1 Introduction

Using corpus data of natural spontaneous conversation in different situations, contexts, and times, this Element explores the speech act of advice. We see advice as emblematic of the two fundamental collaborative motives and behaviours of human socialising – helping and sharing – posited by Tomasello (2008). Helping has two directions of fit in human communication, namely, from you-to-me and from me-to-you. Requesting help has a directional fit from you-to-me and is expressed for the benefit of me as the request maker, while advising (and informing more generally) involves offering help and has a fit from me-to-you and is for the benefit of you, that is, the advisee. Tomasello also posits a human collaborative motive of sharing of feelings and attitudes. We see sharing of feelings and attitudes as omnipresent in human communication and intertwined with the basic communicative helping motives.

Helping and sharing through advice in spoken communication more specifically can be conveyed in many different ways and forms. When we began to explore advice, there was no a priori operational definition of advice to engage with for our corpus pragmatic study of spoken dialogue across a range of communicative contexts. The task of identifying instances of advice in the great outdoors posed many challenges, requiring a thorough annotation protocol and meticulous coding procedures. In this Element, advice sequences are dialogic activities because they comprise a sequence of advice-giving by an adviser and advice uptake by an advisee, and possibly even another act if the advice has been solicited. A crucial component of advice is that it concerns some future action, thought, or behaviour, which the speaker attempts to bring about. The advisee is the main undertaker as well as the main benefactor of that action, but depending on the situation, the adviser’s involvement may be required for a successful outcome. These subtle meaning differences of advice are reflected in the formal properties of the advice-giving utterances, which convey different degrees of deontic and epistemic authority on the part of the adviser. The types of constructions used by the speakers offer different affordances for the uptake of the advice, and so the choice of constructions is crucial. Furthermore, the social power relations between the interlocutors must be considered alongside these and a range of other linguistic and contextual factors. Advice-giving may be seen as rewarding for the advisee, but it is still a sensitive undertaking that may be resisted, rejected, or responded to in other ways. If unsuccessful, the advice itself, or the realisation of the advice in an inappropriate context, may have negative consequences for the relationship between the interlocutors. The exchange in (1) between two friends, taken from the London–Lund Corpus 2 (LLC–2) of spoken British English, illustrates these points.
(1) A: you could use your Club Card uh no Colonel Card thing
B: but I won’t

In (1), speaker A’s utterance to ‘use your Colonel Card thing’ is unambiguously framed as advice directed to B, that is, from me-to-you, albeit with a verb indicating possibility rather than obligation or necessity (could rather than must or need to). This acknowledges the option of declining, which is indeed the case; B outright rejects the advice, with a bluntness that is licensed by the informal and friendly relationship between the interlocutors. In a different setting, these aspects – the form of the advice, of the response, and the effect of either of these on the interlocutors – would be likely to take a different shape.

This complex nature of advice calls for a broad definition of the phenomenon, and for this reason, we conceive of advice as a cover term for a network of instantiations of directive–commisive speech acts that are closely related to each other in terms of their force, direction of fit, and form–meaning properties (see Section 2.1 for details). Previous research on advice has mainly been carried out within the frameworks of Conversation Analysis and traditional corpus linguistics (e.g., Adolphs, 2008; Couper-Kuhlen & Thompson, 2022; Figueras Bates, 2020; Hepburn & Potter, 2011; Heritage & Seif, 1992; Jefferson & Lee, 1981; Pudlinski, 2002; Stivers et al., 2018; van der Auwera & De Wit, 2010) with restrictions arising from the research methods and scope of the respective disciplines. The main focus for conversation analysts has been institutional contexts on the basis of a limited number of advice sequences. In corpus linguistics, there has been research on speech acts in general (e.g., Aijmer, 1996; Deutschmann, 2003; Jautz, 2013; Ronan, 2015), but it has not been aimed at the dialogic sequences of the acts in discourse. The statistical techniques have also been rather limited, often missing out on the multidimensional complexity of how speech acts are conveyed and received. In addition, for advice specifically, there is no research on how it is used in natural conversation from a diachronic perspective, which is what we are also concerned with here.

The approach to advice in natural spontaneous conversation in this Element is a contribution to a new generation of corpus pragmatics research theoretically, methodologically, and with respect to diachronic corpus data of spoken dialogue. The Element combines theoretical insights from Speech Act Theory and frame-based politeness theory with a usage-based, socio-cognitive approach to meaning-making in discourse. Methodologically, it makes use of a mixed-methods modus operandi of qualitative, conversation analytic as well as quantitative procedures and multifactorial statistical analyses. The data are from the London–Lund Corpora (LLC) of spoken British English, comprising the first London–Lund Corpus (LLC–1) from the 1950s to 1980s and the new LLC–2
from 2014 to 2019. An important feature of the dataset is that LLC–2 was carefully compiled to match the size and design of LLC–1 as closely as possible, thus providing a useful resource for principled diachronic comparisons over the past half a century. The Element is guided by three main aims, namely, to

• describe the constructions used to give advice in spontaneous conversation in English in different discourse contexts over a period of approximately fifty years;
• explain the interaction between the constructions and dialogic and social factors, and on the basis of those, formulate predictions for certain frames of advice exchanges and constructional choice by the interlocutors;
• propose a new paradigm for the study of the multifaceted nature of advice in real communication through a unique combination of theoretical, qualitative, quantitative, and statistical approaches to corpus pragmatics.

The intended readership of the Element is students and researchers in corpus pragmatics interested in new ways of investigating speech acts by means of spoken corpora. These students and researchers might be interested in approaches to speech acts where their observations of the communicative functions of the speech acts are based on a large number of examples extracted from different contexts. They may also be interested in considering the interlocutor’s behaviour relative to each other and particularly the addressee’s response, which is often neglected at the expense of data from large, multimillion-word corpora and numbers from off-the-shelf software tools (for exceptions in research on turn-taking, see Rühlemann, 2017, and on dialogic resonance, see Tantucci & Wang, 2021). Our approach embraces both of these research agendas without compromising the scientific rigour of either, but rather elevating the capacity of corpus pragmatics to provide answers to previously unexplored questions about speech acts in spoken dialogue. We believe that the basic principles offered in this Element – demonstrated through the speech act of advice – are a good first step in that direction and should be useful both for novices and seasoned researchers of corpus pragmatics.

The introductory section has so far presented the general topic of advice which this Element explores in natural spontaneous conversation. In the next section, we offer a brief overview of the terms and notions of the framework within which the Element is situated; more detailed discussions of the theoretical background are given in Section 2.

1.1 Terms and Notions of Framework

The research on advice in this Element is situated within the usage-based, socio-cognitive approach to meaning-making in discourse. It rests on the basic
assumption that meanings are evoked on the occasion of use in the communicative situation. Meaning in language is pragmatic in nature and includes both knowledge of the world and knowledge of language itself. Communication through language is social action through which speakers attempt to change the cognitive status of their interlocutors in one way or another. This means that utterances do not exist in a vacuum but are construed with the aim of achieving the interlocutors’ goals and to arrive at a satisfactory level of mutual understanding through a process of meaning negotiation in discourse. In dialogue, speakers co-construct the communicative event and take turns at managing and developing the communicative flow and the outcome of the different speech acts.

These basic assumptions entail a highly dynamic and flexible approach to meaning-making in language, which presupposes that the way in which interlocutors give and receive advice is couched in various layers of cultural knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and patterns of practice. Following Fillmore (1982) and Fillmore and Baker (2009), we see these layers as the frame of the advice act. Frames are culturally based conventionalised knowledge that is shared in a given community. They may include sets of events, for instance, conducting a medical session or running a meeting in a workplace, but events may also be activities related to the act of giving and receiving advice. To elucidate how our research should be understood, we present an outline of what underlies the use of advice constructions in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows the layers embedded in an advice event and illustrates our theoretical approach to the meaningful functioning of language in this Element. The socio-cognitive frame is the envelope in which the whole advice event is enclosed. It comprises interlocutors’ experiences, beliefs, and knowledge about attitudes and social conventions that apply in a given situation. In dialogue, there are at least two frames that cover the experiences and knowledge contributed by the participants in the event. Socio-cognitive frames are important because they form the basis for how advisers construe their utterances and how they negotiate their meanings in the advice act. Important factors that regulate their choices are where, when, why, and with whom they communicate (e.g., professionally or not, formal or informal, age, gender, power relations, cultural background). The discursive frame for advice involves the turn-taking practice of giving and taking. For a successful outcome of the communicative event, the participants need to construct a common ground, that is, a shared workspace of discourse-relevant facts and behaviour (Clark, 1996). Most types of dialogic situations are in a constant flux in natural conversation. Therefore, participants must be flexible and adaptive in the interactive work of upholding the joint activity.
of advice and the constant negotiation of meanings and intentions, as described further in Section 2.2.

Next, in terms of politeness, interlocutors make use of different discursive strategies depending on socio-cognitive and discursive frames in light of what they want to convey in the best way possible. Ideally, these discursive strategies of dialogue are governed by the cooperative principle (Grice, 1975) and an understanding of the participants’ needs and requirements in terms of respect for each other’s personae and self-esteem, that is, their face (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1967). This is where the psychological processes and the discursive strategies related to the intersubjective relationship between the participants become relevant. Goffman refers to face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself” (Goffman, 1967:5) through their interactions with others. Culpeper and Haugh (2014) adopt a social interdependence view of the notion: we have a certain view of our face, which is affected by how others see us, as demonstrated by their behaviour towards us. There is a general expectation in interaction that interlocutors will tend to minimise behaviour that devalues each other’s face, and perhaps even add value to it instead. In Section 2.3.1, we describe how giving and responding to advice are forms of interaction with a high risk of threat to face, and Section 2.3.2 introduces Terkourafi’s (2005, 2015) ecological research on face and politeness to increase our understanding of how sociocultural frames interact with cognitive and interactional frames in real communication. Finally, at the core of an advice event we find the advice constructions. We use the term construction in

![Figure 1 Schematic representation of the various frames and strategies embracing advice constructions](image-url)
the technical sense, that is, as a synonym for form–meaning pairings in language (Goldberg, 2006).

As previously mentioned, advisers have at their disposal a range of constructions to set the scene so that the advice will appeal to the advisee. According to Searle (1969), there are two types of speech acts, direct and indirect ones. The definition of a direct speech act is that there is a conventionalised match between sentence type and the illocutionary function of the speech act (declaratives/ assertions, interrogatives/questions, imperatives/directives). There are also a number of performative expressions that are markers of speech acts, for instance, state/ask/order (see Levinson, 1983:264, 273 for what he termed the literal force hypothesis). In the case of directives, this canonical form–function status is given to utterances such as I hereby order/advise you to make an appointment with the doctor, or to imperatives with the same illocutionary function: make an appointment with the doctor. It should be noted, however, that Searle himself did not subscribe to the literal force hypothesis as a basis for his assumptions about meaning in language; in fact, he argued against the literal meanings of sentences, but made use of the idea as a practical analytical tool in his categorisation of utterances in terms of form. In terms of illocutionary force, he invoked his set of felicity conditions for the categorisation (see Section 2.1 for the felicity conditions for advice).

In our usage-based, socio-cognitive framework, we do not assume that sentence types by default are reflexes of directness of illocutionary function, and that all other constructions are indirect illocutionary acts and therefore need special treatment since they are not literal according to traditional work in pragmatics (see also Paradis, 2003a, 2015; Põldvere & Paradis, 2019, 2020). In other words, it is not the case that some utterances are direct, while others are not. Instead, in our framework all constructions that function as advice evoke a representation of that meaning in conceptual space; they are all equally literal. The difference between them is that they may express different degrees of (in)directness, which in our framework is not a matter of form but of intersubjectivity and communicative (in)directness. By communicative directness we refer to utterances that have the effect of contracting the communicative space by making possible a simple response such as yes or no. Indirectness, however, has the opposite effect of expanding the communicative space and is characterised by a high degree of intersubjective consideration of face to promote successful mutual coordination of mental states. A simple response such as yes or no in the uptake by the advisee is infelicitous in the case of advice presented in an indirect way. Section 4.1.1 will apply this reasoning to real examples of the advice events investigated in this Element.
Advice in Conversation

The rest of the Element is organised as follows. Section 2 explains the role of advice and other related speech acts within the broad network of instantiations of directive–commissive speech acts. We explain why advice serves as an appropriate test bed for our approach to speech acts, one that takes into account its cognitive, dialogic, and social grounding in real communication from a synchronic as well as a diachronic perspective. Section 3 explains the methodological aspects of the approach, namely, the mixed-methods approach involving qualitative, quantitative, and statistical techniques. We introduce a new resource for studying pragmatic phenomena at different points in time in recent history: the LLC of spoken British English. Section 4 presents the empirical results of the investigation, first focusing on the constructions used to give advice and then on the range of factors that affect the uptake of the advice, followed by a discussion of the theoretical implications of the results for corpus pragmatics in Section 5. Finally, Section 6 concludes the investigation.

2 Background

This section engages with the literature on relevant aspects of advice. Section 2.1 discusses the notion of the speech act of advice and its relation to other types of directive and commissive speech acts such as suggestions, recommendations, offers, and requests. Section 2.2 presents the main lines of research on the practices of advice-giving and advice uptake in various disciplines with a focus on Conversation Analysis and Interactional Linguistics. Finally, in Section 2.3 we outline our understanding of the role of face in interaction, and the advantages of using the frame-based approach to politeness in a corpus pragmatic study of advice specifically and speech acts more generally.

2.1 Advice and Related Speech Acts

The starting point of this Element is Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962) and in particular Searle’s (1969, 1976) taxonomy of speech acts: declarations, representatives, expressives, directives, and commissives. In this taxonomy, advice is an instance of the family of directives together with orders and requests of different kinds. The illocutionary function is the same for all directives, that is, to get the addressee to do something, while the illocutionary force and the direction of fit (from me-to-you or vice versa) may differ among different types of directives. The crucial feature for advice is that the addressee is the main benefactor. This is a feature that advice shares with recommendations and suggestions, but where it differs from orders and requests, which are for the benefit of the person who gives the order or makes the request (i.e., the speaker), and where the direction of fit is from you-to-me.
Table 1 presents the felicity conditions for the speech act of advice, adapted by us from Searle’s (1969) conditions for requests. The four conditions of Table 1 must be fulfilled for a speech act of advice to be felicitous. They are the underlying elements of the activity. The preparatory condition is the situational prerequisite for the speech act, which states that the speaker (S) believes that the addressee (A) is able to perform the act.

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<tr>
<td>Sincerity condition</td>
<td>S believes that it would be good for A to perform the act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propositional content condition</td>
<td>S predicates future act of A</td>
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For the sake of comparison with Searle’s conditions, we use the terms ‘speaker’ and ‘addressee’ to refer to the adviser and advisee in this section, but we make use of the latter terms in the rest of the Element.
The first limitation concerns the fact that, in real communication, speech acts have fuzzy boundaries and therefore strict classification of utterances into Searle’s taxonomy is challenging, if not impossible. Directives are not the only speech act that attempts to bring about some future action or that includes A as the intended benefactor, as these properties are also shared by commissives; consider, for example, offers (e.g., *what if I do a roast dinner*). The main difference is that, in the case of offers, the action is carried out by S. Observations of real corpus data, however, reveal that the way in which advice is expressed in conversation often includes both S and A, not only as the intended benefactors, but also as the joint undertakers of the proposed action. Thus, Searle’s felicity conditions need to be extended to also reflect the commissive aspect of advice. The second limitation regards the central unit of analysis of Speech Act Theory, namely, the sentence or utterance. It means that little attention has been paid to the specific linguistic constructions through which acts are carried out, and their distribution in real communication. Not every instance of advice includes the performative verb *advise*, as suggested by the relatively low number of hits of the verb (5,323) in the 100-million-word British National Corpus 1994 (Diederich & Höhn, 2012:340). This second limitation of Speech Act Theory sheds light on the third one. The focus on the utterance as the central unit of analysis, as well as on the illocutionary function of single utterances, has meant that the utterances have been considered outside of their dialogic and sequential context. Such considerations are, however, important because they relate to the perlocutionary effect of speech acts or the effect that speech acts have on A’s actions. Perlocutionary acts may be external to locutionary acts, but even if accompanied by appropriate intentions, a successful act of advising has not occurred until A (or A and S) has performed the act in question (e.g., sat down, taken a cup of coffee, applied for a job). It is most likely because of the difficulty of actually determining the events that have (or have not) taken place in response to the speech act that the investigation of perlocutionary acts has not taken off in Speech Act Theory. However, one way to resolve this is to turn our attention to the *linguistic* manifestation of advice uptake, that is, how people use language to convey their intentions and reactions. We will return to this point in Section 2.2.

The purpose of this section is to address the first limitation, namely, the relation of advice to other speech acts, and to provide a sufficiently broad, yet operational, definition of advice for our purposes. The standard definition of advice in conversation analytic and interactional linguistic research is that advice ‘describes, recommends or otherwise forwards a preferred course of future action’ (Heritage & Sefi, 1992:368). This definition covers all the felicity conditions for advice as described in Table 1, and, pending certain clarifications,
it has the potential to provide an operational description of advice for analysis in different contexts by different constellations of people. In addition to the speech act of advice, for example, the definition allows for the inclusion of speech acts that are not only directive in nature but also commissive. This is because the definition does not specify who should carry out the future action, thus leaving open the interpretation that A does not have to act alone, but that S may also be involved in some way. Proposals fit into this mould (e.g., *we should do something for Halloween*) and so do certain instances of advice proper, where S makes an explicit reference to herself but where the main undertaker of the action is clearly A. Consider, for example, the utterance in (2), where a supervisor advises a supervisee on her thesis on phonetics. The example is from LLC–2.

(2) and then we could go into those and uhm make uhm like measurements of burst frequency

The intended benefactor of the action is left equally unspecified in the definition, suggesting that both S and A may take on this role. By making an explicit reference to herself in (2), for example, the supervisor constructs a common ground of joint interests and activities where she shares with the supervisee some of the responsibility as well as some of the rewards of a successful thesis. While this move is likely to reduce the level of imposition of the advice act (see Section 4.1.1), it has the same illocutionary function as utterances directed at the addressee only (*you could go into …*). Therefore, in this Element we use advice as a cover term for the broad network of instantiations of directive–commissive speech acts, which all share the felicity conditions in Table 2 (an expanded version of Table 1). In addition to clear instances of advice (e.g., *I advise you to …*), the felicity conditions in the table also cover recommendations, suggestions, and proposals (see Section 3.3 for more examples).

Having established a working definition of the speech act of advice in this Element, the next section explores advice from the perspective of

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**Table 2** Felicity conditions for advice as a directive–commissive speech act

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