

SPEECH ACTS AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

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INTRODUCTION

SEVERAL new paradigms have emerged within applied linguistics in recent years. The Chomskyan paradigm has had a marked influence on theories of language and language learning. The goal of language learning within the Chomskyan approach is identified with the acquisition of underlying linguistic categories and systems, from which surface forms are derived through the application of transformational and other rules and processes of a universal type. Despite the addition of a philosophical framework for the theory, and while the Chomskyan concept of language knowledge is quite different in its own terms from the concept of language knowledge implicit in pre-Chomskyan theory, it is only a partial account of the knowledge required to use a language. This paper considers other areas of knowledge which constitute an equally important dimension of the task of learning a language, with particular reference to second and foreign language learning.

Sociolinguists and others have long acknowledged the limitations in the Chomskyan formulation of competence, and stressed the need to include knowledge of the rules of use and communicatively appropriate performance. Bruner, writing of first language learning, has argued that mother tongue acquisition should be looked at not as a solo flight by the child in search of disembodied rules of grammar, but as a problem-solving transaction. The essential problems to be solved by mother and infant have to do with 'how to make our intentions known to others, how to communicate what we have in our consciousness, what we want done on our behalf, how we wish to relate to others, and what in this or other worlds is possible' (Bruner 1978). In this paper we will consider second language acquisition from a similar perspective to that advocated by Bruner for first language acquisition, focussing on the development of communicative rather than linguistic or grammatical competence. While communicative competence theory covers a range of different dimensions of language behaviour in the individual and in the speech community, we will focus on one aspect of communicative competence, namely, speech acts, and consider the contribution of speech act theory to our understanding of second language acquisition.

1. WHAT IS A SPEECH ACT?

Speech act theory has to do with the functions and uses of language, so in the broadest sense we might say that speech acts are all the acts we perform through speaking, all the things we *do* when we speak. Such a definition is too broad for most purposes, however, for the uses to which we put speech encompass most human activities. We use language to build bridges, to con-

solidate political regimes, to carry on arguments, to convey information from one person to another, to entertain, in short to communicate. We use speech in ceremonies, games, recipes, and lectures. On some occasions, e.g., social gatherings, we use language successively to introduce one person to another, carry on conversations, tell jokes, criticize and praise third parties both present and absent, expound on favourite topics, seduce or attempt to seduce, and say farewell. We could extend such lists indefinitely, but as Halliday (1973:18, 28) has pointed out, such lists do not by themselves tell us very much, for the innumerable social purposes for which adults use language are not represented directly, one to one, in the language system.

Hymes (1972) has proposed a useful distinction between speech situations, speech events, and speech acts. Within a community one finds many *situations* associated with speech, such as fights, hunts, meals, parties, etc. But it is not profitable to convert such situations into part of a sociolinguistic description by simply relabelling them in terms of speech, for such situations are not in themselves governed by consistent rules throughout. The term *speech event* can be restricted to activities that are directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech, events such as two party conversations (face-to-face or on the telephone), lectures, introductions, religious rites, and the like. This notion of speech event is related to the traditional concept of genre, though Hymes argues that the two must be treated as analytically independent, and a great deal of empirical research is needed to clarify the relationship between the terms. *Speech acts* (in a narrow sense now) are the minimal terms of the set: speech situation/event/act. When we speak we perform acts such as giving reports, making statements, asking questions, giving warnings, making promises, approving, regretting, and apologizing.

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), who have analyzed classroom transcripts, also propose a 'top-down' analysis, beginning with the social occasion (the lesson) as the outermost analytic frame and successively dividing and subdividing the sequence of discourse down to the smallest unit, the *act*, which they define as the minimal unit of speaking which can be said to have a function. Acts are labelled according to discourse function, e.g., elicitation, question, etc.

In this paper we will be focussing primarily on individual speech acts. However, it is necessary to look somewhat beyond the isolated act represented by the individual sentence, primarily the verb. Austin (1962) pointed out that there are a great number of speech acts (illocutionary acts, in his terminology) and in English there are a great number of verbs which refer to them. Consider for example just the related set: *ask, request, direct, require, order, command, suggest, beg, plead, implore, pray*. Austin claimed that there are over a thousand such verbs in English. But while English verbs provide a useful initial taxonomy for speech acts, the acts are not in fact equivalent to the verbs which frequently name them. Searle (1976) points out that many verbs are not markers of illocutionary force, but of some other feature of the speech act. *Insist* and *suggest*, for example, mark degree of intensity, but do not mark separate speech act functions or illocutionary points. Both may be used with directive function ('I suggest/insist that we go to the movies') or with representative function ('I suggest/insist that the answer is found on page 16'). We need to recognize also that speech acts are not identifiable with the sentence, or

any other level of grammatical description. Hymes' (1972) position is that the level of speech acts mediates between the usual levels of grammar and the rest of a speech event in that it implicates both linguistic form and social norm. Whether or not a particular utterance has the status of a request, for example, may depend upon a conventional linguistic formula ('How about picking me up early this afternoon?'), but it may also depend upon the social relationship between speaker and hearer.

It needs to be recognized too that speech acts occur within discourse, and that the interpretation and negotiation of speech act force is often dependent on the discourse or transactional context. As a minimum, we need to consider the fact that talk is often organized into two-part exchanges. As Goffman (1976) points out, this organizing principle follows from very fundamental requirements of talk as a communication system. A speaker needs to know whether his message has been received and understood; a recipient needs to show that he has received and understood the message. We therefore must recognize such 'adjacency pairs' as summons-answer (Schegloff, 1968), statement-reply (Goffman, 1976), question-answer, request-refusal of request, and the like.

An investigation of speech acts therefore leads naturally into questions of act sequencing (events) and contexts (speech settings or situations). Rehbein and Ehlich, quoted in Candlin (1978), list the different operations that may take place inside a restaurant when the activity is ordering a meal: entering, looking around, judging, taking a seat, wanting the menu, asking for the menu, wanting information, asking for information, consulting, deciding, ordering, transmission, production, delivery, serving, consuming, wanting to pay, asking for the bill, drawing up the account, getting/presenting the bill, accepting the bill, paying, leaving. Norms of linguistic behaviour identify various parts of the sequence. Different participants have different amounts of talking to do and different types of talking, as well as different topics to talk about. Within speech events there are norms for opening and closing sequences, sequencing rules, and distribution frequencies and probabilities for particular speech acts. 'Assigning the value *command* to any of a range of possible utterances ("hot dog", "that one", "please bring me X", a deictic gesture) is a function of recognizing the social world of the restaurant with the rights, duties and social relationship between the participants, as well as that of being aware of the discursual position of the "act of commanding" within the transactional process.' (Candlin, 1978, p. 17.)

Both speech acts and speech events have been studied extensively in recent years and have constituted topical foci for scholars from a great number of disciplines. Speech events have been investigated by anthropologists and ethnographers (Albert, 1964, Gumperz and Hymes, 1972, Sanches and Blount, 1975), folklorists (Abrahams, 1962, Dundes *et al.*, 1972), literary critics (Pratt, 1977), and sociologists (Allen and Guy, 1974). The most detailed and perhaps the most provocative analyses of speech events have been provided by those sociologists who work within the area of sociology termed ethnomethodology, the primary goal of which is to give rigorous sociological formulation to the interactional basis of the things people say and do in the settings of everyday life. Working primarily from transcripts of natural conversations, characterizations have been developed for a variety of conversational activities: turn

taking (Sacks *et al.*, 1974), story telling and identity negotiations (Sacks, 1972), opening and closing conversations (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973), telephone conversations (Schegloff, 1968), and many other aspects of the establishment and management of social relations through conversational roles (Sudnow, 1972, Schenkein, 1978, Garfinkel, 1967, Goffman, 1972 and 1976). Speech acts, on the other hand, have been studied primarily by philosophers of language (Austin, 1962, Searle, 1969 and 1976, Grice, 1968 and 1975) and linguists (Ross, 1970, Gordon and Lakoff, 1971, Cole and Morgan, 1975).

2. THEORETICAL QUESTIONS

The following are some of the major theoretical issues discussed in the speech act literature.

2.1 *Units and categories*

For linguistic analysis, the units of concern are sentences. Contrasts between well-formed and ill-formed (ungrammatical) sentences are primary data. While the grammatical paradigm has been followed by many linguists who have dealt with issues in speech act theory (see most of the papers in Cole and Morgan, 1975) and while basic semantic differences are indeed likely to have syntactic consequences (Searle, 1976), speech acts are in essence *acts*, not *sentences*. Speech acts cannot be equated with *utterances* either, for we often perform more than one act (e.g., inform and request) with a single utterance 'I'm hungry'. Finally, speech acts cannot be equated with the notion of *turn* as an interactional unit, as it may take several speaker turns to accomplish a single act, or, conversely, several acts may be performed within a single speaker turn.

So far we have presented only a very vague description of what speech acts *are*. Perhaps the notion is best clarified by examples, with some effort to group together illocutionary acts into major types.

Searle (1976) presents the clearest taxonomy. For Searle, the basis for classification is 'illocutionary point' or purpose of the act, from the speaker's perspective. According to Searle, speech acts can be grouped into a small number of basic types based on speaker intentions:

Representatives. One of the basic things we do with language is tell people how things are. We *assert, claim, say, report*, and the like. The point or purpose of this class of representatives is to commit the speaker in varying degrees (*suggest, doubt, and deny* are members of this class also) to the truth of something. One test of a representative is whether it can be characterized as true or false.

Directives. When we use language, we do not just refer to the world and make statements about it. Among our most important uses for language is trying to get people to do things. The class of directives includes all speech acts whose primary point is that they count as attempts on the part of the speaker to get the hearer to do something. Suggestions, requests and commands are all directives. They differ in the force of the attempt, but are all attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something.

Commissives. Commissives are those illocutionary acts whose point is to

commit the speaker to do something. Promises and threats both fall into this category, the difference between them being the speaker's assumption about whether or not the promised action is desired by the hearer.

Searle makes the interesting point that there is a difference in the direction of fit between the words of a speech act and the state of affairs in the world when comparing representatives with directives and commissives. With representatives the direction of fit is words-to-world, i.e., what is at issue is whether the words uttered ('The world is flat') match the world. With both representatives and commissives the direction of fit is world-to-words. Future actions are to be done in accordance with words previously uttered. The basic distinction between requests and commissives is that hearer actions are the point of requests and other directives, while speaker actions are the issue with promises and other commissives.

Expressives. The point of this class is to express feelings and attitudes about states of affairs. We *apologize* for things we have done, *deplore* other people's actions, regret, thank, welcome, etc. With expressives there is no direction of fit, but the state of affairs specified in the following proposition is simply assumed to be true. Note also that while representatives, directives and commissives are all associated with a consistent psychological dimension (belief, wish and intent, respectively), the psychological states expressed by expressives are extremely varied.

Declarations. Some speech acts bring about changes in the world simply through their successful execution. 'You're fired,' says the boss, and the employee must start the search for a new position. 'I do,' say the bride and groom, and after the presiding official (secular or clerical) says his part the marriage has taken place. The defining characteristic of this class is that the performance brings about the correspondence between the words and the world. This class is closest to Austin's (1962) original notion of a performative, an act of doing something in the world rather than an act of saying alone.

Other classes, major and minor. Several taxonomies have been proposed in addition to that of Searle. Fraser (1975) adds a few categories. In addition to *acts of asserting* (= Searle's representatives), he includes *acts of evaluating*, the point of which is to express the speaker's assessment of the truth of a proposition and the basis of the judgement, e.g., *analyse, conclude, hypothesize*. In addition to acts of requesting (= Searle's directives), Fraser has a category of acts of suggesting, e.g., *recommend, suggest, urge*. *Acts of stipulating* express a speaker's desire for the acceptance of a naming convention expressed by the proposition, e.g., *call, classify, designate*. Hancher (1979) has suggested two additional kinds of acts, those that combine commissive with directive illocutionary force (e.g., offering, inviting, challenging) and those that require two participants (e.g., giving, selling, contracting).

While the great majority of speech acts can probably be analysed as examples of Searle's major classes, or Fraser's somewhat longer list, there are doubtless some speech acts which are outside these particular taxonomies. Greetings and farewells, for example, constitute a small category (or categories) of acts which are not generalizable as major classes, but which

deserve attention. It is also useful to mention such acts as *refusal of a request*, although utterances which fall into such a category will in most cases be already classifiable in terms of the basic act types: 'I'm sorry, but I can't' = expressive + representative; 'I'll be able to see you tomorrow' (not today) = commissive; 'Do it yourself' = directive.

Performative verbs. From Austin's original notion of a performative come the current and important terms *performative verb* and *explicit performative* (sentence or utterance). These are verbs (sentences, utterances) which explicitly name the acts being performed, e.g., 'I promise to be there', an explicit performative which can be contrasted with the implicit 'I'll be there'. There are certain syntactic requirements generally assumed to hold for a verb to function performatively, such as the requirement that the subject (if expressed) be first person, the addressee (if expressed) second person and the requirement that the verb be in the present tense. Thus 'I promise you that I'll be there' is explicitly performative, while 'He promised that he'd be there' is not—in fact it is not a promise (commissive) at all, but rather a report (representative). While most authors see the performative as a sentence type with such syntactic requirements, Fraser (1975) demurs, arguing that strict syntactic requirements cannot be proved, favouring instead a distinction between strongly performative examples (those which are easily seen as counting as the act denoted by the verb) and weakly performative examples.

2.2 How to perform a speech act

Searle (1965) has attempted to provide analyses of various illocutionary acts, asking what conditions are necessary and sufficient for a particular act to have been performed by the uttering of a particular sentence. For promises, the conditions are identified as follows:

Normal input and output conditions obtain, i.e., the speaker and hearer are not insane, they are not play acting, etc.

A speaker expresses a sentence, the propositional content of which predicates a future act of the speaker.

The hearer would prefer the speaker's doing the act to his not doing the act, and the speaker believes this. Searle calls this a preparatory condition.

It is not obvious to both speaker and hearer that the speaker will do the act in the normal course of events.

The speaker intends to do the act. This is the illocutionary point of promising, which Searle calls the sincerity condition.

The speaker intends that the utterance of the sentence will place him under an obligation to do the act. This is called the essential condition.

The general type of analysis carries over to other speech acts as well. For assertions, for example, one condition is that the speaker must have some basis for supposing the assertions to be true, the sincerity condition is that he must believe it to be true, and the essential condition is that the utterance counts as an attempt to inform and convince.

These conditions do not tell us how speech acts are actually used and understood, however, and the question of how the speaker and hearer assign appropriate illocutionary value to a speech act remains a topic for speculation among linguists, philosophers and ethnomethodologists. Goffman (1976) has pointed out that a classification of speech acts provides us with an opportunity

to see that how an interchange unfolds will depend somewhat on the type of speech act involved, but that an attempt must be made 'to uncover the principles which account for whatever contrast is found on a particular occasion between what is said, what is usually meant by this, and what in fact is meant on that particular occasion of use'.

Searle (1975) talks of inferential strategies and suggests how the second of the following statements could be taken as a rejection of the proposal made in the first statement.

Student X: Let's go to the movies tonight.

Student Y: I have to study for an exam.

Searle (1975, p. 63) reconstructs the steps necessary to derive the intended meaning in the following way (without proposing that these are conscious operations).

- 'Step 1: I have made a proposal to Y, and in response he has made a statement to the effect that he has to study for an exam (facts about the conversation).
- Step 2: I assume that Y is cooperating in the conversation and that therefore his remark is intended to be relevant (principles of conversational cooperation).
- Step 3: A relevant response must be one of acceptance, rejection, counter-proposal, further discussion, etc. (theory of speech acts).
- Step 4: But his literal utterance was not one of these, and so was not a relevant response (inference from Steps 1 and 3).
- Step 5: Therefore, he probably means more than he says. Assuming that his remark is relevant, his primary illocutionary point must differ from his literal one (inference from Steps 2 and 4).
- Step 6: I know that studying for an exam normally takes a large amount of time relative to a single evening, and I know that going to the movies normally takes a large amount of time relative to a single evening (factual background information).
- Step 7: Therefore he probably cannot both go to the movies and study for an exam in one evening (inference from Step 6).
- Step 8: A preparatory condition on the acceptance of a proposal, or on any other commissive, is the ability to perform the act predicated in the propositional content condition (theory of speech acts).
- Step 9: Therefore, I know that he has said something that has the consequence that he probably cannot consistently accept the proposal (inference from Steps 1, 7 and 8).
- Step 10: Therefore, his primary illocutionary point is probably to reject the proposal (inference from Steps 5 and 9).'

Grice's (1975) 'general principles of co-operative behaviour' likewise attempt to identify presuppositions that enable the participants in a speech event to assign appropriate illocutionary value to utterances. Grice refers to four maxims:

- Maxim of Quantity: Make your contribution (just) as informative as is required.
- Maxim of Quality: Make your contribution one that is true.
- Maxim of Relation: Be relevant.
- Maxim of Manner: Avoid obscurity and ambiguity; be brief and orderly.

Grice gives the following example.

'Suppose that A and B are talking about a mutual friend C, who is now working in a bank. A asks B how C is getting on in his job, and B replies: "Oh, quite well, I think; he likes his colleagues, and he hasn't been to prison yet". At this point A might well enquire what B was implying, what he was suggesting, or even what he meant by saying that C had not yet been to prison . . . in a suitable setting A might reason as follows: "(1) B has apparently violated the maxim "Be relevant" and so may be regarded as having flouted one of the maxims conjoining perspicuity; yet I have no reason to suppose that he is opting out from the operation of the Cooperative Principle; (2) given the circumstances I can regard his irrelevance as only apparent if and only if I suppose him to think that C is potentially dishonest; (3) B knows that I am capable of working out step (2). So B implicates that C is potentially dishonest'.

2.3 *Meaning, deep structure, and surface structure*

One of the most controversial aspects of speech act theory has to do with whether illocutionary point is part of the 'meaning' of a sentence and whether that aspect of meaning ought to be represented in the grammar of a language, in the deep structure.

2.3.1 *The performative analysis.* In traditional school grammars of English, there is an assumed fit between sentence type and illocutionary point, to wit: declarative sentences (a grammatical sentence type) are used for making assertions (a speech act category); imperative sentences are used for orders; interrogative sentences are used for asking questions (requests for verbal responses). The 'performative analysis' is essentially an attempt to capture this relationship, by positing for all imperative sentences, for example, a highest performative clause 'I order you' in the deep structure.

Ross (1970) has claimed that declarative sentences must be derived from deep structures containing an explicitly represented performative 'I say (assert, state, etc.) to you X'. Ross presents a large number of syntactic arguments to support the existence of both pronouns in the higher clause, such as pseudo-reflexives in sentences like, 'This paper was written by Ann and myself'. Ross does not attempt to prove that the highest performative is a specific English verb, like *say* or *state*, but simply asserts that it must be [+ performative], [+ communication], [+ linguistic], and [+ declarative].

In its simplest form, the performative analysis does not take us very far in understanding the relationship between linguistic form and illocutionary point. Ross's syntactic arguments have been strongly criticized (see Matthews, 1972), and there are obvious problems with the assumed fit between sentence type and illocutionary force on semantic grounds. Declarative sentences are not always assertions, but can function as questions (when the hearer rather than the speaker is assumed to have knowledge about the proposition—Labov, 1972), or as orders ('No one will leave this room, and that means you!'). Syntactic imperatives may function as other speech acts than orders, e.g., in a sentence like 'Spare the rod and spoil the child'. In general the fit between sentence type and function is only typical, not absolute (Bolinger, 1967).

Sadock (1970) first tackled the problem of what he called 'whimperatives', sentences which have imperative force but question form, e.g., 'Will you close the door please?' Sadock analysed such constructions as conjunctions of

questions and imperatives. Other analyses are possible. Whimperatives could be analysed as ordinary questions (thus failing to take any account of the imperative force, but leaving this to pragmatic, extragrammatical explanations), or one could analyse them as identical in deep structure to imperatives (Heringer, 1972). One could claim that forms like 'Will you shut up?' are merely simple imperatives ('Shut up') to which tags have been added and then preposed (Green, 1975).

2.3.2 *Conversational postulates.* An entirely different approach to the analysis of whimperatives and other indirect speech acts has been proposed by Gordon and Lakoff (1971). Following Grice (1968), they argue that sentences may convey more than their literal meaning. The sentence 'It's cold in here', when spoken by a superior to a subordinate, may convey the meaning of 'Close the window', but that does not mean that the analysis of 'It's cold in here' should include positing an imperative force-indicating device in the deep structure. Gordon and Lakoff propose that speakers and hearers interpret such sentences by reference to conversational postulates. Thus whimperatives are to be analysed grammatically as simple questions, but interpreted as imperatives by means of a conversational postulate or entailment rule, such as: a speaker can convey a request by asking if the hearer intends to do the act, as in 'Will you close the door?'

The conversational postulates proposed by Gordon and Lakoff are both highly predictive and intuitively satisfying. They directly relate the philosophical analyses of what is involved in certain speech acts with the forms of language. For requests, the full form of the conversational postulate is that one can convey a request by either asserting a speaker-based condition or questioning a hearer-based condition. Thus we have the following forms:

I'd like you to go now.	asserts speaker-based sincerity condition S wants H to do A
Could you be a little quieter?	questions hearer-based preparatory condition H is able to do A
Well, are you going to help me?	questions hearer-based preparatory condition. It is not obvious to both S and H that H will do A in the normal course of events

It is clear that the conversational postulates are not quite as neat as Gordon and Lakoff suggest. For example, one can convey requests by asserting hearer-based conditions as well as by questioning them, e.g., 'You could be a little quieter, you know', 'From now on, when I say *jump* you will jump'. But as Clark and Clark (1977) have pointed out, it is an extraordinary correspondence when speakers make indirect requests by making use of the social conventions that cover the proper use of requests.

2.3.3 *Surface structures and contexts.* Ervin-Tripp (1976) has proposed a strikingly different analysis of English directives. Ervin-Tripp argues that although native speakers' understanding can be treated as inferences from literal interpretations, social factors are what determine the actual choice of directive type. Based on a number of empirical studies, Ervin-Tripp reports that need statements ('I need a match') occur between persons differing in

rank. Permission directives, sentences which look like requests for permission but in fact require action on the part of the hearer ('Can I have my record back?'), are usually directed upward in rank, when the hearer controls resources. Hints, which do not include a literal expression of the act desired, are frequent in families and communal groups. The social variables which affect directive choice include age, rank, familiarity, presence of outsiders, territorial location, the seriousness of the service asked and many others. Moreover, Ervin-Tripp claims that directives do not require inference from literal interpretations. Where knowledge of obligations and prohibitions is shared, simple interpretation rules allow prompt understanding.

Reviewing the linguistic debate over the incorporation of illocutionary point in the analysis of sentences, Sadock (1975) suggests two methods of removing arbitrariness from current descriptions. One would eliminate all transderivational constraints that state an interaction between logic and language; the other would require a logicogrammatical treatment wherever it is possible to provide one. Sadock recognizes that the result would be two very different interpretations of sentence meaning, one very shallow and one very deep, but states that 'I am not sure that anything at all rides on this difference'. Does the difference matter for our view of the teaching/learning process? For teaching purposes, especially the preparation of materials, both the deep structure analysis of Gordon and Lakoff and the surface structure oriented analysis of Ervin-Tripp provide valuable source material. But when we consider the implications of the different models for our view of language learning, there does appear to be a difference. The logicogrammatical 'deep' model would force us to view the acquisition of grammatical competence and the acquisition of communicative competence as essentially the same thing, while the 'shallow' model would allow us to consider the development of grammatical forms quite distinctly from the pragmatic ability to match linguistic forms with appropriate social contexts.

2.4 Universals

For the purpose of investigating speech acts in the context of second language learning, perhaps the most important question is whether and to what extent the various aspects of speech acts discussed so far are universal.

Consider first the basic units. Can it be safely asserted that essentially the same classes of speech events (conversations, lectures, discussions, debates etc.) and the same taxonomy of speech acts (i.e., representatives, directives, commissives, etc.) hold for all languages and speech communities? Most researchers assume that the answer to this question is yes, but in fact there has been no ethnographic research carried out to confirm or disprove the assumption. It is probably not true that all languages name the same speech acts with illocutionary verbs (does every language recognise a *suggest*: *insist* distinction?), but again, no research has been reported.

The universality of the strategies for performing speech acts, particularly indirect speech acts, has been discussed in the literature. Gordon and Lakoff say that they have checked with a number of speakers of widely divergent languages and would not be surprised to find that the conversational postulates they propose were universals. Fraser (1978) has recently claimed that the strategies for performing illocutionary acts are essentially the same

across languages. Comparing request strategies in fourteen different languages, Fraser found that the same basic strategies were available in each language. If this is correct, then Fraser is correct in claiming that acquiring social competence in a new language does not involve substantially new concepts concerning how language is organized and what types of devices serve what social functions, but only new (social) attitudes about which strategies may be used appropriately in a given context.

Goffman (1976) draws a distinction between 'system constraints' (those which follow from the requirements of any communication system), which he suggests are pancultural, and 'ritual constraints' (such as constraints regarding how each individual ought to handle himself with respect to others), which can be expected to vary markedly from society to society. System constraints include norms such as those identified by Grice: be relevant, be informative, etc. Ochs-Keenan (1976) has attempted to assess the status of some of Grice's maxims cross-culturally and has found that the maxim 'Be informative' does not hold in Malagasy society. Interlocutors regularly violate the maxim by providing less information than is required by their conversational partner, even though they have the required information. However, it can be argued that the maxims are universal, but that deviations from the norm force us to attempt to uncover additional maxims, motives and strategies to account for departures from an 'ideal' communication system.

Perhaps the most persuasive (and most detailed) argument for the universality of speech act strategies has been put forth by Brown and Levinson (1978). They point out that most speech acts are in some way threatening to either the speaker or the hearer, either by imposing on one party's freedom of action, as with acts of requesting (an attempt to restrict the freedom of the hearer) or by damaging the positive self-image of one of the parties, as with criticisms (hearer's face is damaged) and apologies (speaker's face is damaged). Brown and Levinson argue that speakers compute the level of threat involved, considering such factors as social distance, degree of power that one party may have over the other and the ranking of impositions within a particular culture, and then select a strategy for doing the act. Very threatening actions may not be done at all, and minimally threatening actions are usually done directly and explicitly. It is the great area in between which is most complex. Speakers may select a strategy of 'positive politeness', one which minimizes the threatening action by reassuring the hearer that he or she is valued by the speaker, that somehow the speaker wants what the hearer wants, that they are members of the same in-group, etc. Or a speaker may select a strategy of 'negative politeness', redressing the threat to basic claims of territory and self-determination, for example by apologizing or being indirect and formal. Thus a request for forgiveness might be expressed in a positively polite form as 'Gimme a break, Sweetheart' or in a negatively polite form as 'I hope you'll be able to excuse my error'.

Brown and Levinson describe a great number of positive and negative speech act strategies and investigate their use in three languages (English, Tamil and Tzeltal). They report that they find a fine-grained parallelism in the expression of politeness in these unrelated languages, often including the minutiae of linguistic forms. They argue that interactional systematics, the basis for linguistic realizations, are based largely on universal principles.

There is sufficient evidence to argue, however, that speech act strategies will be found to be universal only if they are phrased in extremely general terms. All languages have some verbs which name performative acts, for example, and some of these may be used to issue directives, but this does not mean that all such request forms in English have literal translations which function the same way in all languages. Consider the distinction between 'I request that . . .' and 'I hereby request that . . .', where the 'hereby' not only makes the request yet more explicit but also lends a quasi-legal flavour to the sentence. In French a similar distinction may be conveyed through quite different linguistic means, such as the use of an elaborated verb form in preference to a simple one, e.g., 'Je vous prie' as against 'Je vous prie de bien vouloir'.

It is possible that 'hedges' on illocutionary force may be a universal strategy or negative politeness, but while this operation may be carried out by the use of tag questions ('It was amazing, wasn't it?') or by intonation in some languages (including English), in other languages the parallel operation may involve other devices, such as the Japanese particle *ne* (Brown and Levinson, 1978, p. 152).

It appears that other speech act strategies can also be considered universal only if they are phrased very generally. It is perhaps the case that one can make a request in any language by referring to the hearer's ability to perform the action, but again exact translations of English sentences often fail to carry identical implied force. Searle (1975) points out that while 'Can you hand me that book?' can be translated literally into Czech, the resulting sentence will sound extremely odd to a Czech speaker. English 'can', 'could', and 'able' when indicating a request can only be translated into Cantonese as *hojih*; other modals usually translated into English as 'can' refer specifically to physical ability and do not imply directive force. A sentence like 'Can you reach the book on the top shelf?', if translated with the modal *naahnggau* ('able'), would be answered with 'yes' or 'no', with no attempt to get the book by the hearer (Marcus, 1978). Green (1975) observes that conditional forms equivalent to English 'would' ('Would you leave it on my desk when you finish, please') cannot carry imperative force in Spanish, Hebrew or Japanese, although they can in English, German and Finnish. In English, we can make requests with non-literal *let's* ('Let's all think before we raise our hands'), but Cole (1975) reports that in both Swahili and Yiddish such constructions are ungrammatical.

Searle has argued that the mechanisms (strategies) for indirect speech are general, not peculiar to this language or that, but within this framework certain standard forms tend to become conventionally established as the standard idiomatic forms. The standard forms for one language may not maintain their indirect speech act potential when translated into another language because (a) the translation may not be idiomatic in the second language and (b) even if idiomatic, the resulting forms may not be those which are conventionally selected as devices for indirect speech acts (Searle, 1975).

Even if speech act strategies are to a certain extent universal, therefore, learners of new languages still need to learn several important things. They need to learn the particular conventionalized forms in the new language, particular applications of general principles which vary systematically among cultures and groups (and to a certain extent among individuals). They need to

learn the general 'ethos' of the new speech community, whether the interactional style in general is stiff and formal or relaxed and open. They need to learn which speech acts are particularly threatening in a particular culture. One culture might place particular emphasis on modesty and circumspection in the expression of speaker beliefs, for example, while in another community requests (or criticisms) might be especially threatening. Learners need to learn the social relationships of the community, the networks of relationships and responsibility which obtain, the kinds of acts which can be directed towards which persons, etc. (Brown and Levinson, 1978). Learners also need to learn some very specific contexts which call for particular speech acts, which vary from society to society. Apte (1974) has identified the contexts which call for 'thank you' in South Indian languages (very restricted), as opposed to American English (extensive). Ueda (1974) has discussed refusals in Japanese, the situations that permit saying 'no', and the ways to refuse a request when a direct refusal is not possible.

Candlin argues that 'interethnic and intercultural variation among mother tongues, domains of language use, inter-language attitudes and language learning purposes lead to misunderstanding, and that such misunderstanding can be understood through the study of discourse patterning. He stresses that the performance of speech acts depends on 'culturally specific appropriateness criteria' (Candlin, 1978). Clyne (1975) discusses communication breakdown (where an intention is misunderstood) and communication conflict (where a misunderstanding leads to friction between speakers) and suggests that both can often be attributed to cross-cultural (interlingual or dialectal), social (sociolectal) or individual (ideolectal) differences in communicative competence rules, e.g., different rules for the realization of particular speech acts. This suggests that a fruitful area of research in second language acquisition is the contrastive analysis of norms for the realization of speech events and speech acts in different speech communities, which could usefully complement contrastive analysis, error analysis, performance analysis and related approaches.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING RESEARCH AND THEORY

The above account of speech events and speech acts reviews the major contributions to speech act theory that have been made by linguists, philosophers, ethnomethodologists and others. We now consider in what ways speech act theory can contribute to our understanding of second language acquisition. A major contribution of speech act theory is in its clarification of dimensions of communicative competence. While the concept of communicative competence is not new, much remains to be done to substantiate the concept empirically, and the study of the role of speech acts in second language learning could make a useful contribution to our knowledge of how second and foreign languages are acquired.

Until recently, theories of second language learning have followed, rather narrowly, models developed in linguistic theory. Thus it was widely assumed that transformational-generative grammar could serve both as a general model for language and as an explanatory model for second language learning. Within much L2 theory and research the primacy of syntax has been taken for

granted and the syntactic paradigm has been dominant. While phonology and other areas have not been ignored, second language learning has largely been described as a continuum of gradually complexifying syntactic systems. The bulk of the empirical research of recent years has been on such issues as morpheme development, error analysis, developmental study of L2 syntax, and these have been related to the concept of proficiency in a second or foreign language. Speech act theory on the other hand, defining proficiency with reference to communicative rather than linguistic competence, looks beyond the level of the sentence to the question of what sentences do and how they do it when language is used. It thus broadens the scope of enquiry to include the study of how second language learners use sentences to perform speech acts and to participate in speech events. In first language acquisition, the acquisition of speech act routines has recently been considered of primary importance.

3.1 *First Language Learning*

Halliday (1975), Dore (1975, 1977) and Bruner (1975, 1978) have examined the development of speech acts in young children (before one year of age) and concluded that knowledge of communicative function precedes true language. Dore (1975) in particular argues that illocutionary force is a language universal, that the speech act is the basic unit of linguistic communication, and that early language development consists of the child's pragmatic intentions gradually becoming grammaticalized. Bruner (1978) has characterized the empiricist associationist view of language learning as 'impossible' and the nativist view as 'miraculous' and suggests that a speech act viewpoint is more explanatory than either. Bruner argues that mother tongue acquisition is a problem solving transactional enterprise, involving an active language learner and an equally active language teacher. Bruner stresses the importance of mother-child interaction and finds this related to the progression in the kinds of requests made by children. First requests are directed at nearby objects, usually held by the mother, and the mother's main job seems to be to establish the sincerity of the request. A second type of request is related to shared activity in games, e.g., 'Mummy read', in the context of reading together. These requests—and the mother's responses—are tied to the development of turn-taking, the assignment of roles, and agency. The last type of request to develop, emerging at 15–16 months with Bruner's children, is for supportive action, such as persuading the mother to get a toy telephone from the cupboard so that the child may play with it. While in both the earliest and the latest requests in the sequence what is desired may be an object, the later request forms are more sophisticated because they involve a goal and a means of getting to it. A similar distinction has been drawn by Halliday between the instrumental ('I want') and the regulatory ('Do as I tell you') functions of early language.

Clark and Clark (1977) report that at the two-word stage children use mainly two types of speech acts, assertions (representatives) and requests (directives). They do not promise things or use declarations; these are not added to their repertoire of speech acts until they are considerably older, but they elaborate the kinds of directives and representatives they make as soon as they begin to produce longer utterances.

Reviewing studies by Halliday, Bates (1976), Dore (1975) and Garvey (1975) on early request forms, Ervin-Tripp concludes:

From a very early age (children) have a rich system of alternations in form that is systematically related to social features. They sensitively identify social contrasts signalled by tag modals, polite forms, address terms, modal embeddings. What they gradually learn to do is conceal their purposes. While they use diverse syntactic forms, they still refer explicitly to their desires and goals, when they are not obvious from the context. So the major differences between adults and young children is not diversity of structure, not diversity of social features—though the rules may increase in number of variables and in complexity with age—but systematic, regular, unmarked requests, which do not refer to what the speaker wants. Wide use of tactful deviousness is a late accomplishment.

Mitchell-Kernan and Kernan (1977) have looked at the choice of directive type among older children (7–12 years) and found that both requests and refusals are in some cases peculiar to children's culture in the way they are elaborated. Children so often use directives to define and test status relationships and obligations that they react testily to directive forms which, on the surface at least, seem perfectly appropriate. While requests that have little cost are usually honoured by adults, Mitchell-Kernan and Kernan found that their children did not honour them and frequently insisted on courtesy phrases (e.g., *pretty please*), and even if these were used did not always comply. The frequent use of challenges ('Who do you think you are?') indicates that the children are constantly on guard to preserve their rights and to defend themselves against challenges to their status.

3.2.1 *Second Language Learning.* In reviewing research on second and foreign language learning, Swain (1977) proposes a four part model of second language learning, isolating four areas of relevant research:

1. *Input factors* refers to input to the learning process or situation, and includes both linguistic and extralinguistic variables.
2. *Learner factors* refers to the contribution of learner variables (age, attitude, motivation, etc.) to the learning process.
3. *Learning factors* refers to strategies and processes used by the learner to learn elements of the target language—generalization, imitation, transfer, analogy, inference etc.
4. *Learned factors* refers to the particular feature of the target language being acquired by the learner (question forms, auxiliaries, negatives, phonology, etc.).

We will consider speech act theory with reference to two of the factors discussed by Swain, namely input factors and learning factors, and discuss how speech act theory contributes to our understanding of the nature of the input to the learning process and to the strategies used by the learner in learning or using a second language.

3.2.2 *Input.* A theory of second language acquisition must take account of the input to the learning process. The study of speech events and speech acts allows for focus on the typical speech settings encountered by second language learners and the identification of discourse structure and norms for the speech events encountered. This includes opening and closing sequences, turn taking

rules, sequencing rules, presupposition, role marking, as well as speech acts (Coulthard, 1977). In the study of language input to second language learning the structure of speech events within the language teaching classroom is particularly important. The structure of classroom language can be defined with reference to its discourse characteristics (Holmes, 1978). Turn taking is controlled by the teacher in typical classroom settings, and the amount of talking is likewise weighted in the teacher's favour. Classroom talk is largely teacher talk. Delamont, quoted by Holmes, notes that of teacher talk, 50% is made up of the speech events of *teaching* or *lecturing* and the other 50% includes 'explicit disciplinary and management moves and . . . reactions to pupil's contributions'. The speech function of questioning is frequent in classrooms, but it is typically a closed question from the teacher where only one acceptable answer is required, and not an open question where several different answers are possible. Coulthard (1977, p. 81) reports the observation that teachers typically ask questions not to find out answers, but to find out if pupils know the answers, and thus once a pupil has produced the answer he needs to know whether it was the right one. The follow-up move, referring back and commenting on the answer, allows for the need.

- T: Initiation: What did we call this picture?
 P: Response: Piece of paper.
 T: Follow-up: A piece of paper. Yes.
 T: Initiation: What did we call this?

The speech function of *orders* is likewise frequent in classroom language, with a wide range of linguistic realizations. Learning within a classroom context must therefore be understood in relation to the highly structured and selective type of language which typifies classroom language and teaching situations.

Second language learners may encounter other situations as input to the learning process which show particular discourse structuring. Candlin *et al.* 1976 have studied speech events within the context of doctor-patient communications, with a view to identifying the structure of relevant speech events, to clarify the difficulties encountered by foreign doctors working in British hospitals. Such learners have to acquire rules for the speech event of *the consultation*. Speech acts identified as typical within the consultation speech event include greet, elicit, interrogate, question, make sure, extend, action-inform, diagnose inform, progress inform etc. 'Investigation of a wide range of consultations revealed that casualty consultation discourse is highly structured, in that there are significant probabilities to the occurrence of the above functions and to their distribution'. (Candlin, 1978, p. 15.)

3.2.3 Learning Factors. Under this heading Swain lists a number of second language learning strategies and processes. The following seem to apply to research into the acquisition of speech act rules in a second or foreign language: (a) Inference, (b) Transfer, (c) Generalization, (d) Transfer of training.

The category communication strategies identified in the L2 literature with reference to the acquisition of syntax, would appear to be redundant with reference to speech acts, since all the examples discussed here can be regarded as instances of communication strategies.

(a) *Inference*. Inferencing is defined as the process by which the learner derives a hypothesis or conclusion about language based on the evidence presented to him. It is the means by which the learner forms hypotheses about the target language. Candlin refers to 'interpretive strategies' which enable the speaker/hearer to retrieve discourse value from speech situations to arrive at an interpretation whereby the hearer's (reader's) interpretations match those of the speaker (or writer). Candlin emphasizes that discourse value is not a constant but varies according to the type of discourse, the relations between the participants, and the influence of the setting and the topic. Thus for example the sentence *Is the cook new?* said in the kitchen of a restaurant by a waiter on noticing an unfamiliar face in the kitchen, may be interpreted as a Yes/No question asking for information. The same question, said by a client in the restaurant to a waiter on receiving a poorly prepared meal, would have the illocutionary force of a complaint.

The nature of inferencing or interpretive strategies in speech act theory remains problematic even for native speakers. But instances of communication breakdown and misunderstanding among non-fluent language users suggest they frequently operate primarily at the surface structure level, identifying propositional content where it is marked directly by lexis or grammar, but often missing indirectly marked speech acts and functions. Thus *will* might be understood as a marker of future tense, for example, and modal overtones missed.

In one case, a Japanese woman who had lived in the United States for about a year did not respond to indirect request forms such as 'can you' and 'will you', but only to the explicit request marker 'please'. She later recognized the directive intent of such indirect forms, but still misinterpreted them, thinking that such forms could be interpreted (and used) only in sales-clerk/customer or other service interactions (Honda, 1977).

Austin (1962) refers to *uptake*, i.e., the interpretation of the illocutionary force of a sentence by the hearer, which may differ from the *intended uptake* of the speaker. The following exchange between a customer in an airline office (a Korean woman) and two sales clerks illustrates the contrast between intended uptake and uptake, and also demonstrates the practical difficulties of determining inferencing strategies. The customer was trying to change flights from one airline to another. Business was slack and a second sales clerk was occasionally joining in the transactional discussion.

- Sales Clerk 1: But Korean Airline won't endorse the ticket, I don't think.
 Sales Clerk 2: (Looking directly at customer) You can call them and ask.
 Customer: OK . . . would you do that please? Would you phone them and ask?

Sales Clerk 2 meant her remarks as a suggestion to the customer that she phone. The customer either thought that the suggestion was directed at Sales Clerk 1, or misinterpreted the utterance as an offer to make the call or as a general statement of possibility (i.e., as meaning 'One could call . . .') or chose to interpret the utterance in one of these ways. The casual observer cannot tell in this case. On questioning the clerk as to how she would analyse the exchange she later said 'She's not as dumb as she pretends'.

Non-fluent language users would thus appear to be more dependent on

contextual or linguistic clues in inferring. This in turn shapes the discourse directed to them by native speakers. Foreigner talk would appear to contain more explicit performatives than speech directed to fluent language users. Thus a teacher's opening to a joke addressed to a class of L2 learners began 'Let me tell you a joke . . . I'm going to tell you a joke . . . OK'. Such direct marking of the illocutionary value of the speech event would not be necessary with fluent language users who would be expected to infer the intended uptake from perhaps 'Did you hear the one about . . .?' Candlin notes that for foreign university students to derive the intended uptake from university lectures they need to be aware of the careful and close integration of the visual, paralinguistic element with the spoken word, if they were going to understand the constant interplay in lectures between 'the *main* and the *subsidiary* planes of discourse—the essential argument and the audience-directed subsidiary comment' (Candlin, 1978:22).

(b) *Transfer*. While the concept of transfer or inference has often been applied to the explanation of L2 performance at the phonological and syntactic level, little attention has been given to the effect of transfer operating at the level of discourse rules, and to its effects on speech event and speech act realizations in second language performance. There is evidence however to suggest that rules governing speech events may differ substantially from one language group to another, thus leading to different rules and norms for turn taking, amount of talking, speech act realizations etc.

Thus the Anang value speech highly and the young are trained in the arts of speech, while for the Wolof, speech, especially in quantity, is dangerous and demeaning. French children are encouraged to be silent when visitors are present at dinner; Russian children are encouraged to talk. Among the Arucanian there are different expectations of men and women, men being encouraged to talk on all occasions, women to be silent—a new wife is not permitted to speak for several months (Coulthard, 1977, p. 49).

Particular speech events such as telephone conversations have also been compared from a cross cultural perspective, showing how transference of rules and expectations from one language to another may create confusion or misunderstanding.

In Japanese, callers rather than answerers generally speak first on the telephone. In France, the fact that telephone calls are generally regarded as impositions on answerers may account for the fact that there are restrictions on caller behaviour which do not hold in English speaking countries (Godard, 1977). In Egypt, there is an expectation that many calls will result in wrong numbers and callers frequently demand to know the identity of answerers; this seems rude to foreigners resident in Egypt, who often conclude that there are no rules at all for 'polite' telephone behaviour in the country (Schmidt, 1975).

Clyne 1975, in a study of immigrants in Australia, discussed 'pragmatic transfer', based on transfer of speech act rules from one language to another, which can lead to communication breakdown or communication conflict. Transfer may operate with respect to a number of dimensions.

(i) *Difference in opening or closing formulae for speech events*. Speech events in a given language may have differing opening or closing formulae, which when transferred to the target language lead to incongruence. For example

with regard to *meal talk*, French and Malay begin with 'bon appetit', and 'selamat makan', respectively, which when transferred to English as *good eating* or *good appetite* appear unusual.

When languages have similar formulae, ritualistic or markedness considerations may be at variance. Greetings in many (perhaps all) speech communities may include questions about the addressee's health, e.g. 'How are you?' In English, Hindi, Spanish, French and many other languages, such questions are largely ritualistic and need not be answered sincerely. In English, 'How are you?' is often not answered at all. In Arabic, on the other hand, the question *must* be answered and in almost all contexts the only appropriate answer is the ritual response formula 'ilhamdullillah' ('praise to God'). In Thai, however, 'sabaaj dii ryy?' ('How are you?') is a non-ritualistic, marked greeting, generally used only if one person has not seen the other for a long time and/or is sincerely concerned about his or her health. The unmarked greeting form in Thai is 'Paj naj?' ('Where are you going?'). Transfer of unmarked formulas could well lead to English speakers judging Thais to be far too curious about the other's whereabouts, while Thais may wonder why English speakers are so concerned about health problems (J. Fieg, personal communication).

(ii) *Formulae used to realize a speech act have different meanings in two languages*. A common transferable formula may exist, but with quite different uptake in the native compared with the target language. An offer of a cigarette for example is declined in German or Indonesian with the equivalent of *thank you*, but accepted with *thank you* in English. Indonesians frequently cause confusion by declining offers with *thank you*. Their interlocutors, if native speakers of English, have been heard to respond with 'Do you mean *thank you* or *no thank you*?' Likewise a native speaker of English who responds to an offer of something when speaking Indonesian, with the Indonesian equivalent of *thank you*, may be taken as having declined.

Silence is particularly ambiguous and difficult to interpret cross-culturally. Silence after a request may be taken as either assent or refusal in a great many cultures, but the non-native speaker will have great difficulty deciding which meaning is meant in unfamiliar contexts.

Formulae which are realizations of the same communicative or politeness strategy but which are only parallel and not identical in form and use may cause particular difficulty. A general strategy of negative politeness is to attempt to minimize the imposition on the hearer. In English, this can be done by using such expressions as 'just' or 'a little' (e.g., 'I just want to ask you a little favour') or euphemisms such as 'borrow' for 'take' ('Can I borrow a cigarette?') or 'a second' or 'a minute' for 'a few minutes' (e.g., 'I'll be with you in just a second'). Exactly the same strategy and similar (but not identical) linguistic realizations are involved in the Arab's or Persian's or Indian's or Mexican's use of such sentences as 'This will be ready tomorrow', meaning 'in a few days' (Brown and Levinson, 1978). However, the native speaker of English generally will take 'tomorrow' only in its literal sense, will be angry when the goods are not provided on time, and will be tempted to make extreme generalizations about the character and sense of time of the people in the new culture.

(iii) *Different social conventions associated with realizations of speech acts*.

Here a number of different dimensions may be subject to transfer. We need to consider at least the following:

Appropriateness of topic. Here we are concerned with what for example can one request in one language compared with another. Which requests can safely be declined? What can be denied or disagreed with and how safely can one transfer such choices across languages? What topics can one ask about on a first encounter with a stranger (1) of equal status (2) of higher status (3) of lower status (4) of same sex (5) of different sex etc.? Thus common questions from Asians on first encounters are *Are you married? How old are you? What is your salary?* The Arabic question which most annoys non-Arabs is *'How much did it cost?'* Such questions violate culturally specific speech act conventions in English.

Degrees of directness of realization of a speech act. A particular speech act such as *refusal* may be expressed differently in two languages. Geertz, 1960 for example, discusses how *refusal* is communicated indirectly in Javanese. He describes a typical situation that his language teachers would use in the model conversations they used to teach him Javanese.

Two men are speaking. One wants something from the other (a loan, a service, his company in going somewhere) and both know it. The petitioner does not want to put his petition directly for fear of angering the petitioned; and the petitioned does not want to state his refusal directly for fear of frustrating the petitioner too severely. Both are very concerned with the other's emotional reactions because ultimately they will effect their own. As a result they go through a long series of formal speech patterns, courtesy forms, complex indirections, and mutual protestations of purity of motive, arriving only slowly at the point of the conversation so that no one is taken by surprise.

Clyne discusses culturally specific routines for the realization of such speech acts such as *persuading* and *apologizing*. 'Persuasion may be done through speech acts like the promise of a bribe, a threat of complaint to a higher official, flattery or self-eulogy, or by overstating the case' (Clyne, 1975:4). Transference of routines from one culture to the other may lead to the interpretation that the speaker is aggressive, impolite, uncouth etc.

(c) *Generalization.* This term includes 'regularization', 'overgeneralization', analogy, and related concepts referred to in the literature. In the second language learning literature it refers to the extension of something known in the L2 to a new context. With reference to speech act rules we will apply the term to the extension of speech act and speech event rules to inappropriate contexts.

(i) *Opening or closing sentences for speech events.* Consider the following exchange, made by a non-native speaker to an office colleague on encountering him in the corridor.

Non-native speaker: How do you do?
Native speaker: Oh hi.

Here the phrase *How do you do* has been extended beyond its boundaries in English—a greeting said on a first encounter in a formal-semiformal situation—to become a generalized greeting said on encountering friends. The appropriate greeting is of course *How are you* or some such phrase.

<i>1st encounter</i>	<i>Subsequent encounter</i>
How do you do.	How are you?
	Hi etc.

Leave-taking formulae may also be generalized to speech events where they are not appropriate. The following exchange is between an office boy delivering a consignment of books to an office.

Office boy:	Where shall I put these books please?
Addressee:	Put them on the table.
Office boy:	(some minutes later). I'll be making a move now.

(ii) *Speech act routine generalized to inappropriate context.* Some errors that on first sight would be attributed to stylistic inappropriateness or mistakes of lexis may turn out to be instances of a routine, appropriate to a particular speech act, generalized to a different type of speech act where it is no longer appropriate. A Yes/No question, for example, which functions as a *request for information*, can be answered with Yes/No plus verb repetition.

Do you have a car? Yes, I do.

A request, however, cannot be answered in the same way.

Can you pass me the milk? Yes, I can.

Borkin and Reinhart (1978, p. 58) discuss second language learners' difficulties with the phrases *excuse me* and *I'm sorry*. A typical mistake is to use these for inappropriate speech acts, as in the following example where the non-native speaker declines an invitation to the movies.

Excuse me. I'd like to go but I don't have time.

Homer, a five year old Iranian child, generalized the English formula 'What's this?' to numerous contexts beyond simple NP identification (Wagner-Gough, 1975).

1. Identification
 - a. What this is Elmer. (= This is Elmer).
 - b. What this is? (= What is this?)
2. Advice or help
 - a. What this is? (= What should I do now?)
3.
 - a. What is it tunnel. (= Stop pushing sand in my tunnel.)
 - b. What this is Homer. (= I'm Homer and you can't tell me what to do.)
 - c. What is this this it. (= Give me that truck.)

Of course, 'what's this?' is multifunctional in adult native English (compare 'what's this' said scornfully, curiously, hintingly, etc.) so that some of Homer's generalizations may be functionally appropriate while others are not; it is difficult to evaluate functional appropriateness in this case when grammatical relationships remain unclear.

(d) *Transfer of training.* This category refers to features of the learners interlanguage which are traceable to teaching procedures used or to the particular textbook or teaching materials from which the learner has studied a language. Here are two examples of what was interpreted as inappropriate

directives and which are probably traceable to transfer of training. They were noted by the spouse of a non-native speaker.

- Example 1. Mother (a non-native speaker) to her son.
So after supper you will do your homework.
- Example 2. The wife to her husband.
Tomorrow we will go to see the movie, alright?

Even given that husbands and wives who speak the same language are often at odds over the choice of directive forms used in the family, something more appears to be going on here. The first sentence, addressed to the NNS's son, would be perfectly appropriate if homework were an issue in the family. However, it is not, and the NNS reports that she meant to *suggest* and did not intend to be or sound imperious. The native speaking spouse suggested that in both these examples *can*, or even better, *c'n*, would have been a better choice of modal to convey the reported intentions of the speaker. But this NNS never uses *can* when reference is to future time, even though this is possible in the native language. She was taught that it is extremely important to indicate time reference in English, and she was taught (contrary to fact) that uncontracted forms are always more polite and proper than contracted forms. In general this speaker pays careful attention to literal meanings. The relationship between her forms and her social meanings could be defined in terms of conversational postulates, though the details of the rules for use of these postulates would differ somewhat from those of a native speaker.

Transfer of training may interact with the other learning factors, such as transfer and generalization, as well as attitudes towards languages, leading to inappropriate language. In Japanese, for example, a great deal rests on control of a highly complex system of honorifics. When the Japanese learns English, he finds nothing very similar, nothing that can be directly transferred. In addition, he generally believes and is probably taught (in accordance with the prevailing stereotype) that while Japanese is a very 'polite' language, English is 'logical', 'direct', and not very polite. The Japanese learner of English may therefore be insensitive to the nuances of English politeness, which are not concentrated in one sub-system of the language.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING

The review presented here raises a number of questions which require empirical investigation and further study before conclusive statements can be made. We have focussed primarily on proficiency in the realization and interpretation of speech acts, rather than the acquisition of speech act rules. The acquisition of pragmatic or communicative competence is an emerging interest in language acquisition studies. Pragmatic rather than grammatical constraints are seen as crucial in accounting for both the structuring of child language utterances and interlanguages, in the work of Peters, Wagner Gough, Hatch and others. Peters (1977) has distinguished two styles of first language acquisition: an analytic style, one word at a time, and a 'gestalt' style, an attempt to use whole utterances in socially appropriate situations. Many investigators of second language learning (e.g., Wagner-Gough and Hatch, 1975) have reported that second language learners are apt to use a gestalt style even more than first language learners, using prefabricated routines and

patterns (which may include speech act formulas) in an attempt to communicate in a socially appropriate way beyond their linguistic competence. One issue of current concern is the degree to which such formulaic language is crucial to the overall development of language. Fillmore (1976) argues that the use of such formulaic speech, motivated by the learner's need to establish social contact, gradually evolves into creative language. Krashen and Scarcella (1978), on the other hand, maintain that routines and patterns play only a minor role in second language acquisition, with the creative construction process evolving in an essentially independent manner. Study of the acquisition of speech acts by non-native speakers should enable us to clarify of these and other issues. Possible issues for further research are the following:

1. Descriptive studies of the types of speech acts encountered in specific settings for second language use and learning, according to such factors as age of speakers (e.g., adult-child; child-child) roles: (e.g., teacher-student; friend-friend; parent-child)—in particular settings, (classroom; work domain) and for specific speech events (e.g., interviews; conversations).
2. Studies relating stages of grammatical development to speech act realizations in interlanguages of different types of learners.
3. Studies of acquisition of rules for the realization and interpretation of speech acts over time among interlanguage users.
4. Cross linguistic comparisons aimed at determining whether different languages make use of the same classes of speech acts and similar strategies for realizing and interpreting speech acts.
5. Studies of the effects of speech act realization on the discourse patterning and conversational structure of non-native language users in different types of discourse.
6. Study of pragmatic errors in non-native discourse, e.g., the failure to code or interpret speech acts appropriately or to recognize or assign appropriate illocutionary force to utterances of native speakers.
7. Studies of the attitudes of native speakers to violation of native speaker rules for speech act realization, and the contribution of such violation to communication conflict or breakdown.
8. Studies relating strategies for the performance and acquisition of speech act rules to language learning processes in general, e.g., to what degree do such factors as transfer, infencing, and overgeneralization also apply to pragmatic dimensions of language learning?

The relevance of speech act theory and research to language teaching is through its contribution to the theory of communicative language teaching. Writers on communicative syllabus design such as Munby and Wilkins, make use of speech act and speech event theory in their accounts of notional and communicative syllabuses for language teaching, as have various other writers on communicative teaching. (Allen, 1977; Stratton, 1977; Paulston 1974; Holmes and Brown, 1977; Widdowson, 1978). The central issue is to what degree successful second language learning can be identified with acquiring rules for speech act realization and interpretation. An emphasis on strategies for speech act realization as a central goal for intermediate and advanced language teaching, would lead to a focus on learning as a *process* rather than on what is learned as a product. Another basic issue concerns translating the concepts of speech act theory and discourse analysis into units which can be realized within a language teaching programme, i.e., which can be operationalized for teaching purposes. Candlin (1978) warns: 'We know

enough, however, to realize methodologically that we must avoid latter day 'structuralism' of concepts and site utterances firmly within connected discourse. Furthermore ways of teaching should shift from teacher-telling to learner interpreting within a syllabus whose prime goal is the development of strategies for discourse processing, rather than as an assembly of items'. Candlin's work on speech events within doctor-patient communications begins from 'detailed functional description of native speakers' interaction, and attempts not simply to teach single functions but to show doctors how to open and close interviews, how to participate in other types of exchange, how to build exchanges into longer sequences, how to manipulate the turn-taking system'. (Coulthard 1977, p. 146). The progression from grammatical to communicative competence within a formal language teaching programme is thus a movement towards the organization of learning and teaching in terms of creating contexts for the realization and interpretation of speech acts within a framework of discourse rules. Questions which require further consideration from this perspective include:

1. To what degree should realization and interpretation strategies for speech acts be taught explicitly in a language teaching programme?
2. How useful are contrastive statements of such coding procedures for learners whose mother tongues adopt different coding strategies?
3. What speech acts are basic and can speech acts and discourse rules be ordered for the purpose of teaching?
4. Are techniques for the teaching of other areas of the target language (dialogues, drills etc.) also appropriate for teaching discourse rules, or are speech act rules acquired as a byproduct of communication?
5. How do we choose for the purpose of teaching, the forms for the realization of speech acts?
6. To what degree should the emphasis on ability to perform and interpret speech acts take priority over the ability to code sentences grammatically within a teaching programme?

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