Searle develops and extends the speech act theory that Austin introduced. Searle focuses on the *illocutionary acts* performed by the speaker.

A. There are any number of acts performed, and these fall under only one aspect of the utterance that you might focus on. Among the acts are muscle movements, propositional acts (e.g., acts of reference and predication), illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts.

B. He focuses on illocutionary acts, and in particular, **promising**. (These are the acts that Austin called *performative utterances*.)

1. He believes that it is fundamental to language study to begin with speech acts, since they are essential to communication.

2. In fact, he takes the *illocutionary act*, and not the word or sentence or brain modules, to be the fundamental unit of linguistic communication, and he has an argument for this: to see a sentence as significant in general, we need to see that sentence as produced by an agent with certain intentions.

**Searle's Goal:** to describe *rules*, *propositions*, and *meaning* with a view of providing a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the performance of **promising**, and then to derive from these a set of semantic rules for promising.

A. **Rules:** Searle argues that language is a rule-governed activity; in arguing for this, he distinguishes between *regulative* and *constitutive* rules.

1. **Regulative Rules:** these regulate pre-existing activity whose existence is independent of the rules; these rules can be stated typically as imperatives. (Often these are mistakenly taken to be the paradigm type of rule.)

2. **Constitutive Rules:** these constitute an activity the existence of which is logically dependent on the rules; these can be expressed as imperatives in certain cases, but they can also be expressed as non-imperative, "counts as" rules. (These tend to get overlooked.)

3. E.g., chess rules, rules of football (touchdown rule as *constitutive* vs. no
taunting rule as *regulative*).

4. Searle argues that the semantics of language can be seen as a "series of systems of constitutive rules and that illocutionary acts are performed in accordance with these rules." These are the rules he is out to identify as the goal of this essay.

B. **Propositions:** The proposition provides the content of the illocutionary act (IA). The same content can be packaged into many different types of IAs. For example, the following utterances would have the same propositional content: "Will John leave the room?" "John will leave the room.", "John, leave the room!", "Would that John left the room.", and "If John will leave the room, I'll leave also."

1. Speakers and not sentences express these propositions.

2. Searle believes that the semantics of natural language should revolve around propositions and force. In a sentence, there will be a proposition and a force indicator that are grounded in the grammar of the sentence. Force can be indicated by word order, stress, intonation, punctuation, etc.

C. **Meaning:** Searle embraces a modified Gricean account of meaning. Grice argues that the meaning of something like an utterance is grounded in the intentions of the speaker; Searle accepts that, but insists that meaning is also a matter of convention.

1. **Searle’s take:** a speaker, in performing an IA, intends to produce a certain effect by means of getting the hearer to recognize his intention to produce that effect.

2. Further, if the words are used literally, he intends this recognition to be achieved in virtue of the conventional connection between the sentence and that effect.

**The Investigative Strategy:** with respect to this and other IAs, we are in the position of someone who has played chess from childhood without acquiring an explicit knowledge of the rules: to acquire such knowledge, she would begin by identifying the conditions under which certain moves are acceptable, and then derive the rules from these sets of conditions.

**The Example: Promising**

A. **The Conditions on Promising:** given that a speaker S utters a sentence T to H,
then in the utterance of T, S sincerely and non-defectively promises that p to H iff:

Normal input and output conditions obtain.

S expresses that p in his utterance of T.

In expressing that p, S predicates a future act A of S.  ((2) and (3) are the Propositional Content Conditions)

H would prefer S's doing A to his not doing A, and S believes H would prefer this.  (Distinguishes this from threats.)

It is not obvious to both S and H that S will do A in the normal course of events.  (Relevance Condition --- this and (4) are the Preparatory Conditions)

S intends to do A.  (Sincerity Condition)

S intends that the utterance of T will place him under an obligation to do A.  (Essential Condition)

(The Gricean Meaning Condition)

The semantical rules of the dialect spoken by S and H are such that T is correctly and sincerely uttered iff (1)-(8) obtain.

The Semantical Rules for Promising:

Propositional Content Rule:  P is to be uttered only in the context of a sentence the utterance of which predicates some future act A of the speaker S.

Preparatory Rule #1:  P is to be uttered only if the hearer H would prefer S's doing A to his not doing A, and S believes that about H.

Preparatory Rule #2:  P is to be uttered only if it is not obvious to both S and H that S will do A in the normal course of events.

Sincerity Rule:  P is to be uttered only if S intends to do A.

Essential Rule:  the utterance of P counts as the undertaking of an obligation to do A.

These are all constitutive rules, although only (5) is expressed as a "counts as" rule.