the following list with one or more of the remaining elements.

I. The force of the utterance is that of assertion (as opposed to suspended assertion, mitigated assertion or hypothetical assertion).

II. An equative predication is associated with two generic referential expressions.

III. The assertion has an axiomatic character.

IV. With respect to information structure, the expression that contains the term being defined is given and the expression equated with it is new.

V. By means of paralinguistic features, the utterance identifies the term being defined as a new technical term and, by syntactic procedures, gives special emphasis to the defining expression.

To make I and II clear, some negative and positive examples can be contrasted. That a definition is an assertion means (1), (2) and (3) cannot be definitions, because their forces are those of hypothetical assertion, suspended assertion and mitigated assertion, respectively.

(1) Let $x = a^2$.

(2) Is z the probability?

(3) It seems a nova is a star 100 times as luminous as the sun.

On the contrary, (4) and (5) are assertions and, therefore, could, in the right contexts, be definitions.

(4) 1 cm = 1/10 m.

(5) A planet is an opaque celestial body.

These five examples exhibit equative predications, whereas in (6) we have a comparative one. Therefore, it cannot be a definition.

(6) $z > r$.

Neither can (7). Its references are particular, as opposed to generic.

(7) Jupiter is the largest planet in the solar system.

Elements III to V require less clarification. Axiomatic definitions are properly exemplified by typical mathematical definitions, and it is such kind of definitions that people have in mind when they express the idea of something being true by definition.

'Given' and 'new' are, as is well known, Halliday's terms (see, *eg* Halliday 1970). They imply analyzing the sentence in use in two parts: what is being talked about and what is being said of it. The terms describe the two parts with respect to the information that has been expressed or made present by the previous utterances, and are self explanatory. Just one point needs to be added. In English, and probably in many other languages, the given information commonly appears first in the sentence and the new information appears last.

The paralinguistic means used to distinguish the term being defined in a written definition are inverted commas, underlining or contrastive typography. Syntactic emphasis is achieved by changing the basic sentential order of subject, verb, and object; this causes what is being talked about to be dissociated from the given information in unexpected, striking ways.

At this point, a remark must be made. The definition of definitions proposed (involving elements I to V) is the result of attempts to determine basic discourse units. However, it is possible to find larger units where the definition seems to be falsified. There are, for example, many defining paragraphs or sections (sometimes explicitly identified as definitions) where forces different from that of assertion, or predications different from the equative one, are involved. Nevertheless, such paragraphs always contain a clearly identifiable definition, in the strict sense of my definition. This is, for instance, what we have in the following extract:

If we start with a certain number a, an integer, and we count successively one unit b times, the number we arrive at we call $a + b$, and that defines addition of integers.

(Feynman 1966: 22-1)

This means the analyst must take a methodological decision: it can be considered that the whole extract is a definition or that it is some part(s) of it which can be identified as definition(s). I would opt for the second choice[6], because it is more precise and rigorous; in fact, I would say that above we have two definitions: one of $a + b$, the phrase between commas, and one of addition of integers, the last five words. It is definitions in this sense which conform to the model presented above.

Rationale

The arguments I have in favour of the definition of definitions in the previous section are varied. Firstly, it is more general than the classical definition in terms of *genus et differentia*. Secondly, it allows us to understand why different and apparently contradictory, definitions of definitions have been put forth by applied linguists. Thirdly, it provides a basis to clarify important controversial issues about definitions, such as the distinction between nominal and real definitions. These arguments will be considered in more detail in the following sections.

Besides those reasons, I have empirical evidence, although it is of a peculiar nature. I have checked the corpora of my previous studies, as well as the definitions quoted by other applied linguists, and have not found any counter-examples to the definition. Furthermore, using my intuitions, I have tried to write counter-examples myself and have found it impossible.

Beyond the classical account

In philosophy and lexicography, a definition of something used to be considered as a statement of the class it belongs in, its *genus*, and the characteristics that distinguish it from other members, its *differentia* (see Robinson 1950). This view gave rise to a number of issues, most of them associated with the prescription of

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rules for defining well. Among these we have, for example, the question of whether things should be defined in terms of their functions or should only be defined in terms of their intrinsic properties.

In spite of such difficulties, the traditional view has been held to be essentially correct. And it is...for a number of definitions, namely those which, as (5), involve classifying what is being defined under a *genus*. In modern semantic nomenclature, these definitions establish a hyponym-superordinate sense relation (for a discussion of sense relations, see Lyons 1977: 271-317).

The problem is that in many definitions there is no hyponym-superordinate relation. In a large number of cases we have other paradigmatic sense relations. Thus, in (4) we have a part-whole relation. This definition cannot be accounted for in traditional terms. Another sort of definitions is further apart from the classical account, because the sense relations involved are not even paradigmatic, but syntagmatic (see Lyons 1977: 240 and 261, for an exposition of these concepts). This is the sort of definitions in which the result of a process is referred to, as in Feynman's definition of $a + b$ quoted above.

Now, what I want to point out is that in classical definitions the *genus et differentia* phrase is a generic referential expression, which is linked to the term being defined by an equative predication. In definitions of the sorts mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the expressions indicating the part-whole relation or referring to the result of a process, are also generic, and they are, too, linked to the terms defined by equative predications. In other words, the classical account is valid for a particular class of definitions whereas the definition of definitions I am proposing is general.

Critique of applied linguistics conceptions

The classical approach has been reflected in applied linguistics conceptions of definitions at least since the seventies' ESP boom, perhaps due to indirect connections with philosophical or lexicographic literature. Thus, in the first book of the *English in Focus* series (Allen, J.P.B. and Widdowson, H.G. 1977) a definition is treated as a "communicative function" whose realization has the following structure: An *X* is a *Y* which *Z*.

The idea that a definition is a statement of *genus et differentia* is more explicitly formulated by Selinker, Todd and Trimble, in points 2 and 3 of the paragraph below.

> The core generalization of a paragraph whose purpose is to define is most commonly in the form of an explicitly stated definition. If this definition is a "formal" definition then it provides the reader with three kinds of important information: (1) the term naming the concept being defined; (2) the class (or set) of which the term is a member; and (3) selected essential characterizing information about the differences which distinguish the concept being defined from all other concepts which are members of the same class; that is, the statement of differences gives one or more the distinguishing characteristics of the particular concept being defined.

> (Selinker et al 1976: 284)

At the time, I held a view which was, in this respect, similar. Consider, *eg*, **B** and **C** in the set of characteristics I had found in definitions:

> **A.** The entity being defined is considered for the first time in the sense defined.
> **B.** A definition associates the entity being defined with a set of distinctive characteristics.
> **C.** A definition classifies the entity being defined.
> **D.** A definition establishes the category of the object being defined.
> **E.** The set of associations entity-characteristic can be considered as a set of axioms.

> (Castaños 1977: 91)

Of course, the criticism of the classical account is extensive to these conceptions, or the aspects of these conceptions that reflect it. They exclude many definitions, such as those of units of measurement.

Besides criticizing the classical orientation which the three conceptions have in common, it is possible to show the particular difficulties that can arise as a consequence of the way each one has been formulated. For instance, it can be seen that if the English in Focus series conception is not handled carefully, it can lead to a false association of form and function, one that can be contradicted by

(5). However, I think at this point it is more useful to consider how ideas that fall outside the classical paradigm have been taken.

The central idea I presented earlier is that utterances which combine I and II, without also having at least one of the other elements, would not normally be considered definitions. This is the case, for example, with many mathematical equations.

Now, the fact that, if I and II obtain, the presence of III or IV or V would make an utterance count as a definition has made some researchers think that III or IV or V are necessary characteristics of all definitions. This is, indeed, what I believed about III in 1977 (see E in the last quotation).

Sometimes it has been thought, mistakenly, that one of those three complementary elements is the defining characteristic of definitions. This is what is expressed in the following extract from a work by Widdowson, which is the original source of my IVth element.

> ... the point about a definition, of course, is that the term to be defined is given and the expression which does the defining is new. If the proposition is re-organized so that this given-new arrangement is reversed, then it can no longer function as a definition: we are no longer explaining a term already given, we are introducing a term to identify or name something already known. In other words, the rearrangement alters the force of the proposition from definition to identification, or naming.

> (Widdowson 1978: 41)

That what Widdowson says here is not the case, is shown by the last sentence in the following paragraph, where the term being defined is new.

> DEFINITION 1.5. Two matrices A and B can be multiplied together in the order AB if and only if the number of columns in the first equals the number of rows in the second. The matrices are then said to be conformable for the product AB.

> (Noble 1969: 5)

This allows us to understand certain apparent contradictions among the various conceptions. As I have mentioned elsewhere (Castaños 1982: 9), in the paragraph by Widdowson quoted above, defining and naming are opposites, whereas in the paragraph by Selinker *et al* quoted earlier, defining includes naming.

Besides the obvious problem of 'naming' not being properly defined, I think Widdowson and Selinker *et al* had in mind different objects when they made their observations about definitions. The fact is that there are cases where Widdowson's opposition holds. If a definition is not axiomatic in character and the term being defined is not distinguished paralinguistically, then it has to be given. On the other hand, what Selinker *et al* say is also partially true. If either a certain definition is axiomatic or the term defined by it is paralinguistically salient, there is a sense in which the term is actually being introduced, and need not be new in Halliday's terms; in this case, there is, again, a sense in which the term defined names the other half of the definition.

A similar contradiction will be found between Widdowson's idea that a definition explains and my idea that it establishes the meaning of the term defined (characteristics A, C, and E). The clarification again depends on showing that neither his nor my conception are correct for all definitions, but each one is valid for a different set. Therefore, this clarification needs not be developed in detail.

Then, the definition of definitions proposed (elements I to V) is more general than the classical account and it allows us to assess the different conceptions of definitions in applied linguistics. It also lets us solve one important controversial issue, to which we now turn.

Real and nominal definitions

This issue is related to the distinction between real and nominal definitions (see, *eg* Alexander 1963: 89-90). According to this, real definitions provide information about the world, whereas nominal definitions provide the meaning of words. This has sometimes been accepted (Widdowson 1973: 286-288), but it can also be questioned (Widdowson 1977: 61).

From element II, it can be seen that the problem is all definitions are nominal and some (or many) are real, *ie* the distinction is not an opposition. An equative predication is, as it were, a meta-statement of co-referentiality; hence, any definition is nominal. Whether or not it is also real, depends on what the referential expressions refer to and on whether or not one of them contains empirical information.

Definition: a complex unit

The rigour and explanatory power that are achieved with the definition of definitions proposed invite us to reflect upon its elements (I to V). One thing to note is that I and II stand apart from III, IV and V in more than one way. In the first place, they are the only common elements to all definitions. In the second place they are about matters which belong in different areas.

III is related to the character of the propositional content of the definition, in relation to the rest of the discourse. IV has to do with the word order in the sentence used to express the proposition. V is, in part, related as well to properties of the sentence and, in part, to paralinguistic properties of the utterance which, strictly speaking, do not belong in the sentence.

Now, I and II do not refer to properties of sentences or properties of propositions. Nor are they about paralinguistic features. Rather, they have to do with what has been identified in the past as the speaker's intentions: her commitment to statements and what she *does* when she expresses a proposition. According to Searle (1969:72), she refers and she predicates. In other words, I and II have to do with speech acts, in the purest sense of terms.

What this means is that a definition is not a speech act, properly, but a more complex unit. It does contain a speech act, an asserted equation of generic references; but it also has propositional, sentential and paralinguistic properties.

Not distinguishing between acts and complex units is probably one of the main sources of inadequate coding systems. In the best case it results in comparing incomparable entities. In the worst, it can cause inconsistent identifications; due to the lack of awareness, at one point the sentential properties can be the

deciding factor and at another the propositional properties can weigh more in the analyst's mind. There is another source of problems which can be signalled from the point where the exposition has taken us.

Acts and act relations

What has been said indicates it is plausible to hypothesize that the defining features of dissertation acts could be forces of assertion, types of reference and types of predication. Perhaps the most important consequence of adopting this view would be the elimination of categories such as 'exemplification' and 'conclusion' from the list of dissertation acts. To see what this means let us consider the following (obviously fabricated) sequences:

Seq. a)   (1) All men are mortal.
          (2) Socrates is a man.
          (3) Therefore, Socrates is mortal.
Seq. b)   (1) All men are mortal.
          (3') *Eg* Socrates is mortal.

The act category that we would use to code (1) in both sequences would be the one defined as a combination of assertion, general reference, and attributive predication. Supposing we called this 'generalization', its definition could be abbreviated as:

Generalization: **A; Att (gen).**

Here, **A** stands for 'assertion'; **Att** stands for 'attributive predication'; and **gen** stands for 'general reference'.

Similarly, (3) would belong in a category, which we could call 'observation', that would be defined as:

Observation: **A; Att (part),** where **part** stands for 'particular reference'.

Now, (3') would also be coded as an observation, because, just as in (3), the force is that of assertion, the reference is particular and the predication is attributive. In other words, we would not distinguish (3') from (3).

But, (3') and (3) are evidently different, and most available taxonomies can distinguish them, for example, as 'conclusion' and 'exemplification', even if these are ill-defined (see *eg* Williams 1973). However, as in such schemes these categories are co-hyponyms of 'observation', this cannot be employed if one of the other two is used, unless the minimum requirements of rigour referred to in the previous chapter are ignored, which is unacceptable.

In short, approaching the coding the way I suggested above would allow us to capture what (3) and (3') have in common, but not their difference, while available taxonomies would allow us to register them as different but not as having something in common. What emerges then is that there seem to be two things in (3) to be coded: the observation and the conclusion. It is also clear that the two cannot be co-hyponyms. But, if this is so, then a conclusion is not an act. What is it then?

Of course, the answer has to be found by looking into the differences between our examples. What is captured in a coding using the traditional taxonomies, and is missed by categories defined the proposed way, is the presence or absence of (2), as well as the connectors *'eg'* and 'therefore'. Clearly, the difference is what is between (1) and (3) or (3'). On these grounds, it seems to me that 'exemplification' and 'conclusion' are relations between acts.

Hence, a proper system to analyse dissertation would require a distinction between acts and act relations. Let me further illustrate the need by commenting on this authentic extract of academic discourse:

> This leads us to a new clash between classical mechanics and the results of experiment. There must certainly be some internal motion in an atom to account for its spectrum, but the internal degrees of freedom, for some classically inexplicable reasons do not contribute to the specific heat.

(Dirac 1930: 2)

The string between the first capital letter and the first full stop is an assertion — some would wish to say a meta-assertion — about three particulars: this, us, and the new clash. There is here a transitive predication, 'lead', linking the three corresponding referential expressions. It is a combination different from the ones we have considered so far; perhaps we could, provisionally, call it 'narrative description'.

There is also a clear relation between the last referential expression in this utterance, "a new clash between classical mechanics and the results of experiment", and the second utterance. It could even be said that it is as if membership to the class of clashes were predicated of the idea contained in the string — that degrees of freedom do not contribute to specific heat.

Certainly, we want to record both: the description and the relation it has, via one of its expressions, with the next string. This is precisely what the conceptual separation of act and act relations allows us to do. In fact, it would let us record other relations, besides the one already considered. Let us note one of them, to see why this is important. The use of the adjective 'new' presupposes the existence of other clashes. Indeed, two paragraphs above, we find:

> The necessity for a departure from classical mechanics is clearly shown by experimental results. In the first place...

> (Dirac 1930: 1)

There is an important relation between the acts in the two extracts. It is reflected and facilitated by: a) the repetition of the expression "classical mechanics"; b) the use of the synonymous phrases "experimental results" and "results of experiment", and c) the selection of the semantically linked pairs of words 'departure' and 'clash' and 'first' and 'new'. The point of this relation is to establish that the non-contribution of degrees of freedom to specific heat is one in a series of facts that do not go along with classical mechanics.

What this shows is that one act can enter into relations with several other acts. Clearly, this can cause many of the consistency problems I referred to in the second section of this chapter. If a coding scheme which includes acts and relations in the same list is used, one researcher might code the act (say, an observa-

tion), while another one might code one of its relations (an exemplification, let us suppose) and still another one a different relation (such as a reformulation).

At this point it is convenient to explore the consequences the suggested procedure to define dissertation acts would have.

Dissertation as illocution?

The concept of speech acts has been inherited from philosophy, and with it the idea that dissertation acts (referred to with other names) are a kind or kinds of illocutionary acts. In agreement with this view, some authors have stated that dissertation acts ought to be defined in terms of what philosophers call 'felicity conditions', "the things which are necessary for (their) smooth or 'happy' functioning" (Austin 1962: 14). In other words, a given act ought to be defined in terms of the conditions necessary for an utterance to count as such (the act).

This is, for example, the position Widdowson adopts after presenting some quotations on definitions, general statements and generalizations taken from an introduction to the logic of science by Alexander (1963):

> What we have here are characterizations of certain illocutionary acts of scientific discourse, which would be recast in the more precise form of specific conditions in the manner of Searle's definition of the act of promising (Searle 1969).

> (Widdowson 1977: 60-61)

To illustrate an attempt in this direction, it is useful to first recall that initially the paradigm was in fact not taken directly from philosophical works, but rather, indirectly, from the sociolinguistic work of William Labov. The classical example was his account of the act of ordering (Labov 1970). According to it, an utterance will be taken as an order if : a) the speaker, S, believes 1 to 4, which are called 'preconditions'; b) the utterance is about one (any) of the preconditions; and c) H, the hearer, knows by virtue of the situation that the other preconditions obtain.

1. Some action X should be done for some purpose.

2. H has the obligation to do X.

3. H has the ability to do X.

4. S has the right to ask H to do X.

We can now note that the five characteristics (A to E) in my 1977 account of definitions quoted in the *Critique of applied linguistics conceptions* section seem to relate to realizations of definitions in the same way that Labov's preconditions relate to realizations of orders. For instance, if a form clearly signals that a new category is being established by an utterance, and, from the context, the reader knows that the other characteristics are applicable, then he reads the utterance as a definition.

For the above reason, I called A to E 'preconditions' of definition (Castaños 1977: 92). But, is this sort of analogy enough to take dissertation acts as illocutionary acts? My answer now is no. It seems to me that Labov's account is, roughly speaking, a description of social rules of conduct for speakers holding certain social relations. And there is nothing resembling social relations or rules of conduct in any of the accounts of definitions I have referred to. One wonders, then, what it means to consider definitions as illocutionary acts (*eg* as in Searle 1976). They do not seem to have anything in common to warrant such classification.

To put the matter in general terms, let us take Austin's felicity conditions for an illocutionary act, which is the framework, with slight modifications, for Searle's specifications of particular kinds of acts:

(A.1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure including the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,

(A.2) the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.

(B.1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and

(B.2) completely.

(Γ.1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further

(Γ.2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently.

(Austin 1962: 14-15)

Now, as far as I know, in definitions of definition, or generalization, or any other dissertation act, no researcher has ever specified who is the appropriate person to perform the act, nor how are the participants expected to conduct themselves once it has been performed. It is not unreasonable, then, to suggest that dissertation and illocutionary acts are of fundamentally different natures. This suggestion, of course, would require a stronger and more detailed argumentation to warrant being a satisfactory conclusion. I believe the effort that would be involved is justifiable. It would provide a solid foundation upon which to solve the problem of defining dissertation acts systematically and it would improve our understanding of argumentation and exposition.

Conclusion

The notion of speech act, which gave momentum to ESP research and teaching, has disappeared from ESP research. This chapter has shown why. The types of definitions we had for acts could not provide the requirements a proper coding system must satisfy. They were not good enough to relate data to categories systematically; and they were neither mutually exclusive nor comprehensive.

But the chapter has also shown that, if ESP research will pursue objectives involving the understanding of academic discourse structures, the notion of dissertation acts is unavoidable. Furthermore, on the basis of a detailed discussion of one particular act, the source of theoretical inadequacy in analytic frameworks for acts was identified: confusing dissertation acts with illocutionary acts.

Hence, the chapter completes Part I of this dissertation. It confirms that it is justifiable to attempt distinguishing dissertation and illocutionary acts at a foundational level.

The main purpose of Part II is, precisely, to establish the distinction between the two acts on the same grounds that the distinction between illocutionary act and sentence was originally established. It will also make a second distinction which was pointed to here, that between acts and relations.

Once the foundations are laid, Part III will concentrate on the systematic definition of acts. In particular, Chapter 9 will retake this chapter's conclusion that dissertation acts can be defined in terms of forces of assertion, types of reference and types of predication.

Chapter 3 notes

1. An example of contributions from the rhetorico-grammatical and the genre analysis traditions is the explanation that tense use is not necessarily governed by time reference, but often indicates degree of generality (Selinker and Trimble 1976). One can also mention the finding that students have particular difficulties with sub-technical vocabulary, "common words that occur with special meanings in scientific and technical fields" (Trimble 1985: 129). A third result is that the methods section of a research articles is less cohesive, and depends more on "inferential bridging" than the introduction or discussion sections (Weissberg 1984; discussed in Swales 1990: 168).

2. Other traces of speech act theory in rhetorico-grammatical studies and genre analyses are the use of phrases like "rhetorical action" and references to the work of authors like Widdowson.

3. It could be added that, in separate personal communications, Selinker and Swales have expressed strong doubts about the soundness and usefulness of speech act theory itself.

4. The mechanics texts comparison presented in the body of this chapter is similar to one reported in Castaños 1978. The essential difference is that the new formulation is more precise, and results from re-analysing the same data using definitions provided in chapter 9. The comparison is presented as open to verification because, although the corpus consisted of complete chapters, and all their utterances were act coded for the analysis, only two books were examined.

5. In the 1993 Research Students Seminar at the ESOL Department of the University of London Institute of Education, H.G. Widdowson argued that data driven research is impossible, among other reasons, because selection of sample corpora imply previous assignment of texts to types. He also formulated a warning against the direct application of frequency studies to syllabus design. The pedagogical usefulness of an item is a complex product of various factors which may not be derivable from its frequency, such as coverage, learning difficulty and availability. He has also stated views akin to these in writing (1993).

6. Of course, a well developed coding system should contain sufficient levels to register both the elementary acts of definition and the medium size units where such acts are central. In order to mark the distinction, these could be called 'defining block', in a system neutral about global structure, or 'defining move', in a system developed after a hierarchical model, such as Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975).

PART II

Chapter 4

THE BASIC CATEGORIES OF DISCOURSE

In the previous three chapters, it has been shown that it is justifiable — I would even say necessary — to examine in depth the basic units of discourse analysis. In particular, it is important to see whether or not what I have called the dissertation act is one of such units, as I propose.

It is the purpose of chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7, which constitute the second part of this Ph.D. thesis, to present the arguments that substantiate my claim. In this chapter (4), the essence of such arguments will be introduced, and they will be developed in the other three.

As the analysis will have to be rather detailed at certain points, there is a danger that it could be seen as taking a life of its own. Therefore, at the end of each chapter, there will be one or two sections that place the issues dealt with in a wider theoretical perspective or relate them to matters of more direct concern to the applied linguist or the language teacher. Although some of the contents here will be mere suggestions for further research or pedagogical developments, I hope they will help to show the connections between the analysis and the concerns represented in the previous chapters.

Approaches

As was stated in Chapter 1, discourse analysis has used three units: the sentence, the proposition and the illocutionary act. There are three approaches to distinguish them. There is the approach which Strawson followed in order to distinguish the sentence from the proposition, in 1950. There is the approach followed by Austin to establish the concept of illocutionary act, at the end of the 50's. And there is, besides these two approaches from analytic philosophy, the approach

which Widdowson followed to introduce the distinction between sentence and illocutionary act in applied linguistics, in the early 70's.

The first approach, Strawson's, is essentially the same approach which Searle adopted in the 60's, when he combined and reformulated Strawson's and Austin's distinctions. But he made some variations and introduced some terminology. For this reason it might be convenient to call this approach 'the Strawson-Searle approach'.

As has been said in the previous chapters, it seems to me that a fourth unit is needed: the 'dissertation act'. I believe one must distinguish between illocution and dissertation. My point is that dissertation acts are not subtypes of illocutionary acts, as has been considered in philosophy and applied linguistics. Rather, they constitute a category at the same hierarchical level.

Let us consider the proposal from the point of view of the three approaches mentioned previously, the Strawson-Searle approach, Austin's approach, and Widdowson's approach.

Strawson and Searle

As a starting point, let us remember the purpose Strawson (1950) had when he distinguished between sentence and what is now often called proposition. His purpose was to clarify certain issues in the discussion of one of the central themes in the philosophy of language: the relations between meaning and truth. More specifically, Strawson wanted to make clear, and criticize, certain points in Bertrand Russell's treatment of sentences such as:

(1) The king of France is wise.

Russell had proposed that a sentence that makes sense was one that had a truth value, that was either true or false. Given that we understand (1), it makes sense, and therefore, it has to be true or false. But, how can it be true or false, if it refers to a non-existent entity (the king of France)?

This reasoning took Russell, through a somewhat complex but very interesting route, to some rather implausible conclusions. It is not necessary to consider his approach in detail, because what Strawson did was to question Russell's first assumption, namely the direct association of meaning with truth and falsity.

Strawson showed that we cannot say that the sentence, as such, is true or false. It does not make sense, because what is true or false is the proposition that is being expressed with the sentence (Strawson 1950: 7). The sentence does not refer to anything. If a speaker uses the sentence at a given moment of History, she will be referring to a certain person; but if another speaker uses the same sentence at a different time, he will be referring to another person. Hence, different propositions will be expressed on each occasion; and one might be true while the other might be false.

For Strawson, the meaning of a sentence is what allows us to express with it a number of propositions. The meaning of the sentence is not one of these propositions (Strawson 1950: 12). Furthermore, which proposition is being expressed on a given occasion depends on the moment and the context in which the sentence is used.

Then, with the same sentence, different propositions can be expressed. The opposite is also true: the same proposition can be expressed with different sentences. For example, it is possible to say, in the XVIII century:

(2) The king of France is hated.

The same proposition can be expressed with:

(3) Louis XVI is hated.

Searle describes this by saying that the sentence and the proposition have distinct identity criteria (Searle 1969: 24). To say that on two occasions the same sentence is used, we consider the selection and the order of words. To say that the same proposition is being expressed we consider what is being referred to and what is being said of it.

Now, the most important thing about Searle's work is that it shows that illocutionary acts have different criteria from both sentences and propositions. Their criteria have to do with the social relations between speaker and hearer and with the speaker's intentions.

What Searle does is to present pairs of situations with some variation; for example, in one case we may have:

(4) I promise to come tomorrow.

And in the other:

(5) I promise not to come tomorrow.

It is shown here that the identity of the illocutionary act, a promise, can be kept when the proposition is varied — from one where "to come" is predicated to another where the negation, "not to come", is predicated —.

To show the opposite another pair can be presented. Let us consider (4) and (6):

(4) I promise to come tomorrow.

(6) I do not promise to come tomorrow.

Here, we have the same proposition with different illocutions.

One important innovation that Searle makes is to redefine the proposition as (simply as) the association of a subject and a predicate. The assertion of a proposition is, thus, distinguished from the proposition itself. Therefore, the question of the truth value of a proposition does not always arise. It does not arise with respect to every proposition, but only with respect to asserted propositions. That is to say, in the following examples, (7) and (8), we have the same proposition.

(7) The sky is blue today.

(8) Is the sky blue today?

But in (7) the proposition is asserted and in (8) it is not. We have two different acts — for Searle, two different illocutionary acts —. These are an assertion and a question, or suspended assertion.

Now, what I wish to show is that the assertion and the question are not illocutionary acts, but dissertation acts. The divergence between the current doctrine and my proposal can be formulated as follows. For the current doctrine, in a simple case what the analyst will recognize in an utterance are: a sentence, a proposition and an act — let us say, an assertion or a request —. What I say is that, besides the sentence and the proposition, we can recognize both the assertion and the request — or the assertion and an offer —.

To show that four basic units are needed, rather than three, a situation can be presented, and then elements of it can be varied to create comparison pairs. This will be done systematically in the following chapter, in order to show that dissertation acts have different identity criteria from sentences, propositions, and illocutionary acts. For the present purposes, only illocution and dissertation will be considered, and this will be done in a brief way.

Let us suppose that somebody, let us call him Richard, has before him a form to fill in. Michael takes out a pen and says:

(9) You haven't got a pen.

By contrast, suppose that Michael does not use (9), but (10):

(10) Have you got a pen?

In both cases we have the same illocutionary act: the offering of a pen. But we have different dissertation acts: an assertion and a question.

To show the converse, let us suppose that Charles asks Dianne:

(11) How many kinds of poetry are there?

to which she responds:

(12) Three: one of sounds, one of images and one of ideas.

By contrast, let us suppose that Gustavo writes in an essay:

(13) How many kinds of poetry are there? Three: one of sounds, one of images, and one of ideas.

In both cases, Charles's and Gustavo's, we have the same dissertation act: a question. But we have different illocutionary acts. In the first case, we have a request for information, or opinion rather. In the second case, the question does not request an answer, but announces it. It is part of a unit that provides information, or opinion.

In sum, it is possible to have the same illocution with different dissertation acts and the same dissertation act with different illocutions. This places the proposal for a fourth unit of analysis within the Strawson-Searle approach. Let us now consider Austin's approach.

Austin

Austin's work, developed after Strawson's and before Searle's, is also related to the theme of truth and meaning. But it differs from Strawson's work in that its purpose is not to delimit the units about which truth value considerations are strictly pertinent, but rather to show that often such considerations are not relevant.

Austin would tell us, for example, that when a priest baptizes a child, he is not saying that he is baptizing the child; he is baptizing him. He is not stating that the child has a certain name; he is making the child's name to be so (Austin 1962: 6-7).

To order is not to describe the ordering. To insult is not to describe the insulting. To forgive is not to describe the forgiving. Ordering, insulting and forgiving are not descriptions of facts; they are the facts. It does not make sense, then,

to ask whether they are true or not, at least not in the sense that we ask whether a description is true or not.

Doing with words, through words. From here Austin arrives at the concept of 'speech act', which is initially a metaphor. It is a metaphor that conveys a simile, a comparison: speech is like action.

Action can be the consequence of action. And it can be the consequence of words, too. That is the point of comparison. But, how can it be? How can words be said to bring about action, given that they are of such a different nature?

How do the two interact? Austin, in a brilliant instant, gives us a glimpse of the answer. He tells us that words inaugurate consequential action (Austin 1962: 15).

To follow the route indicated by Austin, we have to realize that the term 'inaugurate' has two readings. Firstly, it means precedence, which implies that words and actions meet as equals in some terrain. Words initiate, they come first in a series of events where actions follow. Secondly, inauguration is the ritual whereby actions are recognized and legitimated, whereby their existence is accepted.

The two readings are complementary. Words allow actions into the terrain of discourse, and it is so that words can be like actions; because actions become like words.

We are in the domain of acceptability, of appropriateness. Words, speech acts, make actions proper or improper. To strike a person with the fist is no longer inappropriate after receiving an insult from that person. Until recently, sexual relations used to be socially unacceptable unless they had been previously validated by the utterance of 'I do' before the judge or registrar. We are, indeed, in the terrain of civil life.

What is important, then, is to realize that physical actions are interpretable as social acts, just as words are, and as social acts they are subject to being judged socially. Furthermore, it is essentially through words, through speech acts, that the conditions for the interpretation and judgement of action are created and

modified. (And of course, it is also through speech acts that interpretation and judgement conditions for speech acts themselves are established.)

Let us illustrate this view with an anecdote. A friend and I were at a party among people with whom we did not have much familiarity. What we were saying and doing was, therefore, rather conspicuous, or so we felt. It was easy to do something embarrassing. I was particularly vigilant of my voice volume and was carefully registering my behaviour. I was also paying special attention to my friend's conduct.

There was a pause in our conversation. My friend took the opportunity to move his hand towards his pocket, and he said: "I am going to have a cigarette." After a short while, when he was already smoking, I asked him why he had informed me of something which was evident, or if it was not at the moment, it would become so immediately. He puzzled and said: "I don't know; I suppose it wasn't really necessary." Then I replied: "But I think you would not have dared to take the cigarette out if you had not made the announcement." "It's true," he said; "it would have been awkward, specially in this situation."

What would have been awkward, what would have been inappropriate, is to have interrupted the conversation, to have upset the sequence of questions, answers and comments that we were developing. In the situation we were in, taking out the cigarette would have counted as an interruption, and to interrupt was not appropriate. Of course, in other situations the same action could have a different signification.

What my friend's announcement did was to change the situation. He did not change it very much. His action still counted as an interruption; but it was no longer inappropriate.

It is not difficult to find more examples of the use of words to make appropriate actions that will interrupt a communicative event: "please, sit down", "this call will cost you a fortune", "can you hold on a second?", "I'm sorry, it's getting late, will you excuse us?".

The theme of interruptions is very convenient to illustrate the thesis that illocutionary acts create and modify appropriateness conditions. With a rather

brief exposition, it has been possible to show how requests, invitations and so on operate in this area. But there is no reason to suppose that illocutionary acts operate in an essentially different way in other areas.

It is possible to imagine, for example, that the organization of labour depends on making some actions inappropriate and others appropriate, though of course it does not depend only on this. The same can be said of family life. And it is possible to imagine, without needing to make a detailed analysis, that this constant definition and redefinition of appropriateness conditions is effected by requests, invitations, orders, offers, and many illocutionary acts for which we often do not have a name.

Now, if the point of illocutionary acts is determined in a formulation like the previous one, it is not difficult to see that dissertation acts are not illocutionary acts. An assertion or, being more specific, a definition, a classification or generalization, does not inaugurate consequential action, which does not mean that it does not have any effect on action. It does, but not through the conditions of appropriateness or acceptability of actions. Dissertation acts have an effect on action because they modify our knowledge.

Let us consider an example to illustrate the distinction. Let there be two cases. On the one hand, there is a no-smoking sign in a railway car. On the other hand, there is a packet of cigarettes with the inscription: "smoking is dangerous". For lack of better terms, let us call these 'prohibition' and 'warning'.

Let us suppose that both, the sign and the inscription, are read and understood, but that each is ignored by its reader. The person who smokes in spite of the prohibition is performing a forbidden act. The person who smokes in spite of the warning is not performing a forbidden act. Some people might say that he is performing a stupid action, because of the consequences it can have — though the smoker might reply that obtaining pleasure is intelligent —.

The no-smoking sign establishes the prohibition, makes the act a forbidden one. The inscription "smoking is dangerous" does not make the action dangerous. This warning makes us aware of the danger. Its point is to create a certain knowledge, or at least make it present, if it already exists.

To summarize, following the Strawson-Searle approach, it is possible to show that dissertation acts and illocutionary acts have different identity criteria. Following Austin's approach, it is possible to show that dissertation acts do not inaugurate consequential action; rather, they modify knowledge. Let us now consider the matter following Widdowson's approach.

Widdowson

Widdowson's approach is rather more linguistic than the previous two, in so much as he discusses discourse analysis units with regard to their rules of combination. His concern arises from the realization that the capacity to compose grammatically correct sentences does not necessarily imply the ability to produce and understand discourse. A student may have reached a considerable degree of command of English grammar and yet not be able to participate successfully in a dialogue in English, or not be able to write a coherent paragraph in English.

Widdowson distinguishes two ways of organizing stretches of language. The first can be clearly observed in the following passage:

> However, despite this enthusiasm for education and interest in pansophy the proposal to establish a pansophical college fell to the ground although several locations for it were suggested. But the clouds of civil war rendered such plans abortive and Comenius only stayed in London for nine months. When he left he made promises to the Hartlib group that he would continue to work for pansophy and return at a more favourable time; he kept up a correspondence with his English friends for the rest of his life, though the opportunity for a return never came.

> (Sadler 1969: 9)

The string "return at a more favourable time" can be reconstructed into the full clause:

(14) he would return at a more favourable time.

This reconstruction is equivalent to the interpretation that the "incomplete" string would have in the context of Sadler's extract (though one should not, and

one need not, be committed to the idea that the reader does reconstruct the clause; the actual psychological mechanism of interpretation is outside the scope of this kind of deliberation). In other words, the reader knows that the tacit subject of "return" is "he", and she also knows that the tacit modality of the verb phrase is the same as that carried by "would" in the previous clause. The reader knows that this is so because "return", in the incomplete clause, and "continue", in the previous complete clause, are both the same kind of verb form (infinitive minus 'to').

The interpretation of the string "return at a more favourable time", by relation to its previous clause, is then mediated by morphosyntactic principles. Other parts of grammar also intervene in the co-interpretation of sections of the text. For example, "he" in the third sentence has to be related to "Comenius" in the second; and this is possible because "he" is the third person singular masculine pronoun.

"Plans" in the second sentence has to be related to "proposal" in the first sentence; this is possible because there is already a relationship between the two terms in the semantic system of English.

We are talking about co-interpretation links between parts of a text. These links are not grammatical, in the strict sense of the term. They go beyond the clause, and even beyond the sentence. And they involve purely textual factors, such as the order of clauses and sentences. But the links depend on grammatical factors, such as morphosyntactic rules and semantic relations. Following Widdowson (1973: 96), we can say of a text which exhibits this type of links that it is cohesive.

Cohesion has another two kinds of determinants, besides co-interpretation links based on grammatical information:

1) Simple repetition and the use of terms in the same semantic field; for example, the repetition of 'pansophy' and 'return', or the use of 'education' and 'college'. This gives the text a sort of semantic density which indicates that the various clauses are part of the same whole.

2) The order of topics in the various units of information. The first sentence ends with something being said about locations. What is said is that they were suggested. The first part of the second sentence says something about the suggestion ("such plans"), while the second part is about Comenius. If the order of this second sentence were reversed, leaving the first sentence intact, the text would be less cohesive:

> However, despite this enthusiasm for education and interest in pansophy the proposal to establish a pansophical college fell to the ground although several locations for it were suggested. Comenius only stayed in London for nine months; the clouds of civil war rendered (the) plans abortive.

<div align="right">

(Distortion of the previously
quoted passage by Sadler)

</div>

Cohesion has then to do with the factors intervening in the identity of sentences: selection and order of words. Widdowson's second way of organizing stretches of language can be seen in the following imaginary dialogue between spies:

> (A knocks at the door)
>
> B: Who's there?
>
> C: I have the third film.
>
> D: Come in.

No sentence in this dialogue depends for its interpretation on the other sentences. There is no repetition either, and the topics are not only not ordered according to the organization principles of English: they can be said to be unrelated. There is almost no cohesion — it could be argued that there is a link between "who" and "I", but nothing more —.

In spite of its lack of cohesion, we take the dialogue as having unity; we do not see it as a collection of isolated utterances with no relation to each other. There is what Widdowson (1973: 96) calls coherence. And coherence does not

obtain among sentences, as cohesion does. It is the link between the acts realized with the sentences.

The knocking action is interpreted as an act of request to initiate a communicative event, which in turn will have other purposes — perhaps a request to be allowed in —. As a reply to this act, B asks a question, which continues the process of establishing the conditions for further acts A and B might realize. Without actually answering B's question, A makes an assertion that defines two such conditions: A's identity and the point to be dealt with in subsequent events. Perhaps the identification is not very specific, perhaps all B knows after the assertion is that A is the person that brings the third film. But that is sufficient in the context for B to find it acceptable to invite A to come in — of course, B also finds it desirable —.

We, then, have a request and a reply, an initiation and a follow up, the follow up and an invitation. It is thus that the dialogue is coherent.

Cohesion and coherence: two levels of organization. Two levels with distinct units. Cohesion obtains among sentences, and coherence among illocutionary acts. A large number of the stretches of language that we produce everyday are coherent. Many of them are also cohesive.

The important thing about Widdowson's approach is that it justifies the distinction between sentence and illocutionary acts by showing that it is necessary in order to talk about different kinds, or different levels of organization. When Widdowson considers the proposition in the late seventies, he sees it sometimes in relation to cohesion, and sometimes in relation to coherence, without assigning it a specific level of organization.

It is possible to continue along the initial path and arrive at a more consistent theory. It is possible to adopt van Dijk's criterion for the organization of propositions. According to him, if the facts our discourse is about are connected in the world, then our discourse is coherent (van Dijk 1980: 28-29). To avoid confusion with Widdowson's coherence, let us call van Dijk's kind of discourse unity 'connection', a term which he himself uses sometimes.

It is necessary to consider van Dijk critically, because he tends to reduce all discourse unity to connection. It is necessary to realize that this is only one level of unity. It is clear, as he would say, that if we talk about sun-tan lotion, scuba diving and coconut beverages, then our discourse will have unity, because these are things and activities that we see when we go to the beach. And it will have unity even if it does not have much cohesion. But it is also true that we can have cohesion without connection. A most radical example is the following chain answer proving that a carriage is nothing:

> A carriage is a trap, a trap is a gin, gin is a spirit, a spirit is a ghost, and a ghost is nothing.

> (Recorded in Opie, P. and I. 1959: 85)

In this answer to a schoolchildren enigma there is unity only because of the organization of topics and the repetition of words. The topic of the first sentence is the carriage. In the comment to it we find a trap, which in turn becomes the topic of the next sentence, and so on.

Between the enigma (something like "Do you know why a carriage is nothing?") and the answer there is coherence; one illocutionary act is the reply to the other. And within the answer there is cohesion. These two kinds of unity obtain even when there is no connection. Of course, the cohesion and coherence we find here are sufficient only in schoolchildren language games. In another domain, such a discourse would be anomalous, and perhaps the game depends precisely on — it makes sense because of — the anomaly. But this does indicate the recognition by native speakers of cohesion and coherence as levels of unity distinct from connection.

It is then possible to make explicit the principle which Widdowson follows when he distinguishes between sentence and illocutionary act. It is possible to require that every different unit of discourse correspond to a different level of discourse unity. It is possible to have this requirement even if Widdowson himself does not assign a specific level of unity for propositions. It is possible to do this because we can take from van Dijk the corresponding principle of unity, which is distinct from the other two principles.

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Now, if my proposal is valid, if illocution and dissertation must be distinguished, it should be possible to recognize two different levels of discourse unity, corresponding to the two units. To show that this is so, let us consider a pair of examples that was used earlier. In the first case, we had a dialogue between Charles and Dianne:

(11) How many kinds of poetry are there?

(12) Three: one of sounds, one of images, and one of ideas.

In the second case, we had an extract from an essay by Gustavo:

(13) How many kinds of poetry are there? Three: one of sounds, one of images, and one of ideas.

In the first case, in the dialogue, there is a request, for information or opinion. This is followed by the act of providing such information or opinion, by an offer, for lack of a better term. The relation between request and offer is a relation of coherence.

In the second case, in Gustavo's essay, there is no coherence, because there is no request; the question is rhetorical. But this does not mean that it stops being a question. Nor does it mean it cannot have an answer. In fact, the next assertion is its answer. And the relation between question and assertion gives the essay unity, even though it does not have the coherence between request and offer which the dialogue has. This level of discourse unity between dissertation acts can be called 'consistency'.

Two points must be noted. The first is that while the principal level of unity in Gustavo's essay is consistency, and though it does not have the dialogue's coherence, it does not mean that coherence is totally absent from the essay. What happens is that there is no coherence between the elements of the essay, but the essay as a whole provides information (or opinion). And this providing takes place in certain illocutionary conditions.

The second point to note is that, though we have contrasted the consistency of Gustavo's essay with the coherence of the dialogue between Charles and Dianne, it should not be implied that the dialogue lacks consistency.

The dialogue is both, coherent and consistent, because there is unity both between illocutionary acts and between dissertation acts. There is a relation between the request and the offer, and at the same time, there is a relation between the question and the assertion.

Summary

In the current theories, three basic units for discourse analysis are considered: the sentence, the proposition, and the illocutionary act. I propose the inclusion of a fourth unit: the dissertation act.

I have placed my proposal within each of the three approaches that we have for the discussion of discourse units, approaches which I have summarized and partly criticized. I have said that it is possible to show that dissertation acts and illocutionary acts have different identity criteria. I have also said that dissertation acts do not inaugurate consequential action, as illocutionary acts do; rather, they affect action because they modify knowledge, or make it present. Finally, I have shown that consistency between dissertation acts is not the same as coherence between illocutionary acts.

Implications

In other words, the basic categories for discourse analysis are the four units and their corresponding kinds of unity: the sentence and cohesion, the proposition and connection, the illocutionary act and coherence, the dissertation act and consistency. What are the consequences of this for applied linguistics and language teaching?

The main point, now that we see four separate levels, is that previously we may not have observed important phenomena or we may have confused them. This is, in fact, what happened to Ellis when he analysed the dialogue I discussed in Chapter 2 (Ellis 1984: 108). He was only concerned with the illocutionary

dimension of discourse and did not realize the Portuguese boy was surprisingly competent at the dissertation level. This is, too, what happened to the Xochimilco team, whose project was also discussed in Chapter 2. The lack of a proper distinction between illocution and dissertation made us classify under the same heading acts which really belong in different dimensions, and, therefore, perceive sequences of unrelated acts. One conclusion, then, is that the evaluation of different forms of teaching which depends on such analyses ought to be revised.

Another point is that, as our view of discourse is broadened, we can refine our research questions in promising areas. Consider, for example, the area of conversational modifications. Some questions we can now ask are: Do modifications at the sentence level have the same effect as modifications at the proposition, the illocution or the dissertation level? Do useful modifications preserve unity at some levels?

Given that our conception of discourse units has been central to our ways of approaching teaching, we might also rethink our objectives. The development of the communicative approach, at least in its initial years, was conditioned to a considerable extent by a notion of language capacity which implies a doubtful relationship between units. Some of the main proponents of the approach, perhaps starting with Dick Allwright, said that, as communicative competence included most of linguistic (*ie*, syntactic) competence, we need only be concerned with communicative competence (Allwright 1979: 168). If we did, then "linguistic competence would take care of itself" (in words he used in oral presentations since the early seventies, including, for example, a paper he delivered at the 1975 AILA Congress).

The translation of the idea to discourse is: we need only worry about acts. If we do, students will learn sentences. However, if sentences and acts belong in different levels and behave according to different unity principles, how could someone derive sentences from acts? This issue certainly deserves more discussion. It will be carried out in Chapter 7.

The four level view could also be useful in characterizing types of courses. It would seem, for example, that in the past, general English courses used to be concerned with sentences almost exclusively and are now more devoted to illocutionary acts. By contrast, the main interest in notional English for Academic Pur-

poses (EAP)[1] courses would be the level of propositions, whereas the principal objectives of functional EAP courses have to do with dissertation acts. Probably EOP courses respond to needs related both to illocutionary and dissertation acts. If this is a fair approximation to the ELT scene, then a further enquiry into the differences between illocution and dissertation might contribute elements to organize our syllabi better. It is my intention to identify such elements in chapters 8 and 9 and to show how they could be used in Chapter 10. Now, let us proceed with the enquiry.

Chapter 4 notes

1.   The concept of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) was originally associated with the idea of specialized varieties of English mentioned in Chapter 3, although with time it came to refer more often to courses where special attention is given to the devlopment of certain skills, such as reading, or, more specifically, summarizing a text or finding certain information in it. Notional EAP syllabi are organized around supposedly general notions about entities in the world, such as volume. They were originally proposed as an alternative to functional syllabi, which are organized mainly in terms of speech acts. Four important founding proposals of EAP are collected in The British Council 1975 and a considerable amount of bibliographical information is gathered in The British Council 1976. A fairly comprehensive review of issues involved in EAP discussions is Robinson 1980. Good accounts of the most important schools of thought in the area are the books by Trimble and Swales already mentioned in Chapter 3 (Trimble 1985 and Swales 1990). Probably the oldest specialized journal in the area (which continues appearing to this day) is *the ESPecialist*, which is published in Sao Paulo, Brasil.

Chapter 5

IDENTITY CRITERIA: THE STRAWSON-SEARLE APPROACH

The previous chapter was a global presentation of the arguments that show a fourth unit of analysis for discourse is needed. This chapter will develop one such argument systematically.

That dissertation acts are not a subclassification of illocutionary acts, but a category at the same hierarchical level, shall be substantiated by showing that the sentence, the proposition, the illocutionary and the dissertation act have different identity criteria. The reason for calling this method the Strawson-Searle approach is given in the previous chapter and will also be evident further on.

Identity criteria

Let us begin by considering some examples, to see why we need a fourth unit. Let us suppose there is a speaker, whom we shall call S_1, approaching a hearer, H_1, in the middle of a party. Let us further suppose that S_1 utters:

(1) You are smoking,

and that when he is doing so, he is extending his arm and showing he has an ashtray in his hand. Let us say that this situation is picture 1, or P_1.

And let us consider another situation, picture P_2. Now the speaker, S_2, is a teacher in a classroom, and he is approaching a hearer, H_2, who is a very young student, and who is sitting in a chair. But now S_2 is approaching H_2 with a grave expression and crossed arms. He also utters:

(1) You are smoking.

The first thing to notice is that we have two utterances of the same sentence. (1) is being uttered twice, once in P_1 and once in P_2. The second thing to notice is that a different proposition is involved each time. In P_1 a proposition about H1 is being formulated, but in P_2 the proposition being expressed is about H2.

> If we let k represent the predicate 'be smoking', $k(H_1)$ can represent the proposition that H_1 is smoking. In the same manner, $k(H_2)$ will represent the proposition that H_2 is smoking. We can, then, show the two pictures as follows:

P_1: party, S_1, H_1, (1), $k(H_1)$

P_2: classroom, S_2, H_2, (1), $k(H_2)$

What is being shown is that the same sentence can be used to formulate propositions that are not the same. Is the converse also true? Is it possible to have the same proposition with different sentences? The answer is yes. Consider a variation of P_1, which will be represented as P_1'. P_1' is equal to P_1 in every respect, except that instead of S1 uttering (1), he utters (2):

(2) Jessica is smoking.

In both P_1 and P_1' the same person is being referred to, namely H_1. The difference is that in one case she is addressed with the pronoun you' and in the other case with the proper name Jessica'. Some might wish to say that in the second case she is not addressed, in the strict sense, because the verb form corresponds to the third person, rather than the second. They might be right, but the point is that still the same person is being referred to, and the same predicate, k, is being associated with her. We have the same proposition with different words, and therefore, with different sentences. Let us show this in the notation developed:

P_1: party, S_1, H_1, (1), $k(H_1)$

P_1': party, S_1, H_1, (2), $k(H_1)$

What the contrast between P_1 and P_2 and between P_1 and P_1' show is that the criteria to say that we have the same sentence on two occasions are different

from the criteria to say that we have the same proposition. The identity criteria for sentences have to do with the words chosen, "you" or "Jessica". The identity criteria for propositions have to do with who is being referred to, here, H_1.

What is being said here is, of course, what Strawson said in 1950, when he made the critique of Bertrand Russell's treatment of sentences like "The king of France is wise", which was summarized in the previous chapter. It is just that it is being said using Searle's concept of identity criteria (Searle 1969: 22-24) and with the help of an *ad hoc* notation, which is being developed to establish the category of dissertation acts rigorously.

But let us go back to our first two pictures, to the party situation and to the classroom situation, because there is a third thing to notice. We have two illocutionary acts. In P_1 there is the act of offering an ashtray; and in P_2 there is the act of ordering H_2 to stop smoking. Same sentence and different acts. And again, as was the case with propositions, the converse is also true, which can be shown by the use of (2). Let us represent these contrasts:

P_1: party, S_1, H_1, (1), $k(H_1)$, offer

P_2: classroom, S_2, H_2, (1), $k(H_2)$, order

P_1': party, S_1, H_1, (2), $k(H_1)$, offer

The identity criteria for illocutionary acts are, then, different from the identity criteria for sentences. According to Austin and Searle, they have to do with intentions, with the intention of offering, or the intention of ordering, for example. And they have to do with the social relations obtaining between speaker and hearer, and with other aspects of the situation of utterance, such as the physical setting. Uttering (1) in P_2 counts as an order because S_2 is in a position of authority *vis-a-vis* H_2, and because youngsters are not supposed to smoke in classrooms. But uttering (1) in P_1 does not count as an order because different conditions obtain.

Clearly, the identity criteria for illocutionary acts are not different only from the criteria for sentences, but also from the criteria for propositions. And this can be shown easily. To see that the same act can be performed when different

propositions are being formulated, we just need to imagine a small variation of P2, say P2'. Here, S2 utters (3):

(3) You are not smoking.

In P2' we have a different proposition than in P2; in fact we have the negation of it. But we retain exactly the same order to stop smoking. If q stands for 'not k', the contrast can be represented as follows:

P2: classroom, S2, H2, (1), k(H2), order

P2': classroom, S2, H2, (3), q(H2), order

Let us show the converse, that it is possible to have the same proposition and different illocutionary acts. Let us consider a variation of P1', and let us call it P1". Let us see what happens in P1" before S1 utters (2). H1 is in a group of three or four people, and there is a lively conversation going on. S1 joins the group, while holding a cigarette in his mouth and uttering: "John, have you got a light?", to which John replies: "No, I'm sorry, Carlos." S1 has all the reasons to believe that H1 has heard the exchange, and in fact she has. It is now that he turns to H1 and says:

(2) Jessica is smoking.

We have the same proposition as in P1'. But now we have another illocutionary act. Instead of the offering of an ashtray, we have a request for a light. The two situations can be represented as follows:

P1': party, S1, H1, (2), k(H1), offer

P1": cigarette in mouth, S1, H1, (2), p(H1), request

Dissertation acts

Although there is a risk of the exposition seeming repetitive, due to the spiralling, step-by-step construction of the framework, it is convenient to re-state in

specific terms what I said earlier in a general fashion. This will provide both a solid basis for the four units view of discourse and a more subtle means of analysis. In P_1, besides (and not instead of) the illocutionary act of offering an ashtray, there is the act of asserting the proposition that is being formulated. To show the point clearly, let us suppose we have another situation of the P_1 family. Let us call it P_1^*. This is like P_1, except that now S_1 utters (4):

(4) Are you smoking?

What we have done is to retain the proposition, that is, the association of a predicate and a referent, but we have varied the dissertation act. In P_1, $k(H_1)$ is asserted; but in P_1^*, it is not: we have a pure association. The assertion is, as it were, suspended. So, we have the acts of assertion and of suspended assertion. We could call the latter 'question', for short, but only if we are careful not to imply with this term the illocutionary act of request for information. For, as we saw in Chapter 4, there are questions which are not requests for information (such as rhetorical questions). Let us represent this:

P_1: party, S_1, H_1, (1), $k(H_1)$, offer, assertion

P_1^*: party, S_1, H_1, (4), $k(H_1)$, offer, question

Now, is the converse true? Can we have the same dissertation act and different propositions? The answer is yes. To show this, we just need to transport (4) to a P_2 sort of situation, to P_2^*:

P_2^*: classroom, S_2, H_2, (4), $k(H_2)$, order, question

Then we will have a proposition not about H_1, but about H_2. And we will still have a question about the proposition involved in that case.

The starred situations show that the identity criteria for dissertation acts are different from the criteria for propositions. And with the help of these situations, it can also be shown that they are different from those for illocutionary acts. A comparison of P_1 and P_1^* shows that we can vary the dissertation act from assertion to question without varying the illocutionary act of offering. And a com-

parison of P$_1$* and P$_2$* shows that we can vary the illocutionary act from offer to order without varying the dissertation act of question.

It only remains to be shown that the identity criteria for dissertation acts and for sentences are different. As phoneticians like to show, one can have the same affirmative sentence, say (1), either to make an assertion or to ask a question. All that is needed is the right intonation. In one of the P$_1$ situations, say P$_1$**, S$_1$ could utter (2) with low rise intonation. The situation can be represented as follows:

P$_1$**: party, S$_1$, H$_1$, (2), ?, k(H$_1$), offer, question

To show that the converse is also true, that it is possible to have the same question with different sentences, let us imagine two pictures, P$_1$*** and P$_1$****, where S$_1$ utters (5) and (6), correspondingly:

(5) Is Jessica smoking?

(6) I wonder if Jessica is smoking.

'Wonder' in (6) is a lexical device that does in P$_1$**** what the word order of (5) and the ? intonation do in P$_1$** and P$_1$***, respectively. We have:

P$_1$***: party, S$_1$, H$_1$, (5), k(H$_1$), offer, question

P$_1$****: party, S$_1$, H$_1$, (6), k(H$_1$), offer, question

The standard theory accepts the distinction between proposition and dissertation act. In fact, Searle used question and assertion to show the point (Searle 1969: 22-23). What the standard theory does not recognize is the distinction between illocutionary act and dissertation act. That is, it is incapable of accounting for the difference between P$_1$ and P$_1$* at the level of speech acts. It can only distinguish them at the level of sentences. One wonders what the source of this confusion is.

When one wonders about what goes on in the minds of others, one leaves solid ground, but nevertheless, sometimes it is worth doing. I think that the confusion was related to the specific tests for identity criteria employed.

Strawson varied propositions by varying their subjects, which he did by varying the situation of utterance (Strawson 1950: 6-7). And he did all this in order to show the distinction between sentence and proposition. Searle varied the predicate of propositions, which he did by negating the original predicate (Searle 1969: 32). He also varied the form of sentences, from affirmative to interrogative (Searle 1969: 22). Searle did these things to show the distinction between proposition and illocutionary act. I have changed the subject and the predicate, by varying the situation of utterance and by negation. And I have varied the form of sentences. It is by combining these techniques that I have been able to separate the dissertation act from the other units.

But why should this be so? Why should the specific test one uses determine what one sees? The reason is that the four units, sentence, proposition, dissertation act and illocutionary act, are interactive, and to use a metaphor from physics, they have a limited number of degrees of freedom. It is possible to vary some of the units at will, and the ones being varied can be any of the them. But once these are fixed, the rest are also fixed. It is not possible to vary all of them at will. To see this, let us go back to P_1^* and P_2^*:

P_1^*: party, S_1, H_1, (4), $k(H_1)$, offer, question

P_2^*: classroom, S_2, H_2, (4), $k(H_2)$, order, question

It was said earlier that in these two cases we have the same dissertation act, question, and different illocutionary acts, offering and ordering. But it should be noted that we have questions about different propositions. In P_1^* there is a question about $k(H_1)$, and in P_2^* a question about $k(H_2)$. However, when we go from P_1 to P_1^* (or from P_2 to P_2^*), that is, when we go from one picture to another picture in the same family, rather than going across families, we retain the same proposition.

P_1: party, S_1, H_1, (1), $k(H_1)$, offer, assertion

P$_1$*: party, S$_1$, H$_1$, (4), k(H$_1$), offer, question

Now, is it possible to go across families, from a 1-type situation to a 2-type situation, without changing the propositions? The answer is yes. The teacher in the classroom can, for example, say:

(7) A friend of mine who is in the party is smoking,

or even:

(2) Jessica is smoking.

But clearly, if this happens, then there is no longer an order. The moment we fix the proposition and the dissertation act, the illocutionary act is automatically fixed.

The units have a limited number of degrees of freedom, they "interlock", they are mutually conditioned, or better, they are overdetermined, as social scientists would put it. This has been implicitly recognized in philosophy and in sociolinguistics. In the conditions that these disciplines postulate for an utterance to count as a given act, there is often some specification of the proposition involved. But the overdetermination requires explicit recognition, because it is very probably the source of the confusion.

Searle's procedures showed that illocution and proposition are different by showing that either one can be varied at will while the other one remains fixed, also at will. But if one is manipulating sentences, propositions, and illocutions, then dissertations are no longer free; they vary alongside, or remain fixed with, the other units. In Searle's case, the dissertation tends to be tied to the sentence, and so it is not visible. It is only by, so to speak, playing Strawson's techniques against Searle's that one can see the four units varying differently. One can, for example, see the dissertation remaining fixed with the sentence at some moment, but varying with the illocution at the next, depending on the situational features.

Summary

The pictures in Table 1 have been compared to establish the dissertation act as a fourth unit of discourse analysis, together with the sentence, the proposition and the illocutionary act. The sentences involved are collected in Table 2. What has been shown is that the identity criteria for dissertation acts are different from the identity criteria for the other units.

Table 1. *Analytical representation of situations.*

P_1	party,	S_1,	H_1,	(1),	$k(H_1)$,	offer,	assertion
P_2	classroom,	S_2,	H_2,	(1),	$k(H_2)$,	order,	assertion
P_1'	party,	S_1,	H_1,	(2),	$k(H_1)$,	offer,	assertion
P_2'	classroom,	S_2,	H_2,	(3),	$q(H_2)$,	order,	assertion
P_1"	cigarette in mouth,	S_1,	H_1,	(2),	$k(H_1)$,	request,	question
P_1^*	party,	S_1,	H_1,	(4),	$k(H_1)$,	offer,	question
P_2^*	classroom,	S_2,	H_2,	(4),	$k(H_2)$,	question	
					order,		
P_1^{**}	party,	S_1,	H_1,	(2), ?,	$k(H_1)$,	question	
					offer,		
P_1^{***}	party,	S_1,	H_1,	(5),	$k(H_1)$,	offer,	question

Table 2. *Sentences involved in situations analysed.*

(1) You are smoking.
(2) Jessica is smoking.
(3) You are not smoking.
(4) Are you smoking?
(5) Is Jessica smoking?
(6) I wonder if Jessica is smoking.

The comparisons between P_1 and P_2 and between P_1 and P_1' showed that the identity criteria for sentences are different from the identity criteria for propositions, and also from the criteria for illocutionary acts. The comparisons P_2-P_2' and P_1-P_1" showed that propositions and illocutionary acts have different criteria.

The comparisons P_1-P_1^* and P_1^*-P_2^* have shown that the criteria for dissertation acts are different from the criteria for propositions. These two com-

parisons have also shown that dissertation acts and illocutionary acts have different criteria. P_1'-P_1** and P_1***-P_1**** have shown that the criteria for dissertation acts and for sentences are different.

It has, thus, been shown that dissertation acts have different identity criteria than the other units of analysis. But what sort of criteria they are has not been considered, *ie* the elements to characterize different dissertation acts have not been discussed. This will be the central theme of Chapter 9, whereas Chapter 8 will be devoted to the characterization of illocutionary acts.

I have speculated about the sources of the confusion that has led us to think of illocutionary acts as dissertation acts. It would seem that the overdetermination of the four units of discourse, coupled with the specific techniques used to show the units, can lead to the masking of one unit by another.

The units in perspective

The distinction between dissertation and illocutionary acts might remind the reader of Austin's original distinction between constatives and performatives. I would welcome this association, because both distinctions aim to separate what on several occasions Austin reluctantly referred to as 'descriptive' from what he once termed 'operative'. Moreover, Austin had, at the moment he made the distinction, the same conviction I have that it is fundamental, *ie* prior to other classifications one might make.

There are some differences, however. The first one has to do with the fact that Austin's distinction was the first step in the building of his theory, the theme in the first of the twelve William James lectures he delivered at Harvard in 1955 (Austin 1962). He used the opposition of performatives to constatives in order to construct the idea that words can do (Austin 1962: 6) and, therefore, in other lectures he had to work against the idea that constatives do not do. The solution he found, and formulated clearly in the XIth lecture, was that "Stating, describing, &c., are *just two* names among a very great many others for illocutionary acts" (Austin 1962: 148-149). My distinction, which benefits from Austin's work in that it already presupposes dissertation acts do, is kept as basic. This difference in

view is one reason it is necessary to go deeper into the nature of illocution, which is the subject of next chapter.

The second difference, which is reflected in the terms employed ('dissertation' and 'constatives'), is that Austin's class consists of true or false statements, and, therefore, excludes acts like questions. Recalling the discussion in Chapter 3, and anticipating points that will be dealt with in following chapters, it also excludes other acts we want to have in the same overall category, such as definitions and hypotheses.

The third difference, which is the most important one from the point of view of the present chapter, is that Austin's account implies constatives and performatives are mutually exclusive, whereas I have shown they can co-occur.

To give a specific example, he said "I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth" is a performative and not a constative (Austin 1962: 6). My distinction leaves the possibility open that the utterance be described as both an act of christening and an account of that act. This will be important in Chapter 8, when we discuss a problem that has had serious consequences: indirect speech acts.

The above discussion might tell the reader something else: Searle's (1976) direction of fit is being given a special status. This is partly true. Dissertation is often an attempt to "get the words...to match the world" (Searle 1976: 3), whereas on many occasions the world is made to fit illocution. However, the knowledge created by dissertation is not necessarily about the world, and, as just discussed above, many individual dissertation acts, such as questions or definitions, cannot be judged as true or false about the world. Besides, the dimension (as conceived by Searle) cannot provide a fundamental classification of the sort that has been established here, as Searle himself would recognize (Searle 1976: 4). These points will also be considered in mote detail in Chapter 9.

Implications

One simple, general idea that is present throughout the discussion in this chapter is that acts are not part of the sentence. This is, perhaps, a useful way to start thinking about the language teacher's functions. She has to bring in the illocu-

tions or dissertations that accompany the samples of language the student is faced with. Or, better, she has to provide the contexts that determine the interpretation of sentences as acts.

Being more ambitious, it would be interesting if the teacher could vary contexts at some time and sentences at another, to let propositions and acts become visible to the student. This suggestion has to do with one worry: that our language students learn to "see" the interlockings of sentence types, propositions and the two kinds of acts the same way a native speaker does. Looking at this from a reverse angle, could we trace cultural misunderstandings to different interlockings and different mappings between contexts and units? If so, how could we point to the wrong connections to help the student redraw his system?

To facilitate pedagogical explorations in the directions indicated above, and to encourage research that addresses the last questions, applied linguists could provide frames of analysis that reveal the elements at play. With this in mind, the following chapters, specially those in Part III, will gradually approximate to truly general definitions of the illocutionary and the dissertation acts that show their components as simply and as explicitly as possible. Observations about contextual features related to those components will also be made in those chapters.

Chapter 6

THE POINT OF DISSERTATION: AUSTIN'S APPROACH

Comparisons of both the same sentence in different contexts and of different sentences in the same context led us, in the previous chapter, to see that a dissertation act can co-occur with an illocutionary act. The discussion also implied that two dissertation acts (just as two illocutionary acts) are mutually exclusive, which will be dealt with more explicitly in chapters 8 and 9. On methodological grounds, these might be sufficient criteria to establish that the distinction between the two types of acts is basic, specially if our main aim is to solve the coding problems mentioned in the first part of the thesis. However, due to the centrality of the notion of speech act, the distinction has to be substantiated in terms of the points of illocution and dissertation, too. This is the main purpose of the present chapter.

Austin's proposition that when we speak we perform acts has as a consequence the separation of three domains: words, actions, and acts. This will be considered in order to highlight the point of illocution: the creation and modification of the conditions for the interpretation and social judgment of action. The point of dissertation will be shown to be different, namely, the creation and modification of knowledge.

The discussion will point to further developments of the implications and applications suggested so far. It will, for example, show that, if the teacher is going to pay attention to the relationships between sentence, context and acts, he should also consider the meaning of actions. This will, in turn, involve a proposal that we distinguish situational from contextual language teaching on the basis of commitment to do.

Doing

Words do. This is what Austin tells us from the first moment[1]. And this was the starting consideration of many developments in discourse analysis. It will, therefore, be convenient to begin here by asking ourselves what we mean by "do". Besides, in this way we would be faithful to the main method of analytic philosophy (the school to which Austin belonged).

One way to approach the problem is by posing a simpler question: how do words stand *vis-a-vis* action? Let us attempt to answer it.

If the chain of sounds that form a string of words encounters a sleeve that is being rolled up, the sounds will alter the course of the sleeve very little, almost not at all. By comparison to the moving mass of cloth, the momentum of the air puffs that constitute the sounds is extremely small in magnitude. And it is even smaller when compared to the muscular force of the fingers that drive the sleeve.

However, if the sleeve's being rolled up is interpreted as an offer to wash the dishes, and the words are interpreted as declining that offer, then the action of the fingers will probably stop. The act of declining is comparable with, and can be opposed to, the act of offering.

The question of how words stand to actions does, then, seem to have two answers: 1) very weakly and 2) through their interpretations. The first answer focuses on words as action, or rather, on the causal concatenation of physical events that originate with the action of uttering words. The second answer depends on the fact that both words and actions are given social meanings, that they are seen as acts.

In their interpretation as acts, words and actions can be paired. We can, for example, say that "Good bye" and waving your hand are equivalent. We can also say that an action is the reply to a string of words, a smile to a compliment, for instance. Conversely, with words we respond to actions, *eg* with "thank you" to being given a cup of tea. In this sense, words and actions are mutually conditioned.

It is not, as behaviourists believed, that actions cause words according to natural-law-like principles. Rather, it is that action-acts provide conditions under which certain speech-acts are appropriate, and others inappropriate. And people often choose to be appropriate; but they also choose to be inappropriate. It is in the nature of the rules of social interaction that they may be broken.

Just as action constrains words, words have consequences for action. Sometimes one has to do certain things after certain words have been pronounced, in order not to be rude. Even more drastically, unless they have been properly sanctioned by words, certain actions are forbidden. Examples of these situations are, respectively, passing the salt after a request and entering a house without having been invited.

Sometimes there is a tendency to think that actions are more basic than words, and that therefore, a proper understanding of words presupposes a proper understanding of actions. It is even suggested that the principles that govern language have to be derived from the animal drives, or from the material needs of society, that move us into action. It is, for example, said that linguistic structures ultimately reflect economic structures, or that language is essentially an instrument that, so to speak, emerges from the non-linguistic functions it serves.

While it might be true that human beings most often perform acts that will enable them to achieve or avoid actions, and while it is certainly true that action realizations of acts cannot violate material or biological constraints, it should be stressed that actions do not operate directly on words. The social meaning of actions is not transparent; actions have to be interpreted, and interpretation of actions is as complex as interpretation of words.

In some circumstance rolling up your sleeve will mean an offer to do the washing-up. But in others it will mean a challenge to fight. And sometimes it does not mean anything: you simply do it because it is hot, or for many other reasons. Clearly, if an action interacts with a stretch of language, it is because that action has acquired meaning, a meaning which was not inherent to it. Consequently, we must be very careful about any proposal which attempts to locate explanations of language outside the study of language itself, in zoology or economics, for example. We must be careful about functionalist explanations, however insightful they might be — and they are often very insightful —.

In sum, if words are seen as actions, they are barely comparable to other actions. But if words and actions are seen in their interpretation as social acts, then we are dealing with interactive entities of the same kind.

It is probably convenient to see the distinction between actions and acts in a wider context. Different people shake hands differently, for a number of reasons which do not matter here. A careful observer could, for example, record brief and long, or soft and strong, handshakes. A more detailed observation would reveal various possible directions of his hand, *eg* horizontal, or almost vertical facing downwards. Likewise, the thumb could point towards the other person's face or towards her elbow. However, when we report a handshake we often ignore such details. In fact, they are almost always forgotten, because they are irrelevant to the meaning of the action as a handshake act.

Using a distinction originally proposed by Pike (1954), we might perhaps say that the word "handshake" represents *emic* sameness in the face of *etic* divergence. The distinction can be seen as a generalization of the opposition between 'phonemic' and 'phonetic' (see Pike 1993). This captures the fact that from a point of view the first and second consonants in "paper" are the same, but from another they are different; phonemically both are *p*-sounds, but phonetically the first is aspirated (at least in some dialects) while the second is unaspirated. Whereas the etic statement tells us what the sounds are like, the emic statement tells us what the sounds count as. Likewise, a physical description of a hand-written word (including false strokes and adornments) is an etic account of it, and a list of the letters it consists of, or a transcription of them into a standard type, is an emic account.

In a similar fashion, to refer to bodily movements as actions would be to focus on them as etic phenomena and to refer to them as acts would be to consider them in their emic dimension. Hence, one might say that to talk about acts implies adopting a semiotic or semiological approach. Following Locke, Pierce (1940), Morris (1938) and others have shown the need to consider the nature of signs in general and, therefore, of "patterned communication in all modalities" (Sebeok 1964). According to this view, "transactional systems involving sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste" (Sebeok 1964: 5) operate on common principles, and at some fundamental level ought to be studied by one science, which they call 'semiotics'. In a somewhat parallel (and probably independent) develop-

ment, Saussure said language was comparable to "a system of writing, the alphabet of deaf-mutes, symbolic rites, polite formulas, military signals, etc." and "a science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable...I shall call it *semiology*. Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them" (Saussure 1915: 16).

Looking at acts from an emic or a semiotic perspective might indeed be illuminating. For example, several of the acts we have mentioned could be seen as exemplifying Peirce's distinction between types and tokens (for a clear exposition of these concepts, see Lyons 1977: 13). Two physically different handshakes are two tokens, or two instances, of the same type. Moreover, that "the relationship of instantiation involves the recognition of identity relative to some purpose or function" and "it cannot be specified in terms of a certain degree of physical or perceptual similarity" (Lyons 1977: 15-16) is as true of language signs as it is of action-acts, which we saw when rolling-up the sleeve was discussed.

Of direct relevance to language teaching is that certain body signs form systems that are comparable to semantic fields (for this concept, see Lyons 1977: 250), and that they can vary from one culture to another, as fields vary from language to language. Thus, in some countries looking and not looking at the speaker count as paying and not paying attention, but in others they mean requesting and not requesting the floor, which could produce missunderstandings in intercultural communication (Lars 1989 and Lars 1992). One would add that looking and not looking are in complementary but also variable distribution; for some communities, an oblique gaze is looking, but for others it is not looking, just as a certain shade of colour is already purple to some and still violet to others.

There is, however, an important limit to the emic or semiotic views. Not all action-acts are members of conventionalized semiotic systems. Handing Mary's violin to Virginia after she has asked to borrow it counts as lending the violin only because Virginia had made the request, and not because handing violins conventionally means lending violins. As we shall see presently, this is of paramount importance to the notion of speech-act.

What is important to retain here is that actions and acts belong in qualitatively different levels, and that acts are, by definition, meaningful. They may be so

because they form part of an already existing system of signs or because they have acquired meaning in a context where speech plays a decisive role. In any case, answering our second question, it is acts, not actions, that words relate to and are like.

This leads us to see that Austin's idea that uttering words is doing things is initially a metaphor. That is to say, it is literally false. We do not build houses by uttering words; we build them by putting objects together with our hands. But the force of the metaphor makes us see that uttering words is, in some respect, like using our hands: both speaking and moving our bodies can have, and do have, actions as consequences. As seen in Part I, according to Austin, among the felicity conditions for illocutionary acts, among the conditions that have to obtain for an utterance to count as the successful performance of an act (a procedure), we have, the inauguration of consequential conduct:

> (Γ.1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further
> (Γ.2) must so conduct themselves, subsequently.
>
> (Austin 1962: 15)

Putting it more simply, words lay obligations. Actions cause actions and words bind us to act. So, both can be initiators of further activity. This is the simile behind the metaphor.

So, "words do" means words require us to perform actions. These are, then, interpreted as complying acts. But, therefore, an action-act will necessarily have an effect on the conditions created by illocutionary acts: by fulfiling the obligation, the obligation will be removed. The simile has led to its converse: if speaking is like carrying out actions, then carrying out actions is like speaking. The metaphor is double: saying is doing, and doing is meaning.

Coming from another angle, we have seen again that the idea of speech-acts carries with it the idea of action-acts. The point, a second time, is that word and action meet as equals in the terrain of acts (*ie* in discourse). But we have gone a step furher: word and action interplay in a game of obligations. Doing involves

creating obligations. Let us take this another step ahead. Could doing involve other deontic[2] interventions? My answer is yes. A promise and an order do indeed create obligations. But other acts which are listed in Austin's (provisional) classifications (Austin 1962: 155-158), such as consent or give, do not make certain further acts obligatory; they make them permitted. Still others, like degrade, demote or veto, make acts forbidden.

So, an illocutionary act affects further activity because it creates deontic conditions. In Chapter 8, I shall use this idea to develop a view that solves the kinds of problems identified in the first part of the thesis. I will add other elements. I will, for example, include the allowed actors, which are central to the felicity conditions mentioned in Chapter 3 (and have not been discussed here). I will also consider non-complying acts. Besides, I will take into account that deontic outcomes are often the joint product of two or more speakers. But at this point illocution is sufficiently well characterized to be contrasted to dissertation, and the contrast will be useful afterwards.

Dissertation

Invitations, offers and declinations can be said to inaugurate consequential action. But a definition, a generalization or an observation cannot. The former are deontic interventions and the latter are not.

A definition can be involved in an illocutionary act that affects the conditions for action, such as a prohibition. This is clear in the law. But the definition should not be confused with the prohibition, because not all definitions are associated with prohibitions, and not all prohibitions involve a definition. More generally, if the conditions under which an utterance is interpreted as a given illocutionary act are modified in such a way that the interpretation no longer obtains, the associated dissertation act will not necessarily vary, as was shown in the last chapter.

What has to be pointed out here is that dissertation acts cannot be paired to action-acts, in the way that illocutionary acts can. We cannot find actions which are equivalent to generalizing, for example. Nor can we find dissertation acts which are appropriate responses to actions, in the way that thanking was ap-

propriate to being given a cup of tea. The converse, action as response to dissertation seems to be possible in a limited way: there are certain gestures which can indicate approval or disapproval of what is being discussed. But it cannot be said that such gestures carry on dissertation, in the way that action does carry on illocution. A consideration of this difference will throw light on the nature of dissertation acts, and will be undertaken presently.

It is now convenient to see that the fact that dissertation acts cannot be paired to action-acts does not mean that dissertation does not affect action. It does, because with words we talk and think *about* actions, just as we talk and think about other things. This is a third answer to the pivot question of this chapter: "how do words stand *vis-a-vis* actions?" Words denote actions, just as they denote objects. And with words we refer to actions, just as we refer to objects. Furthermore, with words we can predicate properties of the actions we refer to. That is to say, by referring to and predicating of actions, we express propositions about them. We say that such action is so-and-so.

To complete this third answer, let us point out that the acceptance or rejection of propositions about actions (and indeed about many things) has consequences for the plans according to which we execute actions. For example, if one accepts that running a marathon requires an enormous amount of training, and if one also accepts that one does not have much time for training, then one will decide not to run the Mexico City Marathon. Let us underline that this is very different from being forbidden to run the marathon.

But if we are reminded of Searle's distinction between question and answer (Searle 1969: 22-23), it will be clear that what we accept are not pure propositions, in the sense "accept" has in the previous paragraph. We accept assertions; and we could speak of a question as a suspended assertion. Furthermore, from the evidence provided in ESP studies of the phenomenon unfortunately called 'hedging', there is perhaps a continuum of mitigated assertions between the suspended assertion and the full assertion. With expressions such as "it seems that", the speaker can manage not to fully commit himself to the truth of a statement. The same can be achieved with the grammatical devices of modality or with words such as 'perhaps'.

We are dealing with one factor which in Chapter 3 was hypothesized to be constituent (and distinguishing) of dissertation acts: force of assertion. It should be noted at this point that this force is intentional. In fact, we have talked of commitment to the truth of the proposition. This is important, because it is one of the justifications for saying that a definition, an observation and a generalization are acts. The other justification is that they, just as illocutionary acts, are interpreted and judged in conditions which they, in turn, modify. It is just that the conditions for the interpretation and judgement of dissertation are conceptual frameworks, whereas the conditions of illocution are basically social relations and social values.

We can now consider the exception to the generalization that with action we do not perform anything equivalent to dissertation acts: gestures of approval (or disapproval). In a dialogue a person can indicate with such gestures that she gives the same assertive force (or a different one) to a proposition formulated by her interlocutor than he does. Thus, we can say that in such context the person providing the said indications is in fact performing a dissertation act, whose propositional content is elided; it is for this reason that I said earlier that gestures of the sort in question do not carry on dissertation: they simply re-state.

Conclusions

Words are realized by actions that have little physical effect on other actions. But they are interpreted as illocutionary acts that modify deontic conditions and, therefore, inaugurate further acts which are realized as actions. This is one meaning 'do' has when we say "words do".

Words have another sort of consequences on action, because they make knowledge about action. This knowledge tells us whether certain actions are feasible, what they imply, and what they will bring about. So, it conditions our decisions to act. Acting upon knowledge is a second meaning of 'do'.

The two meanings are duly separated by the distinction between illocution and dissertation.

Implications and applications

One implication of the above discussions for the classroom analyst is that teacher and student actions have to be regarded as potentially meaningful. Failure to do this is behind Ellis's (1984: 107-109) misjudgement of a lesson discussed in Chapter 2. He did not realize that Anan's miming counted as a response to the teacher's invitation and, therefore, was evidence of the child's competence to interact illocutionarily. He did not see either that Anan's performance was based on the teacher's previous exposition of the Green Cross Code and, so, was proof of the child's capacity to comprehend oral dissertation.

The need to record action and the meaning of action is perhaps most evident in transcriptions like the following:

Let's have a look at these things let's have a look at these.
(PAUSE 6 SECONDS)
Now ⌃ Let's just have a look at these things here.

(Taken from Sinclair and
Coulthard 1975: 96)

The word "now" and the silent stress " ⌃ " would seem to indicate, not only that something happened during the pause, but also that that something and the previous utterance form a unit. This impression is corroborated by the analysis by the transcribers. Sinclair and Coulthard consider the word and the stress as a marker act which defines a boundary exchange. That is, the previous utterance and the pause form a complete transaction. However, that which completed the utterance, presumably the action of looking, was left off the record.

The deficiency is reflected in the analysis. This shows no 'answering' or 'follow-up' to the utterance and, because in Sinclair and Coulthard's scheme an act is defined in terms of its position in a sequence of acts, the utterance is identified as a 'metastatement'. The analysis, thus, fails to capture a recurrence of a pattern present in other parts of the lesson, consisting of a directive act and a non-verbal response. Clearly, a description of the action, perhaps something like "looking at the objects referred to", is needed within such a transcription, instead of PAUSE. Furthermore, an identification of it as an act of obeying or fulfilling is

necessary in the analysis. This would allow for the utterance to be recorded as some sort of directive.

Let us add that the coding of action should in principle follow similar, if not the same, criteria used in the coding of words. Sinclair and Coulthard sometimes record action, although only as non-verbal behaviour (NV). But, by definition (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975: 42), they can only identify it as a reaction act[3]. A system like theirs would miss greetings, thanks, offers and other acts we have mentioned in this chapter.

Another implication, which answers the main question in Chapter 2, is that a coding system requires two dimensions. The importance of this can be shown by reference to another two (non-consecutive) fragments in Sinclair and Coulthard's corpus:

> (1) And then they realized that what was on the second row was really repetition of what was on the-
> (2) And so they were able to translate and this is what they this is the result of the work that they did.
> They found that these were the symbols which meant these sounds.
>
> (Taken from Sinclair and
> Coulthard 1975: 75)

(1) is coded by the authors as an act of elicitation, whereas (2) is coded as an informative act. The system is unable to show that (1) is both an elicitation and an informative act, and that, so, in the dimension of dissertation, (1) and (2) form part of a larger unit. This points us to an issue that will be addressed in the following chapter: is larger unity a criterion to separate basic types of acts, *ie* to distinguish dimensions?

Let us now consider another implication. If it is important to register action in research, it is also important to take it into account in teaching. It will be easier for students to grasp the illocutionary forces of utterances in the foreign language if they actually see what these do. And there is a better guarantee that they will see what utterances do if they actually take part in the deontic game of utterances, if they come to be committed, or manage to avoid commitments, or commit others to action.

Perhaps what we have here is a simple test of communicative teaching. Previous methods and approaches, such as situational teaching (Corder 1966: 59), were centred on the use of sentences obtained by lexical substitution to talk about things or events in the classroom or presented in various sorts of images. This was supposed to provide meaningful repetition of grammatical patterns. Using discourse analysis terminology (which was not available to language teachers at the time), we can say that referring to things or events, 'situations', allowed for the expression of propositions. Some simple dissertation acts were also performed, but, as we shall see in Chapter 9, they represented a small set. The number of illocutionary act types realized was even more reduced; these were almost exclusively request and provision of information.

As said in Chapter 1, communicative teaching called the teacher's attention to speech acts. It introduced or gave prominence to activities like role-play, which should encourage students to do things with the sentences they are practising. However, nowadays, often classes which pretend to be communicative do not involve the students negotiating deontic outcomes, although they purport to bargain meanings. In other words, students still talk about situations, rather than being in them, and still practise limited classes of speech acts.

In Chapter 10, I shall argue that discussions of communicative situations are not undesirable, so long as they help the student to see the various elements of discourse. However, even if this is accepted, one has to grant that the student has to experience those elements in actual effect, at least at some points. Maybe a question like "Who has carried, or who has to carry out, which actions?", after linguistic exchanges in the classroom, can help us note the extent to which illocution is really at play. If the answer is always nobody, then very probably our classes are not communicative; they are, at best, situational.

This view suggests an extension of Thomas's concept of cross-cultural pragmatic failure. According to her, communication fails, even if what is said is comprehended, when what is meant by what is said is not understood. In our terms, this would be when the correct sentence but a wrong proposition or a wrong illocutionary act are interpreted. One example she gives is taking (3) as a "genuine request for information, rather than ... a complaint" (Thomas 1983: 93).

(3) Is this coffee sugared?

She is particularly concerned with systematic misunderstanding resulting from "the inappropriate transfer of speech act strategies from one language to another" or the application of "different beliefs about rights, 'mentionables', etc." (Thomas 1983: 101)

Thomas makes the point that the language teacher's task is not only to teach the grammar of the target language, but also to sensitize learners "to expect cross-cultural differences in the linguistic realizations of politeness, truthfulness, etc." and give them the tools to overcome pragmatic failure (Thomas 1983: 110). Adopting this perspective, the view of illocution that has evolved from the discussion in this chapter means that the student has to become aware of the commitments acts carry.

Promises do not bind speakers equally in all cultures. For some peoples, a marriage oath is for ever, while for others it can easily be broken. Likewise, in some countries appointments are kept religiously, but in others they are often regarded as flexible plans.

The consequences of not complying with obligations are variable, too. A study by Rall (1993) shows that Mexicans who say they are going to phone you tomorrow and do not are not necessarily regarded as insincere. The promise is simply not a strong obligation. According to the author, this is related, on the one hand, to given notions of time and certainty and, on the other, to promises being used to perform phatic[4] functions which are more important than the possible commitments involved. These might be characteristic, though not necessarily unique, features of Mexican culture.

We knew it was necessary for the language student, not only to learn how to speak words, but also how to do with them. Thomas has told us this means learning possibly different realizations of speech acts. We now see that it also means learning possibly different deontic implications of those acts.

A final implication is that a course designer has to bear in mind both illocution and dissertation. Even if she is going to deal with one in a more detailed fashion than the other, this has to be a conscious and principled decision. It might be justified that a textbook index contains only greetings, orders, promises, offers and the likes — to the exclusion of descriptions, observations, charac-

terizations and the likes —, if it is intended for, say, students who will have to participate in social encounters and that have little time to study the foreign language. But the omission will not be justified at all if it is the result of not knowing that no illocutionary acts could represent the whole domain of speech acts, however carefully they be chosen, because they are of a fundamentally different nature from dissertation acts.

Summary

Words commit action and, therefore, the language teacher and the classroom analyst ought to pay attention to the meaning of action. And they must also pay attention to the making of knowledge, which can accompany the commitment, but is not the same.

Chapter 6 notes

1. The title of Austin's (1962) famous collection of lectures is *How to do things with words*.

2. 'Deontic' is used in expressions like "deontic logic" and "deontic modality", which refer to systems that deal with obligation, prohibition and permission. It is often opposed to 'epistemic', which is used in connection with truth and falsity. The founding paper of deontic logic is von Wright 1951 and the most important contemporary discussion of deontic logic is von Wright 1991. Probably the clearest and most insightful discussion of deontic modality is found in Lyons 1977 (823-849).

3. In Sinclair and Coulthard's system, there is also the possibility of identifying some non-verbal responses, such as nods, as replies. In my terms, these are actions which indicate force of assertion. That is, the notion that actions interplay deontically with words is not present in the system, which is the point made in the body of the chapter. This is manifest in the term used by these authors to identify most non-verbal acts: 'reaction'.

4. The phatic function of language is to make contact between speakers (see *eg* Jakobson 1960), and a typical example of it is greeting. The word 'phatic' was first used by Malinowski (1935) to refer to ritualistic formulae which people in Papua used to identify themselves as participants in a community event and, thus, as members of the community. The point Rall makes in the article referred to in the chapter's body (Rall 1993) is that in Mexico promises to call serve to express an open disposition to be interlocutors again, in the future, though they do not necessarily require that action be taken to that effect at the specific moment referred to.

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Chapter 7

ACTS AND RELATIONS: WIDDOWSON'S APPROACH

When Widdowson introduced the concept of illocutionary acts (which he initially called 'communicative acts') in applied linguistics, he did so by showing that they belong in a different level of analysis than that where sentences belong. This approach is different from the ones followed in the previous two chapters. We could say it is a linguistic, rather than a philosophical approach. Its articulatory idea is that units combine to produce unity, and different sorts of unity correspond to different kinds of units.

There has not been any discussion *about* Widdowson's approach, although his findings have received the attention of all applied linguists. The rationale of the approach has not been made sufficiently explicit, and therefore, its consistent use has not been guaranteed, not even in the work of Widdowson himself. What is perhaps more important, the potential of the approach remains underexploited.

It is the purpose of this chapter to discuss Widdowson's approach, and then, in the light of such discussion, consider the distinction between illocutionary act and dissertation act. The concept of relative autonomy of levels will be proposed. By this I mean that the units of one level cannot be defined without reference to the units in other levels, although the rules of unity of any one level are independent of the rules for other levels. It will be shown that adherence to this concept would imply an alternation in the classroom between the so called authentic communication and the isolation of discourse levels.

It will be stressed that, as indicated in Chapter 2, the four basic categories of discourse analysis — sentence, proposition, illocutionary acts and dissertation act— require four kinds of unity. This view will direct us towards a distinction (suggested in Chapter 3) between acts and relations among acts, which is needed to solve the problems pointed out in chapters 1 and 2. A definition, an observa-

tion and a classification are examples of acts. A deduction and an exemplification are examples of relations between acts. The question of whether relations can provide the basis to establish a notion of act sequences, and thus bridge basic units and global structures, will be posed (and it will be retaken in the following chapters).

1973

In 'Directions in the teaching of discourse' (1973), Henry Widdowson was concerned because language teachers had paid "little attention to the way sentences are used in combination to form stretches of connected discourse" (p. 89). This way of referring to discourse,

> ...straddles two different, if complementary, ways of looking at language beyond the sentence. We might say that one way is to focus attention on the second part of my definition: *sentences in combination*, and the other to focus on the first part: *the use of sentences*.

> (Widdowson 1973: 90)

Widdowson reviews the main works in the study of language beyond the sentence up to 1971, and groups them in the two categories of sentences in combination and the use of sentences. In the first group he, of course, locates the work of Harris (1952). In the second group, Widdowson places the work of Labov (1969).

Of Harris, Widdowson tells us:

> He is thereby able to discover a patterning in the discourse in terms of chains of equivalences. What he does, then, is to reduce different message forms to make them correspond to a common code pattern.

> (Widdowson 1973: 91)

This kind of study is contrasted with the one Labov pursues. Widdowson quotes:

> Sequencing rules do not operate between utterances but between the actions performed by these utterances.
>
> (Labov 1970: 208; in Widdowson 1973: 97)

and

> The rules we need show how things are done with words and how one interprets these utterances as actions: in other words, relating what is done to what is said and what is said to what is done.
>
> (Labov 1969: 54-55; in Widdowson 1973: 92)

From these basis, Widdowson distinguishes *text analysis* from *discourse analysis*, the former aiming at showing "how a text exemplifies the operation of the language code beyond the limits of the sentence" (Widdowson 1973: 92), and the latter referring to "the investigation into the way sentences are put to communicative use in the performing of social actions" (Widdowson 1973: 93).

Text analysis is concerned with "*grammatical cohesion* between sentences", and discourse analysis with "*rhetorical coherence* of utterances in the performance of acts of communication" (p.96). Cohesion and coherence are exemplified with two pieces of dialogue which have become famous:

(1) A: Can you come to Edinburgh tomorrow?
    B: Yes, I can.

(2) A: Can you come to Edinburgh tomorrow?
    B: BEA pilots are on strike.

> (Widdowson 1973: 96)

Dialogue (1) exemplifies cohesion: B uses an elliptical from of the sentence "Yes, I can go to Edinburgh tomorrow", which can be directly related to A's sentence. (2) is not cohesive, but we still recognize unity between A's intervention and B's intervention, if one is interpreted as an order and the other as a refusal to act upon the order. Widdowson explains that this is so if certain relations exist between A and B. He has recourse to what Labov calls 'preconditions' of an act, known in philosophy as 'felicity conditions'.

Among the preconditions of the act of ordering, we have the following: A must believe that B has the ability to carry on the action ordered. The coherence of the second dialogue is then accounted for by the fact that each utterance focuses on this precondition (Widdowson 1973: 97).

In sum, we have two levels of analysis, text and discourse, and to them correspond two basic categories and two sorts of unity: sentences and acts, on the one hand, and cohesion and coherence, on the other.

1978

In *Teaching language as communication* (1978), Widdowson discusses again the distinction between sentence and illocutionary act. But the scheme he now presents differs from the 1973 scheme in some interesting ways. These are:

1. Two dichotomies are introduced. One concerns aspects of performance, and the other types of meaning. The first is the dichotomy between usage and use. The second, the dichotomy between signification and value.

Usage is the manifestation of purely grammatical knowledge in decontextualized sentences or in texts which do not fulfil a communicative function. Use is the realization with language of genuine communicative behaviour. (Widdowson 1978: 3-7).

Signification is the meaning sentences have by virtue of combining lexical items according to grammatical rules (Widdowson 1978: 10-11). Value, on the other hand, is the kind of meaning "which sentences and parts of sentences assume when they are put to use for communicative purposes" (p.11).

The two dichotomies are related. Instances of usage have signification but do not have value. Instances of use will usually have signification, and they always have value.

2. The term 'text' no longer designates one level of analysis. There are perhaps various reasons for this. One could be the need to use the word in a pre-

theoretical sense, in connection with either sentences or acts, or both. Thus, on page 52, we read:

> Which text is to be preferred, then, will depend on which one can most readily be processed by the reader as a combination of illocutionary acts which constitutes an acceptable unit of communication.
>
> (Widdowson 1978: 52)

Another reason for abandoning 'text' as a theoretical term could be the danger of associating too directly the various dichotomies, that is, of associating text with signification and usage, and discourse with value and use. The danger would be to exclude text (and, therefore, cohesion) from genuine use. And Widdowson sees the adequate link between sentences as part of use.

Unfortunately, we are not told why 'text' is no longer part of the technical framework of discourse analysis.

3. The central matter of cohesion is identified as the thematic organization[1] of information:

> Generally speaking we can say that propositions are organized in such a way that what is known, or given, comes first in the sentence, and what is unknown or new, comes second.
>
> (Widdowson 1978:25)

Thematic organization even becomes an explanatory principle for the co-referential interpretation of anaphoric links[2], which Widdowson had considered from the point of view of Hasan 1968, and which was the salient feature of cohesion in Widdowson 1973, at least from the point of view of pedagogical usefulness (see page 95). Thus:

> Note that it is because the information about the crops is given that B's reply does not need to make specific reference to them: the pronoun *they* takes on the value in this context of the full reference *the crops*.
>
> (Widdowson 1978:25)

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4. The proposition is explicitly introduced as a unit of analysis. This is done in a simple, ingenious way. The reporting of propositions is contrasted with the reporting of sentences and the reporting of illocutionary acts. Thus, in (3), (4) and (5), we have, respectively, the report of a sentence, a proposition and an act.

(3) She said: "My husband will return the parcel tomorrow."

(4) She said that her husband would return the parcel tomorrow.

(5) She promised that her husband would return the parcel tomorrow.

Unfortunately, and perhaps because of not dealing explicitly with the level of text —which could have been designated with another name, if necessary— it is not clear what level the proposition belongs to.

At some points, Widdowson follows a distinction between sentence and proposition which is similar to Strawson's (discussed in Chapter 5). That is, a proposition is expressed with a sentence; and which proposition is expressed is something which depends on the situation of utterance. In this sense, he says:

> We may begin by pointing out that when people produce a sentence in the course of normal communicative activity they simultaneously do two things. They express a proposition of one kind or another and at the same time in expressing that proposition they perform some kind of illocutionary act.

> (Widdowson 1978:22)

We also have an example of this way of conceptualizing the proposition. On pages 10 and 11, we find that in the following dialogue (6), and in the appropriate context, the string "the rain" takes on the value of the proposition "the rain destroyed the crops".

(6) A: What destroyed the crops?
     B: The rain.

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One would hence be tempted to say that propositions belong in the level of discourse, if we are to maintain a separation of levels. However, Widdowson also says:

> If we know the dictionary meanings of the lexical items and understand the syntactic relations between them then we can recognize that this sentence represents a proposition and so has meaning...

> (Widdowson 1978:10)

and

> Sentences have meanings as instances of usage: they express propositions by combining words into structures in accordance with grammatical rules.

> (Widdowson 1978:11)

Propositions are now associated with signification, rather than value, and they seem to belong in text, rather than discourse. This appears to be confirmed in the subheadings "2.2 Cohesion and propositional development" and "2.6.1 Propositional development: achieving cohesion".

Such inconsistent associations of levels with the proposition require it be assigned a specific level. It needs to be clear that cohesion obtains among sentences, which is, really, Widdowson's idea:

> The notion of cohesion, then, refers to the way sentences and parts of sentences combine so as to ensure that there is propositional development.

> (Widdowson 1978:26)

What is needed is either that the phrase "propositional development" be left out of the definition of cohesion, or that the corresponding phrase "illocutionary development" be added, so that cohesion is properly seen as a property of "sentences and parts of sentences".

What I am proposing is that the 1973 approach be followed more strictly. This, of course, does not imply a rejection of the 1978 innovations — the introduction of the use/usage and signification/value distinctions, the identification of thematic organization as the central matter of cohesion and the introduction of the proposition as a unit of analysis —. These innovations are undeniably important.

What I mean is that the sentence, the proposition and the illocutionary act should be assigned to three distinct levels of analysis by recognizing three different sorts of unity. These levels need not have special names. Perhaps it is better to leave 'text' as a pre-theoretical term, as seems to be Widdowson's intention, and to use 'discourse' as a global term, to cover the three levels. And we can refer to them with descriptive phrases including 'sentence', 'proposition' and 'illocutionary act'. But we do need special terms for the different sorts of unity. For the reasons shown in Chapter 4, I propose that they be as in Table 3.

Table 3. *Units and sorts of unity.*

UNIT	UNITY
sentence	cohesion
proposition	connection
illocutionary act	coherence

Connection

The point is that propositional unity should not be assimilated to sentential cohesion. Let us consider an example from Widdowson 1978 (p. 26) and contrast it with a modified version:

(7) A: What did the rain do?
      B: It destroyed the crops.

(8) A: What did the rain do?
      B: The crops were destroyed by the rain.

Clearly, we have the same propositions in both exchanges, The difference is in the information structure. In (7) the topic of B's answer has already appeared in A's question, whereas in (8) B's topic is not found in A's question.

A plausible criterion for propositional unity is provided by van Dijk: "if the facts are related the proposition sequence representing them is connected" (van Dijk 1981: 4). This criterion can, for example, help us to analyse the following passage:

(9) John and Rita go to the same school. The school has some beautiful stained windows. In stained glass red is very difficult to obtain. Red is at one end of the visual spectrum.

This passage is very cohesive. Its thematic organization permits a very easy flow of information. The first theme is "John and Rita", and it has a comment which includes "the school", which in turn becomes the second theme, and so on. But there is a lack of unity, because the fact that John and Rita go to the same school has nothing to do with the fact that red is at one end of the visual spectrum.

There is, however, a problem with van Dijk's work. Various sorts of unity are assimilated to — confused with — connection:

> Work in this area, however, first required an answer to the more fundamental question about the *connection* and the coherence (also called the 'cohesion') of sequences of sentences, or sequences of their (underlying) propositions...

(van Dijk 1981: 4)

> In order to connect clauses or sentences, language users will first construct propositions, organize these in FACTS and connect the respective FACTS.

(van Dijk 1981: 8)

From the discussion of the two exchanges at the beginning of this section, (7) and (8), together with the discussion of John and Rita's passage, (9), it not only follows that connection must not be assimilated to cohesion, but also that the con-

verse is true as well: cohesion must not be assimilated to connection. Connection must, then, be genuinely distinct from other sorts of unity.

Perhaps another line of argument taking van Dijk's proposal in its own terms is necessary. It cannot be denied that often the aim of a discourse is to establish that two facts are connected — or that they are not! —. An author may, for example, wish to show that smoking often produces cancer. Or another may wish to show that dictation does not necessarily improve spelling. It can neither be denied that the reader's belief that the facts are unconnected (or connected) can be modified by such discourse. Furthermore, whether or not the discourse succeeds in establishing the (dis)connection of facts depends largely on its own cogency. Therefore, discourse unity, or at least some sort of it, is, in some sense, and at least in some cases, prior to fact connection. Hence, it cannot be a general principle that the ultimate criterion for discourse unity is fact connection. All we can say is connection is *one* sort of unity.

The corollary of the previous discussions is that we need one level of unity for every unit we postulate. Conversely, if a level of unity has been genuinely distinguished, then a unit of analysis corresponding to it must be identified. This is, in fact, a convenient way of making Widdowson's 1973 approach explicit.

But the discussion also shows the approach is both possible and necessary. Therefore, what has to be done now is to consider dissertation acts from the point of view of the relations among them.

Acts and relationships

Relationships between dissertation acts have always received the attention of ESP discourse analysts. They include: exemplification, deduction, contrast, paraphrase, and others. But on most occasions they have not been taken as relationships between acts. They have been taken as acts, *ie* as co-hyponyms of hypothesis, definition, generalization, observation and so on.

The need to distinguish between acts and relations can be shown with the help of two texts:

(10) All human beings are mortal. Socrates is a human being. Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

(11) All human beings are mortal. For example, Socrates is mortal.

The dissertation sequence in (10) could be described as: generalization, sorting, observation. These terms will be discussed in Chapter 9, but any intuitive or vague meanings with which they are associated will be sufficient for our present purposes. The first and the last act, the generalization and the observation, are also present in (11). What is different in the two texts is the relationship between generalization and observation.

In (10) we have what would naturally be called a deduction, and in (11) we have an exemplification. But it should be insisted that these are the relationships between the generalization and the observation, which (as such) have not changed from (10) to (11). With most present coding systems, "therefore, Socrates is mortal" might be registered as the deduction. In fact, the analyst would hesitate between deduction and observation, thus being exposed to unreliability.

Needless to say, the facts reported in (10) are not meant to be different from the facts reported in (11), nor is the connection between them. What is different is the dissertation about the facts. It might be argued that the presence of the proposition expressed by the middle sentence in (10) justifies seeing the contrast between the two texts in terms of connection. But this view is easily shown to be inadequate, with the help of (12), which also contains the said proposition:

(12) All human beings are mortal. For example, Socrates, who is human, is mortal.

The distinction between acts and relationships provides the basis for the solution to an important problem in dissertation analysis. When analysts think about acts properly, they (rightly) demand that texts be single coded, *ie* that one label be assigned to each utterance. But when they take act relations as acts they sense utterances are multifunctional, and insist that they could receive multiple coding. Their feeling is justified; an act will enter into relationship not only with one other act, but possibly with many more, which can be observed in explicitly numbered references to equations in mathematics texts (and perhaps less easily in

many other cases). Now, if acts and relations are properly distinguished, the analyst can code both in parallel, and in the case of acts adhere to the single coding principle whereas in the case of relations opt for multiple coding.

The need to proceed in this suggested way is exemplified in the experimental comparison between two modes of classroom interaction (lockstep and small group) which was discussed in Chapter 2. One part of the analysis of the data consisted in coding dissertation acts and relationships, but the difference between them had not been established. It was particularly difficult to code the following extract from a student working in a pair:

(13) Yes,/ I don't think the creatures have creativity / because if they would have creativity, they all the they will changing his way to do the things,/ and they every year are doing the same the same the same./ So I don't think it's creativity.   And the man all the years and even all day he is changing his way / to act and his way to build and everything and um um...

(Long et al. 1976: 147)

In the discussion about the limitations of the coding system, we find:

Instead of the simple one-to-one coding we have described, [the intervention] could be analysed something as follows:
Having already decided that they are going to microclassify according to + or - creativity: "OK. So what do you think about creativity?" the pair of students now divide the problem into two parts: 'the creatures' and 'the man'. Next, the analysis of the first part, 'the creatures', is introduced by advancing the conclusion, in the form of a hypothesis, that creatures are -creative: "I don't think the creatures have creativity".
The proof that animals are not + creative is carried out not by providing direct evidence but by showing the logical implications of the hypothesis:
 "If they would have creativity, they all the they will   changing his way to do things" and then comparing this against evidence, "...and..." the comparison with evidence being provided in the form of the observation...

(Long et al. 1976: 151)

Clearly, we needed multiple coding of the relationships — introduction, logical implications, comparisons, conclusion —. But we did not need multiple coding of the acts — hypothesis and observations —. Our main problem was, then, that we did not distinguish relationships from acts.

This is a simple but very important point. As chapters 2 and 3 suggested, the lack of a distinction between acts and relations has been one of the main sources of unreliability in speech act coding systems.

The same utterance can, in principle, be coded as the act it performs and as any of the relationships of which it forms part. If analysts are not aware of this, they will at different moments take different options, and do so inconsistently. Moreover, they will count relations as acts, and interpret the discourse they analyse on the basis of such statistics.

Akin views

The nearest applied linguistics came to the view of acts and relationships we needed were the positions reflected in two distinctions, one by Urquhart and another by Trappes-Lomax. Their consideration will make my point clearer.

Urquhart divides "inter-sentential" relationships into two basic types, paratactic (or non-subordinating) and hypotactic (or subordinating) (Widdowson and Urquhart 1976: 40). But then two acts, statement and assertion, are treated as relationships:

> In the case of hypotactic relationships, a basic distinction is drawn between *Statements*, declarative utterances which the author considers will be accepted by his audience without further question, and *Assertions*, which are always followed by supporting material designed to win acceptance for the Assertion.

> (Widdowson and Urquhart 1976: 40)

A class of acts is defined as the relationship an act has with its following act. Immediately afterwards we find the inverse confusion; a relationship is seen as an element in a sequence of acts:

> Hypotactic relationships are:
> I. Statement + Explanation:
> *eg* "The car stopped. The brakes jammed."
> II. Assertion + Substantiation:
> eg "This convenient technique is highly inefficient.
> In normal practice it is usual for more than 40% of the nitrogen to reach the plants."
> III. Assertion + Exemplification:
> *eg* "They are also superior in aesthetic sense: for instance, they discriminate colours better than boys."

> (Widdowson and Urquhart 1976: 40)

The problem is that statements and assertions are not properly seen as entering into the relationships of explanation, substantiation and exemplification. Rather, these relationships are seen as acts that follow statements and assertions. In other words, rather than something like (14), what we need is something like (15):
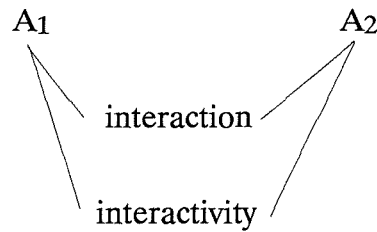
(14) Assertion + Exemplification

(15) Exemplification: Statement + Observation,

though, in the light of the contrast we had at the beginning of this section between deduction and exemplification, the question is somewhat more complex.

Now, Hugh Trappes-Lomax, in his sociolinguistics lectures at the University of Edinburgh during the academic year 1977-78, kept a less confusing distinction between relations and acts. In fact, he proposed two sorts of relationships between illocutionary acts. He called them 'interaction link' and 'interactivity link'. He liked to represent his view with simple diagrams like that in Figure 1, where A_1 and A_2 are speech acts:

Figure 1. *Trappes-Lomax's links.*

$$A_1 \qquad\qquad A_2$$

interaction

interactivity

He said that inter-action obtained between people and inter-activity obtained between the activities performed in discourse. In his examples, he talked about questions and requests for information, and he almost arrived at the distinction I drew between these in Chapter 4. Indeed, I recognize that my view has his as one of its origins.

Other examples to illustrate the point, besides the question/request distinction, are not difficult to find; many have already been provided in the literature, although they have not been seen in the same way I regard them. Consider the following situation. Charlie is writing a piece of music. Sandy arrives and, after greeting Charlie, he says:

(16) It's hot in here...

Charlie replies with (17), and at the same time, goes to the window and opens it.

(17) Yes, it is.

The traditional analysis would be that (16) does not provide information, because it is really a request for Charlie to open the window. (Of course, it could be something stronger, such as a reproach for not having the window open, depending on intonation, on the relationship between Charlie and Sandy and other factors.) On this analysis, (17) would be linked to (16) only as an agreement to satisfy the request, or something like that.

Trappes-Lomax would, I think, have replied that (16) does not stop having information because it is a request, and that (17) is a confirmation of that information, at the same time that it is an agreement to satisfy the request. Either of the following modifications to our situation will make this more evident:
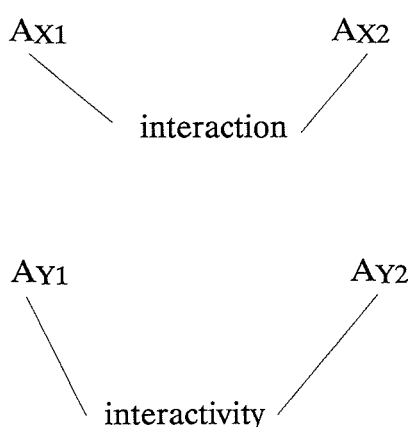
A. After (17), Charlie adds: "I hadn't noticed; my mind was completely absorbed." (He still opens the window.)

B. It is a third person, Sally, who utters (17). (Charlie still opens the window.)

It can be said that in the original situation utterance (16) only makes a certain already available information present, whereas in modification A it actually provides the information. It can also be said that in the original situation (17) is an agreement to satisfy a request, whereas in modification B it is an adherence to the request. But in the three situations (17) confirms (16).

The problem with Trappes-Lomax's position is that it is not in accordance with Widdowson's 1973 approach. Once different sorts of links have been identified, different sorts of acts should be incorporated into the scheme. In other words, the diagram to represent interaction and interactivity should be the one in Figure 2.

Figure 2. *Alternative representation of links.*

Going back to our situations, (16) is used to realize an observation, besides the request. (17) is also used to realize an observation, in fact the same one; this observation is realized at the same time that the agreement, or the adherence, is realized. Between these two observations in (16) and (17) there is a relationship of confirmation. This obtains besides, and independently of, the relationship between request and agreement to comply, or between request and adherence to the request.

To end this discussion, I prefer to retain 'coherence', rather than replace it with 'interaction', for two reasons. Firstly, Widdowson's term is already well established. Secondly, 'interaction' should be better left as a pre-theoretical term to cover various aspects of conversation, rather than be turned into a precise theoretical term to designate a specific kind of relationship. As for the other term, I prefer to use 'consistency', to show that it is in the same conceptual space as 'coherence', but denotes a distinct sort of link. Besides, it keeps an association with 'dissertation'.

Recapitulation

The following has been done in this chapter:

1. Widdowson's 1973 approach has been made explicit;

2. It has been shown that this approach is not strictly followed in Widdowson 1978 (though this work presents some very important innovations);

3. Connection, *ie* propositional unity, has been isolated and, thus, it has been shown that the 1973 approach can and should be kept;

4. Consistency has been shown to be different from coherence, which, according to the approach, has implied that the dissertation act and the illocutionary act are distinct.

In the course of doing this, it has been shown that the distinction between act and consistency (relation) is partly supported by previous views by Urquhart and

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Trappes-Lomax and, at the same time, it improves them. It has also been shown that the distinction removes one of the sources of unreliability in coding systems.

Relative autonomy

The establishment of dissertation as a level of discourse, with its unit, the dissertation act, and its form of unity, consistency, does not necessarily mean that it is completely separate from the other three levels. In fact, what this chapter maintains, together with what was said in previous chapters, implies a relative autonomy of levels.

The type of relationship between levels in a theory of discourse deserves to be mentioned explicitly. The possibility of success a language teaching method has depends on the real nature of those relationships. A purely audiolingual method[3], for example, could only be effective if propositions and acts were directly derivable from sentences (which, we now know, is not the case). But real relationships can only be explored from a theoretical standpoint. Therefore, if a theory openly states its level relationships, it will contribute to clarifying language teaching issues.

Let us then discuss the notion of relative autonomy. It can be stated as follows: the units in one level of analysis cannot be defined without reference to other levels; however, the rules of unity for one level are independent of the rules for any other level. We cannot talk about affirmative sentences without mentioning the act of assertion, nor can we make sense of the idea of interrogative sentences without referring to the act of question; and in either case the notion of a proposition will be present, at least implicitly. Conversely, it is not possible to state what a proposition is without involving the concepts of sentence and act, nor what an act is without opposing it to the sentence and the proposition. However, once the concepts of these units are properly developed, cohesion does not depend on connection, coherence or consistency; nor does any of these depend on the others.

It is convenient to take the notion of relative autonomy down to a further degree of delicacy, by expanding the first part: to define an element of a unit in one level it is necessary to refer to its functions in other levels; it is not enough to

consider it in relation to the other elements in the same unit. It is not possible, for example, to define a noun phrase without invoking referents; it is not enough to contrast its syntactic behaviour with that of a verb phrase. *Viceversa*, it is not possible to give the meaning of 'predicate' without using the ideas of verb and adjective. However, once the elements of a sentence are defined, its grammaticality is not dependent on the well- formedness of the propositions it can be used to express, nor on the appropriateness or felicity of the acts it can be used to perform.

The general form given to the relative autonomy principle, which makes reference both to the internal unity of units and to unity between units, might perhaps be seen as an invitation to revise the problem of levels in different schools of general linguistics. However, although such a revision would strengthen the position adopted[4], it would lead us in directions somewhat removed from the main concerns of this thesis and would require a considerable amount of space. Therefore, only three direct sorts of evidence will be adduced here in favour of the principle:

1. Ambiguity. The fact that sometimes we are not sure what proposition is being expressed with a sentence, even when we understand the sentence as such, shows that there is no necessary projection from the sentence level to the proposition level (nor is there one in the inverse sense). The same can be said for the other level relations. We may understand the content of an utterance and not be sure of the illocutionary intention, or figure out a given speech act from the sequence of speech acts it is part of without knowing exactly what the sentence that realized it meant.

2. Error correction. The fact that we can repair unity breaks at some levels from our understanding at other levels is evidence that the units in one level contain information about the other levels. Notice that this repair need not be overt. In conversation, for example, mental repair (and perhaps a brief non-verbal signal that it has occurred) is often enough. If there were a necessary projection of one level onto another, then errors would be carried over from one level into another, and therefore they would not even be noticed; there would only be one reading possible, the "wrong" one.

3. Jokes. Jokes often exploit divergences between different levels. On many occasions the art of a joke consists in setting the units of discourse in such a way that the rules of unity at one or more levels are surprisingly violated, while the rules at other levels are strictly followed, as if everything was normal. This becomes clear, for example, in elephant jokes, because the person who tells the joke and the person who listens are, in a way, acting the joke. The alternations of questions and answers provides unity at the levels of illocution and dissertation. The thematic organization of sentences results in unity at the sentence level. However, the propositions are about events which cannot co-occur in the world; they exhibit disunity. Absurdity is presented in an environment of normality. That is why we laugh, if we do.

Implications and further research

One implication of the view exposed in the above sections is that in each level of discourse the basic units can be seen as constituting larger units, by the effect of unity relations. In the level of dissertation, for example, it is possible to think about groups or blocks of dissertation acts which are, perhaps, intermediate between the act and what Selinker, Trimble and their colleagues called 'general rhetorical functions', which include, among others, reporting and describing[5] (see Trimble 1985: 11). Relations, conceived in the way indicated here, might even be the clue to define the rhetorical functions operationally — and to clarify other notions in the approach developed by the said authors —. In other words, act relations could bridge basic units and global structures. Further research into relations would, then, be important. The point will be touched upon again in Chapter 9, and the proposal will be further elaborated.

The above hints arise a second suggestion: that genres be treated as conventionalized sequences of dissertation acts. This approach could, again, provide operational definitions, which are needed to complement the existing definitions in terms of communicative purposes (provided, *eg* in Swales 1990: 58). Comments on this will also be added in Chapter 9.

One area where this chapter's discussions may have significant implications is teaching methodology. As indicated above, how levels stand in relation to each other must determine what can be learnt from what. If they are relatively

autonomous, as I have argued, then it will be logically impossible for a student to construct the notion of a sentence element, such as a noun phrase, if this is not seen in use, *ie* if it is not seen in the act of reference. More generally, utterances have to express sentences and propositions and they have to realize illocutionary and dissertation acts, for the student to be able to grasp the sentences as sentences. The consequence is that what has been called "authentic communication", and perhaps should be referred to as "integral communication", or simply "communication", is indispensable for language learning.

However, relative autonomy also means that, once the sentence and the sentence elements are identified, the grammar rules that link them will necessarily be easier to perceive if they are presented in isolation from the rest of language, *ie* if they are artificially detached from communication. The same holds for cohesion, coherence, connection and consistency; each type of unity should be focused in its own terms.

These remarks lead to propose a teaching methodology based on the alternation between integral communication and focus on one level of discourse. This is perhaps controversial, because it reinforces some of the main stands of the communicative approach and, at the same time, contradicts some the most radical principles that gave it origin. The issue will be taken up again in Chapter 10.

Summary

This chapter has stressed the importance of Widdowson's 1973 approach, which can be condensed in the following canon: in discourse analysis, a basic unit is to be postulated if and only if it is to be associated to a form of unity. In agreement with it, consistency and the dissertation act have been shown to belong in the same level. Therefore, the basic categories of discourse analysis are those of Table 4.

Table 4. *The basic categories of discourse analysis.*

UNIT	UNITY
sentence	cohesion
proposition	connection
illocutionary act	coherence
dissertation act	consistency

In this chapter, the principle of relative autonomy between levels has also been proposed and argued for. The implication that teaching should alternate integral communication and detached focus on discourse levels has then been derived.

Addendum

At this moment a note on the utterance, a unit different from those that have been discussed, must be made. It was mentioned in Chapter 2 in connection with the Xochimilco study, and it must be used in almost any analysis.

Until recently, most researchers have adopted a notion of utterance similar to Lyons's (1977: 26-27), which derives from definitions by Bloomfield (1926) and Harris (1951). According to this notion, an utterance is any stretch of talk before and after which there is silence. "It may consist of a sequence of sentences; it may also consist of one or more grammatically incomplete sentence-fragments." It is observable and, "up to a certain point, can be described in purely physical, or external, terms." It is, then, a term that can supposedly be used *"prior to and independently of...description within a particular theoretical framework"* (my emphasis).

It is roughly in this sense that utterances were used in the Xochimilco study (discussed in Chapter 2). Students' interventions were first divided into utterances and, then, utterances were coded to register the speech acts they were used to perform. There are, however, two important differences. One is that silence was not the only utterance boundary. Intonation changes that signalled the speaker regarded what had been uttered as a speech unit were also taken as ut-

terance limits. So, it was possible to have more than one utterance within a turn, whereas for Lyons there is an implicit equation between a turn and an utterance.

The second difference is that there was a non-physical verification of utterance boundaries after the coding. This was imposed by the methodological demand of coding one utterance as the realization of at least one act, and not more than one act in any of the three dimensions adopted. This demand was, in turn, related to Sinclair's (1973) minimum criteria for descriptive systems.

This position not only allows for a methodological rigour which is otherwise unattainable, but also reflects a very basic intuition of informed analysts. An utterance is a unit of production, which is used to realize units of illocutionary activity. It is, so to speak, the perceptible, etic manifestation of an emic unit, as opposed to a mere sound block. This intuition is expressed by Lyons himself:

> ...we will now draw a systematic distinction between the terms 'statement', 'question', 'command', etc., on the one hand, and 'declarative', 'interrogative', 'imperative', etc., on the other. We will use the former set of terms in relation to utterances ... and the latter in relation to system-sentences...

> (Lyons 1977: 30)

There is now in use a more complex definition of utterance than Lyons's. It is partly in agreement with the Xochimilco position and partly in disagreement. It was originally proposed by Scollon (1976) and successively refined by Sato (1985) and by Crookes and Rulon (1985). These two authors state it as follows:

> ...an utterance is defined as a stream of speech with at least one of the following characteristics:
> (1) under one intonation contour,
> (2) bounded by pauses, and
> (3) constituting a single semantic unit.

> (Crookes and Rulon 1985: 9)

According to this definition, an utterance is again a physical, observable entity whose boundaries are not necessarily determinable on purely physical criteria. It is also distinct from the turn (and more than one utterance can constitute a single

turn). However, there is no explicit use of the notion of act, and the idea that utterance limits have to be verified after analysis is absent.

The origin of the two differences is related to the researcher's aims. In a comparison of the utterance and other units, Crookes (1990) argues that the former is more valid in "second language acquisition studies" because it "reflects psychological production processes".

He is not very interested in illocutionary or dissertation development. The units he compares with the utterance are the turn, tone groups and grammatical units derived from the clause. Of the turn, he says it cannot reflect production processes because it is determined by interaction. This argument is wrong; we should be interested in those production processes learners use when they are engaged in interaction. But I will not discuss it any further, because the turn is a theme I can only mention here. Its proper treatment is outside the scope of this thesis.

What I wish to focus on is Crookes and Rulon's third characteristic. Referring to the utterance as a "semantic unit" can help to solve certain segmentation problems, some of which are discussed by Crookes (1990), and which include, for example, deciding whether two morpheme productions are holophrases or separate utterances.

Crookes stresses segmentation following their definition can contribute to achieving statistical reliability. However, this is only possible among researchers who have worked in personal contact. In fact, from Crookes's own discussion, it is evident that direct training is necessary. The vagueness of "semantic unit" make any reliability measurements non-replicable by independent researchers. Is this expression synonymous with 'referent', 'predicate', 'proposition' or 'act'? Does it mean something else?

The problem can be illustrated with the aid of some hypothetical data. Let us suppose that "Friday" is the felicious utterance of a sentence fragment which, in the appropriate context, represents a whole sentence, *eg* (18), and, at the same time, expresses a proposition and realizes illocutionary and dissertation acts, which we might, at this moment, describe as (19), (20) and (21).

(18) It is Friday.

(19) That the 26th is next Friday.

(20) The speaker provides requested information.

(21) The speaker asserts the proposition described by (19).

In this case, utterance boundaries can, and probably should, be drawn before and after "Friday". But let us now suppose that "Friday" is the infelicious start of "Friday...Tuesday, it is Tuesday", which should be analysed in terms of (22) to (25). Here, there should be no boundaries after "Friday", in spite of its being a semantic unit (a referential expression) and its being followed by a pause.

(22) It is Tuesday.

(23) That the 26th is the following Tuesday.

(24) The speaker provides requested information.

(25) The speaker asserts the proposition described by (23).

This shows that a more specific form of characteristic (3) in Crookes and Rulon's definition is needed. It also shows that neither characteristic (1) nor characteristic (2) are sufficient criteria for delimiting utterances and, therefore, verification of boundaries is required after analysis.

Now, what is the best candidate for characteristic (3)?

From various examples discussed in the work cited by Crookes (1990), such as Sato's (1985), it would seem that on most occasions they have propositions in mind. This, I believe, is a good, practical criterion, specially if we are coding on-going discourse. But it cannot be the fundamental one. On many occasions, if a proposition is recoverable by an analyst, she can also identify a sentence or a sentence fragment from which a whole sentence can be reconstructed. And on almost all cases she will be able to code a dissertation and an illocutionary act. However, the converse is not true. There are utterances which realize illocution-

ary acts, such as greetings, which do not express any proposition at all and to which the notions of sentence or sentence fragment are inapplicable.

More complex, a sequence of simple propositions can either constitute one complex proposition, *ie* be associated to one assertion, or be a series of separate utterances each performing one assertion. This is shown easily by (27) and (28), which are two potential renderings of (26) in writing.

(26) I know ... he went to the theatre ... and she went to the cinema

(27) I know, he went to the theatre and she went to the cinema.

(28) I know he went to the theatre. And she went to the cinema.

Another reason for not choosing the expression of a proposition as the fundamental verifying criterion for an utterance is that, in language classrooms, teachers and students often say an empty sentence, *ie* they do not express any proposition, although they still perform the act of exemplifying the sentence.

It follows that we should in the first place define the utterance as a physical unit that is used to realize a speech act. Probably, we should then add operational algorithms to both identify and verify utterances in corpora. These could include the use of pauses and intonation changes (or punctuation signs in writing), as possible boundary signals, and the recognition of complete propositions as valuable checks. But they will also require the confirmation of speech act elements, which are the object of the third part of the thesis.

In Chapter 10, I will be in a position to exemplify the use of the utterance as a segmentation unit in the analysis of authentic data. For now, let us retain that an utterance is a physical unit, whereas the sentence, the proposition, the illocutionary act and the dissertation act are the analyst's reconstructions.

Chapter 7 notes

1. For matters related to the thematic organization of information, see Halliday 1970 and Leech and Svartvik 1975 (sections 410-424).

2. For questions related to anaphoric links see Halliday and Hasan 1976.

3. The audiolingual method consisted essentially of graded repetitions of decontextualized sentences. Today, we would say that these did not express propositions nor realize varieties of acts.

4. A revision of general linguistics schools would show that it is impossible to define syntactic units without reference to morphological and semantic criteria; in the case of the noun phrase, for example, we need to mention morphemes as well as the notion of entity. Conversely, semantic or morphological categories, such as that of property or that of suffix, cannot be properly defined if syntactic classes are not mentioned. However, once the units in any one level are defined, its rules of combination are independent of the rules for any another level; for example, a sentence can be grammatically correct even if it expresses a contradiction or if it does not make sense.

5. Actually, the general rhetorical functions have complex labels, which include not only rhetorical operations, but also the object of such operations. Examples are: "stating purpose", "reporting past research", "presenting information on the operation of apparatus used in experiment". In my terms, they combine aspects that belong in the level of dissertation acts and aspects that belong in the level of propositions. Unfortunately, the combination is not a clear one; rather, it introduces confusions, which I have avoided in the body of the chapter.

PART III

Chapter 8

ILLOCUTION REVISITED

The central problem of this chapter is the identity criteria, or definition features, of illocutionary acts. This problem is approached from the view of illocution exposed in previous chapters, *ie* the view that the terrain of illocution is the terrain where words and actions meet. The aim is to elaborate the proposal, also presented earlier, that illocutionary developoment be described in deontic terms.

The elaboration stems from a discussion of Edmonson's critique of Searle's basic approach to the definition of speech acts. It emphasizes the importance of adhering strictly to Austin's distinction between illocution and perlocution and, therefore, the need to reject Searle's use of perlocutionary elements in the treatment of illocutionary acts. At the same time it isolates the elements in the approach which can be used to distinguish acts by systematic variation. This discussion also produces an initial identification of the features which have to be added in order to achieve a comprehensive framework.

How the proposal might be implemented is exemplified in the anlysis of a particular dialogue. This shows the various sorts of deontic interventions speakers make: comply with or violate the deontic conditions existing at the moment of utterance; change the conditions; propose changes; accept or reject the proposed changes.

From a further elaboration, which points to other examples, it is concluded that four elements are needed to define an illocutionary act: intervention, deontic values involved, person subjected to values and social relationship of speaker to subject. The potential of this approach is demonstrated in a list of sketches of definitions of various acts.

The view arrived at is used to clarify the main coding confusions noted in the first part of the thesis. This clarification suggests ways to link the study of acts with the study of larger units, like act pairs and act sequences.

As anounced in Chapter 1, the points made are articulated to reject the main arguments that aim to exclude speech acts from discourse analysis and pragmatics: the one held by Levinson and by Brown and Yule and the one put forth by Sperber and Wilson.

Finally, the chapter points to two applications in the classroom of the insights provided: the use of the interaction itself and reflection on it.

Critique of the illocutionary acts paradigm

The discussion in chapters 4 and 5 emphasized that the point of illocution is to make present, modify or create the conditions for the interpretation and judgement of action. The basis for focusing on this was Austin's statement that illocutionary acts are often "designed... for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct" (Austin 1962: 15). The view adopted was reinforced by showing that the distinction between illocution and perlocution (Austin 1962: 109-120), which is commonly misunderstood, delimits illocutionary acts to the social or civil domain.

This position is, in fact, an invitation to reconsider the terms in which illocutionary acts are usually defined. To see why, let us take, as a starting point, the paradigm established by Searle, which, as was mentioned in chapter 2, is a variation of Austin's general felicity conditions (Austin 1962: 14-15). According to it, every type of act has four kinds of rules (Searle 1969: 54-71). One is about the 'propositional content' of the utterance that is used to perform the act; another states its 'preparatory' conditions, *ie* those that have to obtain at the moment of utterance; there is also a 'sincerity' rule, which specifies the speakers intentions and beliefs supposedly necessary for the act to count as such; the last rule is called 'essential', and it describes the effect of the act.

The prototypical analysis of an act in these terms is that of promising. From Searle's summary (1969: 63), which illustrates well the meaning of the four rule types, the following scheme can be obtained:

Promising.

- *Propositional content.* Future act A of speaker S.
- *Preparatory.* S believes the hearer H prefers S's doing to his not doing A. It is not obvious to S and H that S would do A in the normal course of events.
- *Sincerity.* S intends to do A.
- *Essential.* S undertakes the obligation to do A.

The four types of rules seem to capture the essence of illocutionary acts. In fact, by specifying rules of each type Searle can distinguish several types of acts (Searle 1969: 64). Nevertheless, the rule types have been subject to different criticisms, among others by Levinson (1983: 278-79). Probably the most incisive are Edmondson's, and I believe their discussion can be very illuminating:

> A first problem is the propositional content rule, *ie* determining whether and in what sense a proposition P is expressed in an utterance T. The preparatory rule...suffers from the weakness that H's preferences and S's beliefs as to H's preferences are not open for inspection, except in so far as we may deduce these from the discourse itself. Similarly the sincerity condition clearly offers no identificational criterion, as following Gricean co-operative principles we assume sincerity. Finally, the essential condition provides simply a dictionary definition of the notion of promising...
>
> (Edmondson 1981: 21)

Edmondson's observations divide Searle's rules in two sets. On the one hand, we have the propositional content rule and the essential condition, which, for Edmondson, are inadequate; on the other, we have the preparatory rule and the sincerity condition, which are "not open for inspection".

Clearly, delimiting our objects of study to directly observable entities has many advantages. But it seems to me that the fact that the third and fourth rules

are about unobservables is not necessarily a weakness. In order not to get into a long philosophical discussion, let us simply remember that physicists have never actually seen an atom; they have only deduced their presence from their macroscopic effects and, recently, from their paths.

If the preparatory and sincerity rules were necessary, then all we could, and should, do is to demand the derivation of empirical consequences from these rules. However, are they necessary? I believe they are not, for the reasons that follow.

The inadequate/unobservable distinction is the reflection of a more fundamental distinction about the kinds of rules, or rather the kinds of entities the rules are about. The apparently inadequate rules specify aspects of observable discourse, whereas the unobservable rules relate to the psychological or mental states supposedly associated with such aspects.

Now, the hearer's states belong in the domain of perlocution and are to be described as the effects of processes denoted by verbs such as: "convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading" (Austin 1962: 109). I do not see why, then, the speaker's states are to be taken as part of the social or, in Austin's terms, 'conventional' performance of acts described in terms such as "informing, ordering, warning, undertaking, etc." (Austin 1962: 109).

If our field of enquiry is philosophy of mind, philosophy of will, or even social psychology, it is understandable that we be primarily interested in whether a speaker is sincere or not when making a promise. But if our field is discourse analysis, then what we must be interested in is describing the promise itself in social or conventional terms. Putting it differently, S may not intend to do A and still promise to do A. In that case, of course, he or she will have to, so to speak, take back the promise with an adequate excuse or assume the social sanctions for not keeping it. What the discourse analyst has to describe then is, precisely, that the person who makes a promise becomes, by making it, subject to a set of social obligations.

Here we see that Edmondson's opposition to Searle's essential rule for promising is too strong. The phrase that states the opposition carries with it, I think, two points. Firstly, Edmondson wants to stress that what Searle is doing is

to explain the English lexeme 'promising', rather than to establish an analytic category; this is made quite explicit later on (Edmondson 1981: 22). On the basis of what I said in Chapter 3, I could not disagree that analysts must be aware of this danger.

Edmondson's second point is an objection to Searle's explaining the said meaning via an equative predication: "if we know what it is to undertake a commitment, we presumably know what it is to make a 'promise' " (Edmondson 1981: 22). I could not but disagree with this objection, though again on the basis of Chapter 3.

In order not to base my disagreement only on a conception of definitions, and take Edmondson's objection in its own terms, it is necessary to indicate the direction of his argument. Although this will introduce further complications, it will also allow us to note certain valid contributions which can help shape a theory of discourse.

Edmondson's thesis is that illocutionary acts are "co-operative achievements or conversational outcomes" (1981: 26), by which he means that for what is usually understood as an act to really be an act, it must have been accepted. A bet is not a bet if it is not taken, he says.

The thesis focuses on something undeniably important, which further stresses the social and interactive nature of illocution I have been emphasizing. There is, however, a problem with this thesis. If an act only takes place if it is accepted, what happens when it is not? According to the thesis, nothing happens, which is definitely unacceptable. Edmondson's own discussion of promises betrays the position: "The conversation may then conclude without my having entered into any commitment to buy a new vase, although I have 'promised' to do so" (1981: 26).

The untenability of the thesis is even more evident when we think of a promise which was accepted during one communicative event and taken back by the speaker or 'given back' by the hearer in another. The negotiative nature of discourse, which is Edmondson's concern, makes it impossible to define analytic categories on the sole basis of final outcomes. What we want to be able to record is every moment in the illocutionary game, however tentative it may be, which is

in fact what Edmondson himself proposes in sections that follow the one being considered (see *eg* Edmondson 1981: 87-94).

In other words, we wish to record both the acts performed by individual participants in an event and the act pairs, or even sequences, constituted by those acts. Units larger than the act, such as Edmonson's 'bet', are definitely needed, but giving them the name 'act', and thus leaving the basic unit nameless will not help much — or rather, it will help, but at the same time will cause damage —.

Not to leave loose ends, and to reinforce the warning about the use of everyday terms made at various points in this thesis, it can be noted that when the verb 'to bet' is used performatively, it is associated with the act of placing or proposing a bet, whereas the reporting use of the verb is in expressions referring not to that act alone but to the cluster of proposal plus acceptance of the bet, as in (1) and (2), respectively.

(1) I bet you a pound he didn't do it yesterday.

(2) Peter wanted to bet a pound, but John refused. So they only bet fifty pence.

We can now go back to Searle's essential rule. It is clear that the idea of undertaking an obligation cannot be left out of any definition of promising, whether dictionary or technical. This is why I said Edmondson's objection was too strong. And it is too strong: the idea does need to be modified. A promise is, strictly, not the undertaking, but the move towards, or the proposal of, undertaking the obligation. Obligations are contracted with others and, hence, the interlocutor has to accept the proposal. This might not be evident because in many cultures a non-rejection, and therefore almost any further act, counts as the acceptance. But it is not difficult to think of situations that would be reported as a rejection of the obligation. Take (3), for instance.

(3) He: I promise to do it at any cost.
     She: No, please don't take risks.

In cases like this, we want to say that he promised, even though the obligation was not really undertaken in the end.

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Edmondson's objection to Searle's propositional content rule is, again, too strong. It is true that in the following fabricated exchange he provides (1981: 21) A does not strictly express a proposition in his second intervention (underlined by Edmondson).

(4) A: I think I'll go and get a beer.
B: Oh, get me one too, will you?
A: <u>Okay</u>.

Let us, for the sake of the argument, agree that "Okay" is a promise (Edmondson 1981: 21-22), which on the basis of the previous analysis we would probably have to reject. What has to be clear is that the analyst must somehow relate "Okay" to the proposition expressed by B, namely (5).

(5) Get (A, B, beer)

"Okay" here is not like hello in greetings, which, it is true, is not related to any proposition whatsoever. The expression counts as the undertaking to carry out the action described by B's proposition, *ie* (5), undeniably a future act of A.

The proposition describing an action promised is, then, not necessarily a content of the utterance that counts as the promise, but such a proposition must somehow be present for the speaker making the promise and the hearer accepting or refusing it. In the example above, the proposition's being involved only by virtue of the interaction strengthens Edmonson's view about the nature of discourse; but it does not necessarily imply the proposition has to be left out of the analysis.

The last statement points to a more basic question: can the propositional content of a given speech act distinguish this from another act? To do so, let us first analyse the content. The point about specifying it is to identify an action and the agent of an action. Thus, we would record (6) as the propositional content of (7).

(6) Bring cup of tea (speaker)

(7) Would you care for a cup of tea?

Of course, a more detailed propositional analysis of (7) would first identify (8) as the proposition expressed and would record (6) as a derived proposition.

(8) Care for a cup of tea (hearer)

An even more delicate analysis would treat both propositions as consisting of two arguments, *ie* they would have the form of (9) and (10).

(9) Bring (speaker, cup of tea)

(10) Care for (hearer, cup of tea)

But for the present purposes, it is sufficient to consider (6) as the propositional content of (7).

Now, if the utterance were (11), and the propositional content were (12), instead of (6), then we would have a different act, a request rather than an offer.

(11) Could I have a cup of tea?

(12) Bring cup of tea (hearer).

But if the utterance were (13), and the content (14), the act would not change. We would still have an offer.

(13) Do you want a piece of cake?

(14) Bring piece of cake (speaker)

Hence, the specific action to be performed does not determine the speech act, but the actor does. This is the answer to the basic question. Then, the propositional content rule is important because it specifies the subject who becomes committed by the act, although it could be argued that this information is also contained in the essential rule.

In sum, I would definitely agree with Edmonson on the conception that doing things with words is a cooperative achievement. However, I do not think this im-

plies the need to abandon the idea of acts as individual contributions to discourse. What it does show is that a parameter has to be added to the standard analysis, to deal with proposals and agreements.

On the other hand, there is no reason to eliminate from the definition of an act ideas such as those involved in Searle's preparatory and essential rules for promising. What has to be eliminated are beliefs and intentions to motivate, for they belong in a domain different from illocution. If the term 'intention' is used at all, it ought to be restricted to perlocutionary changes.

In more concrete terms, what should be retained from the discussion so far is that to specify what certain acts are we have to state: 1) who is the subject involved, the speaker (as in a promise), the hearer (as in a request) or both (as in a bet), and 2) whether they are proposing an obligation, accepting that it be undertaken or actually undertaking it.

Reformulating the theory

I believe such kinds of considerations ought to be the basis for a more general account of illocutionary acts; but, as suggested in earlier chapters, other deontic notions, besides obligations, must be employed. This is obvious even from a brief and simple reflection on acts such as inviting. If we were to develop an analysis of this act in terms of Searle's types of rules, the propositional content rule would be something like: future event E; S will be host. The essential rule would be of this sort: it counts as allowing H to be present at E.

It may be noted, in passing, that in this discussion we would again be faced with the problem of everyday vocabulary. Very often 'invitation' is used to refer to a compound of the illocutionary act described above plus some features in the perlocutionary domain, such as S showing that H's presence is desired or S wishing to please H. Nevertheless, these features are not strictly necessary, which is shown by the existence of lexical and paralinguistic means to indicate in a report if an invitation was accompanied by them or not or, even, if they were sincere or not. "T'was a formal invitation" with falling or falling-rising intonation on the first syllable of "formal" would, for example, very probably mean that H's presence was not really desired. (A rising intonation on the same syllable would

give the utterance a very different meaning: that E is going to be formal, or that the illocutionary force of the act was actually more than that of an invitation).

Returning to the point that was being introduced, if we consult works on logic and the social sciences (*eg* di Bernanrdo 1974), we will find that von Wright's deontic logic (1951) is adequate for the analysis of socially sanctioned conduct. In this system there are four basic normative notions: 'obligatory', 'forbidden', 'permitted', and 'indifferent'. If these are used in combination with the operators of truth-functional logic, only one notion is strictly necessary to start with, because the others can be defined in terms of it. It seems convenient to choose 'permitted' to be this starting notion (di Bernardo 1974: 235). In this case, the definitions for the other notions are:

Obligatory. An act is said to be obligatory if not doing it is not permitted.

Forbidden. A forbidden act is an act not permitted.

Indifferent. An act is indifferent if both doing it and not doing it are permitted.

If we represent an act by 'A' and indicate each notion by its initial letter, we could, following di Bernardo (1974: 235), express the three definitions as:

(1) $OA = not\ P(not\ A)$

(2) $FA = not\ PA$

(3) $IA = PA\ and\ P(not\ A)$

A few comments could be helpful before the notions are used for the purposes of this section. Not all deontic logic systems start with 'permitted'; there are systems, more developed than von Wright's, which start with the notion of 'sanction', and define 'permitted' as 'not sanctioned' (see, *eg* Anderson 1966). This seems to be useful for the development of certain kinds of discussions which distinguish cases where sanction is necessarily provided from cases where it is flexible (di Bernardo 1974: 237). However, I think that, at least for the present, discourse analysts need not get involved in such discussions; it is possible to leave 'sanction' as a pre-theoretical term, and take 'permitted' as the primitive undefined notion.

Now, if we depend on the everyday meaning of 'permitted' and 'indifferent', they might appear to be synonymous. However, when the logician wants a system of the sort defined above, 'indifferent' is needed because, according to such definitions, what is obligatory is permitted. It is, then, necessary to distinguish what is permitted and obligatory from what is permitted and not obligatory. In other words, the important distinction is that between 'obligatory', and 'indifferent'.

It follows that if we were to use the notions as the basis for a theory of illocution, the actual use of 'permitted' could either be ambigous or redundant. If we only said something was permitted, it might not be clear if it was obligatory or indifferent; and when we had already said that it was either obligatory or indifferent, it would necessarily follow that it was also permitted. Therefore, in rigorous definitions of speech acts we only need the three notions defined in (1), (2) and (3), although in certain types of analyses, if context allows us to resolve ambiguities, it might be more natural to use 'permitted', rather than 'indifferent'.

Taking these ideas into account, a conception of illocution emerges from the earlier discussion in this chapter and the remarks on chapters 4, 5 and 6. The first element of this conception is the point that any illocutionary act or action has a deontic value at the moment it occurs. For example, after a sequence of acts, thanking may be obligatory (for a given subject), whereas at other moments it may be indifferent or even forbidden.

Thus, it is possible that an act will simply comply with its deontic value obtaining at the moment it occurs, as would be the case with the provision of previously requested information. Of course, this means that an act could also violate the existing conditions, as happens with unfulfilled promises.

But this leads us to the other elements of the conception, for another possibility is that the act could cause a change in the values of the possible acts and actions to follow; this is, for example, what would happen with an invitation or a greeting, which would respectively turn the invited action and the answering to the greeting indifferent and obligatory. Moreover, the act could also propose, rather than alone cause, the change, which is clear from the discussion in the previous section. Clearly, the act could also be an acceptance or a rejection of an already proposed change.

An application

Let us illustrate this conception in the analysis of a stretch of discourse. This will also allow for the introduction of a further notion needed to deal with the elements of illocution: the notion of relevant context. The stretch I have chosen is a dialogue between a woman and her husband (an adapted and translated version of one in Mallea 1936):

(4) Husband: Are we going to the party?
     Wife: I thought we were.
     Husband: Well, we don't have to.
     Wife: I know, but we said we were going.
     Husband: We can call Ernesto and Jacqueline...
     Wife: Yes, of course; but don't you think we should have called last weeK? I mean, if you don't want to go...
     Husband: All right, we'll go.

Before the interaction there are a series of conditions, a context. The husband is committed to go to a party with his wife. This commitment is linked to another one which belongs in a wider context: both interlocutors contracted an obligation with Ernesto and Jacqueline, because they accepted a previous invitation and later confirmed their attendance.

The first utterance, "are we going to the party?", is used to perform the act of proposing that it be allowed to propose changes to the first context, the commitment of the husband to the wife. This proposal is rejected with the apparently innocent "I thought we were", which restates the context.

Nevertheless, the proposal that proposals get the value indifferent has an effect. This is due to the fact that the rejection is not definite. This, in turn, is a consequence of a rule (that both spouses accept) which says that it is valid to make proposals so long as what they refer to is relevant, and the proposal to allow proposals has brought the commitment to the terrain of relevance.

The next intervention is more direct; the husband does not propose that proposals be permitted: he simply proposes. "Well, we don't have to go" explicitly posits that the value indifferent replaces the value obligatory.

This time the rejection is achieved by bringing the second obligation to the terrain of relevance, which broadens the context under discussion: "...we said we were going".

Again, we have a proposal that proposals of change be deontically indifferent; this time, the object is the second obligation, namely the one wife and husband together have *vis-a-vis* Ernesto and Jacqueline: "We can call..." This time the rejection is definite. The wife adduces a rule about when it is permitted to renounce an obligation: "...we should have called last week..."

Everything comes to be as it was in the beginning: "All right, we'll go." We have witnessed a battle over deontic conditions at the end of which they remain the same. All acts were proposals of change and extensions of context. Even so, the dialogue stresses the deontic nature of illocutionary acts.

Further examples

Implicit in the previous analysis is a consideration of the social roles of the subjects involved; the account makes sense because we know we are talking about two spouses. Although this type of element seems not to be important in Searle's scheme, it has been focused on in conceptions that have had considerable effects in applied linguistics, such as Labov's (1969) account of orders mentioned in Chapter 7, and it has been taken as fundamental in the delimitation of corpora in studies of paramount significance (see, for instance, Sinclair and Coulthard 1975), as well as in the design of pedagogical materials (see, *eg*, Candlin *et al* 1974). Therefore, here, only a brief space will be devoted to showing the need to consider roles, in the form of some simple examples that further illustrate the conception of illocution as deontic intervention.

Let us begin by completing an idea which has been developed at various points above. Entering another person's home is prohibited. An invitation will make it permitted. However, the invitation has to be issued by the home owner

(or some person who has received the power to invite from the owner). If the inviting were done by someone else, it would be void, or unhappy. As Austin (1962: 15) put it: "the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked."

Now, if I were a plumber and the owner of a house asked me to fix a piping and I accepted, we would have performed a series of acts at the end of which, among other things, it would be obligatory for me to come into his house and fix the piping. Realizing this last action would, in turn, count as complying with the obligation created. This would, in such context, commit the owner to give me a sum of money. And that action would, obviously, count as the act of paying.

Between the act of requesting the repair and the act of paying, other acts which were forbidden before the former and would again be prohibited after the latter would be indifferent, such as asking the owner about his family's hygiene habits. In other words, my social role would be variable, rather than fixed; and it would vary because of the acts performed. This means the role and the deontic context are, as it were, two sides of the same coin. Having a certain role is having to comply with the conditions established by given sets of acts and being in a position to perform other determined sets of acts.

The above implies a completely detailed analysis of a discourse would require the use of complex sociological information about the roles of the participants. However, it also entails an analysis at an acceptable level of delicacy could be carried out by specifying the roles in simple, non-specialist terms. Perhaps in most cases it will be sufficient to specify whether the speaker and the hearer have a symmetrical or a non-symmetrical relationship *vis-a-vis* the acts in question. Thus, we could characterize an owner just as someone who has the right to issue invitations and request repairs, without entering into legal considerations. Likewise, a boss would be a person in a position to order, a spouse would be an equal, and so on.

A conclusion

The elements of illocution are, then:

1. The type of intervention on the deontic context. Does it comply, violate, or modify it? Is it a proposal of change?

2. The subjects affected. Who is or would be bound by the deontic conditions in question, the speaker, the hearer, both, or some third person?

3. The role relationship between subjects. Is it symmetric or non-symmetric? If it is asymmetric, is the speaker in a position of authority or is he subordinate to the hearer?

4. The deontic values involved. Is what is in question obligatory, forbidden or indifferent? If a change of conditions is proposed or effected, is it from obligatory to indifferent or is it a different change?

Some definitions

Let us exemplify the use of such elements, by showing some of the distinctions we can make with them. The following are essential sketches of various speech acts, whose names could or could not have exactly corresponding everyday meanings:

Promise. Proposal; speaker; symmetric; indifferent to obligatory.

Request. Proposal; hearer; symmetric; indifferent to obligatory.

Agreement. Assent; hearer; symmetric; indifferent to obligatory.

Acceptance. Assent; speaker; symmetric; indifferent to obligatory.

Order. Effect; hearer; asymmetric (authority); indifferent to obligatory.

Execution. Comply; speaker; obligatory.

Nomination. Proposal; third person; symmetric to asymmetric (authority).

Investment. Proposal; hearer; symmetric to asymmetric (authority).

Accession. Assent; speaker; symmetric to asymmetric (authority).

Declination. Rejection; speaker; symmetric to asymmetric (authority).

Act sequences and act classes

From the previous definitions, it can be seen that the four element view of illocutionary acts can produce a more systematic classification of acts than Searle's (1976). This will be commented on in the following chapter, because, as suggested in Chapter 5, some major differences between the two taxonomies involve the fundamental distinction between illocution and dissertation.
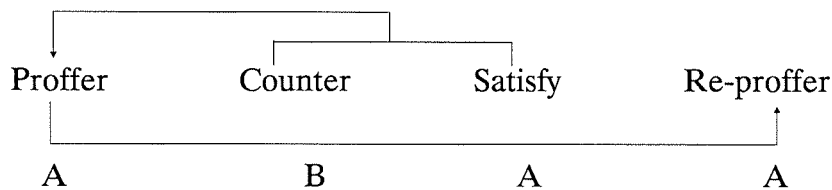
Another advantage of the view is that it explains many of the coding confusions noted in chapters 1 and 2. What the Mallea dialoque tells us, in a negative fashion, is that speakers' participation in discourse is to some extent goal oriented. This is probably the source of Austin's stress on their intentions. But the (intuitive or explicit) realization of that fact is almost surely what makes analysts concentrate on the deontic outcomes of sequences of acts. This is evident in the work by Blum-Kulka et al (1987) criticized in Chapter 1.

To make the point clear, it should be stated that there is nothing wrong in principle with studying outcomes, so long as the researcher is aware that he is not observing individual acts directly. Otherwise he will make mistakes comparable to saying that no act was performed at all by the husband or the wife in the dialogue.

Of course, the constructive criticism would now be to suggest that the concept of act sequences be focused on, to bridge individual acts and final outcomes. There have been a number of interesting contributions that could be used for this purpose. Conversation analysts, for example, use the notion of adjacency pairs to refer to interventions that have to combine in binary constructions, such as greetings (see Schegloff and Sacks 1973). The obligatory occurrence of the

second intervention makes it a part of a larger unit, the pair. A more sophisticated concept of not necessarily adjacent pairs is implicit in Edmondson's 1981 model of spoken discourse, which is designed to capture phenomena like the one represented by the lines and arrows:

Figure 3. *Edmondson's diagram.*

To develop a proper view of act sequences that integrates conversation analysis and Edmonson's model is outside the scope of this thesis. But the direction these developments suggest will be retaken in the last section of this chapter and in Chapter 10, because it can indicate the route for interesting applications of the findings presented here.

Let us now focus on another source of confusions, besides taking sequences for acts: identifying acts with act types, which results from considering only one or two of the defining elements. This is the problem in the article by Ellis (1992) also criticized in Chapter 1. He includes orders under requests because he assumes, perhaps unconsciously, that establishing the person subjected is sufficient to distinguish one act from another. That is, he equates the whole class of initiatives to commit the hearer with one of the members of such class, namely, requests. In other words, his mistake is to ignore type of intervention and role relationship. More will be said about this in Chapter 10.

This leads us to a third source of confusion, which is inconsistent classification. What the proposed view implies is that a systematic and comprehensive division of illocutionary acts would be a four dimensional matrix. This, of course, means that we could do what Ellis attempts to do, *ie* concentrate only on one

dimension, but, again, provided that we are aware that is what we are doing. Unfortunately, most discourse analysis schemes mix dimensions inadvertently; at some moment they classify according to one dimension and at the next according to another. Simple examples of this problem are found in the pioneering scheme by Bellack *et al* (1966). As said in Chapter 2, 'Soliciting' and 'structuring' are two of its categories. Ignoring for the moment the fact that the latter is a complex compound that involves propositional elements as well as speech act elements, whereas the former is a simple category, we can say that the two are alike, in that they focus on subjects and values. Now, 'responding', a third category, is very different, in that it focuses on the type of intervention. The reader will find similar inconsistencies in other coding schemes that followed Bellack's, including the ECS and Sinclair and Coulthard's model (see Chapter 2 for more extensive comments on these).

I think the three types of confusions cannot only be explained easily once discourse is viewed from the perspective proposed here, but also avoided. Chapter 10 indicates how.

Defense of illocutionary acts

The previous two sections consider the advantages the views proposed in this thesis have once the idea that discourse is to be studied in speech act terms has been accepted. But it is also important to see to which extent they contribute to the plausibility of the idea itself. Probably the best way of doing so is by answering rejections of the idea.

The critiques of speech acts which have had more impact on scholars are of two sorts. One claims that speech act analysis is impossible. The other that it is irrelevant.

The original proponent of the first sort of criticism was Levinson. His argument has been adopted and extended by Brown and Yule in a very influential textbook:

> An important practical drawback is expressed by Levinson (1980: 20) in
> the following terms: 'If one looks even cursorily at a transcribed record
> of a conversation, it becomes immediately clear that we do not know

how to assign speech acts in a non-arbitrary way.' The problem with identifying speech acts should not necessarily lead the analyst to abandon their investigation. Rather, it should lead the analyst to recognise that the way speech acts are conventionally classified into discrete act-types such as 'request', 'promise', 'warn', etc. may lead to an inappropriate view of what speakers do with utterances. From the speaker's point of view several sentences (or syntactic chunks) strung together may constitute a single act.

Thus, a fairly extended utterance may be interpreted as a warning or as an apology. On the other hand, one utterance may perform several simultaneous acts.

Consider the following utterance of a husband to his wife:

(24) Hey, Michele, you've passed the exam.

He may be 'doing' several things at once. He may be simultaneously 'asserting', 'congratulating', 'apologising' (for his doubts), etc. As it is presently formulated, Speech Act theory does not offer the discourse analyst a way of determining how a particular set of linguistic elements, uttered in a particular conversational context, comes to receive a particular interpreted meaning.

(Brown and Yule 1983: 233)

The main premise in this attack is that analysts have not produced an algorithm to derive a speech act from any sentence. A second premise is that, if the algorithm existed, one and only one act should be derived for every sentence. An important presupposition accompanies these premises: that analysts should have already produced the algorithm if speech act theory was sound. The central conclusion, devastating in spite of the rhetorical mitigation offered by "as it is presently formulated", is that speech act analysis cannot contribute anything to discourse analysis. The argument is apparently supported by more specific observations, such as: 1) there are cases when the speaker does not perceive what analysts would regard as individual acts, only what has been referred to here as outcomes; 2) utterance (24) is used to perform several speech acts, rather than one.

The main premise is true and the second one is a matter open to discussion. The first observation requires empirical support which is not provided and all the evidence that could be adduced in a deliberation like Brown and Yule's or the present one is contrary to it. The presupposition and the second observation are

definitely mistaken and, therefore, should be regarded as evidence of the need for more speech act theory, rather than less. The conclusion is unacceptable.

Let us take the observations and the presupposition first, and then the question about the number of acts per sentence. That in certain conversations speakers only perceive outcomes would mean that they do not react to the individual acts within those conversations. However, examples like Mallea's dialogue and our most basic intuitions tell us that the model speaker does fine tune his interventions to the changing deontic scene and that deviations from this behaviour are either failures or intentional refusals to conform, as opposed to normal conduct, which is what Brown and Yule's characterization implies.

Other sorts of evidence in support of the reality of speech acts for speakers have been provided at different points in this and previous chapters. One is the recognition certain jokes reveal of coherence as distinct from other types of unity. Another is the variable meaning of speech act verbs, which, like 'bet', can refer either to individual proposals or to final outcomes.

Now, Brown and Yule's description of (24) reveals the types of confusions that have justified this thesis. The simultaneous performance of two or more acts could become problematic if it led to a violation of coding principles or if the acts were contradictory. But these situations could arise only if the acts were in the same domain. At best, 'assertion' is a dissertation act, if not a part of one. 'Congratulating' belongs in the perlocutionary domain and 'etc.' is meaningless. The only illocutionary act left is 'apologizing'. So, even if we accepted the second premise, the observation would not warrant the conclusion.

Turning to the presupposition, what the original distinctions by Strawson, Austin, Searle and Widdowson tell us is that neither propositions nor acts are contained in sentences. Therefore it is not rational to demand that analysts produce derivational algorithms, let alone expect these to have been produced already. If they are at all possible, they will be obtained after successful complex analyses have provided data for building them, and they cannot be established as requirements prior to simple analyses.

The correct scientific strategy at this moment is to demand criteria to verify or falsify the identification of acts by the analyst. And although some of these

criteria will probably involve experimental and qualitative research of production and reception, some others will have to be built into the analysis itself, because there has to be evidence in the discourse; acts leave traces. But the only way to arrive at such trace criteria will be by improving our theoretical frameworks, rather than renouncing them. In fact, the kind of definitions arrived at in this chapter take us very near to the criteria. The type of intervention implies insertion in the context provided by other acts and, hence, forces explanatory cogency.

Let us now take the critique that claims that speech act analysis is not relevant. It has been put forth by Sperber and Wilson. In a most trascendental book, they say:

> A crucial assumption behind this pragmatic programme is that the assignment of every utterance to a particular speech-act type is part of what is communicated and plays a necessary role in comprehension. What is surprising is how little attention has been paid to justifying this assumption. It is one thing to invent, for one's own theoretical purposes, a set of categories to use in classifying utterances of native speakers, or to try to discover the set of categories that native speakers use in classifying their own utterances. It is quite another to claim that such classification plays a necessary role in communication and comprehension. To see the one type of investigation as necessarily shedding light on the other is rather like moving from the observation that tennis players can generally classify strokes as volleys, lobs, approach shots, cross-court backhands and so on, to the conclusion that they are unable to perform or return a stroke without correctly classifying it.

> (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 244)

To this, after a brief description of how speech acts constitute a game of bridge, they add:

> However, the study of bidding is part of the study of bridge, not of verbal communication. Generally speaking, the study of institutional speech acts such as bidding, or declaring war, belongs to the study of institutions.

> (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 245)

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Again, the attack is supported on unwarranted and false assumptions. Among these, for example, is the idea that the main concern of speech act theory has been the decoding process. It has not...yet. Its main concern has been what, using Sperber and Wilson's term, might be called 'institutional meaning' of utterances. Therefore, someone who aimed to demonstrate that speech acts are not a legitimate object of study for anyone interested in communication would have to show that what speakers do when they speak is not done. That person would, in turn, have to explain coherent but non cohesive and unconnected responses, among other communication phenomena, without using the notion of speech act. But the very examples Sperber and Wilson give show that people do do things with words and that interlocutors not only understand what is being done, but they also respond to it.

The worst assumption in the attack is that the speech act "programme" claims speakers consciously classify acts. To base the conclusion that speech act theory should be left out of communication studies on this assumption is like concluding that grammar is irrelevant for the study of language because grammarians claim that speakers classify sentences the same way they do, or like rejecting Sperber and Wilson's theory on the grounds that they say speakers explicitly identify explicatures and implicatures. Just as Sperber and Wilson do not say so, nor grammarians equate knowledge of grammar with knowledge about grammar, speech act analysts have never claimed that speakers necessarily theorize while they speak, let alone attributed their theories to speakers.

The only valid conclusion that can be drawn from Sperber and Wilson's views is one mentioned earlier in this chapter, namely that the student of communication is not well equiped to carry out certain communication studies, and, therefore, interdisciplinary efforts may be necessary. To study bridge communication, besides a discourse analyst, a bridge expert would certainly be required. A detailed investigation might even require other people, such as a game theoretician. But this does not grant the exclusion of speech act analysis, nor "the study of institutions", from research about communication.

It is interesting to observe here that Sperber and Wilson themselves use speech act insights. In the best exposition of their own theory, that the most relevant interpretation of an utterance is that which yields more implications at the lowest processing cost, they say:

As always, the speaker must have some reason for thinking that this surplus of information will be relevant, and more relevant than any alternative information she could provide. She may know, for example, that the hearer is wondering what drink to offer Susan.

(Sperber and Wilson 1986b: 383;

my emphasis)

Further on, they add:

The indirect answer (2b) simultaneously *refuses* the *offer* of coffee and *explains* the refusal, thus saving the hearer the time he might have spent speculating...

(Sperber and Wilson 1986b: 383;

my emphasis)

The authors almost explicitly recognize that they are using a notion of relevance more complex than their definition suggests. Clearly, it is not only the benefit/processing-cost relation which determines it, but also (mainly?) the deontic context that establishes the obligation to answer offers and explain refusals. In this connection, it would seem that the first mention of the speech act issue, "she *may* know, *for example*, that the hearer is *wondering* what drink to offer" (my emphasis), is both a device to introduce the topic and a mechanism to avoid its proper recognition as part of the object of study.

Putting the defense in the authors' tone, it is one thing not to want to focus on speech acts, or one's definitions of relevance not being capable of handling them. It is quite another to argue in an acceptable way that speech acts are irrelevant.

Applications

The inevitability of speech acts directs us to an application in the classroom of the insights in this chapter: the use of what teacher and students do as teacher and students. The organization of the various types of activities, *eg* expositions, group work, or evaluation, offer opportunities for practising offers, requests, or-

ders and many other illocutionary acts, possibly including nominations and appointments, as will be suggested in Chapter 10.

The roles of teacher and student are often implicitly degraded by communicative forms of teaching which advocate their substitution for "authentic" characters, such as those of buyer and seller. However, in so far as these roles are constitutive of the social set of activities called 'education', and people participating in it do not only play, but actually assume them, one can hardly find less artificial settings to work with speech acts than the classroom interaction.

There is, so to speak, a sociology of the classroom, which probably operates all the time, even when students are involved in character play. And this sociology might determine learning outcomes. Indeed, the most important result of the Xochimilco study commented on in Chapter 2 was that students participating in one kind of interaction had opportunities to practise a wider variety of illocutionary acts than students participating in another (as well as more opportunities for practising).

If the exploitation of teacher-student and student-student interaction as pedagogic material is a plausible idea, then, perhaps increasing the students' involvement in classroom affairs and classroom management might also contribute to their effectively doing more things with words. And if this is so, then, reflecting on and discussing about classroom events would probably also have possitive effects on learning. But this would require appropriate conceptual frameworks that focus on the relevant aspects of discourse. The use of this chapter's findings for such purposes is another of the themes of Chapter 10.

Summary

The idea that illocutionary acts create and modify deontic contexts has been developed, and four types of elements to define those acts systematically have been isolated. These are: intervention, value, subject and role. The resulting view has been employed to clarify coding confusions, defend speech act analysis and suggest that classroom interaction be used as pedagogic material.

Chapter 9

DISSERTATION

Considering that the approach to defining illocutionary acts in terms of types of elements adopted in the previous chapter contributed significantly to solve the problems identified in the first part of the thesis, it will be followed here in relation to dissertation acts. However, given that the exposition of dissertation elements was already advanced in Chapter 3, each one will be addressed here individually, in discussions different from the ones that identified illocution elements in sets. Moreover, although an examination of Edmonson's critique of Searle's model proved to be very useful, there will be no initial reference to global models here, because there are no global models.

Nevertheless, there will be a prior introduction. Its theme will be the way reference and predication are usually dealt with (without necessarily being identified as forming part of a speech act scheme). It will be followed by expositions of these two elements. Afterwards, force of assertion will be considered.

A discussion of truth value and probability expressions will follow. It has been included because such expressions can be used to convey forces or to realize predications and could, therefore, be problematic for the analyst. The discussion will involve the notions of higher order predication and propositional attitudes.

Definitions of dissertation acts obtained as combinations of a force of assertion, a reference and a predication will then exemplify the schema. This will complete a view that divides speech acts first in two major categories, illocutionary acts and dissertation acts, and then subclassifies each of these according to the acts' defining elements.

The definitions section will be followed by a comparison of such taxonomy and Searle's. This will show both are kindred, but the basis for the former provide a better understanding of speech acts than those for the latter.

A view of dissertation as knowledge processing will emerge. This will suggest new research themes and teaching topics.

The standard approach

Often standard contributions in pragmatics and discourse analysis stem from developments in formal logic, philosophical logic, and semantics. On many occasions, too, they are reactions against these. The reason for the close link is, naturally, that all those disciplines are concerned with the same or related phenomena.

The first elements this chapter is about, reference and predication, are precisely at the heart of philosophical logic (see Strawson 1967), and their two correlates, argument (or subject) and predicate, are the matter of formal logic (see, *eg* the introduction to Strawson 1967). It would, then, seem to be advisable to take into account how the two logics deal with the question, although they have not really focused on it in a way that provides the set of categories we need. An initial development is often a consideration of propositions expressed by sentences such as (1) or (2).

(1) The tree is tall.

(2) John is young.

In each of these sentences, an individual or particular entity is referred to, the tree in (1) and John in (2). Besides, a property is predicated of the entity, tallness and youth, respectively. Thus, (1) can be used to express the proposition that a given tree has the property of tallness. Likewise, (2) can be used to express that John possesses the property of youth.

These simple propositions constitute a basic model used in contrasts that introduce more complex ones. In this way, it can be noted, for instance, that (3) refers not to one but to several individuals.

(3) Those trees are tall.

Another example of the approach could be the introduction of the notion of two-place predicates. Unlike (2), where there is one act of reference, (4) has two references, to John and to Peter. So, 'young' is a predicate that takes one argument, whereas 'younger' is one which takes two.

(4) John is younger than Peter.

Using the type of notation employed in the previous chapter, these differences can be represented as follows:

(5) tall (tree)

(6) tall (trees)

(7) young (John)

(8) younger (John, Peter)

This approach has proved to be fruitful in semantics too (see, *eg* Lyons 1977: 138-167). Therefore, it will be followed here, in discussing reference and in the first part of the treatment of predication.

Reference

The first distinction that is needed has already been introduced, by (5) and (6). It is, of course, the distinction between singular and plural reference. One point which is useful to note is that plural reference is normally taken as a synthetic indication of a conjunction of a number of singular propositions. Using our examples, (6) is equivalent to (9), where subscripts distinguish entities.

(6) tall (trees)

(9) tall (tree$_1$) and tall (tree$_2$) and tall (tree$_3$) and ...

The second distinction we need is between general and generic reference. As Lyons (1977: 193) points out, general reference is a form of plural reference. But generic reference is essentially.different.

One could say that to refer in general to the individuals or particulars denoted by a name or a noun phrase is to refer to each one of them. But to refer generically to the set of individuals is to adduce a prototypical representation of them. Hence, if the property predicated of the individuals is not shared by some of them, the general proposition will be false, whereas the generic proposition can still be true. For instance, if (10) is true, then (11) is necessarily false, but (12) can be true, because (11) expresses (13), and (12) does not.

(10) Fido has three legs.

(11) All dogs have four legs.

(12) Dogs have four legs.

(13) have (dog$_1$, four legs) and have (dog$_2$, four legs) and have (dog$_3$, four legs)...

The difference between individual (singular, plural or general) reference, on the one hand, and generic reference, on the other, is fundamental for a theory of dissertation. It accounts for the distinction between the acts realized by (14) and (15), which we could label as 'nucleus of definition' and 'nucleus of naming' (although, if seen as compounds of the paralinguistic, sentential, propositional and act features mentioned in Chapter 3, these utterances could not be identified as performing the functions normally called defining and naming).

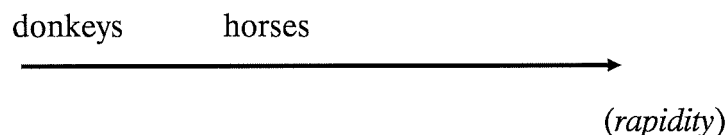(14) The president is the head of government.

(15) The president is Bill Clinton.

The difference also allows us to envisage bridges between studies of text and studies of discourse processing. Individual references are part of propositions about states of affair. For the sake of clarity, at this stage we could say that they are about the world; they provide data. Generic references are best seen as pointing to parts of language systems or conceptual frameworks. The distinction between individual and generic thus parallels the distinction between empirical and theoretical. It is a linguistic point of entry to the understanding of knowledge creation.
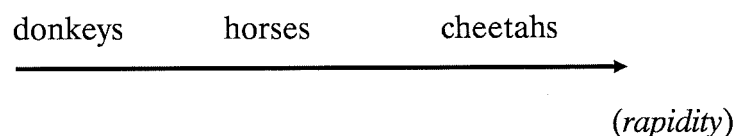
When we say that all of George's horses are fast, we are saying that any one we choose will be fast. The proposition can, so, be verified directly by observation: we take one of George's horses and see whether or not it is fast. And we can take another and another; that is precisely the point of the general "all". But when we say that cheetahs are fast, what is important is that we are attaching 'fast' to the meaning of 'cheetah'. We are placing our prototype of cheetah in relation to other prototypes, on some rapidity scale. If we already know that horses are fast and donkeys slow, we will relate the three in a way that can be represented by Figure 4:

Figure 4. *Effect of generic reference.*

BEFORE *"Cheetahs are fast"*

donkeys   horses

→

(rapidity)

AFTER *"Cheetahs are fast"*

donkeys   horses   cheetahs

→

(rapidity)

In connection with the issues that started the deliberation in the first part of this thesis, particular and generic reference will distinguish acts like the observa-

tion in (16) from acts like the generalization in (17) (for practical convenience the words "nucleus of" will, from now on, be left out from expressions that refer to acts).

(16) The man had a positive opinion about it.

(17) Young, urban Mexicans have modern attitudes.

The two types of references will also separate descriptions, like that in (18), from characterizations, like that in (19), or general statements, such as (20), from classifications, such as (21).

(18) The speech began with a request and ended with a promise.

(19) Modern citizens are individualistic.

(20) They all voted in favour.

(21) A trade union is a corporate subject.

Looking at the matter from this angle, we can note a peculiar act, which has both an individual and a generic reference. In (22) the entity is assigned to a class (or genre). This type of act, which tends to be referred to as "identification" by some scientists (like biologists), is, so to speak, the link between the empirical and the theoretical. It tells us that an individual is to be associated to a prototype.

(22) She is a postmodern person.

The distinction of individual and generic reference is comprehensive at the first level of delicacy, *ie* any reference is either individual or generic. At other levels, various complex subdivisions would be required. For example, as already indicated, an individual reference would have to be subclassified as singular, plural or general. Further on, this subclassification would have to be combined with specifications of definiteness and quantification. But, for the purposes of this thesis, we can remain at the first level. Let us, now, consider predication.

Predication

One way to begin the discussion of this element is to examine the different uses of the verb 'to be'. The function we have been dealing with, namely, the association of a property to an individual is often called 'ascriptive'; according to this usage, one says that in (1) "is" ascribes tallness. It is also common to say that here the verb is a copula because it links the individual and the property. This second way of talking about the function of the verb reflects the idea that, strictly speaking, in ascriptive predication the predicate is expressed by the adjective, rather than the verb.

The association of a property contrasts sharply with the 'existential' use of 'be', which is exemplified in (23):

(23) "Let light be", and light was.

Here, we can properly say that the verb expresses the predicate, although, as we shall see presently, existence is a special predicate. Other verbs and verb forms that can be used to predicate existence are: 'to exist', "there is", 'to obtain', 'to occur'.

Existential predication has received much attention from philosophers. They now tend to agree that to say that something exists is to say that we can form simple propositions about them, and actually verify (or falsify) these. (The most important paper in the development of this view is probably Pears 1963). So, (24) means that we can go out and see if (25) is true or false, *ie* if snow is white or not. By contrast, (26) means (27) does not really make empirical sense.

(24) Snow exists.

(25) Snow is white.

(26) Unicorns do not exist.

(27) Unicorns are blue.

Probably it is practical to represent existential propositions the same way as other propositions, that is, to represent (24), for example, as (28). However, it should be noted that logic texts represent existence with a special symbol, an inverted "E", and that this tends to be used only when variable referents are involved. In this notation, (29) would be represented as (30).

(28) Exist (snow)

(29) x exists.

(30) $\exists x$

The third use of 'to be' is the equative. It has been mentioned on several occasions in this thesis. Therefore, here it will only be recalled that it is involved in statements of coreferentiality and pointed to (14) and (15) as examples of it. Perhaps convenient representations of the propositions expressed by these are (31) and (32). Their speech act codings could be (33) and (34).

(14) The president is the head of government.

(15) The president is Bill Clinton.

(31) Be (the president, the head of government)

(32) Be (Bill Clinton, the president)

(33) Equative (particular, particular)

(34) Equative (generic, generic)

A fourth use of the verb is to include some entity in a class, as in (35).

(35) This is a cyanophite.

This use seems not to have been recognized explicitly in the literature. In fact, in formal logic, the predicate involved here is commonly held to be of the same type as that in (1). That is, formal logicians tend to treat (35) as predicating

"cyanophiteness" of the entity referred to ("this"). However, there is a distinction of the difference, albeit implicit, in the emergence and development of set theory. This does take inclusion, as opposed to ascription, as its object of study. Unfortunately the distinction is often obscured, for two reasons. One is that both ascription and inclusion are referred to merely as predicates. The other is that, for many purposes, it is possible to posit a logical synonymy between them, by taking sentences like (36) and (37) as equivalent.

(36) The chair is grey.

(37) The chair is a grey object.

Now, although it is true that (36) and (37) imply each other, the normal use of inclusions is different, pragmatically and ontologically. The paradigmatic use of ascriptive predication in simple propositions is to associate one property with the entity referred to. The paradigmatic use of inclusions is to associate a number of properties with it, more precisely, to liken it to the prototype that represents the class. This is reflected in grammar. Ascribed properties are typically expressed by adjectives, whereas including classes are typically signalled by nouns.

What is more important to us, the difference is reflected in spontaneous oppositions like the one between description and classification. Looking at this from a previous angle, ascriptions are empirical, while inclusions are theoretical.

I would propose that the proposition in (35) be represented as (38), instead of (39), which would be the traditional way. Accordingly, I would code the speech act elements as (40).

(38) Be (this, cyanophite)

(39) Cyanophite (this)

(40) Inclusive (particular, generic)

In sum, the above examination of the verb 'to be' reveals four types of predications: ascriptive, existential, equative and inclusive.

Other predications

On purely grammatical grounds, such as subject (or object) verb-agreement and subject position, John Lyons specifies six sentence schemata. These "would appear to be identifiable ...in very many unrelated languages" (Lyons 1977: 469). They are labelled: intransitive, transitive, equative, ascriptive, locative and possessive. As can be seen, two schema labels coincide with our predication names: equative and ascriptive. The former in fact involve the latter, as is evident from Lyons's examples on page 470 (renumbered here according to this chapter's sequence):

(41) The chairman is Paul Jones.

(42) He was intelligent.

It can be argued that the other four schemata also involve distinct predications. They are not normally distinguished in logic, but this is simply because philosophers developing logic have not payed attention to them. They seem to have been mainly concerned with the simplest possible structures of propositions that can be used in the exploration of abstract thought (see, *eg* Whitehead and Russell 1910: 2).

Examples of intransitive and transitive predications are (43) and (44). As in traditional grammar, the point about the former is that it says the referent does something, and the point about the latter is that it says the referent does something to something.

(43) Kathleen works.

(44) That boy plays the piano.

Examples of locative and possessive predications are (45) and (46). One tells us that the referent is in a certain place and the other that it belongs to some other entity.

(45) They were in the attic.

(46) This bicycle is John's.

For the purposes of this chapter, informed intuitions about transitive, intransitive, locative and possessive predications are sufficient. Therefore, these shall not be discussed. (The reader interested in deeper considerations about predicative schemata is advised to consult the book by Lyons already mentioned and the works referred to there.)

It should, however, be added that, as with reference, the basic types of reference identified above could be further subclassified at other levels of delicacy. For example, transitive predication could be subdivided into various sorts depending on the roles (recepient, instrument, etc.) of the arguments involved. Here, the discourse analyst would be advised to consider schemata of valency (*eg* Tesniere 1959 or Helbig 1971), case (*eg* Anderson 1977) or thematic roles (*eg* Cowper 1992) as bases for developing her frameworks.

Then, at the first level of delicacy, we have eight types of predication: ascriptive, existential, equative, inclusive, transitive, intransitive, locative and possessive. Using each one will result in different speech acts. Thus (47) is what we might call a 'descriptive statement', whereas (48) and (49) are what we might term a 'narrative statement' and a 'locative report'.

(47) Zeline is beautiful.

(48) Zeline gave a letter to Oscar.

(49) Zeline is by the lake.

We will come back to predication once assertion has been considered, because there is one point where the two themes converge.

Force of assertion

In Chapter 3, besides reference and predication, force of assertion was identified as a defining element of dissertation acts. We can begin considering it by recall-

ing Searle's (1969: 32) distinction between speech act negation and propositional negation (commented in chapters 4 and 5).

Searle shows that, in addition to the usual negations of a statement like (50), namely (51) and (52), a third negation is needed: (53).

(50) There are horses.

(51) There aren't any horses.

(52) There are things that aren't horses.

(53) I don't say there are horses.

The important thing to note here is that the speaker of (50) commits herself to the truth of proposition (54). If a tilde represents negation, the speakers of (51) and (52) commit themselves to the truth of (55) and (56), respectively. However, the speaker of (53) does not commit himself to the truth of any of the three propositions. His commitment is, so to speak, suspended.

(54) $\exists x$ (x is horse)

(55) $\sim\!\exists x$ (x is horse)

(56) $\exists x$ (x is $\sim$horse)

There is a wide variety of devices to indicate an assertion. Take, for example, "yes", "certainly", "it is known that", "I'm sure". Suspension can also be indicated explicitly, *eg* by "One wonders if". As already suggested in earlier chapters, an assertion and a suspended assertion of the same predication about the same reference are different dissertation acts. The best examples have also been given: a simple assertion and a question, such as (49) and (57).

(49) Zeline is by the lake.

(57) Is Zeline by the lake?

A scale between categorical assertion and suspended assertion is conceivable. It is, for example, possible to utter or write (58) and (59).

(58) I have a vague impression that Zeline is by the lake.

(59) I am almost certain that Zeline is by the lake.

We can refer to the range of non-categorical assertions as 'mitigated' assertions and, if necessary, further subclassify them according to degree. Mitigated assertion has been of interest to philosophers, because it provides insights into the nature of knowledge and belief (see, *eg* Wittgenstein 1953: 190-192). It has also drawn the attention of linguists, because it is not possible to describe the behaviour of certain elements of language systems, such as English 'modal verbs' like 'could' and 'might', without recurring to the notion of speaker certainty (see Quirk *et al* 1985: 219 *ff*). Applied linguists, particularly those interested in specialized language, have also studied mitigated assertion, because academic texts exhibit a range of devices for expressing it; indeed, it can be used as a variable to characterize text types or study their evolution (as shown by Salager 1994).

Mitigated assertion is commonly referred to as 'epistemic modality' by both philosophers and linguists (see, *eg* Lyons 1977: 793). However, this terminology is less explicit about its opposition to the non-modal categorical and suspended assertions. Philosophers also discuss mitigated assertion in terms of 'propositional attitudes' (see, *eg* Quine 1992: 65-71). I find this expression adequate, in so much as it clearly indicates variable speaker involvement; but it might obscure the fact that, as an element of a dissertation act, the force of assertion is alongside the type of reference, rather than the referent, and the type of predication, rather than the predicate. The term applied linguists tend to prefer is 'hedging' (see Salager 1994), but this could be misleading. It could indicate that what a mitigation does is essentially to limit the author's risks, and conceal honest reports of uncertainty. Therefore, I will retain 'mitigated assertion'.

There is a fourth type of assertion that must be distinguished: hypothetical assertion. Here, for the sake of her argument, the speaker assumes the proposition she expresses is true, even if she does not know whether this is the case or not. Typically, a hypothetical assertion is made when its implications or its relations to other statements are the focus of the argument. In many respects, a

hypothetical assertion is like a categorical assertion, and for the purpose of calculating its implications and verifying its relations to other assertions, we treat it *as* a categorical assertion. But there is a fundamental difference, to which Wittgenstein points clearly, though elliptically. He says that when we ask someone to try to see we say "Look!", but when we ask them to try to imagine we say "close your eyes!". Although the visual image and the visual impression are of the same type, the language game of looking and the language game of imagining are different (Wittgenstein 1967: Z625-Z632).

The character of a hypothetical assertion is well depicted by a form common in mathematics texts which we have exemplified in earlier chapters: "Let x be a y". Other realizations, used in everyday speech, are "supposing...", and, of course, "if". Hypothetical assertion is often studied in grammar, alongside other phenomena, under two headings: "conditional clauses" and "subjunctive mood" (see, for example, Quirk *et al* 1985: 155-158).

There are, then, four forces: assertion, mitigated assertion, hypothetical assertion, suspended assertion. Let us now consider the theme of higher order predications. An awareness of it might be necessary to make coding decisions involving the notions discussed in this section and the previous one, because there are expressions that can function either as predicates or as force-indicating devices.

Higher order predication and probabilistic statements

Existential predicates give rise to the notion of orders of predication. Strictly speaking, rather than being about individuals (or prototypes), existential predicates are about propositions (involving the individuals or prototypes referred to). To capture the difference, propositions like (25) are said to be of first order and those like (24) are said to be of second order.

(24) Snow exists.

(25) Snow is white.

The notion of orders is sometimes associated to the ontological status of entities, and, then, individuals are said to belong in the first order. But, when this approach is followed, more than two orders are postulated. Sometimes events, processes, and states are seen as second order entities and propositions as third order entities (see Lyons 1977: 443).

To avoid confusions and unnecessary detail, I will refer to predicates like 'exist' simply as higher order predicates. From the point of view of formal logic, 'true' and 'false' are other higher order predicates. This idea can be exemplified by (60) and represented by (61).

(60) It is true that this horse is fast.

(61) True (fast (this horse))

Now, if propositions are the subject matter of a text, *eg* if it is a logic textbook, and it presents a meta-discussion of the rules for deciding whether a given proposition is true or false, then (61) will probably be the best rendering of (60). The author will have conceived of "true" as a predicate, properly speaking. But if the subject matter is horses, and "it is true that" can be substituted for "certainly" or "I'm sure that", then the author is using "true" as a means of indicating his commitment to the proposition that this horse is fast, *ie* as an expression of force, rather than a predicate. In this case, (60) should be represented as (62), and not (61).

(62) Assertion, fast (this horse)

More complicated even is the case of probability statements. As (62-64) show, probability can be the argument, the predicate or the force of a statement.

(62) The probability of event 3 is 1/6.

(63) It is 33.3% probable that event 3 will occur.

(64) To me, it is probable that event 3 will occur.

Hence, (65) could either be what (66) or what (67) represent.

(65) It is likely that they will vote for Tom.

(66) Assertion, likely (vote(they, Tom))

(67) Mitigated assertion, vote(they, Tom)

The point is, as Wittgenstein (1958: 192) put it, "(not to) regard a hesitant assertion as an assertion of hesitancy".

The distinction might seem to be immaterial, for example, when coding casual conversation, in which case the analyst will probably be dealing with mitigated assertions, rather than assertions of probability proper. But in certain types of discourse, such as academic discourse, knowing that an event has a specific probability of occurring and not knowing whether an event can occur or not may be two very different states of knowledge.

Unfortunately the distinction has often been ignored, partly as a consequence of the inadequacy of the term used to study probabilistic statements, the already criticized 'hedging', and largely as a result of not isolating the three elements of dissertation acts. Among other mistakes with this combined origin, coding systems like those mentioned in Chapter 3 would treat (68) and (69) as if they performed the same speech act, and, depending on the analyst, would call both a 'hedge' or both a 'prediction'.

(68) This is probably a cyanophite.

(69) It is very probable that those cyanophites will survive.

In short, the analyst must carefully decide whether truth value or probability expressions are higher order predicates or force carrying devices.

Applying the schema: some definitions

Let us now see the three element speech act schema in operation. Fourteen elements have been identified: two types of references, eight types of predications and four types of forces. These are listed below.

Reference: particular, generic.

Predication: ascriptive, existential, equative, inclusive, intransitive, transitive, locative, possessive.

Force: assertion, mitigated assertion, hypothetical assertion, suspended assertion.

A combination of an element from each list gives us a dissertation act (and different combinations yield different acts). This can be exemplified with the following definitions, where '*N*' stands for "nucleus of" (see Chapter 3), 'gen' for "generic" and 'part' for "particular". As in Chapter 8, the names employed could or could not have corresponding everyday meanings.

N definition. Assertion: equative (gen, gen).

N nomination. Assertion: equative (part, part).

N identification. Assertion: inclusive (part, gen).

N classification. Assertion: inclusive (gen, gen).

N descriptive observation. Assertion: ascriptive (part).

N descriptive generalization. Assertion: ascriptive (gen).

N narrative observation. Assertion: transitive (part, part, part).

N locative observation. Assertion: locative (part, part).

N uncertain identification. Mitigated assertion: inclusive (part, gen).

N hypothetical nomination. Hypothetical assertion: equative (part, part).

N classification question. Suspended assertion: inclusive (gen, gen).

The system provides the possibility of distinguishing precisely and rigourously a definition from a nomination, and both from an identification or a classification. It also shows clearly what a narrative observation and a locative observation, or a classification and a classification question, have in common, and how they differ. Therefore, it prevents the two types of identification errors Chapter 3 singled out when discussing applied linguistics analytic frameworks of the seventies. If acts are assigned to utterances according to the kind of definitions exemplified above, it is not possible to take relations for acts. It is also impossible to consider textual or paralinguistic features of complex units as determining characteristics of acts.

It is now convenient to consider what has perhaps been the most important basic taxonomy of speech acts, in any area of enquiry, Searle's classification, in relation to the schemata of this and the previous chapters. The discussion will show the potential of the schemata, because they allow us to easily note errors in Searle's taxonomy and provide the basis for more rigorous ones.

How many speech acts?

In 1976, Searle said "There are at least a dozen linguistically significant dimensions of difference between illocutionary acts." On the basis of such dimensions, he proposed a taxonomy consisting of five basic categories: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations.

Searle constructs his taxonomy as an alternative to Austin's, which divides acts into verdictives, expositives, exercitives, behabitives and commissives: "There is no clear or consistent principle or set of principles on the basis of which [Austin's] taxonomy is constructed" (Searle 1976: 8). Austin's categories overlap and are heterogeneous, Searle points out.

However, Searle's taxonomy is not as systematic as he would wish, which he admits. He states his dimensions are "criss-crossing continua" (1976: 2). He also says:

> It would be very elegant if we could build our taxonomy entirely around this distinction [direction of fit]..., but though it will figure largely in our taxonomy, I am unable to make it the entire basis of the distinction.

It is possible that the basic separation between illocutionary and dissertation acts established in this thesis is the distinction Searle wished (and perhaps envisaged). Looking at the matter from one angle, Searle's first category, representatives, "are assessable on the dimension of assessment which includes *true* and *false*" (Searle 1976: 10), and it is thus opposed to all the other categories, which are not assessable on the said dimension. So, if the opposition were clearly recognized, the other categories would have to be seen as subcategories of one single category, namely, non-representatives. There would then be a parallelism between Searle's taxonomy and my basic separation.

Looking at the matter from the other angle, the activity of dissertation can be seen as fitting words to the world, as mentioned in Chapter 5, whereas illocutionary activity can be seen as fitting the world to words. As put in the present and previous chapters, dissertation constructs knowledge whereas illocution commits action.

The problem, for Searle's taxonomy, is that some individual dissertation acts cannot be seen as fitting the world, and some individual illocutionary acts cannot be seen as modifying the world. Examples are definitions, on the one hand, and greetings, on the other. (It is only when definitions are combined with observations and generalizations that we see clearly dissertation attempts, or may attempt, to "get the words to match the world". And it is only when greetings open the way to other acts, like orders, that we realize they are part of a verbal activity than can have actions as consequential effects.)

Searle's solution is to keep his word-to-world and world-to-word narrow conceptions and set up peculiar categories where acts like greetings and acts like definitions can fit. These are expressives and declarations. But, of course, now the taxonomy misses the point that definitions are made out of the same type of elements as observations and generalizations. It also obscures the fact that greetings obey and create deontic conditions.

Now, if non-representatives were taken as one major category, Searle's directives and commissives would be seen as the subcategories that result from varying one of my illocutionary elements, the subject, and fixing another, the deontic value. But, then, in order to place expressives and declaratives on the same basic level, this classification principle would have to be abandoned. Each of those two

categories is not determined by a different subject from the subjects of directives or commissives; either can involve either the speaker or the hearer (Searle 1976: 13).

Searle's taxonomy has another two defects, which will only be mentioned here. Firstly, the characterization of expressives involves aspects of the perlocutionary domain; in fact, their point is "to express the psychological state specified" (Searle 1976: 12). Secondly, declaratives is a heterogeneous category which includes illocutionary acts such as appointing, as well as dissertation acts like defining.

By contrast, the definitions sections of this and the previous chapters imply that very systematic taxonomies (in a way, akin in spirit to Searle's) can be produced by the schemata on which those definitions are based. Putting it simply, fixing some defining elements and varying others yields homogeneous groupings and comprehensive subgroupings.

New paths

The above discussion on Searle's taxonomy suggests that now empirical studies of acts in discourse can be more comprehensive and more reliable, which was the main concern expressed in Part 1 of the thesis. Precise identification of all the acts in a discourse makes it possible, not only to conceive, but also to verify or falsify the type of contrasts which have been absent from ESP research, such as the one mentioned in Chapter 3:

> Sequences of descriptive observation, descriptive generalization and definition are far more frequent in introductory mechanics texts than in texts for intermediate students. This is consistent with their aims. The former are designed to present the basic principles of physics and establish a link between them and the world. The latter have the objective of developing sophisticated tools and techniques.

Besides, new paths might have been opened here. It would seem the aim of dissertation analysis ought to be to provide a linguistic understanding of knowledge creation. Some directions we might take in searching for this understanding could be indicated by way of commenting on a revealing paragraph, written by a

mathematician and teacher of mathematics, K.O. Friedrichs. In *From Pythagoras to Einstein*, he says:

> The Pythagorean theorem has suffered the same fate that so many basic mathematical facts have suffered in the course of the history of mathematics. At first, these facts were surprising when they were discovered and deep in that they required original inventive proofs. In the course of time such facts were placed into a conceptual framework in which they could be derived by more or less routine deductions; finally, in a new axiomatic arrangement of this framework, these facts were reduced to serve simply as definitions. Still, this need not have meant reduction to insignificance. What had become merely a definition may have been brought alive and made effective as a guiding principle in the development of new branches of mathematics. It is one of our aims to show that just this process describes the life cycle of the Pythagorean theorem.

> (Friedrichs 1965)

Friedrichs's discourse frameworks are not strictly technical. Nevertheless, his considerations are very insightful and, if translated adequately to our terminology, they could well yield guiding questions for an ambitious research programme.

The first thing to note is that what Friedrichs calls 'the Pythagorean theorem' is a proposition. With this phrase he refers to the "basic mathematical fact" that the lengths of two sides in a triangle with a right angle determine the length of the third side (and that the relation is expressed in terms of the squares of the three quantities). That is, in spite of his using the word 'theorem', he does not refer to the *proof* of the arithmetical relation. Indeed, in a manner which is perhaps not very exact from a linguist's point of view, but still in a very felicious way, he distinguishes the proposition from various possible proofs, explicitly including inventive ones and routine deductions.

The second point is that Friedrichs also distinguishes the proposition from the acts that, like definitions, may accompany it. A third point is that he opposes both proposition and acts to possible act relations, like derivations, which link the "theorem" to axioms, or the unidentified connections that stem from a definition when it functions as a guiding principle. It is almost as if Friedrichs

had been concerned with the same themes this thesis is about. It could even be adduced that he provides an external confirmation of the thesis's relevance.

Now, perhaps the most important point that should be noted is that Friedrichs relates propositions, acts and act relations, on the one hand, to conceptual developments, on the other. Discourse would seem to operate from frameworks: "in a new axiomatic arrangement...these facts were reduced to serve". But it also operates upon the frameworks: "such facts were placed into a framework", "a guiding principle in the development". Thus, discourse is seen as processes that give life to knowledge, and shape its cycles.

All this would seem to indicate that the study of academic language ought to address questions like the following:

-Which propositions are understandable from a given conceptual framework and which lie outside its scope?

-How is the accessibility of a proposition modified when a framework is restructured? *Ie* which "difficult" propositions become "easy" and which new ones become visible?

-What is the effect of a certain dissertation act on a conceptual framework?

In other words, we should not only pursue Widdowson's objective of bringing the study of text and the study of reading close to each other, but also combine these with the investigation of productive writing.

A second reading of Friedrichs fragment in the light of such questions reveals very important phenomena which have not been studied (and which were first drawn to my attention by Elin Emilsson, a student in a postgraduate research seminar on specialized language). Texts written by different authors at different times form constellations which gravitate around conceptual frameworks. This is now being studied by librarians and is, of course, the material basis for the notion of school of thought. But it lacks a linguistic characterization, because we have been interested in other ways of grouping texts, namely under registers or genres (the study of which would also benefit from the distinctions proposed here).

The dynamic view of discourse and knowledge embodied in the above paragraphs suggests another important topic for applied linguistics research: delayed comprehension. It is not uncommon for undergraduate students to find that a text which is very difficult to understand becomes rather easy after a term or two. When they look back at it, they cannot figure out why it was so hard to read. A plausible hypothesis is that originally its content was outside their conceptual frameworks, and that later, as a consequence of their being modified, it came to be within their reach. The modification is caused in part by the text itself, and probably by many other events. Therefore, we could say that the students' perception that the text has become easy is no more than an indication that it has finally been understood, and that the understanding has involved conceptual restructuring.

This sort of delayed comprehension is rarely a concern of the language teacher, although acquiring the learning capacity of which it is synonymous is often one of the main reasons for studying a foreign language. The student wants to learn the language in order to be able to read, which in turn will allow her to acquire new conceptual frameworks. But the language teacher is typically concerned with immediate comprehension, which usually means the understanding of facts from unchanging frameworks. Applied linguists would do a good service if they clarified the distinction between the two forms of comprehension and showed how the first one operates.

Applications

While research on those topics mentioned above takes place, we can begin experimenting in the English for Academic Purposes classroom with various ideas contained in this chapter. They can be grouped in three areas.

Firstly, we might devise exercises to deal with materials larger than the typical fragment of two or three paragraphs, and even larger than the article or chapter ambitious courses treat. We could consider pairs of articles at key contrasting points in the history of a discipline, for example. We could also think about a series in a development, from the theoretical breakthrough paper to the textbook chapter, including experimental reports, counterproposals and summarizing reviews.

Secondly, we might design activities in which students work in parallel with conceptual frameworks and discourse. They could, for example, identify both the framework a text presupposes and the replacements it proposes or effects. They could, as well, learn to map their own frameworks and to recognize the distance between these and the text's. On these bases, it would be possible to draw their attention to what specific acts do to a given framework. At further stages, they could be assigned the task of producing acts that would modify frameworks in given directions. From here, teaching why and how acts link to form stretches of discourse would be rather natural.

Thirdly, we might present the complexity of sentence, proposition and act relations in a manageable way by focusing on the defining features of acts: force, reference and predication. For example, rather than attempting to show directly that full sentences in the present tense can be used to make generalizations or realize definitions or express characterizations, we could concentrate on the fact that the main difference between an observation and a generalization is the type of reference (particular *vs* generic). We would also locate the contrast between a definition and a characterization on their predications (equative *vs* ascriptive). This would allow us to deal with the grammar of referential expressions (or with verbs that are used to express equation) in isolation, but without loosing a discursive, functional perspective.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that it is possible and adequate to generate the definitions of dissertation acts we need by varying force of assertion, predication and reference. That is, it has shown dissertation acts have the form the following formula represents.

FORCE: PREDICATION (REFERENCE1,... REFERENCEn).

On the basis of this principle, the chapter has also located the inadequacies Searle regretted in his taxonomy. Furthermore, it has indicated how to produce a better one: by grouping acts according to the values of the three parameters in the formula.

Perhaps the main implication of the theoretical framework developed here is that now detailed empirical studies of acts in academic discourse can be resumed. These studies are probably needed for the theory construction work to continue. This is, then, almost the place to finish this dissertation.

The chapter has opened new perspectives, too. It has suggested that the aim of dissertation research be to explain how conceptual frameworks are created and developed by constellations of texts. Accordingly, it has proposed that: a) ESP courses cover the wide range of discourse levels mentioned, from speech act elements to constellations and b) they include delayed comprehension, as knowledge processing.

Chapter 10 will indicate how further work can begin.

Chapter 9 notes

1. An example of contributions from the rhetorico-grammatical and the genre analysis traditions is the explanation of tense use referred to in Chapter 3. One can also mention the finding that students have particular difficulties with sub-technical vocabulary, "common words that occur with special meanings in scientific and technical fields" (Trimble: 129). A third result is that the methods section of a research articles is less cohesive, and depends more on "inferential bridging" than the introduction or discussion sections (Weissberg 1984; discussed in Swales 1990: 168).

2. Other traces of speech act theory in rhetorico-grammatical studies and genre analyses are the use of phrases like "rhetorical action" and references to the work of authors like Widdowson.

3. The mechanics texts comparison presented in the body of this chapter is similar to one reported in Castaños 1978. The essential difference is that the new formulation is more precise, and results from re-analysing the same data using the definitions in this chapter. The comparison is presented as open to verification because, although the corpus consisted of complete chapters, and all their utterances were act coded for the analysis, only two books were examined.

Chapter 10

IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

The previous chapter concluded with the following formula, that defines the dissertation act:

FORCE: PREDICATION (REFERENCE1,... REFERENCEn).

It was shown there that definitions of particular dissertation acts can be derived from it, by substituting each label in capital letters by one small case element in the corresponding list (which was provided too). Thus, for example, the nucleus of a classification is defined as:

Assertion: inclusive (generic, generic).

Likewise, Chapter 8 could be summarized in a formula for illocutionary acts:

INTERVENTION: ROLES (SUBJECTS), DEONTIC CONDITIONS,

from which we can derive, *eg*, the definition of an order:

Change effected: subordinate (hearer), permitted to obligatory.

The parsimony of the two formulae has been achieved by identifying and delimiting the nature of each type of acts. This, in turn, was primarily the result of distinguishing one from the other (in the second part of the thesis). But it also required other distinctions, which were introduced and discussed in various chapters, mainly: action and act; act, act relation, and act sequence; act and rhetorical compound; cohesion, connection, coherence, and consistency.

This discussion was motivated and guided by a concern about issues in applied linguistics research and in foreign language pedagogy, besides, of course, by a need for internal cogency. The latter often had to occupy the forefront, due to the complexity of the matter and the confusions pointed to in the preface and the first part of the thesis; nevertheless, the former, which gave direction to the enquiry, was reflected in commentaries about notions which are frequently used by applied linguists and language teachers, such as those of communicative competence or context. These commentaries, which sometimes appeared as interspersed paragraphs and sometimes constituted a special section at the end of a chapter, are of diverse kinds. Some, for example, show solutions to problems of research methodology. Others take existing pedagogical proposals a step ahead or make new proposals. And many point to deficiencies or mistakes in analytic schemata.

It is the central purpose of this chapter to integrate the mentioned distinctions and the commentaries, on the basis of the formulae presented above, in order to develop clear statements of intent that can guide further work. It has three main sections. The first one is a framework for devising empirical research strategies and, perhaps more importantly, for identifying objects of research in ways which lead to valid comparisons of research results. It shows that disparities in articles reviewed in earlier chapters, *eg* those related to the size of units of analysis, can be understood as resulting from fixing (or varying) different elements in the formulae in non-explicit ways. And it, logically, concludes that the associated problems can be eliminated by controlling the elements appropriately. The second and third part present the cores of design programmes; one concentrates on the content and the other on the form of language teaching. They involve a discussion of some contradictions in the communicative approach, such as one which results from the view of learning and the prescription of classroom activity that were part of its roots. They also consider the main limitation of the approach, *viz* the impossibility of incorporating an explicit teaching of grammar in a principled fashion. And they provide explanations and solutions to both the contradictions and the limitation. The framework and the programmes would have to be elaborated and then validated externally, of course; therefore, they cannot be categorical at this stage. However, I have given them a rather definite form, following Bacon's belief that truth emerges from error rather than from confusion.

There are two additional sections. One is a speculation on the possibility and convenience of recovering and redefining the notion of teaching method. This notion came to be so important at one point that today we often use a derived term, 'methodology', to refer to teaching principles (and, sometimes, to teaching technique as well). But the conception we had of it was incompatible with the communicative approach and it had to be abandoned. However, perhaps it is time to rethink the notion and, I will argue, a more general view of method could be useful rather than constraining, in the implementation of the designs envisaged. This view could develop from a realization that the essential function of old methods was to guide the teachers' decisions and that teachers nowadays take even more decisions than they did in the past.

The final section brings together the points about content, form and method, and advocates for an increased use in the classroom of the reflexive property of human language, *ie*, the possibility of turning upon itself. Again, it draws upon and advances ideas that have been put forth elsewhere. For, this reason, it asks whether what is being depicted is teaching which promotes more communication or which promotes communication and more. It will be shown that deliberately keeping the ambiguity might be convenient. In consequence, it will be suggested that what is being depicted be called 'metacommunicative method'.

Besides the purposes that correspond to the outlined sections, this chapter has the objective of indicating ways in which a notation to exploit the potential of the formulae could be developed.

Research

If we look at the work by Ellis that was commented on in chapters 2 and 8 (Ellis 1992) in the light of the second formula presented above, we will see that what his conflating requests and orders means is to fix two elements, the subject and the deontic condition, and to leave the other labels variable:

INTERVENTION: ROLES (hearer), to obligatory.

It is because of this that the conflation is surprising (and counterintuitive). In everyday use, we tend to regard orders as involving a specific type of interven-

tion: an effected change. In other words, the deontic condition becomes obligatory because of the order. By contrast, we tend to think about requests as involving a very different intervention: a proposal. That is, the change to a condition of obligatory would only take place if, in another act, the interlocutor accepts it.

Furthermore, again in everyday speech, describing an act as an order usually implies regarding the hearer as a subordinate to the speaker, even if only within limited contexts or only metaphorically. On the other hand, referring to an utterance as a request means seeing the *speaker* as a subordinate or seeing both interlocutors as symmetrically positioned.

Perhaps the problem is only terminological, *ie* perhaps Ellis is only using a hyponym, 'request', to name a category that actually includes it and other co-hyponyms of it. This would be justifiable to some extent, because there seems to be no superordinate in English to name that category. And, in this case, Ellis might have captured important problems students have with the superordinate class in general. But the problem could be more than merely terminological. It could well be that actual differences between the students' orders and requests have cancelled each other in the analysis precisely because they are taken together.

Unfortunately, although it is not possible to decide what problem there really is, it seems likely that it is of the second type, *ie*, not a merely terminological one. Let us remember that one of Ellis's main concerns was about sociolinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of speech act performance. His research questions included whether students developed a range of forms to realize an act and the sociolinguistic competence to chose from them, in other words whether they associated forms to contexts. But this question can hardly be investigated if the major context variable, roles, is not recorded properly, that is, if different roles are not distinguished.

The study should be welcomed as an improvement from the same author's 1984-88 work, in that it is more accessible to public discussion, because now he at least provides a coding of his data. But, as was hinted in Chapter 2, the lack of a systematic basis to derive the definition of his categories suspends the validity

of the claims made, and this, in turn, limits the present value of the insights offered, which are original and could be very useful.

Now, if the formulae allow us to identify validity problems in discourse analysis, they should also aid us to avoid them in the first place. If, for example, we are interested in the development of a competence to use forms of address, we can fix the element 'hearer', as a substitute for the third label (SUBJECTS), in a controlled experiment or, simply, in structured observations. To simplify our task, we could also fix another two labels and just let one, *eg*, ROLES, vary; this would allow us to see how students address their interlocutors depending on their role relationships. Of course, we might decide to subsequently proceed equally with regard to the other labels, *ie*, to vary INTERVENTION and DEONTIC CHANGES one at a time, while fixing the other two labels. And, if there are sufficient resources, complex combinations of elements (under different labels) could then be analyzed as well: we would then be able to identify and compare our data properly.

Alternatively, we might be interested in investigating specific combinations, that is, acts properly, for example, in relation to different types of tasks, or different kinds of overall goals in an interaction. Let us remember that some claims that have been made in the field of second language development are that some task types allow students more opportunities than others to practice speech acts that are considered important by the researchers or, more simply, more opportunities to practice wider varieties of speech acts. These claims can now be tested, because speech acts can be identified more reliably. Let us pause to see, in the light of the remarks made in the previous paragraph, how rigorous and comprehensive the work can be.

We may suppose that we are interested in the performance of acts that could, in every day terms, be described as 'requests for permission', and, more precisely, be defined as:

Proposal: subordinate (speaker), forbidden to permitted.

We may also suppose we have already decided to study a given corpus, *eg*, certain fragments of the PIXI project data (see Aston 1988a), which were collected to study service encounters, perhaps the most commonly simulated ac-

tivity in language classrooms. Let us, further, assume that we are beginning to analyse one of such fragments:

(1) C: I see.
    A: It's a very very (?close), simplified English, it's: - it's the bible
        made into a story, basically.
    C: + OK, so it loses.
    A: It loses, it loses a lot.
    C: = Yeah.
    A: You can have - if you're gonna have Bible stories, you know,
        let's have *Bible stories*.
    C: = Yeah. OK. + D'you- $(?can I)% leave them here?
    A: $(??)%
    A: = = Yeah. Of course you can, (?thanks very much).
    (1b34)

(Merlini 1988: 194)

Here, "C:" indicates a customer turn and "A:" an assistant turn, while "(1b34)" is a reference to PIXI's tapes. The transcription follows a slightly modified version of Jefferson's (1978) norms[1].

As a preliminary step, we would segment the fragment into utterances, following the criteria suggested in Chapter 7:

(2) C: ^{1}/ I see. /
    A: ^{2}/ It's a very very (?close), simplified English, /
        ^{3}/ it's: - it's the bible made into a story, basically. /
    C: ^{4}/ + OK, so it loses. /
    A: ^{5}/ It loses, it loses a lot. /
    C: ^{6}/ = Yeah. /
    A: ^{7}/ You can have - if you're gonna have Bible stories, you know, let's
        have *Bible stories*. /
    C: ^{8}/ = Yeah. OK. /
    ^{9}/ + D'you- $(?can I)% leave them here? /
    A: ^{10}/ $(??)%
    A: = = Yeah. / ^{11}/ Of course you can, / */ (?thanks very much). /

Of course, for the reasons discussed in the said chapter, this segmentation would be provisional. If any boundary doubts arose, for example at the point marked by "*/", we would perform an analysis of vicinity. This would confirm the boundary suggested by the change of intonation, and, thus, we would have:

(3) C:^{1}/ I see. /
   A:^{2}/ It's a very very (?close), simplified English, /
     ^{3}/ it's: - it's the bible made into a story, basically. /
   C:^{4}/ + OK, so it loses. /
   A:^{5}/ It loses, it loses a lot. /
   C:^{6}/ = Yeah. /
   A:^{7}/ You can have - if you're gonna have Bible stories, you know, let's have *Bible stories*. /
   C:^{8}/ = Yeah. OK./ ^{9}/ + D'you- $(?can I)% leave them here? /
   A:^{10}/ $(??)%
   A: = = Yeah. / ^{11}/ Of course you can, /
     ^{12}/ (?thanks very much). /

The next step would be to mark all the utterances where the speaker would be performing a speech act involving himself or herself, say, on the right hand side margin:

(4) C:^{1}/ I see. /   < (sp) >
   A:^{2}/ It's a very very (?close), simplified English, /
     ^{3}/ it's: - it's the bible made into a story, basically. /
   C:^{4}/ + OK, so it loses. /
   A:^{5}/ It loses, it loses a lot. /
   C:^{6}/ = Yeah. /
   A:^{7}/ You can have - if you're gonna have Bible stories,
   you know, let's have *Bible stories*. /
   C:^{8}/ = Yeah. OK./ ^{9}/ + D'you- $(?can I)%   < (sp) >
   leave them here? /
   A:^{10}/ $(??)%
   A: = = Yeah. / ^{11}/ Of course you can, /
     ^{12}/ (?thanks very much). /

We would now concentrate only on these utterances. The next step would be to mark those which involve a change of conditions from forbidden (f) to permitted (p). Successive markings for proposal (pr) and symmetrical (sy) would yield:

(5) C:^{1}/ I see. /   < (sp) >
   .
   .
   .
   C: ...^{9}/ + D'you- $(?can I)% leave them here? /   < pr:sy(sp),f-p >

This would have ensured that we had identified all and only those acts that satisfy the definition. That is, we would have eliminated the doubts that we might

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had omitted one 'request for permission' or that we might had included some other similar but not equal acts. Furthermore, we could now tabulate acts in relation to speakers and utterances with reliable precision.

This kind of screening can also be the basis for studying pairs of acts. We can first locate, say, acts which effect a given change of conditions and then the pairing acts that comply with such conditions. Following the method of successive markings illustrated above, we could, for example, identify pairs like the following one, taken, again, from the PIXI corpora, where the two acts are adjacent:

(6) A:[1]/ Can I help you? /   < e:sy(h),f-p >
     C: 2/ Yes, can you give me a: - a prediction on   < c:sy(sp),p >
        when Jacques Lacan's Ecrits (?is likely) to
        come back in. /
        (1b56b)

<div align="right">(Data from Aston 1988: 87.

The coding is mine.)</div>

In utterance 1, the assistant (speaker) makes requests from the customer (hearer) permitted. In utterance 2, the customer (now speaker) makes a request, and thus complies with the deontic condition. The codings < e:sy(h),f-p > and < c:sy(sp),p > would record this in a simple and economical way. To mark the relation between the two utterances, we could add a reference to utterance 1 in the coding of utterance 2:

(7) 1. < e:sy(h),f-p >
     2. < c (1):sy(sp),p >

These could be compared with other kinds of pairs, such as those in (8), which could be translated as (9) and coded as (10):

(8) Teacher: [1]/ ¿Tiene Ud. un libro rojo? /
     Pupil: [2]/ No tiene... /
     Teacher: [3]/ Tengo. /
     Pupil: [4]/ No tengo un libro rojo. /

<div align="right">(Data by Grittner, in Allwright 1988: 88.

The segmentation is mine.)</div>

(9) Teacher: ¿Do you have a red book?
    Pupil: I doesn't...
    Teacher: Don't.
    Pupil·   I don't have a red book.

(The translation is mine.)

Addendum

SYMBOLS EMPLOYED

e: effects deontic change
c: complies with deontic
    conditions
c (3): complies with deontic
    conditions established by
    utterance 3
ac: attempts to comply
pr: proposes change

sp speaker
h   hearer
sb subordinate
dm dominant
sy symmetrical
p   permitted
o   obligatory
f   forbidden

:sb(h),o >

change, it was forbidden for the student, who is in a
provide information. The teacher's question counts
obligatory to provide the information. The student
her, who is in a dominant position (dm), is allowed
3, he interrupts. Therefore, utterance 2 counts as
obligation, which is recorded as "ac".

interruption, complies with the existing deontic condi-
establishes a new obligation for the pupil: to correct
the act performed is coded twofold; on the one hand,
affecting the speaker, and on the other those affecting

complies with the two obligations, that established in 1
it is part of two pairs, one adjacent and the other
non-adjacent: 1-4 and 3-4. This is recorded as $<c(1,3):sb(sp),o>$, next to number 4.

Similar approaches could be applied to the study of sequences such as the following one, where three consecutive requests are made, the first two asking for permission to make a further one. (To facilitate the reading of the analysis, an addendum with the symbols used has been attached to this page.)

(11) C: ^{1}/ Excuse me (?love) /   1. $<pr:sy(sp),f-p>$
     A: ^{2}/ = Mm. /   2. $<e(1):sy(h),f-p>$
     C: ^{3}/ Can you help me. /   3. $<c(2):sy(sp),p>$ $<pr:sy(sp),f-p>$
        ^{4}/ Where can I get this book./ 4. $<c(3):sy(sp),p>$ $<pr:sy(h),p-o>$
     (1b44)

(Data in Anderson 1988: 107.

Analysis mine.)

Such an analysis would allow us to say that the final request, which makes it obligatory for the assistant to provide information, is possible because of the other two requests. In this way, we can point to the end result of a sequence without taking it as a single act, which, as was shown in Chapter 8, would make it impossible to distinguish different sequences (the problem with Blum-Kulka's approach.)

In sum, the formula for illocutionary acts provides a vision that allows us to observe acts, elements of acts or sequences of acts rigorously and efficiently, and to identify the entities observed clearly in our reports. The formula for dissertation acts has an analogous value. Given that the discussion in Chapter 9 already pointed in this direction, it is not necessary to show the analogy in detail. Therefore, rather than exemplify the various steps in a dissertation analysis, I will only comment on the possibilities that are open by reference to the coding of a small paragraph:

(12) [1]/ Fine, let's take this a little further./ [2]/ A player accepts the sacrifice of a piece (although he might quite easily have ignored it), reckoning on being able to repel the attack./ [3]/ Is he taking a risk?/ [4]/ Undoubtedly!/ [5]/ Indeed, the attack might turn out to be irresistible./ [6]/ So whose risk is 'riskier'?/

1. [h:tr(pt,pt)]
2. [a:tr(gn,pt)]

3. [s:tr(pt,pt)]
4. [a(3)] 5. [a:av(pt)]
6. [s:cp(wh,wh)]

(Mikhail Tal, quoted by Mark Dvoretsky 1992: 115-116)

Here, besides those symbols introduced in Chapter 9, the following are being used:

h   hypothetical assertion

s   suspended assertion

tr   transitive predication

av ascriptive predication

cp comparative predication

The fact that one can identify the various acts performed in terms of their elements, again, ensures that all (and only those) acts that were of interest to a particular research would be considered. In other words, the problem of reliability is solved also in the case of dissertation acts by adopting formulae as definitions. But the fine coding in terms of elements also gives us the opportunity to see new research questions, such as:

(i) What is the effect of a sequence of assertions preceded by a hypothetical assertion?

(ii) What is the effect of the first assertion in such sequence being about a generic referent?

(iii) Is the creation of a schema (script) the combined result of the two effects?

(iv) How does an ascriptive predication on the type of event that is being scripted (*eg*, as in utterance 5) contribute to place the script in a hierarchy of bases for action?

(v) How does the chain of suspended assertion and assertion forces in utterances 3 to 6 contribute to this placing?

This focus on the devices that produce schematic knowledge complements the observations about systemic and factual knowledge in the previous chapter. A "macro" analysis of act sequences can profit from a "micro" analysis of act elements.

Of course, this suggests several questions on sentence-act relationships:

(vi) What are an author's preferred devices to make forces of assertion lexically explicit?

(vii) What are the most common devices in a field or discipline?

(viii) Do preferences vary from one language to another?

(ix) Is a hypothetical assertion a sufficient condition to interpret a singular indefinite noun phrase as a generic reference?

Once such kinds of questions are formulated, it is possible to envisage a very ambitious but feasible research programme. It seems that the establishment of systematic form-function correspondences at the element level could be a realistic goal. Although some are probably rather complex, as question (ix) suggests, they appear far less intractable than the correspondences between unanalysed sentences and unanalysed acts have been.

At least, we can begin to realize why those correspondences have been intractable. The general defining formula for dissertation acts would allow us to calculate that, even if act elements are distinguished at a low level of delicacy, the number of acts that results from combining their permutations is very high, certainly above 50. An attempt to relate a comprehensive list of whole acts to a list of whole sentence types would have involved an even greater number of comparisons, which, in turn, would have required the support of amounts of data which are unavailable. But if, instead, we aim at establishing element correspondences, the task seems more manageable.

To sum up what has been said so far, the two general act formulae we have at the beginning of this chapter allow us to change focus in different research programmes or at different moments in one programme, from acts to act relations and from these to act sequences, or from acts to act elements. They also allow us to conceive of research that attempts to relate sentence parts to act elements.

Once the illocutionary territory or the dissertation terrain are roughly sketched and we begin to trace act- sentence relations, we have a set of reference points to ask further research questions, *eg*, on the use of paralinguistic features. Consider this, for example:

(x) What is the function of the low rise intonation in the form of address used in utterance 1 of extract (11)?

Addressing the assistant by means of a lexical item — love — probably has several purposes. One of these is to reinforce the opening's main point[2]: to establish the interaction itself. It recognizes the assistant as a hearer, and, at the same time, asks for recognition of the customer as a valid speaker, as one who can use the item. Moreover, the particular item chosen contributes to define the role relationship between speaker and hearer as symmetrical; it is one that could be used by either participant to address the other. It also sets a social distance between the participants (different from the distance 'madam' or 'sir' would define). It would seem that the low rise intonation asks for acceptance of these features. To prove or falsify this could be the objective of an interesting project.

The next question also focuses on a rhetorical compound (the combination of act elements with choices at the sentence level and paralinguistic features):

(xi) Why does the author of (12) decide to use one utterance for the sole purpose of expressing a force of assertion, and why does he express it lexically and accompanies it by an exclamation mark?

The use of "Undoubtedly!" as a whole utterance obviously multiplies the emphasis on the force of assertion, which the reader is already expecting with attention, because the previous utterance is a rhetorical question (*ie*, its force is that of suspended assertion).

But it would also seem to have the effect of dividing the propositional content. To the left of the utterance we have information that constitutes the script whose creation is the purpose of the whole paragraph. To the right, we have an evaluation of the situation scripted. In other words, besides underlining importance, the lexicalization seems to work as a brief, organizing interruption of the propositional flow. The exclamation mark seems to contribute to this, by effectively closing the utterance. Again, this could be the topic of a research project.

The two formulae, then, provide the coordinates that allow us to take different stands. Perhaps a previous optical metaphor may be extended here. We can, not only picture the full body of an act, amplify an element in detail, or focus

back on a sequence of acts, but also obtain a wide angle image that includes sen-
tential and paralinguistic features. So, the formulae, the successive coding proce-
dure they suggest and the focusing strategy this invites can be seen as means to
conceive research programmes that avoid the problems pointed to in the first
chapters of this thesis.

Course content

Now, if, as we noted in the preface, a syllabus is a text that has to be realized as
discourse in the classroom, we can take the previous section as a set of indica-
tions to organize the act content[3] of a general foreign language programme. Let
us follow this suggestion, by first recognizing the two dimensions we have dis-
cussed:

> ILLOCUTION
> DISSERTATION

At a second stage, we can divide each dimension into three levels:

> ILLOCUTION
> Elements
> Acts
> Sequences
>
> DISSERTATION
> Elements
> Acts
> Sequences

At the next stage, we concentrate on the elements dimension, and further
subdivide it:

> ILLOCUTION
> Elements
> *intervention*
> *roles*
> *subjects*
> *deontic conditions*

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DISSERTATION
Elements
force
reference
predication

Finally, the specific elements in each label can be listed:

ILLOCUTION
Elements
intervention
complying
proposing change
effecting change
roles
symmetric
dominant
subordinate
subjects
speaker
hearer
both speaker **&** hearer
deontic conditions
obligatory
permitted
forbidden

DISSERTATION
Elements
force
assertion
mitigated assertion
hypothetical assertion
suspended assertion
reference
generic
particular
predication
ascriptive
existential
equative
inclusive
intransitive
transitive
locative
possessive

As was mentioned in the previous two chapters, we might consider it appropriate to further subdivide some of these categories. We might, for example, wish to distinguish 'plural' from 'singular' under 'particular', or 'telic' from 'atelic' under 'transitive'. However, for the present purposes, this level of delicacy is adequate.

The next step is to focus on the acts level. Given the enormous size a comprehensive list would have, we should provide examples that illustrate well the principle that an act is a combination of elements, and we should include every element at least once in our examples, at least until empirical research produces other kinds of lists. Without assuming that the next list satisfies these requirements best or that the act names used are the most felicious, it can demonstrate the idea:

ILLOCUTION
Acts

promise	e:sy(s),p-o
request for permission	p:sb(s),f-p
invitation	e:sy(h),f-p
order	e:sb(h), -o
ban	e:sb(h),p-f
plot	p:sy(s&h),p-o
execution	c: (s),o

DISSERTATION
Acts

simple question	s:av(pt)
logical hypothesis	h:lg(gn,gn)
observation	a:rl(pt,pt)
identification	a:in(pt,gn)
description	a:av(pt)
tentative generalization	m:av(gn)
postulation	h:ex(pt)
gloss	a:eq(pt,pt)

Here, the symbols are the letters in heavy print in the elements list above.

The next step is to concentrate on sequences, perhaps as follows:

Sequences
relations
binary
adjacent
non-adjacent
non-binary
openings
closings
results

Compounds, which would complete the frame, would come at the end of the first subdivision:

Elements
Acts
Sequences
Compounds
lexicalization of act elements
delimitation and emphasis
syntactic devices
paralinguistic features

Again, at a further level of delicacy, rather than aim to specify all possible combinations, we would seek examples that illustrate the idea and represent all the factors involved, *eg*:

ILLOCUTION
Compound: opening
Act: request for permission < pr:sy(sp),f-p >
lexicalization of act element: forms of address
delimitation and emphasis
syntactic device: imperative
paralinguistic feature: low rise intonation

DISSERTATION
Compound: definition
Act: definition core < a:eq(gn,gn) >
lexicalization of act element: verbs of naming
delimitation and emphasis
syntactic device: dissociation of theme and given
  information
paralinguistic feature: italics

Defining a temporal organization for these items, *ie*, turning the act content into an act syllabus, would require relating this content to other components of the programme, and the shape of these would depend on factors which have not been dealt with in this thesis. It would, at least, be necessary to consider the vocabulary and the grammar the course would aim to teach. But, although the previous discussion on act element realizations provides some directions to make the connections with the lexical and the grammatical syllabi, it would be more than advisable to take into account the available knowledge on the structures of a lexicon and on orders of morpheme acquisition. Besides, decisions about a syllabus should also link closely with decisions about forms of teaching, which have not been much discussed either. However, for the sake of illustrating how the various levels (elements, acts, sequences and compounds) could be interrelated, let us assume a common sense organization, from the simple to the complex, is possible.

Simple adjacency pairs, such as greetings, are our starting point. In order for the student to grasp the point of illocution, well formed pairs are contrasted to pairs where the second act does not really comply with the conditions established by the first, *eg*, where a greeting is followed not by another greeting but by a provision of information.

Slightly more complex, not necessarily adjacent, pairs, where, for example, there is one context expansion,are then introduced. One possibility is request for information and provision of information. This will allow the student to visualize the act as a unit in an interaction.

Once the idea of a speech act is present, although, of course, it has not necessarily been expressed overtly, pairs consisting of a speech act and an action act, such as pairs where the first member is an order to do something (*eg*, bring the chalk), are dealt with. This develops the idea further.

It is now possible to focus on one of the acts that have been introduced, say, requesting information, and consider two or three alternative realizations, which vary, for example, in degrees of politeness. The next step will be to contrast this act with another. Let us suppose it is the order. This leads us to focus on one pair of elements under one label, symmetric and subordinate roles.

We started with a basic unit, an act, in a very small construction, a pair. We moved up to locate it in slightly larger constructions. Then we moved down, to focus on the act again and, then, on one of its elements. We can now move up once more by identifying the element in various parts of larger dialogues. Going even further up, we may deal with the contribution of that element to the end result of a sequence.

We can then effect another top-down movement to the element in question and, from there, focus on another element. When we go up again, the act will start to appear as a combination of elements. With this frame, we might step sideways, to consider lexicalizations, syntactic devices and paralinguistic features that reinforce or delimit the elements and, thus, form rhetorical compounds.

We can proceed in similar zig-zag ways to cover the various items in our dissertation lists. Hence, we are talking about a spiralling syllabus in which a given speech act is considered in different perspectives at various points. We are also talking about choosing, perhaps arbitrarily, certain speech acts as prototypical and deriving others by variation from these.

This kind of syllabus would allow us to cover act elements exhaustively and act sequences and rhetorical compounds comprehensively. It would also instil two central ideas. The first one is that language acts upon its deontic and epistemic contexts of occurrence, that is, truly, that with language humans do. The second is that the ability to do with language is a capacity to combine certain elements. This kind of syllabus might, therefore, be the key to communicative competence, as opposed to performance repertoires (Widdowson 1990).

Method?

Some of the suggestions above go beyond the problem of course content and lead us into the problem of teaching form. I wish to present a brief exploration of them, to show the potential of the discourse view that emerges from this thesis. This will involve a short discussion of the notion of method, which is not much used nowadays, but which should perhaps be recovered.

Moving up and down the levels of dissertation or illocution in the proposed way involves two major kinds of activities. On the one hand, there are activities where we isolate, or at least, focus on parts of discourse. On the other hand, there are activities where we combine the parts or they are already forming an integrated whole. It could be said that we relate to discourse in an 'analytical' fashion or we take it in an 'integral' fashion.

Now, the alternation from integral to analytical involvements implies contrast, substitution and combination operations which invite reflection. This defines another way of classifying activities. Here, we have, on the one hand, activities where the student engages in communication, as a producer of discourse, a recipient or an interlocutor with alternating roles of speaker and hearer. On the other hand, we have those activities where the student observes, and perhaps analyses discourse. Let us, for the sake of the present exposition, call these 'communicative' and 'reflective' modes, respectively.

Combining mode and fashion, we have, in theory, four major types of activities: 1) communicative integral, 2) communicative analytical, 3) reflective integral and 4) reflective analytical. This classification means several sequences are possible in a class, *eg*, 1-3-4-2-1 or 2-4-1-3. The question of which sequences are best arises. And this question is an invitation to recover and recast the notion of method.

Let us recall that, before the communicative approach took force in the mid seventies, 'method' used to be thought of as a sequence of three types of activities: presentation, practice and further practice. Perhaps this was the result of discussing a particular method, within a particular approach (the situational one), in teachers' courses; it certainly provided a clear basic frame for a lesson. In any case, the conception was based on reflections by Anthony and Mackey. According to the former:

> *Method* is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected *approach*. An *approach* is axiomatic, a *method* is procedural.

(Anthony 1963: 65)

He illustrates his point by contrasting two methods (mimic-memorize and pattern practice) in terms of sequences of activities like comparison, memorization and repetition.

For Mackey:

> A method determines what and how much is taught (selection), the order in which it is taught (gradation), how the meaning and form are conveyed (presentation) and what is done to make the use of the language unconscious (repetition).

(Mackey 1965: xi)

The three conceptions, that of the situational approach, Anthony's and Mackey's, depend on the possibility of distinguishing activities in terms of the student's standing *vis-a-vis* language. It is, in fact, the alternation or sequencing of activities thus distinguished that defined a given method.

Now, the communicative approach took that kind of sequencing out of the scene altogether. With the aim of bringing the attitudes and intentions that impress everyday communication into the classroom, it rejected activities like presentation and repetition. It left only one type of activitiy: communication.

Not only were previous methods to be replaced. The lack of possible alternation or sequencing meant that the notion of method itself became irrelevant, or even senseless. Indeed, nowadays it is rare to hear any mention of method or methods.

As stated above, the proposed classification of activities in terms of mode and fashion opens again the possibility of method. We are again in a position to categorise the students' standing in relation to language and , therefore, to define sequences. The interesting thing is that now the alternation does not devoid language from discourse. The effect of activities like repetition was that we were left with bare sentences that were used to express no propositions and to perform no acts at all. Taking a distance to observe discourse or of focusing on different parts of discourse does not alter its nature; it only alters the student's standing — a point to which we will turn below —.

I believe the opportunity is worth taking. The benefits[4] of stipulating teaching the way methods did would be sufficient to justify an attempt to build methods again. But, even if these are disregarded, there is a good reason to develop the kind of alternation proposed. Going beyond the sentence and opening the doors of discourse should have meant that the construction of knowledge and the creation of social reality became legitimate subject matters in the language classroom, but we have not had the means to exploit this potential. Now, placing the student in a position where she not only does things with words, but is also able to see what words do would encourage course designers and teachers to tap the richness in front of them.

There might be two objections to the conclusion to which the above arguments point. One is that there was another reason for the disappearance of method, besides that already noted. Method involved a strict form of planning which is incompatible with the negotiatory and adaptive nature of authentic communication. The only reasonable answer incorporates the objection. Method can no longer be seen as a basis for detailed planning; it has to be taken as a framework for making decisions, both at the design desk and in the classroom. Therefore, it should include criteria that allow the teacher to judge when it is convenient to move up or down the illocution and dissertation lists and when it could be profitable to change mode or fashion.

The second foreseeable objection is that reflection itself has not been justified. Why do want to take time from language use and devote it to observation or discussion about language? There is, of course, an empirical side to this question: we have to find out if reflection produces good results or not. But the question also addresses a basic issue, that has to do with the conception of language that should be behind language teaching.

Here, we go beyond method and are called into the domain of approach. Before entering this domain, let us conclude that the view of content as a hierarchy of levels linked to the two general act formulae invite a recuperation of method. This would involve a recasting of the notion itself, as a frame and a set of criteria to alternate level, mode and fashion.

Approach

Reflection had always been associated with grammar, and grammar was not to be a concern within the communicative approach. The following is a late publication of a view that Allwright had held at least since a congress of the International Association of Applied Linguistics which took place in 1975:

> ...we would be well advised to focus on communicative skills, in the knowledge that this will necessarily involve developing most areas of linguistic competence as an essential part of the product rather than focus on linguistic skills and risk failing to deal with a major part of whatever constitutes communicative competence.

(Allwright 1979: 168)

Therefore, although reflection was not really a favoured activity in the methods the communicative approach questioned, there was no room for it in the new era. One would just not think about it.

The anti-reflection climate was later reinforced by a famous distinction between 'learning' and 'acquisition' (Krashen 1977). The points about this are that: 1) the sole function knowledge about the grammar of a language can have is to monitor and correct what is generated by a device that contains knowledge of it; 2) knowledge of the grammar can only be acquired naturally; 3) overt teaching only produces knowledge about.

Now, as was shown in Chapter 7, the dependency of grammar on discourse unity implied in a view like Allwright's is mistaken. Therefore, its consequences (intended or not) should be revised carefully. On the other hand, Krashen's monitor model is logically impossible[5] and alternatives that account for empirical data better have been developed since the early eighties (for a brief review, see Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991: 323-4). We are only left with an attitude against explicit grammar (which is perhaps changing rapidly), and this is not a sufficiently good reason. In other words, rather than the inclusion of reflective activities, it is their exclusion that requires justification.

Moreover, even if Allwright or Krashen were right, the exclusion of reflection (about any aspect of language) would not follow from the exclusion of explicit grammar. Perhaps what has happened is that we have not had the means to observe speech acts and discuss about them, other than the unreliable lists that conform textbook content tables. One clue pointing in this direction is Allwright's "whatever constitutes communicative competence". And one possible argument in favour of the hypothesis is that certain isolated discourse problems for which there is a vocabulary, such as reference resolution, are beginning to be treated in language classes. If that is so, I hope this thesis will contribute to make discourse, on the whole, more familiar to teachers and students, although I realize it could only do so indirectly: other steps are needed to take its products to the classroom.

In any case, not discussing discourse (and grammar) in a communicative language course is a major omission and embodies a major paradox. One of the fundamental properties of human language is its reflexivity, or the possibility it has to turn upon itself (Hockett 1958, Lyons 1977). To avoid the theme of language is to limit language's communicative potential. Moreover, it is to assume that the only valid form of language learning is that which arises from experience, that we cannot really learn from what others tell us. In this way, it is to negate the very point of communication.

In other words, if we truly assume that communication should be the goal of a language programme, we should include communication about communication in our teaching (and in our students' practice). May I then say that I am advocating a meta-communicative method.

End note

In order to indicate how such a method could be implemented, let me finish with a note on technique. It will consist of some simple suggestions built on hints made in earlier chapters.

The teacher asks students to nominate candidates to represent the group in a future discussion on the school's curriculum with delegates from other groups. He then asks them how the representative could be chosen from the list of can-

didates. A further question is why that method is preferred to other possible procedures.

Now, students are asked to draw a conceptual map around the notion of representation. This will consist of the main concepts in the field, *eg*, nomination, election, duty and accountability. As a further step, students read a text on representation and discuss how its conceptual framework differs from theirs. Then, they decide whether or not they want to change their view.

To conclude these tasks, students are asked to draw a list of the rights and obligations the representative will have *viz-a-viz* her classmates and in relation to other representatives. They also discuss how the representative's duties differ from those of other students.

At the following phase, the teacher draws the students' attention to the fact that it is the appointment which will change the representative's deontic environment. Then they discuss other situations where a speech act changes a person's obligations sharply.

They can now analyse and practise typical formulaic expressions used in English to nominate, elect and appoint. To do so, they could listen to taped material from political processes in English speaking countries. The next step is, of course, to actually conduct the process. This would be followed by the representative's beginning to do some of the things to which he became committed, *eg* making a list of the students in the group or proposing a calendar to discuss various aspects of the syllabus.

On this basis, finer discussions and more subtle activities could gradually be introduced, for example, in relation to the organization of pair work or the presentation of individual homework to the rest of the group. This, in turn, could be the background to analyse and enact other sorts of interactions, such as informal conversation or service encounters.

This turning of the classroom upon itself could, then, provide the means to: 1) include action-acts in discourse, 2) work in parallel with conceptual frameworks, and 3) alternate the communicative and reflective modes and the integral and analytical fashions of activity.

Summary

This chapter has synthesized the thesis's findings about the nature of illocution and dissertation, and has shown how they could be used in applied linguistics research, educational design and classroom practice. The exposition has involved a proposal to recuperate and recast the notion of method, as well as another to develop meta-communicative teaching.

Chapter 10 Notes

1. This is PIXI's version of Jefferson's (1978) transcription conventions:

C:	customer turn
A:	assistant turn
+	short pause
+ +	longer pause
(*n*)	long pause (approximate duration n seconds)
$*text*% or	spoken in overlap with next/previous $*text*% or $$*text*%%
$$*text*%%	in transcript
=*text*	latched to previous turn in transcript
= =	latched to previous-but-one turn in transcript
text -	tone group interrupted
text-	syllable cut short
text:	syllable lengthened (number of colons indicates extent)
.	low fall intonation
,	fall-rise intonation
?	low rise intonation
!	rise-fall intonation
(?*text*)	tape unclear: tentative transcription
(??*n*syll)	tape untranscribable: n = approximate length in syllables
[*comment*]	non-verbal behaviour or context information

2. The view that an opening like that of (11) is aimed at establishing who are valid interlocutors in an interaction is only a reformulation of Firth's point: "Greeting is the recognition of an encounter with another person as socially acceptable" (1972: 1). This is in agreement with the standard interpretation of openings as contact makers (Goffman 1971). However, the perspective I have adopted emphasizes the social and deontic aspects at play, whereas the standard interpretation focuses more on attention and access.

3. Besides an act component, the syllaus would, of course, include a grammatical and a lexical components. If one were designing an ESP course, as opposed to a general English course, one might consider a propositional component as well. The organization of these is outside the scope of this thesis.

4. Recovering the idea of method would have various benefits. In the first place, the teaching profession is still concerned about issues that used to be the matter of method, such as the coherent organization of different techniques. This is reflected, for example, in the fact that one of the main subjects in any teachers' course is called 'methodology'. And those issues would be better dealt with by reference to the problem of sequencing, because, after all, what happens in the classroom happens in time.

In the second place, a form of teaching that, besides being classified under an approach, is defined by a method is more reliable than a form which only has an approach. When we just have an approach, we can have very good and very bad lessons, because there is a great margin for imporvisation. When we have a method, it is easier to guarantee a base-line quality.

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In the third place, a method can be tested, because we can tell that a sequence corresponds or does not correspond to the method. An approach or a methodology cannot really be verified or falsified, because their level of generality does not allow for a systematic identification of lessons that belong in them.

In the forth place, a method can be perfected. If we can trust that what happens is a product of our method and if we can evaluate the results, then we will be able to detect what works well and what does not in the method.

Finally an approach which is accompanied by a method can be taught better than an approach alone or a mere methodology, because it can be communicated with more precision.

5. Not only is correction a form of generation, but for the learned system to be able to monitor, its categories would have to correspond to those of the acquired system. To put it crudely, the acquired and the learned system would have to speak the same language, otherwise they would not understand each other. Therefore, if two systems existed, they would not be as radically different in their functions as Krashen believes. There would, then, be no reason to postulate their sharp separation.

Epilogue

This thesis has demonstrated that dissertation acts are not illocutionary acts. Its main finding pertains to their natures: the former are epistemic and the latter deontic interventions. That is, the fundamental taxonomical separation of analytic units responds to the ontology of speech.

The argumentation has involved distinguishing acts from act relations and act sequences. It has also shown that illocution and dissertation have different forms of unity. These results solve the coding confusions found in applied linguistics studies of discourse. In fact, they provide solid bases for devising observation schemes that are adequate to capture simultaneous and complex phenomena without losing methodological rigour.

Perhaps the most important products of the discussion are the two general formulae that generate definitions of specific acts systematically. They allow researchers to properly control their description elements and to place them within comprehensive frameworks. They also provide teachers and course designers with a map to move up and down the levels of discourse.

For these reasons, it may be said that this thesis shows the value theory and deliberation can have in applied linguistics.

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