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**A CORPUS-DRIVEN STUDY OF SPEECH ACTS  
IN THE HONG KONG CORPUS OF SPOKEN ENGLISH  
(HKCSE)**

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**A Corpus-driven Study of Speech Acts  
in the Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English (HKCSE)**

Seto, Andy Wood-hung

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2014

## **CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY**

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Seto, Andy Wood-hung

## Abstract

Since the 1960s, empirical studies of speech acts have examined specific speech acts such as requests and thanks in spoken or written language in different languages and in different contexts of communication. Most studies have examined the expressions, the patterns and the strategies of a speech act in a particular language. However, regarding research studies in different genres and in different contexts of business communication, most empirical studies have not examined speech acts. Rather, they have other areas of concern such as the structure of and the interaction in workplace meetings with regard to power and politeness. Moreover, few studies reviewed have investigated the relative frequency of a speech act and the co-occurring patterns of two or three speech acts as found in a genre in the context of business communication.

In view of this, the present study aims to investigate, by means of analysis of a corpus of manually annotated speech acts, the features of all the speech acts in six different communicative contexts from a corpus of spoken business discourse. The objectives of the study are: 1. To manually annotate the business sub-corpus of the Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English (HKCSE) (prosodic) with reference to a taxonomy of speech acts informed by previous studies and the writer's personal reflection during the iterative process of utterance-by-utterance annotation; 2. To uncover the relative frequencies of speech acts and co-occurrence of speech acts in an automated way with the aid of *SpeechActConc*, a corpus linguistic program; 3. To analyse and discuss the findings in order to explore the patterns and lexicogrammatical realisations of speech acts in different spoken genres in different contexts of business communication in Hong Kong; and 4. To suggest possible pedagogical implications for ESP in the context of business communication.

The findings indicate that the process of manual annotation of speech act is laborious and requires a number of revision regarding annotation criteria and outcomes. Despite the different contexts of interaction in the business sub-corpus, the quantitative data generated by *SpeechActConc* show that there are similarities not only in the number of and the category of unique speech acts but also in the frequency and the co-occurrence of different speech acts among the six genres. In the analysis of predictable patterns of speech acts, both the preferable

adjacency pairs and the most frequent co-occurring speech acts are discussed and illustrated with examples from the corpus. Apart from predictable sequencing patterns of speech acts such as question and answer or check and confirm, it is found that there are a lot of unpredictable ones, mostly paired with fillers. In examining the lexicogrammatical patterns of speech acts, the study shows that traditional markers such as *opine* or *inform* markers are not the only linguistic realizations; phrases or clauses are common lexicogrammatical realizations to perform the speech acts. The findings of the study are further explored in relation to their contribution to ESP teaching and learning in terms of teaching and learning approaches, instructional materials, and learning tasks.

### **Publication arising from the thesis**

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## Table of contents

<b>Abstract</b>	ii
<b>Publication arising from the thesis</b>	iv
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	v
<b>Table of contents</b>	vi
<b>List of figures</b>	xiii
<b>List of tables</b>	xv
<b>List of abbreviations</b>	xxi
Chapter 1	
<b>Introduction</b>	
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Aims, objectives and research questions	6
1.3 Significance of the study	7
1.4 Outline of the thesis	10
Chapter 2	
<b>Literature Review</b>	
2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 Speech act theory	12
2.2.1 Performatives	15
2.2.2 Locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts	16
2.2.3 Felicity conditions	18
2.2.4 Classifications of speech acts	19
2.3 Empirical studies of speech acts	24
2.3.1 Advice	25
2.3.2 Apology	26
2.3.3 Complaint	30
2.3.4 Disagreement	31
2.3.5 Opinion	32
2.3.6 Refusal	33
2.3.7 Request	36

2.3.8 Thanking	39
2.3.9 Summary	43
2.4 Empirical genre studies in business communication	44
2.4.1 Meetings	45
2.4.2 Telephone and conference calls	47
2.4.3 Informal office talks	48
2.4.4 Service encounters	48
2.4.5 Q&A sessions	49
2.4.6 Interviews	50
2.4.7 Summary	51
2.5 Corpus and speech act annotation	51
2.5.1 Task-oriented annotation	55
2.5.2 Non-task-oriented annotation	57
2.5.3 Middle-ground-oriented annotation	59
2.5.4 Discourse-oriented/conversation-oriented annotation	61
2.5.5 Annotation for the present study	66
2.6 The present study	69
2.7 Summary	71
Chapter 3	
<b>Data description and research methodology</b>	
3.1 Introduction	73
3.2 Data description	73
3.3 Research methodology	77
3.3.1 Speech act taxonomy	77
3.3.2 Speech act annotations	81
3.3.3 Corpus analytical procedure	85
3.4 <i>SpeechActConc</i>	86
3.4.1 The statistics menu	88
3.4.2 The speech act menu	91
3.5 Summary	95

## Chapter 4

### **Meetings**

4.1 Introduction	97
4.2 Background information	97
4.3 Frequency analysis of speech acts in meetings	101
4.4 Discussion of findings	109
4.5 Frequency analysis of co-occurring speech acts in meetings	113
4.6 Discussion of findings	123
4.7 Lexicogrammatical realisation and pattern	129
4.8 Conclusion	134

## Chapter 5

### **Telephone and Conference Calls**

5.1 Introduction	138
5.2 Background information	138
5.3 Frequency analysis of speech acts in telephone and conference calls	140
5.4 Discussion of findings	146
5.5 Frequency analysis of co-occurring speech acts in telephone and conference calls	150
5.6 Discussion of findings	152
5.7 Lexicogrammatical realisation and pattern	155
5.8 Conclusion	155

## Chapter 6

### **Informal Office Talks**

6.1 Introduction	161
6.2 Background information	161
6.3 Frequency analysis of speech acts in informal office talks	163
6.4 Discussion of findings	170
6.5 Frequency analysis of co-occurring speech acts in informal office talk	173
6.6 Discussion of findings	175

6.7 Lexicogrammatical realisation and pattern	178
6.8 Conclusion	184
Chapter 7	
<b>Service encounters</b>	
7.1 Introduction	186
7.2 Background information	186
7.2.1 Airport check-in counters and information counters	187
7.2.2 Hotel concierges [and retail outlets]	191
7.3 Frequency analysis of speech acts at the airport check-in counters and information counters	194
7.4 Discussion of findings	200
7.5 Frequency analysis of speech acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]	205
7.6 Discussion of findings	212
7.7 Frequency analysis of co-occurring speech acts at airport check-in counters and information counters	216
7.8 Discussion of findings	218
7.9 Frequency analysis of co-occurring speech acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]	220
7.10 Discussion of findings	223
7.11 Lexicogrammatical realisation and pattern	225
7.11.1 Airport check-in counters	225
7.11.2 Hotel concierges [and retail outlets]	228
7.12 Conclusion	232
Chapter 8	
<b>Question and Answer Sessions</b>	
8.1 Introduction	234
8.2 Background information	234
8.3 Frequency analysis of speech acts in Q&A sessions	237
8.4 Discussion of findings	243
8.5 Frequency analysis of co-occurring speech acts in Q&A sessions	254

8.6 Discussion of findings	256
8.7 Lexicogrammatical realisation and pattern	260
8.8 Conclusion	263

## Chapter 9

### **Interviews**

9.1 Introduction	265
9.2 Background information	265
9.2.1 Job interviews for research assistant	266
9.2.2 Placement interviews for hotel trainee	269
9.3 Frequency analysis of speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant	273
9.4 Discussion of findings	281
9.5 Frequency analysis of speech acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee	288
9.6 Discussion of findings	295
9.7 Frequency analysis of co-occurring speech acts job interviews for the post of research assistant	299
9.8 Discussion of findings	301
9.9 Frequency analysis of co-occurring speech acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee	303
9.10 Discussion of findings	305
9.11 Lexicogrammatical realisation and pattern	309
9.11.1 Job interviews for the post of research assistant	309
9.11.2 Placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee	312
9.12 Conclusion	315

## Chapter 10

### **Discussion of findings**

10.1 Introduction	317
10.2 Summary	317
10.3 Comparison	322
10.4 Conclusion	334

Chapter 11	
<b>Conclusion</b>	
11.1 Introduction	335
11.2 Research questions revisited:	335
11.2.1 What are the relative frequencies of occurrence of different speech acts in different spoken genres in business communication?	336
11.2.2 What are the patterns of co-occurrence and sequence organisation of speech acts in different spoken genres in business communication?	337
11.2.3 What are the characteristic lexicogrammatical patterns or linguistic realisations of different speech acts in different spoken genres in business communication?	338
11.3 Implications for ESP teaching and learning	339
11.3.1 Teaching and learning approaches	342
11.3.2 Instructional materials	343
11.3.3 Learning tasks	343
11.3.3.1 Input exposure	343
11.3.3.2 Student production	345
11.3.3.3 Assessment	346
11.4 Contribution of the study	348
11.5 Limitations of the study	352
11.6 Areas for further research	354
Appendix 1. Two co-occurring speech acts in meetings	355
Appendix 2. Three co-occurring speech acts in meetings	363
Appendix 3. Two co-occurring speech acts in telephone and conference calls	367
Appendix 4. Three co-occurring speech acts in telephone and conference calls	371
Appendix 5. Two co-occurring speech acts in informal office talks	372

Appendix 6.	Three co-occurring speech acts in informal office talks	377
Appendix 7.	Two co-occurring speech acts at airport check-in counters and information counters	380
Appendix 8.	Three co-occurring speech acts at airport check-in counters and information counters	384
Appendix 9.	Two co-occurring speech acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]	386
Appendix 10.	Three co-occurring speech acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]	390
Appendix 11.	Two co-occurring speech acts in Q&A sessions	392
Appendix 12.	Three co-occurring speech acts in Q&A sessions	396
Appendix 13.	Two co-occurring speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant	398
Appendix 14.	Three co-occurring speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant	404
Appendix 15.	Two co-occurring speech acts in placement Interviews for the post of hotel trainee	407
Appendix 16.	Three co-occurring speech acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee	412
<b>References</b>		<b>416</b>

## List of figures

Figure 2.1.	Framework for the present study	71
Figure 3.1.	A screen shot of <i>SpeechActConc</i>	86
Figure 3.2.	The statistics menu	88
Figure 3.3.	Unique Speech Acts List	89
Figure 3.4.	The Save File Dialog for the Unique Speech Acts List	89
Figure 3.5.	The SA Positional Variants List Dialog	90
Figure 3.6.	The Collocates View Dialog	90
Figure 3.7.	The four items in the Speech Acts menu	91
Figure 3.8.	The All Speech Acts Menu item	91
Figure 3.9.	The second Speech Acts Menu item	92
Figure 3.10.	The 2-SA Co-occurring List Preferences Dialog	92
Figure 3.11.	The Yes/No Dialog for searching only for unique SA with more than one instance	92
Figure 3.12.	The prompt for the Unique SA List	93
Figure 3.13.	The Unique SA List searches	93
Figure 3.14.	The automated search List Box for 2-SA Co-occurring	94
Figure 3.15.	The Open Saved File function for 3-SA Co-occurring	94
Figure 3.16.	The display for selected 3-SA Co-occurring concordance in the List Box	95
Figure 3.17.	The Open Saved File function for 2-SA, 3-SA, and 4-SA Co-occurring	95
Figure 4.1.	The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in meetings	126
Figure 4.2.	The second most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in meetings	128
Figure 5.1.	The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in telephone and conference calls	154
Figure 6.1.	The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in informal office talks	177



Figure 7.1.	The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in service encounters at airport check-in counters and information counters	219
Figure 7.2.	The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]	224
Figure 8.1.	The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in Q&A sessions	258
Figure 9.1.	The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant	302
Figure 9.2.	The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in job interviews for the post of hotel trainee	307
Figure 11.1.	Examples of <i>thank you very much</i> in HKCSE (Prosodic)	344
Figure 11.2.	Sample script for role play	345
Figure 11.3.	Sample questions to test student's perception of speech act of thanking	346
Figure 11.4.	Sample questions to test student's production of speech act of thanking	347

## List of tables

Table 1.1.	A comparison of Searle's and Austin's taxonomies of speech (or illocutionary) acts	14
Table 3.1.	Composition of the HKCSE (prosodic)	74
Table 3.2.	The taxonomy of 69 speech acts	78
Table 3.3.	The meanings of speech acts in the taxonomy	79
Table 4.1.	Frequency of unique speech acts in meetings	101
Table 4.2.	Communicative functions and frequencies of primary acts in meetings	104
Table 4.3.	Communicative functions and frequencies of secondary acts in meetings	106
Table 4.4.	Communicative functions and frequencies of complementary acts in meetings	107
Table 4.5.	Communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts in meetings from other studies	108
Table 4.6.	Top ten two co-occurring speech acts in meetings	113
Table 4.7.	Frequency and percentage of linguistic realisations of [filler] in the six genres	115
Table 4.8.	Top five most frequently occurring [filler] in each of the six genres	121
Table 4.9.	Top ten three co-occurring speech acts in meetings	122
Table 4.10.	Inform markers: frequency of occurrence	130
Table 4.11.	Examples of lexical phrases, clauses (and sentences) for informing	131
Table 5.1.	Frequency of unique speech acts in telephone and conference calls	140
Table 5.2.	Communicative functions and frequencies of primary acts in telephone and conference calls	142
Table 5.3.	Communicative functions and frequencies of secondary acts in telephone and conference calls	144
Table 5.4.	Communicative functions and frequencies of complementary acts in telephone and conferences calls	145

Table 5.5.	Communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts in telephone and conference calls from another study	146
Table 5.6.	Top ten two co-occurring speech acts in telephone and conference calls	150
Table 5.7.	Top ten three co-occurring speech acts in telephone and conference calls	151
Table 5.8.	Inform markers: frequency of occurrence	155
Table 5.9.	Examples of lexical phrases, clauses (and sentences) for informing	156
Table 6.1.	Frequency of unique speech acts in informal office talks	163
Table 6.2.	Communicative functions and frequencies of primary acts in informal office talks	165
Table 6.3.	Communicative function and frequencies of secondary acts in informal office talks	167
Table 6.4.	Communicative functions and frequencies of complementary acts in informal office talk	168
Table 6.5.	Communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts in informal office talks from other studies	169
Table 6.6.	Top ten two co-occurring speech acts in informal office talks	173
Table 6.7.	Top ten three co-occurring speech acts in informal office talks	174
Table 6.8.	Opine markers: frequency of occurrence	179
Table 6.9.	Other opine markers for expressing a personal opinion: frequency of occurrence	180
Table 6.10.	Examples of lexical phrases, clauses (and sentences) for opining	181
Table 7.1.	Speaker identity and topic discussed in service encounters at airport check-in counters and information counters	187
Table 7.2.	Speaker identity and topic discussed in service encounters at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]	191

Table 7.3.	Frequency of unique speech acts at airport check-in counters	194
Table 7.4.	Communicative functions and frequencies of primary acts at airport check-in counters and information counters	196
Table 7.5.	Communicative functions and frequencies of secondary acts at airport check-in counters and information counters	198
Table 7.6.	Communicative function and frequencies of complementary acts at airport check-in counters and information counters	199
Table 7.7.	Communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts at airport check-in counters and information counters from other studies	200
Table 7.8.	Frequency of unique speech acts in the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]	206
Table 7.9.	Communicative functions and frequencies of primary acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]	207
Table 7.10.	Communicative functions and frequencies of secondary acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]	209
Table 7.11.	Communicative functions and frequencies of complementary acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]	210
Table 7.12.	Communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlet] from another study	211
Table 7.13.	Top ten two co-occurring speech acts at airport check-in counters and information counters	216
Table 7.14.	Top ten three co-occurring speech acts in service encounters at airport check-in counters and information counters	217

Table 7.15:	Top ten two co-occurring speech acts in service encounters at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]	220
Table 7.16.	Top ten three co-occurring speech acts in service encounters at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]	222
Table 7.17.	Inform markers: frequency of occurrence	225
Table 7.18.	Examples of lexical phrases, clauses (and sentences) for informing	227
Table 7.19.	Inform markers: frequency of occurrence	229
Table 7.20.	Examples of lexical phrases, clauses (and sentences) for informing	229
Table 8.1.	Frequency of unique speech acts in Q&A sessions after presentations	237
Table 8.2.	Communicative functions and frequencies of primary acts in Q&A sessions	239
Table 8.3.	Communicative functions and frequencies of secondary acts in Q&A sessions	241
Table 8.4	Communicative functions and frequencies of complementary acts in Q&A session	242
Table 8.5.	Top ten two co-occurring speech acts in Q&A sessions	255
Table 8.6.	Top ten three co-occurring speech acts in Q&A Sessions	256
Table 8.7.	Inform markers: frequency of occurrence	260
Table 8.8.	Examples of lexical phrases, clauses (and sentences) for informing	261
Table 9.1.	Frequency of unique speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant	274
Table 9.2.	Communicative functions and frequencies of primary acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant	276

Table 9.3.	Communicative functions and frequencies of secondary acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant	278
Table 9.4.	Communicative functions and frequencies of complementary acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant	279
Table 9.5.	Communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant from other studies	280
Table 9.6.	Frequency of unique speech acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee	289
Table 9.7.	Communicative functions and frequencies of primary acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee	290
Table 9.8.	Communicative function and frequencies of secondary acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee	292
Table 9.9.	Communicative functions and frequencies of complementary acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee	293
Table 9.10.	Communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee from other studies	294
Table 9.11.	Top ten two co-occurring speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant	299
Table 9.12.	Top ten three co-occurring speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant	300
Table 9.13.	Top ten two co-occurring speech acts in placement Interviews for the post of hotel trainee	304
Table 9.14.	Top ten three co-occurring speech acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee	305
Table 9.15.	Acknowledge markers: frequency of occurrence	310

Table 9.16.	Other acknowledge markers for signalling a minimal receipt of information	311
Table 9.17.	Examples of lexical phrases for expressing acknowledgement	312
Table 9.18.	Acknowledge markers: frequency of occurrence	313
Table 9.19.	Other acknowledge markers for signalling a minimal receipt of information	314
Table 9.20.	Examples of lexical phrases for expressing acknowledgement	314
Table 10.1.	A summary of the frequencies of speech acts and lexicogrammatical patterns in the six genres	319
Table 10.2.	Common speech acts in the six genres (in alphabetical order)	325
Table 10.3.	Distinctive acts in the six genres (in alphabetical order)	327
Table 10.4.	Summary of the top five most frequently occurring speech acts	330
Table 10.5.	Summary of the top five least frequently occurring speech acts	333
Table 11.1.	Prototypical samples of speech acts	349

## List of abbreviations

CLAWS	Constituent Likelihood Automatic Word-tagging System
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
DAMSL	Dialog Act Markup in Several Layers
DART	Dialogue Annotation and Research Tool
DCT	Discourse Completion Test
DRI	Discourse Resource Initiative
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
HCRC	Human Communication Research Centre
HKC	Hong Kong Chinese
HKCSE (prosodic)	Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English (prosodic)
ICE	International Corpus of English
ICT	Information and communication technology
L1	first language
L2	second language
LLC	London-Lund Corpus
NES	native English speakers
POS	part-of-speech
PROBE	PRagmatics of Business English
Q&A	question and answer
SA	speech act
SEC	Lancaster/IBM Spoken English Corpus
SEU	Survey of English Usage
SPAAC	Speech Act Annotation Corpus
SPAACy	Speech Act Annotation Corpus tool
SPAADIA	Speech Act Annotated Dialogue
SPICE-Ireland	Systems of <b>P</b> ragmatic annotation in the spoken component of <b>ICE</b> -Ireland
SRILM	Stanford Research Institute Language Modeling
SSE	Survey of Spoken English
TBL	task-based learning
VRM	Verbal Response Modes



## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### 1.1 Background

Language communication involves not only the production of sounds and lexicogrammar but also the use to which utterances are conventionally put in a language community. Every society has its procedures and ceremonies where people's utterances, such as those of a judge and a priest, carry special functions in a particular situation (Saeed, 1997). The speaker normally expects that his or her communicative function in the utterance will be recognized by the hearer. An appropriate recognition will be influenced and determined by the local context in which the utterance takes place (Yule, 2000; Sbiša, 2002). This communicative function of an utterance is in general referred to as speech act.

The study of speech act was originally initiated by ordinary language philosophers, primarily Austin (1962) and Searle (1965, 1969 and 1975). Speech act theory is a branch of philosophy which attempts to classify spoken language in terms of what is done rather than what is said. Speech act theory was first introduced by Austin (1962) and then developed by others, most notably by another philosopher named Searle (see, for example, Searle, 1965, 1969 and 1975). Speech act theorists are concerned with the functional value of utterances rather than the form of utterances.

Austin (1962) distinguishes between the meaning of words and their 'illocutionary force', contending that when someone speaks, 'acts' are performed and that within an utterance a speaker usually performs three acts. These acts are separated out for the purposes of analysis and classification by speech act theorists, but in reality they happen simultaneously. Speech act is understood in three 'senses' or 'classes', namely 'locutionary act', 'illocutionary act', and 'perlocutionary act' (Austin, 1975, p. 94). A locutionary act, the first sense of an utterance, is 'the performance of an act of saying something' (pp. 99-100), the formal literal meaning of the words uttered. It is expressed as a meaningful linguistic utterance with reference to some object in the world (Yule, 2000;

Huang, 2007). A locutionary act consists of three distinctive acts, which are the ‘phonic act’ of uttering some sounds, the ‘phatic act’ of uttering some words according to grammar rules, and the ‘rhetic act’ of reporting the phatic act with similar vocabulary and grammar.. An illocutionary act, the second sense of an utterance, is ‘the performance of an act in saying something’ (Austin, 1975, p. 94), referring to the force or the intention behind the utterance, which is the communicative function of performing an utterance. A perlocutionary act, the third sense of an utterance, refers to certain consequential results or effects on the feelings, thoughts or action of the listener, the speaker, or other people (ibid., p.101). It is the performance of an act ‘by saying something’ (ibid., p.109), the effect the utterance might have. Austin (1962) states that while performing a locutionary act, an illocutionary act is also performed. However, the basis for interpreting the two acts is different, being concerned with ‘meaning’ and ‘force’ respectively.

Since the 1960s, empirical studies of speech acts have examined specific speech acts in spoken or written language in different languages, such as Greek (Cameron, 2003; Koutsantoni, 2005), Spanish (Rojo, 2005; Félix-Brasdefer, 2010), Arabic (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2008; Morkus, 2014) and in different contexts of communication, such as academic (Abdolrezapour et al., 2012; Al-Issa, 2003), political (Jabber & Zhang, 2013; Eriksson, 2011), business (Solon, 2013; Holmes & Stubbe, 2015). They have examined a range of speech acts, including agreement (Kashyap, 2012; Rhee, 2015), apology (Al-Sobh, 2013; Page, 2014; Ancarno, 2015), disagreement (Netz, 2014; Zhu, 2014; Weiste, 2015), refusal (Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Bella, 2014; Morkus, 2014), request (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2013; Jabber & Zhang, 2013; Ogiermann, 2015), and thanking and compliment (Ma é-Arévalo, 2012; Lin, Woodfield, & Ren, 2012; Cheng & Seto, 2015).

Speech act studies have addressed different research focuses; for example, the components and the rapport building potential of a speech act (Page, 2014); the situations in which a speech act is used and the strategies used to express it (Jebahi, 2011; Pishghadam & Zarei, 2011; Rees-Miller, 2011); the linguistic realisations or the lexicogrammatical patterns of a speech act (Long, 2010; Wong, 2010; de Pablos-Ortega, 2011; Mustapha, 201; Bella, 2014); the pragmatic

motive underlying a speaker's choice of a speech act (Ma ĩ-Ar ĩvalo, 2012); and the cultural difference in the use of a speech act (Cheng, 2011; Lin et al., 2012; Morkus, 2014). Researchers have argued that performance of speech acts is complex, multidirectional and multifunctional and, in speech act analysis, various contextual parameters should be considered (Sifianou, 2012; Netz, 2014).

Most speech acts studies have examined the expressions and the patterns of occurrence of specific speech acts in a particular language (e.g., Long, 2010; Shariati & Chamani, 2010; Wong, 2010; Allami & Naeimi, 2011; de Pablos-Ortega, 2011; Jebahi, 2011; Mustapha, 2011; Pishghadam & Zarei, 2011; Bella, 2014; Zhu, 2014). For example, Allami and Naeimi (2011) examined the frequency and content of semantic formulas used in refusals. Shariati and Chamani (2010) have investigated the frequency and sequential position of apology strategies in Persian.

Some have focused on the regional comparison between two, or among three, languages or cultures in the use and features of a speech act (F ĩix-Brasdefer, 2010; Li, 2010; Cheng, 2011; Lin et al, 2012; Morkus, 2014; Ma ĩ-Ar ĩvalo, 2012; Chen, He, & Hu, 2013; Ancarno, 2015). Others have investigated the formulaic and gendered nature of speech acts (Rees-Miller, 2011).

The issue of data collection in speech act studies has been an area of concern. It has been argued that for any study of spoken English, the use of naturally occurring real-life data is preferable to elicited data (Cheng, 2003; Warren, 2006), and hence giving insights into how speech acts are linguistically realised in real-life interactions (cf. Golato, 2003; Cheng, 2010). However, not all studies analyse naturally occurring real-life data, mainly because of the difficulty in obtaining spoken data (Rue & Zhang, 2008) and the long time required for transcribing recorded spoken data

Many speech act studies have examined data obtained from role-play interactions (e.g. F ĩix-Brasdefer, 2010; Li, 2010; Shariati & Chamani, 2010; Cheng, 2011; Abdolrezapour, Dabaghi, & Kassaian, 2012; Bella, 2014; Morkus, 2014), discourse completion tests (DCTs) (Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Jebahi, 2011; Pishghadam & Zarei, 2011), or written responses to prepared and typed situations (Long, 2010; Lin et al., 2012; Al-Sobh, 2013). Written role-play questionnaires

have been used extensively to elicit speech act data across different languages (Beebe & Cummings, 1995; Flöck & Geluykens, 2015). It is argued that though such elicited data can be effective in, for example, studying stereotypical requirements for a socially appropriate response, they neither reveal the range of formulas and strategies used in real interactions nor the actual rate of occurrence of a speech act (Beebe & Cummings, 1995). As for DCT in particular, despite the criticism leveled against the low construct validity and the failure to represent the features of naturally occurring discourse, DCT has been frequently used to evaluate the ability of second/foreign language learners to perform speech acts in a target language and it is argued that DCT should be treated as a language test instead of as a questionnaire (Labben, 2016).

Many speech acts studies have adopted different linguistic approaches and methods, including conversation analysis (e.g. Netz, 2014; Oittinen & Piirainen-Marsh, 2015; Weiste, 2015), discourse analysis (e.g. Georgakopoulou, 2012), corpus linguistics (e.g. Wong, 2010; Handford, 2014; Tsuchiya & Handford, 2014), discourse intonation (e.g. Truckenbrodt, 2015), and linguistic ethnographic analysis (e.g. Van Praet, 2009).

Corpus linguistic methods have made it possible to quantitatively examine a large number of speech acts from a large amount of corpus data. In general, corpus-based studies of speech acts have considered two directions of inquiry. One is automated tagging by computers (cf. Weisser, 2014, 2015) and another is manual tagging by humans (cf. de Felice, 2013). Unlike other types of annotation, such as part-of-speech annotation and syntactic annotation, annotation of speech acts cannot be carried out in a fully automated manner, though the analytical process; for instance, the generation of quantitative information of the frequency of a particular speech act can be computationally-assisted (Archer, Culpeper, & Davies, 2008). This type of pragmatic annotation, largely referring to the second direction of inquiry, involves a highly complex interpretive process performed by the researcher because the researcher has to take into account not only the linguistic realisations but also the contextual information of the textual units commonly known as an ‘utterance’ (Weisser, 2015).

It has been discussed that automation of the pragmatic annotation process is able to generate large-scale and consistently annotated corpora and can be reused

for the annotation of new corpora (Stolcke et al., 2000; Lu, 2014; Weisser, 2014, 2015). However, manual annotation would be advantageous to an exploration of a larger coverage of different linguistic realisations in a corpus of manageable size, even though it is much more time consuming and the specific annotation process may not be reused directly for the annotation of a different corpus (cf. McEnergy, Xiao, & Tono, 2006; Archer et al., 2008). The advantage of manual annotation is, however, after the laborious process of annotation, an inventory of that particular speech act under investigation will be yielded. In other words, the annotation procedure can, in principle, be repeated with data from a similar background or context for an expanded list of linguistic realisations, resulting in a fairly reliable inventory of different realisations of a speech act (cf. Kohnen, 2015).

A review of the studies in different contexts of business communication has revealed that they have examined a wide range of genres and topics, for example, the structure of and the interaction in workplace meetings with regard to power and politeness (e.g. Holmes & Stubbe, 2015; Halvorsen & Sarangi, 2015; Svennevig & Djordjilovic, 2015), politeness strategies and their lexical realisations in telephone conferences (e.g. Chefneux, 2013; Pryor & Woodward-Kron, 2014), the management of topic shifts or social functions in informal talk or casual conversation at work (e.g. Morris-Adams, 2014; Holmes & Stubbe, 2015.; Mak & Chui, 2013), the interactive phenomenon in service encounters from a pragmatic view (e.g. Lind & Salomonson, 2013; Solon, 2013; Fauzi, Ibrahim, & Maros, 2014; Mortensen & Hazel, 2014), the types of questions asked and answered in the Q&A session of conference calls (e.g. Palmieri, Rocci, & Kudrautsava, 2015; Wulff, Swales, & Keller, 2009; Eriksson, 2011), and major features of job interviews as a genre based on a corpus of naturally occurring job interviews (e.g. Wawra, 2014). In Hong Kong, Cheng and others (e.g. Cheng, 2007b; Cheng & Warren, 2005, 2006, 2007; Cheng & Cheng, 2010) have conducted a series of studies that have compared the frequency, form and function of specific speech acts in English language textbooks and the Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English (HKCSE). Besides, Stenström (1994) has described how conversation works, providing a systematic and exhaustive account of the structure of spoken discourse and the diverse strategies speakers

use to have a conversation. It is illustrated throughout with excerpts from genuine conversation and contains numerous exercises with suggested answers based on conversations in the London-Lund Corpus of English Conversation. To date, no research has conducted a corpus study of all the speech acts in a number of different business genres.

## 1.2 Aim, objectives and research questions

The aim of the present study is to investigate, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the speech acts and their linguistic realizations in different spoken genres in the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic). The spoken business genres are meetings, telephone calls and conference calls, informal office talk, service encounters (airport and hotel), question and answer (Q&A) sessions, and interview (job and placement).

The objectives of the study are, for each sub-corpus of spoken business genre, to classify speech acts, and to describe the frequencies of individual speech acts, the patterns of co-occurrences of speech acts, and the linguistic realisations of the speech acts, both within and across turns, with reference to the communicative purposes of the business genres examined and the respective contextual identities, roles and responsibilities of the speakers. This study also discusses the theoretical, methodological and pedagogical implications that can be drawn from the findings. Central to the study is a detailed manually annotated speech act corpus with reference to a speech act taxonomy. Manual annotation of the speech acts in the spoken business corpus was carried out by making reference to the audio recordings, the prosodic transcription of the data (Cheng, Greaves, & Warren, 2008), and a taxonomy of 69 speech acts (Stenström, 1994; Tsui, 1994; Stolcke et al., 2000; Leech & Weisser, 2003). Speech acts were identified and annotated in terms of their forms or linguistic realisations (locutionary act) and the particular communicative functions they represent (illocutionary act) in the corpus data. Consequential results or effects on the feelings, thoughts or actions of the listener or other people (perlocutionary act) of the locutionary act were also considered as they can give more contextual information to inform the annotation of the utterances in the business sub-corpus.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To manually annotate the business sub-corpus of the Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English (HKCSE) (prosodic) with reference to a taxonomy of 69 speech acts, informed by previous relevant studies and the writer's personal reflection during the iterative process of utterance-by-utterance annotation;
2. To uncover the relative frequencies of speech acts and co-occurrence of speech acts in an automated way with the aid of *SpeechActConc*, a corpus linguistic program specifically designed for investigating the speech act annotated business corpus of HKCSE (prosodic);
3. To examine the lexicogrammatical realisations of speech acts in different spoken genres in different contexts of business communication in Hong Kong;
4. To suggest possible pedagogical implications for research and ESP in business communication.

The research questions of the study are:

1. What are the relative frequencies of occurrence of different speech acts in different spoken genres in business communication?
2. What are the patterns of co-occurrence and sequence organisation of speech acts in different spoken genres in business communication?
3. What are the characteristic lexicogrammatical patterns or linguistic realisations of different speech acts in different spoken genres in business communication?
4. What are the pedagogical implications of the study?

### 1.3 Significance of the study

The present corpus study could be of value to our knowledge in the fields of speech act study, speech act annotation, corpus linguistic software, business genres, and corpus pragmatics in different ways. It is worth pointing out that the present study of speech acts is not focused on genre analysis, and so it does not examine the generic structural characteristics, as expressed through the move structure and move-specific lexicogrammatical patterns, of the six business

genres (Koester, 2006). Rather, this speech act study aims to uncover distinctive speech acts and co-occurrence patterns of speech acts used in the six spoken genres in the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic) by adding interpretative and linguistic information to the corpus data (Garside, Leech, & McEnery, 1997) in order to capture the most appropriate communicative function expressed in each utterance (Rühlemann & Aijmer, 2015). Further studies that focus on business settings in other cultures could explore the extent to which the identified typical speech acts in the Hong Kong intercultural corpus are applicable to similar genres in other cultures.

Comparison of corpus findings of the co-occurrence patterns of speech acts across the six genres in the business sub-corpus will also contribute to a new understanding of speech act usage by speakers in different interactive business contexts for different communicative purposes. The frequencies of occurrence and forms of all the speech acts in the corpus can be comprehensively studied due to added annotation through the speech act identification process of careful utterance-by-utterance reading of the corpus data and assigning a most appropriate speech act to each utterance with a notation that can be read by the *SpeechActConc* (cf. McAllister, 2015; Rühlemann & Aijmer, 2015). The availability of more pragmatically annotated corpora like the one presented in this study would contribute to the relative new corpus pragmatics approach that integrates the quantitative approach in corpus linguistics and the qualitative approach in pragmatics (Rühlemann & Aijmer, 2015).

Regarding speech act annotation, the manual annotation of speech acts could contribute to the small yet growing number of corpora with pragmatic annotation (Rühlemann & Aijmer, 2015). Given the possible form-function mismatch of the communicative function and the linguistic realisation of an utterance, automatic assignment of speech act is likely to lead to ambiguity, whereas laborious manual assignment seems inevitable. As mentioned, this represents the first study that has manually annotated the speech acts in six genres of the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic) in its entirety. The spoken sub-corpus annotated has almost 200,000 words, covering the major genres of business communication, namely meetings, telephone calls and conference calls, informal office talk, service encounters (airport and hotel),



question and answer (Q&A) sessions, and interviews (job and placement). They are made up of a range of business contexts of interaction located in Hong Kong. Corpus analysis ranges from quantitative analysis of frequency counts of individual speech acts and co-occurring speech acts to qualitative analysis of lexicogrammatical realisations of speech acts (cf. Cheng, Greaves, & Warren, 2008).

The taxonomy used to annotate the speech acts in the business sub-corpus has been revised and refined meticulously throughout the study. The speech act taxonomy was derived from different research studies. The taxonomy comprising 69 speech acts is not meant to be exhaustive, but it was useful for annotating the speech acts of the corpus data. The speech act annotation involved an iterative process of utterance-by-utterance annotation and revision, making reference to both the audio-recordings and the prosodic transcriptions of the data. The annotation had been checked with the supervisors and a fellow researcher on a regular basis until a consensus was reached. The corpus data were analysed in terms of speech acts; in addition, they had to be marked in a specific way for the computer software *SpeechActConc* to analyse it quantitatively, in terms of the frequency of unique speech acts, and two or three co-occurring speech acts. The study illustrates that the speech acts in the taxonomy are sufficient and relevant in vindicating the moment-by-moment speech act choices made by discourse participants to achieve their specific transactional and relational goals as the spoken discourse unfolds (cf. Cheng et al., 2008).

The results will not only enhance the understanding of the linguistic description of speech acts of real-world business data (cf. Kohnen, 2015) but also advance the teaching and learning of interactions in spoken business English by providing learners with analysed examples of real-world language use (cf. Chan, 2014).

The study adds to the existing body of research literature in speech act studies of naturally occurring business spoken discourse that has adopted different approaches to speech act study, primarily sociolinguistics, conversation analysis and discourse analysis (Evans, 2013b; Generoso, 2013; Nielsen, 2013; Yuan, Setlock, Cosley, & Fussell, 2013; Fauzi et al., 2014; Zhang & Lo, 2014); employed a range of methodologies, such as ethnography, survey research and

discourse-completion tasks (Li, 2000; Nelson, Carson, Al Matal, & El Bakary, 2002; Lee, 2005; Rampton, 2007; Allami & Naeimi, 2011); and drawn upon different concepts, theories, taxonomies that account for the use of specific speech acts in spoken discourse in general and spoken business discourse in particular (e.g. Stiles, 1992; Tsui, 1994; Cheng & Tsui, 2009; Pishghadam & Zarei, 2011; Al-Sobh, 2013; Jabber & Zhang, 2013). The findings of the study will be most useful for researchers in corpus linguistics and corpus pragmatics for future speech act research (Coxhead, 2002; Mindt, 2002).

Regarding business communication, the analysis of real-world, naturally occurring data has become one powerful tool for the investigation of different aspects of business communication, including typical lexicogrammatical and rhetorical features of business genres (Bhatia & Bremner, 2012). The findings of the study will be useful to the practitioners working in the business contexts examined, in terms of the types of speech acts used to express specific communicative functions, how speech acts are used and responded to in real-life business communication, as well as the lexicogrammatical realisations of speech acts. The findings will also be useful for ESP in the preparation of instructional material for both pre-service and in-service training programmes in business communication (Koester, 2012; McCarthy & McCarten, 2012; Evans, 2013a).

#### 1.4 Outline of the thesis

Following this Chapter, the main concepts and theories of speech acts, such as performatives, locution, illocution, perlocution, felicity conditions, Austin's and Searle's classifications of speech acts, are presented in Chapter Two. This is followed by a review of empirical research studies about major speech acts (advice, apology, complaint, disagreement, opinion, refusal, request, and thanking) and genres in spoken business communication (meetings, telephone calls and conference calls, information office talk, service encounters, Q&A sessions, and interviews). It then reviews and discusses the development of different inquiries in corpus and speech act annotations, namely task-oriented, non-task-oriented, middle-ground-oriented, and discourse-/conversation-oriented. The review and discussion inform the study of the advantages, possibilities and limitations of the manual annotation scheme as well as the

analytical framework for the present study.

Chapter Three describes the corpus data used in the study, which was extracted from the HKCSE (prosodic) compiled by the English Department of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, followed by a description of the speech act taxonomy adopted for the study, speech act annotation, and the corpus analytical procedure.

Chapters Four to Nine are similar in the structure of presentation. They first report on the analysis of the frequencies of unique speech acts found in the six spoken genres in the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic), the patterns of two and three co-occurring speech acts, as well as the patterns of lexicogrammatical realisations of the most frequent speech act across the six spoken business genres. Extracts from the annotated business sub-corpus are used to illustrate the features of the most common speech acts in each spoken genre. The findings in this study are discussed with reference to the communicative purposes and speaker roles and responsibilities specific to individual business spoken genres. They are also discussed in relation to the research findings of previous relevant speech act studies.

Chapter Ten discusses the findings by systematically addressing the four research questions, with reference to the literature review. Chapter Eleven draws conclusions, discusses the significance and limitations of the study, and makes suggestions about the theoretical, methodological and pedagogical implications of the study.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews central notions of speech act theory (2.2), followed by empirical studies of speech acts (2.3) and empirical genre studies in business communication (2.4). It then describes and discusses the key issues on corpus and speech act annotation (2.5), followed by a reflection and a framework for the present study (2.6) and a summary of the chapter (2.7).

The review of the speech act theory mainly compares and contrasts the views of J. L. Austin and J. R. Searle on speech act, which gives a historical account of the development of the theory and provides a theoretical foundation for the investigation of speech act in the present study. The discussion of empirical studies of speech acts and empirical genre studies in business communication helps place the investigation in the context of previous research and justify the approach of the present investigation. The comparison and evaluation of the research focuses, methods and findings in the previous relevant studies help to provide an analytical framework for the present study. The review of research in corpus linguistics and speech act annotation, as well as the comparing and contrast of their approaches, research designs and limitations in their methods, also helps inform the framework for this study.

#### 2.2 Speech act theory

Speech act theory, first discussed among a number of ordinary language philosophers involved in analytical philosophy in the 1960s, focuses not on what language is but what language does (Petrey, 1990; Miller & Grimwood, 2015). Among those philosophers, J. L. Austin and J. R. Searle are prominent advocates in the ordinary language school (Smith, 2003). Austin's *How to do thing with words* (1975) and Searle's *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language* (1969) are important books for the study and the development of speech act theory (Burkhardt, 1990; Fotion, 2000). Speech act theory focuses on the ways of using language by studying the basic or minimal units of linguistic

communication and interpreting the communication function performed by the act of speaking a language (Searle 1969, 1979a). In the truth-conditional analysis of logical positivism, a sentence is regarded as meaningful if and only if it can, in principle at least, be verified and tested for its truth and falsity (Levinson, 1983). If a sentence is not verifiable, it is meaningless. However, Austin and Searle argue that a sentence is meaningful as long as the communicative function intended in a speaker's utterance is recognized by the hearer (cf. Bhatia, 1993, 1996).

To identify and describe different functions performed by language, Austin (1975) and Searle (1969) come up with different yet related classifications of speech acts. Austin's classification is a lexical classification of illocutionary verbs, resulting in five categories of speech act, namely 'verdictives', 'exercitives', 'commissives', 'expositives', and 'behabitives' (Austin, 1975, pp. 151-164). Austin's categories are lexical classification because the examples in each category are English verbs and each verb must mark a particular communicative function. For example, 'promise' as an English verb is classified as a 'commissive' that commits the speaker to a certain course of action. Another example is 'affirm', an English verb classified as an 'expositive' that involves the expounding of view, the conducting of arguments and the clarifying of usages and references (Austin, 1975).

Searle later revises and modifies Austin's categories as he has found a number of shortcomings or 'difficulties' in Austin's classification (Searle, 1979b, p.11). For example, there is an apparent confusion between verbs and acts. Moreover, not all the verbs listed in Austin's classification are illocutionary verbs, such as 'intend'. In Searle's explanation, 'intend' is not a speech act whereas 'express an intention' is. There is also no clear set of principles of the classification because of the confusion between the (illocutionary) acts and the (illocutionary) verbs. As a result, there is an overlap from one category to another. Furthermore, there are distinctive kinds of verbs found in the same category, for example, 'dare' and 'challenge' are classified together with, for example, 'thank' and 'apologise' by Austin as behabitives; however, they should be classified as exercitives such as 'order' or 'command'. Even within the same category, not all the verbs can fully satisfy the definitions (Searle, 1979b).

Searle's (1969, 1979a) classification is not a lexical but a functional or purposeful classification of illocutionary acts or illocutionary points, namely 'assertives', 'directives', 'commissives', 'expressives', and 'declaratives', all of them are related to Austin's categories. Table 1.1 compares Austin's (1975 and Searle's (1979a) taxonomies of speech (or illocutionary) acts (Searle, 1979a).

Table 1.1. A comparison of Searle's and Austin's taxonomies of speech (or illocutionary) acts

<b>Searle (1969, 1979a)</b>	<b>Austin (1975)</b>
<b>Assertives:</b> Telling people how things are	<b>Expositives:</b> Expounding of views, conducting of arguments, clarifying of usages and references <b>Verdictives:</b> Delivery of a distinguishable finding upon evidence
<b>Directives:</b> Trying to get people to do things	<b>Behabitives:</b> Reaction to others' behaviours and attitudes to other's past conduct <b>Exercitives:</b> Giving of a decision for or against an action
<b>Commissives:</b> Committing ourselves to doing things	<b>Commissives:</b> Committing the speaker to a certain course of action
<b>Expressives:</b> Expressing our feelings and attitudes	<b>Behabitives</b>
<b>Declaratives:</b> Bringing about changes through our utterances	<b>Expositives</b> <b>Verdictives</b>

In pragmatics, speech acts are in general referred to as actions performed via utterances in conversations, such as apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise, or request (Yule, 2000). The following discussion reviews some basic components of the speech act theory as discussed by Austin and Searle, namely performatives; locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts; felicity conditions; classification of speech acts; and indirect speech acts.

### 2.2.1 Performatives

The most obvious device for indicating the illocutionary force is the verb that explicitly describes the illocutionary act being performed, which is called a ‘performative verb’, or ‘performative’ (Austin, 1975, pp. 4-7, pp. 67-93; cf. Yule, 2000, p. 49; Levinson, 1983, p. 231, p. 244). Austin (1975) compares constative and performative utterances, with constatives dealing with the true or the false value of a statement while performatives dealing with the felicity or the infelicity, sincerity or insincerity, authenticity or inauthenticity of an utterance (Yoshitake 2004, p. 28; Bach, 2006; Henderson & Brown, 1997; Petrey, 1990). Constatives are utterances in which ‘something is *said* which can be evaluated along a dimension of truth’ while performatives are utterances in which ‘something is *done* which cannot be said to be true or false but which can be evaluated along a dimension of ‘felicity’” (Verschueren, 1999, p. 22; italics in original; Récanati, 1980; Geis, 1995; Henderson & Brown, 1997; Moore, 2001; Bach, 2006). Explicit performatives are speech acts that contain verbs, such as ‘promise’ or ‘baptize’ in the first-person singular present indicative active, to describe the act being performed (Austin, 1975, pp. 67-73; Verschueren, 1999, p. 25).

However, the greatest practical problem regarding identifying explicit performatives is that the total number of performative verbs, or speech act verbs, is unknown in any language (Yule, 2000; Mey, 2001). According to the performative hypothesis, every utterance has a structure that corresponds to the explicit performative, which is the most direct and conventional way of expressing a particular illocutionary force and contains a performative verb (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 2000). For instance, in uttering ‘wash the dishes’, the underlying performative clause is ‘I order you to wash the dishes’ (Levinson, 1983, p. 249). When a person makes a performative utterance, he/she is ‘*doing* something rather than merely *saying* something’ (Martinich, 1996, p. 121; italics in original).

In Austin’s words, performatives refer to utterances that do not describe or report anything at all, ‘the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not *normally* be described as, or as ‘just’, saying something’ (Austin, 1975, p. 5; italics in original). The distinctive traits of performatives are not to ‘*describe* my doing of what I should be said in so

uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it' (ibid., p. 6; italics in original). Austin illustrates these traits with the following examples (ibid., p. 5):

- (1) 'I do (sc.[that is to say] take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife)' – as uttered in the course of the marriage ceremony;
- (2) 'I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*' – as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem;
- (3) 'I give and bequeath my watch to my brother' – as occurring in a will;
- (4) 'I bet you six pence it will rain tomorrow'.

Given a clear distinction between performatives and constatives, Austin (1975) argues that most utterances are performatives in which the speakers are almost always doing something by saying something. In other words, the differentiation between constatives and performatives becomes less distinct, as Austin finds that constatives work the same way as performatives (Bach, 2006). The reason is that a speaker does not necessarily utter 'I suggest ...' to make a suggestion or 'I assert ...' to make an assertion, as speakers 'do more things with words than convey information' and when they convey information, they 'often convey more than their words encode' (Bach, 2006).

For Austin, many utterances are equivalent to actions. When someone says: 'I name this ship' or 'I now pronounce you man and wife', the utterance creates a new social or psychological reality. One simple way to decide whether or not a speech act is a performative is to insert the word 'hereby' between subject and verb. If the resulting utterance makes sense, the speech act is probably a performative. For instance, 'I hereby confer upon you the honourable degree of Bachelor of Arts' is a performative (Moore, 2001, p.4). Moreover, Austin later contends that illocutionary acts need not be performed explicitly; for instance, it is unnecessary to use 'I (hereby) suggest ...' to make a suggestion or 'I (hereby) apologize ...' to make an apology (Bach, 2006).

### 2.2.2 Locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts

Austin (1975) replaces the constative-performative terminology by a three-fold distinction. Locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts are three key components in Austin's speech act theory (ibid., pp. 94-108). A



locutionary act is the basic act of utterance that produces a meaningful linguistic expression. It is 'roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence within a certain sense and reference, which ... is roughly equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional sense' (ibid., p. 109). Austin further classifies the locutionary act into three acts, namely 'the phonetic act', which is 'merely the act of uttering certain noises'; 'the phatic act', which is 'the uttering of certain vocables or words, i.e. noises of certain types, belonging to and as belonging to, a certain vocabulary, conforming to and as conforming to a certain grammar'; and 'the rhetic act', which is 'the performance of an act of using those vocables with a certain more-or-less definite sense and reference' (ibid., p. 95). An illocutionary act is an utterance that carries a function to achieve a particular communicative purpose, which has 'a certain (conventional) force', such as 'informing, ordering, warning, undertaking' (Austin, 1975, p. 109, p. 121). A perlocutionary act is an utterance that has the intention to have an effect, referring to 'what we bring about or achieve *by* saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading' (ibid., p. 109; italics in original). The three acts can be understood as 'the act *of* saying something, what one does *in* saying it, and what one does *by* saying it' respectively (Bach, 2006; italics in original.).

These three levels of action can be illustrated with the ensuing example. When a bartender utters 'The bar will be closed in five minutes', he is performing all the three levels of action simultaneously. The locutionary act refers to the saying that the bar he is working at will be closed in five minutes from the time of his utterance. The illocutionary act refers to the bartender's intention to inform the patrons of the bar's closing and perhaps to ask them to order a last drink. The perlocutionary act refers to the intention of producing a further effect in which the patrons actually understand that the bar is to be closed in five minutes and actually order a last drink (Bach, 2003). Austin (1975) does not think that a successful performance of an illocutionary act, for example, requesting something when the hearer recognizes that the speaker is requesting it, is related to the roles of speakers' intentions and hearers' inferences. On the contrary, he supposes that the successful performance of an illocutionary act is related to convention rather than intention (Bach, 2006).

### 2.2.3 Felicity conditions

In order for a speech act to be performed successfully, it is necessary to have met certain expected or appropriate circumstances, which are referred to felicity conditions (Austin 1975; Yule 2000; Levinson, 1983). Whether or not the speaker has the social or legal or other kind of standing to accomplish the act depends on the necessary and sufficient conditions beyond the mere speaking of the words themselves (Moore, 2001). For example, to successfully perform the utterance ‘I divorce you’, the felicity conditions must show how the speaker and the hearer share same linguistic and socio-cultural conventions that count as the performance of a speech act accompanied by a certain conventional result (Oishi, 2007). Another example is ‘I order you to release the prisoners’. To successfully perform this utterance, the felicity conditions must indicate circumstances in which the speaker has legitimacy authority over the hearer and the hearer will obey the order given. If the speaker does not have such an authority, the performance of the act of ordering is deemed unsuccessful (Oishi, 2007).

It is, however, possible that the felicity conditions may fail to regulate the use of performance utterances. A performative utterance may go wrong, or be ‘unhappy’, Austin calls it ‘infelicity’ (Austin 1975, p. 25). Austin lists six rules for felicity conditions. The violations of the first four rules lead to misfires while the violations of the last two rules lead to abuses. The first rule is that ‘there must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect’ (ibid., p. 26). The second rule is that ‘the particular persons or circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked’ (ibid., p. 26). The third rule is that ‘the procedure must be executed by all the participants correctly’ (ibid., p. 36). The fourth rule is that ‘the procedure must be executed by all participants completely’ (ibid., p. 36). When the procedure in a performative utterance is not accepted, invoked inappropriately, or incompletely executed, the act purported to be done in the utterance will not take effect and, as Austin puts it, result in ‘misfire’ (ibid., p. 39). The fifth rule is that ‘where ... the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts, feelings, or intentions, 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, feelings, or intentions, and the

participants must intend so to conduct themselves' (ibid, p. 39). The sixth rule is that 'the participants must so conduct themselves subsequently' (ibid., p. 39). When the participants do not have the required thought, feelings, or intentions, or when the participants fail to do the consequent conduct, the act purported to be done in the utterance is not void but unhappy or insincere (ibid., p. 39).

Searle (1969) interprets these felicity conditions not only the ways in which a speech act is appropriate but also as constitutive rules, meaning that they are jointly constitutive of the different speech acts or illocutionary acts/forces. Though performatives cannot be true or false, like constatives, they can be either felicitous or infelicitous. A performative that works is called felicitous and one that does not is called infelicitous. Relevant social conventions must be satisfied for a performative to work (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 2000). The felicity conditions are necessary for the successful performance of a speech act because they provide a range of rules to which a speaker is committed in performing a particular speech act (illocutionary act) with corresponding linguistic realisation (locutionary act) and to which the consequence of the speech act can possibly be assessed (perlocutionary act).

#### 2.2.4 Classifications of speech acts

Austin's (1975) work was a reaction to his contemporary discussion on language, known as logical positivism (Levinson, 1983; Mey, 2001). Logical positivism is based on three assumptions. The first is that the basic sentence type in language is declarative, which is a statement or an assertive. The second is that the principal use of language is to describe states of affairs by using statements. The third is that the meaning of utterances can be described in terms of their truth or falsity. A key issue for logical positivist approaches is the extent to which the meaning of a sentence can be verified as true or false (Saeed, 1997, p. 207). In contrast to logical positivism, Austin argues that other than making statements and assertions, language has many speech acts, such as questions, exclamation, and commands. Even in sentences with the linguistic realisation of declaratives, not all are used to make true or false statements. Yoshitake (2004) points out that Austin's *How to do things with words* (1975) has first highlighted the functional aspect of language and shifted philosophical arguments to ordinary language.

The underpinning theme in Austin's speech act theory is that 'a statement not only describes a situation or states some facts, but also performs a certain kind of action by itself' (Yoshitake, 2004, p. 28).

In Austin's classification, the illocutionary acts of utterances are divided into five categories: Verdictives, Exercitives, Commissive, Expositives, and Behabitives (Austin 1975, pp. 151-164). Verdictives are verbs used in 'the delivery of a finding, official or unofficial, upon evidence or reasons as to value or fact, so far as these are distinguishable' (ibid., p. 153). Verdictives have 'obvious connexions with truth and falsity, soundness and unsoundness and fairness and unfairness' (ibid., p. 153). Examples include 'acquit', 'hold', 'calculate', 'describe', 'analyse', 'estimate', 'date', 'rank', 'assess', and 'characterize' (ibid., p. 153).

Exercitives are verbs used to refer to 'the giving of a decision in favor of or against a certain course of action or advocacy of it' (ibid., p. 155). They are used to agree or disagree to actions. Examples include 'order', 'command', 'direct', 'plead', 'beg', 'recommend', 'entreat', 'advise', 'appoint', 'dismiss', 'nominate', 'veto', 'declare closed', 'declare open', 'announce', 'warn', 'proclaim', and 'give' (ibid., pp. 155-156).

Commissives are verbs used to 'commit the speaker to a certain course of action' (ibid., p. 157). Examples include 'promise', 'vow', 'pledge', 'covenant', 'contract', 'guarantee', 'embrace', and 'swear' (ibid., pp. 157-158).

Behabitives are verbs that show 'the notion of reaction to other people's behavior and fortunes and of attitudes and expressions of attitudes to someone else's past conduct or imminent conduct' (ibid., p. 160). Examples include 'apologize', 'thank', 'deplore', 'commiserate', 'congratulate', 'felicitate', 'welcome', 'applaud', 'criticize', 'bless', 'curse', 'toast', 'drink', 'dare', 'defy', 'protest', and 'challenge' (ibid., pp. 160-161).

Expositives are verbs used 'in acts of exposition involving the expounding of views, the conducting of arguments, and the clarifying of usages and references' (ibid., p. 161). Examples include 'affirm', 'deny', 'emphasize', 'illustrate', 'answer', 'report', 'accept', 'object to', 'concede', 'describe', 'class', 'identify', and 'call' (ibid., pp. 162-163).

Following Austin's (1975) discussion, Searle (1965) argues that the performance of illocutionary acts is governed by a set of rules, which are the necessary and sufficient conditions for the performance of a particular kind of speech act. Searle distinguishes regulative rules from constitutive rules and proposes that it is the latter which govern the performance of illocutionary acts. Regulative rules regulate existing forms of behaviour whereas constitutive rules regulate and create or define new forms of behaviour. Searle takes the rules of football as an example to explicate that such rules do not only regulate the game but also create the possibility or define the activity. The activity of playing football is constituted by following those rules. Without such rules, there will be no football game.

The set of rules is as follows: 1. Normal input and output conditions obtain, meaning that the speaker and hearer both know how to speak the language, are conscious of what they are doing, are not acting under threats; and do not have physical impairment to communication; 2. The speaker expresses an act in an utterance; 3. In expressing the act, the speaker predicates a future act but not a past act; 4. The hearer would prefer the speaker's doing the act to his not doing so, and the speaker believes the hearer would prefer his doing the act to his not doing so; 5. It is not clear to both the speaker and the hearer that the speaker will do the act in the normal course of events; 6. The speaker intends that the utterance will make him responsible for intending to do the act; 7. The speaker intends that the utterance will place him under an obligation to do the act; 8. The speaker intends to produce an act by getting the hearer to recognize his intention to produce that act and intends that this recognition to be achieved by the lexical and syntactical item conventionally associated with the act; 9. The utterance guided by the semantical rules of the language of the speaker and the hearer is used to make a particular act. Searle (1965) further group these nine rules into four types of conditions: Conditions 2 and 3 are the propositional content conditions. Conditions 4 and 5 are preparatory conditions. Condition 6 is the sincerity condition. Condition 7 is the essential condition. Conditions 1, 8 and 9 apply to all kinds of illocutionary acts.

Like Austin (1975), Searle (1969) distinguishes three sorts of speech act that are performed when a speaker utters a sentence, namely an utterance act, a

propositional act, and an illocutionary act. An utterance act refers to certain speech sounds, words and sentences. A propositional act refers to something or someone and predicts some properties of that thing or person, same as Austin's rhetic act. An illocutionary act refers to a communicative force such as promising, betting, stating, and question.

Searle (1968) argues that Austin's distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts seems unnecessary, as Searle has found that '*all* the members of the class of locutionary acts (performed in the utterance of complete sentence) are members of the class of illocutionary acts, because every rhetic act, and hence every locutionary act, is an illocutionary act' (ibid., p. 413; italics in original). As Searle explains:

No sentence is completely force-neutral. Every sentence has some illocutionary force potential, if only of a very broad kind, built into its meaning. ... [E]ven the most primitive of the old-fashioned grammatical categories of indicative, interrogative, and imperative sentences already contain determinants of illocutionary force. For this reason there is no specification of a locutionary act performed in the utterance of a complete sentence which will not determine the specification of an illocutionary act (Searle, 1968, p. 412).

Searle (1968) argues that instead of distinguishing the differences between locutionary acts, which include phonetic acts, phatic acts, and rhetic acts, and illocutionary acts in Austin's taxonomy, the rhetic acts and the locutionary acts should be eliminated. The remaining acts are therefore phonetic acts, phatic acts, and illocutionary acts. Searle (1968) puts forward three 'linguistic principles' that help identify the illocutionary force of utterances: First, '[w]hatever can be meant can be said', which is called 'the Principle of Expressibility' (ibid., p. 415). 'Whatever one can mean one can, in principle if not in fact, say or come to be able to say' (ibid., p. 415). Second, '[t]he meaning of a sentence is determined by the meanings of all its meaning components' (ibid., p. 415). The meaningful components of a sentence comprise not only 'words (or morphemes) and surface word order' but also 'its deep syntactic structure and the stress and intonation contour of its utterance' (ibid., p. 416). Third, '[t]he illocutionary forces of utterances may be more or less specific; and there are several different principles of distinction for distinguishing different types of illocutionary acts' (ibid., p.

415). The different principles of distinction include the point or purpose of the act (e.g. the difference between a question and a statement); the relative status of the speaker and hearer (e.g. the difference between a command and a request); the degree of commitment undertaken (e.g. the difference between an expression of intent and a promise); and the conversational placing and role of the act (e.g. the difference between a reply to what someone has said and an objection to what he has said (*ibid.*, p. 416)).

Based on his analysis and criticism of Austin's five categories of illocutionary acts, namely verdictive, expositive, exercitive, behabitive, and commissive, Searle (1969, 1979b) proposes another classification of illocutionary acts, by identifying five general ways of using language, or five general categories of illocutionary acts, namely assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations.

In Searle's (1969, 1979b) taxonomy of speech acts, assertives are statements that can be judged as true or false because they describe or represent a state of affairs. Through assertives, we 'tell people how things are' in statements of fact, assertions, conclusions, or descriptions (Searle 1979a, p. viii; cf. Yule 2000). Assertives express 'a belief, making words fit the world, and committing the speaker to the truth of what is asserted' (Verschueren, 1999, p. 24). Examples of assertive verb are 'describe, call, classify, identify' (Searle, 1979b, p. 21). This class of assertives contains 'most of Austin's expositives and many of his verdictives' (*ibid.*, p. 13).

Directives are statements that attempt to get the other person to do something in accordance with the speaker's intent (Searle, 1979a, p. viii). Through directives, we try to get others to do things in commands, orders, requests, or suggestions (Yule, 2000). Directives express 'a wish, making the world fit the words, and counting as an attempt to get the hearer to do something' (Verschueren, 1999, p. 24). Examples of directive verbs are 'dare, defy, challenge, order, command, request, invite, advise' (Searle, 1979b, p. 22). Austin's behabitives and many of his exercitives are in this class (Searle, 1979b).

Commissives are statements that commit the speaker to a course of action as depicted by the propositional content (Searle, 1979a, p. viii). Through commissives, we commit ourselves to doing things in promises, threats, refusals,

and pledges (Yule, 2000). Commissives express ‘an intention, making the world fit the words and counting as a commitment for the speaker to engage in a future course of action’ (Verschueren, 1999, p. 24). Austin’s commissives are in this category (Searle, 1979b, p. 14). Examples of commissive verbs are ‘promise, pledge, vow’ (ibid., p. 22).

Expressives are statements that express the propositional attitudes of the speaker about a state of affairs (Searle, 1979a, p. viii). Through expressives, we express our feelings and attitudes in statements of pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy, or sorrow (Yule, 2000). Expressives express ‘a variety of psychological states, having no direction of fit between words and world, and simply counting as expressions of a psychological state’ (Verschueren, 1999, p. 24). Austin’s behabitives belong to this category (Searle, 1979b). Examples of expressive verbs are ‘apologize, congratulate, thank’ (Searle, 1979b, p. 23).

Declarations are statements that perform an action to bring into existence a state of affairs by representing oneself as performing that action (Searle, 1979a). Through declaratives, we bring about changes in the world (Yule, 2000). Declarations express ‘any psychological state, making both the words fit the world and the world fit the words, and the point of which is to bring about a change in (institutional) reality’ (Verschueren, 1999, p. 24). Austin’s performatives and constatives belong to this category (Searle, 1979b). Examples of declarative verbs are ‘pronounce, appoint, declare’ (ibid., p. 26).

Searle (1979b) concludes that if the illocutionary point is used to classify language uses, there is a rather limited number of basic things we do with language, namely telling people how things are (assertives), trying to get people to do things (directives), committing ourselves to doing things (commissives), expressing our feelings and attitudes (expressives), and bringing about changes through our utterances (declarations).

### **2.3 Empirical studies of speech acts**

Over the past few decades, there have been lots of research studies on speech acts in and across different languages and cultures. Many examine the distinctive features of particular speech acts with elicited data collected by Discourse Completion Test (DCT), questionnaire, role-play, or interview, with



few studies based on naturally occurring data in which the participants are engaging in a real-world interaction in a particular situational setting or a speech event.

Speech acts that have been discussed include advice (e.g. Hinkel, 1997; Koester, 2002), apology (e.g. Chamani & Zareipur, 2013; Al-Sobh, 2013), complaint (e.g. Cohen & Olshtain, 1993; Abdolrezapour et al., 2012), disagreement (e.g. Cordella, 1996; Edstrom, 2004), opinion (e.g. Cheng & Warren, 2006; Cheng & Tsui, 2009), refusal (e.g. Chang, 2009; Allami & Naeimi, 2011), request (e.g. Wei, 2012; Jabber & Zhang, 2013), thanking (e.g. Pishghadam & Zarei, 2011; Cheng & Seto, 2015). Previous studies on different speech acts have investigated a variety of speech events with specific objectives in different contexts of intracultural, intercultural, and cross-cultural communications. These studies attempt to examine the linguistic features and functions of certain speech acts to find patterns, similarities and differences.

### 2.3.1 Advice

Some studies have focused on the comparison of the speech act performance of native speakers and non-native speakers. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990) examine the notion of status in institutional discourse and identify *congruence* as a factor in determining the success of interactions between native speaker and nonnative speakers in that context of advising sessions between faculty advisors and both native and nonnative graduate students. Nonnative students are found lacking status-preserving strategies for the use of non-congruent (status-challenging) speech acts. A similar study done by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) a few years later on a longitudinal comparison of the acquisition of pragmatic competence between advanced nonnative speakers of English and native speakers over the course of a semester shows that the advanced nonnative speakers have employed appropriate speech acts to make more suggestions, fewer rejections and mitigators than the native speakers.

Hinkel (1997) addresses the issue of what can be learned about L2 speech acts with a focus on the L1 responses of native speakers and the L2 responses given by speakers of Chinese to multiple choice questionnaires and DCTs

dealing with the appropriateness of advice in common and observed situations. The findings show that native speakers preferred but selected substantially less direct and hedged advice than the Chinese subjects did.

Other studies have focused on the influence of the social and cultural factors on the speakers' selection of strategies and realisations of speech acts. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1996) investigate the nature of input available to learners in the institutional setting of the academic advising session and find that factors such as the effect of stereotypes and limitations of a learner's pragmatic and grammatical competence will influence the course of development of inter-language pragmatics.

Others have examined the features and functions of certain speech acts. Koester (2002), based on a 34,000-word corpus of workplace spoken discourse, argues for a discourse approach to teaching communicative functions or speech acts in spoken English. The transcripts of two workplace conversations from the corpus data are examined to ascertain how the performance of giving advice and giving directives is accomplished. It is found that speech acts are not usually performed directly and that it is necessary to look beyond individual utterance to see how particular communicative acts unfold within a conversational sequence.

### 2.3.2 Apology

Studies focusing on the comparison of the speech act performance of native speakers and non-native speakers of English in apology include Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1989) cross-cultural investigation of the similarities and differences between native and non-native speakers' realisation patterns in 'requests' and 'apologies'. Linnell, Porter, Stone, and Chen (1992) also examine the performance of apologies between 20 non-native speakers of English and 20 native speakers of English through verbal DCTs and interview. The results show that there are no significant differences between non-native and native speakers.

Some studies have scrutinised the performance of speech act by native speakers of different languages. Bergman and Kasper (1993) examine the perception of Thai and American informants on contextual factors in difference offence contexts, the influence of contextual factors on the selection of apology strategies, and the patterns of intracultural and intercultural variability in the

selection of apology strategies. Questionnaire findings show that Thai and American raters perceive context-external and context-internal factors are unrelated; context-internal factors in offence contexts are highly interrelated; individual offence contexts are not predictable from the general patterns and vary cross-culturally. Bataineh and Bataineh (2008) investigate the apology strategies used by the speakers of American English and Jordanian Arabic with a focus of the causes of their differences regarding the use of explicit apology among other less explicit apology strategies. American English speakers tend to use negative assessment of responsibility when blaming others, whereas Jordanian Arabic speakers tend to use proverbs and non-apology strategies to ease their responsibility and pacify the victim as well as employ negative and positive assessment of responsibility when blaming themselves and others.

Ogiermann (2008) analyses the influence of gender and culture on speech act performance and examines responses to offensive situations produced under identical contextual situations by English and Russian. Apart from apology strategies and intensifying devices, the use of downgrading strategies and the effect of strategy combinations on the illocutionary force of the responses are also examined. Chamani and Zareipur (2013) investigate the use of apology strategies and the offences that motivated apologies among native speakers of British English and Persian by analyzing a large corpus of naturally-occurring data collected from real-life situations. It is found that both English and Persian speakers used relatively the same set of apology strategies, yet with different preferences, and they did not make apologies to remedy the same offence types, even the same offences obligated different apology rates.

A number of researches have investigated the performance of apology in the social and cultural situations. Holmes (1989) examines sex differences in the distribution of apologies to show the complexity of the language learner's task in acquiring communicative competence with reference to a corpus of apologies of New Zealanders. It is found that the offences which elicit apologies and the strategies selected to realise them provide clues to the speech acts the community regards as face-threatening acts and the relative seriousness of different face-threatening acts. Rose (2000) reports the results of an exploratory cross-sectional study of pragmatic development among three groups of primary

school students in Hong Kong who completed a cartoon oral production task designed to elicit requests, apologies, and compliment responses. A number of developmental patterns are found, such as choice of request strategy, frequency of supportive moves, use of adjuncts with apologies and compliment responses, but there is little evidence of sensitivity to situational variation or pragmatic transfer from Cantonese.

Kotani (2002) describes a use of 'I'm sorry' that accomplishes a function that has not been identified previously and discusses the possible consequences of this use in the American English-speaking community. It is found that the use of 'I'm sorry' by a Japanese speaker to express her mixed feelings of gratitude and indebtedness is different from the cultural knowledge regarding the use of the phrase by English speakers. The use of 'I'm sorry' may be interpreted as being insincere when it does not reflect the speaker's feeling of responsibility in serious situations. Rojo (2005) examines the linguistic choices of apology made by Spanish speakers in a role play situation apologizing to a friend for having broken his laptop. It is found that a variety of upgraders and downgraders is used to intensify or to play down the impact of the offence. The complex use of strategies illustrates the complexity of apologies within the community of Spanish speakers. Al-Sobh (2013) analyses the apology expressions used by right Jordanian university students who major in English and explores the apology strategies Arabic native speakers used in six different situations. It is found that the apology strategies used were apology and regret, explanation, offer of repair, equal – equal, low high and responsibility.

Other studies have attempted to investigate the forms, functions, and features of apology. Holmes (1990) discusses the function of apologies within the context of interaction regarding affective and referential meaning. The syntactic, semantic, and sociolinguistic features of apologies are described based on a New Zealand corpus of 183 apologies. Almost all apology exchanges involve an explicit apology and apologies are politeness strategies. Cohen and Olshtain (1993) study how fifteen nonnative speakers assess, plan, and produce the verbal responses in different speech act situations. It is found that in executing speech act behaviour, half of the time respondents conducted only a general assessment of the utterances called for in the situation without planning specific vocabulary

and grammatical structures, often thought in two or three languages when planning and executing speech act utterances, utilized a series of different strategies in searching for language forms, and did not attend much to grammar or pronunciation. Shariati and Chamani (2010) studies the frequency, combination, and sequential position of apology strategies in Persian based on a corpus of 500 naturally-occurring apology exchanges collected through an ethnographic method of observation. It is found that explicit expression of apology with a request for forgiveness and acknowledgement of responsibility was the most common apology strategy in Persian, which appears to be culture-specific.

Other studies have focused on the influence of the social, cultural, and contextual factors on the speaker's selection of strategies and realisations of speech acts. Ide (1998) analyses *Sumimasen*, a conventional expression of apology and gratitude in Japanese in terms of its social metapragmatic functions within the larger framework of public discourse in Japan. The findings show that the exchange of *sumimasen* is an anticipated and habitual metapragmatic ritual activity that functions not only as the expression of apology and gratitude but also as one ritualized formula used in Japanese society to facilitate public face-to-face interaction. Similar to Ide (1998), Tateyama (2001) investigates the effects of explicit and implicit instruction in the use of the three functions of the routine formula *sumimasen*, namely getting attention, apologizing, and expressing gratitude to beginning students of Japanese as a foreign language. It is found that the students benefited from explicit teaching on how the degree of indebtedness in thanking situations, the severity of offence in the apology contexts, and factors such as age and social status intricately influence the choice of routine formulas. Meier (1998) reviews research on apologies and argues that such research needs to progress beyond a descriptive goal to an explanatory goal in terms of underlying cultural assumptions that inform the perception of contextual factors which in turn inform apology behaviour. It is found that there is a less than unified picture of facts about apology literature whereas there are conflicting claims regarding the distribution of strategies, the degree of mitigation effected by account types, the co-occurrence of strategy types, the effect of the severity of the offence, the effect of gender, and the effect of the

interlocutor relationship.

Some studies have investigated the design of classroom activities and course material that develop the ability of language learners to perceive and produce speech acts appropriately in different contextual situations. Intachakra (2004) examines how the study of cross-cultural pragmatics such as apology and compliment in English and Thai can contribute to language teaching and curriculum development.

### 2.3.3 Complaint

Some studies have examined the similarities and differences of complaint performed by native speakers of different languages. Arent (1996) compares the relative frequency of the performance and avoidance of oral complaints by 22 Chinese learners and 12 native speakers of American English who were enrolled in a U.S. university. The participants were asked to respond to three problematic situations and an elicitation instrument was designed to elicit English complaints through audiotaped, closed role plays, perceptions of situational seriousness, and verbal data reports. It is found that sociopragmatic decision-making for Chinese learners and native speakers of American English are associated with individual perceptions of situational seriousness and with culturally-conditioned perceptions of the flexibility of explicit social contracts.

Some studies have focused on the use of complaint by native and non-native speakers of English. Boxer (1993) analyses the speech act sequence of indirect complaint in conversational interactions between Japanese learners of ESL and their English speaking peers. It is found that indirect complaints are frequently employed as positive strategies to establish points of commonality; however, there is a contrast between native speakers and Japanese learners. The former used joking/teasing, nonsubstantive reply ('hmm'), question, advice/lecture, contradiction, commiseration whereas the latter used nonsubstantive reply, question, and commiseration.

Some studies have focused on the social and cultural situations in which a complaint is performed. Abdolrezapour et al. (2012) examine how Iranian EFL learners perceive complaining utterances produced by Americans in 4 asymmetrical situations based on the data collected from role-play interactions of

10 American speakers and a perceptive questionnaire constructed from the interactions. It is found that more indirect complaints were perceived as more polite by the learners and social variables of power and distance made a difference in the degree of politeness perceived.

#### 2.3.4 Disagreement

Some studies have explored the patterns, similarities, and differences of the performance of disagreement between native speakers and non-native speakers of English. Beebe and Takahashi (1989) investigate the performance of disagreement and chastisement in English by 15 native speakers of American and 15 Japanese with advanced English proficiency with data collected from a DCT of a written role-play questionnaire to see how these acts are performed with speakers with unequal status. It is found that Americans are not always more direct or explicit than Japanese; Japanese do not apologize more or always avoid disagreement or critical remarks, especially when speaking to someone of lower status; both Japanese and American use questions as warning, correction, disagreement, chastisement, and embarrassing information, but with different tones and contents; Americans used positive remarks more frequently than Japanese did. Garc ía (1989) examines the stylistic devices used by native speaking American and non-native speaking Venezuelan speakers in two different English role-play situations: disagreeing and requesting. It is found that American speakers preferred nonconfrontational stylistic devices when they disagreed with an American interlocutor and impersonal stylistic devices when they request a service whereas Venezuelan speakers used more confrontational devices when disagreeing and more personal devices when requesting a service. It is suggested that for second and foreign language education, students can profit from acquiring skills that permit them to identify and adjust to different cultural and language-appropriate situations.

Some studies have focused on the influence of social and cultural situations on the speaker's understanding of the concepts and practices of disagreement in different contexts of interaction. Cordella (1996) investigates the conversational style of arguing among three groups of third- and fourth-year university language students who are from Hispanic backgrounds, who lived for a year in a Hispanic

country, and who were in contact with the language only as part of their tertiary-level education respectively. They were asked to talk freely on ‘the role of men and women in society’. It is found that the linguistic choice of the confrontational style and face-threatening acts between the first two groups are similar to each other but different from the third group.

Some studies have investigated the linguistic realisations and patterns of disagreement performed by native speakers of different language in different contexts to compare the similarities and differences. Edstrom (2004) examines disagreement in the context of casual conversation regarding six naturally-occurring conversations between native speakers of Spanish and native speakers of English who live in Venezuela. The participants, mothers of children at a bilingual Spanish/English school, are divided into one English control group, one Spanish control group, and four mixed groups. It is found that though confrontational disagreements predominated among the 10 Venezuelan participants, there were a number of expressions of non-confrontational disagreement. Cheng and Tsui (2009) describe the management of disagreement found in an intercultural conversational corpus between Hong Kong Chinese and native speakers of English with reference to cultural differences in value orientations towards the face system and politeness as well as research on the structural organization and linguistic realisations of dispreferred responses. Hong Kong Chinese are found to be not shy or less likely to disagree with their native speakers of English interlocutors; however, they are more inclined to address the face-want of both themselves and the addressees with the use of redressive language and mitigating devices. Hong Kong Chinese and native speakers of English are found to manage interpersonal relationships and to negotiate common ground with the interlocutor from a qualitative analysis of sequences of disagreements in a conversational excerpt.

### 2.3.5 Opinion

Some studies have focused on the functions and linguistic features of opining in the social and cultural situations. Cheng and Warren (2006) examine the speech act of giving opinions by exploring how participants in intercultural business communication in Hong Kong express personal views and comparing



the findings with school textbooks in Hong Kong on the linguistic realisations of giving one's opinions.

### 2.3.6 Refusal

A number of studies have compared and contrasted the different performances of refusal among native and non-native speakers of English and speakers of different languages. Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990) study Japanese learners of English, native speakers of English, and native speakers of Japanese on refusals to show that pragmatic transfer exists in the order, frequency, and content of semantic formulas used in the Japanese ESL learners' refusals. The participants are asked to fill out a DCT with 12 situations categorized into 4 stimulus types eliciting a refusal, namely requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions. It is found that negative transfer in Japanese non-native speakers of English used in refusals was found in the order, frequency, and content of semantic formulas.

Other studies, however, have focused on the performance by native speakers of different languages. Nelson et al. (2002) investigate similarities and differences between Egyptian Arabic and American English refusals using a modified version of the DCT. It is found that both groups use similar direct and indirect strategies with similar frequency in making refusals. Al-kahtani (2006) compares and differentiates the ways in which Americans, Arabs, and Japanese perform refusals with respect to order, frequency, content, and status. It is found that the subjects are different in the ways they perform refusals in most circumstances and recommended that L2 teachers should enhance learners' sociolinguistic competence to avoid communication errors and to establish increased interaction between native speakers of English and their non-native interlocutors.

Li (2007) compares refusals in Chinese and American English and found that refusals vary in three directness types with situations and cultures, namely direct refusal speech act, ability of negation and indirect refusal speech act, and prefer indirect refusals. Americans are more direct than Chinese and Chinese sincere refusals are considered as face-threatening acts. Chang (2009) investigates pragmatic transfer in refusals by native speakers of Mandarin

speaking English, and to what extent transfer is influenced by the learners' level of L2 proficiency with regard to discourse completion questionnaire. The refusal responses of 35 American college students, 41 English-major seniors, 40 English-major freshmen, and 40 Chinese-major sophomores were analysed in terms of the frequency of semantic formulas and the content of semantic formulas. It is found that while all groups employed a similar range of semantic formulas in responding to the refusals elicited by different initiating acts, they differed in the frequency and content of the semantic formulas. Liao and Bresnahan (1996) devise six scenarios of request for university students in the United States and Taiwan to fill in what they would say when they would rather refuse. It is found that both Taiwanese and Americans utter the politeness markers of apology in the similar frequency. They use different formulaic expressions in refusal and apply different strategies, for example, Chinese people are more economic at making excuses and try not to give the peer a lesson whereas Americans tend to offer different reasons in refusal and do not hesitate to give a lesson if they are right. The majority of both cultures provide vague reasons to refuse high-status; however, significantly more Chinese offer specific reasons in refusing a high-status.

Some studies have examined the features and strategies employed in the performance of refusal in different languages. Chen, Ye, and Zhang (1995) examine the strategies 50 male and 50 female educated native speakers of Mandarin Chinese employ to carry out refusals and the distribution of these strategies in response to different situations and in different interlocutor relationships. Data were collected by means of a 16-item questionnaire designed to elicit responses to four types of initiating acts, namely requests, suggestions, invitations, and offers. It is found that the most frequently used strategies were reasons and alternatives. Reasons allow the refuser to justify the refusal without threatening face, while alternatives enable the refuser to avoid confrontation. Allami and Naeimi (2011) explore the frequency, shift and content of semantic formulas with regard to Iranian EFL learners' language proficiency (lower-intermediate, intermediate, and upper-intermediate), status of interlocutors (lower, equal, and higher) and types of eliciting acts (requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions) on realisation of the strategies. 30

Persian-speaking learners of English were asked to complete a DCT with 12 situations realizing the refusal of the 4 types of eliciting acts. 31 native speakers of Persian were asked to complete the same DCT in Persian for comparative analyses. Responses of 37 American native speakers in a relevant study were reviewed for evidence of common components of speech act sets to establish a set of baseline responses. It is found that there were differences in the frequency, shift and content of semantic formulas used in refusals by Iranian and American speakers when responding to a higher, an equal, and a lower status person. Native speakers of Persian displayed a nearly high level of frequency shift in their use of several semantic formulas, whereas American patterns for refusals were quite consistent regardless of status level. There was a positive correlation between L2 proficiency and pragmatic transfer in which upper-intermediate learners tended to transfer more L1 sociocultural norms to L2 and made more pragmatic errors than the lower-intermediate learners.

Some studies have explored the influence of the social and cultural factors on the speaker's selection of strategies and realisations of request. Bresnahan, Ohashi, Liu, Nebashi, and Liao (1999) examine how two groups of Chinese students in Singapore and Taiwan respond to a request made by a good friend in discourse completion questionnaires to find out what is unique and distinctive in the way that Singapore and Taiwan Chinese communicate. It is found that Singapore Chinese indicated a greater preference for complying with the request from a friend than Chinese in Taiwan whereas Taiwan Chinese used more indirect refusal strategies and embedded structures to soften the tone of voice. When Singapore participants used refusals, they were more direct and used few strategies to refuse than their Taiwanese counterparts. Al-Issa (2003) examines the sociocultural transfer and its motivating factors in refusal by Jordanian EFL learners with reference to data collected through a DCT and a semi-structured interview. Sociocultural transfer in the learners' speech is found in choice of selecting semantic formulas, length of responses, and content of semantic formulas. Learners' pride of the L1, learners' perception of the L2, and religion also possibly motivated sociocultural transfer.

### 2.3.7 Request

Some studies have focused on the performance of request regarding gender different in different languages. Garc ía (1993) examines the strategies used by male and female Peruvian Spanish speakers when participating in making a request for a service and responding to it with regard to cross-gender similarities and/or differences. It is found that when making a request Peruvian Spanish speakers showed a marked preference for the expression of deference over camaraderie, whereas when responding to a request they preferred the establishment of camaraderie with the interlocutor. However, the differences between male and female participation was not statistically significant.

Some studies have focused on the influence of the social, cultural, and contextual factors of specific situations on the speaker's selection of strategies and realisations of request. Takahashi (1996) examines the transferability of 5 Japanese indirect request strategies to corresponding English request contexts. The Japanese request strategies were found to be differentially transferable. The learners' transferability perception was influenced by their L2 proficiency; however, there was no definite tendency for a positive correlation or for a negative correlation between L1 transfer and proficiency. Rather, the transferability of each L1 request strategy seemed to be determined by the interaction between the politeness and conventionality encoded in each strategy and the degree of mitigation required in each imposition context.

Other studies have examined the instruction of linguistic and pragmatic knowledge of request in the classroom. LoCastro (1997) argues that some native speakers of English are uncomfortable with what they perceive to be the lack of linguistic politeness forms in the speech of some Japanese speakers of English and analyses the evidence of politeness in senior high school textbooks. It is found that there is a noticeable absence of linguistic politeness markers in the textbooks. Rose (1999) deals with the development of pragmatic competence in EFL with regard to requests in Cantonese and focuses on the application of pragmatic research to the teaching of EFL with reference to the nature of pragmatic competence and techniques of pragmatic consciousness-raising. Mart ínez-Flor (2009) investigates the use and function of 'please' by Spanish

EFL learners engaged in two oral spontaneous tasks eliciting request use. It is found that 'please' is one of the most frequent modifiers employed by learners when requesting, mainly used in its mitigating function, and is always placed at the end of the request move. Pedagogical invention is suggested by exposing students to film scenes, a rich source of pragmatic input in foreign language contexts.

Some have studied the similarities and differences of request performed by native speakers of different languages. Nakahama (1999) investigates the politeness behaviour of American learners of Japanese with regard to the differences between native speakers of Japanese and American learners of Japanese in high-imposition request sequences and the possible effects of the L1 in learner production. Data were elicited through open role play and retrospective verbal reports from all 5 advanced level American learners of Japanese and 5 native Japanese speakers. It is found that there are differences in the strategies of the opener and the request, which are largely attributable to the differing perceptions of politeness between the two cultures and to the transfer of the learners' L1 sociopragmatics to their L2 production. Rinnert and Kobayashi (1999) study the use of requestive hint in Japanese and native English-speaking subjects. It is found that (1) an apparent contradiction is observed between the perception of decontextualized hints as relatively impolite and the high frequency of actual use of hints in a university office setting, (2) Japanese hints are more opaque than English hints to maintain a balance between pragmatic clarity and avoiding coerciveness, which are affected by contextual and cultural variables.

Lee (2005) investigates the cross-linguistic devices of requests written by native English-speaking and native Cantonese-speaking respondents in an academic context on the basis of 197 DCTs. It is found that both groups asked in a direct sequence accompanied by a different proportion of syntactic and lexical devices to reduce directness. Native English-speaking respondents used a higher frequency and a wider range of syntactic downgraders whereas native Cantonese-speaking respondents used a higher frequency of lexical downgraders and a greater number of combinations of lexical devices. The cross-linguistic comparison of the linguistic features of Cantonese and English requests shows how the distinctive linguistic properties of each language and social factors

combine to constitute a request. Wei (2012) compares the use of the English request speech acts in native speakers of English and Chinese with reference to an oral discourse completion task and the chi-square analysis method. It is found that there are no significant differences regarding request strategies and internal modifications between Chinese and English native speakers, whereas significant differences were found between the use of alerts and external modifications. It is also found that social status and familiarity on both groups are influential. To interlocutor in higher status, both groups show significantly different usages of internal and external modifications. As to interlocutors in equal status, they performed different request strategies, alerts and external modifications. Significant differences were found in the use of alerts to interlocutors in lower social status. To familiar and unfamiliar interlocutors, both groups showed significant differences in the use of alerts and external modifications.

Abdolrezapour and Eslami-Rasekh (2012) study the possible correlation between request compliance and the use of mitigation devices based on the data collected from 4 role-play interactions and stimulated recall procedures. It is found that American requestors are comparably more certain than Iranians that the addressee would comply with their requests using fewer mitigation devices and the Americans are more influenced by the use of mitigation devices on the part of requestor than the Iranians. Tabar (2012) focuses on realisation of requests made by Iranian Persian monolingual and Turkish-Persian bilingual speakers with reference to a DCT to elicit requests in 10 different situations and a politeness questionnaire to measure the perceived politeness. It is found that female use less direct strategies in Persian and more direct strategies in Turkish in comparison with males when making requests. Moreover, the socio-economic status of the interlocutors does not affect the kind of strategy used by the two groups.

Other studies have investigated the influence of social and cultural factors on the speaker's performance of request. Li (2000) argues that the workplace is one sociocultural context where novices within a culture become socialized into new discourse systems and cultures. The ethnography case study deals with the issue of the pragmatics of higher-stakes social communications with a focus on L2 requesting behaviour. It is found that through exposure and participation in

social interactions and with the assistance of experts or more competent peers, an immigrant woman is able to internalize target language and cultural norms and develop communicative competence in ESL in the workplace that allows her to make requests more directly than she had been accustomed by adopting appropriate sociolinguistic strategies and expressions.

Though a number of researches on request use a DCT to collect respondents' linguistic realisations and strategies used, Jabber and Zhang (2013) study the speech act of request in the speech of Barak Obama president of the USA, Remarks by the President at the U.S./China Strategic and Economic Dialogue with regard to the use of 'can', 'will', and 'must'. It is found that request is the most prevalent speech act in the political nominated speech and it is most happened in an indirect way.

### 2.3.8 Thanking

A majority of research on thanking has examined the cross-cultural differences regarding the linguistics form, functions, and structures in the thanking behaviour. Barnlund and Araki (1985) explore the norms governing the management of compliments in Japan and the United States with a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire based on the findings from the interview. It is found that there were highly significant differences in the reported praising behaviour of Japanese and Americans with regard to the status of communicative partners and the attributes admired. When the Japanese were expected to prefer more indirect forms of praise they also showed greater preference for many direct forms; when Americans were expected to prefer more direct forms of praise, they showed surprising preference for indirect forms. Creese (1991) compares British English and American English at the socio-cultural level to investigate how cultural differences are reflected in speech acts including complimenting and reports on the results of a study in which Americans and Britons were interviewed to elicit their perceptions concerning speech acts differences between the two cultures. It is found that the rules for complimenting different cross-culturally. Cheng and Seto (2015) identify and compare the variety of expressions and patterns that perform the thanking speech function in different domains and contexts of situations by speakers of different

national cultural backgrounds. It is found that a great variety of formulations of thanking are realised as ‘thank you’ or ‘thanks’ together with items of particular word-classes such as an adverb phrase or a preposition.

Aston (1995) argues the use of thanking in closing conversations reflects local concerns of conversational management. Analysis of naturally occurring data from English and Italian service encounters suggests that cross-cultural differences in closings may be as much due to differences in the preferred procedures of conversational management as to differences in perceptions of the overall situation or in cultural ethos. Özdemir and Rezvani (2010) examine non-native speakers’ production of speech acts of gratitude in an EFL context, specifically how Turkish and Iranian advanced speakers of English expressed gratitude in terms of strategy use and length of speech. It is found that both Turkish and Iranian speakers of English employed most frequently similar strategies for expressing gratitude; however their length of speech was different.

Other studies have focused on the features and expressions of thanking in particular social and cultural situations, such as the syntactic structures and lexical items. Wolfson and Manes (1980) present an analysis of the speech act of complimenting in a variety of social situations in American English within the framework of ethnography of speaking. It is argued that complimenting has an underlying social function of creating or reinforcing solidarity between the speaker and the addressee. Wolfson (1981) examines the speech act of complimenting to understand the problem of language learners with reference to the semantic and syntactic structure compliments in American English as well as comparisons with complimenting behaviour in other cultures. Jung (1994) identifies the basic functions of thanking and the responses to thanking in American English are to express appreciation of benefits, to enhance rapport between interlocutors, to express dissatisfaction or discomfort indirectly in conversational opening and closing, topic changing, leave-taking and offering positive reinforcement.

Herbert (1986) examines compliment responses by undergraduate students over a three-year period and distinguishes twelve types of compliment responses, namely agreement, non-agreement, and other interpretations. Thanking is found primarily in agreement. Jacobsson (2002) investigates thanking and its associated



expressions in early modern English as well as discusses the functions of the gratitude expressions with intensifiers and 'thanking responders' regarding politeness, thanking strategies, discourse-marking and pragmatics. Koutlaki (2002) focuses on offers and expressions of thanks, the main manifestations of Persian ritual politeness and demonstrates how considerations for both aspects of face and for both interlocutors are the underlying factors in managing polite communication in Persian with reference to two recorded, casual conversations and interviews with native speakers of Persian.

Cheng (2009) describes both the linguistic realisations and the contextual functions of thanking in real-world, naturally occurring English conversations in Hong Kong from the HKCSE (prosodic). Individual instances of the thanking utterances are examined in their contexts of interaction to identify the specific functions performed. It is found that the most frequent realisations of thanking are 'thank you', 'thanks' and 'thank you very much' and there is no instance of dissatisfaction or discomfort indirectly in sarcasm. Wong (2010) focuses on the use of functional lexical chunks such as thanks and thank you and longer formulaic sequences of gratitude such as thanks a lot and thank you very much with reference to the Hong Kong component of the International Corpus of English. It is found that Hong Kong speakers of English do not employ the wide variety of thanking strategies, with thanks and thank you being the commonest forms of gratitude expression. Repetitive gratitude formulae and expressions of appreciation of the interlocutors are exceedingly rare, which suggests that the Chinese may be too reserved to express their gratitude openly and explicitly. Responses to an act of thanking are also found to be infrequent and only a few strategies are represented.

Some studies have compared and contrasted the performance of thanking by native and non-native speakers of English. Eisenstein and Bodman (1986) survey native and non-native English speakers in the United States to compare their thanking behaviours and find that thanking, typically expressed with the realisation of 'thanks' or 'thank you', is used to show gratitude, to compliment on someone, or to signal the end of a conversation. Eisenstein and Bodman (1993) study the use of expressions of gratitude by 56 native speakers of English and 67 non-native speakers with reference to 6 discourse completion tasks. It is found

that native speakers show consistent use of expressions of gratitude within specifically defined contexts, often in the form of speech acts sets. Advanced nonnative English speakers had considerable difficulty in adequately expressing gratitude in the target language at the sociopragmatic and the pragmalinguistic levels.

Some studies have focused on the influence of gender difference on the patterns, similarities, differences of thanking performed. Herbert (1990) discusses the sex-based differences in the form of English compliments and in the frequencies of various compliment responses types with reference to a corpus of 1,062 compliment events. It is found that compliments from men are generally accepted, especially by female recipients, whereas compliments from women are met with a response type other than acceptance. Holmes (1998) examines women's and men's complimenting behaviour, exploring the function of compliments not only as positively affective speech acts and exemplary positive politeness strategies but also as potentially face threatening acts with regard to a corpus of over 450 compliment exchanges. It is found that compliments may serve different functions in women's and men's interaction.

Lorenzo-Dus (2001) analyses the speech act of compliment responses in the light of a relative orientation towards positive or negative politeness with regard to a corpus of more than a thousand compliment responses by British and Spanish male and female undergraduates. It is found that there are cross-cultural and cross-gender similarities as well as differences between the four groups, for instance, Spanish males tended to upgrade compliments ironically more frequently than their female counterparts. Pishghadam and Zarei (2011) investigate the strategies 180 Iranian English learners employ for expressing gratitude in different situations with reference to an open-ended discourse completion task. It is found that Iranian learners feel obliged to show gratitude to others in every form possible for the favor they receive, and they use mainly thanking and positive feeling strategies. It is also found that female Persian speakers use gratitude strategies more often than male ones.

Some studies have explored the pedagogical implication of thanking the acquisition of linguistic elements of the target language. Rose and Ng (2001) compare the effects of inductive and deductive approaches to the teaching of

English compliments and compliment responses to university-level learners of English in Hong Kong with regard to a self-assessment questionnaire, a written discourse completion questionnaire, and a metapragmatic assessment questionnaire based on the same 18 compliment scenarios. It is found that although both types of instruction may lead to gains in pragmalinguistic proficiency, only the deductive instruction may be effective for developing sociopragmatic proficiency. Schauer and Adolphs (2006) explore the similarities and differences between a discourse completion task and corpus data and discuss potential implication for using the two in a pedagogical context. By contrasting native speakers' expressions of gratitude elicited by a discourse completion task with those found in a five-million-word corpus of spoken English, the advantages and disadvantages of both data sets with regard to the language-teaching context is examined and the results suggest that a combined use of both instruments might aid the teaching of formulaic sequences in the classroom.

### 2.3.9 Summary

A review of the research studies conducted over the past few decades has revealed a wide variety of focuses and concerns regarding speech acts in and across different languages, situation, and cultures. Some studies have examined the features and functions of certain speech acts in different languages and cultures. Some have explored the strategies and linguistic realisations of performing certain speech acts in specific social and cultural situations. Some have examined the influence of the social, cultural, and contextual factors on the speaker's selection of strategies and realisations. Some have investigated the similarities and differences between native and non-native speakers of English or between male and female in the performance of certain speech acts. Some have explored the pedagogical implications of the linguistic and pragmatic knowledge of speech acts with focuses on the design of learning and teaching material and activities (cf. Cheng & Ching, 2015). In short, previous studies on different speech acts such as advice, apology, opinion, refusal, or request, have investigated a range of speech events with specific objectives in different contexts of intracultural, intercultural, and cross-cultural communications; however, a majority of these studies are not grounded in naturally occurring

spoken data with prosodic transcription and studied in the context of business communication.

## **2.4 Empirical genre studies in business communication**

Since the 1990s, genre analysis in the field of discourse and communication studies has become more important among academics (Bhatia, 1996). One orientation to genre theory is ‘to develop a grounded description of language uses in professional and academic settings’ (ibid., p.46; cf. Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993). Not only the communicative purposes but also the structural features together with particular practice and strategies are considered to be relevant factors for defining genre (Handford, 2007; Koester, 2010). The main concern of this orientation is to apply genre analysis to specialist language teaching and learning and to focus on consistency of communicative purposes that control both lexicogrammatical and discursive choices (Bhatia, 1993, 1996; cf. Scollon, Scollon, and Jones, 2012).

Business communication is a domain, among the others such as education, healthcare, social welfare, media, etc., in the context of professional and workplace communication (e.g. Evans, 2010; Keyton et al., 2013; Coupland, 2003, 2014[2000]; Lam, Cheng, & Kong, 2014). The analysis of spoken and written workplace discourse has grown considerably in the last decade (Koester, 2006, 2010; Holmes, 2009; Svennevig, 2012a). A number of research studies have been done in some of the contexts found in the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic). Most of these studies take a conversation analysis approach or a sociolinguistics approach to analyse the interaction in the context of intracultural or intercultural business communication. However, there is in general a lack of speech act studies in business communication with focuses on the annotation of speech act, the frequency and co-occurrence of speech acts, or the linguistic realisation of a particular speech act in different genres of business communication. The following review of selected genre studies in business communication aims to show the different objectives and approaches in genre analysis on the one hand and the lack of speech act studies related to the different genres on the other. The lack leads to a research gap regarding the aforesaid focuses.

### 2.4.1 Meetings

Few studies have focused on the influence of the different social and cultural factors on the speaker's selection of strategies and realisations of speech acts in meetings. For example, Bilbow (1997), based on a corpus of naturally occurring meetings audio- and video-recorded at the airline, investigates and analyses the spoken discourse of Chinese and Western members of staff to realise certain directive speech acts (request, commands, and suggestions) in a series of multi-party managerial-level cross-cultural business meetings at a large Hong Kong-based airline. A model of discourse with the concept of impression management is proposed to explain how speakers project certain impressions of themselves to others and how hearers attribute characteristics to speakers on the basis of their discourse regardless of speaker ethnicity or situational difference. It is suggested that the attribution process is affected by the cultural background of both speakers and hearers. The 'discordant' attributions may lead to the reinforcement of negative person-perceptions which may result in distorted communication. Another study of Bilbow (2002) focuses on the use of commissive speech acts in business meetings involving participants from different cultural groups at a large multinational airline corporation in Hong Kong. It has analysed the lexicogrammatical realisation of commissive speech acts in the corpus and concluded that participants' cultural predispositions and meeting-type appear to significantly affect how and when commissive speech acts are used in business meetings in the corpus by different groups.

Asmuß and Oshima (2012) examine one specific recurring feature of meetings regarding the ongoing negotiation of roles at meetings, namely the act of proposing future action. Based on microanalysis of video recordings or two-party strategy meetings, it is found that participants orient to at least two aspects when making proposals, which are the acceptance or rejection of the proposal and questions of entitlement.

Few studies have examined the functions and expressions of discourse markers in meetings. Based on 6-hour video recorded data from business meetings at a company in a German city, Barske (2009) presents a systematic analysis of the interactional use of the particle 'ok' in the institutional setting of

German business meetings. The conversation analytic analysis is focused on how participants co-construct social roles for employing different uses of free-standing 'ok' to mark acknowledgement, understanding, or agreement. It is found that free-standing 'ok' with both averted and maintained eye gaze represent instances that related to the accomplishment of institutional goals such as running a meeting, acknowledging the receipt of contributions, or documenting the information gathered.

A range of issues related to the structures of meetings have been observed in other studies. For example, some have attempted to investigate the negotiation process and order regarding organisational conflict of interest in meetings in different languages and cultures (e.g. Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1997; Bennington, Shelter, & Shaw, 2003; Poncici, 2004) whereas some have investigated the structural stages and the discursive practices of meetings in different languages and cultures (e.g. Handford, 2007, 2010). Others have investigated turn transition, turn-taking system, and turn management (e.g. Ford & Stickle, 2012; Markaki & Mondada, 2012; Nielsen, 2013), or topic development (Svennevig, 2012b) in meetings.

Other studies have focused on the impact of contextual factors, such as language, culture, leadership style, or power, on meetings. Some have explored the influence of different languages and cultures on the business relationship (e.g. Poncici, 2002, 2003). Some have studied the effectiveness of leadership styles in dealing with conflicts in meetings (Holmes & Marra, 2004) and the establishment of team identity (Djordjilovic, 2012). Some have observed how the differences in power between the subordinates and superiors will influence the decision-making practices or organisational goals and values in meetings (e.g. Clifton, 2009; Nielsen, 2009). Clifton (2009) uses naturally occurring data with a fine-grained conversation analysis to look into the taxonomies of influence in making decisions in meetings. The findings show that though decision making is largely bound to the chairperson, other participants can negotiate and influence the decision-making process.

Some have focused on the pedagogical implication of the contents and skills in meeting and investigated the design of textbook material that develops meeting-related skills for language learners (Warren, 2014).

#### 2.4.2. Telephone calls and conference calls

Teleconferencing became common in the 1970s and led to an increase on the topic (Halbe, 2012). More recently, some studies have focused on the forms and functions of telephone calls in different languages and cultures with corpus linguistic methods. For example, Friginal (2009) explores a large-scale corpus representing the typical kinds of interactions and communicative tasks in outsourced call centres located in the Philippines and serving American customers. The study aims at conducting a corpus-based register comparison between outsourced call centre interactions, face-to-face American conversations, and spontaneous telephone exchanges and examines the dynamics of cross-cultural communication between Filipino call centre agents and American callers, as well as other demographic groups of participants in outsourced call centre transactions, such as gender of speakers, agents' experience and performance, and types of transactional tasks. The research design relies on a number of analytical approaches, including corpus linguistics and discourse analysis, and combines quantitative and qualitative examination of linguistic data in the investigation of the frequency distribution and functional characteristics of a range of lexical/syntactic features of outsourced call centre discourse.

Other studies have examined the structure, turn-taking strategies, and topic management of telephone and conference calls with conversation analysis techniques between or among native speakers of different languages based on naturally occurring data (e.g. Bowles, 2006; Bolden, 2008; Pallotti & Varcasia, 2008; Markman, 2009). Bowles (2006) adopts conversation analysis to investigate the telephone opening sequence regarding negotiation of a request. Some have focused on the differences between telephone conference calls and face-to-face meetings regarding, for example, turn takings, overlaps and back channels (e.g. Halbe, 2009, 2012). Halbe (2012) defines conference calls as multiparty meetings over the phone and have a similar structure to face-to-face meetings, which is influenced by the role of the chair, the differences in rank, and the task focus of meetings. It is found that, for example, telephone calls tend more toward the use of negative politeness strategies, fewer overlaps, or fewer turns.

Genre analysis has been adopted to examine telephone calls functionally for their generic structure and linguistic features (e.g. Pryor & Woodward-Kron, 2014). Pryor & Woodward-Kron (2014) have identified a generic structure of nine stages for the effective calls and discussed the implications for English for Medical Purposes course design.

#### 2.4.3 Informal office talks

Studies have examined the instruction of conversational skills and grammatical structure of naturally occurring workplace casual conversation for second-language learners to develop their listening and speaking skills (e.g. Slade & Gardner, 1993; de Silva Joyce & Slade, 2000). These studies highlight the pedagogical implication of the structure of informal conversation. Some have adopted conversation analytic approach to investigate the management of small talk or informal interactions such as topic transitions or move systems and its connection with interpersonal relations in business negotiations (e.g. Fay, 2011; Yang, 2012; Mak & Chui, 2013; Morris-Adam, 2014). Fay (2011) looks into the kinds of messages appeared in the informal communication of co-located employees and identified key themes of the informal workplace interactions. Some have explored the use of vague language in informal talks across a variety of office environments in Western cultural contexts (Koester, 2007). Some have compared the patterns of informal interaction of native speakers with non-native speakers of English and studied the social and cultural reasons for low motivation for cross-language interaction (Yuan et al., 2013).

#### 2.4.4 Service encounters

Politeness has been a recurring theme in the study of service encounters. Some have employed conversation analytic approach to investigate the similarities and differences in polite behaviour or politeness strategies in service encounters across different languages and cultures in a particular culture, or proposed a context-specific model to examine the politeness behaviour in service encounters in a particular culture (e.g. Kong, 1998; Traverso, 2006; Liu, 2009; Varcasia, 2013; Mortensen & Hazel, 2014). On the contrary, some focus on



impoliteness in service encounters and explore how impoliteness is perceived by counter service staff with an ethnographic approach (e.g. Fauzi et al., 2014). The influence of linguistic, cultural, contextual factors or the strategies employed in service encounters is another focus. Some have looked into the sequential, contextual, and linguistic features of the accomplishment of service activities or encounters in institutionally relevant ways or in cross-cultural and cross-linguistic contexts (e.g. Kidwell, 2000; Solon, 2013), whereas some have focused on the influence of the social, cultural, and contextual factors on the speaker's use of specific rapport-building strategies in intercultural service encounters (Ryoo, 2005). As service encounters is a genre in business context (Ventola, 2011; Solon, 2013), there are studies investigating service encounters with an approach of genre analysis. For example, Clarke & Nilsson (2008) argue that structural and functional change of patterns of communication can be used to show how a specific service is evolving within an organization and determine if business demands have changed. Other studies lay an emphasis on the pedagogical implication. Some have aimed at designing a multimedia course to train the airport ground staff to handle service encounters successfully or examined second language pragmatic development in study abroad in the context of service encounters with reference to language socialization and explicit instruction in pragmatics, which is found to have an impact on the use of an appropriate linguistic realisation for achieving a communicative function (e.g. Shively, 2011; Cutting, 2012). Cutting (2012) found that the present tense and ellipsis are often used to inform a third party. Auxiliaries such as *will* for future time are also used to inform or to offer a service to a third party. Modal verbs such as *can*, *could*, *would* are used for offers and requests. These studies imply the importance of pedagogy in the acquisition of speech acts realized in different lexicogrammatical expressions in service encounters.

#### 2.4.5 Q&A sessions

Some studies have adopted a corpus linguistic approach to analyse the face-saving management and meaning negotiation in Q&A sessions of public speeches and presentations (Cheng, 2004). Some have adopted a critical discourse analysis perspective to discuss positivity for reinforcement of mutual

trust, respect and progress; influence and power for subtle persuasion; and evasion to hedge or avoid responses to probing and inconvenient questions from the media (Bhatia, 2006). Closely related to Q&A sessions is the discussion sections or the follow-up questions in conferences. Wulff, Swales, & Keller (2009) examine discussion sessions focusing on phraseological differences between the presentations and the discussion sessions, the features and functions of chairs' utterances, and the different causes of laughter in the discussion sessions. Eriksson (2011) examines follow-up questions from press conferences to argue that these questions are not necessarily adversarial and used for challenging the speakers' answers. These studies show the importance of using naturally occurring spoken data for analysis.

#### 2.4.6 Interviews

Employment interviews have been a research topic in applied linguistics and discourse analysis (Macan, 2009; Zhang & Li, 2014). A number of issues have been investigated. Some studies have adopted conversation analytic or ethnographic approach in exploring the content and structure of interviews drawing on naturally occurring data (e.g. Campion et al., 1997; Rampton, 2007; Clifton, 2012; Van De Mieroop & Schnurr, 2014). The focus is not solely on job interview but also on other business-related interviews such as performance appraisal interviews. Clifton (2012) carries out a fine-grained analysis on face-threatening activities in performance appraisal interviews, looking into the ways the appraiser and the appraisee perform jointly to save face and to maintain a smooth working relationship. In line with Clifton's context, Van De Mieroop & Schnurr (2014) also investigates performance appraisal interview but with a focus on the leadership activities of gate-keeping of selecting and putting information down on paper in the form of notes. Their studies highlight the importance of drawing on naturally occurring spoken data for an in-depth qualitative analysis of a particular focus in business interview. Some have investigated the structures, techniques and strategies for interviewers and interviewees to have effective interviews and the possible pedagogical implications of the discoursal features of job interview (e.g., Macan, 2009; Canavor & Meirowitz, 2010; Jiang, 2013). Jiang (2013) analyses a video clip of a

job interview based on appraisal system and generic structure as well as Systemic Functional Linguistics and politeness theory. It is found that attitudinal evaluation and generic structure help build solidarity between the interviewer and the interviewee. Moreover, both of them take into account positive politeness considerations and cooperative principle.

#### 2.4.7 Summary

The research focuses and methodologies have been employed by these empirical studies are diverse. The study of different forms and functions of particular speech acts, usually limited to one speech act, in different genres is conducted with reference to social, cultural, contextual, and linguistic factors. The generic structure of and the communicative strategies used in different genres have also been investigated. Research approaches, including ethnography, genre analysis and conversation analysis, have been employed in these studies. Many of these empirical genre studies in business have based their investigations on naturally occurring data. They have adopted the methodology of conversation analysis or ethnography that takes a fine-grained approach to examine the sequences of the utterances in different genres. To date, no research has examined and compared speech acts used by speakers in different business genres. Neither has any research been conducted based on an annotated corpus of speech acts.

### **2.5 Corpus and speech act annotation**

With the advancement of information and communication technology (ICT), researchers have been developing software to identify speech acts from corpus data in an automated way and to propose different classification of speech acts (e.g. Anderson et al., 1991; Stiles, 1992; Allen & Core, 1997; Stolcke et al., 2000; Leech & Weisser, 2003; Rayson, 2009). The Human Communication Research Centre (HCRC) Map Task Corpus (Anderson et al., 1991) is a corpus of unscripted, task-oriented dialogues which has been designed, digitally recorded, and transcribed to support the study of spontaneous speech. The Verbal Response Modes (VRM) Annotated Utterances Corpus (Stiles, 1992) focuses on annotating speech acts in email messages and developing a universally applicable annotation

scheme for speech acts. Allen and Core (1997) develop the Dialog Act Markup in Several Layers (DAMSL) annotation scheme for communicative acts in dialog in three layers, namely Forward Communication Functions, Backward Communicative Functions, and Utterance Features. Dialogue Act Modeling (Stolcke et al., 2000) annotates speech-act-like units in spontaneous telephone conversations and examines the acquisition of an accurate automatic tagging of speech acts in a corpus. A few corpora of different domains of communication have been annotated in terms of speech acts. The Speech Act Annotation Corpus (SPAAC) (Leech & Weisser, 2003), for instance, comprises telephone task-oriented dialogues and a set of speech-act annotated dialogues used as training material of dialogue systems. Wmatrix (Rayson, 2009) is a software tool for corpus analysis and comparison with corpus annotation tools such as CLAWS (the Constituent Likelihood Automatic Word-tagging System) part-of-speech tagger and corpus linguistic methodologies such as frequency lists. Keywords method has been extended to key grammatical categories and key semantic domains.

Some programs aim at automatically identifying and classifying the real intent of the speaker in an utterance. For example, Dialogue Annotation and Research Tool (DART) is a research environment that can create automatically pragmatic annotated corpora for the user to annotate and analyse single or multiple dialogues in batch mode (Weisser, 2014). Statistical Verbal Response Modes (VRM) classifier is used to identify the literal meaning of utterances in email conversation and classify direct speech acts automatically with reference to the speech act taxonomy (Lampert, Dale, & Paris, 2006). However, none of these programs can precisely annotate the pragmatic meaning of utterances that convey the speaker's intention because the pragmatic meaning is dependent on the discourse context and background knowledge. Accordingly, at most, a computer program is capable of identifying the literal meaning of the utterances or the linguistic realisations of some obvious speech acts, or put it more directly, speech act verbs.

Corpus annotation is understood as the practice or the procedure of identifying and adding interpretative and linguistic information to an electronic corpus of selected spoken and written language data (Leech, 1997, 2005). It is

interpretative because annotation is indeed the result of human understanding of the text, which means that there is no purely objective, mechanistic ways of deciding which label or labels should be applied to a given linguistic phenomenon. The annotation of a text is also metalinguistic, which means that instead of showing what the text itself comprises, the annotation offers additional information about the language of the text (Leech, 1997).

Corpus annotation provides additional specific information to a corpus that makes it useful for research studies with particular purposes. There are different types of corpus annotation (Leech, 1993). The most widespread type of corpus annotation is known as part-of-speech (POS) tagging or grammatical tagging, which has been applied to many languages to tag and indicate the word class of the words in a text (Garside, 1987; Leech, 1997, 2005). A label or tag is associated with a word to indicate its grammatical class. Such tagging helps identify the various meanings of the words with the same spelling in a text. Other than POS tagging, there are phonetic annotation, prosodic annotation, syntactic annotation, lexical annotation, semantic annotation, discourse annotation, pragmatic annotation, and even stylistic annotation (Leech, 1997, 2005). Phonetic annotation, widespread in speech but data typically collected in laboratory situations, focuses on syllable boundaries and adds information about how a word in a spoken corpus was pronounced. Speech is annotated for details of pronunciation in a language (Gries & Berez, n.d.; Leech, 1997). Prosodic annotation, first appeared in the mid-1970s, adds information about prosodic features such as stress, pitch changes, intonation and pauses across an utterance. Important prosodically annotated corpora include the London-Lund Corpus (LLC) and the Lancaster/IBM Spoken English Corpus (SEC) (Leech, 1997). Syntactic annotation, another widespread type of corpus annotation following POS tagging, adds information about how a given sentence is parsed, in terms of syntactic analysis, into units such as phrases and clauses (Leech, 1997). Lexical annotation is a process of identifying and marking each word in a corpus with its base form. All the forms of the lemma (or the headword) will be marked as representing a particular form of that particular lemma, and can be retrieved without entering all the forms separately (Gries & Berez, n.d.). Semantic annotation adds information about the semantic fields and the semantic category of words. For example, given

the same spelling and pronunciation, the noun ‘cricket’, as a term for a sport and as a term for an insect, belongs to different semantic categories, though there is no difference in spelling or in pronunciation. Discourse annotation adds information about anaphoric links in a text. For example, to connect *them* and its antecedent *the horses* in ‘I’ll saddle *the horses* and bring *them* round’. Pragmatic annotation adds information about the kinds of speech act (or dialogue act) that occur in a spoken dialogue. For instance, the utterance ‘okay’ can be tagged as an acknowledgement, a request, an acceptance, an agreement, or a pragmatic marker initiating a new exchange (Leech, 2005; Archer et al., 2008).

Cheng et al. (2008) is a corpus-driven study of discourse intonation by means of prosodic annotation to study the communicative role of discourse intonation (Brazil, 1985, 1997) in the 0.9-million-word HKCSE (prosodic). The HKCSE (prosodic) is comprised of four sub-corpora (academic, business, conversation and public) compiled between 1997 and 2002. The HKCSE (prosodic) is a rich resource in providing a large volume of real-world data which is situated in a wide range of intercultural communicative contexts that fulfil different communicative purposes (ibid., p. 3). The HKCSE (prosodic) is the first large-scale attempt to use the categories and conventions of discourse intonation in its transcription (ibid., p. 4). The HKCSE (prosodic) consists of 900,214 words in 311 word files. The business sub-corpus is the largest (27.42%) and the academic sub-corpus is the smallest (22.97%) (ibid., p. 5). The systems of discourse intonation used for transcribing and analysing the HKCSE (prosodic) are mainly based on the descriptive framework of discourse intonation developed by Brazil (1985, 1995, 1997) (ibid., p. 11). Brazil’s (1997) discourse intonation comprises four systems of speaker choice, namely prominence, tone, key, and termination. Each has a general meaning which takes on a local meaning within a particular context (ibid., p. 14). In the present study, the corpus data set for speech act annotation is taken from the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic).

The corpus annotation work of this present study belongs to pragmatic annotation, which adds information about the speech acts as found in the utterances in the sub-corpus of business in the HKCSE (prosodic). As discussed before, the study of speech acts can be traced back to a variety of different

approaches in philosophy and linguistics in the 1960s and the 1970s (Austin, 1975; Searle, 1969, 1976; Greenbaum & Savartik, 1990; Leech, 1997; Gries & Berez, n.d.). In the 1990s, given the advancement in information and communication technology, the annotation of spoken discourse has become more important in the design of dialogue systems or programs (Weisser, 2005). These systems or programs allow a computer to interact with an individual to fulfil designated tasks, such as flight planning and booking or cooperative problem solving (ibid.). In order to be able to understand better the interaction between or among the participants in the different contexts of communication and to create dialogue corpora for training or evaluating these systems, researchers from various disciplines, such as sociology or psychology, began to work together for exchanging their ideas and investigating different approaches for speech act annotation (ibid.).

#### 2.5.1 Task-oriented annotation

The development of annotation systems can be broadly divided into four types, depending largely on the focus of speech act annotation. They are task-oriented annotation, non-task-oriented annotation, middle-ground-oriented annotation, and discourse-/conversation-oriented annotation.

The first type is task-oriented annotation. Annotation of this type is intended for tailoring the speech act categories to a specific task or domain (Leech & Weisser, 2003). Examples include the Edinburgh Map Task annotation scheme of the HCRC Map Task Corpus (Anderson et al., 1991), the Dialogue Act Modeling for Automatic Tagging and Recognition of Conversational Speech (Stolcke et al., 2000), and SPICE-Ireland (Systems of Pragmatic annotation in ICE-Ireland) Corpus (Kallen & Kirk, 2012).

The Edinburgh Map Task annotation scheme of the HCRC Map Task Corpus (Anderson et al., 1991) has a set of 128 dialogues that has been recorded, transcribed, and annotated for a wide range of behaviours, and has been released in 1992 for research purposes. The motivation for producing the Map Task Corpus was to elicit unscripted dialogues to boost the likelihood of occurrence of certain linguistic phenomena and to control some effects of context. While the dialogues are spontaneous, the corpus comprises a large, carefully controlled

elicitation exercise. The Map Task is a cooperative task involving two participants. The two speakers sit opposite one another and each has a map which the other cannot see. One speaker, as the Instruction Giver, has a route marker on the map. The other speaker, the Instruction Follower, has no route. The speakers are informed that their goal is to reproduce the Instruction Giver's route on the Instruction Follower's map. The maps are not identical and the speakers are told this explicitly at the beginning of their first session. It is, however, up to them to discover how the two maps differ (Human Communication Research Centre, n.d.).

The Dialogue Act Modeling for Automatic Tagging and Recognition of Conversational Speech (Stolcke, 2002) is a statistical approach for modelling dialogue acts in conversational speech, which refer to speech-act-like units such as statement, question, backchannel, agreement, disagreement, and apology. The model automatically detects and predicts dialogue acts based on lexical, collocational, and prosodic cues, as well as on the discourse coherence of the dialogue act sequence. A dialogue act represents the meaning of an utterance at the level of illocutionary force. A dialogue act is approximately the equivalent of the speech act of Searle (1969), or the adjacency pair part of Schegloff (1972) and Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974). Dialogue acts are a tag set that classifies utterances in accordance with a combination of pragmatic, semantic, and syntactic criteria. The 42 dialogue act labels are generated from a hand-labelled database of 1,155 conversations from the Switchboard corpus of spontaneous human-to-human telephone speech in the descending order of their frequency of occurrence in the corpus. Each conversation involved two randomly selected strangers who were talking informally about one of several self-selected topics of general interest (Stolcke et al., 2000).

In Stolcke's email reply to my enquiry about the possibility of using the system of Dialogue Act Modeling to annotate speech acts in the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic) (A. Stolcke, Nov 22, 2008, e-mail message to author), the work for modelling dialogue acts in telephone conversational speech is quite old and was done at a workshop at the John Hopkins University. The scripts and processed data are not readily accessible any more. However, the algorithms used (except for the prosodic feature extraction) are straightforward



and could be used with the SRILM (Stanford Research Institute Language Modeling Toolkit) tools and some scripting. SRILM is designed to allow both production of and experimentation with statistical language models for speech recognition and other applications. The toolkit supports creation and evaluation of a variety of language model types based on N-gram statistics and related tasks such as statistical tagging (Stolcke, 2002). Also, the raw dialogue act-labelled training data are now available from the Linguistic Data Consortium. However, Stolcke points out that dialogue-act labelling is very task-dependent; it is quite unlikely that the dialogue-act categories used by the work on that particular data would be appropriate for a new corpus unless it is very similar to Switchboard in character (A. Stolcke, Nov 22, 2008, e-mail message to author).

The SPICE-Ireland corpus is a development from the ICE-Ireland (International Corpus of English) project. The spoken texts in the ICE-Ireland are annotated to display aspects of pragmatics, discourse, and prosody. SPICE-Ireland corpus encodes the speech act status of each utterance in the corpus, using a system that is developed from Searle (1969, 1976) on five types of speech acts, namely representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. The reason for adopting Searle's classification is that it provides the SPICE-Ireland team a realistic basis on which to build a system of pragmatic annotation that aims at offering an exhaustive and explicit categorization of the material in the SPICE-Ireland corpus. In case of speech act ambiguity, the most likely interpretation within the context of the conversation as a whole will be annotated. The usual scope of marking for speech acts is the sentence or clause. In all cases, decisions on annotation are made by an analysis of speech in context, and not by any automatic process based on specific words or phrases (Kallen & Kirk, 2012).

### 2.5.2 Non-task-oriented annotation

The second type is non-task-oriented annotation. Annotation of this type is intended for assigning speech acts categories to a more general coverage of dialogue (Leech & Weisser, 2003). Examples include Verbal Response Modes (VRM) Annotated Utterances Corpus (Stiles, 1992) and the classification scheme for the manual annotation of speech acts in a corpus of business emails, in the

context of the PROBE project (PRagmatics of Business English) (de Felice, Darby, Fisher, & Peplow, 2013).

VRM Annotated Utterances Corpus aims at detecting and connecting speech acts among email messages. Email utterances are tagged to indicate some of their dialogic functions. The VRM taxonomy of speech acts is constructed from cross-cutting principles of classification to ensure universal applicability across any domains of discourse. The taxonomy categorizes utterances on two dimensions, namely ‘literal meaning’ (with respect to the ‘grammatical form’) and ‘pragmatic meaning’ (with respect to the ‘communicative intent’) (Stiles 1992, p.16). Each utterance is coded twice for its literal meaning and pragmatic meaning respectively. The pragmatic meaning conveys the speaker’s actual intention, and such meaning is often hidden or highly dependent on discourse context and backchannel knowledge. The final corpus contained 1,368 annotated utterances from 14 dialogues and several sets of isolated utterances (Leech et al., 1997; Lampert et al., 2006). Though VRM research first grew from studying therapist intervention in psychotherapy, it has been applied to different discourse domains, such as American Presidential speeches, doctor-patient interactions, courtroom interrogations, business negotiations, persuasive discourse, and television commercials (Stiles, 1992). Given its clearly defined, domain-independent, and systematic principles of classification, VRM also has wide applicability. In principle, all utterances can be meaningfully classified with exactly one VRM category. However, one shortcoming in VRM is that the utterances are classified with intra-utterance features only, thus information about the discourse context cannot be identified and encoded, and prediction of pragmatic meaning cannot be tackled (Lampert et al., 2006).

According to Stiles’ email reply to my enquiry about the possibility of having the access to the annotation program of VRM taxonomy (W. B. Stiles, Nov 26, 2008, e-mail message to author), the VRM taxonomy distinguishes form codes from intent codes. As form codes are based mostly on grammatical features, Lampert’s program was able to code these in reasonably good agreement with human coders. However, VRM intent codes are harder, since they must be judged from context and often require some empathy with the speaker as well as familiarity with colloquial expressions. It implies that

automatic coding in Lampert's program is limited to categorizing utterances that have particular grammatical features. The real intent of the utterance will only be able to decide by referring to the coder's understanding of the context and interpretation of what the speaker meant.

The PROBE project (de Felice et al., 2013) aims to bring together corpus, computational, and theoretical linguistics by drawing on the insights made available by the annotated corpus of business email communication. Though the classification scheme of the speech act is based on workplace emails, it is highlighted that the methodological framework is intentionally domain-neutral and does not use categories specific to workplace written communication. The classification scheme, consisting of seven broad categories, is aligned to Searle's directives, commissives, expressive, and representatives. The seven categories are 'direct request', 'question-request', 'open question', 'first person commitment', 'first person expression of feeling', 'first person other', and 'other statements (second and third person)' (de Felice et al., 2013, p.79). The product is a manually speech act annotated corpus of email data consisting of approximately 20,700 utterances (263,100 words) from the EnronSent email corpus (Styler, 2011, as cited in de Rachele et al., 2013).

### 2.5.3 Middle-ground-oriented annotation

The third type is a middle-ground-oriented annotation. Annotation of this type is intended for embracing speech act categories for different types of dialogue within the general scope of a particular context (Leech & Weisser, 2003). Examples include the DAMSL annotation scheme (Allen & Core, 1997) and the SPAAC for Dialogue Systems (Leech & Weisser, 2003).

The DAMSL annotation scheme is an outcome of three workshops organized by the Multiparty Discourse Group at the Discourse Resource Initiative (DRI) between 1996 and 1998. This scheme was developed primarily for two-agent task-oriented dialogs, in which the participants collaborate to solve some problem. In this scheme, a dialog is defined as a spoken, typed or written interaction in natural language between two or among more agents. It is divided into units called turns, in which a single speaker has temporary control of the dialog and speaks/writes for some period of time. Within a turn, the speaker may

produce several spoken or typed utterance units. While there are many possible ways to define utterances, the notion of utterance is based on an analysis of the intentions of the speaker (the speech act). For each utterance, the annotation involves making choices along several dimensions, each one describing a different orthogonal aspect of each utterance unit. For example, words of overlapping speech are marked with numbered square brackets with the pausing (Allen & Core, 1997). The ‘several layers’ refer to four main categories of the utterance tags that indicate a particular aspect of the utterance unit and that summarize the intentions of the speaker as well as the content of the utterance (ibid.): (1) Communicative Status – it records whether the utterance is intelligible and whether it was successfully completed; (2) Information Level – it provides information about the semantic content of the utterance; (3) Forward Looking Function – it depicts how the current utterance constrains the future beliefs and actions of the participants, and affects the discourse by, for instance, asking a question or making an offer; (4) Backward Looking Function – it describes how the current utterance relates to the previous discourse by, for instance, answering a question or accepting an offer (ibid.; Weisser, 2005).

The SPAAC project annotates a range of telephone task-oriented dialogues between two individuals (Leech & Weisser, 2003). The main aim of the project was to produce a corpus of pragmatically annotated dialogues that may be used as training data for dialogue systems of telephone services. The secondary aims were to develop a set of generic speech-act labels and to determine other generic elements. The analysis of data was done automatically as far as possible to process a large number of dialogues reliably and efficiently. The data consisted of Virgin Trainline bookings and timetable enquiries, more varied information seeking dialogues from a telecommunications company and some spoken dialogues from the British National Corpus (BNC) (Weisser, 2002).

The main procedures enabled by the Speech Act Annotation Corpus tool (SPAACy) comprised four steps. First, the transcribed text files of telephone dialogues are automatically converted to XML mark-up. Second, the XML mark-up dialogues or individual speakers turns are segmented interactively into smaller functional units or utterance-units, called C-units. Third, speech-act categories as well as other categories about form, polarity, topic, and mode are

assigned automatically. Fourth, speech-act tags are corrected and post-edited manually. The output of SPAACy is then manually post-edited to achieve consistency.

The result was that 1,219 telephone task-oriented dialogues were annotated, amounting to over 182,300 words (Leech & Weisser, 2003). Leech and Weisser (2014) recently published another scheme called Speech Act Annotated Dialogue (SPAADIA) that has been applied to the British Telecom OASIS Corpus of 1,200 telephone dialogues and to the Trainline Corpus of 35 longer telephone dialogues. The dialogues annotated are task-oriented service dialogues in which there are two participants in most dialogues and three participants in some dialogues. Weisser (2014) recently revised SPAACy and produced DART, which is able to analyse dialogue data in batch mode, rather than individually as in SPAACy (Weisser, 2004). It also serves as an interface to editing all configuration files for analysis, providing options for manual pre-processing in a built-in editor, running concordances on analysed files, and analysing domain-specific vocabulary for compiling new dictionaries.

According to Weisser's email reply to my enquiry about the possibility of using SPAACy and DART to annotate speech acts in the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic) (M. Weisser, Nov 27, 2008, e-mail message to author), SPAACy is currently no longer actively developed, as it has been completely superseded by DART, which performs many more different functions in batch mode. With DART, it is now possible to annotate hundreds of files within a very short period of time. DART has not been released as open source because its architecture forms the core of his thesis to be published in 2009 and the coding is not 'clean enough' (M. Weisser, Nov 27, 2008, e-mail message to author) for users to understand easily as well as to configure some of the main analysis parts.

#### 2.5.4 Discourse-oriented/conversation-oriented annotation

Annotation of this type is intended for tagging speech act categories for different types of conversation. Examples include Stenström's (1994) three categories of acts and Tsui's (1994) taxonomy of discourse acts.

The discussion of Stenström's (1994) categories of acts is based on naturally occurring spoken interaction as manifested in the London-Lund Corpus (LLC) of

English conversation was derived from two projects. The first is the Survey of English Usage (SEU) at University College London launched in 1959 by Randolph Quirk, who was succeeded as Director in 1983 by Sidney Greenbaum. The second project is the Survey of Spoken English (SSE), which was started by Jan Svartvik at Lund University in 1975 as a sister project of the London Survey (Greenbaum & Svartvik, 1990, p.11). The SEU corpus contains 200 samples or 'texts', each consisting of 5,000 words, for a total of one million words. The texts were collected over the last 30 years, half taken from spoken English and half from written English. The spoken English texts comprise both dialogue and monologue. The written English texts include not only printed and manuscript material but also examples of English read aloud, as in broadcast news and scripted speeches (Greenbaum & Svartvik, 1990, pp. 11-12). The complete LLC consists of 100 spoken texts, out of which 87 texts totalling some 435,000 words are from the original version of LLC while 13 texts are from SEU corpus (Greenbaum & Svartvik, 1990, p. 14). The spoken texts are spontaneous texts among educated British speakers.

Based on Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) model of classroom interaction, Stenström (1994) describes spoken interaction in the form of casual conversation in terms of five hierarchical levels, which are the transaction, the exchange, the turn, the move, and the act. Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) model consists of five ranks, which are the lesson (the highest unit in the rank), transactions, exchanges, moves, and acts (the lowest unit). A lesson has a structure, which is expressed in terms of exchanges, and boundaries, which are typically marked by 'OK', 'well', 'right', 'now', and 'good' (Coulthard, 1985, p. 123). The structure of transactions begins and ends with a 'boundary exchange', which consists of a frame and/or a focus, followed by a succession of 'informing', 'directing', or 'eliciting' exchanges (ibid., p. 124). The structure of exchanges is expressed in terms of 'moves' (ibid., p. 124). The structure of moves is expressed in terms of 'acts', the status and relationship of moves and acts is similar to that of words and morphemes in grammar (ibid., p. 125). The understanding of act is different from Austin's (1975) illocutionary acts and Searle's (1969) speech acts; acts are defined primarily by their interactive function in an utterance (Coulthard, 1985, p.126).

In Stenström's (1994) study, each hierarchical level consists of one or more units from the following hierarchy. A conversation is formed by one or more transactions. A transaction deals with one single topic with one or more exchanges of interactive units. An exchange consists of at least two turns produced by two different speakers. A turn is what the current speaker says before the next speaker takes over. In each turn there are moves that show how the speakers interact, for example, by initiating and responding. In a move, there are acts to show what the speakers do or mean in each move. An act is the smallest interactive unit to signal what the speaker's intention and its act in the hierarchy constitutes the lowest rank.

Stenström's (1994) classifies acts in three different categories: 33 primary acts, 7 secondary acts, and 10 complementary acts. Primary acts refer to acts that 'can realise moves on their own' (ibid., p. 38). Secondary acts are acts that 'accompany and sometimes replace the primary acts' (ibid., p. 38). Complementary acts 'accompany but rarely replace primary acts' (ibid., p. 39). In the category of primary acts, <question> is an umbrella term for <identification question>, <polarity question> and <confirmation question>; <request> is an umbrella term for <action request> and <permission request>; <answer> is an umbrella term for <comply>, <imply>, <supply>, <evade> and <disclaim> (ibid., p. 40).

The following example from Stenström (1994) illustrates the linguistic realisations of the three categories of acts. Example [68] (ibid., p. 39) consists of two turns (what A says and what B says):

[68] A: have a glass of SHÉRRY#	[Initiate<offer>]
B: ÖH#	[Response<uptake>]
that's N ÍCE of you#	<accept>
as I'm not DR ÍMING#	<justify>]
	(1.2:844-47)

A's turn consists of an initiating move that is made up of one primary act <offer>. B's turn also consists of one move, which is made up of three acts: the complementary act <uptake>, the primary act <accept>, and the secondary act

<justify>. The complementary act <uptake>  $\tilde{O}H\#$  indicates B ‘receives the message and leads on’ but  $\tilde{O}H\#$  itself ‘cannot realise the move on its own’ (A.-B. Stenström, Nov 20, 2008, e-mail message to author). The primary act <accept> *that's NICE of you#* can ‘realise the Response Move on its own without the other two acts’ (ibid.). Stenström explains that ‘an act realised by a word like *OH* could very well realise a primary act in a different type of exchange’ (ibid.). For instance,

- A: I went to the THÉÂTRE last night# [Initiate<inform>]  
B:  $\tilde{O}H\#$  [Response<acknowledge>] (ibid.)

As Stenström (1994) points out:

The speaker does not always mean what s/he literally says, and the listener cannot always identify the speaker’s intention by the form of the utterance. Function is not simply a matter of surface structure but a matter of WHEN and WHERE something is uttered, by WHOM and for WHAT PURPOSE.  
(Stenström, 1994, p. 43)

It means that to understand the real intent or the speech act of an utterance, not only its grammatical features but also the context in which the utterance is realised should be taken into account. However, ‘misinterpretations are rare ... since the speaker’s intention generally follows from the actual speech situation’ (ibid., p. 43). Nevertheless, it is still possible that the existence of personal bias and misjudgement would lead to an inaccurate interpretation of speech acts (cf. de Felice et al., 2013).

Tsui (1991, 1994) also investigates the performance of speech acts and propose a taxonomy of speech acts. It is argued that utterances are ‘characterizable in terms of speech act categories’ and it is possible ‘to delimit a set of speech act types’ (Tsui, 1991, p. 229). Most utterances have the potential of realizing more than one illocutionary act, or different illocutionary acts with the same linguistic realisation. The same utterance can realise an ‘offer’ or a ‘question’ in different contexts of situation. However, in a given context, the utterance can only perform one speech act. Speech act category can be distinguished by two criteria. The first is the location of an utterance in the discourse structure (Tsui, 1991). Based on Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), an



obligatory head act carrying the illocutionary force of the entire move is found in an Initiating Move, a Responding Move, and a Follow-up Move of an exchange. Tsui (1991) argues that the structural location of an utterance can be used to decide which act is realised, even when the utterance has the same linguistic realisation. The second is the kind of response prospected by the utterance. Given the same linguistic realisation of an utterance, the difference between the speech act of 'question' and the speech act of 'offer' lies in the response it prospects. The former prospects only a verbal response, whereas the latter prospects a verbal response possibly with a non-verbal action.

Based on these two criteria, Tsui (1994) proposes a taxonomy of acts based on data collected from real-world, naturally occurring telephone conversations and face-to-face conversations from Birmingham Collection of English Texts as well as field notes taken from real-life communication. The structural location criterion establishes three primary classes of acts, which are Initiating Acts, Responding Acts, and Follow-up Acts. Examples of Initiating Acts include 'request', 'offer', 'invite', 'inform', and 'direct'. Examples of Responding Acts include 'comply', 'accept', 'reply', and 'decline'. Examples of Follow-up Acts include 'evaluate' and 'acknowledge' (Tsui, 1991, pp. 240-241).

In Initiating Acts, there are four subclasses, namely 'requestive', 'elicitation', 'directive', and 'informative' (Tsui, 1991, p. 243). For 'requestive' and 'directive', some non-verbal action is expected, while for 'elicitation' and 'informative', no non-verbal action is expected, and only a verbal response will be solicited (Tsui, 1994, pp. 52-56).

In Responding Acts, there are three subclasses, namely 'positive responding acts', 'negative responding acts', and 'temporization' (Tsui, 1994, pp. 58-59). Positive responding acts are understood as 'preferred' responding utterances with less linguistic material and are given without any delay, whereas negative responding acts are understood as 'dispreferred' responding utterances with more linguistic material and are given with delay (Schegloff et al., 1977, p. 362; as cited in Tsui, 1994, p. 58). Temporization is a 'dispreferred' response used to postpone the decision making, containing linguistic features of delay such as fillers and particles (Tsui, 1994, p. 59).

In Follow-up Acts, there are three subclasses, namely 'endorsement', 'concession', and 'acknowledgement' (Tsui, 1994, pp. 59-61, pp. 200-211). Linguistic realisations of endorsement, such as 'good', 'great' or 'wonderful', are follow-up responses to positive responding acts (ibid., p. 59, p.200). It can also be realised by 'an appreciation or expression of indebtedness for a service rendered, an enthusiastic acceptance of the positive outcome, and agreement with or upgrading of the preceding agreement, or a comment on the information supplied' (ibid., p. 212). Concessions, which aim at minimizing the face damage done, are follow-up responses to negative responding acts. A concession is typically realised by 'minimizing the face-threatening effect' with linguistic realisations like 'well' or 'that's too bad' (ibid., p. 205). Acknowledgements are follow-up responses to temporization, where the addressee has the obligation to get back to the speaker's request later. An acknowledgement is typically realised by linguistic realisations like 'okay', 'right', 'alright', 'yeah', or a repetition of the preceding response spoken in a low key (ibid., p. 205). Overall, a positive response is found to prospect 'either an endorsement or an acknowledgement'; a negative response is found to prospect 'either a concession or an acknowledgement'; a temporization is found to prospect 'only an acknowledgement' (ibid., p. 212).

Apart from the three subclasses of follow-up acts, Tsui (1991) identifies a further optional subclass of follow-up act, which functions as a 'turn-passing' signal, indicating that the addressee has no more to say and would like to relinquish the floor of speaking. 'Turn-passing' act is referred to 'a second follow-up move or follow-up moves subsequent to a first follow-up move', typically realised by linguistic realisations like 'yeah', 'okay', or 'alright' (ibid., p. 210). It occurs when a speaker does not want to take the floor; he/she may indicate the intention of relinquishing the floor to another speaker by producing a further follow-up move after the original follow-up move.

#### 2.5.5 Annotation for the present study

The speech act classification schemes that focus on task-oriented annotation, non-task-oriented annotation, middle-ground-oriented annotation, and discourse-/conversation-oriented annotation are found to be inappropriate for the

present study in certain aspects. For example, the corpus data used for annotation in the previous studies are either task-oriented or domain-specific. The applicability of the speech act categories would be restrictive to the specific domains from which the categories are generated. The variety of annotation frameworks or schemes shows that there is no annotation framework or scheme available, as each research study has specific focuses and objectives (cf. de Felice et al., 2013). The different categories proposed in different classification schemes are relevant but will not be completely suitable for the annotation task of the present study.

As the schemes discussed above do not fully respond to the specific requirements of the present study on the annotation of speech acts in the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic), the first task of the current study is to devise a viable classification scheme of speech act categories that is relevant to the needs of the present study and easy for implementation. With reference to the research focuses and given the size of the business sub-corpus, it is necessary to have a relatively detailed, rather than a broad, classification scheme that can generate a richer annotated corpus to identify a wide range of actions such as informing, opining, acknowledging, questioning, answering, etc. However, a very detailed classification has proved time-consuming and labour-intensive for the annotation task, while also increasing the potential for errors and confusion. Hence, a large amount of manual disambiguation and repetitive error checking have been involved (cf. de Felice et al., 2013).

After the examination of different classification schemes above, the present classification scheme used for the annotation of speech acts in this study is compiled with reference to four of the above speech acts annotation studies that are sufficiently general and related to traditional speech act categories, namely Stenström (1994), Tsui (1994), Stolcke et al. (2000), Leech and Weisser (2003) (See 3.3.1).

In the process of speech act annotation, it is important that a particular communicative function assigned to the utterance is as accurately as possible (Bhatia, 1993, 1996); proper and accurate segmentation of utterances and determination of utterance boundaries are an essential in preparing data for corpus analysis (Archer et al., 2008, p. 63; Bunt, 2009; Geertzen, Petukhova, &

Bunt, 2007). The segmentation of a conversation into utterances has the advantage of having more fine-grained and precise annotation as each utterance has distinctive communicative function (Bunt, 2009). The second task is to carry out a proper segmentation of the data.

To segment transcribed data into distinguishable utterances for further analysis, four crucial factors should be taken into account, namely syntax, pragmatic function, prosody, and pauses (Dhillon, Bhaget, Carvey, & Shriberg, 2004). In terms of syntax, utterance boundaries are derived on a phrasal level. In terms of pragmatic function, utterance boundaries are derived from the unique functions as shown within the conversation. In terms of prosody, utterance boundaries are derived from the aural cues. In terms of pauses, utterance boundaries are derived from the appearance of a lengthy pause.

The third task of the study is to perform an accurate annotation of speech act. Bunt (2010) discusses three annotation guidelines that are crucial to speech act annotation, which are 'Do as an addressee would do', 'Think functionally, not formally', and 'Be specific'. These guidelines are derived from the understanding that speech act annotation is mainly concerned about the correct indication of the intention that the speakers have and the purposes that the speakers wish to achieve when they are involved in the interpretation of others' communicative behaviour.

The first guideline 'Do as an addressee would do' reminds the annotator of putting himself in the position of the participant(s) at whom the utterance was addressed and imagine what the speaker was trying to achieve when selecting an annotation tag to mark the utterance. During the process of annotation, the following two questions are used to guide the researcher to assign or to tag a speech act for each utterance, namely 'What are the speaker's purpose in using the utterance?' and 'Why does the speaker say what he/she says?'. The researcher has attempted to put himself into the roles of different speakers and understand to his best the intention of each speaker when he/she makes an utterance with reference to the nature and background of the conversation, the syntactic structure of the utterance, the audio-recording and the prosodic transcription of the corpus data. By using all the information available, the researcher would normally be able to interpret the speaker's communicative function promptly and

assign the best possible speech act to the utterance.

The second guideline is ‘Think functionally, not formally’. As discussed before, though the linguistic realisation or the lexicogrammatical form of an utterance can provide important clues to the researcher to choose a most appropriate tag, these clues alone would be misleading. It reminds the researcher of the importance of looking for the real function of an utterance, without regard to its linguistic form and clue alone; what the speaker intentionally means is more essential than what he verbally says. For example, propositional questions, usually expressed by interrogatives, are questions that the speaker would like to know if a certain statement is true or false, for example, ‘Did you purchase anything from the mini-bar?’ (HKCSE, B001). Most propositional questions carry this function; however, some carry another function such as a confirmation, for example, ‘Are you going to handle the account by your visa card?’ (HKCSE, B001) or a query, for example, ‘Didn’t you have that (the credit card)?’ (HKCSE, B004).

The third guideline is ‘Be specific’. Given a selection of over 60 speech acts representing different communicative functions in the taxonomy, the process of annotation needs to be as specific as possible. In case of possible ambiguity, the researcher is reminded of understanding the speaker’s intended meaning as accurately as possible and selecting the most specific communicative functions to tag an utterance. This can in principle be done by referring to information including context shared by the speaker and the listener as well as the prosody of the utterance that can alter the communicative function without changing the linguistic realisation of an utterance. For example, the repetition of the same utterance ‘the inspection this afternoon’ (HKCSE, B016) by two different speakers consecutively are tagged with two different speech acts, namely <check> and <confirm> respectively based on the contextual and prosodic information.

## **2.6 The present study**

The above overview shows that there are already a wealth of empirical studies on speech acts, genres in business communication, and speech act annotation schemes. However, there are gaps in the study of speech act

annotation in spoken business communication in Hong Kong. For example, the different speech act classification schemes and annotation schemes have their own focuses, orientations, and contexts of interaction (2.5). Although studies on speech act annotation and business communication are now receiving more attention, a majority of the empirical studies (2.3 and 2.4) carried out are within specific approaches, for instance, conversation analysis or ethnography, and have tended to focus on formal and structured genres, such as meetings and interviews, that have clear beginnings and endings or internal structures in the form of different phases (Koester, 2006, 2010). In other words, there is still much scope in this area for further research regarding other approaches, such as corpus linguistics and pragmatics (Aijmer & Rühlemann, 2015), or other aspects in the study of business genres.

In view of the above issues, the present study aims to contribute towards filling these gaps. By investigating the speech acts or the communicative functions of the corpus data in the setting of spoken business communication, this study offers a new perspective for exploring the implementation of manual speech act annotation with the aid of a specially designed program *SpeechActConc*, aiming at providing useful methods for exploring quantitative and qualitative distinctive features in spoken business communication in Hong Kong. The examination of the frequency and the linguistic realisations of speech acts in different genres help further the study of speech acts in spoken business communication.

Based on the literature review, the study employed an analytical framework for the analysis of speech acts that is informed by the speech act theory empirical research in genres in business communication and studies in corpus and speech act annotation. The framework (Figure 2.1) is constructed with reference to the literature review (Sections 2.3 and 2.4) to answer the research questions (1.3). It is characterised by a synthesis of both quantitative and qualitative analyses with specially designed computer programme to compare and contrast speech acts in a particular communicative context and to discuss possible pedagogical implications. The naturally occurring data from the audio recordings and prosodic transcriptions of the business sub-corpora of the HKCSE (prosodic) are manually annotated with a speech act taxonomy for finding out the frequency of

speech acts, the frequency of co-occurrence of speech acts, and the lexicogrammatical realisations of speech acts with *SpeechActConc*. The findings will be discussed to find out distinctive traits of speech acts across the genres in the business discourse and to recommend pedagogical implications for the teaching and learning of speech acts.

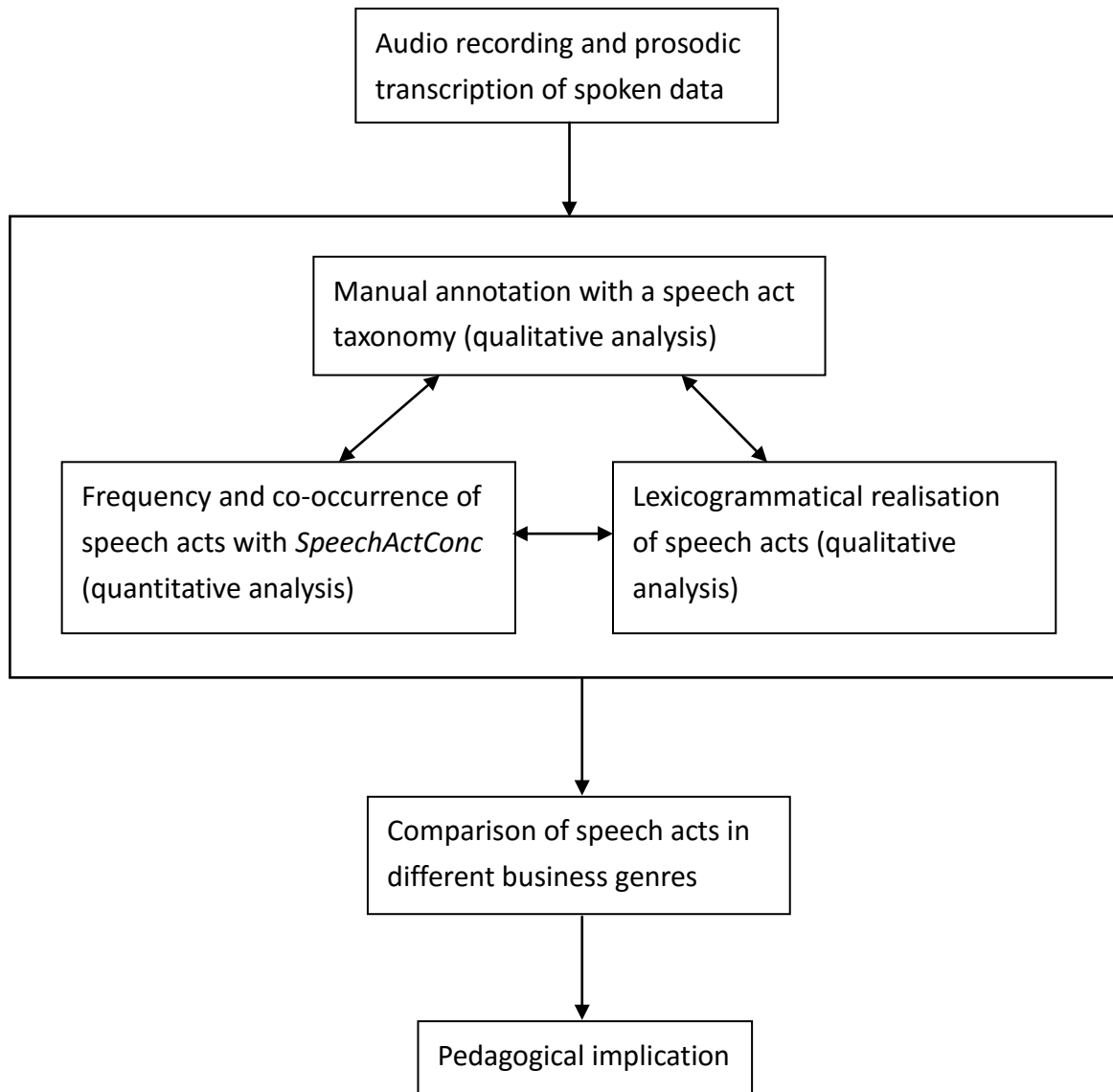


Figure 2.1. Framework for the present study

## 2.7 Summary

This chapter has aimed to set the present study in context by reviewing selected literature in speech act annotation, empirical speech act and genre studies. It provides an overview of different basic components of the speech act

theories (2.2), followed by a review of selected empirical studies in speech act (2.3) and in genres related to business communication (2.4). It also describes and explains different orientations of speech act annotation, followed by some key concerns regarding utterance segmentation and annotation guideline (2.5). It is indicated that the different classification and annotation schemes imply different views of what constitutes appropriate procedures and focuses for the study of speech act annotation. The reflection highlights that though the wide range of research focuses, methodologies, and findings have contributed a lot to the study of speech acts in business communication, there are gaps to be filled in the present study regarding a manual speech act annotation of a spoken corpus of business communication, a quantitative analysis with the aid of a specially designed computer program *SpeechActConc*, and a qualitative analysis of the linguistic features of the speech acts in different genres of business communication in Hong Kong, which leads to the formation of a framework for the analysis of speech acts in the present study.



## Chapter Three

### Data description and research methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the nature and the collection of the data are depicted (3.2), followed by an outline of the speech act taxonomy and analysis procedure that is informed by the literature review (3.3) as well as a description of the major features of the program *SpeechActConc* that is specially written for customized searches and statistical data for the annotated business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic) (3.4). Lastly, a summary is given (3.5).

#### 3.2 Data description

The corpus analysed in the study is the HKCSE (prosodic) compiled in the English Department of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s (Cheng & Warren, 1999). It comprises four sub-corpora that represent the main overarching spoken genres found in the Hong Kong context, namely academic discourses, business discourses, conversations, and public discourses. Each sub-corpus consists of a variety of discourse types and participants. The composition of the four sub-corpora in the HKCSE (prosodic) is summarized as follows: academic discourse (213,204 words in 29 files), including academic consultation, lecture, seminar and tutorial, student presentation and Q&A, workshop for staff; business discourse (259,484 words in 112 files), including announcement and Q&A, conference call/video conferencing, informal office talk, interview, meeting, presentation, presentation and Q&A, service encounter, workplace telephone call; conversation (258,882 words in 71 files); and public discourse (218,402 in 99 files), including discussion forum, interview, press briefing, press briefing and Q&A, radio announcement, speech, speech and Q&A (Table 3.1) (Cheng et al., 2005, 2008).

Table 3.1. Composition of the HKCSE (prosodic)

	<b>Number of words</b>	<b>Proportion (%)</b>	<b>Number of files</b>
<b>Academic</b>	213,204	22.44	29
<b>Business</b>	259,484	27.31	112
<b>Conversation</b>	258,882	27.25	71
<b>Public</b>	218,402	22.99	99
<b>TOTAL</b>	949,972	100.00	311
<b>ACADEMIC</b>			
consultation	17,808	8.35	5
lecture	62,315	29.23	9
seminar and tutorial	38,610	18.11	6
student presentation and Q&A	91,077	42.72	8
workshop for staff	3,394	1.59	1
<b>BUSINESS</b>			
announcement and Q&A	22,103	8.52	3
conference call/video conferencing	6,017	2.32	2
informal office talk	27,338	10.54	4
interview	80,443	31.00	25
meeting	36,272	13.98	9
presentation	20,120	7.75	10
presentation and Q&A	51,218	19.74	4
service encounter	14,457	5.57	52
workplace telephone talk	1,516	0.58	3
<b>PUBLIC</b>			
discussion forum	6,699	3.07	2
interview	87,151	39.90	25
press briefing	3,771	1.73	7
press briefing and Q&A	10,111	4.63	2
radio announcement	88	0.04	1
speech	88,443	40.50	57
speech and Q&A	22,139	10.14	5

The HKCSE (prosodic) is an intercultural corpus in which speakers are classified by their cultural backgrounds in terms of nationality and first language as well as sex in terms of male and female. The two main cultural groups are Hong Kong Chinese (HKC) and native English speakers (NES) who are mainly from Britain, the United States of America, and Australia, although the corpus does not distinguish NES into different national groups. A very small group of

speakers, classified as Other Speakers, are from mainland Chinese, Indian, and Japanese speakers. In the business sub-corpus, the majority (70.54%) of the words are spoken by HKC, with 27.88% by NES, and 1.56% by other speakers. Regarding the distribution of talk between male and female speakers in the business sub-corpus, the proportion of talk by HKC males (48.18%) and NES males (48.85%) is almost the same, followed by Other Speaker males (2.99%), whereas HKC females dominate with 92.57%, as compared to NES females (7.27%) and Other Speaker females (0.16%) (Cheng, Greaves, & Warren, 2008). Cheng, Greaves, & Warren (2008, p.8) accounted for this uneven distribution: ‘in the context of Hong Kong, there is a much greater frequency of occurrence of English discourses produced by HKC, compared to non-HKC in tertiary education and in business and public communication’.

The objectives of the study are, for each spoken business genre in the intercultural corpus, to classify speech acts, and to describe the frequencies of individual speech acts, the patterns of co-occurrences of speech acts, and linguistic realisations of the speech acts, with reference to the communicative purposes of the business genres examined and the respective contextual identities, roles, responsibilities and communication of the speakers. The study adopts the notion of ‘small culture’, viewed as small cohesive social groups, and not ‘large culture’ that is distinguished in terms of nationality, race and ethnicity (Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2010). It does not compare the performance of speech acts between HKC and NES. The study also reviews a number of studies (in 2.3 and 2.4), that have focused on the investigation of the relationship between the use of speech acts and the differences in culture and gender.

The audio recordings were orthographically transcribed by research assistants and cross-checked by experienced researchers working with spoken data. Each orthographic transcription was coded with background and contextual information about the participants and the genre, including the speaker’s gender, age, L1, occupation group, and the relationship between or among the speakers. Paralinguistic features such as throat-clearing and coughing are indicated. Other discursive details such as truncated words, overlaps, and inaudible speech are identified. Pauses are marked with a differentiation between a brief pause and a unit pause that generally lasts for a few seconds.

The HKCSE (prosodic) was further enriched as a research, learning and teaching resource by adding a prosodic transcription (i.e. indicating speakers' intonation in the transcript) (Cheng et al., 2008). The HKCSE (prosodic) is believed to be the largest prosodically transcribed corpus currently in existence. The prosodic transcription of the orthographic transcription was made by adopting discourse intonation systems (tone unit, tone, prominence, key and termination) (Brazil, 1985, 1997). It was carried out by a research associate (Chu, 2002; as cited in Cheng et al., 2008). The prosodic features were determined after repetitive listening to the recordings. Sample transcriptions were cross-checked regularly by the project consultant (Cheng et al., 2005, 2008; Lam, 2008).

The corpus data analysed in this study is the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic). Most of the data were audio-recorded with a MD-recorder by the researchers involved in the project, and audio recordings of presentations on the topics of business and financial services were downloaded from the websites of different organizations. The physical or institutional contexts of recording include meeting rooms in business organizations, government, and university offices; hotel and airport reception or information desks; and convention or conference rooms where business or financial service presentations took place (Cheng, Greaves, & Warren, 2008). The business spoken data were recorded from a range of contexts, including hotels, airport, seminars, press conferences and offices in companies, the government and university. Some physical contexts of interaction, such as the government office and the university office, are not situated in business organisations that are involved in such business activities as buying and selling goods or services to make money. The study is aware that the different contexts are characterised with unique discourse communities, communicative events, communicative purposes, and linguistic choices.

The spoken data collected in these two physical contexts of government and universities offices, though not located in commercial organisations, belong to genres found in business organisations, and in some cases, are business-related. Regarding the government, the recordings are meetings and informal office talks. Regarding the university offices, the recordings are job interviews for research assistants. The interviewers are university researchers who are in charge of the

related research projects. Some interviewees are experienced research assistants from the same or another discipline whereas others are new to the post. All the interviews took place at university. As the focus of the study is on the investigation of speech acts in the six genres, namely meeting, telephone and conference call, informal office talk, service encounter, Q&A session, and interview, these physical contexts of interaction are deemed acceptable.

### **3.3 Research methodology**

#### **3.3.1 Speech act taxonomy**

In Chapter Two, selected speech act classification schemes and annotation schemes are discussed individually with an integrated review. In this Chapter, the uniqueness of each of the selected systems will be reviewed to explain the derivation of the taxonomy of 69 speech acts based on these systems. Based on the author's ongoing reflection during the process of manually annotating the corpus data with reference to a comparison of different classification schemes, a taxonomy of 69 speech acts for speech act annotation is compiled with reference to Stenström (1994), Tsui (1994), Stolcke et al. (2000), and Leech and Weisser (2003). As discussed, these speech act annotation schemes deal with different tasks regarding the project needs or have specific genres in their applications. Stenström (1994) analyses the naturally occurring spoken interaction as manifested in the London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English with reference to three different types of act, depending on their 'status' in the move. Acts, as the smallest interactive unit, show what the speaker intends and wants to communicate. Tsui (1994) proposes a taxonomy of acts based on data collected from authentic, naturally occurring telephone conversations and face-to-face conversations from Birmingham Collection of English Texts as well as field notes taken from real-life communication. The Dialogue Act Modeling focuses on speech-act-like units from spontaneous telephone conversations and acquires an accurate automatic tagging of speech acts in a corpus (Stolcke et al., 2000). The SPAAC focuses on annotating speech acts from different kinds of telephone task-oriented dialogues and devises a set of speech-act annotated dialogues that can be used as training material for dialogue systems (Leech & Weisser, 2003).

Given the different focuses of the studies and the different sources of raw corpus data, it is interesting to find that the speech act categories in different projects or studies are distinctive yet similar to each other. Hence, in order to respond to the requirements of being sufficiently general and applicable to different genres in business communication for the present study, together with the author’s judgement as well as the regular discussion with the fellow researcher and the supervisors, the speech act taxonomy is in principle not based on a single scheme or classification but on an integrated adoption of these four schemes.

During the process of annotation, the taxonomy has been revised a number of times to select the most relevant speech acts for the annotation task, resulting in a taxonomy of 69 speech acts (Table 3.2):

Table 3.2. The taxonomy of 69 speech acts

<b>Alert</b>	<b>Check</b>	<b>Express_possibility</b>	<b>Probe</b>	<b>Self-commendation</b>
<b>Answer to question: comply</b>	<b>Closer</b>	<b>Express_wish</b>	<b>Query</b>	<b>Self-denigration</b>
<b>Answer to question: disclaim</b>	<b>Clue</b>	<b>Filler</b>	<b>Question: confirmation</b>	<b>Smoother</b>
<b>Answer to question: evade</b>	<b>Confirm</b>	<b>Frame</b>	<b>Question: identification</b>	<b>Staller</b>
<b>Answer to question: imply</b>	<b>Correct</b>	<b>Greeting</b>	<b>Question: polarity</b>	<b>Starter</b>
<b>Answer to question: supply</b>	<b>Correct-self</b>	<b>Hedge</b>	<b>Raise_issue</b>	<b>Statement: inform</b>
<b>Answer to request: accept</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Instruction</b>	<b>React</b>	<b>Statement: opine</b>
<b>Answer to request: evade</b>	<b>Elicit-repeat</b>	<b>Invite</b>	<b>Rebound</b>	<b>Suggest</b>
<b>Answer to request: reject</b>	<b>Empathizer</b>	<b>Justify</b>	<b>Register</b>	<b>Thanks</b>
<b>Apology</b>	<b>Empathy</b>	<b>Metacomment</b>	<b>Reply to statement: acknowledge</b>	<b>Threat</b>
<b>Appealer</b>	<b>Emphasizer</b>	<b>Monitor</b>	<b>Reply to statement: agree</b>	<b>Unclassifiable</b>
<b>Appreciation</b>	<b>Engage</b>	<b>Offer</b>	<b>Reply to statement: object</b>	<b>Uptake</b>
<b>Booster</b>	<b>Evaluate</b>	<b>Precursor</b>	<b>Request: action</b>	<b>Warning</b>
<b>Call-off</b>	<b>Expand</b>	<b>Preface</b>	<b>Request: permission</b>	

As these 69 speech acts are compiled with reference to the four studies mentioned before, the label given to each speech act is the same as it is in the original source, even though some labels including [statement: inform] and [statement: opine] may be argued as ambiguous or even inaccurate, given that the

communicative functions of informing and opining are not necessarily realised in the form of a statement. The final taxonomy is also not aimed to be an original or an exhaustive list of speech acts for a particular genre in the business sub-corpus. The author has taken an open attitude towards the appropriateness of annotating an utterance with the available acts in the taxonomy; the list can always be revised, modified, and expanded if necessary during the annotation process. In principle, the list is not limited to the 69 speech acts only. In other words, if there is an utterance that cannot be properly annotated with any one of the speech acts in the taxonomy, the author will select an appropriate act other than the existing speech acts at his discretion. The meanings of these 69 speech acts as defined in Stenström (1994), Tsui (1994), Stolcke et al. (2000), Leech and Weisser (2003) are summarised in Table 3.3:

Table 3.3. The meanings of speech acts in the taxonomy

<b>Speech Act</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Alert	To call the address's attention
Answer to question: comply	To give adequate information explicitly
Answer to question: disclaim	To declare that the answer is unknown
Answer to question: evade	To avoid answering (consciously)
Answer to question: imply	To give adequate answer implicitly
Answer to question: supply	To give inadequate information
Answer to request: accept	To agree to a request, a suggestion, etc.
Answer to request: evade	To avoid answering (consciously)
Answer to request: reject	To disagree to a request, a suggestion, etc.
Apology	To express regret
Appealer	To invite feedback
Appreciation	To express appreciation
Booster	To assess what the speaker himself / herself says
Call-off	To prompt a conversational closing
Check	To ask for repetition and clarification
Closer	To end a conversational ending
Clue	To follow a primary act and give a hint or provide additional information after a question
Confirm	To respond to a request for information
Correct	To correct what the other speaker has said
Correct-self	To correct one's own utterance after having been corrected by another speaker
Disagree	To express disagreement
Elicit-repeat	To prospect a repetition
Empathizer	To involve the listener
Empathy	To show concern for and to emphasize with the addressee
Emphasizer	To underline what was said in the primary act
Engage	To show willingness to interact by responding to salutation
Evaluate	To judge the value of what the previous speaker said
Expand	To give complementary information
Express_possibility	To express a possibility that cannot be interpreted as a suggestion, a direction or an offer

Express_wish	To express a wish or a desire that cannot be interpreted as a direction
Filler	To fill a gap in the discourse
Frame	To mark a boundary in the discourse in a separate tone unit
Greeting	To greet somebody or bid farewell
Hedge	To help avoiding commitment
Instruction	To get the addressee to comply
Invite	To ask if somebody would like to do something
Justify	To defend what was said in the primary act
Metacomment	To comment on current talk
Monitor	To help put something right
Offer	To present something for acceptance or rejection
Precursor	To precede a primary act and give information, to link up what was said before, or to comment on something in the preceding dialogue
Preface	To introduce a primary act, to have a face-saving effect in that it prepares another speaker for what is going to happen next, or to make sure that certain pre-conditions hold before making the following act
Probe	To volunteer further details or implications for confirmation
Query	To express doubt or strong surprise
Question: confirmation	To ask for a confirming answer
Question: identification	To ask for an answer identifying a <i>Wh</i> -word
Question: polarity	To ask for a <i>yes / no</i> answer
Raise_issue	To raise an issue (non-informative)
React	To express attitude and strong feelings
Rebound	To question relevance, legitimacy, or veracity of the prior move
Register	To display attention to the speaker
Reply to statement: acknowledge	To signal receipt of information or to signal that the second speaker accepts what the first speaker said as a valid contribution to the conversation
Reply to statement: agree	To signal agreement with what was just said or to signal that the second speaker approves of what the first speaker means
Reply to statement: object	To signal a different opinion or to signal that the second speaker does not agree with the first speaker
Request: action	To ask somebody to do something
Request: permission	To ask for a go-ahead
Self-commendation	To evaluate the speaker himself / herself positively
Self-denigration	To evaluate the speaker himself / herself negatively
Smoother	To respond to an apology
Staller	To play for time
Starter	To help getting started
Statement: inform	To provide information
Statement: opine	To express opinion or give one's personal opinion
Suggest	To put forward an idea or a plan
Thanks	To express gratitude
Threat	To explicitly state that the speaker will cause undesirable consequences to the addressees if he/she refuse to comply
Unclassifiable	To refer to an unclassified move such as a joke, a cough or an inaudible utterance
Uptake	To accept what was said and lead on
Warning	To specify the undesirable consequence of non-compliance

With reference to the meanings or functions of the 69 speech acts as depicted in Table 3.3 and the author's judgment based on the prosodic transcription and the recorded data, the speech acts in the orthographic transcription are manually annotated one after another.

The present research is by far the first comparative corpus-based study of different genres in the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic), analysed with reference to a speech act taxonomy constructed based on a lengthy and



interactive annotation process by the researcher, integrating a number of scholarly studies about speech act taxonomy (Anderson et al., 1991; Stiles, 1992; Stenström, 1994; Tsui, 1994; Allen & Core, 1997; Stolcke et al., 2000; Stolcke, 2002; Leech & Weisser, 2003; Weisser, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2014, 2015).

### 3.3.2 Speech act annotations

The corpus data used in the research is manually annotated with reference to a taxonomy of 69 speech acts. Each utterance from the six genres in the business sub-corpus is carefully annotated utterance-by-utterance for its pragmatic meaning. Both the recorded tracks and the prosodic transcription of the corpus data are closely referred to in the annotation process. The annotation of the corpus data are revised and refined repeatedly after regular cross-checking and discussion with a fellow researcher and supervisors until consensus is reached. This integrated manual speech act annotation process could be useful for pragmatic annotation in corpus linguistics or corpus pragmatics (Aijmer & Rühlemann (Eds.), 2015). During the annotation process, the author does not assign the most appropriate speech act to the utterance only by his own judgment without any references. Rather, his judgement is informed by the speech act taxonomies proposed in a number of related studies mentioned above. These taxonomies act as ideas and categories for the author to examine the corpus (cf. Römer, 2005a; Cheng, 2012).

Before the speech acts in the corpus can be searched for and listed, the speech acts must have been appropriately marked so that the computer software program can identify the speech acts in the corpus data. The procedure of marking up the corpus data is as follows: A speech act has to be marked at the beginning by an opening arrow bracket '<' followed immediately, with no intervening spaces or other characters, by an **SA\*\*\*** where the \*\*\* represents any number from 001 to 999. In this study, the numbers used are from 001 to 069, as the number of speech acts in the taxonomy is 69. It is necessary to have three digits in the number, namely 001 to 009 and 010 to 069. As long as the speech act is denoted as starting with an opening arrow bracket '<', followed by **SA\*\*\***, and finished with a closing arrow bracket '>', the program *SpeechActConc* is able to read it and do the quantitative analysis. Put differently, every speech act

needs to have a beginning and an end with arrow brackets. Missing either of these arrow brackets will result in malfunction of the program, for instance, the number of speech acts in a corpus dataset cannot be calculated properly. For the sake of clarity to the researcher, the particular speech act assigned with the number is put inside an opening square bracket '[' and a closing square bracket ']', after the three-digit number and before the transcribed data. For example, instead of merely marking the speech act 'alert' with <SA001 ... >, <SA001 [alert] ... > is used so that the researcher can understand what these numbers stand for particular speech acts.

A key issue before the annotation process is to decide how to delimit the unit of annotation, which is closely related to the identification of a feasible segmentation strategy (See 2.5.5; cf. de Felice et al, 2013). As the data is spoken rather than written, punctuation and spacing cannot be used to delimit utterances. Hence, the segmentation in this study depends primarily on two criteria: First, the identification of 'tone unit' in discourse intonation (Brazil, 1995, 1997). Second, the communicative function of the utterance as expressed in the form of a phrase or a clause. Regarding the first criterion, a tone unit is defined as 'the stretch of language that carries the systematically-opposed features of intonation' (Brazil, 1997, p. 3). The definition of tone unit boundaries relies on a tonic prominence and a pause. When there is a tonic prominence, the identification of the tone is complete and there is only one tone per tone unit. When there is a pause, it represents the end of a tone unit (Cheng et al., 2008). Regarding the second criterion, it is not uncommon for more than one speech act to be contained in the same utterance from a tone unit. In such a case, the utterance will be segmented into two and be annotated separately (cf. de Felice et al, 2013).

Accordingly, the procedure of annotating the 260,000-word business sub-corpus consists of several stages. First, in order for the *SpeechActConc* to interrogate the speech act notations in the business sub-corpus after the manual utterance-by-utterance analysis, all notations originally used in the HKCSE (prosodic) to indicate the prosodic features were taken away, resulting in an orthographic or a plain text transcription of the spoken data. Since the same arrow brackets (< ... >) in the prosodic notation used in the HKCSE (prosodic) are also used in the *SpeechActConc* notation system, the prosodic notation from

the HKCSE (prosodic) is taken away while annotating the speech acts so that the annotated data can be searched and read by *SpeechActConc*. It does not mean that the prosodic properties in the HKCSE (prosodic) are neglected. On the contrary, they are closely referred to in the repeated process of speech acts annotation. Second, the orthographic transcription was manually segmented and annotated utterance-by-utterance primarily with reference to the tones and the tone-unit boundaries as marked in the original prosodic transcription as well as the most appropriate communicative functions as indicated in the utterances, resulting in a speech-act annotated transcription. 15 out of 18 service encounters from hotel concierges [and retail outlets] (B001-B015) were first annotated to be treated as a sample speech act annotation for cross-checking with a fellow researcher who has experience in working with spoken data. The data annotated by the research assistant amount to 56 minutes and 5,195 words in total. Discrepancies are thoroughly examined through emails, face-to-face discussion and telephone conversations between the fellow researcher and me before finalizing the annotations of these 15 files. The resulting annotations are cross-checked by the supervisors. These annotations are referred to in the following annotation of other genres in this study as points of reference, because the data examined are identical in terms of the prosodic transcription and the contexts of interaction of the data. For the subsequent manual speech acts annotation, extracts from each of the six genres are regularly cross-checked by the supervisors. Discrepancies are discussed during consultation sessions for a higher level of accuracy and consistency in the entire annotation. Third, After a thorough examination and a number of revisions based on the discussion with the fellow researcher, the final version of the annotation acted as a blueprint for the ensuing speech act annotation for the other five genres, namely, meetings, telephone and conference calls, informal offices talks, Q&A sessions, and interviews.

As mentioned, during the process of annotation, not only the orthographic transcription of the spoken data but also the recorded tracks of spoken discourse were referred to simultaneously for the speech act annotation. All the audio recordings were listened to several times to determine the most appropriate speech act tag for the utterance or the segment of an utterance. Samples of the

speech act annotations were regularly cross-checked by and discussed with the supervisors, followed by further revisions and editing. The process of annotating the entire 260,000 business sub-corpus was found to be both laborious and challenging. However, a high level of consistency can be achieved as there was only one principal annotator and researcher (cf. Cheng et al., 2008; Lam, 2008).

Moreover, the communicative meanings of discourse intonation derived from the situational context provide additional information to the communicative functions of the utterances (Brazil, 1985, 1995, 1997). The notion of tone unit, which is the basic building block and the smallest sketch of speech with which a particular choice of tone or key is associated, is useful to the present study with regard to utterance segmentation (Brazil, 1994; Archer et al., 2008). In Brazil's (1997) model of discourse intonation, four systems of speaker choices are used to govern the intonation choices, namely prominence, tone, key, and termination. Among these four systems, thirteen intonation choices occur within the boundaries of a tone unit. Each has a local meaning within a particular communicative context decided by speakers during the process of spontaneous interaction.

Among these intonation choices, proclaiming tones (the fall and rise-fall tones) and referring tones (the rise and fall-rise tones) are consulted in the annotation process of speech acts. In case of telling something, a proclaimed tone unit is used when speakers assume an unshared perspective regarding the content of the tone unit, which is telling something new to the listener, while a referring tone unit is used when speakers assume a shared perspective, which is telling about already known to the listener. In case of asking something, a proclaimed tone unit indicates that the speaker does not have the information that the listener has, whereas a referring tone unit indicates that both the speaker and the listener have the same information. The purpose of the former is to find out the information while that of the latter is to make sure the information is correct (Brazil, 1994).

The tone unit boundary is referred to the original annotation in the HKCSE (prosodic) while listening to the recording and annotating the speech acts from the prosodically transcribed data. Tone unit boundaries are defined by the occurrence of a tonic prominence or a tone (internal criterion) and a pause

(external criterion). Tone unit boundaries are sometimes difficult to define and assign, as the determination was done auditorily and by attending to the sound substance of the recording instead of to syntactic patterning as shown in boundaries of clausal or sentential elements. Tone units with their own distinctive rhythms are identified by the trained transcriber who sets them apart from surrounding tone units and uses the properties of the sound substance of the recording which are internal to the tone unit (rhythm, prominence, tone, key, termination) (Cheng et al., 2008).

### 3.3.3 Corpus analytical procedure

Both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques are used to interpret the findings (Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1998). Quantitative data alone, such as frequency lists or concordances, is meaningless unless it is interpreted (Gries, 2009); the analytical procedure of the speech acts in the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic) is mainly qualitative supported by numerical evidence from the *SpeechActConc* program. As described, the corpus data was manually annotated with reference to the taxonomy of 69 speech acts. The corpus analysis involves the generation of the frequency lists of unique speech acts (or speech act types) and of co-occurring speech acts in each of the six annotated genres; the examinations of the frequency findings and the corpus data for important features on interaction patterns and lexicogrammatical patterns; and the interpretations and explanations of related pragmatic and discursive phenomena.

Though the examination of frequencies of speech acts and the study of linguistic examples of certain speech acts are possible based on speech act searches alone, most of the analyses in this study cannot be accomplished if they are restricted to searching for a particular speech act or sequence of speech acts. As expected, each speech act can be associated with different linguistic realisations and lexicogrammatical patterns. It can be illustrated by searching for a phrase or a clause and noting the words that occur within it. For example, as shown in the concordance lines, personal pronouns and direct discourse in [statement: inform] and [statement: opine] occur more frequently than other realisations and patterns (cf. Hunston, 2002).

Concordance lines only present information without any interpretation; human judgement is needed to perceive distinctive features related to the quantitative information of the speech acts (cf. Hunston, 2002). Qualitative analysis of the corpus data aims at investigating the linguistic phenomena of the speech acts with reference to contextual factors such as place and time of the communicative event and relationship between interlocutors (Hasko, 2012). The linguistic features of particular speech acts are studied to explore the importance of these findings for understanding the use of speech act in different business spoken genres. Speech act association patterns are investigated and interpreted to look for the systematic ways in which speech acts are used in association with other speech acts interactively (cf. Biber et al., 1998; Cheng, 2012).

### 3.4 *SpeechActConc*

*SpeechActConc* (Figure 3.1), first used as a corpus analytical tool in this study, is a program designed and written by Chris Greaves of the English Department of Hong Kong Polytechnic University in 2010 specially for corpus analysis of annotated speech acts. It can identify and count annotated speech acts in a corpus in an automated manner. It can display each speech act and produce speech act concordances, listed by frequency and sorted by co-occurring or co-selected speech acts to the right or left of the centred speech acts. It can also automatically find 2-, 3-, or 4-speech act instances of speech act co-occurrence even when they occur in different positions relative to one another (i.e. positional variation) and when one or more speech acts occur in between the other speech acts (i.e. constituency variation) (Cheng et al., 2006, 2009).

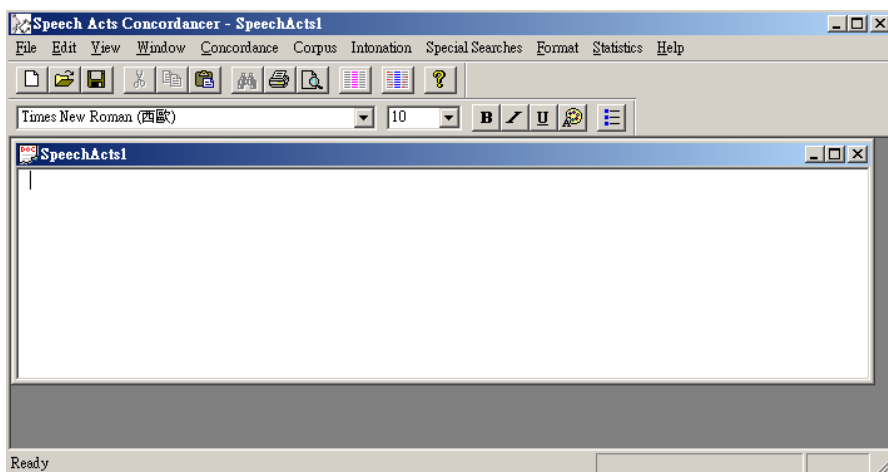


Figure 3.1. A screen shot of *SpeechActConc*

These functions of *SpeechActConc* are similar to those of *ConcGram* (Greaves, 2005, 2009; Greaves & Warren, 2010a; Cheng, 2012), another program written by Chris Greaves. *ConcGram* (Greaves, 2009) is ‘a search-engine, which on top of the capability to handle constituency variation (i.e. AB, ACB), also handles positional variation (i.e. AB, BA), conducts fully automated searches, and searches for word associations of any size’ (Cheng et al., 2006, p. 413). In short, *ConcGram* is a phraseological search engine which can, other than setting the size of the span, conduct fully automated searches throughout the data without any prior input from the user and show all possible collocational patterns of speech acts existing in a data set (cf. Cheng, 2007a). The main functions of *ConcGram* for text analysis include listing of all speech acts, frequency of unique speech acts, fully automated speech act search, user nominated speech act search, speech act positional sort, specified 2-speech act-only search, and specified 3-speech act co-occurrence search.

The notion of speech act co-occurrence in this study is related to the notion of word concgramming (Cheng et al., 2006, 2009). All instances of a speech act, together with positional variation and constituency variation, can be displayed in a single set of concordance lines for analysis. The user-friendly design of the display of speech act concordances is convenient for researchers to investigate a more extensive description of the frequency, the pattern, and the use of speech acts in the corpus data.

Accordingly, the primary functions of *SpeechActConc* is to perform fully automated searches without any form of prior intervention by the user (i.e. non-user-nominated searches); it is also possible for the user to specify a speech act or speech acts as a search query (i.e. user-nominated searches). When user-nominated speech acts are performed, the selection of which speech act to be in central position is decided alphabetically. The fully automated capability of the program makes it possible for the user to identify all the potential patterns of co-occurring speech acts, and to discover a more extensive description of existing and new patterns of the use of speech act in business communication (cf. Cheng et al., 2006). This fully automated capability of search engine increases the possibility of uncovering new co-selections or patterns of speech acts. It is

also possible for the researchers to nominate a speech act or speech acts to search as a speech act search query.

A basic search for a single speech act can be done in concordance search. After the speech act to search for in the corpus file has been entered, all instances of the searched SA will be listed. A co-occurring SA search can be done by setting the preferences and entering the words (2 to 4 words) to search for. Co-occurring speech acts are then sorted based on their position relative to the centred string. The process of creating the initial list of two co-occurring speech acts is as follows: First, all the unique speech acts (or speech act types) in a text are identified and listed. Second, each unique speech act is used as the single origin for the search with the list concordance. Third, all co-occurring speech acts are listed for each single origin.

From this initial two co-occurring speech acts list, a three co-occurring speech acts list can be built from fully automated search, which is created by performing double-origin searches based on the two co-occurring speech acts list, taking the resulting concordance lines and listing each associated speech acts found in them together with each double origin searched (cf. Cheng et al., 2006).

#### 3.4.1 The statistics menu

The following describes the design and functions of *SpeechActConc* in greater detail. Figure 3.2 shows the statistics menu of the program: Unique Speech Acts, Positional List, and Collocate View. The statistics are referred to the number of instances and the percentage of individual and co-occurring speech acts; statistical tests are not performed with these three functions available.

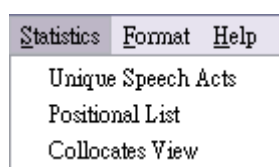


Figure 3.2. The statistics menu

The first function is to create a list of unique speech acts for the corpus. Any speech act may occur many times in a corpus, but it will be counted only once in the list of Unique Speech Acts. The list then serves as the data for the program to



be operated on. To produce the following Unique Speech Acts List (Figure 3.3), the user has to select the first item and then click the ‘Frequency Sort’ button.

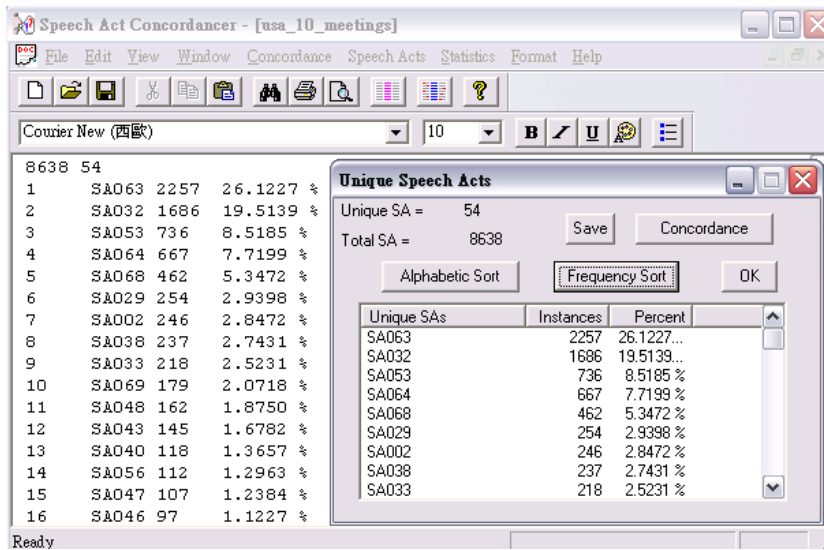


Figure 3.3. Unique Speech Acts List

The list has to be saved as a file for the operation of the automated search for co-occurring speech acts in the corpus (Figure 3.4).

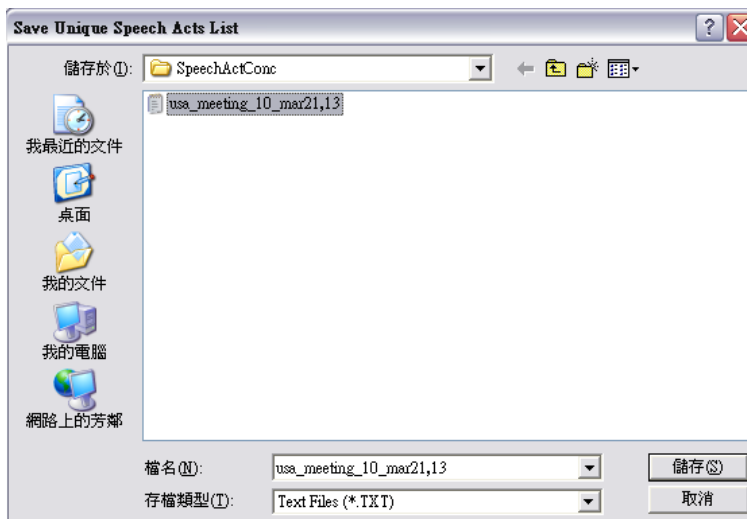


Figure 3.4. The Save File Dialog for the Unique Speech Acts List

The second function is to give the position variants for co-occurring speech acts. A concordance for the speech act co-occurrence has to be created before generating a positional list (Figure 3.5).

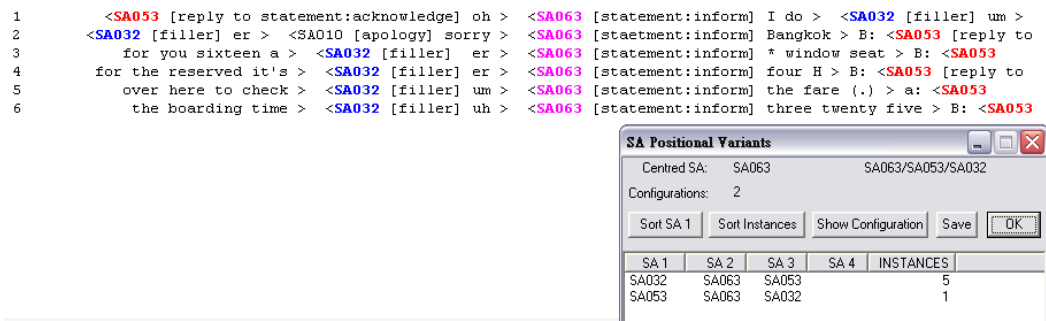


Figure 3.5. The SA Positional Variants List Dialog

Figure 3.5 shows the positional variants for the three co-occurring speech acts <SA063 [statement: inform]> / <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge]> / <SA032 [filler]> concordance list. There are two configurations, in which the configuration <SA032> / <SA063> / <SA053> is the most frequent with 5 instances.

The third function is to give a summary of the collocated word statistics after creating a sorted list of concordances. Collocate words with the speech acts are sorted alphabetically (Figure 3.6). This function can only be used with a list that is sorted to the right or left of the centred speech act. In an unsorted list or one that has been sorted by position, collocate words will not be recorded.

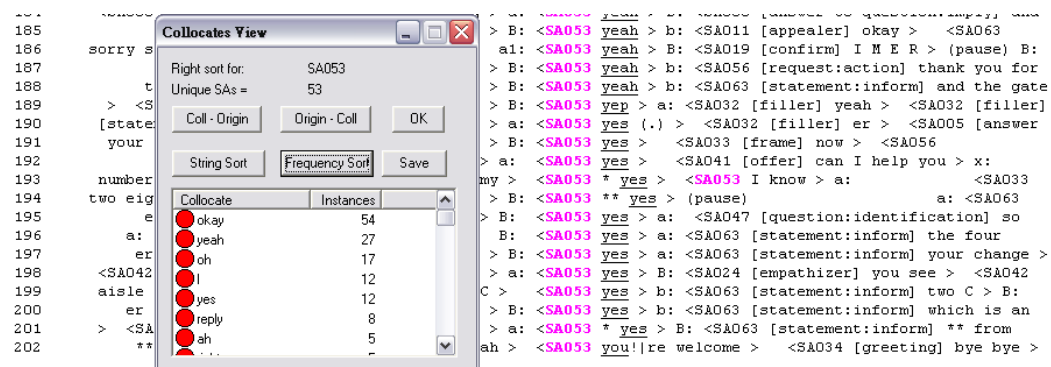


Figure 3.6. The Collocates View Dialog

Figure 3.6 shows that for <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge]>, there are 53 unique collocate words. The most frequent is ‘okay’ with 54 instances, showing that ‘okay’ is the most frequent word for acknowledging.

### 3.4.2 The Speech act menu

The Speech Act menu has four items, namely ‘All Speech Acts < >’, ‘SA with Co-occ SA (automated)’, ‘Open Saved File’, and ‘Using specified SA ONLY’ (Figure 3.7).

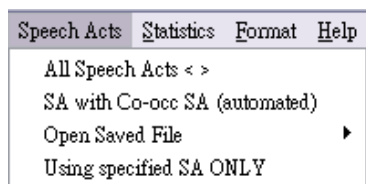


Figure 3.7. The four items in the Speech Acts menu

The first menu item ‘All Speech Acts < >’ can load and display all the speech acts in the user’s annotated corpus file, giving the number and making an unsorted list which shows all the speech acts which have been identified in the corpus, in the order as they occur. All speech acts are enclosed within arrow brackets and denoted by SA\*\*\* (where \*\*\* indicates any three-digit numbers). Thus the first speech act in this file is called <SA033>, which is followed by <SA032> which is number 2 in the list. Each speech act is placed immediately to the left and is followed by 100 characters to the right (Figure 3.8).

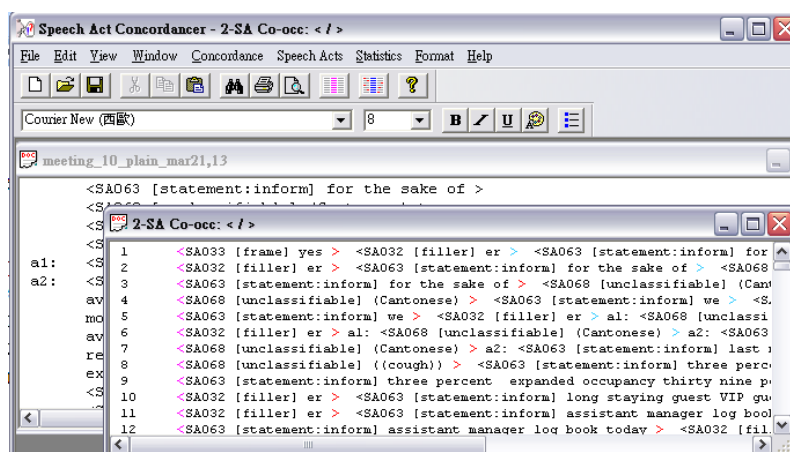


Figure 3.8. The All Speech Acts Menu item

The second menu item ‘SA with Co-occ SA (automated)’ offers an automated search for 2 co-occurring speech acts, which shows all the instances where a speech act occurs with another speech act (Figure 3.9).

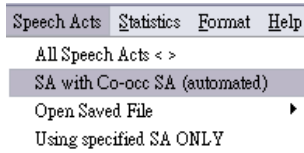


Figure 3.9. The second Speech Acts Menu item

When this item is selected, the user is required to decide the preferences from the ‘2-SA Co-occurring List Preferences Dialog’ (Figure 3.10). As co-occurrences that only have a single instance are probably insignificant associations, they are dropped by default. ‘Duplicates’ are examples ... and ...; they are kept in the list by default. The default can be overridden if the user would like to retain single instances (Figure 3.10).

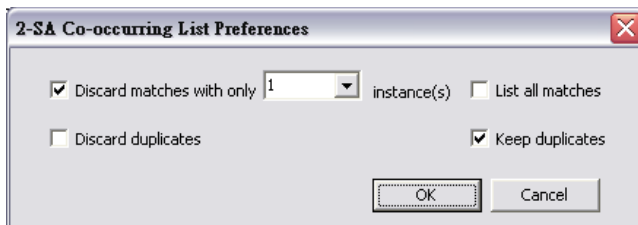


Figure 3.10. The 2-SA Co-occurring List Preferences Dialog

The user is then asked if he/she would like to search for speech acts which have only a single instance in the Unique SA List (Figure 3.11). This default can be overridden.



Figure 3.11. The Yes/No Dialog for searching only for unique SA with more than one instance

Next the user is prompted for the Unique SA List that was produced earlier in the Statistics Menu (Figure 3.12).

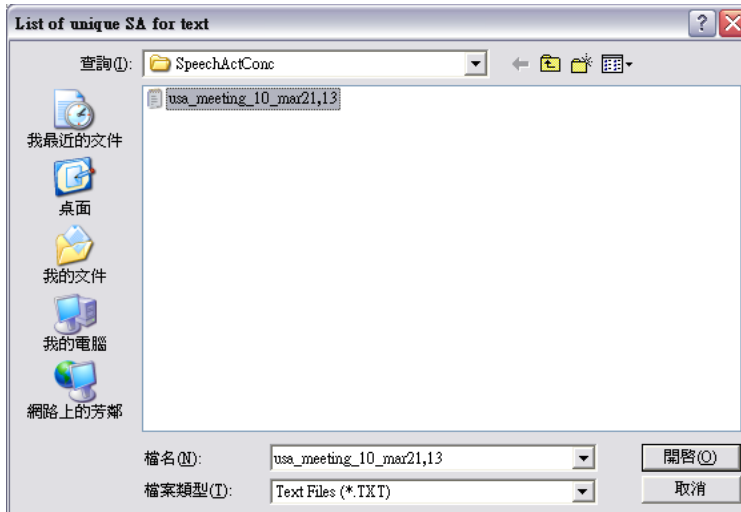


Figure 3.12. The prompt for the Unique SA List

Then the searches as specified are performed using this List. All the items in the selected Unique SA List are searched (Figure 3.13).

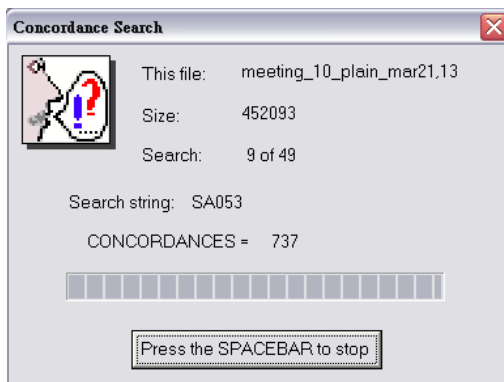


Figure 3.13. The Unique SA List searches

The result of the searches is shown in Figure 3.14 with the co-occurring speech acts listed as 2-SA Co-occurring. The List Box is shown after the 'Co-occur SA Ins' column has been sorted (by clicking the 'Sort Instances' button).

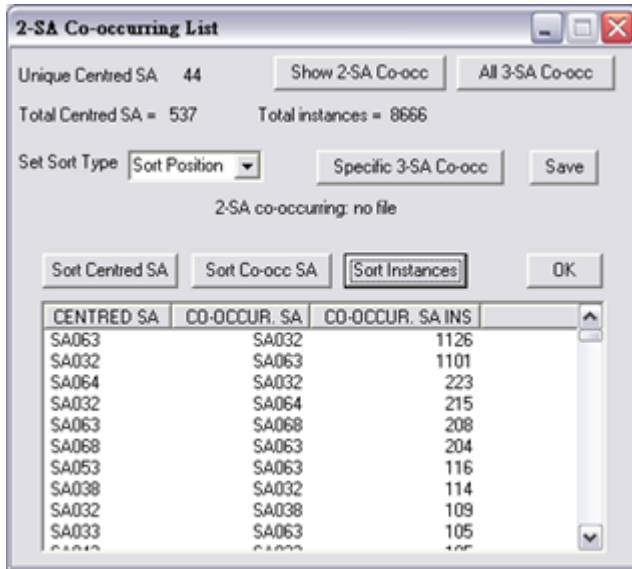


Figure 3.14. The automated search List Box for 2-SA Co-occurring

If the user would like to search for the 3-SA Co-occurring List, the user can first save the 2\_SA Co-occurring List and then click the ‘All 3-SA co-occ’ button, and an automated search for 3-SA Co-occurring List in the corpus will be generated (Figure 3.15).

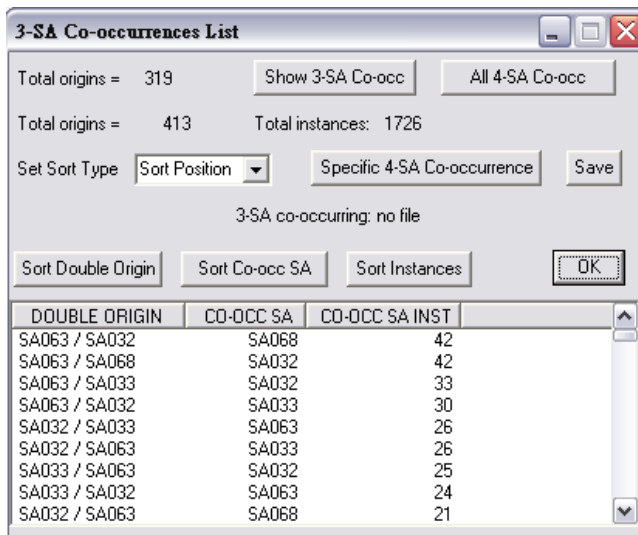


Figure 3.15. The Open Saved File function for 3-SA Co-occurring

‘Double Origin’ refers to the 2-SA Co-occurring List, in which the centred SA and co-occurring SA are used together to find the third co-occurring SA. As shown in the list, <SA063> and <SA032> most frequently co-occurs with

<SA068>. Selecting this in the List Box and clicking the ‘Show 3-SA Co-occ’ button produces concordance in Figure 3.16.

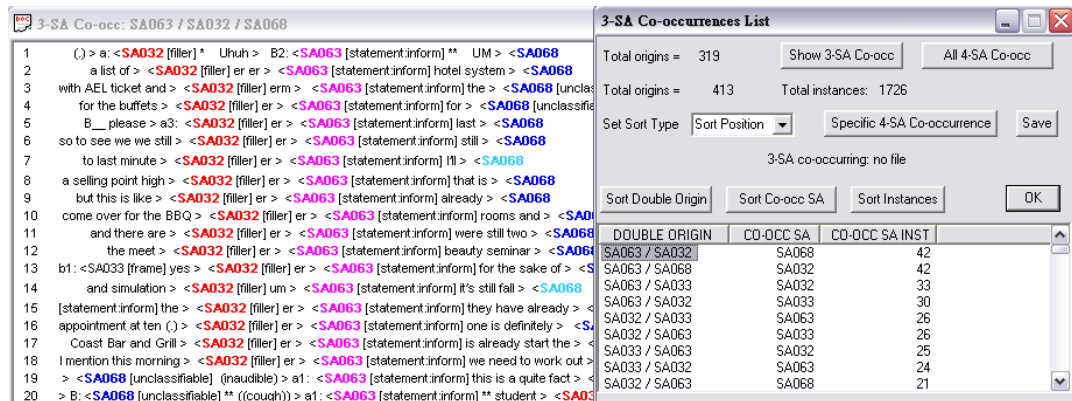


Figure 3.16. The display for selected 3-SA Co-occurring concordance in the List Box

The third menu item ‘Open Saved File’ is for opening saved 2-, 3-, or 4-SA Co-occurring SA lists. An opened file for 2-SA, 3-SA, or 4-SA Co-occurring is shown in Figure 3.17.

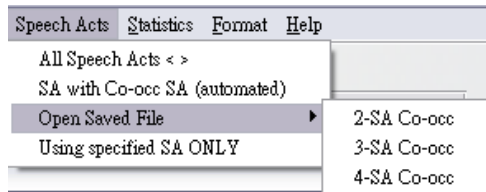


Figure 3.17. The Open Saved File function for 2-SA, 3-SA, and 4-SA Co-occurring

### 3.5 Summary

This chapter gives an account of the data to be used in this study (3.2), explains the research methodology with regard to speech act taxonomy, speech act annotations, and analysis procedure (3.3), and describes the functions of *SpeechActConc* (3.4). It has proposed an approach for manually annotating the speech acts in the business sub-corpus in the HKCSE (prosodic) and for carrying out the qualitative and quantitative investigation of speech acts among the different genres of business communication with the aid of the computer program. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the importance of manual annotation lies in the

necessity of close reference to the context of interaction for a most accurate interpretation of the communicative function of an utterance in a spontaneous naturally occurring spoken discourse. Given the intricacy and diversity in the use of linguistic realisations, automatic annotation may not be able to assign a best act to an utterance in such conversations effectively, in particular when the linguistic realisations are at variance with commonly agreed patterns or markers. Therefore, manual, qualitative study of corpus data is required to recognize the pragmatic communicative functions in the corpus. As frequency information can be generated with ease and obtained straightforwardly, quantitative research is usually associated with corpus data and focused on topics such as the rank order of the most frequent speech acts in the corpus, the raw frequency or the number of a given speech act in the corpus, the percentage of the total number of speech acts in the corpus that the raw frequency represents, the most frequent co-occurrences (e.g. 2-speech-act co-occurrences, 3-speech-act co-occurrences) of a given speech act in the corpus (cf. Timmis, 2015). The range of topics that can be investigated is reflected in the formulation of the research objectives and research questions of this study.



## Chapter Four

### Meetings

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background information about the meeting data in the HKCSE (prosodic) (4.2). It then describes and analyses the frequencies of occurrence of the speech acts identified in meetings (4.3) with a discussion of the findings (4.4), followed by a frequency analysis of two and three co-occurring speech acts (4.5) and discussion of findings (4.6). Lastly, the lexicogrammatical realisations and patterns of the most frequently occurring speech act in meetings are examined (4.7).

#### 4.2 Background information

Eleven meetings in various business and professional settings can be classified into three types: management meetings (B016-B019, B022-B023) involving a chairman and other staff (N=6), project progress meetings (B058-B060) involving supervisors and research staff or assistants (N=4), and a general meeting (B056) involving colleagues and a professor (N=1).

Business meetings play a key role in most workplace settings (Poncini, 2002, 2003, 2004; Koester, 2010; Holmes & Stubbe, 2015). Most descriptions of meetings have tended to identify a three-part generic structure consisting of an opening phase, a debating or discussion phase, and a closing phase (Koester, 2010; Oittinen & Piirainen-Marsh, 2015). The generic structure is more obvious in the management meetings than in the project progress meetings and the general meeting. All the three phases of a meeting will be investigated to answer the first three research questions. The data in the six management meetings were collected from various departments in hotels (Lin, 2008). The meetings were conducted in accordance with an agenda and led by the chairperson, with the representatives of different departments being asked to give a report on the performance of their departments. The four project progress meetings took place in an academic department in a university. The meetings were conducted without an agenda and led by the supervisor(s) or project leader(s). The research staff

members were asked to report on the progress of the assigned tasks such as data collection, data analysis, or other kinds of administrative work related to a particular research project (Lin, 2008). In the general meeting, the data were obtained from one-to-one interactions between colleagues from the same or different departments in an export company (Lin, 2008). Given the limited number of recordings collected in each type of meetings, the three types of meeting were analysed together.

In B016, the twelve speakers were four female Hong Kong Chinese and eight male Hong Kong Chinese. The topics of the meeting were as follows: the hotel average reservation and occupancy rate, long staying and VIP guests, guest irregularity cases, outstanding staff entry cases, nomination of staff for training, shipping charges with courier companies, setting up of a health club booth inside the hotel, renewal of door handle, energy saving bulbs, reset of mini bar, request of film shooting on the hotel roof top, one-day occupancy rate of all the hotels under the group, flight delay arrangement, airlines lay over, VIP arrival, monthly system rate, pick up rate, food cost, cleaning of the hotel ceiling, as well as promotion of the restaurant.

In B017, the thirteen speakers were five female Hong Kong Chinese and eight male Hong Kong Chinese. The topics of the meeting were as follows: lay over at the airport, average hotel booking, day use of early arrivals, marketing proposal and crew contract with the airlines, VIP flight and special hotel arrangement, long staying booking of an aviation company, rental of business centre service, day use booking request from an airlines for stop over, travel agency booking, room booking for university workshop and training, arrangement for labour day holidays, arrangement for large group checking in, weekly package and monthly room booking, room booking for company meeting and training, as well as report of hotel inspection.

In B018, the six speakers were one female Hong Kong Chinese and five male Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: graduation dinner package promotion, room arrangement for wedding expo at Easter, promotion of food and beverage department, company annual lunch and dinner, Easter extravaganza, secretary's week, special offer and promotion, promotion of business with different airlines, as well as passenger lounge for early arrivals.

In B019, the seven speakers were two female Hong Kong Chinese and five male Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: progress of the making of internal brochure, progress of connections with the media, charity programme, mother's day advertisement, film shooting at the hotel, one-day occupancy rate of different hotels under the group, delayed flight passengers, fixing the rate of hotel facilities, escalator maintenance, receptionist work, agreement with an airlines on reservation about party sale, hotel television system, sale of paintings in the coffee shop.

In B022, the twelve speakers were two female Hong Kong Chinese, four male Hong Kong Chinese, one female English speaker, and five male English speakers. The topics were as follows: self-introduction of staff members, guest comments with follow-up actions, paid occupancy rate, guest arrivals, suite and VIP booking, room booking for seminar, review of hotel restaurant performance, university lunch arrangement, strategy meeting arrangement, photo-taking of the hotel by a magazine, calling for a meeting about a project, arrangement of an event for department managers, quarterly guest control, fax service arrangement, as well as environmental expedition arrangement.

In B023, the thirteen speakers were four female Hong Kong Chinese, four male Hong Kong Chinese, and five male English speakers. The topics were as follows: self-introduction of staff members, review of the logbook about special incidents happened in the hotel, occupancy rate of the previous night, guest arrivals, VIP guests and visitors, suite booking, group arrival and departure, function room booking, performance of coffee shop and restaurant, guest comments, regular guest booking, follow-up actions with requests from travel agency and newspaper, buffet dining room air-conditioning, guest complaint about the food temperature, mobile phone signal transmission capacity, hotel interior renovation, as well as sales and marketing programme.

In B056, the four speakers were one female Hong Kong Chinese and three male English speakers. The topics were as follows: job descriptions including doing business with agents and customers and developing new business opportunities, export procedures, business trips in China, understanding the internal operation of the company, filing of the fax system, updating the business calendar, prioritizing the quotations about road diameter and overall length

hardness quality, filing of original drawings, and pricing of items.

In B058, the two speakers were one male Hong Kong Chinese and one female English speaker. The topics were as follows: the source of a journal article, filming of discourse classes, checking of video equipment, handling of the recorded video tapes and cassette tapes, transcription of the recordings, and preparation of a conference paper.

In B059, the three speakers were two female Hong Kong Chinese and one male English speaker. The topics were as follows: the use of piano dehumidifier, the use of dehumidifier in wardrobe, transcription of spoken data in video tapes and cassette tapes, arrangement of spoken data collection including the variety and the quantity, possibility of recording at a wedding banquet, discussion of wedding gift that is appropriate for a Chinese wedding banquet, arrangement for future employment of a current research assistant, possible candidates for the summer jobs, and purchase of reference book.

In B060, the three speakers were two female Hong Kong Chinese and one male English speaker. The topics were as follows: publication of journal article, arrangement of a workshop, data collection sources such as tutorials and seminars, proportion of Hong Kong Chinese and English speaker in the data collected, new chair in the office, transcription of spoken data from lectures, references related to lectures, handling of dissertation abstracts, cost of video tapes, Mark 6 lottery, corpus project and its budget, journal article written by one of the speakers, review of research assistants' performance and working hours, checking of the amount of transcribed data in genres including academic and business, arrangement for spoken data collection from companies, difficulty of transcribing spoken data with different accents and levels of fluency, as well as mosquito bites.

Despite the limited number of recordings collected in the eleven meetings, the topics are more diverse than expected, possibly due to the different nature of these meetings, namely hotel management meetings, university research project process meetings, and export company general meeting. However, among the meetings with the same contextual background, such as the management meetings held in a hotel or the project process meetings held in a university, the topics are found to be similar, though not necessarily the same, and shared in the

same type of meetings whereas occasionally some topics, mostly personal, are not closely or directly related to the purpose or goal for the meeting.

In the six hotel management meetings, the topics are mainly focused on the daily operation of different departments at the hotel such as occupancy rate, room booking arrangement, hotel promotion programme, and facility maintenance. In the four university research project progress meetings, the topics are mainly related to the particular research projects being discussed, such as data collection, transcription of spoken data, and research assistant employment. In the one export company general meeting, the topics include export procedures and details about quotations.

In hotel management meetings and the export company meeting, there is no instance of topics that are unrelated to the purpose or goal for the meeting. However, in project progress meetings, it is found that a number of topics are not directly related to the purpose or goal for the meeting, including the use of dehumidifier inside a piano and a wardrobe, the discussion about an appropriate gift for a Chinese wedding banquet, and mosquito bites. One possible explanation is that the meetings held in hotel and in the company are conducted with reference to a formal written agenda, which helps the participants focus on the relevant topics and maintain an orderly discussion towards the purpose or goal in the meeting (Handford, 2010). On the contrary, the meetings held in university are not conducted with a formal written agenda, which allows the participants to address (personal) topics that are not directly related to the purpose or goal for the meeting.

### **4.3 Frequency analysis of speech acts in meetings**

Frequency of occurrence can be important as they show which speech acts or combinations of speech acts are essential in a genre. On the basis of frequency findings, it is possible to see which speech acts are the most important ones and should be dealt with first in English language teaching and learning. Out of 8,178 instances of speech acts found in the meetings, there are 48 unique speech acts. They are listed in accordance with the descending frequency sort (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Frequency of unique speech acts in meetings

No	Speech act	Frequency	Percentage
1	Statement: inform	2241	27.40%
2	Filler	1686	20.62%
3	Reply to statement: acknowledge	738	9.02%
4	Statement: opine	680	8.32%
5	Expand	254	3.11%
6	Answer to question: comply	246	3.01%
7	Justify	237	2.90%
8	Frame	218	2.67%
9	Uptake	179	2.19%
10	Question: polarity	162	1.98%
11	Preface	145	1.77%
12	Monitor	118	1.44%
13	Request: action	112	1.37%
14	Question: identification	107	1.31%
15	Question: confirmation	97	1.19%
16	Reply to statement: agree	79	0.97%
17	Suggest	74	0.90%
18	Clue	73	0.89%
19	Check	70	0.86%
20	Precursor	63	0.77%
21	Answer to request: accept	55	0.67%
22	Confirm	53	0.65%
23	Alert	52	0.64%
24	Answer to question: imply	50	0.61%
25	Starter	48	0.59%
26	Appealer	46	0.56%
27	Thanks	39	0.48%
28	Empathizer	39	0.48%
29	Hedge	35	0.43%
30	Instruction	23	0.28%
31	Express_wish	22	0.27%
32	Answer to question: supply	15	0.18%

33	Reply to statement: object	15	0.18%
34	Emphasizer	12	0.15%
35	Query	12	0.15%
36	Staller	11	0.13%
37	Apology	10	0.12%
38	Greeting	10	0.12%
39	Answer to question: disclaim	9	0.11%
40	Evaluate	9	0.11%
41	Correct	5	0.06%
42	Empathy	5	0.06%
43	Disagree	5	0.06%
44	React	4	0.05%
45	Request: permission	3	0.04%
46	Answer to request: evade	3	0.04%
47	Correct-self	2	0.02%
48	Invite	2	0.02%

As seen from Table 4.1, the two most frequent speech acts in the sub-corpus of meetings are [statement: inform] (27.40%) and [filler] (20.62%), each with more than 1,600 occurrences, followed by [reply to statement: acknowledge] (9.02%), [statement: opine] (8.32%). The more frequent speech acts are followed by [expand] (3.11%), [answer to question: comply] (3.01%), [justify] (2.90%), [frame] (2.67%), [uptake] (2.19%), [question: polarity] (1.98%), [preface] (1.77%), [monitor] (1.44%), [request: action] (1.37%), [question: identification] (1.31%), and [question: confirmation] (1.19%). The frequencies of the remaining speech acts are lower, ranging from 79 occurrences (0.97%) ([reply to statement: agree]) to 2 occurrence (0.02%) ([correct-self] and [invite]).

Out of these 48 speech acts, there are twenty-eight primary speech acts (58.33%) (Table 4.2), six secondary acts (12.50%) (Table 4.3), and nine complementary acts (18.75%) (Table 4.4), with reference to Stenström's (1994) taxonomy and five speech acts (10.42%) (Table 4.5) with reference to other studies (Tsui, 1994; Leech & Weisser, 2003). Acts, being the smallest interactive unit in spoken interaction, signal what the speakers intend, want or wish to communicate (Stenström, 1994) and are divided into three categories, namely

primary acts, secondary acts, and complementary acts. Each act has its own communicative function(s).

Table 4.2 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the twenty-eight primary acts in meetings.

Table 4.2. Communicative functions and frequencies of primary acts in meetings

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Statement: inform	Provide or present neutral information	2,241	27.40%
2	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Signal receipt of information or signal that the second speaker accepts what the first speaker said as a valid contribution to the conversation	738	9.02%
3	Statement: opine	Give or express one's personal opinions, feelings and attitudes	680	8.32%
4	Answer to question: comply	Answer a question directly and adequately	246	3.01%
5	Question: polarity	Ask for a yes / no question	162	1.98%
6	Request: action	Ask somebody to do something	112	1.37%
7	Question: identification	Ask for information or an answer identifying a wh-word	107	1.31%
8	Question: confirmation	Ask for a confirming answer	97	1.19%
9	Reply to statement: agree	Signal agreement with what was just said, indicate that speaker B approves of what speaker A means	79	0.97%
10	Suggest	Put forward an idea or a plan	74	0.90%
11	Check	Ask for repetition or clarification of what was said in the immediately preceding turn	70	0.86%



12	Answer to request: accept	Agree to a request, a suggestion, etc.	55	0.67%
13	Confirm	Respond to a request for confirmation	53	0.65%
14	Alert	Call the addressee's attention, attract the other party's / parties' attention	52	0.64%
15	Answer to question: imply	Answer the question indirectly, give adequate information implicitly	50	0.61%
16	Thanks	Express gratitude	39	0.48%
17	Answer to question: supply	Give inadequate information, does not really answer the question	15	0.18%
18	Reply to statement: object	Signal a different opinion	15	0.18%
19	Query	Express doubt or strong surprise	12	0.15%
20	Apology	Express regret	10	0.12%
21	Greeting	Greet somebody or bid farewell	10	0.12%
22	Answer to question: disclaim	Declare the answer is unknown; come up with an answer that is honest and straightforward but which does not answer the question and does not pretend to do so	9	0.11%
23	Evaluate	Judge the value of what the previous speaker said	9	0.11%
24	Disagree	Express disagreement	5	0.06%
25	React	Express attitude or strong feelings	4	0.05%
26	Request: permission	Ask for a go-ahead	3	0.04%
27	Answer to request: evade	Avoid answering (consciously)	3	0.04%
28	Invite	Ask if somebody 'would like to do X', submit something for acceptance	2	0.03%

In Table 4.2, the most frequent primary speech acts in the meetings is [statement: inform] (27.40%), followed by [reply to statement: acknowledge] (9.02%), [statement: opine] (8.32%), and [answer to question: comply] (3.01%). They are followed by [question: polarity] (1.98%), [request: action] (1.37%), [question: identification] (1.31%), and [question: confirmation] (1.19%). The frequencies of the remaining primary speech acts are lower, ranging from 97 occurrences (1.19%) ([question: confirmation]) to 2 occurrences (0.03%) ([invite]).

Table 4.3 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the six secondary acts in meetings.

Table 4.3. Communicative functions and frequencies of secondary acts in meetings

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Expand	Give complementary information	254	3.11%
2	Justify	Defend what was said in the primary act, give the reason why	237	2.90%
3	Preface	Introduce a primary act, has a face-saving effect in that they prepare speaker B for what is going to happen next, make sure that certain pre-conditions hold before making the [following primary act]	145	1.77%
4	Clue	Follow a primary act and give a hint, provide additional information after a question, comment on the question	73	0.89%
5	Precursor	Precede a primary act and give information, link up what was said before, comment on something in the preceding dialogue	63	0.77%
6	Emphasizer	Underline what was said in the primary act	12	0.15%

In Table 4.3, the three most frequent secondary speech acts in meetings are [expand] (3.11%), [justify] (2.90%), and [preface] (1.77%), each with more than 140 occurrences, followed by [clue] (0.89%) and [precursor] (0.77%). The least frequent secondary speech act is [emphasizer] (0.15%).

Table 4.4 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the nine complementary acts in meetings.

Table 4.4. Communicative functions and frequencies of complementary acts in meetings

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Filler	Fill a gap in the discourse	1,686	20.62%
2	Frame	Mark a boundary or the beginning of a new stage in the discourse	218	2.67%
3	Uptake	Accept what was said and lead on, acknowledge receipt of what the previous speaker said and evaluate it before going on	179	2.19%
4	Monitor	Help putting something right, make a new start or rephrase what the speaker was going to say in the middle of a turn as the listener cannot follow or is not convinced, make the speaker's point clear, steer what the speaker says	118	1.44%
5	Starter	Helps getting started	48	0.59%
6	Appealer	Invite feedback	46	0.56%
7	Empathizer	Involve the listener, engage the listener and make her/him feel part of the conversation, intensify the relationship with the listener, prompt listener feedback, the current speaker invites the current listener to take an active part	39	0.48%

8	Hedge	Help avoiding commitment, modify and mitigate an utterance, help the speaker avoid going straight to the point, avoid being blunt, avoid appearing authoritative, and avoid committing him/herself	35	0.43%
9	Staller	Play for time	11	0.13%

Table 4.4 shows that the most frequent complementary speech act in meetings is [filler] (20.62%), followed by [frame] (2.67%), [uptake] (2.19%), and monitor (1.44%). The frequencies of the remaining speech acts are lower, ranging from 48 occurrences (0.59%) ([starter]) to 11 occurrences (0.13%) ([staller]).

Table 4.5 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts in meetings from other studies (Tsui, 1994; Leech & Weisser, 2003).

Table 4.5. Communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts in meetings from other studies

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage	Source
1	Instruction	get the addressee to comply	23	0.28%	Tsui (1994)
2	Express_wish	Express a wish or desire	22	0.27%	Leech and Weisser (2003)
3	Correct	Correct what the other speaker has said	5	0.06%	
4	Empathy	Show concern for and empathize with the addressee such as 'congratulate', 'well-wishing', 'welcome', 'condole'	5	0.06%	Tsui (1994)
5	Correct-self	Correct one's own utterance	2	0.02%	Leech and Weisser (2003)

Table 4.5 shows that the two most frequent speech acts from other studies are [instruction] (0.28%) and [express\_wish] (0.27%) with more than 20 occurrences. The frequencies of the remaining speech acts are lower, ranging from 5 occurrences (0.06%) (for example, [correct]) to 2 occurrences (0.02%) ([correct-self]).

In summary, the findings on the communicative function and frequency analysis of different categories of speech acts have shown that in the context of meeting, the majority of speech acts are from Stenström's (1994) primary acts (58.33%), which are used to realise moves on their own, followed by complementary acts (18.75%), which are used to accompany but rarely replaces primary acts and secondary acts (12.50%), which are used to accompany and sometimes replace primary acts. The remaining acts are from other studies (10.42%). The quantitative results regarding different unique acts shown above respond to the first research question on the relative frequencies of occurrence of different speech acts in a genre.

#### **4.4 Discussion of findings**

As reflected in the communicative function and frequency analysis of different categories of speech acts, reporting objective or neutral information and expressing personal opinions are relatively common practices in management meetings (B016-B019, B022-B023), research project progress meetings (B058-B060), and a general meeting (B056). Both [statement: inform] (27.40%) and [statement: opine] (8.32%) are within the top five most frequently occurring speech acts, with [statement: inform] being the most frequent while [statement: opine] the fourth. They occur significantly more frequently than the other speech acts, except [filler] (20.62%) and [reply to statement: acknowledge] (9.02%), which are in the third and fourth places respectively. These acts are reflected in the language used in the practices and the structures of (business) meetings, including opening of meeting, discussion of the agenda, and closing of meeting (Handford, 2007, 2010; cf. Bhatia, 1993, 1996) and realised by distinctive lexicogrammatical features in the meetings for the purposes of reviewing, planning, giving and receiving information or advice (cf. Handford, 2010). The

following examples can illustrate the different linguistic realisations found in the dataset to perform a particular speech act.

With regard to reporting objective or neutral information in a hotel meeting, the linguistic realisations of [statement: inform] can be a summary of the daily performance of various departments, as shown in Extract 4.1 (B022). Apart from lines 5 and 9, which are fillers ‘er’ and ‘um’ respectively, speaker B2 reports on the performance of the restaurants with the support of figures:

Extract 4.1 B022

Location: Hotel meeting room

Participant: B2: Male native

1. B2: <SA063 [statement: inform] and (.) we repeat the money
2. yesterday (.) >
3. <SA063 [statement: inform] we did totally four hundred and
4. forty-one thousand dollars >
5. <SA032 [filler] er >
6. <SA063 [statement: inform] shortly behind budget >
7. <SA063 [statement: inform] exceed the budget on the beverage
8. >
9. <SA032 [filler] um >
10. <SA063 [statement: inform] again a strong performance in
11. Todd's >
12. <SA063 [statement: inform] thirty-five against budget twenty
13. eight (.) >
14. <SA063 [statement: inform] good performance in Dickens >
15. <SA063 [statement: inform] forty-two against budget
16. thirty-six >

With regard to expressing personal opinions, the linguistic realisations of [statement: opine] can be a suggestion for handling an issue from daily hotel operation. For example, as shown in Extract 4.2 (B016), a large amount of money has been found in a guest room, and the colleagues express their opinions about how the issue should be dealt with. Speaker b3 suggests looking for the

previous guest and asking him about the money (lines 3-4 and 6-7). Speaker a2 suggests not telling the guest anything about the money (lines 9-10 and 13). Speaker b1 suggests looking for the guest and asking him if he has left anything in the hotel (lines 5, 11, and 15-16).

Extract 4.2 B016

Location: Hotel meeting room

Participants: b1, b3: male Hong Kong Chinese

a2: female Hong Kong Chinese

1. b3: <SA043 [preface] he is only a suspected may be could be the
2. another one >
3. <SA064 [statement: opine] \* so we got to chase this previous
4. guest >
5. b1: <SA064 [statement: opine] \*\* could be could be the >
6. b3: <SA064 [statement: opine] we talk to this guy first and then
7. >
8. <SA068 [unclassifiable] (inaudible) >
9. a2: <SA064 [statement: opine] the other way we didn't tell him
10. anything just say the hotel is looking for him >
11. b1: <SA064 [statement: opine] looking for him and \* ask him >
12. b3: <SA064 [statement: opine] \*\* yeah for anything left >
13. a2: <SA064 [statement: opine] \*\* whether he left something >
14. <SA032 [filler] yeah >
15. b1: <SA064 [statement: opine] whether he left anything in the
16. hotel >

It is also found that [statement: inform] or [statement: opine] is followed by [reply to statement: acknowledge] (9.02%), which signals a minimal receipt of information, such as 'okay', 'yeah', 'yes', 'uhuh', 'mhm', 'mm', 'right', 'sure', or a combination of these markers, such as 'okay yeah', 'mhm yeah', 'okay sure'. Few of these linguistic realisations of acknowledgement, such as 'right' and 'okay', are found in Stenström (1994). Moreover, other than these realisations, it is found that a listener can express an acknowledgement by repeating what the

speaker has just said, as shown in Extract 4.3 (B017). After speaker b2 has raised a question about the date for a group check-in at a hotel (line 1), speaker a2 and speaker a1 answer it (lines 2 and 3). To reply to their answers, speaker b2 responds by repeating a2 and a1's answers 'Sunday' (line 4), rather than using the lexical items listed above:

Extract 4.3 B017

Location: Hotel meeting room

Participants: b2: male Hong Kong Chinese  
a1 / a2: female Hong Kong Chinese

1. b2: <SA047 [question: identification] when is it >
2. a2: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] Sun \* day >
3. a1: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] \*\* Sunday >
4. b2: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] this Sunday >

The following is another example of the use of repetition to show acknowledgement (Extract 4.4). In Extract 4.4, a1 is talking about her view on mosquito bites on (lines 1-2 and 4-5), and a2 responds to her views by repeating 'female' (line 3), instead of using such markers as 'mhm' or 'okay':

Extract 4.4 B060

Location: University meeting room

Participants: a1 / a2: female Hong Kong Chinese

1. a1: <SA064 [statement: opine] my theory is female female gets
2. bitten >
3. a2: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] female >
4. a1: <SA064 [statement: opine] females as opposed to male tend to
5. get bitten by mos-mosquito mosquitoes >



In summary, the linguistic realisations of the most frequently occurring speech acts in meetings are diverse. Few of them, such as ‘okay’ or ‘right’ for responding to what the speaker has said, are markers as found in studies like Stenström (1994), whose data is from the London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English that includes conversation in private or public discussion in London, or Schiffrin (1987), whose data is from interviews with working-class and middle-class Jewish residents of a mixed-ethnic neighbourhood in Philadelphia. However, it is more common that these linguistic realisations do not need to be introduced or signaled by a marker. Rather, there are a range of linguistic expressions that could be used to perform a particular speech act.

#### 4.5 Frequency analysis of co-occurring speech acts in meetings

In meetings, out of a total of 3,749 instances of two co-occurring speech acts, there are 27 unique centred speech acts and 240 total centred speech acts (Appendix 1). The top ten two co-occurring speech acts are as follows (Table 4.6):

Table 4.6. Top ten two co-occurring speech acts in meetings

Centred speech act	Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Statement: inform	Filler	1117	29.79
Filler	Statement: opine	224	5.97
Filler	Justify	109	2.91
Statement: inform	Frame	105	2.80
Filler	Preface	104	2.77
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	88	2.35
Filler	Expand	76	2.03
Filler	Frame	67	1.79
Filler	Request: action	67	1.79
Filler	Monitor	64	1.71

As seen from Table 4.6, the most frequent two co-occurring speech acts are ‘[statement: inform] / [filler]’ (29.79%), followed by ‘[filler] / [statement: opine]’

(5.95%), '[filler] / [justify]' (2.91%), '[statement: inform] / [frame]' (105; 2.80%), as well as '[filler] / [preface]' (2.77%). The frequencies of the remaining two co-occurring speech acts are lower, ranging from 88 occurrences (2.35%) ('[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]') to 2 occurrences (0.05%) (e.g. '[uptake] / [hedge]').

Fillers are very commonly used by speakers when they inform (29.79%), opine (5.95%) or justify (2.91%), thus making it one of the most frequently co-occurring speech acts. The very frequent occurrence of [filler] in all the six genres deserves further elaboration and discussion. Fillers (Stenström, 1994; Clark & Fox Tree, 2002), as a type of speech disfluencies (Duvall, Robbins, Graham, & Divett, 2014), can be realised by a set of lexical items such as 'well', 'okay', 'you know', 'I mean' (e.g. Schiffrin, 1987; Stenström, 1994; Castro, 2009) or 'uh', 'um' (Clark & Fox Tree, 2002). They are also referred to as 'discourse markers' (e.g. Schiffrin, 1987; Stenström, 1994), 'filled pauses' (Clark & Fox Tree, 2002), or 'filler words' (Erten, 2014; Laserna, Seih, & Pennebaker, 2014). Though discourse markers and filled pauses are considered to be two categories of filler words (Laserna et al, 2014), they perform different textual functions in helping the speakers organise the discourse, such as starting a conversation, introducing and marking the end of a topic, introducing and digression and marking the resumption of the old topic, signally the end of a conversation, and of course, serving as a filler or delaying tactic to sustain discourse or hold the floor (Stenström, 1994; Brinton, 1996; Carter & McCarthy, 1997; Muller 2005).

The discursual function of [filler] to fill a gap in the discourse in the six genres has shown similarities and differences regarding their linguistic realisations. These filled pauses are used by speakers to sustain discourse or to hold the floor. Table 4.7 shows the wide range of linguistic realisations of [filler] for this discursual function as well as of their diverse frequencies and percentages of occurrence. Analysis of the filled pauses in the six genres of business discourse has produced 116 linguistic realisations of [filler] (Table 4.7). These 116 linguistic realisations are diverse, ranging from a sound (e.g. 'uhuh') and a word (e.g. 'well') to sounds (e.g. 'um er') and words (e.g. 'you know') to combinations of sound(s) and word(s) (e.g. 'and um', 'yes er um', 'sort of erm').

Table 4.7. Frequency and percentage of linguistic realisations of [filler] in the six genres

Genre Realization	Meeting	Telephone and conference call	Informal office talk	Service encounter		Q&A session	Interview	
				Airport	Hotel		Job	Placement
actually							2 (0.07%)	1 (0.04%)
aghh			1 (0.09%)					
ah			1 (0.09%)	1 (0.30%)	1 (0.50%)		4 (0.14%)	2 (0.08%)
ahaa							3 (0.10%)	
al-		1 (0.19%)						
alright	4 (0.24%)	1 (0.19%)		1 (0.30%)	7 (3.54%)	1 (0.08%)	74 (2.59%)	10 (0.40%)
alright then		1 (0.19%)						
and							1 (0.03%)	
and er		8 (1.54%)						1 (0.04%)
and erm						1 (0.08%)	1 (0.03%)	
and you know			1 (0.09%)					
and um	2 (0.12%)			1 (0.30%)			1 (0.03%)	1 (0.04%)
ar								1 (0.04%)
blah blah blah			1 (0.09%)					
but			1 (0.09%)			1 (0.08%)		
but er	1 (0.06%)		1 (0.09%)			1 (0.08%)		
but erm						1 (0.08%)		

but yes			1 (0.09%)					
em								7 (0.28%)
er	1,042 (61.80%)	212 (40.77%)	410 (35.65%)	204 (61.08%)	90 (45.45%)	630 (51.72%)	1,136 (39.72%)	1,292 (51.85%)
errr-	1 (0.06%)							
er er	38 (2.25%)		8 (0.70%)	3 (0.90%)	4 (2.02%)	10 (0.82%)	8 (0.28%)	6 (0.24%)
er er er	3 (0.18%)					3 (0.25%)		
er er er er	1 (0.06%)							
er erm	1 (0.06%)						1 (0.03%)	
er is is			1 (0.09%)					
er sort of er er	1 (0.06%)							
er the						1 (0.08%)		
er yeah	1 (0.06%)							
er yes				1 (0.30%)				1 (0.04%)
er you know								1 (0.04%)
er um		1 (0.19%)					1 (0.03%)	
erm	114 (6.76%)	64 (12.31%)	15 (1.30%)	3 (0.90%)	7 (3.54%)	204 (16.75%)	224 (7.83%)	16 (0.64%)
erm er	4 (0.24%)		1 (0.09%)			1 (0.08%)		
fine	2 (0.12%)		1 (0.09%)					1 (0.04%)
good	2 (0.12%)		2 (0.17%)					
great	2 (0.12%)					1 (0.08%)		1 (0.04%)
ha								2 (0.08%)
huh	1 (0.06%)	1 (0.19%)		2 (0.60%)	2 (1.01%)		1 (0.03%)	3 (0.12%)
I	2 (0.12%)							
is it			2 (0.17%)					
it er		1 (0.19%)						
la				1 (0.30%)				

let's er								1 (0.04%)
manager								1 (0.04%)
mhm	6 (0.36%)	2 (0.38%)	2 (0.17%)	2 (0.60%)	5 (2.53%)		49 (1.71%)	52 (2.09%)
mhm mhm							1 (0.03%)	
mhm mm mm								1 (0.04%)
mhm yeah					1 (0.51%)			
mhmm				1 (0.30%)		1 (0.08%)		1 (0.04%)
mm	41 (2.43%)		9 (0.78%)	3 (0.90%)	3 (1.52%)	3 (0.25%)	75 (2.62%)	75 (3.01%)
mm er								2 (0.08%)
mm mm	1 (0.06%)						2 (0.07%)	1 (0.04%)
mm mm mm								2 (0.08%)
mm mm mm mm mm								2 (0.08%)
mm mm mm mm mm mm mm								1 (0.04%)
mm um								1 (0.04%)
of erm						1 (0.08%)		
oh	4 (0.24%)	3 (0.58%)	7 (0.61%)	3 (0.60%)	1 (0.51%)	2 (0.16%)	9 (0.31%)	6 (0.24%)
oh yeah		1 (0.19%)						
okay	80 (4.74%)	12 (2.31%)	9 (0.78%)	27 (8.08%)	11 (5.56%)	23 (1.89%)	69 (2.41%)	54 (2.17%)
okay and um	1 (0.06%)							
okay er	2 (0.12%)							
okay great	1 (0.06%)							
okay then	2 (0.12%)							
okay okay	1 (0.06%)							
okay yeah	1 (0.06%)			1 (0.30%)				

re						1 (0.08%)	1 (0.03%)	1 (0.04%)
right	17 (1.01%)	5 (0.96%)	19 (1.65%)	6 (1.80%)	5 (2.53%)	12 (0.99%)	80 (2.80%)	7 (0.28%)
right erm							1 (0.03%)	
right yeah							1 (0.03%)	
so	1 (0.06%)	1 (0.19%)	3 (0.26%)	2 (0.60%)	6 (3.03%)	2 (0.16%)	11 (0.38%)	3 (0.12%)
so er					4 (2.02%)			
so erm	1 (0.06%)							
so um	1 (0.06%)							
sort of	2 (0.12%)	2 (0.38%)				96 (7.88%)		1 (0.04%)
sort of erm						1 (0.08%)		
sure	1 (0.06%)					1 (0.08%)	1 (0.03%)	
that							1 (0.03%)	
the um			1 (0.09%)					
then			1 (0.09%)					
to er								1 (0.04%)
uh				7 (2.10%)				
uh huh				1 (0.30%)			1 (0.03%)	
uhuh	2 (0.12%)	2 (0.38%)		3 (0.90%)	2 (1.01%)		18 (0.63%)	6 (0.24%)
uhuh uhuh							1 (0.03%)	
um	108 (6.41%)	40 (7.69%)	196 (17.04%)	25 (7.49%)	11 (5.56%)	72 (5.91%)	567 (19.83%)	790 (31.70%)
um um							1 (0.03%)	1 (0.04%)
um er	1 (0.06%)					3 (0.25%)	1 (0.03%)	2 (0.08%)
very good					1 (0.51%)			
we er er		1 (0.19%)						
well	1 (0.06%)	9 (1.73%)	17 (1.48%)	2 (0.60%)	4 (2.02%)	9 (0.74%)	71 (2.48%)	21 (0.84%)
well it's			1 (0.09%)					
well yeah							2 (0.07%)	

well well							1 (0.03%)	
woo		1 (0.19%)						
yea							1 (0.03%)	
yeah	106 (6.29%)	34 (6.54%)	112 (9.74%)	23 (6.89%)	22 (11.11%)	15 (1.23%)	333 (11.64%)	43 (1.73%)
yeah look			1 (0.09%)					
yeah mm							1 (0.03%)	
yeah okay	1 (0.06%)							
yeah right			1 (0.09%)					
yeah yeah	2 (0.12%)						1 (0.03%)	
yep	1 (0.06%)			2 (0.60%)	1 (0.51%)			
yes	7 (0.42%)	5 (0.96%)	7 (0.61%)	6 (1.80%)	6 (3.03%)	3 (0.25%)	27 (0.94%)	20 (0.80%)
yes er um							1 (0.03%)	
yo	1 (0.06%)							
you			1 (0.09%)					
you know	69 (4.09%)	110 (21.15%)	313 (27.22%)	2 (0.60%)	3 (1.52%)	117 (9.61%)	74 (2.59%)	49 (1.97%)
you know it's			1 (0.09%)					
you know like		1 (0.19%)						
you know oh		1 (0.19%)						
you know sort of						1 (0.08%)		
you see	2 (0.12%)							1 (0.04%)
you you know			2 (0.17%)					
yup				1 (0.30%)	1 (0.51%)		1 (0.03%)	
	<b>1686 (100%)</b>	<b>520 (100%)</b>	<b>1,150 (100%)</b>	<b>334 (100%)</b>	<b>198 (100%)</b>	<b>1,218 (100%)</b>	<b>2,860 (100%)</b>	<b>2,492 (100%)</b>

However, it is found that the more complicated the realisations are, the less frequent they are.

Table 4.8 compares the top five most frequently occurring linguistic realisations in each genre. ‘Er’ occurs most frequently in all the six genres with an average average of 48.38%, ranging from 35.65% in informal office talks to 61.80% in meetings. ‘Um’ occurs in all genres except hotel service encounters, with the percentage ranging from 5.91% in Q&A sessions to 31.70% in placement interviews, obviously lower than those of ‘er’. The other realisations, namely ‘erm’, ‘okay’, and ‘yeah’ occur in four to five genres with percentages ranging from 2.13% (‘okay’ in placement interviews) to 21.11% (‘yeah’ in hotel service encounters). The percentages of occurrences are also lower than ‘um’. Two realisations – ‘right’ and ‘you know’ – occur in two to three genres with percentages ranging from 1.65% (‘right’ in informal office talks) to 27.22 % (‘you know’ in informal office talks). The last four realisations are found in one genre only, which are ‘alright’ (3.54%) in hotel service encounters, ‘mm’ (3.01%) in placement interview, ‘sort of’ (7.88%) in Q&A sessions, and ‘uh’ (2.10%) in airport service encounter; the numbers of occurrences of these realisations could be negligible.

Two observations can be made. First, among the top five most frequently occurring linguistics realisations of [filler] in the six genres, ‘er’ and ‘um’ are the most common ones as they are found in almost all the genres with relatively higher percentages of occurrence. Both of them are sounds rather than words. The remaining more frequent realisations consist of both sounds (e.g. ‘uh’ and ‘mm’) and words (e.g. ‘alright’ and ‘sort of’). ‘Er’ and ‘um’ could be two distinctive realisations of [filler] in the business discourse. Second, all the top five realisations are simple with one sound (e.g. ‘erm’), one word (‘okay’), or two words (‘you know’). These most common forms are syntactically simpler than the less frequent realisations found in the genres.

Fillers, together with other complementary acts (Stenström, 1994), work on the discourse level (Mehrddad, Ferdows, & Parviz, 2015) and do not carry a communicative function or purpose. Rather, they are syntactically independent from the environment or the speech event (Brinton, 2008) and convey collateral or interactional messages in a communication (Stenström, 1994; Erten, 2014).



Table 4.8. Top five most frequently occurring [filler] in each of the six genres

Genre [filler]	Meeting	Telephone and conference call	Informal office talk	Service encounter		Q&A session	Interview	
				Airport	Hotel		Job	Placement
alright	/	/	/	/	3.54%	/	/	/
er	61.80%	40.77%	35.65%	60.08%	45.45%	51.72%	39.72%	51.85%
erm	6.76%	12.31%	/	/	3.54%	16.75%	7.83%	/
mm	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	3.01%
okay	4.74%	2.31%	/	8.08%	5.56%	/	/	2.13%
right	/	/	1.65%	/	/	/	2.80%	2.13%
sort of	/	/	/	/	/	7.88%	/	/
yeah	6.29%	/	9.74%	6.89%	21.11%	/	11.64%	/
uh	/	/	/	2.10%	/	/	/	/
um	6.41%	7.69%	17.04%	7.49%	/	5.91%	19.83%	31.70%
you know	/	21.15%	27.22%	/	/	9.61%	/	/

One characteristic of fillers is their high frequency of occurrence in spoken discourse (Brinton, 1996; Jucker & Ziv, 1998), which is in consistency with the findings from the present study.

Apart from the co-occurring speech acts with [filler], other adjacency pairs are found in the search for two co-occurring speech acts. Some are recognized with a preferred response such as ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’ (2.35%), ‘[check] / [confirm]’ (0.88%), ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: agree]’ (0.51%) whereas many others are not, such as ‘[statement: inform] / [frame]’ (2.80%), ‘[statement: inform] / [uptake]’ (1.52%), ‘[statement: opine] / [frame]’ (1.31%).

Regarding three co-occurring speech acts, out of a total of 293 instances, there are 85 double origins (Appendix 2). Table 4.9 shows the frequency distribution of the top ten three co-occurring speech acts in meetings (Table 4.9):

Table 4.9. Top ten three co-occurring speech acts in meetings

Double origin		Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Statement: inform	Frame	Filler	33	11.26
Statement: inform	Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	21	7.17
Statement: inform	Filler	Uptake	13	4.44
Filler	Frame	Statement: opine	12	4.10
Filler	Statement: opine	Statement: inform	11	3.75
statement: inform	Filler	Thanks	7	2.39
Filler	Frame	Request: action	6	2.05
Statement: inform	Filler	Preface	5	1.71
Statement: inform	Filler	Alert	5	1.71
Filler	Preface	Uptake	5	1.71

As seen in Table 4.9, the two most frequent three co-occurring speech acts are ‘[statement: inform] / [frame] / [filler]’ (11.26%) and ‘[statement: inform] / [filler] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’ (7.17%). They are followed by ‘[statement: inform] / [filler] / [uptake]’ (4.44%); ‘[filler] / [frame] / [statement: opine]’ (4.10%); ‘[filler] / [statement: opine] / [statement: inform]’ (3.75%). The frequencies of the remaining three co-occurring speech acts are lower, ranging from seven occurrences (2.39%) (‘[statement: inform] / [filler] / [thanks]’) to two occurrences (0.68%) (e.g. ‘[alert] / [self-denigration] / [filler]’).

#### **4.6 Discussion of findings**

The discussion about sequential patterns of speech acts is closely related to the notion of adjacency pairs in conversation analysis (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). In the adjacency pair, certain pair types are identified in conversation that are characterized by two utterance length, adjacent positioning of component utterances, and different speakers producing each utterance. Instances of common pair types, termed ‘first pair part’ and ‘second pair part’, include ‘question – answer’, ‘greeting – greeting’, and ‘offer – acceptance / refusal’, as well as invitation – acceptance / decline’, ‘complaint – denial’, ‘compliment – rejection’, ‘challenge – rejection’, and ‘request – grant’. The two pair parts are intimately linked and are used for selecting next speaker by current speaker (Sacks et al., 1974; cf. Mey, 2001).

In conversational interchanges, not all potential second parts to the first part of an adjacency pair are of equal standing on the one hand, and not all second pair parts in an adjacency relationship are of equal structural complexity on the other. There is a rank operating over the alternatives such that there is one preferred and one dispreferred category of response. The notion of preference is a structural notion that corresponds to the linguistic concept of ‘markedness’. Preferred second pair parts are ‘unmarked’, occurring as structurally simpler turns, while dispreferred second part parts are ‘marked’, occurring as structurally complex turns (Levinson, 1983). For example, an acceptance is a preferred second part for an offer, a request, an invitation whereas a refusal is a dispreferred second part; an expected answer is a preferred second part of a question whereas an unexpected answer or a non-answer is not (cf. Levinson,

1983; Pomerantz, 1984; Mey, 2001).

In contrast to the simple and immediate nature of preferred second pair parts such as acknowledgement or confirmation, dispreferred ones are delayed and contain additional complex components or show various degrees of structural build-up such as elaborated excuses or long explanations (Levinson, 1983; Mey, 2001). Marked behaviours are ‘dispreferred’ because they require more on the part of the speakers, usually resulting in a noticeable deviance from what is expected or accepted (Mey, 2001). The concepts of adjacency pairs and preference organization as discussed in conversation analysis are referred to in the scrutiny of the two co-occurring speech acts in the six genres in business communication. The findings help respond to the second research question.

Regarding the two co-occurring speech acts in meetings, few adjacency pairs with a preferred next action as mentioned in Sections 1.5 and 2.5.4 are found such as ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’, ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’, and ‘[check] / [confirm]’. One pair is ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’, which is the most frequently occurring pair of speech acts without [filler]. An example is shown in Extract 4.5 (B022). In a hotel meeting, after B5 has reported what has been done to a guest (lines 1-2), B3 gives a preferred response of acknowledgement ‘sure’ (line 3), which is simple and almost spontaneous:

Extract 4.5: B022

Location: Hotel

Participants: B3, B5: Male native

1. B5: <SA063 [statement: inform] somebody just give her a courtesy
2. call this morning >
3. B3: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] sure >

Given the examples of unmarked patterns, it is suggested that there are predictable patterns of speech acts structured in terms of preference organisation in the genre of business meetings (Pomerantz, 1984). However, there are lots of

two co-occurring speech acts that are not intimately linked and do not show a clear relationship to one another. Among the top ten most frequently occurring pairs, only one pair, which is '[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]', is found to be intimately linked. All the other nine pairs, with [filler] as either the first or the second pair part, do not reflect any relationship between the two acts.

One possible reason could be related to the process of speech acts annotation. A speaker's utterance, depending on its contents and communicative functions, may consist of more than one segment. As only one tag is assigned to each utterance segment, the entire speaker's utterance will become a series of tags of different speech acts. It will result in a number of co-occurring speech acts that are located from an utterance of the same speaker instead of from the utterance of two different speakers.

Another possible reason is related to the notion of simultaneous talk in terms of interruptions and overlaps (Cheng, 2007b) for the sake of 'competing self-selectors for a next turn' (Sacks et al., 1974, p. 706) or of projecting 'possible completion or transition-relevance places' (ibid., p. 707). In the process of tagging the speech acts of the speakers in meetings, it is found that when simultaneous talk occurs, in the form of either an interruption or an overlap, the inserted utterance of the speaker will be tagged instantly, leading to a breakdown of the ongoing utterance of the current speaker into various segments that may or may not be tagged with the same speech act.

Regarding three co-occurring speech acts, the goal of studying their sequential patterns is to look for meaningful association or collocation, which is one of the five categories of co-selection (Sinclair, 1996, as cited in Cheng et al., 2006), of speech acts in meetings. Rather than identifying word associations, this study attempts to identify frequent speech act associations that are discursively meaningful in meetings. The use of *SpeechActConc*, similar to *ConcGram*, is capable of overcoming the limitation of finding instances of collocation of speech acts that are strictly contiguous in sequence and handling both constituency variation (i.e., AB, ACB) and positional variation (i.e., AB, BA) of speech act (cf. Cheng et al, 2006).

Given the two possible reasons mentioned earlier, though it is possible to generate a list of associated speech acts, the associations may not show clearly the distinctive collocational patterns in meetings (cf. Greaves & Warren, 2010b). The phenomenon could be illustrated with the following examples.

Figure 4.1 is the first most frequent three co-occurring speech acts – ‘[statement: inform] / [frame] / [filler]’ with a double origin ‘[statement: inform] / [frame]’:

```

1  [filler] UM > B1: <SA063 [statement:inform] Basically > B2: <SA033 [frame] * SO > B1:
2  <SA032 [filler] you know > <SA063 [statement:inform] the managing director > <SA033 [frame] well >
3  <SA032 [filler] ** er > <SA063 [statement:inform] lecture > <SA033 [frame] so > <SA010 [apology]
4  <SA032 [filler] er er > <SA063 [statement:inform] business > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA033 [frame]
5  B2: <SA032 [filler] erm > <SA063 [statement:inform] just saying > <SA033 [frame] so > <SA063
6  <SA032 [filler] er > <SA064 [statement:inform] data > B: <SA033 [frame] well > <SA032 [filler]
7  and > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] already > <SA033 [frame] well > <SA063
8  group > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] of seventy packs > <SA033 [frame] so > <SA063
9  <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] with about a hundred stay > <SA033 [frame] so >
10 <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] will be happening in Hong Kong > <SA033 [frame]
11 <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] details discussion internally > <SA033 [frame]
12 B: <SA033 [frame] ** so > <SA063 [statement:inform] if we if we call > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063
13 B: <SA033 [frame] well > <SA063 [statement:inform] we've got > <SA032 [filler] * er > a1: <SA032
14 <SA033 [frame] well > <SA063 [statement:inform] whether we can we can > <SA032 [filler] you
15 <SA033 [frame] so > <SA063 [statement:inform] the > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063
16 floor <SA033 [frame] so > <SA063 [statement:inform] basically > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063
17 a1: <SA033 [frame] so > <SA063 [statement:inform] there're > B: <SA032 [filler] * yeah > a1:
18 <SA033 [frame] so > <SA063 [statement:inform] a series of > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063
19 <SA033 [frame] so > <SA063 [statement:inform] they will check out > <SA032 [filler] er >
20 <SA033 [frame] so > <SA063 [statement:inform] today's situation is > <SA032 [filler] er >
21 SA033 [frame] so > <SA063 [statement:inform] anyway I will have a visit > <SA032 [filler] er
22 <SA033 [frame] so > <SA063 [statement:inform] we'll just have to give it > <SA032 [filler]
23 [statement:inform] Basically > B2: <SA033 [frame] * SO > B1: <SA032 [filler] ** oKAY >
24 <SA064 [statement:inform] data > B: <SA033 [frame] well > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA064
25 a1: <SA032 [filler] ** okay * okay > B: <SA033 [frame] ** so > <SA063 [statement:inform] that's an
26 <SA032 [filler] ** er > B: <SA033 [frame] well > <SA063 [statement:inform] there are some
27 <SA032 [filler] erm (.) > <SA033 [frame] alright > <SA063 [statement:inform] so we've
28 <SA032 [filler] er > <SA033 [frame] so (.) > <SA063 [statement:inform] you will
29 B3: <SA032 [filler] er > <SA033 [frame] so yeah > <SA063 [statement:inform] as I said
30 <SA032 [filler] er > <SA033 [frame] so anyway > <SA063 [statement:inform] that

```

Figure 4.1. The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in meetings

The example illustrates that there are four sequences of the association, which are ‘[frame]→[statement: inform]→[filler]’ (lines 1-11), ‘[filler]→[statement: inform]→[frame]’ (lines 12-22), ‘[statement: inform]→[frame]→[filler]’ (lines 23-24), ‘[filler]→[frame]→[statement: inform]’ (lines 25-30). To further understand the context in which these speech acts are realised, Extract 4.6 from line 21 is shown as follows. In Extract 4.6, speaker b6 is a hotel staff member. He is reporting the progress of having a visit to a company (lines 1, 3, 5-6). After mentioning that he was rejected for the visit, he made a boundary in a separate tone unit with ‘so’ (line 7). Then he went on informing the colleagues of his plan to visit the company the following week (lines 8, 10, 12) with fillers (lines 9, 11):

Extract 4.6: B017

Location: Hotel

Participant: b6: male Hong Kong Chinese

1. b6: <SA063 [statement:inform] in fact I've asked to make a >
2. <SA032 [filler] er >
3. <SA063 [statement:inform] personal visit to make the >
4. <SA032 [filler] er er >
5. <SA063 [statement:inform] decision make but I I was being
6. rejected >
7. <SA033 [frame] so >
8. <SA063 [statement:inform] anyway I will have a visit >
9. <SA032 [filler] er >
10. <SA063 [statement:inform] on next Monday to see if their >
11. <SA032 [filler] er >
12. <SA063 [statement:inform] to see the booking handler KCRC >

Figure 4.2 is the second most frequent three co-occurring speech acts – ‘[statement: inform] / [filler] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’ with a double origin ‘[statement: inform] / [filler]’:

1 statement:acknowledge] \* mhm > B: <SA032 [filler] \*\* yeah > <SA063 [statement:inform] so we need  
2 to statement:acknowledge] from C\_\_ > B: <SA032 [filler] yeah > a1: <SA063 [statement:inform] \*  
3 to statement:acknowledge] okay yeah > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA063 [statement:inform] also > <SA032  
4 to statement:acknowledge] booked > B: <SA032 [filler] er > a2: <SA063 [statement:inform] \* yeah I have  
5 to statement:acknowledge] \* alright > <SA032 [filler] right > b: <SA063 [statement:inform] \*\*  
6 to statement:acknowledge] okay > B5: <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] that's it for  
7 to statement:acknowledge] yeah > a1: <SA032 [filler] um > <SA063 [statement:inform] the HTMs are  
8 to statement:acknowledge] okay > B: <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] this one I want  
9 to statement:acknowledge] right > a2: <SA033 [filler] yeah > <SA063 [statement:inform] not a  
10 to statement:acknowledge] \* mhm > a1: <SA032 [filler] \*\* um > <SA063 [statement:inform] so I've  
11 to statement:acknowledge] MM > B2: <SA032 [filler] YEAH > <SA063 [statement:inform] WE'LL  
12 to statement:acknowledge] sure > B1: <SA032 [filler] yeah > B5: <SA063 [statement:inform] that's  
13 to statement:acknowledge] \* okay > B: <SA032 [filler] \*\* yeah > a2: <SA063 [statement:inform] I I  
14 to statement:acknowledge] uhuh > a3: <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] what she would  
15 to statement:acknowledge] mm > A: <SA032 [filler] \* and um > b: <SA063 [statement:inform] \*\* I I  
16 to statement:acknowledge] yeah > a1: <SA032 [filler] mhm > (pause) a1: <SA063 [statement:inform]  
17 to statement:acknowledge] K\_ > B2: <SA032 [filler] um > <SA063 [statement:inform] revenue-wise  
18 to statement:acknowledge] okay > B: <SA032 [filler] okay > <SA063 [statement:inform] but that means  
19 to statement:acknowledge] mm > B: <SA032 [filler] yeah > a2: <SA063 [statement:inform] but in  
20 to statement:acknowledge] RIGHT > <SA032 [filler] oKAY > <SA063 [statement:inform] but we'll  
21 to statement:acknowledge] \* mm > B: <SA032 [filler] \*\* you know > <SA063 [statement:inform] we once  
22 to statement:acknowledge] mm > b3: <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] she he just want  
23 reply to statement:acknowledge] okay > <SA032 [filler] alright > <SA063 [statement:inform] and I have  
24 [reply to statement:acknowledge] yeah > <SA032 [filler] yeah (.) > A: <SA063 [statement:inform] \*  
25 [reply to statement:acknowledge] yes > <SA032 [filler] er er > <SA063 [statement:inform] there were  
26 [reply to statement:acknowledge] mm > <SA032 [filler] yeah > <SA063 [statement:inform] and for the  
27 [statement:inform] back door > b4: <SA032 [filler] er > <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge]  
28 [filler] right > a1: <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] mm > b2: <SA063 [statement:inform] has has  
29 [filler] yeah > B3: <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] mhm > B1: <SA063 [statement:inform] just >  
30 [filler] \* yeah > a1: <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] \*\* yep > B: <SA063 [statement:inform] that's  
31 [filler] yeah > A: <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] okay > <SA063 [statement:inform] so that's  
32 [filler] okay > a1: <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] \* mm > a2: <SA063 [statement:inform] \*\* we have  
33 [filler] \*\* er > <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] yeah yeah > B: <SA063 [statement:inform] \*

34 [filler] er > B: <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] mm > a1: <SA063 [statement:inform] and gives >  
35 [filler] er > <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] guest > <SA063 [statement:inform] there is no  
36 <SA032 [filler] er > <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] yeah > <SA063 [statement:inform] we thought  
37 <SA031 [filler] yeah > a1: <SA063 [statement:inform] m- > B: <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge]  
38 statement:acknowledge] okay > <SA063 [statement:inform] last night > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063  
40 statement:acknowledge] yeah > <SA063 [statement:inform] it's M S > <SA032 [filler] you know >  
41 statement:acknowledge] yeah > <SA063 [statement:inform] I know (.) > a2: <SA032 [filler] \* yeah > B:  
42 statement:acknowledge] okay > <SA063 [statement:inform] the entire ways > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063  
43 statement:acknowledge] yes > <SA063 [statement:inform] he's > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA063  
44 statement:acknowledge] mm > <SA063 [statement:inform] we don't > B: <SA032 [filler] \* er > a1: <SA063

Figure 4.2. The second most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in meetings

The example also illustrates that there are five sequences of the association, which are ‘[reply to statement: acknowledge]→[filler]→[statement: inform]’ (lines 1-26), ‘[statement: inform]→[filler]→[reply to statement: acknowledge]’ (line 27), ‘[filler]→[reply to statement: acknowledge]→[inform]’ (lines 28-36), ‘[filler]→[statement: inform]→[reply to statement: acknowledge]’ (line 37), ‘[reply to statement: acknowledge]→[statement: inform]→[filler]’ (lines 38-44).

Extract 4.7 from line 17 is used to illustrate the importance of understanding the context of the speech act association. In the extract, b1 and b4 are hotel staff members. They are talking about the new door handle. After b1 points out the problem about the handles (lines 1-16), b4 responds with an ‘er’ (line 17) as a filler and a ‘yeah’ (line 18) as an acknowledgement. The associated speech acts are ‘[statement: inform] →[filler] →[reply to statement: acknowledge]’:

Extract 4.7: B016

Location: hotel

Participants: b1, b4: male Hong Kong Chinese

1. b1: <SA063 [statement:inform] the problem is you have touch up
2. you have >
3. <SA032 [filler] er >
4. <SA063 [statement:inform] you have >
5. <SA032 [filler] er >
6. <SA063 [statement:inform] polish them we have touch >
7. <SA032 [filler] er >
8. <SA063 [statement:inform] touch up the >
9. <SA032 [filler] er >



10. <SA063 [statement:inform] the door but then you still have
11. the >
12. <SA032 [filler] er >
13. <SA063 [statement:inform] old handle then >
14. <SA063 [statement:inform] stretch again the >
15. <SA032 [filler] er >
16. <SA063 [statement:inform] back door >
17. b4: <SA032 [filler] er >
18. <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] yeah >

It is observed that the identification of different associations of the three speech acts can at least show the relationship among them as performed by different speakers in meetings, though the collocational patterns may not be as discursively representative as expected.

#### **4.7 Lexicogrammatical realisation and pattern**

In the sub-corpus of meetings, [statement: inform] is the most frequent speech act (27.40%). In a spoken interaction, [statement: inform] is used to provide or supply neutral information as an initiation in an exchange and is typically realised by a declarative utterance with a falling tone and with various degrees of certainty (Stenström, 1994).

Based on London-Lund Spoken Corpus, Stenström (1994) identifies seven inform markers, namely ‘actually’, ‘as a matter of fact’, ‘in fact’, ‘the fact is’, ‘the point is’, ‘you know’, and ‘you see’. In this study, the seven inform markers were used to interrogate the 2,241 instances of [statement: inform] in the meetings. The results are shown in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10. Inform markers: frequency of occurrence

Meetings			
No	Inform marker (Stenström, 1994)	Occurrence	Percentage
1	<i>actually</i>	15	0.67
3	<i>in fact</i>	3	0.13
2	<i>as a matter of fact</i>	0	0.00
4	<i>the fact is</i>	0	0.00
5	<i>the point is</i>	0	0.00
6	<i>you know</i>	1	0.04
7	<i>you see</i>	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>19</b>	<b>0.85</b>

Table 4.10 shows that out of the seven inform markers, three are found in the meetings, namely *actually*, *in fact*, and *you know*. *Actually* (0.67%) is the most frequently occurring inform marker, followed by *in fact* (0.13%) and *you know* (0.04%). Among these seven inform markers, Stenström explains further the differences between ‘you see’ and ‘you know’. ‘You see’ is typically used when the first speaker assumes that the information of subject given is ‘new’ to the second speaker. ‘You know’ can be used in the same way as ‘you see’, but it is more often used when the first speaker assumes that the second speaker is ‘familiar’ with the subject already or when the first speaker would like to create an impression that both of the speakers share a common ground. It can also be used to hint at some underlying message. ‘You see’ is often part of the tone unit whereas ‘you know’ is generally pronounced in a separate tone unit with varying intonation contours.

It is noted that both ‘you see’ and ‘you know’ are also commonly used as an [empathizer] to involve or engage the listener and make her/him feel part of the conversation at the beginning and the end of a turn. The use of an [empathizer] helps the speaker intensify the relationship with the listener by prompting her/his feedback. It is also used to highlight a word or an element in the message while making a [statement: inform]. An [empathizer] such as ‘as you know’, ‘if you see what I mean’, ‘you know’, ‘you see’, and tags usually occupy a separate tone unit and the tone is often rising (Stenström, 1994, p. 128).

The remaining 2,222 instances that are excluded from these inform markers, accounting for 99.15% of all instances of [statement: inform], are lexical phrases for informing. They are combinations of content (or lexical) words (noun, verb, adjective, and adverb) and grammatical (or function) words (such as article, pronoun, preposition, and auxiliary verb). The following examples are retrieved from the meeting sub-corpus that show the diverse patterns of informing other than employing the inform markers in different syntactic units, namely phrase, clause (and sentence). A phrase consists of two or more lexical items (Stenström, 1994; Leech, 1989). It is a group of words that are closely related but have no subject or predicate, which may be used as a noun, verb, adjective, or adverb (Shertzer, 1986). It is a group of words which has a subject and a predicate. A main clause can stand alone as a sentence whereas a subordinate clause is incomplete and is used with a main clause to express a related idea (Shertzer, 1986). Clauses are the main structures of which sentences are build (Leech, 1989). A sentence is comprised minimally of a single clause analysable in terms of subject, verb, (object, complement, adverbial) (Stenström, 1994). It contains at least one main clause; it may also contain another main clause to form a compound sentence or subordinate clauses to form a complex sentence (Leech, 1989). Table 4.11 are examples of lexical phrases, clauses (and sentences) for informing.

Table 4.11. Examples of lexical phrases, clauses (and sentences) for informing

Phrase	<p>... also the coffee shop paintings and the dishes from the chef for the Sudden Weekly ...</p> <p>... and for the VIP arrival today only one long staying guest Mister P___ N___ in more quite details ...</p> <p>... general information for all concerned ...</p> <p>... just two breaks with a working lunch ...</p>
Clause (and sentence)	<p>... a proposal was submitted to them regarding a staff activity ...</p> <p>... all the programme is already pending ...</p> <p>... we also have a suite booking for a Mister G_ from Unilever Hong Kong ...</p>

	<p>... and then we will try to accommodate the best we can ...</p> <p>... and we have already received the information ...</p> <p>... for the lunch period there is a special promotion ...</p> <p>... he would like a bigger shower head and slippers ...</p> <p>... I don't know ...</p> <p>... I'm not sure ...</p> <p>... it's in my room now ...</p> <p>... one of them knows what she wants to do ...</p> <p>... she happens to work here ...</p>
--	---

As seen from the examples (Table 4.11), these phrases and clauses (and sentences) are both content and context-specific. Without the use of inform markers such as 'namely', 'in fact' and 'the point is' (Stenström, 1994, p. 90), speakers in meetings have used linguistic realisations such as the expressions shown above to supply or present neutral information regarding a particular topic in the meetings. This is not surprising because it is not a requirement to use inform markers to realise the function of supplying or presenting neutral information. Rather, it is observed in meetings that speakers usually directly inform the listeners what they would like to convey through phrases or clauses (and sentences).

Further analysis shows that there are different lexical choices to achieve the communicative function in phrases and clauses. Direct discourse and first person pronouns are used to provide information that is either new or shared by the speakers and the agent who provides such information. As illustrated in the following examples, the use of direct discourse and first person pronouns gives a more personalised attitude:

1. **I** understand what you mean now
2. **I** did it this morning
3. **I** haven't got my own copy
  
4. **we** can put things into the calendar
5. **we** put the initials first
6. **we** don't have no more meetings

Direct discourse and second person pronouns are used to emphasise the person who receives the information, as shown in the examples below:

1. **you** might expect a lot more complaint
2. **you** need to write up the paper before giving a speech
3. **you've** got deposit

Direct discourse and third person pronouns are used to highlight the third party or parties involved in the information. The examples below illustrate this feature:

1. **he's** given us a good news
2. **he** is involved a fighting again with some taxi driver
3. **he** received medical attention
  
4. **she** went to the Tang Shiu Kin hospital and
5. **she** is a an executive officer over in
6. **she** happens to work here
  
7. **it** will be published in the intranet
8. **it's** a couple of hours
9. **it** doesn't feature Todd's or any of our other outlets about our vegetarian food
  
10. **they** are not included
11. **they** have made an air corp arrangement but
12. **they** just walk on to it

The message itself can be the actor represented by demonstrative pronouns or demonstrative adjectives, or by phrases related to the content:

1. **This** is the third time
2. **This** one I want
3. **This** is a special school
  
4. **That** will be this one then
5. **That's** all for me
6. **That** kind of training

Coordinating conjunctions such as 'and', 'or' and 'so' are frequently used to join two parts of the information:

1. **and** I will I will do that
2. **and** the rate was one thousand and twenty-five
3. **and** the tour guide will pick up the keys at nine o'clock  
in the evening
4. **but** you didn't listen to me
5. **but** the June thing is already fixed
6. **but** I'll ask you advice
7. **so** the combination makes it a very big jackpot sixty  
million
8. **so** they're going to let me know by Wednesday or Thursday
9. **so** we need something like twelve hours of each  
approximately

Regarding the grammatical structure, declarative is commonly used. Most of the topics being discussed in meetings are not spontaneously raised by the participants but restricted by the agenda, which acts as a guideline not only during the meeting but also before the meeting for the participants to prepare for the report and the discussion in the meetings (cf. Evans, 2010; Warren, 2014). Skills such as 'presenting effective arguments', 'putting forward suggestions', 'expressing one's opinions', 'brainstorming ideas', 'responding to others' ideas' (Warren, 2014, p. 14; cf. Evan, 2010) will require an elaborated presentation of ideas with examples, reasons, or evidence, which is manifested in the formulation of phrases or clauses (and sentences) in the realisation of the communicative function of informing.

It may be concluded that the linguistic realisation of [statement: inform] in meetings is more complex than the inform markers discussed earlier. The expressions found in meetings are not only more packed with content words, but also have more total words (together with grammatical words) (cf. Kong, 2009). The use of more packed phrases or clauses is probably because of the need to give information effectively in a meeting.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

The discussion and analysis in this chapter shows the frequencies and linguistic realisations of unique speech acts as well as co-occurring speech acts in meetings. In response to the first research question, the most frequent speech acts, such as [statement: inform], [statement: opine], and [reply to statement: acknowledge] are elaborated with examples from the annotated corpus data in

Section 4.4. In terms of frequencies, it is found that primary acts prevail among the unique speech acts. The prevalence of primary acts is a useful finding to suggest that they contribute to the distinctive features of the genre of meetings in business communication (Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, & Planken, 2013). These primary acts are reflected in the practices and structures of the meetings to help achieve both the transactional and relational goals of, for example, reviewing, opining, as well as giving and receiving information.

In response to the second research question, two and three co-occurring speech acts have been examined. The study of two co-occurring speech acts is related to the well-known notion of adjacency pairs in conversation analysis as briefly discussed in Section 4.6. Some conventional or unmarked adjacency pairs with a preferred next action include ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge] and ‘[check] / [confirm]’. However, apart from these conventional or unmarked patterns of speech acts, there are lots of marked patterns shown in the investigation, in particular the association with [filler]. It has been explained that the feature is related to the process of speech acts annotation where a speaker’s utterance, regardless of its length, will be segmented and annotated in accordance with the communicative function. It is found that [filler], as a marker to fill a gap in the discourse, is a common speech act that occurs in a speaker’s utterance. Another possible reason mentioned is related to the annotation with interruptions and overlaps in simultaneous talk. The inserted speaker’s utterance in an interruption or an overlap will be tagged instantly to show the flow of the conversation. Because of this instant tagging, the current speaker’s ongoing utterance will also be segmented and tagged. Regarding three co-occurring speech acts, it is observed that the associations have different sequences and not all of them have discursively meaningful collocation patterns. Some meaningful associations such as ‘[statement: inform] / [filler] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’ are illustrated with examples extracted from the data.

In response to the third research question, the linguistic realisations of the most frequent speech act are examined in Section 4.7. As shown in the selected extracts, the variety of linguistic realisations of the speech acts are not confined to conventional markers such as ‘as a matter of fact’ for [statement: inform], ‘I think’ for [statement: opine], or ‘I see’ for [reply to statement: acknowledge].

There are no fixed realisations and patterns for [statement: inform]. Rather, it is a rather lengthy description of the information required an interlocutor by or the opinion expressed by an interlocutor in the conversation. One possible reason is that an elaborated presentation of ideas with examples, reasons, or evidence is important in a meeting in which participants have to present arguments, bring forth suggestions, express opinions, and brainstorm ideas. Hence, it is not easy to summarize from the linguistic realisations a list of common expressions of most speech acts annotated in meetings. The realisations are diverse and influenced by discursive relationship resulting from the communication topics and goals. These topics and goals include task assigning (Svennevig & Djordjilovic, 2015) and decision making (Halvorsen & Sarangi, 2015).

Though it has been argued that the context of interaction has an important impact on linguistic choices that characterize a particular genre (e.g. Baker & McEnery (Eds.), 2015; Sánchez-Macarro & Carter, 1998), most of the frequent speech acts found in business meetings actually occurred in other genres as well. One possible explanation for this result is that all of the genres share a similar context of interaction – business communication. The similarity in context would lead to similar selections of speech acts. However, such similarity does not eliminate the variation among different genres. It will be shown in the following five chapters that each genre has some unique speech acts, though they may be the less frequent ones, indicating that each genre as the context of interaction has an inevitable influence on speech act choice and is therefore one of the factors for the variation in linguistic features.

This chapter has also illustrated some possible ways in which *SpeechActConc* can be used to produce quantitative data about the frequencies and percentages of unique speech act and co-occurring speech acts. As shown in 4.3 to 4.6, *SpeechActConc* are particularly useful in generating quantitative data from a manually annotated speech act corpus. Based on the quantitative data, the program can display concordance lines of selected speech act(s) to illustrate the lexicogrammatical features of a particular speech act or patterns of co-occurring speech acts. Such features and patterns are describable and interesting as they can show how the speakers select lexical words or phrases or clauses to express a certain speech act or to realise a certain communicative function. The speaker's



selection is not determined by the specific lexical or grammatical words or speech act markers, but by the speaker's decision to express what is more appropriate and effective in a specific context of interaction. In the following five chapters, the manually annotated data of other five genres will be analysed by *SpeechActConc* in the same manner.

## Chapter Five

### Telephone and conference calls

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background information about the telephone and conference call data (5.2). It describes and analyses the frequencies of occurrence and communicative functions (or illocutionary force) of the speech acts in telephone and conference calls (5.3) with a discussion of the findings (5.4), followed by a frequency analysis of two and three co-occurring speech acts (5.5) and discussion (5.6). Lastly, the lexicogrammatical realisations and patterns of the most frequently occurring speech act in telephone and conference calls are examined (5.7).

#### 5.2 Background information

The data are workplace telephone calls and video conferencing (B073-B074, B111-B112, and B147). Workplace telephone calls involve two people discussing business-related matters. Video conferencing involves managerial staff from different companies located in Hong Kong and other countries. The calls are hosted by a chairperson who is responsible for maintaining a smooth progress of the discussion among participants from different places (Lin, 2008). Regarding telephone call, it may be argued that it is merely a channel or a mode of communication in which different kinds of interactions with different purposes can be realised, implying that it does not have clear defined goals or purposes. The argument is valid when telephone call is understood as personal telephone conversations in which there are no specific communicative structure, style, or content (Swales, 1990).

However, it is also suggested that telephone call is an example or a member of genres that have recognised form, content, and purpose (Antunes, Costa, & Pino, 2006; Huhta, Vogt, Johnson, & Tulkki, 2013). In this study, the data collected are in fact telephone calls taken place in offices for business-related communicative purposes. They constitute a genre in their own right as they have a specific framework with some expected sequences of actions

and share the same particular patterns and instances (Fludernik, 1996; Nieto, n.d.). The adjective ‘workplace’ is used in some studies to highlight the nature of the telephone calls studied is business-related, which focuses on the sequences of communicative action in business conversations realised in the genre of telephone call (Fairclough, 2003; Bolden, 2008).

The goal orientation of genre can be observed in the workplace telephone calls in which the interactants are working to achieve their aligned but different goals such as giving information, eliciting information, giving advice (Pryor & Woodward-Kron, 2014). Different generic stages or phases can in principle be identified, such as the opening sequence, the reason-for-call sequence, and closing exchange (Bowles, 2006; Ting & Lau, 2009).

Conference calls, on the other hand, also has a specific structure and a communicative goal that are similar to face-to-face meetings because of multiparty setting, the role of the chair, the differences in rank and seniority, as well as the task focus of meeting (Blitvich, 2007; Halbe, 2012). Moreover, the constraints on the structure, the type and style of the contributions, and the kind of face work participants engage in telephone mediated nature of communication make conference calls ‘a very unique communicative event’ (Blitvich, 2007, p. 73).

In B073, the two speakers were one female Hong Kong Chinese and one female English speaker. The topics were as follows: seat assignment and checking of number of rows on plane.

In B074, the three speakers were one male Hong Kong Chinese and one female English speaker. The topics were as follows: clarification of a previously missed call, confirmation of contract extension for a research assistant, and reasons for calling back.

In B111, the eight speakers were one female Hong Kong Chinese, four female English speakers and three male English speakers. The topics were as follows: security policy manual, handling of confidential information and physical documents; reasons for safeguarding the client confidential documents; ways of handling confidential documents and other security issues at the copy centre in Hong Kong, London, and New York; cost cutting in the operation of graphics department; meal or transportation allowance cutting in different cities;

statistics about the bankers' use of graphics or dot bank.

In B112, the two speakers were one female Hong Kong Chinese and one female English speaker. The topics were as follows: connection between i-track and dot bank, and the use of i-track in different regions.

In B147, the two speakers were one female Hong Kong Chinese and one female English speaker. The topics were as follows: selection of a global computer vendor to accommodate needs in different regions, in-service staff training course on information technology, the use of XP operating system, and the work of graphics professionals.

Given the nature of and the limited number of recordings collected in telephone and conference calls, the topics of the calls and the contexts in which the calls were taken place are quite diverse, which include flight ticket enquiry, business confidentiality, information technology for the topics and university, bank, and airlines for the contexts.

### 5.3 Frequency analysis of speech acts in telephone and conference calls

Out of the 1,856 instances of speech acts found in telephone and conference calls, there are 36 unique speech acts. There are listed in accordance with the descending frequency sort (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1. Frequency of unique speech acts in telephone and conference calls

No	Speech act	Frequency	Percentage
1	Filler	520	28.02%
2	Statement: inform	272	14.66%
3	Reply to statement: acknowledge	184	9.91%
4	Statement: opine	127	6.84%
5	Expand	103	5.55%
6	Justify	92	5.01%
7	Answer to question: comply	81	4.36%
8	Question: polarity	76	4.09%
9	Clue	39	2.10%
10	Frame	37	1.99%
11	Question: identification	35	1.89%

12	Preface	30	1.62%
13	Question: confirmation	27	1.45%
14	Greeting	26	1.40%
15	Precursor	25	1.35%
16	Alert	20	1.08%
17	Empathizer	19	1.02%
18	Monitor	13	0.70%
19	Hedge	12	0.65%
20	Uptake	12	0.65%
21	Answer to question: imply	12	0.65%
22	Request: action	10	0.54%
23	Check	10	0.54%
24	Confirm	10	0.54%
25	Thanks	10	0.54%
26	Reply to statement: agree	10	0.54%
27	Appealer	6	0.32%
28	Emphasizer	6	0.32%
29	Empathy	5	0.27%
30	Apology	5	0.27%
31	Answer to request: accept	3	0.16%
32	Answer to question: disclaim	3	0.16%
33	Staller	3	0.16%
34	Query	2	0.11%
35	Answer to question: supply	2	0.11%
36	Reply to statement: object	2	0.11%

As seen from Table 5.1, the two most frequent speech acts in the data of telephone and conference calls are [filler] (28.02%) and [statement: inform] (14.66%), each with more than 270 occurrences, followed by [reply to statement: acknowledge] (9.91%), [statement: opine] (6.84%), and [expand] (5.55%). The frequencies of the remaining speech acts are lower, ranging from 92 occurrences (5.01%) ([justify]) to 2 occurrences (0.11%) (e.g. [query]).

Out of these 36 speech acts, there are twenty-one primary acts (58.33%) (Table 5.2), six secondary acts (16.67%) (Table 5.3), and eight complementary acts (22.22%) (Table 5.4) from Stenström (1994) as well as one speech acts

(2.78%) (Table 5.5) from Tsui (1994). Each act has its own communicative function(s).

Table 5.2 shows the communicative functions and frequency of the twenty-one primary acts in telephone and conference calls

Table 5.2. Communicative functions and frequencies of primary acts in telephone and conference calls

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Statement: inform	Provide or present neutral information	272	14.66%
2	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Signal receipt of information or signal that the second speaker accepts what the first speaker said as a valid contribution to the conversation	184	9.91%
3	Statement: opine	Give or express one's personal opinions, feelings and attitudes	127	6.84%
4	Answer to question: comply	Answer a question directly and adequately	81	4.36%
5	Question: polarity	Ask for a yes / no question	76	4.09%
6	Question: identification	Ask for information or an answer identifying a wh-word	35	1.89%
7	Question: confirmation	Ask for a confirming answer	27	1.45%
8	Greeting	Greet somebody or bid farewell	26	1.40%
9	Alert	Call the addressee's attention, attract the other party's / parties' attention	20	1.08%
10	Answer to question: imply	Answer the question indirectly, give adequate information implicitly	12	0.65%

11	Request: action	Ask somebody to do something	10	0.54%
12	Check	Ask for repetition or clarification of what was said in the immediately preceding turn	10	0.54%
13	Confirm	Respond to a request for confirmation	10	0.54%
14	Thanks	Express gratitude	10	0.54%
15	Reply to statement: agree	Signal agreement with what was just said, indicate that speaker B approves of what speaker A means	10	0.54%
16	Apology	Express regret	5	0.27%
17	Answer to request: accept	Agree to a request, a suggestion, etc.	3	0.16%
18	Answer to question: disclaim	Declare the answer is unknown; come up with an answer that is honest and straightforward but which does not answer the question and does not pretend to do so	3	0.16%
19	Query	Express doubt or strong surprise	2	0.11%
20	Answer to question: supply	Give inadequate information, does not really answer the question	2	0.11%
21	Reply to statement: object	Signal a different opinion	2	0.11%

In Table 5.2, the three most frequent primary speech acts in the telephone and conference calls are [statement: inform] (14.66%), [reply to statement: acknowledge] (9.91%), and [statement: opine] (6.84%), each with more than 120 occurrences, followed by [answer to question: comply] (4.36%) and [question: polarity] (4.09%). The frequencies of the remaining primary speech acts are lower, ranging from 35 occurrences (1.89%) ([question: identification]) to 2

occurrence (0.11%) (e.g. [query]).

Table 5.3 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the six secondary acts in telephone and conference calls.

Table 5.3. Communicative functions and frequencies of secondary acts in telephone and conference calls

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Expand	Give complementary information	103	5.55%
2	Justify	Defend what was said in the primary act, give the reason why	92	5.01 %
3	Clue	Follow a primary act and give a hint, provide additional information after a question, comment on the question	39	2.10%
4	Preface	Introduce a primary act, has a face-saving effect in that they prepare speaker B for what is going to happen next, make sure that certain pre-conditions hold before making the [following primary act]	30	1.62%
5	Precursor	Precede a primary act and give information, link up what was said before, comment on something in the preceding dialogue	25	1.35%
6	Emphasizer	Underline what was said in the primary act	6	0.32%

Table 5.3 shows that the most frequent secondary speech act in telephone and conference calls is [expand] (5.55%), followed by [clue] (2.10%). The frequencies of the remaining secondary speech acts are lower, ranging from 30 occurrences (1.62%) ([preface]) to 6 occurrences (0.32%) ([emphasizer]).

Table 5.4 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the eight complementary acts in telephone and conference calls.



Table 5.4. Communicative functions and frequencies of complementary acts in telephone and conferences calls

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	filler	Fill a gap in the discourse	520	28.02%
2	Frame	Mark a boundary or the beginning of a new stage in the discourse	37	1.99%
3	Empathizer	Involve the listener, engage the listener and make her/him feel part of the conversation, intensify the relationship with the listener, prompt listener feedback, the current speaker invites the current listener to take an active part	19	1.02%
4	Monitor	Help putting something right, make a new start or rephrase what the speaker was going to say in the middle of a turn as the listener cannot follow or is not convinced, make the speaker's point clear, steer what the speaker says	13	0.70%
5	Hedge	Help avoiding commitment, modify and mitigate an utterance, help the speaker avoid going straight to the point, avoid being blunt, avoid appearing authoritative, and avoid committing him/herself	12	0.65%
6	Uptake	Accept what was said and lead on, acknowledge receipt of what the previous speaker said and evaluate it before going on	12	0.66%
7	Appealer	Invite feedback	6	0.32%
8	Staller	Play for time	3	0.16%

Table 5.4 shows that the most frequent complementary speech act in telephone and conference calls is [filler] (28.02%), followed by [frame] (1.99%). The frequencies of the remaining complementary speech acts are lower, ranging

from 19 occurrences (1.02%) ([empathizer]) to 3 occurrences (0.16%) ([staller]).

Table 5.5 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of speech act in telephone and conference calls from another study (Tsui, 1994).

Table 5.5. Communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts in telephone and conference calls from another study

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage	Source
1	Empathy	Show concern for and empathize with the addressee such as ‘congratulate’, ‘well-wishing’, ‘welcome’, ‘condole’	5	0.27%	Tsui (1994)

Table 5.5 shows that the only speech act from another study is [empathy] (0.27%) with 5 occurrences.

In summary, the findings regarding the communicative function and frequency analysis of different categories of speech acts have shown that in the context of telephone and conference calls, the majority of speech acts are from Stenström’s (1994) primary acts (58.33%), which are used to realise moves on their own, followed by complementary acts (22.22%), which are used to accompany but rarely replaces primary acts and secondary acts (16.67%), which are used to accompany and sometimes replace primary acts. The remaining act is from other studies (2.78%). The quantitative results regarding different unique acts shown above respond to the first research question on the relative frequencies of occurrence of different speech acts in a genre.

#### 5.4 Discussion of findings

In telephone and conference calls, reporting objective or neutral information and expressing personal opinions, feelings or attitudes are common practices, thus both [statement: inform] (14.66%) and [statement: opine] (6.84%) occur more frequently than other speech acts. ‘Statement: inform’ and ‘statement: opine’ are usually followed by an acknowledgement to signal a minimal receipt

of information, leading to a higher frequent occurrence of another speech act – [reply to statement: acknowledge] (9.91%). [Filler] (17.34%), which is a common act in conversation, is in the first place on the list.

The linguistic realisations of these speech acts are diverse in accordance with the topics discussed. These acts are reflected in the language used in the practices and the structures of telephone and conference calls, including optional non-topical conversation and business episode that introduces the reasons for calling (Halmari, 1993, as cited in Generoso, 2013) and realised by distinctive lexicogrammatical features in telephone and conference calls for the purposes of giving and receiving both information and opinions. The following examples can illustrate the different linguistic realisations found in the dataset to perform a particular speech act.

With regard to reporting objective or neutral information in telephone and conference calls, it can be background information about the person who makes a phone call, as shown in Extract 5.1 (B074). In Extract 5.1 (B074), speaker A, a caller, makes a call to speaker b, a personnel staff. After greeting (line 1), speaker A gives speaker b background information about why she calls back then (lines 3-7, 10-12, 14-16 and 18). In response, speaker b acknowledges speaker A's information with 'mhm' (lines 8, 17, and 19) and 'er' (line 13):

Extract 5.1: B074

Location: Unknown

Participants: A: Female native b: male Hong Kong Chinese

1. A: <SA034 [greeting] C\_\_ >
2. <SA032 [filler] um >
3. <SA063 [statement: inform] this is M\_\_ X\_\_ >
4. <SA063 [statement: inform] I'm calling back regarding >
5. <SA032 [filler] um >
6. <SA063 [statement: inform] the research assistant at the E
7. L S C >
8. b: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] mhm >
9. A: <SA032 [filler] um >

10. <SA063 [statement: inform] you gave me a call >
11. <SA063 [statement: inform] I'm I'm returning your telephone
12. call >
13. b: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] er >
14. A: <SA063 [statement: inform] you you called I believe on the
15. twenty third of May >
16. <SA063 [statement: inform] but I was not in >
17. b: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] mhm >
18. A: <SA063 [statement: inform] at that time >
19. b: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] \* mhm >

With regard to expressing personal opinions, feelings or attitudes, [statement: opine] can be an opinion about having a contact with another male colleague about a computer security system, a belief about the future development of the security system, and a suggestion for addressing the importance of the security system, as shown in Extract 5.2 (B111). Extract 5.2 (B111) is from a conference call conducted in Hong Kong with London and New York colleagues on issues about computer security compliance. Speaker A3 first proposes to have a contact with another colleague (lines 1-2). Then she goes on expressing her belief about the future development of computer security system (lines 3-4) and her opinion on the necessity to address the trend in the discussion (lines 5-6 and 8-9). In response with a minimal receipt of information, speaker a acknowledges A3's opinions with 'yes' and 'yeah' (lines 7 and 10) respectively:

Extract 5.2: B111

Location: Unknown

Participants: A3: Female native      a: Female Hong Kong Chinese

1. A3: <SA064 [statement:opine] I think he's open that conversation
2. with you folks >
3. <SA038 [justify] because you're in the process of of
4. developing your system (.) >
5. <SA064 [statement: opine] but that will be something that will
6. be global I believe (.) >

7. a: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] \* yes >
8. A3: <SA064 [statement: opine] \*\* we have to address that as well
9. >
10. a: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] yeah >

With regard to signaling a minimal receipt of information following [statement: inform] or [statement: opine], [reply to statement: statement] can be a repetition of what the other speaker has just said, as shown in Extract 5.3 (B073). In Extract 5.3 (B073), speaker a, a telephone operator, asks speaker A, a caller, what her departure date is (lines 1-2). Speaker A responds with a direct and adequate answer (lines 4-5). Then she proceeds to give additional information about the confirmation number ‘six eight five’ (lines 6-7) and ‘one zero M’ (line 9). Speaker a, while listening to the speaker A’s information, signals the receipt of information by repeating ‘six eight five’ (line 8):

Extract 5.3: B073

Location: Unknown

Participants: a: Female Hong Kong Chinese A: Female native

1. a: <SA047 [question: identification] may I know your departure
2. date >
3. A: <SA032 [filler] um >
4. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] the departure date is June
5. fifteenth >
6. <SA029 [expand] and the confirmation number is six eight five
7. >
8. a: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] six eight five >
9. A: <SA029 [expand] one zero M >

In summary, the linguistic realisations of the most frequently occurring speech acts in telephone and conference calls are not necessarily restricted to a list of markers. Regarding the realisation of a particular communicative function through a speech act, there are a range of linguistic expressions that could be used to achieve the goal.

## 5.5 Frequency analysis of co-occurring speech acts in telephone and conference calls

In telephone and conference calls, out of a total of 972 co-occurring speech acts instances, 19 are unique centred speech acts and 92 are total centred speech acts (Appendix 3). The top ten two co-occurring speech acts are as follows (Table 5.6):

Table 5.6. Top ten two co-occurring speech acts in telephone and conference calls

Centred speech act	Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Statement: inform	190	19.55
Filler	Statement: opine	98	10.08
Filler	Expand	68	7.00
Filler	Justify	64	6.58
Filler	Question: polarity	54	5.56
Filler	Clue	38	3.91
Filler	Frame	29	2.98
Filler	Preface	25	2.57
Filler	Precursor	22	2.26
Filler	Answer to question: comply	21	2.16

As seen from Table 5.6, the two most frequent two co-occurring speech acts are ‘[filler] / [statement: inform]’ (19.55%) as well as ‘[filler] / [statement: opine]’ (10.08%), followed by ‘[filler] / [expand]’ (7.00%), ‘[filler] / [justify]’ (6.58%), as well as ‘[filler] / [question: polarity]’ (5.56%). The frequencies of the remaining two co-occurring speech acts are lower, ranging from 38 occurrences (3.91%) (‘[filler] / [clue]’) to 2 occurrences (0.21%) (e.g. ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: agree]’).

Fillers are commonly used by speakers when they inform (19.55%), opine (10.08%), expand (7.00%), justify (6.58%), question asking for a yes or no answer (5.56%), etc.; making it one of the most frequently co-occurring speech acts. However, apart from the co-occurring speech acts with [filler], other adjacency pairs are found in the search for two co-occurring speech acts. Some

are recognized with a preferred response such as ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’ (1.34%), ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’ (1.34%) whereas others are not, such as ‘[statement: inform] / [frame]’ (1.34%), ‘[reply to statement: acknowledge] / [justify]’ (0.93%), ‘[statement: inform] / [empathizer]’ (0.82%)

Regarding three co-occurring speech acts, out of a total of 62 instances of three co-occurring speech acts, there are 23 double origins (Appendix 4). Table 5.7 shows the frequency distribution of the top ten three co-occurring speech acts in telephone and conference calls (Table 5.7):

Table 5.7. Top ten three co-occurring speech acts in telephone and conference calls

Double origin		Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Frame	Statement: inform	8	14.29
Filler	Frame	Statement: opine	7	11.11
Statement: opine	Empathizer	Filler	4	6.35
Filler	Precursor	Alert	3	4.76
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Alert	3	4.76
Statement: inform	Statement: opine	Filler	3	4.76
Clue	Alert	Question: polarity	2	3.17
Expand	Answer to question: comply	Filler	2	3.17
Expand	Frame	Filler	2	3.17
Filler	Statement: inform	Greeting	2	3.17

As seen in Table 5.7, the two most frequent co-occurring speech acts are [filler], [statement: inform], [frame] (14.29%) and [filler], [statement: opine], [frame] (11.11%), followed by [statement: opine], [empathizer], [filler] (6.35%). The frequencies of the remaining three co-occurring speech acts are lower, ranging from 3 occurrences (4.76%) (e.g. ‘[filler] / [precursor] / [alert]’) to 2 occurrences (3.17%) (e.g. ‘[statement: inform] / [empathizer] / [filler]’).

## 5.6 Discussion of findings

In line with the discussion in Chapter Four about the notion of adjacency pairs in conversation analysis, few adjacency pairs with a preferred next action, as mentioned in Sections 1.5 and 2.5.4, in telephone and conference calls, such as ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’, ‘[check] / [confirm]’, and ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: agree]’. Extract 5.4 (B112) shows ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’. Speaker A and speaker a are colleagues. They talk about the connection between i-track and dot bank over the phone. After speaker a’s recommendation for using i-track, speaker A express her views that she should have access to the data and see if i-track is suitable for her (lines 1-2, 4-5). Speaker a, after listening to her views, responds with an acknowledgement (line 6):

Extract 5.4: B112

Location: Workplace telephone discussion

Participants: A: Female English speaker a: Female Hong Kong Chinese

1. A: <SA064 [statement: opine] \*\* including some data and seeing 2. >
3. <SA032 [filler] you know >
4. <SA064 [statement: opine] if it's gonna to work out
5. functionally okay for us >
6. a: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] yeah >

Another example of an adjacency pair with a preferred response is ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’, as shown in Extract 5.5 (B111). During the conference call with colleagues in London and New York about security compliance management, the connection is unstable. Speaker A3, a colleague, tells speaker a, another colleague, that she will call her again (line 1). Speaker a replies with an acknowledgement (line 2):



Extract 5.5: B111

Location: Conference call with overseas colleagues

Participants: A3: Female English speaker      a: Female Hong Kong Chinese

1. A3: <SA063 [statement:inform] we'll call you >
2. a: <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] okay >

‘[Statement: opine] / [reply to statement: agree]’ is also an example of preferred adjacency pair, as shown in Extract 5.6 (B147). Speaker A and speaker a, who are colleagues, talk about the difficulty of using the new computer system for the graphic presentations. Speaker a expresses her opinion that the difficulty should be left to the technical staff (lines 1-2, 4). Speaker A replies with an agreement (line 5):

Extract 5.6: B147

Location: Telephone call

Participants: a: Female Hong Kong Chinese      A: Female English speaker

1. a: <SA064 [statement: opine] just get your technology people to
2. do their best >
3. <SA032 [filler] you know >
4. <SA064 [statement: opine] to narrow the time gap (.)>
5. A: <SA054 [reply to statement: agree] mm >

Regarding three co-occurring speech acts, based on the goals of studying their sequential patterns depicted and elucidated in Chapter Four, though it is possible to generate a list of associated speech acts, the associations may not show clearly the distinctive collocational patterns in telephone and conference calls, as illustrated with the following example.

Figure 5.1 is the most frequent three co-occurring speech acts – ‘[frame] / [filler] / [statement: inform]’ with a double origin ‘[filler] / [frame]’:

```

1  [frame] so > b: <SA032 [filler] um > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] we just confirm
2  <SA033 [frame] so um > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA063 [statement:inform] in Hong Kong >
3  A3: <SA033 [frame] right > <SA032 [filler] erm > <SA063 [statement:inform] our the >
4  computers (.) > <SA033 [frame] so > <SA032 [filler] erm > <SA063 [statement:inform] I don't know
5  save the money > <SA033 [frame] so > <SA032 [filler] you know > <SA063 [statement:inform] as you may
6  a: <SA033 [frame] ** so > <SA063 [statement:inform] in any case > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063
7  a: <SA033 [frame] okay > <SA063 [statement:inform] and now we have it > <SA032 [filler] you know >
8  yes > <SA033 [frame] now > <SA063 [statement:inform] what what would we do here is > <SA032 [filler]
9  a: <SA033 [frame] so > <SA063 [statement:inform] probably > <SA032 [filler] you know > <SA063

```

Figure 5.1. The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in telephone and conference calls

The example illustrates that there are two sequences of the association, which are ‘[frame]→[filler]→[statement: inform]’ (lines 1-5), ‘[frame]→[statement: inform]→[filler]’ (lines 6-9). To further understand the context in which these speech acts are realised, Extract 5.7 from line 4 is shown as follows. In Extract 5.7, speaker a, a staff member of an international bank, talks about the purpose of the conference call is to review and discuss a new security policy manual regarding the handling of confidential information and documents, the use of passwords, and the antivirus software. Then she pauses and makes a boundary in the discourse with ‘so’ as a frame (line 1), followed by a filler (line 2). She goes on telling the colleagues that she is not sure about the conditions in New York (line 3). The associated speech acts are ‘[frame] →[filler] →[statement: inform]’:

Extract 5.7: B111

Location: Conference call

Participants: a: Female Hong Kong Chinese

1. a: <SA033 [frame] so >
2. <SA032 [filler] erm >
3. <SA063 [statement: inform] I don't know about >
4. <SA032 [filler] erm >
5. <SA063 [statement: inform] New York >

It is observed that the identification of different associations of the three speech acts can at least show the relationship among them as performed by different speakers in telephone and conference calls, though the collocational patterns may not be as discursively representative as expected.

### 5.7 Lexicogrammatical realisation and pattern

In the sub-corpus of telephone and conference calls, other than [filler] (28.02%), [statement: inform] is the most frequent speech act (14.66%). Based on the discussion in Chapter Four about inform markers in Stenström (1994), her seven inform markers were used to interrogate the 272 instances of [statement: inform] in telephone and conference calls. The results are shown in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8. Inform markers: frequency of occurrence

Telephone and conference calls			
No	Inform marker (Stenström, 1994)	Occurrence	Percentage
1	<i>actually</i>	2	0.74
3	<i>in fact</i>	0	0.00
2	<i>as a matter of fact</i>	0	0.00
4	<i>the fact is</i>	0	0.00
5	<i>the point is</i>	0	0.00
6	<i>you know</i>	1	0.37
7	<i>you see</i>	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>1.10</b>

Table 5.8 shows that out of the seven inform markers, two are found in the meetings, namely *actually* (0.74%) and *you know* (0.37%).

The remaining 269 instances that account for 98.90% of all instances of [statement: inform] are lexical phrases for informing. They are combinations of content (or lexical) words (noun, verb, adjective, and adverb) and grammatical (or function) words (such as article, pronoun, preposition, and auxiliary verb). The following examples (Table 5.9) are retrieved from the sub-corpus of telephone and conference calls that show the diverse patterns of informing other than employing the inform markers in different syntactic units.

Table 5.9. Examples of lexical phrases, clauses (and sentences) for informing

Phrase	<p>... and nothing else ...</p> <p>... the seventeen of June ...</p> <p>... your department ...</p> <p>... now in business ...</p> <p>... about a week ...</p>
Clause (and sentence)	<p>... if there is a need to do it ...</p> <p>... like to figure it out ...</p> <p>... probably line managers to show some support ...</p> <p>... thirteen C change to fifteen C ...</p> <p>... it's a very big scale ...</p> <p>... she's in charge ...</p> <p>... we have a clear front desk area ...</p>

As seen from the examples (Table 5.9), these phrases and clauses (and sentences) are both content and context-specific. Without the use of inform markers such as ‘namely’, ‘in fact’ and ‘the point is’ (Stenström, 1994, p. 90), speakers in telephone and conference calls have used linguistic realisations such as the expressions shown above to supply or present neutral information regarding a particular topic in the interactions. This is not surprising because it is not a requirement to use inform markers to realise the function of supplying or presenting neutral information. Rather, it is observed in telephone and conference calls that speakers usually directly inform the listeners what they would like to convey through phrases or clauses (and sentences) without the use of inform markers.

Further analysis shows that there are different lexical choices to achieve the communicative function in phrases and clauses. Direct discourse and first person pronouns are used to provide information that is either new or shared by the speakers and the agent who provides such information. As illustrated in the following examples, the use of direct discourse and first person pronouns gives a more personalised attitude:

1. **I** don't know whether it is the right way to do
2. **I** just want to figure out how the graphics people in the region are doing the stuff in a very consistent manner
3. **I** will be in trouble
  
4. **we** hear you very well
5. **we** have a clear front desk area
6. **we** could actually save the money

Direct discourse and second person pronouns are used to emphasise the person who receives the information, as shown in the examples below:

1. **you** are not in Hong Kong
2. **you** gave me a call
3. **you** can get the i-track anytime from Hong Kong

Direct discourse and third person pronouns are used to highlight the third party or parties involved in the information. The examples below illustrate this feature:

1. **she** is in charge
2. **she** could be able to figure out a course for us
3. **she** hasn't got back to me about the timing
  
4. **it** is what I'm planning to do for the bankers training
5. **it's** a big scale
6. **it's** possibly they will sit in a queue
  
7. **they** have a very long term objective on this thing
8. **they** try to do their best to narrow the gap
9. **they** don't listen

Coordinating conjunctions such as 'and', 'or' and 'so' are frequently used to join two parts of the information:

1. **and** we do have a front desk person for all the information
2. **and** now we have it
3. **and** the anti-virus programme of the computers
  
4. **but** we want to get it done on the second of July
5. **but** I'm just getting very concerned
6. **but** people would generally be invited pass

7. **so** at the moment the bankers can come in and sit next to an operator
8. **so** we've had a work best for our shift
9. **so** they need something to link to i-track

Regarding the grammatical structure, declarative is commonly used. The topics in the sub-corpus of telephone and conference calls are similar to those in the sub-corpus of meetings and of service encounters. The difference is in the organisational context (cf. Clarke & Nilsson, 2008) where in meetings and service encounters, participants are engaged in a physical environment with face-to-face interactions for the business processes and services whereas in telephone and conference calls, participants are involved in the same business processes and services without a physical contact with the people in the interactions. The latter is basically voice-to-voice interactions among the participants.

Accordingly, regarding the linguistic realisations of [statement: inform], the discussion in Chapters Four and Six about the complexity and lexical density of [statement: inform] in meetings and in service encounters are relevant.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has described the frequencies of unique speech acts and co-occurring speech acts in the telephone and conference calls in the business sub-corpus of HKCSE (prosodic), and discussed lexicogrammatical realisations and patterns of the most frequent speech act in the genre. The quantitative and qualitative findings reveal the great variety of speech acts and linguistic realisations performed by speakers in pursuing transactional goals in the genre (cf. Koester, 2006, 2010).

In response to the first research question, in terms of the frequencies, the main finding is that though [statement: inform] and [reply to statement: acknowledge] are two of the top five most frequently occurring speech acts, the most frequent act is [filler]. One possible reason for its prevalence could be related to the differences between face-to-face conversations and telephone and conference calls. Given the technical constraints in telephone and conference calls, only one conversation can take place. Speakers cannot acknowledge each other by a smile or a nod. Length of a speaker's utterance depends to a large degree on

the action to be accomplished such as information updates, comments or questions on topics (cf. Halbe, 2012). The frequent use of [filler] as an utterance internal filler is reasonable as it is a means to let the speaker have enough time to express his or her train of thought, in particular when the speaker would like to maintain control or keep the floor of the conversation while thinking of what to say next. The hesitation with [filler] is also used to indicate uncertainty and represent difficulty of the speaker in expressing an opinion or elaborating an argument (cf. Bowles, 2006). Nevertheless, the prevalence of [filler] in the telephone and conference calls is important and deserves further study.

In response to the second research question, two and three co-occurring speech acts have been examined. As discussed in Section 4.8, the co-occurrence of speech acts is largely related to adjacency pairs in conversation analysis. Similar to meetings, most frequent two co-occurring speech acts are not conventional adjacency pairs, not to mention those with a preferred next action such as ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: agree]’ or ‘[check] / [confirm]’. Rather, the top ten most frequent two co-occurring speech acts are all associated with [filler] (Section 5.5), which is also the most frequent speech act annotated in telephone and conference calls. The frequent occurrence of [filler] could explain why the quantitative findings of the most frequent two co-occurring speech acts as found by *SpeechActConc* are associated with [filler]. Conventional adjacency pairs are produced next to each other; however, when there are insertions between them, such as filler, then the following pair, either preferred or dispreferred, will be separated from the first pair (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). Regarding three co-occurring speech acts, the most frequent three co-occurring speech acts are ‘[filler] / [statement: inform] / [frame]’ with eight instances. As discussed in Section 5.6, there are two sequences of the association. Similar to what have been mentioned in Section 4.8, the collocation pattern is not discursively representative.

In response to the third research question, in terms of realisations and patterns, the most frequent unique speech acts [statement: inform] has been discussed (Section 5.7). Additional emphasis has been placed on examining the comparison with seven inform markers (Stenström, 1994). Out of around 300 instances, only *actually* and *you know* are found in telephone and conference

calls as inform markers. In most of the annotations, the transactional goals are accomplished with more complex linguistic realisations in terms of phrases and clauses. There is also no clear form-function relation or fixed patterns associated with specific words and word classes.



## Chapter Six

### Informal office talks

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background information about the informal office talk data (6.2). It then describes and analyses the frequencies of occurrence and communicative functions (or illocutionary force) of the speech acts in informal office talks (6.3) with a discussion of the findings (6.4), followed by a frequency analysis of two and three co-occurring speech acts (6.5) and discussion (6.6). Lastly, the lexicogrammatical realisations and patterns of the most frequently occurring speech act in informal office talks are examined (6.7).

#### 6.2 Background information

In the corpus, the four informal office talks (B075, B113, B146, and B148) are one-to-one interactions between colleagues in their workplace or in a restaurant. In general, the participants in the interactions have established trustful relationships prior to the data collection (cf. McKays, Bowyer, & Commins, 2000). Thus, the topics of the talks are diverse and causal. They are not only restricted to job-related issues, including current job duties, past working experiences, challenges at workplace and job security affected by global financial turmoil, differences in corporate cultures related to geography, people, nation, as well as changes at work regarding salary, prospect, outsourcing, and personnel, but also personal issues in their private life, including sharing of the local life and cultures of different places around the world, future travel plans, career development, opinions about life in Hong Kong, as well as discussion related to education, colleagues, and retirement.

In B075, the two speakers were a male English speaker and a female Hong Kong Chinese. The talk took place at the workplace. The topics were about their personal life and working life. For personal life, they share with each other about their opinions and experience about the life and people in places they have visited before, such as Angkor and Phnom Penh in Cambodia, Kaohsiung in

Taiwan, and Beijing in China. They also talk about the possible destinations for their coming holidays. For working life, they talk about the progress of the current recruitment of part time staff, the renewal of membership, customer complaints about the service, and their previous working experiences with airlines.

In B113, the two speakers were a female Hong Kong Chinese and a male English speaker. The conversation took place during lunch. The topics were about their personal life and working life. For personal life, they share with each other about their views on education. For working life, they talk about personal career development, job promotion, colleagues, and current job situations at the workplace.

In B146, the two speakers were a female Hong Kong Chinese and a male English speaker. The talk took place in a restaurant. The topics were about their personal life and working life. For personal life, they express their views on life in Hong Kong. For working life, they talk about the challenges in investment banking business, the influence of global financial turmoil, the influence of Asian culture to the company, and the differences in corporate culture in terms of geographical location and nationality.

In B148, the two speakers were a female Hong Kong Chinese and a female Indian. The talk took place in a restaurant. The topics were about their personal life and working life. For personal life, they share about the MBA class and retirement planning. For working life, they talk about the experience of working with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds; job security; corporate culture; and different kinds of changes at work, including salary, promotion, prospect, outsourcing, and colleagues.

Though the number of recordings collected in informal office talks is limited, the topics are diverse but restricted mainly to personal life and working life regarding particular contexts (cf. Slade & Gardner, 1993). In the sub-corpus of informal office talks, the contexts are mainly lunch break at workplace or in restaurant. Given the distinctive features regarding informal talks, or 'causal talk', 'causal conversation', or 'everyday chat' (Eggins & Slade, 1997; cf. Ventola, 1979), such as the lack of a clear pragmatic purpose, which is different from meetings, service encounters, or telephone and conference calls, that involves,

for example, the buying-and-selling transaction, the topics could be as diverse as observed in each recording. In other words, it is shown that these informal talks are less concerned with the transactional goals but with clear non-transactional or relational goals involving topics both inside and outside the workplace (Koester, 2006). Moreover, these talks or conversations are less structured in a sense that an introduction and a conclusion are not applicable in the workplace most of the time (Chan, 2014).

### 6.3 Frequency analysis of speech acts in informal office talks

Out of 6,067 instances of speech acts found in the informal office talks, there are 38 unique speech acts. They are listed in accordance with the descending frequency sort (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1. Frequency of unique speech acts in informal office talks

No	Speech act	Frequency	Percentage
1	Statement: opine	1247	20.55%
2	Statement: inform	1167	19.24%
3	Filler	1150	18.96%
4	Reply to statement: acknowledge	606	9.99%
5	Justify	312	5.14%
6	Expand	263	4.33%
7	Reply to statement: agree	227	3.74%
8	Answer to question: comply	184	3.03%
9	Empathizer	115	1.90%
10	Preface	108	1.78%
11	Frame	99	1.63%
12	Monitor	97	1.60%
13	Question: polarity	56	0.92%
14	Question: confirmation	55	0.91%
15	Clue	47	0.77%
16	Question: identification	46	0.76%
17	Hedge	36	0.59%
18	Alert	32	0.53%

19	Precursor	30	0.49%
20	Answer to question: imply	22	0.36%
21	Check	21	0.35%
22	Confirm	20	0.33%
23	Uptake	16	0.26%
24	Emphasizer	16	0.26%
25	Appealer	15	0.25%
26	Thanks	10	0.16%
27	Reply to statement: object	8	0.13%
28	Query	7	0.12%
29	React	7	0.12%
30	Apology	6	0.10%
31	Empathy	6	0.10%
32	Greeting	5	0.08%
33	Staller	5	0.08%
34	Suggest	5	0.08%
35	Answer to question: disclaim	4	0.07%
36	Request: action	4	0.07%
37	Answer to question: supply	3	0.05%
38	Correct-self	2	0.03%

As seen from Table 6.1, the three most frequent speech acts in the informal office talks are [statement: opine] (20.55%), [statement: inform] (19.24%), and [filler] (18.96%), each with more than 1,100 occurrences, followed by [reply to statement: acknowledge] (9.99%), [justify] (5.14%), [expand] (4.33%), [reply to statement: agree] (3.74%), [answer to question: comply] (3.03%), [empathizer] (1.90%), [preface] (1.78%), [frame] (1.63%), and [monitor] (1.60%). The frequencies of the remaining speech acts are lower, ranging from 56 occurrences (0.92%) ([question: polarity]) to 2 occurrences (0.03%) ([correct-self]).

Out of these 38 speech acts, there are twenty-two primary acts (56.41%) (Table 6.2), seven secondary acts (17.95%) (Table 6.3), and eight complementary acts (20.51%) (Table 6.4) from Stenström's (1994) taxonomy and two speech acts from other studies (5.13%) (Table 6.5) (Tsui, 1994; Leech & Weisser, 2003). Each speech act is found to perform communicative function(s) in the specific contexts of interaction in the business and workplace data.

Table 6.2 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of occurrence of twenty-two primary acts identified in informal office talks.

Table 6.2. Communicative functions and frequencies of primary acts in informal office talks

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Statement: opine	Give or express one's personal opinions, feelings and attitudes	1,247	20.55%
2	Statement: inform	Provide or present neutral information	1,167	19.24%
3	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Signal receipt of information or signal that the second speaker accepts what the first speaker said as a valid contribution to the conversation	606	9.99%
4	Reply to statement: agree	Signal agreement with what was just said, indicate that speaker B approves of what speaker A means	227	3.74%
5	Answer to question: comply	Answer a question directly and adequately	184	3.03%
6	Question: polarity	Ask for a yes / no question	56	0.92%
7	Question: confirmation	Ask for a confirming answer	55	0.91%
8	Question: identification	Ask for information or an answer identifying a wh-word	46	0.76%
9	Alert	Call the addressee's attention, attract the other party's / parties' attention	32	0.53%
10	Answer to question: imply	Answer the question indirectly, give adequate information implicitly	22	0.36%

11	Check	Ask for repetition or clarification of what was said in the immediately preceding turn	21	0.35%
12	Confirm	Respond to a request for confirmation	20	0.33%
13	Thanks	Express gratitude	10	0.16%
14	Reply to statement: object	Signal a different opinion	8	0.13%
15	Query	Express doubt or strong surprise	7	0.12%
16	React	Express attitude or strong feelings	7	0.12%
17	Apology	Express regret	6	0.10%
18	Greeting	Greet somebody or bid farewell	5	0.08%
19	Suggest	Put forward an idea or a plan	5	0.08%
20	Answer to question: disclaim	Declare the answer is unknown; come up with an answer that is honest and straightforward but which does not answer the question and does not pretend to do so	4	0.07%
21	Request: action	Ask somebody to do something	4	0.07%
22	Answer to question: supply	Give inadequate information, does not really answer the question	3	0.05%

Table 6.2 shows that the three most frequent primary speech acts in informal office talks are [statement: opine] (20.55%), [statement: inform] (19.24%), and [reply to statement: acknowledge] (9.99%), each with more than 600 occurrences, followed by [reply to statement: agree] (3.74%) and [answer to question: comply] (3.03%). The frequencies of the remaining primary speech acts are lower, ranging from 56 occurrences (0.92%) ([question: polarity]) to 3 occurrences (0.05%) ([answer to question: supply]).

Table 6.3 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the seven secondary acts in informal office talks.

Table 6.3. Communicative function and frequencies of secondary acts in informal office talks

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Justify	Defend what was said in the primary act, give the reason why	312	5.14%
2	Expand	Give complementary information	263	4.33%
3	Preface	Introduce a primary act, has a face-saving effect in that they prepare speaker B for what is going to happen next, make sure that certain pre-conditions hold before making the [following primary act]	108	1.78%
4	Clue	Follow a primary act and give a hint, provide additional information after a question, comment on the question	47	0.77%
5	Precursor	Precede a primary act and give information, link up what was said before, comment on something in the preceding dialogue	30	0.40%
6	Emphasizer	Underline what was said in the primary act	15	0.25%

In Table 6.3, the two most frequent secondary speech acts in informal office talks are [justify] (5.14%) and [expand] (4.33%), each with more than 260 occurrences in the informal office talks, followed by [preface] (1.78%). The frequencies of the remaining secondary speech acts are lower, ranging from 47 occurrences (0.77%) ([clue]) to 15 occurrences (0.25%) ([emphasizer]).

Table 6.4 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the eight complementary acts in informal office talks.

Table 6.4. Communicative functions and frequencies of complementary acts in informal office talks

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Filler	Fill a gap in the discourse	1,150	18.96%
2	Empathizer	Involve the listener, engage the listener and make her/him feel part of the conversation, intensify the relationship with the listener, prompt listener feedback, the current speaker invites the current listener to take an active part	115	1.90%
3	Frame	Mark a boundary or the beginning of a new stage in the discourse	99	1.63%
4	Monitor	Help putting something right, make a new start or rephrase what the speaker was going to say in the middle of a turn as the listener cannot follow or is not convinced, make the speaker's point clear, steer what the speaker says	97	1.60%
5	Hedge	Help avoiding commitment, modify and mitigate an utterance, help the speaker avoid going straight to the point, avoid being blunt, avoid appearing authoritative, and avoid committing him/herself	36	0.59%
6	Uptake	Accept what was said and lead on, acknowledge receipt of what the previous speaker said and evaluate it before going on	16	0.26%
7	Appealer	Invite feedback	15	0.25%
8	Staller	Play for time	5	0.08%

Table 6.4 shows that the most frequent complementary speech act in the informal office talks is [filler] (18.96%), followed by [empathizer] (1.90%), [frame] (1.63%), and [monitor] (1.60%). The frequencies of the remaining



complementary speech acts are lower, ranging from 36 occurrences (0.59%) ([hedge]) to 5 occurrences (0.08%) ([staller]).

Table 6.5 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts in informal office talks from other studies (Tsui, 1994; Leech & Weisser, 2003).

Table 6.5. Communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts in informal office talks from other studies

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage	Source
1	Empathy	Show concern for and empathize with the addressee such as 'congratulate', 'well-wishing', 'welcome', 'condole'	6	0.10%	Tsui (1994)
2	Correct-self	Correct one's own utterance	2	0.03%	Leech and Weisser (2003)

In Table 6.5, the most frequent speech act from other studies is [empathy] (0.10%), followed by [correct-self] (0.03%).

In summary, the findings on the communicative function and frequency analysis of different categories of speech acts have shown that in the context of informal office talks, the majority of speech acts are from Stenström's (1994) primary acts (56.41%), which are used to realise moves on their own, followed by complementary acts (20.51%), which are used to accompany but rarely replaces primary acts and secondary acts (31.82%), which are used to accompany and sometimes replace primary acts. The remaining acts are from other studies (5.13%). The quantitative results regarding different unique acts shown above respond to the first research question on the relative frequencies of occurrence of different speech acts in a genre.

## 6.4 Discussion of findings

As reflected in the communicative function and frequency analysis of different categories of speech acts, reporting objective or neutral information and expressing personal opinions are relatively common practices in informal office talks. Both [statement: opine] (20.55%) and [statement: inform] (19.24%) are the first two in the top five most frequently occurring speech acts, followed by [reply to statement: acknowledge] (9.99%), [reply to statement: agree] (3.74%), and [answer to question: comply] (3.03%).

These acts are reflected in the language used in the practice and the generic structure of informal office talks, including beginning, processing, and ending (McKay et al., 2000; de Silva Joyce & Slade, 2000; cf. Eggins & Slade, 1997) and realised by distinctive lexicogrammatical features in informal office talks for the purposes of giving and receiving both information and opinions (Eggins & Slade, 1997). The following examples can illustrate the different linguistic realisations found in the dataset to perform a particular speech act.

In informal office talks, expressing personal opinions and reporting objective or neutral information are common practices, thus both [statement: opine] (20.55%) and [statement: inform] (19.24%) occur more frequently than other speech acts. Extract 6.1 (B146) shows an example of expressing personal opinions, which is giving personal opinions on extra jobs during lunchtime at a restaurant. Extract 6.1 contains a number of examples of opine. Speakers a and B1 are colleagues. They are having lunch in a restaurant. Speaker a expresses her views on the workload in the working hours (lines 2-4, 6), with a filler ‘you know’ (line 3). She goes on expressing that lunch time is one’s personal time (lines 7-9). She expresses her negative attitudinal views on the bankers going to the restaurant for lunch (lines 10-11):

Extract 6.1: B146

Location: Restaurant

Participants: a: female Hong Kong Chinese      B1: male English speaker

1. a: <SA001 [alert] \*\* hey >
2. <SA064 [statement: opine] you already >
3. <SA032 [filler] you know >
4. <SA064 [statement: opine] done a lot of things >
5. B1: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] \* yeah >
6. a: <SA064 [statement: opine] \*\* at work >
7. <SA064 [statement: opine] now it's your personal time >
8. <SA064 [statement: opine] lunch time is your personal time
9. >
10. <SA064 [statement: opine] so I hate the bankers that come here
11. >

With regard to reporting objective or neutral information in an informal office talk, the linguistic realisations of [statement: inform] are not restricted to the markers listed in Stenström (1994). On the contrary, it can be provision of information to express discontent over the staff vacation arrangement, as shown in Extract 6.2 (B148). Extract 6.2 (B148) took place in a restaurant. Speaker y and speaker a1 are talking about the vacation pay. After speaker y has said that their vacation pay is no longer tax deductible, she goes on informing speaker a1 that the managers have not told them the change in their vacation pay (lines 1-5 and lines 7-8):

Extract 6.2: B148

Location: Restaurant

Participants: a1: female Hong Kong Chinese y: Indian

1. y: <SA063 [statement:inform] but they haven't told us >
2. <SA063 [statement:inform] they haven't told us yet >
3. <SA063 [statement:inform] nobody told us >
4. <SA063 [statement:inform] we're taking we're taking vacation
5. expecting fifteen percent of our vacation is >
6. a1: <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] \* right >
7. y: <SA063 [statement:inform] \*\* the is not deducted from that
8. >

It is also found that [statement: opine] and [statement: inform] are followed by ‘reply to statement: acknowledge’ (9.99%), which signals a minimal receipt of information, such as ‘yeah’, ‘mhm’, ‘right’, ‘okay’, ‘mm’, ‘oh’, ‘uhuh’, and ‘yes’, or a combination of these markers, such as ‘oh yes’, ‘oh right’, and ‘oh okay’. Few of these linguistic realisations of acknowledgement, such as ‘okay’ and ‘right’, are found in Stenström (1994). Moreover, other than these formal realisations, it is found that a listener can express an acknowledgement by repeating what the speaker has just said, as shown in Extract 6.3 (B075). Speakers a and B are talking about holiday trips. After speaker B has told speaker a that his next trip is probably in April (lines 1-8), with ‘er’ (lines 2, 4, 7) and ‘um’ (line 5) in between, speaker a responds by repeating ‘April’ (line 9):

Extract 6.3: B075

Location: Office

Participants: a: female Hong Kong Chinese      B: male English speaker

1. B: <SA029 [expand] it I I can't really go but >
2. <SA032 [filler] er >
3. <SA029 [expand] probably the next trip I'll do is >
4. <SA032 [filler] er (.) >
5. <SA032 [filler] um >
6. <SA029 [expand] I the coming >
7. <SA032 [filler] er >
8. <SA029 [expand] April >
9. a: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] April >

The following is another example of the use of repetition to show acknowledgement (Extract 6.4). In Extract 6.4, speaker a1 is asking a waitress to serve some tea. Then speaker y tells speaker a1 that she doesn't want any tea (line 1). Speaker a1 responds by repeating what speaker y has said – ‘don't want tea’ – to express acknowledgement (line 2), followed by a discourse marker ‘oh’ that also shows acknowledgement (line 3):

Extract 6.4: B148

Location: Restaurant

Participants: y: Indian a1: female Hong Kong Chinese

1. y: <SA063 [statement: inform] I don't want tea >
2. a1: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] you don't want tea
3. >
4. <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] oh >
5. y: <SA063 [statement: inform] I wanted the bean >

In summary, the linguistic realisations of the most frequently occurring speech acts in informal office talks are not restricted to a list of markers. Regarding the realisation of a particular communicative function through a speech act, there are a range of linguistic expressions that could be used to achieve the goal.

### 6.5 Frequency analysis of co-occurring speech acts in informal office talks

In informal office talks, out of a total of 2,640 instances of two co-occurring speech acts, there are 17 unique centred speech acts and 130 total centred speech act (Appendix 5). The top ten two co-occurring speech acts are as follows:

Table 6.6. Top ten two co-occurring speech acts in informal office talks

centred speech act	co-occurring speech act	co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Statement: inform	Filler	493	18.67
Statement: opine	Filler	484	18.33
Filler	Justify	170	6.44
Filler	Expand	114	4.32
Statement: opine	Reply to statement: agree	96	3.64
Filler	Answer to question: comply	65	2.46

Filler	Preface	58	2.20
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	57	2.16
Statement: opine	Empathizer	55	2.08
Statement: inform	Empathizer	48	1.82

As seen from Table 6.6, the two most frequent two co-occurring speech acts are ‘[statement: inform] / [filler]’ (18.67%) as well as ‘[statement: opine] / [filler]’ (18.33%), followed by ‘[justify] / [filler]’ (6.44%) as well as ‘[filler] / [expand]’ (4.32%). The frequencies of the remaining two co-occurring speech acts are lower, ranging from 96 occurrences (‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: agree]’) to 2 occurrences (e.g. ‘[statement: opine] / [apology]’).

Fillers are very commonly used by speakers when they inform (18.67%), opine (18.33%), justify (6.44%) or expand (4.32%), thus becoming one of the most frequently co-occurring speech acts. However, apart from the co-occurring speech acts with [filler], other adjacency pairs are found in the search for two co-occurring speech acts. Some are recognized with a preferred response such as ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: agree]’ (3.64%), ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’ (2.16%), ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’ (1.36%) whereas many others are not, such as ‘[statement: opine] / [empathizer]’ (2.08%), ‘[statement: inform] / [empathizer]’ (1.82%), ‘[statement: inform] / [frame]’ (1.52%) .

Regarding three co-occurring speech acts, out of a total of 169 instances of three co-occurring speech acts, there are 47 double origins (Appendix 6). Table 6.7 shows the frequency distribution of the top ten three co-occurring speech acts in informal office talks.

Table 6.7. Top ten three co-occurring speech acts in informal office talks

Double origin		Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Statement: inform	Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	18	10.65
Statement: opine	Filler	Empathizer	11	6.51

Statement: inform	Filler	Frame	10	5.92
Statement: opine	Filler	Frame	10	5.92
Statement: opine	Filler	Justify	8	4.73
Statement: opine	Filler	Reply to statement: agree	8	4.73
Statement: inform	Filler	Reply to statement: agree	5	2.96
Statement: inform	Filler	Statement: opine	5	2.96
Statement: opine	Filler	Hedge	5	2.96
Filler	Expand	Reply to statement: acknowledge	5	2.96

As seen in Table 6.7, the four most frequent three co-occurring speech acts are ‘[statement: inform] / [filler] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’ (10.65%); ‘[statement: opine] / [filler] / [empathizer]’ (6.51%); ‘[statement: inform] / [filler] / [frame]’ (5.92%); and ‘[statement: opine] / [filler] / [frame]’ (5.92%). They are followed by ‘[statement: opine] / [filler] / [justify]’ (4.73%) as well as ‘[statement: opine] / [filler] / [reply to statement: agree]’ (4.73%). The frequencies of the remaining three co-occurring speech acts are lower, ranging from 5 occurrences (2.96%) (e.g. ‘[statement: inform] / [filler] / [reply to statement: agree]’) to 2 occurrences (1.19%) (e.g. ‘[justify] / [preface] / [filler]’).

## 6.6 Discussion of findings

Adjacency pairs with a preferred next action, as mentioned in Sections 1.5 and 2.5.4, have been observed in informal office talks, such as ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: agree]’, ‘[check] / [confirm]’, and ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’. Extract 6.5 (B146) shows ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: agree]’. In an informal office talk at a restaurant, speakers B1 and a, who are colleagues, are talking about the working culture of an investment bank. Together with an empathizer (line 3), speaker B1 expresses his views on the importance of having a capable person with integrity to do business in a competitive and challenging environment (lines 1-8). Speaker a responds with an agreement (lines 9-10):

Extract 6.5: B146

Location: Restaurant

Participants: B1: Male English speaker a: Female Hong Kong Chinese

1. B1: <SA064 [statement: opine] it's built on your integrity and
2. your ability to execute >
3. <SA024 [empathizer] and you know what >
4. <SA064 [statement: opine] that's that's a lot (. ) >
5. <SA064 [statement: opine] that's a lot (. ) >
6. <SA064 [statement: opine] once you ask for all those things
7. together there's not a lot people in this world that can
8. deliver that >
9. a: <SA054 [reply to statement: agree] yes >
10. <SA054 [reply to statement: agree] true >

The other one is '[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]', as shown in Extract 6.6 (B075). In the extract, the colleagues are talking about the recent work of membership renewal kits. Speaker a tells speaker B that she used to have eight staff (lines 1-2) and has twelve staff at present (line 4). Speaker B signals the receipt of information with an acknowledgement (line 3):

Extract 6.6: B075

Location: Unknown

Participants: a: Female Hong Kong Chinese B: Male English speaker

1. a: <SA063 [statement: inform] we used to have eight staff only
2. including S\_\_ and myself >
3. B: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] yeah >
4. a: <SA063 [statement:inform] and now we have twelve >

Regarding three co-occurring speech acts, based on the goals of studying their sequential patterns depicted and elucidated in Chapter Four, though it is possible to generate a list of associated speech acts, the associations may not



show clearly the distinctive collocational patterns in informal office talks, as illustrated with the following example.

Figure 6.1 is the first most frequent three co-occurring speech acts – ‘[statement: inform] / [filler] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’ with a double origin ‘[statement: inform] / [filler]’:

1 <SA032 [filler] um > <SA035 [hedge] I think > <SA063 [statement:inform] I'll try that > B: <SA053  
 2 <SA032 [filler] um > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA063 [statement:inform] red bean paste > B: <SA053  
 3 <SA032 [filler] um > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] in early January > B: <SA053  
 4 was I challenged > <SA032 [filler] you know > <SA063 [statement:inform] all the time > a1: <SA053  
 5 the magazine > <SA032 [filler] \* yeah > B: <SA063 [statement:inform] \*\* it's the two > a: <SA053  
 6 April > B: <SA032 [filler] yeah > <SA063 [statement:inform] to Australia > a: <SA053  
 7 we also went to > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] Siem Reap > a: <SA053 [reply  
 8 my companion today for > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] ice cream > y: <SA053 [reply  
 9 he spoke > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] Cantonese > a: <SA053 [reply  
 10 that strategy that is > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA063 [statement:inform] it works (.) > B1: <SA053  
 11 the wedding cake > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA063 [statement:inform] is very sweet > B: <SA053  
 12 do I'll do the part > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] briefing part > B: <SA053  
 13 and she gave me > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] two for England > a: <SA053  
 14 those kind of > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] we call rituals > B1: <SA053  
 15 uhuh > B: <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] living in Cambodia > a: <SA053  
 16 <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] good > <SA063 [statement:inform] and > <SA032 [filler] er >  
 17 <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] mm > a: <SA063 [statement:inform] and we have > <SA032 [filler]  
 18 <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] yeah > <SA063 [statement:inform] I at ABCD there's > <SA032

Figure 6.1. The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in informal office talks

The examples illustrate that there are two sequences of the association, which are ‘[filler]→[statement: inform]→[reply to statement: acknowledge]’ (lines 1-15) and ‘[reply to statement: acknowledge]→[statement: inform]→[filler]’ (lines 16-18). To further understand the context in which these speech acts are realised, Extract 6.7 from line 13 is shown as follows. In Extract 6.7, speaker B is telling speaker a about a female staff at a post office in Phnom Penh. Speakers B first starts with a filler (line 1) and then states that he wanted to buy one stamp for the United Kingdom; however, the female staff does not understand English very well and she gives Speaker B two stamps instead (line 2). Speaker a responds with a minimal acknowledgement (line 3). The associated speech acts are ‘[filler]→[statement: inform]→[reply to statement: acknowledge]’:

Extract 6.7: B075

Location: Office

Participants: B: male English speaker a: female Hong Kong Chinese

1. B: <SA032 [filler] er >
2. <SA063 [statement:inform] two for England >
3. a: <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] \* yeah >

Extract 6.8 is an example of another sequence from line 17, Speaker B and speaker a are talking about the wedding traditions in Hong Kong. Speaker a tells speaker B that the traditional Chinese wedding cake is very sweet. Then speaker B responds with a minimal acknowledgement (line 1). Then speaker a tells speaker B that the cake is made with red bean paste (line 2), which is accompanied with a filler (line 3):

Extract 6.8: B075

Location: Office

Participants: B: male English speaker a: female Hong Kong Chinese

1. B: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] mm >
2. a: <SA063 [statement: inform] and we have >
3. <SA032 [filler] um >

It is observed that the identification of different associations of the three speech acts can at least show the relationship among them as performed by different speakers in meetings, though the collocational patterns may not be as discursively representative as expected.

### **6.7 Lexicogrammatical realisation and pattern**

In the sub-corpus of informal office talks, [statement: opine] is the most frequent speech act (20.55%). A person's opinion could involve making an evaluation or comment on the topic under discussion (Cheng & Warren, 2006). Stenström (1994), based on London-Lund Spoken Corpus, identifies 6 opine

markers, namely ‘I feel’, ‘I think’, ‘it seems’, ‘it’s a pity that’, ‘it’s surprising that’, and ‘it’s ...’. Cheng and Warren (2006) has identified 24 opine markers in the business corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic). In this study, these 24 opine markers were used to interrogate 1,247 instances of [statement: opine] in the informal office talks. The results are shown in Table 6.8.

Table 6.8. Opine markers: frequency of occurrence

<b>Informal office talks</b>			
<b>No</b>	<b>Opine markers (from Cheng &amp; Warren, 2006)</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	<i>(it) it's (it's) ...</i>	151	12.11
2	<i>I + think (thought)</i>	78	6.26
3	<i>I + say</i>	14	1.12
4	<i>I + know</i>	6	0.48
5	<i>that + seem(s)</i>	6	0.48
6	<i>I + find (found)</i>	5	0.40
7	<i>I + like</i>	4	0.32
8	<i>I + feel (felt)</i>	3	0.24
9	<i>the + thing + is</i>	2	0.16
10	<i>I + (don't) believe</i>	2	0.16
11	<i>I + suppose</i>	2	0.16
12	<i>I + sure</i>	2	0.16
<b>Total</b>		<b>275</b>	<b>22.05</b>

Table 6.8 shows that out of the 24 opine markers, 12 are found in the informal office talks. They include both the positive and negative constructions (such as *I believe* and *I don't believe*), different tenses and aspects (such as *I find* and *I found*), variations of the base form of an opine marker (such as *I know obviously ...*, *I know that/how ...*) (c.f. Cheng & Warren, 2006), repetition of words as hesitation indicators commonly found in naturally occurring conversation (such as *it it's...*, *it's it's...*), and contracted verb forms (such as *it's*). *It's* (12.11%) is the most frequently occurring opine marker, followed by *I + think (thought)* (6.26%). Other markers are less frequent, ranging from *I + say* (1.12%)

to *the + thing + is / I + (don't) believe / I + suppose / I + sure* (0.16%).

Other than these, there are other markers, which are used to give an opinion or ‘to express an evaluation of the state of desires, approval, enjoyment, etc.’ (Cheng & Warren, 2006, p.48), not found from those 24 opine markers. Table 6.9 shows these other markers from the sub-corpus.

Table 6.9. Other opine markers for expressing a personal opinion: frequency of occurrence

informal office talks			
No	Opine markers	Occurrence	Percentage
1	<i>but ...</i>	144	11.55
2	<i>that is (that's)</i>	73	5.85
3	<i>you have to</i>	19	1.52
4	<i>you can</i>	17	1.36
5	<i>I + want</i>	6	0.48
6	<i>I + can</i>	6	0.48
7	<i>you need</i>	5	0.40
8	<i>you've got to</i>	4	0.32
9	<i>I + have</i>	2	0.16
10	<i>I + understand</i>	2	0.16
<b>Total</b>		<b>278</b>	<b>22.29</b>

Among these markers, *but* (11.55%) is the most frequently occurring opine marker, followed by *that's / that is* (5.85%). The other markers are less frequent, ranging from *you have to* (1.52%) to *I + need* (0.08). It is interesting to note that *but* accounts for 11.55% of all 1,247 instances. The use of *but* in expressing opinion is common when the speaker would like to make a contrasting opinion against a previous opinion proposed either by the speaker herself / himself or by another speaker.

When combined, the total number of these opine markers is 553, which accounts for 44.34% of all instances of [statement: opine] in informal office talks. The remaining 694 instances that are excluded from these opine markers,

accounting for 55.66% of all instances of [statement: opine], are lexical phrases, clauses (and sentences) for expressing opinions. They are combinations of content (or lexical) word (noun, verb, adjective, and adverb) and grammatical (or function) words (such as article, pronoun, preposition, and auxiliary verb). The following examples are retrieved from the sub-corpus of informal office talks that illustrate the diverse patterns of expressing opinions other than employing opine markers in different syntactic units. Table 6.10 shows examples of lexical phrases, clauses (and sentences) for opining.

Table 6.10. Examples of lexical phrases, clauses (and sentences) for opining

Phrase	<p>... and to a certain degree ...</p> <p>... because of that ...</p> <p>... especially the management ...</p> <p>... even the education ...</p> <p>... from the airport ...</p>
Clause (and sentence)	<p>... a strong culture is a great company ...,</p> <p>... and do the stuff that you think is right ...,</p> <p>... do something about it ...</p> <p>... consultants are treated very differently ...</p> <p>... females do that already ...</p> <p>... he was a nice guy at that time ...</p>

Further analysis shows that there are different lexical choices to achieve the communicative function in phrases and clauses. Opining is mostly carried out through declaratives and sometimes through hypothetical expressions of *if-clauses*.

Direct discourse and first person pronouns are used to provide information that is either new or shared by the speakers and the agent who provides such information. As illustrated in the following examples, the use of direct discourse and first person plural pronoun gives a more personalised attitude of the opinion that is shared by the community:

1. **we** still can be successful in this
2. **we** are doing really good job
3. **we** have a very secure future

Direct discourse and second person pronouns are used to emphasise the person who receives the opinion, as shown in the examples below:

1. **you** have to bind them for about three years
2. **you**'ve done a great job then
3. **you**'ll like it

Direct discourse and third person pronouns are used to highlight the third party or parties involved in the opinion. The examples below illustrate this feature:

1. **he** was a nice guy at that time
2. **he** wouldn't remember us
3. **he** might be back again when the market improved
  
4. **it** is very serious
5. **it** might be very different
6. **it** sounds really fattening
  
7. **they**'re very US centric
8. **they** don't like us
9. **they** should communicate with us

The message itself can be the actor represented by demonstrative pronouns or demonstrative adjectives, or by phrases related to the opinion:

1. **That** makes it difficult
2. **That** kind of reinvestment is more important to keep people
3. **That** would be good

Coordinating conjunctions such as 'and' and 'so' are frequently used to join two parts of the opinion:

1. **and** let them let you guys do it
2. **and** hope the best will come
3. **and** the worst thing is
  
4. **so** I'd better let my boss know

5. **so** you don't go crazy is to just accept it
6. **so** it's just a matter of reading for

The hypothetical expression of *if-clauses* is used to express an opinion about a hypothetical action:

1. **if** you outsource it to India you can outsource it to China
2. **if** he walked out of there at five thirty or six o'clock nobody would say anything
3. **if** they are not making profit they shouldn't give you any bonus

As seen from the examples, these phrases and clauses (and sentences) are both content and context-specific. Without the use of inform markers such as 'namely', 'in fact' and 'the point is' (Stenström, 1994, p. 90), speakers in informal office talks have used linguistic realisations such as the expressions shown above to express personal opinions regarding a particular topic in the interactions. This is not surprising because it is not a requirement to use opine markers to realise the function of opining. Rather, it is observed in informal office talks that speakers also express their opinions directly through phrases or clauses (and sentences) without the use of opine markers.

In informal office talks where participants have equal power in the interaction and are in close or continual contact for development of affective attitudes towards one another (de Silva Joyce & Slade, 2000), expressing and exchanging personal opinion is common. Informal office talks are classified as one of the genres in workplace casual conversation (Eggins & Slade, 1997; cf. Slade & Gardner, 1993; de Silva Joyce & Slade, 2000). The relationship between speakers and individual personality and style are important factors influencing the characteristics of each informal office talk (Koester, 2006, 2010). In the sub-corpus of informal office talks examined in this study, [statement: opine] is frequent in sharing job-related issues such as job security and changes as well as personal issues such as daily life and retirement. Both opine markers and other lexical markers are found to be frequently used when expressing opinions.

## 6.8 Conclusion

From the analysis and discussion, it is found that there is a range of speech acts as used by speakers to fulfil mainly the relational goals (Koester, 2006, 2010). It examines the different unique speech acts and co-occurring speech acts with corpus evidence. In response to the first research question, the frequent speech acts show speakers' consideration of the purposes of giving and receiving both information and opinions in various local contexts of the informal office talks. Similar to the findings in meetings and telephone and conference calls, [filler] is the third most frequent speech act after [statement: opine] and [statement: inform]. The frequent occurrence of [statement: opine] and [statement: inform] could be attributed to the nature of informal talk or causal conversation at the workplace (Section 6.4). In such informal talk or casual conversation, participants (usually colleagues) are in close or continual contact, have established affective attitudes towards each other, and have equal power in the interaction (cf. Eggins and Slade, 1997). Given the relationship, the participants are more likely to share their feelings and experiences as well as to exchange ideas and opinions regarding issues ranging from working life to personal life (cf. Slade, 1997). Given the frequent occurrence of [statement: inform] and [statement: inform], it may be suggested that relational talk cannot be neatly separated from transactional talk.

In response to the second research question, the presence of [filler] is again found in most of the top ten frequent two and three co-occurring speech acts (Section 6.5). However, there are instances of adjacency pairs with a preferred next action, such as '[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: agree]' and '[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]' (Section 6.6). The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts are '[statement: inform] / [filler] / [reply to statement: acknowledgement]' with two sequences of the association. However, it is observed that most of the co-occurrence of speech acts is not necessarily meaningfully associated, in particular with the frequent occurrence of [filler].

In response to the third research question, the linguistic realisations and patterns of the most frequent speech act are discussed and analysed (Section 6.7). The realisations of [statement: opine] are compared with the 24 opine markers identified by Cheng and Warren (2006). It is found that out of the 24 markers, 12



are found in informal office talks. Apart from these 12 markers, a total of 10 other markers are found in the informal office talks. The most frequent is 'but', which is commonly found when a contrastive opinion is expressed by either the first or the second speaker. Unlike inform markers discussed before in meetings (Section 4.7) as well as telephone and conference calls (Section 5.7), opine markers are more diverse in form and commonly used to express opinions. However, near half of the instances of [statement: opine] remain to be lexical phrases and clauses, implying that it is not necessary to use opine markers to express opinions.

## Chapter Seven

### Service encounters

#### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background information about the service encounter data (7.2). It then describes and analyses the frequencies and communicative functions (or illocutionary force) of the speech acts at the airport check-in counters and information counters (7.3) as well as those at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets] (7.5), both with a discussion of the findings respectively (7.4 and 7.6). They are followed by a frequency analysis of two and three co-occurring speech acts (7.7 and 7.9) and discussion (7.8 and 7.10). Lastly, the lexicogrammatical realisations and patterns of the most frequently occurring speech act in airport and in hotel service encounters are examined (7.11).

#### 7.2 Background information

In the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic), service encounters are mostly one-to-one interactions with a few having more than two participants. They take place at the check-in counters and the information counters at the Hong Kong International Airport as well as the concierges and the retail outlets at hotels in Hong Kong (Lin, 2008). Service encounter are a genre that is quite widespread in institutional and workplace discourse (Shively, 2011; Mortensen & Hazel, 2014). They are goal-oriented, front stage activities that frequently involve interactions with a routine structure or a fairly regular pattern between service providers and service receivers (Kidwell, 2000; Solon, 2013). At least two factors are common to all service encounters, which are the constant roles of service provider and customer (or service receiver) and the transactional goal of giving or obtaining a service or information (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015). Apart from transactional elements, many service encounters include a substantial amount of relational talk (Koester, 2010).

### 7.2.1 Airport check-in counters and information counters

The 33 service encounters (B024-B055B) mainly involve a passenger or passengers and an airlines official or officials dealing with the check-in procedures, flight and ticket information, and ticket booking and amendment. The passengers are either local travellers or transit travellers who have just arrived at the Hong Kong International airport. The airlines staff member is responsible for normal check-in procedures and offering other necessary assistance (Lin, 2008). Given that the service encounters at the airport check-in counters and those at the information counters are routine and conventionalized interactions that share similar communicative purposes and the duration of the conversations is relatively short (with some very short ones such as B025 and B028) (cf. Ryoo, 2005; Solon, 2013), it is interesting to find that despite the similarities, such as airport tax and seat arrangement, the details in some encounters are distinct from the others, like enquiry about the club membership and shower facilities. Table 7.1 shows the speaker information and the various topics from each encounter.

Table 7.1. Speaker identity and topic discussed in service encounters at airport check-in counters and information counters

<b>File no</b>	<b>Speaker information</b>	<b>Topic discussed</b>
B024	two female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	special rates about the airport hotel room / booking of a room for a transit passenger
B025	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker.	airport tax
B026	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	confirmation of flight ticket from Hong Kong to Frankfurt
B027	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	airport tax refund / confirmation of hotel room reservation.

B028	one female Hong Kong Chinese / two Japanese speakers	ability to speak Japanese
B029	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	flight ticket reservation / duration of staying at the destination / boarding pass collection
B030	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one female English speaker / one male English speaker	flight seating arrangement / early check-in.
B031	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	information checking
B032	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	Macro Polo Club membership / round trip ticket reservation / means of payment for ticket
B033	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	arrangement for one-way ticket / details of the ticket
B034	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one Indian	checking of Bombay-bound flight / purchase of ticket
B035	two female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	confirmation of ticket reservation / checking of and request for additional baggage limit / check-in time for the flight
B036	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one female English speaker / one male English speaker	change of flight seating assignment
B037	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	ticket payment / request for an aisle seat
B038	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one Italian	ticket refund
B039	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one Indian	ticket arrangement
B040	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one French	flight details

B041	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	ticket reservation
B042	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	request for airport tax / checking for ticket reservation / seat assignment
B043	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	flight check-in / checked baggage
B044	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	flight check-in / seat assignment / airport tax / boarding details
B045	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	flight check-in / seat assignment
B046	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	baggage check-in
B047	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	baggage check-in / airport tax
B048	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	seat assignment / boarding details
B049	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	checking of flight ticket / airport tax / baggage check-in / direction to the lounge / request for the possibility of going to the first class lounge
B050	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	flight check-in time / airport tax / seat assignment / boarding gate closing time
B051	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	flight check-in / airport tax / seat assignment / baggage claim / boarding details / lounge

B052	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	airport tax / baggage claim / seat assignment / boarding details
B053	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	airport tax / baggage check-in / seat assignment / boarding details / lounge
B054	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	airport tax / baggage check-in / seat assignment / boarding details / lounge
B055A	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one female English speaker / one male English speaker	airport tax / boarding details / seat assignment
B055B	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	checking of ticket and passport / airport tax / confirmation of destination / baggage check-in / seat assignment / lounge / boarding details / quest for shower facility

As shown in Table 7.1, most of the topics covered at the airport service encounters are concerned with normal procedures at airport check-in counters and information counters (cf. Ventola, 1983), including ticket information, baggage check-in, airport tax, and boarding details, and general enquires at airport information counters, including hotel room booking and flight ticket information. This explains the similarity in the nature of the topics found in the service encounters at the airport check-in counters and the information counters.

It is also observed from the topics that the interactions in the service encounters are in general friendly (cf. Ryoo, 2005). Unlike the service encounters involving the act of buying and selling between the shopkeeper or the salesperson and the customer that might create argument over the transaction, interactions between the airport staff member and the passenger(s) are in contrast less threatening or confrontational and are conducted in friendly and harmonious way, though there might be a power difference between the airport staff members and the passengers in which the passenger has the power advantage over the airport staff member, together with the fact that both of them do not expect a long-lasting relationship with each other (Kong, 1998).

#### 7.2.2 Hotel concierges [and retail outlets]

The 18 service encounters (B001-B015, B020-B21B) mainly involve a guest or guests and a concierge staff dealing with the check-in and check-out procedures, such as validation of the guest identity and settlement of the final bills. Apart from normal procedures, some encounters also involve chatting between the guest and the staff about the present stay (Lin, 2008). Table 7.2 shows the speaker information and the various topics from each encounter.

Table 7.2. Speaker identity and topic discussed in service encounters at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]

<b>File no</b>	<b>Speaker information</b>	<b>Topic discussed</b>
B001	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	hotel check-out / mini-bar consumption / bill settlement / the guest's trip to China / the guest's tiredness
B002	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	hotel stay extension / request for towel

B003	one female English speaker / one male Hong Kong Chinese / one female Hong Kong Chinese	request for stamp / the guest's trip in Hong Kong / introduction and promotion of the hotel / working experience of a hotel staff member / room rates of other hotels / guest comments about the hotel activities on Valentine's Day / restaurants at the hotel / hotel facilities such as health club and swimming pool
B004	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	hotel check-out / bill settlement
B005	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	hotel room key card
B006	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	hotel check-out / mini-bar consumption
B007A	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one female English speaker	hotel check-out / mini-bar consumption / bill settlement
B007B	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	hotel check-out / mini-bar consumption
B008	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	hotel check-out / bill settlement
B009	one male Hong Kong Chinese / two Mandarin and English speakers	hotel check-in / clarification of booking information / request for different rooms / mini-bar key



B010	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	hotel check-in / request for a smoking room / room charges luggage arrangement
B011	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	hotel check-in / room reservation / checking of booking information / selection of smoking or non-smoking room / time for check-out / request for wake-up call / luggage arrangement
B012	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	hotel check-out
B013	one male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	room booking
B014	two male Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	loss of room key
B015	two male Hong Kong Chinese / two male English speakers	hotel check-in / stamp buying
B020	one female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	hotel swimming pool
B021A	three female Hong Kong Chinese / one female English speaker	swimsuit selection (price, quality, and brand name)
B021B	two female Hong Kong Chinese / one male English speaker	gymnasium usage fee / services and facilities covered / guest name / room number

As shown in Table 7.2, most of the topics covered at the hotel service encounters are concerned with normal procedures at the hotel concierges [and

retail outlets] (cf. Ventola, 1983), including check-in and check-out procedures, and enquiry of product details. This explains the similarity in the nature of the topics found in the service encounters at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]. Similar to service encounters at the airport check-in counters and information counters, it is observed from the topics that the interactions in the hotel service encounters are in general friendly (cf. Ryoo, 2005). Interactions between the hotel staff member and the guest(s) are less threatening or confrontational and are conducted in friendly and harmonious way, though there might be a power difference between the hotel staff members and the guests in which the guest has the power advantage over the airport staff member, together with the fact that both of them do not expect a long-lasting relationship with each other (Kong, 1998).

### **7.3 Frequency analysis of speech acts at the airport check-in counters and information counters**

Out of 1,926 instances of speech acts found at the airport check-in counters and information counters, there are 40 unique speech acts. They are listed in accordance with the descending frequency sort (Table 7.3).

Table 7.3. Frequency of unique speech acts at airport check-in counters

<b>Number</b>	<b>Speech act</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Filler	334	17.34%
2	Statement: inform	302	15.68%
3	Reply to statement: acknowledge	204	10.59%
4	Answer to question: comply	171	8.88%
5	Question: identification	76	3.95%
6	Request: action	74	3.84%
7	Thanks	70	3.63%
8	Expand	65	3.37%
9	Question: confirmation	61	3.17%
10	Question: polarity	59	3.06%
11	Check	51	2.65%
12	Answer to request: accept	41	2.13%

13	Confirm	39	2.02%
14	Empathizer	33	1.71%
15	Justify	32	1.66%
16	Frame	29	1.51%
17	Greeting	26	1.35%
18	Clue	25	1.30%
19	Empathy	24	1.25%
20	Statement: opine	23	1.19%
21	Precursor	21	1.09%
22	Answer to question: imply	20	1.04%
23	Uptake	19	0.99%
24	Apology	18	0.93%
25	Alert	14	0.73%
26	Appealer	14	0.73%
27	Suggest	11	0.57%
28	Offer	9	0.47%
29	Preface	9	0.47%
30	Answer to question: supply	8	0.42%
31	Smoother	7	0.36%
32	Staller	5	0.26%
33	Request: permission	5	0.26%
34	Query	5	0.26%
35	Hedge	4	0.21%
36	Reply to statement: agree	4	0.21%
37	Monitor	4	0.21%
38	Express_wish	3	0.16%
39	Answer to request: reject	3	0.16%
40	Answer to question: evade	2	0.10%

As seen from Table 7.3, the three most frequent speech acts in the data of service encounters: airport check-in counters are [filler] (17.34%), [statement: inform] (15.68%), and [reply to statement: acknowledge] (10.59%), each with more than 200 occurrences, followed by [answer to question: comply] (8.88%). The frequencies of the remaining speech acts are lower, ranging from 76 occurrences (3.95%) ([question: identification]) to 2 occurrences (0.10%) ([answer to

question: evade]).

Out of these 40 speech acts, there are twenty-five primary acts (62.50%) (Table 7.4), five secondary acts (12.50%) (Table 7.5), eight complementary acts (20.00%) (Table 7.6) from Stenström (1994) as well as two speech acts (5.00%) (Table 7.7) from other studies (Tsui, 1994; Leech & Weisser, 2003).

Table 7.4 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the twenty-five primary acts at airport check-in counters and information counters.

Table 7.4. Communicative functions and frequencies of primary acts at airport check-in counters and information counters

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Statement: inform	Provide or present neutral information	302	15.68%
2	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Signal receipt of information or signal that the second speaker accepts what the first speaker said as a valid contribution to the conversation	204	10.59%
3	Answer to question: comply	Answer a question directly and adequately	171	8.88%
4	Question: identification	Ask for information or an answer identifying a wh-word	76	3.95%
5	Request: action	Ask somebody to do something	74	3.84%
6	Thanks	Express gratitude	70	3.68%
7	Question: confirmation	Ask for a confirming answer	61	3.17%
8	Question: polarity	Ask for a yes / no question	59	3.06%
9	Check	Ask for repetition or clarification of what was said in the immediately preceding turn	51	2.65%
10	Answer to request: accept	Agree to a request, a suggestion, etc.	41	2.13%

11	Confirm	Respond to a request for confirmation	39	2.02%
12	Greeting	Greet somebody or bid farewell	26	1.35%
13	Statement: opine	Give or express one's personal opinions, feelings and attitudes	23	1.19%
14	Answer to question: imply	Answer the question indirectly, give adequate information implicitly	19	0.99%
15	Apology	Express regret	18	0.93%
16	Alert	Call the addressee's attention, attract the other party's / parties' attention	14	0.73%
17	Suggest	Put forward an idea or a plan	11	0.57%
18	Offer	Present or submit something for acceptance or rejection	9	0.47%
19	Answer to question: supply	Give inadequate information, does not really answer the question	8	0.42%
20	Smoother	Respond to an [apology]	7	0.36%
21	Request: permission	Ask for a go-ahead	5	0.26%
22	Query	Express doubt or strong surprise	5	0.26%
23	Reply to statement: agree	Signal agreement with what was just said, indicate that speaker B approves of what speaker A means	4	0.21%
24	Answer to request: reject	Disagrees to a [request], [suggest], etc.	3	0.16%
25	Answer to question: evade	Avoid answering (consciously)	2	0.10%

In Table 7.4, the three most frequent primary speech acts in the service encounters: airport check-in counters are [statement: inform] (15.68%), [reply to statement: acknowledge] (10.59%), and [answer to question: comply] (8.88%), each with more than 170 occurrences, followed by [question: identification] (3.95%), [request: action] (3.84%), [thanks] (3.68%), [question: confirmation] (3.17%), [question: polarity] (3.06%). The frequencies of the remaining primary

speech acts are lower, ranging from 51 occurrences (2.65%) ([check]) to 2 occurrences (0.10%) ([answer to question: evade]).

Table 7.5 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the five secondary acts at airport check-in counters and information counters.

Table 7.5. Communicative functions and frequencies of secondary acts at airport check-in counters and information counters

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Expand	Give complementary information	65	3.37%
2	Justify	Defend what was said in the primary act, give the reason why	32	1.66%
3	Clue	Follow a primary act and give a hint, provide additional information after a question, comment on the question	25	1.30%
4	Precursor	Precede a primary act and give information, link up what was said before, comment on something in the preceding dialogue	21	1.09%
5	Preface	Introduce a primary act, has a face-saving effect in that they prepare speaker B for what is going to happen next, make sure that certain pre-conditions hold before making the [following primary act]	8	0.42%

Table 7.5 shows that the most frequent secondary speech act at airport check-in counters and information counters is [expand] (3.37%), followed by [empathizer] (1.71%), [justify] (1.66%), [clue] (1.30%), and [precursor] (1.09%). The least frequent secondary act is [preface] (0.42%).

Table 7.6 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the eight complementary acts at airport check-in counters and information counters.

Table 7.6. Communicative functions and frequencies of complementary acts at airport check-in counters and information counters

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Filler	Fill a gap in the discourse	334	17.34%
2	Empathizer	Involve the listener, engage the listener and make her / him feel part of the conversation, the speaker intensifies the relationship with the listener, prompt listener feedback,	33	1.71%
3	Frame	Mark a boundary or the beginning of a new stage in the discourse	29	1.51%
4	Uptake	Accept what was said and lead on, acknowledge receipt of what the previous speaker said and evaluate it before going on	18	0.93%
5	Appealer	Invite feedback	14	0.73%
6	Staller	Play for time	5	0.26%
7	Hedge	Help avoiding commitment, modify and mitigate an utterance, help the speaker avoid going straight to the point, avoid being blunt, avoid appearing authoritative, and avoid committing him/herself	4	0.21%
8	Monitor	Help putting something right, make a new start or rephrase what the speaker was going to say in the middle of a turn as the listener cannot follow or is not convinced, make the speaker's point clear, steer what the speaker says	4	0.21%

In Table 7.6, the most frequent complementary speech act in the service encounters: airport check-in counters is [filler] (17.34%), followed by [frame] (1.51%), [uptake] (0.93%), and [appealer] (0.73%). The frequencies of the remaining complementary speech acts are lower, ranging from 5 occurrences (0.26%) ([staller]) to 4 occurrences (0.21%) ([hedge] and [monitor]).

Table 7.7 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts at airport check-in counters and information counters from other studies (Tsui, 1994; Leech & Weisser, 2003).

Table 7.7. Communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts at airport check-in counters and information counters from other studies

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage	Source
1	Empathy	show concern for and empathize with the addressee such as 'congratulate', 'well-wishing', 'welcome', 'condole'	24	1.25%	Tsui (1994)
2	Express_wish	Express a wish or desire	3	0.16%	Leech and Weisser (2003)

Table 7.7 shows that the most frequent speech act from other studies is [empathy] (1.25%), followed by [express\_wish] (0.16%).

In summary, the findings on the communicative function and frequency analysis of different categories of speech acts have shown that in the context of airport check-in counters, the majority of speech acts are from Stenström's (1994) primary acts (62.50%), which are used to realise moves on their own, followed by complementary acts (20.00%), which are used to accompany but rarely replaces primary acts and secondary acts (12.50%), which are used to accompany and sometimes replace primary acts. The remaining three acts are from other studies (5.00%). The quantitative results regarding different unique acts shown above respond to the first research question on the relative frequencies of occurrence of different speech acts in a genre.

#### 7.4 Discussion of findings

Findings of the communicative function and frequency analysis of different categories of speech acts, reporting objective or neutral information and



signalling receipt of information or signaling that the second speaker accepts what the first speaker said as a valid contribution to the conversation are relatively common practices at airport check-in counters and information counters. Both [statement: inform] (15.68%) and [reply to statement: acknowledge] (10.59%) are within the top five most frequently occurring speech acts, with [statement: inform] being the second most frequent while [reply to statement: acknowledge] the third. They occur more frequently than the other speech acts, except [filler] (17.34%), which is in the first place on the list.

These acts are reflected in the language used in the practices and the structures of (touristic) service encounters, including request for service, negotiation sequence and provision (or not) of service (Solon, 2013; cf. Kidwell, 2000) and realised by distinctive lexicogrammatical features in the service encounters for the purposes of requesting, negotiating, and providing service (Kidwell, 2000). The following examples can illustrate the different linguistic realisations found in the dataset to perform a particular speech act.

With regard to reporting objective or neutral information in the airport check-in counters or information counters, the linguistic realisations of [statement: inform] are diverse, as the major purpose of [statement: inform] at the counters is to provide a wide range of services, such as ticketing, baggage check-in, boarding details, seat arrangement, to the passengers effectively and efficiently. Extract 7.1 (B042) is an example of a provision of information about part of the check-in procedures. In Extract 7.1 (B042), speaker b, an officer from the airlines, reports to the passenger the neutral information about the passport, the boarding gate number, the boarding gate time, the lounge invitation card, the airport tax receipt, the luggage tag, and the ticket (lines 1-13 and 17). It is found that none of the inform markers are found in the Extract, [statement: inform] is realised directly by offering necessary information without the use of inform marker such as ‘the point is’ or ‘in fact’:

Extract 7.1: B042

Location: Airport check-in counter

Participant: b: Male Hong Kong Chinese      B: Male native

1. b: <SA063 [statement: inform] your passport >
2. <SA063 [statement: inform] and boarding gate number twelve
3. for your flight >
4. <SA063 [statement: inform] and the boarding time is twelve
5. o'clock and >
6. <SA032 [filler] um >
7. <SA063 [statement: inform] lounge invitation card >
8. <SA063 [statement: inform] airport tax receipt >
9. <SA063 [statement: inform] and the luggage tag >
10. <SA063 [statement: inform] and please keep the ticket inside
11. the boarding pass folder >
12. <SA063 [statement:inform] we will collect those tickets in
13. the boarding pass >
14. <SA068 [unclassifiable] (inaudible) >
15. B: <SA068 [unclassifiable] (inaudible) >
16. b: <SA032 [filler] yeah >
17. <SA063 [statement: inform] it's around half an hour >

The high frequencies of [statement: inform] and [reply to statement: acknowledge] indicate that in service encounters at airport check-in counters and information counters, the speech acts of supplying or presenting neutral information are normally expected to be acknowledged. Extract 7.2 (B055(B)) is an example of [reply to statement: acknowledge] after [statement: inform]. Speaker a, an airlines officer, tells speaker B, a passenger, that it is necessary to pay the airport tax again when he leaves and then returns to the immigration (lines 1-2). Speaker B responds with an acknowledgement 'okay' (line 3):

Extract 7.2: B055(B)

Location: Airport check-in counter

Participants a: Female Hong Kong Chinese B: Male native

1. a: <SA063 [statement: inform] but when you go out of the
2. immigration you should need to pay another to go back >
3. B: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] okay >

Apart from the acknowledge markers listed in the Stenström (1994), there are other markers found in the dataset, including ‘I know’, ‘that’s right’, ‘uhuh’, ‘yeah’. A listener can also express an acknowledgement by repeating what the speaker has just said, as shown in Extract 7.3 (B035). In Extract 7.3 (B035), speaker a1, an airlines officer, and b, a passenger, are talking about the flight details. After giving an answer to the question about the time for checking in by the airline officer (lines 4-6, 8), the passenger acknowledges it with a repetition of the answer (line 9):

Extract 7.3: B035

Location: Airport information counter

Participants: a1: female Hong Kong Chinese B: Male native

1. B: <SA047 [question:identification] what time do I check in
2. business class >
3. a1: <SA032 [filler] er >
4. <SA002 [answer to question:comply] actually any time will do
5. >
6. <SA002 [answer to question:comply] not later than >
7. <SA032 [filler] er >
8. <SA002 [answer to question:comply] three forty-five >
9. B: <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] three forty-five >

Regarding the provision of a direct and an adequate answer to a question, [answer to question: comply], which answers to a question ‘to the point’ with ‘no more and now less than the information asked for’ (Stenström, 1994, p. 114), can be a response to an identification question, a confirmation question, and a polarity question. Extract 7.4 (B029) is an example of an [answer to question: comply] to an identification question. In Extract 7.4 (B029), an airlines officer is helping a passenger with the ticket arrangement. Speaker a, the airlines officer, asks speaker B, the passenger, if he would like a one-way ticket or a round-trip ticket (lines 1-2). Speaker B gives an adequate answer in response (lines 4-5):

Extract 7.4: B029

Location: Airport check-in counter

Participants: a: Female Hong Kong Chinese B: Male native

1. a: <SA047 [question: identification] would you like to have
2. one-way ticket or round trip >
3. B: <SA032 [filler] erm >
4. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] round trip I think please
5. >

Extract 7.5 (B026) is an example of an [answer to question: comply] to a confirmation question. In Extract 7.5 (B026), a passenger is asking an airlines officer about the refund. Speaker B, the passenger, asks a confirmation question to see if he can get the refund at the counter (lines 1-2). In response, speaker a, the airlines officer, gives a direct answer (lines 3-4):

Extract 7.5: B026

Location: Airport check-in counter

Participants: B: Male native a: Female Hong Kong Chinese

1. B: <SA046 [question: confirmation] so I get the refund from
2. here >
3. a: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] yeah >
4. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] sure >

Extract 7.6 (B032) is an example of an [answer to question: comply] to a polarity question. In Extract 7.6 (B032), speaker a, an airlines officer, asks speaker B, a passenger, if he would like to pay the flight ticket by credit card (lines 1-2). Speaker B gives a direct response (line 3):

Extract 7.6: B032

Location: Airport check-in counter

Participants: a: Female Hong Kong Chinese B: Male native

1. a: <SA048 [question: polarity] would you like to pay by credit
2. card then >
3. B: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] yes >

In summary, the linguistic realisations of the most frequently occurring speech acts at airport check-in counters and information counters are not necessarily restricted to a list of markers. Regarding the realisation of a particular communicative function through a speech act, there is a range of linguistic expressions that could be used to achieve the goal.

### **7.5 Frequency analysis of speech acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]**

Out of 1,561 instances of speech acts found at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets], there are 38 unique speech acts. There are listed in accordance with the descending frequency sort (Table 7.8).

Table 7.8. Frequency of unique speech acts in the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]

<b>Number</b>	<b>Speech act</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Statement: inform	217	13.90%
2	Filler	198	12.68%
3	Reply to statement: acknowledge	188	12.04%
4	Answer to question: comply	129	8.26%
5	Statement: opine	103	6.60%
6	Expand	79	5.06%
7	Thanks	55	3.52%
8	Uptake	52	3.33%
9	Question: polarity	50	3.20%
10	Request: action	48	3.08%
11	Question: identification	39	2.50%
12	Check	38	2.43%
13	Confirm	37	2.37%
14	Question: confirmation	37	2.37%
15	Answer to request: accept	33	2.11%
16	Frame	27	1.73%
17	Reply to statement: agree	26	1.67%
18	Greeting	20	1.28%
19	Clue	18	1.15%
20	Precursor	18	1.15%
21	Justify	18	1.15%
22	Query	17	1.09%
23	Preface	15	0.96%
24	Staller	14	0.90%
25	Emphasizer	14	0.90%
26	Appealer	11	0.70%
27	Alert	8	0.51%
28	Empathy	7	0.45%
29	Hedge	6	0.38%
30	Answer to question: imply	6	0.38%
31	Apology	5	0.32%

32	Offer	4	0.26%
33	Answer to question: supply	4	0.26%
34	Disagree	4	0.26%
35	Request: permission	4	0.26%
36	Reply to statement: object	4	0.26%
37	Empathizer	3	0.19%
38	Suggest	2	0.13%

As seen from Table 7.8, the three most frequent speech acts in the data of service encounters: the hotel concierges [and retail outlets] are [statement: inform] (13.90%), [filler] (12.68%), and [reply to statement: acknowledge] (12.04%), each with more than 180 occurrences, followed by [answer to question: comply] (8.26%) and [statement: opine] (6.60%) The frequencies of the remaining speech acts are lower, ranging from 79 occurrences (5.06%) ([expand]) to 2 occurrences (0.13%) ([suggest]).

Out of these 38 speech acts, there are twenty-four primary acts (63.16%) (Table 7.9), six secondary acts (15.79%) (Table 7.10), and seven complementary acts (18.42%) (Table 7.11) from Stenström (1994) as well as one speech act (2.63%) (Table 7.12) from Tsui (1994). Each act has its own communicative function(s).

Table 7.9 shows the communication functions and frequencies of the twenty-four primary acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets].

Table 7.9. Communicative functions and frequencies of primary acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Statement: inform	Provide or present neutral information	217	13.90%
2	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Signal receipt of information or signal that the second speaker accepts what the first speaker said as a valid contribution to the conversation	188	12.68%

3	Answer to question: comply	Answer a question directly and adequately	129	8.26%
4	Statement: opine	Give or express one's personal opinions, feelings and attitudes	103	6.60%
5	Thanks	Express gratitude	55	3.52%
6	Question: polarity	Ask for a yes / no question	50	3.20%
7	Request: action	Ask somebody to do something	48	3.08%
8	Question: identification	Ask for information or an answer identifying a wh-word	39	2.50%
9	Check	Ask for repetition or clarification of what was said in the immediately preceding turn	38	2.43%
10	Confirm	Respond to a request for confirmation	37	2.37%
11	Question: confirmation	Ask for a confirming answer	37	2.37%
12	Answer to request: accept	Agree to a request, a suggestion, etc.	33	2.11%
13	Reply to statement: agree	Signal agreement with what was just said, indicate that speaker B approves of what speaker A means	26	1.67%
14	Greeting	Greet somebody or bid farewell	20	1.28%
15	Query	Express doubt or strong surprise	17	1.09%
16	Alert	Call the addressee's attention, attract the other party's / parties' attention	8	0.51%
17	Answer to question: imply	Answer the question indirectly, give adequate information implicitly	6	0.38%
18	Apology	Express regret	5	0.32%
19	Offer	Present or submit something for acceptance or rejection	4	0.26%



20	Answer to question: supply	Give inadequate information, does not really answer the question	4	0.26%
21	Disagree	Express disagreement	4	0.26%
22	Request: permission	Ask for a go-ahead	4	0.26%
23	Reply to statement: object	Signal a different opinion	4	0.26%
24	Suggest	Put forward an idea or a plan	2	0.13%

Table 7.9 shows that the two most frequent primary speech acts in the service encounters at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets] are [statement: inform] (13.90%) and [reply to statement: acknowledge] (12.68%), each with more than 180 occurrences, followed by [answer to question: comply] (8.26%) and [statement: opine] (6.60%). The frequencies of the remaining primary speech acts are lower, ranging from 55 occurrences (3.52%) ([thanks]) to 2 occurrences (0.13%) ([suggest]).

Table 7.10 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the six secondary acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets].

Table 7.10. Communicative functions and frequencies of secondary acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Expand	Give complementary information	79	5.06%
2	Clue	Follow a primary act and give a hint, provide additional information after a question, comment on the question	18	1.15%
3	Precursor	Precede a primary act and give information, link up what was said before, comment on something in the preceding dialogue	18	1.15%
4	Justify	Defend what was said in the primary act, give the reason why	18	1.15%

5	Preface	Introduce a primary act, has a face-saving effect in that they prepare speaker B for what is going to happen next, make sure that certain pre-conditions hold before making the [following primary act]	15	0.96%
6	Emphasizer	Underline what was said in the primary act	14	0.90%

Table 7.10 shows that the most frequent secondary speech act in the service encounters at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets] is [expand] (5.06%). The frequencies of the remaining secondary speech acts are lower, ranging from 18 occurrences (1.15%) ([clue], [precursor], and [justify]) to 14 occurrences (0.90%) ([emphasizer]).

Table 7.11 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the seven complementary acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets].

Table 7.11. Communicative functions and frequencies of complementary acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Filler	Fill a gap in the discourse	198	12.68%
2	Uptake	Accept what was said and lead on, acknowledge receipt of what the previous speaker said and evaluate it before going on	52	3.33%
3	Frame	Mark a boundary or the beginning of a new stage in the discourse	27	1.73%
4	Staller	Play for time	14	0.89%
5	Appealer	Invite feedback	11	0.70%
6	Hedge	Help avoiding commitment, modify and mitigate an utterance, help the speaker avoid going straight to the point, avoid being blunt, avoid appearing authoritative, and avoid committing him/herself	6	0.38%

7	Empathizer	Involve the listener, engage the listener and make her/him feel part of the conversation, intensify the relationship with the listener, prompt listener feedback, the current speaker invites the current listener to take an active part	3	0.19%
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In Table 7.11, the most frequent complementary speech act in the service encounters at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets] is [filler] (12.68%), followed by [uptake] (3.33%) and [frame] (1.73%). The frequencies of the remaining speech acts are lower, ranging from 14 occurrences (0.89%) ([staller]) to 3 occurrences (0.19%) ([empathizer]).

Table 7.12 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts at hotel concierges [and retail outlets] from another study (Tsui, 1994).

Table 7.12. Communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlet] from another study

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage	Source
1	Empathy	show concern for and empathize with the addressee such as 'congratulate', 'well-wishing', 'welcome', 'condole'	7	0.45%	Tsui (1994)

As shown in Table 7.12, the only speech act from another study is [empathy] (0.45%).

In summary, the findings on the communicative function and frequency analysis of different categories of speech acts have shown that in the context of meeting, the majority of speech acts are from Stenström's (1994) primary acts (63.16%), which are used to realise moves on their own, followed by complementary acts (18.42%), which are used to accompany but rarely replaces

primary acts and secondary acts (15.79%), which are used to accompany and sometimes replace primary acts. The remaining act is from other studies (2.63%). The quantitative results regarding different unique acts shown above respond to the first research question on the relative frequencies of occurrence of different speech acts in a genre.

## **7.6 Discussion of findings**

Analyses of the findings of the communicative function and frequencies of different categories of speech acts, reporting objective or neutral information and signalling receipt of information or signaling that the second speaker accepts what the first speaker said as a valid contribution to the conversation are relatively common practices at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]. Both [statement: inform] (13.90%) and [reply to statement: acknowledge] (12.04%) are within the top five most frequently occurring speech acts, with [statement: inform] being the most frequent while [reply to statement: acknowledge] the third. [Filler] (17.34%), which is a common act in conversation, is in the second place on the list. Moreover, [answer to question: comply] (8.26%) and [statement: opine] (6.60%) are in the fourth and fifth places respectively, indicating that giving a direct and an adequate answer to a question as well as expressing one's personal opinions, feelings, and attitudes are also common at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets].

These acts are reflected in the language used in the practices and the structures of (touristic) service encounters, including request for service, negotiation sequence and provision (or not) of service (Solon, 2013; cf. Kidwell, 2000) and realised by distinctive lexicogrammatical features in the service encounters for the purposes of requesting, negotiating, and providing service (Kidwell, 2000). The following examples can illustrate the different linguistic realisations found in the dataset to perform a particular speech act.

With regard to presenting neutral information to customers, that is [statement: inform], and signaling an acknowledgement of the information, that is [reply to statement: acknowledge], these acts are easily observed during the check-in and check-out procedures at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]. Extract 7.7 (B011) is an example of presenting neutral information to a customer

and an acknowledgement by the customer during the check-in procedures. In Extract 7.7 (B011), speaker b, a hotel staff, tells speaker B, a hotel guest, the information about the room he is staying in and the arrangement of his luggage (lines 3-9). Speaker B responds with an acknowledgement with ‘okay’ (line 10):

Extract 7.7: B011

Location: Hotel concierge

Participants: b: male Hong Kong Chinese      B: Male native

1. b: <SA001 [alert] sir >
2. <SA068 [unclassifiable] (inaudible) >
3. <SA063 [statement: inform] your room is on the seventh floor
4. >
5. <SA063 [statement: inform] seven zero eight two >
6. <SA063 [statement: inform] on the seventh floor >
7. <SA063 [statement: inform] this way >
8. <SA063 [statement: inform] and I’ll call to send the luggage
9. to the room >
10. B: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] okay >

Extract 7.8 (B004) is an example of ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’ during the check-out procedures. In Extract 7.8 (B004), during the check-out procedures, speaker b, a hotel staff, tells speaker B, a hotel guest, the details of the bill (line 2-7). In response, speaker B signals his receipt of information with ‘yeah’ (line 8):

Extract 7.8: B004

Location: Hotel concierge

Participants: b: Male Hong Kong Chinese      B: Male native

1. b: <SA033 [frame] yes >
2. <SA063 [statement: inform] in in your bill they have >
3. <SA032 [filler] er >
4. <SA063 [statement: inform] local call one hundred number call
5. >
6. <SA063 [statement: inform] and one coffee shops in lobby
7. lounge >
8. B: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] yeah >

[Reply to statement: acknowledge] is not only followed by [statement: inform], it is also commonly followed by a complying answer to a question, that is [answer to question: comply]. Extract 7.9 (B007B) is an example of an acknowledgement to an [answer to question: comply] after a polarity question. In Extract 7.9 (B007B), speaker b, a hotel staff, asks speaker B, a hotel guest, if he has the mini-bar key (line 1). Speaker B gives an [answer to question: comply] (lines 3-4). Speaker b acknowledges his answer with ‘okay’ (line 5):

Extract 7.9: B007B

Location: Hotel concierge

Participants: b: Male Hong Kong Chinese      B: Male native

1. b: <SA048 [question: polarity] do you have the key of the mini-bar
2. >
3. B: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] no >
4. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] no nothing >
5. b: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] okay >

Extract 7.10 (B009) is an example of [reply to statement: acknowledge] to [answer to question: comply] after a confirmation question. In Extract 7.10 (B009), speaker b1, a hotel staff, asks a confirmation question if speaker x, a hotel guest, comes together with the group for training and meeting (lines 1-2). Speaker x gives an [answer to question: comply] with ‘yeah’ (line 3). Then, speaker b1 acknowledges her answer with ‘okay’ (line 4):

Extract 7.10: B009

Location: Hotel concierge

Participants: b1: Female Hong Kong Chinese

x: Female Mandarin-/English-speaking Chinese

1. b1: <SA046 [question:confirmation] so you so you come with the
2. group for for training right for meeting \* is it >
3. x: <SA002 [answer to question:comply] \*\* yeah >
4. b1: <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] okay >

Extract 7.11 (B003) is an example of [answer to question: comply] after an identification question. In Extract 7.11 (B003), speaker a, a hotel staff member, asks speaker A, a hotel guest, how she would like to settle the bill (lines 1-2). Speaker A responds with an [answer to question: comply], stating that she would like to settle the bill by credit card (line 3). Then, speaker a responds with ‘yeah’, that is a [reply to statement: acknowledge] (line 4):

Extract 7.11: B003

Location: Hotel concierge

Participants: a: Female Hong Kong Chinese A: Female native

1. a: <SA047 [question:identification] you paid cash or credit card
2. >
3. A: <SA002 [answer to question:comply] by credit card please >
4. a: <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] yeah >

In summary, the linguistic realisations of the most frequently occurring speech acts in service encounters are not restricted to a list of markers. Regarding the realisation of a particular communicative function through a speech act, there are a range of linguistic expressions that could be used to achieve the goal.

## 7.7 Frequency analysis of co-occurring speech acts at airport check-in counters and information counters

In service encounters at airport check-in counters, out of a total of 819 instances of two co-occurring speech acts, there are 18 unique centred speech acts and 113 total centred speech acts (Appendix 7). The top ten two co-occurring speech acts are as follows (Table 7.13):

Table 7.13. Top ten two co-occurring speech acts at airport check-in counters and information counters

Centred speech act	Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Statement: inform	104	12.70
Filler	Answer to question: comply	42	5.13
Filler	Request: action	36	4.40
Filler	Question: identification	32	3.91
Check	Confirm	29	3.54
Filler	Question: confirmation	23	2.81
Filler	Expand	20	2.44
Answer to question: comply	Expand	17	2.08
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	17	2.08
Filler	Question: polarity	15	1.83

As seen in Table 7.13, the most frequent two co-occurring speech acts are ‘[filler] / [statement: inform]’ (12.70%), followed by ‘[filler] / [answer to question: comply]’ (5.13%), ‘[filler] / [request: action]’ (4.40%), ‘[filler] / [question: identification]’ (3.91%) as well as ‘[check] / [confirm]’ (3.54%). The frequencies of the remaining two co-occurring speech acts are lower, ranging from 23 occurrences (2.81%) (‘[filler] / [question: confirmation]’) to 2 occurrences (0.24%) (e.g. ‘[statement: inform] / [apology]’).

Fillers are very commonly used by speakers when they inform (12.70%), answer explicitly and adequately (5.13%), request (4.40%), or ask for an answer



identifying with a wh-word (3.91%), etc., thus making it one of the most frequently co-occurring speech acts. However, apart from the co-occurring speech acts with [filler], other adjacency pairs are found in the search for two co-occurring speech acts. Some are recognized with a preferred response, though less frequent sometimes, such as ‘[question: identification] / [answer to question: comply]’, ‘[request: action] / [answer to request: accept]’, ‘[apology] / [smoother]’.

Regarding three co-occurring speech acts, out of a total of 59 instances, there are 26 double origins (Appendix 8). Table 7.14 shows the frequency distribution of the three co-occurring speech acts in service encounters at airport check-in counters.

Table 7.14. Top ten three co-occurring speech acts in service encounters at airport check-in counters and information counters

Double origin		Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Statement: inform	Apology	4	6.78
Check	Confirm	Filler	4	6.78
Filler	Statement: inform	Smoother	3	5.08
Request: action	Staller	Filler	3	5.08
Thanks	Empathizer	Statement: inform	3	5.08
Filler	Statement: inform	Frame	2	3.39
Filler	Statement: inform	Answer to request: accept	2	3.39
Filler	Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	3.39
Filler	Statement: inform	Alert	2	3.39
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Request: action	2	3.39

As seen in Table 7.14, the two most frequent three co-occurring speech acts are ‘[filler] / [statement: inform] / [apology]’ (6.78%) as well as ‘[check] / [confirm] / [filler]’ (6.78%). They are followed by ‘[filler] / [statement: inform] /

[smoother]' (5.08%), '[request: action] / [staller] / [filler]' (5.08%), and '[thanks] / [empathizer] / [statement: inform]' (5.08%). The frequency of the remaining three co-occurring speech acts is 2 occurrences (3.39%), such as '[statement: opine] / [hedge] / [filler]'.

## 7.8 Discussion of findings

Few adjacency pairs with a preferred next action, as mentioned in Sections 1.5 and 2.5.4, have been observed in the service encounters at the airport check-in counters and information counters, such as '[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]', '[check] / [confirm]', and '[question: identification] / [answer to question: comply]'. Extract 7.12 (B024) shows '[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]'. In Extract 7.12 (B024), speaker a, an airlines officer, tells speaker B, a transit passenger, about the arrangement of a hotel room (lines 1-5 and 7). Speaker B responds with an 'okay', that is a [reply to statement: acknowledge] (line 8):

Extract 7.12: B024

Location: Airport check-in counter

Participants: a: Female Hong Kong Chinese B: Male native

1. a: <SA063 [statement: inform] but I have to check with the
2. reception desk whether they have any room ava- available
3. tonight >
4. <SA063 [statement: inform] and also I will tell you how??s
5. >
6. <SA032 [filler] er >
7. <SA063 [statement: inform] how much would it be >
8. B: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] \* okay >

Another common adjacency pair is '[check] / [confirm]', extract 7.13 (B026) is an example. In Extract 7.13 (B026), speaker a, an airlines officer, is asking speaker B, a passenger, for his boarding pass. However, speaker B tells speaker a that he does not have the boarding with him. Hence, speaker a checks if speaker

B's boarding pass has been collected already (lines 1-2). Speaker B responds with a confirmation (lines 3-4). And speaker a acknowledges speaker B's reply with a [reply to statement: acknowledge] (line 5):

Extract 7.13: B026

Location: Airport check-in counter

Participants: a: Female Hong Kong Chinese B: Male native

1. a: <SA015 [check] you mean the check in staff collect the boarding
2. card already >
3. B: <SA019 [confirm] yeah >
4. <SA019 [confirm] \* yeah >
5. a: <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] \*\* okay >

Regarding three co-occurring speech acts, based on the goals of studying their sequential patterns depicted and elucidated in Chapter Four, though it is possible to generate a list of associated speech acts, the associations may not show clearly the distinctive collocational patterns in service encounters at the airport check-in counters and information counters, as illustrated with the following example.

Figure 7.1 is the most frequent three co-occurring speech acts – ‘[filler] / [statement: inform] / [apology]’ with a double origin ‘[filler] / [statement: inform]’:

```

1 er > <SA010 [apology] sorry > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] we have no idea
2 <SA063 [statement:inform] one moment > <SA032 [filler] er > B: <SA001 [alert] oh > <SA010 [apology]
3 at the hotel > b: <SA032 [filler] er > <SA010 [apology] sorry > <SA063 [statement:inform] it??s >
4 going to Taipei > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA010 [apology] sorry > <SA063 [statement:inform] Bangkok > B:

```

Figure 7.1. The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in service encounters at airport check-in counters and information counters

The example illustrates that there are three sequences of the association, which are ‘[apology]→[filler]→[statement: inform]’ (line 1), ‘[statement: inform]→[filler]→[apology]’ (line 2), and ‘[filler]→[apology]→[statement: inform]’ (line 3).

inform]’ (lines 3-4). To further understand the context in which these speech acts are realised, Extract 7.14 from line 1 is shown as follows. In Extract 7.14, speaker B is the airline staff member. He first apologizes (line 2) while responding to the passenger about the refund arrangement of the ticket. Then he tells the passenger that he does not know the exact reason for such arrangement (line 4) and says that it would be related to the agreement of the airlines company (lines 5 and 7), with a filler in between (line 6). The associated speech acts are ‘[apology] →[filler]→[statement: inform]’:

Extract 7.14: B038

Location: Airport check-in counter

Participants: b: Male Hong Kong Chinese

1. b: <SA032 [filler] er >
2. <SA010 [apology] sorry >
3. <SA032 [filler] er >
4. <SA063 [statement:inform] we have no idea >
5. <SA063 [statement:inform] ticket depends on the >
6. <SA032 [filler] er >
7. <SA063 [statement:inform] agreement (. ) >

### **7.9 Frequency analysis of co-occurring speech acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]**

In service encounters at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets], out of a total of 699 instances of two co-occurring speech acts, there are 20 unique centred speech acts and 112 total centred speech acts (Appendix 9). The top ten two co-occurring speech acts are as follows (Table 7.15):

Table 7.15: Top ten two co-occurring speech acts in service encounters at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]

Centred speech act	Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Statement: inform	Filler	70	10.01
Check	Confirm	29	4.15
Answer to question: comply	Expand	23	3.29
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	22	3.15
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Thanks	21	3.00
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Expand	21	3.00
Filler	Thanks	18	2.58
Filler	Answer to question: comply	16	2.29
Filler	Statement: opine	16	2.29
Filler	Question: polarity	14	2.00

As seen in Table 7.15, the most frequent two co-occurring speech acts are ‘[statement: inform] / [filler]’ (10.01%), followed from ‘[check] / [confirm]’ (4.15%), ‘[answer to question: comply] / [expand]’ (3.29%), ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’ (3.15%), ‘[reply to statement: acknowledge] / [thanks]’ (3.00%), as well as ‘[reply to statement: acknowledge] / [expand]’ (3.00%). The frequencies of the remaining two co-occurring speech acts are lower, ranging from 18 occurrences (2.58%) (‘[filler] / [thanks]’) to 2 occurrences (0.30%) (e.g. ‘[uptake] / [check]’).

Though fillers are commonly used by speakers when they inform (10.01%), there are a few adjacency pairs with a preferred response in the search for two co-occurring speech acts, such as ‘[check] / [confirm]’ (4.15%), ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’ (3.15%), or ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: agree]’ (1.72%) whereas many others are not, such as ‘[reply to statement: acknowledge] / [expand]’ (3.00%), ‘[reply to statement: acknowledge] / [expand]’ (3.00%).

Regarding three co-occurring speech acts, out of a total of 50 instances of three co-occurring speech acts, there are 24 double origins (Appendix 10). Table 7.16 shows the frequency distribution of the top ten three co-occurring speech acts in service encounters at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets].

Table 7.16. Top ten three co-occurring speech acts in service encounters at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]

Double origin		Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Check	Confirm	Filler	5	9.09
Statement: inform	Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	4	7.27
Check	Confirm	Expand	3	5.45
Statement: opine	Uptake	Filler	3	5.45
Statement: inform	Filler	Frame	2	3.64
Check	Confirm	Answer to question: comply	2	3.64
Check	Confirm	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	3.64
Answer to question: comply	Expand	Uptake	2	3.64
Answer to question: comply	Expand	Question: polarity	2	3.64
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Answer to question: comply	2	3.64

As seen in Table 7.16, the most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in service encounters at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets] are ‘[check] / [confirm] / [filler]’ (9.09%). It is followed by ‘[statement: inform] / [filler] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’ (7.27%), ‘[check] / [confirm] / [expand]’ (5.45%), and ‘[statement: opine] / [uptake] / [filler]’ (5.45%). The frequency of the remaining three co-occurring speech acts is 2 occurrences (3.64%) (e.g. ‘[statement: inform] / [filler] / [frame]’).

### 7.10 Discussion of findings

Few adjacency pairs with a preferred next action have been identified in the service encounters at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets], such as ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’, ‘[check] / [confirm]’, and ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: agree]’. Extract 7.15 (B003) shows ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’. In Extract 7.15 (B003), speakers a, a hotel staff member, and A, a hotel guest, are talking about the rate of another hotel in Hong Kong. Speaker a tells speaker A that the room costs about two thousand Hong Kong dollars a night, that is [statement: inform] (lines 1 and 3). Speaker A responds with a minimal receipt of information, that is [reply to statement: acknowledge] (lines 2 and 4) respectively:

Extract 7.15: B003

Location: Hotel concierge

Participants: a: Female Hong Kong Chinese      A: Female native

1. a: <SA063 [statement: inform] two thousand >
2. A: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] yep >
3. a: <SA063 [statement: inform] two thousand something >
4. A: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] something yup >

Extract 7.16 (B001) shows ‘[check] / [confirm]’. In Extract 7.16 (B001), speaker B, a visitor, is checking out of the hotel. A hotel staff, speaker b, asks him for the credit card to settle the bill. Then speaker B would like to check if he

has to use a visa card (line 1). Speaker b replies with a confirmation (line 2):

Extract 7.16: B001

Location: Hotel concierge

Participants: B: Male native b: male Hong Kong Chinese

1. B: <SA015 [check] it's a visa >
2. b: <SA019 [confirm] yeah >
3. B: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] alright >

Regarding three co-occurring speech acts, though it is possible to generate a list of associated speech acts, the associations may not show clearly the distinctive collocational patterns in service encounters at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets], as illustrated with the following example.

Figure 7.2 is the most frequent three co-occurring speech acts – ‘[check] / [confirm] / [filler]’ with a double origin ‘[check] / [confirm]’:

```
1 a: <SA032 [filler] ** okay > A: <SA015 [check] ask ask for P_ > a: <SA019 [confirm] P_ * yes >
2 got it > A: <SA032 [filler] huh > b: <SA015 [check] you didn't got the key > A: <SA019 [confirm] no
3 (inaudible) > B: <SA032 [filler] er > <SA015 [check] this way > b: <SA019 [confirm] yeah > <SA032
4 okay > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA015 [check] thirty Hong Kong dollars > a1: <SA019 [confirm]
5 [filler] er > a: <SA015 [check] ** for for gymnasium > B: <SA019 [confirm] uhuh
```

Figure 7.2. The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]

The example illustrates that there is one sequence of the association, which is ‘[filler]→[check]→[confirm]’ (lines 1-5). Extract 7.17 from line 2 illustrates the importance of understanding the context of the speech act association. In Extract 7.17, speaker b, the hotel staff member, asks speaker A, the guest, if she got the mini-bar key (line 1). Speaker A replies with an adequate answer (line 2) and gives complementary information that she does not have the key (line 3). After acknowledging the answer by speaker b (lines 4-5), speaker A responds with a filler (line 6). Speaker b then checks if speaker A does not have the key (line 7) and speaker A gives an affirmative response (line 8):



Extract 7.17: B021B

Location: hotel concierge

Participants: A: Female English speaker                      b: Male Hong Kong Chinese

1. b: <SA048 [question: polarity] have you got the mini-bar key >
2. A: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] no >
3.        <SA029 [expand] I didn't have one >
4. b: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] okay >
5.        <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] you didn't got it >
6. A: <SA032 [filler] huh >
7. b: <SA015 [check] you didn't got the key >
8. A: <SA019 [confirm] no >

It is observed that the identification of different associations of the three speech acts can at least show the relationship among them as performed by different speakers at the airport check-in counters and information counters as well as the hotel concierges [and retail outlets], though the collocational patterns may not be as discursively representative as expected.

## **7.11 Lexicogrammatical realisation and pattern**

### **7.11.1 Airport check-in counters**

In the sub-corpus of service encounters at the airport check-in counters and information counters, other than [filler] (17.34%), [statement: inform] is the most frequent speech act (15.68%). Stenström's (1994) seven inform markers were used to interrogate the 302 instances of [statement: inform] in the service encounters at the airport check-in counters and information counters. The results are shown in Table 7.17.

Table 7.17. Inform markers: frequency of occurrence

<b>Service encounters:</b>			
<b>Airport check-in counters and information counters</b>			
<b>No</b>	<b>Inform marker (Stenström, 1994)</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	<i>actually</i>	3	0.99
2	<i>in fact</i>	0	0.00
3	<i>as a matter of fact</i>	0	0.00
4	<i>the fact is</i>	0	0.00
5	<i>the point is</i>	0	0.00
6	<i>you know</i>	0	0.00
7	<i>you see</i>	1	0.33
<b>Total</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>1.32</b>

Table 7.17 shows that out of the seven inform markers, three are found in the airport check-in counters and information counters, namely *actually* and *you see*. *Actually* (0.99%) is the most frequently occurring inform marker, followed by *in fact* (0.33%).

The remaining 298 instances that are excluded from these inform markers, accounting for 98.68% of all instances of [statement: inform], are lexical phrases for informing. They are combinations of content (or lexical) words (noun, verb, adjective, and adverb) and grammatical (or function) words (such as article, pronoun, preposition, and auxiliary verb). The following examples are retrieved from the airport check-in counter and information counter sub-corpus that show the diverse patterns of informing other than employing the inform markers in different syntactic units, namely phrase, clause (and sentence) in different syntactic units. Table 7.18 are examples of lexical phrases, clauses (and sentences) for informing.

Table 7.18. Examples of lexical phrases, clauses (and sentences) for informing

Phrase	<p>... airport tax receipt ...</p> <p>... and boarding gate number twelve for your flight ...</p> <p>... and window seat for in business class ...</p> <p>... at nine thirty ...</p> <p>... the receipt for the airport tax here ...</p>
Clause (and Sentence)	<p>... and your boarding pass gate not assigned yet ...</p> <p>... but want to remind you that the gate will close at four fifteen ...</p> <p>... this the ticket return to you ...</p> <p>... here is your ticket ...</p> <p>... I have Hong Kong Hong Kong dollars ...</p>

Further analysis shows that there are different lexical choices to achieve the communicative function in phrases and clauses. Regarding the grammatical structure, declarative is commonly used. Direct discourse and first person pronouns are used to provide information that is either new or shared by the speakers and the agent who provides such information. As illustrated in the following examples, the use of direct discourse and first person pronouns gives a more personalised attitude:

1. **I** do have a reservation number there
2. **I** can see that you already reserved
3. **I** arrived this morning
  
4. **we** start boarding at ten thirty five
5. **we** tried calling them for about four times from Thailand and their line was always busy
6. **we** have no idea

Direct discourse and second person pronouns are used to emphasise the person who receives the information, as shown in the examples below:

1. **you** have [to] pay separately at the departure
2. **you** can change it in Taiwan
3. **you'**re going to Jakarta

Direct discourse and third person pronouns are used to highlight the third party or parties involved in the information. The examples below illustrate this feature:

1. **it** is not necessary
2. **it's** aisle seat
3. **it** was done by the travel agent

Coordinating conjunctions such as 'and', 'or' and 'so' are frequently used to join two parts of the information:

1. **and** the boarding time is twelve o'clock
2. **and** this is the lounge card
3. **and** your reservation is being confirmed tomorrow
  
4. **but** I have to pay the difference
5. **but** want to remind you the gate will close at four fifteen
6. **but** when you go out of the immigration you should need to pay another to go back
  
7. **so** the gate will close ten minutes before departure
8. **so** this is the price for round trip economy class
9. **so** we couldn't get it changed ourselves

#### 7.11.2 Hotel concierges [and retail outlets]

In the sub-corpus of service encounters at hotel concierge [and retail outlets], [statement: inform] is the most frequent speech act (13.90%). The seven inform markers from Stenström (1994) were used to interrogate the 217 instances of [statement: inform] in service encounters at hotel concierge [and retail outlets]. The results are shown in Table 7.19.

Table 7.19. Inform markers: frequency of occurrence

<b>Service encounters: Hotel concierges [and retail outlets]</b>			
<b>No</b>	<b>Inform marker (Stenström, 1994)</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	<i>actually</i>	0	0.00
3	<i>in fact</i>	0	0.00
2	<i>as a matter of fact</i>	0	0.00
4	<i>the fact is</i>	0	0.00
5	<i>the point is</i>	0	0.00
6	<i>you know</i>	1	0.46
7	<i>you see</i>	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>0.46</b>

Table 7.19 shows that out of the seven inform markers, one is found in the meetings, namely *you know* (0.46%).

The remaining 216 instances that are excluded from these inform markers, accounting for 99.54% of all instances of [statement: inform], are lexical phrases for informing. They are combinations of content (or lexical) words (noun, verb, adjective, and adverb) and grammatical (or function) words (such as article, pronoun, preposition, and auxiliary verb). The following examples are retrieved from the hotel concierge [and retail outlet] sub-corpus that show the diverse patterns of informing other than employing the inform markers in different syntactic units, namely, phrase, clause (and sentence) in different syntactic units. Table 7.20 are examples of lexical phrases, clauses (and sentences) for informing.

Table 7.20. Examples of lexical phrases, clauses (and sentences) for informing

Phrase	
	... and one coffee shops in lobby lounge ...
	... eight o'clock flight tomorrow morning ...
	... including breakfast ...
	... just the normal proceed procedure ...
	... local call one hundred number call ...

Clause (and sentence)	<p>... give you back your credit card first ...</p> <p>... just want to make sure he's coming with me ...</p> <p>... walk around the hotel and talking another guests ...</p> <p>... and I'll call to send the luggage to the room ...</p> <p>... but the booking was made by himself ...</p>
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Further analysis shows that there are different lexical choices to achieve the communicative function in phrases and clauses. Regarding the grammatical structure, declarative is commonly used. Direct discourse and first person pronouns are used to provide information that is either new or shared by the speakers and the agent who provides such information. As illustrated in the following examples, the use of direct discourse and first person pronouns gives a more personalised attitude:

1. **I** will call the bell boy to bring up your luggage for you
2. **I** understand the main charge will be done by Japan Airlines
3. **I** give you the nice room for you
4. **we** don't have your name in order now
5. **we** have a lot of people from Hong Kong living in Vancouver
6. **we** are five stars hotel also

Direct discourse and second person pronouns are used to emphasise the person who receives the information, as shown in the examples below:

1. **you** still have a stamp
2. **you** got a local call
3. **you** just return the room key to our cashier counter

Direct discourse and third person pronouns are used to highlight the third party or parties involved in the information. The examples below illustrate this feature:

1. **it's** coming
2. **it's** on the third floor on this side
3. **it** works it it still works

4. **they** paid my room
5. **they** give the boy to send it to your room
6. **they** call you receptionist

The message itself can be the actor represented by demonstrative pronouns or demonstrative adjectives, or by phrases related to the content:

1. **This** is the smallest we have
2. **This** just depends the with the brand different brand name
3. **This** is the Regal Airport Hotel

Coordinating conjunctions such as ‘and’, ‘or’ and ‘so’ are frequently used to join two parts of the information:

1. **and** your room number four o nine five
2. **and** this is your mini-bar key
3. **and** the sauna steam is inside the male changing room
  
4. **but** your company book for two nights for you
5. **but** the booking was made by himself
6. **but** it's in my new name

As seen from the examples, these phrases and clauses (and sentences) are both content and context-specific. Without the use of inform markers such as ‘namely’, ‘in fact’ and ‘the point is’ (Stenström, 1994, p. 90), speakers in service encounters at the airport check-in counters and information counters as well as at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets] have used linguistic realisations such as the expressions shown above to supply or present neutral information regarding a particular topic in the interactions. As discussed in Chapter Six, the use of inform marker is not a necessary option to supply or present neutral information. Similar to the findings in informal office talks, speakers in the service encounters of both airport check-in counters and information counters as well as hotel concierges [and retail outlets] that usually directly inform the listeners what they would like to convey through phrases or clauses (and sentences) without the use of inform markers.

The interactive process of a service provider, who is the airlines or the hotel staff member(s), and a service receiver, who is the airlines passenger(s) or the hotel guest(s), involves the provision of customer service by answering questions

and giving information in a proper manner (cf. Lind & Salomonson, 2013) to pursue their respective goals by making the right linguistic choices in dialoguing (Ventola, 2011; cf. Ventola, 1983, 2005). Service encounters at the airport and the hotel are work practices that have relatively short processes and routine patterns or sequences (Clarke & Nilsson, 2008). At airport check-in counters and information counters, the sequence includes the following elements: going to the counter, requesting help from the airlines staff, offering help to the passenger, asking the passenger for necessary documents, reminding the passenger of departure details, a departing word as the passenger leaves the counter. At hotel concierges [and retail outlets], similar sequence is observed, including going to the counter, requesting help from the hotel staff, offering help to the hotel guest, asking for details about a product, handling of check-out procedures, and a departing words as the guest leaves the counter. The linguistic realisation of [statement: inform] in both service encounters, usually with a declarative, is therefore more complex than the inform markers mentioned. Influenced by the nature of the service encounters and the context in which the interaction takes place, the expressions used by the service providers are in general expected and restricted.

## **7.12 Conclusion**

In this chapter, corpus data of service encounters at the airports and the hotels are annotated and examined. In response to the first research question, the findings is in line with the previous three genres, primary speech acts occur more often than the other categories (Sections 7.4 and 7.6). As expected, reporting objective or neutral information, i.e. [statement: inform], and signalling receipt of information, i.e. [reply to statement: acknowledge], are in the top five most frequent speech acts, which is supported by the core structure of service encounters such as request for service and provision of service and the transactional goals between the passengers and the airport staff as well as the guests and the hotel staff.

In response to the second research question, similar to the previous three genres, the prevalence of [filler] dominates the association of both two and three co-occurring speech acts, implying that the collocational patterns are not



necessarily meaningfully associated or discursively representative (Sections 7.8 and 7.10). However, it is noted that a frequent adjacency pair with a preferred next action is [check] and [confirm], which is common in service encounters at both the airports and the hotels. The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts is ‘[apology] / [filler] / [statement: inform]’ with three sequences in airport counters and ‘[check] / [confirm] / [filler]’ with one sequence in hotel concierges. As mentioned, these co-occurrences may not be meaningfully associated because of the limited number of instances.

In response to the third research question, what is revealed in the lexicogrammatical realisations of the most frequently occurring speech act is supported by transactional goals in the context of service encounter (Section 7.11). [Statement: inform], as the most frequent speech act, is used to demonstrate the diverse realisations found in the data. They are not limited to conventional markers as listed by Stenström (1994). Rather, the linguistic choices managed by the speakers largely depend on the specific local context and are rarely expressed with markers for providing objective or neutral information, which vary from a small number of markers to different lexicogrammatical patterns. The frequent occurrence of [statement: inform] indicates that the airport and the hotel staff are more likely give a direct verbal presentation of necessary information that are related to a particular context.

## Chapter Eight

### Question and answer sessions

#### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background information about the question and answer session (Q&A) data (8.2). It then describes and analyses the frequencies and communicative functions (or illocutionary force) of the speech acts in Q&A sessions (8.3) with a discussion of the findings (8.4), followed by a frequency analysis of two and three co-occurring speech acts (8.5) and discussion of findings (8.6). Lastly, the lexicogrammatical realisations and patterns of the most frequently occurring speech act in Q&A sessions are examined (8.7).

#### 8.2 Background information

In the corpus, the seven question and answer (Q&A) sessions (B094, B108, B121, B123, B125, B155-B156) can be divided into two categories: one is after annual announcements of banks or listed companies (B108, B155, B156); the other is during presentations given by companies or professional organizations for in-service training (B094, B121, B123, B125). The first type is conducted by a master of ceremony of the announcement or the chief executive officer after the presentation of the company annual performance. The audience, in general, includes shareholders, financial analysts, local and overseas journalists. The second type is incorporated in the presentations. These presentations are given by experts in a particular field and the audience is mainly professionals related to the field. As the presenters invite questions during their presentations, there is usually not a formal Q&A session with a formal transition from the presentation to the Q&A session (Lin, 2008).

In B094, the five speakers were one female Hong Kong Chinese and four male Hong Kong Chinese. The topics of the Q&A session were as follows: the benefits of using online system to reduce the operation cost of a company, and the differences between a company that mainly manufactures products and one that mainly focuses on the control of the operation cost without damaging the brand image and employee morale.

In B108, the twenty two speakers were three female English speakers, seven male English speakers, four female Hong Kong Chinese, seven male Hong Kong Chinese, and one Indian. The topics were as follows: reasons for the decrease of the mutual fund income and the outlook of the mutual fund business in the coming year, sources of the deterioration for the gross new provision, reasons for then in the restructure loans, performance of funds management, nature of the investments in liquidity management, possibility of using tools like hybrid capital to restructure the balance sheet, unsecured consumer lending in the new provisions, provision for collateral short fall in terms of falling property market, credit card charge off rate, momentum of fund sales, tier one ration, source of forex profits, interest rate positioning, amount of fund sales shifted from the bank deposits, reduction of general provision rate, amount of unsecured consumer lending such as credit cards and personal loans, insurance business, reasons for the decline in the general reserve, annual credit card charge off rate, credit card provision, hurdle rate of return for the bank to make acquisition or investment in China, clarification of a market speculation, specific provisioning policy change, credit card advance and consumer lending, increase of debt securities portfolio in the interest rate cycle, long term insurance business, means to double the value of the shareholders, and cost discipline.

In B121, the nine speakers were one female English speaker, four female Hong Kong Chinese, and four male Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: reactions of SCOLAR towards the language policy, relations of SCOLAR with other agencies and government departments, language benchmarks for teachers, English as medium of language in Singapore, Hong Kong and China, roles of native English speakers in schools, requirements for a competent English teacher, strategies to improve the standard of local English teachers, targets for in-service teacher training, and possibility of organizing continuous English enhancement courses to replace the assessment test.

In B123, the twenty two speakers were one female English speaker, one male English speaker, twelve female Hong Kong Chinese, and eight male Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: request for the copy of the presentation material and book recommendation about intercultural or international communication.

In B125, the eleven speakers were one female English speaker, six female Hong Kong Chinese, and four male Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: hair style, clothing colour in different seasons, effects between warm and cool colours, and different functions of wearing the glasses.

In B155, the thirteen speakers were one male English speaker, nine male Hong Kong Chinese, and three female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: target of the company's total earnings, debt and equity of an android tablet in India, investment in a power station, loss in the Asia Pacific region, future spending for development projects, update of the receivable situation, update of the planned conversion, update of the fuel source of an android tablet, update of the supply of natural gas for a power station, cash received from the property sales, the number of unsold property units, average selling prices of property units, net loss of profit from business, minimum risk adjusted return for the power company, book value of a telecom company, operating data of oxygen, business relation with China, power business development in Asia Pacific countries, and loss associate with the strike.

In B156, the ten speakers were one male English speaker, six male Hong Kong Chinese, and three female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: capital expenditure with an android tablet and cost for the shift of natural gas, views on tariff reforms, investment strategy in China, growth in residential sector, reasons for unsold units, dividend policy on property profit, progress of a project with a cement company, breakdown of sales to China, participation in gas sector and vision towards the company enterprises, pricing of a gas project, comments about the impact of natural gas on the company business in Hong Kong, strategy in power investments inside and outside the Asia Pacific region, and breakdown of company profit.

A common feature of a business speech or presentation is the Q&A session. It is not only a common feature but an expected feature after a presentation. The absence of a Q&A session is therefore marked; it is unusual not to have a Q&A session in this context of interaction. Moreover, Q&A sessions are typically unrehearsed and unplanned in terms of exact content and structure, and require the speaker to depart from the script and engage in a more spontaneous dialogue with questioners (Cheng, 2004). Hence, given the limited number of recordings

collected in Q&A sessions, it is found that the topics are diverse, possibly because of different types of presentations and company annual report announcements. Topics are closely related to the themes of the presentations, such as intercultural communication, language policy, hairstyle, fashion, and the announcements, such as mutual fund, cost control, liquidity management, and investment strategy.

### 8.3 Frequency analysis of speech acts in Q&A sessions

Out of 4,412 instances of speech acts found in the Q&A sessions after company announcements and during interactive presentations, 36 unique speech acts are found. They are listed in accordance with the descending frequency sort (Table 8.1).

Table 8.1. Frequency of unique speech acts in Q&A sessions

No	Speech act	Frequency	Percentage
1	Filler	1218	27.61%
2	Statement: inform	747	16.93%
3	Statement: opine	621	14.08%
4	Expand	203	4.60%
5	Preface	181	4.10%
6	Precursor	178	4.03%
7	Answer to question: comply	166	3.76%
8	Justify	154	3.49%
9	Empathizer	115	2.61%
10	Frame	101	2.29%
11	Question: identification	100	2.27%
12	Reply to statement: acknowledge	99	2.24%
13	Question: polarity	85	1.93%
14	Monitor	65	1.47%
15	Thanks	46	1.04%
16	Appealer	44	1.00%
17	Hedge	34	0.77%
18	Clue	31	0.70%

19	Question: confirmation	27	0.61%
20	Uptake	25	0.57%
21	Emphasizer	24	0.54%
22	Answer to request: accept	21	0.48%
23	Answer to question: imply	20	0.45%
24	Greeting	16	0.36%
25	Alert	11	0.25%
26	Reply to statement: agree	11	0.25%
27	Answer to question: disclaim	10	0.23%
28	Check	9	0.20%
29	Staller	8	0.18%
30	Request: action	8	0.18%
31	Apology	8	0.18%
32	Confirm	8	0.18%
33	Answer to question: evade	6	0.14%
34	Request: permission	4	0.09%
35	Answer to question: supply	3	0.07%
36	Answer to request: reject	3	0.07%

As seen from Table 8.1, the three most frequent speech acts in the data of Q&A sessions are [filler] (27.61%), [statement: inform] (16.93%), and [statement: opine] (14.08%), each with more than 600 occurrences, followed by [expand] (60.00%), [preface] (4.10%), [precursor] (4.03%), [answer to question: comply] (3.76%), [justify] (3.49%), [empathizer] (2.61%), [frame] (2.29%), and [question: identification] (2.27%). The frequencies of the remaining speech acts are lower, ranging from 99 occurrences (2.24%) ([reply to statement: acknowledge]) to 3 occurrences (0.07%) ([answer to question: supply] and [answer to question: reject]).

Out of these 36 speech acts, there are twenty-two primary acts (61.11%) (Table 8.2), six secondary acts (16.67%) (Table 8.3), and eight complementary acts (22.22%) (Table 8.4) from Stenström (1994). Each act has its own communicative function(s).

Table 8.2 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the twenty-two primary acts in Q&A sessions.

Table 8.2. Communicative functions and frequencies of primary acts in Q&A sessions

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Statement: inform	Provide or present neutral information	749	16.98%
2	Statement: opine	Give or express one's personal opinions, feelings and attitudes	649	14.71%
3	Answer to question: comply	Answer a question directly and adequately	134	3.04%
4	Question: identification	Ask for information or an answer identifying a wh-word	100	2.27%
5	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Signal receipt of information or signal that the second speaker accepts what the first speaker said as a valid contribution to the conversation	99	2.24%
6	Question: polarity	Ask for a yes / no question	85	1.93%
7	Thanks	Express gratitude	46	1.04%
8	Question: confirmation	Ask for a confirming answer	27	0.61%
9	Answer to request: accept	Agree to a request, a suggestion, etc.	21	0.48%
10	Answer to question: imply	Answer the question indirectly, give adequate information implicitly	19	0.43%
11	Greeting	Greet somebody or bid farewell	16	0.36%
12	Alert	Call the addressee's attention, attract the other party's / parties' attention	11	0.25%

13	Reply to statement: agree	Signal agreement with what was just said, indicate that speaker B approves of what speaker A means	11	0.25%
14	Answer to question: disclaim	Declare the answer is unknown; come up with an answer that is honest and straightforward but which does not answer the question and does not pretend to do so	10	0.23%
15	Check	Ask for repetition or clarification of what was said in the immediately preceding turn	9	0.20%
16	Request: action	Ask somebody to do something	8	0.18%
17	Apology	Express regret	8	0.18%
18	Confirm	Respond to a request for confirmation	8	0.18%
19	Answer to question: evade	Avoid answering (consciously)	6	0.14%
20	Request: permission	Ask for a go-ahead	4	0.09%
21	Answer to question: supply	Give inadequate information, does not really answer the question	3	0.07%
22	Answer to request: reject	Disagrees to a [request], [suggest], etc.	3	0.07%

In Table 8.2, the two most frequent primary speech acts in the Q&A sessions are [statement: inform] (16.93%) and [statement: opine] (14.08%), each with more than 600 occurrences, followed by [answer to question: comply] (3.49%), [question: identification] (2.27%), [reply to statement: acknowledge] (2.24%), [question: polarity] (1.93%), and [thanks] (1.04%). The frequencies of the remaining primary speech acts are lower, ranging from 27 occurrences (0.61%) ([question: confirmation]) to 3 occurrences (0.07%) ([answer to question: supply] and [answer to request: reject]).



Table 8.3 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of secondary speech acts in Q&A sessions.

Table 8.3. Communicative functions and frequencies of secondary acts in Q&A sessions

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Expand	Give complementary information	203	4.60%
2	Preface	Introduce a primary act, has a face-saving effect in that they prepare speaker B for what is going to happen next, make sure that certain pre-conditions hold before making the [following primary act]	181	4.10%
3	Precursor	Precede a primary act and give information, link up what was said before, comment on something in the preceding dialogue	178	4.03%
4	Justify	Defend what was said in the primary act, give the reason why	154	3.49%
5	Clue	Follow a primary act and give a hint, provide additional information after a question, comment on the question	31	0.70%
6	Emphasizer	Underline what was said in the primary act	24	0.54%

In Table 8.3, the most frequent secondary speech acts in the Q&A sessions are [expand] (4.60%), followed by [preface] (4.10%), [precursor] (4.03%), and [justify] (3.49%). The frequencies of the remaining secondary speech acts are lower, ranging from 31 occurrences (0.70%) ([clue]) to 24 occurrences (0.54%) ([emphasizer]).

Table 8.4 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the eight complementary speech acts in the Q&A sessions.

Table 8.4. Communicative functions and frequencies of complementary acts in Q&A session

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Filler	Fill a gap in the discourse	1,218	27.62%
2	Empathizer	Involve the listener, engage the listener and make her/him feel part of the conversation, intensify the relationship with the listener, prompt listener feedback, the current speaker invites the current listener to take an active part	115	2.61%
3	Frame	Mark a boundary or the beginning of a new stage in the discourse	100	2.27%
4	Monitor	Help putting something right, make a new start or rephrase what the speaker was going to say in the middle of a turn as the listener cannot follow or is not convinced, make the speaker's point clear, steer what the speaker says	65	1.47%
5	Appealer	Invite feedback	44	1.00%
6	Hedge	Help avoiding commitment, modify and mitigate an utterance, help the speaker avoid going straight to the point, avoid being blunt, avoid appearing authoritative, and avoid committing him/herself	34	0.77%
7	Uptake	Accept what was said and lead on, acknowledge receipt of what the previous speaker said and evaluate it before going on	25	0.57%
8	Staller	Play for time	8	0.18%

In Table 8.4, the most frequent complementary speech act in the Q&A sessions is [filler] (27.62%) with more than 1,200 occurrences, followed by [empathizer] (2.61%) and [frame] (2.27%). The frequencies of the remaining speech acts are lower, ranging from 65 occurrences (1.47%) ([monitor]) to 8 occurrences (0.18%)

[staller]).

In summary, the findings on the communicative function and frequency analysis of different categories of speech acts have shown that in the context of Q&A sessions, the majority of speech acts are from Stenström's (1994) primary acts (61.11%), which are used to realise moves on their own, followed by complementary acts (22.22%), which are used to accompany but rarely replaces primary acts and secondary acts (16.67%), which are used to accompany and sometimes replace primary acts. The quantitative results regarding different unique acts shown above respond to the first research question on the relative frequencies of occurrence of different speech acts in a genre.

#### **8.4 Discussion of findings**

As shown in the communicative function and frequency analysis of different categories of speech acts, reporting objective or neutral information and expressing personal opinions are relatively common practices in Q&A sessions. Both [statement: inform] (16.93%) and [statement: opine] (14.08%) are within the top five most frequently occurring speech acts, with [statement: inform] being the second while [statement: opine] the third. They are followed by [expand] (4.60%) and [preface] (4.10%). It may in general be assumed that in Q&A sessions, questioning (namely 'identification', 'confirmation', and 'polarity') and answering (namely 'comply', 'imply', 'supply', 'evade', 'disclaim') (Stenström, 1994) should be the most frequently occurring speech acts; however, it is found that other than [filler] (27.61%), [statement: inform] (16.93%) and [statement: opine] (14.08%) are frequently occurred. One possible reason is that after a question is or a number of questions are raised by an audience, the presenter will not only respond to the question or questions with brief answers but also further elaborate or explain the answers with other related information or parts of the earlier presentation (Cheng, 2004). It usually results in a lengthy response. Moreover, the lexicogrammatical features are not restricted to markers identified in Stenström (1994) for the speech acts, for example, 'actually', 'as a matter of fact', 'in fact', 'the fact is', 'the point is', 'you know', 'you see' for [statement: inform] (p.90); or 'I feel', 'I think', 'it seems', 'it's a pity that', 'it's surprising that', 'it's ...' for [statement: opine] (p.91). The

following examples can illustrate the different linguistic realisations found in the dataset to perform a particular speech act.

With regard to reporting objective or neutral information in Q&A sessions, the linguistic realisations of [statement: inform] are not restricted to the markers mentioned in Stenström (1994). Rather, it can be a further elaboration of information related to the given answer, as shown in Extract 8.1 (B108). In the Q&A session after the annual results announcement of a local bank, a member of the audience, speaker B3, is nominated to ask a question. Speaker B3 asks speaker b1, the vice-chairman and chief executive of the bank, if provisions of collateral short fall have been made in terms of the falling market price (lines 1-2 and 4-5). Speaker b1 responds to the question directly with an adequate and explicit answer (lines 6-7). Then speaker b1 gives complementary information about the regular reviewing operation of the bank (line 8). After that, he goes on offering more information about the decline of collaterals in the previous year (lines 18-19, 21 and 23-25):

Extract 8.1: B108

Location: Press conference room

Participants: B3: male native b1: male Hong Kong Chinese

1. B3: <SA048 [question: polarity] did you have to make provisions
2. for >
3. <SA032 [filler] er >
4. <SA048 [question: polarity] collateral short fall in terms
5. of the falling property \* market >
6. b1: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] \*\* we always do >
7. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] we always do >
8. <SA029 [expand] we always review our capital >
9. <SA032 [filler] er >
10. <SA032 [filler] er >
11. <SA032 [filler] er >
12. <SA040 [monitor] I mean the property >
13. <SA032 [filler] er >
14. <SA040 [monitor] value >

15. <SA032 [filler] er >
16. <SA040 [monitor] of our collaterals last year decline by what
17. we in our assumption >
18. <SA063 [statement: inform] I think we it it it decline by
19. thirteen something like percent >
20. <SA011 [appealer] is that right >
21. <SA063 [statement: inform] in terms of overall market >
22. <SA032 [filler] er >
23. <SA063 [statement: inform] property market prices >
24. <SA063 [statement: inform] we made very conservative
25. assumptions on the property value >

Another example of [statement: inform] to give further explanation of information related to the given answer is shown in Extract 8.2 (B121). In Extract 8.2 (B121), b3, an audience in a seminar about English language policy and development in Hong Kong, raises an identification question on lines 1-2 and a confirmation question (lines 14-24) with responses from a2, the speaker of the seminar, to the previous identification question (lines 13-14). The identification question is about the language policy and development in China. The confirmation question is about whether or not there are similar native-speaking English teacher schemes in China. After responding with an adequate and explicit answer to the confirmation question (line 28), speaker a2 provide additional information about the elite schools in China where native-speaking English teachers are recruited (lines 31-45):

Extract 8.2: B121

Location: Unknown

Participants: b3: female Hong Kong Chinese a2: male Hong Kong Chinese

1. b3: <SA047 [question: identification] but how about the case in
2. mainland China >
3. a2: <SA032 [filler] erm >
4. <SA068 [unclassifiable] see >
5. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] I think mainland is

6. beginning to catch up >
7. <SA040 [monitor] but I mean it's still >
8. <SA032 [filler] erm >
9. <SA040 [monitor] the I I don't know enough about mainland >
10. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] but I know that >
11. <SA032 [filler] erm >
12. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] in pockets where there
13. is funding various schools are being set up >
14. b3: <SA046 [question: confirmation] they but but they haven't any
15. >
16. a2: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] \* very good schools >
17. <SA032 [filler] mm >
18. b3: <SA046 [question: confirmation] \*\* project like that >
19. <SA032 [filler] right >
20. <SA032 [filler] er >
21. <SA046 [question: confirmation] if they have any project like
22. >
23. <SA068 [unclassifiable] (inaudible) >
24. <SA046 [question: confirmation] any T-net >
25. a2: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] no >
26. b3: <SA068 [unclassifiable] (inaudible) >
27. <SA011 [appealer] right >
28. a2: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] no >
29. <SA029 [expand] but they hire native speakers >
30. b3: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] yes >
31. a2: <SA063 [statement: inform] a lot of native speakers in  
mainland China >
32. <SA032 [filler] um >
33. <SA063 [statement: inform] in fact these >
34. <SA032 [filler] er >
35. <SA063 [statement: inform] there the elite schools are
36. actually >
37. <SA032 [filler] erm >
38. <SA063 [statement: inform] are private mainly >
39. <SA063 [statement: inform] I know of I've heard of one school
40. >
41. <SA032 [filler] erm >
42. <SA063 [statement: inform] that act- in Beijing that actually
43. >
44. <SA032 [filler] erm >

- 45. <SA063 [statement: inform] is incredibly elite >
- 46. <SA038 [justify] because all the sons of the >
- 47. <SA032 [filler] erm >
- 48. <SA038 [justify] Beijing officials go their sons >
- 49. <SA024 [empathizer] you know you know (.) >
- 50. b3: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] \* yeah >

With regard to expressing personal opinions after an answer, the linguistic realisations of [statement: opine] are not restricted to the markers listed in Stenström (1994). Rather, it can be a suggestion of the right colour of clothing for different people in different situations, as shown in Extract 8.3 (B125). Speaker a6, a member of the audience in a talk about professional image of men and women, raises a confirmation question about whether or not women should choose warm or cool clothing colours as Speaker a2, the speaker of the talk, talks about the importance of matching the colour of clothing with the skin tones and the hair colours in her talk. Speaker a2 gives an explicit answer (line 7), stating that the choice of clothing colours depends on the preference of speaker a6. After that, speaker a2 goes on expressing her views on how different people dress differently (lines 8-14 and lines 16-19):

Extract 8.3: B125

Location: Unknown

Participants: a6 / a2: female Hong Kong Chinese

- 1. a6: <SA042 [precursor] you mention about >
- 2. <SA068 [unclassifiable] ((inaudible)) >
- 3. <SA042 [precursor] us being warm or cool >
- 4. <SA033 [frame] so >
- 5. <SA046 [question: confirmation] we go with the warm or cool
- 6. colour >
- 7. a2: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] all you are like >
- 8. <SA064 [statement: opine] the younger I suggested a baby two
- 9. day old >
- 10. <SA064 [statement: opine] hasn't to be a child >

11. <SA064 [statement: opine] another consultant the oldest I
12. think is seventy-three >
13. <SA064 [statement: opine] you don't change but there are case
14. >
15. <SA043 [preface] take a model on the catwalk >
16. <SA064 [statement: opine] everything she wear looks beautiful
17. >
18. <SA064 [statement: opine] but she's properly made up to suit
19. that >

It is found that [expand] is used to give complementary information, which is usually followed by an answer, including polarity question, confirmation question, and identification question, when the respondent thinks that the answer or the response alone is not sufficient enough to express himself or herself (Stenström, 1994). Extract 8.4 (B108) is an example of giving complementary information after a direct and adequate answer to a polarity question. In Extract 8.4 (B108), speaker B3, an audience in the annual results announcement press conference of a local bank, asks its vice-chairman and chief executive, speaker b1, if the bank has made provisions for the collateral short fall in terms of the falling property market (lines 1-5). Speaker b1, after responding with a direct and adequate answer to the question (lines 6-7), he goes on adding complementary information, stating that the bank will review their capital (line 8):

Extract 8.4: B108

Location: Press conference room

Participants: B3: Male native                      b1: Male Hong Kong Chinese

1. B3: <SA048 [question: polarity] did you have to make provisions
2. for >
3. <SA032 [filler] er >
4. <SA048 [question: polarity] collateral short fall in terms
5. of the falling property \* market >
6. b1: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] \*\* we always do >
7. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] we always do >
8. <SA029 [expand] we always review our capital >



Extract 8.5 is an example of giving complementary information following an inadequate answer to a confirmation question. In Extract 8.5 (B108), speaker y, a member of the audience in the press conference, in response to speaker b1's [statement: inform] about the decrease in insurance business, asks a confirmation question (lines 1-3) whether or not the trend is seasonal. Speaker b1 first gives an [answer to question: supply] (lines 4-5), as he does not make it clear if the decreasing trend is seasonal. The information given is not direct and adequate; it is a wish of speaker b1. Then he goes on adding more information by stating that it is the first time for the bank to face a decrease in the insurance business (line 6):

Extract 8.5: B108

Location: Press conference room

Participants: y: Indian                      b1: Male Hong Kong Chinese

1. y: <SA046 [question: confirmation] and so it's seasonal >
2.        <SA046 [question: confirmation] \* it's not a trend that we
3.        should extrapolate >
4. b1: <SA006 [answer to question: supply] \*\* it I hope it's seasonal
5.        >
6.        <SA029 [expand] this is the first time we adopt it >

Extract 8.6 is an example of giving complementary information after a response stating that the answer is unknown to an identification question. In Extract 8.6 (B108), speaker a4 asks speaker b1 an identification question about the trend of the cost (lines 6-9). Speaker b1 gives a disclaiming answer, declaring that the answer is unknown (lines 12 and 16). The disclaiming response does not answer the question and pretend to do so. After that, speaker b1 proceeds to give complementary information by stating that the bank has attempted to control the cost in a disciplined way (lines 13-14 and 17-18):

Extract 8.6: B108

Location: Press conference room

Participants: a4: Female Hong Kong Chinese

b1: Male Hong Kong Chinese

1. a4: <SA032 [filler] er >
2. <SA034 [greeting] V\_ >
3. <SA042 [precursor] your your bank has a very strong and
4. excellent cost discipline >
5. <SA032 [filler] er >
6. <SA047 [question: identification] could you guide us as to
7. where you see the cost lines going >
8. <SA032 [filler] er >
9. <SA047 [question: identification] going forward >
10. <SA066 [thanks] \* thanks >
11. b1: <SA043 [preface] \*\* I hope it will go down but >
12. <SA003 [answer to question: disclaim] but I don't know >
13. <SA029 [expand] we try to exercise very tight control as well
14. we are very disciplined in cost >
15. <SA032 [filler] er >
16. <SA003 [answer to question: disclaim] I hard to say >
17. <SA029 [expand] we will try >
18. <SA029 [expand] we will try
19. <SA032 [filler] but er >
20. <SA066 [thanks] thank you very much for your support (.) >
21. <SA066 [thanks] thank you >

[Expand] can also be followed by a response, such as a complying answer and a disclaiming answer. As shown in Extract 8.7 (B121), speaker a2, the speaker of a talk on the English language development in Hong Kong, has responded to a previous identification question raised by another audience about the language development in the Mainland China. Then speaker b3, an audience at the talk, raises a confirmation question the implementation of any Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) projects in China on lines 1-4. Speaker a2 gives an adequate answer stating that there is no project like this in China on

lines 5 and 8. Then she goes on giving complementary information by stating that the schools in China have recruited native English speakers on their own on line 9.

Extract 8.7: B121

Location: Unknown

Participants: b3: Male Hong Kong Chinese

a2: Female Hong Kong Chinese

1. b3: <SA046 [question: confirmation] if they have any project like
2. >
3. <SA068 [unclassifiable] (inaudible) >
4. <SA046 [question: confirmation] any T-net >
5. a2: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] no >
6. b3: <SA068 [unclassifiable] (inaudible) >
7. <SA011 [appealer] right >
8. a2: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] no >
9. <SA029 [expand] but they hire native speakers >

Extract 8.8 (B156) is from an Interim Results Announcement press conference of a local public utility company. It shows an example of adding further information after a disclaiming answer. In Extract 8.8 (B156), b3, a member of the audience in the press conference, raises an identification question (lines 2-11), with fillers 'er' (lines 4 and 10) as well as an inaudible utterance (line 7), about the breakdown of sales to PPA and those to Guangdong. Speaker a2, after giving background information about the sales, responds to the question with a disclaiming answer (lines 40-41). After stating that he does not have the information about the exact breakdown, speaker a2 adds that the information will be provided later (line 42):

Extract 8.8: B156

Location: Press conference room

Participants: b3: Male Hong Kong Chinese

a2: Female Hong Kong Chinese

1. b3: <SA032 [filler] erm >
2. <SA047 [question: identification] would you with regards to
3. your sales to to China would you be able to roughly >
4. <SA032 [filler] er >
5. <SA047 [question: identification] break down how much because
6. >
7. <SA068 [unclassifiable] (inaudible) >
8. <SA047 [question: identification] should go PPA and how much
9. would actually sold to Guangdong >
10. <SA032 [filler] er >
11. <SA047 [question: identification] grid >
12. a2: <SA069 [uptake] erm >
13. <SA043 [preface] the this year the >
14. <SA032 [filler] er >
15. <SA043 [preface] sales to Guangdong >
16. <SA061 [staller] er have er er >
17. <SA043 [preface] we we we have a kind of two two >
18. <SA032 [filler] er >
19. <SA043 [preface] major contracts for sales to Guangdong >
20. <SA032 [filler] er >
21. <SA043 [preface] one is to the Shekkong area >
22. <SA043 [preface] the other is to GPG >
23. <SA043 [preface] this year the sales to >
24. <SA032 [filler] er >
25. <SA043 [preface] the Guangdong Power Grid is >
26. <SA032 [filler] er >
27. <SA043 [preface] substantially more >
28. <SA032 [filler] er >
29. <SA038 [justify] primarily because of >
30. <SA032 [filler] er >
31. <SA038 [justify] very very severe shortage >
32. <SA032 [filler] er >

33. <SA038 [justify] and and they are facing very high growth  
 34. especially in Guangdong and Shenzhen areas >  
 35. <SA032 [filler] er >  
 36. <SA038 [justify] and >  
 37. <SA032 [filler] er er >  
 38. <SA038 [justify] also not as much rain as they have expected  
 39. >  
 40. <SA003 [answer to question: disclaim] but the exact breakdown  
 41. I don't have it with me >  
 42. <SA029 [expand] we can provide it later >  
 43. <SA032 [filler] mm >

[Expand] can be followed by [statement: opine] and [statement: inform] as well. In Extract 8.9 (B121), Speaker a2, the speaker of a talk on the English language development in Hong Kong, expresses her opinions about the role of English to Singaporeans (lines 1-2). Then she goes on giving additional information, that is [expand], about the language diversity in Singapore (lines 3-7) and the popularity of the use of English among Singaporeans (lines 7 and 10) respectively.

Extract 8.9: B121

Location: Unknown

Participants: a2: Female Hong Kong Chinese b2: Male Hong Kong Chinese

1. a2: <SA064 [statement: opine] but a lot of the Singaporean  
 2. actually have English virtually as their mother tongue >  
 3. <SA029 [expand] if you go to Singapore you talk with them they  
 4. will be able to talk in >  
 5. <SA032 [filler] er >  
 6. <SA029 [expand] five Chinese dialects >  
 7. <SA029 [expand] English even the taxi drivers can do that >  
 8. <SA011 [appealer] right >  
 9. b2: <SA068 [unclassifiable] \* (inaudible) >  
 10. a2: <SA029 [expand] \*\* but they can't write Chinese >

Extract 8.10 (B125) shows an example of adding complementary information after a provision of neutral information. Speaker a2, the speaker of a talk about the professional image for men and women, while responding to a question about the use of different colours in clothing in different seasons, she states that it is mainly a combination of white and other colours (lines 1-4 and 7). And she provides additional information (lines 5-6 and 8-10), which is a list of examples of different colour options:

Extract 8.10: B125

Location: Unknown

Participant: a2: Female Hong Kong Chinese

1. a2: <SA063 [statement:inform] normally would be the white of
2. off-white premium white >
3. <SA063 [statement:inform] and then you can add any of the
4. colour >
5. <SA029 [expand] the yellow >
6. <SA029 [expand] the pink >
7. <SA063 [statement:inform] whether it's warm or cool >
8. <SA029 [expand] even pale green >
9. <SA029 [expand] even purple lavender >
10. <SA029 [expand] and all shades of blue >

In summary, the linguistic realisations of the most frequently occurring speech acts in Q&A sessions are not restricted to a list of markers. Regarding the realisation of a particular communicative function through a speech act, there are a range of linguistic expressions that could be used to achieve the goal.

### **8.5 Frequency analysis of co-occurring speech acts in Q&A sessions**

In Q&A sessions, out of a total of 2,127 instances of two co-occurring speech acts, there are 21 unique centred speech acts and 129 total centred speech acts (Appendix 11). The top ten two co-occurring speech acts are as follows

(Table 8.5):

Table 8.5. Top ten two co-occurring speech acts in Q&A sessions

Centred speech act	Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Statement: inform	423	19.89
Filler	Statement: opine	310	14.57
Filler	Precursor	127	5.97
Filler	Preface	105	4.94
Filler	Expand	105	4.94
Filler	Justify	99	4.65
Filler	Answer to question: comply	66	3.10
Filler	Empathizer	61	2.87
Filler	Question: identification	52	2.44
Filler	Monitor	43	2.02

As seen from the Table 8.5, the five most frequent two co-occurring speech acts are ‘[filler] / [statement: inform]’ (19.89%), ‘[filler] / [statement: opine]’ (14.57%), ‘[filler] / [precursor]’ (5.97%), ‘[filler] / [preface]’ (4.94%), and ‘[filler] / [expand]’ (4.94%). The frequencies of the remaining two co-occurring speech acts are lower, ranging from 4.65% (‘[filler] / [justify]’) to 2 occurrences (such as (‘[uptake] / [answer to question: evade]’).

Fillers are commonly used by speakers when they inform (19.89%) and opine (14.57%). However, apart from the co-occurring speech acts with [filler], other adjacency pairs are found in the search for two co-occurring speech acts. Some are recognized with a preferred response such as ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’.

Regarding three co-occurring speech acts, out of a total of 160 instances of three co-occurring speech acts, there are 42 double origins (Appendix 12). Table 8.6 shows the frequency distribution of the three co-occurring speech acts in Q&A sessions (Table 8.6).

Table 8.6. Top ten three co-occurring speech acts in Q&A sessions

Double origin		Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Statement: opine	Empathizer	16	10.00
Filler	Statement: inform	Empathizer	10	6.25
Filler	Statement: opine	Frame	10	6.25
Filler	Statement: inform	Frame	9	5.63
Filler	Statement: inform	Preface	6	3.75
Filler	Precursor	Greeting	5	3.13
Statement: inform	Appealer	Filler	5	3.13
Statement: opine	Hedge	Filler	5	3.13
Statement: opine	Preface	Filler	5	3.13
Filler	Statement: inform	Justify	4	2.50

As seen from Table 8.6, the four most frequent three co-occurring speech acts are ‘[filler] / [statement: opine] / [empathizer]’ (10.00%); ‘[filler] / [statement: inform] / [empathizer]’ (6.25%); ‘[filler] / [statement: opine] / [frame]’ (6.25%); ‘[filler] / [statement: inform] / [frame]’ (5.63%). The frequency of the remaining three co-occurring speech acts are lower, ranging from 3.75% occurrences (‘[filler] / [statement: inform] / [preface]’) to 2 occurrences (e.g. ‘[uptake] / [answer to question: evade] / [thanks]’).

## 8.6 Discussion of findings

Few adjacency pairs with a preferred next action in Q&A sessions such as ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’, ‘[question: polarity] / [answer to question: comply]’, ‘[check] / [confirm]’. Extract 8.11 (B121) shows ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’. In the extract, a2, the speaker of the talk, is describing what she knew about the use of English in Singapore (lines 1, 3-5). After the description, a member of the audience responds by acknowledging with ‘mm’ (line 6):



Extract 8.11: B121

Location: Lecture Room

Participant: a2: Female Hong Kong Chinese

b2: Male Hong Kong Chinese

1. a2: <SA063 [statement:inform] my knowledge doesn't >
2. <SA032 [filler] you know >
3. <SA063 [statement:inform] go go into that particular area >
4. <SA063 [statement:inform] but they net- quite a lot of the
5. Singaporeans actually have English as their mother tongue >
6. b2: <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] mm >

The other one is '[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]', as shown in Extract 8.12 (B108). Speaker b1, vice-chairman and chief executive of a local bank, was predicting the investment sales performance of the bank in that year. He predicts that the investment sales would go down two to three hundred mil per month (lines 2-3, 5). Speaker b2, a participant at the press conference, acknowledges his opinions with a repetition of the lexical term 'natural' (line 4):

Extract 8.12: B108

Location: Press conference room

Participants: b1 / b2: Male Hong Kong Chinese

1. b1: <SA032 [filler] um >
2. <SA064 [statement:opine] it's about three hundred mil per
3. month >
4. b2: <SA054 [reply to statement:agree] natural natural >
5. b1: <SA064 [statement:opine] but I would expect this (.) >

Regarding three co-occurring speech acts, though it is possible to generate a list of associated speech acts, the associations may not show clearly the distinctive collocational patterns in Q&A sessions, as illustrated with the following example.

Figure 8.1 is the first most frequent three co-occurring speech acts – ‘[filler] / [statement: opine] / [empathizer]’ with a double origin ‘[filler] / [statement: opine]’:

```

1 <SA064 [statement:opine] as our book matures > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA024 [empathizer] you know >
2 <SA064 [statement:opine] so the concept of > <SA032 [filler] erm > <SA024 [empathizer] you know >
3 mm mm > b1: <SA024 [empathizer] ** you know > <SA032 [filler] er > B7: <SA064 [statement:opine] I
4 [filler] er > <SA024 [empathizer] you know > <SA032 [filler] erm > <SA064 [statement:opine] then of
5 of course > <SA024 [empathizer] you know > <SA032 [filler] sort of > <SA064 [statement:opine]
6 how this (> > <SA024 [empathizer] you know > <SA032 [filler] sort of > <SA064 [statement:opine]
7 is more > <SA024 [empathizer] you know > <SA032 [filler] sort of > <SA064 [statement:opine] more
8 [filler] erm > <SA024 [empathizer] you know > <SA032 [filler] sort of > <SA064 [statement:opine]
9 [filler] um > <SA024 [empathizer] you know > <SA032 [filler] sort of > <SA064 [statement:opine]
10 [filler] er > <SA024 [empathizer] you know > <SA032 [filler] sort of > <SA064 [statement:opine] the
11 [filler] erm > <SA024 [empathizer] you know > <SA032 [filler] sort of > <SA064 [statement:opine] good
12 can imagine > <SA024 [empathizer] you know > <SA032 [filler] sort of > <SA064 [statement:opine] that
13 [frame] so > <SA024 [empathizer] you know > <SA032 [filler] sort of > <SA064 [statement:opine] it
14 there's no > <SA024 [empathizer] you know > <SA032 [filler] sort of > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA064
15 know that > <SA024 [empathizer] you know > <SA032 [filler] sort of > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA064
16 let's say > <SA024 [empathizer] you know > <SA032 [filler] sort of > <SA032 [filler] erm > <SA064

```

Figure 8.1. The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in Q&A sessions

The examples illustrate that there are two sequences of the association, which are ‘[statement: opine]→[filler]→[empathizer]’ (lines 1-2), ‘[empathizer]→[filler]→[statement: opine]’ (lines 3-16). To further understand the context in which these speech acts are realised, Extract 8.13 from line 1 is shown as follows. B1, the speaker of the annual results announcement, was responding to a follow-up question about the interest rate risk, re-investment risk, and the ability of the bank to maintain revenues from a placement activity (lines 2, 6, 8-9, 12). In between his response, he uses ‘you know’ as an [empathizer] to involve the person who raises the question:

Extract 8.13: B108

Location: Bank Annual Results Announcement

Participants: b1: Male Hong Kong Chinese

1. b1: <SA069 [uptake] well >
2. <SA064 [statement:opine] as our book matures >
3. <SA032 [filler] er >
4. <SA024 [empathizer] you know >
5. <SA032 [filler] erm >
6. <SA064 [statement:opine] then of course >
7. <SA032 [filler] er >
8. <SA064 [statement:opine] we will face some pressure in terms
9. of >
10. <SA032 [filler] er >
11. <SA032 [filler] er >
12. <SA064 [statement:opine] interest income >

Extract 8.14 is from line 3 shows an example of another sequence. In Extract 8.14, speaker a2 is the speaker of a seminar on English language policy in Hong Kong. She is responding to a question about the proper role played by Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) that aims at raising language standard in Hong Kong and the concerns about the language benchmark assessment examinations for local teachers. She expresses her opinions about the difficulties that teachers have (lines 1, 4-5), with an [empathizer] (line 2) and a [filler] (line 3) in between her opinions:

Extract 8.14: B121

Location: Seminar

Participant: a2: female Hong Kong Chinese

1. a2: <SA064 [statement:opine] for I can I can imagine >
2. <SA024 [empathizer] you know >
3. <SA032 [filler] sort of >
4. <SA064 [statement:opine] that teachers are having incredible
5. di- difficulties and mainly with writing >

It is observed that the identification of different associations of the three speech acts can at least show the relationship among them as performed by

different speakers in Q&A sessions, though the collocational patterns may not be as discursively representative as expected.

### 8.7 Lexicogrammatical realisation and pattern

In the sub-corpus of Q&A sessions, other than [filler] (27.61%), [statement: inform] is the most frequent speech act (16.93%). Stenström's (1994) seven inform markers were used to interrogate the 747 instances of [statement: inform] in the Q&A sessions. The results are shown in Table 8.7.

Table 8.7. Inform markers: frequency of occurrence

Question and answer sessions			
No	Inform marker (Stenström, 1994)	Occurrence	Percentage
1	<i>actually</i>	14	1.87
3	<i>in fact</i>	3	0.40
2	<i>as a matter of fact</i>	0	0.00
4	<i>the fact is</i>	0	0.00
5	<i>the point is</i>	0	0.00
6	<i>you know</i>	1	0.13
7	<i>you see</i>	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>2.41</b>

Table 8.7 shows that out of the seven inform markers, three are found in the meetings, namely *actually*, *in fact*, and *you know*. *Actually* (1.87%) is the most frequently occurring inform marker, followed by *in fact* (0.40%) and *you know* (N=1; 0.13%).

The remaining 729 instances that are excluded from these inform markers, accounting for 97.59% of all instances of [statement: inform], are lexical phrases for informing. They are combinations of content (or lexical) words (noun, verb, adjective, and adverb) and grammatical (or function) words (such as article, pronoun, preposition, and auxiliary verb). The following examples are retrieved from the Q&A sub-corpus that show the diverse patterns of informing other than employing the inform markers in different syntactic units (Table 8.8).

Table 8.8. Examples of lexical phrases, clauses (and sentences) for informing

Phrase	<p>... a lot of native speakers in mainland China ...</p> <p>... an intellectual conversation ...</p> <p>... but maybe not once every month now ...</p> <p>... in Beijing for many many years ...</p> <p>... very fluent ...</p>
Clause (and sentence)	<p>... as we discussed in the past ...</p> <p>... forget that thirty percent ...</p> <p>... I don't know how they they did it ...</p> <p>... it would be like that ...</p> <p>... she knew what she was doing she knew ...</p>

Further analysis shows that there are different lexical choices to achieve the communicative function in phrases and clauses. Direct discourse and first person pronouns are used to provide information that is either new or shared by the speakers and the agent who provides such information. As illustrated in the following examples, the use of direct discourse and first person pronouns gives a more personalised attitude:

1. **I** forgot about that one
2. **I** was born in Singapore
3. **I** am in charge of this team
  
4. **we**'ll be doing joint venture with Beijing
5. **we** paid for the whole portfolio
6. **we** have looked at the gas business before

Direct discourse and second person pronouns are used to emphasise the person who receives the information, as shown in the examples below:

1. **you** have new capital requirements
2. **you**'re talking about the diglossic situation
3. **you** only need to count five percent of the loan portfolio credit card

Direct discourse and third person pronouns are used to highlight the third party or parties involved in the information. The examples below illustrate this feature:

1. **it** dealt with that problem by issuing a bond
2. **it's** someone in in precisely perfect process
3. **it** was the whole portfolio
  
4. **they** speak in English
5. **they** they put money in professional training
6. **they** work with it

The message itself can be the actor represented by demonstrative pronouns or demonstrative adjectives, or by phrases related to the content:

1. **This** is the third time
2. **This** one I want
3. **This** is a special school
  
4. **That's** a decline or property price decline that we assumed
5. **That's** my view
6. **That** was finally ninety four million US dollars

Coordinating conjunctions such as 'and', 'or' and 'so' are frequently used to join two parts of the information:

1. **and** they learn it well
2. **and** most of our classes are teacher dominated anyway
3. **and** and the situation now is is is reasonably stable
  
4. **but** the government they set the direction at that time
5. **but** maybe not once every month now
6. **but** they will not use our our credits
  
7. **so** I knew she wasn't quite German
8. **so** we've seen a reduction in in in in price
9. **so** it will be individual

Regarding the grammatical structure, declarative is commonly used. As seen from the examples, these phrases and clauses (and sentences) are both content and context-specific. Similar to previous discussion on [statement: inform] and the use of inform markers, speakers in Q&A sessions have also used linguistic realisations such as the expressions shown above to supply or present neutral

information regarding a particular topic in the interactions. It is observed in Q&A sessions that speakers usually directly inform the listeners what they would like to convey through phrases or clauses (and sentences) without the use of inform markers.

The generic structure of Q&A sessions is typically an interactional sequence in which the speakers of the seminar or the press conference answer the question raised by participants or journalists. The question-answer pair is typical of spontaneous interaction (Bhatia, 2006). In the interactional sequence, while or after answering the question raised by the audience, it is quite common for the speakers to give other neutral information related to the theme of the questions (8.4). Accordingly, apart from [filler], [statement: inform] is the most frequently occurring speech act found in the sub-corpus of Q&A sessions.

## **8.8 Conclusion**

In response to the first research question, the discussion has been shown that on the whole, compared to the speech acts in other genres, reporting neutral information and expressing personal opinions are among the top five most frequently occurring speech acts in their immediate contexts of interaction (Section 8.4). They are found to be frequently employed by the speakers of the annual announcements and the presentations. There is evidence to suggest that when answering questions, the presenters will either provide the answer to the question early at the beginning of the response or later after the introduction of information. (cf. Cheng, 2004). It is also found that the content of the answer to the original question is often more than required, meaning that the speaker tends to give complementary or additional information to further support and explain the answer. This additional part of the response can be factual information or personal opinions.

In response to the second research question, few adjacency pairs with a preferred next action are found such as '[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]' and '[question: polarity] / [answer to question: comply]' (Section 8.6). Lots of other co-occurring speech acts with [fillers] are not meaningfully associated (see Section 4.8). The most frequent three co-occurring speech act is '[filler] / [statement: opine] / [empathizer]' with two sequences. However, the

small number of instances does not seem to be representative enough to make generalization of the findings. It is again unclear whether or not the co-occurrence is meaningfully associated.

In response to the third research question, it is shown that there are features of discourse that characterized the Q&A sessions as compared to other genres (Section 8.7). The lexicogrammatical realisations of the most frequent speech act have served to illustrate some of the complex ways in which speakers' transactional goals are accomplished effectively at the Q&A sessions. [Statement: inform] is used to show that common markers are not the only realisations of informing. Factual information is more often given in more specific lexical items. It is difficult, if not impossible, to have a list of common expressions of informing universally applicable to every context.



## **Chapter Nine**

### **Interviews**

#### **9.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the background information about the interview data (9.2). It then describes and analyses the frequencies of occurrence and communicative functions (or illocutionary force) of the speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant (9.3) as well as those in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee (9.5), both with a discussion of the findings, in 9.4 and 9.6 respectively. They are followed by a frequency analysis of two and three co-occurring speech acts (9.7 and 9.9) and discussion of findings (9.8 and 9.10). Lastly, the lexicogrammatical realisations and patterns of the most frequently occurring speech act in job interviews and in placement interviews are examined (9.11).

#### **9.2 Background information**

In the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic), interviews are divided into two categories: job interviews (B071-B072, B076-B085, B114) for the post of research assistant in the university and placement interviews (B061-B070B) for the hotel training programme co-organized by the university and the hotel. In general, the participants in the interactions do not know each other prior to the data collection. The difference in identity between the interviewer(s) and the interviewee has characterized both the topics discussed and the flow of communication in the interview. Job interviews can be challenging situations, as they require participants, in particular the interviewees, to deal with a range of discourse modes with fewer opportunities, in theory at least, for repair than in other types of business communication. Moreover, job interviews often, if not always, involve people who are socially less advantaged due to lower levels of skill, experience, and education. The inequality in power resulted from such differences will lead to a lack of ability of the interviewees to control the discourse (Koester, 2010).

Given the nature of the interviews and the asymmetry in power, topics are largely initiated by the interviewers and focused on the interviewee's education background, work experience, expectations of the job or the placement, etc. Interviewers will usually provide background information related to the job or post offered. For instance, in the job interviews, the interviewers describe the nature of the research project advertised and the expected responsibilities of a research assistant whereas in the placement interview, the interviewers describe the history of the hotel, the daily operation of the departments in which the interviewee would be placed during the internship and, same as the job interviews, the expected responsibilities the interviewee is required to take as a trainee.

#### 9.2.1 Job interviews for research assistant

The thirteen job interviews involve an interviewee and two (or three) interviewers. The interviewers are university researchers who are in charge of the related research projects. Some interviewees are experienced research assistants from the same or another discipline whereas others are new to the post. All the interviews took place at university.

In B071, the four speakers were a male English speaker, a female Hong Kong Chinese, and two are female English speakers. The topics of the interview were as follows: the interviewee's computing skills, her reasons for having interest in applied linguistics and the post, clarification of her past education and work experience, her career development, her feelings about the job requirements, her questions for the interviewers about the working hours of the job and the duration of the research project, as well as the interviewers' descriptions of the job nature and expectations of the research project.

In B072, the five speakers were a female Hong Kong Chinese, a male English speaker, and three female English speakers. The topics of the interview were as follows: the interviewee's reasons for applying for the post; her opinions on linguistics, English learning, business English and education; her academic background and work experience; her future career development; her competency in computer skills and research skills; and her question for the interviewers about difficulties for Hong Kong Chinese in learning English.

In B076, the four speakers were a male English speaker and three female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics of the interview were as follows: background information about the research projects, the interviewee's understanding of the job duties in the projects, her past work experiences, her computer skills, her interest in the job duties of the post, and discussion on her spoken data transcription experience.

In B077, the four speakers were a male English speaker and three female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: background information about the research projects; information about the job duties; the interviewee's interest in the job duties; her past work experiences regarding computer software, transcription, spoken data, written data, and data collection; as well as her question about the start date of the job.

In B078, the four speakers were a male English speaker and three female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: the interviewee's current work details, her education background related to spoken data transcription, her reasons for being a research assistant, her past experience in transcribing spoken data, the interviewer's description of the present job duties, the interviewee's interest and assessment of the present job duties, and her question about the time for the notification of the interview result.

In B079, the four speakers were a male English speaker and three female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: the interviewee's education background regarding data analysis, transcription, and intonation; her views on different linguistic subjects and feature of spoken data; the job description of a research assistant in the current post; and her question about the duration of the two projects.

In B080, the four speakers were a male English speaker and three female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: the interviewee's education background, background information about the research projects, the job specifications of a research assistant, the interviewee's opinions about the job requirement of a research assistant, and discussion about the interviewee's capacity of handling spoken data transcription tasks.

In B081, the four speakers were a male English speaker and three female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: the information about the

projects, interviewee's opinions about the job duties of a research assistant, details about her past working and research experience, discussion about the findings of her previous researches, her interest in doing research and data collection, her opinions about choosing a job as a research assistant, details of her current job, and discussion about the possibility of having other part-time jobs for the post of a research assistant.

In B082, the four speakers were a male English speaker and three male Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: the interviewer's explanation for the purpose of audio-recording the interview, information about the two projects, interviewee's previous experience in research, his previous education and work experience, his opinions and experience in transcribing spoken data, and his question about the time span of the projects and the notification of the interview result.

In B083, the four speakers were a male English speaker and three female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: the interviewee's education background in general and education in translation in particular, her reasons for applying for the job, her interest in the job, her future education plan, her perception of spoken data transcription, the interviewer's explanation of the job duties of a research assistant, the interviewee's questions to clarify the main duties of a research assistant and the job details of the first project.

In B084, the four speakers were a male English speaker and three female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: information about the two research projects, the interviewee's current and previous education details, her previous experience as a research assistant, her reasons for applying for the job, her future education plan, her perception of her temperament of doing transcription, the interviewer's explanation about the notification of the interview result, and the interviewee's question about the start date of the job.

In B085, the four speakers were a male English speaker and three female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: the interviewee's previous education and research experience regarding data collection, methodology, and findings; her reasons for applying for the job; her readiness for transcribing spoken data; her future career plan; and the details of the contract.

In B114, the three speakers were a male English speaker and two female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: information about the projects related to the job, the interviewee's opinions about her suitability for the job, her previous work experience, her understanding of and opinions about doing transcription, her reflections after doing transcription particularly regarding the fluency of English speaker English speakers, discussion about perfect spoken English, the interviewer's explanation of the job description for a research assistant, the interviewee's future career plan, the interviewer's opinions about the interviewee's abilities for the pursuit of an academic post in university, discussion about the interviewee's another interview at a bank, and discussion about the salary for a research assistant.

Most of the topics covered in the job interviews for the post of research assistant are in the 'Information Exchange' stage of a job interview (Canavor & Meirowitz, 2010, as cited in Jiang, 2013) and can be divided two areas: one is interviewer-oriented and the other interviewee-oriented. For the former, the liability of offering the relevant information is on the interviewer(s) and the topics include information about the research project, job duties of a research assistant while for the latter, the liability in on the interviewee and the topics are relatively more, including personal details, academic background, reasons for applying the post, past working experience, and opinions on various issues related to the post. This explains the goals of the participants in the interview. For interviewer(s), they have to assess the job suitability of the candidate and to select the best one in terms of work experience, communicative effectiveness, professional skills while for the interviewee, he/she has to have the skills to perform well, impress or persuade the interviewer(s), and get offered the job (Rampton, 2007; Jiang, 2013).

### 9.2.2 Placement interviews for hotel trainee

The eleven interviews involve an interviewee and usually two interviewers. The interviewers are senior staff from the hotel management. The main goal of the interview is to assign the interviewees, who are undergraduate students majoring in hotel and tourism management, to an appropriate department or departments for internship (Lin, 2008). Success in the internship placement

interview is important for the interviewees as they will probably be offered full time jobs at the same hotel after graduation from their undergraduate programme.

In B061, the three speakers were female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: The interviewee's education background, her reasons for choosing to study hotel management, her perception and expectation of the degree course, her plan after graduation and reasons for such plan, her readiness for shift duties, her previous work experience, her opinions about the necessary qualities for a guest contacting personnel in hotel, her evaluation of her own strengths and weaknesses, her future career plan, her quest for interviewer's recommendations about how a trainee can adapt better to the hotel environment during the internship, interviewers' opinions about how to be a good trainee, about if a trainee is a burden to the hotel, about trainers with different styles, about the reasons for failing an interviewee, and discussion about how to assign the department for the interviewee and travel allowance.

In B062, the two speakers were a male English speaker and a female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: the procedures of the interview, background information of the hotel, the interviewer's self-introduction, her reasons for choosing to study hotel and catering management, her reasons for working in hotel industry, her reasons for choosing the particular hotel for training, her preference and reasons for choosing room division department and food and beverage department for training, her previous practicum experience, her previous job requirements in a restaurant, the interviewer's elaboration on work shifts, his explanation of the importance of practicum experience, his quest about when interviewee will complete her university education, and the interviewee's quest about the recommendations for a trainee to adapt to the hotel environment.

In B063, the two speakers were female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: the interviewer's self-introduction and description of the objectives and the procedures of the interview, the interviewee's self-introduction and reasons for choosing hotel industry, her past travelling experience, her opinions about which aspects of hotel accommodation during the previous travels that have influenced her most for the decision to select hotel industry, her academic achievement, her reflection on what she learns from social service, her

feelings of having an interview in the hotel, her understanding of the hotel, her selection of and reasons for the department she is interested in, her opinions about the three most important attributes of a good customer service staff, her education background, her opinions about dealing with complaints, her perception of her weaknesses, her plan in three to five years, her opinions about the future hotel market after 1997, the interviewer's description of the placement arrangement and expectations for trainees, and details of the other arrangements after the interview.

In B064, the two speakers were a male English speaker and a female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: the interviewee's self-introduction, her reasons for choosing to work at the front office department rather than at food and beverage department, her knowledge about the hotel, her opinions about handling a customer's unreasonable request, her choice of and reasons for a particular department for placement, her quest about the placement details, her language proficiency, her reasons for choosing hotel business, and the interviewer's introduction of the operations of different departments.

In B065, the two speakers were a male Hong Kong Chinese and a female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: the interviewee's self-introduction, her previous experience related to hotel business, her reasons for the interest in hotel business, her opinions about the future of hotel industry in Hong Kong, her understanding of the internship arrangement, the interviewer's opinions about the purpose of the internship, the interviewee's preparation before the start of the internship, her language proficiency, her favourite subjects at university, her understanding of the difficulty encountered at the front office, the interviewer's expectations on trainees, and the interviewee's question about the placement arrangement.

In B066, the two speakers were a male Hong Kong Chinese and a female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: the interviewer's self-introduction, the interviewee's opinions about the arrangement of an interview for an intern, her reasons for choosing a particular university for tertiary education, her assessment about the hotel course offered at the particular university after one and a half years of studying, her expectations on the internship, her opinions about how to gain real working experience in the hotel

during the internship and about the possible influence of the handover of sovereignty in Hong Kong on hotel industry, her hobbies, her comments on educational system in Hong Kong, her relationship with her family and group based project regarding opining and compromising, her preference of the placement arrangement, her assessment of own strengths and weaknesses, her quest for the interviewer's recommendation for a trainee and explanation of the details of the training programme, and the interviewer's introduction of the hotel.

In B067, the two speakers were a male Hong Kong Chinese and a female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: the interviewee's self-introduction, her reasons for choosing to learn about hotel industry, her expectations and preferred department for the training, and her three-year career plan.

In B068, the two speakers were a female English speaker and a female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: the interviewee's sharing about her current study in hotel management, her reasons for choosing hotel management, her hobbies in free time, her plan after university graduation, her reasons for choosing front office department for training, her expectations for the internship, her opinions about the conditions for hiring front office staff, her strengths and weaknesses, her future career plan, her preferred departments apart from front desk department, and the interviewer's description of the procedures after the interview.

In B069, the two speakers were a male English speaker and a male Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: the interviewee's background information; his reasons for choosing the food and beverage department, for going to the particular hotel and for choosing western or Italian restaurant during the internship; his English language ability; his past working experience; his strengths; the interviewer's description of the Italian restaurant; the interviewee's quest about the guidelines for serving customers and the possibility of working in bar.

In B070A, the two speakers were a female Hong Kong Chinese and a male English speaker. The topics were as follows: the interviewer's introduction of the hotel, the interviewee's expectations from the study at the university, details of her current study, her personal background information related to family and



hobby, her past working experience, her understanding of her own personality and of her work performance from a third person's viewpoint, her strengths and weaknesses, her opinions about the important personal skills for a successful manager, her five-year career plan, her preference for placement arrangement, her reasons for choosing hotel industry, and discussion about the placement arrangement.

In B070B, the three speakers were a male English speaker and two female Hong Kong Chinese. The topics were as follows: the interviewee's self-introduction, her reasons for choosing hotel management at university and the front office department and human resources department for placement, the interviewer's description and clarification of the placement arrangement, the interviewee's career plan after graduation, her response to shift work, her expectations of three-year career development, her experience in cooking and being a waitress, her views on handling a customer's complaint, the interviewer's opinions about the performance of the interviewee in the interview and the necessary qualities for a staff member of the front office department as well as the human resources department, the interviewee's questions about the expectations of the hotel for a trainee, and the interviewer's clarification of information related to placement arrangement as well as other documents with the interviewee.

Despite the difference in the goal of the two kinds of interviews, most of the topics covered in the placement interviews are similar to those in the job interviews, the interviewer-oriented topics include job description, expectations towards the trainee, a brief introduction of the hotel operation while the interviewee-oriented ones include self-introduction, preference of and reasons for selecting a particular department, and future career plans.

### **9.3 Frequency analysis of speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant**

Out of 10,947 instances of speech acts found in the job interviews for the post of research assistant, there are 42 unique speech acts. They are listed in accordance with the descending frequency sort (Table 9.1).

Table 9.1. Frequency of unique speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant

No	Speech act	Frequency	Percentage
1	Filler	2860	26.13%
2	Reply to statement: acknowledge	1783	16.29%
3	Statement: inform	1416	12.94%
4	Answer to question: comply	1092	9.98%
5	Expand	540	4.93%
6	Statement: opine	518	4.73%
7	Justify	478	4.37%
8	Question: identification	263	2.40%
9	Question: polarity	234	2.14%
10	Frame	202	1.85%
11	Question: confirmation	148	1.35%
12	Precursor	145	1.32%
13	Monitor	140	1.28%
14	Empathizer	133	1.21%
15	Reply to statement: agree	128	1.17%
16	Thanks	110	1.00%
17	Preface	98	0.90%
18	Clue	97	0.89%
19	Answer to question: imply	95	0.87%
20	Hedge	82	0.75%
21	Uptake	49	0.45%
22	Check	48	0.44%
23	Confirm	44	0.40%
24	Greeting	40	0.37%
25	Request: action	33	0.30%
26	Answer to request: accept	19	0.17%
27	Answer to question: disclaim	15	0.14%
28	Apology	15	0.14%
29	Emphasizer	14	0.13%
30	Alert	13	0.12%

31	Smoother	13	0.12%
32	Answer to question: supply	12	0.11%
33	Appealer	10	0.09%
34	Empathy	10	0.09%
35	Reply to statement: object	10	0.09%
36	Staller	9	0.08%
37	Request: permission	6	0.05%
38	Disagree	5	0.05%
39	Query	5	0.05%
40	Express_wish	5	0.05%
41	Suggest	3	0.03%
42	Offer	3	0.03%

As seen from Table 9.1, the three most frequent speech acts in the data of job interviews are [filler] (26.13%), [reply to statement: acknowledge] (16.29%), and [statement: inform] (12.94%), each with more than 1,400 occurrences, followed by [answer to question: comply] (9.98%), [expand] (4.93%), [statement: opine] (4.73%), [justify] (4.37%), [question: identification] (2.40%), [question: polarity] (2.14%), [frame] (1.85%), [question: confirmation] (1.35%), [precursor] (1.32%), [monitor] (1.28%), [empathizer] (1.21%), [reply to statement: agree] (1.17%), and [thanks] (1.00%), ranging from 1,092 occurrences ([answer to question: comply]) to 110 occurrences ([thanks]). The frequencies of the remaining speech acts are lower, ranging from 98 occurrences (0.9%) ([preface]) to 3 occurrences (0.03%) ([suggest] and [offer]).

Out of these 42 speech acts, there are twenty-six primary acts (61.91%) (Table 9.2), six secondary acts (14.29%) (Table 9.3), and eight complementary acts (19.05%) (Table 9.4) from Stenström (1994), and two speech acts (4.76%) (Table 9.5) from Leech and Weisser (2003).

Table 9.2 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the twenty-six primary acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant.

Table 9.2. Communicative functions and frequencies of primary acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Signal receipt of information or signal that the second speaker accepts what the first speaker said as a valid contribution to the conversation	1,783	16.29%
2	Statement: inform	Provide or present neutral information	1,414	12.92%
3	Answer to question: comply	Answer a question directly and adequately	1,092	9.98%
4	Statement: opine	Give or express one's personal opinions, feelings and attitudes	518	4.73%
5	Question: identification	Ask for information or an answer identifying a wh-word	264	2.41%
6	Question: polarity	Ask for a yes / no question	234	2.14%
7	Question: confirmation	Ask for a confirming answer	148	1.35%
8	Reply to statement: agree	Signal agreement with what was just said, indicate that speaker B approves of what speaker A means	128	1.17%
9	Thanks	Express gratitude	110	1.16%
10	Answer to question: imply	Answer the question indirectly, give adequate information implicitly	95	0.87%
11	Check	Ask for repetition or clarification of what was said in the immediately preceding turn	48	0.44%
12	Confirm	Respond to a request for confirmation	44	0.40%
13	Greeting	Greet somebody or bid farewell	39	0.36%

14	Request: action	Ask somebody to do something	33	0.30%
15	Answer to request: accept	Agree to a request, a suggestion, etc.	19	0.17%
16	Answer to question: disclaim	Declare the answer is unknown; come up with an answer that is honest and straightforward but which does not answer the question and does not pretend to do so	15	0.14%
17	Apology	Express regret	15	0.14%
18	Alert	Call the addressee's attention, attract the other party's / parties' attention	13	0.12%
19	Smoother	Respond to an [apology]	13	0.12%
20	Answer to question: supply	Give inadequate information, does not really answer the question	12	0.11%
21	Reply to statement: object	Signal a different opinion	10	0.09%
22	Request: permission	Ask for a go-ahead	6	0.05%
23	Disagree	Express disagreement	5	0.05%
24	Query	Express doubt or strong surprise	5	0.05%
25	Suggest	Put forward an idea or a plan	3	0.03%
26	Offer	Present or submit something for acceptance or rejection	3	0.03%

Table 9.2 shows that the three most frequent primary speech acts in the job interviews are [reply to statement: acknowledge] (16.29%), [statement: inform] (12.92%), and [answer to question: comply] (9.98%), each with more than 1,000 occurrences, followed by [statement: opine] (4.73%), [question: identification] (2.41%), and [question: polarity] (2.14%). The frequencies of the remaining primary speech acts are lower, ranging from 148 occurrences (1.35%) ([question: confirmation]) to 3 occurrences (0.03%) ([suggest] and [offer]).

Table 9.3 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the six secondary acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant.

Table 9.3. Communicative functions and frequencies of secondary acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Expand	Give complementary information	540	4.93%
2	Justify	Defend what was said in the primary act, give the reason why	478	4.37%
3	Precursor	Precede a primary act and give information, link up what was said before, comment on something in the preceding dialogue	146	1.33%
4	Preface	Introduce a primary act, has a face-saving effect in that they prepare speaker B for what is going to happen next, make sure that certain pre-conditions hold before making the [following primary act]	98	0.90%
5	Clue	Follow a primary act and give a hint, provide additional information after a question, comment on the question	97	0.89%
6	Emphasizer	Underline what was said in the primary act	14	0.13%

In Table 9.3, the two most frequent secondary speech acts in the job interviews are [expand] (4.93%) and [justify] (4.37%), each with more than 470 occurrences, followed by [precursor] (1.33%). The frequencies of the remaining primary speech acts are lower, ranging from 98 occurrences (0.90%) ([preface]) to 14 occurrences (0.13%) ([emphasizer]).

Table 9.4 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the eight complementary acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant.

Table 9.4. Communicative functions and frequencies of complementary acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Filler	Fill a gap in the discourse	2,860	26.14%
2	Frame	Mark a boundary or the beginning of a new stage in the discourse	203	1.85%
3	Monitor	Help putting something right, make a new start or rephrase what the speaker was going to say in the middle of a turn as the listener cannot follow or is not convinced, make the speaker's point clear, steer what the speaker says	140	1.28%
4	Empathizer	Involve the listener, engage the listener and make her / him feel part of the conversation, the speaker intensifies the relationship with the listener, prompt listener feedback	133	1.21%
5	Hedge	Help avoiding commitment, modify and mitigate an utterance, help the speaker avoid going straight to the point, avoid being blunt, avoid appearing authoritative, and avoid committing him/herself	82	0.75%
6	Uptake	Accept what was said and lead on, acknowledge receipt of what the previous speaker said and evaluate it before going on	49	0.45%
7	Appealer	Invite feedback	10	0.09%
8	Staller	Play for time	9	0.08%

Table 9.4 shows that the most frequent complementary speech act in the job interviews is [filler] (26.14%) with more than 2,800 occurrences, followed by [frame] (1.85%), [monitor] (1.28%), and [empathizer] (1.21%). The frequencies of the remaining speech acts are lower, ranging from 82 occurrences (0.75%)

([hedge]) to 9 occurrences (0.08%) ([staller]).

Table 9.5 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant described in other studies (Tsui, 1994; Leech & Weisser, 2003)

Table 9.5. Communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant from other studies

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage	Source
1	Empathy	show concern for and empathize with the addressee such as ‘congratulate’, ‘well-wishing’, ‘welcome’, ‘condole’	10	0.09%	Tsui (1994)
2	Express_wish	Express a wish or desire	5	0.05%	Leech and Weisser (2003)

In Table 9.5, the two speech acts from other studies are [empathy] (0.09%) and [express\_wish] (0.05%).

In summary, the findings on the communicative function and frequency analysis of different categories of speech acts have shown that in the context of job interviews for the post of research assistant, the majority of speech acts are from Stenström’s (1994) primary acts (61.91%), which are used to realise moves on their own, followed by complementary acts (19.05%), which are used to accompany but rarely replaces primary acts and secondary acts (14.29%), which are used to accompany and sometimes replace primary acts. The remaining two acts are from other studies (4.76%). The quantitative results regarding different unique acts shown above respond to the first research question on the relative frequencies of occurrence of different speech acts in a genre.



#### 9.4 Discussion of findings

Analyses of the communicative function and frequencies of occurrence of different categories of speech acts show that reporting objective or neutral information and signalling receipt of information or signaling that the second speaker accepts what the first speaker said as a valid contribution to the conversation are relatively common practices in job interviews for the post of research assistant. Other than [filler] (26.13%), both [statement: inform] (12.94%) and [reply to statement: acknowledge] (16.29%) are within the two five most frequently occurring speech acts, with [reply to statement: acknowledge] being the second most frequent while [statement: inform] the third.

These speech acts are found in the practices and the structures of job interviews (cf. Macan, 2009), such as a three-dimensional model of interview structure consisting of the development of the interview based on a job analysis, the process of the interview, and the use of information gathered in the interview (Dipboye, Wooten, & Halverson, 2004). Regarding the process of the interviews, standardized or guided questions related to the job are used to select the best candidate for the position (Campion, Palmer, & Campion, 1997). Both the interviewer(s) and the interviewee in an interview are required to offer information related to the post and questions raised by the others. The formal realisations of lexicogrammatical features for informing, acknowledging, and answering are not restricted to markers identified in Stenström (1994) for the speech acts such as ‘actually’, ‘as a matter of fact’, ‘in fact’, ‘the fact is’, ‘the point is’, ‘you know’, ‘you see’ for [statement: inform] (p.90) or ‘ah’, ‘all right’, ‘I see’, ‘oh’, ‘OK’, ‘quite’, ‘really’, ‘right’, ‘goodness’, ‘gosh’, ‘oh dear’ for [reply to statement: acknowledge] (p.111). The following examples can illustrate the different linguistic realisations found in the sub-corpus to perform a particular speech act.

With regard to reporting objective or neutral information in a job interview, the linguistic realisations of [statement: inform] are not restricted to the markers mentioned before. In contrast, the language used can be a description of the project related to the post offered, as shown in Extract 9.1 (B114). In Extract 9.1, a1, the interviewer is describing the details of the project to the interviewee. Other than the fillers ‘er’ (lines 3, 13, 18) and ‘um’ (line 9), all other lines are

used to inform the interviewee about the sources of data, including questionnaires (line 4), focus group discussions (lines 5-6), student online postings (lines 7-8); the research focuses of the project, including student perception and preference of online self-assessment and peer assessment (lines 10-12, 14-17, 19-20); and the potential problems that may appear in the online assessment (lines 21-23). After the description, the interviewee a2 responds by acknowledging with 'yes' (line 24):

Extract 9.1: B114

Location: University meeting room

Participants: a1 / a2: female Hong Kong Chinese

1. a1: <SA063 [statement:inform] we would we we will we will have
2. >
3. <SA032 [filler] er >
4. <SA063 [statement:inform] questionnaires >
5. <SA063 [statement:inform] we will have focus group
6. discussions >
7. <SA063 [statement:inform] and we will analyse the postings
8. the students put on the web and also >
9. <SA032 [filler] um >
10. <SA063 [statement:inform] especially to look at how they
11. think assessment this this form of assessment collaborative
12. assessment >
13. <SA032 [filler] er >
14. <SA063 [statement:inform] how they perceive this form of
15. assessment >
16. <SA063 [statement:inform] whether they like it or not and
17. whether (.) this >
18. <SA032 [filler] er >
19. <SA063 [statement:inform] they perceive this form of
20. assessment fair and objective >
21. <SA063 [statement:inform] and the problems that they might
22. have when they when they had to assess others and themselves
23. online >
24. a2: <SA053 [reply to statement:acknowledge] \* yes >

With regard to answering the question, it is found that that the interviewees tend to give explicit and direct answers with adequate information to questions raised by the interviewers, which explains why [answer to question: comply] (9.98%) occurs more frequently than other types of response to question, namely [answer to question: imply] (0.87%), [answer to question: disclaim] (0.14%), and [answer to question: supply] (0.11%). The questions raised by the interviewers are identification questions (2.40%), polarity questions (2.14%), and confirmation questions (1.35%). According to Stenström (1994), identification questions ask for an answer identified by a wh-word; they are typically realised by an interrogative sentence with a wh-word. Polarity questions ask for a yes or no answer; they are typically realised by an utterance involving inverted word-order or do-periphrasis. Confirmation questions ask for a confirming answer; they are typically realised by a declarative utterance and a tag. Other than a tag, there are variants such as ‘alright’, ‘okay’, or ‘right’. Extract 9.2 (B071) is an example of giving an explicit and direct answer; that is, [answer to question: comply], to an identification question raised by an interviewer. In the interview, speaker B, the interviewer, asks an identification question (lines 7-8) to find out in which department the interviewee, speaker a, was working in the Hong Kong Government. Speaker a responds with an [answer to question: comply] by stating ‘the Home Affairs Department’ (lines 10-11):

Extract 9.2: B071

Location: University meeting room

Participants: B: Male English speaker                      a: female Hong Kong Chinese

1. B: <SA042 [precursor] WHEN >
2. a: <SA032 [filler] \* YEAH >
3. B: <SA042 [precursor] \*\* when you SAY that you're you
4.        WORKED for the hong kong GOVERNMENT >
5. a: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] \* YEAH >
6. B: <SA042 [precursor] \*\* as a liAison officer >
7.        <SA047 [question: identification] WHICH which dePARTment

8. WERE you in >
9. a: <SA032 [filler] UM >
10. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] the HOME affAIRS
11. dePARTment >
12. B: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] MM >

Extract 9.3 (B085) is an example of giving an [answer to question: comply] to a polarity question by the interviewer. Extract 9.3 takes place near the end of the interview. Speaker a1, the interviewer, asks two polarity questions (lines 2-5) to see if speaker a3, the interviewee, would like to ask any questions. Speaker a3 responds with a direct and adequate answer 'I don't think so' (line 7):

Extract 9.3: B085

Location: University meeting room

Participants: a1 / a3: female Hong Kong Chinese

1. a1: <SA033 [frame] oKAY (.)>
2. <SA048 [question: polarity] do you have MORE QUESTions
3. (.)>
4. <SA048 [question: polarity] do you have QUESTions \* to
5. ASK us >
6. a3: <SA032 [filler] \*\* UM >
7. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] I don't THINK so >
8. a1: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] oKAY >

Extract 9.4 (B081) is an example of giving an [answer to question: comply] to a confirmation question by the interviewer. In Extract 9.4, speaker a3, the interviewee, would like to confirm if the post offered will start after Christmas, so she asks speaker a1, the interviewer, a confirmation question (lines 4-9, 11-14). Speaker a1 responds with a number of direct and explicit answers (lines 10, 16-18), namely 'yeah' and 'that's right':

Extract 9.4: B081

Location: University meeting room

Participants: a3 / a1: female Hong Kong Chinese

1. a3: <SA032 [filler] Mhm >
2. <SA033 [frame] SO >
3. <SA032 [filler] er >
4. <SA046 [question: confirmation] THAT means IF i THAT
5. are you TRYing to say that the POST WILL WILL WILL >
6. <SA032 [filler] er >
7. <SA046 [question: confirmation] START >
8. <SA032 [filler] ER >
9. <SA046 [question: confirmation] AFter the CHRISTmas >
10. a1: <SA002 [answer to question:comply] YEAH >
11. a3: <SA032 [filler] \* YEAH >
12. <SA046 [question: confirmation] THAT means >
13. <SA032 [filler] okay >
14. <SA046 [question: confirmation] after CHRISTmas >
15. a1: <SA068 [unclassifiable] \*\* WE >
16. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] YEAH >
17. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] THAT'S right >
18. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] YEAH >

The speech act of [answer to question: comply] (9.98%) is followed by [expand] (4.93%) to give more detailed information or additional relevant information. Extract 9.5 (B077) is an example of a provision of additional information after answering the question raised by the interviewer. In Extract 9.5, speaker B, the interviewer, has asked speaker a3, the interviewee, about whether or not it is difficult to transcribe the conversational data collected in a local shopping mall (lines 1-2 and 4-5). After answering the question (lines 7-9), speaker a3 goes on giving additional information about how she can do better in the transcription task (lines 10-14), with the fillers 'er' (line 11) and 'um' (line 13) respectively.

Extract 9.5: B077

Location: University meeting room

Participants: a2 / a3: Female Hong Kong Chinese

B: Male English speaker

1. B: <SA042 [precursor] WHAT ab WHAT aBOUT the DAta that you
2. colLEcted from the FOreigners in FESTival WALK (.)>
3. a3: <SA032 [filler] \* MM >
4. B: <SA048 [question: polarity] \*\* was THAT also Very
5. difficult to tranSCRIBE >
6. a3: <SA032 [filler] ER (.)>
7. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] YES >
8. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] IT IT'S QUITE
9. DIFficult >
10. <SA029 [expand] BUT >
11. <SA032 [filler] ER >
12. <SA029 [expand] i THINK it is BETter IF I CAN >
13. <SA032 [filler] UM >
14. <SA029 [expand] HEAR for MAny TIMES >
15. a2: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] oKAY >
16. <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] YEAH >
17. <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] YEAH >
18. B: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] YEAH >

Extract 9.6 (B081) is an example of [expand] that gives additional information. In the extract, speaker B, the interviewer, is discussing a paper about the classroom interaction between teachers and students written by speaker a3, the interviewee. After speaker a3 has answered the question about the other findings in the study (lines 8-10), she gives more detailed information about 'the three levels', namely 'the primary' (line 11), 'the junior secondary' (line 12), and 'the senior secondary' (line 15):

Extract 9.6: B081

Location: University meeting room

Participants: B: Male English speaker a3: Female Hong Kong Chinese

1. B: <SA047 [question:identification] so WHAT else what
2. ELSE did you FIND in TERMS of the the
3. BEhaviour of STUdents and \*TEAchers >
4. a3: <SA032 [filler] \*\* UM >
5. <SA002 [answer to question:comply] WE real we REALly
6. feel THAT >
7. <SA032 [filler] um >
8. <SA002 [answer to question:comply] in FACT we're
9. TRYing to MAKE a compARison (.) aMONG the THREE
10. LLevels >
11. <SA029 [expand] the PRImary (.) >
12. <SA029 [expand] the JUNior SEcondary (.) >
13. <SA029 [expand] AND >
14. <SA032 [filler] er >
15. <SA029 [expand] and the SENior SEcondary (.) >
16. <SA032 [filler] UM >
17. <SA029 [expand] SETtings >

Extract 9.7 (B080) is another example of [expand] that gives additional information. In Extract 9.7, speaker a2, the interviewer, is asking speaker b, the interviewee, about his understanding of intonation patterns and the possibility for him to transcribe intonation patterns. Then speaker a2 asks a question to check if speaker b has received any training related to transcribing intonation patterns (lines 1-5). After answering the question (line 6), speaker b gives additional relevant information by saying that he has studied something related to intonation patterns in his university education (lines 8, 10, 12, and 14):

Extract 9.7: B080

Location: University meeting room

Participants: a2: female Hong Kong Chinese

b: male Hong Kong Chinese

1. a2: <SA046 [question: confirmation] BUT you HAVen't
2. undergone Any >
3. <SA032 [filler] ER >
4. <SA046 [question: confirmation] speCific TRAIning \* on
5. THIS parTicular >
6. b: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] \*\* TRAIning NO >
7. <SA068 [unclassifiable] ((inaudible)) >
8. <SA029 [expand] BUT >
9. <SA032 [filler] UM >
10. <SA029 [expand] during my first YEAR (.) >
11. a2: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] \* Uhuh >
12. b: <SA029 [expand] \*\* in the universiTY (.) >
13. a2: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] \* Uhuh >
14. b: <SA029 [expand] \*\* I STUdied that KIND of THING >
15. a2: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] oKAY >

In summary, the linguistic realisations of the most frequently occurring speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant are not necessarily restricted to a list of markers. Instead, a range of linguistic expressions are found to be used to achieve the communicative purpose and pragmatic goal.

### **9.5 Frequency analysis of speech acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee**

Out of 9,044 instances of speech acts found in the placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee, 34 unique speech acts are identified. They are listed in accordance with the descending frequency sort (Table 9.6).



Table 9.6. Frequency of unique speech acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee

No	Speech act	Frequency	Percentage
1	Filler	2,492	27.55%
2	Reply to statement: acknowledge	1,516	16.76%
3	Answer to question: comply	1,312	14.51%
4	Statement: inform	727	8.04%
5	Justify	529	5.85%
6	Statement: opine	413	4.57%
7	Question: identification	296	3.27%
8	Expand	281	3.11%
9	Precursor	246	2.72%
10	Answer to question: imply	191	2.11%
11	Question: polarity	170	1.88%
12	Frame	168	1.86%
13	Empathizer	91	1.01%
14	Monitor	87	0.96%
15	Hedge	76	0.84%
16	Question: confirmation	71	0.79%
17	Clue	71	0.79%
18	Starter	62	0.69%
19	Thanks	43	0.48%
20	Confirm	35	0.39%
21	Check	34	0.38%
22	Reply to statement: agree	24	0.27%
23	Uptake	23	0.25%
24	Answer to question: supply	21	0.23%
25	Appealer	14	0.15%
26	Request: action	11	0.12%
27	Answer to request: accept	7	0.08%
28	Empathy	6	0.07%
29	Alert	6	0.07%
30	Query	5	0.06%
31	Reply to statement: object	4	0.04%

32	Answer to question: disclaim	3	0.03%
33	Express_wish	3	0.03%
34	Apology	2	0.02%

As seen from Table 9.6, the three most frequent speech acts in the placement interviews are [fillers] (27.55%), [reply to statement: acknowledge] (16.76%), and [answer to question: comply] (14.51%), each with more than 1,300 occurrences, followed by [statement: inform] (8.04%), [justify] (5.85%), [statement: opine] (4.57%), [question: identification] (3.27%), [expand] (3.11%), [precursor] (2.72%), [answer to question: imply] (2.11%), [question: polarity] (1.88%), [frame] (1.86%), [empathizer] (1.01%). The frequencies of the remaining speech acts are lower, ranging from 87 occurrences (0.96%) ([monitor]) to 2 occurrences (0.02%) ([apology]).

Out of these 34 speech acts, there are twenty primary acts (58.82%) (Table 9.7), four secondary acts (11.77%) (Table 9.8), and eight complementary acts (23.53%) (Table 9.9), and two speech acts (5.88%) (Table 9.10) from Tsui (1994) and Leech and Weisser (2003).

Table 9.7 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the twenty primary acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee.

Table 9.7. Communicative functions and frequencies of primary acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Signal receipt of information or signal that the second speaker accepts what the first speaker said as a valid contribution to the conversation	1,516	16.76%
2	Answer to question: comply	Answer a question directly and adequately	1,312	14.51%
3	Statement: inform	Provide or present neutral information	727	8.04%

4	Statement: opine	Give or express one's personal opinions, feelings and attitudes	413	4.57%
5	Question: identification	Ask for information or an answer identifying a wh-word	296	3.27%
6	Answer to question: imply	Answer the question indirectly, give adequate information implicitly	191	2.11%
7	Question: polarity	Ask for a yes / no question	170	1.88%
8	Question: confirmation	Ask for a confirming answer	71	0.79%
9	Thanks	Express gratitude	43	0.48%
10	Confirm	Respond to a request for confirmation	35	0.39%
11	Check	Ask for repetition or clarification of what was said in the immediately preceding turn	34	0.38%
12	Reply to statement: agree	Signal agreement with what was just said, indicate that speaker B approves of what speaker A means	24	0.27%
13	Answer to question: supply	Give inadequate information, does not really answer the question	21	0.23%
14	Request: action	Ask somebody to do something	11	0.12%
15	Answer to request: accept	Agree to a request, a suggestion, etc.	7	0.08%
16	Alert	Call the addressee's attention, attract the other party's / parties' attention	6	0.07%
17	Query	Express doubt or strong surprise	5	0.06%
18	Reply to statement: object	Signal a different opinion	4	0.04%

19	Answer to question: disclaim	Declare the answer is unknown; come up with an answer that is honest and straightforward but which does not answer the question and does not pretend to do so	3	0.03%
20	Apology	Express regret	2	0.02%

Table 9.7 shows that the three most frequent primary speech acts in the placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee are [reply to statement: acknowledge] (16.76%), [answer to question: comply] (14.51%), and [statement: inform] (8.04%), each with more than 700 occurrences, followed by [statement: opine] (4.57%), [question: identification] (3.27%), [answer to question: imply] (2.11%), and [question: polarity] (1.88%). The frequencies of the remaining primary speech acts are lower, ranging from 71 occurrences (0.79%) ([question: confirmation]) to 2 occurrences (0.02%) ([apology]).

Table 9.8 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the four secondary acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee.

Table 9.8. Communicative function and frequencies of secondary acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Justify	Defend what was said in the primary act, give the reason why	529	5.85%
2	Expand	Give complementary information	281	3.11%
3	Precursor	Precede a primary act and give information, link up what was said before, comment on something in the preceding dialogue	246	2.72%
4	Clue	Follow a primary act and give a hint, provide additional information after a question, comment on the question	71	0.79%

In Table 9.8, the most frequent secondary speech acts are [justify] (5.85%) with over 500 occurrences, followed by [expand] (3.11%), [precursor] (2.72%), and

[clue] (0.79%).

Table 9.9 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of the eight complementary acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee.

Table 9.9. Communicative functions and frequencies of complementary acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage
1	Filler	Fill a gap in the discourse	2,492	27.55%
2	Frame	Mark a boundary or the beginning of a new stage in the discourse	168	1.86%
3	Empathizer	Involve the listener, engage the listener and make her / him feel part of the conversation, the speaker intensifies the relationship with the listener, prompt listener feedback	91	1.01%
4	Monitor	Help putting something right, make a new start or rephrase what the speaker was going to say in the middle of a turn as the listener cannot follow or is not convinced, make the speaker's point clear, steer what the speaker says	87	0.96%
5	Hedge	Help avoiding commitment, modify and mitigate an utterance, help the speaker avoid going straight to the point, avoid being blunt, avoid appearing authoritative, and avoid committing him/herself	76	0.84%
6	Uptake	Accept what was said and lead on, acknowledge receipt of what the previous speaker said and evaluate it before going on	23	0.69%
7	Starter	Helps getting started	62	0.25%
8	Appealer	Invite feedback	14	0.15%

Table 9.9 shows that the most frequent complementary speech act is [filler] (27.55%) with more than 2,400 occurrences in the placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee, followed by [frame] (1.86%). The frequencies of the remaining complementary speech acts are lower, ranging from 91 occurrences (1.10%) ([empathizer]) to 14 occurrences (0.15%) ([appealer]).

Table 9.10 shows the communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee in other studies (Tsui, 1994; Leech & Weisser, 2003).

Table 9.10. Communicative functions and frequencies of speech acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee from other studies

No	Speech act	Communicative function	Frequency	Percentage	Source
1	Empathy	Show concern for and empathize with the addressee such as ‘congratulate’, ‘well-wishing’, ‘welcome’, ‘condole’	6	0.07%	Tsui (1994)
2	Express_wish	Express a wish or a desire,	3	0.03%	Leech and Weisser, 2003

In Table 9.10, the two speech acts from other studies are [empathy] (0.07%) and [express\_wish] (0.03%)

In summary, the findings on the communicative function and frequency analysis of different categories of speech acts have shown that in the context of placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee, the majority of speech acts are from Stenström’s (1994) primary acts (58.82%), which are used to realise moves on their own, followed by complementary acts (11.77%), which are used to accompany but rarely replaces primary acts and secondary acts (23.53%), which are used to accompany and sometimes replace primary acts. The remaining act is from other studies (5.88%). The quantitative results regarding different unique acts shown above respond to the first research question on the relative

frequencies of occurrence of different speech acts in a genre.

## 9.6 Discussion of findings

Analyses of the communicative function and frequencies of occurrence of different categories of speech acts indicate that reporting objective or neutral information and signalling receipt of information or signaling that the second speaker accepts what the first speaker said as a valid contribution to the conversation are relatively common practices in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee. Both [statement: inform] (8.04%) and [reply to statement: acknowledge] (16.76%) are within the top five most frequently occurring speech acts, with [statement: inform] being the fourth while [reply to statement: acknowledge] the second. [Filler] (27.55%), which is a common act in conversation, is in the first place on the list. Moreover, [answer to question: comply] (14.51%) and [justify] (5.85%) are in the third and fifth places respectively, indicating that giving a direct and an adequate answer to a question as well as defending what was said in the primary act with proper reason(s) are also common in the placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee.

In the placement interviews, a minimal receipt of information – [reply to statement: acknowledge] (16.76%) and a long and exhaustive answer – [answer to question: comply] (14.51%) are common responding acts to questioning and stating. Questions are used to ask for information or confirmation and expected to be answered. Statements, including presentation of neutral information ([inform]) and an expression of personal opinions, feelings and attitudes ([opine]), are used to supply information and expected to be acknowledged. Based on the discussion regarding the lexicogrammatical features in job interview before, the linguistic realisations of speech acts are also not restricted to the markers identified in Stenström (1994). The following examples can illustrate the different linguistic realisations to perform a particular speech act.

With regard to acknowledging a minimal receipt of information without showing whether or not a speaker approves or disapproves of what another speaker has heard, [reply to statement: acknowledge], while not necessarily restricted to markers such as ‘all right’ or ‘I see’, can be an acknowledgement to neutral information, an answer, or an opinion. In Extract 9.8 (B063), [reply to

statement: acknowledge] is used to acknowledge neutral information. In the extract, the interview has almost come to the end. Speaker a1, the interviewer, tells speaker a2, the interviewee, what to do after the interview. First, she asks the interviewee to go outside (lines 1-5). Second, she tells the interviewee to wait for a while outside (line 8). Third, she says that she will decide where to place the interviewee (lines 9-10 and 12-13). In response, the interviewee acknowledges that she has received the information with ‘mhm’ (line 6) and ‘mm’ (line 14):

Extract 9.8: B063

Location: Hotel meeting room

Participants: a1 / a2: female Hong Kong Chinese

1. a1: <SA063 [statement: inform] what I will do now is >
2. <SA032 [filler] um (.) >
3. <SA063 [statement: inform] I will later on I will >
4. <SA032 [filler] er >
5. <SA063 [statement: inform] ask you to go back outside >
6. a2: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] mhm >
7. a1: <SA032 [filler] er >
8. <SA063 [statement: inform] wait for me for a moment >
9. <SA063 [statement: inform] I would like to try to decide (.)
10. >
11. <SA032 [filler] um >
12. <SA063 [statement: inform] where I would like to place you 13. >
14. a2: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] mm >
15. a1: <SA063 [statement: inform] today (.) >

In Extract 9.9 (B062), [reply to statement: acknowledge] is used to acknowledge an answer given by the interlocutor. In Extract 9.9, speaker a1, the interviewer, asks an identification question about the feeling of speaker a2, the interviewee, after she is assigned to an interview at the Peninsula Hotel (lines 1-6). The interviewee gives a direct and explicit answer (lines 7-18). The interviewer signals her acknowledgement of the information with ‘mhm’ (lines 10 and 13) in between the interview’s response as well as at the end of the



response (line 19):

Extract 9.9: B062

Location: Hotel meeting room

Participants: a1 / a2: female Hong Kong Chinese

1. a1: <SA047 [question: identification] I'd like to ask you >
2. <SA032 [filler] er >
3. <SA047 [question: identification] when you are assigned to
4. the Peninsula to have an interview at the Peninsula >
5. <SA032 [filler] er >
6. <SA047 [question: identification] how did you feel >
7. a2: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] I feel >
8. <SA032 [filler] um (.) >
9. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] very happy >
10. a1: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] \* mhm >
11. a2: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] \*\* and I feel that I have
12. to be well prepared >
13. a1: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] \* mhm >
14. a2: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] \*\* for the interview and
15. I also found some >
16. <SA032 [filler] um >
17. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] materials that are
18. related to the company's background >
19. a1: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] mhm >

In Extract 9.10 (B068), [reply to statement: acknowledge] is used to acknowledge an opinion by the interlocutor, as shown in Extract (B068). Regarding [statement: opine], the response does not have to be an agreement or an objection; it can also be an acknowledgement (Stenström, 1994). In the extract, speaker A, the interviewer, offers her opinions and advice on the career development of speaker a, the interviewee (lines 1-4, 6-9, and 12-25) with fillers 'er' (lines 2, 13, 15, 17, 21, 23) and 'you know' (line 8). Speaker a responds with 'mhm' (lines 5, 10-11, 26) without disclosing whether or not she agrees or disagrees to what she heard:

Extract 9.10: B068

Location: Hotel meeting room

Participants: A: female British a: female Hong Kong Chinese

1. A: <SA064 [statement: opine] \*\* so I think >
2. <SA032 [filler] er >
3. <SA064 [statement: opine] you can even get a better luggage
4. of preparation >
5. a: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] \* mhm >
6. A: <SA064 [statement: opine] \*\* for your future career if you
7. cover as many >
8. <SA032 [filler] you know >
9. <SA064 [statement: opine] different aspects >
10. a: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] \* mhm >
11. <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] mhm >
12. A: <SA064 [statement: opine] \*\* as many different >
13. <SA032 [filler] er >
14. <SA064 [statement: opine] departments you can you can >
15. <SA032 [filler] er >
16. <SA064 [statement: opine] cover >
17. <SA032 [filler] er >
18. <SA064 [statement: opine] especially at the beginning of your
19. career >
20. <SA064 [statement: opine] I think it's >
21. <SA032 [filler] er >
22. <SA064 [statement: opine] sometimes also interesting >
23. <SA032 [filler] er >
24. <SA064 [statement: opine] to focus not only on one specific
25. department >
26. a: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] \* mhm >

In summary, similar to the other genres discussed, a range of linguistic expressions are found in the speech acts of placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee.

## 9.7 Frequency analysis of co-occurring speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant

In job interviews for the post of research assistant, out of a total of 4,316 instances of two co-occurring speech acts, there are 38 unique centred speech acts and 172 total centred speech acts (Appendix 13). The top ten two co-occurring speech acts are as follows (Table 9.11):

Table 9.11. Top ten two co-occurring speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant

Centred speech act	Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Statement: inform	885	20.51
Filler	Answer to question: comply	524	12.14
Filler	Expand	311	7.21
Filler	Justify	299	6.93
Filler	Statement: opine	184	4.26
Filler	Question: identification	126	2.92
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	120	2.78
Filler	Question: polarity	108	2.50
Filler	Precursor	96	2.22
Filler	Frame	91	2.11

As seen from Table 9.11, the two most frequent two co-occurring speech acts are ‘[filler] / [statement: inform]’ (20.51%) as well as ‘[filler] / [answer to question: comply]’ (12.14%), followed by ‘[filler] / [expand]’ (7.21%) as well as ‘[filler] / [justify]’ (6.93%). The frequencies of the remaining two co-occurring speech acts are lower, ranging from 184 occurrences (4.26%) (‘[filler] / [statement: opine]’) to 2 occurrences (0.05%) (e.g. ‘[uptake] / [appealer]’).

Fillers are very commonly used by speakers when they inform (20.51%), answer explicitly and adequately (12.14%), expand (7.21%), justify (6.93%), opine (4.26%), etc.; making it one of the most frequently co-occurring speech acts. However, other adjacency pairs with a preferred response are also found in the search for two co-occurring speech acts, such as ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’ (1.18%), ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement:

acknowledge]’ (0.83%), and ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: agree]’ (0.67%) whereas many others are not, such as ‘[statement: inform] / [frame]’ (1.58%), ‘[reply to statement: acknowledge] / [expand]’ (1.14%), and ‘[statement: inform] / [empathizer]’ (0.76%).

Regarding three co-occurring speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant, out of a total of 209 instances of three co-occurring speech acts, there are 61 double origins (Appendix 14). Table 9.12 shows the frequency distribution of the top then three co-occurring speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant:

Table 9.12. Top ten three co-occurring speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant

Double origin		Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Frame	Statement: inform	26	12.44
Filler	Empathizer	Statement: inform	12	5.74
Filler	Frame	Precursor	9	4.31
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Statement: inform	8	3.83
Filler	Statement: inform	Statement: opine	6	2.87
Statement: inform	Monitor	Filler	6	2.87
Filler	Frame	Question: polarity	5	2.39
Filler	Expand	Reply to statement: acknowledge	5	2.39
Filler	Hedge	Justify	5	2.39
Statement: opine	Reply to statement: agree	Filler	5	2.39

As seen in Table 9.12, the three most frequent co-occurring speech acts are ‘[filler] / [frame] / [statement: inform]’ (12.44%); ‘[filler] / [empathizer] / [statement: inform]’ (5.74%); and ‘[filler] / [frame] / [precursor]’ (4.31%). They are followed by ‘[filler] / [reply to statement: acknowledge] / [statement: inform]’ (3.83%); ‘[filler] / [statement: inform] / [statement: opine]’ (2.87%); and ‘[statement: inform] / [monitor] / [filler]’ (2.87). The frequencies of the

remaining three co-occurring speech acts are lower, ranging from 5 occurrences (2.39%) (e.g. ‘[filler] / [frame] / [question: polarity]’) to 2 occurrences (0.96%) (e.g. ‘[uptake] / [confirm] / [filler]’).

### 9.8 Discussion of findings

Few adjacency pairs with a preferred next action are found in job interviews for the post of research assistant are, for instance, ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’ and ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: agree]’. Extract 9.11 (B071) shows ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’. In a job interview at a hotel meeting room, speaker B, the interviewer, is talking about the job requirements of the research assistant (lines 1-2 and 4-6). Speaker a, the interviewee, signals the receipt of information with an acknowledgement (lines 3 and 7):

Extract 9.11: B071

Location: Hotel meeting room

Participants: B: Male English speaker      a: Female Hong Kong Chinese

1. B: <SA063 [statement: inform] we we would ask you to obviously
2. >
3. a: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] \* mm >
4. B: <SA063 [statement: inform] \*\* familiarize yourself with some
5. of the literature relating to learning style and approaches
6. to learning and strategy use >
7. a: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] mm >

The other one is ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’, as shown in Extract 9.12 (B072). In the extract, the interviewer, speaker A1, and the interviewee, speaker a, are talking about the research project in which the interviewee will be involved if the interview is successful. Speaker A1 expresses her opinions that if speaker a can join the project, then she will know more about how people communicate with each other at the workplace (lines 1-2, 4, 6). Speaker a responds with an acknowledgement (lines 3 and 5):

Extract 9.12: B072

Location: Hotel meeting room

Participants: A1: Female native English speaker

a: Female Hong Kong Chinese

1. A1: <SA064 [statement: opine] it's so you would you would come
2. to the project >
3. a: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] mhm >
4. A1: <SA064 [statement: opine] knowing about how people >
5. a: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] \* yes >
6. A1: <SA064 [statement: opine] \*\* have to have to communicate >

Regarding three co-occurring speech acts, though it is possible to generate a list of associated speech acts, the associations may not show clearly the distinctive collocational patterns in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee, as illustrated with the following example.

Figure 9.1 is an example of the first most frequent three co-occurring speech acts – ‘[filler] / [frame] / [statement: inform]’ with a double origin ‘[filler] / [frame]’:

```

1 <SA033 [frame] so > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA063 [statement:inform] if you
2 [filler] UM > <SA033 [frame] and SO > <SA032 [filler] erm > <SA063 [statement:inform] that
3 oKAY > a1: <SA033 [frame] okay THEN > <SA032 [filler] ERM (.) > <SA063
4 [frame] WELL > <SA033 [frame] ACTually > <SA032 [filler] well > <SA032 [filler] ER > <SA063
5 B: <SA033 [frame] OKAY > <SA032 [filler] UM > <SA063 [statement:inform] i
6 THEN BE > <SA033 [frame] WELL > <SA032 [filler] ER > <SA063 [statement:inform]
7 I > <SA033 [frame] WELL > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA032 [filler] WELL > <SA063
8 is the BEST way > <SA033 [frame] SO > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform] so
9 Mhm > B: <SA033 [frame] and SO > <SA032 [filler] UM > <SA063 [statement:inform]
10 <SA032 [filler] ER > <SA033 [frame] SO > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA063 [statement:inform]
11 as WELL > <SA033 [frame] SO > <SA032 [filler] ERM > <SA063 [statement:inform]
12 [filler] oKAY > a1: <SA033 [frame] SO > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA063 [statement:inform]
13 their reports and so on > <SA033 [frame] so > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA063 [statement:inform] the
14 RIGHT > a: <SA033 [frame] SO > <SA032 [filler] UM > <SA063 [statement:inform] I
15 really problematic > <SA033 [frame] so > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA063
16 COMpany AND then > <SA032 [filler] ER > <SA033 [frame] SO > <SA063
17 teenaGERS AND the AND then > <SA032 [filler] ER > <SA033 [frame] SO > <SA063
18 [reply to statement:acknowledge] * mm > B: <SA032 [filler] ** er > <SA033 [frame] so > <SA063
19 two SETS of questionNAIRE AND then > <SA032 [filler] ER > <SA033 [frame] SO > <SA063
20 <SA063 [statement:inform] SO you have to > <SA032 [filler] ER > <SA033 [frame] WELL > <SA032
21 <SA063 [statement:inform] and THEN > <SA032 [filler] ER > <SA033 [frame] SO > <SA032
22 er > <SA063 [statement:inform] SUpervisor > <SA032 [filler] ER > <SA033 [frame] WELL >
23 <SA063 [statement:inform] ** AND > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA033 [frame] WELL > <SA063
24 er > <SA063 [statement:inform] so I > <SA032 [filler] ER > <SA033 [frame] SO >

```

Figure 9.1. The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant

The example illustrates that there are three sequences of the association, which are '[frame]→[filler]→[statement: inform]' (lines 1-15), '[filler]→[frame]→[statement: inform]' (lines 16-19), and '[statement: inform]→[filler]→[frame]' (lines 20-24). To further understand the context in which these speech acts are realised, Extract 9.13 from line 13 in the lower box is shown as follows. In Extract 9.13, speaker a1, the interviewer, is telling the interviewee about the research project in which she would be involved if the application is successful. In the course of informing the detail, speaker a1 uses a frame (line 1) before a filler (line 2) to mark the boundary of new information about such details (lines 3-5, 7-8), with another filler in between (line 6):

Extract 9.13: B114

Location: University meeting room

Participant: a1: Female Hong Kong Chinese

1. a1: <SA033 [frame] so >
2. <SA032 [filler] um >
3. <SA063 [statement:inform] the project this the sub-project
4. you will be working working for is called online collaborative
5. assessment to enhance teaching and learning >
6. <SA032 [filler] right >
7. <SA063 [statement:inform] as you can see there is a list
8. of sub-projects (.) >

### **9.9 Frequency analysis of co-occurring speech acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee**

In placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee, out of a total of 4,541 instances of two co-occurring speech acts, there are 34 unique centred speech acts and 139 total centred speech acts (Appendix 15). Table 9.13 shows the frequency distribution of top ten two co-occurring speech acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee:

Table 9.13. Top ten two co-occurring speech acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee

Centred speech act	Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Answer to question: comply	895	19.71
Filler	Justify	454	10.00
Filler	Statement: inform	411	9.05
Filler	Expand	234	5.15
Filler	Question: identification	216	4.76
Filler	Statement: opine	200	4.40
Filler	Precursor	181	3.99
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Answer to question: comply	140	3.08
Filler	Answer to question: imply	118	2.60
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Statement: inform	110	2.42

As seen in Table 9.13, the three most frequent two co-occurring speech acts are ‘[filler] / [answer to question: comply]’ (19.71%), ‘[filler] / [justify]’ (10.00%), as well as ‘[filler] / [statement: inform]’ (9.05%), followed by ‘[filler] / [expand]’ (5.15%), ‘[filler] / [question: identification]’ (4.76%), ‘[filler] / [statement: opine]’ (4.40%), ‘[filler] / [precursor]’ (3.99%), as well as ‘[reply to statement: acknowledge] / [answer to question: comply]’ (3.08%). The frequencies of the remaining two co-occurring speech acts are lower, ranging from 118 occurrences (2.60%) (‘[filler] / [answer to question: imply]’) to 2 occurrences (0.04%) (e.g. ‘[uptake] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’).

Fillers are very commonly used by speakers when they answer explicitly and adequately (19.71%), justify (10.00%), inform (9.05%), expand (5.15%), ask for an answer identifying with a wh-word (4.76%), opine (4.40%), etc., thus making it one of the most frequently co-occurring speech acts. However, other adjacency pairs with a preferred response are also found in the search for two co-occurring speech acts.

Regarding three co-occurring speech acts, out of a total of 288 instances of three co-occurring speech acts, there are 72 double origins (Appendix 16). Table



9.14 shows the frequency distribution of the top ten three co-occurring speech acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee.

Table 9.14. Top ten three co-occurring speech acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee

Double origin		Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Hedge	18	6.25
Filler	Statement: opine	Frame	16	5.56
Filler	Precursor	Frame	15	5.21
Filler	Statement: inform	Frame	15	5.21
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Statement: inform	10	3.47
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Confirm	8	2.78
Filler	Expand	Hedge	8	2.78
Filler	Precursor	Empathizer	7	2.43
Filler	Question: identification	Statement: opine	7	2.43
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Expand	7	2.43

As seen in Table 9.14, the three most frequent three co-occurring speech acts are ‘[filler] / [answer to question: comply] / [hedge]’ (6.25%); ‘[filler] / [statement: opine] / [frame]’ (5.56%); ‘[filler] / [precursor] / [frame]’ (5.21%); and ‘[filler] / [statement: inform] / [frame]’ (5.21%). The frequency of the remaining three co-occurring speech acts is lower, ranging from 10 occurrences (3.47%) (‘[filler] / [reply to statement: acknowledge] / [statement: inform]’) to 2 occurrences (0.69%) (e.g. ‘[empathizer] / [monitor] / [filler]’).

### 9.10 Discussion of findings

Few adjacency pairs with a preferred next action in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee are found, such as ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to

statement: acknowledge]' and '[check] / [confirm]'. Extract 9.14 (B062) shows '[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]'. In the placement interview at a hotel meeting room, the interviewer, speaker B, first gives the interviewee, speaker a, basic information about the procedure of the interview (lines 2-3, 5-8, and 10). Speaker a signals the receipt of information with an acknowledge (lines 4 and 9):

Extract 9.14: B062

Location: Hotel meeting room

Participants: B: Male native a: Female Hong Kong Chinese

1. B: <SA032 [filler] er >
2. <SA063 [statement: inform] I would like to first start by
3. introducing myself >
4. a: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] mm >
5. B: <SA063 [statement: inform] and the (.) bit of history of the
6. division I >
7. <SA032 [filler] sort of >
8. <SA063 [statement: inform] take care of >
9. a: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] mm >
10. B: <SA063 [statement:inform] within the hotel (.) >

The other one is '[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]', as shown in Extract 9.15 (B061). In the interview, the interviewee (speaker a1) and the interviewer (speaker a2) are talking about the interviewee's previous practicum experience at the restaurants inside a local university campus. After a provision of details about the practicum, speaker a1 expresses her positive views on the arrangement (lines 1-2 and 4). Speaker a2, in turn, responds with an acknowledgement (line 5):

Extract 9.15: B061

Location: Hotel meeting room

Participants: a1 / a2: Female Hong Kong Chinese

1. a1: <SA064 [statement: opine] I also think that this subject is
2. quite >
3. <SA032 [filler] um >
4. <SA064 [statement: opine] interesting and practical >
5. a2: <SA053 [reply to statement: acknowledge] \* mhm >

Regarding three co-occurring speech acts, though it is possible to generate a list of associated speech acts, the associations may not show clearly the distinctive collocational patterns in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee, as illustrated with the following example.

Figure 9.2 is the first most frequent three co-occurring speech acts – ‘[filler] / [answer to question: comply] / [hedge]’ with as double origin ‘[filler] / [answer to question: comply]’:

```
1 <SA002 [answer to question:comply] rooms (.) > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA035 [hedge] I think (.) >
2 Airport > <SA035 [hedge] and I I think that > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA032 [filler] um er > <SA002
3 of question > <SA035 [hedge] but I think > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA002 [answer to question:comply]
4 [filler] um > <SA035 [hedge] I think (.) > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA002 [answer to question:comply]
5 area > <SA035 [hedge] I think (.) > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA002 [answer to question:comply] I learned
6 * mhm > a: <SA035 [hedge] ** I think > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA002 [answer to question:comply]
7 departments but > <SA035 [hedge] I think > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA002 [answer to question:comply]
8 <SA032 [filler] um > <SA035 [hedge] I think > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA002 [answer to question:comply]
9 so > <SA035 [hedge] I think > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA002 [answer to question:comply]
10 ((laugh)) > <SA035 [hedge] I think > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA002 [answer to question:comply]
11 and > <SA035 [hedge] I think > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA002 [answer to question:comply]
12 give given to them > <SA035 [hedge] I think > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA002 [answer to question:comply]
13 (.) do that > a2: <SA035 [hedge] I think > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA002 [answer to question:comply]
14 <SA032 [filler] um > <SA035 [hedge] I think > <SA032 [filler] um > <SA002 [answer to question:comply]
15 ** Hong Kong and > <SA035 [hedge] I think > <SA032 [filler] um (.) > <SA002 [answer to
16 rooms division > a1: <SA035 [hedge] I think > <SA032 [filler] um (.) > <SA002 [answer to
17 [question:identification] spend more time > a: <SA032 [filler] em > <SA035 [hedge] I think > <SA002
18 if they satisfy with my service > <SA032 [filler] er > <SA035 [hedge] I think > <SA002
```

Figure 9.2. The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts in job interviews for the post of hotel trainee

The example illustrates that there are three sequences of the speech act association, which are ‘[answer to question: comply]→[filler]→[hedge]’ (line 1), ‘[hedge]→[filler]→[answer to question: comply]’ (lines 2-16), and

‘[filler]→[hedge]→[answer to question: comply]’ (lines 1-5). Extract 9.16 from line 1 is used to understand the context of the speech act association. In Extract 9.16, speaker a is the interviewee. She is answering a question raised by the interviewer about which specific section at the food and beverage department she would like to work with during the practicum. Speaker a gives an adequate answer first (line 1), followed by a filler (line 2) and a hedge (line 3):

Extract 9.16: B062

Location: Hotel meeting room

Participants: a: Female Hong Kong Chinese

a: <SA002 [answer to question: comply] rooms (.) >  
<SA032 [filler] um >  
<SA035 [hedge] I think (.) >

Extract 9.17 is another example of the same three speech acts but with a different sequence from line 5 – ‘[hedge] / [filler] / [answer to question: comply]’. The interviewee (speaker a2) is answering a question raised the interviewer about her biggest achievement at the university. Speaker a2 is giving a detailed answer to the question about what she has learned from the course. In her lengthy response, she uses a hedge (line 1), followed by a filler (line 2) and an adequate answer (line 3):

Extract 9.17: B063

Location: Hotel meeting room

Participants: a2: Female Hong Kong Chinese

1. a2: <SA035 [hedge] I think (.) >  
2. <SA032 [filler] um >  
3. <SA002 [answer to question: comply] I learned >

It is observed that the identification of different associations of the three speech acts can at least show the relationship among them as performed by different speakers in job interviews for the post of research assistant and placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee, though the collocational patterns may not be as discursively representative as expected

## **9.11 Lexicogrammatical realisation and pattern**

### 9.11.1 Job interviews for the post of research assistant

In the sub-corpus of job interviews for the post of research assistant, apart from [filler] (26.13%), [reply to statement: acknowledge] is the most frequent speech act (16.29%). In a spoken interaction, there can be five hierarchical levels, namely the transaction, the exchange, the turn, the move, and the act (Stenström, 1994). An exchange, the smallest interactive unit consistently minimally of two turns produced by two different speakers that involves a negotiation of a single piece of information. After an initiation with a [statement: inform] to supply information or a [statement: opine] to express opinion in an exchange, it is expected to be responded to by an acknowledgement – a [reply to statement: acknowledge], a [reply to statement: agree], or a [reply to statement: object] (Stenström, 1994). Among these three speech acts, [reply to statement: acknowledge] is the most economical way and a useful device to allow the speaker to respond without disclosing whether s/he approves or disapproves of what s/he heard. Based on London-Lund Spoken Corpus, Stenström (1994) identifies 11 acknowledge markers, namely ‘ah’, ‘all right’, ‘I see’, ‘oh’, ‘ok (okay)’, ‘quite’, ‘really’, ‘right’, ‘goodness’, ‘gosh’, and ‘oh dear’. In this study, the 11 acknowledge markers were used to interrogate 1,783 instances of [reply to statement: acknowledge] in the job interviews for the post of research assistant. The results are shown in Table 9.15.

Table 9.15. Acknowledge markers: frequency of occurrence

<b>Job interviews for the post of research assistant</b>			
<b>No</b>	<b>Acknowledge marker (Stenström, 1994)</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	<i>ok (okay)</i>	239	13.40
2	<i>right</i>	111	6.23
3	<i>I see (I see + ... / ... I see)</i>	38	2.13
4	<i>oh</i>	14	0.79
5	<i>all right (alright)</i>	11	0.62
6	<i>ah</i>	2	0.11
7	<i>really</i>	1	0.06
8	<i>quite</i>	0	0.00
9	<i>goodness</i>	0	0.00
10	<i>gosh</i>	0	0.00
11	<i>oh dear</i>	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>416</b>	<b>23.33</b>

Table 9.15 shows that out of the 11 acknowledge markers, 7 are found in the job interviews for the post of research assistant, namely *okay*, *right*, *I see*, *oh*, *alright*, *ah* and *really*. *Okay* (13.40%) is the most frequently occurring acknowledge marker, followed by *right* (6.23%) and *I see* (2.13%). Other markers are less frequent, ranging from *oh* (N=14; 0.79%) to *really* (0.06%).

Other than these, there are other markers, which are used to signal a minimal receipt of information with showing the speaker's approval or disapproval of what is just heard, omitted from those 11 markers. Table 9.16 shows these other markers from the sub-corpus.

Table 9.16. Other acknowledge markers for signalling a minimal receipt of information

<b>Job interviews for the post of research assistant</b>			
<b>No</b>	<b>Acknowledge marker</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	<i>mhm</i>	396	22.21
2	<i>mm</i>	342	19.18
3	<i>right</i>	111	6.23
4	<i>yes</i>	72	4.04
5	<i>uh huh / huh / uhuh</i>	65	3.65
6	<i>er</i>	12	0.67
7	<i>no</i>	8	0.45
8	<i>oh + ...</i>	6	0.34
9	<i>sure</i>	6	0.34
10	<i>sure</i>	6	0.34
11	<i>erm</i>	5	0.28
12	<i>ahaa</i>	5	0.28
13	<i>um</i>	3	0.17
14	<i>I know</i>	3	0.17
15	<i>not at all</i>	2	0.11
16	<i>good</i>	2	0.11
17	<i>of course</i>	2	0.11
18	<i>yea</i>	1	0.06
19	<i>ahhhh</i>	1	0.06
20	<i>exactly</i>	1	0.06
<b>Total</b>		<b>1049</b>	<b>58.83</b>

Among these markers, *mhm* (22.21%) is the most frequently occurring acknowledge marker, followed by *mm* (19.18%) and *right* (6.23%). The other markers are less frequent, ranging from *yes* (4.04%) to *yea / ahhhh / exactly* (N=1; 0.06%).

When combined, the total number of these acknowledge markers is 1,465, which accounts for 82.16% of all instances of [reply to statement: acknowledge] in job interviews for the post of research assistant. The remaining 318 instances

that are excluded from these acknowledge markers, accounting for 17.84% of all instances of [reply to statement: acknowledge], are lexical phrases for expressing acknowledgement. The following examples extracted from the placement interview sub-corpus show the phrases of expressing acknowledgement other than employing acknowledge markers (Table 9.17).

Table 9.17. Examples of lexical phrases for expressing acknowledgement

Phrase	<p>pleasure talk</p> <p>ten months</p> <p>an assignment</p> <p>fifteen minutes</p> <p>early next week</p>
--------	---

These examples are both content and context-specific, which basically are repetition of what the previous speaker has said in the interviews.

#### 9.11.2 Placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee

In the sub-corpus of placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee, apart from [filler] (27.55%), [reply to statement: acknowledge] is the most frequent speech act (16.76%). The same 11 acknowledge markers from Stenström (1994) were used to interrogate these 1,516 instances of [reply to statement: acknowledge] in the placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee. The results are shown in Table 9.18.



Table 9.18. Acknowledge markers: frequency of occurrence

<b>Placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee</b>			
<b>No</b>	<b>Acknowledge marker (Stenström, 1994)</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	<i>ok (okay)</i>	127	8.38
2	<i>I see ( ... I see)</i>	54	3.56
3	<i>oh (oh ...)</i>	31	2.04
4	<i>right</i>	21	1.39
5	<i>all right (alright)</i>	13	0.86
6	<i>ah (ah ...)</i>	5	0.33
7	<i>really</i>	1	0.07
8	<i>quite</i>	0	0.00
9	<i>goodness</i>	0	0.00
10	<i>gosh</i>	0	0.00
11	<i>oh dear</i>	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>252</b>	<b>16.62</b>

Table 9.18 shows that out of 11 acknowledge markers, 7 are found in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee, namely *okay*, *I see*, *oh*, *right*, *alright* and *really*. *Okay* (8.38%) is the most frequently occurring acknowledge marker, followed by *I see* (3.56%) and *oh* (2.04%). Other markers are less frequent, ranging from *right* (1.39%) to *really* (0.07%).

Other than these, there are other markers, which are used to signal a minimal receipt of information with showing the speaker's approval or disapproval of what is just heard, omitted from those 11 markers. Table 9.19 shows these other markers from the sub-corpus.

Table 9.19. Other acknowledge markers for signalling a minimal receipt of information

<b>Placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee</b>			
<b>No</b>	<b>Acknowledge marker</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	<i>mhm</i>	549	36.21
2	<i>mm</i>	510	33.64
3	<i>yes</i>	42	2.77
4	<i>yeah</i>	41	2.70
5	<i>um</i>	22	1.45
6	<i>sure</i>	8	0.53
7	<i>great</i>	3	0.20
<b>Total</b>		<b>1175</b>	<b>77.51</b>

Among these markers, *mhm* (36.21%) is the most frequently occurring acknowledge marker, followed by *mm* (33.64%). The other markers are less frequent, ranging from *yes* (2.77%) to *great* (0.20%).

When combined, the total number of these acknowledge markers is 1,427, which account for 94.13% of all instances of [reply to statement: acknowledge] in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee. The remaining 89 instances that are excluded from these acknowledge markers, accounting for 5.87% of all instances of [reply to statement: acknowledge] are lexical phrases. The following examples show the phrases of expressing acknowledgement other than employing acknowledge markers (Table 9.20).

Table 9.20. Examples of lexical phrases for expressing acknowledgement

<b>Phrase</b>	
	around sixteen weeks
	full time
	still second second year student
	some basic knowledge
	five subjects

It is found that in both job and placement interviews, the use of acknowledge markers to signal receipt of information is not limited to commonly used markers but also phrases that, as shown before, repeat what the previous speaker has said.

## **9.12 Conclusion**

In response to the first research question, the quantitative and qualitative analysis of a variety of the job and placement interviews have shown that, discourse participants orient to transactional goals through the frequent use of questions and answers that are for eliciting facts and opinions (Sections 9.4 and 9.6). Most answers by the interviewees to the information questions that elicit facts and opinions are presented with relevant and sufficient information. Seldom do the interviewees evade answering the questions raised in the interviews. Another feature is the frequent use of acknowledgement by both interviewers and interviewees in response to facts and opinions. The lexicogrammatical realisations range from a wide variety of markers to phrases that are closely related to the context of interaction.

In response to the second research question, the findings regarding two co-occurring speech acts have shown that ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’, ‘statement: opine] / [reply to statement: agree]’, ‘[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]’, and ‘[check] / [confirm]’ are meaningful associated speech acts (Sections 9.8 and 9.10). The extracts illustrate that the interactions have fulfilled the transactional goals in a meeting with these adjacency pairs with a preferred next action. A number of two co-occurring speech acts with [filler], however, do not have a clear meaningful association (see Section 4.8). The most frequent three co-occurring speech acts are ‘[filler] / [frame] / [statement: inform]’ with three sequences in job interview and ‘[filler] / [answer to question: comply] / [hedge]’ with three sequences in placement interviews. As discussed, they also do not have a meaningful association with a small number of instances.

In response to the third research question, the linguistics and discursive patterns identified in the context of job and placement interviews provide evidence of the practices developed within these communities (Section 9.11).

Different acknowledge markers and lexical phrases are found in the data to show acknowledge. A number of these markers are newly found in the data, such as 'mhm', 'mm', and 'ok'. Given the power difference and special role relationships between the interviewers and the interviewees in such workplace interactions, the findings obtained from the analysis contribute to confirming that interviews exhibit the distinctive characteristics of an institutional discourse regarding goals, role relationships and activities of the participants.

## Chapter Ten

### Discussion of findings

#### 10.1 Introduction

In this chapter, an overall summary of the present study will first be presented (10.2), followed by a comparative analysis of the findings, based on the discussion regarding the first three research questions in Chapters 4 to 9, across the six genres, namely meeting, telephone and conference call, informal office talk, service encounter (airport check-in counter and information counter/hotel concierge [and retail outlet]), Q&A session, and interview (job interview for research assistant/placement interview for hotel trainee), in the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic) (10.3).

#### 10.2 Summary

In Chapter One, the brief history of speech act studies and the development of information and communicative technology are provided, which leads to the goals and the research questions of the study. The goals are twofold: (1) To manually annotate the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic); (2) To describe and analyse the speech acts in the annotated business corpus in order to explore the use and meaning and patterns of speech acts in different genres and contexts of interaction in business communication. The four questions are: (1) What are the relative frequencies of occurrence of different speech acts in different spoken genres in business communication? (2) Are there any predictable patterns of speech acts in different genres or contexts of interaction in business communication? (3) What are the characteristic lexicogrammatical patterns or linguistic realisations of different speech acts in different spoken genres in business communication? (4) In what ways do the business genre-specific communicative purposes and speaker identities, roles and responsibilities account for the findings? (5) What are the possible implications for ESP teaching and learning?

Following the introductory chapter, Chapter Two discusses previous studies of speech acts, focusing on particular aspects that are relevant to the study. It begins by addressing notions related to speech act theory with reference to Austin and Searle, including performatives, acts (locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary), felicity conditions, speech acts classification. This is followed by a review of different types of corpus annotation, including task-oriented and non-task-oriented. A number of annotation schemes is then introduced, namely Stenström (1994), Tsui (1994), Stolcke et al. (2000), and Leech and Weisser (2003). These schemes are important references for the taxonomy used to annotate the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic).

Chapter Three provides a description of the spoken business sub-corpora and outlines the research procedure in the present study. The business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic) is selected for its diverse prosodic mark-ups and diverse contextual variables. The properties of the speech act taxonomy used for annotation in the present study and the analytical procedure with the aid of *SpeechActConc* is described and explained.

The subsequent Chapters Four to Nine focus on the first three research questions to investigate the frequencies of occurrence and communicative functions of the four categories of unique speech acts, the two and three co-occurring speech act sequences, as well as lexicogrammatical realisations and patterns in the six genres from the business sub-corpus, namely, meetings, telephone and conference calls, informal office talks, service encounters (airport and hotel), Q&A sessions, and interviews (job and placement).

The findings that emerge from the analysis of the annotated corpus data and discussion of the overall frequencies of different categories of speech acts and the most frequent primary speech act for lexicogrammatical patterns analysis from Chapters Four to Nine are summarised (Table 10.1).

Table 10.1. A summary of the frequencies of speech acts and lexicogrammatical patterns in the six genres

Genre Speech act	Meeting	Telephone and conference call	Informal office talk	Service encounter		Q&A session	Interview	
				Airport	Hotel		Job	Placement
Unique acts	48 (100%)	36 (100%)	38 (100%)	40 (100%)	38 (100%)	36 (100%)	42 (100%)	34 (100%)
Primary acts	28 (58.33%)	21 (58.33%)	22 (57.89%)	25 (62.50%)	24 (63.16%)	22 (61.11%)	26 (61.91%)	20 (58.82%)
Secondary acts	6 (12.50%)	6 (16.67%)	6 (15.78%)	5 (12.50%)	6 (15.79%)	6 (16.67%)	6 (14.29%)	4 (11.77%)
Complementary acts	9 (18.75%)	8 (22.22%)	8 (21.05%)	8 (20.00%)	7 (18.42%)	8 (22.22%)	8 (19.05%)	8 (23.53%)
Other acts	5 (10.42%)	1 (2.78%)	2 (5.26%)	2 (5.00%)	1 (2.63%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (4.76%)	2 (5.88%)
2 co-occurring acts (unique centred acts)	3,749 (27)	972 (19)	2,640 (17)	819 (18)	669 (20)	2,127 (21)	4,316 (38)	4,541 (34)
3 co-occurring acts (double origin)	293 (85)	62 (23)	169 (47)	59 (26)	50 (24)	160 (42)	209 (61)	288 (72)
the most frequent primary speech act for lexicogrammatical patterns	Statement: inform	Statement: inform	Statement: opine	Statement: inform	Statement: inform	Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Reply to statement: acknowledge

As shown in Table 10.1, the number of unique speech acts among the six genres range from 34 (placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee) to 48 (meetings), in which a number of frequently occurring speech acts appear in all genres, such as [filler], [statement: inform], or [justify]. However, some acts from the taxonomy of 69 speech acts are not found in the business sub-corpus, for instance, [threat] (which explicitly state that the speaker will cause undesirable consequences to the addressee if he/she refuses to comply) or [booster] (which assesses what the speaker himself says).

The unique speech acts of each genre are divided into 4 categories: For primary acts, the range is from 20 (placement interviews) to 28 (meetings). For secondary acts, the range is from 4 (placement interviews) to 7 (informal office talks). For complementary acts, the range is from 7 (hotel concierges [and retail outlets]) to 9 (meetings). For other speech acts, the range is from 1 (hotel concierges [and retail outlets] and telephone and conference calls) to 5 (meetings).

The percentages that show the distribution of the four categories of speech acts in each genre are found to be similar to each other, except for Q&A sessions in which there is not any act from other studies. For primary acts, the percentages range from 56.41% (informal office talks) to 63.16% (hotel concierges [and retail outlets]). For secondary acts, the range is from 11.77% (placement interviews) to 17.95% (informal office talks).

For complementary acts, the range is from 18.42% (hotel concierges [and retail outlets]) to 23.53% (placement interviews). For other acts, except for Q&A sessions (0%), the percentages range from 2.63% (hotel concierges [and retail outlets]) to 8.33% (meetings). Despite the differences in the contexts and in the total number of words (ranging from 7,533 (telephone and conference calls) to 80,443 (interviews)), the percentages show that the dispersion of different acts among the six genres is in general similar to each other.

As discussed before, in all the six genres the linguistic realisations of the most frequently occurring speech acts are not restricted to a list of markers. Regarding the realisation of a particular communicative function through a speech act, there are a range of linguistic expressions that could be used to achieve the goal. Moreover, these frequent speech acts, such as [statement:



inform] or [reply to statement: acknowledge] are not common speech acts studied as compared with apology, refusal, request, or thanking (See 2.5.8).

The number of two co-occurring speech acts among the six genres is more diverse, ranging from 669 (hotel concierges [and retail outlets]) to 4,541 (placement interviews), with unique speech acts ranging from 17 (informal office talks) to 38 (job interviews). For three co-occurring speech acts, its total number is less than that of two co-occurring speech acts, the range is from 34 (placement interviews) to 293 (meetings), with double origins ranging from 23 (telephone and conference calls) to 288 (placement interviews). It is observed that the identification of different associations of the two or three speech acts can show the relationship among them as performed by different speakers in different genres, though the collocational patterns may not be as discursively representative as expected.

For lexicogrammatical patterns of the most frequent primary speech act, [statement: inform] is dominant among all genres, followed by [reply to statement: acknowledge] in interviews and [statement: opine] in informal office. The lexicogrammatical realisations and patterns of use of frequently occurring speech acts are not limited to markers but expressed in phrases and clauses (and sentences) that are genre-specific and context-specific. This is in line with some recent empirical studies on speech acts (e.g. Özdemir & Rezvani, 2010; Shariati & Chamani, 2010; Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Al-Sobh, 2013).

As illustrated in previous chapters, there is a contrast to the previous empirical studies on speech acts (2.6) that tend to focus more on intercultural or cross-cultural comparison of speech acts such as apology (e.g. Chamani & Zareipur, 2013), refusal (e.g. Chang, 2009), request (e.g. Zhang, 2013), and thanking (e.g. Wong, 2010) with reference to perceived data mainly elicited from interlocutors through role play (e.g. Abdolrezapour & Eslami-Rasekh, 2012), DCT (e.g. Pishghadam & Zarei, 2011; Wei, 2012), questionnaire (e.g. Tabar, 2012), and interview (e.g. Fauzi et al., 2014).

### 10.3 Comparison

In the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic), the six genres (meetings, telephone and conference calls, informal office talks, service encounters, Q&A sessions, and interviews) covers a variety of contexts of interaction in business communication with a wide range of topics related to the particular context (See 4.2, 5.2, 6.2, 7.2, 8.2 and 9.2). The following discussion is to compare the similarities and differences in the discussed topics, the frequencies of unique speech acts, and the lexicogrammatical patterns of the most frequent speech act in the six genres.

Regarding the topics, a summary recapturing the main features is described as follows: First, in the six hotel management meetings, the topics are mainly focused on the daily operation of different departments at the hotel. In the four university research project progress meetings, the topics are mainly related to the particular research projects being discussed. In the one export company general meeting, the topics include export procedures and details about quotations. In general, it is found that most topics are related to the purpose or goal for the meeting except for some topics in project progress meetings that are more personal. Second, in telephone and conference calls, the topics of the calls and the contexts in which the calls were taken place include flight ticket enquiry, business confidentiality, information technology for the topics and university, bank, and airlines for the contexts.

Third, in informal office talks, the topics are restricted mainly to personal life and working life regarding particular contexts at workplace or in restaurant. Fourth, in service encounters, most of the topics covered at the service encounters are concerned with normal procedures at airport check-in counters and information counters as well as the hotel concierges [and retail outlets], including flight ticket information, baggage check-in, hotel check-in and check-out. Fifth, in Q&A sessions, the topics are related to different themes of presentations and company annual report announcements. Sixth, in interviews, despite the difference in the goal of the two kinds of interviews, the topics are divided into two types, namely interviewer-oriented and interviewee-oriented. Given the diverse topics involved, the interactions occur in various kinds of workplace, such as office, and non-working, such as restaurant, settings have a

wide range of core transactional and/or relational goals that are realised with the employment of particular speech acts (e.g. Nielsen, 2009; Fay, 2011). The different institutional roles or discourse identities at workplace interactions also affect the use of speech acts (e.g. Markaki & Mondada, 2012). Though the present study is not focused on genre analysis, the institutional goals and roles are found to be important as they have direct impact on the speech acts selection and lexical choice. These specific communicative purposes in each genre of the business discourse define the distinctive features of each genre and characterise the employment of particular speech acts and lexical choice (e.g. Koester, 2006; Rampton, 2007; Djordjilovic, 2012; Mak & Chui, 2013).

In meetings, all interactions involve two parties – the chairperson of the meeting and the members of the meeting. Regarding the management meetings at a hotel and the general meeting at an export company, the interactions involve a chairperson and other staff members, such as the person-in-charge of a department. The roles of the chairperson in a company require them to run an effective meeting that sticks to the agenda with fair report and open discussion of matters as well as appropriate and necessary decision making. The roles of the other staff members require them to report and discuss the items on the agenda. Regarding the research project progress meetings at a university, the interactions involve research project supervisors and research assistants. The roles of the supervisor in a university require them to check and monitor the progress of the research project and related administrative work. The roles of the research assistants require them to report the progress of the tasks assigned and other administrative work. The tasks completed mainly consist of transactional goals such as daily operation of different departments at a hotel, export procedures and details about quotations. The specific communicative purposes as well as speaker identities, roles and responsibilities results in 48 speech acts, out of which 26 are shared among other genres while 22 are distinctive to meetings (See Tables 10.2 and 10.3).

In telephone and conference calls, all interactions involve two parties – either the service provider and the service receiver or the chairperson of the meeting and the members of the meeting. The roles of the service providers require them to ask questions for providing relevant and necessary services. The

roles of the service receivers require them to give relevant responses and answers to the requests and questions raised by the service providers. Regarding interactions in the telephone calls, the two types of speakers are staff members of the airlines and a passenger. Regarding interactions in the conference calls, the two types of speakers are the chairperson and other staff members. The tasks completed mainly consist of transactional goals such as flight ticket enquiry, business confidentiality, and information technology. The specific communicative purposes as well as speaker identities, roles and responsibilities results in 36 speech acts, out of which 26 are shared among other genres while 10 are distinctive to service encounters (See Tables 10.2 and 10.3).

In informal office talks, all interactions involve colleagues who know each other at workplace. As the nature of informal office talk is similar to casual conversation or everyday chat (e.g. Slade & Gardner, 1993; de Silva Joyce & Slade, 2000), there are no particular roles or responsibilities assigned to the colleagues. Regarding interactions in informal office talks, the tasks completed consist of both transactional goals, such as customer complaints and corporate culture, and interpersonal goals, such as vacation and retirement. The specific communicative purposes as well as speaker identities results in 38 speech acts, out of which 26 are shared among other genres while 12 are distinctive to informal office talks (See Tables 10.2 and 10.3).

In service encounters at check-in counters and the airport information counters as well as at hotel concierges [and retail outlets], all interactions involve two parties – the service provider and the service receiver. Regarding interactions in the airport, the two types of speakers are typically a staff member/staff members of the airport/an airline and a passenger/passengers. Regarding interactions at the hotel, the two types of speakers involved are a guest or guests and a concierge staff member or a hotel salesperson. The tasks completed mainly consist of transactional goals such as flight ticket information, baggage check-in, hotel check-in and check-out. The specific communicative purposes as well as speaker identities, roles and responsibilities results in 42 speech acts, out of which 26 are shared among other genres while 16 are distinctive to service encounters (See Tables 10.2 and 10.3).

In Q&A sessions after the announcements of annual reports of banks or listed companies and during the presentations or talks organised by companies or professional organisations. All interactions involve two parties – the presenter and the audience. The roles of the presenters require them to answer questions raised by the audience, including reporters in announcements or participants in presentations or talks. The roles of the audience require them to ask questions clarifying the issues or seeking further information related to the announcements or the presentations. Regarding interactions after the announcements, the two types of speakers involve a team, including the chief executive officer, representing the company as well as journalists and financial analysts. Regarding interactions during the presentations, the two types of speakers involve the speakers of the presentations or talks and the participants. The tasks completed consist of transactional goals such as investment strategy, cost control, language policy, and fashion. The specific communicative purposes as well as speaker identities, roles and responsibilities results in 36 speech acts, out of which 26 are shared among other genres while 10 are distinctive to Q&A sessions (See Tables 10.2 and 10.3).

In job interviews for the post of research assistant and placement interviews for the post in a hotel training programme, all interactions involve two parties - interviewee and interviewer. Regarding interactions at both job and placement interviews, the two types of speakers are the candidates and the academic staff members of a particular department in the university. The roles of the interviewers require them to ask different types of questions to elicit relevant information from the interviewees. The roles of the interviewees require them to answer questions raised by the interviewers and provide additional information when necessary. The tasks completed mainly consist of transactional goals such as job duties, working experience, personal details, and future career plans. The specific communicative purposes as well as speaker identities, roles and responsibilities results in 44 speech acts, out of which 26 are shared among other genres while 18 are distinctive to interviews (See Tables 10.2 and 10.3).

An overview of the speech acts that are common to all six genres shows that out of the 69 speech acts, 51 are found across the six genres. Among these 51 acts, 26 occur in all genres (Table 10.2).

Table 10.2. Common speech acts in the six genres (in alphabetical order)

1. [alert]	14. [hedge]
2. [answer to question: comply]	15. [justify]
3. [answer to question: imply]	16. [precursor]
4. [answer to question: supply]	17. [question: confirmation]
5. [apology]	18. [question: identification]
6. [appealer]	19. [question: polarity]
7. [check]	20. [reply to statement: acknowledge]
8. [clue]	21. [reply to statement: agree]
9. [confirm]	22. [request: action]
10. [empathizer]	23. [statement: inform]
11. [expand]	24. [statement: opine]
12. [filler]	25. [thanks]
13. [frame]	26. [uptake]

Regardless of the differences in their frequencies, these 26 speech acts could be referred to as the common acts of the six genres in the business sub-corpus in HKCSE (prosodic). The explanation for the use of these speech acts could be due to the fact that the speakers are trying to fulfill both transactional and relational goals in a variety of local contexts of interaction in the local workplace discourse.

Apart from these common acts that can be identified across the six genres, there are distinctive, though not all exclusive, acts found in each genre (Table 10.3). These distinctive acts help distinguish the attributes of each genre from the others. Among the 22 acts in meetings, five are exclusive, namely [answer to request: evade], [correct], [evaluate], [instruction], and [invite]. In service encounters and interviews, there are 16 and 18 acts respectively. There are 10 acts are in telephone and conference calls, informal office talks, and Q&A

Table 10.3. Distinctive acts in the six genres (in alphabetical order)

Meeting	Telephone and conference call	Informal office talk	Service encounter	Q&A session	Interview
1.[answer to question: disclaim] 2.[answer to request: accept] 3.[answer to question: evade] 4.[correct] 5.[correct-self] 6.[disagree] 7.[empathy] 8.[emphasizer] 9.[evaluate] 10.[express_wish] 11.[greeting] 12.[instruction] 13.[invite] 14.[monitor] 15.[preface] 16.[query] 17.[react] 18.[reply to statement: object] 19.[request: permission] 20.[staller] 21.[starter] 22.[suggest]	1.[answer to question: disclaim] 2.[answer to request: accept] 3.[correct-self] 3.[empathy] 4.[emphasizer] 5.[greeting] 6.[monitor] 7.[preface] 8.[query] 9.[reply to statement: object] 10.[staller]	1.[answer to question: disclaim] 2.[correct-self] 3.[empathy] 4.[emphasizer] 5.[greeting] 6.[monitor] 7.[preface] 8.[query] 9.[react] 10.[reply to statement: object] 11.[staller] 12.[suggest]	1.[answer to question: evade] 2.[answer to request: accept] 3.[answer to request: reject] 4.[disagree] 5.[empathy] 6.[emphasizer] 7.[greeting] 8.[monitor] 9.[offer] 10.[preface] 11.[query] 12.[reply to statement: object] 13.[request: permission] 14.[smoother] 15.[staller] 16.[suggest]	1.[answer to question: disclaim] 2.[answer to question: evade] 3.[answer to request: accept] 4.[answer to request: reject] 5.[emphasizer] 6.[greeting] 7.[monitor] 8.[preface] 9.[request: permission] 10.[staller]	1.[answer to question: disclaim] 2.[answer to question: evade] 3.[answer to request: accept] 4.[disagree] 5.[empathy] 6.[emphasizer] 7.[express_wish] 8.[greeting] 9.[monitor] 10.[offer] 11.[preface] 12.[query] 13.[reply to statement: object] 14.[request: permission] 15.[smoother] 16.[staller] 17.[starter] 18.[suggest]

sessions. These distinctive acts, together with the 26 acts common to all six genres, are characteristics of each genre in the business sub-corpus in the HKCSE (prosodic).

In summary, the speech acts in the six genres are used to realise the transactional and relational goals in different speech act events. The 48 speech acts, including five exclusive acts, in meetings are performed to deal with topics such as hotel room occupancy rate, hotel room booking arrangement, hotel promotion programme, facility maintenance, the progress of the assigned research tasks, data collection issue, transcription of spoken data, research assistant employment, and export procedures and details about quotations (See 4.2). The 36 speech acts in telephone and conference calls are performed to deal with topics including flight ticket enquiry in an airline context, business confidentiality in a banking context, and information technology in a university context (See 5.2). The 38 speech acts in informal office talks are performed to deal with topics in personal life including vacation, education, daily life, retirement planning and topics in working life such as customer complaints, staff recruitment, career development, corporate culture (See 6.2)

The 42 speech acts in service encounters are performed to deal with topics including ticket information, baggage check-in, airport tax, boarding details, hotel room booking, flight ticket information, validation of the guest identity, settlement of the final bills, chatting between the guest and the staff about the present stay (See 7.2). The 36 speech acts in Q&A sessions are performed to deal with topics including intercultural communication, language policy, hairstyle, fashion, mutual fund, cost control, liquidity management, and investment strategy (See 8.2). The 44 speech acts in interviews are performed to deal with topics including include information about the research project, job duties of a research assistant, expectations towards the trainee, a brief introduction of the hotel operation, personal details, academic background, reasons for applying the post, past working experience, opinions on various issues related to the post, future career plans, preference of and reasons for selecting a particular department (See 9.2).

Regarding the frequency of unique speech acts, given the wide variety of topics in each genre and the distinctive communicative goal or purpose across the



six genres in the business sub-corpus; it is found that the top five most frequently occurring speech acts are similar across the six genres (Table 10.4). Apart from [filler], [statement: inform] is also found in the six genres in the business sub-corpus. A common second-pair part of an adjacency – [reply to statement: acknowledge] – is found in all genres except Q&A session. As shown in previous research studies, [reply to statement: acknowledge] is regarded as a preferred second-pair part to [statement: inform] or [statement: opine].

[Statement: opine] is the next common speech act found in all genres except service encounters at airport and interviews for research assistant and hotel trainees. [Expand] is also found in all genres except meetings, telephone and conference calls, Q&A sessions, and interview for hotel trainee. [Justify] occurs in both informal talks and placement interviews. [Question: identification] and [answer to question: comply] are found in service encounters. The former is at airport alone while the latter is at both airport and hotel. [Preface] is found in Q&A sessions alone. In terms of frequency, the order of the top five most frequently occurring speech acts across the six genres is [filler] and [statement inform] (100%), [reply to statement: acknowledge] (87.50%), [statement: opine] (62.5%), [expand] (50%), [question: identification] and [justify] (25%), as well as [answer to question: comply] and [preface] (12.5%).

The quantitative analysis of a variety of speech acts across the genres has explored the features of the communicative functions or purposes shared among the genres. It may be suggested that in the six different genres of the business communication, these nine speech acts are dominant features that could further be examined to look into their relationships in terms of sequences in each genre. As shown in the corpus data, speech acts are occurred in sequences accomplished by one speaker and subsequent speakers. And the occurrence of subsequent speech act(s) should be in close relation with the previous one(s).

Among these nine acts, it is common to make a suggestion that [statement: inform] is followed by a [reply to statement: acknowledge] when there are two speakers, or followed by a [expand] when the speaker would like to give extra information about what he/she has just informed. Other suggestions would be [statement opine] and [justify] in which the speaker would like to support his or her viewpoint with a reason, or [question: identification] and [answer to question:

Table 10.4. Summary of the top five most frequently occurring speech acts

Genre Frequency of speech act	Meeting	Telephone and conference call	Informal office talk	Service encounter		Q&A session	Interview	
				Airport	Hotel		Job	Placement
1 <sup>st</sup>	Statement: inform	Filler	Statement: opine	Filler	Statement: inform	Filler	Filler	Filler
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Filler	Statement: inform	Statement: inform	Statement: inform	Filler	Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Reply to statement: acknowledge
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Statement: opine	Statement: inform	Answer to question: comply
4 <sup>th</sup>	Statement: opine	Statement: opine	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Answer to question: comply	Answer to question: comply	Expand	Answer to question: comply	Statement: inform
5 <sup>th</sup>	Expand	Expand	Justify	Question: identification	Statement: opine	Preface	Expand	Justify

comply] in which a wh- or information question is followed by an adequate and relevant answer. As may be expected, this correlation can be more or less acceptable in the sense of a conversational obligation and each speech act can indeed be interpreted with regard to the neighbouring speech acts.

Structurally speaking, these above suggestions may have captured some meaningful features of a sequence of speech acts in a conversational context in which a particular speech act is linked up with another speech act. However, more attention should be focused on the sequential patterns as found automatically by *SpeechActConc* as it has revealed lots of unexpected or unconventional sequences that make it difficult to come up with a plausible explanation for the relationship between two or even three co-occurring speech acts.

Nevertheless, the qualitative-based corpus findings can offer a more specific description of the genre in terms of specific discourse traits, which can be reflected through frequent speech acts. The evidences from the top five most frequent speech acts show that, regardless of the differences in transactional and relational goals, there are both distinctive and common speech acts across the genres. It is indicated that a number of factors, including the discursive relationship resulting from the generic goal and the institutional relationship, will influence the linguistic choice and discursive strategies in each genre. The choice and strategies will be reflected in the specific use of speech acts. Given the differences in each genre, these most frequently occurring speech acts across the six genres, which are, in alphabetical order, [answer to question: comply], [expand], [filler], [justify], [preface], [question: identification], [reply to statement: acknowledge], [statement: inform], [statement: opine] could be regarded as the featured acts that characterize the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic).

Apart from the analysis of the more frequent speech acts, the less frequent speech acts, in particular the speech acts found exclusively in a genre, can also be used to identify some of the specific linguistic features in different workplace genres and to highlight difference among them. These less frequent and exclusive speech acts can be used to uncover the special and particular constraints of institutional or workplace discourse (Koester, 2010). They can also be useful in

enabling the discovery of specific lexicogrammatical realisations or patterns for the respective communicative functions, which may be different from one workplace context to another and limited on the basis of the discursive roles of the participants in different local contexts of interaction. Among the top five least frequent speech acts across the genres (Table 10.5), two exclusive speech acts in meetings are found, which are [answer to request: evade] (N=3) and [invite] (N=2).

Regarding the lexicogrammatical patterns of the most frequent speech act, it is found that institutional or workplace discourse has distinctive lexicogrammatical items (cf. McCarthy & Handford, 2004; as cited in Koester, 2006) as illustrated in previous chapters. As has been discussed in Chapter Two, most of the speech acts, with the exception of [statement: opine] and [disagree], investigated in the previous empirical studies, including apology, refusal, request, and thanking, are different from the frequently occurring speech acts found in this study, such as [statement: inform], [reply to statement: acknowledge], [expand], and [justify].

Close observation of the linguistic realisations of the above speech acts highlights the language of business communication is far more complex than the employment of suitable markers. This emphasizes that the realisations depend on considering contextual or discursive factors (cf. Cheng, 2009; Cheng & Cheng, 2010). Essentially, successful business communication depends on the individual speaker's contribution to the construction of effective interaction (Poncici, 2004). It could also be confirmed that linguistic realisations of speech acts in business communication are not static or undifferentiated but full of dynamics and variability that are both content- and context specific (Poncici, 2004). The relatively extensive use of phrases and clauses to realise a particular speech act indicates that further empirical studies of speech act may focus more on the lexicogrammatical realisations or patterns of both most and least frequently occurring speech acts in the context of business communication.

Table 10.5. Summary of the top five least frequently occurring speech acts

Genre Frequency of speech act	Meeting	Telephone and conference call	Informal office talk	Service encounter		Q&A session	Interview	
				Airport	Hotel		Job	Placement
1 <sup>st</sup>	Invite	Reply to statement: object	Correct-self	Answer to question: evade	Suggest	Answer to request: reject	Offer	Apology
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Correct-self	Answer to question: supply	Meta- comment	Answer to request: reject	Empathizer	Answer to question: supply	Suggest	Express_ wish
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Answer to question: evade	Query	Answer to question: supply	Express_ wish	Reply to statement: object	Request: permission	Express_ wish	Answer to question: disclaim
4 <sup>th</sup>	Request: permission	Staller	Request: action	Monitor	Request: permission	Answer to question: evade	Query	Reply to statement: object
5 <sup>th</sup>	React	Answer to question: disclaim	Answer to question: disclaim	Reply to statement: agree	Disagree	Confirm	Disagree	Query

## 10.4 Conclusion

Corpus linguistics allows researchers to get access to rich descriptions of the use of speech acts in business communication. Accompanied with the computer program *SpeechActConc*, the complex issues related to the quantitative analysis of the speech acts in different genres and the qualitative analysis of the linguistic features associated with different situations can be studied to depict how the use of linguistic features for a particular speech act varies across different genres. The combination of quantitative corpus methods with qualitative analysis such as discourse analysis is found to be able to provide a richer and more differentiated account of workplace interactions.

Despite a great variability that makes a generalization of the findings across the different genres difficult, there are a number of traits that are common to all, including the common speech acts found in each genre and the list of the more frequent speech acts. The differences observed can probably be explained in a number of ways, for example, the features of a particular genre or the power differences between speakers. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that the different genres in the business sub-corpus vary in line with pre-determined and specific communicative goals that distinguish each of them from the others. The variation is manifest in the particular speech acts other than the 25 common acts mentioned before and the diverse lexicogrammatical realisations of each speech act in the genres as demonstrated in the previous discussion.

## Chapter Eleven

### Conclusion

#### 11.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the study by referring back to the first three research questions put forward in Chapter One (11.2). The fourth question regarding implications for language teaching are then discussed (11.3), followed by a description of the contributions (11.4) and the limitations (11.5) of the present study. The areas for future research will be recommended (11.6).

#### 11.2 Research questions revisited

This study undertakes a lengthy manual speech acts annotation of selected genres or discourse types in the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic) and an automatic quantitative analysis of the frequencies and co-occurrences of speech acts with the assistance of a specially designed computer program *SpeechActConc*. The present study has compared both quantitatively and the qualitatively the phenomena regarding the use of speech acts among the six genres. The investigation is conducted by focusing on similarities and differences in the features of the use of speech act to achieve specific transactional and relational goals in the different genres of local business communication. It shows how the uses of different speech acts contribute to the accomplishment of shared goals at the discourse and reflect the nature of a particular genre. Co-occurrences of speech acts from different genres uncovers the multifaceted natures of the business communication by providing a richer interpretation of the relationship between the genres and the speech acts as well as the distinctive features of the speech act realisation.

It is shown that in the literature there has been a lack of investigation in the speech act annotation and feature of a variety of business genres based on real-world, naturally occurring data with detailed prosodic transcription collected in Hong Kong. All the data collected is from audio recordings and prosodic transcriptions of the business sub-corpus in the HKCSE (prosodic). Given that the data used for this study is obtained from a range of physical contexts,

attention needs to be given to the differences in topics and the distinctiveness of the discourse type when considering the speech acts employed by the interactants.

Regarding the first three research questions posted at the beginning of this study, the data shows the following:

#### 11.2.1 What are the relative frequencies of occurrence of different speech acts in different spoken genres in business communication?

The quantitative analysis of the speech acts indicates that similar speech acts are shared among different genres in business communication. The relative frequencies of occurrence of different speech acts in different genres are obtained with *SpeechActConc* and discussed in Chapters 4 to 9. As shown in Table 10.2, a summary of the top five most frequently occurring speech acts across the six genres, similar speech acts are found. In the top five speech act list, both [filler] and [statement: inform] are found in all six genres, followed by [reply to statement: acknowledge], [statement: opine], [answer to question: comply], [expand], and [justify]. These are featured speech acts, among the 26 speech acts common to all genres studied, that characterise the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic) and fulfil the general communicative needs in local business context.

As has been discussed, the nature of the business discourse presumes the capacity to communicate effectively for the completion of different tasks in a range of genres with the use of various strategies. Despite the complex nature of business context and the range of cultural and organisational factors that determine what an effective communication is, similarities of speech acts are observed in the findings. As far as genre differences are concerned, little variation has been observed in the data. On the contrary, the findings indicate that a list of speech acts is likely to be more important in local business communication. It could be attributable to the expected communicative goals and shared generic features in the six genres, which are derived from the same general business genre.



### 11.2.2 What are the patterns of co-occurrence and sequence organisation of speech acts in different spoken genres in business communication?

The sequence organisation of speech acts, namely two co-occurring speech acts and three co-occurring speech acts, are examined in Chapters 4 to 9. Some predictable or 'unmarked' sequencing patterns of speech act are found. For example, '[statement: inform] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]', '[check] / [confirm]', '[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: agree]', or '[question: identification] / [answer to question: comply]'. These 'unmarked' patterns support the notion of adjacency pairs, a main concern and focus in conversation analysis (Schegloff, 1972, 1979; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973; Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977).

However, these predictable sequencing speech acts or adjacency pairs with a preferred next action in conversation analysis do not belong to the common two co-occurring speech acts found in the data. On the contrary, given the uncontrolled environment from which the data is collected, it is found that there is a wide range of sequential patterns of two co-occurring speech acts that are unpredictable or 'marked', in particular with the association of [filler]. Its frequent occurrence makes it a common pair part to other speech acts, such as '[statement: inform] / [filler]', '[filler] / [expand]', '[filler] / [justify]', or '[filler] / [request: action]'.

For three co-occurring speech acts, the phenomena are similar to the findings regarding to two co-occurring speech acts, with [filler] the most common associated speech acts with the other two. In the study, the most frequent occurring three co-occurring speech acts are selected to illustrate the various possibility of sequencing the three speech acts, such as '[statement: inform] / [frame] / [filler]', '[statement: inform] / [filler] / [reply to statement: acknowledge]', '[frame] / [filler] / [statement: inform]', or '[filler] / [statement: inform] / [apology]'.

It is observed from the findings that the co-occurrence of speech acts do not always support the notion of adjacency pairs in conversation analysis or collocational association in discourse analysis. These co-occurred speech acts

typically do not coincide with traditional markers, but instead represent content- and context-specific realisations. The realisations revealed in the data suggest that the naturally occurring data collected in the business sub-corpus will affect the speech act performance. Their own particular lexis and grammatical features, such as the frequent use of [fillers], are different from those collected from a controlled setting or environment that have a relatively limited variety of patterns or formulaic sequence categories (Schauer & Adolphs, 2006). Though many co-occurrences are the result of a random distribution of speech acts from the quantitative approach, some common adjacency pairs with preferred and dispreferred second parts can still be found in the data.

11.2.3 What are the characteristic lexicogrammatical patterns or linguistic realisations of different speech acts in different spoken genres in business communication?

Through data from a range of business genres and through a variety of speech acts, the study has set out to describe the ways in which speech act realisation patterns are similar and differ across discourse types. The patterns identified in the data reflect the distinctive features of each speech act. As discussed with the lexicogrammatical patterns of the most frequently occurring speech act in different genres in Chapters 4 to 9, it is found that most traditional markers, such as opine marker, inform marker, or acknowledge marker, are not the common linguistic realisations of [statement: opine], [statement: inform], or [reply to statement: acknowledge].

In contrast, the realisations are diversely expressed in terms of phrases or clauses (or sentences) to perform the speech acts. There are not as many formulaic expressions of a particular speech act as one may think. For instance, the speech act of [reply to statement: acknowledge] is not necessarily realised by markers such as ‘ok’, ‘I see’, or ‘right’ alone. A range of phrases and clauses (and sentences) are used to respond to [statement: inform] or [statement: opine].

However, lots of similarities in grammar items are found from the examples of [statement: inform] and [statement: opine] in the five genres, such as personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, and connectives. Such repetition, though with

different instances of the grammar items, may lead to a view that the analysis is superficial and has insufficient evidence for the finding. However, the similarity may also serve to show the possibility of identifying a unique feature of the particular speech act in different genres of business communication. For example, as found in informal office talks, more than half of the realisations (55.66%) of [statement: opine] are at not opine markers but, which are commonly expressed through declaratives and hypothetical expressions of *if-clauses*, direct discourse with different personal pronouns, and coordinating conjunctions at lexical or clausal level. Regarding [statement: inform] in other genres, it is also found that direct discourse with personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, and coordinating conjunctions are often used to achieve the communicative purposes.

As has been illustrated, speech act realisation is a complex linguistic phenomenon that comprises the unity of form, content, and function. A large variety of pragmatic functions can be realised by markers, phrases, and clauses. The findings of the study suggest that not only are these lexicogrammatical patterns not static or formulaic, they also need to be interpreted in the specific contexts of situation in which they occur. It would have further complicated the pictures of grammatical patterns and lexical choices for the realisation of speech acts. Nevertheless, these linguistic features are notable as they bring to light a variety of patterns of linguistic realisation of speech acts which can help to enrich the overall understanding of the speech act performance in each genre of business communication in Hong Kong. The findings can also allow researchers to check and understand how specific speech acts are realised in the texts of English business discourse.

### **11.3 Implications for ESP teaching and learning**

The findings regarding the first four research questions can be used to inform the fifth and last research question: What are the possible theoretical, methodological and pedagogical implications for ESP? An important recommendation to be made for English language teachers and teaching material writers, especially those involved in ESP teaching and learning, is that teaching material needs to incorporate a more accurate and wider range of language forms, into their teaching material in order to better reflect the realities of actual

language use, and so enhance learners' language awareness of the use of English in naturally occurring English (Campoy-Cubillo, Bellés-Fortuño, & Gea-Valor (Eds.), 2010; Römer, 2009; Seto, 2009, 2011).

Regarding the teaching and learning of speech acts in particular, given the aid of computational and analytical skills, innovative pedagogical practices aim at identifying and depicting linguistic realisations of different speech acts can be implemented at the classroom level (Römer, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2006a; Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson & Planken, 2013). The linguistic and discursive patterns identified in specific workplace contexts can be used to inform classroom teaching and can contribute to the design of teaching and learning material for language learners.

The approaches of corpus-driven research and data-driven learning for students at an advanced level of study is recommended for the language learners to learn to become language researchers and reviewed the practices of engaging university students to apply corpus methods and develop strategies to investigate the linguistic features of naturally occurring English with reference to phraseology (Cheng, 2007a; Bennett, 2010; Fuster & Clavel, 2010; Meunier, 2011; Pérez-Paredes, Sánchez-Tornel, & Calero, 2011). The same methods and techniques could be extended to investigate other speech acts. For instance, concordance outputs can be used for learners to deduce the functions of the linguistic realisations of different speech acts (Tribble & Jones, 1990). Concordance outputs can be turned into a gap fill exercise by deleting the keywords, which are particular linguistic realisations of speech acts. Learners can be asked to supply the keywords themselves or given a list of linguistic realisations to select from (Tribble & Jones, 1990; Meunier, 2002). Learners can be divided into groups and asked to record their practices of the use of different speech acts. The results will then be compared to the findings in naturally occurring spoken discourse. In the process, learners can recognize the errors in their practices and know what is correct and valid (Meunier, 2002).

Corpora and concordances could have been used more frequently in English language teaching. Pedagogical corpus applications could focus on both indirect and direct approaches to using corpora in teaching and learning. Indirect applications of corpora help researchers and material writers not only with the

design of the language teaching syllabus and curriculum but also with the content in reference work and teaching material. Corpora of specialized texts and research findings based on them also help improve pedagogical practice, curriculum development and material design. Direct applications of corpora help language learners and teachers to understand the language patterns in an autonomous way with the data-driven learning method. Data-driven learning activities can also be applied to specialized corpora such as learner corpora and parallel (or translation) corpora (Römer, 2006b, 2008)

In English language education, it is problematic to rely on the introspections of teachers and textbook writers, and greater attention needs to be given to real-world language use (Cheng, 2006, 2007b; Cheng & Cheng, 2010; Cheng & Warren, 2005, 2006, 2007; Cheng & Seto, 2015; Walsh, 2010; Lam et al., 2014). To provide effective English learning education and promote communicative competence among learners, teachers and textbook writers need to incorporate more accurate linguistic realisations into our teaching material to better reflect the real-world use of English in naturally occurring spoken discourse (Sobkowiak, 2015). Corpus data is useful in offering naturally occurring learning material to help enhance the language awareness of not only the teachers and the textbook writers but also the learners. Corpus-driven approach and data-driven learning are essential for the purpose of enhancing language awareness.

Given the availability of corpora and searching tools, both teachers and learners can make use of the corpus data in language teaching and learning contexts without specific training in knowledge in information technology. Linguistic realisations of selected speech acts can be used in specific pedagogical and learning contexts. The corpus evidence can be used in many ways (Cheng, 2006; Cheng & Warren, 1999, 2006, 2007; Lam et al., 2014; Mahlberg, 2006; Tsui, 2005; Cheng & Warren, 2006; Koester, 2010). At the regional level, the corpus evidence can be a basis for curriculum development. At the school level, it can be tailored to specific pedagogical goals and learning requirements. At the classroom level, it can be integrated into teaching and learning material. The overall focus could be on selecting those lexicogrammatical items and linguistic features with relatively high frequency of occurrence in corpora and applying them to areas of curriculum development, pedagogical practices, and language

awareness. On the basis of corpus evidence, more attention needs to be given to those items and features that are overlooked in existing curriculum and textbooks.

### 11.3.1 Teaching and learning approaches

In the past two decades, in English language learning, the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach and task-based learning (TBL) have become major methods (Richards & Rogers, 2001; Nunan, 2004; Willis & Willis, 2007; Willis, 2009; Izadpanah, 2010; Zhao, 2011; Brown, 2014). CLT emphasises interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. Successful communication depends on not only learners' grammatical competence but also their sociolinguistic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). The emphasis in teaching the speech act of thanking should be on the learners' knowledge of the sociolinguistics rules of the target language and the cultural differences regarding the appropriate use of thanking in the L2 as opposed to their L1. Task-based learning (TBL) (Ellis, 2003; Willis & Willis, 2007), a refinement of CLT, proposes the importance of engaging learners in accomplishing tasks with the target language in purposeful situations during the process of learning. Both CLT and TBL highlight the importance of grammatical and sociolinguistic knowledge in the pursuit of successful communication.

A number of interventional studies in interlanguage pragmatics investigating the effects of formal instruction on pragmatics have been conducted (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Schmidt, 1993; Hinkel, 1994; Kasper, 1997; Rose & Ng, 2001; Willis & Willis, 2007). In general, the findings confirm the advantages of instruction group over uninstructed group in the acquisition of pragmatics. Formal and explicit instruction is more effective than informal and implicit instruction in helping learners understand pragmatics (Kasper, 1997). With regard to compliments and compliment responses, it is found that as compared with the inductive instruction approach, the deductive instruction approach is more effective in helping learners improve the use of response strategies in compliments (Rose & Ng, 2001).

### 11.3.2 Instructional material

The issue of authenticity in ELT has long been discussed (Widdowson, 2000; Römer, 2004a, 2004b; Tamo, 2009). It is argued that inadequate or even faulty descriptions of linguistic features in instructional material have failed to provide learners with real-world English. Instead of presenting real-world samples of English in use, many ESL or EFL textbooks contain invented texts and examples constructed with a particular teaching purpose or around a particular topic. The descriptions in the textbooks are based on the intuition of the writers or second-hand accounts (McEnery & Wilson, 2001). It is often found that the texts and examples differ considerably from the real-world language use in natural speech situations, as textbook writers are supposed to use the language as it actually is in real life (Gilmore, 2007; Polio, 2014).

### 11.3.3 Learning tasks

Typical learning tasks in CLT and TBL, such as awareness-raising tasks, observational tasks and role play, are suitable for learning and teaching speech acts. Awareness-raising tasks with real-world examples drawn from corpus data enable learners to understand and learn the linguistic realisations and functions of the speech acts in different contexts of communication. Observational tasks enable learners to understand the variations in the use of different speech acts in different cultures and observe the realisation of typical speech acts in conversation. Role play activities can provide learners with opportunities to engage in carefully designed and controlled language practices. A discourse-based approach to developing students' knowledge and ability in the appropriate use of the speech act in business settings is recommended. Similar to the task-based learning approach, the discourse-based approach consists of three main stages, which are input exposure, students' production, and assessment (e.g. Richards & Rogers, 2001; Ellis, 2003; Willis & Willis, 2007; Brown, 2014).

#### 11.3.3.1 Input exposure

The goal of the input exposure stage is to enhance students' awareness of the linguistic realisations of thanking in L2. Teachers' input to material writing and adaptation is crucial as their knowledge of the students in their classes allows

them to judge and assess the appropriateness of the adapted and tailored material for their students. Since the 1990s, frontline teachers and textbook writers have made use of corpus data to design tasks for language students (e.g. Boulton, Carter-Thomas, & Rowley-Jolivet, 2012; Frankenberg-Garcia, 2012; Frankenberg-Garcia, Flowerdew, & Aston, 2011; Johns, 1991; Mindt, 1997; McCarthy, 1998; Meunier, 2002; McEnery & Xiao, 2011; Römer, 2011; Sinclair, 1991, 1997, 2001, 2004; Timmis, 2015; Tognini-Bonelli, 1996, 2001; Tomlinson, 2011; Tribble & Jones, 1990). These classroom activities can focus on the linguistic realisations of thanking in L2 with the use of corpus evidence.

Figure 11.1 shows some instances of *thank you very much* adapted from HKCSE (prosodic) (Cheng & Warren, 1999; Cheng & Cheng, 2010). These examples could be used as classroom activities in groups. After discussion, each group could share its findings with others to reflect on why they have sequenced the utterances. These tasks can be used to raise students' awareness of the linguistic features of the speech act of thanking in L2.

Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
b: may I have your signature once again please B: okay yeah b: alright here you go B: okay <b><i>thank you very much</i></b> b: no problem	a: this is the lucky money for the Chinese New Year A: oh b: happy new year A: <b><i>thank you very much</i></b>	b: did you took the min- from the mini-bar B: no b: just sign here sir B: okay b: <b><i>thank you very much</i></b>
(Source: Adapted from HKCSE (prosodic) [B001])	(Source: Adapted from HKCSE (prosodic) [B003])	(Source: Adapted from HKCSE (prosodic) [B006])

Figure 11.1. Examples of *thank you very much* in HKCSE (prosodic)

Teachers could extract examples from the corpus with specific genres when preparing learning material so as to avoid the use of invented examples usually found in textbook material, such as *thanks a bunch* or *I can't thank you enough*, which are not very common realisations of the act of thanking (Aston, 1995; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986; Herbert, 1986; Stenström, 1994). Other than emphasizing the linguistic realisations of the speech act of thanking, textbook



writers and frontline teachers can explicate others ways of expressing gratitude. While the use of modifiers or intensifiers is common to indicate the level of gratitude and formality, for example, *thank you very much* and *thanks so much*, the speech act of thanking can be complemented with another speech act, for example, *thank you for* [+the reason for thanking].

### 11.3.3.2 Student production

After input exposure, a number of activities can be designed in the students' production stage. In this stage, students can pay more attention to the context of situation and the expressions learnt in the exposure stage to consolidate their socio-linguistic knowledge. Students could work in groups, make a list of linguistic realisations of thanking and check them against the corpus data. Then, students could prepare extracts of thanking and describe the linguistic realisations of thanking from the corpus data. They could then deduce from the communicative contexts in which the speech act is performed.

In another task, students can discuss and then select a situation from the corpus that expresses gratitude and perform through Readers' Theatre, which is originally a way for students to become excited and enthusiastic about reading when they are presented with the opportunity to participate in a performance. Through this activity, students have the opportunity to develop fluency and further enhance comprehension of what they are reading. The following, adapted from HKCSE (prosodic) could be a sample script for the role play (Figure 11.2):

b: Mister \_\_ is going to Japan Japan  
B: yeah  
b: **thank you for** your passport sir (.) er Mister \_\_ may I have er one hundred dollar for the airport tax please  
(pause)  
b: **thank you** (.) and Mister \_\_ do you have any check-in baggage  
B: no  
b: and you have a seat for you reserved is eighteen H it's aisle seat ok  
B: **thank you**

(Source: Adapted from HKCSE (prosodic) [B053])

Figure 11.2. Sample script for role play

More competent students could be asked to revise the scripts adapted from the corpus data and rewrite them to suit particular interactional contexts. For instance, teachers may ask students to develop the conversation further to achieve a particular outcome. Using the example in Figure 11.2, students could improvise how the conversation might go on after *thank you* uttered by B.

#### 11.3.3.3 Assessment

The goal of assessment is to check how efficiently students use the speech act of thanking for real-life communicative purposes (Cohen, 2004). The organisation and discussion activities presented above could be used in quizzes as continuous assessment (Figures 11.3 and 11.4).

<p><b>Speech act of thanking</b></p> <p>Identify the most appropriate (✓) and the least appropriate (✗) responses in the following situations:</p> <p>1. Your friend has bought you a drink from the school canteen. You would say:</p> <p>_____ thanks for buying me the drink. _____ thanks a bunch. _____ thanks. _____ many thanks.</p> <p>2. You are invited to give a talk in a company and would like to show gratitude for the invitation before the talk. You would say:</p> <p>_____ I thank you for inviting me to this talk. _____ thank you for inviting me to this talk _____ thank you ever so much for inviting me to this talk. _____ I can't thank you enough for inviting me to this talk</p>
--

Figure 11.3. Sample questions to test student's perception of speech act of thanking

### **Speech act of thanking**

Fill in the blank with an appropriate response of thanking.

1. You are in the classroom and your teacher has just given you back a quiz. What would you say?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. You asked your friend to buy you a book. You later knew that your friend had spent 5 hours looking for the book. When your friend gave you the book, what would you say?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Figure 11.4. Sample questions to test student's production of speech act of thanking

The role-play activity presented could be audio-taped or video-recorded for self-assessment or peer assessment. Teachers can also diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses, and particularly discuss possible inappropriate linguistic realisations of thanking after the role-play activity (Sasaki, 1998). Teachers could assess the overall performance of the students with regard to the following factors on a scale of 1-5 (Cohen, 2004):

- Level of formality (given the age, status, and familiarity between the roles)
- Degree of politeness (given the importance of the event)
- Degree of directness (given the level of familiarity between the roles)
- Pragmalinguistic control (appropriateness of language structures used)
- Sociopragmatic control (appropriateness of speech act performed)
- Overall success of the speech act performance

In summary, the discourse-based approach is not merely restricted to interlanguage pragmatics; rather, it can be extended to different areas of language learning. Corpus data will continue to be important resources for material writers, teachers and students for genuine English use in real-life situations. In order to better reflect the realities of actual language use, a wider range of both linguistic realisations and contextual functions of the speech act need to be incorporated into the instructional material and tasks. In ESP teaching, it is problematic to rely solely on the introspection or the intuition of teachers and textbook writers. More

attention should be given to the daily use of language in the real world. Accordingly, corpus data would be a useful resource as it offers real-world material for not only learners but also teachers to more accurately understand the use of language in an ever-changing world. The use of English language spoken corpora, such as the Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English (Cheng & Warren, 1999), for real-life instances of particular speech acts for material and tasks, and especially for comparison with examples in the textbook literature, for example, functions of particular speech acts and linguistic patterns of their expressions.

#### **11.4 Contribution of the study**

As mentioned in Chapter One, the present study is an initial study that annotates manually the speech acts in the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic) with the aid of the program *SpeechActConc* and examines the frequencies, co-occurrences, and the linguistic-grammatical realisations and patterns of speech acts in different genres and contexts of interaction in business communication. The study contributes to our knowledge in the field of speech act annotation, corpus linguistic software, business communication, and corpus pragmatics in a number of ways.

First, it is the first study that has manually annotated the speech acts in the selected six genres of the business sub-corpus of the HKCSE (prosodic) in its entirety. The spoken sub-corpus annotated has almost 200,000 words, covering the major discourse types of business communication, namely meetings, telephone and conference calls, informal office talks, service encounters (airport and hotel), question and answer sessions, and interview (job and placement). They are made up of a range of contexts of interaction located in Hong Kong. The depth of corpus analysis ranges from quantitative analysis of frequency counts of individual and co-occurring speech acts to qualitative analysis of selected lexicogrammatical realisations of speech acts (cf. Cheng et al., 2008).

Second, the taxonomy used to annotate speech acts in the business sub-corpus has been consistently refined and meticulously consulted throughout the study. The application began from the stage of design of the study and formulation of research questions; the reiterative process of speech act annotation, checking, double-checking, and cross-checking; the design and implementation

of the software program (*SpeechActConc*) to read and search the annotated data; and up to the analysis, interpretation and explanation of the quantitative and qualitative findings. The study illustrates that most of the speech acts included in the taxonomy are sufficient and relevant in vindicating the moment-by-moment speech act choices made by discourse participants to achieve their specific transactional and relational goals as the spoken discourse unfolds (cf. Cheng et al., 2008).

Third, the study adds to the existing body of research literature in speech act annotation of naturally occurring business spoken discourse that has adopted different approaches to speech act study, primarily sociolinguistics, conversation analysis, discourse analysis (e.g., Evans, 2013b; Generoso, 2013; Nielsen, 2013; Yuan et al., 2013); employed a range of methodologies, such as ethnography, survey research, discourse-completion task (e.g., Li, 2000; Nelson et al., 2002; Lee, 2005; Rampton, 2007; Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Fauzi et al., 2014); and drawn upon different concepts, theories, taxonomies, that account for the use of specific speech acts in spoken discourse in general and spoken business discourse in particular (e.g., Stiles, 1992; Tsui, 1994; Cheng & Tsui, 2009; Pishghadam & Zarei, 2011; Al-Sobh, 2013; Jabber & Zhang, 2013).

The fourth contribution is, among the 51 annotated speech acts out of the taxonomy of 69 speech acts, a total of 26 speech acts have been found across the six genres in the business sub-corpus. These most commonly used speech acts need to be highlighted in the way they are realised lexically and grammatically as well as on how they are co-occur with each other. They deserve further investigation to better understand whether or not they can be regarded as the typical speech acts for the business communication in the local context. It could be of value to studies related to speech act annotation, business communication, corpus linguistics, or corpus pragmatics. Table 11.1 shows the prototypical sample of these 51 speech acts annotated in the business sub-corpus.

Table 11.1. Prototypical samples of speech acts

<b>Number</b>	<b>Speech act</b>	<b>Prototypical sample</b>	<b>Source</b>
1	Alert	<b>sorry</b>	B003
2	Answer to question:	b: did you purchase anything from the mini-bar	B001

	comply	<b>B: no</b>	
3	Answer to question: disclaim	<b>I I don't know</b>	B003
4	Answer to question: evade	a1: is it possible to record some meetings	B059
		<b>B: that there's a few things that I could record</b>	
5	Answer to question: imply	A: I wish I could speak Chinese	B003
		a: * can you	
		A: ** would be nice	
		<b>I wish I could</b>	
6	Answer to question: supply	B: is it in the quiet section	B049
		a: <b>it's the first row</b>	
7	Answer to request: accept	<b>let me see</b>	B001
8	Answer to request: evade	a: why you no choice our hotel	B003
		<b>this is a good one also better than Regent Hotel</b>	
9	Answer to request: reject	B: can you request for me please	B035
		a1: <b>because we can't request it here for you</b>	
10	Apology	<b>sorry</b>	B001
11	Appealer	<b>is that okay</b>	B002
12	Check	B: <b>it's a visa</b>	B001
		b: yeah	
13	Clue	is there any way I can get into the first class lounge	B049
		<b>because I was travelling with that man</b>	
14	Confirm	B: it's a visa	B001
		b: <b>yeah</b>	
15	Correct	a3: united airlines but if if R__ [name] can talk to FedEx again to see if we can receive something	B016
		<b>b1: not only Fe- FedEx we're talking about all other courier company including EPS DHL</b>	

16	Correct-self	yesterday I received a request from the protocol division of the Hong Kong department oh <b>Hong Kong government</b> sorry	B016
17	Disagree	<b>not really</b>	B072
18	Empathizer	<b>you know</b>	B027
19	Empathy	<b>have a nice trip</b>	B001
20	Emphasizer	<b>certainly</b>	B003
21	Evaluate	a: perhaps we might have time going out for dinner with the colleagues there	B075
		B: <b>that will be interesting</b>	
22	Expand	a: we haven't seen for a long time	B075
		B: I know	
		<b>we've been busy with recently then</b>	
23	Express_wish	<b>I hope so</b>	B037
24	Filler	<b>um</b>	B001
25	Frame	<b>and by the way</b>	B001
26	Greeting	<b>good bye</b>	B001
27	Hedge	<b>I think</b>	B041
28	Instruction	<b>get R___ [name] talk to talk to the courier companies again and find out what needs to be done in case</b>	B016
29	Invite	<b>please feel free to ask us any questions you have</b>	B156
30	Justify	but I am sorry that	B024
		<b>because once you arrived we cannot offer you any special rate</b>	
31	Monitor	<b>I mean</b>	B029
32	Offer	<b>what about I just ask the house keeping to make up the room</b>	B002
33	Precursor	B: <b>the problem is when you arrive in the morning in Hong Kong in Europe it's midnight</b> so you feel very tired	B001

34	Preface	<b>B: I I currently in eight eight zero four seven and I was going to be checking out this afternoon but there there's a problem with my flight</b> so I would like to stay until tomorrow	B002
35	Query	b: I do need your credit card once again	B001
		<b>B: once again</b>	
		b: yeah	
36	Question: confirmation	<b>five zero five eight right</b>	B003
37	Question: identification	<b>how long will it take to go to Chi- China</b>	B001
38	Question: polarity	<b>b: did you purchase anything from the mini-bar</b>	B001
		B: no	
39	React	<b>oh no</b>	B059
40	Reply to statement: acknowledge	<b>okay</b>	B001
41	Reply to statement: agree	<b>yeah</b>	B001
42	Request: action	<b>may I have your signature once again please</b>	B001
43	Request: permission	<b>just a moment</b>	B021(B)
44	Smoother	a: I'm sorry	B036
		<b>B: it's alright</b>	
45	Staller	<b>um it's it's um</b>	B002
46	Starter	<b>actually</b>	B021(A)
47	Statement: inform	<b>your bill is on the way</b>	B001
48	Statement: opine	<b>you are very tired</b>	B001
49	Suggest	<b>you could do the express checkout too</b>	B003
50	Thanks	<b>thank you so much</b>	B002
51	Uptake	b: how long will it take to go to Chi- China	B001
		<b>B: er one hour</b>	



### 11.5 Limitations of the study

There are several limitations for the study. First, given the scope of the study, it is not an attempt to do an exhaustive analysis of all annotated speech acts in the six genres, but rather an attempt to show the observations of communicative functions of conversational utterances and demonstrate the processes of quantitative and qualitative analysis with the aid of *SpeechActConc*. Accordingly, only the more frequently occurring speech acts are selected for illustration and analysis. The remaining less frequently occurring speech acts are largely not studied. These less frequently occurring speech acts are also important in the sense that they, together with the more frequently occurring speech acts, establish a distinctive feature regarding the particular genre in the business sub-corpus.

Second, with regard to the discussion of two co-occurring speech acts, only the adjacency pairs with a preferred next action is dealt, such as ‘[question: identification] / [answer to question: comply]’, ‘[check] / [confirm]’, or ‘[statement: opine] / [reply to statement: agree]’, other dispreferred pairs and pairs associated with [filler] are not examined. However, the vast amount of evidence from the six genres show that most of the co-occurring speech acts are not linked together in the form of adjacency pairs with or without a preferred next action. In contrast, their associations are not restricted to any established rules or models.

Third, as shown in the literature review, a number of research studies regarding business communication in different contexts or situation types such as meeting or service encounter focus on the influence of different dimensions including gender, ethnicity, power, language, or culture in workplace interaction (e.g. Holmes, 2009). These dimensions of analysis can provide different directions for interpreting the quantitative and qualitative findings from the speech act annotation in this study.

Fourth, the quantitative data showing different frequencies of speech acts and the qualitative data showing different linguistic realisations and patterns in each genre from the present study could be compared across different genres. Given the different size in each of the six genres, to compare the raw frequencies of speech acts alone can be misleading (Biber et al., 1998). Normalization of the raw frequencies or normalized frequencies is necessary for a valid comparison

across different genres. By dividing the raw frequency by the speech act count for the genre and multiplying the result by a suitable number for comparison given the size of the corpus, the normalized frequency of each speech act in each genre can be validly compared (McAllister, 2015). Based on the normalized frequency counts, the linguistic realisations and patterns can be selected and investigated more closely to find out differences across different genres with reference to the dimensions mentioned in the previous paragraph.

### **11.6 Areas for further research**

Speech acts annotation and the related analysis of speech acts would become more important with reference to the understanding of the communicative functions the speakers would like to make during a conversation in a business context. The findings and conclusions of the present study could be of value to various types of research. Further research related to the present study could be focused on, first, an intercultural comparison between Hong Kong Chinese (HKC) and native speakers of English (NSE) regarding the differences in the use of speech acts to express a particular communicative function, such as [thanks]. Not only the frequencies but also the patterns could be compared with them (cf. Traverso, 2006; Varcasia, 2013).

Second, the annotation and analytical procedure of speech acts could be applied to the other three corpora, namely academic, conversational, and public, of the HKCSE (prosodic), or other spoken corpora. The findings of frequencies and speech act co-occurring patterns could be used for making a comparison of speech acts among different corpora.

Third, comparisons could be made between different roles played by different participants in each genre; for instance, service provider and service receiver in a service encounter, interviewer and interviewee in an interview, speaker and audience in a Q&A session, facilitator and participants in a meeting, to see how the differences would result in difference ways of expressing the same communicative function of a speech act.

Fourth, the findings could be analysed and discussed with reference to business genre-specific communicative purposes and speaker identities, roles and responsibilities to examine how they account for the findings.

Appendix 1. Two co-occurring speech acts in meetings

Centred speech act	Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Statement: inform	filler	1117	29.79
Filler	Statement: opine	224	5.97
Filler	Justify	109	2.91
Statement: inform	Frame	105	2.80
Filler	Preface	104	2.77
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	88	2.35
Filler	Expand	76	2.03
Filler	Frame	67	1.79
Filler	Request: action	67	1.79
Filler	Monitor	64	1.71
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	63	1.68
Statement: inform	Uptake	57	1.52
Filler	Answer to question: comply	56	1.49
Statement: opine	Frame	49	1.31
Filler	Question: polarity	41	1.09
Filler	Precursor	40	1.07
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Statement: opine	36	0.96
Filler	Uptake	35	0.93
Check	Confirm	33	0.88
Statement: opine	Uptake	29	0.77
Expand	Answer to question: comply	25	0.67
Filler	Question: identification	25	0.67
Filler	Answer to question: imply	25	0.67
Filler	Question: confirmation	23	0.61
Filler	Suggest	23	0.61
Statement: inform	Statement: opine	23	0.61
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Justify	22	0.59
Reply to statement:	Expand	21	0.56

acknowledge			
Statement: inform	Expand	20	0.53
Statement: inform	Preface	19	0.51
Statement: opine	Reply to statement: agree	19	0.51
Filler	Alert	18	0.48
Statement: inform	Alert	18	0.48
Statement: opine	Starter	18	0.48
Answer to question: comply	Question: polarity	17	0.45
Filler	Clue	17	0.45
Frame	Preface	17	0.45
Statement: inform	Starter	17	0.45
Statement: inform	Thanks	17	0.45
Filler	Instruction	15	0.40
Answer to question: comply	Uptake	14	0.37
Answer to question: comply	Clue	13	0.35
Filler	Express_wish	13	0.35
Statement: inform	Empathizer	13	0.35
Statement: opine	Justify	13	0.35
Expand	Uptake	12	0.32
Filler	Hedge	12	0.32
Frame	Request: action	12	0.32
Statement: opine	Hedge	12	0.32
Statement: opine	Expand	12	0.32
Filler	Reply to statement: agree	11	0.29
Filler	Answer to request: accept	11	0.29
Frame	Uptake	11	0.29
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Uptake	11	0.29
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Answer to question: acknowledge	11	0.29
Statement: inform	Appealer	11	0.29
Frame	Question: polarity	10	0.27
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Confirm	10	0.27
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	10	0.27

Answer to question: comply	Question: confirmation	9	0.24
Filler	Check	9	0.24
Request: action	Answer to request: accept	9	0.24
Request: action	Alert	9	0.24
Statement: inform	Answer to question: comply	9	0.24
Statement: inform	Question: polarity	9	0.24
Statement: opine	Empathizer	9	0.24
Statement: opine	Monitor	9	0.24
Uptake	Preface	9	0.24
Answer to question: comply	Appealer	8	0.21
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Thanks	8	0.21
Statement: inform	Monitor	8	0.21
Suggest	Answer to request: accept	8	0.21
Expand	Reply to statement: object	7	0.19
Filler	Empathizer	7	0.19
Filler	Thanks	7	0.19
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Starter	7	0.19
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Frame	7	0.19
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Empathizer	7	0.19
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Monitor	7	0.19
Statement: opine	Appealer	7	0.19
Statement: opine	Question: confirmation	7	0.19
Expand	Confirm	6	0.16
Expand	Starter	6	0.16
Filler	Starter	6	0.16
Filler	Greeting	6	0.16
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: polarity	6	0.16
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Appealer	6	0.16

Statement: inform	Justify	6	0.16
Statement: inform	Question: identification	6	0.16
Uptake	Suggest	6	0.16
Uptake	Question: identification	6	0.16
Uptake	Answer to question: imply	6	0.16
Answer to question: comply	Check	5	0.13
Expand	Reply to statement: agree	5	0.13
Filler	Confirm	5	0.13
Filler	Answer to question: supply	5	0.13
Frame	Suggest	5	0.13
Frame	Reply to statement: agree	5	0.13
Justify	Hedge	5	0.13
Question: identification	Precursor	5	0.13
Question: polarity	Precursor	5	0.13
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Precursor	5	0.13
Statement: inform	Check	5	0.13
Statement: inform	Confirm	5	0.13
Statement: inform	Answer to request: accept	5	0.13
Statement: inform	Question: confirmation	5	0.13
Statement: inform	Hedge	5	0.13
Statement: opine	Confirm	5	0.13
Statement: opine	Emphasizer	5	0.13
Uptake	Check	5	0.13
Uptake	Alert	5	0.13
Expand	Empathizer	4	0.11
Frame	Monitor	4	0.11
Frame	Question: confirmation	4	0.11
Justify	Confirm	4	0.11
Monitor	Starter	4	0.11
Preface	Hedge	4	0.11
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: identification	4	0.11
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Alert	4	0.11

Reply to statement: agree	Starter	4	0.11
Statement: opine	Preface	4	0.11
Statement: opine	Alert	4	0.11
Uptake	Question: polarity	4	0.11
Uptake	Precursor	4	0.11
Uptake	Thanks	4	0.11
Uptake	Starter	4	0.11
Uptake	Question: confirmation	4	0.11
Alert	Thanks	3	0.08
Answer to question: comply	Starter	3	0.08
Answer to question: comply	Monitor	3	0.08
Answer to question: comply	Question: identification	3	0.08
Appealer	Thanks	3	0.08
Expand	Monitor	3	0.08
Expand	Frame	3	0.08
Expand	Suggest	3	0.08
Filler	Apology	3	0.08
Filler	Disagree	3	0.08
Frame	Hedge	3	0.08
Frame	Alert	3	0.08
Frame	Question: identification	3	0.08
Frame	Check	3	0.08
Frame	Clue	3	0.08
Justify	Appealer	3	0.08
Justify	Reply to statement: agree	3	0.08
Justify	Frame	3	0.08
Preface	Request: action	3	0.08
Question: confirmation	Reply to statement: agree	3	0.08
Question: identification	Clue	3	0.08
Question: polarity	Thanks	3	0.08
Question: polarity	Alert	3	0.08
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Preface	3	0.08
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Hedge	3	0.08

Request: action	Appealer	3	0.08
Statement: inform	Greeting	3	0.08
Statement: inform	empathy	3	0.08
Statement: inform	react	3	0.08
Statement: inform	Query	3	0.08
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: object	3	0.08
Statement: inform	Clue	3	0.08
Statement: inform	Request: action	3	0.08
Statement: opine	Answer to question: comply	3	0.08
Statement: opine	Evaluate	3	0.08
Uptake	Request: action	3	0.08
Uptake	Answer to question: supply	3	0.08
Uptake	Answer to request: accept	3	0.08
Uptake	Reply to statement: agree	3	0.08
Uptake	Monitor	3	0.08
Uptake	Clue	3	0.08
Alert	Self-denigration	2	0.05
Alert	Instruction	2	0.05
Answer to question: comply	Staller	2	0.05
Answer to question: comply	Frame	2	0.05
Answer to question: comply	Empathy	2	0.05
Answer to request: accept	Evaluate	2	0.05
Answer to request: accept	Confirm	2	0.05
Check	Appealer	2	0.05
Check	Hedge	2	0.05
Check	Empathizer	2	0.05
Check	Appealer	2	0.05
Confirm	Alert	2	0.05
Confirm	Query	2	0.05
Confirm	Appealer	2	0.05
Confirm	Question: confirmation	2	0.05
Empathizer	Express_wish	2	0.05
Emphasizer	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	0.05
Expand	Preface	2	0.05
Expand	Justify	2	0.05



Expand	Question: polarity	2	0.05
Expand	Answer to request; accept	2	0.05
Expand	Hedge	2	0.05
Expand	Question: confirmation	2	0.05
Expand	Check	2	0.05
Frame	Answer to question: imply	2	0.05
Frame	Instruction	2	0.05
Frame	Precursor	2	0.05
Justify	Uptake	2	0.05
Justify	Answer to request: accept	2	0.05
Justify	Starter	2	0.05
Justify	Suggest	2	0.05
Monitor	Hedge	2	0.05
Monitor	Disagree	2	0.05
Precursor	Hedge	2	0.05
Precursor	Empathizer	2	0.05
Precursor	Thanks	2	0.05
Preface	Appealer	2	0.05
Preface	Alert	2	0.05
Preface	Answer to request: accept	2	0.05
Preface	Starter	2	0.05
Preface	Suggest	2	0.05
Preface	Clue	2	0.05
Question: confirmation	Instruction	2	0.05
Question: identification	Check	2	0.05
Question: identification	Confirm	2	0.05
Question: polarity	Hedge	2	0.05
Question: polarity	Answer to request: accept	2	0.05
Question: polarity	Clue	2	0.05
Question: polarity	Check	2	0.05
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Instruction	2	0.05
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Staller	2	0.05
Reply to statement:	Check	2	0.05

acknowledge			
Request: action	Reply to statement: agree	2	0.05
Statement: inform	Answer to question: imply	2	0.05
Statement: inform	Apology	2	0.05
Statement: inform	Emphasizer	2	0.05
Statement: inform	instruction	2	0.05
Statement: inform	Precursor	2	0.05
Statement: inform	Express_wish	2	0.05
Statement: opine	Answer to question: accept	2	0.05
Statement: opine	Staller	2	0.05
Statement: opine	Thanks	2	0.05
Statement: opine	Check	2	0.05
Statement: opine	suggest	2	0.05
Statement: opine	Disagree	2	0.05
Suggest	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	0.05
Suggest	Confirm	2	0.05
Suggest	Starter	2	0.05
Thanks	Greeting	2	0.05
Uptake	Confirm	2	0.05
Uptake	Answer to question: disclaim	2	0.05
Uptake	Hedge	2	0.05

Appendix 2. Three co-occurring speech acts in meetings

Double origin		Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Statement: inform	Frame	Filler	33	11.26
Statement: inform	Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	21	7.17
Statement: inform	Filler	Uptake	13	4.44
Filler	Frame	Statement: opine	12	4.10
Filler	Statement: opine	Statement: inform	11	3.75
statement: inform	Filler	Thanks	7	2.39
Filler	Frame	Request: action	6	2.05
Statement: inform	Filler	Preface	5	1.71
Statement: inform	Filler	Alert	5	1.71
Filler	Preface	Uptake	5	1.71
Request: action	Answer to request: accept	Filler	5	1.71
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Uptake	4	1.37
Filler	Statement: opine	Hedge	4	1.37
Filler	Request: action	Statement: inform	4	1.37
Filler	Justify	Statement: inform	4	1.37
Filler	Expand	Statement: inform	4	1.37
Statement: inform	Frame	Reply to statement: acknowledge	3	1.02
Filler	Request: action	Alert	3	1.02
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Uptake	3	1.02
Filler	Answer to request:	Statement: inform	3	1.02

	accept			
Statement: opine	Uptake	Frame	3	1.02
Expand	Answer to question: comply	Reply to statement: acknowledge	3	1.02
Expand	Answer to question: comply	Filler	3	1.02
Expand	Uptake	Filler	3	1.02
Frame	Uptake	Statement: inform	3	1.02
Frame	Reply to statement: agree	Statement: inform	3	1.02
Uptake	Starter	Statement: inform	3	1.02
Check	Confirm	Filler	3	1.02
Statement: inform	Filler	Confirm	2	0.68
Statement: inform	Filler	Hedge	2	0.68
Statement: inform	Filler	Question: confirmation	2	0.68
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Answer to question: comply	2	0.68
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Reply to statement: object	2	0.68
Statement: inform	Uptake	Statement: opine	2	0.68
Filler	Frame	Preface	2	0.68
Filler	Frame	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	0.68
Filler	Question: confirmation	Question: polarity	2	0.68
Filler	Preface	Hedge	2	0.68
Filler	Preface	Empathizer	2	0.68
Filler	Preface	Request: action	2	0.68
Filler	Statement: opine	monitor	2	0.68
Filler	Statement: opine	Uptake	2	0.68
Filler	Statement: opine	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	0.68
Filler	Statement: opine	Starter	2	0.68

Filler	Reply to statement: agree	Request: action	2	0.68
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Precursor	2	0.68
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Expand	2	0.68
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: polarity	2	0.68
Filler	Request: action	Expand	2	0.68
Filler	Precursor	Empathizer	2	0.68
Filler	Precursor	Alert	2	0.68
Filler	Uptake	Clue	2	0.68
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Confirm	Statement: inform	2	0.68
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Justify	Staller	2	0.68
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Justify	Statement: inform	2	0.68
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Answer to question: comply	Filler	2	0.68
Statement: opine	Appealer	Filler	2	0.68
Statement: opine	Frame	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	0.68
Statement: opine	Answer to question: comply	Filler	2	0.68
Statement: opine	Confirm	Filler	2	0.68
Expand	Answer to question: comply	Statement: inform	2	0.68
Expand	Reply to statement: object	Statement: inform	2	0.68
Answer to	Question: polarity	expand	2	0.68

question: comply				
Answer to question: comply	Appealer	Filler	2	0.68
Answer to question: comply	Appealer	Statement: inform	2	0.68
Justify	Appealer	Filler	2	0.68
Justify	Uptake	Filler	2	0.68
Justify	Reply to statement: agree	Filler	2	0.68
Frame	Preface	Uptake	2	0.68
Frame	Request: action	Hedge	2	0.68
Frame	Uptake	Filler	2	0.68
Frame	Monitor	Statement: inform	2	0.68
Frame	Question: polarity	Alert	2	0.68
Uptake	Suggest	Statement: inform	2	0.68
Uptake	Request: action	Statement: inform	2	0.68
Uptake	Question: identification	Filler	2	0.68
Uptake	Thanks	Statement: inform	2	0.68
Uptake	Preface	Alert	2	0.68
Question: polarity	Hedge	Filler	2	0.68
Check	Confirm	Statement: inform	2	0.68
Check	Confirm	Answer to question: comply	2	0.68
Confirm	Alert	Check	2	0.68
Confirm	Question: confirmation	Check	2	0.68
Alert	Thanks	Filler	2	0.68
Alert	Self-denigration	Filler	2	0.68

Appendix 3. Two co-occurring speech acts in telephone and conference calls

Centred speech act	Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Statement: inform	190	19.55
Filler	Statement: opine	98	10.08
Filler	Expand	68	7.00
Filler	Justify	64	6.58
Filler	Question: polarity	54	5.56
Filler	Clue	38	3.91
Filler	Frame	29	2.98
Filler	Preface	25	2.57
Filler	Precursor	22	2.26
Filler	Answer to question: comply	21	2.16
Filler	Question: identification	18	1.85
Filler	Alert	16	1.65
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	15	1.54
Filler	Question: confirmation	14	1.44
Filler	Monitor	13	1.34
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Statement: opine	13	1.34
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	13	1.34
Statement: inform	Frame	13	1.34
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Justify	9	0.93
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Answer to question: comply	8	0.82
Statement: inform	Empathizer	8	0.82
Filler	Request: action	7	0.72
Statement: inform	Statement: opine	7	0.72
Answer to question: comply	Question: polarity	6	0.62
Filler	Empathy	6	0.62
Greeting	Thanks	6	0.62
Statement: opine	Empathizer	6	0.62

Expand	Answer to question: comply	5	0.51
Filler	Check	5	0.51
Filler	Thanks	5	0.51
Filler	Greeting	5	0.51
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Expand	5	0.51
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: identification	5	0.51
Answer to question: comply	Uptake	4	0.41
Justify	Hedge	4	0.41
Justify	Empathizer	4	0.41
Question: polarity	Alert	4	0.41
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: polarity	4	0.41
Statement: inform	Expand	4	0.41
Statement: inform	Hedge	4	0.41
Statement: inform	Justify	4	0.41
Statement: inform	Alert	4	0.41
Statement: opine	Justify	4	0.41
Statement: opine	Frame	4	0.41
Answer to question: comply	Precursor	3	0.31
Check	Confirm	3	0.31
Filler	Answer to request: accept	3	0.31
Filler	Empathizer	3	0.31
Greeting	Alert	3	0.31
Justify	Frame	3	0.31
Precursor	Alert	3	0.31
Question: polarity	Check	3	0.31
Question: polarity	Precursor	3	0.31
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Confirm	3	0.31
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: confirmation	3	0.31
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Thanks	3	0.31
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Clue	3	0.31



Statement: opine	Alert	3	0.31
Uptake	Answer to question: imply	3	0.31
Answer to question: comply	Appealer	2	0.21
Answer to question: comply	Clue	2	0.21
Answer to question: comply	Alert	2	0.21
Clue	Alert	2	0.21
Clue	Question: polarity	2	0.21
Expand	Empathizer	2	0.21
Expand	Hedge	2	0.21
Expand	Frame	2	0.21
Filler	Answer to question: imply	2	0.21
Filler	Hedge	2	0.21
Filler	Answer to question: supply	2	0.21
Filler	Staller	2	0.21
Filler	Emphasizer	2	0.21
Frame	Question: confirmation	2	0.21
Frame	Thanks	2	0.21
Justify	Monitor	2	0.21
Monitor	Hedge	2	0.21
Monitor	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	0.21
Preface	Empathizer	2	0.21
Question: confirmation	Precursor	2	0.21
Question: identification	Empathizer	2	0.21
Question: polarity	Frame	2	0.21
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Preface	2	0.21
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Frame	2	0.21
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Staller	2	0.21
reply to statement: agree	Emphasizer	2	0.21
Statement: inform	Greeting	2	0.21
Statement: inform	reply to statement: agree	2	0.21
Statement: inform	Answer to question: comply	2	0.21
Statement: inform	Uptake	2	0.21
Statement: opine	Question: polarity	2	0.21

Statement: opine	Greeting	2	0.21
Statement: opine	reply to statement: agree	2	0.21

Appendix 4. Three co-occurring speech acts in telephone and conference calls

Double origin		Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Statement: inform	Frame	9	14.29
Filler	Statement: opine	Frame	7	11.11
Statement: opine	Empathizer	Filler	4	6.35
Filler	Precursor	Alert	3	4.76
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Alert	3	4.76
Statement: inform	Statement: opine	Filler	3	4.76
Clue	Alert	Question: polarity	2	3.17
Expand	Answer to question: comply	Filler	2	3.17
Expand	Frame	Filler	2	3.17
Filler	Statement: inform	Greeting	2	3.17
Filler	Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	3.17
Filler	Statement: opine	Alert	2	3.17
Filler	Statement: opine	Emphasizer	2	3.17
Filler	Question: polarity	Alert	2	3.17
Filler	Question: polarity	Frame	2	3.17
Filler	Clue	Alert	2	3.17
Filler	Frame	Question: confirmation	2	3.17
Filler	Alert	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	3.17
Frame	Thanks	Filler	2	3.17
Monitor	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Filler	2	3.17
Question: polarity	Check	Filler	2	3.17
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Answer to question: comply	Filler	2	3.17
Statement: inform	Empathizer	Filler	2	3.17

Appendix 5. Two co-occurring speech acts in informal office talks

<b>Centred speech act</b>	<b>Co-occurring speech act</b>	<b>Co-occurring instance</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Statement: inform	Filler	493	18.67
Statement: opine	Filler	484	18.33
Filler	Justify	170	6.44
Filler	Expand	114	4.32
Statement: opine	Reply to statement: agree	96	3.64
Filler	Answer to question: comply	65	2.46
Filler	Preface	58	2.20
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	57	2.16
Statement: opine	Empathizer	55	2.08
Statement: inform	Empathizer	48	1.82
Filler	Monitor	40	1.52
Statement: inform	Frame	40	1.52
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Expand	38	1.44
Statement: opine	Frame	38	1.44
Statement: opine	Reply to statement: acknowledge	36	1.36
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	34	1.29
Statement: opine	Statement: inform	32	1.21
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Justify	31	1.17
Filler	Frame	29	1.10
Statement: opine	Justify	29	1.10
Filler	Clue	25	0.95
Filler	Reply to statement: agree	24	0.91
Statement: opine	Hedge	23	0.87
Expand	Answer to question: comply	20	0.76

Filler	Offer	20	0.76
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Preface	18	0.68
Filler	Question: confirmation	16	0.61
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: agree	16	0.61
Filler	Question: polarity	15	0.57
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Monitor	15	0.57
Statement: opine	Expand	15	0.57
Statement: opine	Alert	15	0.57
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Frame	13	0.49
Statement: opine	Preface	13	0.49
Filler	Empathizer	11	0.42
Statement: inform	Justify	10	0.38
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Clue	9	0.34
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Answer to question: comply	9	0.34
Statement: inform	Expand	9	0.34
Statement: opine	Emphasizer	9	0.34
Answer to question: comply	Question: confirmation	8	0.30
Check	Confirm	8	0.30
Expand	Reply to statement: agree	8	0.30
Filler	Question: identification	8	0.30
Filler	Answer to question: imply	8	0.30
Filler	Check	8	0.30
Justify	Reply to statement: agree	8	0.30
Statement: inform	Monitor	8	0.30
Statement: opine	Monitor	8	0.30
Expand	Empathizer	7	0.27
Justify	Empathizer	7	0.27

Statement: inform	Preface	7	0.27
Statement: inform	Alert	7	0.27
Empathizer	Monitor	6	0.23
Expand	Reply to statement: object	6	0.23
Filler	Hedge	6	0.23
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Emphasizer	6	0.23
Reply to statement: agree	Empathizer	6	0.23
Statement: inform	Answer to question: comply	6	0.23
Statement: opine	Question: identification	6	0.23
Answer to question: comply	Clue	5	0.19
Empathizer	Preface	5	0.19
Filler	Staller	5	0.19
Justify	Frame	5	0.19
Question: polarity	Offer	5	0.19
Reply to statement: agree	Preface	5	0.19
Statement: inform	Hedge	5	0.19
Statement: inform	Apology	5	0.19
Statement: opine	Uptake	5	0.19
Statement: opine	Answer to question: comply	5	0.19
Answer to question: comply	Appealer	4	0.15
Answer to question: comply	Question: identification	4	0.15
Answer to question: comply	Question: polarity	4	0.15
Answer to question: comply	Empathizer	4	0.15
Filler	Confirm	4	0.15
Justify	Expand	4	0.15
Justify	Hedge	4	0.15
Preface	Frame	4	0.15
Preface	Alert	4	0.15

Reply to statement: agree	Monitor	4	0.15
Statement: inform	Uptake	4	0.15
Answer to question: comply	Uptake	3	0.11
Empathizer	Alert	3	0.11
Empathizer	Frame	3	0.11
Empathy	Greeting	3	0.11
Expand	Question: polarity	3	0.11
Expand	Frame	3	0.11
Expand	Alert	3	0.11
Expand	Question: confirmation	3	0.11
Filler	Reply to statement: object	3	0.11
Filler	Appealer	3	0.11
Filler	Alert	3	0.11
Monitor	Question: identification	3	0.11
Statement: inform	Question: confirmation	3	0.11
Answer to question: comply	Check	2	0.08
Clue	Confirm	2	0.08
Empathizer	Hedge	2	0.08
Expand	Hedge	2	0.08
Filler	Greeting	2	0.08
Filler	Uptake	2	0.08
Filler	Answer to question: disclaim	2	0.08
Filler	Thanks	2	0.08
Filler	React	2	0.08
Frame	Question: identification	2	0.08
Frame	Question: polarity	2	0.08
Frame	Thanks	2	0.08
Justify	Question: polarity	2	0.08
Justify	Preface	2	0.08
Monitor	Answer to question: comply	2	0.08
Preface	Emphasizer	2	0.08
Question: identification	Offer	2	0.08

Reply to statement: acknowledge	Confirm	2	0.08
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Reply to statement: agree	2	0.08
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: confirmation	2	0.08
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Empathizer	2	0.08
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Empathy	2	0.08
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Check	2	0.08
Reply to statement: agree	Emphasizer	2	0.08
Reply to statement: agree	Alert	2	0.08
Reply to statement: agree	Appealer	2	0.08
Statement: inform	Check	2	0.08
Statement: inform	Confirm	2	0.08
Statement: inform	React	2	0.08
Statement: opine	Staller	2	0.08
Statement: opine	Reply to statement: object	2	0.08
Statement: opine	Thanks	2	0.08
Statement: opine	React	2	0.08
Statement: opine	Appealer	2	0.08
Statement: opine	Apology	2	0.08



Appendix 6. Three co-occurring speech acts in informal office talks

Double origin		Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Statement: inform	Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	18	10.65
Statement: opine	Filler	Empathizer	11	6.51
Statement: inform	Filler	Frame	10	5.92
Statement: opine	Filler	Frame	10	5.92
Statement: opine	Filler	Justify	8	4.73
Statement: opine	Filler	Reply to statement: agree	8	4.73
Statement: inform	Filler	Reply to statement: agree	5	2.96
Statement: inform	Filler	Statement: opine	5	2.96
Statement: opine	Filler	Hedge	5	2.96
Filler	Expand	Reply to statement: acknowledge	5	2.96
Statement: inform	Filler	Empathizer	4	2.37
Statement: opine	Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	3	1.78
Statement: opine	Filler	Expand	3	1.78
Statement: opine	Filler	Preface	3	1.78
Filler	Justify	Reply to statement: acknowledge	3	1.78
Filler	Monitor	Statement: opine	3	1.78
Filler	Monitor	Reply to statement: agree	3	1.78

Reply to statement: acknowledge	Expand	Statement: inform	3	1.78
Expand	Answer to question: comply	Reply to statement: acknowledge	3	1.78
Statement: inform	Filler	Hedge	2	1.18
Statement: inform	Filler	Apology	2	1.18
Statement: inform	Filler	Monitor	2	1.18
Statement: opine	Filler	Question: identification	2	1.18
Statement: opine	Filler	Alert	2	1.18
Filler	Justify	Expand	2	1.18
Filler	Expand	Answer to question: comply	2	1.18
Filler	Expand	Statement: inform	2	1.18
Filler	Expand	Preface	2	1.18
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Clue	2	1.18
Filler	Preface	Statement: inform	2	1.18
Filler	Preface	Frame	2	1.18
Statement: opine	Empathizer	Frame	2	1.18
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Monitor	Filler	2	1.18
Statement: inform	Expand	Uptake	2	1.18
Check	Confirm	Filler	2	1.18
Expand	Reply to statement: agree	Statement: opine	2	1.18
Justify	Reply to	Filler	2	1.18

	statement: agree			
Expand	Empathizer	Filler	2	1.18
Filler	Staller	Statement: inform	2	1.18
Question: polarity	Offer	Answer to question: comply	2	1.18
Preface	Alert	Statement: opine	2	1.18
Expand	Question: polarity	Filler	2	1.18
Filler	Appealer	Statement: opine	2	1.18
Filler	Alert	Statement: inform	2	1.18
Clue	Confirm	Filler	2	1.18
Justify	Preface	Filler	2	1.18

Appendix 7. Two co-occurring speech acts at airport check-in counters and information counters

Centred speech act	Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Statement: inform	104	12.70
Filler	Answer to question: comply	42	5.13
Filler	Request: action	36	4.40
Filler	Question: identification	32	3.91
Check	Confirm	29	3.54
Filler	Question: confirmation	23	2.81
Filler	Expand	20	2.44
Answer to question: comply	Expand	17	2.08
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	17	2.08
Filler	Question: polarity	15	1.83
Statement: inform	Thanks	15	1.83
Filler	Justify	14	1.71
Filler	Suggest	14	1.71
Thanks	Empathy	14	1.71
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Confirm	13	1.59
Filler	Empathizer	12	1.47
Statement: inform	Frame	12	1.47
Statement: inform	Empathizer	12	1.47
Filler	Apology	10	1.22
Filler	Check	10	1.22
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Thanks	10	1.22
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	9	1.10
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Answer to question: comply	9	1.10
Answer to question: comply	Question: identification	8	0.98
Filler	Precursor	8	0.98
Filler	Clue	8	0.98

Request: action	Thanks	8	0.98
Answer to question: comply	Uptake	7	0.85
Filler	Thanks	7	0.85
Filler	Preface	7	0.85
Filler	Answer to question: imply	7	0.85
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Expand	7	0.85
Request: action	Answer to request: accept	7	0.85
Filler	Statement: opine	6	0.73
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Empathizer	6	0.73
Statement: inform	Answer to question: comply	6	0.73
Thanks	Greeting	6	0.73
Thanks	Empathizer	6	0.73
Answer to question: comply	Question: polarity	5	0.61
Answer to question: comply	Appealer	5	0.61
Answer to question: comply	Clue	5	0.61
Filler	Answer to request: accept	5	0.61
Filler	Frame	5	0.61
Filler	Alert	5	0.61
Greeting	Offer	5	0.61
Greeting	Empathy	5	0.61
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: identification	5	0.61
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Request: action	5	0.61
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: polarity	5	0.61
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Answer to question: imply	5	0.61
Statement: inform	Check	5	0.61
Thanks	Frame	5	0.61
Apology	Smoother	4	0.49
Empathizer	Frame	4	0.49
Filler	Confirm	4	0.49
Filler	Query	4	0.49
Question: identification	Frame	4	0.49

Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: confirmation	4	0.49
Statement: inform	Question: polarity	4	0.49
Answer to question: comply	Thanks	3	0.37
Answer to question: comply	Confirm	3	0.37
Answer to request: accept	Offer	3	0.37
Answer to request: accept	Uptake	3	0.37
Expand	Question: polarity	3	0.37
Expand	Confirm	3	0.37
Filler	Offer	3	0.37
Filler	Answer to question: supply	3	0.37
Filler	Greeting	3	0.37
Filler	Staller	3	0.37
Filler	Smoother	3	0.37
Justify	Apology	3	0.37
Question: identification	Confirm	3	0.37
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Empathy	3	0.37
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Apology	3	0.37
Request: action	Frame	3	0.37
Request: action	Greeting	3	0.37
Statement: opine	Hedge	3	0.37
Thanks	Answer to request: accept	3	0.37
Thanks	Question: polarity	3	0.37
Answer to question: comply	Question: confirmation	2	0.24
Answer to question: comply	Apology	2	0.24
Check	Appealer	2	0.24
Check	Clue	2	0.24
Empathy	Statement: inform	2	0.24
Expand	Appealer	2	0.24
Expand	Answer to request: accept	2	0.24
Filler	Answer to request: reject	2	0.24
Filler	Request: permission	2	0.24
Filler	Hedge	2	0.24
Filler	Monitor	2	0.24
Question: confirmation	Frame	2	0.24

Question: identification	Alert	2	0.24
Question: identification	Statement: opine	2	0.24
Question: identification	Precursor	2	0.24
Question: identification	Check	2	0.24
Question: polarity	Uptake	2	0.24
Question: polarity	Frame	2	0.24
Question: polarity	Empathizer	2	0.24
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Frame	2	0.24
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Check	2	0.24
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Appealer	2	0.24
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Clue	2	0.24
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Justify	2	0.24
Request: action	Uptake	2	0.24
Request: action	Check	2	0.24
Request: action	Staller	2	0.24
Statement: inform	Justify	2	0.24
Statement: inform	Uptake	2	0.24
Statement: inform	Request: action	2	0.24
Statement: inform	Statement: opine	2	0.24
Statement: inform	Clue	2	0.24
Statement: inform	Alert	2	0.24
Statement: inform	Apology	2	0.24

Appendix 8. Three co-occurring speech acts at airport check-in counters and information counters

Double origin		Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Statement: inform	Apology	4	6.78
Check	Confirm	Filler	4	6.78
Filler	Statement: inform	Smoother	3	5.08
Request: action	Staller	Filler	3	5.08
Thanks	Empathizer	Statement: inform	3	5.08
Filler	Statement: inform	Frame	2	3.39
Filler	Statement: inform	Answer to request: accept	2	3.39
Filler	Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	3.39
Filler	Statement: inform	Alert	2	3.39
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Request: action	2	3.39
Filler	Question: confirmation	Empathizer	2	3.39
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Clue	2	3.39
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Answer to question: comply	Thanks	2	3.39
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Empathizer	Question: identification	2	3.39
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Empathizer	Statement: inform	2	3.39
Answer to question: comply	Appealer	Expand	2	3.39
Answer to question: comply	Expand	Uptake	2	3.39
Answer to question: comply	Expand	Filler	2	3.39
Question: identification	Statement: opine	Filler	2	3.39



Request: action	Answer to request: accept	Filler	2	3.39
Expand	Question: polarity	Answer to question: comply	2	3.39
Check	Confirm	Question: identification	2	3.39
Check	Clue	Filler	2	3.39
Empathizer	Frame	Statement: inform	2	3.39
Empathy	Statement: inform	Thanks	2	3.39
Statement: opine	Hedge	Filler	2	3.39

Appendix 9. Two co-occurring speech acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]

Centred speech act	Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Statement: inform	Filler	70	10.01
Check	Confirm	29	4.15
Answer to question: comply	Expand	23	3.29
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	22	3.15
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Thanks	21	3.00
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Expand	21	3.00
Filler	Thanks	18	2.58
Filler	Answer to question: comply	16	2.29
Filler	Statement: opine	16	2.29
Filler	Question: polarity	14	2.00
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Statement: opine	14	2.00
Filler	Question: identification	12	1.72
Filler	Expand	12	1.72
Filler	Question: confirmation	12	1.72
Statement: opine	Reply to statement: agree	12	1.72
Filler	Frame	10	1.43
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Confirm	10	1.43
Statement: inform	Thanks	10	1.43
Statement: opine	Uptake	10	1.43
Filler	Request: action	9	1.29
Filler	Check	9	1.29
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Answer to question: comply	9	1.29
Answer to question:	Uptake	8	1.14

comply			
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	8	1.14
Filler	Clue	8	1.14
Statement: inform	Uptake	8	1.14
Statement: opine	Frame	8	1.14
Filler	Confirm	7	1.00
Filler	Preface	7	1.00
Statement: opine	Expand	7	1.00
Answer to question: comply	Question: polarity	6	0.86
Answer to question: comply	Question: identification	6	0.86
Answer to question: comply	Appealer	6	0.86
Question: confirmation	Frame	6	0.86
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Uptake	6	0.86
Statement: inform	Frame	6	0.86
Statement: inform	Answer to question: comply	6	0.86
Answer to question: comply	Request: action	5	0.72
Expand	Query	5	0.72
Expand	Confirm	5	0.72
Filler	Staller	5	0.72
Filler	Uptake	5	0.72
Filler	Justify	5	0.72
Request: action	Answer to request: accept	5	0.72
Statement: opine	Emphasizer	5	0.72
Thanks	Greeting	5	0.72
Answer to question: comply	Question: confirmation	4	0.57
Answer to question: comply	Query	4	0.57
Answer to question: comply	Check	4	0.57

Expand	Check	4	0.57
Expand	Uptake	4	0.57
Filler	Precursor	4	0.57
Request: action	Frame	4	0.57
Statement: opine	Preface	4	0.57
Thanks	Answer to request: accept	4	0.57
Uptake	Question: identification	4	0.57
Answer to question: comply	Thanks	3	0.43
Confirm	Emphasizer	3	0.43
Expand	Question: identification	3	0.43
Expand	Reply to statement: agree	3	0.43
Filler	Apology	3	0.43
Filler	Greeting	3	0.43
Filler	Answer to request: accept	3	0.43
Filler	Emphasizer	3	0.43
Justify	Disagree	3	0.43
Justify	Query	3	0.43
Question: identification	Precursor	3	0.43
Question: polarity	Frame	3	0.43
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: confirmation	3	0.43
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Check	3	0.43
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Staller	3	0.43
Statement: opine	Precursor	3	0.43
Statement: opine	Thanks	3	0.43
Thanks	Question: polarity	3	0.43
Uptake	Confirm	3	0.43
Uptake	Query	3	0.43
Answer to question: comply	Staller	2	0.29
Clue	Hedge	2	0.29
Confirm	Statement: opine	2	0.29
Expand	Hedge	2	0.29
Filler	Query	2	0.29

Filler	Hedge	2	0.29
Filler	Suggest	2	0.29
Filler	Request: permission	2	0.29
Filler	Alert	2	0.29
Filler	Disagree	2	0.29
Greeting	Offer	2	0.29
Justify	Statement: opine	2	0.29
Preface	Hedge	2	0.29
Query	Disagree	2	0.29
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Request: action	2	0.29
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Greeting	2	0.29
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: identification	2	0.29
Reply to statement: agree	Clue	2	0.29
Reply to statement: agree	Justify	2	0.29
Reply to statement: agree	Filler	2	0.29
Request: action	Query	2	0.29
Statement: inform	Staller	2	0.29
Statement: inform	Appealer	2	0.29
Statement: inform	Alert	2	0.29
Statement: inform	Preface	2	0.29
Statement: inform	Expand	2	0.29
Statement: inform	Confirm	2	0.29
Statement: inform	Empathy	2	0.29
Statement: inform	Greeting	2	0.29
Statement: opine	Apology	2	0.29
Statement: opine	Statement: inform	2	0.29
Statement: opine	Question: identification	2	0.29
Thanks	Empathy	2	0.29
Uptake	Answer to request: accept	2	0.29
Uptake	Greeting	2	0.29
Uptake	Check	2	0.29

Appendix 10. Three co-occurring speech acts at the hotel concierges [and retail outlets]

Double origin		Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Check	Confirm	Filler	5	9.09
Statement: inform	Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	4	7.27
Check	Confirm	Expand	3	5.45
Statement: opine	Uptake	Filler	3	5.45
Statement: inform	Filler	Frame	2	3.64
Check	Confirm	Answer to question: comply	2	3.64
Check	Confirm	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	3.64
Answer to question: comply	Expand	Uptake	2	3.64
Answer to question: comply	Expand	Question: polarity	2	3.64
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Answer to question: comply	2	3.64
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Thanks	Statement: inform	2	3.64
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Expand	Statement: inform	2	3.64
Filler	Thanks	Statement: inform	2	3.64
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Uptake	2	3.64

Filler	Answer to question: comply	Question: polarity	2	3.64
Answer to question: comply	Uptake	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	3.64
Filler	Confirm	Statement: inform	2	3.64
Filler	Preface	Hedge	2	3.64
Expand	Query	Answer to question: comply	2	3.64
Expand	Check	Uptake	2	3.64
Confirm	Emphasizer	Check	2	3.64
Expand	Question: identification	Answer to question: comply	2	3.64
Confirm	Statement: opine	Check	2	3.64
Statement: opine	Question: identification	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	3.64

Appendix 11. Two co-occurring speech acts in Q&A sessions

Centred speech act	Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Statement: inform	423	19.89
Filler	Statement: opine	310	14.57
Filler	Precursor	127	5.97
Filler	Preface	105	4.94
Filler	Expand	105	4.94
Filler	Justify	99	4.65
Filler	Answer to question: comply	66	3.10
Filler	Empathizer	61	2.87
Filler	Question: identification	52	2.44
Filler	Monitor	43	2.02
Filler	Question: polarity	40	1.88
Statement: inform	Frame	37	1.74
Statement: opine	Frame	33	1.55
Filler	Frame	30	1.41
Statement: inform	Empathizer	29	1.36
Statement: opine	Empathizer	27	1.27
Statement: inform	Statement: opine	18	0.85
Statement: opine	Appealer	16	0.75
Statement: inform	Hedge	15	0.71
Statement: inform	Preface	14	0.66
Statement: opine	Preface	14	0.66
Statement: opine	Hedge	13	0.61
Filler	Answer to question: imply	12	0.56
Statement: inform	Appealer	12	0.56
Filler	Thanks	11	0.52
Filler	Greeting	11	0.52
Justify	Empathizer	11	0.52
Statement: inform	Expand	10	0.47
Statement: opine	Emphasizer	10	0.47
Empathizer	Monitor	9	0.42
Filler	Clue	9	0.42
Filler	Question: confirmation	9	0.42



Preface	Frame	9	0.42
Statement: inform	Emphasizer	9	0.42
Statement: opine	Expand	9	0.42
Precursor	Greeting	8	0.38
Preface	Empathizer	8	0.38
Statement: opine	Justify	8	0.38
Answer to question: comply	Empathizer	7	0.33
Expand	Hedge	6	0.28
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	6	0.28
Filler	Answer to request: accept	6	0.28
Frame	Appealer	6	0.28
Precursor	Question: polarity	6	0.28
Preface	Staller	6	0.28
Statement: opine	Monitor	6	0.28
Expand	Empathizer	5	0.24
Filler	Hedge	5	0.24
Filler	Emphasizer	5	0.24
Filler	Answer to question: disclaim	5	0.24
Frame	Thanks	5	0.24
Statement: inform	Monitor	5	0.24
Statement: inform	Precursor	5	0.24
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: acknowledge	5	0.24
Statement: inform	Justify	5	0.24
Statement: opine	Reply to statement: acknowledge	5	0.24
Thanks	Uptake	5	0.24
Answer to question: comply	Uptake	4	0.19
Answer to question: comply	Thanks	4	0.19
Answer to question: comply	Reply to statement: acknowledge	4	0.19
Answer to question: comply	Hedge	4	0.19
Filler	Request: action	4	0.19
Filler	Appealer	4	0.19
Justify	Frame	4	0.19
Justify	Hedge	4	0.19

Precursor	Question: identification	4	0.19
Preface	Appealer	4	0.19
Preface	Uptake	4	0.19
Preface	Hedge	4	0.19
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Monitor	4	0.19
Statement: inform	Uptake	4	0.19
Statement: inform	Greeting	4	0.19
Answer to question: comply	Frame	3	0.14
Answer to question: comply	Question: polarity	3	0.14
Answer to question: comply	Monitor	3	0.14
Check	Confirm	3	0.14
Empathizer	Hedge	3	0.14
Expand	Answer to question: comply	3	0.14
Expand	Preface	3	0.14
Expand	Frame	3	0.14
Filler	Apology	3	0.14
Filler	Uptake	3	0.14
Precursor	Monitor	3	0.14
Question: polarity	Alert	3	0.14
Statement: inform	Alert	3	0.14
Statement: inform	Apology	3	0.14
Statement: opine	Uptake	3	0.14
Statement: opine	Thanks	3	0.14
Thanks	Answer to request: accept	3	0.14
Alert	Request: action	2	0.09
Answer to question: comply	Appealer	2	0.09
Answer to request: accept	Greeting	2	0.09
Answer to request: accept	Alert	2	0.09
Clue	Uptake	2	0.09
Confirm	Statement: inform	2	0.09
Empathizer	Clue	2	0.09
Empathizer	Appealer	2	0.09
Empathizer	Staller	2	0.09
Empathizer	Frame	2	0.09
Emphasizer	Expand	2	0.09
Emphasizer	Reply to statement: agree	2	0.09

Expand	Thanks	2	0.09
Expand	Justify	2	0.09
Expand	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	0.09
Expand	Appealer	2	0.09
Filler	Answer to question: supply	2	0.09
Filler	Check	2	0.09
Filler	Answer to request: reject	2	0.09
Filler	Alert	2	0.09
Frame	Question: identification	2	0.09
Frame	Question: polarity	2	0.09
Precursor	Empathizer	2	0.09
Precursor	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	0.09
Precursor	Appealer	2	0.09
Precursor	Thanks	2	0.09
Precursor	Frame	2	0.09
Precursor	Answer to request: accept	2	0.09
Preface	Answer to question: comply	2	0.09
Preface	Justify	2	0.09
Preface	Thanks	2	0.09
Question: identification	Answer to question: comply	2	0.09
Question: polarity	Uptake	2	0.09
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Preface	2	0.09
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Staller	2	0.09
Statement: inform	Thanks	2	0.09
Statement: inform	Answer to request: accept	2	0.09
Statement: opine	Apology	2	0.09
Thanks	Appealer	2	0.09
Uptake	Answer to question: evade	2	0.09

Appendix 12. Three co-occurring speech acts in Q&A sessions

Double origin		Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Statement: opine	Empathizer	16	10.00
Filler	Statement: inform	Empathizer	10	6.25
Filler	Statement: opine	Frame	10	6.25
Filler	Statement: inform	Frame	9	5.63
Filler	Statement: inform	Preface	6	3.75
Filler	Precursor	Greeting	5	3.13
Statement: inform	Appealer	Filler	5	3.13
Statement: opine	Hedge	Filler	5	3.13
Statement: opine	Preface	Filler	5	3.13
Filler	Statement: inform	Justify	4	2.50
Filler	Precursor	Answer to request: accept	4	2.50
Filler	Precursor	Question: identification	4	2.50
Filler	Justify	Empathizer	4	2.50
Statement: inform	Hedge	Filler	4	2.50
Statement: opine	Appealer	Filler	4	2.50
Expand	Hedge	Filler	4	2.50
Filler	Statement: inform	Precursor	3	1.88
Filler	Statement: inform	Expand	3	1.88
Filler	Statement: inform	Statement: opine	3	1.88
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Preface	3	1.88
Filler	Expand	Empathizer	3	1.88
Precursor	Question: polarity	Filler	3	1.88
Justify	Frame	Filler	3	1.88
Empathizer	Monitor	Filler	3	1.88
Frame	Thanks	Filler	3	1.88
Filler	Statement: inform	Emphasizer	2	1.25
Filler	Statement: inform	Answer to question: comply	2	1.25
Filler	Statement: inform	Monitor	2	1.25

Filler	Justify	Preface	2	1.25
Filler	Statement: opine	Expand	2	1.25
Filler	Preface	Expand	2	1.25
Filler	Preface	Empathizer	2	1.25
Statement: inform	Uptake	Filler	2	1.25
Statement: inform	Greeting	Filler	2	1.25
Statement: inform	Apology	Filler	2	1.25
Statement: opine	Empathizer	Hedge	2	1.25
Statement: opine	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Filler	2	1.25
Preface	Appealer	Frame	2	1.25
Preface	Empathizer	Staller	2	1.25
Preface	Uptake	Filler	2	1.25
Preface	Staller	Filler	2	1.25
Uptake	Answer to question: evade	Thanks	2	1.25

Appendix 13. Two co-occurring speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant

<b>Centred speech act</b>	<b>Co-occurring speech act</b>	<b>Co-occurring instance</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Filler	Statement: inform	885	20.51
Filler	Answer to question: comply	524	12.14
Filler	Expand	311	7.21
Filler	Justify	299	6.93
Filler	Statement: opine	184	4.26
Filler	Question: identification	126	2.92
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	120	2.78
Filler	Question: polarity	108	2.50
Filler	Precursor	96	2.22
Filler	Frame	91	2.11
Filler	Question: confirmation	85	1.97
Statement: inform	Frame	68	1.58
Filler	Answer to question: imply	66	1.53
Filler	Preface	65	1.51
Filler	Monitor	63	1.46
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Statement: inform	51	1.18
Filler	Confirm	49	1.14
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Expand	49	1.14
Filler	Empathizer	37	0.86
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Statement: opine	36	0.83
Filler	Thanks	34	0.79
Filler	Hedge	33	0.76
Statement: inform	Empathizer	33	0.76
Statement: opine	Reply to statement: agree	29	0.67
Answer to question: comply	Expand	24	0.56
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Empathizer	23	0.53
Reply to statement:	Thanks	22	0.51

acknowledge			
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Justify	22	0.51
Statement: opine	Frame	22	0.51
Filler	Check	21	0.49
Answer to question: comply	Frame	20	0.46
Filler	Request: action	20	0.46
Answer to question: comply	Hedge	18	0.42
Justify	Empathizer	17	0.39
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Answer to question: comply	17	0.39
Statement: inform	Hedge	16	0.37
Answer to question: comply	Uptake	15	0.35
Filler	Uptake	13	0.30
Question: identification	Frame	13	0.30
Statement: inform	Monitor	13	0.30
Question: polarity	Frame	12	0.28
Expand	Justify	11	0.25
Filler	Reply to statement: agree	11	0.25
Frame	Thanks	11	0.25
Statement: opine	Hedge	11	0.25
Statement: opine	Empathizer	11	0.25
Answer to question: comply	Question: identification	10	0.23
Filler	Confirm	10	0.23
Frame	Precursor	10	0.23
Answer to question: comply	Empathizer	9	0.21
Filler	Greeting	9	0.21
Filler	Answer to request: accept	9	0.21
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: polarity	9	0.21
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: agree	9	0.21
Answer to question: comply	Question: polarity	8	0.19
Answer to question: comply	Confirm	8	0.19
Filler	Alert	8	0.19
Justify	Frame	8	0.19
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Monitor	8	0.19

Answer to question: comply	Question: confirmation	7	0.16
Check	Confirm	7	0.16
Filler	Answer to question: supply	7	0.16
Frame	Question: confirmation	7	0.16
Justify	Hedge	7	0.16
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Frame	7	0.16
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Reply to statement: agree	7	0.16
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Confirm	7	0.16
Statement: opine	Justify	7	0.16
Thanks	Greeting	7	0.16
Expand	Frame	6	0.14
Expand	Empathizer	6	0.14
Expand	Reply to statement: agree	6	0.14
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Precursor	6	0.14
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: confirmation	6	0.14
Statement: opine	Monitor	6	0.14
Answer to question: comply	Justify	5	0.12
Answer to question: comply	Monitor	5	0.12
Expand	Monitor	5	0.12
Expand	Hedge	5	0.12
Frame	Reply to statement: agree	5	0.12
Frame	Answer to question: imply	5	0.12
Question: identification	Confirm	5	0.12
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Confirm	5	0.12
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Hedge	5	0.12
Statement: inform	Greeting	5	0.12
Statement: opine	Thanks	5	0.12
Statement: opine	Reply to statement: object	5	0.12
Answer to question: comply	Appealer	4	0.09
Apology	Smoother	4	0.09



Empathizer	Preface	4	0.09
Empathizer	Answer to question: imply	4	0.09
Expand	Confirm	4	0.09
Filler	Answer to question: disclaim	4	0.09
Filler	Empathy	4	0.09
Frame	Monitor	4	0.09
Frame	Preface	4	0.09
Frame	Hedge	4	0.09
Monitor	Empathizer	4	0.09
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Uptake	4	0.09
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Check	4	0.09
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: identification	4	0.09
Statement: inform	Justify	4	0.09
Statement: inform	Expand	4	0.09
Statement: inform	Statement: opine	4	0.09
Statement: opine	Emphasizer	4	0.09
Statement: opine	Question: polarity	4	0.09
Uptake	Confirm	4	0.09
Answer to question: comply	Emphasizer	3	0.07
Answer to question: imply	Uptake	3	0.07
Expand	Question: polarity	3	0.07
Filler	Apology	3	0.07
Filler	Express_wish	3	0.07
Justify	Monitor	3	0.07
Monitor	Preface	3	0.07
Precursor	Hedge	3	0.07
Question: confirmation	Thanks	3	0.07
Question: identification	Precursor	3	0.07
Question: identification	Monitor	3	0.07
Question: identification	Apology	3	0.07
Question: polarity	Empathizer	3	0.07
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Preface	3	0.07
Statement: inform	Preface	3	0.07

Statement: inform	Thanks	3	0.07
Statement: inform	Uptake	3	0.07
Statement: inform	Emphasizer	3	0.07
Statement: opine	Precursor	3	0.07
Statement: opine	Uptake	3	0.07
Alert	Answer to question: comply	2	0.05
Answer to question: comply	Precursor	2	0.05
Answer to question: comply	Thanks	2	0.05
Answer to question: imply	Hedge	2	0.05
Confirm	Hedge	2	0.05
Confirm	Uptake	2	0.05
Expand	Statement: opine	2	0.05
Expand	Check	2	0.05
Filler	Disagree	2	0.05
Filler	Smoother	2	0.05
Filler	Appealer	2	0.05
Filler	Starter	2	0.05
Filler	Query	2	0.05
Filler	Reply to statement: object	2	0.05
Frame	Empathizer	2	0.05
Frame	Greeting	2	0.05
Hedge	Uptake	2	0.05
Justify	Reply to statement: agree	2	0.05
Monitor	Reply to statement: agree	2	0.05
Monitor	Confirm	2	0.05
Precursor	Question: polarity	2	0.05
Precursor	Empathizer	2	0.05
Preface	Uptake	2	0.05
Question: confirmation	Monitor	2	0.05
Question: identification	Query	2	0.05
Question: identification	Empathizer	2	0.05
Question: polarity	Thanks	2	0.05
Question: polarity	Uptake	2	0.05
Question: polarity	Monitor	2	0.05
Question: polarity	Request: action	2	0.05
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Appealer	2	0.05

Reply to statement: agree	Smoother	2	0.05
Reply to statement: agree	Question: identification	2	0.05
Reply to statement: agree	Uptake	2	0.05
Request: action	Answer to request: accept	2	0.05
Statement: inform	Confirm	2	0.05
Statement: inform	Answer to question: comply	2	0.05
Statement: inform	Smoother	2	0.05
Statement: inform	Question: identification	2	0.05
Statement: inform	Appealer	2	0.05
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: object	2	0.05
Statement: opine	Preface	2	0.05
Thanks	Alert	2	0.05
Thanks	Uptake	2	0.05
Uptake	Appealer	2	0.05

Appendix 14. Three co-occurring speech acts in job interviews for the post of research assistant

Double origin		Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Frame	Statement: inform	25	12.44
Filler	Empathizer	Statement: inform	12	5.74
Filler	Frame	Precursor	9	4.31
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Statement: inform	8	3.83
Filler	Statement: inform	Statement: opine	6	2.87
Statement: inform	Monitor	Filler	6	2.87
Filler	Frame	Question: polarity	5	2.39
Filler	Expand	Reply to statement: acknowledge	5	2.39
Filler	Hedge	Justify	5	2.39
Statement: opine	Reply to statement: agree	Filler	5	2.39
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Hedge	4	1.91
Filler	Statement: inform	Justify	4	1.91
Filler	Hedge	Statement: opine	4	1.91
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: agree	Filler	4	1.91
Justify	Frame	Filler	4	1.91
Filler	Frame	Question: confirmation	3	1.44
Filler	Frame	Answer to question: comply	3	1.44
Filler	Frame	Statement: opine	3	1.44
Filler	Thanks	Question: confirmation	3	1.44
Filler	Precursor	Hedge	3	1.44
Filler	Question: identification	Answer to question: comply	3	1.44
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Uptake	3	1.44

Filler	Statement: inform	Hedge	3	1.44
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Statement: opine	Filler	3	1.44
Expand	Reply to statement: agree	Reply to statement: acknowledge	3	1.44
Filler	Frame	Thanks	2	0.96
Filler	Frame	Alert	2	0.96
Filler	Frame	Expand	2	0.96
Filler	Thanks	Greeting	2	0.96
Filler	Question: identification	Empathizer	2	0.96
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Empathizer	2	0.96
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Justify	2	0.96
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Statement: opine	2	0.96
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Expand	2	0.96
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Monitor	2	0.96
Filler	Empathizer	Justify	2	0.96
Filler	Empathizer	Question: polarity	2	0.96
Filler	Question: confirmation	Statement: opine	2	0.96
Filler	Expand	Statement: inform	2	0.96
Filler	Expand	Justify	2	0.96
Filler	Expand	Monitor	2	0.96
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Justify	2	0.96
Filler	Statement: inform	Confirm	2	0.96
Filler	Statement: opine	Justify	2	0.96
Filler	Justify	Check	2	0.96
Filler	Justify	Monitor	2	0.96
Filler	Check	Confirm	2	0.96
Filler	Question: polarity	Answer to question: imply	2	0.96

Statement: inform	Frame	Empathizer	2	0.96
Statement: inform	Hedge	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	0.96
Statement: inform	Preface	Filler	2	0.96
Expand	Question: polarity	Filler	2	0.96
Expand	Confirm	Filler	2	0.96
Expand	Hedge	Filler	2	0.96
Statement: opine	Empathizer	Filler	2	0.96
Question: identification	Confirm	Filler	2	0.96
Frame	Reply to statement: agree	Statement: opine	2	0.96
Frame	Preface	Statement: inform	2	0.96
Monitor	Preface	Filler	2	0.96
Monitor	Reply to statement: agree	Filler	2	0.96
Uptake	Confirm	Filler	2	0.96

Appendix 15. Two co-occurring speech acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee

Centred speech act	Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Answer to question: comply	895	19.71
Filler	Justify	454	10.00
Filler	Statement: inform	411	9.05
Filler	Expand	234	5.15
Filler	Question: identification	216	4.76
Filler	Statement: opine	200	4.40
Filler	Precursor	181	3.99
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Answer to question: comply	140	3.08
Filler	Answer to question: imply	118	2.60
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Statement: inform	110	2.42
Filler	Question: polarity	97	2.14
Filler	Frame	95	2.09
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Statement: opine	79	1.74
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Justify	64	1.41
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	62	1.37
Filler	Monitor	55	1.21
Filler	Hedge	49	1.08
Filler	Preface	48	1.06
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Precursor	45	0.99
Filler	Confirm	40	0.88
Filler	Empathizer	39	0.86
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Expand	36	0.79
Statement: inform	Frame	35	0.77
Answer to question: comply	Hedge	34	0.75
Reply to statement:	Answer to question: imply	32	0.70

acknowledge			
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Frame	31	0.68
Filler	Question: confirmation	29	0.64
Precursor	Frame	27	0.59
Statement: opine	Frame	25	0.55
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: identification	23	0.51
Statement: inform	Empathizer	22	0.48
Precursor	Empathizer	20	0.44
Filler	Answer to question: supply	19	0.42
Filler	Thanks	19	0.42
Confirm	Check	16	0.35
Expand	Hedge	16	0.35
Answer to question: comply	Frame	14	0.31
Question: identification	Frame	14	0.31
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: confirmation	14	0.31
Filler	Check	12	0.26
Statement: opine	Empathizer	12	0.26
Statement: opine	Thanks	12	0.26
Answer to question: comply	Justify	11	0.24
Filler	Confirm	11	0.24
Frame	Thanks	11	0.24
Question: polarity	Frame	11	0.24
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: polarity	11	0.24
Statement: inform	Monitor	11	0.24
Answer to question: comply	Question: polarity	10	0.22
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Empathizer	10	0.22
Answer to question: comply	Question: confirmation	9	0.20
Answer to question: comply	Uptake	9	0.20
Answer to question: comply	Expand	8	0.18
Filler	Uptake	8	0.18
Justify	Hedge	8	0.18
Reply to statement:	Confirm	8	0.18



acknowledge			
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Monitor	8	0.18
Statement: inform	Justify	8	0.18
Answer to question: comply	Empathizer	7	0.15
Answer to question: imply	Hedge	7	0.15
Frame	Preface	7	0.15
Frame	Question: confirmation	7	0.15
Question: polarity	Empathizer	7	0.15
Statement: opine	Monitor	7	0.15
Answer to question: comply	Question: identification	6	0.13
Filler	Request: action	6	0.13
Justify	Empathizer	6	0.13
Justify	Expand	6	0.13
Precursor	Monitor	6	0.13
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Preface	6	0.13
Answer to question: comply	Appealer	5	0.11
Expand	Frame	5	0.11
Filler	Reply to statement: agree	5	0.11
Question: identification	Empathizer	5	0.11
Question: polarity	Monitor	5	0.11
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Thanks	5	0.11
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Confirm	5	0.11
Statement: opine	Question: identification	5	0.11
Statement: opine	Hedge	5	0.11
Answer to question: comply	Statement: opine	4	0.09
Answer to question: comply	Confirm	4	0.09
Answer to question: comply	Precursor	4	0.09
Answer to question: comply	Monitor	4	0.09
Answer to question: comply	Query	4	0.09
Empathizer	Monitor	4	0.09
Filler	Answer to request: accept	4	0.09
Frame	Monitor	4	0.09
Monitor	Confirm	4	0.09

Precursor	Question: polarity	4	0.09
Question: identification	Monitor	4	0.09
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Check	4	0.09
Statement: inform	Statement: opine	4	0.09
Statement: inform	Thanks	4	0.09
Statement: inform	Hedge	4	0.09
Statement: opine	Uptake	4	0.09
Statement: opine	Precursor	4	0.09
Empathizer	Confirm	3	0.07
Empathizer	Preface	3	0.07
Expand	Monitor	3	0.07
Expand	Confirm	3	0.07
Expand	Empathizer	3	0.07
Filler	Appealer	3	0.07
Filler	Answer to question: disclaim	3	0.07
Filler	Alert	3	0.07
Frame	Request: action	3	0.07
Frame	Hedge	3	0.07
Justify	Statement: opine	3	0.07
Precursor	Hedge	3	0.07
Question: confirmation	Confirm	3	0.07
Question: identification	Check	3	0.07
Question: polarity	Confirm	3	0.07
Statement: opine	Appealer	3	0.07
Statement: opine	Expand	3	0.07
Statement: opine	Preface	3	0.07
Answer to question: comply	Check	2	0.04
Answer to question: comply	Confirm	2	0.04
Confirm	Reply to statement: agree	2	0.04
Expand	Question: confirmation	2	0.04
Expand	Reply to statement: object	2	0.04
Filler	Apology	2	0.04
Filler	Emphasizer	2	0.04
Filler	Empathy	2	0.04
Filler	Express_wish	2	0.04
Filler	Elicit-repeat	2	0.04

Frame	Empathizer	2	0.04
Hedge	Question: confirmation	2	0.04
Justify	Question: identification	2	0.04
Justify	Reply to statement: agree	2	0.04
Monitor	Appealer	2	0.04
Monitor	Hedge	2	0.04
Question: identification	Confirm	2	0.04
Question: identification	Expand	2	0.04
Question: polarity	Uptake	2	0.04
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Empathy	2	0.04
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Appealer	2	0.04
Statement: inform	Reply to statement: agree	2	0.04
Statement: inform	Alert	2	0.04
Statement: opine	Reply to statement: agree	2	0.04
Uptake	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	0.04

Appendix 16. Three co-occurring speech acts in placement interviews for the post of hotel trainee

Double origin		Co-occurring speech act	Co-occurring instance	Percentage (%)
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Hedge	18	6.25
Filler	Statement: opine	Frame	16	5.56
Filler	Precursor	Frame	15	5.21
Filler	Statement: inform	Frame	15	5.21
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Statement: inform	10	3.47
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Confirm	8	2.78
Filler	Expand	Hedge	8	2.78
Filler	Precursor	Empathizer	7	2.43
Filler	Question: identification	Statement: opine	7	2.43
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Expand	7	2.43
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Frame	7	2.43
Filler	Empathizer	Statement: inform	6	2.08
Filler	Statement: opine	Hedge	6	2.08
Filler	Precursor	Statement: opine	5	1.74
Filler	Precursor	Reply to statement: acknowledge	5	1.74
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Reply to statement: acknowledge	5	1.74
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Justify	5	1.74
Confirm	Check	Filler	5	1.74
Filler	Question: identification	Frame	4	1.39
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Uptake	4	1.39
Filler	Empathizer	Justify	4	1.39

Filler	Expand	Frame	4	1.39
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Statement: opine	4	1.39
Filler	Statement: opine	Statement: inform	4	1.39
Filler	Precursor	Question: identification	3	1.04
Filler	Question: identification	Answer to question: comply	3	1.04
Filler	Question: identification	Justify	3	1.04
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Question: polarity	3	1.04
Filler	Justify	Reply to statement: acknowledge	3	1.04
Filler	Question: polarity	Statement: opine	3	1.04
Filler	Question: polarity	Frame	3	1.04
Filler	Statement: opine	Thanks	3	1.04
Filler	Frame	Thanks	3	1.04
Statement: opine	Frame	Reply to statement: acknowledge	3	1.04
Statement: opine	Frame	Thanks	3	1.04
Expand	Confirm	Filler	3	1.04
Confirm	Check	Reply to statement: acknowledge	3	1.04
Filler	Preface	Thanks	2	0.69
Filler	Precursor	Monitor	2	0.69
Filler	Question: identification	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	0.69
Filler	Question: identification	Statement: inform	2	0.69
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Monitor	2	0.69
Filler	Answer to question: comply	Statement: inform	2	0.69
Filler	Empathizer	Statement: opine	2	0.69
Filler	Empathizer	Preface	2	0.69
Filler	Monitor	Confirm	2	0.69

Filler	Monitor	Statement: inform	2	0.69
Filler	Confirm	Answer to question: imply	2	0.69
Filler	Answer to question: imply	Statement: opine	2	0.69
Filler	Answer to question: imply	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	0.69
Filler	Answer to question: imply	Hedge	2	0.69
Filler	Justify	Emphasizer	2	0.69
Filler	Justify	Statement: inform	2	0.69
Filler	Justify	Expand	2	0.69
Filler	Justify	Hedge	2	0.69
Filler	Question: confirmation	Frame	2	0.69
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Question: polarity	2	0.69
Filler	Reply to statement: acknowledge	Frame	2	0.69
Filler	Statement: inform	Answer to request: accept	2	0.69
Filler	Statement: inform	Thanks	2	0.69
Reply to statement: acknowledge	Justify	Expand	2	0.69
Answer to question: comply	Query	Filler	2	0.69
Statement: inform	Alert	Filler	2	0.69
Statement: opine	Question: identification	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	0.69
Precursor	Monitor	Empathizer	2	0.69
Precursor	Empathizer	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	0.69
Precursor	Hedge	Reply to statement: acknowledge	2	0.69
Question: polarity	Empathizer	Filler	2	0.69
Question: polarity	Uptake	Filler	2	0.69
Frame	Preface	Filler	2	0.69

Frame	Hedge	Answer to question: comply	2	0.69
Empathizer	Monitor	Filler	2	0.69

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