

# UPWARD INFLUENCE: A LINGUISTIC ACT OF GAINING COMPLIANCE

## *Introduction*

*A Taxonomy of Speech Acts and Relevance Conditions*

*Language and Speech in Upward Influence*

*Foci of Research on Upward Influence Strategies: An overview*

Motives and strategies for upward influence

*Conceptualising Speech Act Theory model for upward influencing*

*Analysis of Sample Dialogue using Constitutive Rules of Speech Act Theory*

*Discussion of the Analysis*

*Conclusions*

## ***Abstract***

Employees within the organization are faced with the task of influencing their superiors and gaining compliance. By effectively using influence they can secure desired results and resources from their superiors. According to scholars and researchers use of appropriate upward influence strategies also contribute to the effective functioning of the organization. While considerable work has been done on strategies, literature on the medium through which these strategies are applied, viz. speech, is sparse. The study attempts to bridge the gap by demonstrating through analysis of dialogue in the corporate environment that study of speech and familiarity with rules can facilitate the process of upward influence. It draws on Speech Act Theory to prove that employees can frame their strategies for successful upward influencing by structuring them in accordance with linguistic rules.

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## ***Introduction***

Influence has been described as “getting one’s way” (Kipnis, Schmidt and Wilkinson, 1980). It could be of two types – downward and upward. Attempts made by the superior to influence the subordinate are referred to as downward and when there is a reversal of the effort it is called upward. The focus of the paper is on Upward Influence (UI) in organisations.

“The existing research [on upward communication] is based largely on individual-psychological models of communication and traditional hierarchical models of leader-member relations” (Waldron, 1999:252). Studies indicate that subordinates, by effectively using influence strategies, can secure desired results and resources from their superiors. Hence, their choice of influence strategies is indicative of their level of success within the organisation. Similarly, from the organisational point of view ability to understand the superior and use appropriate upward influence strategies also contributes to the effective functioning of the company (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; Gabarro, 1979; Kanter, 1977; Pelz, 1952; Weinstein, 1979) as it points towards happy relationships between employees and managers. Though upward influence has been considered to be one of the relevant areas for work in organisational communication research (Jablin, 1985) empirical evidence and field studies that could further add to the existing literature are sparse as compared to that on downward influence. A major chunk of the studies in this area have been conducted from the psychological, marketing, sociological and human resource perspective. Further, the medium through which these strategies are applied, viz. speech has been scantily researched upon. An understanding then of the speech acts

used in UI calls for an integration of existing literature on the choice and use of upward influence strategies and linguistic acts.

The purpose of this article is to illustrate a linguistic approach to understanding the nature, significance and application of UI strategies in organisations. The approach involves use of language at different stages in UI. This will be done by categorising language and by demonstrating, through analysis of a dialogue, how a change in a rule/set of rules can alter the response in UI. In order to do this we shall borrow from linguistic philosophy (Speech Act Theory, Searle, 1969) and social psychology. The performative view of language, with emphasis on linguistic action and relevance to the situation (Grice, 1975) rather than comprehension will be the primary concern of the paper.

First we will introduce a brief framework to understand the speech act theory (SAT) as presented by its first authors (Austin and Searle). This will be followed by a review on existing literature by social psychologists on UI strategies. Finally we will present an example of UI speech acts. We will also demonstrate, sustain and develop the idea that "how to do things with words" in the organisational setup can be translated to "how to do upward influence with words".

Our goal in this paper is to show

1. how and why speech act theory and relevance conditions can be applied to UI
2. what strategies are used in the organisation for UI from the socio-linguistic perspective
3. how such an approach can facilitate UI.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to give an exhaustive analytic review on the debate around speech acts from a philosophical point of view, and their applications. These are, however, of primary interest both for us and other researchers in the field.

The paper begins with a brief discussion of SAT and the Co-operative Principle (CP) and maxims as postulated by H.P. Grice. A review on the literature on SAT and its application to discourse patterns as well as influence strategies applied in the organisational setup follows. Next section is a review on the research on upward influence strategies from the point of view of motives and goals of change agent. This section documents many of the strategies identified by the researchers. The subsequent section conceptualises a model of SAT for UI using a model of communication. This model is then applied to dialogue in the organization and conclusions are derived.

(Throughout the paper the two words strategies and tactics would be used interchangeably and synonymously. Both are indicative of moves made by subordinates to influence the superior).

### ***A Taxonomy of Speech Acts and Relevance Conditions***

SAT demonstrates that utterances have the power to do things, not only do they represent ideas, but they also accomplish tasks that would not be done as effectively (if at all). For example, requesting – *Please close the door*; commanding – *Get out!* For speech act theoreticians “speaking a language is engaging in a (highly complex) rule-governed form of behavior” (Searle,

1969:12). Pioneering work in this area has been done by Austin (1962), and later developed by Searle (1969). Austin's theory enumerates the fact that usage of certain verbs commits the speaker to a certain act. E.g. "I promise to complete the project." The effect of an utterance of this kind commits the speaker to an act of promising. Searle extends this concept of Austin to incorporate different kinds of speech acts that can be used when making utterances in communication "An utterance comprises the particular words, spoken or written, that carry out a specific message strategy.[...] Within face-to-face interaction, an utterance may be a single conversational turn, part of a turn or several successive sentences" (Wilson, 2002:27).

Speech act demonstrates that utterances have the power to do things. They provide a way of talking about utterances in terms of the surface grammatical structure, context in which they are made, intentions, attitudes and expectations of the participants and generally the unspoken rules and conventions that come in play when a message is sent and received. Familiarity with these rules and conventions would help in a better choice and design of an influence tactic and its ultimate success in gaining compliance. This would be highly relevant in the organisational setup, where time is limited and compliance is a must.

Searle (1969) postulates that when a person makes an utterance, it is primarily to perform a speech act. The effects of these acts could be of two or possibly three kinds – locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. Locutionary acts are those acts that involve locutions or simple noises that a person makes when he is trying to communicate, that is, it is an act of producing a grammatically recognizable utterance. If the locution has some

content, it turns into an illocution or is an illocutionary act. Some examples of an illocutionary act are: requesting, promising, warning, convincing etc. Finally, if the illocution has some effect on the target it turns into a perlocutionary act - the act of accepting the fact that the speaker by saying what he does, intends to bring about an desired effect in the hearer in addition to those achieved by the illocutionary acts. For communication in organisations, most important is the illocutionary point of an utterance, i.e. what the speaker intends to achieve by making a particular utterance in a particular context. In other words, it is the intention of the agent that spearheads the interaction process or determines the choice of strategy in the influencing process. Searle (1973) proposes that illocutionary acts be classified into five categories, which are as follows:

1. Representatives where speakers are committed in varying degrees to the truth of the propositions they have uttered: swearing, believing and reporting
2. Directives, where speakers try to get hearers to do something: commanding, requesting, influencing and urging
3. Commissives, commit the speakers in varying degrees of action e.g. vowing, promising and undertaking
4. Declarations, whereby speakers alter states of affairs by performing such acts as “I pronounce you man and wife”
5. Expressives, where speakers express attitudes: congratulating, apologizing.

While all five categories are important from the point of view of communication, the first two, namely, representatives and directives are of greater significance in the study of communication in the corporate world.

Searle (1969) postulates two types of rules – regulative and constitutive which help in gauging the intent of the sender and in differentiating between the different types of speech acts. Regulative acts conform to social conventions and are those acts that “govern preexisting form of behaviour” (Wilson, 2002:193). Examples of this rule could be table manners or etiquette. Constitutive rules also conform to social conventions. However, the point at which they depart from regulative rules is that they define and create forms of behaviour. For example, making an utterance counts as performing a certain act or “Doing X counts as Y” (Wilson, 2002:193). Any violations recorded or observed therein are indicative of erratic behaviour on the part of the doer. As per the rules of Searle, all speech acts are governed by constitutive rules that define the conditions in which the speech act takes place. They exemplify the conditions that must exist for a speech act to take place.

To perform a speech act correctly, familiarity with the conditions is essential. These conditions are referred to as appropriateness or felicity conditions. These would comprise knowledge that users of the language share together in understanding of the context. Searle proposes (1969) that these appropriateness conditions be labelled as preparatory, essential or sincerity conditions. For example, the illocutionary act of making a statement carries the following appropriateness conditions:

“ 1. speaker believes p (where p is the proposition)

2. speaker has evidence for the truth of p (or reasons for believing p)
3. it is not obvious to both speaker and addressee that the addressee knows p (or does not need to be reminded of p)
4. speaker has some reason for wanting addressee to know p (or to remember p)” (Pratt, 1977:82).

If these appropriateness conditions are extended to influencing behaviour, the stage would be set for the performance of a certain strategy through the utterance of rule-governed speech acts.

From a linguist’s perspective these appropriateness conditions are more basic in understanding an utterance than probably the explicit verbal construct. Going beyond the lexical and the syntactical format of the words and the sentences and to understand them in the context in which they occur is what “Hymes (1971) has called our ‘communicative competence’ ” (Traugott 1973:6). However, while the speech act theory concentrates on single sentence utterances it could be expanded to incorporate multi-sentence constructs as would be evidenced in arguing, influencing, persuading etc. (Pratt, 1977). Viewing the speech act of influencing as a communication process would entail:

1. Familiarity with felicity conditions
2. Act of making utterances
3. Receptivity of the audience
4. Response

The ‘influencing competence’ of the sender and the impact of the message would only be ascertained when a desired response would be framed.



The relevance of an utterance in a given context is close to the CP and maxims, as postulated by Grice (1975). At this point it would be appropriate to dwell upon Grice's CP and maxims. CP states: "Make your contribution such as is required, at the state at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged"(Grice,1975:45). Grice observes that a conversational exchange is a succession of interrelated remarks, which are a result of the co-operative effort of the participants, each of whom recognises a "common purpose" or a "mutually accepted direction" in which the conversation is to proceed. He further formulates four maxims – maxim of quantity (amount of information given), quality (nature of information), manner (mode of expression) and relation (relevance of topic to situation/Contextual relevance). The last of these, maxim of Relation – would take into account the analysis of the appropriateness conditions in situations where the speaker by making an assertion wants "the hearer to do X". His motive is to cajole, persuade, influence "the hearer" to perform a specific action. The appropriateness conditions (desire to get the addressee perform a certain act) are embedded in the utterance itself. According to the definition of the maxim of Relation, the relevance to the appropriateness condition or the "assertibility condition" is implicit in the utterance. Assertions whose relevance is "tellable" (Pratt, 1977) represent styles of affairs that are unusual, problematic and contrary to situations. In these situations, the utterance intends to produce in the addressee a belief, evaluation of the belief and a subsequent response. The speaker intends bringing about a change in the perspective of the hearer by creating a situation in which there is suspension of existing belief, re- interpretation of the situation (problematic or otherwise), assignment of meaning and possible change in viewpoint.

The application of the Speech Act theory and Maxim of Relevance to the process of influencing can yield interesting results. This process is a specific design of speech act that is tellable. The contextual relevance of the illocutionary acts help in bringing about a (un)willing suspension of belief in problematic situations or otherwise for rectification of the situation.

### ***Language and Speech in Upward Influence***

This section provides a brief overview on existing literature on use of language in the process of UI. This review provides us a with a base from where we can take off in our analysis of UI and the role of linguistic acts in the fructification of the process.

Drake and Moberg (1986) made an early attempt to position workplace influence at the discourse level. They stated that most of the analysis on compliance gaining focussed on rewards or exchange of resources. However, they concluded by stating that the linguistic act of gaining compliance was in itself “intrinsically rewarding”. The change in emotional relationship between the superior and the subordinate on gaining compliance could be equated with exchange of external rewards on success at influencing. Drake and Moberg (1986) in their analysis paid minute attention to the micro dynamics of leader-follower influence and have successfully attempted analysis of relational dimensions.

There have also been some interesting studies conducted by Fairhurst (1993), Fairhurst and Chandler, (1989) on discourse between leader and follower. They have viewed language and discourse patterns between

leaders and followers as being mutual rather than one-way. This perforce turns influencing as an ongoing process which necessitates two-way communication.

Together with the talk patterns there has also been some analysis on the content of the message to be delivered. Among other things, the content of the message has been commonly understood to be one of the major causes of success in relationships between superiors and subordinates (Schilit and Locke, 1982) as 50 to 75 percent of the time in the organisations is spent on communicating (Starling, 1993) be it writing, speaking, reading or listening. In fact, in most of the studies conducted on upward influence strategies maximum amount of emphasis is laid on “the words that people use to persuade others” (Kipnis, 1984:81).

Existing literature on content analysis focusses on the importance, the feasibility and the desirability of the influence request (Yukl, et al.,1996). Yukl et al.(1996) in a study conducted on 195 MBA students found that the importance of the request (context) and the element of “enjoyability” to the recipient (content) was higher than type of strategy used or the power of the agent on the target.

While there is an appreciation of the need for analysis of the content, the same does not hold true for an understanding of the language or speech that goes into the making of an influence strategy. Probably one of the reasons why language and speech have not been extensively researched in the context of the corporate world is that language has been looked upon as a “conduit” (Starling, 1993: 10). In the process of communication, language is

merely viewed as a vehicle or mode of transmission of message. What makes the whole process so intriguing and worth researching is the fact that without changing the basic construct of the language, the meaning of the utterances can have a different connotation in the mind of the hearer with a brief alteration in the situation or the context.

An analysis of upward influence from the point of view of verbal communication would reveal that words used for influencing when conjoined together to form messages do not, in themselves make language, speech or discourse. In communication it is important for the utterance to be appropriate to the event than to be linguistically accurate (Hymes, 1972). An analysis of speech and discourse necessitates much more than a study of language at the word level or the sentential level. Sentences need to be joined together to make coherent wholes or sequences before they can be analysed or studied. It is only when there is fruitful exchange of these sequences between individuals who aim at achieving a particular purpose, in a given context, are more or less conscious of their patterns, bring their knowledge of the world, and understanding of each other into the talk-pattern that we can refer to it as discourse or communication (Hymes,1972).

Probably another reason for the sparse attention to language usage in influencing strategies could be that talk is associated with describing certain events or stating facts. However, it goes much beyond that, talk can also mean acts. When a person makes a statement, he could be performing certain actions, such as, convincing, persuading, promising etc. J. L.Austin (1962) gave the famous example of the bridegroom, who on saying “I do” proclaims to the minister that he has actually performed the act of getting

married. To extend the concept of performatives it would not be wrong to state that when the subordinate makes use of talk or language to influence the superior; he is actually performing an act of trying to gain compliance. On the other hand, the superior too is performing an act by overt statements of listening (“True”), not listening (“I’m not with you”) or indicating involvement in some other issue (“I have to deal with other things”). Hence, as exemplified above if making an utterance is equivalent to performing an act or leads to performance of an act then the idea of linguistic action is well justified.

Before we move to an application of SAT to UI in organizations, it would be in order to provide a brief overview on literature on UI strategies. Professionals and readers would greatly benefit by familiarizing themselves with existing strategies before usage of linguistic rules for successful implementation of these strategies.

### ***Foci of Research on Upward Influence strategies: An overview***

Deluga and Perry (1991) describe upward influence as an attempt made by the subordinate to secure a desired response from the superior. It is an intentional and strategic choice made by the individual and is directed at someone higher up in the hierarchy in the organisation, who is more powerful (Waldron, 1999). Application of upward influence strategies indicate that the agent normally has less power and authority than the target and hence cannot use force or “order” the target to comply to his request/demand (Porter, Allen and Angle, 1990). Given this link, understanding more about

1. Motives/intent of employees in upward influencing

2. choice of a particular strategy in accordance with the motives/intent
3. transformation of intent into message form

brings about ease in comprehension of the language game employed within the organisation.

### *Motives for selection of a strategy*

Managers attempt to influence their superiors in a number of ways so as to secure personal and organisational goals (Madison, Allen, Porter, Remwick and Mayes, 1980; Mowday, 1979 and Schein,1977). The use and choice of strategies however, varies in accordance with the goals (Kipnis and Schmidt, 1983; Kipnis, Schmidt and Wilkinson, 1980). “Potentially relevant aspects of the influence pattern include differences in choices of tactics to use with subordinates, peers and superiors (directional differences) which tactics are used together in the same influence attempt (tactic combinations) and differences in the choice of tactics for successive influence attempts made with the same target person (sequencing difference)” (Yukl and Falbe, 1993:5).

Upward influence research indicates that the effectiveness of different influence tactics varies and that subordinates use different upward influence strategies in their attempt to receive desired outcomes such as, positive performance ratings, promotions and salary increase (Kipnis et al. (1980).

Subordinates’ choice of influence tactics may affect the result by colouring the manager’s perception of skills or competence, the manager’s affection for the employees (Judge and Ferris, 1993; Wayne and Ferris, 1990) and/ or

the manager's perception of similarity between the employee and the manager (Wayne and Liden, 1995).

Thus, research indicates that the choice of strategy employed by subordinates to influence their supervisors (upward influence) is a result of their motives or goals – be it personal or organisational. More specifically, it is analysing the reasons for choice of one strategy over another.

### *Choice of Strategy*

In an inductive study Kipnis et al. (1980) developed a questionnaire to measure influence behaviour and objectives. The questionnaire was administered to night students and each was asked to describe the method of influencing subordinates, peers and superiors. This has been considered by social psychologists to be a pioneering and a very important exploratory study on choice of strategy. In the initial stage they reported 14 tactics - explanation, direct requests, clandestine acts, exchange, personal negative actions, coalition, persistence, demand, weak ask, gathering evidence, training, self presentation, administrative sanctions and reward. Revising this initial study Kipnis and Schmidt (1982) developed the Profiles of Organisational Influence Scale (POIS) with a 27 – item sub scale which measured six tactic categories – rationality/ reason; ingratiation; exchange/ bargaining; assertiveness; coalition and upward appeal. These six general tactics subsumed the original 14 categories. Considerable research has measured the appropriateness of these six upward influence strategies. Other types of research questions have been generated using the original questionnaire employed for measuring these six strategies (Ansari and Kapoor, 1987; Erez and Rim, 1982).

Substantial research has been conducted on choice of strategies used for influencing. Reason has been understood to be the most “direct” of all strategies (Waldera,1988). The usage of this tactic is contingent upon the relationship between the superior and the subordinate and choice of this strategy is directly proportionate to the goals and needs of the subordinate (Waldera,1988). Reason has also been referred to as rational persuasion (Ansari and Kapoor, 1987; Yukl,1981), rationality (Cheng, 1983); and persuasive arguments (Mowday, 1978). It is a rational tactic and pertains to presentation of facts and figures to convince or develop logic in the argument (Kipnis,1984; Kipnis et al., 1980).

Ingratiation is an informal or nonperformance specific exchange (Schilit and Locke, 1982). This strategy takes into account interpersonal attraction, impression management, flattery and creation of good will (Kipnis and Vanderveer, 1971; Kipnis et al., 1980; Mechanic, 1962). One major reason for the choice of this particular strategy could be to create a favourable impression, that is, begin a process by which the agent exercises control over or manipulates the reactions of others (Leary and Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 1980; Tedeschi and Reiss, 1981). The influence tactic of favour rendering has often also been labelled as a form of ingratiation (Kipnis and Schmidt, 1988; Kumar and Beyerlein, 1991). The agent in this case renders favours with the purpose of ingratiating himself with the target (Kipnis and Schmidt, 1988; Liden and Mitchell, 1988). It has been observed that when subordinates have less power than the managers they are trying to influence, both, ingratiation and reason are used (Kipnis and Schmidt, 1983). In fact, performance appraisals could be based on the impressions superiors form



about their subordinates (Rao, Schmidt, Murray, 1995) as a distinction is made between subordinates who want to be liked from those who want to appear to be competent (Godfrey et al., 1986). Hence, specific influence styles of subordinates help shape the manager's perceptions and form impressions about the subordinate (Wayne and Ferris, 1990). Some of the tactics that researchers would like to club under this category are "friendliness", "liking" and self-presentation strategies (Waldron, 1999: 257)

The use of exchange strategy comes about when there is reward envisaged in the process. Exchange of benefits or favour (Kipnis et al., 1980), exchanging resources or even proposing to make sacrifices is volunteered. Another example of exchange/bargaining tactics could be indebtedness which reminds the receiver of promises for exchange of obligations requiring compliance (Waldron, Hunt and Dsilva, 1993).

Assertiveness tactic is generally referred to as the "hard" tactic in which overt and direct strategies are used for upward influencing. Employees in complete command of the situation, strong internal locus of control, technical expertise and information are more likely to use this strategy. Falbe and Yukl (1992) refer to these strategies as "pressure" tactics. Demanding, threatening, issuing directives or challenges, persisting or "wearing down" the superior (Mowday, 1978; Waldron et al., 1993) are all part of the assertiveness strategy.

Working with coworkers and developing support among them would comprise approaches to coalition strategy where more emphasis is laid on

numbers, majority opinion and ability to associate with prevailing opinion. In most of his works, Schilit (1987a, 1987b) refers to it as “group support”.

In upward appeal the manager goes “over the head” of the superior to get the desired objective. The agent convinces the target of the acceptance of the proposal by higher authorities in order to gain compliance. This strategy is normally used as a last resort in cases where all other compliance gaining tactics have failed. It is normally understood as a secondary tactic, as the superior in the initial stages resists all other efforts on the part of the agent (Maslyn et al., 1996; Waldron et al., 1993).

While all these strategies postulated by Kipnis et al. have been researched and discussed thoroughly some more have been added to complete the circuit and analysis of influence strategies. Schriesheim and Hinkin (1990) in their exclusive study of upward influence strategies questioned the claims of Kipnis et al. (1980) as they felt that certain aspects of upward influence had been neglected as the study conceptually equated it with downward and horizontal communication. In a new and modified survey of two-factor analysis reported by students and employees they validated the appropriateness of the six strategies proposed by Kipnis et al. (1980). However, they questioned the content validity of the scale proposed by Kipnis. In turn they proposed a shorter 18 items instrument that would measure all the six strategies in upward influence categories.

Yukl and Falbe (1990), Yukl and Tracey (1992) replicated the work of Kipnis et al. (1980). Their objective in conducting research along similar lines was two-fold:

1.to determine if the major findings in the Kipnis et al. study could be replicated with differences in methodology and

2.to extend the research to incorporate additional strategies.

They used open-ended coding system in which their data comprised description of influence incidents. In their conclusion they state that a checklist (as provided by Kipnis et al.) might be influenced by social desirability biases. So they considered other “self-reported tactics” presented both by the agent and the target. Together with this they added two more strategies, i.e., inspirational and consultation tactics to the already existing list of six postulated by Kipnis and his colleagues (1980).

Yukl and Falbe (1990) discuss inspirational appeal as a strategy for arousing enthusiasm by appealing to the emotions or values of the recipient. This tactic with similar connotations, but a different name, has also been alluded to as the “allurement” tactic (Lamude, 1993). This tactic presupposes that the target will eventually benefit by providing happiness to and complying with the wishes of other members within the organisation.

Consultation tactics as defined by Yukl and Falbe (1990) indicate involvement of the recipient in the decision making process so as to secure commitment at a later stage. This strategy also involves securing the advice of the supervisors in the initial phases so as to involve them in decisions about new work procedures at a later stage. (Waldron et al., 1993)

A few additional tactics have been suggested by scholars. These are either alternatives or additions to the already existing list of tactics proposed by Kipnis. For example “power” tactics suggested by Cheng (1983) are similar

to Kipnis et al.'s (1980) influence strategies. However, researchers have defined other tactics that do not fit within the framework provided by Kipnis. Schriesheim and Tepper (1989) postulate "volunteer first" as a strategy in which the subordinates convince the superior into adopting a new procedure by following it themselves in the initial stages. Another strategy discussed by Waldron et al. (1993) is "troubleshooting" in which the subordinate anticipates the objections that the superior may have to his suggestions and provides the alternative so that all hurdles are removed. Subordinates also gain influence by closely adhering to organisational rules and norms (Schilit and Locke, 1982). This has alternatively been described as "formalization" (Waldron et al. 1993). Participants using this kind of strategy would formalize the procedures at staff meetings by cajoling their reluctant supervisors to discuss proposals. Further, emotions have also been understudied as a means of gaining compliance from the supervisor (Waldron, 1994). There have been brief descriptions of other strategies or tactics such as "guilt induction, emotion editing, intentional embarrassment, and elicitation of pity" (Waldron, 1999: 259) by Schilit and Locke (1982), Waldron (1991).

There are other minor strategies as "avoidance" (Waldron et al., 1983), "withdrawal" (Maslyn et al., 1996), "deceptive and manipulative" tactics (Erez and Rim, 1982; Schilit, 1987a, 1987b; Schilit and Locke, 1982; Schriesheim and Tepper, 1989; Waldron et al., 1993) that have been discussed by researchers. In avoidance, the subordinate refrains from using any influence tactic with the leader. He occasionally also uses circumvention to avoid direct confrontation. This could also be referred to as a face-saving device. Withdrawal as a tactic has been associated with the subordinate

removing himself from the company/office of superior after there is initial evidence of hesitation to compliance of request. Finally the deceptive or manipulative strategies are an extension of the “clandestine” tactics postulated by Kipnis et al. (1980).

The choice of a particular strategy is the byproduct of the subordinates’ control over resources and goals. Together with this contextual factors also determine the choice of strategies (Kipnis and Schmidt, 1983; Perrault and Miles, 1978). Discussions in this area point towards the fact that subjects use covert message strategies (Porter et al., 1981) while others indicate that they employ rational/ logical presentation of ideas (Ansari 1987; Ansari and Kapoor, 1987; Cheng, 1983; Kipnis 1984; Schilit and Locke, 1982). Jablin (1985) however points out that the application of a strategy is the result of the choice from a whole array of situational factors.

As the methodology of application of some of the strategies is similar, researchers have attempted to club them under a few heads. “Hard” tactics would make use of overt and direct attempts by the agent such as assertiveness, threats, and direct requests. These are primarily used to indicate and wield power. “Soft” tactics would employ covert or indirect means such as reason, ingratiation etc.(Kipnis and Schmidt, 1983). These strategies make use of indirect appeal and emotion so as to make themselves likeable and ideas saleable for a higher degree of acceptance. Together with work by researchers on the six strategies postulated by Kipnis et al. (1980) there have been studies that suggest additional strategies like, inspirational appeal, troubleshooting etc.

Understanding the motive, the intent of the sender and the subsequent choice of strategy sets the stage for conceptualisation and application of a SAT model to UI.

### ***Conceptualising a Speech Act Theory Model for Upward Influence***

Borrowing from the theory of speech act and concept of linguistic action, in which an act is performed merely by making an utterance, we propose that influencing too can be understood as a language game in which an act is performed by making an utterance. Both then, (speech acts and influencing) can be viewed as parts of the communication process.

In the tradition of ordinary language, as in communication, the intent/motive of the sender is fundamental in understanding any utterance. Application of rules is a subsequent activity that ascertains success in the fructification of intent of sender. E.g., an utterance can be understood as a request to perform a certain act, or a command. In both these cases there is an attempt to influence the hearer into accepting either the request or the command. In both these cases it could happen that the propositional content is the same. In other words, SAT is mainly concerned with illocutionary acts. These acts cannot be understood without reference to the beliefs and intentions of the speaker and hearer. Thus for a speaker to convey a request to a hearer, the speaker must convey the request by uttering it.

Let us consider the utterance “*Let’s go*” made by a subordinate to his superior. Whether it is understood as a request or a command the propositional content, (speaker refers a present or future action to be undertaken by the hearer) remains the same. However, an understanding of

the felicity conditions and the intent of the speaker reveal that if the utterance is made by a subordinate to a superior, it cannot be a command and hence, has to be viewed as a request. What changes the understanding of two utterances with similar propositional content is the intent of the sender and the appropriateness conditions. And this also happens to be the primary concern of speech act theoreticians, i.e., recognition of intentions of the speaker from the utterances he makes. The intentions help in adhering to the constitutive rules that govern a speech act.

For the purpose of explication a model of communication is presented. In the model presented below, the intent of the sender helps him to determine the manner in which he encodes his message and transmits it to the receiver. Similarly, the receiver after decoding the message initially gives a response to his perceived value of the message, before he encodes his response and transmits it to the sender. In between this verbal transaction there is an important component of noise that could be present either in the mind of the sender or the receiver. This can create problems at the time of formulation or reception of the message and disguise the true intent of the speaker.

(Insert Fig. 1)

Within the mind of the sender ( $s$ ) there is a message that needs to be transmitted. The message (A) is moulded first, by the intent (W) of the sender. As the message right now is still in its embryonic state, the intent is given a firm shape (X) within the mind of  $s$  who then decides the manner in which the message needs to be transmitted (B). Depending on the understanding of the receiver  $s$  encodes (Y) his message (C) and finally transmits (Z) the message (D) to the receiver ( $r$ ). Then there is a role reversal with  $r$  in the position of  $s$ . The entire process is repeated with the original  $s$

now in the receiving position. It is only when this circuit is complete that we can say, effective communication has taken place. While the message is in the formulation stage or response stage there could be an element of noise – intraneous or extraneous, that might impede the process of communication either on the part of *s* or *h*.

For future research, a model of speech act theory and the constitutive rules has been superimposed on the communication model presented above. The message needs to travel from the sender to the receiver and back to the sender. In this process the constitutive rules comprising the propositional content, preparatory (“felicity conditions”) and the sincerity rules are taken into account before the message is given locutionary force. At the end of the receiver, before the perlocutionary act can change into a locutionary act, there is assessment of the appropriateness or “felicity” conditions and the contextual relevance of the message adjudged. Appropriate response is subsequently delivered.

(Insert Fig. 2)

The constitutive rules for UI could be designed as follows:

Type of Rule	Enumeration
Propositional Content Rule	speaker ( <i>s</i> ) refers to a present or future action to be undertaken by hearer ( <i>h</i> )
Preparatory rules	
Need for Action	<i>s</i> perceives that there is a reason for influencing and subsequent action to



	be taken along utterances with overt or covert intentions
Need for Influencing	It should not be evident that h was intending to carry out the act prior to influencing act of s
Ability	s believes and is convinced of the ability of h to perform the task
Willingness	s believes that h, subsequent to usage of appropriate strategies would be willing to perform the act
Sincerity rule	s sincerely wants to influence h for fructification of personal or organizational goals.

[Modulated from adaptation of Searle's(1969) Constitutive Rules for the Speech Act of Requesting presented in Wilson, 2002:194]

If one were to consider a strategy that could be used for the set of constitutive rules explicated above, one could think of reason or rationality. However, with a change in any one of the rules, be it propositional, preparatory or sincerity, the strategy would also undergo a change. For example, if the employee is convinced of the unwillingness of the manager to be influenced, he would not use reason or rationality but would probably resort to coalition, ingratiation or upward appeal.

We have presented constitutive rules for different six different UI strategies (as postulated by Kipnis and Schmidt, 1982) below. We have restricted the discussion to these six as they are the main UI strategies

used across organisations. An understanding of the rules would enable professionals to choose the appropriate strategy for gaining compliance in the organisations.

<b>STRATEGIES</b>	<b>CONSTITUTIVE RULES</b>		
	Propositional	Preparatory	Sincerity
Rationality/ Reason	Speaker (s) refers to a present or future action to be undertaken by hearer(h)	a. Need for Action b. Need for influencing c. Ability on the part of h to perform the task d. Willingness on the part of h to perform the task, subsequent to usage of appropriate strategy	S sincerely wants to influence h for fructification of personal or organisational goals
Ingratiation	Speaker (s) refers to a present or future action to be undertaken by hearer(h)	a. Need for Action b. Need for influencing c. Ability on the part of h to perform the task d. Unwillingness/Hesitancy on the part of h to perform the task.	S sincerely wants to influence h for fructification of personal or organisational goals
Exchange/ Bargaining	Speaker (s) refers to a present or future action to be undertaken by hearer(h)	a. Need for Action b. Need for influencing c. Ability on the part of h to perform the task d. Unwillingness on the part of h to perform the task on the given terms and conditions	S sincerely wants to influence h for fructification of personal or organisational goals
Assertiveness	Speaker (s) refers to a present or future action to be undertaken by hearer(h)	a. Need for Action b. Need for influencing c. Ability on the part of h to perform the task d. Unwillingness on the	S sincerely wants to influence h for fructification of personal or organisational goals

		part of h to perform the task till he is pressurized by demands, threats and challenges.	
Coalition	Speaker (s) refers to a present or future action to be undertaken by hearer(h)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Need for Action</li> <li>b. Need for influencing</li> <li>c. Ability on the part of h to perform the task</li> <li>d. Unwillingness on the part of h to be swayed by the viewpoints of one person in the organisation</li> </ul>	S sincerely wants to influence h for fructification of personal or organisational goals
Upward Appeal	Speaker (s) refers to a present or future action to be undertaken by hearer(h)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Need for Action</li> <li>b. Need for influencing</li> <li>c. Ability on the part of h to perform the task</li> <li>d. Unwillingness on the part of h to perform the task due to organisational or personal reasons</li> </ul>	S sincerely wants to influence h for fructification of personal or organisational goals

It is worthwhile to note that the difference in the level of “willingness” on the part of the recipient or preparatory, “felicity conditions” necessitates a change in the choice of strategy for successful implementation of UI.

***An Analysis of Sample Dialogue using Constitutive Rules of SAT***

In this section we have taken dialogue from a FMCG Company and shown how constitutive rules can be applied to it. We would like to argue that familiarity with rules can help technical communicators strategise UI

attempts and use appropriate strategies for maximum gain in minimum time.

One of the most important happenings within an organisation is the monthly Operations Review Meetings. Because of increased interpersonal communication all incidents are reported, either formally or informally, to the Regional Office. In this particular example certain inefficiencies at the plant, namely machine breakdowns and lower raw material yields were being under reported. Hence, a member of the regional office is appointed to attend the Operations Review Meeting.

The plant under study is a remote one with a weak plant manager who is neither technically very sound nor is able to control his team. The Production Manager (PM) is a veteran at the plant and is critical to the plant, given his history and hands off nature of the Plant Manager. PM has an attitude and is abrasive with other team members. Plant Manager's support to the PM has caused a lot of friction with other members of the team. Hence, some correct and some incorrect information has been transmitted to the Regional Office. The PM is aware that certain inconsistencies in the operations have been reported. He is mentally prepared for the Visiting Member (VM) of the Regional office and has chalked out his strategy for gaining compliance.

### **Meeting**

**Production Manager:** We are covering the line & mechanical efficiencies in our presentation. However, we do not have the numbers for the current month.

**Visiting Member:** These are critical areas that must be covered in all monthly meetings.

**Production Manager:** Line efficiency does not indicate anything. Lower line efficiency can be a function of lapses in areas where production has no role... like glass non availability etc.

**Visiting Member:** It does reveal something, while not the entire picture. Mechanical efficiency however is critical.

**Production Manager:** Agree with you. But this month we haven't really tracked it.

**Visiting Member:** Then what do you report. How does one get to know what kind of breakdowns, the line has had.

**Production Manager:** Last month was crazy on production. We did not have the time to track all that. However, there were no problems. Though there were some regular shut downs for regular maintenance work but on no day was production either not taken or delayed. If you want from next month we will regularly and certainly report the issue.

**Visiting Member:** Great job, but tell me, the external lab reports suggest that versus last year there has been a reduction in your average fill heights. If you factor the same in, actually your yields have fallen.

**Production Manager:** Actually the external lab reports are based on samples. We have in fact improved our fill heights versus last year. It is their sampling which is faulty. We have undertaken so many initiatives, executed SGAs, which have resulted in great results....

**Visiting Member:** Do you have an alternative study to reflect the same?

**Production Manager:** No

**Visiting Member:** All checks are sample based. I think its time that you rolled up your sleeves and got down to improvements.

This dialogue can be divided into two parts. In the first part the subordinate succeeds in influencing his superior into accepting his point of view. However, in the second half fails due to change in propositional and preparatory conditions.

In this particular example the constitutive rules for the first half of the dialogue have been designed as follows:

Type of Rule	Enumeration
Propositional Content Rule	PM intends an act of compliance by the VM by addressing the problematic area.
Preparatory rules	
Need for Action	PM perceives that there is a reason for influencing and subsequent action to be taken along utterances with overt or covert intentions
Need for Influencing	It should not be evident that VM was intending to carry out the act prior to influencing act of PM
Ability	PM believes and is convinced of the ability of VM to give a clean chit to the plant
Willingness	PM believes that VM, subsequent to usage of appropriate strategies (reason and logic) would be willing to perform the act
Sincerity rule	PM sincerely wants to influence VM for fructification of personal or organizational goals – the name of the plant should not get sullied nor should ineffective handling of issues come to light.

In the second half of the dialogue, Production Manager is caught off guard and is totally unprepared and unfamiliar with the opposition that follows. The initiation of a discussion focusing round the problematic area, namely “average fill heights” is initiated by the VM. Hence, there is no time to formulate the prepositional content rule. PM does not get an opportunity to frame his utterances in accordance with his intent. The “appropriateness conditions” for the PM are violated to serve the cause of the organizational goal at the cost of personal gain. Hence, his choice and application of an incorrect UI strategy, namely circumvention, does not fall within the bounds of constitutive rules for influencing in this particular case. Result – PM’s inability to influence the VM.

### ***Discussion of the Analysis***

Based on SAT, we have attempted to provide an explanation for the choice of strategies by members within the organization. Specifically we have restricted the discussion to the three constitutive rules, namely, propositional, preparatory and sincerity. Comprehension of these rules aids appropriate choice of strategy in the “compliance gaining game” within the organisation. The preparatory conditions are the most important as they enable the sender to gauge the receptivity/willingness of the respondent. A minor (un)willing misunderstanding of any one of the rules followed by an incorrect choice of strategy can lead to an unsuccessful UI attempt.

The three constitutive rules aid the choice of strategy in the influencing process. Both strategies and influencing are part of the communication process. Effective choice and usage of the strategies follow, subsequent to

assessment of the intent of the sender, the situation and the (un)willingness on the part of the receiver to be influenced. Aberrations, if any, in the communication process are negated as “appropriateness” or “felicity conditions” are studied before use of UI strategy as a linguistic act of gaining compliance.

In the corporate world, the awareness as well as knowledge of application of the constitutive rules spell out success or otherwise in UI attempts. The strategies for UI are chosen in accordance with sincerity of application and receptivity of these criteria. However, as shown earlier, a change in the rules also heralds a change in the strategy to be adopted.

### ***Conclusions***

The paper argues that for gaining compliance technical communicators need to consider the verbalization of the strategies proposed by scholars for successful influencing endeavours. Borrowing from the findings of Searle, the paper proposes that UI is a linguistic act of gaining compliance. The subordinate by making an utterance or series of utterances performs the act of influencing and securing the approval from the superior. While theoretically a simple statement, in practice can be easily negated when the choice of strategy is not in harmony with the rules of SAT.

Though we presented a review of most strategies used for UI, we restricted the application of SAT to six most important strategies, viz. reason, ingratiation, exchange/bargaining, assertiveness, coalition and upward appeal that are frequently used in organisations. The application



of constitutive rules indicated that the propositional content and sincerity conditions in all six were the same. Preparatory conditions that spelt out the intent, need and ability of the sender and willingness of the receiver to get influenced varied in all six cases. To narrow it still further, it was found that the intent, need and ability of the sender in all cases remained the same. However, a slight modification in the anticipated degree of "willingness" or receptivity of the receiver necessitated a change in the strategy to be adopted.

We have argued that the application of SAT to UI can facilitate the process and bring about success in influencing endeavours. Familiarity with SAT as well as UI strategies is the first step to gaining compliance. Application of SAT to UI influence follows that leads to a convergence of the two in the communication process. Three major advantages for the corporate houses as well as technical communicators can be envisioned when SAT is successfully applied to UI:

1. Reduction in cost, in terms of time, energy and effort if compliance can be easily gained
2. Enhancement of superior-subordinate relationship
3. Improvement in organisational climate

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Fig.1

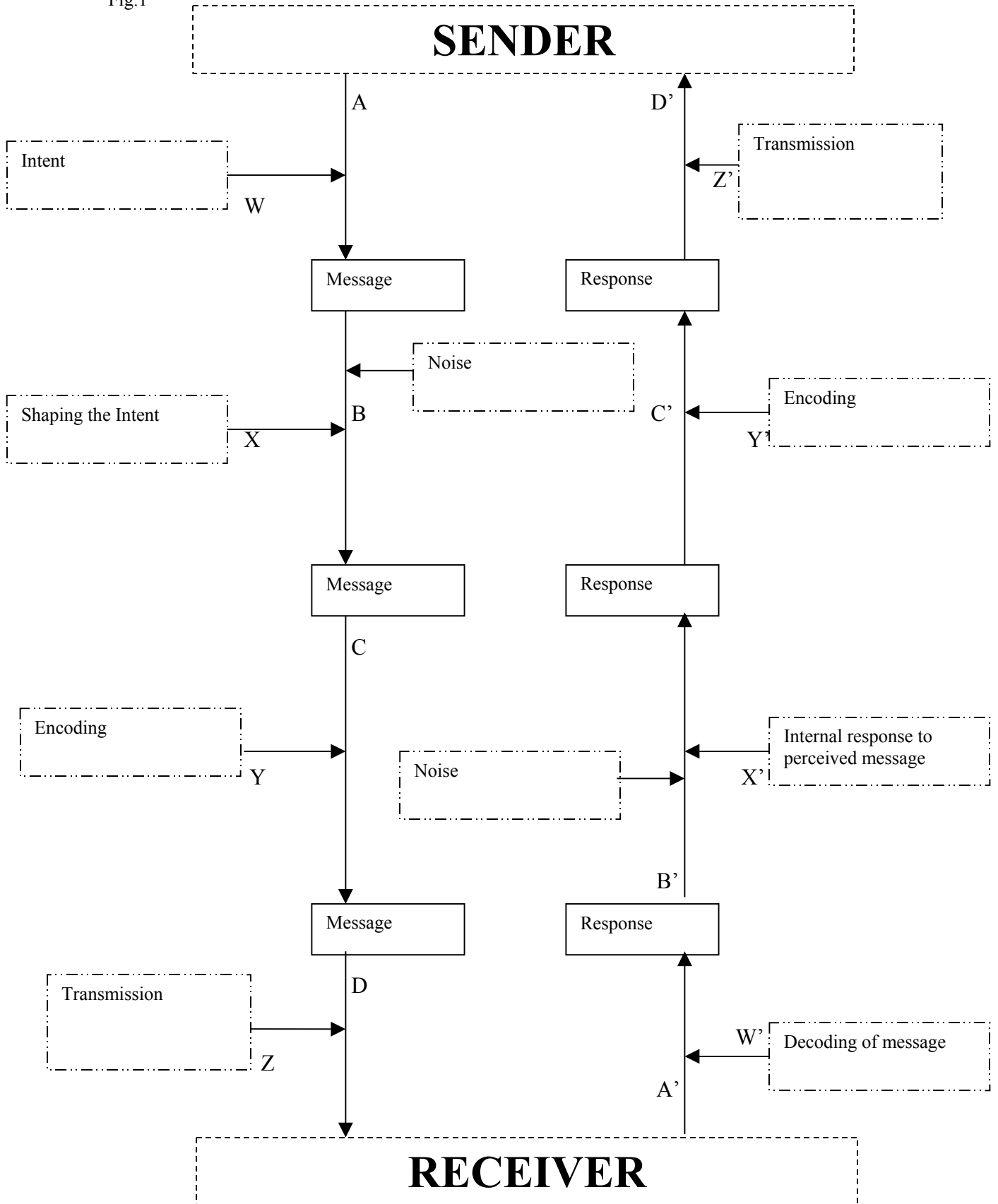


Fig.2

