1 Introduction

Austin (1962) characterized explicit performatives as a class of utterances that make explicit their illocutionary force and described the performative formula as the combination of a first person singular subject with a present tense performative verb in indicative mood and active voice. According to Austin (1979), this grammatical standard form is not a general characterization of performative utterances, but varying those features might prevent the utterance from establishing performative force:

For example, when we say ‘I promise that …’, the case is very different from when we say ‘He promises that …’, or in the past tense ‘I promised that …’. For when we say ‘I promise that …’ we do perform an act of promising—we give a promise.

Following Eckardt (2012) and Condoravdi and Lauer (2011), I assume that the real performative formula, i.e. a linguistic characterization of performative utterances, can be formalized on the level of LF. The semantics of performatives constrains the range of possible overt realizations. An account of performative utterances should explain how the two key properties of performative meaning—self-referentiality and self-verification—can be derived. In this paper, I am going to adopt an event-based account of self-referential utterances from Eckardt (2012) and a common-ground based analysis of performative self-verification from Jary (2007) to show how the illocutionary force can be derived from the compositional semantics. In doing so, I will follow Jary in the assumption that the combination of a performative main verb and

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self-referentiality will be sufficient in order to derive self-verification and the illocutionary force specified by a performative utterance. The pragmatic mechanisms outlined here are similar to those formalized in Condoravdi and Lauer (2011), who use a situation-based account of the semantics of self-reference, but also explain self-verification with commitment-based self-ascription of an internal state. They go further than I do here in formalizing the relevant mechanisms, but I explore some more foundational questions about principled reasons that the self-verification should follow from just the speaker’s assertive commitment to a self-referential utterance with a performative verb.

In the tradition of Bach (1975), this approach rests on the hypothesis that performative utterances are not a semantic anomaly, but have a propositional content and thus also a compositionally derived truth-value. That view is an alternative to Austin’s characterization, who argued that performatives ‘do not themselves report facts and are not themselves true or false.’ Instead of being characterized by truth-conditions, their meaning should be described by virtue of felicity-conditions.

Like Searle (1989) and Condoravdi and Lauer (2011), I am assuming an analysis of performatives as self-referential and self-verifying assertions of sentences with a performative main verb. In the following section, I introduce Eckhard’s approach to the semantics of performatives, in particular her event-based analysis of self-reference. In her account, an utterance is self-referential, if its propositional content is such that the main verb’s event argument refers to the utterance event. Her explanation of self-verification remains rather inexplicit. In section three, I will show how performative self-verification could be derived from an LF that involves a performative main verb and self-referentiality. These considerations are based on an approach by Jary (2007), in which performative self-verification is modeled as a necessary update of the common ground. Jary argues that this comes about, because performatives work as linguistic acts of showing. He concludes that performatives are fundamentally different from assertions, which are not necessarily added to the common ground. I will show how we can integrate Jary’s key insights into Eckardt’s truth-conditional analysis, according to which a given utterance is interpreted and evaluated as an assertion.

An event-based account of performative utterances allows for an accurate prediction of the conditions under which an utterance can be interpreted performatively. Having the event-argument of the main verb refer to the utterance event also allows for some conclusions about its structure. Eckardt suggests that eventive co-reference entails

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1 Austin (1979) describes several ways in which a performative utterance could be infelicitous:

1. **Misfires:** The use of certain performative utterances is enabled by corresponding social conventions. In order for a certain type of performative to be able to bring about a speech act, there has to be a socially accepted rule that allows that. It has further to be applied under the right circumstances, in the right situation, by the right persons. Violation of these social principles leads to a misfire.

2. **Abuses:** The use of a performative utterance suggests the intention of the speaker to perform the specified act. According to Austin, an insincerely used performative is infelicitous by virtue of being an abuse.

3. **Misunderstanding:** Another way in which performative utterances might fail is a global fail of communication.

4. **Poetic uses** (such as acting a play, making a joke or writing a poem): Austin is not very specific about how this kind of infelicity works. I take ‘poetic uses’ to refer to figurative uses of language, in which utterances generally do not have the illocutionary force they have in standard communication. This seems to be in line with Austin, saying that such considerations are relevant for all kinds of utterances.

While the study of felicity-conditions is important to understand the nature of performatives, I will not have to say much in this respect here.
ontological identity. She assumes property-based criteria for identity of events and subscribes to the uniqueness of roles as a principle of event individuation. It follows that the participants of the utterance event, its speaker and hearer, should also be the arguments of the performative verb.

In section 4, I will show how these predictions align with what can be observed as a restriction on the reference of the participant arguments of the performative verb thank: The agent of thank has to be the speaker and its recipient has to be the hearer. I will call this kind of connection between the roles of the performative verb and the speech participants performative linking. If events denoted by performative verbs are utterance events under a self-referential interpretation and the uniqueness of roles must hold in order for that to be true, the notion of a performative linking would be somewhat trivial. Instead of being explicitly postulated, it could be derived from the uniqueness of roles and event identity. In the section 5, however, I will discuss various performative verbs with different argument structures, different role assignments and different performative linkings. Some performative verbs do not even optionally allow for an oblique realization of the hearer, who therefore does not seem to be a participant in the described event. Under the assumption of the uniqueness of roles as a requirement for event identity, this is a puzzle for an event-based account of eventive self-referentiality. I will conclude this paper with a discussion of possible resolutions for this problem.

2 Eckardt’s account

2.1 A formal analysis of self-referential utterances

Considering self-referentiality a crucial and necessary feature of performative utterances, Eckardt (2012) provides a truth-conditional analysis of performatives on the basis of Davidson (1980). His basic assumption, that verbs take an event-argument, allows for a straightforward implementation of self-referential utterances: because utterances are events, they are possible referents for the event argument of the main verb of the uttered sentence. The adverb hereby, which characteristically is taken by performative verbs, introduces a context-relative constant ε, referring to the utter-
ance. It saturates the event argument of the verb and thereby induces performative self-reference.

(1)  
\begin{enumerate}
\item a. \(I \text{ (hereby) [promise to bring beer]}_{VP}\)
\item b. \([\text{promise to bring beer}]^e = \lambda e \lambda x. \text{PROMISE}(x, e, \text{BRING}(x, \text{BEER}), w)\)
\item c. \([I]^c = \text{sp} \ (\text{speaker in context } c)\)
\item d. \([\text{hereby}]^c = e \ (\text{ongoing act of information transfer in } c)\)
\item e. \([I \text{ hereby promise to bring beer}]^c = \text{Promise}(\text{sp}, e, \text{BRING}(\text{sp}, \text{BEER}))\)
\end{enumerate}

This analysis of performatives with hereby is in line with Searle’s (1989) argument for a direct derivation of performative force: Self-referentiality is understood as a key-condition for a performative reading. Introducing the pronoun \(e\) as an explicit representation of self-referentiality allows performative force to be read directly from the LF. However, unlike Searle, Eckardt does not assume a tacit hereby for performatives occurring without it, but existential closure, which leads to an indirect derivation of performativity, much like Bach (1975) proposed.

(2) \([I \text{ promise to bring beer}]^e = \exists e. \text{Promise}(\text{sp}, e, \text{BRING}(\text{sp}, \text{BEER}))\)

The self-referentiality of this existential statement comes about in context, along with its verification through instantiation of the existentially bound variable to \(e\).

(3) \([\exists e. \text{Promise}(\text{sp}, e, \text{BRING}(\text{sp}, \text{BEER}))]^Mg = 1 \text{ because} \quad [\exists e. \text{Promise}(\text{sp}, e, \text{BRING}(\text{sp}, \text{BEER}))]^Mg(e/\epsilon) = 1\)

Eckardt shows that self-referentiality accounts for whether an utterance is interpreted as a performative or not in many cases, which were formerly considered problematic. For instance, it explains how the same sentence can be used as a performative in some contexts and as a statement in others. As Eckardt points out, a habitual interpretation of performative sentences leads to a reportative utterance.

(4) (Whenever you invite me,) I promise to bring beer.

A specific utterance event is not habitual. Therefore Eckardt’s theory predicts that (4), which is habitual, could not be a performative. Within this account, performative meaning is established, if the event-argument of the performative verb refers to the utterance event. Diverse processes saturating verbal arguments give rise to different derivations of self-referentiality. It follows that the performative event (or speech act) is the utterance event. According to Eckardt, this identity makes the utterance

b. So that hereby was fulfilled what has been spoken in effect by several of the prophets... (‘hereby’ = that Jesus came from Nazareth)

I omit the representation of modality for the purposes of this paper.
event and the performative event subject to the uniqueness of roles as a necessary criterion for event individuation. Following Landmann (2000) (Carlson (1984), Parsons (1990)), she conceives of thematic roles as partial functions from eventualities to individuals:

(5) Adapted from Landmann, 2000, p. 38):

**Unique Role Requirement**

If a role is specified for an event (in a given world), it is uniquely specified (in that world).

However, there are performative utterances which are not strictly self-referring:

(6) a. \[[King Karl hereby promises you a cow. (to farmer Burns)] =

\[
\text{Promise(King, } \varepsilon \text{, Give(King, cow, Burns)})
\]

(6) can be interpreted performatively, when uttered by an official messenger or representative of the king. Taking into account the uniqueness of roles, the interpretation of hereby in (6a) as referring to the utterance is predicted to lead to a felicitous utterance only if the speaker is King Karl. Eckardt therefore generalizes the reference of hereby to a more abstract ongoing act of information transfer (hereinafter communicative event). Minimal communicative events take place at the level of utterances, and can be part of complex communicative events: A person A communicating on behalf of another person B towards a person C involves an overarching communicative event between B and C. For delegated performatives like (6), Eckardt characterizes the context-sensitive constant \( \varepsilon \) as referring to that complex communicative event. Eckardt describes the communicative event as being established by the utterance, but does not give a formalization of the relation that holds between the two. The utterance in (6) not only seems to establish the communicative event, but also be a constituent part. Therefore, I will interpret the relation between the utterance \( u \) and the communicative event \( \varepsilon \) as mereological inclusion: an utterance \( u \) can only be a performative if \( u \subseteq \varepsilon \). Because the performative main verb in (6) refers to a mereological subpart of the utterance, it can be considered indirectly self-referential.

This raises the more general question about what communicative events are (and are not) – a question which I attempt to elucidate in the forthcoming sections. I will assume that performative utterances are a special type of communicative event, which are introduced into the semantic representation as the main verb’s event argument. Because the event denoted by the performative main verb and the communication are the same event, they should share their thematic roles and other eventive properties. Investigating the linguistic realizations of these arguments and properties may offer some insight into their internal structure.

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4I added the limitation that this criterion for event identity only holds with respect to a given world. This seems to be a necessary refinement, as cross-world identity has to be defined on criteria that are not merely property-based. For the purposes of this paper, however, a limitation to the actual world will be sufficient.

5Following Condoravdi and Lauer (2011), I am going to use the term communicative event, not because I think that Eckardt’s term is a bad denomination, but rather, because the shorter ‘communicative event’ will be more convenient to use, when talking about its properties and roles.
2.2 Self-reference vs. self-verification

Another widely discussed characteristic of performative utterances is being self-verificational. The incoherence of discourses like in (7) has often been used as a test for performativity.

(7) **Eckardt** (2012)

a. *I invite you to come to my party tonight.* – # No, that’s not true.
b. *I invite you to come to my party tonight.* – # Yes, correct.

However, Eckardt shows that neither self-verification nor self-referentiality are equivalent or sufficient for performativity. Many verbs can take hereby as an argument and thereby establish a self-referential reading. Not all of them bring about self-verification or performative meaning, as (8) shows.

(8) *I hereby utter a sentence with seven words.*

An utterance of (8) would be self-referential, but not self-verificational (it would be that of a false statement). The self-reference is explicitly realized through the use of hereby and the sentence is a statement about its utterance. Self-verification established through context-anchoring, on the other hand does not require self-referentiality either, nor does it necessarily lead to a performative interpretation.

(9) *I am here now.*

The self-verification of (9) comes about through the proximal deixis of its subparts, anchoring them in the speech situation. Although this sentence could not be used to make a self-referential utterance, it is anchored in context, similarly to eventive self-referential utterances as described by Eckardt. In this section, I will use Jary’s (2007) analysis of performative self-verification in terms of a necessary update of the common ground that comes about as a linguistic act of showing in order to explain how the mechanism of self-verification of sentences like (9) is similar to performative self-verification.

2.3 A sufficient characterization?

Eckardt provides a derivation of self-reference and establishes the distinctness of self-referentiality and self-verification. Examples like (8) show that not all self-referential utterances are self-verifying assertions. She therefore concludes that her truth-conditional characterization of self-referentiality cannot sufficiently characterize performative utterances. Her attempt to resolve the explanatory gap between self-referentiality and self-verification is the assumption that the speaker has the power to define the category of their utterance.

She assumes this step in the derivation of performativity to be an extra-compositional manifestation of the speaker’s intention, which is implicit and assumed by the hearer under absence of evidence to the contrary.
She does not make explicit, how this definition comes about, what circumstances count as evidence to the contrary or how it might be formalized. She, however, takes it to be a faithful explication of Searle’s DECLARATION, who, like Eckardt, argued that the illocutionary force of performatives cannot be explained on the basis of self-referentiality alone, but needs an additional step. According to Searle, declarations require an extra-linguistic institution, a special position of the speaker in that institution, some social conventions that allow certain expressions to be interpreted as declarations and the intention of the speaker to issue a declaration. These requirements mirror the conditions Austin describes, under which a performative can go wrong. A violation of the conventional and institutional conditions leads to an Austinian misfire. These conditions are characteristic to performative utterances in a social dimension. Because they are determined by extra-linguistic facts, they cannot contribute to a linguistic analysis of performatives.

Another factor, both Searle and Eckardt consider necessary is the intention of the speaker to perform the specified speech act. Searle discriminates between being committed to having an intention and actually having the intention. He argues that assertions could only achieve the former, while declarations require the latter. Unlike the commitment to an utterance, which can be established in discourse, the actual intention of the speaker is a non-linguistic circumstance. Cases of performative utterances in which the speaker does not have the actual intention to perform the specified speech act, while at the same time committing to their intention can be characterized as Austinian abuses. This characterization of insincere communication, however, relies on considerations, that are both extra-linguistic and not unique to performatives. This is so, because the actual intention of the speaker does not have any influence on the meaning of their utterances, and the notion of insincerity can be extended to all kinds of speech acts, including assertions. Committing to an assertive act while lacking the actual intention to make the assertion could be described as an abuse of assertive force, that is, a lie.

The commitment of the speaker to their intention to perform a speech act on the other hand does have an influence on interpretation. This effect can be observed in the example that Eckardt gives to illustrate the failure of the speaker’s definition as a performative:

(10)  B: (gasps) Stop it! You are killing me!
A: (laughing): Ok. I hereby promise to never be funny again.

In fact, A’s utterance in (10) does not establish performative force, because the speaker does not commit to the intention to perform it. A’s utterance cannot be interpreted performatively, because it is interpreted as a joke. It can thus be described as an ironic form of figurative speech. We might characterize this case as a ‘poetic use’ in Austin’s terms. Grice (1967) would analyze such cases as flouting the maxim of quality, giving rise to an ironic reading through absolving the speaker from their liability to the literal content of their utterance. As Eckardt writes, this can be known by the hearer due to ‘evidence to the contrary’ that might be provided by the context, common ground knowledge or intonation. The consideration of the
speaker’s commitment to their utterance and the literal meaning of its content is thus a linguistic matter, but not specific to performative utterances. The speaker is not committed to an intention to perform the speech act of promising is not given in (10), because its context is such that the speaker is not committed to the literal meaning of their utterance. That suggests that the manifestation of a speaker’s intention is not part of the compositional semantics.

Eckardt’s and Searle’s arguments for an extra-compositional step of intention manifestation can be reduced to extra-linguistic factors or general principles of communication. Gricean cooperativity can also rebut Searle’s objection to the argument in Bach and Harnish (1979) for treating performatives as assertions. In their derivation of performativity, they include the premise that

(11) ‘Presumably [the speaker] is speaking the truth.’

Searle replies:

Now, if we are right in thinking that performatives are self-guaranteeing, then it is redundant to suppose that we need an extra presumption that the speaker is telling the truth [...] because as far as the illocutionary force is concerned, there is no way [s]he could fail to speak the truth.

I would argue that Searle, albeit making the right observations, is looking at this from the wrong angle. If Grice (1967) is correct in assuming that the maxim of quality is crucial to communicative cooperativity, the premise that Bach and Harnish take on is not an extra-presumption. The foundational principles of communication suggest a bias towards accepting the assertions of others. In linguistic communication, it is not the special case if the hearer assumes that the speaker is telling the truth, but the other way around. The hearer assumes the falsity of an asserted proposition, only if they have a reason, be it contradictory knowledge or contextual cues.

Reversing the burden of proof in this way allows us to turn Searle’s reasoning around: Searle takes performative self-verification as given and argues on that ground that (11) follows. Having made the point that in fact (11) should be taken as given, I will use the rest of this section to show that self-verification follows and the next section to work out how that might work in detail.

2.4 The performative verb and epistemic authority

Having critiqued Eckardt’s concept of speaker’s definition, I still would like to make use of her notion of defining the utterance as a performative. Having argued against

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8 An assertion in the same context would also be interpreted ironically in discharge of the speaker’s commitment to its literal meaning:

B: (gasps) Stop it! You are killing me!
A: (laughing) Ok. I know I am a bad person.
postulating it as an extra-compositional additional condition, I will treat it as a derivative notion and offer a new explanation of how it works, where it derives from and why the speaker can define their own utterance.

The fundamental communicative bias towards accepting a speaker’s assertions lies at the heart of why the speaker has the power to define their utterance. To see this, consider another attempt Searle makes to invalidate Bach and Harnish:

Their account takes it as given that the utterance can constitute an order, but if we are allowed to assume that utterances can constitute states of affairs described by the utterance, then we do not have an account that explains the differences between sentences which work as performatives and sentences which do not, such as e.g., ‘I am the King of Spain.’

Treating self-referentiality as a necessary condition for performativity, we do have such an account. ‘I am the King of Spain’ is not self-referential and thus not a performative. Further, we need a way to distinguish a performative from a non-performative self-referential utterance like the above (8), repeated here:

(8) *I hereby utter a sentence with seven words.*

Characterizing performative utterances as utterances of propositions that involve the self-referential use of a performative predicate, also this distinction can be made. The presence of a performative verb in addition to self-referentiality is what makes (1a, also repeated) a performative as opposed to (8).

(1a) a. ‘I hereby promise to bring beer.’

The two semantic conditions—self-referentiality and having a performative main verb—allow for a semantic derivation of Eckhardt’s definition. They ensure that the performative verb predicates over the utterance event. To visualize this, recall (1e), the semantic representation of (1a).

(1e) \[ [I\ \text{hereby promise to bring beer.}]^c = \text{PROMISE}(\text{sp}, \epsilon, \text{BRING}((\text{sp}, \text{beer}))) \]

I take it that asserting a proposition involving performative predication over the utterance event has exactly the meaning of defining the utterance as a performative. Under this view, Eckhardt’s definition is a result of compositional semantic derivation. Because only performative verbs combine with self-referentiality to bring about a definition of the form ‘PROMISE(ε)’, the key to the meaning of the definition must be introduced by the lexical semantics of the performative verb.

The semantics of performatives—the self-referential use of a performative verb—distinguishes them from other assertions. But although we can give a purely semantic explanation why (1a) is a performative, while ‘I am the King of Spain’ or (8) are not, Searle has a point in the above cited critique of Bach and Harnish. We do have to explain how an utterance can constitute, say, an order, given a self-referential
LF with a performative main verb. We have to explain how uttering the definition ‘Promise(ε)’ makes for a self-verifying assertion.

Searle himself assumes that speech acts are a special class of actions that can be performed solely on the basis of manifesting the intention to do so. In Eckardt’s terms, the speaker has the power to define their utterance. I take both of these insights to be important descriptive generalizations. An assertion-based account like this one could explain them in terms of a special epistemic status.

As a matter of fact, there is a clear epistemic difference between propositions that concern facts about the world (like ‘I am the King of Spain.’) and facts about the intentions of a person. This difference is the possibility for the hearer to have knowledge that might contradict the asserted proposition. Propositions about states of affairs in the world might be observable or known by any person within that world. Propositions that are about the intentions of some person S are different in that respect: There is no way in which some other person H could have contradictory knowledge about S’s psychological state. H has to take S’s word for it. The same idea can be found in Kaufmann’s (2012) analysis of imperatives as assertions of modalized propositions. Following Hamblin’s (1987) notion of social or rational authority, Kaufmann describes the special epistemic status of a speaker’s statements about their own psychological state in terms of an epistemic authority of the speaker.

Now assume that, due to the maxim of quality, conversational cooperativity makes it the case that assertions are evaluated as true by default and as false only if they create a contradiction. Suppose also, that the manifestation of the speaker’s intention and their definition of the utterance as performative is given in the literal meaning of the utterance content. Then, the epistemic nature of these propositions, being such that the hearer cannot possibly have any knowledge contradicting them, can explain why self-verification comes about. Searle argues that it is redundant to assume that the speaker is telling the truth, because there is no way in which they could fail to. Turning this argumentation around, one might argue that speaker of a performative will always be assumed to speak the truth because they are assumed to speak the truth by default and if they are speaking about their own intentions, the hearer will not know any better.

To summarize, there is no independent reason to assume that performative utterances are characterized by a special pragmatic mechanism. Saying this, I do not want to deny that intention manifestation or defining the utterance as a performative play a role for deriving the illocutionary force. But I argue that we have to look for those in the semantics: Given the predication over the utterance event by a performative verb that is part of Eckardt’s analysis of self-referentiality, the definition of the utterance can rather be regarded to be an explicitly realized part of the truth-conditions. Because performative verbs are agentive predicates, the speaker’s intention is an entailment.

In this subsection, I have given an argument that performative self-verification can be derived from the truth-conditional semantics, without showing how that can be achieved. Following Jary (2007), I suggest that the self-verification of a performative utterance can be characterized as a necessary update of the common ground. To
show how that could follow from a performative LF, involving self-referentiality and a performative main verb, I will analyze performatives in Jary’s terms—as an act of showing.

Eckardt dismisses Jary’s argument that self-referentiality is sufficient to characterize performative utterances and points out that his notion of self-referentiality is not made explicit. Eckardt on the other hand characterizes self-referentiality without making the mechanisms of self-verification explicit. In the following section, I introduce Jary’s account and attempt to combine the two approaches in order to show how performative utterances can be sufficiently characterized in terms of self-referential predication of the performative verb over the communicative event.

3 The derivation of performativity

3.1 Direct vs. indirect derivations

Before discussing how Eckardt’s and Jary’s analyses might be combined, let me compare the assumptions made in this paper against the different views that can be found the scientific discourse. The question of how performativity is derived has been discussed controversially in literature on semantics, pragmatics and the philosophy of language. Austin (1979) brought attention to the issue of performative utterances, which can be used to perform actions and behave fundamentally different than assertions. His main argument for this claim is that a performative utterance cannot be assigned a truth value. Rather than using truth-conditions, they can be characterized by means of felicity conditions. Bach (1975) on the other hand, argues that performative utterances are statements, that are true by virtue of being uttered. The meaning of a speech act is not derived as a part of propositional meaning itself, but is a result of pragmatic inferences. It is proposed that performative utterances involve a non-assertive speech act in addition to an assertion.

In light of this contrast, there have been several accounts arguing for one or the other position. The different stances on this controversy are distinguished by how they answer the following questions:

1. Are performative utterances assertions of propositions?

2. Is the performative speech act derived directly from literal meaning?

Austin (1979), Searle (1989) and Jary (2007) would negate the first question and affirm the second, whereas indirect speech act theorists like Bach (1975) would give the contrary answer. The latter position is also taken in much of the recent semantic research, because it is clearly desirable to have a generalized truth-conditional account of the meaning of different utterances in a compositional theory of semantics. Eckardt on the other hand synthesizes the two ever competing views on the derivation of performativity: the direct derivation of performative meaning, as advocated in the tradition of Austin (1979) and Searle (1989) finds room in her analysis as the explicit
realization of self-reference through the adverb hereby. The indirect derivation as proposed by Bach (1975) is accounted for in Eckardt’s analysis as implicit realizations of self-reference through existential binding. Because self-referentiality is derived indirectly, also performativity is derived indirectly. Searle’s explicit/implicit distinction of performatives seems to need a refinement: although explicit performatives with a performative verb make explicit what kind of speech act they (can) bring about, performativity crucially relies on self-referentiality, which can be explicitly realized by hereby. Thus, only performatives with hereby can be considered truly explicit, as they also make self-reference explicit. Combining indirect and direct derivations of self-referentiality, Eckardt’s account still generally views performatives as assertions of propositions with truth-values.

This suggests that the above questions can be addressed separately: The question of direct or indirect derivation is a different question than if performatives are assertions of propositions. Following Jary (2007), I will model assertive force in terms of Stalnaker’s (1978) common ground, and adopt Jary’s adaption of this model to capture performative self-verification as a necessary update of the common ground. Making use of Jary’s analysis, I will show that contrary to their treatment in the literature, these two positions can be combined. I argue for a direct (i.e. compositional) derivation of the performative speech act, but also that performatives are a subtype of assertions. I will further argue that in order to derive performativity from compositional semantics in this way, in fact we have to assume that they have assertive force.

3.2 Jary (2007): Necessary update of the common ground

So far, we have an answer to the first of the above questions and a formal characterization of self-referential utterances: Performative utterances involve a propositional content (and have a compositionally derived truth value). I am going to restate the Searlian view in Eckardt’s terminology: performative self-verification comes about as the definition of the utterance event as performative. I argued that this comes about as part of the semantic meaning of the utterance content, by means of a predication over the utterance event by a performative verb. I also adopted Searle’s fundamental assumptions of speech act theory, also reformulated in a way suitable to the assumptions made in this paper: The fact that performative verbs can refer to speech acts and thus denote a class of actions that can be achieved by manifesting the intention to do so is why they can be used to define utterances.

I am further adopting Jary’s (2007) view, that performative self-verification can be explained on the basis of Stalnaker’s (1978) model of the common ground. Performative self-verification works differently than semantic mechanisms of self-verification on the basis of truth-functional predicates or tautology (cf. Johannson (2003)). Jary argues that performatives work as linguistic acts of showing, which lead to a necessary update of the common ground.

Stalnaker models assertions as the speaker’s attempt to modify the common ground.
The asserted proposition will be added to the common ground, only if judged true or accepted by the hearer. Grounding the asserted proposition is thus an avoidable update of the common ground, but every assertion also gives rise to an unavoidable update of the common ground: the fact, that the utterance has been made will be added to the common ground, whether the asserted proposition is accepted by the hearer or not. This is due to the fact that the utterance is a manifest event, like every other event that can be observed by all the speech participants (cf. Stalnaker (2002)).

According to Jary, performative utterances—like all utterances—are also manifest events. He contrasts performative utterances from assertions, the notable difference being that they license grounding of the expressed proposition without any judgment about its truth or falsity.

Jary argues that this comes about, because performatives work as linguistic acts of showing in the sense of Green (2008), who introduces the distinction between (at least) three different kinds of showing: the first is ‘showing-that’, which can be thought of in terms of proof. It results in propositional knowledge and an example would be extensive calculations, which show that there is a black hole at the end of the universe. Another type is ‘showing-α’, which is to make something perceptible. An example would be showing someone your injured ankle, which would result in perceptual knowledge about that state of affairs. A third kind of showing is what Green calls ‘showing-how’, which results in qualitative knowledge e.g. about how something looks, smells or feels. Jary argues that performative utterances are instances of showing-α: they make a state of affairs perceptible (viz. the one described in the uttered proposition). Green characterizes this type of showing as consisting of two components: the state of affairs that is shown and a means of pointing at that state of affairs. According to Jary, self-referentiality constitutes the pointing in the case of performative utterances, whereas the utterance itself constitutes the state of affairs.

Two cases can be distinguished from the act of showing involved in performative utterances: the first are implicit speech acts, which make state of affairs perceptible (by pragmatic inferences), without explicitly pointing to it. The other are self-verificational utterances like the above mentioned I am here now. This sentence is self-verifying as an act of showing-α, because it deictically refers to a state of affairs, which is necessarily given in any speech situation, although not at the same time creating it.

This fits nicely with the assumptions made so far: accepting Stalnaker’s assumptions about the grounding of assertions and the power to define utterances as certain lexically specified speech acts, Jary’s characterization of self-verification as necessary grounding follows from the predication of the performative verb over the utterance and the resulting identity of the speech act and the utterance event. If the utterance is a manifest event and the speech act equals the utterance, also the speech act is a manifest event, leading to an unavoidable update of the common ground. Holding the view that performative utterances are assertions, however, we will have to make some adjustments and be more specific about how the idea that performatives involve an act of showing can enrich our idea of definition and intention manifestation. To
avoid confusion, let me make clear that I take them to be different descriptions of the same phenomenon, that is the property of performative utterances being uncontradictable, because they are expressive assertions about the speaker’s state of mind.

3.3 Self-verification

Jary argues that performative utterances are fundamentally different from assertions, as linguistic acts of showing, they license grounding without any judgment of their truth or falsity by the hearer. My position is that they are judged with respect to their truth or falsity, they are just always judged true. Performatives do not have a special type of illocutionary force that operates on the way they are treated during interpretation. Rather, they are interpreted like ordinary assertions. Performatives work as acts of showing only because they are expressions of the psychological state of the speaker, making it perceptible and pointing to it. In fact, I would argue that it is crucial that performative utterances are interpreted as assertions and that their content undergoes interpretation and evaluation like an asserted proposition. Also, I would like to harness Searle’s fundamental assumption of speech act theory here: if expressing the intention to perform a speech act is equivalent to performing a speech act, then the description of the utterance as a performative (i.e. the expressed proposition) is a fact about the psychological state of the hearer. The affirmative bias of cooperative communication allows the content to be judged true without evidence to the contrary. And its expressive nature makes sure that it will not be contradicted as long as the speaker commits to the assertion.

(12) 1. S asserts $p = ‘I hereby thank you.’$
2. $H$ interprets $p$: $[I hereby thank you]^{w,c} = 1$ if, the utterance in $c$ is an event of type $\text{thank}$ with agent $sp$ and recipient $h$.
3. Because $\text{thank}$ is agentive, $p \rightarrow ‘sp intends to thank h’$
4. (Searle:) The manifestation of the intention to perform a speech act is sufficient to perform a speech act.
(Eckardt:) The speaker has the power to define the category of their

\[
\text{thank}'(sp,e,h) \\
\lambda x. \text{thank}'(x,e,h) \\
\lambda e. \lambda x. \text{thank}'(x,e,h) \\
\lambda e. \lambda x. \text{thank}'(x,e,y) \text{you h}
\]
utterance.

(Jary:) The speaker makes perceptible the state of affairs that they are performing an act of thanking and use the content of their utterance to point to it.

(This paper:) Because $p$ is a proposition about $S$'s intention, there is no way for $H$ to have contradictory knowledge.

5. (Bach + Harnish:) ‘Presumably, $S$ is speaking the truth.’

(Grice:) ‘[H] expect[s $S$’s] contributions to be genuine and not spurious.’

6. Therefore, $e$ (in $c$) is an event of type thank with agent $sp$ and recipient $h$. (i.e. $p = 1$)

7. $p$ is added to the common ground in $c$.

The philosophical puzzle, how actions can be brought about, merely by the meaning of a sentence, is provided with a straightforward answer: they cannot. In the case of performatives, the speaker does not magically bring about an event, but issues an utterance, i.e. a real world communicative event. Predication over this event brings about a definition as a lexically specified speech act.

Assertive force requires the expressed proposition to be interpreted, evaluated and accepted by the hearer in order to be added to the common ground. I argued that due to cooperativity, communication is biased towards acceptance and performatives are expressions of the speaker’s (commitment to an) intention. The performatives property of necessary grounding (a.k.a. self-verification) can thus be derived from the propositional content of a performative utterance and the non-contradictability of the speaker’s assertions about their own intentions. Crucially, we do not have to assume extra pragmatic factors for a linguistic characterization of performative utterances. They can be delineated on the basis of their compositional meaning alone in the way that Eckardt proposed. Therefore, let us return to the investigation of the compositional meaning of performative utterances.

4 Utterance events and performative argument structure

4.1 Performatives and self-referentiality

Deriving performative self-referentiality as reference to an utterance event requires modeling utterances as events. As such they have participants with certain roles. They have a speaker, a hearer and a content. They are issued in a certain place at a certain time. All these can be understood as functional attributes of the utterance event, which together specify the situational context. Performative verbs also assign their arguments certain roles with respect to the performative event. Based on the uniqueness of roles, they should match the roles, the speech participants have with respect to the communicative event. If the speaker is the agent of the communication, they should be the agent of the performative event. The same point can be made for the hearer as communicative recipient. It seems to be a viable assumption that
speech acts have this restriction in general: that the participants of the locutionary event (utterance, act of information transfer, communicative event) have to be the participants of the illocutionary event (speech act) as well and pass on their thematic roles.

Concerning explicit speech acts, this should have an observable effect on the arguments of performative verbs, which can be formulated as a restriction on their reference. In the rest of this section, I will show that the participants of performative events have a requirement to be anchored in context in order to achieve a performative interpretation of the utterance. This is predicted by the uniqueness of roles, but not as straightforwardly realized as one might expect: like utterance self-referentiality, context-anchoring can be achieved explicitly or through implicit circumstantial coreference. The possibility of indirect self-reference in the case of delegated performatives also allows for context-anchoring to come about indirectly. This section thus also deals with the different ways in which the context-anchoring requirement of performative arguments can be fulfilled.

The data presented in the following section, however, suggest that this restriction does not apply to certain arguments of certain performative verbs. This exception violates the uniqueness of roles principle and leads to problems for the event-based analysis of performative utterances under the present assumptions for reference and individuation. For now, let us focus on the behavior of performative verbs, which do require their arguments to be anchored in context – either through co-reference or relational association.

### 4.2 Reference of performative event participants

Coreference of the performative participant-arguments with the interlocutors can be achieved in the same ways, in which eventive self-referentiality arises. The argument realizations in (13) show a contrast similar to the interpretation of performatives with and without hereby.

(13)  a. *I (hereby) thank you.*  
      b. *Thank you.*  
      c. *The writer of this thesis (hereby) thanks her readers.*  
      d. *Lisa (hereby) thanks Daniel and Peter.*  
      e. *My employer (hereby) thanks you for your patience.*

If I uttered one of the sentences in (13a – 13c) to you, that would constitute an act of thanking. In Eckardt’s terms, such an act involves an utterance-level communicative event between two parties (me and you) and therefore produces directly self-referential utterances. Not all of these sentences involve a first person subject, yet they require coreference of the performative agent with the speaker. And this is crucial: a performative interpretation of (13d) is possible if I am Lisa and you are Daniel or Peter. (13c) has no such contextual restrictions. Its verbal arguments are realized as definite descriptions, which again involve some deixis and therefore
context-anchoring. In a written context, they have the same extension as the verbal arguments in (13a). This illustrates how third-person arguments can be part of the construal of performatory meaning under certain contextual conditions. The deictic verbal arguments in (13a + 13c) make explicit their contextual anchoring, whereas the descriptive arguments in (13d) require circumstantial coreference with communicative participants under a performatory interpretation.

The sentence (13e) would need some additional context: at least it needs an authorization for me to speak on behalf of my employer. Only in virtue of this delegation, (13e) can be uttered performatively. This involves a larger communicative event between my employer and you, which is relaid via my utterance. What is observable here, is coreference of the communicative agent with the performative agent. Because my utterance is an integral part of this larger communicative event, it has an indirect, mereological self-reference.

The old performative formula explained

Austin (1979) described present tense indicative sentences with a first person subject as the standard grammatical form for performatives. This characterization has often been referred to as the performative formula. Although already Austin notes exceptions of performatives which deviate from this standard form, he still believes that performatives require a certain mode of presentation of their agent (as the speaker of the sentence) (cf. Austin (1962/1975: 60–61), via Jary (2007)). Jary interprets Austin’s formulation of this requirement on the basis of Kaplan (1978), who subdivides the meaning of indexicals into two aspects: their content (i.e. reference) and their character (the principle on the basis of which the indexical picks out its referent). Accordingly, Austin’s claim can be interpreted as a claim that performatives require a first person agent. Jary points out that this mode of presentation of the performative agent as the speaker of the sentence, is not essential to self-referentiality or performatory meaning, but rather helps to disambiguate performatory sentences without hereby between a self-referential and non-self-referential interpretation.

I have argued above that the real performative formula can be understood not as a grammatical, but a logical form, that involves a performative predication over the utterance event. It is thus the reference, not the grammatical form of verbal arguments specifying the participants of the event, which has to be such that it is compatible with such an interpretation. The explicit realization of reference to speech participants involves the use of personal deixis. Because they explicate their anchoring in context, the use of deictic verbal arguments is the most straightforward way to indicate that an interpretation of the utterance as self-referential is intended. In front of the background of Jary’s remarks about disambiguation, it is therefore not surprising that a first person agent, second person recipient and present tense are so common among performatives.

I think of the semantic composition of performatory sentences with explicitly context-anchored arguments parallel to Eckardt’s interpretation of performatives with the deictic hereby:
The arguments of $\text{THANK}$ in (14e) are saturated with deictic expressions. Its arguments are explicitly co-referential with the utterance participants. Like the roles taken by participants in an event, tense is a unique property of events. A unique event in a given world can only occur at one time, which might be extended or punctual, explicitly specified or indefinite, but unique with respect to the event and world.

Unlike context-anchoring, which may or may not be overtly realized, tense is obligatorily realized in English. Because present tense is conceptualized as the tense of the utterance, it should be the only choice for a self-referential interpretation. An event-based account of self-referentiality predicts a likelihood of grammatically explicit realizations of context-anchoring, and therefore explains Austin’s characterization of a grammatical standard form for performatives, and why it is so frequent but not exclusive.

**Existential binding and circumstantial coreference**

Realizing arguments as specific existential statements is not only found for event-arguments. Eckardt gives an example of specific existential binding of the subject of ‘Someone needs a bath here.’, which you could imagine if uttered by a parent to their child. Also, conventionalized omissions like in (15) are not unusual:

(15) $[\text{Thank you.}]^{w,c} = \exists x \exists e . \text{THANK}(x, e, h)$

A performative utterance of (15) necessarily involves self-reference and therefore context-anchoring of all verbal arguments. That the performative recipient is explicitly realized as the communicative recipient is compatible with that interpretation. Of course, a large dose of social convention plays a role for the preferred interpretation of such existential statements. (15) is one of the most frequently used performatives, which is probably one of the factors which made the conventionalization of this omission possible in the first place and thus ensured that a self-referential performative is the associated interpretation.8

The relation between the participant-arguments and the event-argument explains why (intended) performative sentences with third person subjects are often infelicitous: Third person NPs can refer to persons other than the speech participants. But

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8Assuming that passivization involves existential binding of the agent-argument, passive performatives can be interpreted similarly. Under a self-referential interpretation of the utterance, the existentially bound variable in the performative agent argument place has to be instantiated as the utterance agent.
also, although it is unusual, they can refer to interlocutors, which presents one of the advantages of an event based account of performatives: The felicitousness of third-person agent performatives is no longer puzzling.

\[(\text{Lisa hereby thanks Daniel and Peter})^{w,c} = \]
\[
\text{THANK}(\text{LISA}, \varepsilon, \text{DANIEL \& PETER}) = 1 \text{ if }
\]
\[
I^{w,c}(\text{LISA}) = \text{sp, and } (I^{w,c}(\text{DANIEL}) = \text{h or } I^{w,c}(\text{PETER}) = \text{h})
\]

Although there are no existential statements in the meaning (16), performative context-anchoring is established similarly here: If the subject refers to the speaker and the direct object refers to the hearer, a performative interpretation is possible. Because the reference of the event-argument is explicitly specified through hereby, only a performative interpretation is possible. Third person arguments do not hinder a performative interpretation in general, but only when they refer to a person who is not a speech participant (which is mostly the case).

(16) also illustrates how third person recipients can be understood as a means of domain restriction, specifying the circle of intended recipients. This can most frequently be observed in mass media or in general, any context in which absent communication reaches more recipients than are intended for the speech act (e.g I hereby greet my mom.). This domain restriction operates on the set of recipients and thus fulfills the context anchoring requirement.

In English, the third person is not deictic, like the first and second person are. While the first and second person specify the role of a participant in the communicative event, the third person has no such specification. This is different in languages with obviative marking, like for example some Algonquian languages. They specify the role of a third person with respect to the utterance context as proximate or obviative. If obviative realizations of participant-arguments exclude coreference with speech participants, they should not allow for an interpretation as strictly self-referential performatives. They might, however, occur in performatives which are conveyed on behalf of others, as they are less restricted. It would be interesting to test these predictions in further research.

**Mereologically self-referential utterances**

Certain social conventions (e.g employment, mandate, legal representation) allow for persons to communicate on behalf of others. A sender A communicating with a recipient B via a messenger C constitutes a complex communicative event with smaller communicative events as proper subparts. Eckardt motivates her generalization of performative self-reference as reference to an abstract communicative event with delegated performatives like the following:

\[(6) \text{ King Karl hereby promises you a cow.}\]
\[(17) \text{ We hereby promise to clean our desks.}\]
A felicitous utterance of (6) or (17) constitutes an exception to the principle that performative arguments refer to immediate interlocutors. Because these and similar cases involve an indirect kind of eventive self-reference, they also allow for an indirect context anchoring of participant-arguments. The indirect self-reference of a performative utterance \( u \) by \( C \) towards \( B \) on behalf of \( A \) comes about through reference of the event argument to the larger communicative event \( c \) between \( A \) and \( C \). \( u \) is thus not strictly self-referential, but because \( u \subseteq c \), an indirect kind of self-reference is established, which can be described as mereological. The relationship between the event-argument and the participant-arguments stays the same: the participant-arguments of the verb have to be the participants of the specified event. Therefore, the performative agent as expressed in the utterance has to be the communicative agent \( A \). (6) is an example of a sentence which could be uttered as the temporally ultimate subpart of the complex communicative event: the communication between \( C \) and \( B \).

A felicitous utterance of (6) also presupposes some delegation-relation between the speaker \( C \) and the performative agent \( A \). The felicity of all performative utterances requires some social conventions that gives the speaker the power to perform the specified speech act. For delegated performatives, a delegation-relation is required as a special kind of such a social convention. Only in virtue of this relation, the promise in (6) can be a felicitous performative. The agent-argument meets the referential restriction for to be anchored in context indirectly as relational association of performative participant-arguments with interlocutors. This association can also be made explicit through the use of relational nouns or possessive DPs.

(18) a. *My employer (hereby) thanks you for your patience.*
    b. *I demand payment from your client.*

Although a variant of (18a) with a non-relational subject (e.g. *The Café du Congo*) can be uttered performatively (e.g. if the Café du Congo is my employer), relational arguments are probably a frequent choice for such delegated performatives, because they explicitly express the relation between the messenger and the communicative agent. (18b) shows that relational context-anchoring can be found for the performative undergoer as well as for the performative actor. The delegation-relation between an absent communicative participant and their representative can give mandate for emissive communication as well as for receptive communication.

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9 I understand relational nouns as transitive nominal predicates, which congruently combine with possession. This conception of relationality is based on theories which assume an associative structure and a subcategorial concept type as part of the lexical semantics. Löbner (2011) assumes that ± uniqueness and ± relationality are inherent semantic features of lexical nouns and that their cross-classification gives rise to a four-way distinction of nominal concept types. Possession can overtly mark relationality and the possessive constructions with first-person possessors in (18) are therefore an explicit realization of associative context anchoring.
5 Problems for event-based self-referentiality

Under the assumption of the uniqueness of roles, the observations made in the above section are not surprising: the requirement that performative participant-arguments are anchored in context fulfills the expectation, that the interpretation of an utterance as self-referential should only be possible, if the arguments of the verb that refers to the utterance, refer to the speech participants. This is however not the case for all performative verbs.

There is a diversity of argument structures and role assignments among performative verbs, and while the context-anchoring requirement can be generalized to hold for all performative agents, the second role that is (or can be) occupied by a person is required to refer to the hearer in many, but not all of the cases. Because the question, if a participant of the performative event also has to be a participant of the utterance event under a self-referential interpretation, is determined by the respective verb, we will assume that different performative verbs lexicalize different requirements on linking their roles to the utterance situation.

5.1 Performative mapping and deviating argument structures

Many transitive performative verbs work like the above described thank, in that they select for an agent and a second participant, which is a person and require both to be anchored in context in one of the above described ways under a self-referential interpretation. Some examples for such verbs are given in (19).

(19) a. I hereby greet/congratulate/thank you.
    b. I hereby hire/fire/forgive/wed/divorce you.

Note that in a performative utterance of an active sentence, these verbs obligatorily appear with a subject that is linked to the communicative agent and a direct object, which is linked to the communicative recipient. Replacing one of these with a third-person NP only leads to a performative interpretation in one of two cases: either the NP refers to the person that inhibits the communicative role linked to the respective performative role or it refers to a person that is in a representation-relation with the person that inhibits the linked communicative role.

But already these rather unproblematic cases are puzzling under the assumption of reference to the utterance event by the performative verb and the uniqueness of roles: While the transitive performative verbs in (19a) might be analyzed as involving a recipient (the person receiving a greeting, a congratulation or gratitude), the verbs in (19b) are caused changes of state, which involve an agent and a patient role. The patient argument is linked to the communicative recipient. The uniqueness of roles does not only state that the participants (of the identical events) are unique, but also that their roles are.

That notion is used by Parsons (1990) to differentiate between a selling-event, a buying-event and a trade as three closely related, but distinct events. This suggests
that the performative and communicative event in performative utterances of (19b) may be related, but are not in fact identical.

Some transitive performative verbs exhibit even stronger evidence for a non-identity of the performative event and the utterance, as they select for a patient-argument, which is not linked to the communicative recipient:

(20)  
  a. I hereby name/christen this ship Queen Mary (# to you).
  b. I hereby designate Mary as the next speaker (# to you).
  c. I hereby nominate Mary for premiership (# to you).

The active subject of the verbs in (19b) and (20) is assigned agent role and linked to the speaker. The direct object is assigned patient role in both cases and linked to the hearer in (19b), but not in (20). Although the performative events referred to by the verbs in the latter of the two examples may still be related to the utterance event (as it shares its agent and time), the realization of a patient argument, which is not linked to the hearer and the lack of the possibility to realize the hearer as an optional oblique argument, suggests that the hearer is no participant in the performative event. Assuming the uniqueness of roles, it is thus problematic to assume that the utterance and the speech act are identical.

In spite of these problems for a general assumption of identity of speech act and utterance in performative utterances, I claim that there is nevertheless a relation that holds between the two events. This claim is based on the following observations: all performative verbs select for an agent role, which is linked to the speaker role. In many cases, the second argument that can refer to a person is linked to the hearer. The positive generalization, that the speaker role in the utterance event is linked to the performative agent shows that, generally, there is a relation between the performative event and the utterance. Because it is not possible to make a similar generalization about linking the hearer to the performative argument structure, it can be inferred that the performative event and the utterance are not generally identical.

In section 4, a third role of the utterance event was introduced: its content. The content of the utterance event cannot possibly be an argument of the performative verb, because this would lead to an infinite regress of self-embedding. This disparity means that the utterance and the speech act cannot be the same event in any case, not only the cases in which the hearer is not linked to the performative argument structure. Hence, the identity between speech acts and utterances as suggested by their coreference is not only challenged by the argument structure of a few performative verbs, but contestable in general.

5.2 Possible resolutions

Eckardt’s event-based analysis of performative utterances (in combination with an explication of self-verification e.g. in the sense of Jary (2007)) has many merits for the theoretical analysis of performative meaning:

• It characterizes performative utterances on the basis of their LF.
• It synthesizes direct and indirect derivations of performatives self-referentiality.
• It formally distinguishes the two performatives key-properties self-reference and self-verification.
• It accounts for the inherent ambiguity of hereby-less performatives sentences.
• It allows for an account of performatives utterances that deviate from the standard grammatical from in terms of grammatical person of verbal arguments.

The assumption that the performative verbs refers to the utterance, which entails the identity of the speech act and the utterance, has thus important advantages, but leads to contradictions under the current assumptions about the uniqueness of roles and reference. If one were to preserve Eckardt's quite fruitful analysis, there are two directions in which one could to go about this: Either there is something wrong with the uniqueness of roles, or there is something wrong with our understanding of coreference. Either of the two could be redefined and formulated less strict.

Because semantic roles cannot easily be defined as primitive properties of of events as ontological entities, but can rather be identified as properties of predicates that refer to events, a possibility might be to say that an event can actually be the same under two different predicative descriptions, even if they have a different argument structure. This idea would correspond to a parallel example in the nominal domain, where an expression like my brother can have the same reference as a proper name referring to the same person, even though one of the expressions involves a transitive predicate and the other does not.

If we want to keep a requirement for identity, we might consider that both events should have the same participants, although not necessary with the same roles, or require both predicates to have the same most salient argument. Loosening the uniqueness of roles to a mere uniqueness of participants would, however, deprive us of the possibility to distinguish between a trade, a selling-event and a buying-event, which take place at the same time. One could argue that these are just three different descriptions of the same event, but distinguishing between these three is a well established practice in Davidsonian semantics for several reasons. If we apply this to the nominal example, there would be no grounds on which to argue that my brother and my brother's sister have different referents, as both these expressions describe the same relation.

Requiring both predicates to have the same most salient argument alone would not be enough to establish identity in the eventive domain. If it was, there would be no way to distinguish between the eventualities referred to by all verbs that hold of the same agent. Taking the uniqueness of time into account would tidy this up a bit: then, only those events that exactly overlap in time could be the same event. This definition would nevertheless still conflate all the actions done by one person at the same time. When, every time I talk to some particularly unfriendly person, I think in my head that the person is a moron, we certainly would like to think of two different events, even if they occur at the same time.

Possibly, there are other, more elaborate ways to loosen the uniqueness of roles principle of event individuation. One possibility I can think of is a generalization
of semantic roles (e.g. in terms of semantic macro-roles as in Van Valin (2005), but although such an approach might be fruitful, it does not provide a straightforward answer to the problems discussed here (there might be a more complicated one, though).

Another possibility to resolve the problems that arise with the uniqueness of roles under the assumption of self-referential utterance events is not to change the principle of role uniqueness, but broaden the conditions under which an utterance can be thought of as self-referential. I prefer this option, not only to keep in our theory a means to determine the (non-)identity of events, but also because we already made one exception to strict self-referentiality in the case of delegated performatives. Loosening the requirements on self-referentiality for utterances could mean that utterance self-referentiality can be achieved, not (only) if the performative event and the utterance event are identical, but (also) if some kind of relation holds between them. Of course, this cannot just be any kind of relation and the question, which kinds of relation allow for a self-referential interpretation to come about needs some more extensive investigation.

One relation that we identified as maintaining a self-referential interpretation is mereological inclusion. Performative verbs can be thought of as lexicalizing an abstraction over the utterance content and describing the effect. It seems that they also generally involve an utterance event. The question if that means that they mereologically include an utterance event has to remain open for now. Another possibility might be that the two events are in some kind of derivation relation based on their conceptual structure. One way to characterize operations on conceptual structures for events is in terms of contingency (cf. Moens and Steedman (1988)). Support for this view, which allows for associative referential shifts on the basis of an enablement-relation or consequentiality, comes from examples of inchoative state performatives, a class of performative utterances without a performative verb. The performative event in inchoative state performatives like in (21) is specified by describing the intended result state, which is brought about by the performative utterance.

(21) a. The meeting is hereby over.
   b. Court is hereby in session.
   c. You are now husband and wife.
   d. You may hereby go home.

Because utterances are not stative, it is obvious that the event specified by the main verb of these sentences cannot straightforwardly be treated as co-referential with the utterance event. Only if self-reference can be established by specifying an event, which is contingently related to the utterance (like its consequent state), these utterances can be characterized as self-referential performatives in our framework (and they should be). Similar indications can be obtained from performative utterances of non-present-tense sentences, like the example (22), which Eckardt brings up.

(22) All your credit card debts will hereby be forgiven.
For the time of the utterance event is usually encoded as present tense, also a future performative has to involve some means of relating the specified future event to the present utterance. Analyzing the English passive as involving an operation on the conceptual structure of an event yielding a stative output, (22) can also be analyzed as specifying the future consequent state of the present utterance. The examples in (21 + 22) all speak in favor of allowing (indirect) eventive coreference to be established by certain relations that hold between the two events.

Another indicator in favor of the view that there is a systematic relation that holds between the utterance event and the performative event is the fact that the performative agent is always linked to the communicative agent, whereas the communicative content is never linked to performative argument structure. It can rather be described as being systematically abstracted over in the idiosyncratic, non-structural part of the lexical semantics of the performative verb.

This view allows for the utterance event and the performative event to be related, possibly overlapping, but different events in an ontological sense. Accordingly, the locutionary and illocutionary event can in fact be thought of as distinct, but not separate events.

### 6 Conclusion

Performatives make explicit their illocutionary force and bring about a speech act that is specified in the meaning of its content. Following Eckardt, I argued that they can be characterized on the level of LF, as a specification of a speech act, which is co-referential with the utterance event. Another LF-based formalization of the semantics of self-referential utterances is Condoravdi and Lauer’s (2011) situation-based account.

I have shown that Eckardt’s eventive co-reference does not involve identity of the speech act and the utterance event in general, as suggested by Eckardt. Co-reference can rather be established in an indirect way, which can be characterized as associative. This means that some kind of relation has to hold between the two events. One kind of relation that allows for this association is mereological inclusion. This follows from Eckardt’s analysis of delegated performatives. Performative-like utterances with stative verbs or future tense (describing the result of the speech act) suggest that associative self-reference of utterance events might be explicable in terms of a relation of contingency as defined by Moens and Steedman (1988). This approach might also make predictions for deviations from the temporal and aspeccial features of the utterance event, which makes it a potential starting point for future research.

Thus, the indirect nature of utterance self-referentiality in performative utterances is, not necessarily harmful to the idea that the self-referential specification of a performative event can be used to define the utterance. Even if, due to the non-identity of performative event and utterance, the performative verb cannot actually be interpreted as a predication over the utterance event, it does add information about it, which allows it to be interpreted as a performative definition. Considering the
reflections from last section, about utterance self-reference potentially being associative, the performative definition should be characterized more generally as the explicit specification of a speech act, which is (in some way) structurally related to the utterance event.

Although I suggest that these challenges for an event-based approach of utterance self-reference are not necessarily unresolvable, they might be taken as an argument for the situation-based account in Condoravdi and Lauer (2011), if such an analysis can account for the above discussed delegated performatives, which seem to be one of Eckhard’s main motivations to propose an event-based account. However, future tense performatives and inchoative state performatives, which seem to be describing the result of the speech act rather than the speech situation, might be problematic for this kind of analysis as well.

The grammatical realization of the performative logical form can vary: Performative verbs lexicalize different linking-requirements for their arguments, which can give useful hints in future examinations of the relationship between the specified speech act and the utterance event. If a performative role is linked to a communicative role, their occupants have to be co-referential or relationally associated in order for the utterance to establish a self-referential reading. This is, however, merely a restriction on reference, not on grammatical features of the arguments of the performative verb. Still, it is the case that utterance-level performative utterances are more frequent than delegated ones, which means that direct co-reference is more frequent than a relational association for performative roles that are linked to utterance roles. Also, for reasons of disambiguation, realizations of performative arguments that make their context-anchoring explicit are more frequent than those that do not. That is why the use of personal deixis is so frequent among verbal participant arguments in performative utterances.

I showed how and why self-verification should be derived directly from a self-referential semantic representation in an assertoric account (for a formalization, see Condoravdi and Lauer (2011)). Following Jary, I have argued, that performative self-verification comes about as a necessary update of the common ground and can be directly derived from the specification of a speech act under self-reference. Having adopted Eckardt’s truth-conditional characterization, I come to different conclusions than Jary:

I followed the delineation that performative utterances involve an act of showing a state of affairs or of defining the utterance. However, both notions merely describe how performatives are self-referential, rather than explaining why. I offered an explanation on the basis of the speaker’s expression of their own intention. I argued that only under the assumption that performatives are assertions of propositions, the performative property of self-verification comes about as a necessary update of the common ground due to a cooperative bias towards acceptance and the non-contradictability of the utterance content.
References


