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## TESIS DOCTORAL

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<b>Construcciones ilocutivas en inglés: un estudio desde el punto de vista del Modelo Léxico Construccional</b>
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**UNIVERSIDAD DE LA RIOJA**

**FACULTAD DE LETRAS Y DE LA EDUCACIÓN  
DEPARTAMENTO DE FILOLOGÍAS MODERNAS**

**TESIS DOCTORAL**

**CONSTRUCCIONES ILOCUTIVAS EN INGLÉS: UN  
ESTUDIO DESDE EL PUNTO DE VISTA DEL MODELO  
LÉXICO CONSTRUCCIONAL**

**Presentada por: Nuria Del Campo Martínez**

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Pérez Hernández**

## ABSTRACT

The present dissertation is concerned with how illocutionary meaning is cognitively motivated and constrained. The theoretical framework is the *Lexical Constructional Model* (henceforth LCM) as propounded by Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal (2008, 2011) and Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza (2008, 2009).

The LCM focuses on the relations that hold between syntax and aspects of meaning construction ranging from argument structure (level 1) and implicature (level 2) to illocutionary meaning (level 3) and discourse phenomena (level 4). In the LCM, illocutionary meaning is either the result of filling in non-parametrizable constructional variables such as *X* in *Can You X<sub>VP</sub>?* or of affording metonymic access to high-level situational cognitive models. One such model is the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* (Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007; Baicchi and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2011) which captures all relevant information associated with illocution. This cognitive model is incorporated into the description of level 3 activity within the LCM and presented as lying at the core of the conventionalization process of illocutionary constructions. The LCM thus postulates an inferential path based on the instantiation of relevant parts of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* to derive speech act values that may become conventionalized for a significant number of speakers within a linguistic community.

In this research work I determine the applicability of the analytical tools developed by the LCM for illocutionary description. The speech acts selected for the analytical part of this dissertation are those proposed by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) as exploiting cultural principles of interaction. It is my contention that the linguistic realization of these illocutionary acts is based upon lexico-grammatical resources that exhibit a given instantiation potential for relevant parts of their corresponding semantic structure in relation to the context of situation. These constructional realizations may range from full codification to different degrees of conventionalization. For example, a construction like *Can You X<sub>VP</sub>?* gives access to the part of the cognitive model of requesting concerned with the addressee's ability to carry out an action that is presented as beneficial to the speaker. Through the application of the rules of cultural interaction stipulated in the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, the addressee is expected to act to the speaker's benefit if it is within his range of abilities. The *Can You X<sub>VP</sub>?* construction is capable in itself of activating this

principle of interaction and has thus become highly specified to convey a request value.

The results of this kind of analysis lend credence to the claim that illocutionary constructions arise from the interplay between semantic structure from the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* and construal operations that give prominence to distinct parts of the cognitive model of the speech act category under scrutiny. On the basis of the LCM notion of situational meaning, this dissertation formulates I will formulate a generic structure for each of the interpersonal speech acts under consideration and examines the reasoning schemas behind a number of constructions used for their expression. The resulting account attempts to unveil the idiosyncrasies of interpersonal illocutionary categories based on the interplay between different kinds of cultural generalizations and realization procedures.

## RESUMEN

El presente trabajo de investigación tiene que ver con la motivación cognitiva y las constricciones del significado ilocutivo. El marco teórico en el cual se encuadra este estudio es el modelo lingüístico de construcción de significado denominado *Modelo Léxico Construccional* (MLC) propuesto por Ruiz de Mendoza y Mairal (2008, 2011) y Mairal y Ruiz de Mendoza (2008, 2009).

El MLC pretende dar cuenta de la relación entre la sintaxis y las diferentes facetas de la construcción del significado, y ordena las construcciones por niveles de significado, partiendo de la gramática nuclear (nivel 1), la implicatura (nivel 2), el significado ilocutivo (nivel 3) y el discursivo (nivel 4). En el MLC, el significado ilocutivo deriva o bien de la realización de los elementos variables de las construcciones como el de la *X* en la construcción *Can You X<sub>vp</sub>?* o bien de la activación metonímica de modelos cognitivos situacionales de alto nivel. Uno de esos modelos es el *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* (Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi, 2007; Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza, 2011), que recoge información relevante al significado ilocutivo. Este modelo forma parte de la descripción de la actividad ilocutiva en el MLC como factor clave en el proceso de convencionalización de las construcciones ilocutivas. De esta forma, el MLC propone una ruta inferencial basada en la activación de diferentes partes del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* para la derivación de actos de habla que pueden convencionalizarse para un número de hablantes dentro de una comunidad lingüística.

Este trabajo de investigación pretende determinar la aplicabilidad de las herramientas analíticas del MLC para la descripción del significado ilocutivo. Los actos de habla seleccionados para la parte analítica de este estudio son los propuestos por Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) como basados en los principios culturales de interacción. Es nuestro objetivo demostrar que la realización lingüística de los actos de habla interpersonales está basada en procedimientos léxicos y gramaticales capaces de activar partes relevantes de su estructura semántica de acuerdo con el contexto de situación. Los procedimientos de realización construccionales varían entre la codificación completa y los diferentes grados de convencionalización. Una construcción como *Can You X<sub>vp</sub>?* proporciona acceso a la parte del modelo cognitivo de petición relacionada con la capacidad del oyente de realizar una acción beneficiosa para el hablante. Mediante la aplicación de las reglas de interacción cultural del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio*, es presumible que el oyente actuará en beneficio del hablante si es capaz de

hacerlo. La construcción *Can You X<sub>VP</sub>?* tiene la capacidad de activar por sí sola dicho principio de interacción y se ha convencionalizado para realizar peticiones.

Los resultados de este análisis trata de dar credibilidad a la hipótesis del MLC según la cual las construcciones ilocutivas resultan de la interacción entre estructura semántica del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* y operaciones de construcción lingüística que dan prominencia a distintas partes del modelo cognitivo del acto de habla en particular. Partiendo de la base de significado situacional postulada en el MLC, me propongo formular una estructura genérica para cada uno de los actos de habla interpersonales que constituyen el objeto de este estudio y examinar los esquemas de razonamiento de un amplio número de construcciones empleadas en su expresión. La propuesta resultante pretende desvelar la idiosincrasia de las ilocuciones interpersonales basándose en la interacción entre diversos principios culturales y procedimientos de realización.

*To my family,  
for their guidance and encouragement.*

“Try the experiment of communicating,  
with fullness and accuracy, some experience to another,  
especially if it be somewhat complicated,  
and you will find your own attitude toward your experience changing”.  
(John Dewey, 1916, *Democracy and Education*)



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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CL	Cognitive Linguistics
CG	Cognitive Grammar
RCG	Radical Construction Grammar
ECG	Embodied Construction Grammar
RRG	Role and Reference Grammar
LCM	Lexical Constructional Model
FG	Functional Grammar
FLM	Functional Lexematic Model
NSM	Natural Semantic Metalanguage
LT	Lexical Template
CT	Constructional Template
NP	Noun Phrase
VP	Verb Phrase
PP	Prepositional Phrase
BNC	British National Corpus
COCA	Corpus of Contemporary American English

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since Austin's (1962) foundational work on language as a mode of action, the study of illocution has deserved the attention of a considerable number of researchers within diverse fields and frameworks. Traditional accounts of speech acts, however, lack an explanation on the weight of codification and inference in illocutionary production and interpretation. Some approaches such as Searle's (1969) convention rules, Systemic-Functional Grammar (Halliday, 1994; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) or Functional Grammar (Dik, 1989, 1997) give priority to the role of codification. Other proposals (Bach and Harnish, 1979, Leech, 1983) emphasize the role of inference.

Because of their radical views on the nature of illocution, both the grammatical and the inferential approaches are fraught with shortcomings. Those approaches which place emphasis on codification are able to account for a reduced number of illocutions whereas those theories that favor inference are unable to explain the fact that languages universally recognize three sentence types and the fact that certain illocutions are interpreted more easily than others. This suggests that both grammatical and inferential theories present important difficulties. The present study attempts to offer a solution to the above shortcomings of traditional theories of speech acts.

I will argue that the adoption of a cognitivist framework sheds light on the issue by endowing it with a whole new range of analytical tools. Recent developments on Cognitive Linguistics have allowed semanticists to discuss illocution as the result of performing cognitive operations supporting inferential schemas that apply to cognitive models of a situational kind (Panther and Thornburg, 1998, 2004). These studies have also given evidence supporting the existence of conventional speech acts and illocutionary constructions, which are seen as linguistic configurations which are highly specified to convey a given illocutionary value (Panther and Thornburg, 1999, Pérez, 2001; Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2002; Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007; Baicchi and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2011; Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2011). This view of constructions makes it possible to account for how illocutionary meaning imposes different degrees of codification on its production and understanding, which has been one of the greatest concerns in pragmatics research.

The study of the constructional composition of speech acts has shown that there is a greater degree of conventionalization in illocutionary production and interpretation than has generally been recognized in pragmatics. These studies on the constructional nature of speech act

meaning have paved the way for the incorporation of illocutionary phenomena into a principled model of meaning construction called the *Lexical Constructional Model* (Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal, 2008, 2011; Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2009).

The Lexical Constructional Model (LCM), which has deep roots in Relevance Theory, Cognitive Linguistics, and Construction Grammar, is concerned with the development of a comprehensive theory of meaning construction that accounts for all facets of the process. To that aim, the model is structured on four descriptive levels, which refer to core grammar representations (level 1), implicated and explicated meaning captured by low-level situational models (level 2), implicated and explicated illocutionary meaning (level 3) and discourse structure and relations (level 4). Meaning derivation takes place at the four levels in the form of inference or conventionalized constructions. Lower levels of semantic structure can be incorporated into higher ones as regulated by a number of cognitive and pragmatic constraints.

In the LCM, illocutionary meaning is treated as the result of affording part-whole metonymic access to abstract situational models. Such abstract models, which are grounded in the cultural conventions specified in the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* (Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007), derive from generalizing over multiple cases of everyday interaction where people attempt to describe or report situations, satisfy either their own or other people's desires, or to express their feelings about them. Illocutionary meaning is thus conveyed by means of linguistic mechanisms that are capable of activating the relevant parts of the cognitive model underlying a given illocutionary category. These mechanisms receive the name of illocutionary constructions and can be conventionalized through frequent use in appropriate contexts. The present study grows as a preliminary attempt to provide an exhaustive account of level 3 constructions in the LCM. It is also contended that the LCM provides us with an explanatorily adequate research framework that allows us to better understand the semantic and pragmatic behavior of illocutionary constructions.

## **1.1. SCOPE AND CONTENT OF THE PRESENT STUDY**

The approach to the study of illocution adopted in this research work takes a semantic stance in the controversy about whether speech act meaning belongs to the domain of semantics or pragmatics. Pérez (2001) has gone far into the ascription of illocutionary phenomena to the semantics

of a language. In general, owing to the dependence of illocutionary interpretation on contextual information, the study of speech acts has been traditionally assigned to pragmatic research together with issues like deictics and figurative meaning. The non-literal meaning of speech acts appeared to be beyond the scope of truth-conditional semantics at the time of the inception of speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) and made it necessary to include contextual variables in their explanation. Nevertheless, the ascription of illocution to the semantics of a language is possible given the conception of semantics within cognitive accounts.

Within Cognitive Linguistics, semantics is concerned with systems of knowledge organization like Fillmore's *frames* or Lakoff's *idealized cognitive models* or ICMs (see section 2.1.). From this perspective, illocutionary meaning can be considered the object of semantics since the contextual information associated with it is subject to the principles that structure interactional knowledge. Widdowson (1984) has proposed the existence of interpersonal schemas capturing the knowledge of how language is used to perform social acts. In these schemas, however, pragmatic principles of the kind postulated by Grice (1975) and Leech (1983) are not included. Several interpersonal schemas have been formulated as capturing different types of illocutionary meaning (Panther and Thornburg, 1998, 2003; Sweetser, 2000). Nevertheless, none of these accounts considers the principles of social interaction to be part of the knowledge captured by interpersonal schemas.

Probably, the most important contributions on the transference of pragmatic issues to the semantic component of language are found in Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal (1997) and Pérez (2001). Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal argue that our knowledge of social roles and conventions is structured in the form of interpersonal knowledge schemas in opposition to ideational knowledge schemas, which include information about conceptual objects, processes and states. By way of illustration, our knowledge of the concept *hospital* includes ideational information about the physical space and furniture that are part of a hospital as well as an interpersonal schema specifying the knowledge of the conventions and social behavior associated with this place. In Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal's account, principles of interaction like Grice's and Leech's maxims are thus part of the knowledge which is captured by interpersonal schemas and constitute an object of semantic study. In contrast, pragmatic research would be concerned with the definition of the strategies guiding the speaker's use of the linguistic resources available for communication. Pérez, in turn, offers a study of speech acts that adopts a semantic stance on illocution. This author



develops a model for the description of illocutionary meaning structured in the form of propositional ICMs that contain the meaning conditions which characterize an illocutionary category. In her research, pragmatics is concerned with defining the different ways of giving access to these ICMs for communication purposes.

Taking these facts into account, and working within the framework of the LCM, the present study of illocution consists of a description of (i) the semantic features that make up the cognitive models that capture illocutionary categories, and (ii) the instantiation potential that constructions have for relevant parts of a conceptual structure. In other words, I shall describe the most common conventional realizations of directive, commissive and expressive speech acts in English. It should be borne in mind that the illocutionary constructions put forward in this study do not pair a complete cognitive model with its associated linguistic realization procedures but rather the parameters that play a role in adapting relevant elements of such models to their corresponding constructional realizations. In so doing, I will examine the reasoning schemas or rationales behind constructions by focusing on the relationship between their form and their meaning. I will contend that the higher the number of parameters of a given cognitive model which are instantiated through an illocutionary construction, the higher the degree of codification of the construction. Those illocutionary constructions that exhibit a high instantiation potential therefore constitute adequate vehicles for the expression of a speech act category as they afford easy access to the cognitive model associated with that category. Constructions displaying such a high instantiation potential yield default illocutionary values. In contrast, those constructions which are not capable of supplying relevant points of access to the cognitive model of a specific illocutionary category will require complementary inferential activity to adjust their illocutionary meaning to contextual requirements.

This work, although conceived within the scope of the LCM, takes into consideration previous studies on the characterization and realization of illocution, especially the work by Wierzbicka (1987), who adopts a semantic stance to speech act verbs, and by Pérez (2001), who takes a constructional perspective. These studies have helped me to clarify the definition of the illocutionary categories selected for this research and also to analyze their constructional component. The rest of the bibliography devoted to the description of illocutionary categories, although growing each year, is scarce and theoretical. Some studies focus on a single category and are usually geared to supplying a fine-grained description and definition of a given act. This tendency is even more marked in the case of

commissive and expressive illocutions. However, most of these studies are not concerned with the description of the meaning conditions of the speech act under consideration (a notable exception is the account of requests provided by Pérez, 1996). Some examples are the studies of advising devoted to either solicited advice (Hudson, 1990) or unsolicited advice (Boatman, 1987) or the more recent approach to the taxonomy of suggestions (Martínez-Flor, 2005). Given this, the bibliography on the issue has been of very limited use for our account, which focuses on the cognitive modeling of illocutionary meaning and on its realization through conventionalized formulas. Some specific works have been valuable for the characterization of certain speech act categories (a case in point is the study of condolences carried out by Maloney, 2009), although their lack of consideration of the semantic features of the illocution under scrutiny has not allowed us to address their conceptual nature. For this reason, the present research has concentrated mainly on the descriptions of speech act meaning provided by Wierzbicka (1987) and Pérez (2001), and has taken such descriptions as the point of departure for an approach to illocution in terms of constructions and cognitive models.

This study of directive, commissive and expressive speech acts is restricted to English data. As has been argued by Wierzbicka (1985, 1991) and Pérez (2001), distinct languages not only categorize speech acts in different ways but also exhibit differences in the forms used by speakers to perform a given speech act type (for example, while the Israeli culture is reported to be generally direct, English-speaking societies generally prefer indirect devices). From this follows that, while the notions of illocutionary construction and cognitive model can be applied to diverse languages, their form and content will differ from one language to another. Further typological research would be desirable to carry out a cross-cultural comparison with other languages. However, this kind of study is beyond the scope of the present research.

The speech act categories chosen for this study are those of ordering, requesting, advising, offering, promising, threatening, congratulating, thanking, apologizing, pardoning, condoling and boasting. They are interpersonal speech acts categories which, according to Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007), arise from the generalizations of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. Each of the cultural conventions stipulated in the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, which represents a major tool of analysis for the illocutionary component of the LCM, provides a background for each of these speech act categories. The present analysis takes for granted the existence of these categories as a pretheoretical assumption with a view to

studying illocutionary expression. This categorization has been chosen because, by capturing relevant knowledge about cultural conventions, it is a convenient starting point for the study of the interactional meaning of speech acts (see section 2.4.2.). Furthermore, the frequency of occurrence of these interpersonal categories has facilitated the compilation of data and the building of the corpus on which this study is based.

The contents of this research work have been organized as follows. Since this study on illocution is framed within the tradition of Cognitive Linguistics, chapter two begins with an outline of the most fundamental postulates that characterize the Cognitive Linguistics approach. Section 2.1. provides a preliminary overview of how conceptual organization is reflected in the concerns addressed by cognitive semanticists. Section 2.2. outlines the main theoretical assumptions held within Cognitive Linguistics approaches to grammar. The notion of construction is defined and the most influential construction grammar models are sketched out in this section. Construction grammar models are compared in an attempt to achieve a broad view of the controversial issue of constructions. Comparisons between these models allow me to explain the emergence of the Lexical Constructional Model with the purpose of integrating opposed paradigms to meaning construction. Section 2.3. addresses the Lexical Constructional Model and the way in which this model develops adequate tools for the study of meaning construction. Section 2.4. provides an outline of the treatment of illocutionary acts based on illocutionary constructions, situational cognitive models and realization procedures. The section ends with a description of the notion of illocutionary construction proposed in this study and of the properties that characterize my own approach to illocution. Chapters three to fourteen contain the analysis of the twelve illocutionary types under consideration. Each of these chapters has been divided into three sections. The first of them contains the description of the semantic grounding and conventions associated with the corresponding speech act category as well as the definition of the situational cognitive model or generic structure of the category. The second part of each chapter presents the constructional realizations which are found to instantiate the parameters of the generic structure previously defined in the first part of the chapter. These constructional realizations have been grouped according to the sentence type involved (i.e. declarative, imperative, and interrogative). The third part of each chapter makes generalizations on the constructional realizations for each illocutionary category. Finally, the last chapter provides a summary of the main conclusions that can be drawn from this research and gives an outline of possible lines for future research.

## 1.2. CORPUS AND DATA

Traditionally, the study of illocutionary meaning has generally been done on the basis of information elicited from native informants. Computerized data have been rarely used mostly because pragmatic analyses need to rely on context (Myers, 1991) and corpora tend to strip much of the context of utterances. In the study of speech act meaning, this problem is added to the one concerning the difficulty of extracting instances of illocutionary acts by means of concordance programs (Pérez, 2001). This is but a consequence of the fact that most speech acts that we perform lack fixed linguistic forms which can be the object of a concordance query. However, these difficulties can be overcome effectively and the benefits of a corpus-based approach to illocution have motivated some attempts in this direction. An example is Pérez (2001), who gathers data from various sources and performs computer concordances mostly on the basis of metalinguistic analyses intuitively carried out by writers with dialogs. This approach is up until today the most comprehensive study of illocutionary meaning from a cognitive perspective. Since the LCM draws heavily, for the illocutionary level, on insights from Cognitive Linguistics, Pérez's work is the best possible point of departure.

Following the lead of Pérez, and based on the assumption that illocutionary meaning is dependent on constructional patterns, this study searches for conventionalized strings intuitively categorized as performing a speech act. Elaborating a list of constructions that are suspended to have a steady illocutionary meaning might be considered by some scholars as a non-objective way of approaching the descriptive and explanatory problem of illocution. But this problem is comparable to the one lexicologists face when deciding upon the items that belong to a given lexical class. The process is purely inductive, that is, the data is put together according to a common feature. A similar methodology can be used when it comes to finding out the properties of constructional behavior.

A different issue is when illocutionary meaning is not dependent on specific constructional patterns, that is, when inferential activity overrides lexical and grammatical clues. As has been shown in Panther and Thornburg (1998, 2003), Ruiz de Mendoza (2005, 2007), Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza (2002) and Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007), inferred illocutionary activity is a matter of cultural cognitive models that are accessed metonymically. So far the best possible methodology to investigate such models with a degree of objectivity is the one used by Pérez (2001) based on metalinguistic intuitive judgments. The main

problem with this methodology is that it does not allow the analyst to manipulate utterances in order to determine other expressive possibilities. Decisions on different realizations of a cognitive model will have to be based on a careful examination of the contexts in which they are produced, which will be done on the basis of the analyst's knowledge of the language that is the object of study. This degree of subjectivity seems unavoidable given the nature of inferred illocutionary meaning. In any case, even though the present dissertation borrows insights from Pérez (2001) and Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) for the formulation of illocutionary cognitive models and their linguistic realizations, the emphasis will be on observable constructional behavior, which will introduce a greater amount of objectivity into the analysis. In fact, it will be postulated that this analysis can cast light on previous proposals for the identification of scenario elements. The difference is that the presence or absence of an element, or its degree of prominence within a scenario, will now be determined by a close examination of how constructional features are put to use in context.

Interestingly enough, the methodological approach that I am postulating is somewhat at variance with some recent trends in Cognitive Linguistics (Geeraerts, 2006; Gries and Stefanowistch, 2006, Grondelaers, Geeraerts and Speelman, 2007; Gries and Wulff, 2009; Glynn and Fischer, 2010), which, under the influence of corpus linguistics, argue in favor of the statistical objectification of linguistic analysis, which is to be complemented almost exclusively by other empirical methods, usually of a psycholinguistic nature, as advocated, for example, by Hampe (2005) for image schemas. This trend was initiated for the theory of metaphor by Deignan (1999) and Partington (1998) and was postulated as a complementary tool of qualitative analysis carried out by cognitive linguists. But, as argued in very recent work, Deignan (2005) considers statistical analysis as a complementary tool of insights gained on the basis of qualitative analysis of the kind that has been carried out by major Cognitive Linguistic scholars. Perhaps the crucial point is that statistical analysis of co-occurrence of elements in a corpus can at best serve as a descriptive clue as to where to look for an explanation of the phenomenon that has thus been dug out or as a way of falsifying a hypothesis that has been elaborated by looking into preliminary data. But statistical analysis cannot provide the researcher with explanations nor can it reveal all constraints on linguistic production. A corpus can tell the analyst what is possible but never what cannot be said and why. This is an important point even when we are just dealing with lexical and argument structure data, which are naturally sensitive to massive computerized searches. But it is

even more important if we consider other aspects of linguistic explanation such as the implicational and illocutionary levels where it is inevitable for the linguist to resort to his own intuition on the basis of his competence in the language under study. This kind of analysis, as indicated above, demands a close qualitative scrutiny of contexts of use and the speaker's behavior in these contexts, which will reveal the actual nature of the cognitive models on which such use is based. Within this methodological approach, computer-aided concordances are a useful way to find data in a minimally organized fashion, but the end result depends on creating higher levels of organization of the data (i.e. looking for adequate linguistic generalizations, as propounded by Goldberg, 2003, 2006) by means of analytical tools which in this way are put to a test.

Statistical analyses have proved useful to provide quantifiable assessments of the degree of attraction and repulsion that certain words have for certain constructions. Evidently, this approach can yield insights into lexical-constructional integration possibilities at level 1 of the LCM, as it has for the standard Goldbergian approach in the work of Stefanowitsch and Gries (2003, 2005). But the principles that constrain the integration or fusion processes are not revealed through statistical analysis. They need to be worked out on the basis of speaker's judgments. What is more, in corpus-driven analyses, the problem of impossible examples, as has been noted by such a prominent scholar as Fillmore (1992), cannot be addressed. The LCM takes sides with a corpus-based –rather than a corpus-driven– approach to linguistic enquiry. In this approach, corpus data becomes a valuable tool to supply insights into linguistic phenomena, but the underlying rules are discovered on the basis of formulating surface structure generalizations, much in the way that has been defended by Goldberg (2003, 2006). In other words, in this analysis the data obtained constitutes a valuable methodological resource used to refine the initial hypotheses. This methodology requires finding structural and use patterns on the basis of corpus occurrences of natural linguistic output and accounting for such patterns by formulating the sets of interacting principles that regulate their production. As for other empirical approaches, I agree that they can complement findings based on purely linguistic procedures. Goldberg herself has collaborated with psycholinguists (e.g. Hare and Goldberg, 1999, Bencini and Goldberg, 2000) in priming experiments that lend empirical validity to the notion of construction. Eddington and Ruiz de Mendoza (2010) have also provided empirical support for a larger amount of argument structure constructions (caused-motion, benefactive, resultative, instrument-subject, reciprocal). But this is far from accounting

for the whole range of intricacies that underlie constructional behavior. In fact, empirical evidence of a psycholinguistic kind may not exist without hypotheses to be tested. For example, philosophical and linguistic approaches to the notion of image schema date back to Johnson (1987) and Lakoff (1987). But empirical work on them, as evidenced by the collection of papers in Hampe (2005), is very recent. In this methodological approach, computer-aided concordances are a useful way to find data in a minimally organized fashion, but the end result depends on creating higher levels of organization of the data by means of diverse analytical tools.

My description of illocutionary cognitive models and constructional realizations in chapters three to fourteen results from the analysis of a corpus of over four thousand and five hundred instances of directive, commissive and expressive speech acts in English. The data upon which this analysis is based has been drawn from two computerized corpora, The British National Corpus and The Corpus of Contemporary American English. The British National Corpus (henceforth BNC)<sup>1</sup> was chosen from among other electronic corpora available for two reasons. First, because the BNC contains both spoken and written material from a great variety of sources. Second, because the BNC is based on real language use and is not restricted to any kind of interactional situation. The choice of the Corpus of Contemporary American English (henceforth COCA)<sup>2</sup> was based on similar reasons. In the first place, because the COCA, being the largest corpus of English and the only large and balanced corpus of American English, constitutes one of the most useful research tools for the compilation of linguistic databases. Second, because, like the BNC, it includes both written and spoken texts from a wide range of registers and from different genres and subject fields. Moreover, the corpus is regularly updated and thus provides a realistic picture of modern language use. Finally, because

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<sup>1</sup> The BNC contains extracts of 4049 modern English texts spoken and written. Each text is segmented into orthographic sentence units and each word is assigned a part of a speech code. There are six and a quarter a million sentences, and over one hundred million words. In order to collect the data I have used online software which allows users to search the BNC corpus and see the frequency of the search term up to fifty randomly selected instances. This software includes data in the form of H4V or key word in context concordances. The key word organizes each text type taking into account features such as region, level, gender of speakers, and topic.

<sup>2</sup> The COCA is composed of more than four hundred million words in over 160000 American English texts. Each text is organized chronologically by genre and represents a wide range of literature. The COCA enables researchers to limit searches by frequency and compare frequency of words, phrases and grammatical constructions. In order to search for speech acts in the COCA, I have made use of software that produces data in the form of concordances. The searched word appears in the centre of a context which is about five lines above and below. Together with this contextual information, the corpus specifies the date when the example was retrieved and the source, which provides the genre and register through which it is manifested.

although its nature is similar to that of the BNC, the software available for the COCA permits more refined searches. One of the advantages of working with two electronic corpora is that it allows us to overcome the difficulties that may result from the exclusive use of only one of them. An important advantage of the use of the BNC is that it makes it possible to carry out flexible searches and provides information about the frequency of the searched items for up to fifty instances. It is therefore easy to see if the type of realization being searched in the corpus is productive or not. This feature has proved valuable in the process of discovering which constructions are most commonly used to perform each illocutionary category. A further advantage of the BNC is its organization of data in the form of concordances. After identifying a constructional realization in the corpus, I used the concordance tool to search the BNC for other instances of that particular realization. Despite these useful tools, the BNC has presented some problems that have been overcome with the use of the COCA. In contrast to the BNC, the COCA contains a larger number of instances and has thus provided examples of constructions that did not prove productive in the BNC, as was the case of the constructional realizations of most expressive speech acts. Another advantage has to do with the fact that it is updated on a regular basis and thus reflects the most current changes in the language. Although each offers different advantages, both corpora provide information with accuracy. In short, the use of the BNC and the COCA has guaranteed a fair degree of objectivity in the extraction of the examples for this study. However, I must acknowledge that the nature of the corpora and of the results that stem from this study is determined by its electronic sources. Although the data contains both on spoken and written records, the spoken section is not annotated for suprasegmental features or kinesic factors. Research on suprasegmental features or gestures as illocutionary makers should be carried out to cover the aspects of interaction which are absent of this study.

The two sources described above have returned a total of over four thousand and five hundred instances of directive, commissive and expressive speech acts. In order to make the corpus more manageable, I have divided the instances retrieved according to the speech act they perform. The instances of each illocutionary type have been in turn organized into separate constructions arranged according to the sentence type involved. This has allowed me to compare the frequency of each of the constructions used in the production of a speech act category and to relate that frequency to the sentence type on which they are based. The creation of frequency tables does not mean that the present analysis is exclusively



based on the statistical processing of the data. Frequency tables have been made to provide an integrated picture of the data and thus draw generalizations on the realization of each speech act. This study focuses on the explanation and description of the constructional realizations of an illocutionary type according to a set of cultural conventions rather than on measuring the frequency of different realizations which are found in their performance. This has provided a rich and exhaustive description of the data, which in turn has permitted to inspect constructions from an innovative perspective.

To finish with, I shall describe the steps followed in order to carry out this analysis. First, I selected the speech act categories which would be the object of study. As explained above, Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's (2007) speech act categorization in terms of cultural conventions was borrowed for this purpose (see section 2.4.2.). I then formulated a situational cognitive model for each speech act type by generalizing over multiple cases of everyday interaction. Thanks to the use of thesauri and dictionaries, I arranged a set of illocutionary constructions which could be used in the performance of each speech act. Once this was done, I retrieved a reasonable number of examples for each construction from the BNC and the COCA. With all the data collected and having drawn some preliminary generalizations, I was able to characterize the idiosyncrasy of each construction in an accurate manner and study its degree of codification in relation to its instantiation potential for the variables defined in the corresponding cognitive model. It was found that constructions with a high instantiation potential for relevant parts of the cognitive model of an illocutionary category exhibit higher degrees of codification than those with a low instantiation potential. Throughout this study, both Pérez's and Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's approaches have been put in contrast, while making emphasis on the theoretical assumptions that suit my own analysis.

## 2. A COGNITIVE APPROACH TO ILLOCUTION

The existence of speech acts has been widely accepted ever since Austin (1962) made us aware of the fact that language can be used not only to describe reality but also to perform actions. A number of different theories have been formulated to account for speech act meaning. The two most fruitful lines of research in this field are represented by inferential theories put forward by pragmatists (Bach and Harnish, 1979; Leech, 1983; Levinson, 2000) and grammatical accounts, traditionally associated to functional grammar theories (Dik, 1989, 1997; Givón, 1990; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). The approaches belonging to the first group assume that the illocutionary force of an utterance always results from inferential processes. In contrast, those in the second group claim that at least those speech act types based on the three universal types are directly understood without the need of inference. The remaining illocutionary types result from different derivation processes or from the options offered by the language system. Although both accounts present valuable advantages, they fail to provide a fully-fledged explanation of the functioning of illocutionary meaning.

Pragmatic theories develop incomplete views on illocution as either conventional or inferential. Functional positions ignore the motivation and constraints on illocution and tend to overgrammaticalize speech act meaning (Butler, 1996). Most of them also lack a consideration of socio-cultural issues (e.g. variables like power or social distance, etc.) that affect illocutionary interpretation. Moreover, nearly all of them, with the exception of Givón's (1990) proposal, fail to describe the psychological processes involved in the workings of illocutionary activity (see Pérez, 2001, for a thorough discussion of the flaws of traditional theories of speech acts). An integrated model of illocutionary phenomena should take into account the motivation of speech acts and consider socio-cultural variables and politeness matters. It should further comply with recent findings on human cognition. This study represents a humble attempt in the direction of endowing the research on illocution with a degree of psychological adequacy under the light of Cognitive Linguistics.

Dirven and Ruiz de Mendoza (2010) argue that Cognitive Linguistics (CL) is a set of complementary analytical and explanatory perspectives that abide by the *cognitive commitment* as postulated originally by Lakoff (1990), i.e. the commitment to make linguistic studies compatible and even subservient to empirical findings in cognitive science. The cognitive approach is a broad movement based on a common set of principles and

assumptions related to cognitive sciences (philosophy, psychology, artificial intelligence, etc.) that seek to decipher the complexities of human cognition (cf. Dirven and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2010). Cognitivism views language as a window to human conceptualization patterns, processing mechanisms, categorization principles and experiential and environmental effects. Three major principles guide a cognitive analysis of language. These three principles represent a response by the pioneering figures in Cognitive Linguistics to the dominant generative paradigm, which pursues an autonomous view of language.<sup>3</sup> The first principle is that language is not an autonomous cognitive faculty. The corollary of this principle is that the representation of linguistic knowledge is essentially the same as the representation of other conceptual structures. Thus, cognitive theories regard linguistic knowledge as part of general cognition and thinking. Linguistic behavior is not independent from other general cognitive abilities that allow mental processes of reasoning, memory and learning. In this connection Cognitive Linguistics appeal to models of memory, perception and categorization in cognitive psychology. Much of cognitive linguistic research has been devoted to shedding light on the cognitive abilities that apply to language and the conceptual structures that play a role in modeling concepts.

The second principle is encapsulated in Langacker's (1999) slogan 'grammar is conceptualization'. This motto is grounded in the assumption that the grammatical structures of language are directly associated to the way in which people understand the world. That is, conceptual structure cannot be limited to a simple truth-conditional correspondence with the world.<sup>4</sup> Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claim that truth is relative to culture and to the different conceptual structures that every person has. The aftermath of this assumption is that language is not independent from our conceptualization of reality. Language is embodied and emerges from our interaction with the environment.

The third principle is that knowledge of language emerges from language use. Categories and structures in phonology, morphology, semantics and syntax are built up from our cognition of utterances on specific occasions. The emphasis on the role of experience in linguistic knowledge has important consequences in terms of the way linguistic analysis is carried out, as will be seen in our subsequent discussion of

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<sup>3</sup> Croft and Cruse (2004: 1-4) devote the introduction of their work to the description of these three principles.

<sup>4</sup> Truth-conditional semantics is of course still active research today, as cognitive linguistics continues to provide arguments in favor of their hypotheses.

analytical categories. This principle is the response to formal approaches to semantics and syntax in which the organization of linguistic knowledge is governed by innate general schemas. Instead, Cognitive Linguistics claims that variations in semantic interpretation and syntactic behavior give rise to different models of linguistic representation that are adapted to general linguistic patterns. In semantics, this hypothesis is manifested in Fillmore's (1975, 1982, 1985) semantics of understanding. In syntax, this principle has given rise to Construction Grammar as the new theory of syntax (Fillmore and Kay, 1993; Kay and Fillmore, 1999; Fillmore and Atkins, 2000; Lakoff, 1987; Goldberg, 1995, 2006; Croft, 2001; Michaelis, 2003; Tomasello, 2003). The primary commitment of Construction grammar is to develop an integrated account of both the regular and the idiomatic properties of language. Given the central role of Construction Grammar in this study, a critical overview will be provided in section 2.2. Section 2.3., in turn, will introduce the reader to the origins and the general architecture of the Lexical Constructional Model (Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal, 2007, 2008, 2010; Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2008, 2009), which represents the theoretical framework for this study of illocution.

In sum, this chapter is devoted to a detailed discussion of the benefits that can be drawn from the integration of proposals belonging to different theoretical frameworks in the task of developing a comprehensive analysis of illocutionary meaning. My account of illocutionary phenomena takes into consideration cognitive issues involved in the construal processes that take part in illocutionary meaning construction. I address the main assumptions held within the field of Cognitive Linguistics and Construction Grammar. I offer a review of the origins of the cognitivist approach and a summary of its various approaches to language organization, some of which are basic to the understanding of the analysis (section 2.1.). Likewise, I describe the notion of construction and the different ways in which this concept has been defined (sections 2.2. and 2.3.). This revision leads to the proposal of a different cognitive approach to illocution in terms of illocutionary constructions and high-level situational cognitive models (section 2.4.).

## **2.1. CONCEPTUAL REPRESENTATION IN COGNITIVE ACCOUNTS**

As propounded in the works of Lakoff (1987), Johnson (1987) and Lakoff and Johnson (1999), Cognitive Linguistics emerges as a reaction to the objectivist paradigm, a philosophical tradition that has influenced every

field of human investigation for centuries. The objectivist paradigm is based on the assumptions that reality is structured independently of human understanding and that our conceptualization of the world rests upon a theory of categorization according to which all entities in a given category share a group of defining features (i.e. classical theory of categorization). These assumptions are revised by cognitive scientists (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 198-210), who propose an alternative paradigm that receives the name of experientialism and has embodiment as its central concept. The experientialist approach argues that both our knowledge of the world and our language are construed upon preconceptual bodily experiences. A significant amount of research has also been carried out trying to account for perception and knowledge. Two ways in which embodied experience manifests itself is in terms of basic-level categories and image-schemas, both of which give meaningful structure to our physical experience at a preconceptual level. Furthermore, the cognitive approach claims that abstract notions which are not grounded in physical experience are understood by means of metaphorical operations. Finally, while objectivists defend that categorization is achieved on the basis of a number of necessary and sufficient properties shared by all the entities in a category, cognitivism adheres to Prototype Theory (Rosch, 1975, 1977, 1978), which maintains that categories are structured in terms of representativeness. The more similar an entity is to the prototype, the more central its status within a category. From this follows that not only do entities display different degrees of approximation, but also that there are no clear distinctions within a given class or between groups. A classical attempt to organize conceptual structure in terms of prototypes is found in Lakoff (1987), who identifies four sources of prototype effects according to propositional, image-schematic, metonymic and metaphoric structuring principles. Lakoff claims that we organize our knowledge by means of these structuring principles which receive the name of *idealized cognitive models* (ICMs). ICMs are conventionalized cognitive structures that are idealized for the purpose of understanding.<sup>5</sup> Let us briefly revise the different types of ICMs proposed by Lakoff (1987).

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<sup>5</sup> Ruiz de Mendoza (1996: 343) redefines Lakoff's classification by making a distinction between *operational* (metaphor and metonymy) and *non-operational* (propositions and image-schemas) *cognitive models*. Operational models represent the organizing principles of human experience and the result of applying them. Non-operational models arise from applying such organizing principles to the knowledge acquired through our interaction with the world. The latter make use of the former. Following Lakoff's description of image-schemas as abstract cognitive constructs, Ruiz de Mendoza (2007) has also made a distinction between primary, low, and high-level characterizations. All in all, the concept of ICM is essential in the cognitive framework and basic to the understanding of this research work.

Lakoff's conception of propositional structure draws many ideas from Schank and Albelson's (1977) *scripts* and Fillmore's (1982) *frames*. Scripts are defined as knowledge structures designed for frequently recurring event sequences. For example, the RESTAURANT script is divided into four scenes, which are entering, ordering, eating and exiting. Frames are schematic representations of knowledge networks that link a number of domains relative to a linguistic structure. The understanding of concepts such as BUY, SELL or PAY requires having access to the COMMERCIAL EVENT frame, which provides the background for the categories which are represented by this word. Likewise, the RISK frame provides the background for categories such as CHANCE, HARM, VALUED OBJECT, DEED, ACTOR, GAIN, PURPOSE, BENEFICIARY and MOTIVATION (Fillmore and Atkins, 1992). The theory of Frame Semantics has been applied to a recent corpus-based computational lexicography project called *FrameNet*, which is being carried out at the International Computer Science Institute in Berkeley. The *FrameNet* lexical database contains around ten thousand lexical units (i.e. a pairing of a word with a meaning), eight hundred semantic frames and over one hundred and twenty thousand example sentences. Drawing on Fillmore's (1982, 1985) Frame Semantics, Boas (2003) adopts a usage-based approach to language analysis which gives evidence on the decisive power that a lexical entry displays in its syntactic projection.

Lakoff (1987: 284-287) describes propositional models as related to entities, their properties and the relations that hold among them. Lakoff distinguishes five types of propositional ICMs: propositions, scenarios or scripts, feature bundles, taxonomies and radial categories.

The structure of a proposition consists of a number of arguments and a predicate where a proposition is the whole and the predicate and arguments are the parts composing it. Moreover, there can exist semantic relations among the arguments; there may be an agent, a patient, an instrument, or a location. More complex propositions can be created from simple ones by means of devices such as modification, quantification, complementation, and so on.

The structure of a scenario is arranged in terms of an initial state, a sequence of events and a final state. The PART-WHOLE schema in the domain of time underlies the general structure of scenarios. Other entities within a scenario concern people, things, properties, relations and propositions. We identify again relations holding between such entities of the scenario such as causal relations or identity relations. Scenarios also have a purpose structure since they specify the purposes of people.

A feature bundle constitutes a collection of properties. Feature bundles can represent classical categories in the sense that they contain the properties shared by all members in a category. Weight feature bundles assign weight to the features in a bundle. The sign indicates the importance of the features. Weight feature bundles are taken as representations of prototypical category members. Coleman and Kay's (1981) analysis of *lie* is an example of weight feature bundles. The weightings for *lie* are: first, lack of belief, second, attempt to deceive, and third, being false. A statement that has the first and the second properties but not the third, counts as a good example of a *lie*. Conversely, a statement that has the second and the third properties is a less good example of a *lie*.

This brings us to taxonomies, which are but hierarchically structured classical categories. In such an arrangement, each higher-order category is regarded as a whole and the immediately lower categories are the parts. If these categories are classical, they are defined by feature bundles and the feature bundles that characterize higher level categories must include all the features of lower level ones. Lakoff (*ibid*: 166) provides the example of biological taxonomies. Elephants, for instance, can be grouped together into larger categories (i.e. mammals) and also split up into smaller categories (i.e. various kinds of elephants).

Finally, a radial category can be represented as a container within which any of its subcategories is located. The structure of a radial category is guided by the center-periphery schema whereby one subcategory is central and the others are related to it by various kinds of connections. In Lakoff's (1987: 91) view, the concept MOTHER is an instance of radial category since it possesses an innermost sense and different tangential senses. There is a *central* subcategory, defined by a cluster of cognitive models (the birth model, the nurturance model, the marital model, etc.) and there are *noncentral* extensions which are variants of the central subcategory (*adoptive mother*, *birth mother*, *foster mother*, etc.). The central model determines the possibilities for extensions, as well as the relations between central model and the extensions.

Image-schematic ICMs structure schematic patterns that arise from imagistic domains. Image-schemas are described as recurring patterns of experience which are abstract and topological in nature (cf. Johnson, 1987; Peña, 2003, 2008; Hampe, 2005). Image-schemas constitute organized constructs with a series of structural elements and a basic internal logic which can be applied to abstract reasoning. For example, given that humans have their head at the top of their bodies and their feet at the bottom, the vertical axis of the human body features an up-down or top-bottom

asymmetry. The VERTICALITY image schema allows us to understand abstract concepts such as happiness in terms of vertical orientation. In this way, high positions are associated with positive axiological values (cf. *He is on cloud nine*) and low positions with negative (cf. *Things are at an all-time low*).

Metaphors are sets of correspondences across two discrete conceptual domains (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1999; Lakoff, 1990, 1993, 2008). One of them, called the source, allows us to understand the other, called the target. Metonymies are considered domain-internal conceptual mappings between two concepts where one of them affords access to –and stands for– the other (cf. Kövecses and Radden, 1998; Ruiz de Mendoza, 2000). It is commonly accepted that metaphor and metonymy are two pervasive ways of making use of propositional structure and image-schematic structure to construe the world (Panther and Thornburg, 1998; Sweetser, 2000; Panther, 2005; Tendahl and Gibbs, 2008; Tendahl, 2009). For example, we can talk about love relationships as if they were journeys (which are in turn complex image-schematic configurations consisting of a moving entity, a source and a destination of motion) and in so doing we understand lovers' progress towards their goals. Or, in the case of metonymy, we can refer to an entity by drawing the addressee's attention to a conceptually salient constituent of that entity. For instance, we can refer to a worker by mentioning his hands since the notion of hands is conceptually prominent in the domain of labor. Ruiz de Mendoza (2000) has defined two ways of correspondence for metonymy, domain expansion and domain reduction, which have been taken up in the broader accounts on cognitive operations in Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez (2003), Ruiz de Mendoza and Peña (2005), and Ruiz de Mendoza (2011). The basic idea is that some metonymies use part of a conceptual domain to give access to the whole, while others use the whole to give access to one of its parts. The present approach to illocutionary interpretation takes up this description of metonymy in order to explain the activation of illocutionary scenarios by affording access to one part of them (Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2002; Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez, 2003; Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007; Baicchi and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2011; Ruiz de Mendoza, 2011).

On the basis of previous work on abstract and non-abstract cognitive models, Ruiz de Mendoza (2007) distinguishes between low and high levels of linguistic description. The former are non-generic levels of conceptual representation created by making well-entrenched coherent links between the elements of our encyclopaedic knowledge store. The latter involve generic levels of conceptual representation created by deriving structure



common to multiple low-level models. The distinction between these two levels of conceptualization has important consequences for the understanding of the semantic motivation of grammar, especially in terms of metaphor and metonymy. Kövecses and Radden (1998) and Panther and Thornburg (2000) had already found a small group of metonymies with an impact of grammatical phenomena, such as cases of categorial and subcategorial conversion involving nouns, adjectives and verbs. A more detailed account dealing with the issue is the one put forward by Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez (2001), who discuss high-level metonymy under the label of grammatical metonymy, with offshoots in Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal (2002), Ruiz de Mendoza and Díez (2004) and Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez (2004). These authors claim that it is necessary for linguistic theory to understand metonymic operations on generic cognitive models such as action, instrument, object and others. Grammatical metonymy is a form of high-level (i.e. non-lexical) metonymy that affects morphological and syntactic structure. An example of such construct is a metonymic mapping underlying the utterance *There's too much chair in this room* (cf. Dik, 1989: 121), which licenses a categorial conversion from a countable noun to a mass noun. The notion of grammatical metonymy has later on been extended to metaphor (Pérez and Díez, 2005) and developed by Ruiz de Mendoza (2007) and Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal (2007). These authors incorporate both high-level metaphor and high-level metonymy into the Lexical Constructional Model in the form of external constraints on lexical-constructional subsumption (see section 2.3.).

## **2.2. A CRITICAL REVISION OF COGNITIVE GRAMMAR APPROACHES**

When we talk about cognitive models of grammar, we do not have in mind a specific cognitive grammar theory, but rather a model that generalizes over several specific theories which will be discussed in this chapter. Cognitive models of grammar generally assume the broad commitments of Cognitive Linguistics and the principles characterizing the cognitive semantics approach.

There are two primary assumptions guiding the Cognitive Linguistics approach to grammar: the symbolic thesis and the usage-based thesis. The first of these assumptions (which is labeled a symbolic assembly in Langacker's Cognitive Grammar framework) has its roots in the Saussurean theory of language and maintains that the fundamental unit of grammar is a

symbolic structure pairing form and function. Symbolic units have two poles, a semantic pole (i.e. its meaning) and a phonological pole (i.e. its sound). These units are psychological in the sense that they belong within the mental grammar of the speaker, and are described by Langacker (cf. 1987: 57) as an inventory of conventional linguistic units. For example, the image of a tree represents the concept TREE, which is the semantic pole of a symbolic unit. The phonological pole of the unit is the speaker's knowledge of the string of sounds that correspond to the concept TREE. The idea that symbolic grammatical units are inherently meaningful gives rise to the idea of a lexicon-grammar continuum where content words and grammatical constructions count as symbolic units but differ in terms of the quality of the meaning associated with them. Symbolic units can be minimal or simplex, as in the case of morphemes, or complex, as in the case of complex words, phrases or sentences. Units having complex symbolic structure are called constructions in Langacker's Cognitive Grammar (Langacker, 2005).

The second assumption of the Cognitive Linguistics approach to grammar is the usage-based thesis. This thesis maintains that the speaker's knowledge of a language is formed by the abstraction of symbolic units from situated instances of language use. Since usage-based approaches hold that language emerges from use, there is no distinction between the knowledge of a language and its use. The act of deploying a symbolic unit in a usage event involves both meaning and form. Any given usage event is formed by speech sounds and their corresponding interpretation.

Having outlined the central assumptions shared by all models of cognitive grammar, I shall introduce the specific theories that represent this approach. These are the Conceptual Structuring System Model, postulated by Talmy (2000), the Cognitive Grammar approach, put forward by Langacker (1987, 1991, 2005, 2006, 2008), and a number of construction grammar accounts and cognitive theories of grammaticalization. There are four main varieties of constructional grammar approaches (Gonzálvez-García and Butler, 2006). The first is the theory called Construction Grammar, which was developed by Fillmore and Kay (1988) and Kay and Fillmore (1999). This theory sets the central thesis for the development of constructionist approaches. The second is Goldberg's Construction Grammar (1995, 2006), which focuses on the argument structure of sentence-level constructions such as the English ditransitive and the English resultative construction. The third variety is Radical Construction Grammar, a theory developed by Croft (2001, 2003), which aims at exploring the implications of linguistic typology for syntax. The fourth is a recent account

developed by Bergen and Chang (2005), known as Embodied Construction Grammar. This model is based on the assumption that all linguistic units, including morphemes, words, phrases and sentences, are constructions. A brief overview of each of these constructionist approaches is provided in the following sections. I will describe first Langacker's model of grammar to sketch the basic assumptions of cognitive accounts of grammar. As it will be evident in this study, some of the central assumptions of these theories are complementary. Finally, I shall devote special attention to the Lexical Constructional Model, which has been recently developed by Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal (2008, 2011) and Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza (2009), and on which this research is framed.

### **2.2.1. Cognitive Grammar**

Cognitive Grammar (CG) is the theoretical framework devised by Langacker (1987, 1991, 1999, 2005, 2006, 2008). This has been the most influential theory of grammar within Cognitive Linguistics. It aims at describing the cognitive mechanisms and principles that motivate the formation and use of symbolic structural units. Following Talmy (2000), Langacker assumes that closed-class (i.e. grammatical) units are inherently meaningful. The main point of divergence with respect to Talmy's approach is that Langacker does not believe that open-class and closed-class units represent different conceptual systems. Cognitive Grammar is generally classified as a constructional model of grammar because Langacker adopts a constructional view of certain types of grammatical units. However, Langacker's view of constructions differs from the one adopted by other constructionist proposals. A further feature in common between Langacker's Cognitive Grammar and other constructionist approaches relates to the fact that they are both inventory-based accounts of grammar. Inventory-based theories regard grammar as a repository of symbolic units rather than a system of rules or principles. This is based on the assumption that the language system does not build structure, as has been held by Generative linguists (Chomsky, 1965), but stores it. In spite of these similarities, Cognitive Grammar is traditionally considered separately from constructionist accounts because it focuses on the cognitive mechanisms and principles underlying grammar.

Langacker argues that grammatical structures have a conceptual basis and can thus be characterized semantically. The scope of predication of a linguistic expression is its base and what the expression designates from

within that base is its profile. Base domains constitute innately primitive dimensions that cannot be further decomposed such as time, color, space, and pitch scale or temperature sensations. The meaning of lexical items cannot be understood independently of the base domains they evoke and which supply their conceptual content. Langacker classifies linguistic structures into nominal predications and relational predications. The former are conceptually autonomous, which means that they invoke concepts that are inherently meaningful, such as nouns or noun phrases. Relational predications are conceptually dependent, that is to say, they rely on other linguistic units to complete their meaning, as is the case with adjectives and propositions. Langacker (2002: 74-75) summarizes the difference between nominal and relational predications as follows:

A nominal predication presupposes the interconnections among a set of conceived entities, and profiles the region thus established. On the other hand, a relational predication presupposes a set of entities, and profiles the interconnections among these entities.

Langacker illustrates the distinction between nominal and relational predications by comparing the noun *group* with the adverb *together*. These two words share the same conceptual content. But while the first profiles the entities and the whole they comprise thereby consisting in a nominal predication, the latter profiles the interconnections between the entities and is thus a relational predication. Relational predications are conceptually dependent in the sense that the interconnections they profile cannot be conceived separately from the entities they connect. Furthermore, relational predications capture the schematic representation of the entities they connect, which display what Langacker calls a trajector-landmark asymmetry. The notion of trajector (TR) is understood as the most salient element or the primary figure in a profiled relation. The notion of landmark (LM) is defined as the second focal element or the secondary figure. In a sentence like *John has a car*, the subject is the trajector while the object is the landmark. Langacker (1987: 219) states that there are four patterns of relational predications in terms of TR-LM combinations, which are summarized in table 1:

Trajector (TR)	Landmark (LM)	Examples
THING	THING	on, (to) love
PROCESS	THING	fast
PROCESS	PROCESS	before
THING	PROCESS	want, think

Table 1. *Trajector-landmark combinations in relational predications*

Relational predications are divided into two subcategories, which are temporal relations and atemporal relations. The former account for finite verb forms that can be schematically characterized in terms of PROCESSES. The latter, which account for word-classes and non-finite verb forms, are schematically characterized as STATES. Consider the examples below:

- (1) Peter destroyed the letters secretly.
- (2) His destruction of the letters was secretive.

In example (1), *destroyed* is conceived as a dynamic PROCESS that is carried out in a certain manner, which is expressed by the adverb *secretively*. Example (2), in contrast, construes *destruction* as a THING that has a property, which is expressed by the adjective *secretive*.<sup>6</sup> Now that Langacker's approach to semantic characterization has been set out, let us explore the nature of the units that comprise grammatical constructions and the relations among them. In Cognitive Grammar complex symbolic structures are constructions, and they can be complex words, phrases or clauses. Constituency (i.e. the combination of small subparts into larger, more complex units) is accounted for in terms of TR-LM organization. Thus, a phrase such as *white napkin* brings together two semantic poles. *White* profiles (i.e. designates) a subpart of the COLOR SPECTRUM and is structured in the schematic TR specified as PHYSICAL OBJECT, which is in turn an instance of THING. *Napkin* designates a specific type of PHYSICAL OBJECT among other richer semantic specifications. The association of these two semantic poles within the phrase maps the semantic-specific *napkin* onto the semantic TR *white*.

Valence relations hold between the component structures that conform grammatical constructions. The term valency refers to the number of participants that is required by a verb. A verb like *sleep*, for example, involves one single participant (cf. *Harry slept*) whereas a verb like *eat* involves two (cf. *Lily ate the pie*). In Langacker's theory, there are four main factors that determine valence, namely, correspondence, profile

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<sup>6</sup> Utterance (2), where the event of destroying a city is treated as a physical entity, is licensed by the high-level metaphor EVENTS ARE ENTITIES (Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez, 2001). This metaphor allows us to predict a large number of meaning implications: participant entities may be left implicit (i.e. the agent of the action), the event is regarded as an experience that can be treated as an instrument (*We were threatened with destruction*), an object of perception (*We saw the destruction*) or of knowledge (*We knew about the destruction*) (see Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal, 2007).

determinacy, conceptual autonomy versus conceptual dependence, and constituency.

In the first place, *correspondence* refers to the idea that the component structures within a grammatical construction share certain aspects of their structure. For instance, relational predications only become meaningful when they relate to a trajector or a landmark. *Profile determinacy* depends on which of the component structures determines the profile of the grammatical construction or composite structure as a whole. Consider the phrase *under the table*, which profiles both a RELATION (cf. *under*) and a THING (cf. *the table*), while the phrase as a whole describes a property of location of an entity and therefore profiles a RELATION rather than a THING.

*Conceptual autonomy* versus *conceptual dependence* refers to the asymmetry described in terms of heads and dependents. Langacker (1987: 300) defines dependence in the following way:

One structure, D, is dependent of the other, A, to the extent that A constitutes an elaboration of a salient substructure within D.

The head of a construction is defined as the profile determinant, and the relations between the components of a construction are defined in terms of autonomy and dependence. The component structures that constitute an elaboration are conceptually autonomous (e.g. *napkin* in *white napkin* or *the table* in *under the table*), while the structures that need to be elaborated are dependent (e.g. *white* in *white napkin* or *under* in *under the table*).

*Constituency* relates to the construction of progressively complex composite structures. Langacker's model of constituency does not only account for word structure but also for phrase and clause structure. These four factors are not of equal importance to valence relations. Langacker argues that correspondence is a central factor because it takes part in all kinds of valence relations. In contrast, constituency is not fundamental because complex constructions can be made up by different means. In Langacker's view, the prototypical grammatical construction comprises two component structures. This means that the internal constituency of constructions can be described in terms of binary relations. For example, in the NP *that white napkin under the table*, the PP structure *under the table* involves a relation between the preposition *under* and the NP *the table*, while the larger NP structure *that white napkin under the table* involves a relation between the NP *that white napkin* and the PP *under the table*. Every grammatical construction is stored in the structured inventory that represents the speaker's linguistic knowledge.

### 2.2.2. Construction Grammar

Fillmore, Kay and collaborators are placed among the first linguists who reinstated the notion of construction in grammatical theory. Their Construction Grammar approach was developed to handle cases that went beyond the capacity of Generative Grammar. In general terms, Generative Grammarians account for language by a system of words and rules, where the words are the lexical units in the speaker's lexicon which are subject to different types of linguistic rules. Phonological rules govern strings of sounds, semantic rules govern the semantic interpretation of the clause in keeping with the principle of compositionality and syntactic rules govern the assemblies of words into complex grammatical structures. The principle of compositionality states that the meaning of an expression emerges from the meanings of its parts, together with the way in which these parts coexist (cf. Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor, 1988). This principle gives rise to a theory of meaning that is independent of context, such as the one upheld by Generative Grammarians. The principle was proved wrong by Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor's research on idiomatic expressions. Their study evidenced that the meaning of certain linguistic structures could not be deduced from the speaker's knowledge of the semantic and syntactic rules of the language. Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor's typology of idiomatic expressions is based on four parameters, encoding and decoding idioms, grammatical and extragrammatical idioms, substantive and formal idioms and idioms with and without pragmatic value. While encoding idioms such as *wide alert* can be understood on first hearing, the meaning of decoding idioms such as *kick the bucket* cannot be inferred and needs to be worked out. Grammatical idioms obey grammatical rules, in contrast, extragrammatical idioms do not. Substantive idioms are comprised by lexical items with semantic content, while the meaning of formal idioms is provided by syntactic patterns. For example, *kick the bucket* is a substantive idiom because most of the content expressions involved are intrinsic to it. An example of a formal idiom is the *let alone* construction. Finally, idiomatic expressions can be pragmatically motivated or neutral. Fillmore and collaborators concentrate on the description of formal idioms because they are learned as a whole rather than word by word. Formal idiomatic constructions have an additional pragmatic value that in many cases cannot be predicted from their component parts. An example is the *let alone* formal idiom:

- (3) Fred doesn't like shrimp, *let alone* squid.

Semantically, *let alone* has the idiosyncratic property that the two expressions are presented as opposite points on a scale where the second item (cf. *squid*) has greater emphatic force than the first (cf. *shrimp*). In relation to this property is the fact that the *let alone* construction can be characterized as a negative polarity item. This means that it can only take place in negative contexts, either determined by a morphosyntactic negation or by a lexical item like the verb *doubt* or the adverb *even*.

(4) I *doubt* Fred doesn't like shrimp, let alone squid.

(5) Fred doesn't *even* like shrimp, let alone squid.

There is also a pragmatic value in the *let alone* construction. It not only rejects a proposition but also gives additional relevant information. The relevant information is in the first conjunct of the construction and establishes a contrast between the two propositions conjoined, implying that there is a stronger proposition than the one that is mentioned and which is more forcefully rejected. The pragmatic impact of *let alone* is shared among a family of similar constructions. Consider the examples below:

(6) Fred doesn't like shrimp, *never mind* squid.

(7) Fred doesn't *even* like shrimp, *much less* squid.

In light of their study of idiomatic constructions such as *let alone*, Fillmore and collaborators have argued in favor of a model of language that considers the semantic and pragmatic properties of grammatical constructions. This view of language is opposed to formal claims on the modularity of language defended in the Chomskyan approach (Chomsky, 1988), which regards the mental grammar as a special module of the mind which is a separate cognitive faculty that has no connection with other cognitive abilities. One basic postulate of Cognitive Linguistics is the claim that knowledge of language is not independent of other general cognitive abilities. Fillmore and collaborators have put forward a linguistic model where syntactic, semantic, phonological and pragmatic knowledge is encapsulated into a single representation that receives the name of "construction". The grammar of a language is regarded as a repertory of constructions to which speakers have access as part of their linguistic knowledge. Fillmore and collaborators (1988: 534) define constructions in the following terms:



[...] clusters of information including, simultaneously, morphosyntactic patterns, semantic interpretation principles to which these are dedicated, and, in many cases, specific pragmatic functions in whose service they exist.

This constructional model provided the empirical basis for the symbolic thesis that is central to the cognitive accounts of grammar. The model was later on revised by Kay and Fillmore (1999), who sketched out the details of a new theoretical framework that they called Construction Grammar. The idiomatic construction that was chosen by Kay and Fillmore to illustrate their framework was the *What's X Doing Y* construction, which they abbreviated to the WXDY construction. This construction is illustrated in the examples below:

- (8) What's this fly doing in my soup?
- (9) What's the child doing covered with spaghetti?
- (10) What's this scratch doing on my car door?
- (11) What's George doing without a solicitor?
- (12) What's Peter doing kissing that girl?
- (13) What's she doing undressed?
- (14) What's Mary doing on a scooter?

As observed in these examples, the construction lends itself to a wide variety of specific instances. The X part of the construction can be headed by different kinds of subjects. The Y part is very flexible and admits different kinds of categories including participial verb forms (cf. *kissing*, *covered*), prepositions (*without*) and adjectives (cf. *undressed*).<sup>7</sup> As Kay and

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<sup>7</sup> Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal (2002: 156) point to the power of the Y element to ensure the complaint meaning value of the construction. The ambiguity appreciated in the examples tends to disappear the more we specify the Y element, resulting in obvious complaint interpretations on the part of the speaker who seems fairly disappointed about the situation described by the WXDY construction. Ruiz de Mendoza (2001) provides an explanation for this in terms of metonymic access to the meaning conditions of the construction. In his view, there is a cognitive model underlying the WXDY construction that abides the hearer to change the Y action if it is manifest to him that it is negative for the speaker. Specifying the negative nature of Y gives easier access to this part of the cognitive model thereby pointing to a complaint interpretation. See the Lexical Constructional Model's approach to implicational constructions in section 2.3.4.1.

Fillmore put it, the complaint meaning sense of the WXDY construction is not derivable from the combination of the meaning of the lexical items making up the construction. This view of constructions is in line with Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor's definition of constructions as symbolic structural items carrying specific meanings. In Kay and Fillmore's theory, idiomatic constructions, like WXDY, interact with more familiar constructions in language; they thus developed Construction Grammar to provide an integrated account of both the regular and the idiomatic properties of language. In other words, the commitment of Construction Grammar is to develop an integrated account of the regular and the idiomatic properties of a language. Kay and Fillmore's Construction Grammar contains only one level of syntactic representation and is made up of grammatical representations containing syntactic and semantic information of argument structure. This Construction Grammar model consists of a number of generalized constructions that motivate more specific constructions like WXDY. Syntactic patterns are also represented by constructions capturing the grammatical relations holding between different categories, such as VP, PP and NP. The constructions that make up Kay and Fillmore's Construction Grammar are linked by means of inheritance relations, that is, specific constructions inherit the properties of generic ones. The WXDY construction inherits the syntactic properties of generalized constructions and the regular properties that identify its idiomatic value.

### **2.2.3. The Goldbergian approach**

As advanced above, the contribution of Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor (1988) and Kay and Fillmore (1999) is focused on the construction. Their approach developed the symbolic thesis from words to grammatical constructions based on the *generalization commitment*, a commitment to a common set of principles to treat different areas of linguistic study. It was necessary to apply the constructional approach to regular grammar in order to develop a solid constructional perspective. Goldberg's (1995, 2006) research was probably the most important development in this area. Influenced by the work of Kay and Fillmore (1999) on idiomatic constructions and by the work of Lakoff (1987) on *there* constructions, Goldberg developed a construction grammar that attempted to extend the constructional approach from irregular idiomatic constructions to regular constructions. Thus, Goldberg's Construction Grammar was built upon the

patterns she found in verb argument constructions like ditransitives and resultatives. The main assumption of Goldberg's theory is that sentence-level constructions carry meaning independently of the words in the sentence (cf. Goldberg, 1995: 1). Before discussing Goldberg's approach in detail, it is important to note that her definition of construction is different from the one developed by Langacker for Cognitive Grammar. Langacker defines a construction as a unit with a complex symbolic structure, that is, a complex word, a phrase or a sentence. Here is Goldberg's (1995: 4) definition of construction:

C is a CONSTRUCTION iff it is a form-meaning pair  $\langle F_i, S_i \rangle$  such that some aspect of  $F_i$  or some aspect of  $S_i$  is not strictly predictable from C's component parts or from other previously established constructions.

In Goldberg's definition, F stands for form and S stands for semantics, so  $\langle F, S \rangle$  represents a symbolic unit with form and meaning. This definition rests upon the issue of predictability, but in a different way from Langacker's definition of construction. In the Goldbergian approach, any aspect of the form and meaning of a construction cannot be predictable from its component parts. From this follows that both bound morphemes and free morphemes are considered constructions in Goldberg's theory but not in Langacker's account. Goldberg's conception of constructions as pairings of form and function is indicative of the affinity of her approach with functional theories of grammar (cf. González-García, 2003; González-García and Butler, 2006). A further crucial difference between Goldberg's proposal and Langacker's theory is that Goldberg does not make any distinction between simplex and complex units, since both may count as constructions. Recall that in Langacker's model, constructions are complex symbolic units. Like other cognitive linguists, Goldberg assumes there is a lexicon-grammar continuum to which she refers as the constructicon. Goldberg also assumes the usage-based thesis of Cognitive Linguistics approaches and argues that the properties of a language are reflected in human experience and conceptual organization. In this respect, the Goldbergian model is considered a cognitive account of grammar. Goldberg contends there are a number of advantages of adopting a constructional approach to argument structure. Firstly, a constructional account avoids both the need to postulate different senses for one verb, which would be necessary in lexical theories to explain the caused-motion use of the verb *sneeze*. Second, a constructional perspective avoids circularity in the sense that the properties of constructions are not determined by the verb but by the construction itself. A third advantage of a

constructional approach is that it allows for semantic parsimony, or, in other words, it provides an economical account for the range of constructions in which a verb can take place by focusing on the construction and not on the verb. For example, because the verb *kick* can appear in eight different argument constructions, a lexical approach would be forced to posit eight senses for this verb. This proliferation of senses is avoided if one simple central meaning is postulated together with an account of the principles that regulate the way this central sense is adjusted to various constructional demands. The fourth advantage preserves compositionality in the sense that words contribute to the meaning of sentences but do not provide all the semantic content since sentence-level constructions have their own schematic meaning.

With respect to the nature of verb semantics, Goldberg argues that frames (Fillmore, 1982) set up the basis for the understanding of the nature of the verbs that are involved in constructions. In frame semantics, the meaning of words is understood against the background of a conceptual frame (or domain, in Langacker's terms). From this perspective, constructions do not possess a unique meaning value but rather they interact with the meaning of other constructions forming a network of relationships. Goldberg illustrates argument constructions with the examples reproduced in table 2.

Ditransitive	X CAUSES Y TO RECEIVE X	Subj V Obj Obj <sub>2</sub>	Pat faxed Bill the letter.
Caused Motion	X CAUSES Y TO MOVE X	Subj V Obl	Pat sneezed the napkin off the table
Resultative	X CAUSES Y TO BECOME X	Subj V Obj X Comp	She kissed him unconscious.
Intransitive Motion	X MOVES Y	Subj V Obl	The fly buzzed into the room.
Conative	X DIRECTS ACTION AT Y	Subj V Obl <sub>at</sub>	Sam kicked at Bill.

Table 2. *Examples of argument structure discussed by Goldberg (1995: 3)*

These decompositional structures do not capture all the ingredients in the meaning of the verb but only the syntactically relevant meaning aspects of the verb, or, in Goldberg's (1995: 28) words, the constructional meaning. Given that Goldberg makes no strict division between syntax and semantics, constructional polysemy is to be expected. Goldberg contends that constructions have different but related senses which form a network centred on a prototype. For example, the prototypical sense of the ditransitive construction is the actual transfer of an object to a recipient.

Possible related senses would be drawn from this central sense and yield conventionalized associations. This is the case of verbs such as *bake* or *cook*, which do not imply transfer but only the intention of the agent to give an object to a recipient, as in the sentence *Mary baked Peter a cake*.

This brings us to Goldberg's *scene encoding hypothesis*, according to which the constructions corresponding to basic sentence types codify as their central senses event types basic to human experience (cf. Goldberg, 1995: 39). We participate in these scenes everyday and they represent fundamental aspects of perception. See Grady and Johnson (2002) for an account of experiential scenes, similar to those postulated by Goldberg. In Grady and Johnson's account, our perceptual experience is also structured in the form of scenes associated with dimensions of meaning.

To explain what governs the interaction of verbs with constructions, Goldberg claims that while verbs have participant roles, constructions have argument roles. The frame of a given verb specifies the participants that are associated with the verb. Thus, the verb *buy* is associated with three participant roles, which are BUYER, SELLER and GOODS, while the verb *sing* has two, SINGER and SONG. Goldberg adheres to Langacker's notion of profiling to determine the frame underlying the conceptual domain of a given verb. Unlike the specificity of participant roles, the argument roles which are associated with constructions are of a more semantic kind. The approach to argument roles goes beyond the number of arguments required by a predicate and regards the types of arguments needed in terms of their semantic properties. Various proposals have been put forward concerning argument roles. Some examples are provided in the table below:

Agent	Volitional initiator of action
Patient	Undergoer effect of action, change of state
Theme	Moved by action or whose location is described
Experiencer	Sentient and aware of action
Beneficiary	For whose benefit action is performed
Instrument	Means by which action is performed
Location	Place in which event takes place
Goal	Entity towards which something moves
Source	Entity from which something moves

Table 3. *Examples of Goldbergian argument roles*

Goldberg (1995: 50) posits two principles that regulate and constrain the fusion of participant and argument roles.<sup>8</sup> These principles are the

<sup>8</sup> This term was originally propounded in Jakendoff's (1990) theory to make reference to the combination of two sets of semantic constraints within a lexical entry. In the Golbergian approach, the term refers to the integration of the participant roles of a verb and the argument roles of a construction. The Lexical Constructional Model, in which this analysis is framed,

*Semantic Coherence Principle* and the *Correspondence Principle*. The former states that there must be semantic compatibility between participant and argument roles. The latter postulates that the participant roles that are semantically salient must fuse with grammatical relations that provide them with discourse prominence. The two principles read as follows:

*The Semantic Coherence Principle:* Only roles which are semantically compatible can be fused. Two roles *r1* and *r2* are semantically compatible if either *r1* can be construed as an instance of *r2* or *r2* can be construed as an instance of *r1*.

*The Correspondence Principle:* Each participant role that is lexically profiled and expressed must be fused with a profiled argument role of the construction. If a verb has three profiled participant roles, then one of them may be fused with a nonprofiled argument role of a construction.

In Goldberg's theory, constructions interact within a network of relations that take the form of inheritance links. There are four different kinds of inheritance links. *Polysemy links*, in the first place, capture the relation between any particular sense of a construction and the extensions from this sense.<sup>9</sup> For example, the verbs in *John gave Sally the ball* and *John promised Sally the ball* share the salient features of the central sense of the ditransitive construction. The second type of inheritance links postulated by Goldberg are *subpart links*. These are posited when one construction is a subpart of another and exists independently. Thus, *Mary walked the dog* is a subtype of *The dog walked* because it adds a causal element. *Instance links* are the third kind of inheritance links. They are operational when a construction is an instance or special case of another construction. An example of an instance link is the sense of drive in the sentence *Chris drove Pat mad*, which constrains the argument meaning crazy.<sup>10</sup> The fourth kind of inheritance links are *metaphorical extension links*, which are defined as capturing the relationship between two constructions metaphorically related, as is the case of the relationship between the resultative

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uses this term to describe the fusion processes of lexical and constructional templates. In the next chapter, we will see how the LCM integrates Goldberg's constructions into its approach to meaning construction.

<sup>9</sup> In the LCM such extensions are considered to be epiphenomenal, that is, the side effect of constrained lexical-constructional integration. The verb *promise* is not an inherently ditransitive verb, but it can take part in this construction provided it is compatible with or at least licensable with it. The same reasoning applies to the causative walk in *Mary walked the dog*, which is constrained by the high-level metonymy ACTIVITY FOR (CAUSED) EVENT (Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> This example illustrates a special idiomatic sense of the more general resultative construction (cf. *The blacksmith hammered the metal flat*).

construction *Pat hammered the metal flat* and the caused-motion construction *Pat threw the metal off the table*. The destination element of the caused-motion construction is mapped onto the goal element.<sup>11</sup> In line with Goldberg's metaphorical extension links, the LCM regards metaphor and metonymy as licensing factors in the fusion of verbs belonging to certain predicate classes to specific argument constructions. In the LCM, metaphor and metonymy are considered two prominent cases of external constraints regulating the interaction possibilities between lexical and constructional configurations.

#### 2.2.4. Radical Construction Grammar

Radical Construction Grammar (RCG) was developed by Croft (2001, 2003) with the aim of developing a grammar model combining insights from functional typological theories and cognitive approaches. Linguistic typologies are theories that explore the structural properties of language from a cross-linguistic perspective and explain the patterns found in functional terms. However, RCG is in many aspects close to cognitive approaches. In line with Langacker and Goldberg, Croft assumes the existence of a continuum between lexicon and grammar. This author also accepts the usage-based thesis and Langacker's idea of entrenchment. But Croft's (2001: 17) definition of construction differs from both Langacker's and Goldberg's proposals:

Construction Grammar has generalized the notion of construction to apply to any grammatical structure, including both its form and meaning.

In RCG, constructions are the only primitive units in grammar and can be either simplex or complex in terms of structure and either specific or schematic in terms of meaning. Only fully substantive constructions, such as words, are considered atomic in RCG, which means that grammatical categories like syntactic functions rely on the constructions within which they occur to define their meaning. Croft's model disregards universal primitives to argue in favor of language-specific constructions conformed by semantic and grammatical subparts. Croft claims that grammatical diversity should be taken as the starting point to build a model that accounts

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<sup>11</sup> Ruiz de Mendoza and Luzondo (2011) have argued that the caused-motion construction is a member of the resultative family. The high-level metaphor GOALS ARE DESTINATIONS conflates destination of motion with goals of action and licenses the resultative use of the caused-motion construction.

adequately for patterns of typological variation. In RCG, constructions are the only primitive units in the grammar. Croft's taxonomy of constructions is represented in the table below:

Construction type	Traditional name	Example
Complex and mostly schematic	Syntax	[NP <i>be</i> -TENSE VERB- <i>en</i> by NP]
Complex and mostly specific	Idiom	[ <i>pull</i> -TENSE NP's <i>leg</i> ]
Complex but bound	Morphology	[NOUN- <i>s</i> ], [VERB-TENSE]
Atomic and schematic	Word classes	[NOUN], [VERB]
Atomic and specific	Lexical items	[ <i>the</i> ], [ <i>jumper</i> ]

Table 4. *RCG taxonomy of constructions* (Croft, 2001: 17)

Unlike reductionist models of grammar, RCG regards the structure as a whole rather than decomposing each part and treating it as an independent unit. The form and meaning of a construction are linked by symbolic relations. Each construction is regarded as a whole in the same way that a lexical item is a form-meaning pairing in the conventional view of the lexicon. For instance, the construction *Heather sings* is made up of two parts, *Heather* being the subject and *sing* being the predicate (Croft and Cruse, 2004: 259). RCG thus takes the whole complex structure as basic and the subparts in terms of their occurrence in a role in the structure (cf. Croft and Cruse, 2004: 285). Constituency is conceived as a grouping where grammatical units are identified in terms of contiguity and heads are characterized as 'primary information-bearing units' or PIBUs (cf. Croft, 2001: 258). It may be noted that Croft's model regards meronymic relations between the parts of a construction in semantic terms. Each of the subunits that conforms a construction constitutes a category whose members are accounted for by their role in the construction. Categories are differentiated by appending the name of the construction to the labels for each of the units in the construction. A representation of the transitive and intransitive constructions is provided in figure 1:



Figure 1. *The transitive and intransitive constructions* (Croft and Cruse, 2004: 287)

In figure 1, the establishment of the category verb is a generalization over the categories IntrV and TrV. The motivation for the superordinate category verb is its occurrence as the category in other related constructions. In RCG, the categories defined by constructions may vary



from one language to another, but they are mapped onto a common conceptual space. RCG's assumption of a universal conceptual space is inherited from functional typologies. Typological theories adopt some version of a semantic map model. A semantic map is a language-specific typological pattern that rests upon a conceptual space or universal system of knowledge. By way of illustration, consider the marking-systems for the transitive and intransitive constructions. The subject of a transitive verb is labeled A (AGENT), the object of a transitive verb is labeled O (OBJECT) and the subject of an intransitive verb is labeled S (SUBJECT). The system only needs to differentiate A and O since neither A and S nor S and O can co-occur. This knowledge is represented by a conceptual space underlying language-specific patterns for marking systems.

Before finishing this overview of RCG, I should make clear why Croft defines his model as radical. RCG is totally non-reductionist and contends that constructions do not derive from their component parts but that the parts derive from the constructions in which they appear. Constructions are the building blocks of language and not grammatical units, which are considered epiphenomenal. This view is shared by the LCM (Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal, 2011). Furthermore, RCG rejects basic assumptions of theoretical linguistics, such as the existence of word classes and grammatical functions, which are regarded as not only language-specific, but also construction-specific. This should make clear why Croft defines his model as radical. RCG identifies universal patterns concerning the mapping of meaning onto form that underlie a conceptual system of knowledge. Finally, RCG disregards syntactic relations in favor of semantic relations, based on the assumption that form is semantically motivated, in line with cognitive approaches.

### **2.2.5. Embodied Construction Grammar**

Embodied Construction Grammar (ECG) is a recent constructionist approach developed by Bergen, Chang and collaborators. This model assumes that constructions are the basic units of language. All linguistic units are considered constructions, including morphemes, words, phrases and sentences. ECG thus concentrates on examining how constructions are processed in dynamic language comprehension. In other words, while other constructionist approaches place the emphasis on modeling linguistic knowledge, the ECG model assumes that constructions form the basis of linguistic knowledge and focuses on examining how these constructions are

processed in language comprehension. Much of the research carried out by Bergen and Chang (2005) has focused on developing a formal system to describe constructions that is capable of accounting for the embodied knowledge involved in constructions in language understanding. According to ECG, we perform two tasks upon hearing an utterance. The first is analysis, which involves the mapping of the utterance onto the grammatical system to recognize which constructions are instantiated. The second is simulation, which involves the activation of the conceptual content that is represented by the construction in order to process the information and produce a response to the message. The conceptual representations that are invoked in the process of simulation are embodied schematic structures like VERTICALITY or PATH. In other words, our embodied experience gives rise to the conceptual representations prompted in language processing. Consider what would be processing like in the example:

- (15) Mary tossed me a drink.  
       (Bergen and Chang, 2005: 19)

During the analysis stage, each of the phonetic forms maps onto a construction in the hearer's structured inventory of constructions at morpheme, word and phrase level. The ditransitive construction is triggered by the conceptual constructs evoked (remember the discussion on Goldberg's approach). This enables the hearer to map the participant roles onto argument roles and the context of the utterance allows the hearer to identify the referent *me* as himself. In the simulation stage, the ditransitive construction activates three schemas, FORCE ACTIVATION, CAUSE-EFFECT and RECEIVE. These schemas are associated with schematic events and schematic roles (Langacker, 1987) and it is the mapping of constructions onto these schematic events and roles that gives rise to the simulation process. For instance, in (15), the construction instantiated by *Mary* is the ENERGY SOURCE and the construction instantiated by *me* is ENERGY SINK. The simulation process, in turn, gives rise to a number of inferences, some of which are illustrated below, where small caps indicate participants and event schemas (Bergen and Chang, 2005: 24):

- (i)   SPEAKER does not have DRINK.
- (ii)  MARY exerts force via TOSS.
- (iii) DRINK in reach of MARY.

- (iv) DRINK in hand of MARY.
- (v) MARY launches DRINK toward SPEAKER.
- (vi) MARY expands energy.
- (vii) DRINK flying toward SPEAKER.
- (viii) DRINK not in hand of MARY.
- (ix) MARY causes SPEAKER to receive DRINK.
- (x) SPEAKER has received DRINK.

These inferences seem evident if we decompose the meaning of the utterance, but it is nonetheless important for a model of language processing to account for the way in which such inferences are triggered in utterance comprehension. Similarly to ECG, the LCM distinguishes between constructional integration and cued inferencing. However, the LCM systematizes the way integration and cueing take place and how the two complement each other through a study of cognitive modeling and constraining factors.

ECG claims that it is embodied experience that gives rise to conceptual representations in terms of image-schematic structures and which in turn results in pragmatic inferences at the simulation process. The ECG approach shows how a constructional model can be extended to account for linguistic knowledge and the processing of language by relying on embodied knowledge as knowledge of language and on mental simulations as the outcome of language comprehension.

#### **2.2.6. Final considerations**

Cognitive Linguistics approaches to grammar share two key features. First, despite the fact that they provide different definitions for the notion of construction, these are still understood as symbolic units of form and function. Second, they all share the assumption that language is a structured inventory of constructions (Langacker, 1987). Furthermore, all these accounts assume that constructions are related through a complex network

of links, which not only rest upon a shared structure but also upon shared meaning, as is the case of polysemy links or metaphorical extension links.

The main difference among these constructionist approaches has to do with their diverging views on how constructions should be defined. Langacker's Cognitive Grammar conceives them as units with complex symbolic structure whether or not their meaning can be predicted from their component parts. Goldberg sees constructions as symbolic units that can be either simplex or complex and whose semantics cannot be predicted in terms of meaning or structure. Goldberg's definition of construction is very close to the one put forward by Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor in Construction Grammar. Croft's RCG maintains that all linguistic units are constructions regardless of their complexity. In effect, Croft claims that all patterns are construction-specific and arbitrary. ECG's conception of constructions is very close to the one postulated in RCG, except for the fact that ECG places emphasis on the understanding of constructions and on the nature of the embodied nature of language processing.

A further difference relates to whether or not these approaches are considered usage-based. The only one which cannot be described as such is Kay and Fillmore's theory of Construction Grammar. This represents a fundamental point of contrast with other cognitively-oriented approaches.

The third point of divergence among constructionist approaches has to do with their reductionist nature (Croft and Cruse, 2004). In non-reductionist theories, constructions are considered primitive units, and the parts are the properties of these units. In reductionist approaches, the parts are primitive units and the construction is conformed by the parts. In turn, Cognitive Grammar regards constructions as grammatical units deriving from TR-LM organization, from which it follows that it is a non-reductionist approach. The Goldbergian model is also non-reductionist because it is based on the assumption that participant roles arise from a frame, which is a primitive unit. Goldberg's analysis of syntactic roles is in contrast considered reductionist by Croft and Cruse, since it describes grammatical primitives such as verb or subject as the syntactic properties of constructions. RCG and ECG are non-reductionist approaches because they describe constructions as primitive and the parts in relation to the construction.

The main weakness of constructionist approaches concerns their incapability to give a solid explanation of the elements that constrain the unification of syntactic patterns and lexical entries (Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal, 2008, 2011; Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2009). The LCM was born in an attempt to achieve a more refined descriptive and explanatory

degree of adequacy by combining insights of constructionist approaches and functional projectionist theories. As is the case of many academic disciplines, some opposed theoretical assumptions can find a way to combine insights. Thus, the LCM emerged with the aim of developing a usage-based theory of meaning construction capable of explaining all aspects of meaning, including those that go beyond argument structure. The present research makes use of the theoretical tools provided by the LCM for the analysis of illocutionary constructions. Since I have adopted a constructionist perspective on illocution, understanding constructionist approaches seems essential for the development of this study.

This research, although conceived within the scope of the LCM, will take into consideration some assumptions held within Langacker's Cognitive Grammar with respect to construal operations in meaning. Construal phenomena have to do with the way in which the constructional composition of illocution varies according to how it perspectivizes the knowledge structure that arises from the way speakers interact.

In next section I include an overview of the theoretical proposals of the LCM and its approach to illocutionary phenomena.

## **2.3. AN OVERVIEW OF THE LEXICAL CONSTRUCTIONAL MODEL AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.3.1. The architecture of the LCM**

As mentioned above, the Lexical Constructional Model (LCM) emerges as an effort to reconcile the discrepant perspectives of functional projectionist theories, on the one hand, and of the cognitively-oriented constructionist approaches to language, on the other (Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal, 2007, 2008, 2011). The LCM is concerned with the study of the relations that hold between syntax and all aspects of meaning construction, not forgetting traditional implicature, illocutionary meaning and discourse. With the purpose of developing a robust semantic theory, the LCM combines a number of opposed theoretical assumptions held by projectionist theories (e.g. Role and Reference Grammar; RRG; Dik's Functional Grammar; FG) and constructionist accounts such as the ones propounded by Kay and Fillmore (1999), Goldberg (1995, 2006) and Croft (2001) among others. Projectionist approaches (Dik, 1989, 1997; Van Valin and LaPolla, 1997; Van Valin, 2005) generally assume that syntactic

structure can be predicted on the basis of the information that is coded by the lexical item plus a set of linking rules, thus disregarding the strength of constructional configurations in deriving morphosyntactic structure. As argued by Goldberg (1995, 2006), constructions may add arguments whose final meaning (e.g. the caused-motion sense in *The audience laughed the poor guy off the stage*) cannot be predicted from verbal projection (i.e. the argument structure of *laugh*). Conversely, constructionist approaches do not generally specify what it is that either licenses or constrains the integration of lexical items into syntactic structures. The LCM argues that both perspectives are necessary to account for all facets of meaning construction, including those that go beyond core grammar representations.

Another important assumption of the LCM has to do with the idea that all levels of linguistic description and explanation may make use of the same or at least comparable cognitive processes (Ruiz de Mendoza, 2007). For this reason, the LCM is focused as well on finding unifying features across different levels of linguistic description and explanation. This assumption is termed the *equipollence hypothesis*, which has enabled this model to achieve a certain degree of consistency and greater simplicity in the study of meaning construction (Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2009). Through the application of the hypothesis, the LCM has been able to identify metaphor and metonymy at non-lexical levels of linguistic description and to place metaphorical and metonymic operations as constraining factors on lexical-constructional fusion.

The model also contemplates other cognitive processes such as *cueing* or *cued inferencing* and *constructional subsumption*. Subsumption and conceptual cueing are cognitive processes that function at all levels of meaning derivation. The former is a meaning production mechanism by which lower-level structures are absorbed into higher-level configurations. The latter is viewed as a form of guided interpretation on the basis of linguistic clues. Cued inferencing is regarded not only as an issue of pragmatic and discourse levels but also of grammar. Both of them are meaning generation processes internally and externally constrained on the basis of cognitive mechanisms. The type of constraints admitted to exist are both internal and external. Internal constraints specify the conditions under which lexical templates may vary their internal makeup. External constraints relate to high-level metaphorical and metonymic operations that affect subsumption processes. Figure 2 (Ruiz de Mendoza and González-García, 2011) represents the various aspects of the overall architecture of the LCM. This diagram portrays all constructional levels (i.e. *grammar*, *implicature*, *illocution* and *discourse*), each affected by internal and external

constraints, and the cognitive processes regulating lexical and constructional interaction (i.e. *cued inferencing* and *subsumption*).

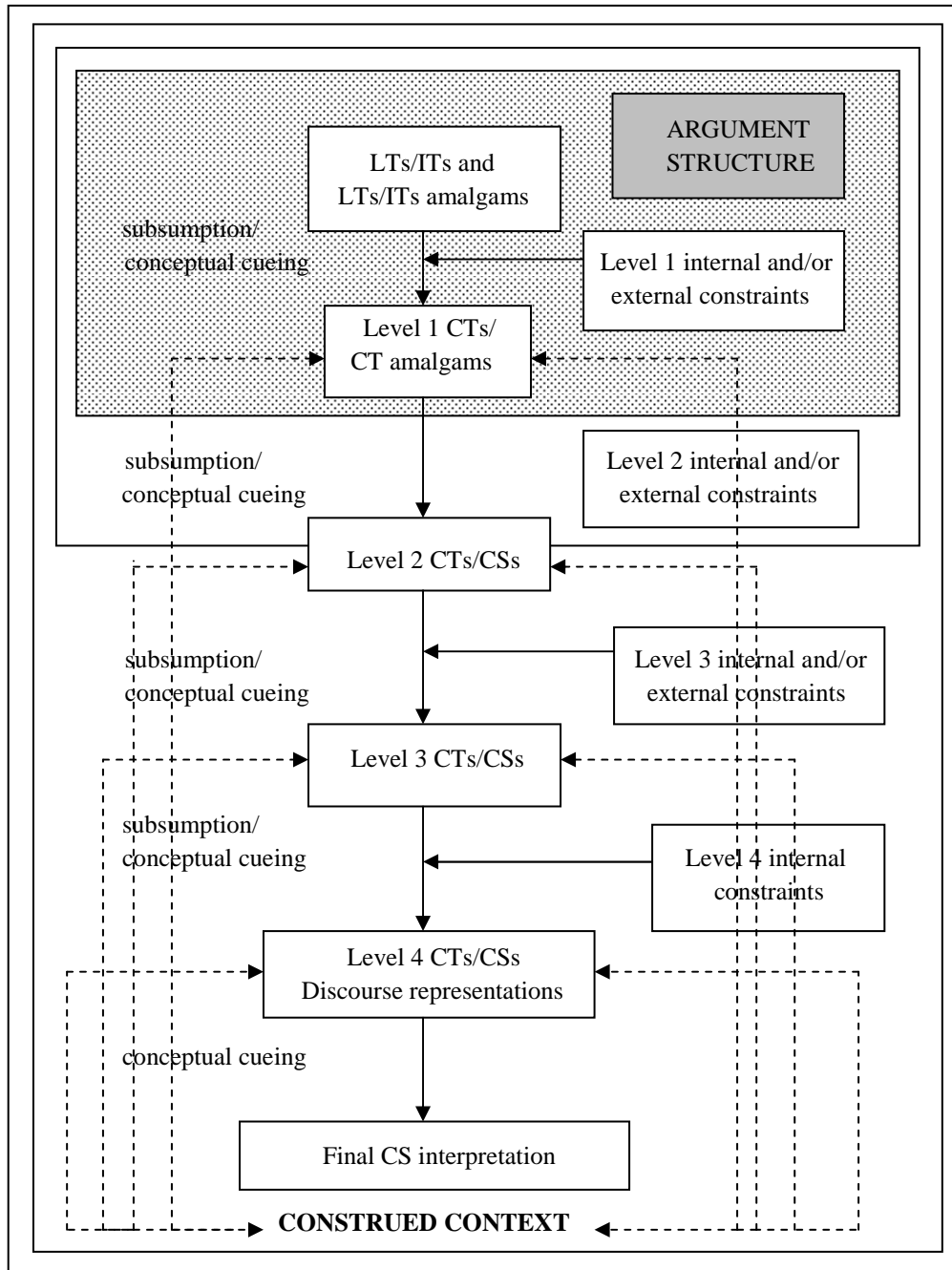


Figure 2. The overall architecture of the Lexical Constructional Model  
 LT = Lexical Template; IT= Idiomatic Template CT = Constructional Template; CS = Conceptual Structure

The LCM classifies constructions into argumental (level 1) and non-argumental (levels 2, 3 and 4). Argument structure constructions are in line with Goldberg's approach to construction types (i.e. ditransitive, caused motion, resultative, etc.), whereas the latter signal implicational constructions (level 2), illocutionary constructions (level 3) and discourse constructions (level 4). In contrast to argument structure constructions, those belonging to levels 2, 3 and 4 feature higher degrees of idiomaticity, since they logically combine more complex patterns. The distinction between argument structure and other constructional configurations is an essential one within the LCM and basic to the understanding of this research, one of whose primary objectives is the development of its description of idiomatic constructions.

The semantic component of the LCM comprises four different levels. Level 1 consists of elements of syntactically relevant semantic representation based on the principled interaction between lexical (LTs) and constructional templates (CTs). A lexical template is a non-generic semantic representation of the syntactically relevant information of a predicate. A constructional template consists of a generic or abstract semantic representation of grammatically relevant meaning elements that are derived from lower-level representations. According to Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza (2009: 194):

The principled interaction between lexical and constructional templates supplies the central or core meaning layer for the other more peripheral operations –involving implicated meaning– to take place.

Level 2, or implicational module, addresses inferential aspects of linguistic communication (i.e. low-level inferencing). Level 3, or illocutionary module, deals with illocutionary meaning (i.e. high-level inferencing). Finally, level 4, or discourse module, accounts for the discourse aspects of the LCM, including cohesion and coherence phenomena. Each of the levels is either subsumed into a higher configuration or acts as a cue for the activation of relevant conceptual structure that yields an implicit meaning derivation. As advanced above, the incorporation of lower-level constructions into higher-level ones is regulated by two cognitive processes, *subsumption* and *conceptual cueing*. Subsumption is internally and externally constrained. Internal coercion arises from the semantic properties of the lexical and constructional templates, and external coercion results from the possibility or impossibility of performing high-level metaphoric and metonymic operations on lexical items. Conceptual cueing is a form of guided inferencing on the basis of



linguistic clues. Cued inferential activity takes place at the four constructional levels as an alternative to subsumption. At the level of core grammar (cf. Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2009: 194), it takes the form of inferences obtained by making contextual adjustments to the meaning of predicates. At levels 2, 3 and 4 cued inferencing accounts for meaning implications obtained on the basis of conceptual connections among propositions (in discourse) or on metonymic access to high-level (for illocution) and low-level (for traditional implicature) situational models.

Configurations in levels 2, 3 and 4 display high degrees of idiomaticity than argument structure constructions, which are basically idiomatic in nature and admit lower degrees of elaboration. The LCM recognizes the existence of a continuum between linguistic phenomena but is not focused on studying such a continuum since regards it as characteristic of the intrinsic nature of the linguistic units.

### **2.3.2. Lexical and constructional representation**

The LCM makes use of lexical and constructional templates for the semantic representation of relational predicates. Lexical templates are semantic representations that consist of a syntactic module, which captures the *Aktionsart* structure of a given predicate, and a semantic module, which contains semantic, pragmatic and contextual information that is syntactically relevant. The notion of lexical template is borrowed from Faber and Mairal's (1999) Functional-Lexematic Model (FLM). Drawing on some of the assumptions of Dik's FG, the main goal of the FLM is to expand the FG lexicon by making its relational structure explicit. In the FLM, syntax is semantically motivated and words are the central units of description, covering all syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features. Mairal and Faber (2007: 138) define lexical templates as formal representations of a lexical unit and the world knowledge elements that affect its syntactic representation. Constructional templates have a more abstract nature than lexical templates and are based on Goldberg's (1995, 2006) notion of argument structure construction (i.e. ditransitive, caused motion, resultative, intransitive motion and conative). Broadly speaking, constructional templates specify the structure that is common to multiple lexical items. At level 1 or core module, CTs are described as argument structure non-idiomatic constructions containing elements of syntactically relevant semantic interpretation. At levels 2, 3 and 4, CTs are defined as idiomatic constructions consisting of variable (or parametrizable) and fixed (or non-

parametrizable) elements. Lexical and constructional templates interact at all levels of linguistic description and they partially resemble each other in predictable ways. Both of them make use of the same metalanguage, which unifies and enriches the Goldbergian approach and the logical structure metalanguage of Role and Reference Grammar.

### 2.3.2.1. Lexical templates

The LCM has developed the notion of lexical template (Mairal and Faber, 2002, 2005, 2007) on the basis of the logical structures postulated in Role and Reference Grammar (cf. Van Valin and LaPolla, 1997; Van Valin, 2005). RRG, following Dowty (1979), proposes a decompositional system for representing the semantic and argument structure of verbs (their Logical Structure) using the *Aktionsart* distinctions proposed by Vendler (1967). Verbs denote states, activities, achievements, semelfactives and accomplishments, together with their causative counterparts. The LCM claims that the logical structures postulated in RRG are insufficient to account for the differences in a predicate syntactic behavior. RRG contends that states and activities are primitives and form part of the logical representation of the rest of predicates.<sup>12</sup> For this reason, the LCM proposes lexical templates as an enriched version of such logical structures. A lexical template is constructed on the basis of a universal metalanguage and it consists of a syntactic module and a semantic module. The latter contains all semantic, pragmatic and contextual parameters that distinguish predicates belonging to the same lexical domain from one another. These parameters are represented by an inventory of lexical functions (Mel'cuk, 1989; Mel'cuk *et al.*, 1995; Alonso Ramos, 2002), a revised list of the semantic primitives identified in Wierzbicka's Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) (cf. Wierzbicka, 1996; Goddard and Wierzbicka, 2002).<sup>13</sup> These primitives have been shown to have a universal status,

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<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the formalism of the first lexical templates, I refer the reader to Van Valin and Wilkins (2003) Van Valin and LaPolla (1997) and Mairal and Faber (2002, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Wierzbicka's (1987, 1998, 1996) work has been largely influential within the fields of lexicology and lexicography. Wierzbicka's Natural Semantic Metalanguage aims at identifying the shared core of all natural languages, an intermediary language of syntactic description that uses natural language expressions and avoids abstraction (cf. Goddard, 1998: 329). Wierzbicka's search for the basic meaning components of a language brought about the formulation of an inventory of semantic primitives, conceived as having a universal status (e.g. mental categories such as *think*, *want*, *know*, *feel*, *see* or *hear* and event categories such as *do*, *happen* or *move*). Semantic primes are language-specific manifestations of a universal set of basic concepts. Semantic primes conform a lexicon for semantic analysis, which also has its own semantic counterpart and are identified through universal syntactic patterns.

something which keeps in with the aim of the LCM to provide typologically valid representations. Table 5 reproduces the list of NSM semantic primitives provided by Goddard and Wierzbicka (2002).

Category	Primitives
Substantives	I, YOU, PEOPLE
Relational substantives	SOMETHING/THING, BODY, KIND, PART
Determiners	THIS, THE SAME, OTHER
Quantifiers	ONE, TWO, SOME, ALL, MANY/MUCH
Evaluators	GOOD, BAD
Descriptors	BIG, SMALL
Mental/experiential predicates	THINK, KNOW, WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR
Speech	SAY, WORDS, TRUE
Actions and events	DO, HAPPEN, MOVE
Existence and possession	THERE IS/EXIST, HAVE
Life and death	LIVE, DIE
Time	WHEN/TIME, NOW, BEFORE, AFTER, A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME, MOMENT
Space	WHERE/PLACE, HERE, ABOVE, BELOW, FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE, TOUCH
Logical concepts	NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF
Intensifier, augmentor	VERY, MORE
Similarity	LIKE, WAY

Table 5. List of NSM semantic primitives based on Goddard and Wierzbicka (2002)

The syntactic module contains the information given by the argument structure of a predicate, the lexical class to which it belongs (represented by a semantic primitive), its syntactic interface and argument structure relations ( $x = 1$ ,  $y = 2$ ,  $z = 3$ ; 1, 2, and 3 being internal variables and  $x$ ,  $y$  and  $z$  the argument structure participants). This is the representational format for a lexical template:

**Predicate:** [SEMANTIC MODULE <lexical functions>] [AKTIONSART MODULE <semantic primitives>]

The lexical template of the predicate *persuade*, for instance, is represented as follows:

**Persuade:** [[FACT<sub>12</sub> (true)<sub>2</sub>/ FACT<sub>12</sub> (become)] INSTR (say)<sub>123</sub>] [**do'** ( $x$ ,  $\emptyset$ )] CAUSE [become **think'** ( $y$ ,  $z$ )]

In the semantic module, *persuade*, which is a hyponym within the lexical domain of *believe*, inherits all the properties of its corresponding hyperonym (*to believe*), and is thus defined on the basis of the primitive

element (*think*) that defines the whole hierarchy. Each lexical function (e.g. the INSTR parameter, which indicates that the action is performed by *saying* something) captures the idiosyncratic features that differentiate predicates belonging to the same lexical domain. The right-hand part of the template specifies the logical structure of the predicate (a causative accomplishment), which is in turn modified by the semantic component.

### 2.3.2.2. Constructional templates

Constructional templates are defined (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal, 2008) as non-lexical representations that have grammatical impact and are more abstract in nature than lexical templates. As stated above, the LCM classifies constructional templates into argumental (level 1) and non-argumental or idiomatic (levels 2, 3 and 4). The former are related to Goldberg's (1995, 2006) approach to construction types (i.e. ditransitive, resultative, caused motion, etc.), whereas the latter signal implicational constructions (level 2), illocutionary constructions (level 3) and discourse constructions (level 4). Configurations at the core grammar module are built into constructional representations. Argument structure constructions are made up of sets of arguments that relate to one another on the basis of abstract predicates such as CAUSE, BECOME, MOVE and HAVE. These representations retain the formalism proposed by Goldberg, although adapted to the requirements of a universal semantic metalanguage used in conjunction with the characteristics of logical structures. Thus, constructional templates are based on the same metalanguage as lexical templates, which show a unified decompositional system of meaning representation. By way of illustration, observe the format of the caused-motion construction (cf. Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2009: 163) as a straightforward example:

(16) [**do'** (x, y)] CAUSE [BECOME \* NOT **be-LOC'** (y, z)]

(17) [**pred'** (x, y)] CAUSE [BECOME \* NOT **be-LOC'** (y, z)]

(18) The audience laughed the poor guy off the stage.  
       [**laugh'** (the audience, the poor guy)] CAUSE [BECOME \* NOT **be-LOC'** (the poor guy, the stage)]

(19) Frank sneezed the napkin off the table.

[sneeze' (Frank, the napkin)] CAUSE [BECOME \* NOT be-LOC'  
(the napkin, the table)]

One of the constraints that is postulated at level 1 of description has to do with the ascription of verbs to a given lexical class. Consider, for instance, the case of *break* and *destroy* mentioned before. Other constraints at this level relate to the conceptual compatibility between lexical and constructional configurations and with how lexical templates impose requirements on the type of elements that can realize a constructional feature. At levels 2, 3 and 4 of description, constructional representations capture conventional implications that go beyond the clause level. The generation process of idiomatic constructions is regulated by cognitive processes (i.e. *subsumption* and *cued inferencing*), which are in turn internally and externally constrained on the basis of cognitive mechanisms. Section 2.3.4 below discusses the implicational, illocutionary and discursive constructional levels in greater detail.

### 2.3.3. The pragmatic dimension of constructional meaning

Functional approaches have traditionally been concerned with the study of pragmatic and discourse phenomena. In general terms, functional grammar approaches (Dik, 1989, 1997; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) adopt a semanticist view of pragmatic inferencing based on the understanding of speech act meaning in terms of semantic features. Although pragmatics is included in the general functional framework, these studies are unable to capture the full gamut of motivating factors and constraints of illocution. Conversely, the Cognitive Linguistics approach to pragmatics and discourse (Langacker, 1998, 2001; Otal and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2007; Panther and Thornburg, 1998, 2003; Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez, 2003) is focused on the mental processes involved in drawing inferences about intended meanings. This way, illocutionary meaning has generally been treated as a matter of metonymic access to special cognitive models of a situational kind. However, the CL account does not include pragmatic meaning as part of a unified framework. One of the aims of the LCM is to produce a comprehensive description of meaning construction. Thus, in the LCM, pragmatics and discourse are viewed as different levels of meaning construction that make use of essentially the same cognitive processes as grammar. In order to provide a unified account of pragmatic and discourse meaning, the LCM postulates three levels of meaning beyond

the argument structure level, and determines to what extent these levels of description can be accounted for in terms of grammatical mechanisms. Argument structure constructions in the LCM are described at level 1, where the interaction between argument structure configurations and lexical items yield form core grammar characterizations. The LCM differentiates three kinds of non-argument structure constructions: level 2 or implicational constructions, which deal with meaning that emerges from the way in which speakers interact through language; level 3 or illocutionary constructions, which capture the illocutionary force that arises from the way in which speakers interact on the basis of situational models; and level 4 or discourse constructions, which address the way in which speakers organize speech in terms of coherence and cohesion. According to the LCM, these levels capture different forms of non-argumental meaning in a highly conventionalized way. In contrast to level-1 core grammar configurations, constructions belonging to the rest of the levels display high degrees of idiomaticity, logically being much more complex patterns.

### **2.3.3.1. Implicational constructions**

When explaining implicational constructions, the LCM makes reference to both linguistically guided inferencing, termed *presupposition*, which is assumed to have a constructional motivation, and pragmatically guided inferencing, termed *implicature*, which is also assumed to have a constructional motivation. In both cases, meaning derivation is a matter of low-level situational models, which are used by lexical configurations. Let us consider the following examples:

(20) Who has been rummaging through my things?

(21) It is my father who built the house.

Example (20) is a presuppositional construction, and example (21) is a focus construction (Goldberg, 2006; Schönefeld, 2006). I will deal with each of them in turn. In (20), the speaker is bothered by the situation conveyed through a presupposition (i.e. someone has been rummaging through his things). The idea that the speaker is bothered is not derivable from the presupposition but from the implication that no one is expected to rummage through another person's belongings without permission. This implication can be easily derivable from other sentences that make use of

the same constructional configuration. See Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal (2002) for this kind of analysis:

(22) Who has been shouting the whole night?

(23) Who has been reading my diary?

(24) Who has been messing with my computer?

(25) Who has been sitting on my couch?

This is because the implication that the speaker is bothered by the situation is constructed on the basis of the *wh*-pattern, which has become largely “entrenched” (in Langacker’s terminology, 1999: 105) as a form of complaint to a large extent in English. Entrenchment is the cognitive process by which a linguistic structure becomes associated to a given meaning value.

There are other related constructions that tend to carry the same meaning implications that have been observed for the examples above. Consider:

(26) Why is he eating cold pizza?

(27) Where have you been the whole morning?

(28) What has she been doing with all that money?

(29) When has this order been issued?

All these configurations presuppose that the situation described after the *wh*-interrogative pronoun has actually been the case. However, the same meaning effect can be found in other non-presuppositional constructions. The clearest example is provided by the WXDY construction, discussed by Kay and Fillmore (1999):

(30) What’s the child doing in the garden?

(31) What’s your brother doing in the theatre?

(32) What’s your father doing in the garage?

(33) What's our President doing in Haiti?

In all the above examples, there is a situation simultaneous to the time of the utterance. Unlike in the presuppositional examples, the actuality of the situation is not assumed on the basis of a level 1 property of the construction, but rather on the default assumption found in a pragmatic implication. In a context where the speaker knows the addressee is aware of the situation described after the *wh*-pronoun, the only way he has to make it relevant is to shift the interpretation from one in which the addressee has to describe the situation to one in which the addressee has to determine the speaker's feelings about it. Sentences of this type are a way of calling the addressee's attention to a negative situation about which the addressee or someone else is expected to do something or as forms of complaint about situations that cannot be changed. Consider:

(34) The child is up to something in the garden.

(35) Your brother is in the theatre with that girlfriend of his.

(36) The doctor said your father should have full rest.

(37) Our President is not supposed to go to Haiti.

According to the interpretative rationale described above, utterances (34), (35) and (36) can be interpreted as requests for remedial action. Utterance (37) can be considered a complaint. However, it is possible to think of contexts where utterances (34), (35) and (36) are either complaints where the speaker does not expect the addressee to act or a combination of complaining and requesting for remedial action. Utterance (35), for instance, will be considered a request for action only in a context where the speaker knows the addressee can stop this situation. In a context where the speaker knows the addressee is not in a position to prevent his brother from dating his girlfriend, the utterance will be interpreted as a complaint. The complaint interpretation is stronger the more elaborated the Y element is. See the examples provided by Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal (2002: 156) below:

(38) What's your brother doing?

(39) What's your brother doing in the theatre?



(40) What's your brother doing in the theatre with that girlfriend of his?

In any case, the call for action of the WXDY construction and the associated complaint meaning sense are possible because of the high conventionalized meaning implication produced at the implicational level.

Focus constructions, such as the one in example (21), represent a different case of implicational constructions. The phenomenon of focalization has been studied by Dik (1997) in many languages. Constructions of this type are described as focusing on terms and can be achieved through a variety of linguistic mechanisms such as cleft structures, intonation, accentual prominence and reduplication. Each of these mechanisms is used to present part of the information conveyed in the utterance as more relevant than the rest either because it is new or because the speaker thinks it is more important. In utterance (21), there is a situation where both the speaker and the addressee know that the speaker's father built the house. The part of the information that receives prominence attempts to emphasize the speaker's father's achievement and probably the speaker ought to praise him in building the house on the basis of socio-cultural generalizations for appropriate behavior. In a context where the information is totally new to the addressee, this information simply calls his attention about a situation he was not aware of. The LCM deals with focus constructions at the implicational level since they are regarded as forms of restructuring level 1 information in a way that it becomes adapted to the interactional needs of the interlocutors. However, this phenomenon is also recognized to have implications in discourse structure through cued inferencing. For example, the fact that it was the father who built the house and nobody else allows us to discard, through inferencing, the following discourse sequence: "It was my father that built the house, not the barn".

### **2.3.3.2. Illocutionary constructions**

Level 3 constructions are conventionalized strings that convey specific forms of illocutionary meaning (Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2009). When dealing with the issue of illocutionary meaning, the LCM departs from functional grammar accounts (e.g. Dik, 1989, 1997; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) and comes closer to the cognitivist approach to illocution, especially to the accounts provided by Thornburg and Panther (1997), Panther and Thornburg (1998, 2003), and Panther (2005), although with some points of divergence. According to Halliday and Matthiessen

(2004), illocutionary meaning is not a separate dimension outside grammar, and needs to be introduced into grammatical description. For these authors, the clause is a grammatical unit that combines three kinds of meaning that corresponds to the general functions of language: ideational, interpersonal and textual. Thus, the clause is presented differently in each meaning dimension, i.e. as representation (ideational meaning), as exchange (interpersonal meaning), and as message (textual meaning). This way, illocutionary meaning is viewed as part of the clause, which is in turn perspectivized by a meaning dimension within this theoretical context. Speech act meaning is regarded as an issue of giving or demanding either information or goods and services. These two oppositions result in the categorization of speech act meaning into four basic semantic functions. Here is a representation of the different kinds of speech roles and their corresponding responses:

Giving information	Stating <i>Pat bought a new car.</i>	Acknowledging <i>Did she?</i>	Contradicting <i>No, she didn't!</i>
Giving goods and services	Offering <i>Shall I put the light on?</i>	Accepting <i>Yes, please!</i>	Disclaiming <i>I can't tell.</i>
Demanding information	Questioning <i>Where is Tom going on holidays?</i>	Answering <i>He is going to Italy.</i>	Disclaiming <i>I can't tell.</i>
Demanding goods and services	Commanding <i>Be quiet!</i>	Undertaking <i>Sure!</i>	Refusing <i>No, I won't!</i>

Table 6. *Semantic categories of speech act meaning (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004)*

Halliday and Matthiessen's account is not exempt of problems. In the first place, unlike statements, questions and commands, offers do not have an equivalent sentence type of their own (Pérez, 2001: 37). Second, while it is possible to postulate that we use language to give and demand information or to give and demand goods and services, it is not possible to postulate that we give goods and services through language. We use language to indicate that we are desirous to give goods and services, but we give them through non-verbal actions that involve physical work (Ruiz de Mendoza, 1999). The analysis proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen is rather asymmetrical. The third problem with this account is that it fails to set up correspondences between speech function and grammatical form. For example, following their typology, an utterance like *Can you give me something to drink?*, conveying a request, would correspond to the demanding-goods-and-services speech function, and thus would be expressed in the imperative mood, which is not the case. As was already

argued by Leech (1983), the interrogative sentence type enhances the degree of politeness and mitigates the imperative tone of a request (cf. *Give me something to drink*). Thus, Halliday and Matthiessen's account seems incapable of explaining the motivation for this kind of indirect speech act, since it does not generally take into account the full range of linguistic mechanisms that offer to convey the speaker's intention. The request *Can you give me something to drink?* makes use of the interrogative mood from a grammatical perspective and is a demand from a pragmatic perspective. A final problem with Halliday and Matthiessen's approach has to do with the fact that it does not contemplate the whole range of speech acts which fall within one of the four broad categories. Halliday and Matthiessen do not account for non-primary speech functions and their corresponding responses. For instance, it might be argued, following Halliday and Matthiessen's argumentation, that congratulating is a form of giving information about the speaker's attitude. Nonetheless, they are not naturally followed by an acknowledgement or a contradiction:

- (41) A. You did a great job this year.  
       B. Thank you.  
       \*Yes, I did.  
       \*No, I didn't.

As observed in example (41), the speaker's attitude cannot be acknowledged or contradicted in congratulations. This is but natural in expressive speech acts, where the expected responses are thankfulness (congratulating and condoling) and acceptance (thanking, apologizing). Furthermore, ironical or offensive responses, although inappropriate, should be considered as well for expressives. Thus, as noted by Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza (2009: 170), Halliday and Matthiessen's analysis cannot explain the whole range of possible responses to variants of the primary speech act functions.

A possible improvement on Halliday and Matthiessen's account is found, according to the LCM (Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2009), in Dik's Functional Grammar (FG), which, on the basis of typological data (Sadock and Zwicky, 1985), associates each sentence type with a given illocutionary interpretation. Thus, Dik argues that most languages codify four basic speech act types, i.e. statements, questions, commands and exclamations. Except for exclamations, each basic speech act corresponds to one of the sentence types, i.e. declarative, interrogative and imperative. Exclamations are obtained by adding suprasegmental features to any of the basic sentence

types. Through the use of grammatical mechanisms, speakers can derive other illocutions from the basic ones. For example, imperative constructions can be converted into requests by inserting the adverb *please* (e.g. *Pass me the salt, please*), and declaratives can be transformed into questions by adding a tag (e.g. *She is a nice girl, isn't she?*). In contrast to Halliday and Matthiessen's approach, Dik's proposal accounts for the role of syntactic mechanisms in producing illocutionary meaning. However, Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza (2009: 171) argue that the idea of derived illocutions faces two important challenges. The first one is related to the fact that conversion mechanisms such as *please* are sometimes more necessary than others to disambiguate a structural configuration. For example, the use of *please* is more necessary in (42) than in (43) for a request interpretation and it cannot be used in (44):

(42) Can you read? > Can you read, please?

(43) Can you listen to me?

(44) Can you hear the Ocean? > \*Can you hear the Ocean, please?

The second problem in Dik's derivational account, according to Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza, has to do with the fact that non-basic illocutions do not need derivational grammatical mechanisms to be interpreted and can be obtained directly. Consider the examples:

(45) Won't you give me a kiss?

(46) Shall I close the door?

(47) Can't you just listen to what I'm saying?

For Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza (2009), the identification of default interpretations which are not predictable from grammatical form gives a piece of evidence against Dik's derivational approach. Alternatively, the LCM proposes a constructional account of non-pragmatic illocutionary meaning where constructions, much in the same way as level-2 configurations, have parametrizable (*VP* in *Can You X<sub>VP</sub>?*) and non-parametrizable (*Can You* in *Can You X<sub>VP</sub>?*) elements. Although the LCM has not developed a description of illocutionary configurations, its explanatory apparatus takes into account level-3 constructions, which have

been studied by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007), Baicchi and Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) and Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza (2011). These authors argue that heavily entrenched grammatical constructions convey specific forms of illocutionary meaning. In this line of thinking, Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) contend that constructional conventionalization arises from cultural patterns and define a number of cultural principles that generalize the use of certain constructions to realize a given speech act. These cultural conventions are articulated as variables within a cognitive model labeled the *Cost-Benefit Idealized Cognitive Model*, first proposed by Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza (2002) and later developed by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) and Baicchi and Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) (see section 2.4.2.). In this latter revision, the model is presented as lying at the root of linguistic expressions used to convey speech act meaning. In this perspective, inferences result from the activation of high-level situational cognitive models through cognitive operations.

#### **2.3.3.3. Discourse constructions**

Discourse constructions capture different forms of meaning implications of the relations that underlie discourse coherence. For the LCM (cf. Otal and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2007, Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2009), discourse connections go beyond the clause level, and they can be signaled by linguistic mechanisms or left for the addressee to infer. In the first case, representations make use of high-level non-situational frames to establish discourse relations such as evidence-conclusion or cause-effect, temporal relations such as precedence or simultaneity, or conceptual relations such as contrast or conditioning. As for the second case, the LCM argues that it is an issue of cued inferencing. A well-known example of what the LCM considers a discourse construction is the *let alone* construction studied by Fillmore and collaborators (see section 2.2.2.). Consider the examples:

(48) I won't call him, and I won't invite him to my house.

(49) I won't call him, nor invite him to my house.

(50) I won't call him, let alone invite him to my house.

In a default interpretation, example (48) conveys the idea that the speaker is annoyed with somebody else and is not willing either to call him

or to invite him to his house. Example (49) expresses the same idea but it has the additional implication that the speaker is not only unwilling to call the other person but also he is even less unwilling to invite him to his house. This implication arises from the use of the complementary alternation construction (*Not X Nor Y*) because of its greater emphasis on the existence of only two possible courses of action, each of which is rejected explicitly. In example (50), such an implication becomes explicit through the use of the *let alone* pattern. As Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor (1988) point out, the elements X and Y in the *X Let Alone Y* construction share an entailment relation in which X expresses or implies a negative situation that would rarely take place and Y is less likely to occur than X. The type of discourse connection exhibited pragmatically emphasizes the Y element through an overstressed contrast. For the LCM, the *let alone* construction consists of two variable elements (X and Y) and one constituent element (*let alone*) with a high degree of fixation, since it is only interchangeable with *much less*, *not to mention* and *never mind*. Observe how the meaning entailments are not affected by the use of one or another conjunction in the examples:

(51) I won't call him, much less invite him to my house.

(52) I won't call him, not to mention invite him to my house.

(53) I won't call him, never mind invite him to my house.

These configurations carry the same meaning implications and, for this reason, they are considered variants of the *let alone* configuration. Other discourse constructions such as *Just Because X Doesn't Mean Y*, *X So Y* and *Y After All X* are also examined by Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza (2009). Let us discuss each of them separately.

The construction *Just Because X Doesn't Mean Y*, which is a variant of the causative configuration *Just Because X There Is No Reason To Think Y* (Bender and Kathol, 2001), establishes evidence-conclusion relations. Take the following examples as representative:

(54) Just because it is snowing out, doesn't mean global warming is fake.

(55) It is snowing out but this doesn't mean global warming is fake.

In these examples, the speaker presupposes that the addressee assumes he does not need to worry about global warming because it is snowing out

and warns him against such an assumption. Both sentences indicate to the addressee that the first constituent (captured by the X variable) does not necessarily entail the second. This meaning effect is obtained by an implication that parametrizes an evidence-conclusion pattern.

The constructions *X So Y* and *Y After All X* are different forms of expressing evidence-conclusion relations. In the former, the evidence is captured in the first variable and the conclusion in the second. In the latter, the conclusion is expressed first and the evidence on which it is based follows. While *X So Y* emphasizes the conclusion, *Y After All* gives prominence to the evidence. Consider the examples:

(56) It is snowing out, so global warming must be fake.

(57) Global warming must be fake; after all, it is snowing out.

The presupposition that the addressee believes he must not worry about global warming is made explicit in examples (56) and (57). The emphasis of the first utterance is on the conclusion while the second highlights the evidence. Note that the use of the modal *must* specifies a logical deduction that reinforces the interpretation of the clause containing it as the conclusion of the evidence-conclusion discourse relation. Without this level 1 grammatical pointer, the inferential process would be less constrained from a discourse perspective. The final meaning representation would then require cueing operations that might add other implicatures, illocutionary values or discourse relations, such as humor, irony or exaggeration.

#### **2.3.4. Cognitive constraints on meaning construction**

The interaction between lexical and constructional configurations is regulated by two cognitive processes, *cueing* and *subsumption* (see section 2.3.1.). The former is a cognitive mechanism that guides speakers towards the correct interpretation of a message at any level of meaning construction. Because it leaves up to the addressee to determine which elements are relevant for the identification of the meaning value, it occasionally requires the use of repair and meaning negotiation strategies (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal, 1997; Otal and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2007). The latter involves the incorporation of lower-level structures into higher-level configurations and is internally and externally constrained by cognitive principles.

### 2.3.4.1. Cued inferencing

Conceptual cueing is a form of inferential activity aided by lexical and/or constructional clues. At the core grammar level, cued inferencing takes the form of meaning implications that make full sense of underdetermined linguistic expressions. See how cueing operates in the examples below:

(58) She is getting ready [to go to the party].

(59) He [David] has bought a new car.

(60) I'll spend some time [a long time] at the coffee shop.

(61) You must stop [smoking].

(62) I finished [doing my homework].

(63) I saw her comb [I saw the comb that belongs to her] [I saw her performing the action of combing herself].

All the examples above are cases of context dependent cueing. The bracketed information contains the information that is required to obtain the meaningful interpretation of each sentence. For example, in (58), it is necessary to know that the protagonist is getting ready for a party and not ready in general since this sense does not make the sentence meaningful. Sperber and Wilson (1995: 158) provide an account for the mechanisms that apply to specify underdetermined linguistic expressions, including those of disambiguation, fixation of reference, completion and strengthening. Whichever the case, these mechanisms have to match the linguistic requirements imposed by each sentence. Thus, in (59), the addressee attributes the deictic pronoun to a person he knows by fixing the reference of the speaker. The sense in (60) requires implicit contextual information to understand *some time* as meaning *a long time*. Utterances (61) and (62) need to be completed with the non-finite verbal complement they omit, which signals the end point of an action in (62) and the initial point of an action in (61).

Other ways in which cued inferencing occurs through complete meaningful sentences whose specification process is not dependent on their linguistic structure. The following examples are borrowed from Carston



(2002), who discusses them from the point of view of Relevance Theory. Within the framework of the LCM, Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza (2009: 178) treat them as cases of context independent cueing:

(64) John [habitually] drinks [alcohol].

(65) It's [approximately] half past four.

(66) My child has [exactly] four dolls.

(67) She has a [higher-than-normal body] temperature.

Note that the completion process of these examples is not guided by the constructional elements of the message. The specifications between square brackets are the default interpretations of these sentences, which in (64) would be that John has a drinking habit, in (65) that it is not exactly half past four, in (66) that the child has more than four dolls and in (67) that the girl is not feeling well. Cueing of this kind is different from cueing in underdetermined sentences that require being parametrized on the basis of contextual factors. In this latter group of examples, cueing takes the form of meaning implications that call the addressee's attention to an entity, situation or event and is not guided by the linguistic structure. In contrast, examples (64) and (67) require a form of inferencing that determines their interpretation on the basis of linguistic clues.

At levels 2 and 3, conceptual cueing accounts for traditional implicature and illocutionary meaning respectively. In the LCM (Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2009: 179), illocutionary meaning and traditional implicature are regarded as the result of affording metonymic access to parts of low-level and high-level cognitive models (see section 2.1.). Both low-level and high-level cognitive models are subdivided into situational and non-situational models. Cognitive models of a situational kind involve the interaction among different entities within a certain time and place. Conversely, non-situational models include variables that are not dependent on a specific time and place. Cognitive operations on low-level non-situational models result in lexical inferencing. This kind of inferencing enables speakers to scale down the meaning of *burnt* in *This stake is burnt* (Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal, 2008; Ruiz de Mendoza, 2011) and understand it as something like *overdone*. Operations like metaphor and metonymy on high-level non-situational models generally result in syntactic alternations such as A COMMUNICATIVE ACTION IS AN EFFECTUAL

ACTION (e.g. *He talked me into it*), AN ACTIVITY IS AN ACCOMPLISHMENT (e.g. *He drank himself into a stupor*), and AN EMOTIONAL STATE IS AN EFFECTUAL ACTION (e.g. *John loved Mary back into life*). An example of a metonymic operation licensing a syntactic alternation would be the PROCESS FOR ACTION metonymy, which motivates inchoative and middle alternations (e.g. *The door closed easily* versus *He closed the door easily*) (see Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez, 2001).

At level 2 in the LCM, metonymy acts as an inferential schema (Panther and Thornburg, 2003; Panther, 2005) that affords access to whole low-level situational models. This is for instance the case of *I waved down a taxi* (Lakoff: 1987: 78), which stands for a situation in which the speaker waves his hand to stop a taxi, gets into it and asks the driver to take him to his destination; part of a low-level situational model is used to invoke the whole model. At level 3, metonymy acts in much the same way as at level 2, with the difference that it does so on the basis of high-level (i.e. more generic) situational models. For example, an utterance like *I am thirsty* may stand as a request in the context of a request scenario based on the social convention whereby when people make it manifest that they are affected by a negative situation, other people are expected to provide them with help. This social convention is part of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* (Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007; Baicchi and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2011). Let us provide an example of how the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* supports illocutionary meaning derivation in a conversational exchange. Consider the sentences below:

- (68) A: I have a terrible headache.  
       B: I will give you an aspirin.  
       A: Yes, please. Thank you so much!

According to part of the information contained in the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, if it is manifest to a person that a state of affairs is not beneficial for another person, and the first person has the capacity to change that state of affairs, then he should do so. In the example given, the addressee knows that the speaker is suffering a headache and offers him an aspirin to soothe his pain. In turn, A's response is grounded in another part of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, which stipulates that we must feel grateful about other people's help. The model thus generalizes over the cultural features of multiple illocutionary scenarios. In Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's approach, relevant parts of high-level situational models (or

illocutionary scenarios in Panther and Thornburg's account) are strongly related to the cultural conventions specifying rules of appropriate behavior, which are expressed in a number of generalizations underlying the constructional composition of illocutionary meaning. The analysis of illocutionary constructions will explore the theoretical implications of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* based on a wide range of instances of speech acts (see section 2.4.2. for an extended description of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*). Cued inferencing at the level of discourse relations has been examined in detail in section 2.3.3.3.

### 2.3.4.2. Subsumption

Lexical-constructional subsumption is a cognitive process by which lower levels of semantic structure are incorporated into higher levels of syntactically-oriented structure. Subsumption processes are regulated by cognitive principles and produce fully-fledged semantic representations in readiness for syntactic realization. Subsumption is a constrained process that functions at all levels of meaning derivation. The type of constraints can be internal and external. At the core grammar level, internal constraints specify the conditions under which a lexical template may modify its internal configuration. They take part in licensing or blocking out the incorporation of lexical items into a construction on the basis of lexical class ascription, lexical-constructional compatibility and either predicate or internal variable conditioning of external variables. External constraints relate to high-level metaphorical and metonymic operations that affect subsumption processes. In order to explain in detail the difference between the two kinds of constraints, let us deal with an example of each of them:

(69) The enemy destroyed the city. \*The city destroyed.

(70) The audience laughed the poor guy off the stage.

As observed in example (69), the internal constraints of the predicate *break* state the conditions under which it may vary its internal makeup. The lexical class constraint explains why 'cessation of existence' verbs (e.g. destroy) cannot be used in the inchoative and middle alternations, while 'change of state' verbs can.

In relation to external constraints, let us consider example (70), which is an instance of the caused-motion construction (Goldberg, 1995, 2006).

The LCM (Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal, 2007) argues that *laugh* suffers a subcategorical conversion process from **laugh at'** (x, y) to **laugh'** (x, y). This subcategorical conversion is regarded as a consequence of the *Override Principle* (Michaelis, 2003), according to which the meaning of a lexical item conforms to the meaning of the structure in which it is embedded. Thus, Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal argue that the predicate *laugh* in (68) takes part in the caused motion construction according to a metaphorical operation that conceives experiential actions like *laughing* (i.e. actions with emotional impact) as effectual actions like *pushing* or *kicking* (i.e. actions that can cause physical motion). This metaphor imposes constraints on lexical-constructional subsumption by permitting or disallowing subcategorical conversion of other 'experiential action' predicates. Observe the following examples borrowed from Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza (2009: 180):

(71) She winked him into her bedroom.

(72) His colleagues shouted him out of the lecture hall.

(73) Sandra stared him into silence.

(74) She could smile him into abject submission.

These examples are licensed by the high-level metaphor AN EXPERIENTIAL ACTION IS AN EFFECTUAL ACTION, which is viewed as the conceptual motivation for certain constructional alternations as well as other grammatical phenomena. However, the meaning effect does not arise from the metaphorical mapping but from constructional coercion as postulated by Michaelis (2003). Constructional coercion consists in a meaning adaptation process whereby constructional composition imposes its meaning structure on a lexical configuration.

We shall now devote our attention to another type of constraints put forward by the LCM that make reference to the internal semantic configuration of the templates (Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal, 2006). Let us deal with each of these constraints separately. The first kind of internal constraint is *full matching*. Here, a lexical item is required to fit all constructional requirements without coming into conflict with its internal structure. For instance, the transitive predicate *drink* (e.g. *Let's drink some whiskey on ice*) may occur in the intransitive form (e.g. *I just want to drink and unwind*) and is forced to eliminate the second argument variable in

order to take part in the construction. To explain the internal adaptation of drink to the intransitive construction, the LCM postulates a form of transitive construction where the object is omitted (*the objectless transitive construction*, in Lemmens, 2006; or, in Goldberg's, 2001, *de-emphasized* or *de-profiled object construction*), so that the action receives prominence over the object. This formulation is in line with cued inferencing at the core grammar level (see section 2.3.4.1.), where the addressee recovers the missing argument inferentially from the context.

The second case of internal constraint is *event identification condition*, according to which the subevents specified by lexical and constructional templates are required to match. This constraint specifies, for example, that the motion subevent of the conative construction licenses the incorporation of verbal predicates (e.g. *John hit at the wall with a stick*) into the construction and blocks out activity predicates (e.g. *\*John touched at the wall with a stick*).

The third kind of constraint is the *lexical class constraint*, which accounts for the restrictions that verbal class ascription place on lexical-constructional subsumption.

The fourth internal constraint in subsumption processes is *lexical blocking*. This constraint covers cases in which one component of the lexical template impedes the fusion with a given construction when such an element is a suppletive form (i.e. a word A is replaced by a different word B to express a particular grammatical form of A). For example, the verb *kill* cannot participate in inchoative constructions since it possesses a suppletive form (i.e. *die*) to express its objectless counterpart:

(75) The man killed the bird.

(76) The bird died.

(77) \*The bird killed.

This internal constraint blocks out the use of the verb *kill* in this configuration because the form *die* is coded in the linguistic system with the same meaning.

The fifth kind of constraint goes under the name of *predicate-argument conditioning*. This constraint (cf. Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2009: 187) accounts for the limitations on the way in which constructional variables are realized. Sometimes a lexical template can place restrictions on the kind of instantiating element that we can have for a constructional

argument. Consider, for instance, the caused motion construction, which takes the (simplified) form of *X-pred-Y(=NP)-Z(=PP)*. This construction can take, in principle, any verb participant to instantiate the Y element, which can be either non-human (e.g. *The dog chased the cat out of the house*) or human (e.g. *Peter kicked John out of the room*). Nonetheless, once the predicate and PP slots have been filled in, this choice constrains the kind of Y element which can be used. In constructions where the Y element has been realized by a human verb role (e.g. *Tom helped her father into the car*), a non-human element (e.g. *\*Tom helped the chair into the car*) is not possible.

The sixth constraint, which is called *internal variable conditioning*, also limits the manner in which constructional variables are instantiated. This constraint takes place when the predicate variables determine the nature of both the predicate and constructional arguments. An example can be found in some resultative phrases, where the *drive-crazy* sense of *drive* tends to denote a negative mental state:

(78) He drove her crazy/bananas/bonkers/mad/insane.

Thus, such a predicate disallows the occurrence of a Z element describing a positive mental state (cf. *\*He drove her kind/happy/pleasant/joyful*). Outside the core grammar module, subsumption processes are an issue of semantic compatibility between the idiomatic parts of constructions and the meaning implications conveyed by the variable parts. This constraint, which receives the name of morphosyntactic parametrization, specifies the morphosyntactic type of the elements than can be realized in a construction. By way of illustration, consider the *Can You X<sub>VP</sub>?* construction, where certain lexical classes (i.e. states and non-active accomplishments) are blocked out, as in the utterances *#Can you be tall?* and *#Can you own the house, please?*.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the X and the Y elements in the *¿Qué Hace X (Y)?* construction are constrained such that X is usually realized by a NP, while Y is realized by a PP (see Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2009: 187). The same can be said of the *Double Be* construction (McConvell, 1988; Tuggy, 1996; Massam, 1999), which draws attention to a given situation while asserting its truthfulness, as in *The thing is, is that he did not tell the truth*. This construction, which takes the form of *X Is, Is Y*, the X and Y elements are defined by a number of features; X, which is the topic, takes a high tone, while Y, which is the

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<sup>14</sup> Throughout this dissertation, the symbol # will be used to indicate that a grammatically correct sentence is pragmatically infelicitous.

focus, is marked by a low tone; Y can be freely realized by any that-clause but X is limited to a few options (i.e. *the thing, the problem, the question, what I mean* and *what happens*).

### 2.3.5. Conclusion

The LCM overcomes the discrepant perspectives on meaning construction held by functional theories and constructionist approaches to language. It describes the interaction between lexical and constructional representations, starting off from core grammar characterizations and ending in discourse coherence patterns, passing through traditional implicature and illocutionary force. The model is made up of four levels. At level 1, we find the notions of lexical and constructional templates. The former operate at the level of grammar and capture the syntactically relevant information of a predicate. The latter represent more abstract information with a grammatical impact and operate at all levels. Level 2 deals with conventionalized and non-conventionalized low-level implicational aspects of communication. Level 3 deals with inferencing based on high-level situational models and the way illocutionary meaning can be produced through conventionalized linguistic expressions. Level 4 captures the discourse aspects of communication, especially those related to cohesion and coherence.

The LCM distinguishes between argument structure constructions (level 1) and non-argument structure constructions (levels 2, 3 and 4). Argument structure constructions are built by abstracting away elements common to a number of lower-level predicate classes. Non-argument structure constructions signal different levels of non-argumental meaning and are thus classified into implicational, illocutionary and discourse constructions. Implicational constructions capture meaning that results from the way speakers interact with the lexical and grammatical properties of utterances and do not affect the relation between predicates and their arguments. Illocutionary constructions deal with the illocutionary force that arises from the way speakers interact on the basis of argument-predicate configurations. Discourse constructions capture the meaning that emerges from the way speakers organize speech production on the basis of the semantic configuration of utterances.

The interaction between lexical and constructional templates is constrained by internal and external factors. Internal coercion takes part in the internal makeup of the templates, while external coercion relates to non-

lexical metaphorical and metonymic operations affecting grammatical structure. Two cognitive principles regulate the meaning generation process: subsumption and conceptual cueing or cued inferencing. Subsumption consists in the incorporation of lower-level configurations into higher-level compositions. Cued inferencing is a form of inferencing based on linguistic clues. Both processes take place at all levels of meaning construction.

The LCM is thus a principled model of meaning construction that combines insights from projectionist and constructionist theories. The relevance of the LCM for this study of illocutionary constructions lies on its ability to account for the constructional elements that guide speakers towards the illocutionary value of linguistic expressions. In the present analysis, the point of departure is the LCM's assumption that heavily entrenched grammatical constructions convey all kinds of speech act meaning. The present study is an attempt to develop the description of level 3 constructions in the LCM.

#### **2.4. BUILDING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO ILLOCUTIONARY MEANING**

This section outlines my own approach to illocutionary meaning which is an elaboration of the LCM view of illocution described above (section 2.3.3.2.). My proposal takes the form of a construction-oriented account according to which the linguistic expressions used to realize each illocutionary category become entrenched through frequent use in conversation (cf. Langacker, 1999). The advantages of a constructional approach to illocution have been discussed by Ruiz de Mendoza (1999), Pérez (2001) and Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza (2011). First, a constructional view of illocution allows us to carry out a systematic description of those formal configurations with an illocutionary value. Second, the notion of construction makes it possible to determine the relation between a given linguistic form and a given illocutionary meaning. The third and final advantage of a constructional account of illocution is that it allows us to identify a motivation for form and meaning from a cognitive viewpoint. My own approach to illocution can be understood as a development of the one put forward by the LCM, regarding both the formal and meaning parameters involved in illocutionary construction. According to the LCM, the degree of entrenchment of certain linguistic expressions is such that speakers do not make use of any inferential mechanism to arrive at their



illocutionary value. The notion of entrenchment is fundamental in order to account for the aspects involved in the conventionalization process of constructions. Entrenchment processes are described by Langacker (1999) as creating interpretative shortcuts between linguistic expressions and their meaning.<sup>15</sup> In this way, constructions are used so frequently to perform a speech act that their illocutionary meaning becomes conventionalized. The relevance of Langacker's proposal for this study has to do with the description of illocution in terms of construal phenomena (Langacker, 1987, 1999) that provide access to situational cognitive models as defended in Ruiz de Mendoza (2007). The present analysis explores how construal processes affect illocutionary performance and contribute to creating different degrees of codification and conventionalization.

First, I will provide the reader with an overview of the cognitive approach to illocution developed by Panther and Thornburg where illocution is treated in terms of metonymic access to propositional models of interactional meaning. Panther and Thornburg's original account will be discussed in section 2.4.1. Subsequent cognitively-oriented approaches to illocution emerge in an attempt to overcome the shortcomings of Panther and Thornburg's account and will be explored in section 2.4.2. Different perspectives of illocutionary constructions will be then described in section 2.4.3. Taking stock of this discussion, I will put forward my own view of illocutionary constructions in section 2.4.4. As will become evident, this new notion of illocutionary construction is required by the nature of the object of study. Finally, I will summarize the tools put forward for the present analysis in section 2.4.5.

## **2.4.1. ILLOCUTIONARY SCENARIOS**

Panther and Thornburg's approach contends that our knowledge of illocutionary meaning is organized in the form of illocutionary scenarios. This type of organizational structure of generic knowledge is shared by the

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<sup>15</sup> In Langacker's (1987, 1999) view, concepts are built, extended and entrenched through repeated use. The notion of entrenchment makes reference to the cognitive process whereby linguistic units become conventionalized as conveying a specific meaning. Langacker's definition of entrenchment processes underlies the classification provided by the LCM of cognitive situational models that license pragmatic inferencing. Low-level situational models are entrenched every-day life scenarios such as taking a taxi, going to the dentist, going to school, and the like. High-level situational models are abstractions over low-level situational models. For example, the idea of begging arises from our experience with people asking for money in street corners and other public places, from vanquished enemies looking for their lives to be spared, and so on.

members of a linguistic community and is stored in long-term memory. Illocutionary scenarios can be exploited metonymically by activating relevant parts of them. For example, indirect requests such as *Can you open the window?*, *Will you close the door?* and *Do you have any soda?* activate several pre-conditions for the realization of a request. These are the addressee's ability and willingness to act in the first two utterances and his possession of the required object in the third. Such pre-conditions afford metonymic access to the whole speech act category of requesting. By way of illustration, consider Panther and Thornburg's (1998: 759) request scenario:

- (i) Before component:  
The hearer (H) can do the action (A).  
The speaker (S) wants H to do A.
- (ii) Core component:  
S puts H under a (more or less strong) obligation to do A.  
H is under an obligation to do A (H must/should/ought to do A).
- (iii) After component:  
H will do A.  
S has emotional response.

In Panther and Thornburg's theory, any of the components of the scenario can stand for a whole speech act by means of a metonymic operation. The linguistic items in an utterance determine the exploitation of one component of the scenario or another. Consider the following utterances:

- (iv) Before component: Can you pass me the salt?
- (v) Core component: Pass me the salt.
- (vi) After component: Will you pass me the salt?

The modal verb *can* in the first utterance activates the BEFORE component. The second utterance manages to instantiate the CORE component of the scenario. In the third example, the future auxiliary *will* points to the AFTER component. These metonymic instantiations of the scenario are represented in the figures below:

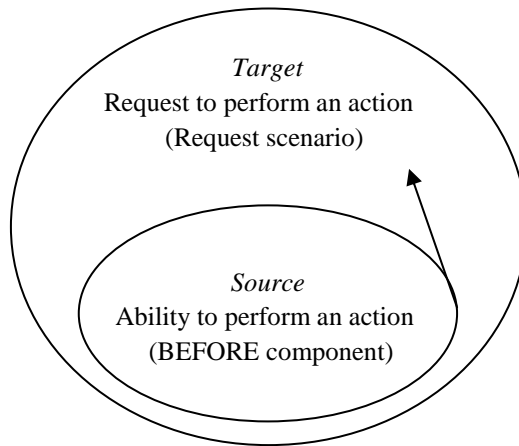


Figure 3. *Ability to perform an action (e.g. Can you pass me the salt?)*

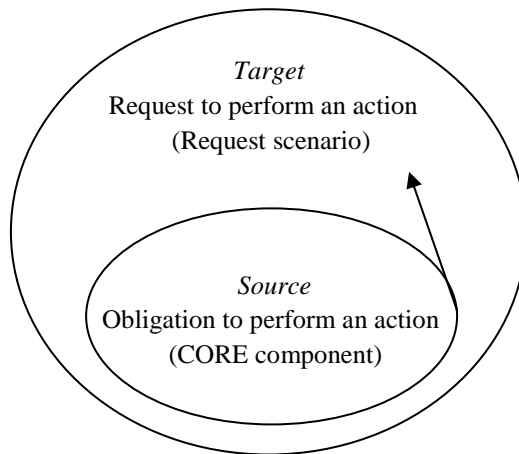


Figure 4. *Obligation to perform an action (e.g. Pass me the salt)*

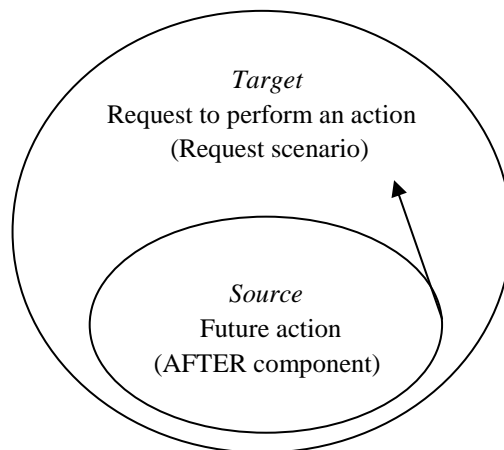


Figure 5. *Future action (e.g. Will you pass me the salt?)*

Illocutionary scenarios are thus conceptual constructs of interactional meaning representation abstracted away from a number of prototypical

situations where people attempt to get their needs satisfied through expressions of different kinds (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007: 102). Scenarios are stored in long-term memory ready for metonymic instantiation.

#### **2.4.2. REFINEMENTS ON THE NOTION OF ILLOCUTIONARY SCENARIO**

Panther and Thornburg's formulation has been revised by Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza (2002, 2011), who claim that pragmatic inferencing is more than a matter of a metonymy and a scenario. On the basis of an analysis of directive acts, part of which can be traced back to preliminary work in Ruiz de Mendoza (1999) and Pérez (2001), Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza (2002, 2011) contend that there are other variables, most of them socio-cultural, which should be taken into consideration as well. These socio-cultural variables are listed in Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007: 103):

- (i) The power relationship between interlocutors.
- (ii) The degree of optionality conveyed by the utterance.
- (iii) The degree of politeness.
- (iv) The degree of cost-benefit.
- (v) The degree of prototypicality of some utterances over others.
- (vi) The semantic motivation of various types of indirect speech acts as expressed by oblique modals or negative modals.
- (vii) The cognitive grounding of a speech act.

In Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza's (2011) view, these variables are captured by cognitive models that combine with scenarios in a complex but fully principled way. These authors generalize over the semantic makeup of various kinds of illocutionary scenarios by postulating a single description labelled the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. The first formulation of this model was found in Ruiz de Mendoza's (1999) *Politeness Convention*,

which was intended as a development of Leech's (1983) cost-benefit pragmatic scale. The convention stipulated that people work under the assumption that other people have to satisfy their needs if it is within their range of abilities. In the later formulation put forward by Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza (2002), the convention is articulated as a cognitive model and goes under the name of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. According to this model, people are culturally expected to help other people and at the same time, they expect not to be put to too great an effort in that respect. This hypothesis has been further developed by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) and Baicchi and Ruiz de Mendoza (2011), who describe the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* as a high-level cultural model based on the concept of mutual manifestness proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1995). According to these authors, when we construct a message, we trust that our addressees will be able to construct a mental representation of what we intend to communicate and that such a representation will be enough to achieve our communicative goals. Thus, an utterance like *I'm thirsty* functions as a request to the extent that it makes manifest to the addressee that there is a non-beneficial state of affairs affecting the speaker. Here is the *Cost-Benefit Idealized Cognitive Model* as postulated by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007: 111-112):

- (a) If it is manifest to A that a particular state of affairs is not beneficial to B, and if A has the capacity to change that state of affairs, then A should do so.
- (b) If it is manifest to A that a potential state of affairs is not beneficial to B, then A is not expected to bring it about.
- (c) If it is manifest to A that a potential state of affairs is beneficial to B, then A is expected to bring it about provided he has the capacity to do so.
- (d) If it is manifest to A that it is not manifest to B that a potential state of affairs is (regarded as) beneficial for A, A is expected to make this manifest to B.
- (e) If it is manifest to A that it is not manifest to B that a potential state of affairs is beneficial for B, A is expected to make this manifest to B.

- (f) If it is manifest to A that a state of affairs is beneficial to B and B has brought it about, A should feel pleased about it and make this feeling manifest to B.
- (g) If it is manifest to B that A has changed a state of affairs to B's benefit, B should feel grateful about A's action and make this feeling manifest to B.
- (h) If it is manifest to A that A has not acted as directed by parts (a), (b), and (c) of the 'cost-benefit' model, A should feel regretful about this situation and make this feeling manifest to B.
- (i) If it is manifest to B that A has not acted as directed by parts (a), (b), and (c) of the 'cost-benefit' model and A has made his regret manifest to B, B should feel forgiveness for A's inaction and make his feeling manifest to A.
- (j) If it is manifest to A and B that a particular state of affairs is not beneficial to B but A has no power to change it to B's benefit, A should still feel sympathy for B over the non-beneficial state of affairs and make this manifest to B.
- (k) If it is manifest to A that A is responsible for a certain state of affairs to be to A's benefit, A may feel proud about this situation and make it manifest to B.

This study will explore the theoretical implications of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* in relation to a broad range of speech act categories and emphasize those assumptions that best suit the analysis. The working hypothesis is that the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* lies at the core of both conventional and non-conventional structures expressing all kinds of illocutionary meaning. The interpretation of non-conventional expressions is dependent on inferential processes of the kind postulated by Panther and Thornburg (1998, 2003). However, illocutionary meaning is in many cases conveyed by means of conventional expressions that have become entrenched giving rise to inferential shortcuts. These constructions originally provided access to one component of an illocutionary scenario but their repeated use in specific contexts conventionalized their meaning to the extent that they have ended up yielding a default illocutionary value. Cultural norms are also part of this conventionalization process. Given that

each of the stipulations of the model provides a specific background for each illocutionary category, the ability of a construction to instantiate the cultural norm shaping its conceptualization will determine the degree of codification or conventionalization of that construction. For example, the utterance *Could you bring me a glass of water?* is easily understood as a request according to part (c) of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, which stipulates that we have to satisfy other people's needs. This part of the model is the base for a wide range of request constructions such as *Can You X<sub>VP</sub>?*, *Could You X<sub>VP</sub>?*, and *Do You Think You Could X<sub>VP</sub>?*, among others. Originally, the request value of these sequences was likely inferred on the basis of the metonymy POTENTIALITY FOR ACTUALITY (Panther and Thornburg, 1999), according to which the expression of potentiality stands for the actuality of the future action. With frequent use in appropriate contexts the request meaning of these constructions has become entrenched thus making it unnecessary to work out the reasoning schema every time they are used. Constructions with an entrenched illocutionary meaning display high degrees of conventionalization and represent optimal devices for the performance of a speech act category due to their instantiation potential for cultural generalizations.

The understanding of illocutionary categories according to a number of cultural generalizations is rather innovative.<sup>16</sup> This perspective on speech act categorization is grounded in the interactional function of language. Drawing on Halliday's (1970, 1973, 1978) distinction between the ideational and interpersonal functions of language, Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) propose a division between ideational and interpersonal speech act categories. Only the latter involve interaction and therefore comply with the cultural generalizations of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. For each illocutionary category there is one part of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* that is instantiated. Table 7 reproduces Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's (2007: 118) categorization of interpersonal or interactional speech act categories as instantiating the various cultural stipulations of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*:

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<sup>16</sup> The Searlean (1979) categorization of speech acts has been the most widely accepted one in the linguist field. Searle divides speech acts according to their function, which can be either: (i) *interpersonal* (comprising directive, commissive and expressive acts) and *informative* (declarative and representative acts). The value of taxonomies of speech act categories is denied by Relevance Theory. According to Sperber and Wilson (1986), speakers do not think about the category they are performing, but their utterances are interpreted as promises, requests, offers, etc., on an *ad hoc* basis. Bridging the gap that separates the Searlean (1979) categorization and Relevance Theory, cognitive analyses grounded in the description of cultural models such as the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* (Ruiz de Mendoza, 1999; Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2002; Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007; Baicchi and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2011) emerge as a reaction against both proposals.

Speech act category	Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model part
Ordering (telling, commanding)	(a), (b)
Requesting (asking, demanding, begging)	(a), (b)
Advising (recommending)	(c)
Offering	(d)
Promising (undertaking, vowing)	(e)
Threatening	(e)
Congratulating	(f)
Thanking	(g)
Apologizing (regretting, lamenting)	(h)
Pardoning	(i)
Condoling	(j)
Boasting (exulting)	(k)

Table 7. *Speech act categories in terms of the Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*

Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's proposal is grounded in the cultural conventions that are involved in the categorization of speech acts. Thus, acts of begging and acts of requesting are included within the same category as instantiating parts (a) and (b) of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. What differentiates requesting from begging is the submissiveness component that is present in acts of begging, which is manifested through repetitions, exclamations and interjections. The ultimate interpretation of an utterance as an act of requesting or an act of begging depends on the relationship holding between the speakers. A similar case occurs with the inclusion of acts of warning within the threatening category as exploiting part (e) of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. The interpretation of a warning or a threat needs additional contextual information about the speaker's degree of involvement in the future course of action that is presented by the utterance. Threatening involves a greater coercion than warning since the authority of threats derives from potential speaker-induced damage and not from the social power of the speaker. In fact, there are frequent cases of constructional polysemy between warning and threatening that require parametrization operations.<sup>17</sup>

The approach to categorization adopted by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) is the first one that accounts for illocutionary categories in terms of their cultural background. This speech act categorization offers interesting insights into the nature of speech acts which cannot be overlooked. Their taxonomy is capable of accounting for the cultural

<sup>17</sup> Some constructionist grammarians (cf. Goldberg, 1995: 32), given that they accept the existence of the grammar-lexicon continuum, assume that polysemy also applies to constructions (not only to lexical items). We find examples of constructional polysemy in Goldberg's work (the ditransitive form is presented as pairing different but related senses, as in the case of the ditransitive expression *Chris baked Jan a cake*, which does not necessarily mean that Jan received the cake).



differences between speech acts and provides analysts with a manageable tool for the description of illocution (see section 1.1.). For this reason I have chosen this categorization as the one from which to select the twelve illocutionary categories which are the object of this study.

### **2.4.3. ILLOCUTIONARY CONSTRUCTIONS**

The range of studies concerned with the relationship between the properties of speech acts and their realization procedures is somewhat broad (e.g. Risselada, 1993; Ruiz de Mendoza, 1999; Pérez, 2001; Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2002; Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007).<sup>18</sup> Within the framework of Functional Grammar, Risselada's (1993: 74) approach to illocution departs from the assumption that the illocutionary value of speech acts is expressed by means of combinations of linguistic properties that reflect the characteristic features of the speech act involved. Explicit utterances express all the essential features of an illocutionary type. Implicit utterances make use of contextual features such as politeness or power, and their interpretation hangs on the fact that the shared background knowledge provides speakers with the necessary information to derive the illocutionary value of an utterance. Although Risselada does not talk explicitly about constructions in her account, her proposal points to a constructional view of illocution. Her pairings of linguistic forms with properties of speech acts cannot be considered otherwise. Her theory is in line with cognitively-oriented accounts of illocution such as the one put forward by Ruiz de Mendoza (1999). Ruiz de Mendoza's notion of specialization of function, like Risselada's degree of explicitness, refers to the ability of an expression to instantiate a higher or lower number of meaning conditions of a speech act.

Risselada's and Ruiz de Mendoza's initial lead towards a constructional approach to illocution was followed by Pérez (2001). The type of illocutionary constructions proposed by this author refines both Risselada's and Ruiz de Mendoza's work in two ways. First, Pérez extends the notion of illocutionary construction to include an array of linguistic properties such as sentence type, lexical elements, suprasegmental properties and suprasentential configurations. Second, Pérez accounts for the semantics of illocutionary constructions in the form of propositional

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<sup>18</sup> The term realization procedure has been borrowed from Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal (1997), who define it as the options offered by the linguistic system for the realization of a communicative strategy. Similarly, Pérez's (2001) analysis understands this term as the linguistic mechanisms that exploit one or another variable of an illocutionary ICM.

ICMs. The scalar nature of ICMs makes it possible to account for a large number of illocutionary constructions for the expression of a speech act. From this viewpoint, Pérez determines the meaning conditions that make up the ICMs of ten directive and commissive speech acts and determines the linguistic mechanisms that activate those meaning conditions. Based on how many and which of these procedures are used in each interactional exchange, Pérez describes the prototypical realization of each illocutionary type. The greater amount of variables of the ICM that are activated by an expression, the more prototypical the expression is for the realization of a speech act. However, the weakness of a prototypical account of illocutionary phenomena relates to the fact that illocutionary expressions cannot be prototypical independently of the context. To avoid this problem, Pérez takes into account contextual variables in her description of illocutionary ICMs such as optionality or power. Thus, Pérez understands illocutionary constructions as pairings of linguistic expressions capable of activating a number of the semantic variables of an illocutionary ICM. For instance, the interrogative sentence type would be a suitable realization procedure for the realization of requests, and the prototypicality of this type of request construction would depend on to what extent the formal properties of the construction are capable of activating the central variables in the corresponding ICM. Let us briefly describe each of these variables. In the first place, the addressee is presented as the agent who is performing the action described in the predication. Second, the action presented is going to take place in the future. Third, there is a degree of optionality implicit in the interrogative sentence type which leaves the addressee with certain freedom to decide about the course of action. The fourth variable that is activated is the addressee's ability to perform the action expressed in the predication. Finally, there is a certain degree of mitigation that is activated by constructions of this type. This is because requests involve a cost to the addressee and a benefit to the speaker and the imperative force of the request needs to be softened.<sup>19</sup> These variables are definitional of requests, which makes this construction highly specialized for requesting.

The conception of illocutionary constructions in the LCM differs from the one formulated by Pérez in two aspects. The first difference is that while Pérez defines constructions in terms of ICM variables, the LCM places

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<sup>19</sup> Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's (2007) account eliminates the cost to the addressee element from the cost-benefit pragmatic scale. Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi make use of the benefit dimension to distinguish between interpersonal categories and informational categories. The first group includes directive, commissive and expressive acts. The second group consists in assertive speech acts. The only acts that are constrained by cultural generalizations are those belonging to the first group because they are the ones involving interaction between speakers.

stronger emphasis on the constructional composition of illocution and regards illocutionary constructions as conventionalized strings made up of fixed and modifiable elements. The fixed elements cannot be changed without altering the meaning implications of the construction and the variable elements can be parametrized in a constrained way. The second difference is that, unlike the proposal in Pérez (2001), the LCM accounts for constructions that have elements in common and enter into family resemblance relationships.

These two aspects are considered in Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's (2007) and Baicchi and Ruiz de Mendoza's (2011) approach to illocution, which represents a first step towards laying the foundations for the development of level 3 constructions in the LCM. As has been explained in the previous section, Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's approach is based on the assumption that the constructional composition of illocution is both motivated and constrained by cultural generalizations. The degree of explicitness depends on the speaker's communicative intention and on the availability of contextual information. Conventionalization arises from the use of a construction in a context in which it gives easy access to relevant parts of a situational cognitive model. Here is Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's (2007: 108) definition of illocutionary constructions:

Illocutionary constructions may be thus characterized as (sets of) grammatical resources that are capable of (jointly) activating relevant parts of an illocutionary scenario in connection to a context of situation (which may activate other parts of the scenario in a complementary fashion).

In Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's theory, illocutionary meaning is interpreted through the metonymic activation of relevant points of access to high-level situational cognitive models. Thus, Panther and Thornburg's (1998, 2003) conception of illocutionary scenarios is given the status of high-level situational models in Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's account. An important difference between these two proposals of meaning representation is that high-level situational models capture a number of cultural conventions that are disregarded in Panther and Thornburg's approach. Such cultural conventions carry pragmatic information like power, social distance, politeness, optionality and so on. These conventions are part of our high-level knowledge about the world and because of this they are included in high-level representations of interactional meaning. They are realized through the use of different linguistic mechanisms such as mitigating devices or oblique modals, which have a meaning potential and become the semantic makeup of illocutionary categories. Precisely, the

stipulations specified in the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* are derived from the semantic makeup of different kinds of illocutionary scenarios. I will provide an example in order to illustrate how metonymic access to high-level situational models gives rise to illocutionary meaning. For an utterance like *I am alone* to be interpreted as a request, it must be clear from the context that the speaker does not want to be alone (e.g. the presumption would be cancelled by a following utterance like *I want to be alone*). Contextual information thus contributes to the interpretation of this expression, and allows deriving the implicit request value by means of a metonymy on the basis of a condition-consequence reasoning schema. This schema would be that if the speaker is alone and wants company, then he is asking the addressee to stay with him. The condition part of the schema is supplied by the linguistic expression, but the consequence part has to be accessed metonymically. The inference is therefore produced by affording metonymic access to the parts of the high-level situational cognitive model that are relevant for illocutionary interpretation. With frequent use, expressions originally involved in the selection of relevant points of access to a high-level situational cognitive model become entrenched and give rise to highly specialized constructions (e.g. the sequence *Could You X<sub>VP</sub>*? for polite requests). Since high-level situational cognitive models are but types of cultural models, it is only natural that the constructional conventionalization of illocutionary constructions is constrained by cultural conventions like those in the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*.

I shall emphasize three advantages of conventionalization in pragmatic inferencing. First, it is unquestionable that conventionalized sequences help us to better reach the correct illocutionary value of utterances. If the construction *I Want You X<sub>VP</sub>* has a default value as an order, the addressee will automatically be led to its interpretation as a command and thus act as required by the speaker. Second, we will be able to realize any given speech act without resorting to grammatical sentence types, as has been proposed by functional grammar accounts (Dik, 1989, 1997; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). The third advantage of conventionalization relates to the fact that additional meaning implications that are not dependent on linguistic form can be easily triggered by the contextual variables and the mutual background knowledge based on the speakers. Thus, conventionalization processes are compatible with inferential activity from the context. This analysis takes sides with the notion of conventionalization posited by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) and with their formulation of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, which will serve as a major theoretical tool for this research. However, I

shall argue there is one important aspect of the cognitive activity underlying illocutionary meaning production and derivation that is missing in Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's account. This aspect relates to the fact that speakers can and do give prominence to some components of a speech act over others by means of cognitive construal processes of the type postulated by Langacker (1987, 1999). It is one primary aim of this research to address this issue.

#### **2.4.4. TOWARDS A NEW VIEW OF ILLOCUTIONARY CONSTRUCTIONS**

The type of illocutionary construction put forward in this study consists of a specification of linguistic realizations and a number of meaning conditions that make up a high-level situational cognitive model or illocutionary scenario. The formal composition of illocutionary constructions includes properties such as sentence type, grammatical elements, lexical properties and suprasegmental features. The meaning conditions defined in the situational cognitive model include features such as the power relationship holding between speakers, the degree of cost-benefit or the degree of optionality conveyed by the speech act.

The complexity of illocutionary phenomena calls for an approach that considers the different meaning aspects involved in the construction of illocution. On the one hand, it is suggested that illocutionary meaning is mostly dependent on specific constructional patterns. In cases where inferential activity overrides lexical and grammatical clues, illocutionary interpretation is a matter of cultural cognitive models that are accessed metonymically. On the other hand, my proposal suggests that the construction and interpretation of illocutionary meaning can best be approached by taking into account cognitive construal processes. The selection of the parts of our experience that are relevant to the illocutionary purpose is a matter of construal. Thus, our illocutionary goal involves the selection of different elements from a cognitive model in order to lead the addressee to the intended illocutionary interpretation.

So far, our concept of illocutionary construction can be understood as a mere refinement of the one suggested by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) by introducing construal phenomena on speech act meaning. However, it goes beyond this refinement. Under the light of the LCM, this study adopts a constructional account of illocutionary meaning where constructions contain parametrizable and non-parametrizable elements. The

LCM, which is still a fairly recent model and needs further development, does not specifically focus on the issue of illocutionary constructions, but provides a theoretical account that attempts to explain the construction of illocutionary meaning. Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, by placing strong emphasis on the constructional composition of illocution, provide an explanatorily adequate research framework to understand the conceptual motivation and cognitive constraints of illocutionary constructions.

Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's (2007) proposal of situational cognitive models develops Panther and Thornburg's notion of illocutionary scenario in two ways. First, situational cognitive models possess an ontological component, that is, they are defined by the different values of the variables relevant to their description. Second, situational models structure these variables and consider the interplay between them. Low-level scenarios arise from deriving generic structure from situational models and applying this structure to specific situations. Non-conventional realizations of the various parts of cognitive models rely on inferential activity and take part in the construal phenomena. This approach will consider both conventional and non-conventional realizations of illocutionary meaning since they both have the ability to activate an element of the semantic base of a speech act category. There is one more relevant aspect in which this account of illocution takes sides with Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's proposal. It envisages illocutionary scenarios as high-level situational cognitive models containing cultural conventions with pragmatic information. High-level situational cognitive models are capable of accounting for a vast number of illocutionary constructions for a speech act type. The variables of situational cognitive models are culture-specific and their realization is thus related to the context of situation of each interactional exchange. This is natural since the understanding of speech act meaning is highly constrained by cultural conventions (see Goldberg, 2009, for a recent approach to constructions as cultural units). The consequences that this type of organizational structure has for an account of illocution such as the one pursued here should be carefully considered. Many different meaning conditions of situational cognitive models can become activated through linguistic mechanisms, giving rise to constructions with different degrees of codification. Since the rating of a given illocutionary type depends on the needs of each conversational exchange, the number of illocutionary constructions is expected to be very high. The amount of illocutionary constructions increases if we consider the fact that in some cases different linguistic means are used to activate the same meaning conditions (see Pérez, 2001: 88). For example, the degree of mitigation in

requests may be realized through a vast number of linguistic resources such as lexicalised mitigators (the adverb *please*), oblique modal verbs (*can* or *could*) or expressions pointing to the little effort that is needed to satisfy the speaker's need (*Hold on a second*). It would be impossible to study the totality of contexts and the related meaning conditions of an illocutionary type in those contexts. Therefore, this analysis focuses on the description of specific constructions that have become entrenched in the language for the expression of a given illocution.

I am also concerned with the description of non-conventional expressions that require the use of inference to produce speech act meaning. In relation to this, the present study will consider inferential activity as a matter of construal. One of the main assumptions held within Cognitive Grammar (Langacker, 1987, 1991) revolves around the notion of *construal* and has to do with the idea that different grammatical forms convey distinct conceptualizations. It is thus argued that distinct constructions encoding the same proposition and therefore expressing the same meaning reveal distinct ways of perception. Langacker's model can be extended to account for the expression of illocution as based on constructional realizations which perspectivize different aspects of the conceptual grounding of a speech act category. If we depart from the assumption that illocutionary meaning arises from the instantiation of relevant parts of situational cognitive models grounded in cultural generalizations, it is logical to expect that different forms of instantiation of a cognitive model will give way to distinct types of constructional realizations. This perspectivization of a cognitive model may be regarded as taking part in construal. From this point of view, speakers would use one or another construction for the performance of a speech act depending on their conceptualization of that speech act or on a given communicative purpose. Construal processes will be postulated as operating in the expression of speech act meaning.

## **2.4.5. DEVELOPING A CONSTRUCTIONAL MODEL FOR THE DESCRIPTION OF ILLOCUTION**

### **2.4.5.1. High-level situational cognitive models**

The present study of interpersonal illocutionary categories defines the semantic characterization of each speech act type and proceeds to examine which constructional realizations are available for its expression. In other

words, the analysis will first concentrate on the meaning side of illocutionary constructions and then on the formal side. Before proceeding, it is important to describe how such analysis will proceed.

Regarding the meaning side of illocutionary constructions, the characteristics of each speech act type will be determined by applying Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's (2007) insights on the description of illocutionary categories. These take the form of high-level situational cognitive models generalizing over multiple everyday situations where people attempt to satisfy their desires or other people's desires or express their feelings about them. For the authors, everyday social interaction is captured by low-level situational models, which constitute the base for implicational meaning. While the access to low-level models results in the derivation of implicated meaning or implicatures, the activation of high-level models produces illocutionary meaning which can become conventionalized thereby acquiring a constructional status (Ruiz de Mendoza and González-García, 2011). In contrast to low-level situational cognitive models, high-level models capture different forms of cultural knowledge. Cultural generalizations carry different types of pragmatic information like power, politeness, optionality and cost-benefit variables, and they provide a background to interpersonal speech act categories. Let us formulate different low-level models and a high-level model for the category of requesting in order to illustrate this point. Some possible low-level models of requesting may be the following:

- (i) A is in need of something. A makes B aware of his need. B takes care of A's need.
- (ii) A is in need of something. A makes B aware of his ability to provide for his need. B takes care of the A's need.
- (iii) A is in need of something. A makes B aware of his need. A appeals to B's willingness to help. B may be persuaded or not.
- (iv) A is in need but pretends not to be in a needful situation. B, however, becomes aware of A's need and is moved to help.

A high-level model or generic structure of requesting may derive from the common elements of the low-level models formulated above:

- (v) A is in need of something.



- (vi) A makes B aware of his need.
- (vii) A makes B aware of his ability to provide for his need.
- (viii) A appeals to B's willingness to help.
- (ix) B may be persuaded or not.

This high-level situational cognitive model thus constitutes the semantic base of the act of requesting. The definition of requests can then be constructed on the basis of the parameters making up the high-level model or generic structure postulated above. This generic structure is in turn but a manifestation of specifications (a) and (b) of Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. These two generalizations provide the cultural background for requests and thus each of the parameters of the high-level cognitive model of requesting revolves around these cultural stipulations. The access to different parameters of the generic structure of requesting produces more or less codified requests depending on the explicitness of the instantiation as well as on contextual information. By mentioning to someone that we are in need of something and that it is contextually manifest to the other person that he has the ability to satisfy our need, we produce a request according to part (a) of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, which reminds the addressee that he is expected to help us provided that he has the ability to do so. Likewise, appealing to the addressee's willingness to satisfy our need instantiates a parameter of the generic structure and part (b) of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, thereby giving rise to a straightforward request which can only be cancelled contextually. Given that the formal realizations of speech acts are both motivated and constrained by the high-level meaning elements that make up their corresponding situational cognitive models, it is necessary to construct a definition of each illocutionary category prior to the description of its constructional realizations. The parameters of each of the high-level cognitive models motivate the properties of the illocutionary constructions based on them.

Because of the nature of illocutionary constructions, each chapter of the analysis will begin with a discussion of the definitional components of the corresponding illocutionary category and the cultural conventions associated with their performance. Then the high-level model capturing the semantic features will be defined in order to provide a major analytical tool for the description of the constructional realizations for that category.

#### 2.4.5.2. Constructional realizations

With respect to the formal side of illocutionary constructions, this study will account for a number of linguistic properties including sentence type, lexical elements, grammatical properties and suprasegmental patterns. Giving their universal nature, sentence types are one of the most important formal elements to be considered in the expression of illocutionary meaning (Pérez, 2001: 84), as was advanced by Dik (1997). The value of the sentence types in the codification of illocution has been evidenced in Pérez's (*ibid*) account, following Risselada's (1993) proposal on the relationship between speech acts and sentence types. Instead of matching interrogatives with questions, imperatives with commands and declaratives with assertions, Risselada ascribes a generic illocutionary meaning to the three sentence types in the following manner:

- (i) Imperative construction:  
Form: The imperative sentence type.  
Meaning: Presentation of a state of affairs for its future realization.
- (ii) Declarative construction:  
Form: The declarative sentence type.  
Meaning: Presentation of a state of affairs.
- (iii) Interrogative construction:  
Form: The interrogative sentence type.  
Meaning: Presentation of a state of affairs as partially open.

In this way, Risselada redefines the relationship between sentence types and illocutionary meaning in terms of their compatibility. Each sentence type is presented as compatible with a number of possible illocutions but their illocutionary value is extremely underspecified. As a consequence, declarative sentences appear as the most flexible of the three as they are compatible with almost any type of illocutionary meaning. Imperative and interrogative sentences are much more restricted. It seems odd to convey assertions by means of interrogative sentences or promises by means of imperatives. Pérez adheres to Risselada's proposal on the basis that it accounts for a cline of codification degrees in illocutionary performance. The meaning of the three sentence types is rather generic and needs to be specified through the use of different linguistic means in order to produce more codified illocutionary acts.

Elaborating on the view of illocution proposed by Risselada, Pérez's constructional approach to illocution integrates sentence types as indicators of illocutionary force together with lexical and grammatical properties. According to Pérez, certain properties of sentence types activate important aspects of the conceptual nature of illocutionary categories. However, Pérez's analysis differs from Risselada's in that the form of the constructions proposed is more highly specified and includes a wide range of linguistic elements.

Following Pérez's view, and working within the framework of the LCM, the present study includes sentence types within the group of linguistic mechanisms available for the expression of illocution. The other linguistic properties that are part of constructions consist of lexico-grammatical resources and suprasegmental features. Our corpus of analysis suggests that the use of certain lexico-grammatical mechanisms is capable in itself of activating the semantic structure of an illocutionary category. This is the case of modality markers in the production of orders. Highly codified commands can be realized by specifying declarative sentences through the use of objective modality. In a similar vein, highly specified requests may be realized through the use of mitigators or beneficiary indicators and condition clauses. Those cases in which prosodic features acquire a significant value generally consist of implicit constructions whose default illocutionary value can be cancelled out through the appropriate intonation. A case in point is represented by those constructions asking about the addressee's ability to do something for the speaker (i.e. *Can You X<sub>VP</sub>?*). The high degree of codification of constructions of this type leads to a default interpretation as requests. However, this meaning can be cancelled by means of an impositive intonation leading to an order interpretation (i.e. *Can you shut up!*). Given the significance of grammatical, lexical and intonational patterns in the expression of speech acts, they should be included as part of the formal composition of constructions. These resources function as indicators of the illocutionary meaning of a construction and thus have a direct impact on the degree of codification of the illocutionary force of an utterance.

The type of illocutionary construction advocated in this study can thus be defined as an assembly of formal elements –including sentence type and lexico-grammatical resources– and a function which consists of the illocutionary force that is to be conveyed. Depending on the instantiation potential of the elements of the construction for the relevant parts of the situational cognitive model of an illocutionary category, the degree of specification of the illocutionary meaning will vary considerably. It is one

aim of this work to find out which constructions are more appropriate for the expression of a given illocutionary value.

My contention is that the expression of an illocutionary category is based on linguistic mechanisms capable of activating relevant parts of its semantic structure. The ability of a construction to instantiate the parameters of the high-level cognitive model of an illocutionary category will be a determining factor in order to establish its degree of codification and will also play a significant role in its conventionalization.

Regarding the degree of explicitness of illocutionary constructions, the LCM distinguishes between codified and conventionalized constructions. The former are those whose illocutionary force is highly specified through linguistic elements capable of instantiating the defining parameters of an illocutionary cognitive model. Their use produces a default illocutionary meaning that can be cancelled out contextually. In general terms, conventionalized constructions are those which originally involved an inferential path for the activation of a situational cognitive model but have become entrenched through frequent use. The inferential process which was needed in their illocutionary performance is no longer required given their conventionalization. As may be apparent, constructions range from full codification to different degrees of conventionalization. It is logical that due to their economy of processing, codified illocutions will be more often used by the speakers of a language, which in turn paves the way for the generation of a convention of use.<sup>20</sup> This view of illocutionary performance provides an explanation for the reasons which make certain constructions more appropriate than others for the expression of a given speech act. The higher the degree of codification, the easier it is to grasp the illocutionary meaning and thus the more explicit the construction is. In contrast, if a construction is implicit but still attains important levels of effectiveness and gives easy access to a situational cognitive model, it is then likely to be conventionalized for a specific illocutionary value. Both processes of codification and conventionalization of illocutionary meaning are motivated and constrained by cultural norms. Codified constructions

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<sup>20</sup> This assumption rests upon the cognitive economy principle that underlies both the storing and the retrieval of conceptual information. The role of constructions in terms of cognitive economy has already been approached by Tomasello (1992) and Chang and Maia (2001) in the domain of how grammatical constructions are learned. On the one hand, the *verb island hypothesis* proposed by Tomasello (1992) claims that children's verbs are islands, each developing its own syntax independently of other verbs. Simple patterns are learned by imitation, while complex ones develop from the simpler antecedents for each verb separately. On the other, within the framework of ECG, Chang and Maia (2001) claim that the acquisition of constituent structure encompasses a broad subset of the children's experience, including meaning as it is communicated in context.

manage to instantiate defining parameters of a speech act category which are related to cultural conventions. In the case of conventionalization, cultural generalizations act as constraining factors of the process whereby a construction becomes entrenched to produce an illocution.

The analysis of constructions in chapters three to fourteen will be devoted to find both codification and conventionalization at work in illocutionary performance. I will develop the illocutionary component of the LCM by looking into the cognitive motivation and cultural constraints which impose different degrees of conventionalization on the expression of illocution. Throughout this work I will also provide evidence in support of the LCM approach to illocution in terms of situational cognitive models and conventional constructions. The analysis of the data will thus reveal that the LCM provides an explanatorily adequate framework to understand the semantic and pragmatic behavior of illocutionary constructions.

### 3. THE SPEECH ACT OF ORDERING

#### 3.1. THE SEMANTICS OF ORDERING

Orders are compelling instructions to people that are intended to make them act in the way other people want them to. Acts of ordering presuppose both the speaker's desire that an action is carried out and the addressee's obligation to perform the action (Wierzbicka, 1987). The speaker who utters an order wants the addressee to do something and expects him to do it. It is the addressee's realization that he is required to do what the speaker asks him to that triggers off the required response.

Prototypical orders are described by Pérez (2001: 93-104) as holding the following attributes: the speaker presents a future action for realization; the addressee is the expected agent of the future action; the speaker has authority over the addressee, which is granted by social convention; there is no mitigation; the degree of optionality is extremely low; the degree of speaker's will is high and the degree of addressee's will is low.<sup>21</sup> Her study shows that imperative constructions are by far the most prototypical means for the expression of orders. The impositive nature of the imperative sentence type makes it an excellent vehicle for the realization of ordering. Declarative constructions, however, can only capture a few attributes of orders.

In contrast to the analysis in Pérez (2001), we shall not focus our attention on the prototypicality of constructions but rather on their instantiation potential. In other words, the present work is not concerned with the degree of prototypicality of certain expressions over others but with the ability of constructions to afford relevant points of access to the cognitive model of ordering and with how that ability may determine the conventionalization of constructions for the performance of orders. Before studying the most common realizations of orders, it becomes necessary to describe the semantic grounding of this illocutionary category. The description of orders proposed by Wierzbicka (1987) and Pérez (2001) has helped me in developing my own definition of the conceptual nature of this

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<sup>21</sup> Following Leech (1983), Pérez presents orders as prototypically involving a cost to the addressee and a benefit to the speaker. Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) argue that the 'cost' element is not essential in the definition of directive acts in general and acts of ordering in particular. In consonance with this view, it should be noted that it is indeed possible to find cases of orders where the speaker gets no objective benefit. Take, for instance, the situation of a wounded officer ordering a lower-rank private to abandon him on the battlefield and run away to save his life. The benefit here is for the addressee and the cost for the speaker, which is the reverse situation of the one identified by Leech (1983) and Pérez (2001) for orders.

speech act type. The description of the semantics of orders has been done in light of Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's (2007) approach to orders in terms of cultural conventions. The two conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* that have been found to underlie the semantic makeup of orders read in the following way (Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007: 111):

*If it is manifest to A that a particular state of affairs is not beneficial to B, and if A has the capacity to change that state of affairs, then A should do so.*

*If it is manifest to A that a potential state of affairs is not beneficial to B, then A is not expected to bring it about.*

These conventions of the model also apply in the interpretation of requests. The type of instantiation of these conventions is nonetheless different in each case. When ordering, speakers necessarily have some authority over their addressees. This is not the case with requests, which can be performed whatever the power relationship between the speakers.

Different types of power may be distinguished, each displaying a different degree of strength (see Verschueren, 1985). The power that is associated with ordering can be either physical or institutional and is of a rather strong nature. Other types of power (e.g. moral, knowledge, self-defence) may give rise to highly implicit orders. It may be argued that the speaker's authority constitutes one of the defining features of orders. The importance of the power of the speaker in the understanding of orders has been approached earlier by Pérez (2001: 101), who establishes the ratings of the power variable in relation to the force of the order. According to Pérez, the lower the speaker's power, the weaker the force of the order and vice versa. Following the account provided by Pérez, I shall consider the power attribute as definitional of orders. This attribute brings about a consequent reduction of the addressee's optionality towards the action presented for realization. The expected response by the addressee is to comply with the speaker's wishes since the latter holds a powerful position. See how some indication of authority on the part of the speaker is necessary for ordering to be possible:

- (1) As the commanding officer, *I order you to step off this balcony and close the door behind you.* (Coca 2007)
- (2) *You are going to learn their language.* (Coca 1991)

- (3) *I want you to stay inside, keep the doors locked.* (Coca 1990)
- (4) *You must not smoke nor drink nor chew.* (Bnc)

All these examples share a structure that is based on the notion of authority thus leading the addressee towards an order interpretation. In (1), there is a full instantiation of the fact that the speaker is more powerful than the addressee which, together with the explicitation of the illocutionary value by means of the corresponding performative verb, specifies the order meaning to the extent that it cannot be interpreted as an instance of a different speech act.

Some may argue that the use of the performative verb is what leads to the ordering reading regardless the manifestness of the speaker's authority. The explicitation of the type of power the speaker holds over the addressee nevertheless has the communicative impact of increasing the force of the order to a large extent. By contrast, (2) does not make the ordering value explicit and its interpretation is dependent on the mutual manifestness of the speaker's power. If it is clear from the context or background information that the speaker has some authority over the addressee, the mere presentation of the addressee as the agent of a future action is enough to produce an ordering reading. A similar case is found in (3), in which the manifestness of the speaker's desire to get an action performed by the addressee is only communicatively effective if it is clear from the context that the former has power over the latter. In that case, the position of authority that the speaker holds will entitle him to expect the addressee to satisfy his wishes if it is within the addressee's range of abilities. Utterance (4) is also interpreted as an order on the basis of the notion of authority, but the type of authority that applies in this case derives from external ruling. In these cases of ordering, the action to be carried out is not imposed by the speaker himself but by an external source. At this point it becomes necessary to distinguish between two types of authority, *internal* and *external* (Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez, 2004). Internal authority consists of a self-imposed obligation underlying self-commands that naturally shade off into commissive speech acts. External authority is an obligation imposed by an external source on the addressee, and it may be speaker-oriented, as in the case of the first three utterances, or derive from a third party, as in the case of the fourth one. The type that is associated with ordering is external authority. It can be observed in previous utterances that it is difficult to derive an order interpretation if there is no explicit indication of this component. The speaker's power is what compels the addressee to carry out



the future action described in the predication. The generic structure formulated in this study takes into consideration the value of the power component in the understanding of ordering.

The other component that is definitional of orders is the addressee's obligation to act as required by the speaker. This obligation arises from the two cultural conventions described in this section as underlying the conceptual grounding of orders. These two principles move the addressee to satisfy other people's wishes or needs provided that he has the ability to do so. The obligation of the addressee to act is further enhanced by the speaker's power over him. In fact, in ordering such an obligation cannot be understood separate from the speaker's authority. In normal circumstances, the addressee should be expected to satisfy the speaker's wishes. He would still be free to decide whether or not to follow cultural conventions. In ordering, this optionality is not possible due to the speaker's powerful position, which leaves the addressee with no choice but to act as required. This component has also been considered by Wierzbicka, who argues that orders do not appeal to the addressee's goodwill but rather to his obligation. In the study by Pérez, it is shown that the higher the speaker's authority; the lower the addressee's optionality, which gives rise to highly impositive orders. Here are some examples that illustrate how the speaker's power and the addressee's obligation are closely intertwined in ordering:

(5) *I would like you to review the tapes.* (Coca 1992)

(6) *Please clean up your room!* (Coca 2007)

These utterances cannot be interpreted as orders if it is not mutually manifest to the participants that the speaker has authority over the addressee. The use of mitigators like the conditional tense or the adverb *please* decreases the force of the ordering value and the interpretation is not possible if there is contextual information that moves the addressee to comply with the wishes of a powerful speaker. The order meaning of these utterances is implicit and crucially dependent on the power component.

The high-level cognitive model or generic structure of ordering is built around the notions of power and obligation. Some possible low-level cognitive models for orders may be the following:

- (a) A has authority over B. A wants B to do something. A makes this wish manifest to B. B acts as commanded.

- (b) A has authority over B. A wants B to do something. A makes B aware of his obligation to act. B acts as commanded.
- (c) A has authority over B. A knows that a course of action would be beneficial to B. A appeals to B's willingness to act. B acts as commanded.
- (d) A has authority over B. A wants B to join him in a course of action that is beneficial for both. B acts as commanded.

To these low-level models of ordering there is a corresponding set of common elements belonging to the generic structure:

- (e) A has authority over B.
- (f) A wants B to do something.
- (g) A makes B aware of his desire.
- (h) B is aware he is under an obligation to act as expressed by A's desire.
- (i) B is expected to act as commanded.

This generic structure attains linguistic expression through a number of constructional realizations with instantiation potential for one or more of its parameters. Remember that the higher the number of parameters that a construction is capable of instantiating, the more codified the act of ordering becomes. Certain realizations with a high instantiation potential become conventionalized and the inferential path that was originally involved in their interpretation is no longer needed to produce an ordering reading. Some of the most conventional constructions expressing orders are illustrated in the utterances below:

- (7) *Daughter*, I order you to rise. (Coca 2006)
- (8) *I want you to* take off those sunglasses. (Coca 1990)
- (9) *Please get* the job started. (Coca 1990)
- (10) *You have got to* give the jury your theory of the case. (Coca 1995)

(11) *You are going to stay with me.* (Coca 1992)

Each of these utterances instantiates one different part of the generic structure and qualifies as an order in the appropriate context. Utterance (7) points to the parts of the generic structure of ordering that present the speaker as holding a position of authority over the addressee and wanting the addressee to do something. Utterance (8) simply activates the part of the generic structure that describes the speaker as wanting to get an action performed by someone else. The verb used in this case makes the manifestness of the speaker's desire explicit but the order interpretation relies on contextual information presenting the speaker as authoritative. Utterance (9) activates the direct instruction that is given by the speaker and which constitutes the central parameter of the generic structure of ordering. It is simple to issue a command by means of a bare imperative. Utterance (10) is based on the part of the structure which presents the addressee as obliged to carry out the action required on the basis of the speaker's authority. To finish with, utterance (11) activates the parameter of the generic structure concerning the expected response on the part of the addressee. Statements describing the addressee's realization of the required action are enough to instantiate this parameter if uttered by speakers holding a powerful position. The next section deals with the cognitive motivation of these and other constructional realizations of orders.

### 3.2. REALIZATION PROCEDURES FOR ORDERING

Orders have traditionally been equated with the use of the imperative sentence type. A look at the corpus nonetheless reveals the inaccuracy of such an association between orders and imperatives:

Sentence type	Constructions	Occurrences
Imperative	4	106
Declarative	6	18
Interrogative	3	108

Table 8. *Distribution of order constructions by sentence type*

In the first place, not only orders, but all other directive categories in the corpus can be performed by an imperative. The imperative sentence type presents an action for realization, which matches with the purpose of directive acts. The compatibility of the imperative sentence type with the semantics of directives makes it an excellent vehicle for their expression.

Orders can also be performed through the use of declarative and interrogative sentences. Declarative constructions need to be codified by means of lexical and grammatical mechanisms capable of instantiating the defining semantic parameters of orders. Likewise, interrogatives have to be adapted to the impositive nature of orders, which is achieved mainly by means of suprasegmental devices. In this section it is my objective to study some of the most common constructional realizations which are used by real speakers to instantiate the parameters that make up the generic structure of ordering. In so doing, I will attempt to show that the traditional equation between orders and imperatives is not completely unfounded. Due to the impositive character of imperative constructions, these represent more highly specialized means for the expression of orders than declarative and interrogative constructions.

### 3.2.1. Imperative order constructions

The compatibility of the meaning conditions of the imperative sentence type with the semantics of orders makes imperative constructions specialized for the expression of this illocutionary value. Such meaning conditions are nevertheless shared by other directives to a large extent. As a consequence, the factors that make imperatives appropriate for the performance of orders make them also suitable for the realization of other speech act categories. Nevertheless the impositive nature of imperatives seems to be more adapted for the expression of acts like ordering. Other formal procedures used in conjunction with the imperative sentence type give rise to highly effective constructions.

#### $X_{IMP}$

A notable number of instances of ordering in the corpus are expressed by means of bare imperatives. It has already been explained that the meaning conditions of the imperative sentence type make the purpose of ordering explicit. Telling the addressee to carry out an action represents a simple and effective way of giving an order. Compare the examples:

(12) “*Stop* that!” he ordered. (Bnc)

(13) You must leave this place. *Go* now. (Coca 1993)

(14) *Bring* me a paper, and also a pen and ink. (Coca 1993)

Although all these instances of orders are expressed by means of a bare imperative, their degree of specification differs. Utterance (12) displays a falling intonation signaled by an exclamation. This type of intonation is used by speakers with authority over their addressees. Therefore it instantiates one of the defining parameters of the structure of ordering, namely, that the speaker has power over the addressee. Furthermore, the use of falling intonation conveys the idea that there is a final decision on the part of the speaker, which gives the addressee no choice to refuse. In this way the part of the generic structure concerning the obligation of the addressee to carry out an action is activated. The use of this realization procedure in conjunction with the imperative sentence type manages to activate additional parameters of the generic structure and thus gives rise to a highly specialized order. A similar effect can be achieved through the use of an adverb of immediateness as is the case with (13). Adverbs of this type are felt as a further imposition by the addressee since he is not only required to carry out an action but to do it within a period of time. This new imposition increases the addressee's obligation to act and triggers the power component. The use of the imperative sentence type in conjunction with adverbs of immediateness results in highly codified instances of ordering. This is not the case with (14), in which the imperative merely presents an action for realization by the addressee without making use of additional formal properties. The utterance could easily be interpreted as a case of requesting due to the absence of formal properties pointing to the speaker as holding a position of authority. The mechanisms used in (12) and (13) not only make explicit the order interpretation but also give the imperative a constructional status by adding a fixed element to a modifiable verb. Conversely, the type of realization in (14) has a very generic meaning which is parametrizable in actual use.

### *Please X<sub>IMP</sub>*

It has been shown that the addition of other formal properties gives imperatives constructional status. One of the most productive procedures that have been found in conjunction with the imperative sentence type in the corpus is the adverb *please*. Interestingly enough, this adverb has been treated as a directivity mitigator in Dik's (1997) account, that is, a linguistic device used to convert orders into requests. It may appear odd to make use

of a mitigator in the expression of a speech act that is characterized by its impositive nature. The use of *please* generally appeals to the addressee's optionality towards the required action. By contrast, in orders, the adverb functions as a reminder to the addressee that he is under the obligation to act not only according to cultural conventions but also because it is the only option he has. In this particular case, the use of the adverb does not appeal to the addressee's willingness but rather to his understanding about his lack of optionality. See some examples:

(15) *Please stop* writing and calling. (Coca 2008)

(16) When you are in your seats *please* keep your belts fastened. (Coca 1991)

The use of the adverb in these utterances reminds the addressee that he has to do what he is told and makes sure that the addressee understands this. In (15), the use of *please* conveys the idea that the speaker is rather annoyed by the addressee's letters and phone calls. Knowing that his action disturbs the speaker and provided that he has the ability to, the addressee should stop in compliance with cultural conventions. He would still have to decide whether or not to do so. In the context of an authoritative speaker, the addressee would be forced to stop writing and calling merely because of the speaker's power. The power component thus combines with cultural conventions to enhance the order interpretation. In (16), the adverb reminds the addressees that they are compelled to obey regulations and show respect to their own safety and legitimate authority. On this occasion, the speaker has no direct power over the addressee but represents an authoritative external source and makes use of *please* to make sure that the addressee understands that he is under the obligation to obey.

### ***X<sub>IMP</sub> It Is An Order***

One of the most productive ways of making explicit the order meaning of an imperative is by means of an explicit performative. The explicitation of the order meaning in a quasi performative statement used in conjunction with the imperative manages to instantiate all the parameters of the generic structure of ordering:

(17) Tell your comrade. *It is an order.* (Coca 1998)

As can be observed, the explicitation of the illocutionary meaning in utterance (17) makes the order more forceful. Because of this, the construction is generally uttered by speakers in a position of authority who believe the addressee is not willing to act as required and feel they need to remind the addressee that he is under the obligation to carry out the required action.

### *Let's X<sub>VP</sub>*

The plural form of the imperative is generally associated with acts of suggesting that involve both the speaker and the addressee. But it can be also used in contexts of ordering in which an authoritative speaker requires the addressee's involvement in a joint action. In these situations, the default suggesting meaning of the construction is overridden through inferential activity. The interpretation of the construction depends on contextual information about the relationship holding between the participants. If it is clear from the context that the speaker has authority over the addressee and that he is making use of that authority to obtain the addressee's involvement in a joint action, the construction will produce a straightforward ordering reading. In opposition to this, if the construction is uttered by powerless speakers who only intend to take part in a joint action with the addressee, it will be interpreted as a suggestion. The utterances below illustrate two cases in which the construction functions as an order:

(18) Come on, guys. *Let's* clean up the mess. (Coca 1994)

(19) *Let's* get the hell out. (Bnc)

The use of this construction in utterance (18) seems to be motivated by a high degree of willingness on the part of the addressee. The speaker has enough authority to impose on the addressee, but since the addressee is willing to carry out the action, the speaker does not need to perform a strict order and prefers a softer form. In this context, the *let's* form represents a much more appropriate means for the expression of the order. Utterance (19) depicts the opposite situation. In spite of not having authority over the addressee, the speaker feels entitled to perform an order because it is in the benefit of both of them to carry out the action. The use of this construction is motivated by the fact that the required action involves the participation of both the speaker and the addressee.

### 3.2.2. Declarative order constructions

Declarative sentences are in principle compatible with the nature of orders since these involve the presentation of a future state of affairs. But this property is shared by the whole range of directive acts. It thus becomes necessary to consider the relevance of other linguistic mechanisms which, used in conjunction with the declarative sentence type, give way to a higher degree of specification of declarative constructions for the performance of orders. Let us now discuss each specific case:

#### *I Order You X<sub>VP</sub>*

An effective way of specifying the ordering value of a declarative construction is by making use of an explicit performative verb. Constructions based on performative predicates achieve a full instantiation of the generic structure and thus represent highly codified means for the performance of a speech act type. In contrast to explicit performatives based on the imperative form, declaratives give the addressee a higher degree of optionality to decide upon the realization of the required action. Look at the example:

(20) “Get out of my rooms! *I order you to go away!*” (Coca 1995)

The interpretation of constructions like the one illustrated above is to a large extent guided by the explicit use of the performative verb. The performative verb in the utterance leads the addressee to the ordering value effortlessly. Furthermore, the specification of the illocutionary goal has the effect of increasing the degree of force conveyed and makes the resulting order more impositive. Because of this, constructions based on performative predicates are generally more appropriate in contexts where the speaker finds himself in the position in which he seeks compliance on the part of the addressee by reinforcing his authority over him. As expected, the variable element of the construction must denote a speaker-controllable activity in order to obtain an ordering reading. The fixed element can be interchanged with other verbs of command. It is common to find that the fixed elements of a construction alternate with elements from the same class. See how the meaning implications do not change with the use of one or another verb:

(21) *I command you to stay with me forever!* (Bnc)



(22) *I instruct you to make a formal application.* (Coca 1990)

These realizations carry the same meaning implications as the previous one and may therefore be regarded as mere constructional variants making use of a different ordering verb. The use of one or another performative verb may give rise to subtle meaning differences which respond to specific contextual needs but which in either case produce a forceful instance of ordering.

### ***I Want You X<sub>VP</sub>***

Another way of specifying the order meaning in declarative constructions is by pointing to the part of the generic structure of the underlying cognitive model in which the speaker makes explicit his wish to get an action carried out by the addressee. Even though this parameter of the generic structure is the motivating factor for orders, its activation is not capable in itself of producing an ordering reading. The order interpretation of the construction is fully dependent once again on contextual information pointing to the speaker as holding a position of authority over the addressee. In orders, such authority is enough to expect the addressee's compliance and the strongly directive meaning of the construction is easy to grasp. In contexts in which the relationship between participants is on equal terms, the use of the construction usually counts as an instance of requesting. Here are three examples of the construction:

(23) *I want you to follow a woman.* (Bnc)

(24) When you went home from school yesterday, *I want you to raise your hand if you saw a gun.* (Coca 1990)

(25) *I want you to go into the village.* (Coca 1990)

Despite the dependence on contextual information for their interpretation as orders, the instantiation potential of this type of realization gives way to fairly well-adapted instances of the speech act under scrutiny. In these utterances, the speaker makes explicit his wish of getting something done by the addressee. This manages to instantiate the purpose of ordering and the central parameters of the generic structure which lead the addressee to the order interpretation almost instantly.

### ***You Have Got To X<sub>VP</sub>***

An alternative way of specifying the declarative sentence type to produce codified orders is by means of modality markers. With objective modality, Dik (1989) understands (with Hengeveld, 1987, 1988, 1989) all those linguistic means that express the speaker's evaluation of the likelihood of occurrence of a state of affairs. Modality markers are capable of instantiating the parameter of the generic structure of ordering concerning the obligation that is imposed on the addressee. This type of obligation arises from the observance of the cultural conventions underlying the conceptual grounding of orders and is reinforced by the speaker's power over the addressee. Thus, through the activation of the conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* formulated in the previous discussion the addressee should bring about a state of affairs that is beneficial for the speaker provided that he has the ability to do so. Since the addressee has not brought about such a state of affairs, the speaker reminds him of his obligation to do it. Through a metonymic inferential schema, this construction gives easy access to the generic structure of orders and has thus become highly conventionalized for the expression of this speech act type. Consider the following examples:

(26) *You've got to* run for office. (Coca 2008)

(27) *You've got to* learn English. *You've got to* listen. (Coca 2007)

In both of them the use of the construction indicates to the addressee that he is under the obligation to carry out an action which can be imposed either by the speaker or by a third party. The action should have been carried out by the addressee but since this has not been the case the speaker feels the need to remind the addressee of his obligation to act.

### ***You Must X<sub>VP</sub>***

This construction works on the basis of a metonymic operation of the same kind as the one specified for the previous type of realization. They differ on the fact that the use of the modal verb *must* renders the obligation imposed on the addressee even more explicit. In the previous case, the modal verb implicated that the carrying out of the required action should come as a personal decision made by the addressee. This implication is

related to a kind of authority that has to do with self-imposed obligations. In the case under consideration, the modal verb expresses an obligation imposed by a source that is external to the addressee, either the speaker or a third party. This type of obligation indicates higher degrees of imposition and is much more appropriate to express orders. By way of illustration, consider:

(28) *You must* write in a clear and lucid style. (Bnc)

(29) *You must* pay your dues. (Coca 1990)

As illustrated in these utterances, the verb used in the construction reminds the addressee that he is under the obligation to act as required. Utterance (28) depicts an academic context in which the speaker is the person who is going to assess the addressee's progress and tells him to write his exam in a clear style. The speaker has enough authority over the addressee to set the standards and the addressee has the obligation to obey if he does not want to fail. In (29), the use of the construction intends to remind the addressee that he is under the obligation to pay to an external authority. In both cases, the addressee finds himself in a position in which he has to comply with the required action. The degree of imposition conveyed seems enough to activate the authority and obligation components and enable the interpretation of the construction as an order.

### ***You Are Going To X<sub>VP</sub>***

This construction expresses a similar impositive reading as the previous ones. Again, through the application of the conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, the speaker reminds the addressee that he is under the obligation to bring about a state of affairs. In so doing, the speaker presents the addressee as the agent of the action which is the object of his wishes. Specifying the future realization of the action by the addressee involves a final decision on the part of the speaker which increases the degree of imposition conveyed and forces the addressee into compliance. The examples below illustrate this:

(30) *You are going to* play in the competition. (Bnc)

(31) *You are going to* get some ownership in this company. (Coca 1995)

The construction imposes an action on the addressee by expressing certainty that it will be carried out. The expression of certainty about the addressee's future course of action presents the addressee as lacking optionality under the speaker's authority. It is thus implicit that the speaker holds a position of authority high enough to expect the addressee to comply with his wishes. The instantiation of these properties functions as a hint to interpret the construction as an order. There is nevertheless one parameter of the generic structure of orders that is not overtly instantiated by this type of realization, namely, the speaker's interest in getting the action carried out. This parameter can be made explicit by means of using another declarative sentence expressing the speaker's wishes (cf. *You are going to play in the competition because I want you to*). This use of this construction displays a higher degree of instantiation than others since it activates a higher number of parameters of the generic structure of ordering.

### ***You Are To X<sub>VP</sub>***

The rationale behind this construction is the same as in the previous declarative constructions but the modality marker used in this case places more emphasis on the addressee and on his obligation to bring about the state of affairs expressed in the predication. This meaning ingredient conveys a higher degree of imposition on the addressee and therefore gives rise to more specified instances of ordering:

(32) You are not to call out. *You are to* raise your hand. (Coca 2006)

(33) *You are to* sit here and have breakfast. (Coca 1995)

The two utterances above illustrate how the impositive tone of the construction manages to produce notably forceful orders. In utterance (32), the speaker specifies both what is expected and what is not expected from the addressee. The presentation of the addressee as directly involved in the realization of the action that is the object of the speaker's wishes reduces even more his optionality and forces him to act as required. Utterance (33) depicts a similar situation. The speaker clearly indicates the state of affairs which is expected to be brought about by the addressee. In either case, the mere presentation of the realization of the action as something that is going to occur for certain leaves the addressee no freedom to refuse and makes the construction a highly effective way of expressing orders.

### 3.2.3. Interrogative order constructions

Interrogative constructions are the least specialized means for the performance of orders. This is due to the fact that the open nature of the interrogative sentence type clashes with the imposition that is characteristic of orders. However, it is possible to reduce the openness of an interrogative sentence by means of a falling intonation, which can be supported by gesturing. Thus, the use of a falling intonation manages to instantiate the lack of optionality that is typical of this illocutionary type and makes interrogative constructions suitable for the expression of orders.

#### *Can You X<sub>vp</sub>?*

This is fundamentally a request construction, but its request meaning can be overridden through inference. The fact that the speaker questions the addressee about his capacity to carry out an action to satisfy the wishes of an authoritative speaker produces a collapse of logic that can only be re-established if the utterance is understood as an order. The interpretation of this type of realization procedure as an order thus arises from the instantiation of the convention of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* that binds people to act to the benefit of others to the best of their ability. Questioning someone over whom we have authority about his capacity to carry out an action to our own benefit functions as a means of persuasion to obtain his compliance. Since the addressee should have acted as specified without being asked to do so, the use of this construction holds for cases in which the speaker wants to impose his authority to get the action carried out by the addressee. It is precisely the speaker's latent authority that enables the order interpretation; otherwise the utterance would be understood as a request. The examples below illustrate how the construction produces an ordering reading in contexts of authority:

(34) *Can you* shut up for a minute? (Coca 2006)

(35) *Can you* find the aircraft! (Coca 1991)

Both utterances above are fairly explicit orders if uttered by a powerful speaker. In the two cases, the addressee has not acted as he was obliged to by cultural conventions and the speaker reminds the addressee of his obligation to do it. Both utterances make use of further procedures to

instantiate additional parameters of the generic structure of ordering and make the ordering value more explicit. Utterance (34) includes a durative specification conveying irritation on the part of the speaker and (35) makes use of a harsh falling intonation indicating the speaker's authority.

### *Can You Please X<sub>vp</sub>?*

This construction functions under the same rationale as the previous one, with the only difference that in this case the use of the adverb *please* urges the addressee to perform the action thus endowing the order with a more forceful meaning impact. The impositive use of the adverb derives from the fact that the addressee has not acted as expected by the speaker and therefore the speaker feels compelled to appeal to his willingness to do something. Here are some examples:

(36) *Can you please stop interrupting?* These are ridiculous objections.  
(Coca 1997)

(37) *Can you stop following me, please!* (Coca 2007)

Both utterances make use of procedures capable of instantiating the defining components of orders more explicit. In (36), the construction indicates the intended result (i.e. the addressee should stop interrupting) and the statement used in conjunction with the construction indicates the reason of the request (i.e. the addressee's objections are ridiculous). There is a reason-result pattern which embeds the compelling request, the addressee should not be interrupting the speaker according the parts of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* that provide the cultural background for requesting. The force of the resulting act is increased through the use of the verb *stop*, which indicates irritation on the part of the speaker and urges the addressee to get quiet in order to please him. In (37), the presupposition is that the addressee is doing something that bothers the speaker and he shouldn't be doing that on the basis of the generalizations of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. The use of a falling intonation reinforces the idea of imposition thus pointing to the order interpretation with increasing certainty. In spite of the use of these mechanisms, the high degree of implicitness of this construction makes it appropriate only for contexts where it is clear enough that the speaker is in a position of authority and is

appealing to the addressee's willingness to carry out an action that he should have performed without being asked.

### ***Why Don't You X<sub>vp</sub>?***

This construction conventionally conveys an act of advising. This interpretation can be nonetheless overridden through inference in a context in which the speaker is evidently irritated with the addressee. In such a context, the speaker is not likely to be giving advice, so the addressee needs to take a different interpretive path. The ordering reading of the construction thus presupposes that the addressee is behaving improperly and not acting as expected. This type of realization calls the addressee's attention to the ongoing state of affairs that affects the speaker and should be changed to his benefit, as stipulated in the principles of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* that provide the cultural background for orders. The activation of these generalizations gives access to the part of the generic structure of ordering in which the addressee is required to act in accordance with the speaker's desire, which gives rise to an order interpretation:

(38) *Why don't you* just be quiet for a while? (Bnc)

(39) *Why don't you* fix these damn switches before someone gets killed?  
(Coca 2010)

In (38), the use of a durative specification contributes to making the act of ordering more explicit. This specification has the function of urging the addressee to act as required by the speaker. In (39), the use of a swear word indicating annoyance on the part of the speaker seeks the right to impose authority over the addressee. The use of an impositive falling intonation in both utterances decreases the openness of the interrogative sentence type and reminds the addressee that he is under the obligation to comply with the speaker's wishes. The use of these mechanisms increases the degree of codification of the resulting instances of ordering.

### **3.2.4. Generalizations on constructions for ordering**

Some generalizations may be drawn from the analysis of the constructional realizations of the speech act of ordering. First, imperative

constructions appear as the most specialized means for the expression of orders. The reason for this is that they manage to instantiate the defining characteristic of this illocutionary type, namely, the fact that the speaker has authority over the addressee. The speaker's authority is a component that shapes the generic structure of ordering and its instantiation is in itself capable of producing a straightforward reading of an utterance as an instance of this illocutionary category. Imperative constructions nonetheless also prove productive in the performance of other directive speech acts and their order meaning has to be further codified through the use of specific resources pointing either to the speaker's power over the addressee or to the addressee's obligation to comply. These resources include the use of the adverb *please* and of quasi performative realizations.

Unlike imperative constructions, declarative orders only partially instantiate the generic structure and therefore need to be codified to yield an ordering reading. Resources like performative verbs or modality markers prove notably effective in the specification of the declarative form for the realization of orders.

Finally, interrogative constructions reveal themselves as the least specialized linguistic mechanism for the performance of orders. The open nature that is characteristic of the interrogative sentence type clashes with the imposition of orders. This makes interrogative constructions a poor vehicle for the expression of the lack of addressee's optionality before an authoritative speaker, which characterizes the act of ordering. It is, however, still possible to specify the ordering value of interrogative constructions through the use of mechanisms like an impositive falling intonation pointing to the speaker's authority or of durative specifications conveying irritation on the part of the speaker.



## 4. THE SPEECH ACT OF REQUESTING

### 4.1. THE SEMANTICS OF REQUESTING

Requests are ways of asking for other people's help to get something done. Requests are based on the presupposition that the addressee is capable of performing an action that would help the speaker out of a potential problem. Prototypical requests are described by Pérez (2001: 115-130) as characterized by the following attributes: the speaker presents a future action; the addressee is the expected agent of the future action; the future action involves a benefit to the speaker or to a third party; the addressee has freedom to decide on the realization of the future action; there is mitigation; the degree of speaker's will is high and the degree of addressee's will is low.<sup>22</sup>

Pérez (2001) also shows that interrogative sentences are the most prototypical means for the realization of this speech act category. The interrogative sentence type is in itself capable of instantiating the open nature of requests and thus represents an excellent vehicle for the performance of requesting. Imperative and declarative constructions are much less specialized than interrogatives since they only partially instantiate a few of the variables of requesting.

This study is not concerned with the prototypical realizations of requests, but rather with the constructional features that characterize the expression of this illocutionary type. As was explained in previous chapters, this constructional analysis is based on the instantiation of the meaning conditions that make up the situational cognitive model or generic structure of requests. The greater the number of parameters that a constructional realization is capable of activating, the higher its degree of specification to convey a request meaning. The nature of request constructions thus ranges from full codification to different levels of conventionalization. Before focusing on the study of the most common conventional realizations for

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<sup>22</sup> As with other directives, Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) do not regard the 'cost-benefit' element as definitional of requests. Following their argumentation, we find examples of requests that are not necessarily beneficial to the speaker but to a third party. In their thinking, the speaker only wants to get an action performed whether it benefits him or not. Pérez (2001: 122) shows, however, that the values of the defining variables of requests are only logical if the 'cost-benefit' parameter is taken into account. A case in point is the variable of optionality, which tends to be higher in requests than in orders, to give an example within the category of directives. The addressee's optionality is highly constrained by the fact that he is not the beneficiary of the requested action and his decision to carry out the action or to refuse to do so may affect others.

requests, it is necessary to define the semantic grounding of this speech act category. The description of requests put forward by Wierzbicka (1987) and Pérez (2001) has helped me to elaborate my own definition of the conceptual nature of this illocutionary type. Both proposals have been put in contrast by giving emphasis to the assumptions that suit my view of requests. The generic structure of requesting has been formulated as deriving from multiple cases of everyday interaction in which people attempt to get their needs satisfied by others. This process of meaning derivation has been carried out in accordance with Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's (2007) approach to requests in terms of cultural conventions. The conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* that have been found to underlie the conceptual grounding of requests and which have guided me in the definition of the generic structure of this speech act type are the following (Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007: 111):

*If it is manifest to A that a particular state of affairs is not beneficial to B, and if A has the capacity to change that state of affairs, then A should do so.*

*If it is manifest to A that a potential state of affairs is not beneficial to B, then A is not expected to bring it about.*

I already discussed in the previous chapter that these conventions of the model also apply in the interpretation of orders. The difference is that, while acts of ordering are performed by speakers holding power over their addressees, in acts of requesting the relationship between the speaker and the addressee is on equal terms. The speaker may have authority over the addressee but he does not use it to obtain his compliance. Nevertheless, the fact that requests are uttered by powerless speakers does not mean that the addressee's freedom to decide on the realization of the requested action is totally unconstrained. As a matter of fact, requests have a stronger bonding nature than other speech acts like advising or offering. The reason is found in the fact that, while requests involve a benefit to the speaker or to a third party, those other acts involve a benefit to the addressee. As Pérez puts it, the addressee has greater freedom to decide if he is the one affected by the future action. In contrast, the addressee's freedom is much more constrained if the future action may affect other people's welfare, as is precisely the case of requests. The two conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* reproduced above in fact constrain the freedom of the addressee by reminding him that he is required to help others if it is within

his range of abilities. The addressee's optionality is therefore restrained by the cultural conventions underlying the conceptual grounding of requests.

The cultural constraints on the addressee's optionality constitute one of the defining features of requesting. The other main attribute of requesting is also related to cultural conventions and has to do with the high degree of politeness which is expected on the part of the speaker. Since speakers request other people to act to their benefit knowing that they are culturally bound to do so, it usually becomes necessary to mitigate the force of the act by increasing the degree of the addressee's optionality. Since granting someone with optionality is perceived as a sign of politeness in our society, both components of optionality and politeness are closely related in the production of mitigated requests. In this study, both optionality and politeness are regarded as characteristic features of requesting, an idea which may be supported by the fact that the most specific means to convey requests are focused on guaranteeing a high degree of both of them.

Moreover, optionality and politeness are related to the two variables which are presupposed in the performance of requests. The instantiation of either of these variables manages to produce a straightforward requesting reading as they constitute the conceptual grounding upon which requests are based. One of these features has to do with the manifestness of the speaker's need. The other refers to the role of the addressee in changing that state of affairs into one that is positive to the speaker. As argued by Wierzbicka and Pérez in their respective accounts of this illocutionary category, the performance of requests presupposes that there is a non-beneficial state of affairs affecting the speaker that the addressee has the capacity to change. This assumption is defined by the conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* that apply in the definition of requests and which enjoin the addressee to act provided that he has the ability to do so. Given that the speaker's need represents one of the conditions for the performance of this speech act type, its sole instantiation yields a requesting reading:

- (1) "I'm thirsty", he said. "Have some milk", Nell said. (Coca 2006)
- (2) Olivia: "I'm thirsty". Mom: "I don't have any water". (Coca 2004)

Both dialogues depict situations in which the mere presentation of a state of affairs that is negative to the speaker is interpreted as a request by the addressee. The availability of contextual variables pointing to the addressee as the agent of the action that would benefit the speaker enables

the addressee to derive the implicit part of the message and arrive at the request meaning. The request interpretation is so straightforward that in both utterances the addressee responds according to cultural principles. In the utterance (1), the addressee offers some milk that may help the speaker quench his thirst. In (2), the addressee does not have any water and excuses himself for being unable to help the speaker. The contextual information that allows the request interpretation can be made explicit by means of a direct question asking the addressee to help. The following are some representative examples:

- (3) “*Could you please* call your dog? He’s between me and my bike”.  
(Coca 2001)
- (4) “*Would you mind* opening the door? I think one of the cats wants in”.  
(Coca 1992)

These two utterances illustrate constructions that are conventional requests. Their request meaning is nonetheless further specified through the manifestness of the speaker’s need by means of a statement pointing to a negative situation the addressee has the ability to change. The other feature has to do with the expectation that it will be the addressee that will change the negative situation that affects the speaker into a positive one. This latter variable of requesting was implicit in previous utterances and is easily derivable from contextual information but its instantiation makes the request meaning more explicit. This has the communicative consequence of producing a default request interpretation of these utterances as instances of requesting. It is also possible to make more explicit instances by making manifest the request of the speaker in contexts where it is only implicit that there is a negative state of affairs affecting the speaker. This is because questions asking the addressee to do something for the speaker also manage to convey the idea that there is a need on the part of the speaker that has to be satisfied. Despite not being directly communicated by means of a statement, this feature is implicit in the request. Consider:

- (5) *Could you possibly* help us out? (Bnc)
- (6) “Well, *maybe you could* help a little”, she said smiling. (Coca 1994)

Even though these two utterances do not specify the nature of the negative state of affairs affecting the speaker, it is clear that the speaker is

asking for help and it is easy to derive from contextual information what the speaker needs help for. Because of this, utterances of this type in which there is no specification of the speaker's situation count as indirect requests which are readily interpreted by relying on the context. The speaker's expectations about the addressee's response put the addressee in a situation in which he must help in order to be polite. The use of past forms in both cases helps to increase the addressee's optionality and consequently mitigates their force, which gives rise to much more polite instances of requesting. Indirect requests of this type show how conventional forms of behavior play an essential role in the performance of requests and also how granting the addressee with optionality manages to produce polite instances of requesting. For this reason my definition of the generic structure of requesting has been carried out according to the cultural conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* that stipulate the expected behavior of both the speaker and the addressee. My description of the high-level situational cognitive model or generic structure of requesting takes into account the pragmatic variables of the act already discussed by Wierzbicka (1987) and Pérez (2001) in relation to politeness and optionality. The generic structure of requesting accounts for the semantics of the speech act by generalizing over cases of interaction where people ask others to do something for them. The definition of the cognitive model of requesting has enabled me to identify the constructional realizations of this illocutionary type:

- (a) A is in need of something.
- (b) A makes B aware of his need.
- (c) A makes B aware of his ability to provide for his need.
- (d) A appeals to B's willingness to help.
- (e) B may be persuaded to help or not.

Each parameter can be instantiated through different constructional realizations. The instantiation of each parameter gives rise to examples of requesting with different degrees of codification. Observe in the utterances below how different constructional realizations work for each of the parameters of the generic structure of requesting:

- (7) "*I need to make a phone call*". (Coca 1990)

- (8) Mother, *I'm thirsty*, and my water jar is empty. (Coca 2000)
- (9) *Can you* give me some advice? (Coca 1990)
- (10) *Would you mind* keeping your voice down? (Coca 1992)
- (11) Dress up for me, *won't you*? (Coca 2002)

These utterances are representative of the constructional realizations that have been found in the expression of requests. Each points to one of the parameters of requesting. Utterances (7) and (8) address the part of the structure in which the speaker makes the addressee aware of the needful situation in which he finds himself. Utterances (9) and (10) respectively appeal to the addressee's ability and willingness to satisfy the speaker's need. Utterance (11) points to the parameter which concerns the expected response on the part of the addressee. Note that the degrees of mitigation are significant in all the utterances. This is natural considering the constraints that cultural conventions impose on the performance of requests, which make it necessary to mitigate the force of the act by increasing the degree of the addressee's optionality towards the action. The study of the realization procedures of requests aims to show how the compliance with cultural conventions manages to produce fairly effective instances of this illocutionary category.

#### 4.2. REALIZATION PROCEDURES FOR REQUESTING

Requests have a tendency to be performed by means of interrogative constructions. The number of interrogative instances of requesting in the corpus clearly outnumbers those of imperative or declarative requests.

Sentence type	Constructions	Occurrences
Imperative	5	308
Declarative	3	84
Interrogative	4	64

Table 9. *Distribution of request constructions by sentence type*

Considering the semantic properties of requesting, it is not surprising to find a preference for interrogative constructions. The open nature of the interrogative sentence type is an excellent vehicle for the expression of the high levels of optionality and politeness that are characteristic of requests.

Because of this, interrogative constructions are much more specific for the production of requests than imperative or declarative constructions. In spite of being compatible with the illocutionary purpose of requests, which is getting someone to do something for us, the impositive nature of the imperative sentence type considerably reduces the degree of the addressee's optionality and thus gives rise to instances of requesting that require the use of specific linguistic mechanisms to guarantee that the addressee will have freedom to decide upon the realization of the requested action. Declarative constructions appear as the least specialized means for the performance of requests. Further specification of the declarative form by means of lexicogrammatical mechanisms nonetheless results in effective request constructions.

#### **4.2.1. Interrogative request constructions**

The compatibility of the interrogative sentence type with the meaning conditions of requests explains the high number of instances based on the interrogative sentence type. The openness of interrogative constructions constitutes a fairly adequate means for the expression of the unimpositive nature of requests. Interrogative constructions manage to perform polite requests guaranteeing that the addressee will have a high degree of optionality.

##### ***Can/ Could You X<sub>VP</sub>?***

This type of realization is probably the most conventional constructional form for the expression of requests. Originally the request meaning of the construction was derived by means of an inferential schema that gives access to the addressee's ability part of the generic structure of requesting. Asking the addressee about his ability to act represents an implicit way of making him aware that he is indeed able to carry out the requested action and of reminding him that he is culturally bound to act if he has the ability to do so. Over time, the use of this construction in contexts of this type, with the implication that the speaker wants in fact the action to be performed, has become entrenched and given rise to a request construction. The requesting reading of the construction nonetheless depends on the type of realization of the variable element. Consider the utterances below:

- (12) *Can you take* a truck to Poland? (Coca 2010)
- (13) *Can you write* a screenplay? (Coca 2007)
- (14) *Can you put on* your coat by yourself? (Coca 2005)
- (15) *Can you find* true love on a reality TV show? (Coca 2008)
- (16) *Can you bring* me some food? (Coca 2007)
- (17) *Can you pick* me up? (Coca 1990)
- (18) *Can you smell* the flowers? (Coca 1992)
- (19) *Can you hear* the thunder? (Coca 2000)

For the construction to yield a request meaning, the variable element must be realized by a verb designating a controllable action involving some benefit to the speaker. In (12) and (13), the variable element is realized by such a verb but there is no explicit indication of the potential benefit of the requested action for the speaker. Because of this, the request interpretation of these two utterances is largely dependent on contextual information. It must be clear from the context that the speaker does want the action to be performed and that the realization of the action is going to involve a certain benefit to the speaker. Otherwise these utterances would only ask about the addressee's ability to carry out the action. In (14) and (15), the variable element is realized by a verb indicating control but it is made manifest that the action does not seek the speaker's benefit and that the speaker is only enquiring about the addressee's ability to carry out that action. By contrast, in (16) and (17), the benefit component is completely instantiated by means of object pronouns pointing to the speaker as the beneficiary of the action. Mechanisms of this type instantiate one defining feature of requests, which is the benefit that the requested action seeks for the speaker and thus produces a straightforward requesting reading. In (18) and (19), the variable element is realized by a verb denoting a non-controllable activity, which is incompatible with the nature of requests. These two utterances therefore function as mere questions since the speaker has no special interest in getting the action performed.

It is also possible to make the request meaning of the construction more explicit by means of the use of a past tense in the fixed element. The



mitigation brought about by the use of a past form specifies the request meaning of the construction by increasing the degree of politeness.<sup>23</sup> Take these examples as representative:

(20) *Could you* collect this loan? (Coca 1990)

(21) *Could you* just wait a minute? (Coca 1990)

Though the benefit that the realization of the requested action involves for the speaker is only implicit from the context, the use of the past form of the modal verb in the fixed element of the construction is in itself capable of producing an easy requesting reading. In (20), it is assumed that the loan would somehow benefit the speaker. In (21), it is implied that the speaker is asking the addressee to wait because he needs some time.<sup>24</sup> The past form of the verb does not only point to the addressee's ability to carry out the action but also to his willingness by giving him freedom to refuse. This instantiates a further parameter of the generic structure and thus produces more explicit instances of requesting.

### *Can/ Could You Please X<sub>VP</sub>?*

This construction is based on the same rationale as before and in fact it shall be seen as a mere variant of the previous one. The difference is that the addition of the adverb *please* increases the degree of politeness to the extent that it is not possible to interpret this type of realization as an instance of a different speech act. Due to its mitigating properties, the use of *please* is capable of producing a straightforward request interpretation:

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<sup>23</sup> The past tense has been recognized as a conventionalized pragmatic mitigator in English. Taylor (1995: 152) and Pérez (1996: 198-208) provide an explanation for the use of past modals as requests in cognitive terms. According to Taylor, there is a first metaphoric mapping that structures the time domain in terms of space (cf. near future, distant past) and a second one that structures distance in terms of social involvement (cf. close friend, distant relative). The use of the past tense thus indicates a psychological distance between the addressee and the requested action. Pérez (1996) adds the observation that the distance needed to obtain the mitigating effect needs to be established both between the addressee and the speech act, and between the intended speech act and the actual speech act. The use of verbs in the past tense increases the indirectness of requests, thereby offering the addressee a greater degree of optionality to comply with the speaker's wishes.

<sup>24</sup> The linguistic hedge *just* that is used in the utterances functions as a mitigator of the illocutionary force by reducing the cost of the speech act. As pointed out by Holmes (1984) and Pérez (2001), the adverb *just* is one of the most common types of linguistic hedges in English requests. This adverb conveys the idea that the speaker's request is not too much of a burden. In other words, that it is not really as costly as the directive expression suggests.

(22) *Can you please* explain? I don't understand (Coca 2000)

(23) *Can you please* hand me some towels? (Coca 2005)

Thanks to the use of the adverb *please*, the request meaning of the construction is much more specified in these two utterances. It is still possible to further specify the request value by making use of a past form in the modal verb that takes part in the fixed element of the construction. See the following examples:

(24) *Could you please* help me? (Bnc)

(25) Driver, *could you please* wait? I'll be right back. (Coca 2003)

It has already been shown that the use of past modals increases the degree of politeness of the request and gives way to highly specialized instances of requesting. The use of a past modal manages to leave the addressee more optionality to decide upon the realization of the requested action thus instantiating the corresponding part of the generic structure of requesting. Increasing the addressee's optionality in turn upgrades the degree of politeness of the request. These properties are characteristic of requests and their simultaneous instantiation gives rise to a default request interpretation.

### ***Will/Would You X<sub>VP</sub>?***

This type of realization procedure asks for the addressee's help by appealing to his willingness to act to the speaker's benefit. Enquiring into the addressee's willingness to act in a given way constitutes an implicit way of making the addressee aware that his freedom is constrained by cultural conventions and that he should be willing to help the speaker provided that he has the ability to do so. Consider:

(26) *Will you get to see* your grandson for Christmas? (Coca 2005)

(27) *Will you make* the eggs over easy? (Coca 2006)

Even though the utterances do not indicate that the speaker is interested in the bringing about of the requested state of affairs because of

the benefits that it involves for him, the construction is easily interpreted as a request. This information is crucial in the interpretation of these utterances as instances of requesting and needs to be clear from the context. Otherwise, instances of the construction would function as simple questions. Observe in the following utterances how this kind of information can be made explicit by means of object pronouns pointing to the speaker as the beneficiary of the action:

(28) *Will you pick me* up at the airport? (Coca 1997)

(29) *Will you buy us* tickets to the opera? (Coca 2009)

In these two utterances, the beneficiary of the action is made explicit. Such an explicitation functions as a reminder to the addressee that his freedom to decide is constrained by the cultural convention according to which he should carry out the requested action if it is manifest to him that the action involves some benefit to the speaker. The instantiation of this cultural convention gives access to the cultural background of the act and therefore produces an easy reading of (28) and (29) as instances of requesting.

As was the case with the previous construction, the request meaning can be further specified through the use of a past verbal form. I have already explained that past forms display a type of mitigation which seems appropriate for the high degree of politeness that is characteristic of requests. Notice how the mitigating effect of past forms functions as a hint towards the interpretation of the above utterances as instances of requesting:

(30) *Would you get to see* your grandson for Christmas?

(31) *Would you make* the eggs over easy?

Even though the use of past forms specializes the construction for the realization of requests, the interpretation of the construction as an instance of this illocutionary type is crucially dependent on the benefit component which is characteristic of requesting. If it is not clear from the context that the action is beneficial for the speaker, this type of realization will function as a mere question asking the addressee what his course of action would be in a given circumstance. It is thus possible to regard utterances above as simple questions if contextual variables do not point to the speaker as the beneficiary of the action.

### ***Will/Would You Please X<sub>VP</sub>?***

This construction is based on the same rationale as the previous one and it may be regarded as a simple variant with a higher degree of politeness that results from the use of the adverb *please*. In general, the use of this adverb indicates that the speaker seeks a benefit from the requested action. However, if *please* is stressed, it gives rise to a forceful request. This arises from the implication that the speaker feels the addressee should have acted to the speaker's benefit and has not done so. The focus on the adverb therefore indicates that the addressee should have been pleased (i.e. willing) in the required way without being told to do so. The following utterances illustrate cases of the construction where *please* functions as a mitigating device:

(32) *Will you please come home?* (Coca 1996)

(33) *Will you please open the door?* (Coca 2001)

In these utterances, the use of the adverb *please* makes explicit the speaker's interest in getting the action performed. In (32), the speaker wants the addressee to go home with him and in (33), the speaker indicates that he would like to get the door closed. The expression of the speaker's wishes counts as an attempt to remind the addressee that he is expected to act as requested according to cultural conventions. The use of the adverb counts as a sign that the speaker acknowledges the addressee's optionality by appealing to his willingness. This idea is also communicated by the variant of the construction that makes use of a past form in its fixed element, although in this latter case the request is more polite and therefore further specified:

(34) *Would you please bring your stethoscope?* (Coca 2010)

(35) *Would you please give help on controlling lawn moths?* (Coca 1996)

As observed in utterances (34) and (35), the use of past forms manages to increase the degree of politeness of the construction and make it more appropriate to express the mitigation that is characteristic of requests. The politeness that characterizes instances of this type fits better in formal contexts where there is a distant relationship between the speaker and the addressee.

### *Do/Would You Mind X<sub>VP</sub>?*

This is a further conventional construction for requests that appeals to the addressee's willingness to carry out the requested action. Because appealing to someone's willingness indicates that we acknowledge their freedom to refuse, this type of realization instantiates two of the distinctive properties of requesting.

(36) *Do you mind taking* a picture of us? (Coca 2003)

(37) *Do you mind waiting* outside for the taxi? (Coca 1999)

In (36), the predication makes explicit that the speaker is going to obtain a certain benefit from the bringing about of the state of affairs. In (37), by contrast, there is no indication of the potential benefit that is typical of requests. Nonetheless the appeal to the addressee's willingness is enough to give way to a requesting reading that may be cancelled out contextually. As was the case with previous constructions, further specification of the request meaning can be achieved through the use of a past form:

(38) *Would you mind opening* the door? (Coca 1990)

(39) *Would you mind waiting* a few days? (Coca 2003)

The utterances above illustrate the mitigating effect of the use of a past form in the fixed element and how this mitigation points to the request interpretation. Mitigation is a crucial defining characteristic of requesting given the need not to impose the speaker's wishes on the addressee. This mitigation is captured by the generic structure in the form of parameters which appeal to the addressee's ability or willingness to help. This particular construction appeals to the addressee's willingness to carry out the action and it does so by showing a high degree of politeness that is well-adapted to the nature of requesting.

#### **4.2.2. Imperative request constructions**

The imperative sentence type does not seem to be an appropriate vehicle for the expression of requests. The impositive nature of imperative constructions clashes with the high degrees of optionality and politeness

that are characteristic of requests. Hence the small number of instances of requesting that make use of imperative constructions. In order to reduce the impositive tone of the imperative sentence type it is necessary to use linguistic mechanisms which mitigate the force of the act and leave the addressee with enough freedom to decide upon the realization of the requested action. These mechanisms basically include the use of the adverb *please*, linguistic hedges and question tags, all of which instantiate the parameters of the generic structure of requesting that deal with mitigation.

### ***Please X<sub>IMP</sub>***

It has been pointed out that, unlike orders, imperative request constructions show a tendency to be surrounded by linguistic mechanisms which, functioning as mitigators, manage to instantiate several of the parameters that make up the generic structure of requesting. In this construction, the addition of the adverb *please* to the bare imperative acknowledges the addressee's optionality by appealing to his willingness to comply with the request. Because of this, the use of the adverb in the construction mitigates the impact of the imperative and produces an easy requesting reading. Consider the examples below:

(40) *Please put* your hands in the yellow circles. (Coca 1997)

(41) *Please open* the door. (Coca 1995)

The use of an imperative in these utterances instantiates the parameters of the generic structure in which the speaker presents an action for realization. The request meaning thus results from the combination of the imperative describing the required action, and the mitigator *please*, which makes explicit the addressee's optionality to carry out an action that is beneficial for the speaker.

### ***X<sub>IMP</sub>, Can You/Could You?***

In this construction, the impositive nature of the imperative is reduced by means of a question tag pointing to the addressee's ability to carry out the action. By enquiring about the addressee's ability, the speaker is in fact reminding the addressee that he is bound by cultural conventions to act to

his benefit if it is within his range of abilities. The use of this question tag recognizes the addressee's optionality to decide upon the realization of the action and thus favors a requesting reading:

(42) Go ahead, play it back, *can you?* (Coca 2001)

The utterance above illustrates the softening value of a question tag about the addressee's ability. Further mitigation can be achieved by using a past form in the question tag. As has already been noted, past forms have mitigating properties that increase the degree of the addressee's optionality and become useful in specifying the request meaning of imperative constructions:

(43) Tell him that, *could you?* (Coca 2006)

The use of the past form of the modal in the question tag does not only point to the part of the generic structure in which the speaker appeals to the addressee's ability to act but also to his willingness, thus instantiating the two components of requesting that attempt to mitigate the force of the act to obtain the addressee's compliance. The simultaneous instantiation of these parameters, together with the direct presentation of the action the speaker wants to be performed, manages to make the request meaning more straightforward and makes the construction appropriate for the expression of the high degree of mitigation that is characteristic of requesting.

### ***X<sub>IMP</sub>, Will You/Would You?***

This type of realization also makes use of question tags in order to mitigate the force of the imperative, but the type of tags used in this case point to the addressees' willingness. The action to be carried out by the addressee is presented in the variable part of the construction expressed in the imperative mood. The fixed part is formed by a question tag reminding the addressee that he should be willing to help the speaker:

(44) Help me get this stuff off, *will you?* (Coca 2010)

Despite the instantiation potential of the question tag enquiring about the addressee's willingness for the corresponding part of the generic structure, the lack of further mitigation gives rise to highly implicit

instances. This question tag may also be used with a bare imperative in instances of different speech acts like advising or offering. It is nevertheless possible to make the request meaning more explicit by using the verb of the question tag in the past. See how the mitigating effect of the past form of the question tag is capable of producing a requesting reading:

(45) Pour me a tiny glass of tea, *would you?* (Coca 2003)

The use of the question tag pointing to the addressee's willingness in the past form conveys an inherent politeness that yields a default request meaning. Realization procedures of this type thus represent highly effective means of adapting imperative constructions for the expression of requests.

#### **4.2.3. Declarative request constructions**

The little specification of the declarative sentence type makes it minimally explicit for the performance of requests. It is nonetheless possible to produce specialized declarative constructions by making use of diverse linguistic devices with instantiation potential for the parameters of the generic structure related to speaker's need and addressee's optionality, which constitute the defining attributes of requesting.

##### ***I Need X<sub>NP</sub>***

Constructions aimed at making manifest to the addressee that the speaker is facing a negative state of affairs instantiate the corresponding parameter of the generic structure of requests. The needful situation in which the speaker is involved is the precondition for the performance of requests and it instantiates the part of the cultural background for requesting according to which the addressee should help the speaker if it is manifest to him that the speaker is facing a negative state of affairs. Because of its lexical transparency, the fixed part contains much of the request meaning of the construction. The variable part denotes the item or the action that is needed by the speaker:

(46) *I need* a ride home. (Coca 2010)

(47) *I need* a place to stay tonight. (Coca 2009)



Note that the rationale behind the request meaning of this construction works only if the item being requested in the variable part can be provided by the addressee. Otherwise this type of realization only expresses feelings of desire or concern about a state of affairs which cannot be changed:

(48) *I need* one hundred thousand dollars. (Coca 1996)

(49) *I need* a man to love me. (Coca 2002)

It must be clear from the context that the addressee has the ability to provide the speaker with his need in order for the construction to produce a request meaning. The interpretation of the construction is thus largely dependent on contextual information. The use of further procedures increases the degree of mitigation of the act and functions as a hint towards the request interpretation:

(50) I need a glass of wine, *please*. (Coca 2009)

The addition of the adverb *please* in the utterance above fully instantiates the part of the generic structure dealing with the benefits that the speaker would obtain from the realization of the action and because of this it is capable of producing a default requesting reading. A similar effect would be achieved through the use of other beneficiary indicators or linguistic hedges of the kind found in previous types of realization.

### ***I Want X<sub>NP</sub>***

In this construction there applies the same rationale as in the previous one, with the difference that the verb used in case makes the speaker's need implicit in the manifestness of his desire. This situation partially contrasts with the one that was the case with the previous type of realization:

(51) *I want* a baby. (Coca 2010)

(52) *I want* a jacket and two pairs of boots. (Coca 2009)

Once again the request interpretation of the construction is crucially dependent on contextual information. For the construction to convey a request meaning it must be clear from contextual or background

information that the item being requested can be actually provided by the addressee. If that is not the case the construction only expresses the speaker's hopes or desires:

(53) *I want* a boyfriend. (Coca 2006)

(54) *I want* a certain kind of balance in my life. (Coca 2011)

Neither of these utterances functions as a request. In both cases, the speaker is only telling the addressee about his wishes knowing that it is not within the range of abilities of the addressee to provide him with them. Therefore in these examples the speaker does not want to get something from the addressee but just to express his worries and needs. As was the case with the previous type of realization, the request meaning of the construction can be made explicit by means of linguistic resources appealing to the addressee's willingness to comply with the speaker's wishes. Appealing to the addressee's willingness explicitly points to the addressee as the person who is supposed to provide the speaker with his wishes, thus giving rise to a default request meaning:

(55) I want a shave, *please*. (Coca 1993)

Thanks to the mitigating properties of the adverb *please* and its instantiation potential for the most relevant parts of the generic structure of requesting its use in conjunction with this type of realization manages to produce a straightforward requesting reading. More specialized declarative request constructions present the addressee as the agent of the action expressed in the predication.

### ***I Wonder If You Can X<sub>VP</sub>***

The high degree of mitigation of this type of realization makes it an excellent foundation for the expression of requests. The use of a conditional expression leaves the addressee with enough optionality to decide upon the realization of the requested action thus favoring the request interpretation. In the construction, the speaker is not really asking the addressee to carry out an action; he is literally only wondering about what the behavior of the addressee would be if the speaker were involved in a needful situation. It is up to the addressee to determine what his course of action would be if he

were asked about his ability to do something in that case and if that condition holds in the present. Contextual information enables the addressee to derive the implicit part of the construction by pointing to him as the person who has the ability to change the negative situation in which the speaker is involved into a positive one:

(56) *I wonder if you can* visit her, she has no friends in the area there.  
(Coca 2003)

The force of the act is mitigating to a notably high degree. The conditional of the fixed part indicates psychological distance between the speaker and the addressee and between the addressee and the action. Furthermore, the idea that the speaker is only wondering about the addressee's course of action in a given circumstance increases both the addressee's optionality and the politeness of the act. It is still possible to further mitigate the force of the request by making use of a past modal referring to the addressee's ability to act:

(57) *I wonder if you could* just read that for us. (Coca 1994)

The use of the past modal in (57) has the same impact that has been discussed for other kinds of request using *could*. The addressee is thus left with a noticeably high degree of optionality to decide what his course of action can be. A similar mitigating effect can be achieved by using the past form in the verb of the fixed part of the construction. By way of illustration, consider the examples:

(58) *I wondered if you could* tell us what's going on. (Coca 1999)

(59) *I was wondering if you could* help me. (Coca 1994)

Due to the mitigating properties of past forms their simultaneous use in the two parts of the construction point to a request interpretation. Long inferential paths like the one underlying the request value of the construction increase the degree of optionality and politeness and specify the request meaning to a greater extent (see Leech, 1983, for an account of indirectness in terms of a mismatch between the inferential path and the explicitation of the meaning in an utterance). In spite of the high degree of specification that these constructions display for requests, its length makes it generally preferable to use shorter realizations. However, constructions of

this type fit very well in formal contexts where there is a distant relationship between participants in which indirect speech acts are more polite and therefore appropriate.

### ***I Would Appreciate If You X<sub>VP</sub>***

This construction manages to make the request meaning explicit by indicating that the speaker would obtain benefits from the realization of an action by the addressee. By presenting the addressee as the agent of an action that would be beneficial for the speaker, the construction instantiates all the parameters of the generic structure of requesting. This type of realization is furthermore fairly well-adapted for the performance of requests due to the diverse mitigating mechanisms that it contains. The use of a past modal distancing the addressee from the benefits that he would obtain from the requested action increases the degree of politeness conveyed by the speech act. Furthermore, the use of a conditional form indicating the possibility that the addressee carries out the requested action increases the degree of optionality of the act.

(60) *I would appreciate if you didn't interrupt me.* (Coca 2010)

This utterance illustrates the instantiation potential that this type of realization has for each of the parameters of the generic structure of requesting. In spite of the high degree of specification of this construction, its length makes it less adapted than other briefer realizations. It is the use of past modals in conjunction with conditional forms which increases the inferential route towards a request interpretation and which as a result increases the degree of politeness of the construction. Polite realizations of this type are generally more appropriate in contexts where there is a distant relationship holding between the speaker and the addressee and the former finds it necessary to use mechanisms that are capable of conveying his intention not to impose his wishes on the latter.

#### **4.2.4. Generalizations on constructions for requesting**

Interrogative constructions appear as the most specialized means for the performance of requests. The high degree of specification of interrogative constructions is motivated by the fact that the optionality of

the addressee finds an excellent vehicle for expression in the open nature of the interrogative sentence type. The most productive interrogative constructions are those appealing to the addressee's ability and willingness to carry out the requested action. The instantiation potential that these constructions have for the corresponding parts of the generic structure yields an easy requesting reading, which is nonetheless dependent on the manifestness of the benefits that the action is supposed to bring about for the speaker. To make the benefit component explicit these realizations make frequent use of mitigating resources like beneficiary indicators or the adverb *please*, which are capable of producing a request interpretation.

With regard to imperative constructions, the meaning conditions of the imperative sentence type focus on the presentation of an action to be realized by the addressee. This is the exact purpose of requests and because of this the use of imperative constructions appears rather useful for this illocutionary category. However, the impositive nature of the imperative sentence type makes it a poor mechanism for the high degree of optionality required in requesting. Because of this, imperative request constructions include diverse resources attempting to reduce the force of the act and providing the addressee with the optionality that is typical of requests. These mechanisms are mainly the adverb *please* and question tags appealing to the addressee's ability and willingness to perform the action.

The least codified constructions for the realization of requests are those based on the declarative sentence type. The use of specific devices in declarative constructions increases their degree of codification. The most recurring parameter of the generic structure instantiated by declarative constructions is the one making manifest the speaker's need. By making the addressee aware that there is a negative state of affairs in contexts where it is mutually manifest that the addressee has the ability to change that state of affairs into a positive one counts as a hint towards a request interpretation. On these occasions, the understanding of this type of realizations as instances of requesting is, however, crucially dependent on contextual information making both participants aware that the addressee has the ability to provide the speaker with the requested item. More explicit declarative constructions can be achieved by presenting the addressee as the person who has the ability to satisfy the speaker's need directly. Realizations of this type also make manifest the speaker's desire to get an action performed. These two components are definitional of requests and their instantiation gives way to highly specialized constructions whose length calls for formal contexts where there is a distant relationship holding between participants.

## 5. THE SPEECH ACT OF ADVISING

### 5.1. THE SEMANTICS OF ADVISING

According to Wierzbicka (187: 182) and Pérez (2001: 149), the term *advise* may have two different senses:

- (1) Advise<sub>1</sub>: to inform someone about a future state of affairs.
- (2) Advise<sub>2</sub>: to attempt to show the addressee possible courses of action which the speaker believes may be beneficial for the former.

As noted by Wierzbicka, advise<sub>1</sub> is a type of speech act usually performed by professional people or people in a position of responsibility who need to communicate their clients information which is beneficial for them. The examples below are instances of advise<sub>1</sub>:

- (3) “The best medicine is preventive” he advised. (Coca 1994)
- (4) “The future of glass is the same as the past” he advised. (Coca 2003)
- (5) With local officials concerned there are still bodies buried in homes and casino ships lying like beached whales along the highway, he advised slowing down a bit. (Coca 2005)
- (6) “Father Jack Morris will be with us in the morning” she advised. (Coca 2003)

In these examples the speaker is acting to the addressee’s benefit and the addressee is expected to take into account the information provided by the speaker to shape his actions. The difference with advise<sub>2</sub> is that in advise<sub>1</sub>, the speaker does not specify a course of action for the addressee. He only provides the addressee with the information he needs so he can decide on the most appropriate course of action. As observed, advise<sub>1</sub> simply intends to inform and is much closer to the category of informational acts than to that of interpersonal acts. Because of this, the present study concentrates on the expression of advise<sub>2</sub>, which is the lexicalization of an interpersonal speech act. As pointed out by Pérez, this second sense of advising is still subject to further internal classification. She distinguishes

between solicited and unsolicited advice depending on whether or not the piece of advice has been sought or uttered without being requested. Although this distinction was not considered in the traditional approaches to speech act meaning (Searle, 1969), some more recent studies have been devoted either to the workings of solicited (Hudson, 1990) or unsolicited advising (Boatman, 1987). In their approach to speech act categorization, Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) do not take into consideration this distinction. These authors consider advising to be an interpersonal speech act that arises from social convention according to which people have to bring about those states of affairs they believe beneficial for other people. The distinction between solicited and unsolicited advice is neither considered in traditional accounts of speech acts (Searle, 1969; Bach and Harnish, 1979).

Pérez's (2001) research on directive illocutions shows that these two kinds of advising present different characteristics in their realization. Nevertheless, Pérez recognizes certain attributes that are common to both solicited and unsolicited advising: the speaker presents a future course of action for realization; the course of action is expected to be carried out by the addressee; the speaker has some authority over the addressee;<sup>25</sup> there is mitigation, the addressee's optionality is constrained by the power of the speaker; the degree of addressee's will is expected to be high.<sup>26</sup> Her research shows a general tendency towards the use of imperative sentences for the realization of advising. However, the attributes of advising which are instantiated by imperative constructions are shared with other directive acts and thus the imperative sentence type is not a very explicit means for the expression of advising. The advising meaning can be nonetheless specified by means of linguistic devices aimed at guaranteeing the addressee's freedom to decide on the course of action proposed. Declarative and interrogative sentences also display low degrees of specification.

The study carried out by Pérez has proved useful in determining the semantic structure of advising. Advising is used to offer people an opinion

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<sup>25</sup> The type of authority associated with advising is referred to as *knowledge authority* and has a very weak nature (Verschueren, 1985: 181). Knowledge authority arises from a person's greater understanding of a subject or situation, either due to laborious learning or lifelong experience.

<sup>26</sup> As is the case with other directives, the 'cost' component is avoided by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) for the explanation of advising although the 'benefit' element plays a very important role. What characterizes advising is the fact that the addressee will benefit himself if he follows the speaker's directions. This feature distinguishes acts of advising from ordering, requesting or threatening, in which the speaker is the beneficiary of the action described in the predication. In fact, all the instances of advising in the corpus count as attempts by the speaker to influence the addressee's course of action to the benefit of the latter.

about what they should do or how they should act if they are involved in a negative state of affairs. Acts of advising emerge from the cultural convention according to which people have to bring about those states of affairs they believe beneficial for other people. The convention of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* that applies in the interpretation of advising read as follows (Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007: 111):

*If it is manifest to A that a particular state of affairs is not beneficial to B, and if A has the capacity to change that state of affairs, then A should do so.*

What characterizes the act of advising is the benefit that it intends to involve for the addressee. It may be argued that all the other attributes of are crucially dependent on the benefit component. The optionality that characterizes advising is, for example, determined by the fact that the addressee is both the agent and the beneficiary of the action. With regard to the degree of optionality displayed, it is high and unconstrained. In orders, the addressee's optionality is reduced by the speaker's authority. In requests, the addressee's optionality is constrained by conventions of politeness. In contrast, the addressee's optionality in the act of advising is high and unconstrained. Because the outcome of the addressee's decision only affects him, he is free to decide upon the realization of the action. Something similar occurs with the type of power associated with advising. When advising, speakers have some knowledge power over their addressees that stems from their greater understanding of a subject. Unlike the power that is characteristic of orders, the knowledge authority related with advising does not restrict the addressee's optionality, but simply entitles him to attempt to influence the addressee's course of action to his benefit. The type of mitigation that is proper of advising is also interrelated with the dimension of benefit. A certain amount of mitigation is expected in the expression of advising in order to make it manifest that the speaker merely wants to show the addressee potential courses of action rather than to impose them onto him. In this it is different from requesting. Requests are mitigated to reduce the cost that the proposed action involves for the addressee. Advising seeks the addressee's benefit and therefore there is no cost that needs to be minimized. This justifies the previous consideration of the act of advising in terms of the benefit that it involves for the addressee. Because of this, the semantic structure of advising proposed in this study, which takes the form of a high-level situational cognitive model, is based on the benefit dimension. The high-level cognitive model of advising



generalizes over cases of everyday interaction where people tell others what they should do in order to bring about a state of affairs that is beneficial for them. Here are some possible low-level cognitive models of advising:

- (a) B appears to be involved a negative state of affairs. A believes that a course of action could change that negative state of affairs into one that is beneficial for B. A makes B aware of such a course of action. B may take the course of action specified by A.
- (b) B appears to be involved a negative state of affairs. A believes that a course of action could change that negative state of affairs into one that is beneficial for B. A makes B aware that he would be the beneficiary of such a course of action. B may be interested in obtaining the benefit. B may take the course of action specified by A.
- (c) B makes A aware that he is involved in a negative state of affairs. A believes that a course of action could change that negative state of affairs into one that is beneficial for B. A makes B aware of such a course of action. B may take the course of action specified by A.
- (d) B asks A his opinion about what he should do to change a negative state of affairs in which he is involved. A thinks about a course of action that could change that negative state of affairs into one that is beneficial for B. A makes B aware of such a course of action. B may take the course of action specified by A.

The high-level model or generic structure of advising may derive from the common elements of these low-level models:

- (e) B appears to be involved a negative state of affairs.
- (f) A believes that a course of action could change that negative state of affairs into one that is beneficial for B.
- (g) A makes B aware of such a course of action.
- (h) A makes B aware that he would be the beneficiary of such a course of action.
- (i) B may be interested in obtaining the benefit.

- (j) B may take the course of action specified by A.

Any of the parameters of this generic structure is instantiated through different constructional realizations. Some are exemplified in the utterances below:

- (7) You're just lonely, Hank. Take some pills. *You need to* sleep. (Coca 1990)
- (8) *You should* eat salad every day. (Bnc)
- (9) *How about* some music? (Coca 2001)
- (10) When you come back, *you can* show me your treasures. *It will do you good* to have a bit of a distraction. (Coca 1996)
- (11) *It may be a good idea to* exercise with a qualified exercise professional for at least your first couple of sessions. (Coca 1998)
- (12) If you are a serious writer who can't find a publisher, *I would advise you* to wait until the right editor comes along. (Coca 2004)

All the above realizations instantiate relevant parts of the cognitive model proposed and represent explicit means for the expression of advising. Utterance (7) activates the part of the generic structure which presents the addressee as involved in a negative state of affairs. Utterance (8) spells out the part of the generic structure in which the speaker considers a course of action that could change the negative state of affairs into one that is beneficial for the addressee. Utterance (9) instantiates the part of the generic structure that requests the addressee's consideration about carrying out an action that is beneficial for him. The use of an interrogative construction guarantees the addressee's optionality and contributes to making the act of advising explicit. Utterance (10) points to the part of the generic structure where the speaker makes the addressee aware of the benefits that he would obtain from the proposed action. The same meaning condition is expressed in utterance (11). Finally, the utterance in (12), which displays the highest degree of codification for advising, manages to activate the full generic structure by making use of the performative verb. As will be shown in next section, the use of these constructions for advising displays some peculiarities motivated by differences in the context of situation.

## 5.2. REALIZATION PROCEDURES FOR ADVISING

The data shows a vast array of declarative constructions in the expression of advising. The number of advising constructions identified in the corpus for each sentence type is reproduced in table below.

Sentence type	Constructions	Occurrences
Imperative	2	16
Declarative	10	338
Interrogative	2	82

Table 10. *Distribution of advising constructions by sentence type*

In this section it is my objective to formulate some of the most conventional of those realization procedures which are used to activate the parameters that make up the generic structure of advising.

### 5.2.1. Imperative advising constructions

Imperative constructions do not appear to be a very explicit means of expression for the act of advising. This is due to the fact that the imposition conveyed by the imperative sentence type clashes with the optionality that characterizes advising. It is possible to reduce the imposition of imperative constructions by means of linguistic mechanisms like conditional expressions, hedges and the adverb *please*. In so doing, the speaker will be able to activate the variables of optionality and mitigation that are typical of advising thus making the act more explicit. Let us explore how these mechanisms are used to increase the degree of codification of imperative constructions for the realization of advising:

#### ***Consider $X_{VP}$***

This construction requests the addressee's consideration about the nature of the state of affairs that he has to change to his benefit. Since the speaker merely asks the addressee to evaluate the benefits of carrying out an action, the construction is not very impositive. Consider the following example:

- (13) *Consider getting* a housekeeper twice monthly if the budget allows.  
(Coca 2007)

In utterance (13), the addressee's optionality is communicated by means of a conditional expression. The hypothetical sense introduced by the conditional expression, together with the fact that it is up to the addressee to decide whether the suggested condition holds or not, increases the optionality of the act. The adverb *please* also constitutes an excellent means for increasing the addressee's optionality by appealing to his willingness:

(14) *Please* consider volunteering. (Coca 2001)

The use of adverb *please* in (14) is used to reinforce the idea that the piece of advice is given only because it is the speaker's belief that the action will be beneficial for the addressee and that the addressee is free to decide whether or not to carry out the action. The use of a persuasive mechanism of this type indicates that the speaker acknowledges the addressee's freedom. This means that the degree of optionality increases, and therefore, the imposition of the imperative decreases, that is, the force of the act is mitigated.

### ***Think About X<sub>VP</sub>***

The rationale behind this construction is the same as above but the verb used in this case generally requests a less careful evaluation on the part of the addressee. The use of this verb gives rise to a different way of parametrizing the meaning value of the construction by using the same rational schema. As observed in utterance below, the lexical transparency of the construction is enough to produce an advising reading:

(15) *Think about* buying an apartment, a condominium unit or a cooperative residence. (Coca 1995)

This type of realization may also admit the use of a mitigator in order to decrease the force of the imperative to that of advising. The adverb *please* represents once again a common resource which can be used in this respect. Consider the communicative effects of this lexical item in the following utterance:

(16) *Please* think about providing blue bags half the size of the ones we buy now so that old ladies can carry their old newspapers out to the garbage. (Coca 1996)

As was the case with the previous construction, the use of please appeals to the addressee's rationality. It counts as an attempt to persuade him of the benefits of the proposed action. In so doing it acknowledges his freedom to decide upon his future course of action and therefore activates the variables of optionality and mitigating.

### 5.2.2. Declarative advising constructions

It has already been explained that the low degree of specification of the declarative sentence type makes it equally appropriate for the expression of diverse speech acts. We have seen how the use of different linguistic mechanisms increases the degree of specification of declarative constructions for the realization of a particular illocution. The instances of advising in the corpus reveal highly specialized declarative constructions combining lexical and grammatical resources with a high instantiation potential for relevant parts of the corresponding cognitive model.

#### *I Advise You X<sub>VP</sub>*

One way of codifying the advising meaning through a declarative sentence type is by making explicit the illocutionary value by means of an explicit performative verb. The corpus contains a large number of instances realized by means of constructions based on performative predicates. The force conveyed by this construction is justified by the need to make manifest the speaker's desire to help. Look at the examples below:

- (17) *I advise you to take a breath. You are about to behold something truly extraordinary.* (Coca 2003)
- (18) The house is yours. *I advise you to close it up and forget its secrets.* (Coca 2006)

These examples succeed in activating the full generic structure thereby leading the addressee to the advising value almost effortlessly. The force of the construction is mitigated by means of different resources. In utterance (17), the impact of the advice is reduced by an additional declarative sentence encouraging the addressee to keep calm and attentive, thus drawing his attention to the benefits he is about to obtain. In contrast to

this, utterance (18) illustrates a forceful piece of advice. The speaker gives his opinion about an action that would be beneficial for the addressee without giving an incentive which may motivate compliance on the part of the addressee. The forced conveyed can also be mitigated through the use of the performative verb through conditional forms:

(19) *I would advise you* to start getting in touch with your lawyer now.  
(Coca 2004)

(20) *I would advise you* to enjoy her while you can. (Bnc)

Although it may not appear explicit, conditional forms activate the part of the generic structure that relates to the addressee's optionality, which reduces the force of the act and specifies the advising value of the construction. The conditional tense in these examples suggests that the speaker is not actually giving advice but only considering what his advice would be in the situation described. It is up to the addressee to decide if the situation described holds and whether or not to follow the piece of advice. The high degree of mitigation displayed by this formal realization makes it a fairly adequate means for performing an act of advising.

### ***If I Were You I Would X<sub>VP</sub>***

This construction represents a highly conventional means of giving advice. In its conventional form, this construction consists of an invariable conditional expression (i.e. *if I were you*) plus a sentence in the first person singular subject. The advising reading of this construction is easy to grasp. The speaker refers to a hypothetical situation and tells the addressee what would be his reaction if he were the addressee. Since everybody seeks the best for themselves, it is clear that the proposed action is beneficial in nature. Moreover, the conditional expression makes it explicit that the speaker is not really considering carrying out the action, but he is only thinking what his course of action would be for the addressee's sake. In this way is activated the benefit component of the generic structure of advising, given that, if the action described in the predication is carried out by the addressee, it will be beneficial for him.<sup>27</sup> By way of illustration, consider the following examples:

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<sup>27</sup> The advising reading of this construction can be explained in terms of the cognitive theory of mental spaces (Fauconnier, 1985; Fauconnier and Turner, 2002; Dancygier and Sweetser,

(21) “*If I were you*, I’d get off the cross”. (Coca 1991)

(22) *If I were you* I’d change those spike heels for walking shoes and explore the place. (Bnc)

The level of conventionalization of this construction is such that the conditional expression is often left out without causing difficulties in its interpretation as a piece of advice:

(23) I would take the amber leather suitcase out of the closet. (Coca 2001)

At first sight this constructional variant does not seem a very explicit way of performing the act of advising, since it does not point to the addressee as the person who is to carry out the action in any way. It is nevertheless such implicitness that activates the values of optionality and mitigation which are proper of advising. Because the addressee is not explicitly presented as the agent of the proposed action, he has a greater freedom of action, and consequently the force of the act is mitigated.

### ***You Must X<sub>VP</sub>***

Highly codified instances of advising can be produced by specifying declarative sentences by means of modality markers. Objective modality expresses the speaker’s evaluation of the likelihood of occurrence of a state of affairs. Modality markers used in advising denote that the carrying out of the action would not only be recommendable but also obligatory according to a certain norm. This type of obligation arises from the observance of the cultural convention underlying the conceptual grounding of advising. Thus, through the activation of part (c) of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, speakers should make their addressees aware of what is beneficial for them if it is not manifest to them. By means of a metonymic inferential schema, the construction gives easy access to the cognitive model of advising.

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2005). This theory is based on the idea that we set up mental spaces when we think and speak. Space builders are the linguistic units that prompt the construction of mental spaces. In the present analysis, we could regard as space builders those expressions capable of creating contexts for illocutionary interpretation. This construction sets up two mental spaces, the first one relating to the speaker’s course of action in a given situation, and the second referring to the addressee’s course of action in the exact same situation. The connection between the two mental spaces suggests that the speaker’s action, if carried out by the addressee, would be as beneficial to him as it would be for the speaker. Because everybody wants the best for themselves, the addressee would be expected to follow the piece of advice.

Because everybody wants the best for themselves, the addressee would be expected to follow the piece of advice. But the addressee should have freedom to decide against it. For this reason, the type of marker used may appear rather impositive. In order to guarantee the addressee's optionality, the construction needs to be accompanied by other linguistic elements that mitigate the force of the marker so that it loses its impositive character. The lack of mitigation may fit only in marked contexts where it is clear that the speaker's purpose is merely to give advice:

- (24) To me they are good photographs. You *must* just go ahead and see what happens. (Coca 1990)

In (24), the speaker's intention of giving advice is made explicit by a statement giving his opinion about the addressee's photographs. The obligatoriness of the modal verb is significantly mitigated by the use of that statement and the linguistic hedge that minimizes the task that is being imposed on the addressee (i.e. *just*). The use of these two mechanisms leads to an advising interpretation which can be contextually cancelled.

### ***You Have Got To X<sub>VP</sub>***

The metonymic operation specified above is the same for this construction, with the difference that the modal verb *have to* displays a lower degree of imposition. This makes the construction more appropriate for the realization of acts of advising. The force conveyed is, however, still high and the construction needs to use other linguistic means to secure the addressee's freedom. Here is an example:

- (25) I think that, when you are the president, you *have got* to take the good and the bad. (Coca 2002)

In (25), the construction makes use of diverse resources to make the addressee aware that the speaker intends to recommend an action without being impositive. In the first place, there is a condition clause describing a situation in which the speaker's advice would be useful. If the addressee believes such a condition applies, it is up to him to decide whether or not to follow the advice. The use of condition clauses of this type proves effective in the explication of the advising meaning in constructions making use of impositive modality markers. Further, in the example there is a linguistic



hedge consisting in a declarative clause in which the speaker indicates he is just giving his opinion about the action that should be carried out by the addressee. By specifying that he is only saying what he believes to be the best option, the speaker is implying the idea that the obligatoriness marked by the modal verb arises from personal credence and not from an external rule. If the addressee chooses not to follow the speaker's advice, he will not be violating any cultural convention but simply failing to act as the speaker thinks is advisable. Thanks to the use of such mitigators, this particular instance constitutes a fairly adequate piece of advice. The value of the construction for advising is thus constrained by contextual information and its suitability depends on mitigating mechanisms.

### ***You Should X<sub>VP</sub>***

This construction expresses the same meaning of imposition as the previous ones. Again, through the application of part (c) of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, the speaker reminds the addressee that he is under the obligation to bring about a state of affairs that is beneficial for him. In contrast to previous realizations, the imposition conveyed by the type of marker is much lower. The speaker is simply arguing that it is the addressee's obligation to carry out an action to the addressee's benefit. The low degree of imposition conveyed makes this construction a suitable means for the expression of advising. Take the following example as representative:

- (26) *You should* not exceed this amount because iron can be toxic in certain individuals. (Bnc)

The action proposed in (26) is clearly beneficial for the addressee. The benefits involved in the action proposed to the addressee are made explicit through the use of a reason clause. The obligation of the addressee to act as proposed by the speaker arises from the addressee's assumed desire not to be harmed.

### ***You Ought To X<sub>VP</sub>***

This type of realization also gives advice by indicating an obligation on the part of the speaker to perform the action being proposed. The modal

verb used in this construction expresses social obligation but conveys a low degree of imposition:

(27) *You ought to* have a hot whisky and lemon. (Bnc)

(28) “*You really ought to* learn to enjoy a good cigar”. (Coca 2005)

The advising meaning of both (27) and (28) above is based on the speaker’s belief that the addressee has to act in a certain way. In (27), it is implicit in the action proposed that the speaker seeks the benefit of the addressee, which gives access to the benefit component of advising. In (28), the emphasis is placed on the obligation of the addressee to follow the speaker’s advice, which conveys the idea that the speaker firmly believes on the benefits the addressee would obtain from the performance of the recommended action and therefore functions as a persuasive device to obtain the addressee’s compliance.

### ***You Can X<sub>VP</sub>***

It has already been shown that modality markers constitute an effective means for the specification of the advising meaning in declarative constructions. The use of inherent modality in a declarative sentence is yet another possible realization procedure for the act of advising. Inherent modality refers to the distinctions that define the relation between a participant and the state of affairs in which he is involved. One of these distinctions relates to the ability of the participant to carry out an action (e.g. *can*, *be able to*). The advising interpretation of this construction is based on the assumption that people, knowing that they may obtain certain benefits if they bring about a certain state of affairs, will do so provided that they have the ability to do so. Making explicit the fact that the addressee is indeed able to act in a way that is beneficial for him is enough to give rise to the act of advising. The following example illustrates this:

(29) You know, *you can* scream at him, you can send him pictures, you can write to him. (Coca 1990)

This rationale only works if the verb phrase in the variable element denotes an action offered to the addressee as a proposal to change a negative state of affairs to one that is beneficial for him. It must be also

clear from the context that the addressee is the person that is going to carry out the action and that the action only seeks the addressee's own benefit. Otherwise the construction may perform other illocutions such as orders (e.g. *You can clean your room out*) or implicit offers (e.g. *You can have some more of this cake*).

### ***You Need X<sub>VP</sub>***

Inherent modality may also be related to the addressee's necessity to carry out an action (e.g. *need*). Expressing certainty about the addressee's need to act in a certain way constitutes a rather implicit means of making manifest our belief that his carrying out of an action will be beneficial for him.

- (30) *You need to ask yourself what you want, and what you can realistically expect.* (Bnc)

As was the previous case, the interpretation of this construction as a piece of advice is largely dependent on the realization of the variable element by a verb denoting benefit to the addressee and constrained by contextual information. The idea of benefit to the addressee is often associated with verbs of necessity, but it not fully coded into it. Utterance (30) can only be understood as a piece of advice if it is used in a context where it is clear that the addressee is considering diverse courses of actions to change a negative state of affairs. The verb indicates that there is an actual necessity on the part of the addressee to follow the piece of advice in order to obtain benefits. This constrains the addressee's optionality, who is left with no other alternatives to change the situation in which he is involved. This reduction in optionality is nonetheless compensated by pointing to the addressee as the beneficiary of the action.

### ***X<sub>VP</sub> Is A Good Idea***

So far the study of the declarative constructions used for advising has evidenced the relevance of the component of the cognitive model which concerns the benefits that that the addressee may obtain from the realization the proposed action. The linguistic mechanisms used to specify the advising meaning in declarative constructions are all grounded in the benefit

component. The present type of realization is not an exception. In this case, the advising value arises from the manifestness of the speaker's belief that a certain action may be beneficial for the addressee. Presenting a course of action for realization as something positive manages to activate central parameters of the generic structure formulated for advising. It first instantiates the part of the structure in which the speaker thinks upon a course of action which may be positive for the addressee. It also instantiates the part of the structure which concerns the manifestness of that course of action and the benefits the addressee would obtain. The instantiation of these two parameters manages to produce fairly codified instances of advising:

(31) Starting a part-time gig *is a good idea*. (Coca 2011)

However, the presentation of only one course of action as recommendable may cause a reduction of optionality that needs to be compensated:

(32) It *may be* a good idea to buy two copies. (Coca 2011)

(33) It *might be* a good idea to start thinking about adoption. (Bnc)

As observed in these two utterances, modality markers of possibility mitigate the force of the act. The resulting pieces of advice are thus more tentative and implicit and the freedom of the addressee is considerably increased.

### ***X<sub>VP</sub> Is The Best Option***

In contrast to the previous construction, the use of a superlative adjective in this case reduces the addressee's optionality to a larger extent. This makes it necessary to increase his freedom of action through mechanisms such as statements expressing the benefits the speaker seeks for the addressee or conditional forms and modality markers, which leave the addressee with freedom to decide upon the realization of the action. In (34) below, the reduction in optionality brought about by the use of the superlative is compensated by a conditional form that allows the addressee to decide if he wants to carry out the action when the condition described applies:

- (34) When rodent problems are too big for cats or dogs to handle, and you don't want to wait for barn owls to move in and help you out, trapping *is the best option*. (Coca 1995)

The advising meaning is mostly contained in the fixed part of this type of realization, although the interpretation as a piece of advice depends on the semantics of the verb realizing the variable part. The verb must denote a controllable action that benefits the addressee. The fixed element of the construction may be subject to changes according to differences in aspect. See the example:

- (35) "We are advising that leasing *will be the best option* in the first year and our initial impression is that there will be more quota available than sheep that need it". (Bnc)

In (35), the fixed verbal phrase of the construction takes a modal verb pointing to the future realization of the proposed action. The communicative effect of the use of this verb may be contrasted with the effect created by the use of a conditional expression in the previous utterance. Conditional forms grant the addressee with optionality whereas expressions of certainty constrain the choices on the part of the addressee and thus seem rather inappropriate for the expression of advising. The advising interpretation of this utterance would depend on contextual information pointing to a symmetric relationship holding between the speaker and the addressee as regards their social power.

### 5.2.3. Interrogative advising constructions

Interrogative sentences are the least codified means for the performance of advising. The inherent openness of the interrogative sentence type generally activates the optionality element. Because of this, interrogatives are highly compatible with speech act categories like requesting which display a high degree of addressee's optionality. In requests, the speaker's attempt to obtain benefits from the addressee's action needs to be compensated by increasing the addressee's optionality, which finds a suitable means of expression in interrogative constructions. However, in advising, there is no need to increase the addressee's optionality since the benefits are to the addressee himself and the carrying out of the proposed action is only the addressee's decision. This explains

the small number of advising constructions based on the interrogative sentence type. Nevertheless, the fact that there is no need to give greater freedom to the addressee does not mean that it is not possible to make use of interrogative advising constructions which activate this component. The following constructions illustrate the way in which the optionality variable is instantiated through the use of the interrogative form.

### ***Why Not $X_{VP}$ ?***

The interpretation of this construction as an instance of advising arises from the instantiation of part (c) of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, which binds people not to do anything negative to others. Questioning someone the reason for not carrying out an action that is beneficial functions as a means of persuading the addressee to do as told. Since there is no reason why the specified action should not be taken, then the addressee should follow the piece of advice so that he can benefit from it.

(36) *Why not* take the chance? (Coca 1990)

By making use of the interrogative form, the speaker acknowledges the addressee's state of mind and freedom to make his own decisions. This manages to instantiate the optionality element that is typical of advising and makes the act more explicit.

### ***How About $X_{VP}$ ?***

The rationale behind this construction is also grounded in the convention that provides the cultural background for advising and which leads us to make other people aware that a given state of affairs is beneficial for them if we believe that they are unaware of this situation. In this case, the speaker puts forward a possibility that seems to be a good option for the addressee, leaving him much freedom as to whether or not to accept his proposal. Since the addressee is told to carry out the action only if he wishes to, the optionality is increased, and so is the mitigation of the act. Here is one example:

(37) *How about* making something out of the cockroaches in your room?  
(Coca 1995)

- (38) If the man in your life is bored with socks, scarves and slippers, *how about* buying him the ultimate shirt for Christmas? (Bnc)

The manifestness of the addressee's need to ponder on the possibility of doing something on his own benefit is in itself capable of producing an easy interpretation of the construction as an instance of advising.<sup>28</sup> The use of the interrogative form in this case represents a highly adequate means of giving rise to such an interpretation. Note that, originally, the non-abbreviated expression *How would you feel about X<sub>VP</sub>?* was probably intended as a way of getting the addressee to examine his own feelings about following a proposed course of action which the speaker thought was good for him.

#### 5.2.4. Generalizations on constructions for advising

The analysis of the realizations of advising in our corpus reveals once again how different linguistic mechanisms may be arranged into particular constructions which, by instantiating a number of relevant parts of the situational cognitive model for advising facilitate the interpretation of particular utterances as instances of this illocutionary type. The imperative sentence type has proved the most appropriate means for this purpose. The compatibility of the meaning conditions of the imperative construction makes it fairly well-adapted for advising. The impositive nature of the imperative sentence type needs to be nonetheless softened through different mechanisms in order to secure the addressee's optionality.

Regarding the use of the declarative sentence type, it has been shown that the suitability of declarative constructions relates to the lexico-grammatical resources used. In spite of the unimpositive character of the declarative form, the little degree of specification that it shows makes it necessary to use mechanisms that lead the addressee to the advising interpretation. The advising meaning can be made explicit through the use

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<sup>28</sup> One of the assumptions of this study has to do with the fact that the semantic and pragmatic grounding of interpersonal speech acts consists of high-level situational meaning deriving from the cultural stipulations of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. In the definition of the model, Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) and Baicchi and Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) disregard the value of the cost element as a defining characteristic of directive speech acts. This analysis of directives shall follow this perspective and consider cost merely as the absence of benefit. In the case of the construction under consideration, the action proposed thus counts as a matter of indirect benefit to the addressee in avoiding a potential cost. Since the addressee is not aware of this benefit, the nature of the state of affairs needs to be made manifest to him.

of an explicit performative verb. Other means for specifying the advising value of declaratives are modality markers. As has been explained, telling the addressee that the proposed action is obligatory to a certain extent is an implicit way of reminding him that he is expected to act in compliance with cultural conventions. Some of the declarative constructions in the corpus have shown a large degree of conventionalization as in the case with the *if I were you* form.

Regarding interrogative constructions, they have proved the least adapted means for performing the act of advising. This is due to their open nature. The corpus has shown two ways of giving advice on the basis of the interrogative sentence type. These constructions manage to instantiate the part of the cognitive model of advising which points to the addressee as needing to reflect upon a potential benefit.



## 6. THE SPEECH ACT OF OFFERING

### 6.1. THE SEMANTICS OF OFFERING

Acts of offering present a state of affairs for acceptance or rejection. The person that makes an offer does not know if the addressee wants him to carry out the action expressed in the predication. In general, the speaker believes the addressee will accept the offer, since what he intends to do is in the benefit of the latter. Authors like Searle (1975: 11), Leech (1983: 217) and Wierzbicka (1987: 191) regard offers as clear cases of commissive illocutions. In contrast, Hancher (1979: 7) holds that offers belong to a hybrid commissive-directive category since they display elements of both directive and commissive speech acts. Offers fulfill one of the central characteristics of directive acts in attempting to influence the addressee's behavior. As in the case of commissive acts, however, the speaker undertakes to carry out a certain action. This means that bringing about the state of affairs expressed in the predication always requires the speaker's involvement. Pérez (2001: 289) supports Hancher's account, although with an important point of divergence. Hancher observes that Searlean illocutionary categories do not fully accommodate hybrid illocutions. He thus posits a new hybrid commissive-directive category. Pérez (*ibid*: 290) contends that this category of commissive-directives does not consist of a homogeneous group of speech acts with an exact intermediate position between commissive and directive illocutions. Instead, she argues for a continuum of illocutionary categories (see the characterization of threats in section 8.1., for further considerations on the categorization of hybrid illocutionary types). In fact, she regards offers as nearer to the commissive end of the continuum. In her view, offers ask for an active involvement on the part of the speaker and just a passive involvement on the part of the addressee. The fact that the speaker presents himself as the agent of the action brings acts of offering closer to the category of commissive speech act categories.

The present corpus-based analysis reveals that both directive and commissive features are relevant for the definition of offers. Let us begin by discussing Pérez's description of the meaning conditions that characterize the act of offering. In her study, prototypical offers have the following attributes: the speaker presents himself as the agent of a future action; the degree of mitigation is low; the speaker is uncertain about the addressee's will; the future action involves a benefit to the addressee and a cost to the

speaker; the addressee has freedom to accept or reject the offer.<sup>29</sup> Her study reveals a significant preference for the use of interrogative sentences for the realization of offers. The open nature of interrogative sentences makes them an excellent means for the expression of a proposition left to the addressee's consideration. Declarative sentences also convey lack of imposition, and are therefore shown as a frequent realization procedure for offering. However, their low degree of specialization needs to be increased by the addition of linguistic devices capable of activating relevant parts of the corresponding illocutionary scenario. Imperative sentences, in contrast, do not instantiate the high degree of optionality that characterizes offers and, because of this, they are largely unspecified for the realization of this speech act type.

Pérez's analysis has helped me to define the meaning conditions that make up the generic structure of this speech act. Offers count as attempts to get the addressee to let the speaker carry out an action which is assumed to be beneficial for him. This means that the addressee will expect some benefits from the action. Since he is the beneficiary of the action, the addressee is free to decide whether he wants to accept the speaker's offer. Here is the convention of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* that applies in the interpretation of offering (Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007: 111):

*If it is manifest to A that it is not manifest to B that a potential state of affairs is (regarded as) beneficial for A, A is expected to make this manifest to B.*

The speaker who utters an offer works under the assumption that the addressee is not aware of his ability to alter the negative state of affairs in which he is involved. By telling the addressee that he is capable of helping him to carry out an action, the speaker is committing himself to doing it if the addressee accepts the offer. Since the speaker seeks the addressee's benefit, he has reasons to believe that the addressee is willing to accept his help. The fact that the addressee is the beneficiary of the speaker's action functions as a hint towards the interpretation of an utterance as an offer. Those cases in which the speaker offers to do something that is negative for the addressee shade off into ironic instances of threatening:

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<sup>29</sup> In commissive acts, the speaker commits himself to a certain course of action. Therefore offers can be regarded as costly to the speaker. The realization of the action expressed in the predication results in a benefit to the addressee and a cost to the speaker. However, in keeping with the insights in Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) and Baicchi and Ruiz de Mendoza (2011), this study shall consider the cost of offers a mere side-effect of the speaker's obedience to the cultural generalization that moves us to help other people if it is within our range of abilities.

- (1) Do you want me to cut your hands off, use it as an ashtray? (Coca 2001)

This construction is highly specialized for the performance of offers. However, the fact that the action the speaker intends to carry out is not beneficial for the addressee is not compatible with the nature of offering. I shall thus argue that the benefits to be obtained by the addressee represent a very relevant characteristic of this illocutionary category.

The other defining element of offering is that it involves the participation of both the speaker and the addressee in bringing about a state of affairs. As concluded above, the apparent hybrid commissive-directive nature of offers derives from this attribute. The act of offering is however closer to the commissive end of the continuum. The reason is that the action expressed in the predication is to be brought about by the speaker. In those cases in which the addressee is presented as the agent of the action, it is implied that the speaker is also committed. Consider, for instance:

- (2) “Relax”, she said. “Have another glass of water”. (Coca 1993)
- (3) “Here, take my seat”, she offered, and the young woman took it with a grateful smile. (Bnc)

The examples above present the addressee as the agent of the action. Pérez (2001: 309) distinguishes two types of offering, one which involves the speaker carrying out an action that is beneficial for the addressee, and another which involves the transfer of an object from the speaker to the addressee. The first type involves an action by the speaker (i.e. bringing about a state of affairs) and an action by the addressee (i.e. acceptance of the offer). The second type involves an action by the speaker (i.e. giving) and two actions by the addressee (i.e. accepting the offer and taking the object that is being offered). The examples above involve the transfer of an object (i.e. *glass of water, seat*) from the speaker to the addressee. As noted by Pérez, transferring objects involves the participation of both the speaker and the addressee. In order for the addressee to have another glass of water or to take the speaker’s seat, the speaker must be committed to giving him another glass of water or to giving him his seat. According to Pérez, only those offers that refer to the transfer of objects can be realized by imperative sentences that present the addressee as the agent of the action. Observe how offers that have to do with the performance of an action by the addressee do not permit this type of realization procedure:

- (4) \*Have the water drunk.
- (5) May I give you another glass of water?

From this discussion it may be concluded that offers always involve a commitment on the part of the speaker. In cases related to the transfer of an object the speaker commits himself to giving something to the addressee and in cases that involve the performance of an action the speaker commits himself to bringing about a state of affairs. Offers also involve the addressee's participation, either if it has to do with his acceptance or with the performance of an additional physical action of his acceptance. Together with the benefit that the offer may bring to the addressee, I shall consider that the participation of the speaker and the addressee in bringing about a state of affairs is the defining element of this illocutionary type. My definition of the high-level cognitive model or generic structure of offering makes provision of these two semantic features. This generic structure derives from generalizing over low-level scenarios. Some such scenarios are the following:

- (a) A believes that bringing about a state of affairs would be beneficial for B. A has the ability to bring about such a state of affairs. A makes B aware of his ability. B may accept A's proposal.
- (b) A believes that bringing about a state of affairs would be beneficial for B. A makes B aware of his willingness to help. B may accept A's proposal.
- (c) A believes that bringing about a state of affairs would be beneficial for B. A has the ability to bring about such a state of affairs. A makes B aware of his ability. B may participate in the bringing about of the state of affairs.
- (d) A believes that bringing about a state of affairs would be beneficial for B. A has the ability to bring about such a state of affairs. A makes B aware of his ability. A makes B aware of his willingness to help. B may participate in the bringing about of the state of affairs.

To these low-level models correspond some common elements to the generic structure:

- (e) A believes that bringing about a state of affairs would be beneficial for B.
- (f) A has the ability to bring about such a state of affairs.
- (g) A makes B aware of his ability.
- (h) A makes B aware of his willingness to help.
- (i) B may accept A's proposal.
- (j) B may participate in the bringing about of the state of affairs.

This description of offering will allow me to identify the constructions which instantiate this illocutionary type. The realizational resources for the generic structure may be exemplified in the following utterances:

- (6) Mom, *do you need help* with your shower? You shouldn't do it alone. (Coca 1995)
- (7) Can *I offer* you something to drink? On a nasty wet morning like this one? (Coca 1995)
- (8) *I could* cook you a bit of bacon in seconds with a microwave. (Bnc)
- (9) Don't think twice. If you need help moving, *I'm there*. (Coca 2002)
- (10) *Do you want me to* check your spellings for you? (Bnc)
- (11) *Will you let me* help you? (Coca 1991)

Each of these constructions instantiates one different parameter of the generic structure of offering. The offer in (6) is prompted by the speaker's belief that the addressee needs help in bringing about a state of affairs, which constitutes the motivating factor for offers. The speaker makes the addressee aware of his ability to provide help in (7) and (8) and his willingness in (9). Utterances (10) and (11) examples request the addressee's acceptance of the addressee's proposal. It is worth noticing that, in contrast to what we saw with directive acts, in offering the component of the generic structure concerning the addressee's carrying out of the action

may hardly be used to stand for the whole speech act. This occurs because anticipating the addressee's response in a directive act is a way of directing him into compliance, which clashes with the conditional character of offers.

## 6.2. REALIZATION PROCEDURES FOR OFFERING

The instances of offering in the corpus are mainly performed by interrogative constructions. The number of offers corresponding to each sentence type is captured in the following table.

Sentence type	Constructions	Occurrences
Interrogative	9	306
Declarative	3	118
Imperative	3	58

Table 11. *Distribution of offering constructions by sentence type*

Considering the semantic properties of offering, it is not surprising that this speech act category should show preference for the use of interrogative constructions. Offers are conditional. This means that the carrying out the action specified in the predication will only takes place if the addressee accepts the offer. Interrogative sentences present an open proposition and represent excellent foundations for the performance of offers. Likewise, the high degree of optionality that characterizes this illocutionary type finds in interrogative constructions a suitable means of expression. Declarative and imperative constructions do not convey the same degree of optionality and they are not as apt for offering. Let us study each of the constructions for the expression of offers in the corpus.

### 6.2.1. Interrogative offer constructions

The most productive group of constructional realizations for the speech act under consideration is the one that has the interrogative sentence type as its foundation. Those found in the corpus are considered below.

#### *Would You Like Me X<sub>VP</sub>?*

This formal realization has been found in a significant group of instances in the corpus. The high degree of specialization of this procedure

has its motivation in the semantics of the act of offering. This construction points to the part of the generic structure of offering that presents a state of affairs which is the object of the addressee's wishes or necessities. See the following examples:

(12) Ms. Williams, *would you like me to* help you do your makeup today?  
(Coca 2004)

(13) *Would you like me to* make you some eggs and bacon? (Bnc)

The cultural convention underlying the realization of offers moves the speaker to make the addressee aware of the states of affairs that are negative to him. The present construction gives easy access to this convention and has therefore become conventionalized for the expression of offers. The utterances above inquire about the addressee's willingness to be helped by the speaker. The addressee's willingness is activated through the use of the modal *would*, which has the consequence of increasing the degree of optionality of this type of realization. Such optionality is further increased by presenting the speaker as the agent of the action. The addressee is told that, if the action to be carried out by the speaker is against his will, he is free to reject the offer. Since the beneficiary of the action is the addressee himself, the outcome of his decision only affects him.

### ***Do You Want Me X<sub>VP</sub>?***

In this construction the use of the verb *want* makes the speaker's enquiry about the addressee's wishes more explicit. As argued above, questions about the addressee's desires represent quite specific means of instantiating the semantic structure of offers. Consider:

(14) *Do you want me to* take you to the hospital? (Coca 1994)

(15) "*Do you want me to* come with you and show you the way out?"  
offered Endill. (Bnc)

The pronouns in italics in these examples present the speaker as the agent of the action, while the questions themselves point to the addressee as the beneficiary of that action. Together with the use of the interrogative sentence type, which presents a proposition left for the addressee's

acceptance, this mechanism displays a high degree of optionality which constitutes a hint towards the offering reading.

### ***May I Help You $X_{VP}$ ?***

Although this construction has shown little productiveness in the corpus, it represents a fairly codified means for the expression of offers. In this case, the speaker is asking for permission to help the addressee, which is a natural consequence of politeness conventions. Here are two examples from the corpus:

(16) *May I help you* find a particular Masterpiece movie? (Coca 2001)

(17) *May I help you* look? (Coca 2004)

The fact that the speaker's proposal may be helpful for the addressee is in itself capable of instantiating the whole generic structure for the act of offering. The utterances above qualify as explicit instances of offering. In these utterances, the speaker realizes that the addressee has not asked for help, maybe because he feels shy about it or because he may be even unaware that someone can help. Then, through the application of rules of interaction, the speaker is expected to make the addressee aware of his willingness to help. The fact that the addressee himself does not ask for help associates the use of this construction to contexts in which the participants are not acquainted with each other.

### ***Do You Need Help $X_{VP}$ ?***

This construction also appeals to the addressee's necessities but it conveys a lower degree of optionality. As specified by cultural conventions, the speaker should be expected to offer help to the addressee if it is manifest to him that the addressee is affected by a negative state of affairs. Since in normal circumstances the addressee may ask other people for help, the speaker enquires if the addressee wants him to perform the action expressed in the predication. This realization procedure allows the speaker to mitigate the force of the act by increasing the addressee's optionality towards the offer. If the addressee does not feel he needs the speaker's help, he is free to refuse:



(18) *Do you need help* with a project or report that will benefit your ward or unit? (Bnc)

(19) *Do you need help* with design? (Coca 1998)

The benefit to be obtained by the addressee is only made manifest through the verb used in the realization of the variable part of the construction. The variable element needs to be realized by a verb denoting a controlled action and a benefit to the addressee. The fixed part of the construction contains much of the offer meaning and is sensitive to formal changes. See the examples:

(20) I was thinking, *don't you need help* with your counting? I could write numbers down for you? (Coca 1994)

(21) *You need help* with that thing? (Coca 1994)

As shown in (20), the use of a negated form of the verb gives rise to an unmitigated offer that may be appropriate in contexts where the social distance between the speakers is small. The reason is that, counter to all expectations, the addressee has not complied with social conventions to make the speaker aware of his need. The use of the negated form of the auxiliary verb, therefore, presupposes the addressee's refusal and presents him as not following cultural conventions. Because of this, the sequence would fit in contexts of familiarity in which the speakers know each other well enough to infer that the speaker really worries about the addressee and does not want him to carry out the action himself. In (21), the relationship holding between the participants is also close and the speaker is able to utter a very informal offer. The absence of the auxiliary verb constrains the addressee's optionality, which, although may seem incompatible with the act of offering, is fully justified in cases of close familiarity between the speakers.

### ***Can I X<sub>VP</sub> You Y<sub>NP</sub>?***

This formal realization makes explicit the most relevant features of the generic structure of offers in such a way that it leads to straightforward interpretations as such. The rationale behind this construction has to do with the speaker's ability to do something for the addressee, which, following

cultural conventions obliges the speaker to do it. In uttering offers of this type, the speaker is actually asking for permission to act as he should. This type of realization is particularly useful in those cases in which the speaker is uncertain about the addressee's willingness:

(22) *Can I give you a ride somewhere?* (Coca 1990)

(23) *Can I help you find anything?* (Coca 1990)

These sentences make the addressee aware of the speaker's ability to carry out an action to his benefit. This being so, the addressee should allow the speaker to do it if he finds it convenient. Informing the addressee about the speaker's ability to help represents an effective way to make an offer without constraining the addressee's optionality to decide upon his acceptance. As with other directive and commissive speech acts, higher degrees of mitigation can be achieved through the use of the past tense (see, for example, the mitigating effect of the past in interrogative request constructions in section 4.2.1.):

(24) *Could I give you a ride?* (Coca 1993)

While previous examples have strong offering values, example (24) expresses a very tentative offer. As observed, the same construction may give rise to different outcomes in terms of politeness. The tentativeness conveyed by the form *could* instantiate a higher degree of optionality, thereby rendering very polite instances of offering. Owing to its greater politeness, the use of this construction is generally preferred in contexts where there is a large social distance between the speakers.

### ***Is There Anything I Can X<sub>VP</sub>?***

In this construction, the speaker asks if he can do something to help change a state of affairs that affects the addressee negatively. As stipulated in the cultural convention of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* that shapes the background for offers, the speaker is expected to change any non-beneficial state of affairs that may affect the addressee if he has the ability to do so. Look at the example:

(25) *Is there anything I can get for you, bard?* (Coca 1992)

As was the case with the previous type of realization, higher degrees of mitigation can be achieved through the use of the past tense. As has been explained before, past modals distance the speaker from the action presented in the predication and thus exhibit mitigating properties which are well-adapted to formal contexts:

(26) “Is there anything I *could* help you with?” Mrs. Pierce offered. (Coca 1991)

As observed in the utterance above, the use of the past forms manages to convey an even higher degree of optionality. Conversely, other variations of this type of realization may not instantiate the high level of optionality that is characteristic of offers. It is possible to convey the implicit idea that the addressee actually needs help and constrain the addressee’s optionality to accept or reject the offer:

(27) Mr. Smith. Is there something I *can* get for you? (Coca 1991)

When the speaker is certain about the addressee’s will, realizations such as the one above tend to make use of the present tense and the particle *something*. The use of *something* suggests that the speaker does not expect a negative response; *anything* is more neutral. Although this device constrains the addressee’s optionality, the speaker’s enquiry about the addressee’s welfare is more than enough to produce an easy offering reading. Hence, constructional realizations of this type constitute a highly specialized means for performing offers in contexts in which the distance between the speakers is small and thus no mitigation is expected.

### ***Will You Let Me X<sub>VP</sub>?***

This formal realization presents the speaker as the potential agent of a future action provided that the addressee gives his consent. It consists in the use of the auxiliary *will* followed by the verb *let*, a first person object pronoun and a verb phrase. The construction works under the assumption that the addressee is not willing to be helped by the speaker and the strategy is planned in such a way that the addressee does not take offense from the offer. In so doing, the speaker acts as if the offer was more to his own benefit than to the addressee’s benefit. By way of illustration, consider these examples:

(28) *Will you let me take the babe for you?* (Coca 1992)

(29) *Please, will you let me turn the handle for you?* (Bnc)

These utterances appeal to the addressee's willingness to accept the speaker's help. In both of them, the implication that the speaker wants in fact to carry out an action to the addressee's benefit is made explicit by the addition of a beneficiary indicator (i.e. *for you*). This beneficiary indicator manages to instantiate the corresponding part of the generic structure of offering. Note how the straightforward offering reading of these utterances vanishes in the absence of this beneficiary indicator:

(30) *Will you let me take the babe?*

(31) *Please, will you let me turn the handle?*

In these examples, the inferential path that the addressee has to take for an offering reading would result in the strengthening of the assumption that the action presented for realization is to his own benefit. Otherwise, these sentences would be easily interpreted as requests for permission. Pointing to the addressee as the beneficiary of the action represents a codified means of performing offers. Further, it constitutes a persuasive mechanism to obtain the addressee's acceptance. The use of such a mechanism is a sign that the speaker acknowledges the addressee's optionality, which is another parameter of the generic structure under consideration. This leaves the addressee with much freedom to decide upon the speaker's proposal and consequently manages to convey very explicit offers. Another form of mitigation would be the use of the past tense in the modal verb:

(32) *Would you let me show you some of the screenplay?* (Coca 1990)

However, in this case, the mitigating effect of the modal *would* results in a much more implicit offering value. The offering reading of the example is largely dependent on the use of the second person pronoun pointing to the addressee as the beneficiary of the action. When there is no explicit indication that the action is to the addressee's benefit, this type of realization has a default interpretation as a request, which can be cancelled out contextually. Probably because this construction may give way to ambiguities of this kind, it is not often used in the expression of offers.

### ***Can I Offer You X<sub>NP</sub>?***

The offer meaning can also be made explicit by the use of constructions based on performative predicates. The corpus contains a vast number of offers expressed by means of explicit performatives. One possible realization of performatives focuses on the speaker's ability to give something to the addressee. The use of the interrogative sentence type in conjunction to a second person pronoun pointing to the addressee as the beneficiary of the action represents a codified means of making offers:

(33) *Can I offer* you something? A cold drink? There's orange soda. (Coca 1993)

(34) I know you've recently had a cup of coffee... but *can I offer* you a drink? (Bnc)

By means of the modal verb *can*, the speaker is making the addressee aware that he has the ability to help, but he will only do it if this is the addressee's wish. This mechanism grants a high degree of optionality to the addressee, thereby activating one of the central features defining the act of offering. The verb in this construction is yet subject to be expressed in the past tense, which distantiates the speaker from his offer and therefore conveys a high degree of mitigation. Consider the example below:

(35) *Could I offer* you some tea? (Coca 1995)

This example shows greater tentativeness than the previous ones. In addition to indicating that the speaker has the ability to help, the use of the past tense also conveys the idea that he is willing to do so. This mitigation strategy softens the force of the act to a large extent.

### ***May I Offer You X<sub>NP</sub>?***

The use of the modal *may* allows the speaker to express a degree of tentativeness that is appropriate for those cases in which he is uncertain about the addressee's willingness to accept his collaboration. Look at the examples below:

(36) *May I offer* you something to warm you up? (Coca 1994)

(37) *May I offer you a glass of wine?* (Bnc)

The mitigation conveyed by the construction increases the degree of optionality and thus yields very polite offers. Example (36) points to the potential benefit that the speaker's offer involves for the addressee. This is a crucial parameter of the generic structure postulated above, since it specifies the motivating factor for offering. In contrast, the benefits to be obtained by the addressee are not made explicit in (37). Nevertheless, the use of the performative verb still allows a default offer interpretation.

### 6.2.2. Declarative offer constructions

The corpus contains a bountiful number of offers performed by means of declarative constructions. Although the degree of specification of the declarative sentence type is low, the use of different linguistic resources in declarative constructions gives rise to highly explicit offers. In most cases, these mechanisms point to the speaker's ability or willingness to bring about a state of affairs that is presented as beneficial for the addressee. Let us focus on how these mechanisms are capable of activating the relevant features of this illocutionary category.

#### *I Can X<sub>VP</sub> You Y<sub>NP</sub>*

The interpretation of this construction as an offer lies in its explicitation of the speaker's ability to carry out an action to the addressee's benefit. Through the application of the conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, if the speaker has reasons to believe that the addressee is not aware of his ability to help, the speaker should make it manifest to the addressee:

(38) "I have an ex-presso machine. *I can make you some presso*", she said. (Coca 2009)

(39) I'm just going to the carnival, but *I can give you a lift that far*. (Coca 2003)

Taking advantage of the mitigating properties of past modal verbs, even higher degrees of optionality can be conveyed. This seems fairly

adequate for the realization of offers given their conditional nature, and gives rise to diverse constructional variants of this type of realization. These examples illustrate this:

(40) Well, maybe there's other girls that, you know, you'd be interested in or maybe *I could* fix *you* up with somebody else. (Coca 1993)

(41) *I could* cook *you* a bit of bacon in seconds with a microwave. (Bnc)

In these examples, the speaker dissociates himself from his offer and increases the addressee's freedom to decide on the proposal. Because of this, declarative sentences like the ones reproduced above come through as very explicit instances of offering. Conversely, the optionality variable can be reduced through the use of different modality markers. The examples below are instances of offering that make use of modality markers expressing obligation:

(42) *I must* give *you* an Oxford dictionary next Christmas. (Coca 2004)

(43) *I should* lend *you* some books by the great critics of my era. (Coca 1998)

The modality markers in these examples instantiate an obligation on the part of the speaker to impose an action on the addressee, which reduces the degree of optionality that is characteristic of offers. As a consequence, their use in this type of realization may lead to more impositive illocutions.

### ***There Must Be Something I Can X<sub>VP</sub>***

The use of this construction is prompted by the speaker's ignorance regarding what he should do in order to help the addressee. The speaker makes this explicit so that the addressee will not suspect the speaker has not been trying to help. Offers of this type generally follow previous complaints or wishes from the addressee. Observe these examples:

(44) *There must be something* we can find for you to do during the summer. (Coca 2005)

(45) *There must be something* I can do for you. (Coca 2003)

The cultural convention underlying the conceptual grounding of offering specifies that we must help other people provided we have the ability to do so. If it is manifest to the speaker that the addressee is involved in a negative state of affairs and he does not know what to do to change it into a positive one, then he should make the addressee aware that he is willing to help. This counts as an indirect request for the addressee to indicate how the speaker should act.

### ***I Offer You X<sub>NP</sub>***

As opposed to those interrogative constructions based on performative predicates, performative realizations that make use of the declarative sentence type display a low degree of mitigation, which has the communicative consequence of decreasing the addressee's optionality. Making explicit the offering value may lead to uncomfortable situations from the perspective of social interaction, since the addressee finds himself in the need of either refusing or accepting the offer against his will. Therefore the use of interrogative performative constructions is generally preferred in order not to constrain the addressee's optionality. The examples below illustrate the workings of declarative performatives for offering:

(46) Just prepare them with a healthier approach. To that end, *I offer* you these recipes. (Coca 1999)

(47) *I offer* you a nice house. (Bnc)

Even less mitigated instances of offering may be obtained through the use of the progressive tense. As explained by Dik (1989), progressive forms convey the idea of insistence, which suggests that the speaker is somehow impatient and irritated. Using a progressive form (which has no end-point) with a telic verb (one that involves an end-point for the action) creates a conceptual clash that is solved by construing the state of affairs as consisting in a repeated number of finished actions. In other words, the use of the progressive tense with a telic verb such as the one under scrutiny conveys an inherent idea of irritation that is not compatible with the speaker's desire to help that is typical of offers:

(48) In return for your resignation, *I am offering* you the opportunity to study a dreadful disease in a living laboratory. (Bnc)



In this example, the progressive form suggests that the speaker is demanding a straight response. This type of realization exploits the part of the generic structure for this speech act that attempts to raise the addressee's awareness about the benefits involved in the speaker's offer. By insisting on it, the speaker is actually implying that the addressee needs to evaluate the state of affairs which is being proposed and the benefits that would result from the bringing about of such a state of affairs. In spite of its high degree of codification for offers, this construction does not fully instantiate the high degree of optionality that characterizes this speech act category. Hence it is not fully appropriate for the performance of a strictly unimpositive act.

### 6.2.3. Imperative offer constructions

Imperative sentences do not appear as an adequate vehicle for the expression of the high degree of optionality associated with the act of offering. The corpus contains examples of only three imperative offer constructions. These include mechanisms that function as mitigators and make the offer meaning explicit. Bare imperatives give rise to minimally explicit offers related to the transfer of an object from the speaker to the addressee. The motivating factor for these cases is the speaker's desire to be useful. However, the specialization of bare imperative sentences for the performance of offers is very low.

#### ***Let Me X<sub>VP</sub> For You***

One of the imperative constructions found in the performance of offers consists of the use of the *let* particle followed by a first person pronoun presenting the speaker as the agent of the action. In this construction, the action presented for realization will take place only if the addressee gives his consent.

(49) *Let me get that for you!* (Bnc)

(50) *Let me construct for you what I think is a scenario that closely resembles my version.* (Coca 1991)

As observed, the use of this construction is restricted to cases in which the speaker takes it for granted that the addressee will not accept his offer.

In order to get his offer accepted, the speaker acts as if the action presented for realization was to his own benefit. This is but a strategy to obtain the addressee's compliance in order to act as stipulated by cultural conventions of expected social behavior. The offering reading is easily grasped by the use of a beneficiary indicator (i.e. *for you*) pointing to the addressee as the actual beneficiary of the action. The use of beneficiary indicators of this type points to a crucial parameter of the generic structure of offers and therefore gives rise to codified instances of this illocutionary category.

### ***X<sub>IMP</sub> If You Are Interested***

In this construction, the force of the imperative tone is softened by the use of a condition clause. The speaker who makes use of this type of realization does not know if the addressee wants him to carry out the action expressed in the predication. The speaker's uncertainty about the addressee's willingness therefore motivates highly tentative instances of offering, as in examples below. Note how the elements in italics are crucial to produce an offering reading.

(51) *If you are interested* in pursuing this opportunity please *sign* and *return* the attached undertaking of confidentiality to me. (Bnc)

(52) Please *phone me* on *if you are interested*. (Bnc)

In both examples, the speaker tells the addressee that he will provide help if it is the addressee's desire. The hypothetical sense expressed by the condition clause, together with the fact that it is up to the addressee to decide whether or not the condition holds, increases the degree of optionality and consequently mitigates the force of the act. This type of mitigation in turn increases the degree of specialization of the construction, which would require a fairly marked context in order not to be interpreted as an offer.

### ***X<sub>IMP</sub> If You Need Help***

A variation of the previous construction involves the use of a condition clause pointing to the addressee's necessities. In so doing, an essential parameter in the understanding of offering is activated, namely,

the fact that the addressee is facing a non-beneficial state of affairs. The addressee's needs are manifest to the speaker although they have not been explicitly mentioned. The speaker thus attempts to make the addressee aware of his needs by asking him about them. Take the following examples as representative:

(53) *Tell me* if you need help, and I will give it. (Coca 1994)

(54) If you need help, just *ask*. (Bnc)

Because the addressee's needs stand as the motivation for the act of offering, as captured by the first parameter of the generic structure, this construction represents another case in which the motivating factor stands for the whole speech act. This metonymic operation is to a large extent cued by the condition clause *if you need help*, which, as noted for other speech acts (see the analysis of the conditional forms used as mitigating devices of advising in section 5.2.) functions as a mitigator and a decisive factor in the production of highly explicit offers.

#### **6.2.4. Generalizations on constructions for offering**

Interrogative constructions are the most codified means for the expression of offering. The reason is that they are capable of activating the high degree of optionality that is characteristic of this speech act type. The most productive interrogative constructions in the corpus point to the addressee's willingness to be helped by the speaker in carrying out an action. Other frequent means for the realization of offers also instantiate the variables of the structure referring either to speaker's ability or to his willingness to bring about a state of affairs that is beneficial to the addressee. The simultaneous use of a performative verb increases the degree of codification of the utterance as the expression of an offer. Owing to the inherent optionality of interrogative sentences, offers tend to be expressed by means of interrogative constructions based on performatives rather than declarative performatives.

The use of explicit performatives making use of the declarative sentence type has also surfaced as a fairly explicit means for the realization of offers, but they seem to constrain the addressee's freedom towards the offer and therefore they are not fully appropriate for the expression of a strictly unimpositive act such as the one under consideration. Declarative

constructions only partially instantiate the corresponding generic structure and thus they need to use realization procedures capable of making the offering value explicit. We have seen how the most highly codified declarative constructions for the performance of offers point as well to the speaker's ability to help and to the addressee's necessities. These variables are either cued by modal verbs or by beneficiary indicators. In this connection, the use of past modal verbs has arisen as a mitigator capable of conveying higher degrees of politeness that are particularly useful in cases whenever there is a large social distance between the participants and the speaker is uncertain about the addressee's willingness.

Finally, imperative constructions for offering often include devices which, functioning as mitigators, manage to activate the parameters of the generic structure of offering that either point to the speaker's desire to help or to the addressee's wishes. Those offers performed by means of isolated imperatives refer to cases of transferring an object from the speaker to the addressee. In these cases, the lack of mitigation is explained by the speaker's willingness to be useful to the addressee. Nevertheless, this type of construction has shown to be scarcely productive for the realization of offers.

## **7. THE SPEECH ACT OF PROMISING**

### **7.1. THE SEMANTICS OF PROMISING**

Promises commit us to some future course of action that will involve a certain benefit to an addressee or to a third party. The few studies on promises that there exist were conducted by Searle (1969, 1979) in the early times of speech act theory. Other accounts of promises that differ slightly from Searle's are the ones put forward by Leech (1983), Wierzbicka (1987) and Pérez (2001).

Searle's description of this speech act is linked to a number of satisfaction conditions. According to this author (1969: 57), a promise is a commitment on the part of the speaker to perform a future action (propositional content condition). The addressee should want the speaker to do so (preparatory condition) and the speaker should have the intention of carrying out the action (sincerity condition). On the whole, the utterance of a promise puts the speaker under the obligation of bringing about the state of affairs specified in the predication (essential condition). Although Leech (1983) accepts the relevance of the propositional content condition and the sincerity condition for the performance of promises, he excludes the essential condition in his description of this illocutionary act and provides a different formulation of the preparatory condition. Leech does not, however, give an explanation for the exclusion of the essential condition in his account. With respect to the preparatory condition, Leech argues that the realization of a promise presupposes that the action will be beneficial for the addressee. From this follows that the addressee wants the speaker to carry out the action, although this is not a necessary precondition for the performance of a promise. If the action which is to be the object of the promise is beneficial for the addressee, the speaker will assume that the addressee wants him to perform the action. I agree with Leech that promises are made as long as the future action is beneficial to the addressee even if the speaker does not know if the addressee wants him to carry out the action. It has been further observed from the instances in the corpus that the speaker cannot always be sure about the addressee's willingness but he may presume it on the basis of his assumption that the future action will be beneficial to the addressee. In conclusion, the speaker is uncertain about the addressee's willingness unless the latter tells him specifically. The following example explicitly indicates that the degree of the addressee's willingness is high:

- (1) And I know you want to get off health care, and I will. (Coca 2010)

Although there are a few cases of promises that follow requests by the addressee, the speaker generally utters a promise without having a certainty about the addressee's willingness and simply assumes that everybody is willing to obtain benefit from a positive action. This may lead to the addressee's rejection of promises when he does not want the specified state of affairs to be brought about:

- (2) "Okay, I'll go. I can't, though, promise". "I don't want promises, I want results". (Coca 1996)

Another approach to promises that deserves attention was put forward by Wierzbicka (1987). The author concentrates on the *obligation* that the act imposes on the speaker as one of the defining aspects of promises. According to Searle, this type of obligation is the purpose of the act of promising. In contrast, Wierzbicka (1987: 207) does not regard the obligation undertaken by the speaker as the purpose in itself, but rather as a way of achieving the real aim of promising (i.e. convincing the addressee that the speaker will perform the act). In uttering a promise, the speaker does not undertake an obligation to act, but causes the addressee to believe that the speaker will bring about a positive state of affairs. Pérez (2001: 324) agrees with Wierzbicka's suggestions to a large extent. According to Pérez, the dimension of obligation that is associated with promising results from the interplay between the expectations aroused in the addressee by the act of promising itself and general conventions of social interaction. Pérez's view of promises and her description of the concept of obligation allow me to include within this illocutionary type those instances where the speaker utters a promise without having the intention to perform the specified action. As argued by Pérez, a speaker may utter a conditional promise in order to talk the addressee into doing something to the speaker's benefit:

- (3) "If you give me your scarf, I've got to let you be in our gang". (Coca 1993)

In the example above, the speaker aims to achieve his goal of getting the addressee's scarf, but with no intention of carrying out the promised action. In other words, the speaker is using the act of promising as a persuasive strategy by taking advantage of the addressee's belief in his observance of the cultural conventions of politeness. The fact is that the

speaker does not feel under the obligation to observe those conventions and is using them to get the addressee's scarf. Pérez argues that the non-observance of the conventions of politeness results in an absence of obligation on the part of the speaker at the same time that it gives rise to impolite promises. Since the speaker will not observe cultural conventions, he makes an insincere promise which puts him under no obligation. In turn, the speaker is aware that not conforming to cultural conventions will make him appear as an impolite person.

The above discussion clarifies the reasons why the concept of obligation is not included in Pérez's description of the act of promising. Her account defines prototypical promises as characterized by the following attributes: the speaker presents himself as the agent of a future course of action; the speaker is uncertain about the addressee's willingness but assumes it is high since he is the beneficiary of the action; the speaker's optionality is constrained by cultural conventions; mitigation can be motivated by a variety of factors.<sup>30</sup> Her research shows that promises can only be realized through declarative sentences. This is so because the declarative form is the only one that allows speakers to make statements about a state of affairs they intend to bring about. Neither the imperative nor the interrogative sentence types enable speakers to predicate future courses of action. Pérez's work has been crucial in order to determine the parameters needed for the description of the semantic structure of promises. In short, promises commit the speaker to doing something that will be beneficial to the addressee. The convention of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* that applies in the interpretation of promising reads as follows (Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007: 111):

*If it is manifest to A that it is not manifest to B that a potential state of affairs is beneficial for B, A is expected to make this manifest to B.*

Promises are thus based on the addressee's expectation that the speaker has become aware that there is a state of affairs such that if it comes about, it will benefit the addressee. Then the speaker is expected to bring it about and assures the addressee that he will meet the addressee's

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<sup>30</sup> Mitigation devices are generally associated with costly directive acts (e.g. orders and requests). Because of this, mitigation may be perceived as an irrelevant issue in the definition of commissive illocutions. The study of promises carried out by Pérez (2001: 333) proves this intuition wrong and shows that the act of promising is in fact sensitive to several types of mitigation responding to different goals. The mitigation of promises may attempt to increase the speaker's optionality or prevent the addressee from entertaining high expectations when the speaker is uncertain about his ability to carry out the promised action.

expectations. Much in the same way, promises arise from the addressee's expectation that the speaker will not bring about a state of affairs that is harmful for the addressee. In such a case, the speaker assures the addressee that he will not bring it about. Acts of promising cannot be conceived if they are not beneficial to the addressee or to a third party. In sum, promises convey the speaker's assurance that he will comply with the addressee's rightful expectations.

The high-level cognitive model or generic structure of promising derives from generalizing over cases of interaction where people undertake to act to other people's benefit. These are some low-level models of promising:

- (a) A has a wish. A makes B aware of his wish. B undertakes to act to A's benefit.
- (b) A has a wish. B has the ability to satisfy A's wish. B undertakes to act to A's benefit.
- (c) A pretends not to wish something. B is deceived and is moved to undertake to act to A's benefit.
- (d) B is in a position of authority. A wishes something from B. B is moved to undertake to act to A's benefit.

The above low-level models of promising have generic structure in common that is used by speakers to construct a high-level cognitive model:

- (e) A appears to have a wish.
- (f) B has the ability to satisfy A's wish.
- (g) B makes it manifest to A that he will act to his benefit.
- (h) B is expected to act accordingly.

By means of a metonymic operation, any of the components of the generic structure may stand for the act of promising. The use of different realization procedures determines the instantiation of one part of the generic structure or another. This may become apparent in the examples considered below:



- (4) You catch this in your mouth, *I'll give* you a present. (Coca 1999)
- (5) *I am going to* take care of this baby. This is my little princess. (Coca 1998)
- (6) *There will be* no discrimination here. (Coca 1990)
- (7) *I will make sure* you are getting the best bargains. (Coca 2008)

These utterances, which instantiate different variables of the above conceptual representation, qualify as promises in the appropriate context. Utterances (4) and (5) activate the speaker's undertaking to satisfy a desire of the addressee's. The use of a first person singular subject and of the present continuous form or the future simple tense is frequent in the realization of promises. In (4), it is clear that the action that will be carried out is beneficial for the addressee. This is only implied in (5), where the interpretation of the utterance as a promise requires contextual information pointing to the addressee as the beneficiary of the action specified in the predication. The utterance in (6) activates the result of the promised action. The value of this type of realization as a promise depends on the speaker's control over the state of affairs that he is describing. Utterance (7) instantiates the speaker's assurance that an action will be carried out to the addressee's benefit. Although the speaker does not undertake to carry out the action himself, it is implicit that he will do something to ensure that the action takes place. In all, these realization procedures have become largely entrenched for the expression of promises. Their high degree of codification is motivated by their ability to instantiate relevant variables of the generic structure of this illocutionary category.

## **7.2. REALIZATION PROCEDURES FOR PROMISING**

The most outstanding characteristic of the realization of promises is their absolute preference for the use of declarative constructions. None of the examples in the corpus is based on either the interrogative or the imperative sentence forms. This feature distinguishes acts of promising from other commissive categories, which can be expressed through any of the three sentence types. Some commissives may have a preference for the use of interrogative sentences (e.g. offering) and others for the use of imperatives (e.g. threatening), but on the whole their realization can be

based on any of the three sentence types. This is not the case with promises, which are exclusively related to the use of declarative sentences. The reason for this is to be found in the nature of each of the three universal sentence types.

Sentence type	Constructions	Occurrences
Declarative	8	440
Imperative	0	0
Interrogative	0	0

Table 12. *Distribution of promise constructions by sentence type*

As discussed in previous chapters, though the three sentence types are largely underspecified as to their meaning conditions, declarative sentences are less so than the others (Risselada, 1993: 71). According to Pérez (2001: 337), imperative sentences are incompatible with the realization of promises, since imperatives seem to be related to speaker's wishes and addressee's actions, while promises involve addressee's wishes and speaker's actions. Likewise, interrogative sentences do not represent an appropriate vehicle for the expression of promises. Interrogatives present a proposition as partially open, a feature that has proved useful in the realization of some commissive acts (e.g. offering) in order to increase the addressee's optionality to carry out the specified action and thus make the act more appropriate from the perspective of social interaction. The openness of interrogative sentences, however, is of no avail for acts of promising, where the addressee's optionality does not need to be increased since he is the beneficiary of the future action. Given that everybody likes other people to bring about states of affairs that are beneficial for them, there is no need to question the addressee about his desire to get a beneficial action carried out for him. The expression of promising is therefore linked to the declarative form, which exhibits the lowest degrees of specialization of the sentence types. The promising value of declarative constructions needs to be codified through the use of diverse linguistic mechanisms.

### 7.2.1. Declarative promise constructions

The declarative form is so little specified that its meaning conditions are compatible with the semantic features of promising as well as with those of most illocutionary categories. The speaker is able to further specify the value of declarative constructions through a number of realization procedures capable of instantiating defining characteristics of promising. In

fact, the combination of several of these realization procedures may give rise to fairly explicit constructions. Let us analyze the examples in the corpus to see how they manage to convey a promise meaning.

### ***I Promise X<sub>VP</sub>***

This construction activates the full generic structure of promises through the explicit use of the performative verb. The corpus contains a significant number of examples realized by means of explicit performative constructions. The reason may be found in one of the meaning conditions of promising, which is the speaker's need to make manifest his intention to bring about a beneficial state of affairs for the addressee. The use of the performative verb in the fixed part of the construction enables the speaker to make his commitment more explicit. The modifiable part can be realized by a verb in the infinitive or in the indicative mood. Some illustrative cases are contained in the corpus:

(8) *I promise* not to fall for your boss, Victoria. (Bnc)

(9) We'll be married, *I promise* we will. (Bnc)

When the verb is expressed in the infinitive, the promise focuses on the action to be carried out, and when it is expressed in the future, it stresses the result of the promised action.

### ***I Assure You X<sub>P</sub>***

Although much less explicit than the previous one, this realization is another type of performative construction used for promises. The verb used in this realization aims to give the addressee confidence in bringing about a state of affairs. The use of a second person object *you* points to the addressee as the beneficiary of the promised action. Consider the examples below:

(10) I am very well aware of the need for security, and *I assure you* that the horses are well guarded. (Bnc)

(11) *I assure you* those checks will be received and cashed. (Coca 1995)

The promising value of these examples is motivated by a metonymic mapping linking the speaker's involvement in the performance of the action with the actual performance of the action. The implicitness of the speaker's involvement is supported by the fact that neither of the examples point to the speaker as the agent of the action. Not making explicit the speaker's identity as the agent may be the consequence of his wish to increase his optionality. This way he could be able to refuse to act or even blame others if the action does not take place. It could also be that it is obvious from the context that the speaker will carry out the action and there is no need to make it explicit once more. Whichever the case, the force of the resulting promises is softened by the non-explicitation of the speaker as the agent of the action. In contrast, the specification of the speaker's identity as the agent makes the involvement of the speaker explicit and results in more forceful instances of promising:

(12) *I assure you that I will* do a good job. (Coca 2003)

(13) *I assure you I won't* be offended. (Coca 1998)

As can be seen in these examples, the addition of a first person subject and a future tense verb may increase the force of the act of promising considerably.

### ***I Guarantee X<sub>p</sub>***

The metonymic mapping above is the same for this construction, with the difference that the emphasis of the verb used in this case is on the speaker's assuming responsibility for the realization of the action that is the object of the addressee's desire. Even though the speaker is not explicitly presented as the agent of the action, the construction conveys the implicit idea that he will make sure that the action takes place in favor of the addressee. Here is an example:

(14) *I guarantee* that the hostages will be released while I am in Sherhaben. (Coca 1990)

In this promise, the agent of the action is neither the speaker nor the addressee. However, it is implicit that the speaker has power over the person who will release the hostages and will use this power to make sure

that they are released. The fact that the speaker's power allows him to guarantee the carrying out of the action must be clear from the context in order to produce a promising reading. As was the case with previous examples, more forceful promises result from the explicitation of the speaker's identity as the agent of the action:

(15) *I guarantee I will make you men.* (Coca 1998)

The specification of the speaker's identity as the agent of the action gives rise to explicit promises that may be appropriate in contexts in which the speaker feels under the obligation to show his determination to do something for the addressee. An alternative way of producing forceful promises is to use a second person object to specify the addressee as the beneficiary of the action. The indication of the benefit to be obtained by the addressee manages to activate the corresponding parameter of the generic structure of promises:

(16) *I guarantee you there will be legislation in fifty states next year.*  
(COCA 1990)

(17) *You'll be back in a week, I guarantee you.* (BNC)

In (16), it is implied that the addressee will obtain some benefit from the development in the legislation, while in (17), the addressee will obtain benefits from his return.

### ***I Can Promise $X_{VP}$ /Can Assure $X_{VP}$ / I Can Guarantee $X_{VP}$***

Constructions expressing the speaker's undertaking frequently make use of the oblique modal verb *can* (Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez, 2001). By using the *can* form, these realizations instantiate part (a) of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, according to which we have to make other people aware of what is beneficial for them if we have the capacity to do so. This in turn affords access to part (d) of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, which gives rise to the value of the construction as a promise. This inferential process is based on the metonymy **POTENTIALITY FOR ACTUALITY**, which links an expression of potentiality with the actuality of a future action. In the construction, the explicitation of the speaker's capacity to take a course of action stands for his actual course of action. Consider:

(18) *I can promise* some heated discussions. (Bnc)

(19) *I can assure* you that my family and I are not in that group. (Coca 2008)

(20) *I can guarantee* hours of fun. (Bnc)

On the whole, these sequences produce a fairly straightforward reading as a promise, which can be cancelled out contextually.

### ***I Will X<sub>VP</sub>***

The use of a first person subject plus a future simple tense manages to instantiate the full generic structure of promising by presenting the speaker as the agent of a future action. In order to convey a promising value, the verb used in the modifiable part of the construction needs to be pointing to an action that is beneficial for the addressee (for example, the utterance *I will kill you*, which denotes an action that is clearly negative for the addressee, becomes a threat). The force of this construction may be subject to changes through different realization procedures:

(21) I promise *I will* not open the door to any strange men. (Bnc)

(22) I assure you *I will* strive to be of more worth to the Gold Dragon Hung. (Bnc)

(23) I guarantee *I will* make you men. (Coca 1998)

The force of the previous construction can be increased by making use of a verb of commitment. Verbs of this type instantiate the full generic structure for promising and facilitate the interpretation of an utterance as an instance of this illocutionary type. The high level of explicitness of these constructions makes them highly specialized means for the realization of promises. Consider now:

(24) I will *definitely* support the motion to ban them in the city. (Coca 1990)

(25) I will *certainly* keep you informed about the corpus project. (Bnc)

Another way of expressing forceful promises is through the use of adverbs of certainty. Constructions of this type are motivated by the metonymy A COMMITMENT TO PERFORM AN ACTION FOR THE ACTUAL PERFORMANCE OF THE ACTION. Such realizations point to the actuality of the future state of affairs by indicating that the speaker is committed to bringing it about. The reasoning schema applying in these realizations is the same as the one behind the *I Will X<sub>VP</sub>* construction. Generally, the *I Will X<sub>VP</sub>* construction counts as a promise if the speaker is committed to doing the action expressed in *X<sub>VP</sub>*. That is to say, the promising value of the *I Will X<sub>VP</sub>* construction is based on a reasoning process whereby the speaker commits himself to performing the designated action so much an action will come about. Stating the first part of the schema affords metonymic access to the whole of it. Adverbs of certainty simply reinforce the speaker's commitment and so the metonymy is the same. Once again, the interpretation of these constructions as promises depends on the benefits that the action involves for the addressee. Let us now discuss the following examples:

(26) I will *try to* be back by six o' clock. (Bnc)

(27) I will *probably* leave tomorrow. (Coca 1998)

Again, these expressions are variants of the *I Will X<sub>VP</sub>* construction and follow the same basic reasoning schema. The use of adverbs of possibility indicates that the speaker is uncertain as to his ability to perform the action. Still, the speaker's commitment to carrying out the action stands for the actual performance of the action. The use of adverbs of possibility thus increases the degrees of mitigation of these promises. This type of mitigation may be due to a desire on the part of the speaker to increase his optionality if he is uncertain about his capacity to fulfill his promise. The use of mitigators in these expressions nonetheless suggests that the speaker is willing to do his best to satisfy the addressee, which is the motivating factor of promises.

### ***I Am Going To X<sub>VP</sub>***

This is another constructional realization based on the part of the generic structure of promising that presents the speaker as the agent of a future action. As argued above, the element that allows us to identify

promises revolves around the speaker's commitment. A statement committing to the performance of a future action enables the speaker to make a promise that relies on contextual information to produce an easy illocutionary interpretation. The promising value of this construction is nonetheless largely dependent on the variable elements. The variable part of the construction needs to be realized by a controlled activity that intends to benefit the addressee in some way. As may be expected from the definition of promises, it must be clear that the action to be carried out involves a benefit to the addressee and that it is the addressee's wishes that the speaker wants to satisfy. This type of realization shows the speaker's strong determination to benefit the addressee. Here are two examples from the corpus:

(28) Ronald Reagan ran for office, saying "*I am going to cut your taxes*".  
(Coca1990)

(29) *So I am going to go this way round, right, and I'm going to take some doughnuts.* (Bnc)

The promising value of these utterances is implicit in the speaker's commitment to bringing about the state of affairs expressed in the predication. In (28), the speaker attempts to be elected president by promising the citizens that there will be a tax cut. That action would have many positive effects for workers, since they will get all benefits for themselves. This promise counts as a strategy to obtain the addressees' votes by promising to give them what they want once the speaker is elected president. In (29), the speaker assumes the addressee wants some doughnuts and decides to get some for him. In both cases, the speaker's determination to get the action performed is expressed through the use of a first person subject and a future continuous tense. The explicit indication of the speaker's commitment leads to the understanding of the construction as an instance of promising.

### ***I Will Make Sure $X_p$***

This type of realization instantiates the commitment part of the generic structure we formulated above. By indicating that he is going to verify that a state of affairs is brought about to the addressee's benefit, the speaker undertakes to do something for the addressee. The role of the



speaker's involvement in the action to be carried out is implicit and derivable from contextual information.

- (30) As a governor, *I will make sure* that our teachers and students have the resources to spend their time teaching and learning. (Coca 2006)

The example expresses the speaker's determination to provide schools with the necessary resources to ensure their educational needs. This is but an example of how this type of realization leads to a default promising value.

### ***There Will Be $X_{NP}$***

This construction points to the result of the promised action. Its degree of specification is, however, very low and its promising value is largely dependent on contextual information. In order to communicate a promise, it must be clear that it is the speaker who will bring about the state of affairs that he is describing. Otherwise this type of realization only makes statements about the future. Consider:

- (31) *There will be* a concert this evening. (Coca 1990)

- (32) *There will be* no more negotiations. (Coca 1990)

Whereas the first case consists of a factual description, the second may convey a commitment on the part of the speaker not to negotiate with a certain political group. The difference between these two utterances has to do with the speaker's control over the future state of affairs he is describing. In (31), the speaker is not in charge of the concert, but in (32) he seems to be, potentially at least, in possession of the resources needed to decide whether or not to negotiate with a certain group. Given an appropriate context, the default meaning of the second example would be that of a promise, or at least an act of reassurance. The commitment value of this construction may be reinforced if combined with a different type of realization procedure. This is the case of example below:

- (33) Elect me and *I will make sure* that *there will be* no massive rise in prices, there will be no inflation, there will be plenty of goods. (Coca 1990)

In spite of its high degree of specialization, this type of realization procedure has proved so little productive in the corpus that it cannot be considered a construction in a strict sense.

### **7.2.2. Generalizations on constructions for promising**

Probably the most significant feature of the instances in the corpus is their total preference for declarative sentences. All of them are based on this sentence form, which is so little specialized that it requires a number of realization procedures to further codify its illocutionary value. As discussed in the analysis, the use of a performative verb or a performative noun makes explicit the promise meaning of a declarative construction. We have seen different types of performative realizations all of them capable of instantiating the full cognitive model for promises and thereby producing highly codified instances of this speech act type. Those constructional realizations which do not contain a performative verb are nonetheless capable of codifying the promise value by means of diverse linguistic resources with instantiation potential for relevant parameters of the generic structure. These mechanisms include the presentation of the speaker as the agent of a future action, which points to the part of the generic structure in which the speaker commits himself into doing something for the addressee, and the presentation of the addressee as the beneficiary of that action, which instantiates the corresponding part of the generic structure. Because of the relevance of these two parameters in the definition of promises, all the constructional realizations in the corpus focus on their instantiation. They are the most outstanding features of promising and therefore their activation is capable of producing highly specified instances that would require marked contexts not to be interpreted as promises. As has also been shown, the force of these instances can be further increased or mitigated through a variety of factors and thus constrain the speaker's optionality to carry out the promised action.

## 8. THE SPEECH ACT OF THREATENING

### 8.1. THE SEMANTICS OF THREATENING

The act of threatening consists in a coercion wherein a course of action is proposed to avoid a negative response. Authors disagree as to what the categorization of the act of threatening should be. Searle (1979) classifies threats within the group of directive illocutions, since they count as attempts to get the addressee to do something. Leech (1983), in contrast, categorizes threats as commissives due to the fact that they present a future state of affairs that is assumed to be brought about by the speaker. As argued by Pérez (2001: 263), both of them provide a partial description of the act of threatening. Searle's account ignores the fact that threats attempt to get the hearer to do something through coercion (i.e. through the speaker's undertaking to bring about a negative state of affairs for the addressee in case he does not comply). Therefore acts of threatening cannot be regarded as purely directive illocutions. Leech's proposal, on the other hand, concentrates on the commitment assumed by the speaker to carry out a future action and ignores the fact that the speaker's undertaking is motivated by his intention to get the addressee to do something. Thus, threats cannot be considered purely commissive acts either.

All in all, authors have taken two main directions in the categorization of threats. Some proposals (Bach and Harnish; 1979; Hancher, 1979) posit the existence of a directive-commissive illocutionary category that includes acts of threatening and offering, among others, which display features of both directive and commissive acts (see section 6.1., for a discussion on the categorization of hybrid illocutionary acts).<sup>31</sup> In contrast, more recent approaches (Risselada, 1993; Pérez, 2001) contend that there is no need to postulate further categories to classify hybrid illocutions such the one under consideration. Within these accounts, hybrid illocutions occupy intermediate positions between already existing categories. As shown by Pérez, threats contain elements of many different illocutionary categories.

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<sup>31</sup> I have already pointed out the appropriateness of the category of directive-commissive illocutions proposed by this group of theories in the discussion of offers so I shall not go over the issue again. Suffice it to say that while their insights into the hybrid nature of acts of offering and threatening represent a further step in relation to traditional accounts (Searle, 1979; Leech, 1983), their definition of a hybrid directive-commissive category is arguable. As was the case with offering, hybrid illocutions are not equally directive and commissive. Rather than a superordinate category, it seems more appropriate to posit a continuum between the extremes of directive and commissive acts (Pérez, 2001) where hybrid illocutions occupy different positions.

They share with orders the fact that the speaker has some authority over the addressee. They are also like requests in that the speaker has interest in getting an action to be carried out by the addressee. This interest justifies the coercion that forms part of the nature of threats. At the same time, they share with warnings the fact that the speaker's action is proposed to avoid a future cost for the addressee. The avoidance of cost is essential in the understanding of threats. Threats offer a choice between two possible states of affairs, the second being more costly than the first, which forces the addressee to carry out the proposed action. Likewise, promises include a semantic feature that is constituent of the act of threatening. In both cases, the speaker commits himself to bringing about a future state of affairs. However, in promises, such an event is desirable for the addressee, while in threats it is presented as something negative. The data in the corpus supports Pérez's suggestions. As can be observed in this study, the most codified realizations for threatening instantiate either the avoidance of cost or the speaker's undertaking to carry out an action. These two semantic features are definitional of threatening and they are capable of instantiating the whole speech act. Notice how these meaning conditions point with increasing certainty to a threat interpretation:

- (1) *Kick me again and I will kick your balls* so hard that they will fly out of your backside. (Bnc)
- (2) We're going to *be watching you*, nigger. (Coca 1997)

Example (1) specifies a state of affairs that the speaker does not want the addressee to bring about. The speaker tells the addressee that if he carries out an action (i.e. *to kick the speaker*), then he will cause something negative to happen to the addressee. Since the action is presented as the cause of the speaker's negative response, it can be inferred that the speaker does not want the addressee to carry out such an action. The avoidance of cost is enough to secure compliance on the part of the addressee. Therefore the explicitation of the exact state of affairs that should not be brought about conveys an inherent coercion that yields the threat interpretation. In contrast, example (2) does not overtly specify an action for the addressee to carry out. That action is implicit and derived from contextual information. In this case, the emphasis is on the speaker's undertaking to watch the addressee closely. The fact that this commitment is used as a form of coercion makes the interpretation of the utterance as a threat straightforward. Both (1) and (2) express the speaker's undertaking to carry

out an action that would cause a great cost to the addressee. As Pérez shows, these two variables shape the coercive character that is typical of threatening. This peculiarity of threats, together with the fact that they involve an unavoidable cost to the addressee, turns them into a *socially conflictive* act.<sup>32</sup> Surprisingly enough, the semantic grounding of threats arises from a particular exploitation of the part of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* that moves us to make other people aware of what is beneficial for them. Because the state of affairs that is assumed to be brought about by the speaker involves a great cost to the addressee, the speaker is expected to make it manifest to the addressee. The convention of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* that applies in the interpretation of threats reads as follows (Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007: 111):

*If it is manifest to A that it is not manifest to B that a potential state of affairs is beneficial for B, A is expected to make this manifest to B.*

The speaker who utters a threat works under the assumption that the state of affairs that he wants to be brought about involves a cost to the addressee and therefore presupposes his refusal. As a consequence, he seeks the addressee's compliance by telling him that his resistance would result in a greater cost. By means of the coercion involved in offering two costly states of affairs, the speaker attempts to achieve his goal. In order to be capable of carrying out a threat, the speaker must have some kind of authority over the addressee. Only a person who has the power to act against the addressee can threaten him. The lack of authority on the part of the speaker turns threats into simple bluffs incapable of coercing the addressee into compliance:

- (3) A: "Here. Tighten. You'll feel it if you tighten".  
 B: She stepped away. "Don't do that! I'll leave."  
 A: "No, you won't", he laughed.  
 (Coca 1997)

The above utterances show the connection between the speaker's authority and the realization of threats. In the example, B is being trained by her instructor A, who has control over the situation and therefore is in a position of authority. At some point, B feels she cannot handle the physical

<sup>32</sup> It is Leech (1983: 104) who uses this term to refer to acts like cursing, accusing and threatening which are characterized by an intrinsic lack of politeness. In opposition to this, Pérez shows (2001: 279) that some instances of threatening display high degrees of politeness that may be better adapted to the polite behavior that is required in formal contexts.

activity required anymore. Her utterance, although expressed as a threat, is simply a bluff or an attempt to make her instructor stop the session. She needs exercise and has no intention to stop the workout. This explains A's response in which he laughs at B's utterance and despises at her threat.

The performance of threats requires a powerful position on the part of the speaker. The type of power that is associated with threatening, however, is different from that which underlies ordering. In orders, the speaker's power arises from a higher social status, while in threats, the speaker's power derives from his capacity to harm the addressee. The correlation between the speaker's power and the force of threats has already been approached by Pérez, who argues that threats are effective only if they are uttered by powerful speakers capable of carrying out the action which they undertake to perform. All threats in our corpus are uttered by speakers in a powerful position. This is only natural since threats intend to put pressure on the addressee so he will comply with the speaker's wish and the existence of a powerful speaker counts as an adequate way to secure the addressee's obedience. I have thus considered the parameter of power as one of the most important features in my definition of the high-level cognitive model of threats. This model derives from generalizing over low-level scenarios. Some low-level models of threatening may be the following:

- (a) A wants to get something done by B. A has the capacity to cause trouble to B. A tells B to carry out an action. B may be intimidated or not.
- (b) A wants to get something done by B. A has the capacity to cause trouble to B. A believes B will not comply with his demand. A tells B to carry out the action. B may be intimidated or not.
- (c) A wants to get something done by B. A has the capacity to cause trouble to B. A makes B aware of his intention to cause trouble to him if he does not carry out the action. B may be intimidated or not.
- (d) A wants to get something done by B but does not tell B. B becomes aware of A's desire and is intimidated by his capacity to cause trouble to him.

The common elements of these low-level models correspond to the generic structure:

- (e) A wants to get something done by B.
- (f) A has the capacity to cause trouble to B.
- (g) A believes B will not comply with his demand.
- (h) A tells B to carry out the action.
- (i) A makes B aware of his intention to cause trouble to him if he does not carry out the action.
- (j) B may be intimidated or not.

The following utterances instantiate different parameters of this generic structure:

- (4) Give me the truth *or I will slit your throat*, then go to him and slit his too. (Bnc)
- (5) You don't know *what I am capable of*. (Coca 1990)
- (6) Madam, get your son to the telephone at once *or I will have Officer Cecil give you a good poking* with his over-sized weapon. (Bnc)
- (7) Scream, *and I will kill you both*. (Coca 2007)
- (8) That could cause a lot of problems, and *you don't want that to happen*. (Coca 2007)
- (9) If ever I believe you are even thinking otherwise, *you will regret it*. (Coca 1999)

So far we have seen that the number of parameters of the generic structure instantiated by a construction correlate with the degree of codification of that construction for the production of a speech act. The higher the number of parameters that are instantiated by a realization procedure, the easier it becomes for the addressee to recognize the speaker's intention. The analysis of the corpus material has revealed formal configurations which, by activating a different number of parameters, constitute more or less specialized realization procedures.

## 8.2. REALIZATION PROCEDURES FOR THREATENING

The expression of threats is characterized by a mixture of realizations that have already been shown to be involved in the performance of other speech acts. Most constructions in the corpus are based on the declarative sentence type, which although exhibiting low degrees of specialization combines with specific mechanisms for the expression of the imposition and harshness proper of threats thus giving rise to highly adapted constructional realizations. Imperative and interrogative realizations are also productive in the performance of threats but they make use of resources different from those of other speech acts. The distribution of constructions for threatening by sentence type is reproduced in the table below:

Sentence type	Constructions	Occurrences
Declarative	7	102
Imperative	3	90
Interrogative	2	10

Table 13. *Distribution of threat constructions by sentence type*

As advanced in the previous section, threats differ from other speech acts mainly in their combining of three meaning conditions, which refer to the position of authority held by the speaker, the avoidance of cost that is proposed to the addressee and the speaker's undertaking to carry out a negative action for the addressee. This combination results in a largely impositive and coercive commissive act. The semantic features that make up the structure of threatening allow us to postulate the type of realizations which can be expected in the expression of this illocutionary act. It can be predicted that there will be different kinds of realizations indicating the power status of the speaker. Similarly, it can be expected that those constructional realizations involved in the instantiation of the parameter referring to the negative action to be carried out by the speaker will be a distinctive characteristic in the expression of threats.

### 8.2.1. Declarative threat constructions

Declarative constructions activate the parameter of the semantic structure of threatening that refers to the speaker's undertaking to carry out a future action. Because this feature is shared by other commissive acts (i.e. offering, promising), declarative constructions need to use specific linguistic mechanisms that work to instantiate further parameters of



threatening. In what follows, I shall describe the specific constructional realizations that can be used to produce highly explicit instances of threatening.

### ***I Will Be Watching You***

Threats involve the speaker's assumption that the addressee does not want to carry out the specified action. A way of intimidating the addressee and securing his compliance is to tell him that he is going to be watched. This type of realization enables the speaker to exert control over the addressee and reduce his optionality. The addressee finds himself in the position of having to comply with the speaker in order to guarantee his welfare. The threatening value of this construction originates in the fact that people do not like to be watched. Watching people without their consent is a way of gathering information about them that could later be used against them. Precisely, if after watching the addressee for some time the speaker is not satisfied with his behavior, he could do something negative to him. The speaker would not be able to hurt the addressee if he did not have such kind of information. Consider the examples:

(10) You lied to me right there at the end. *I'll be watching you.* (Coca 2007)

(11) *We'll be watching you* all day long, Tim. (Coca 2004)

These utterances tell the addressee that the speaker is going to watch him but do not explicitly say that the speaker will bring about a negative state of affairs for the addressee if he does not act as required. This is left for the addressee to infer on the basis of a common every day scenario. By just hinting at the possible source of dissatisfaction, the speaker communicates to the addressee that he may do something negative to him. The utterance in (10) makes explicit the fact that the addressee has not acted as required and is going to be watched to ensure that he does so in the future. The threatening value of (11) is more implicit, since the kind of behavior that is expected from the addressee is not overtly expressed. More forceful threats can be achieved by the use of the present tense. See, for instance:

(12) Big brother *is watching you*, and filming as well. (Bnc)

- (13) “*I’m watching you every second, Danny*”. (Coca 1999)

As observed in (12) and (13), the present tense conveys a higher degree of coercion than the future tense. The use of the present simple conveys the implicit idea that the speaker is in constant alert watching the addressee. This implication is made more manifest through the use of a progressive present form. As noted before with respect to declarative offers (see section 6.2.2.), progressive tenses indicate insistence and imply that the speaker is determined to watch the addressee constantly and cause trouble to him in case of non-compliance.

#### ***If You $X_{VP}$ I Will $Y_{VP}$***

Many of the examples of threatening in the corpus are expressed by means of the combination of two declarative sentences. Within the group of realizations that share this characteristic, the vast majority of occurrences are cases of conditional forms. The use of a conditional expression enables the speaker to hypothesize about the negative state of affairs that will be brought about in case of the addressee’s non compliance. The example below illustrates this:

- (14) I allow you to stay in my home because of Lizzy, but I warn you now, Dan, *if you* try and interfere in my life, *I’ll have you out* the front door so fast you’ll burn a hole in the carpet. (Bnc)

The sentence in the conditional form specifies the action that should not be carried out by the addressee. The sentence expressed in the future simple indicates the negative state of affairs which the speaker will bring about if the addressee does not comply with his wishes. The coercive character of the threat is enhanced by means of an impositive intonation. In this way, the construction manages to convey the idea that the addressee can avoid a high cost by complying with the speaker’s wishes.

#### ***If You $X_{VP}$ I Will Kill You***

This is a variant of the previous construction in which the use of the verb *kill* as a fixed element in the second clause makes the threatening value even more explicit. This type of realization only has one variable element

which refers to the state of affairs that should not be brought about by the addressee. The clause related to the speaker's negative response is in this case parametrized by a damage verb. This mechanism activates the part of the generic structure of threats that presents the negative action which will be carried out by the speaker:

(15) *If you attempt to shout for help, I'll kill you.* (Bnc)

(16) *If you say anything, boy, I will kill you, your mother, and everybody else up in this bitch!* (Coca 2008)

Through a metaphoric operation, the verb *kill* lets the addressee infer the negative effects of his lack of cooperation. The use of other damage verbs is frequent in the threat instances in the corpus. This is by no means arbitrary. Damage verbs make the speaker's intention to hurt the addressee explicit and therefore represent a highly adequate means for the expression of threats. Here are two examples:

(17) *If you hurt that girl, I'll ruin you.* (Coca 1992)

(18) *If you get in my way then I'll destroy you.* (Bnc)

Such is the degree of conventionalization of this construction is such that the conditional expression can be left out without hindering its interpretation as a threat:

(19) *I will kill you with my bare hands.* (Coca 1993)

Although this realization procedure does not specify the action that should be carried out by the addressee, the indication of the speaker's determination to bring about a negative state of affairs is enough to produce a straightforward request reading.

### ***If You X<sub>VP</sub> You Will Y<sub>VP</sub>***

In contrast to previous constructions, in this realization the speaker is not presented as the agent of the negative action that will affect the addressee. The construction merely presents the addressee as the undergoer of a non-beneficial state of affairs. Although it is not specified that such a

state of affairs will be brought about by the speaker, the speaker's involvement is implicit in the first part of the construction, in which he expresses his wishes to get something done by the addressee. The variable element is realized by a verb in the passive voice indicating the addressee's lack of control over the negative action that will affect him:

- (20) I'm going to be watching you, Mr. Brown, and if you do this again, *if you do this* in writing or if you do it to me, *you will be kicked out*.  
(Coca 1992)

To interpret the utterance above as a threat it must be implied from the context that the negative action will be carried out by the speaker. This type of threat activates the part of the generic structure for threats related to the avoidable negative state of affairs that the speaker intends to bring about. This is enough to afford easy access to the threat interpretation.

### ***I Warn You X<sub>p</sub>***

Constructions based on performative predicates have previously been shown to be excellent means for the explicitation of illocutionary values. However, acts of threatening are not sensitive to expression through explicit performatives. No instance of threatening in the corpus is expressed by means of a construction based on a performative predicate. This may be due to the coercive character of threats, which is bound to cause offense and does not need to be enhanced by the use of an explicit performative. Acts of threatening seek in many cases the opposite purpose, that is, to decrease the degree of imposition in order to make the threat less offensive. Several instances in the corpus are expressed by this type of realization:

- (21) *I warn you*, if that thing comes near me again, I'll shoot it on sight.  
(Coca 2001)

Acts of warning are very similar to acts of threatening. In both cases, a powerful speaker attempts to make the addressee aware of a negative state of affairs. They differ in the degree of involvement of the speaker in bringing about such a state of affairs, which is lower in the case of warnings. Because of this, the use of verbs of warning in instances of threatening conveys the same degree of coercion as threat verbs but aim at reducing the speaker's involvement in the negative state of affairs that will

be brought about and present it as a mere event that will take place if the addressee does not comply with the speaker's wishes. Most examples in the corpus use this formula in conjunction with other constructions to enable the threat interpretation. This is the case of example (21) above, which uses the warning formula together with a highly explicit realization for threatening consisting of the combination of two declarative sentences pointing to the two alternative states of affairs that are proposed to the addressee. If no other procedures are combined with the warning construction, the speaker is avoiding responsibility for the harm to be inflicted on the addressee:

- (22) I think *I should warn you* that it would be a mistake to underestimate what I'm capable of. (Bnc)

The use of a modality marker in (22) indicates that it is the speaker's position of authority that binds him to punish the addressee and not his own wishes. Different degrees of speaker's willingness in harming the addressee may give rise to constructional variants that make use of mood operators expressing obligation.

### ***You Will Regret X<sub>NP</sub>***

This type of realization makes explicit the most relevant features of the generic structure in such a way that it produces a straightforward threatening reading. The construction implies that the speaker has been somehow wronged by the addressee's behavior. The speaker then undertakes to pursue redress in the form of revenge for the addressee's behavior. This type of realization thus points to the motivating factor for threats, which is the speaker's wish to do something negative to the addressee for not acting as he was expected. Likewise, it activates the part of the cognitive model of threatening where the speaker undertakes to harm the addressee. The construction further indicates that the addressee will feel sorry about his behavior after harm is inflicted on him, which refers to the resultative part of the structure of threatening. This last item is partially conveyed linguistically and made to stand for the rest of the model, thus motivating the threat interpretation. Take the examples as representative:

- (23) This is going to hurt you very badly. *You will regret* the day your baby was killed. You will regret this day. (Coca 1993)

It is the metonymy RESULT FOR ACTION that makes the addressee aware he is acting in a way he will regret in the future. It is possible to make use of the future simple tense in the fixed part of the construction. The use of different tenses results in a subtle difference in the speaker's level of commitment. Example (23) expresses a prediction about the harm the addressee will face (which by implication, guided by the metonymy, turns into the speaker undertaking to bringing about the negative state of affairs), while (24) conveys actual commitment:

- (24) “*You’re going to regret the day you ever laid eyes on Matthew*”.  
(Bnc)

Despite their high instantiation potential, these utterances can only be interpreted as threats if it is understood from the context that it is the speaker who will bring about the negative state of affairs.

### ***You Don’t Want Me X<sub>VP</sub>***

In this construction, the speaker specifies the kind of action that he will carry out in order to harm the addressee in case of non-compliance. This type of realization works under the assumption that the addressee does not want the speaker to bring about the negative state of affairs. Here lies the coercion that is characteristic of threats, and which is capable of making the threat meaning explicit:

- (25) Surely *you don’t want me to* comment upon internal things going on in the company. (Coca 1990)

In order for the construction to be interpreted as a threat, the variable element must be realized by a verb phrase that indicates some harm for the addressee. The manifestness of the speaker's power is also crucial. Otherwise the construction gives rise to implicit instances of offering. In the example above, the type of power that enables the speaker to threaten the addressee does not arise from a higher position in the company, since it is the addressee who appears as the speaker's boss, but from the speaker's knowledge about internal issues of the company and his intention to comment upon them. His assumption that the addressee will do anything to discourage him from his purpose allows the speaker to pressurize the addressee into obedience.

### 8.2.2. Imperative threat constructions

In threatening, the speaker attempts to get something done through coercion. The use of imperative constructions allows the speaker to specify the action that he wants the addressee to carry out. The impositive nature of the imperative sentence type makes imperative constructions excellent foundations for the expression of threats. However, none of the instances in the corpus is expressed by means of a single imperative. All of them are realized through the disjunctive combination of an imperative and a declarative sentence.

#### $X_{IMP}$ *Or* $I Y_{VP}$

Within the group of realizations that make use of an imperative and a declarative sentence, the majority of occurrences are instances of the construction under scrutiny. The high frequency of occurrence of this construction is not random. The construction is capable of instantiating most of the parameters of the generic structure of threatening. By way of illustration, consider:

(26) “Clear off, *or I will attack you*”. (Bnc)

(27) Don’t move, soldier fellow. Hands up *or I will* shoot you dead. (Coca 1990)

The imperative specifies the action which the speaker wants the addressee to carry out. In turn, the declarative sentence communicates the state of affairs which the speaker will bring about if the addressee does not comply with his wishes. By using a first person subject, the speaker takes responsibility for the harm that will be inflicted to the addressee, which suggests a strong determination in carrying out the threat. Distinct types of coordination between the declarative and imperative sentence result in different constructional variants:

(28) Keep moving. Leave the forts alone, the castle, the village, everything, understand? *Otherwise* I will chain you in the worst dungeon I can find when I get my hands on you again. (Coca 1994)

(29) Touch her *and* I will kill you, I swear. (Coca 2005)

The use of a disjunctive form in (28) makes it clear that the speaker wants the addressee to carry out the action specified in the imperative sentence. In (29), the use of the conjunction makes it necessary to infer that the speaker wants the addressee to do the opposite of what he is saying. Because the inferential path is larger when conjunctions are used, the construction in the disjunctive form is generally preferred.

### ***X<sub>IMP</sub> Or You Y<sub>VP</sub>***

In this construction, which is a variant of the previous one, the declarative sentence is in the passive voice and presents the addressee as the undergoer of a future state of affairs that will be negative for him. The speaker's involvement in the negative state of affairs to be brought about needs to be manifest in order for the construction to produce a threatening reading:

(30) Free all the hostages, *or you will* pay the price. (Coca 1991)

If the speaker's intention to cause harm to the addressee is clear, the construction is enough to activate the parameters of power and commitment of the generic structure, which enable the threat meaning of this utterance.

### ***X<sub>IMP</sub> Or I Will Kill You***

This construction represents yet a further variant of the general *X<sub>IMP</sub> Or I Y<sub>VP</sub>* pattern and belongs to the same family of constructions as the declarative formula with the verb *kill* discussed above. The use of an imperative form conveys a higher degree of imposition and makes this construction more explicit:

(31) Get away from him or *I will kill you*. (COCA 1993)

In (31), the emphasis is on the harm that the speaker intends to inflict on the addressee. Similar constructional variants may arise by focusing on the negative effects that the speaker's action will have for the addressee. This example illustrates this:

(32) Don't lie, *or you are dead*. (COCA 1998)



By hinting at the possible result of his action, the speaker is communicating the addressee that he is going to harm him if he keeps on lying. Example (32) manages to activate the resultative part of the generic structure of threatening, which is not enough in itself to instantiate the act. There is no explicit indication of the speaker's involvement in the harm that will be caused to the addressee. This part of the generic structure needs to be inferred for the construction to be interpreted as a threat.

### 8.2.3. Interrogative threat constructions

The corpus only contains ten instances of threatening performed by means of interrogative constructions. The openness of interrogative sentences makes them little effective in the production of impositive illocutions like threats. Interrogative threats are restricted to cases in which the speaker questions the addressee about his willingness to get a negative response in case of non-compliance.

#### *Do You Want Me $X_{vp}$ ?*

This formal realization, which has shown to be fairly specialized for the expression of offers, has been found in four instances of threatening. Let us remember that offers attempt to get the addressee to let the speaker carry out an action which is assumed to be beneficial for him. This construction points to the state of affairs which is the object of the addressee's wishes, which is one of the most relevant parameters of the semantic structure of offering. The activation of this variable makes the offer interpretation straightforward. As may become evident, threats contrast with offers in that in the former the state of affairs that is proposed is supposed to be negative for the addressee. Thus, the threatening value of this construction depends on the nature of the state of affairs that is proposed to the addressee. The variable element has to be realized by a non-controllable activity that denotes some kind of harm for the addressee. The open nature of the interrogative sentence disappears with the use of an impositive falling intonation. In these terms, this construction instantiates the part of the threatening structure that has the addressee as the undergoer of a harmful state of affairs, which is enough to produce an easy threat value:

(33) *Do you want me to beat the truth out of you?* (Bnc)

(34) *Do you want me to hurt you?* (Coca 2001)

In (33) and (34), it is clear that the speaker wants the addressee to do something and has the intention to harm the addressee in case of non compliance. A mere question about whether the addressee would like the speaker to bring about a negative state of affairs enables their interpretation as instances of threatening.

### ***Do You Want X?***

The threat meaning of this construction is based on the same reasoning schema as the previous one, but in this case the speaker is not presented as the agent of the action that may harm the addressee. This formula questions the addressee about his wishes to get an action carried out. Since everybody wants the best for themselves, the addressee is supposed to be interested in getting something beneficial for him. Here lies the offering meaning of the construction, which is activated by the rules of interaction that move us to satisfy other people's wishes if it is within our range of abilities. Threats are not influenced by these conventions, because they intend to benefit the speaker at all costs. On the contrary, the coercive character of threats relates to the harm that the action to be carried out by the speaker involves for the addressee. Because of this, the threatening value of the construction depends on the nature of the variable element. It can be realized by a verb either in the active or in the passive voice. In the first case, the addressee is given the option to decide whether to carry out the proposed action or not. In the second case, the addressee does not have control over the harm that is going to be inflicted on him. See the examples below:

(35) *Do you want to fight me? Come, fight me if you will.* (Coca 2008)

(36) *Do you want to get yourself killed, Danny?* (Bnc)

In (35), the variable element is realized by a verb in the active voice which denotes a controllable activity involving a potential harm for the addressee. Although he seems to have a possibility to choose, in actual fact the addressee is in a position in which he has to agree with the speaker's wishes in order not to get hurt. In (36), the action is realized by a causative *get* indicating lack of control on the part of the addressee. To be interpreted

as a threat, the speaker's involvement in the state of affairs that will be brought about to harm the addressee must be clear from the context.

#### **8.2.4. Generalizations on constructions for threatening**

Most of the threat constructions in the corpus combine imperative and declarative sentences. The fact that this is the most common type of realization procedure is certainly not arbitrary. The combination of an imperative and a declarative sentence in a particular realization manages to instantiate the most relevant semantic structure of threatening. The imperative sentence specifies the action which the speaker wants the addressee to carry out. The declarative sentence points to the state of affairs which the speaker will bring about if the addressee does not comply with his wishes. As a result, the combination of a declarative and an imperative has become largely conventionalized for the realization of threats.

Likewise, those constructions combining two declarative sentences have also become specialized for the performance of threats. In these cases, the first declarative communicates the action which the speaker wants the addressee to carry out, and the second indicates the harm that is going to be inflicted on the addressee in case of non-compliance. The first declarative sentence is expressed in the conditional form and the second in the future tense. This allows the speaker to make it explicit that the addressee will be harmed only if he does not comply with the speaker's wishes, thereby activating one of the central features defining the act of threatening. Because of this, threats are realized mainly by means of the combination of two disjunctive declaratives.

There are only a few instances in the corpus performed by means of a construction with a single imperative sentence. These realizations point either to the speaker's authority over the addressee or to the trouble that the speaker will cause to the addressee if he does not act as requested. In these constructions, the action which the speaker wants the addressee to carry out is not made explicit and therefore requires inferential activity to be interpreted as a threat.

Interrogative constructions are the least specialized means for the expression of threats since they only partially activate the corresponding semantic structure. Interrogative constructions are used in threatening by pointing to the addressee's lack of interest in getting hurt by the speaker in case of not complying with the latter's wish, which constitutes the resultative part of the generic structure of threatening.

## **9. THE SPEECH ACT OF CONGRATULATING**

### **9.1. THE SEMANTICS OF CONGRATULATING**

Most of the research devoted to the description of expressive acts has been carried out in the early times of speech act theory. In Searle's (1979) account, expressives are defined as aimed at communicating the speaker's emotional state about the situations presented in the content of a message. Since expressive acts do not represent the world or change it, Searle assigns them an empty direction of fit. The Searlean approach to expressives has been largely accepted in general terms.

An account of expressive acts that differs from Searle's is the one put forward by Habermas (1984). Habermas coincides with the definition of expressives provided by Searle to a large extent. However, he claims that the Searlean account cannot identify any world relation or direction of fit for expressives due to the problem that Searle makes no provision for the subjective world of the speaker. The description of expressive speech acts provided by Habermas is related to the subjective world, the claim for sincerity and the subjective function. In this way, he views expressive acts as used to present some information belonging to the subjective world of the speaker. The addressee will be motivated to accept the claim for sincerity raised by the speaker if the speaker can assure the addressee that he really means what he says. Habermas's analysis explains the addressee's motivations to accept the validity of the speech acts, which are lacking in Searle's approach.

Apart from Searle's and Habermas's proposals, there are few studies describing the semantics of expressive acts (Norrick, 1978; Wierzbicka, 1987). This trend is even more marked in the case of congratulations. The factors that may explain this bias are varied. To begin with, congratulations have been found to be less frequent in communicative interaction than other expressive acts like apologizing (see Cole *et al.*, 1978, and Dore, 1978). It may be speculated that, since apologies involve previous offenses, they have a greater impact in shaping the relationship between participants than congratulations, which are related to joy. This would explain the higher frequency of the former. Moreover, the realization of apologies is influenced by the already existing relationship between participants, the time in which they are delivered, the speaker's reluctance and the addressee's reaction, which makes them a more attractive object of study for pragmaticists. Whether for these or other reasons, the fact is that

theorists have shown a preference for the study of apologies to the neglect of congratulations. An account of congratulations that seems worth extending further is the one put forward by Wierzbicka (1987). This author explains the motivation of congratulations and proposes a semantic characterization of the act. According to this author, congratulations are performed to express joy at the addressee's success. Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's (2007) is the first approach that makes provision for the cultural convention that leads people to congratulate others. Congratulations arise from the stipulation that we have to feel pleased about other people's benefit. The convention under consideration is defined by the authors in the following way (Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007: 111):

*If it is manifest to A that a state of affairs is beneficial to B and B has brought it about, A should feel pleased about it and make this feeling manifest to B.*

We congratulate people when something good happens to them. According to Wierzbicka, in congratulating someone we assume that the addressee has done something that caused a happy event to take place. Wierzbicka see oddity in congratulating someone who has unexpectedly received an inheritance. However, I shall argue that it is indeed possible to congratulate people merely on the occasion of good fortune. It would be even impolite if we did not congratulate a friend of us who has received an inheritance. And if we did not, it would not be because he has not contributed to it but because we grieve with him over the death of the person who has left the inheritance. We cannot congratulate people if they are not pleased about the benefit they have received. The presupposition of the addressee's joy seems determining in the performance of congratulating. Speakers assume that the addressee is pleased because of the happy event and needs to say that he shares his pleasure. But, although congratulations have an element of self-expression, they are more addressee oriented than speaker oriented (Wierzbicka, 1987). Above all, the speaker intends to convey a warm message to the addressee. The data in the corpus supports these insights. Most instances of congratulating merely express the speaker's joy or commend the addressee for the benefit obtained. My description of the high-level cognitive model of congratulating is built around the cultural convention of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* and captures the semantic import of the act. It generalizes over cases of interaction where people express joy at the benefit of others. Here are some of these cases of interaction in the form of low-level cognitive models:

- (a) A state of affairs has been brought about to A's benefit. B becomes aware of it. B makes his pleasure manifest to A. A may feel pleased about B's feelings.
- (b) A state of affairs has been brought about to A's benefit. B becomes aware of it and assumes A feels pleased. B makes his pleasure manifest to A. A may feel pleased about B's feelings.
- (c) A makes B aware that a state of affairs has been brought about to A's benefit. B makes his pleasure manifest to A. A may feel pleased about B's feelings.
- (d) A makes B aware that a state of affairs has been brought about to A's benefit. B assumes A feels pleased because of the benefit. B makes his pleasure manifest to A. A may feel pleased about B's feelings.

These low-level models of congratulating have generic structure in common that may be used to derive a high-level cognitive model:

- (e) A state of affairs has been brought about to A's benefit.
- (f) B becomes aware of it.
- (g) B assumes A feels pleased because of the benefit obtained.
- (h) B makes his pleasure manifest to A.
- (i) A may feel pleased about B's feelings.

This generic structure will guide us in the analysis of the constructions performing congratulations. The examples below illustrate some of the most conventional constructions for congratulating:

- (1) I'm glad you did what you did, on your own, without anyone's help. *I'm glad for you, Harry.* (Coca 2002)
- (2) Quick delivery and pass set. Good movement in pocket. *Great job* looking off defensive backs. (Coca 1990)
- (3) I am so glad to hear it. *You must be pleased.* (Coca 1992)

- (4) I'm so happy for you. And so was it everything you dreamed it would be? (Coca 2005)
- (5) "You did well. Thank you".  
 "Very grateful. Thank you". (Coca 2003)

All these constructions activate different parts of the generic structure formulated above. Utterance (1) points to the benefit obtained by the addressee from the bringing about of the state of affairs. Utterances (2) and (3) activate the acknowledgement of the benefit that the state of affairs has brought about for the addressee on the part of the speaker. Utterance (4) spells out the manifestness of the speaker's feelings of pleasure about the benefits obtained by the addressee. The use of a question enquiring about the addressee's joy seeks to confirm the speaker's assumption about his feelings. Finally, the utterance in (5), which forms part of a dialogue, makes explicit the addressee's reaction to the speaker's feelings. The addressee is expected to feel grateful on the basis of the cultural convention according to which we must express appreciation when others do or say things that are good to us. This convention is captured by the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* and is dealt with in detail in next chapter as the cultural background for acts of thanking.

## 9.2. REALIZATION PROCEDURES FOR CONGRATULATING

The performance of congratulations displays a marked preference for declarative constructions. Contrary to directive and commissive speech acts, expressives show a tendency to use the declarative form. This comes as no surprise. The declarative form allows speakers to make their feelings explicit by means of a statement. The distribution of constructions for congratulating by sentence type is summarized in the table below:

Sentence type	Constructions	Occurrences
Declarative	10	415
Imperative	2	14
Interrogative	2	6

Table 14. *Distribution of congratulating constructions by sentence type*

Let us see the constructional realizations which characterize each of the sentence types when used in the performance of the speech act under consideration.

### 9.2.1. Declarative congratulating constructions

The compatibility of the declarative sentence type with the realization of expressive acts makes it a perfect vehicle for congratulating. Hence the large number of congratulating occurrences using declarative constructions. As will be shown, the realization procedures involved in the expression of declarative congratulations can be divided in two large groups: the use of performative verbs and adjectives related to the speaker's emotional state. I shall devote the rest of this section to the discussion of these realization procedures:

#### *Congratulations To $X_{NP}$ On $Y_{NP}$*

This construction is probably one of the most explicit means for the expression of congratulations. The explicitation of the congratulating meaning instantiates the full generic structure, thus making it easy to interpret an utterance based on this construction as an instance of congratulating. The fixed part of the construction denotes the speaker's feelings of joy. The variable part may change with the purpose of the speaker. It may be the case that the speaker does not feel the need to specify the circumstances of the congratulation by means of a variable element. In such cases, the speaker gives congratulations in a fairly direct way. This is an example of such a situation:

(6) Many *congratulations*. (Bnc)

In other cases, a variable element can be used to specify the state of affairs which constitutes the object of the congratulation. Such an element can be realized by a prepositional phrase that takes part in the construction. See the differences in meaning of this constructional variant in the following example:

(7) “*Congratulations on* a job well done, payment is on its way”. (Coca 1991)

Example (7) depicts a context where the speaker is the addressee's employer and is satisfied about the work he has done because it benefits both the addressee and the speaker. The emphasis of the congratulation is on the job that the addressee has done and which has brought about the



beneficial state of affairs. Specifying the nature of the action carried out by the addressee conveys the idea that the speaker appreciates the addressee's effort and the good quality of his work. In the kind of contexts described, the speaker and the addressee work together and they must show cordiality to each other. It can be considered that they share a relationship which is close enough to make the speaker feel pleased about the addressee's achievements and praise him sincerely. Warmer instances of congratulating can be achieved by emphasizing the role of the addressee in bringing about the beneficial state of affairs:

- (8) *Many congratulations to your girlfriend and yourself on the birth of your daughter.* (Bnc)

In these cases, the construction admits another prepositional phrase specifying the identity of the person who is responsible for the happy event. The use of this resource conveys greater appreciation on the part of the speaker.

### ***I Congratulate You On X<sub>NP</sub>***

This construction constitutes a different way of performing explicit congratulations. The use of the performative verb leads to a default congratulating meaning:

- (9) *I congratulate you on your punctuality.* (Bnc)
- (10) *I congratulate you on your graduation tomorrow. All the best to you.* (Coca 1999)

It is possible to include verbs of desire to indicate the speaker's willingness to congratulate the addressee. Although in such cases the congratulating meaning is more implicit, the illocutionary value is grasped by means of a metonymic operation whereby the speaker's willingness to congratulate the addressee stands for his actual congratulation. These are representative examples of this constructional variant:

- (11) *I'd like to congratulate you both on a job well done.* (Coca 1991)
- (12) *Well, I want to congratulate you on your strong showing.* (Coca 1999)

- (13) *I wish to congratulate you* on your defense. (Coca 2000)

The emphasis of these realizations is on the speaker's willingness to make the congratulation. By making his desire to congratulate the addressee explicit, the speaker is indicating that it is the state of affairs that has been brought about to the addressee's benefit and not cultural conventions that impels him to express joy. This meaning implication gives rise to warm instances of congratulating. In opposition to this, other constructional variants may arise denoting a low willingness on the part of the speaker to congratulate the addressee:

- (14) *I must congratulate you* on your successful trip through Europe. (Coca 2001)

- (15) *I have to congratulate you*, Alex. You've succeeded beyond anyone's expectations. (Coca 1994)

- (16) I suppose *I should congratulate you*. (Coca 2003)

- (17) *I ought to congratulate you* on your elevation, I suppose. (Bnc)

These realizations communicate the idea that the speaker is congratulating the addressee not because he is willing to, but because he is compelled to given the circumstances. Although it could be argued that in such cases the speaker does not feel real happiness for the addressee, the truth is that he is acting according to cultural conventions whether or not his feelings are sincere.

### ***I Compliment You On<sub>NP</sub>***

This constructional realization is another means for the expression of explicit congratulations. The characteristics of this construction are the same as those of the previous one, with the only difference that the verb used in this case shows more courtesy and respect. Because of this, the meaning implications conveyed are different. Here is an example from the corpus:

- (18) *I compliment you* on your patriotism, your idealism, your creativity and your ingenuity. (COCA 1992)

As was the case before, this construction may be subject to formal changes. The use of modality markers may give rise to constructional variants specifying the addressee's feelings that have motivated the congratulation. When verbs of obligation take part in the fixed part of the construction, the speaker conveys the idea that he feels compelled to compliment the addressee:

(19) "*I must compliment you* all on your efficiency and your bravery here today". (Bnc)

(20) *I have to compliment you* on that. Nice. (Coca 2009)

Verbs of obligation indicate a self-imposed obligation on the part of the speaker when he realizes that the addressee deserves the compliment. In contrast, if the speaker wants to show that he is willing to praise the addressee, the construction makes use of verbs of desire:

(21) Tom! *I want to compliment you* on your wife. She's a beautiful lady! (Coca 1995)

(22) Editor, *I would like to compliment you* on your February Editorial. (Coca 1998)

Constructional variants making use of verbs of desire give rise to affectionate instances of congratulating in which the speaker wants to show that he shares the addressee's joy to the extent that he is impelled to express his eagerness to congratulate him.

### ***I Commend You On X<sub>NP</sub>***

This type of realization represents an alternative vehicle for the expression of congratulations through the use of a performative verb. The verb used in this case expresses appraisal more than joy about the addressee's success. Look at the example:

(23) *I commend you on* your excellent magazine. (Coca 1997)

In the utterance, the speaker is expressing a positive judgment about the work carried out by the addressee. The congratulation is implicit in the

speaker's positive evaluation because his appraisal implies something good about the addressee. In other words, the positive evaluation of the work carried out by the addressee reflects positively on him. Judgements of this type give access to the part of the generic structure which presents the addressee as benefited from a state of affairs. This parameter of the generic structure represents much of the meaning content of congratulations and its instantiation manages to produce a straightforward congratulating reading in appropriate contexts.

### ***I Praise You ( $X_{PREP}$ )***

This realization procedure is yet another way of performing explicit congratulations. The construction praises the addressee's qualities. The implicit idea is that such qualities have enabled the addressee to bring about the state of affairs that is the object of the speaker's appraisal. This construction may admit a variable element depending on the intended communicative purpose. This element would be realized by a prepositional phrase that singles out the addressee's achievement:

- (24) You mean the world to me. *I praise you* for standing by me through all of this, through my mistake. (Coca)

The absence of a variable element specifying the action carried out by the addressee would result in a general praise, but even in this case the implication that the addressee deserves appraisal is present in the background.

### ***I Am Happy For You ( $X_P$ )***

This construction makes the speaker's feelings of joy explicit. The congratulating meaning of the construction is lexically transparent and simple to grasp. Expressions about the speaker's happiness towards a state of affairs that is positive for the addressee instantiate the complete act of congratulating through the explicitation of the illocutionary value:

- (25) I heard about your wedding plans, I'm so *happy for you*. (Coca 1993)

- (26) Then it's not gone. Good. *I'm happy for you*. (Coca 2002)

On some occasions, the speaker may indicate the action that has been brought about to the addressee's benefit. In the utterance above, the construction is used together with a statement which refers to the event the speaker is happy about. The construction may also single out this event through the use of a *that*-clause:

- (27) Well, were so happy *that you are on the road to recovery* and feeling better, and we know things are just going to get better week to week. (Coca 2009)

It is up to the speaker to decide whether or not to give emphasis to the state of affairs that has benefited the addressee by means of a variable element. The fixed part of the construction is also subject to compositional changes. The adjective used to express the speaker's feelings may be replaced by others with a related meaning, which may give rise to different constructional variants:

- (28) *I'm glad* you had a good time. (Coca 1991)

- (29) *I'm pleased for you*, Daniel. (Coca 2008)

The use of different adjectives expressing the speaker's joy in the construction is related to the emphasis or the force that the congratulation intends to communicate.

### ***I Am Proud Of You* ( $X_{PREP}$ )**

This realization also points to the part of the cognitive model of congratulating that relates to the speaker's good feelings about the benefit received by the addressee. Unlike previous construction, in this case, the speaker is not expressing joy but rather pride about the addressee for being capable of achieving a goal. This makes this realization procedure appropriate for very specific contexts:

- (30) I'm very *proud of you*, sweetheart. (Bnc)

The construction consists of a first person subject and a verb phrase expressing pride for the addressee. It may be the case that the speaker believes there is no need to point out the addressee's achievement. But it

may be the case that the speaker wants to commend the addressee on something specific. In this latter case, the construction makes use of a variable element introduced by a prepositional phrase describing the action about which the speaker is proud:

- (31) I'm *proud of you* for always being the man of your house. (Coca 2009)

Since the speaker cannot feel proud about a situation that he believes to be non-beneficial for the addressee, the feelings of joy are implicit in the construction and can be easily derived.

### ***You Did Well* ( $X_{PREP}$ )**

More implicit congratulations can be performed by activating the component of congratulating that points to the state of affairs brought about to the addressee's benefit. Although in congratulating the happy event does not necessarily have to be caused by the addressee, constructions of this type assume that such is the case. These statements praise something done by the addressee. One possible realization procedure of this type is exemplified below:

- (32) *You did well.* Come back tomorrow. You will learn more. (Coca 2000)

- (33) Oh, I saw you on this particular TV show. *You did well.* (Coca 1995)

This construction is highly specialized for the illocutionary value under consideration. Praising the action that has been carried out by the addressee and which has brought about a beneficial state of affairs produces a straightforward congratulating reading.

### ***Well Done* ( $X_{PREP}$ )**

This type of realization is another way of performing congratulations by praising the addressee for having brought about a state of affairs that is beneficial for him. The construction is so specified that the use of only its fixed part does not cause difficulties in its interpretation as a congratulation. Consider:

(34) *Well done!* (Bnc)

In other cases, the speaker may refer to the state of affairs brought about by the addressee by using a statement. As a matter of fact, most of the examples of this construction in the corpus are found in combination with statements of this kind. This procedure reinforces the congratulating meaning of the construction by making explicit the speaker's good feelings towards the action which has been carried out by the addressee and has caused the happy event. The use of these statements eases the interpretation of utterances as congratulations. Here is an example:

(35) *Well done!* You recited marvelously! (Coca 1991)

Only one instance of the construction in the corpus makes use of a variable element indicating the addressee's achievement. In this example, the variable element is realized by a prepositional phrase with a noun indicating the subject area in which the addressee has succeeded. The fact that this type of realization shows little productiveness could be explained by the high degree of entrenchment of the initial construction, which makes it unnecessary to use references to make explicit reference to the state of affairs that constitutes the object of the congratulation:

(36) *Well done with* the pitchfork, but don't talk to the neighbours too much about this, will you? (Bnc)

When the nature of the action the addressee is being praised about is not clear, as in the case of (36), this form of the construction becomes useful to activate this characteristic of the semantic structure.

### ***You Did Well/You Did A Good Job* ( $X_{PREP}$ )**

In a similar vein as with the previous realizations, this construction points to the part of the cognitive model of congratulating that describes the achievement which is brought about by the addressee. Since this constitutes the motivating factor for congratulations, it gives easy access to the full generic structure. The construction follows the general tendency of the realizations for congratulations seen so far. The lexical transparency of the fixed elements is such that it becomes unnecessary to specify the kind of state of affairs brought about by the addressee:

(37) “*You did well*, Jamison. Good job”. (Coca 2007)

(38) You did a *good job with* that shed, Homer. (Coca 1999)

In (37), the speaker is using the construction to praise the addressee for an unspecified course of action. The use of the construction alone produces a default value of the utterance as a congratulation. In (38), the construction makes use of a variable element referring to the addressee’s accomplishment. It should be noticed that it is not just the variable part of the construction that is subject to change. The fixed element may be modified in order to increase the impact conveyed by the congratulation. Different adjectives may be used for this purpose, thus giving rise to diverse constructional variants. Take these examples as representative:

(39) You’ve done a *great job*, an astounding job considering the limited resources available to you. (COCA 1991)

(40) *You have done a nice job* decorating the White House. (COCA 1991)

Different adjectives emphasize the quality of the addressee’s job with varying degrees of intensity. Those included in (39) and (40), for instance, convey more forceful congratulations which are appropriate in contexts in which the speaker admires the addressee for the work he has carried out.

### 9.2.2. Interrogative congratulating constructions

The open nature of interrogative constructions makes them a scarcely effective means for performing expressive acts. This might explain the limited occurrence of interrogative constructions in the corpus. Those that have been found are based on asking for permission to congratulate the addressee on an achievement.

#### *Can I Congratulate You On X<sub>NP</sub>?*

The use of a performative verb is capable in itself of producing a congratulating meaning effortlessly. One type of interrogative realization including a performative verb points to the speaker’s ability to congratulate the addressee:



- (41) Larry, before you ask me that, *can I congratulate you* on that wonderful coverage on the war you done? (Coca 1991)

Through the application of the cultural conventions that motivate the realization of congratulations, if it is manifest to the speaker that the addressee has brought about a state of affairs to his benefit, then the speaker should feel pleased and make it manifest to the addressee. By using the modal verb *can*, the speaker is making the addressee aware that he feels happy at his success, but he will express his feelings only if they comfort the addressee. The construction produces implicit congratulations based on the high-level metonymy PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT AN ACTION FOR ACTION, which links the request for permission to the addressee with the actual act of congratulating.

### ***May I Congratulate You On X<sub>NP</sub>?***

The verb *may* expresses a higher degree of tentativeness than the modal *can*. Consider:

- (42) *May I congratulate you* on your recent marriage, Lord Greenleigh? (Coca 2006)

In (42), the tentativeness of the verb fits in a formal context where there is a large social distance between the speakers. Permission to perform congratulations gives the addressee freedom to decide whether or not to accept congratulations from the speaker. This makes realizations of this type appropriate for contexts in which the speaker feels uncertain about the addressee's wishes to receive compliments.

### **9.2.3. Imperative congratulating constructions**

Imperative constructions are little specialized for the performance of congratulations. In effect, the imperative sentence type gives instruction to carry out an action. Only imperative constructions requesting for permission to praise the addressee constitute appropriate foundations for the realization of congratulating. These realizations display high degrees of codification because of their ability to instantiate the act of congratulating by means of performative predicates.

### ***Let Me Congratulate You On X<sub>NP</sub>***

The performance of congratulations presupposes the addressee's willingness to share his feelings of joy about the state of affairs that has been brought about to his benefit. Congratulations addressed to people who do not want to receive a compliment may give rise to uncomfortable situations. Such contexts require the use of tentative congratulations asking for permission to express the speaker's happiness at the addressee's fortune. Imperative constructions become useful in this type of situation:

(43) *Let me congratulate you* on your victory. (Coca 1996)

In contrast to interrogative constructions, the use of imperatives for performing congratulations does not create an expectation for an answer from the addressee. The addressee does not find himself in the position to allow the speaker to congratulate him on his achievement. In fact, the speaker takes responsibility for giving congratulations that may be annoying to the addressee. However, the fact that the addressee is not expected to react in a given way to the congratulation does not mean that he has a choice. The impositive tone of the imperative reduces the addressee's freedom considerably.

### ***Let Me Commend You On X<sub>NP</sub>***

In this construction the use of the verb *commend* conveys assessment more than joy for the addressee bringing about a state of affairs. At the same time, the construction indicates that the speaker is not willing to annoy the addressee if he does not want to get credit for such an achievement. The use of the construction functions as a reminder to the addressee that the speaker believes it is necessary to express that the state of affairs brought about deserves praise even if he does not want to be commended. The example below illustrates this:

(44) Mr. Tibbs, first of all, *let me commend you* on your superb composure in light of what you've been through. (Coca 1993)

The example illustrates a situation in which the speaker admires the addressee for being able to cope with a difficult situation and wants to express his admiration without making him feel uncomfortable. This leaves

the addressee in a position where he only can accept the speaker's feelings and express gratitude.

#### **9.2.4. Generalizations on constructions for congratulating**

The expression of congratulating is characterized by its preference for the use of declarative constructions. Declarative constructions allow the speaker to express his feelings through a statement and are well adapted for the performance of expressive acts. One way of producing congratulations through the declarative form is by making use of a performative verb, as with other speech acts, constructions based on performative predicates make the congratulating meaning explicit. Other way of performing congratulations using declarative constructions is by praising the addressee's bringing about of the beneficial state of affairs or expressing the speaker's feelings of joy for the benefit obtained by the addressee. All the declarative constructions in the corpus point to one of these variables of congratulating.

Neither interrogative nor imperative constructions are capable of producing explicit congratulations. The limited number of interrogative and imperative congratulating constructions that have been found are based on asking for permission to congratulate the addressee. In order to do so, they make use of a performative verb, which gives access to the whole generic structure of congratulating and make the purpose of the act explicit.

## 10. THE SPEECH ACT OF THANKING

### 10.1. THE SEMANTICS OF THANKING

Acts of thanking express our gratitude in acknowledgement of a benefit that we have received for someone else's helpful or positive actions. Thanking is considered a polite form of behavior and cultural conventions lead us to manifest good feelings towards people who have done something beneficial for us. Because of this, it is generally argued that thanking is a fairly formulaic and insincere act (Norrick, 1978: 285). Since we are expected to express appreciation towards people in acknowledgement of a benefit that we have received, sometimes we do this without really feeling the need to do so. Wierzbicka (1987: 215) disagrees about statements that regard thanking as an empty social ritual and claims that these approaches confuse thanking with saying *thank you*. For Wierzbicka, *thank you* is indeed formulaic and often does not express any good feelings. *Thank you* can be said coldly conveying that one wishes to be left alone. But thanking other people does convey good feelings. This does not mean that acts of thanking are only effective if we are sincere about our gratitude. It is possible to thank others without having any good feelings for them but at least we must pretend that we do. The examples in the corpus support Wierzbicka's suggestions to a large extent. Sincere acts of thanking are usually reported by means of the corresponding performative verb, together, in some cases, with expressions of respect or affection:

- (1) I thanked him *kindly*. (Coca 2008)
- (2) She thanked him *warmly*. (Bnc)
- (3) Meredith brought the check and thanked them *with a friendly smile*. (Coca 1991)

In contrast, it is rather odd to find hostile acts of thanking reported by means of the performative verb. Consider the counterparts of the three examples above:

- (4) \*I thanked him *angrily*.
- (5) \*She thanked him *with obvious irritation*.

- (6) \*Meredith brought the check and thanked them *with a frown*.

Wierzbicka's distinction between thanking and saying *thank you* seems useful to account for the duty-bound component of thanking. Expressions of gratitude need to convey appreciation in order to be understood as instances of thanking. Otherwise they are considered stiff and ritualistic. I agree nonetheless with Norrick's (1978) claim that the obligation inherent in thanking is partially responsible for the stiff character of thanking. We are expected to thank the addressee for his actions whether we feel real gratitude or not. However, we are still free to decide not to give thanks if we do not really feel gratitude. But the failure to perform the act of thanking would not be more polite than doing it insincerely. The obligation of thanking emerges from the cultural convention that leads us to express gratitude for other people upon the realization that they have done something good for us. One of the conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* provides the background for this principle. This convention motivates the performance of thanking and is defined in the following way (Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007: 111):

*If it is manifest to B that A has changed a state of affairs to B's benefit, B should feel grateful about A's action and make this feeling manifest to B.*

The realization of thanking is a response to a state of affairs that has been brought about by the addressee and which has involved a benefit to the speaker. Acts of thanking thus presuppose that the addressee has done something good for the speaker and that the speaker feels pleased about that. These are the two components of thanking that convey the speaker's gratitude. On the one hand, thanking attempts to acknowledge the benefit that the speaker has received from the action carried out by the addressee. On the other hand, thanking conveys the appreciation the speaker feels towards the addressee because of that. Both concepts are certainly definitional components of the semantics of the act of thanking. Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's (2007) explanation of the cultural convention that motivates the production of thanking seems therefore useful to study this illocutionary category. Such a convention not only accounts for the motivation for thanking (the fact that the speaker has obtained benefit from the addressee's actions) but also for its communicative purpose (the speaker's gratitude towards the addressee). These two components account for the link between the speaker's gratitude and the act of thanking.

The few existing studies on thanking are mainly concerned with the social function of the act (Searle, 1975; Bach and Harnish, 1979; Franken and Dominicy, 2001) and they ignore the relationship that seems to hold between gratitude and thanking. In contrast, the generalization captured by the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* accounts sufficiently for the speaker's feelings of gratitude. Whether the speaker feels real appreciation or not, he should thank the addressee upon the realization that he has done something good for him. The gratitude that is conveyed by thanking thus does not arise from the speaker's feelings towards the addressee but rather from the action that has been carried out by the addressee and that has benefited the speaker. The speaker's gratitude is only the expected response in such a situation. Because everybody feels pleased when someone else does something good for him, it is expected that his expression of gratitude will be sincerely felt. But the recognized obligation to express gratitude does not mean that thanking aims merely at complying with a social function and cannot convey a sincere feeling. Nor does it mean that it is an empty social ritual.

The speaker's sincerity is not really important in the expression of thanking. I shall argue that the obligation associated with thanking simply arises from the observance of cultural conventions. If the speaker decides to act in accordance with such principles and does not feel real gratitude, he is not being insincere, as has been claimed by traditional accounts. This is so because, as noted by Wierzbicka (1987), the social function of thanking is not related to the speaker's feelings but rather to the addressee's actions. Of course the speaker may not feel appreciation at all towards the addressee and he may simply intend to be polite, what he wants is for the addressee to feel good about him. The performance of thanking seems to revolve around the speaker's assumption that the addressee wants to hear that the state of affairs he has brought about has pleased the speaker.

The suggestion that thanking is addressee-oriented rather than speaker-oriented is supported by the communicative impact that the act of thanking intends to cause on the addressee. When we give thanks to someone, we want to make him aware that we know that he has done something that is good for us. Note the explicitness of the following examples:

- (7) *I want you to know that* I am forever grateful for you all. (Coca 2003)
- (8) *I need you to know* how much I appreciate what you've done for me. (Coca 1994)

Both of these utterances count as attempts to make the addressee aware of the speaker's feelings of gratitude. Expressions of the speaker's desire to give thanks can only be understood as instances of thanking if the purpose of the act is precisely to manifest the speaker's good feelings. This aspect of thanking may be considered the most crucial for the function of the act. From this discussion I can derive the definitional components of the semantics of thanking. In the first place, thanking emerges in response to the benefit that we obtain from someone else. Secondly, our act intends to convey gratitude towards the addressee. This gratitude is conveyed through the acknowledgement that others have done something good for us and that we feel pleased about it. Thirdly, the addressee is expected to react warmly to our expression of gratitude. Each of the parameters of the generic structure of thanking accounts for one of these semantic features. This high-level cognitive model derives from generalizations over multiple low-level scenarios:

- (a) A has brought about a state of affairs that has benefited B. B feels gratitude towards A. B makes this feeling manifest to A. A may feel pleased about B's gratitude.
- (b) A has brought about a state of affairs that has benefited B and is not aware of it. B feels gratitude towards A and wants to acknowledge the benefit received. B expresses gratitude to A. A may feel pleased about the good feelings of B.
- (c) A has brought about a state of affairs that has benefited B and wants B to acknowledge the benefit received. B expresses gratitude to A. A may feel pleased about B's gratitude.
- (d) A has brought about a state of affairs that has benefited B but does not want to get credit for that. However, B feels gratitude towards A and makes this feeling manifest to A. A may feel pleased about B's gratitude.

These low-level models of thanking share some elements that make up the generic structure of thanking:

- (e) A has brought about a state of affairs that has benefited B.
- (f) B feels gratitude towards A because of that.

- (g) B makes this feeling manifest to A.
- (h) A may feel pleased about B's gratitude.

Observe how the instantiation of each of the parameters of the generic structure gives rise to instances of thanking:

- (9) You have been *incredibly good to me* when I was in desperate need. (Coca 2003)
- (10) *I want to thank you* for this opportunity and tell you I will do my very best for you. (Bnc)
- (11) *I appreciate* everything you've done. (Bnc)
- (12) "Thank you very much for being with us today. Thank you very much".  
"My pleasure". (Coca 1990)

Utterance (9) activates the addressee's bringing about of a state of affairs that has benefited the speaker. The instantiation of this component is not capable of producing a thanking reading and the addressee needs inferential activity aided by contextual variables and background information. Utterances (10) and (11) point to the acknowledgement of the benefit received on the part of the speaker and the manifestness of his gratitude to the addressee. The utterance in (12), which is part of a dialogue, makes explicit the addressee's reaction to the speaker's expression of gratitude. The addressee may feel pleased based on the same cultural convention that motivates the speaker's act of thanking, according to which we should feel grateful when others do or say things that are good to us and make that gratitude manifest to others.

## 10.2. REALIZATION PROCEDURES FOR THANKING

The number of declarative instances of thanking in the corpus clearly outnumbers those based on the interrogative and the imperative forms. This is due to the compatibility of the declarative sentence type with expressive illocutionary acts. The number of occurrences of each of these sentence types is the following:



Sentence type	Constructions	Occurrences
Declarative	5	530
Interrogative	2	5
Imperative	1	12

Table 15. *Distribution of thanking constructions by sentence type*

The performance of thanking conforms to the realization of expressive acts, which show a tendency towards the use of declarative sentences. Very few instances contained in the corpus are based on either interrogative or imperative sentences. Imperative sentences are related to the speaker's wish to get an action performed, while thanking revolves around the speaker's feelings about an action already carried out. Here lies the incompatibility of thanking with the imperative form. Nonetheless, in the previous chapter, we had the chance to see that *let* commands are a frequent realization for expressives. This is also the case with thanking.

Interrogative sentences present open propositions that seek a response from the addressee. Acts of thanking express the speaker's gratitude and their realization does not depend on the addressee's response. The few interrogative constructions contained in the corpus ask permission to give thanks.

Assertions appear as the most versatile means for the expression of the speaker's feelings. However, the little specification of declarative sentences makes them compatible with the meaning conditions of thanking as well as with those of the rest of expressive categories. Declarative constructions must be enriched with further indicators of this illocutionary force. A number of linguistic resources such as performative verbs and expressions of warmth towards the addressee allow the speaker to specify the thanking meaning in declarative constructions.

### 10.2.1. Declarative thanking constructions

Declarative constructions allow speakers to make statements about their feelings of gratitude. These statements instantiate most attributes of thanking and thus constitute adequate means for the expression of this speech act type. Nevertheless, the declarative sentence type is characterized by its low level of specification for a given illocutionary type. In order to produce a clear instance of thanking, declarative constructions need to make use of mechanisms capable of activating the relevant parameters of the corresponding generic structure. Those found in the corpus are considered below.

### ***I Thank You For X<sub>P</sub>***

According to the data in the corpus, one of the most productive ways of specifying the declarative sentence type for the performance of thanking is by means of a performative verb. The use of a singular subject pronoun and a performative verb instantiates the full generic structure of thanking:

(13) *I thank you for* your concern. (Bnc)

(14) *I thank you for* reading this story, and I hope you enjoy it. (Coca 2007)

In both examples, the use of the performative verb leads to a default thanking meaning. There is, however, a difference in the constructional composition of each utterance. This difference relates to the type of realization of the variable element, which points to the benefit that the speaker has obtained from the state of affairs brought about by the addressee. In (13), the variable element is realized by a noun phrase. In (14), it is realized by a verb phrase. Whichever the case, it makes explicit the action the speaker is thanking the addressee for. As far as the fixed part of the construction is concerned, it is also subject to changes depending on the speaker's purpose. The use of verbs of desire, for example, indicates willingness on the part of the speaker to give thanks. In these cases the idea of thanking is more implicit, but it can be easily inferred through a metonymic operation linking the speaker's willingness to give thanks with his actual expression of thanking. Here are some examples:

(15) *I would like to thank you* all for your goodwill and affection. I am very fortunate. (Coca 2003)

(16) *I want to thank you* for this opportunity and tell you I will do my very best for you. (Bnc)

This realization procedure seems to convey the implicit idea that the speaker is so pleased about the benefit received from the addressee that he is impelled to share his feelings. This meaning implication softens the impact of the act and gives rise to constructional variants that may fit in contexts of intimacy between the speaker and the addressee. In contrast, the use of verbs of obligation gives way to variants indicating that the speaker is not really willing to thank the addressee but feels compelled to do so in order to be polite. Consider:

(17) *I must thank you, Mary, for the suggestion.* (Coca 1996)

(18) *I have to thank you for this welcome you've provided.* (Coca 1991)

Utterances (17) and (18) convey the idea that the speaker only thanks the addressee in order to comply with the cultural conventions stipulated in the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. These constructional realizations contrast with the previous ones in relation to the feelings that prompt the act of thanking. Those cases in which the construction makes use of verbs of willingness indicate the speaker is truly happy about the benefit that he has received from the addressee and because of this happiness he has the urge to give thanks. Those cases in which the construction includes verbs of obligation imply that the speaker is actually not happy about the state of affairs brought about by the addressee but has received benefit from it and feels compelled to thank him. It should be borne in mind that the degree of speaker's willingness does not constitute the motivation for thanking. Therefore different degrees of willingness on the part of the speaker will give rise to more or less forceful instances of thanking but will not affect the intention of the act.

Such is the instantiation potential of this construction that it in many cases it is not necessary to include the first person subject. The verb alone is enough to instantiate the act of thanking. Those performatives which contain a subject give priority to the speaker while those which lack a subject pronoun place emphasis on the addressee. The following examples illustrate this:

(19) *Thank you for the opportunity to express myself.* (Coca 2009)

(20) *Thank you for sharing your struggles and success!* (Coca 2009)

It is also possible to find instances in which the construction lacks both a subject pronoun and an object pronoun. In these cases the act focuses on the expression of gratitude itself. There is no emphasis given either to the fact that the speaker acknowledges the benefit he has received or to the addressee as the person who has brought about such a benefit. Look at the examples below:

(21) *Thanks for the lunch, Gary.* (Bnc)

(22) *Thanks for making me part of the family here today.* (Coca 2009)

As opposed to what was the case with the construction from which these realizations stem, the fixed part cannot include verbs of willingness or obligation. The lack of a subject pronoun makes it impossible to include verbs describing the speaker's feelings. However, these constructional variants are subject to changes of a different kind. It may include diverse adverbs denoting a great gratitude on the part of the speaker. The adverbial intensifiers used in these utterances indicate the speaker feels a deep appreciation for the addressee. Realizations of this type are related to contexts where the speaker has received a great benefit from the addressee or feels highly satisfied about the addressee's action. Examples below illustrate a way in which this meaning can be conveyed:

(23) *Thank you very much for* being with us, Matt. We appreciate it. (Coca 2007)

(24) *Thank you so much for* your good wishes. (Bnc)

(25) All right. *Thanks very much for* your thought. (Coca 2007)

(26) *Thanks so much for* making time for us. Appreciate it. (Coca 2008)

Whether or not they make use of such kind of intensifiers, these realizational variants proves more productive in the expression of thanking than the general performative from which they derive. Surprisingly enough, the lack of the subject and the object pronoun renders them capable of adapting to the most diverse contexts.

### ***I Am Thankful For X<sub>P</sub>***

This construction is another explicit means for the expression of thanking. The use of an adjective denoting the gratitude that the speaker feels towards the addressee makes this formulation highly codified for thanking. Since this type of realization does not include an object pronoun referring to the addressee as the person who received the expression of appreciation, it may not be directed to an addressee in every case. Many instances of this construction express the speaker's gratitude for something life has given to him. Here is one example:

(27) *I am thankful for* living. *I am thankful for* my baby. (Coca 2007)

The absence of an addressee on such occasions may give the wrong impression that my definition of the generic structure for this speech act is not capable of accounting for certain scenarios of thanking. I may argue that this is not true. The expressions of gratitude for life are based on the generic structure defined for thanking. They comply with each of the parameters of the structure. They are motivated by a benefit received by the speaker. Although the beneficial state of affairs has not been brought about by the addressee, it comes from a source that is different from the speaker and the speaker believes that source is responsible for the benefit he has obtained. The speaker feels the need to express his gratitude. With regard to the addressee's response, the structure specifies what the expected reaction is but it also indicates that such a reaction may not occur. In cases like the one under consideration, the act of thanking is directed to an entity that cannot give any response. But the speaker knows that already and he just wants to express his thankfulness. The generic structure is capable of accounting for these instances, which represent the majority of the examples of the construction found in the corpus.

Those instances of this construction which are directed to a specific addressee contain a prepositional phrase that presents the addressee as the person who has brought about the state of affairs the speaker gives thanks for:

(28) Well, and *I'm thankful to you*, Susan. Thanks so much! (Coca 1994)

Instances of this type have not proved productive. The *thank you* forms studied before in this section are more easily recognized as instances of thanking than this construction. The reason why these forms are more conventionalized for thanking rather than the present one may be related to the principle of economy that governs linguistic activity. Despite the fact that both produce explicit instances of thanking, *thank you* forms are briefer and are thus preferable.

### ***I Am Grateful For X<sub>P</sub>***

The use of the adjective *grateful* in this realization procedure produces warmer instances of thanking. The construction does not contain a specific object pronoun presenting the addressee as the person who is being thanked. This is only implicit in the meaning part of the construction. As was the previous case, the non-explicitation of the addressee's identity as the person

who has brought about the beneficial state of affairs allows speakers to use the construction in cases where the speaker is expressing gratitude for the good things life has given to him. Consider:

- (29) I take nothing for granted anymore. *I am grateful for* every blessing in my life. (Coca 1999)

Many instances in the corpus depict situations like the one illustrated in (29). But it is also possible to use this realization procedure to express thankfulness towards a specific addressee:

- (30) *I am grateful for* your loyalty, for your courage, and for your selfless generosity. (Coca 2006)

In (30), the variable element is realized by a noun phrase indicating the addressee's qualities that have allowed acting to the speaker's benefit. It is possible to thank people for their qualities as long as they are beneficial for us in some way. In this case, the addressee's identity as the person who has carried out the action the speaker is thankful for is only specified in the variable part of the construction. In order to make it explicit in the fixed part, the construction may include a prepositional phrase specifying the identity of the addressee:

- (31) *I am grateful to you for* your kind words. (Coca 2007)

- (32) *I am grateful to you for* believing me. (Coca 1992)

This compositional difference results in a constructional variant that fits in contexts in which it becomes necessary to indicate the addressee's involvement in bringing about the state of affairs the speaker has received benefit from.

### ***I Appreciate X***

This is yet other way of using the declarative form based on pointing to the part of the generic structure related to the manifestness of the speaker's gratitude towards the addressee. This construction consists of a fixed part which conveys much of the thanking meaning of the construction due to its lexical transparency and a variable which specifies the nature of

the beneficial state of affairs brought about by the addressee. Let us provide two examples:

(33) *I appreciate* everything you've done. (Coca 2008)

(34) *I appreciate* you're taking the time to talk with us. (Coca 2008)

The variable element may be realized by a noun phrase, as is the case of (33), or by a verb phrase, as in (34). Its realization will depend on the emphasis of the specific act of thanking. In most cases it is due to the speaker's desire to stress the acknowledgement of the benefit received. If the speaker wants to express a deep appreciation for the addressee's action, he may also include adverbial intensifiers:

(35) *I really appreciate* the opportunity that's been afforded me. (Coca 2002)

Intensifiers of this type convey the idea that it is because of the speaker's gratitude rather than cultural conventions that he is thanking the addressee. Such a meaning implication has the consequence of increasing the degree of intensification of the expression of the speaker's appreciation, which results in warmer instances of thanking.

### ***X<sub>P</sub> Means A Lot To Me***

This construction places a greater emphasis on the state of affairs brought about by the addressee. Unlike in the cases of the previous constructions, its realizational part is introduced by a description of the action carried out by the addressee. This attaches more importance to the addressee's action and indicates a deep sense of indebtedness on the part of the speaker:

(36) I appreciate you coming here. *It means a lot to me.* (Coca 2006)

(37) You have been very supportive of this effort and, honestly, *it means a lot to me.* (Coca 2007)

As can be observed in the examples, the use of the variable element is optional and simply obeys communicative purposes. This element can be

realized either by a noun phrase or a verb phrase indicating the role of the addressee in carrying out the action that has resulted in a benefit for the speaker. The instances of the construction making use of the variable element give emphasis to the state of affairs brought about by the addressee. In contrast, in the instances in which the addressee's action is made explicit by means of an additional declarative sentence used in conjunction with the construction the focus of attention is on the speaker's feelings towards that particular action.

### **10.2.2. Interrogative thanking constructions**

In previous sections I have provided an explanation of why acts of thanking are not generally realized by means of interrogative constructions. Presenting the speaker's feelings through a statement is a more effective way of giving thanks. There are, however, diverse reasons that may lead the speaker to perform a more implicit act of thanking through the interrogative form. In certain situations, there may be a distant relationship holding between participants and the speaker may be afraid of making the addressee uncomfortable with his thanking. In such contexts, requests for permission to give thanks in the form of an interrogative sentence become useful. The corpus contains a few examples of interrogative constructions of this type. Let us consider them in detail.

#### ***Can I Thank You For $X_{VP}$ ?***

It is absurd to ask someone about one's capacity to express our feelings if we are clearly able to do so. The fact that the speaker questions the addressee about his ability to give thanks produces a collapse of logic that can only be reestablished if the sentence is understood as a request for permission. The purpose of thanking is to make the addressee aware of the speaker's gratitude towards him. The expression of gratitude is expected to satisfy the addressee somehow due to the acknowledgement of the state of affairs that he has brought about. But if the speaker is uncertain about how the addressee may react, requests for permission become the most appropriate option to give thanks. Consider the example:

- (38) *Can I thank you for sharing with us the example of the concentration, that you put so much in such a short time? (Bnc)*



The use of the performative verb in (38) makes explicit the speaker's intention to thank the addressee, but his expression of thankfulness is still implicit in his request for permission. This functions as a persuasive strategy that gives rise to fairly tentative instances of thanking.

### ***May I Thank You For X<sub>VP</sub>?***

The use of *may* in this construction conveys a greater degree of tentativeness. Here is an example:

(39) And if I may, *may I thank you for* your service? (Coca 2007)

The speaker assumes very politely that the addressee may not want to be thanked and for that reason asks for permission to perform an act that might embarrass a shy or humble addressee. Although he is free to decide not to accept the speaker's expression of gratitude, it would not be polite to do so. Requests for permission of this type do not really ask the addressee if he wants to be thanked. They convey the speaker's gratitude at the same time they make the addressee aware that the speaker is not sure about the appropriateness of his act and does not want to make the addressee feel uncomfortable.

### **10.2.3. Imperative thanking constructions**

The corpus contains only one example of the act of thanking expressed through the imperative sentence type. This example is an instance of a type of realization that is productive in the performance of expressive acts. This realization procedure asks for permission to give thanks by means of the verb *let*.

### ***Let Me Thank You For X<sub>P</sub>***

I have already shown how uncertainty about the addressee's willingness to receive appreciation for what he has done requires the use of more tentative instances of thanking. By using an imperative to ask for permission to give thanks, the speaker manages to perform a highly implicit instance of thanking that adapts fairly well to such situations. This

construction is capable of producing clear acts of thanking through the use of the corresponding performative verb. At the same time, the use of the imperative mitigates the meaning impact of the act. Look at the example:

(40) *Let me thank you, Henry, for your leadership.* (Coca 2002)

Imperative requests for permission to give thanks convey a degree of imposition that is not present in their interrogative counterparts, which has the effect of increasing the degree of force conveyed.

### **10.2.2. Generalizations on constructions for thanking**

This study of the constructional realizations for thanking leads to the following generalizations. The declarative sentence type is fully compatible with the meaning conditions of expressive acts in general and acts of thanking in particular. The corpus shows declarative constructions as the most productive means for the performance of thanking. It is nevertheless necessary to increase the degree of specification of declaratives by means of linguistic resources like performative verbs or expressions of gratitude. The use of these elements gives rise to declarative constructions that are well adapted for the realization of thanking.

With regard to the use of interrogative constructions, these constitute a less specialized means for thanking given the open nature of the interrogative sentence type. The interrogative instances of thanking in the corpus consist in requests for permission to express the speaker's feelings. These make reference to the speaker's gratitude and convey his desire to make it manifest to the addressee in such a way that the illocutionary force is easily derived.

The only thanking construction found in the corpus based on the imperative sentence type also requests the addressee for permission to give thanks. In contrast to their interrogative counterparts, the realizations that take this form are more impositive. The implicitness of these constructions makes them suitable in contexts where the speaker is uncertain about the addressee's willingness to be thanked.

## 11. THE SPEECH ACT OF APOLOGIZING

### 11.1. THE SEMANTICS OF APOLOGIZING

Apologies are remedial acts that express regret for a past action or past behavior. In apologizing, we acknowledge that we have caused something to happen that is negative to someone else. As argued by Wierzbicka (1987: 216), we apologize for the unintended consequences of our acts. In these situations, the action is not carried out to inconvenience the addressee on purpose. Still the effects of that action are negative for the addressee. In contrast, in pardoning, the offense consists of a state of affairs directly affecting the person whose forgiveness is needed. Offenses for which people apologize are thus smaller than those for which people ask forgiveness. One may apologize for stepping on somebody's foot, hurting someone's feelings, failing to provide the food or drink that guests have the right to expect or disappointing somebody's reasonable expectations. In all these situations, the speaker acts in such a way that he causes something bad to happen to the addressee. Thus, he thinks the addressee may feel injured and attempts to prevent or stop it by expressing regret about his action.

Apologies indicate awareness about a misdeed or respect for the person who has been offended, thus paving the way for reconciliation. The regret expressed in the apology may be sincere or insincere. I adhere to Wierzbicka's claim that even if apologies are insincere, but even when they are insincere, they are uttered not only to make manifest our sorrow but also as a kind of compensation for the offense caused. It is not enough to make the addressee aware that we are sorry. It is necessary to convey the idea that we acknowledge the negative state of affairs that our action has brought about for him.

The recognized need for apologizing is accounted for by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007). These authors include apologizing within a group of interpersonal acts performed in accordance to the cultural conventions defined in the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. In their approach, acts of apologizing comply with a social requirement according to which we should express sorrow if we have brought about a state of affairs that is negative to other people. The cultural generalization of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* that appears as underlying the conceptual nature of apologizing reads in the following terms (Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007: 111):

*If it is manifest to A that A has not acted as directed by parts (a), (b), and (c) of the 'cost-benefit' model, A should feel regretful about this situation and make this feeling manifest to B.*

From this discussion it is possible to draw the main features of the act of apologizing. The first of these characteristics has to do with its motivation. Apologizing is motivated by a need to express regret for having carried out an action that has proved non-beneficial for someone else. The performance of an apology presupposes that we acknowledge that our behavior has wronged the other person. It may be the case that our apology is demanded as a closing gambit in a conflict. Here is an example of such a situation:

- (1) "Maybe you should apologize".  
"Of course. My mistake". (Coca 2006)

In contexts of this type, the addressee makes it manifest that the speaker's action has offended him. The addressee's request for an apology puts the speaker in the need to express his sorrow for the offense he has caused. Demands for apologies are often made by people who consider themselves in a position of power. In such cases, the addressee may want to receive recognition for his powerful position by forcing the speaker to assume responsibility for the conflict. On other occasions, the addressee may simply feel wronged by the speaker and believe that he deserves an apology. Whichever the case, apologies that are prompted by a request on the part of the addressee do not arise from the speaker's feelings of regret but from the manifestness of the cultural convention according to which we have to express regret if we bring about a state of affairs that is negative to others. This convention is captured by the cultural stipulation of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* formulated above and it constitutes the motivation for the realization of acts of apologizing.

The obligation to apologize does not mean that apologies merely aim at complying with a social function nor that they are empty social rituals. However, the duty-bound component of apologizing has led some authors (Norrick, 1978: 284; Wierzbicka, 1987: 215) to believe that it does not convey a sincere feeling. Norrick, in particular, contends that apologizing has the social function of admitting responsibility for a situation that affected someone in a negative way and sometimes ask for forgiveness. Wierzbicka disagrees with Norrick in that the admission of responsibility is part of the content of apologies. For Wierzbicka, the admission of

responsibility for the situation is assumed, not asserted, by speakers who apologize. If the responsibility for the situation is not assumed by both the speaker and the addressee, the speaker needs to admit it before he can apologize. My definition of apologizing takes sides with Wierzbicka's view. One cannot apologize for something one does not consider oneself responsible for. Even though the admission of responsibility is not part of the content of apologizing, it is a prerequisite for the performance of the act and because of this its manifestness is capable of producing straightforward apologies.

The admission of responsibility is the second characteristic of apologies. A third characteristic has to do with the response that is expected on the part of the addressee. According to Fillmore (1971: 286), apologies are mainly performed to obtain the addressee's forgiveness. It may be argued that the acceptance of an apology is not part of the content of the act but rather a consequence of its realization. The speaker's purpose is merely expressing regret for having brought about a state of affairs that is negative for the addressee. The addressee may accept or not the apology. Based on these considerations, I will detail the elements of the high-level cognitive model underlying this illocutionary type. This model derives from generalizing over low-level scenarios. Some of these scenarios may be the following:

- (a) A has acted in such a way that has caused something bad to happen to B. A assumes responsibility for the badness of the state of affairs that he has brought about and which affects B negatively. B may accept A's regret or not.
- (b) A has acted in such a way that has caused something bad to happen to B. A expresses regret for the offense caused to B. B may accept A's regret or not.
- (c) A has acted in such a way that has caused something bad to happen to B and is not aware of it. B makes A aware that such state of affairs affects him negatively. A expresses regret for the offense caused to B. B may accept A's regret or not.
- (d) A has acted in such a way that has caused something bad to happen to B but does not assume responsibility for this. B makes A aware of his obligation to express regret for the offense caused. A expresses regret for the offense caused to B. B may accept A's regret or not.

These low-level models of apologizing have generic structure in common upon which the high-level cognitive model may be constructed. This generic structure captures the semantics of apologizing:

- (e) A has brought about such a state of affairs that has caused something bad to happen to B.
- (f) A assumes responsibility for the badness of the state of affairs that he has brought about, which affects B negatively.
- (g) A expresses regret for the offense caused to B.
- (h) B may accept A's regret.

This generic structure is realized by means of different constructions that have an instantiation potential with respect to one or more parameters. The analysis will show that certain parameters of the generic structure have greater potential than others to instantiate the act of apologizing. Some of the most specialized constructions for apologizing are exemplified in the utterances below:

- (2) *I am ashamed* that I have kept you from your rest, after so troublous a day. (Bnc)
- (3) "I'm *sorry about* the message. That was a stupid thing to say". (Coca 1990)
- (4) "In retrospect, *I regret making* that call and I apologize". (Coca 2007)
- (5) Do you think you'll ever *be able to forgive me*? (Bnc)

Utterance (2) activates the speaker's bringing about of a state of affairs. The expression of shame towards the badness of the situation caused to the addressee is frequent in the realization of apologies. Utterances (3) and (4) spell out the admission of responsibility for the offense caused on the part of the speaker and the manifestness of his regret to the addressee. The apology in (3) is prompted by the speaker's regret at not having acted thoughtlessly. In (4), it is the badness caused to the addressee that impels the speaker to apologize. Utterance (5) asks for the addressee's forgiveness. Interrogative constructions like the one illustrated in (5) produce indirect

instances of apologizing by pointing to the expected response on the part of the addressee. In my description of the act I have contended that the request for forgiveness does not constitute the main content of apologizing but a consequence of their realization. The speaker's apology may be either accepted or rejected by the addressee. Requests for acceptance of this type convey an apologetic attitude on the part of the speaker and result in implicit instances of this illocutionary category.

## 11.2. REALIZATION PROCEDURES FOR APOLOGIZING

The distribution of apologizing constructions in the corpus by sentence type is reproduced in the following table:

Sentence type	Constructions	Occurrences
Declarative	7	212
Imperative	4	94
Interrogative	2	24

Table 16. *Distribution of apologizing constructions by sentence type*

Apologies display a preference for declarative constructions. In this they resemble several other expressive categories (e.g. congratulating, thanking, pardoning, condoling, etc.). Declarative constructions are an excellent vehicle for the expression of the speaker's feelings. However, the declarative constructions used in the expression of apologies exhibit formal peculiarities motivated by the specific semantic features of the semantic structure and which function as hints towards the apologizing interpretation. With respect to the use of imperative and interrogative constructions for apologizing, the number of constructions in the corpus based on the imperative and interrogative sentence types is noticeably higher than for other expressive acts.

### 11.2.1. Declarative apologizing constructions

As was the case with congratulating and thanking, the low degree of specialization of the declarative sentence type for apologizing can be upgraded with the use of certain linguistic mechanisms. Some include the use of performative verbs and adjectives expressing regret with a rising intonation. Let us study how these mechanisms codify the apologizing meaning in declarative constructions.

### *I Am Ashamed (X<sub>P</sub>)*

This construction is one of the most explicit ways of performing apologies through the declarative form. It consists of a first person subject plus a verb phrase describing the speaker's feelings of shame about a past action. Shame is not the same as regret, but it is implied that the speaker regrets carrying out the action he feels ashamed about. We cannot feel shame about things we do not regret. Two parts of the generic structure are activated, namely, the speaker's feelings of sorrow about a past action and the manifestness of such feelings to the addressee. The instantiation of these parts is nonetheless implicit since the expression of shame only implies the speaker's sorrow. Look at the example below:

- (6) I offended both of you, and *I'm ashamed*. (Coca 1993)

In (6), the only indication that makes explicit that the speaker has offended both addressees is made in a declarative sentence used in combination with the construction. If it were not for this, the utterance could count as a mere expression of shame and not as an apology. To be interpreted as an instance of apologizing, it must be clear from the context that what the speaker feels shame about is that he has offended the two addressees. The instantiation of the wrongfulness that the speaker's action has caused to the addressee is required to understand this construction as an apology. It is possible to include a variable part in the construction that makes explicit the state of affairs brought about by the speaker:

- (7) It's I who should be down on my knees apologizing. *I'm ashamed* of my behavior. (Coca 2006)
- (8) *I am ashamed* that I have kept you from your rest, after so troublous a day. (Bnc)

These examples illustrate how the specification that the speaker feels shame for acting in a way that has been negative for the addressee points towards an apologizing interpretation. This part of the construction needs to be realized by a prepositional phrase describing the state of affairs the speaker is apologizing for. The use of different prepositions may have different communicative consequences. Cases like the one exemplified in (7) point to the speaker's action. By contrast, instances like (8) place more emphasis on the problems that the action has caused to the addressee. This



element has to make reference to the fact that the speaker's action has affected the addressee negatively. Otherwise, the value of the construction as an apology depends on contextual factors to a large extent. By way of illustration, consider:

(9) *I am ashamed* of what I have become. (Bnc)

(10) *I'm ashamed* of my impatience. But my feet are on the ground. (Coca 2007)

For (9) and (10) to be interpreted as apologies, it should be clear from the context that the situation described in the variable element of the construction has brought about a non-beneficial state of affairs for the addressee. If such is not the case, the speaker will simply express shame for having done something unworthy in the past.

### ***I Feel Terrible* ( $X_{PREP}$ )**

Again this type of realization contains a verb phrase describing the speaker's feelings for acting in a way that is negative for the addressee. The use of this sequence has the same instantiation potential as the one analyzed in relation to the previous construction. The manifestness of the speaker's regret to the addressee is instantiated, as can be observed in example (11) below:

(11) "*I feel terrible*" he said. (Bnc)

It may become apparent that the instantiation of this component of the generic structure is not capable in itself of yielding an apologizing reading. Without a specific reference to the negative state of affairs brought about by the speaker, the interpretation of the construction as an apology hangs on contextual information. It must be manifest to both participants that the speaker has acted in a way that has offended the addressee and that this is why he feels bad. This information can be made explicit through different means. It is possible to find this type of realization in conjunction with other constructional realizations used for apologizing:

(12) Baby, *I'm sorry. I feel terrible*. I'd stay and talk but I'm so late. (Coca 1990)

The combined use of different constructions of apologizing in (12) produces an easy interpretation of the utterance as an apology. Another way of specifying the apologizing meaning of the construction is by making explicit the negative action that the speaker regrets to carry out. This part of the generic structure can be instantiated through the use of a variable element realized by a prepositional phrase. Here is an example:

- (13) *I feel terrible* about missing the playoffs after all the sacrifice that we made back in March. (Coca 2007)

This variable element needs to include a verb denoting a controlled activity which has been carried out by the addressee in the past. In (13), it is implied from the action specified that the addressee has inverted a great effort in the realization of a group activity and that it was the speaker's fault that the team did not succeed. In expressing regrets for failing in something that involved sacrifice, the speaker recognizes the harm caused to the addressee. The acknowledgement of the negative state of affairs brought about by the speaker is definitional of apologies. The more explicit the reference to this component is, the easier it is for the addressee to work out the apologizing reading.

### ***I Regret X<sub>P</sub>***

This construction makes the apologizing value explicit through the use of a first person subject and a verb expressing regret plus an object denoting the negative state of affairs. The manifestness of the speaker's regret together with the specification of the action the speaker is apologizing for activate the corresponding parts of the generic structure. The instantiation of these two components of the act produces a default apologizing meaning:

- (14) "*I regret* losing my temper" he said. (Coca 2000)

- (15) *I regret* dragging you back here, but I had to be certain. (Bnc)

The variable element of the construction is realized through a verb phrase describing the negative action carried out by the speaker. Such a verb phrase is introduced by a verb in the gerund form. There may be an indication of the harm that has been caused to the addressee or not. In the case of (14), there is no indication that the speaker's action has had any

effect on the addressee. It is only implicit in the apology and derivable from the expression of regret. In (15), the construction does not indicate that the addressee has faced a negative state of affairs because of the speaker but points out that the action has somehow affected the addressee.

### ***I Apologize (X<sub>p</sub>)***

Thanks to the use of a performative verb, this type of realization gives rise to highly codified apologies:

(16) *I apologize*. I was angry and I'm sorry about what I said. (Coca 1992)

(17) *I apologize*. I shouldn't have threatened you. (Coca 1991)

In these two examples, the construction does not contain any element describing the state of affairs that is the object of the apology. Such a state of affairs is described in a declarative sentence used in combination with the construction. This device is not required to understand these utterances as apologies since the performative verb is enough to make the apologizing meaning explicit. The addition of the declarative sentences may be due to the speaker's desire to specify the action he is apologizing for.

Alternatively, the speaker's action may be specified by means of a variable element within the construction. The examples below illustrate this:

(18) *I apologize* if we have done an inadequate or certainly an incomplete job. (Coca 1990)

(19) *I apologize* for spilling the drink. (Coca 1990)

The use of a conditional clause in example (18) and a prepositional phrase in (19) make explicit the negative state of affairs brought about by the speaker. There is, however, a slight meaning difference. Those cases in which the variable element is realized by a conditional clause result from the speaker's uncertainty that his action has been negative for the addressee. The speaker only thinks that it is possible that his action may have affected the addressee in a negative way and finds himself in the need to apologize if such is the case. In contrast, those utterances in which the variable element is realized by a prepositional phrase introduced by the preposition *of*

presuppose that the speaker's action has indeed caused a negative situation for the addressee. Making the action that has affected the addressee explicit by means of a variable element contributes to adaptability of the construction to diverse contexts.

The fixed part of the construction is also subject to changes that may have an effect on the meaning conveyed. This part of the construction admits diverse modality markers indicating the reasons behind the speaker's apology. The use of verbs of desire, for example, conveys the idea that the speaker is willing to apologize. In these cases, the apologizing meaning is understood by means of a metonymic operation whereby the speaker's willingness to apologize stands for his actual apology:

(20) "*I want to apologize* for the way I put you through hell", he told her.  
(Coca 2009)

(21) "*I would like to apologize* for the crime that I have been convicted of",  
he said. (Coca 2008)

The emphasis of this constructional variant is on the speaker's desire to express regret. By saying that he is willing to apologize, the speaker conveys the idea that he regrets having caused trouble to the addressee and such feelings impel him to make an apology. Other constructional variants may arise when modality markers are used:

(22) "*I must apologize*", he began, "for not coming in to see you this morning, as I said I would". (Bnc)

(23) *I should apologize* for this behavior in front of a stranger, and I do apologize. (Coca 1990)

The use of markers expressing obligation indicates awareness on the part of the speaker of the harm caused to the addressee. The speaker is implying that he recognizes that his action was negative to the addressee and thinks it is necessary to apologize.

### ***I Was Wrong (X<sub>P</sub>)***

This construction makes the speaker's acknowledgement of the negative state of affairs explicit. The activation of this part of the generic

structure is not capable in itself of producing an apologizing interpretation. A central component of the act is left to be inferred by the addressee, namely, that the speaker regrets having acted wrongly. Further, it must be clear from the context that the speaker's mistake has brought about a negative situation for the addressee. Because of this, the apologizing reading of the construction is somewhat implicit. The interpretation of (24) as an apology, for instance, is largely dependent on contextual information pointing to the action carried out by the speaker as harmful for the addressee:

(24) "*I was wrong*" she said slowly. (Bnc)

The speaker's regret can be made explicit by means of a declarative sentence used in conjunction with the construction. This is the case of the following example:

(25) *I was wrong*, and I deeply regret my actions. (Coca 2008)

In contrast to (24), the declarative sentence in (25) presents the speaker expressing regret for his behavior. This difference between (24) and (25) has an impact on the degree of explicitness of the resulting apologies.

A similar effect can be achieved by activating a different part of the generic structure which has to do with the negative situation that the speaker's action has caused to the addressee. In so doing, the construction may make use of a variable element realized by a verb phrase. Example (26) illustrates this constructional variant:

(26) No, baby, you're right. *I was wrong* to judge you. (Coca 1999)

In most instances in our corpus the combined use of the construction with different expressions for apologizing makes its interpretation more straightforward. Here is an example:

(27) *I was wrong* to strike you. Please accept my apology. (Coca 2007)

If (26) and (27) are compared, the first thing that can be observed is that, while in (27) the speaker's intention to apologize is overtly expressed, in (26) it needs to be inferred by the addressee. This is because the combination of this realization with other constructions produces a default apologizing reading.

### ***I Made A Mistake* ( $X_{VP}$ )**

This construction places a greater emphasis on the acknowledgement of having done something wrong that has affected the addressee. As was the case with the previous construction, this type of realization is generally used in conjunction with others in order to lead towards the apologizing reading. Consider the following example:

(28) *I made a mistake*, and I'm awfully sorry. (Coca 1994)

Even though this construction activates the motivating factor for apologies, which refers to the speaker's realization that his actions have had negative consequences for the addressee, it is not capable of producing a clear apologizing reading. More explicit apologies can be produced by making use of a variable element which specifies the action carried out by the speaker. This element is realized by a verb phrase introduced by a verb expressed in the gerund form:

(29) Excuse me, *I made a mistake* coming here. (Coca 1990)

The state of affairs brought about by the speaker is specified in (29). If it is not made explicit in the variable element, it needs to be manifest to both participants that the state of affairs has affected the addressee negatively.

### ***I Am Sorry* ( $X_P$ )**

In spite of its instantiation potential for the speaker's regret, the degree of specialization of this construction for the performance of apologies is low. The reason is that it does not specify that the speaker's sorrow arises from a state of affairs that he has brought about. If the speaker has caused the negative situation, the illocutionary meaning is an apology. Conversely, if the speaker expresses sorrow over a misfortune that has occurred to the addressee, the construction is performing the act of condoling. The interpretation of the intended meaning therefore depends on contextual variables to a large extent. The following example illustrates this:

(30) Sorry. *I'm sorry*. (Coca 2005)

For (30) to be interpreted as an apology, it must be clear that the speaker's regret happens because of his involvement in the negative situation caused to the addressee. This information can be made explicit through the use of a variable element specifying the action carried out by the speaker:

(31) *I'm sorry* for the mean things that I said. (Coca 2007)

(32) *I'm sorry* I bothered you. (Coca 2009)

These examples indicate that the speaker's sorrow arises from a state of affairs that he has brought about and has affected the addressee negatively. In (31), such state of affairs consists in the way the speaker talked to the addressee. In (32), it results from the fact that he bothered the addressee. The specification of the fact that the speaker's sorrow derives from causing trouble to the addressee leads to an apologizing reading effortlessly.

### **11.2.2. Imperative apologizing constructions**

Imperative apologizing constructions differ from those imperatives used in the performance of other expressives, which generally ask for permission to express the speaker's feelings. In apologizing, imperatives ask the addressee to accept the speaker's regret. In so doing, they remind the addressee that he is expected to accept the speaker's apology in compliance with cultural conventions.

#### ***Forgive Me***

This imperative construction has proved the most productive for the expression of apologies. This preference may be due to the explicitness of the verb, which manages to instantiate the part of the generic structure specifying the addressee's expected forgiveness, thereby implying regret on the part of the speaker. According to cultural conventions, forgiveness occurs when it is manifest to the speaker that the addressee regrets his action. See how the use of this construction conveys an apology:

(33) "*Forgive me*, my sweet. I perceive I have offended you". (Coca 1990)

Notice how in (33) there is no explicit reference to the state of affairs the speaker is apologizing for. The construction is only accompanied by an expression of endearment suggesting an intimate relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Expressions of this type aim at reducing the force of the imperative by means of showing the speaker's concern for the addressee. There is also a declarative sentence accompanying the construction in which the speaker expresses his certainty about having done something that has resulted in a negative situation for the addressee. It also suggests that the speaker is worried. The use of these persuasive devices leads the addressee to understand the imperative as less imposing. On the whole, the apology takes place even if the utterance does not specify the action that the speaker is apologizing for. Still, as was the case with declarative constructions, it is possible to make the speaker's action explicit by means of a variable element:

(34) I came just as soon as I could get away. *Forgive me* for the delay.  
(Coca 1990)

(35) *Forgive me* for pressing you. (Coca 1990)

In (34), the variable element is realized by a prepositional phrase which describes the result of the speaker's action. In (35), the variable element is realized by a prepositional phrase containing a non-finite form which describes the specific action carried out by the speaker. As may be expected, this action has to denote some kind of harm to the addressee or, if that is not the case, it must be manifest to both participants that the action has brought about negative consequences for the addressee. The use of a variable element pointing to this part of the generic structure obviously results in more codified apologies.

### ***Excuse Me***

This construction adapts to those contexts where there is a distant relationship between the speaker and the addressee and the former is only apologizing because he thinks he is compelled to. As opposed to other occasions, the speaker does not want to make the fact that he is apologizing explicit because he is obliged by cultural conventions. The distance between participants is marked by the lack of persuasive devices or of endearment terms in most instances of the construction in the corpus:



(36) “*Excuse me*” he said, and hurried off. (Bnc)

(37) *Excuse me for* leaving this for you to do. (Coca 2007)

In (36), the construction does not indicate the action that has been carried out by the speaker. In (37), the construction does make use of a variable element describing the speaker’s action. Due to the instantiation potential of the verb, the variable element is not necessary to interpret the construction as an instance of apologizing and its use may be due to the speaker’s wish to emphasize it.

### ***Pardon Me***

Only a few cases of apology in the corpus are instances of this type of realization. The following are two representative examples:

(38) “*Pardon me!*” said a big woman, stepping on me. (Bnc)

(39) *Pardon me* for being rude. (Coca 1997)

The verb in the construction can be used both in contexts where there exists a close relationship holding between participants and in contexts where there is a large social distance between them.

### ***Accept My Apologies***

This construction is probably the most explicit of the imperative realizations for apologizing. Its lexical transparency instantiates the addressee’s expected response to the apology. Because of this it is often unnecessary to make use of additional realization procedures conveying the intended meaning. This in turn makes the construction better adapted for formal contexts or situations where the relationship holding between the participants is distant. Consider:

(40) “*Accept my apologies*”, Doctor Hebert said. (Coca 1993)

The speaker may use mitigating devices in order to decrease the force of the imperative. Many instances in the corpus make use of the adverb

*please* or terms of endearment. These mechanisms soften the impact of the act to a large degree and make the imperative more appropriate. Consider, for instance:

- (41) *Please accept my apologies* for my poor manners and for deliberately embarrassing you. (Coca 1994)

In example (41), the construction contains a variable element pointing to the state of affairs which is the object of the apology. The specification of such a state of affairs aims at acknowledging the speaker's misbehavior. This acknowledgement implies feelings of regret on the part of the speaker and makes the apology more explicit.

### 11.2.3. Interrogative apologizing constructions

Interrogative constructions for apologizing request for forgiveness in much the same way as imperatives. The use of the interrogative sentence type softens the impact of the request and makes them more adequate for the expression of the speaker's desire to obtain the addressee's forgiveness. Interrogative constructions request for forgiveness without being impositive and thus seem to be better adapted for the realization of apologies than imperatives.

#### *Can You Forgive Me (X<sub>PREP</sub>)?*

This construction asks the addressee about his ability to forgive the speaker. This type of realization is based on the cultural generalization which shapes the conceptual grounding of pardoning. According to this cultural principle, if it is manifest to the addressee that the speaker regrets the past action that did harm to him, then the addressee should forgive the speaker provided that he has the ability to do so. The construction functions as a reminder to the addressee that his response to the apology is constrained by cultural principles. See two representative examples from the corpus:

- (42) It's not your fault, it's all mine. Dad, *can you forgive me?* (Coca 2000)
- (43) *Can you forgive me* for being so neglectful recently? (Coca 1998)

As can be observed, the construction may exhibit changes in its fixed elements depending on the specific speaker's communicative purposes. Those cases where the speaker simply wants to make the addressee aware that he should forgive him if he has the ability to do so will not allow the use of a variable element specifying the action the speaker has carried out and for which he is apologizing. In contrast, those instances of the construction which focus on the speaker's action will make use of such an element. In these cases, the variable element functions as a persuasive device to obtain the addressee's forgiveness since it makes explicit the mistake made by the speaker.

### ***Will You Forgive Me (X<sub>PREP</sub>)?***

In this case, it is the willingness of the addressee to forgive the speaker that stands for the request for forgiveness. This metonymic operation gives access once again to the part of the cognitive model of apologizing that specifies the addressee's expected response to the speaker's apology. Here are two examples from the corpus:

(44) I'm sorry if I was out of line. *Will you forgive me?* Please? (Coca 2001)

(45) "*Will you forgive me* for not taking the cape?" (Coca 1999)

It may become apparent that the constructional composition of this type of realization is subject to differences regarding its variable elements. As is the case with example (44), it is possible to use the construction formed simply by its fixed elements. This is enough to activate the expected response to the apology on the part of the addressee. Alternatively, it is possible to make use of a variable element specifying the type of action carried out by the speaker. This is the case with (45), which illustrates how the use of this variable element has the effect of acknowledging the negative situation for which the speaker is responsible. The reading of the construction as an apology does not seem to be affected whether or not the variable element is used. Questions about the addressee's willingness to forgive the speaker are capable of instantiating the cultural convention that shapes the conceptual nature of pardoning. This convention moves the addressee to forgive the speaker when he shows regret for having brought about a state of affairs that is negative or harmful. Since pardoning is the

expected response to apologies, the instantiation of this cultural convention conveys a default apologizing reading.

#### **11.2.4. Generalizations on constructions for apologizing**

The performance of apologizing shows the same preference for the use of the declarative sentence type that is characteristic of expressive acts. The declarative constructions found in the corpus exploit central parameters of the generic structure of apologizing. More specifically, they point to the variables of the structure concerning the speaker's feelings of regret and the manifestness of such feelings to the addressee. The instantiation of these parameters is, however, not enough to produce an apologizing meaning. For this interpretation to be possible, it must be clear that the speaker's regret arises from his realization that his action has caused something negative to happen to the addressee. The understanding of these constructions as instances of apologizing crucially depends on the manifestness to both the speaker and the addressee that the expression of regret acknowledges a past behavior that has affected the addressee in a negative way.

Regarding the use of the other two sentence types in the realization of apologies, it is worth mentioning that this illocutionary category exhibits a greater tendency to be performed by means of interrogatives and imperatives than other expressive acts. Both imperatives and interrogatives convey feelings of regret by asking the addressee to accept the speaker's feelings. The productivity of interrogative and imperative constructions may be due to the relevance of the addressee's response to the speaker's expression of regret in the understanding of apologies. The instantiation of this parameter has turned out to be highly productive in the performance of apologizing.

## 12. THE SPEECH ACT OF PARDONING

### 12.1. THE SEMANTICS OF PARDONING

Acts of pardoning express forgiveness and give up claim on account of an offense or debt. According to Wierzbicka (1987: 230), verbs of pardoning differ in the implied dimensions of the guilt assumed by the offender. This difference gives way to diverse acts. Let us discuss each of them in detail. The first of the pardoning verbs referred to by Wierzbicka is *forgive*. The verb *forgive* relates to big offenses. In other words, forgiving is concerned with bad actions and revolves around wrongs in personal relationships. One can use the word *forgive* referring to minor offenses only for special humorous or stylistic effect. *Forgive* implies that the speaker was hurt by the offender's actions and that his bad feelings towards the offender were justifiable. In expressing forgiveness, the speaker foregoes his bad feelings out of his own good will. *Excuse*, in contrast to *forgive*, is concerned with minor offenses and gravitates towards breaches in social conventions. The person who excuses someone decides not to hold it against the offender. When we excuse ourselves, we seek to be excused on the grounds that there are extenuating circumstances. If we ask to be excused for being late we do not imply that we are not responsible for it. For example, this is the case when we are late because of an unforeseeable traffic jam or because we came across a friend whom we had not seen for many years. *Justify* is very closely related to *excuse*, although unlike *excuse*, *justify* does not imply guilt. In justifying an action, the speaker acknowledges the causer's responsibility and hastens to explain the reasons that have prompted him to act as he did. The examples below illustrate these meaning differences between verbs of pardoning:

- (1) *Forgive* me for saying that. I didn't mean to hurt you. (Coca 1992)
- (2) *Excuse* me for being so nosy, but you look kind of lost. (Coca 1991)
- (3) The mayor *justified* the crackdown by blaming illegal immigrants for a rise in local crime. (Coca 2009)

In addition, Wierzbicka recognizes two more verbs performing particular forms of pardoning. In the first place, *absolve*, in the religious sense of the word, frees people from the consequences of sin. With respect

to the secular sense, people can be absolved if acquitted of responsibility. The verb has a deeply entrenched religious component and is scarcely used outside religious contexts. A similar situation occurs with the verb *pardon*, which has become specialized in a legal sense. Pardon as used with reference to legal matters works to stop the effects of a sentence. The speaker who pardons intervenes to save the convicted person from punishment. These two verbs give rise to cases of pardoning that are strictly related to such specific contexts.

On the whole, it seems wise to differentiate the features of each of the acts conforming the category of pardoning. All these acts are included within the category of pardoning put forward by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007). The authors generalize over multiple acts of pardoning by focusing on their common elements and establish a category that somewhat covers all the differences. With the exception of *absolve* and *pardon*, owing to their strict contextual specialization, all verbs ascribed to the category of pardoning exhibit similarities in their semantic and pragmatic makeup. In the first place, in all verbs of pardoning, it is assumed that someone has done something bad to us and that the offender feels regret because of that. In the case of *absolve*, the effects of the addressee's action are not against the speaker but rather against religious principles that regulate behavior. With regard to *pardon*, the bad action has not had negative effects for us but for the addressee himself since he is going to be punished and we want to prevent it. The assumption that our addressee has done something wrong against us is one of the prerequisites for the performance of pardoning. In some cases, our forgiveness may be prompted by our presupposition that the addressee regrets having acted in the wrong way. Presuppositions about the addressee's regret are generally made manifest through the use of conditional sentences assuming the addressee's feelings. The corpus contains a vast number of examples of such a situation:

(4) No offense taken, *if you were wondering*. (Coca 1992)

(5) *If you feel you are a mess* do not worry. (Bnc)

Those cases of pardoning that arise from the speaker's own presupposition are marked by the speaker's uncertainty about the addressee's feelings of regret. As illustrated by these utterances, the speaker expresses forgiveness by making it clear that he is insecure about the addressee's desire to obtain forgiveness. The speaker's uncertainty about the addressee's feelings of regret is expressed by means of conditional

clauses. Conversely, the expression of forgiveness may be also prompted through an apology by the addressee. In those instances of pardoning, the apology makes the speaker certain about the addressee's feelings of regret. Here are two examples from the corpus:

- (6) "Will you ever forgive me?" he pleaded.  
"I accept your apologies, Mein Fuhrer", Himmler responded. (Coca 1999)
- (7) "My apology. I didn't mean, I never brought, I meant no offense". She colored, looking flustered.  
"No offense taken", he said quickly. (Coca 1994)

Acts of pardoning are prompted by the assumption that the addressee regrets his action, whether it is a presupposition or it is made manifest through an explicit apology. The second feature shared by verbs of pardoning has to do with the speaker's undertaking not to hold the offense against the addressee. Wierzbicka explains how the content of the undertaking is for each verb of pardoning. In *forgiving*, which is concerned with a long-term attitude towards the other person, the speaker decides not to think of the addressee in terms of his wrongdoing. In *excusing*, which relates with a temporary judgment about the other person, the speaker undertakes not to think something bad about the offender because of his offense. In *justifying*, the speaker does not only decide to pardon the bad action but also to seek an explanation for the unfortunate behavior of the addressee. The speaker's decision not to hold the offense against the addressee is manifested differently in the verbs *absolving* and *pardoning*. In *absolve*, the speaker has the duty to free the addressee from his sins. In the case of *pardoning*, the speaker feels that if he does not intervene, something bad will happen to the addressee. In other words, in both *absolve* and *pardon* the speaker's decision to forgive the addressee obeys to the speaker's assumption that he is compelled to do it by external circumstances. The third characteristic shared by verbs of pardoning relates to the speaker's purpose. The illocutionary goal of acts of pardoning is somewhat difficult to establish. It may be argued that the speaker's purpose is to prevent the addressee's feelings of regret towards his bad actions. It may also be argued that the speaker may be interested in reestablishing ties between him and the addressee. I shall argue that the purpose of pardoning has to do with the forgoing of the bad feelings that have been caused by the addressee's offense. This appears as the goal of all verbs of pardoning. It

may appear that the purpose of *absolve* and *pardon* is different since these verbs attempt to release the addressee from punishment. However, *absolve* and *pardon* obey the same purposes as all other pardoning verbs since they count as ways of releasing resentment against the addressee by cancelling the consequences of his actions. The forgoing of the bad feelings against the addressee seems common to all verbs, although some of them focus on the manifestness of the speaker's decision not to hold it against the addressee (i.e. *forgive*, *excuse*, *pardon*) or the attempt to prevent the negative consequences of the offense (i.e. *absolve*, *pardon*). As will become evident in the analysis of the constructional realizations of pardoning, the use of one or another verb for the performance of this illocutionary type will be determined by its own semantic characteristics. Considering the common features of the verbs of pardoning allows us to carry out a more detailed study of this speech act category. The category of pardoning is regarded in this study as a speech act type that arises in compliance with one of the cultural conventions formulated in the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. This convention is defined by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007: 111) in the following way:

*If it is manifest to B that A has not acted as directed by parts (a), (b), and (c) of the 'cost-benefit' model and A has made his regret manifest to B, B should feel forgiveness for A's inaction and make his feeling manifest to A.*

The act of pardoning is grounded in the generalization that moves us to feel forgiveness if we assume an apologetic attitude or an awareness of the offense on the part of the addressee. In general terms, we cannot pardon someone who is unaware of his misbehavior. If we have been wronged by someone's behavior and that person does neither recognize nor admits the wrong, we can ignore it, dismiss it or hold it against him but we can hardly forgive him. This relates to the previous discussion on the presupposition assumed by verbs of pardoning concerning the addressee's feelings of regret. As was explained, such an assumption is necessary for the performance of pardoning.

It could be argued here that the social function of pardoning might give rise to insincere instances of the act. However, as pointed out in the analysis of other expressive acts, the sincerity of the speaker's feelings does not determine the successful realization of pardoning. The speaker who pardons has decided to act according to the cultural convention that leads him to forgive an offense. Even if he does not feel forgiveness for the



addressee, he has chosen to act in a way that complies with cultural conventions and is thus performing effective instances of pardoning. As with other speech acts, the convention of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* which provides the background for pardoning has helped me to define a high-level cognitive model capturing the conceptual nature of this speech act type. This high-level cognitive model generalizes over low-level models. These are possible low-level models of pardoning:

- (a) A has caused something negative to happen to B. A appears to feel regret about his action. B forgives A for his action.
- (b) A has caused something negative to happen to B. A expresses regret about his action. B forgives A for his action.
- (c) A has caused something negative to happen to B. A does not feel regret about his action but B assumes he does. B forgives A for his action.
- (d) A has caused something negative to happen to B. A feels regret about his action and asks B to forgive him. B forgives A for his action.

The common elements of these low-level models correspond to the generic structure:

- (e) A has caused something negative to happen to B.
- (f) A appears to feel regret about his action.
- (g) B feels forgiveness for A's action.
- (h) B makes this feeling manifest to A.

This generic structure generalizes over the peculiarities of different forms of pardoning. The instantiation of each part gives rise to instances of the act. The following examples illustrate some of the most conventional constructions for pardoning:

- (8) What you did was completely wrong. But *I do think you're awfully remorseful* for what you did, and you wanted to make amends. (Coca 2004)

- (9) *Don't worry* about hurting me. (Coca 2002)
- (10) *"It is nothing"* he said, "let us go on". (Coca 2003)
- (11) *I forgive you* heartily. (Bnc)

In (8), it is made explicit that the addressee did something that was negative for the addressee. This spells out the part of the generic structure that specifies the precondition of pardoning. This is enough to produce a pardoning reading. In opposition to this, utterances (9) and (10) activate the speaker's assumption of the addressee's regret only partially. The pardoning interpretation is implicit. Utterance (11) points to the speaker's decision not to hold resentment against the addressee because of his negative action. The use of the verb is capable in itself of producing a pardoning reading.

## 12.2. REALIZATION PROCEDURES FOR PARDONING

The most significant feature of the realization procedures of pardoning is the absolute preference for the use of declarative and imperative constructions.

Sentence type	Constructions	Occurrences
Declarative	10	158
Imperative	2	22
Interrogative	0	0

Table 17. *Distribution of pardoning constructions by sentence type*

As has been pointed out in previous chapters, the meaning conditions of expressive acts make them fully compatible with the declarative sentence type. The speech act under consideration is no exception. The speaker's forgiveness is best expressed by means of the declarative sentence type.

The semantic properties of pardoning also explain the use of the imperative form. Imperatives aim at influencing the addressee's behavior. The imperative pardoning constructions in the corpus attempt to reassure the addressee so that he does not feel bad about the negative state of affairs he has brought about.

None of the instances in the corpus are based on the interrogative sentence type. Interrogatives present a proposition for the addressee's evaluation. This clashes with the purpose of pardoning, which is making the speaker's forgiveness manifest to the addressee.

### 12.2.1. Declarative pardoning constructions

Declarative constructions are the most appropriate vehicle for the performance of pardoning. Most of the declarative constructions in the corpus present propositions describing the speaker's forgiveness for the addressee's action. However, as has been repeatedly pointed out throughout this study, declarative constructions are very little specialized regarding their illocutionary value. It is necessary to codify their pardoning meaning by means of diverse linguistic mechanisms.

#### *I Excuse You*

The use of performative verbs is one of the most recurring ways for specifying the pardoning meaning in declarative constructions. In the discussion above, we saw how different performative verbs are used in the expression of this illocutionary type. It became apparent that the meaning implications specific to each of these verbs may give rise to instances of pardoning that are more appropriate to given contexts. The verb in the construction under scrutiny conveys a relatively minor guilt. It adapts to cases where the speaker pardons the addressee for insignificant offenses. In excusing the addressee's behavior, the speaker is not wiping out his guilt but rather he is not holding it against him. The example below illustrates how this meaning implication is conveyed by the verb:

(12) Of course *I excuse you*. (Bnc)

Through the use of the verb *excuse*, the speaker makes manifest his decision to excuse the addressee on the basis that his behavior is the result of external circumstances. This meaning implication is entrenched to this verb. The construction thus does not generally allow the use of a variable element pointing to the circumstances excusing the addressee's behavior. None of the instances of this construction in the corpus make use of a variable element. But most of them display changes in the composition of their fixed part. The most outstanding of these changes is the lack of an explicit subject. The high degree of specification of this type of realization enables the speaker not to make use of the first person subject. Here is an example:

(13) "*Excuse you*. You're in my way". (Coca 2001)

In the situation depicted above, the addressee does not excuse himself for being on the way of the speaker. The speaker excuses his behavior on the basis of justifiable circumstances.

The other change in the composition of the fixed part found in several instances of the corpus is the use of future tenses. This does not affect the pardoning meaning of the construction either. In committing ourselves to excuse the addressee, we are implying the idea that we have already decided to do it and thus the pardoning value is the same:

(14) “*I’ll excuse you this time, boy*”, said the fairy, graciously, “but you must remember that I wish you to wash your face and hands when you are to talk with me and”, she added, as though inspired by an afterthought, “it would be well for you to keep them clean at other times, too”. (Coca 1992)

(15) *I’m going to excuse you at this time*; however, you are subject to recall. (Coca 1995)

In both (14) and (15), the use of a future tense indicates an already taken decision on the part of the speaker to excuse the addressee for his fault. At the same time it is communicated that the speaker will not do it again if the offense is repeated in the future. These instances obey to contexts where the speaker has a position of authority over the addressee and the speaker excuses the addressee if he acts as the speaker dictates for future occasions.

### ***I Forgive You***

The use of the verb *forgive* adapts this construction for contexts different from those analyzed so far. This verb indicates that the speaker has been really offended by the addressee’s action and that his feelings are justifiable. In saying that he forgives the addressee, the speaker foregoes his resentment against the addressee out of the goodness of his heart. In contexts of this type, this construction is probably the most effective means to express forgiveness for the addressee. In some cases, the speaker may not need to specify the addressee’s action in order to produce a pardoning reading:

(16) “All right, *I forgive you*”, said Dolly. (Bnc)

In other cases, the speaker may make reference to the addressee's action by including a variable element in the construction. This variable element can be realized either through a verb phrase or a noun phrase introduced by a preposition. Those cases in which the variable element is realized by a verb phrase stress the addressee's action, whereas those in which the element is realized by a noun phrase place the emphasis on the results of the addressee's action:

(17) "*I forgive you* for running away". (Coca 1996)

(18) *I forgive you* for what you said to me. (Coca 1992)

Although the specification of the action carried out by the addressee instantiates a further parameter of the generic structure, it is not necessary for the understanding of the pardoning meaning of the construction. The use of variable elements of this type obeys to the speaker's desire to remark how he has been affected by the addressee's behavior and to imply how difficult it is for him to forgive the latter. This meaning implication is the same if the addressee's action is not specified in a variable element within the construction but in a declarative sentence used simultaneously. See the following example:

(19) Even though you did a lot of very bad things to me, *I forgive you* and still love you. (Coca 1996)

Other changes in the formal composition of this construction may take place in its fixed part. As was the case with the previous realization, it is possible to make use of a future tense in order to indicate the speaker's decision to forgive the addressee. Such a decision counts as a commitment on the part of the speaker to forgive the addressee and. It is a metonymic operation that enables the addressee to arrive at the pardoning meaning. Consider:

(20) You were concentrating on your ascent tactics, not philosophy, and so *I will forgive you*. (Coca 1996)

Much in the same vein, the construction may make use of a past tense indicating that the speaker has already forgiven the addressee. In this case, the metonymic mapping links the speaker's past decision to forgive the addressee with the present forgiveness. Those instances of pardoning

making use of this constructional variant imply that the speaker overcame his bad feelings time ago and that he does not hold resentment against the addressee:

(21) You don't have to be sorry. I forgave you a long time ago. (Coca 2002)

(22) "I've already *forgiven you* for not being there for me". (Coca 2001)

The construction may also make use of modality markers describing the circumstances that impel the speaker to forgive the addressee. The use of the modal verb *can*, for example, implies that the speaker feels capable of forgiving the addressee and that such is the reason why he is doing it. It also conveys the idea that if the speaker would not feel capable of forgiving the addressee he would not do it even if that meant violating cultural conventions:

(23) You are young, and *I can forgive you* for what you have done. (Coca 1997)

(24) "I think *I can bring myself to forgive you*" she said dryly. (Coca 1992)

Likewise, the speaker may indicate his willingness to forgive the addressee by using a verb of desire. In general terms, these verbs are used to indicate that the speaker indeed wants to forgive the addressee but that there are circumstances that prevent him from doing it:

(25) *I want to forgive you*, but I can't. (Coca 1996)

In (25), the speaker indicates that he is willing to forgive the addressee but he is unable to do it. In such a situation, he should not feel as if he is violating cultural conventions because he has actually decided to comply with such principles forgiving the addressee. The circumstances that prevent him from doing it are external to him and he thus cannot be blamed for acting against conventions. The speaker is not, however, making explicit that he wants to follow the rules of behavior in expressing forgiveness. Presenting himself as unable to act according with conventions is enough to remind the addressee that the inability of doing it excuses him. On other occasions, the speaker may make his decision to forgive the addressee explicit in order to comply with conventions by using a verb indicating

obligation. In these cases, the speaker is not showing any willingness to forgive the addressee. He is rather indicating that he would not forgive him if he were not obliged by cultural conventions:

- (26) “I suppose *I should forgive you*, even if I’m not sure you meant well”.  
(Coca 1990)

These constructional variants contrast with the previous one as regards the feelings that make the speaker forgive the addressee. When used with verbs of willingness, the speaker forgives the addressee because he wants to. When used with verbs of obligation, the speaker forgives the addressee because he is expected to do so by cultural conventions.

### ***I Pardon You***

This is but a further type of performative construction for pardoning. The verb used in this case has specialized for legal contexts where the speaker intends to stop the effect of a sentence and prevent a process that otherwise would punish the addressee. However, the use of the construction is not restricted to legal matters. In fact, the only instance of this construction found in the corpus depicts a non-legal context:

- (27) Go ahead, go on, leave. *I pardon you*. (Coca 1993)

The use of the performative verb makes the interpretation of (27) as an instance of pardoning fairly straightforward.

### ***I Absolve You***

This is another construction making use of a performative verb. As noted by Wierzbicka, the verb *absolve* has specialized in religious contexts in which the speaker is a priest who frees a penitent from his sins in the sacrament of penance. Although it is possible to find instances of this type of realization in secular situations, its use is almost restricted to religious contexts. As a matter of fact, all the instances of this type of realization in the corpus are associated to religious situations:

- (28) “In the name of the Father, *I absolve you*”. (Coca 1995)

The absolution of the addressee is conveyed by the fixed part of the construction alone and there is no need to specify the committed sins by means of a variable element. But in some cases, the speaker may prefer to do it in order to emphasize the act of absolution:

(29) “*I absolve you of your sins*”. (Coca 1996)

In those cases in which the construction takes a variable element, the speaker wants to reinforce the idea that there is no longer an obstacle to the union of the addressee with God.

### ***I Accept Your Apology***

Although this construction does not make use of a performative verb, it does contain a lexically transparent structure that affords easy access to the high-level cognitive model of pardoning. The lexical composition of the construction depicts contexts in which the expression of forgiveness follows an apology by the addressee. The use of the construction presupposes that the addressee has already expressed regret towards his action. This activates the corresponding parameter of the generic structure. The instantiation of this parameter is, however, not enough to produce a pardoning reading. The addressee needs to infer that the speaker accepts his apology because he feels forgiveness for him. This is only implicit in the construction:

(30) If you were telling me the truth when you said I was the only one, then *I accept your apology*. (Coca 2008)

In (30), the speaker makes use of an additional declarative sentence expressing feelings of forgiveness for the addressee. The use of this device specifies the pardoning meaning of the construction. Less forceful instances of pardoning may result from the use of the passive voice, which distances the speaker from the act and focuses on the acceptance of the apology:

(31) And *your apology is accepted* and the gesture much appreciated. (Bnc)

The pardoning meaning is even more implicit in constructional variants of this type. The use of the passive does not specify that it is the speaker and not a third party the person who has accepted the addressee's



apology. This information needs to be inferred from the context in order to arrive at the pardoning meaning of the construction. It must also be understood that the acceptance of the addressee's apology conveys feelings of forgiveness on the part of the speaker.

### ***It Is Nothing***

This construction presents the speaker giving relative insignificance to the action carried out by the addressee so that the addressee does not need to feel sorry about it. The construction only partially activates the speaker's assumption of the addressee's regret. Because of this, the pardoning reading is implicit and largely dependent on contextual variables. Let us illustrate this with an example:

(32) "*It is nothing*" he said, "let us go on". (Coca 2003)

(33) "Please do not worry, madam, *it is nothing* except a little accident" said Marcelle. (Bnc)

The pardoning act in (32) is highly implicit and could be just as well an instance of apologizing or condoling. The utterance in (33), in contrast, makes use of a further realization used in the expression of pardoning which tells the addressee not to worry about the negative action he has carried out, thus making the illocutionary value less implicit.

### ***You Did Wrong***

Another way of specifying the declarative sentence type for the performance of pardoning is by making explicit the offense the speaker is forgiving the addressee for. This construction activates the fact that the speaker was negatively affected by an action carried out by the addressee. The instantiation of this part of the generic structure alone is nonetheless incapable of producing a pardoning reading. It needs to be inferred that the recognition of the addressee's offense indicates forgiveness on the part of the speaker:

(34) I'll never have it any other way. *You did wrong*, my dear. I'm afraid so. (Coca 2001)

This construction fits in contexts in which the addressee is expressing his concern about the negative state of affairs he has brought about and the speaker attempts to calm him down by recognizing that although such state of affairs has affected him, he forgives the addressee. The implicitness of the construction can be offset by the addition of other resources aiming at making explicit the speaker's communicative intention.

(35) “*What you did was wrong. But you are not a bad person*”. (Coca 1992)

In (35), the speaker makes use of an additional declarative sentence indicating that he does not think something bad about the addressee because of the offense he has caused to him. This resource makes explicit the speaker's forgiveness and codifies the pardoning value of the construction.

### ***You Made A Mistake***

This construction gives more insignificance to the action carried out by the addressee. It conveys the idea that, despite the fact that speaker has been offended by the addressee's action, he has reflected upon it and considered it a mere mistake. Playing down the importance of the addressee's offense indicates that the speaker has got over it, which in turn implies that he has forgiven him. Furthermore, referring to the addressee's action as a mistake conveys the idea that there are good reasons for the speaker to forgive the addressee:

(36) Okay, *you made a mistake*. A mistake happens and I am not worried about whom to blame it on. (Coca 1992)

Utterance (36) illustrates how the speaker empathizes with the addressee on the negative action carried out. It is still implicit the idea that it is the speaker's empathy that leads him to forgive the addressee for the offense. Other linguistic devices used in conjunction with this construction may help to make it more explicit. Consider:

(37) I miss you. Yes, I love you. *You made a mistake* and you regret it. Yes, I understand. (Coca 1992)

The declarative sentence used in conjunction with the construction implies an apologetic attitude on the part of the addressee. Together with

the little significance that the speaker gives to the offense, this decreases the implicitness of the construction and leads the addressee to the interpretation of a pardoning value.

### ***No Offense Taken***

More explicit instances of pardoning can be achieved by specifying that the addressee's action has not caused offense to the speaker. Although the speaker who uses this construction denies having been affected by the addressee's action, it is manifest from the context that he was actually offended. Through a metonymic operation, the negation of the offense conveys the idea that, although the speaker was affected negatively, he has decided not to hold resentment against the addressee because of it:

(38) "It's okay. *No offense taken*". (Coca 2005)

(39) "No offense meant". "*No offense taken*". (Coca 1991)

Both utterances depict contexts where the addressee shows concern for having offended the speaker and the speaker attempts to calm him down by saying that he has not actually offended him.

### ***No Need To Apologize***

In this construction the addressee's apologetic attitude is made even more explicit by means of a performative verb. Because of this the construction can be used in an adequate way only if the addressee has made manifest his feelings of regret to the speaker. Once again, the negation of the offense by the speaker is perceived as an act of pardoning:

(40) "*No need to apologize*", he said. "I haven't taken anything you've said seriously". (Coca 2001)

Notice the impersonal effect produced by the lack of a specific subject in the construction. Such an effect can be decreased by making use of a grammatical subject introducing the clause. The use of this mechanism gives rise to a constructional variant that brings the apology nearer the addressee resulting in more warm instances of pardoning:

- (41) *There's no need to apologize.* You come up anytime you want. (Coca 1995)

Although the offense caused by the addressee is not specified, the construction is capable of producing a clear pardoning meaning. The offense caused by the addressee is therefore included only in cases where the speaker wants to give emphasis to it. Mentioning the state of affairs caused by the addressee acts as a cue in inferring that there is a state of affairs that has actually caused offense to the speaker:

- (42) *There's no need to apologize* for saying out loud what you, the majority of your party, corporate leaders and talk-radio hosts hold to be true in your heart of hearts. (Coca 2003)

Those cases in which this constructional variant specifies the addressee's offense by means of a variable element make it easier to derive the implicit meaning, which is the fact that there is actually an offense the addressee should apologize for.

### **12.2.2. Imperative pardoning constructions**

The use of imperative constructions is scarce in the expression of pardoning. This is motivated by the meaning conditions that make up the semantic base of this speech act type. Imperative constructions are restricted to cases in which the speaker asks the addressee not to worry about having brought the negative state of affairs brought about. Asking the addressee not to be worried is a sign that the speaker is concerned about the addressee and this, in turn, indicates that the speaker does not hold resentment against him. Let us focus on the characteristics of the meaning conditions that activate the meaning conditions of the act of pardoning.

#### ***Don't Worry***

The negative use of the imperative tells the addressee not to worry about causing offense to the speaker. This device points to the part of the generic structure of pardoning that presents the addressee as feeling regret towards the speaker. The instantiation of this part of the structure is not enough to produce a pardoning reading. The pardoning interpretation of the

construction needs to be aided by contextual information. Look at the example below:

- (43) “*Do not worry*” she told me. “The problem will eventually be solved”.  
(Coca 1992)

For (43) to be understood as an instance of pardoning, it must be mutually manifest to the participants that what worries the addressee is the action he has carried out and which has caused something negative for the speaker. The manifestness of this information is crucial to grasp the pardoning meaning of a construction that could be otherwise regarded as a different act. This information can also be made explicit by means of a variable element realized by a verb phrase and introduced by a preposition. The verb used in the variable element needs to describe an action referring to the past but expressed in a gerund form denoting some cost to the speaker. In most cases, the specification of the negative action may be done only to give emphasis to the harm caused by the addressee:

- (44) *Don’t worry* about hurting me. (Coca 2002)

The variable element used in (44) gives rise to a much more explicit pardoning reading.

### ***Don’t Upset Yourself***

This construction places more emphasis on the addressee’s concern. Here is an example from the corpus:

- (45) It’s all right. *Don’t upset yourself*. Calm down. (Coca 2002)

Telling the addressee to calm down presupposes that he is feeling concerned about something. If it is clear from the context that the addressee is worried about doing something negative to the speaker, then the imperative counts as an acknowledgment of the addressee’s apologetic attitude. Such an acknowledgement conveys the idea that the speaker cares more about the addressee’s bad feelings than about his own. This implies that the speaker does not hold bad feelings for the addressee and gives rise to a pardoning meaning. The condition part of this reasoning schema is provided by the context, which makes this construction highly implicit for

pardoning. As was the case with the previous construction, it is possible to make this contextual information explicit by means of a variable element. Such a variable element needs to make explicit reference to the fact that the addressee has caused a negative state of affairs. This is the case with the utterance:

- (46) Well, *don't upset yourself* about it because worse things have happened than this. (Bnc)

The implicitness of constructions of this type makes them rather unspecialized for the performance of pardoning and restricts their use to fairly marked contexts.

### **12.2.3. Generalizations on constructions for pardoning**

The expression of pardoning is characterized by its total preference for the use of declarative and imperative constructions. Declarative constructions adapt to the purpose and meaning conditions of pardoning in that they allow the speaker to express his feelings of forgiveness in a straight way. The low degree of specification of the declarative sentence type nonetheless makes necessary the use of several linguistic mechanisms such as performative verbs or other explicit expressions pointing to relevant parts of the structure of pardoning. In most cases, the parts of the generic structure which are activated relate to the speaker's feelings of forgiveness or to the negative state of affairs brought about by the addressee.

Imperative constructions, in turn, only point to the part of the structure which shows an apologetic attitude on the part of the addressee but do not make explicit reference to it and, therefore, yield highly implicit instances of pardoning.

### 13. THE SPEECH ACT OF CONDOLING

#### 13.1. THE SEMANTICS OF CONDOLING

Condolences are expressions of sympathy to someone who has experienced grief arising from death or misfortune. When we condole to a given situation or person, we offer support to enable that person to overcome his difficulties. The few studies on condoling that there are concentrate on the formulaic nature of the act and/or on its social function. These studies argue that acts of condoling arise from politeness conventions and are socially regulated (Maloney, 2009). It is my belief that statements of this kind focus mainly on the social function of condolences and tend to ignore the purpose of the act. Condolences make manifest to others that we are aware of their misfortune and that we feel sorry for being unable to help. The fact that speakers are obliged to offer condolences by politeness conventions does not mean that they cannot feel real grief over the addressee or that they do not want to give support. If we condole to someone, we convey feelings of sympathy to that person. Of course we can condole insincerely without feeling sympathy about the addressee but at least we must pretend we do. Laughing while expressing a condolence would be impolite and rather odd. The approaches regarding condolences as ritualistic acts lack a formulation of the specific principles of politeness that provide the background of condolences. The account of condolences carried out by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) proposes that this illocutionary act is realized in accordance to one of the cultural conventions formulated in the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* which is defined in the following way (Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007: 111):

*If it is manifest to A and B that a particular state of affairs is not beneficial to B but A has no power to change it to B's benefit, A should still feel sympathy for B over the non-beneficial state of affairs and make this manifest to B.*

In condoling, speakers assume that the addressee is immersed in a state of affairs that is negative for him. It is presupposed that such situation has not been brought about by the addressee himself but still has to cope with. It is odd to offer condolences to someone who is suffering the consequences of a bad behavior. We condole when a person is in times of adversity: either feeling unhappy due to a misfortune or grieving the loss of

a loved one. It is also assumed that the speaker has no ability to change the negative state of affairs affecting the addressee into a positive one. This is an important feature of condolences. The speaker should help the addressee if the latter finds himself in a bad situation provided that he has the ability to do so. If he cannot do that, he should offer condolences to the addressee about the situation he is facing. If the speaker had the ability to change the negative state of affairs to the benefit of the addressee then he should do it. These cases give way to acts of offering or promising. It is also crucial for the understanding of condolences to bear in mind that the negative state of affairs in which the addressee is involved has not been brought about neither by the speaker nor by the addressee.

It is possible to express sympathy at people who are suffering the negative effects of our behavior. These cases, however, represent implicit instances of apologizing. It is the speaker's involvement in the negative state of affairs affecting the addressee that leads to the interpretation of an act as either an apology or a condolence. Higher degrees of involvement on the part of the speaker in bringing about the negative state of affairs will produce an apology reading whereas lower involvement on the part of the speaker will instantiate the act of condoling. The examples below illustrate this:

- (1) Lord Covington, *I am so sorry* to hear about your wife, Lady Covington, passing away. (Coca 1998)
- (2) *I am so sorry*, Elizabeth, for all the pain and suffering I have caused you and your family. (Coca 1998)

Although utterances (1) and (2) are instances of the same construction, they are performing different acts. The two utterances depict situations in which the speaker feels sorrow over a state of affairs which is assumed to be negative for the addressee. This characteristic is common both to apologizing and condoling. The difference lies in the speaker's involvement in causing the negative state of affairs. In utterance (1), the situation affecting the addressee is the loss of his wife, which has not been caused by the speaker. This implication produces an easy condoling reading. In utterance (2), the speaker explicitly indicates that he has brought about the state of affairs affecting the addressee. This leads its interpretation as an apology. If there is no reference to the speaker's involvement in the negative state of affairs it is necessary to turn to the context in order to identify the intended meaning.



The conceptual structure that is shared by acts of apologizing and condoling frequently results in expression through polysemous constructions. These realizations need to be perspectivised through the use of lexical items, grammatical resources or suprasegmental patterns. In the above utterances, the feature that leads to their interpretation as one or the other act is contained in the variable element of the construction, which points to the component that differentiates apologies from condolences.

The semantic features of condoling may give rise to specific situations of misfortune. Because of this, acts of condoling often show specialization for experiences of grief over the death of a close person. Here are two examples from the corpus:

- (3) Alicia. I am sorry about *what happened to* your friend's car. (Coca 1996)
- (4) I am sorry about *this unfortunate occurrence*. (Coca 1995)

Both (3) and (4) are cases of condoling in which the addressee's grief does not arise from death. In (3), the speaker expresses sympathy to the addressee on the realization that he is concerned about something bad that happened to one of his friends' car. Example (4) does not specify the kind of misfortune that has happened to the addressee but it makes it explicit that it is not related to mourning. The corpus contains a vast number of instances of condoling of this type although the specialization of acts of condolences for contexts of mourning makes them insignificant in comparison. The cultural convention that shapes the conceptual grounding of condolences specifies the expression of sorrow about our inability to help others. This inability is more manifest in contexts of mourning and this may be the reason for the specialization of the act in such situations.

The diverse cases of interaction where speakers perform condolences are specified in low-level situational models. These are some possible low-level cognitive models of condoling:

- (a) It is manifest to A that B is involved in a negative state of affairs. A is unable to change the state of affairs to B's benefit. A expresses sympathy to B. B may accept A's sympathy.
- (b) It is manifest to A that B is involved in a negative state of affairs. A is unable to change the state of affairs to B's benefit. A is willing to make B feel better. A offers help in case B is in need.

- (c) It is manifest to A that B is involved in a negative state of affairs. A is uncertain about B's willingness to be given condolences. A offers support to B.
- (d) B is involved in a negative state of affairs but pretends not to be. A, however, becomes aware of it and expresses sympathy about B's misfortune. B may accept A's sympathy.

These low-level models of condoling have elements in common upon which the generic structure may be constructed:

- (e) It is manifest to A that B is involved in a negative state of affairs.
- (f) A is unable to change the state of affairs to B's benefit.
- (g) A feels sympathy about B's misfortune.
- (h) A makes this feeling manifest to B.
- (i) B may accept A's sympathy.

See how the instantiation of each part of the generic structure results in condolences with different degrees of codification:

- (5) I'm *very sorry* for your loss. I know it's got to be painful. (Coca 1992)
- (6) But no words *could ease the pain* of the Whitley family of Altadena, California. (Coca 2005)
- (7) My condolences to you all. (Coca 2004)
- (8) *My sympathy goes* out to him and his loved ones, and I applaud his bravery in coming forward with this news. (Coca 1991)
- (9) Please *accept my condolences*. (Coca 1990)

All these realizations are representative of the constructions found in the performance of condolences. Utterance (5) points to the fact that the speaker's grief arises from his assumption that the addressee is facing a harmful situation. In (6), the speaker indicates that he is unable to change

the negative state of affairs affecting the addressee. The speaker's sympathy is, however, not overtly expressed, and the condoling interpretation is implicit. This is not the case with utterances (7) and (8) which display one the highest degrees of codification for condoling, as they are capable of activating the full generic structure. In (9), it is activated the addressee's expected response to the speaker's condolences. Of course, that is the acceptance of the act, since cultural conventions lead us to express gratitude when others sympathize with our feelings.

### 13.2. REALIZATION PROCEDURES FOR CONDOLING

According to the corpus, the most numerous group of constructions for the act under consideration is the one which has the declarative sentence type as its foundation.

Sentence type	Constructions	Occurrences
Declarative	5	102
Imperative	4	10
Interrogative	0	0

Table 18. *Distribution of condoling constructions by sentence type*

The compatibility between the declarative sentence type and the meaning conditions of expressive acts has been approached in previous chapters. Statements constitute a well adapted means for the expression of our feelings in contrast to imperative and interrogative sentences.

The imperative sentence type is used to direct behavior and thus only fits in with tentative cases of condoling in which the speaker requests for permission or acceptance of his feelings of sympathy about the negative situation in which the addressee is involved. This may be the reason why in the corpus very few examples of condolences are based on the imperative form.

Finally, interrogative sentences have proved largely incompatible with the performance of condolences. None of the examples in the corpus is based on the interrogative sentence type. As has been repeatedly explained in the analysis of expressives, the interrogative form presents an open proposition to the addressee. Because expressives communicate the speaker's feelings in the form of closed propositions they do not usually take the interrogative form unless it becomes appropriate in specific contexts. The use of the interrogative sentence type has shown productive for other expressive acts but this is not the case of condoling.

### 13.2.1. Declarative condoling constructions

The declarative constructions in the corpus manage to make the speaker's sympathy explicit and thus constitute the most adequate means for the expression of condolences.

#### *I X<sub>VP</sub> My Condolences (X<sub>PREP</sub>)*

A large number of declarative instances in the corpus correspond to this construction type. The lexical transparency of the construction manages to produce a default condoling reading.

The only elements of the construction that may be parametrized are the subject and the verb. The subject of the constructions needs to be realized by a first person pronoun either in the singular or the plural form. A first person pronoun points to the speaker as the person who is offering condolences and is therefore necessary in order to comply with the semantics of the act. The verb phrase has to be realized by verbs of expressing or giving which denote a controlled action and a benefit to the addressee component. The verbs used in the utterances below are representative of the ones that often realized the fixed verb phrase of the construction:

- (10) I *extend my condolences* to his parents, family and friends. (Coca 2006)
- (11) I have come to *offer my condolences* for your loss and see if there is any comfort your community can provide for you in your time of grief. (Coca 2010)
- (12) I'm calling to *express my condolences* on the death of your brother. (Coca 2005)

Although all these realizations convey the same condoling reading, they contain different meaning entailments depending on the verb they use in their fixed part. In (10), the construction takes the verb *extend* as its fixed element. This verb fits in situations where the speaker wants to make his condolence more inclusive. It works in contexts where the act of condoling is addressed to more than one person. The verb also works under the assumption that the addressees already know the speaker feels sorry over

their grief but needs to make his feelings manifest to all of them. In the case of (11), the use of the verb *offer* is not determined by contextual variables, as was with the previous case, but rather by the speaker's intention to express his feelings under the assumption that they will support the addressee in his difficulties. Finally, the use of the verb *express* in utterance (12) makes emphasis on the purpose of the condolence. In this case, the speaker highlights the idea that he is condoling only because of a need to make his feelings manifest to the addressee. The condoling value is the same in all three cases by virtue of the performative realization of the fixed part. The use of one verb or another only has an impact in the emphasis that the speaker wants to place on a given part of the structure of condoling. Other verbs of expressing that may be found realizing the fixed verb phrase of the construction include *say*, *declare*, *convey*, *manifest* or *show*. Alternative verbs of giving may be *give*, *hand*, *pass* or *present*.

The fixed part of the construction may also be subject to changes in its composition given that it may take verbs of desire. Here are some examples:

(13) *I wish to* extend my condolences about your husband's accident. (Bnc)

(14) I'm not asking you a question, *I just want to* express my condolences again to you and my enormous regard and respect for you for the dignity that you've shown throughout this trial. (Coca 1997)

(15) *I'd like to* offer my deepest condolences. (Coca 2005)

These constructional variants convey the idea that the speaker is willing to express sympathy over the negative state of affairs affecting the addressee and that his act of condoling is impelled by such desire. This may be the reason why the corpus does not contain instances of the construction in which the verb phrase of the fixed part admits modality markers. Given that the addressee is affected by a negative state of affairs, condolences need to express a true sadness on the part of the speaker to be effective in their goal of offering support.

### ***My Condolences* ( $X_{PREP}$ )**

In this construction the absence of a verb phrase makes the purpose of condoling more explicit. Let us see examples of the present constructions drawn from the corpus:

- (16) “*My condolences*”, he said. “Your father was a great man”. (Coca 1999)

The mere expression of the speaker’s condolences produces a straightforward interpretation of the utterance as an instance of this illocutionary type. Although the construction in itself does not specify the state of affairs the speaker is offering condolences for, it is implicit in the declarative sentence used in conjunction with the construction that the addressee’s father just died. This information is provided by contextual variables and is not needed for the condolence. The purpose of this sentence is not related with the specification of the state of affairs which is the object of the condolence but rather to comfort the addressee by expressing real sorrow about losing a good man. The specification of the negative state of affairs can also be made through the use of a variable element introduced by a preposition:

- (17) “Sir, *my condolences on* the death of your secretary”. (Bnc)

- (18) “My dear lady”, he said. “*My condolences for* your loss”. (Coca 2005)

In (17) and (18), the variable element pointing to the negative situation in which the addressee finds himself can be realized by different prepositional phrases. The use of one preposition or another conveys subtle meaning differences. When the preposition *on* is used, the condolence focuses on the state of affairs affecting the addressee, whereas when the preposition *for* is used, the comfort that the addressee may receive from the speaker’s condolence is emphasized.

It is also possible to find instances of the construction making use of a variable element specifying the identity of the addressee as the person who is immersed in the negative state of affairs. A case in point is illustrated below:

- (19) One of the things I first want to say is absolutely *my condolences to* the people of Haiti. (Coca 2010)

Utterance (19) makes explicit that the speaker’s condolences are addressed to the people of Haiti. This procedure is generally used when it is necessary to highlight the addressee’s identity among a group or when the people whom the condolences are addressed to are not present at the time of speaking.

### *I X<sub>VP</sub> My Sympathy (X<sub>PREP</sub>)*

This construction is another way of performing explicit condolences. In this case, it is not the condoling meaning which is made explicit by the lexical components of the construction, but the speaker's sympathy. The expression of the speaker's sympathy is the purpose of the act and its manifestness yields a condoling reading. Once again, the construction is compatible with the use of verbs of expressing or giving. These verbs denote the idea that the speaker is expressing his feelings in order to satisfy the addressee and his feelings are therefore something to be appreciated. Consider:

- (20) I *express* my sympathy for the hardships they suffered and offer my apology for the situation they found themselves in. (Coca 2007)
- (21) As a parent who has grieved the death of a teenage child, I *extend* my sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Molen. (Coca 2001)

The examples above illustrate the meaning differences that may arise from using either an expressing verb or a giving verb in the construction. When a verb of expressing is used, as is the case in (20), the speaker's intention to make his feelings manifest to the addressee is emphasized. When a verb of giving is used, as in (21), it is implied that the expression of the speaker's sympathy seeks to benefit the addressee.

As was the case with previous cases, the fixed part of the construction is subject to formal differences. The corpus contains no instances making use of a modality marker. Only instances in which the fixed part takes a verb of desire have been found in the corpus. These are two examples:

- (22) I'd *like to* express my sympathy for the loss of your daughter. (Coca 1992)
- (23) I *just wanted to* extend my sympathy to you and your family. (Coca 2003)

The use of verbs of desire in the construction makes it explicit that the expression of the speaker's sympathy is made only because he wants to and not simply in observance of cultural conventions. What is more, it is implied that the sad event in which the addressee is involved impels the speaker to communicate this sympathy.

### ***My Sympathy* ( $X_{PREP}$ )**

The condoling meaning of this construction places the emphasis on the speaker's feelings rather than in his intention to make such feelings manifest to the addressee. The explicitness of the construction leads to the condoling reading effortlessly:

(24) *And my sympathies* once again to your lovely wife. (Bnc)

It becomes apparent that the absence of a subject pointing to the speaker as the person expressing condolences and a verb phrase specifying this desire to express his feelings to the addressee does not affect the explicitness of the condoling value conveyed. In (24), the construction makes use of a variable element specifying the addressee of the condolence. This is done because the person the speaker is talking to is not the receiver of the condolence and the person who is with the speaker is therefore asked to communicate the speaker's feelings to someone else. It is possible to use this type of element also before the fixed part of the construction in order to emphasize the addressee's identity. Let us provide one example:

(25) *To* and all the family our deepest sympathy. (Bnc)

The variable element may be alternatively realized by a verb phrase with the purpose of highlighting the transfer involved in the expression of his feelings:

(26) Right now, *my sympathy goes to* the deceased. (Coca 1997)

In cases like the one exemplified in (26), the condolence is perceived as a transfer from the speaker to the addressee. The use of the verb *go* taking part in the variable element allows the speaker to imply that the expression of his sympathy is an attempt to comfort the addressee.

### ***I Am Sorry* ( $X_P$ )**

This is probably the most implicit construction used in the expression of condolences. In this realization procedure, it is not sympathy that the speaker is expressing but sorrow. This makes the construction equally appropriate for apologies and condolences. It is the information provided by



the context that determines its interpretation as one or the other. Here is an example:

(27) *I am sorry.* Your head must hurt. Come back here to the guest bedroom. (Coca 2003)

Both in apologies and condolences, the speaker feels sorrow about something negative affecting the addressee. The difference lies in the fact that in apologizing, the negative situation has been caused by the speaker, in condoling it is a misfortune the addressee has to deal with. It is necessary that this difference becomes apparent to both participants in order for the construction to achieve its illocutionary purpose. The ambiguity may be resolved by specifying this type of information through the use of a variable element:

(28) *I am sorry for* your loss, Jane. I know what it is to be orphaned. (Coca 2009)

(29) *I am sorry that* you have Parkinson's. (Coca 2008)

These examples make the fact that the speaker's sorrow derives from a misfortune occurred to the addressee explicit. In (28), such misfortune consists in the death of the addressee's parents. In (29), it results from the fact that the addressee suffers from a disease.

### **13.2.2. Imperative condoling constructions**

Imperative condoling constructions are restricted to cases in which the speaker asks either for permission to express his sympathy or for acceptance on the part of the addressee. Although the imperative sentence type may seem incompatible with the act of condoling, our corpus shows several imperative constructions highly specialized for condolences.

#### ***Accept My Condolences***

This construction requests the addressee's acceptance for the speaker's sympathy. The lexical components of the construction make the condoling meaning explicit. Consider the example below:

(30) Please *accept my condolences*, Alex. (Coca 2006)

It is significant that all the instances of the construction found in the corpus make use of the mitigator *please*. The reason may be the need to mitigate the impositive nature of the imperative in order to give the construction the warm tone that characterizes the act of condoling.

### ***Accept My Sympathy***

This construction works under the same rationale as the previous one, but here the lexical components place more emphasis on the speaker's feelings than on the explicitness of the condoling meaning:

(31) It would be pointless of me to offer my help? There is probably nothing anyone can do, but please *accept my sympathy*. (Coca 1990)

Again, all the instances provided by the corpus contain the adverb *please* as part of their fixed elements. This mitigator softens the impositive tone of the imperative and makes the construction more appropriate for the expression of condolences. Imperative requests of this type become handy in contexts in which the speaker is uncertain about the addressee's willingness to receive condolences.

### ***Let Me X<sub>VP</sub> My Condolences***

As has been evidenced in previous chapters, the *let* form is productive in the performance of expressive illocutions. The expression of condolences is not an exception. This particle is capable of activating two parts of the generic structure of condoling. It activates in the first place the manifestness of the speaker's sympathy. Second, it spells out the part of the structure specifying the addressee's expected response. Requests of this type do not really seek the addressee's permission to receive condolences but aim at expressing concern about the addressee's wish to be offered sympathy. This reduces the impact of the imperative considerably:

(32) On behalf of all Americans, *let me extend* my condolences to the families of those who lost their lives and our prayers to those who were injured. (Coca 1996)

- (33) First of all, Mrs. Steiner, let me say thank you to you for being here tonight and also *let me offer* my condolences to you and let you know that you and so many who have shared your loss have been in the prayers of many others and my family as well for you. (Coca 2004)

The verb phrase of the construction can take different predicates. In example (32), the construction takes the verb *extend* which, as explained above, conveys the meaning implication that the speaker's condolences are addressed to diverse addressees which may not be present at the time of speaking. In (33), the verb used is *offer*, which indicates that the speaker is presenting his feelings for the addressee's acceptance. Since the verbs used in these utterances indicate that the speaker only wants to express his sympathy, without forcing the addressee into acceptance, they seem particularly compatible with the semantics of the construction.

#### ***Let Me X<sub>VP</sub> My Sympathy***

This type of realization belongs to the same family of constructions as the previous one. In this construction, however, the manifestness of the speaker's sympathy is more explicit. The fixed part of the construction cannot be parametrized and the verb that realizes the variable part must be realized by verbs of expressing or giving. Despite the high degree of codification that this construction shows for the expression of condolences the corpus only contains one instance:

- (34) Again *let me extend* my sympathy to you and your father. (Coca 2008)

Again it is the verb *extend* the one used in the construction. The high productivity of this verb in the realizations for condolences may be explained by its ability to capture transfer of the speaker's feelings involved in this illocutionary type.

#### **13.2.3. Generalizations on constructions for condoling**

The performance of condolences is characterized by its preference for the use of declarative and imperative constructions. No instances of condoling based on the interrogative sentence type have been found in the

corpus. This could be expected since the purpose of expressive acts clashes with the meaning conditions of the interrogative form.

The study of the constructional realizations of condolences thus concentrates on the declarative and imperative sentences. Declarative condoling constructions focus on the manifestness of the speaker's feelings thus making the intended meaning explicit. More implicit constructions are achieved with expressions of sorrow by the speaker without specifying the origin of such sorrow in the addressee's misfortune. The specification of this information is a key factor in the interpretation of an apology or a condolence. This information can be made explicit either by the use of a variable element or an additional declarative sentence indicating that the addressee is suffering from a misfortune and not due an event caused by the speaker.

Imperative constructions display similar degrees of explicitness. Nevertheless, the meaning conditions of the imperative form specify the presentation of an action for realization and since condolences merely express the speaker's feelings, imperative condoling constructions need to make the addressee participate in the expression of sympathy. The only part of the generic structure that is compatible with this meaning condition has to do with the addressee's response to the speaker's feelings. This part of condoling can be instantiated in two different ways. One is to ask the addressee to accept the speaker's expression of sympathy. Requests of this type function as reminders to the addressee that his response is constrained by cultural conventions. An alternative way to instantiate this parameter is to ask for permission to express sympathy. Asking for permission reminds the addressee that he is expected to accept and appreciate the speaker's feelings.

## 14. THE SPEECH ACT OF BOASTING

### 14.1. THE SEMANTICS OF BOASTING

Boasting is the act of making an ostentatious speech. Boasts express feelings of satisfaction about an achievement, overcoming a challenge or an accomplishment. By uttering a boast, the speaker intends to share his feelings of satisfaction with others and expects they will feel a sense of pride and accomplishment. Acts of boasting are often considered aggressive. Boasts praise the speaker for an achievement, which is in principle incompatible with the appropriate measures of modesty established in our culture. Moreover, in some cases, boasting is considered not only as an expression of satisfaction but also as a way of communicating the speaker's superiority. What is more, uttering boasts can be regarded as a way of magnifying an accomplishment out of proportion (Brown, 2006).

The definition of boasting put forward by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) differs from these views. These authors consider the performance of boasting as a form of interaction that arises from the application of the cultural conventions stipulated in the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. In this approach, acts of boasting count as attempts to express an achievement and do not need to be offensive. In effect, it is one of the generalizations of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* which appears as underlying the conceptual nature of boasting. This cultural generalization reads as follows (Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007: 111):

*If it is manifest to A that A is responsible for a certain state of affairs to be to A's benefit, A may feel proud about this situation and make it manifest to B.*

Boasts arise from the speaker's need to communicate his feelings of satisfaction for bringing about a state of affairs to his benefit. The expected response on the part of the addressee is described in another cultural generalization of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. Through the application of the part of the model that provides the cultural background for congratulations, the addressee should praise the speaker if it is manifest to him that the speaker has achieved something that is beneficial for him. A different response on the part of the addressee would be considered impolite as it would break the harmony of the interaction. However, this response

could be justified in cases in which the showoff the speaker is bound to cause offense. In these situations, the speaker would have performed a boast to assert his superiority over the addressee, who would be unfairly relegated to an inferior position. The example below illustrates this:

- (1) “What difference does it make if you whack her or I whack her?” Tony asked.  
“Ultimately, no difference at all”, Angelo said. “But I’m in charge, and I’m shooting the woman. I want to make sure she’s dead. I’m the one who has to answer to Cerino”.  
“So you think you can shoot someone better than me?” Tony said. He seemed insulted. (Coca 1992)

This exchange depicts a situation in which Tony and Angelo are competing for carrying out a task and Angelo implies he has more expertise to do it. This leaves Tony in an inferior position, which obviously offends him. Except in contexts of this type, boasts do not necessarily dwindle the addressee’s self-esteem and conform to the principles of interaction. Another case in which a negative response on the part of the addressee would be justified would be a context in which the achievement brought about by the speaker is not beneficial for the addressee. Consider:

- (2) “I fooled Tamerlane the Great!” he boasted.  
“You spoiled my perfect goose!” she cried. (Coca 2003)

In this context, the speaker is boasting that he has been capable of taming a wild goose that belongs to the addressee. Since the addressee disagrees with the means used by the speaker to trick the goose, her response is an expression of complaint for not treating the animal in an appropriate manner. Such a response conveys unacceptance on the part of the addressee with respect to the speaker’s behavior. Because of this, in order to perform a boast that adapts to cultural conventions, the speaker’s accomplishment should not be harmful for the addressee.

The high-level cognitive model that I will put forward for boasting captures the semantic characterization of the act. It is based on the convention of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* defined as the background for boasting. This high-level cognitive model derives from generalizing over low-level scenarios where people attempt to make others aware of their achievements. The following are some possible low-level scenarios of boasting:

- (a) A has achieved something to be proud of. A makes this situation manifest to B. B may feel pleased for A.
- (b) A has brought about a state of affairs to his benefit. A feels proud of it. A makes this situation manifest to B. B may feel pleased for A.
- (c) A's family has brought about a state of affairs to their benefit. A feels proud of it. A makes this situation manifest to B. B may feel pleased for A.
- (d) A state of affairs has been brought about to A's benefit. A makes this situation manifest to B. B may feel pleased for A.

The common elements of these low-level models correspond to the generic structure:

- (e) There is a situation such that A feels proud of it.
- (f) A makes this situation manifest to B.
- (g) B may feel pleased for A.

This generic structure is realized by means of constructions with an instantiation potential with respect to one or more parameters. Some of the most codified constructions for boasting are illustrated in the utterances below:

- (3) "*I am good at cricket!*" he yelled. (Bnc)
- (4) I bought a British car and I am *proud of* it. (Bnc)
- (5) You have to *admire me* for this, *I achieved* my goal. (Coca 1997)

The boast in (3) makes reference to the situation the speaker is proud. Such a situation may consist in a state of affairs brought about by the speaker or by someone else or it may simply denote something that affects the speaker positively. In the example, it is one of the speaker's qualities that make him feel proud. Boasts of this type consist in positive descriptions about the speaker. The activation of this part of the generic structure yields implicit instances of boasting. In the case of (4), it is an action carried out

by the speaker he is proud of. This utterance points to the first and the second parts of the generic structure and displays a higher degree of codification. Example (5) points to the expected response on the part of the addressee. This statement reminds the addressee that he is culturally abided to feel satisfied for the speaker about something he has accomplished. It also spells out the manifestness of the situation that makes the addressee feel proud. The boast interpretation of this utterance is easy to grasp. Note that all these instances make use of declarative constructions. Acts of boasting mainly focus on communicating the speaker's feelings about a beneficial state of affairs and find in the declarative sentence type a suitable means of expression.

## 14.2. REALIZATION PROCEDURES FOR BOASTING

The data displays a large number of declarative constructions in the expression of boasting. The number of boasting constructions identified for each sentence type is reproduced in the table below:

Sentence type	Constructions	Occurrences
Declarative	11	270
Interrogative	2	14
Imperative	2	6

Table 19. *Distribution of boasting constructions by sentence type*

Most instances in the corpus are based on the declarative sentence type. Acts of boasting share this feature with other expressives. Statements describing the state of affairs brought about to the speaker's benefit or the speaker's feeling about it quite easily give access to the generic structure of boasting.

Imperative constructions, in contrast, constitute a poor vehicle for the expression of boasts. The imposition conveyed by the imperative sentence type is appropriate for an act that intends to direct the addressee's behavior but not to describe the speaker's feelings. The corpus contains, however, imperative constructions requesting the addressee's confirmation about the speaker's qualities. A similar situation occurs with the use of interrogative constructions. The interrogative form presents an open proposition, a property which clashes with the communicative goal of boasting, namely, the manifestness of the speaker's feelings. Nonetheless, it is possible to minimize the openness of the interrogative sentence type via some linguistic resources to make it more adequate for the realization of boasts.



### 14.2.1. Declarative boasting constructions

The low degree of specification of the declarative sentence type needs to be increased through linguistic mechanisms which contribute to the codification of the boasting meaning. Let us analyze those found in the corpus.

#### *I Am Good X<sub>PR</sub>*

The performance of boasts requires the use of direct and concise formulas. In cases in which it is the speaker's qualities that he feels proud of, the use of a positive adjective describing him points with certainty to a boast interpretation. The feelings of pride are conveyed in an implicit way. The following examples illustrate this:

(6) *I am good* at quizzes that involve logic. (Bnc)

(7) “*I am good* at languages”. (Coca 1991)

The use of the declarative sentence type presents the speaker's excellence as an issue already set up rather than an open one. This allows the speaker to boast about his skills without expressing superiority over the addressee in compliance with politeness conventions.

#### *I Am Better X<sub>PR</sub> (Than X<sub>NP</sub>)*

One productive way of specifying a declarative construction in order to specify the declarative form for the performance of boasting is by means of using comparative forms with an adjective describing the goodness of the speaker. Although similar in form to the previous construction, this type of realization qualifies as a more explicit means for the performance of boasts:

(8) After three times *I am better*, better, better! (Coca 1997)

(9) *I am better* at yielding, not perfect, just better. (Coca 2009)

The meaning implications conveyed are different in each case. While example (8) does not specify the kind of skills of the speaker, example (9)

indicates the activity the speaker has mastered by means of a prepositional phrase. The reference to the subject matter in which the speaker has succeeded reduces the force of the comparative. When no such reference is made, it may seem that the speaker is simply strutting around.

Some realizations of this construction may make use of a variable element with a comparative expression. This allows the speaker to contrast his skills with those of other people and to display his superiority. In so doing, the speaker leaves the addressee in a position he cannot refute. The following are instances of the construction that make use of this realization procedure:

(10) *I am a little better* than most other students my age. *I am much better* than most students of my age. (Coca 2004)

(11) *I am better* than you. (Coca 2006)

In (10) and (11), the variable element specifies the identity of those who have not achieved the same level of success as the speaker. In (10), the speaker is presented as superior than the average student. The addressee is therefore expected to praise the speaker. Example (11), in which the speaker presents himself as superior than the addressee, is naturally intended to cause offense. In cases of this kind, it is frequent that the addressee disagrees with the speaker's statement and attempts to get some credit for himself. Since the speaker has overlooked the cultural conventions that disapprove his boasting of superiority, the addressee feels justified to ignore those according to which he should praise the speaker.

### ***I Am The Best* $X_{NP}$**

Based on the same rationale than previous construction, this type of realization presents the speaker as the most important member of a group of people or as the best in an activity. The use of the superlative form conveys the idea that the speaker has one quality that is greater than anything it could be compared to. In using this construction, the speaker is pretending to express not his opinion but rather facts. This meaning implication gives rise to forceful instances of boasting that are only appropriate in contexts where there is enough intimacy and they are not perceived as offensive:

(12) "*I am the best* promoter in the world". (Coca 1992)

(13) I, La Carlotta, *I am the best* opera singer in Paris. (Bnc)

The construction is subject to formal differences. In some cases, it may make use of a verbal form referring to the speaker's excellence as something belonging to the past. The use of the past form decreases the force of the boast and reduces the speaker's showoff. If the achievement that he brought about was in the past, the expression of boasting counts as an attempt to share the speaker's experiences. Nevertheless, the use of the superlative form still indicates that the speaker has a high opinion of himself, even if his achievement took place long time ago:

(14) *I was the best* student and had loads of friends. (Coca 1993)

It may be the case that the speaker wants to reduce the impact of his boast and attribute the expression of his excellence to someone else. In these situations, the use of the past responds to the requirements of reported speech. This constructional variant is illustrated below:

(15) He told me *I was the best* sergeant he had ever seen. (Coca 2004)

Another variant of this construction results from the use of an interrogative form. In this case, the speaker shares his achievements by asking the addressee if he already is aware of them:

(16) Did you know *I was the best* singer and actor at my old school? (Coca 2009)

Questions of this type do not intend to obtain an answer from the addressee but rather to pave the way for the expression of the speaker's achievements. The use of the interrogative form considerably softens the force of the act and gives rise to unassuming and tentative instances of boasting.

### ***I Am The Most X<sub>ADJ</sub>***

This construction is another way of performing boasts by making use of the comparative form. In this case, the speaker is presented as having a certain skill which is greater than that of anybody else. The fixed part of the construction consists of a statement using a first person subject and a

phrasal verb in the superlative form. The modifiable part is realized by an adjective expressing the speaker's qualities followed by a noun denoting the field in which the speaker outstands from the rest. The boast meaning depends on the value of the adjective. In order for the construction to be interpreted as a boast, the adjectival phrase must describe a positive quality of the speaker. Otherwise the construction counts as a way of expressing frustration about failing in achieving something.

(17) *I am the most unskilled person I know.* (Coca 2001)

As was argued for other constructions using the superlative form, the force of the act is considerably high and its use needs to be restricted to contexts of intimacy not to be offensive. Look at the following examples:

(18) Sir, *I am the most* successful sportswriter in America and not merely a 'moderate success'. (Coca 1994)

(19) *I am the most* important witness in the trial of the century. If I go down, their case goes bye-bye. (Coca 1995)

In both examples, the main clause presents the speaker as having achieved something to be proud of. Nevertheless, the meaning implications conveyed are different. In (18), the speaker is asking for the addressee's recognition. The boast is prompted by the addressee's downplay of the speaker's qualities. Example (19) arises from the speaker's desire to get appreciation for his services.

### *X<sub>NEGPR</sub> Better Than Me*

Once again the speaker stands from the rest by means of comparing his skills to those of other people. However, in this construction the speaker does not make a statement about himself using a first person subject. Instead, he makes an existential statement asserting that there are no people with better qualities than him. The first part of the construction is realized by the pronoun which is compared to the addressee and the second part consists in an expression of goodness in the comparative form. Here is an example:

(20) I still don't think there is *anybody* out there *better* than me. (Bnc)

The variable part of the construction admits the use of any pronoun that indicates absence of other entities. This realization procedure produces forceful instances of boasting displaying superiority. As will be shown below, this pattern gives rise to constructional realizations conveying the same meaning implications with differences in form.

#### ***X<sub>NEGPR</sub> As Good As I Am***

This is the first of the realizations considered above. The difference has to do with the nature of the fixed elements. While the previous formula expresses a comparison by using an adjectival phrase in the comparative form, this one does so by making use of a comparative of equality. The main idea which is communicated is that nobody has skills that are equal to those of the speaker. The modifiable part of this construction functions in the same way. The use of a negative pronoun presumes the inexistence of people that can be compared to the speaker. The use of other pronouns compares the speaker to real people:

(21) Darrick Martin said “You’ll never be *as good as I am*”. (Coca 1990)

In (21), the speaker compares himself to the addressee leaving the latter in an inferior position. This has an impact in the degree of force conveyed by the construction, which is significantly increased and its use may give way to uncomfortable situations.

#### ***X<sub>NEGPR</sub> Does Y<sub>NP</sub> Like Me***

This is the second realization of the constructional pattern discussed above. In this case, the speaker is not boasting about what he is but about what he does. In other words, the construction makes reference to the skills the speaker has for the performance of a particular activity but does not imply that he is better than other people because of these skills. The boasting meaning lies in the statement that nobody is capable of carrying out a task the way he does. Since the speaker boasts about a specific ability he has, this type of realization does not convey the display of superiority that is communicated by the other related constructions:

(22) No one builds ponds *like me*. (Coca 2003)

Differently from the previous constructions, this realization contains two variable elements. The first one is realized by a negative pronoun indicating the entities that are incapable of achieving the speaker's excellence. The second one is realized by a noun phrase signaling the task the speaker has the ability to carry out.

The comparative phrase of the construction can be subject to changes depending on the communicative purpose:

(23) "No one does a tower of books *like I do*", she boasted. (Coca 2000)

(24) "Luckily none of the African American waiters mess up *like I do*". (Coca 2010)

In (23) and (24), the construction makes use of a first person subject followed by a verb in the present tense. This device places emphasis on the skills that the speaker has and which cannot be compared to others. The force of the resulting boast is noticeably increased.

### ***I Am Proud Of X<sub>NP</sub>***

Another type of realization associated with the performance of boasts is the one which concentrates on the speaker's pride about bringing about an achievement. As argued in the description of the semantic makeup of boasting, the speaker's pride for a situation constitutes the motivating factor for the realization of this illocutionary type. For this reason, the boasting value conveyed by the construction is lexically transparent and easy to grasp:

(25) I'm *proud of* my bronze medal and keep it in a safe with my World Championship belt. (Bnc)

(26) I am *proud of* the role that I have played in making sure that America is safe. (Coca 2010)

The variable part of the construction consists of a noun phrase describing the entity, situation or event the speaker is proud of. In (25), the speaker is proud of an object, a medal he won in a competition. In (26), the speaker's pride refers to his participation in an event that was beneficial for others. In either case, the focus of the construction is on the speaker's pride

and because of this its usage is merely expressive and does not attempt to obtain the addressee's praise.

### ***I Managed X<sub>NP</sub>***

Another way of performing explicit boasts through the declarative form is by directly describing a state of affairs that the speaker has brought about and is proud of. This can be communicated by using a first person subject plus a verb phrase expressing achievement. The corpus contains different constructional realizations based on this linguistic pattern. One of the most productive is illustrated in the example:

- (27) But he did pull a few strings, and *I managed to get* a scholarship.  
(Coca 2009)

Example (27) expresses pride in obtaining a scholarship. The state of affairs brought about by the speaker and the manifestness of his feelings are both activated. The activation of these two parts of the generic structure results in high degrees of codification for cases where it is an achievement of the speaker the object of the boast.

### ***I Achieved X<sub>NP</sub>***

The verb used in this construction implicates the idea that the state of affairs brought about by the speaker is something he has been trying to achieve for some time. The achievement is thus something especially to be proud about and the addressee should praise the speaker. For this reason, instances of boasting based of this construction in many occasions convey a sense of fulfillment on the part of the speaker for achieving his goal:

- (28) *I achieved* the look I personally wanted. (Coca 2006)

The fixed part of the construction is subject to changes in aspect. It is possible to use present perfect forms to refer to an achievement that has been brought about recently. The boasting meaning conveyed is the same:

- (29) I'm very pleased because *Martin and I have achieved* a lot together, and a championship race is what we were after. (Bnc)

In all cases the use of this construction constitutes a lexical means of activating the defining parts of the generic structure of boasting.

### ***I Did Well* ( $X_{PREP}$ )**

This type of realization is yet a further mechanism making reference to an achievement brought about by the speaker. As its counterparts, it consists of the use of a first person singular subject and a verb phrase expressing achievement. By way of illustration, consider the following examples:

(30) I passed my A levels, *I did well*. (Bnc)

(31) *I did well* in math and science; my dad was a physicist, so I inherited that gene. (Coca 2009)

The modifiable element of this construction may not be operative in certain cases. In example (30), for instance, the speaker only uses the fixed part of the construction and specifies the achievement he has brought about through an additional clause that does not take part in the realization. The emphasis of this utterance is on the state of affairs brought about. Example (31), in contrast, does make use of the variable element signaling the subject matter in which the speaker has achieved his goal. The presence of the variable element decreases the force of the boast and consequently reduces its impact. Furthermore, the speaker is taking his credit away by indicating that his qualities are only the result of his genes and he has not actively contributed to them in a special way. In both utterances, the use of the construction exhibits high degrees of codification for boasts to the extent that it would require a marked context for them to be understood as instance of a different speech act category.

### **14.2.2. Interrogative boasting constructions**

The openness of the interrogative sentence type seems incompatible with the nature of boasts, given that acts of boasting present a definite proposition communicating the speaker's feelings. Nevertheless, certain interrogative constructions convey boasts by looking for the addressee's reassurance about the speaker's pride.



### ***Am I Not X<sub>ADJ</sub>?***

Boasts that are addressed to people who do not intend to approve of the state of affairs that has been brought about to the speaker's benefit may break the harmony of the interaction. Securing the addressee's appraisal requires the performance of less explicit boasts. Questions about the speaker's involvement in the bringing about of the state of affairs expect an expression of pride on the part of the addressee. Consider:

(32) “*Am I not radiant?*” and drove the judge to rhapsodies about her in just those words. (Bnc)

(33) *Am I not* best peddler in all America? You're a genie out of a magic lamp! (Coca 2005)

In (32), the speaker's boast causes the addressee's negative reaction. In (33), the addressee feels proud of the speaker and praises him. Whichever is the response to the boast, the addressee finds himself in the need to give his opinion about the achievement of the speaker.

### ***Is X<sub>NP</sub> As Good As Me?***

This construction expresses the same meaning implications as the previous one. Since the speaker thinks the addressee will be observing cultural conventions, he questions the addressee about his opinion expecting a positive reaction:

(34) “You ever see a cop dressed *as good as me*?” Hawk said. “Some of the undercover Vice guys look pretty fresh” Wanda said. (Coca 1996)

The question posed to the addressee presents the speaker as talking proudly about himself. The manifestness of the speaker's feelings makes the interpretation of (34) as an instance of boasting straightforward.

### **14.2.3. Imperative boasting constructions**

Imperative constructions are the least codified for the performance of boasts. The imperative sentence type presents an action for realization,

which fits in with acts that intend to instruct behavior to the addressee but not with those which express an idea. However, boasting may find in imperative constructions an adequate means for imposing on the addressee the belief on the speaker's superiority. The corpus contains a few instances of boasting that aim at directing the addressee to admire the speaker.

### *See I X<sub>VP</sub>*

This construction attempts to impose on the addressee the goodness of the speaker. This realization is motivated by a metaphor labelled SEEING IS UNDERSTANDING (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Danesi, 1990). This metaphor conceptualizes our reasoning in terms of a physical sense. The notion of understanding is structured in terms of sight. By instructing the addressee to see what the speaker is or has done, the construction aims at making the addressee believe on the speaker's excellence and accept his role in the state of affairs that has been brought about to his benefit. The corpus contains a small number of instances of boasts displaying this form. Nevertheless, the following example illustrates the effectiveness of this construction in the production of boasts:

(35) *See, I'm better than you. I'm more famous.* (Coca 1995)

The use of the imperative form does not convey a high imposition. On the contrary, it simply presents an action for realization, which is the acceptance of the speaker's superiority. However, the realization of this action leaves the addressee in an inferior position and thus the use of the imperative may be found offensive.

### *Let's Face It I X<sub>VP</sub>*

Since the plural form of the imperative conveys low degrees of imposition, its use results in more polite boasts. By presenting the speaker and the addressee together in the acceptance of the speaker's excellence, this construction manages to decrease the force of the imperative. Higher degrees of involvement on the part of the speaker indicate that he has to make an effort to accept the excellence of his achievements. This effort is as costly as the one that needs to be made by the addressee. Take the following example as representative:

(36) *Let's face it.* I've already accomplished so many of the abstract goals in my career. (Coca 1999)

In (36), the state of affairs achieved by the speaker is instantiated as well as the addressee's acceptance. Even though the speaker's pride remains implicit, the instantiation of these two parts of the generic structure produces largely codified instances of boasting which fit in with cultural conventions.

#### **14.2.4. Generalizations on constructions for boasting**

Declarative constructions are by far the most explicit means for the realization of boasts. In spite of being so little specialized, the declarative form perfectly accommodates to the requirements of expressive speech acts. Declarative constructions manage to instantiate the relevant features that make up the semantic structure of boasting. The use of the declarative form in conjunction with comparative adjectives and verbs of achievement increase the degree of codification of the boasting value.

Interrogative and imperative constructions, although more implicit, also manage to produce codified boasts. These sentence types attempt to obtain the addressee's praise for the achievement brought about by the speaker. In so doing, they make the manifestness of the state of affairs brought about by the speaker explicit. The instantiation of these two parts of the generic structure yields an easy boasting meaning. What differentiates interrogatives from imperatives is the degree of force. While interrogatives pose a question to the addressee, imperatives require a specific response. This conveys the idea of imposition, which increases the impact of the resulting act.

## 15. CONCLUSION

The main aim of this dissertation has been to develop the illocutionary component of the LCM. In this final chapter I summarize the main findings of the present work in terms of their theoretical implications and I suggest further lines of research to continue investigating the motivation and constraints of illocution.

The LCM approach to illocution needs to be placed in a context of opposed views held by traditional speech act theories. The need for the development of a constructional approach to illocution has been made apparent by a brief revision of the main shortcomings presented by speech act theories, on the one hand, and an outline of the advantages of the adoption of a constructionist perspective working within the tradition of cognitive linguistics, on the other.

Independently of the framework, research on speech act meaning has traditionally been conducted within one of two opposed approaches, characterized by the weight they place on codification or on inference in illocutionary performance. In chapter two it was argued that both groups of theories are fraught with difficulties and that neither is on its own capable of accounting for all aspects of illocution. On the one hand, inferential theories ignore the existence of the three sentence types in most languages and the codification of speech act meaning in realizational resources with an illocutionary force that can be grasped effortlessly. On the other hand, approaches based on codification do not account for the conceptual grounding of speech act meaning and fall into a state of overgrammaticalization. These facts call for an integrated account of illocution that takes both codification and inference into account.

Alternative proposals have been elaborated within Cognitive Linguistics. With the aim of overcoming the problems of inferential and functional grammar theories, Panther and Thornburg (1998, 2003) account for illocution in terms of scenarios, but their contribution does not provide an explanation for those expressions that do not involve metonymic activity in order to produce illocutionary values. Refinements of this theory have been carried out by Pérez (2001) and Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza (2002), who have proposed the integration of cultural variables into illocutionary scenarios. This hypothesis has been further developed into a constructionist approach (Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007; Baicchi and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2011; Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2011) outlining the main theoretical assumptions of the illocutionary component of the LCM. In this approach, illocutionary scenarios are regarded as high-level situational

cognitive models capturing illocutionary meaning that derives from generalizing over everyday situations. These models are constructed on the basis of a number of cultural generalizations that are part of our interactional knowledge. The activation of these models produces illocutionary meaning which can become conventionalized thus acquiring a constructional status (Ruiz de Mendoza and González-García, 2011) of the kind postulated within constructionist accounts of language (Goldberg, 1995, 2006). It has been necessary to bear out this hypothesis and to develop the description of illocutionary constructions in the LCM.

Although traditional speech act theories recognize conventional speech acts, their accounts of illocutionary conventionalization are unsatisfactory on two grounds. First, because they fail to provide the explanation of the origins and the motivation of the convention of use of a given speech act. Second, because they postulate that even in cases of high codification, the illocutionary value of a speech act still needs to be inferred. To solve this problem, from a constructionist perspective, Pérez (2001) approaches the issue of conventionalization by postulating a continuum between codification and inference. This treatment of conventionalization has been supported by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007), whose proposals have been included in the early development of level 3 constructions in the LCM (Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2009), with the difference that these authors regard cultural norms as imposing different degrees of codification on speech acts. These approaches have served as guidelines for the development of the LCM approach to illocution in terms of constructions that have become entrenched through a process of conventionalization that is, in turn, constrained by cultural conventions. A study of speech acts that is capable of capturing the cultural norms involved in constructional conventionalization was therefore required.

With these considerations as a point of departure, the present research has enquired into the structure of illocutionary constructions with a view to reviewing and improving the proposals in the LCM. The LCM claims that illocutionary constructions are the result of the degree of ability of an expression to instantiate the relevant components defining the cognitive model of a speech act category. Our generic knowledge of an illocutionary category is structured in the form of situational cognitive models which capture both semantic and pragmatic variables as well as the cultural conventions that provide the background for that category. Metonymic operations on an illocutionary cognitive model result in the derivation of illocutionary meaning. The illocutionary value of each construction is determined by its instantiation potential for the parameters of the

corresponding high-level cognitive model. Throughout this dissertation I have provided linguistic evidence in support of this claim. On the grounds of explanatory elegance, this dissertation has developed a constructionist view of speech act meaning in which constructions are not mere assemblies of form and meaning where form calls upon given ways of meaning interpretation, but rather formal realizations of meaning representations with the ability to afford access to such representations in connection to contextual variables that can also fill in relevant parts of the meaning representation composite structure.

The study of the expression of interpersonal speech act categories pursued here starts with the semantic characterization of each illocution and then proceeds to determine what constructional realizations are available for its expression. Regarding the semantic part of illocutionary constructions, I have carried out a description of the semantic features of speech act categories in terms of high-level situational cognitive models capturing the cultural conventions associated with their realization. It has been shown that high-level cognitive models (Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2007; Baicchi and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2011) constitute a more comprehensive tool for the organization of illocutionary meaning than scenarios (Panther and Thornburg, 1998, 2003; Panther, 2005) in two ways. First, their generic nature enables them to account for different illocutionary situations. Second, they capture cultural conventions specifying principles of interaction. In this respect, this dissertation has revised the work of Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) and Baicchi and Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) and has applied the stipulations of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* to the semantic characterization of interpersonal speech act categories in terms of high-level cognitive models. The *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* captures all the information from situational cognitive models associated with interactional speech act categories. The analysis evidences that high-level cognitive models provide rich definitions of the semantic composition of illocutionary categories by generalizing over diverse situational contexts. It also shows that the cultural conventions shape the conceptual nature of speech acts and play a role in their constructional realization. By way of illustration, the high-level model of promising is grounded in the convention that leads us to act in ways that are good to others. The model consists in a number of parameters that flesh out the traditional Searlean felicity conditions (cf. Searle, 1969). Utterances like *I will buy you a diamond ring* instantiate the cognitive model of promising by activating one of its parameters (i.e. the speaker's commitment to carrying out an action) through the application of the cultural convention specified. In cases of

instances like *There will be a computer for you next year*, the commitment value needs to be inferred on the basis of contextual information pointing to the speaker as the person who will bring about the specified state of affairs in obedience to politeness conventions. The *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* reveals itself as an explanatorily adequate tool to study the cognitive motivation of meaning construction.

The formal composition of illocution is argued to be both realizational of meaning constructions and, to a degree, conventionally associated with them. The constructions capable of activating the conceptual representation of a speech act category produce an illocutionary meaning that is easily recognized. Constructions based on performative predicates are a case in point.

It may be the case that a construction displays a low degree of specialization for a single speech act thus being compatible with a broad range of illocutions. Besides modality markers, there are linguistic devices such as hedges, mitigators and prosodic features that are capable of codifying the illocutionary meaning of an underspecified construction. This claim has already been made in functional grammar accounts (e.g. Dik, 1997). Nevertheless, in this study the use of such elements is not postulated to result in grammatical conversion, but rather we see such elements as instantiating the cultural stipulations of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. An example of this situation is the *I Am Sorry* ( $X_P$ ) construction, which is equally appropriate for apologies and condolences. In the two speech acts, the speaker feels sorrow about a negative state of affairs affecting the addressee. The difference has to do with the speaker's involvement in bringing about such a state of affairs. If it has been brought about by the speaker, the illocutionary meaning is an apology. But if it consists in a misfortune that has occurred to the addressee, the construction performs the act of condoling. This information can be made explicit by further specifying the variable element of the construction denoting the state of affairs brought about and therefore leading to the different conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* that motivate apologies and condolences. Another case is the  $X_{IMP}$  construction, which can be used to perform both orders and requests. In orders, the construction is realized by a bare imperative with a harsh falling intonation (e.g. *Sit down and listen!*). In requests, it makes use of mitigators such as *please* (e.g. *Hold that box, please*), beneficiary indicators (e.g. *Read that letter for me*) or even question tags (e.g. *Pick me at the airport tomorrow, will you?*).

Those realizations that are unable to supply relevant points of access to the meaning representation of an illocutionary type require the use of

inferential activity to communicate a specific speech act meaning. These inferential processes are regulated by metonymic access to situational cognitive models, much in the same way as postulated by Panther and Thornburg (1998, 2003), and are constrained by the conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. One example is the *You Did Wrong* construction for pardoning, which invokes the idea that the speaker was negatively affected by an action carried out by the addressee. The instantiation of this component is incapable of producing a pardoning interpretation in itself so it needs to be inferred that the acknowledgement of the addressee's offense indicates forgiveness on the part of the speaker. If the speaker's forgiveness is made manifest to the addressee in an utterance like *You did wrong but I forgive you*, the pardoning meaning is conveyed through the activation of the part of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* that obliges us to forgive others for their offenses. This convention provides the cultural background for this speech act category and its metonymic activation yields a pardoning interpretation. Otherwise the construction would simply consist in a factual description of the offense caused by the addressee (e.g. *You did certainly wrong*). Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) are on the right track in assuming that metonymy allows us to derive implicit illocutionary meaning in relation to cultural conventions and also in arguing that inferences may become conventionalized.

As has been shown, illocutionary meaning is in many cases conveyed by means of expressions that originally provided access to one component of an illocutionary scenario but their repeated use in specific contexts conventionalized their meaning to the extent that they have ended up yielding a default illocutionary value (e.g. the of-quoted *Can You X<sub>VP</sub>?* construction and its variants for requests). Conventional constructions are those that display high degrees of codification without having reached it fully. The conventionalization of constructions results from the frequency of use, their appropriateness for certain contexts and their adaptation to cultural conventions. Understanding conventional constructions in these terms is compatible with the Goldbergian (2006: 5) approach, in which fairly transparent combinations are considered constructions with the proviso that they are frequent. Although I do not currently have standards of absolute/relative frequency, it is clear that the *Can You X<sub>VP</sub>?* sequence and its variants qualify as cases of frequent combinations and therefore as constructions.

In cases of conventionalization, illocutionary interpretation requires the use of inference and relies on the realization of variable elements and contextual information or shared background knowledge. This is the case of



the *If I Were You I Would X<sub>VP</sub>* construction for advising. Owing to the high degree of conventionalization of this construction, the metonymic operation that links the part of the cognitive model that is instantiated to its intended illocutionary value is not necessarily required every time this expression is used. What is more, the conditional part of the construction can be left out without causing difficulties for its interpretation as an act of advising.

These findings support the LCM approach to illocution and provide evidence of its explanatory power. The results of this study nonetheless suggest that further research on the subject is still needed.

The conceptual nature of speech acts is based on cultural conventions. It would be advisable, however, to develop the description of these conventions in order to account for the differences among constructions performing illocutionary acts grounded in the same generalization. By way of illustration, the speech acts of requesting and begging are included by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) within a broad category of acts that instruct the addressee to act to the speaker's benefit. Although begging and requesting are understood against the same cultural background (that we have to do our best to satisfy other people's needs), they are distinct in nature. In begging, the relationship that holds between the participants is marked by the addressee's authoritative position. This is not the case for requests, where the relationship between participants is thought to be on equal grounds. The difference between begging and requesting is manifested in their constructional realizations. While requests tend to use mitigators like *please* or beneficiary indicators, beggings use repetitions and exclamations. The analysis of the illocutionary relations between speech acts based on the same cultural conventions would lead to important meaning and form distinctions between constructions.

Constructions can be polysemous or associated with a family of closely related senses. Polysemous constructions are realizations with alternative conceptual meanings. We find examples of constructional polysemy in Goldberg's (1995) work (the ditransitive form is presented as pairing different but related senses, as in the case of the ditransitive expression *Chris baked Jan a cake*, which does not necessarily mean that Jan received the cake). Each of the meanings of polysemous constructions can be perspectivised through the use of lexical items, grammatical resources or suprasegmental features. A case in point is the *You Must X<sub>VP</sub>* construction for ordering and advising. This polysemy is solved when the realization of the variable part calls upon a certain part of an illocutionary scenario. When there is no explicit use of a linguistic item to give rise to one or another conceptual value, the interpretation of polysemous

expressions relies on contextual information. The polysemous senses of these constructions are semantically related to different conceptual representations.

It is also to be noted that the formal composition of constructions can be connected in a ‘family resemblance’ fashion, as has been proposed by González-García (2008) for object-related depictive constructions with a common attitudinal, evaluative meaning (e.g. *He thinks himself virtuous* or *I find her so sweet*). Certain constructions pointing to the same part of the conceptual representation of an illocutionary category display similarities in form that cannot be overlooked. A representative case is the group of constructions containing modality markers (cf. *You Must X<sub>VP</sub>*, *You Have Got To X<sub>VP</sub>*, *You Should X<sub>VP</sub>* and *You Ought To X<sub>VP</sub>*), performing advising. All of them indicate that the carrying out of the proposed action is not only convenient but also necessary in terms of cultural conventions. The difference between them is the degree of imposition. It is possible to postulate a family of constructions pointing to the component of advising related to the addressee’s obligation to act in a way that is beneficial for him. Some constructions have been found with a similar form which activates different parts of the cognitive model of a speech act category. The *Can You X<sub>VP</sub>?* pattern, for instance, points to the ability component of the request scenario, and its formal composition is close to that of a construction like *Will You X<sub>VP</sub>?*, which points to the addressee’s willingness to help. Positing a family of request constructions where the modal auxiliary verb changes according to differences in aspect (cf. *Could You X<sub>VP</sub>?*, *Will You X<sub>VP</sub>?*, *Would You X<sub>VP</sub>?* and so on) would be helpful to account for the type of relationship that links them. It would also allow us to explain the constraints on the formal variants of each constructions (e.g. *Can You Please X<sub>VP</sub>?* or *Can You X<sub>VP</sub> For Me?*). These facts seem to point to the convenience of postulating families of related constructions for a given illocutionary category. There is a need for research on the relationships of form and meaning among families of illocutionary constructions. If possible, it would be necessary to find what these families have in common with the aim of positing constructions whose realizational potential depends on a set of constraining principles. Further exploration on the issue would certainly be interesting and productive.

Moreover, the conditions for the incorporation of illocutionary constructions within the LCM should be investigated in order to specify the constraints that are at work in their subsumption from the lower levels up to the discourse level.

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## SUMMARY IN SPANISH

### 1. INTRODUCCIÓN

El presente trabajo de investigación se encuadra dentro del *Modelo Léxico Construccional* (MLC), desarrollado por Ruiz de Mendoza y Mairal (2008) y Mairal y Ruiz de Mendoza (2008, 2009). El MLC pretende dar cuenta de la relación que existe entre la sintaxis y los diferentes aspectos de la construcción del significado, y ordena las construcciones por niveles de significado, partiendo de la gramática nuclear (nivel 1), y pasando por la implicatura (nivel 2), el significado ilocutivo (nivel 3) y el discursivo (nivel 4). Este estudio se centra en la descripción de las construcciones ilocutivas, definidas como secuencias convencionalizadas en la realización de actos ilocutivos. En el MLC, el significado ilocutivo deriva o bien de la realización de los elementos variables de las construcciones como el de la *X* en la construcción *Can You X<sub>VP</sub>?* o bien de la activación metonímica de modelos cognitivos situacionales de alto nivel. De esta forma, el MLC subsana los defectos de las teorías tradicionales de actos de habla propuestas en círculos funcionalistas (Dik, 1989, 1997; Halliday y Matthiessen, 2004) e inferencialistas (Bach y Harnish, 1979; Leech, 1983) y ofrece una visión de los mecanismos conceptuales implicados en la realización del significado ilocutivo y en su convencionalización.

El objetivo principal de este trabajo gira en torno al desarrollo de la descripción de las construcciones ilocutivas en el nivel 3 del MLC. Esta propuesta parte de estudios preliminares llevados a cabo por Pérez (2001) en el marco de la lingüística cognitiva, quien analiza la base semántica y los procedimientos de realización más comunes de los actos de habla directivos y compromisivos, y por Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) dentro del MLC, quienes describen el significado ilocutivo mediante modelos cognitivos situacionales de alto nivel y proponen el *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* como factor clave en la convencionalización de las construcciones ilocutivas. Nuestro trabajo pretende determinar la aplicabilidad de las herramientas analíticas del MLC para la descripción del significado ilocutivo en actos de habla interpersonales. Los actos de habla seleccionados para la parte analítica de este estudio son los propuestos por Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011). Todos ellos están basados en los principios culturales de interacción del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio*, y son los siguientes: ordenar, pedir, aconsejar, ofrecer, prometer,

amenazar, felicitar, agradecer, disculparse, perdonar, condolerse y jactarse. Concretamente, el propósito del capítulo introductorio de esta tesis se centra, por una parte, en establecer la necesidad y la motivación de este estudio, y por otra, en describir la metodología adoptada en la recogida y análisis de datos. Nuestro objetivo es el de realizar un análisis de las construcciones ilocutivas más comunes utilizadas en la expresión de los actos de habla interpersonales, estableciendo sus relaciones semántico-formales y postulando familias de construcciones emparentadas por rasgos formales y semánticos en común. Asimismo, pretendemos especificar las razones por las cuales el enfoque de la ilocución adoptado por el MLC constituye una de las propuestas más sistemáticas y explicativamente aptas dentro del panorama actual de los enfoques cognitivistas. De todo este trabajo se habrá de derivar una teoría cognitiva de los actos de habla en la que se explicita cómo opera la coerción de los elementos idiomáticos de cada construcción sobre las posibilidades de instanciación semántica de los elementos variables, lo que, a su vez, se habrá de traducir en una explicitación del rango de variabilidad formal de aquellos.

Por lo que respecta a la metodología adoptada en la compilación de los datos, este trabajo de investigación recurre a algunas de las herramientas propias de la lingüística del corpus, con el fin de dotar nuestro análisis de rigor y fiabilidad. El estudio de construcciones ilocutivas requiere una especificación clara de su composición formal, en la que se debe detallar el alcance de su componente idiomático y sus elementos variables. Requiere además una clara caracterización de su composición semántica y de la relación de ésta con la formal. De manera adicional, el estudio debe contemplar la posibilidad de que parte del componente variable de una construcción se complete con información contextual compatible con la expresada lingüísticamente.

En lo que concierne a la composición formal y semántica de las construcciones ilocutivas, este trabajo gira en torno al análisis exhaustivo de ejemplos obtenidos a partir del Corpus Nacional Británico (BNC) y el Corpus de Inglés Americano Contemporáneo (COCA) de marcas formales con fuerte potencial ilocutivo y de habla marcados metalingüísticamente como tales. Adoptamos por tanto una metodología basada en concordancias de corpus propuesta en el trabajo de Pérez (2001), puesto que representa en el paradigma cognitivista el estudio más exhaustivo del componente construccional de la ilocución hasta la fecha. En cuanto a las relaciones de las construcciones ilocutivas entre sí y de éstas con otros niveles de descripción del MLC, examinamos diferentes contextos de uso y se determinan una a una sus condiciones de ocurrencia, así como los diversos

modos de incorporación de información implicada y explicada o predicacional. En resumen, este capítulo define como objetivo de esta tesis la elaboración de una descripción preliminar del nivel ilocutivo del MLC basándose en construcciones convencionalizadas extraídas de corpórea electrónicos. Por último, este capítulo describe el formato de este trabajo y el contenido de cada uno de los apartados que lo conforman.

## **2. UN ENFOQUE COGNITIVISTA DE LA ILOCUCIÓN**

Esta tesis adopta postulados básicos del paradigma cognitivista al estudio del componente construccional de la ilocución. En lingüística cognitiva no existe una postura definida acerca del componente ilocutivo del lenguaje. En líneas generales, se asume la existencia de inferencias activadas metonímicamente sobre la base de esquemas conceptuales (Panther y Thornburg, 1998, 2003). Dichos esquemas guían la labor inferencial de acuerdo con información lingüística y contextual. Este tipo de modelos ha sido desarrollado posteriormente dentro del marco del MLC por Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007), Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) y Pérez y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011), quienes proponen una distinción entre modelos proposicionales de tipo concreto (Lakoff, 1987) y los de nivel genérico. Son estos últimos los que proporcionan la base de las construcciones ilocutivas, que pasan a entenderse no sólo como asociaciones de forma y sentido, sino como sistemas de instanciaciones y parametrizaciones de las condiciones semánticas de los modelos cognitivos genéricos. De esta forma, las expresiones lingüísticas poseen un potencial de instanciación respecto a determinados conjuntos de condiciones semánticas de un modelo cognitivo genérico. Dicho potencial determina el nivel de especialización funcional de las mismas. Esta visión de las construcciones ilocutivas ofrece una mejor comprensión de la convencionalización y la inferencia en la producción de actos de habla. Puesto que este trabajo de investigación se encuadra dentro del MLC, es preciso definir las nociones básicas sobre los cuales se asienta la teoría de este modelo.

El MLC se plantea como superación de enfoques lexicalistas y construccionalistas del lenguaje en el estudio de la interacción de las representaciones léxicas y construccionales. Mientras que los primeros asumen que la sintaxis se puede generar en gran medida a partir de proyecciones de la estructura lógica de las piezas léxicas, los segundos no distinguen entre léxico y sintaxis. El MLC distingue dos tipos de

construcciones, argumentales e idiomáticas. Las primeras permiten fusionar léxico y sintaxis atendiendo al número y clase de argumentos que poseen las piezas léxicas y las segundas poseen elementos fijos o idiomáticos a los que se incorporan elementos variables compuestos por estructuras argumentales desarrolladas. Las construcciones idiomáticas pueden ser implicativas, ilocutivas o discursivas. Dos operaciones cognitivas permiten combinar construcciones del mismo nivel entre sí y de unos niveles con otros, las de subsunción y las de parametrización. Las de subsunción vienen restringidas por factores internos y externos a la operación, y se aplican esencialmente a la interacción entre léxico y construcciones argumentales en el nivel nuclear; las de parametrización ocurren en los demás niveles y asumen la existencia de elementos variables que se han de fijar de acuerdo con condiciones impuestas por las construcciones receptoras de elementos de niveles inferiores. De esta manera el MLC dilucida con claridad cómo el significado construccional argumental abstracto interacciona con el generado a partir del léxico, y cómo las construcciones se ordenan por niveles de significado. Además, aporta una solución a la falta de consenso en la definición del concepto de construcción y las relaciones entre construcciones existente en el terreno de la *Gramática de Construcciones*. Este campo abarca los modelos de Fillmore y Kay (1995), la versión original de Lakoff (1987), junto con su más reciente desarrollo denominado *Gramática de Construcciones Corpórea* (Bergen y Chang 2005), la famosa formulación de Goldberg (1995, 2006), conocida con el nombre de *Gramática de Construcciones Cognitiva*, la *Gramática Cognitiva* de Langacker (1987) y la *Gramática de Construcciones Radical* de Croft (2001, 2003). Este capítulo repasa de forma no exhaustiva estas ramas y el concepto de construcción sobre el que se asientan con el objetivo de introducir la propuesta del MLC en el marco de divergencias presente en la *Gramática de Construcciones* y de presentarlo como uno de los pocos modelos capaces de dar cuenta de la construcción del significado. Además de armonizar las diversas teorías construccionistas, el MLC combina modelos como la *Gramática del Papel y la Referencia* (Van Valin, 2005) y el *Modelo Lexemático Funcional* (Faber y Mairal, 1999), al mismo tiempo que se adhiere a los criterios de adecuación propuestos por Dik (1997) y al compromiso cognitivo de Lakoff (1990).

Enmarcado en la *Gramática de Construcciones*, el MLC asigna un valor construccional al significado ilocutivo procedente de procesos de convencionalización asociados a múltiples contextos con rasgos comunes. En el MLC, las construcciones ilocutivas son por tanto secuencias convencionalizadas en la realización de actos ilocutivos. Se puede

considerar como ejemplo característico la construcción para peticiones de la forma *Can You X<sub>VP</sub>?*, en cuya parte variable normalmente encontramos mitigadores (ej. *please*) o indicadores de beneficio (ej. *for me*), y que forma parte de una familia de construcciones en las que el auxiliar modal varía para expresar diferencias de aspecto (*Could You X<sub>VP</sub>?*, *Will You X<sub>VP</sub>?*, *Would You X<sub>VP</sub>?*).

Esta propuesta clarifica la controversia sobre hasta qué punto se puede incluir un componente ilocutivo como parte de la descripción gramatical. En teorías funcionalistas (Dik, 1989, 1997; Halliday y Matthiessen, 2004), se asume que el significado ilocutivo es parte de la gramática de forma limitada. Únicamente se admiten como parte de la gramática aquellos valores ilocutivos que se puedan derivar de las ilocuciones básicas (las relacionadas con las oraciones declarativas, interrogativas e imperativas) mediante mecanismos gramaticales. Por ejemplo, el adverbio *please* permitiría derivar una petición de una pregunta. Sin embargo, no encontramos en inglés un mecanismo para derivar un consejo a partir de una orden en imperativo. En este segundo caso el proceso se postula como puramente inferencial y, por tanto, determinado por el contexto. Sin embargo, como observan Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011), la propuesta derivacional no puede explicar aquellos casos en que, sin usarse el mecanismo derivacional, se obtiene por defecto el mismo valor ilocutivo que si se usara, como en *Can you listen to me?* el valor de petición. En cambio, postular la activación de la construcción *Can You X?* resuelve el problema, si se definen bien los rasgos semánticos de la construcción, los cuales restringen el tipo de elementos que pueden realizar el elemento variable X. En el caso de *Can you listen to me?*, la variable X se realiza mediante una predicación que denota una acción intencional, por lo que se elimina la posibilidad de una interpretación como demanda de información. En cambio, en *Can you write Morse code?*, la interpretación por defecto es la de una pregunta acerca de la capacidad del oyente para escribir en Morse. El análisis de las construcciones ilocutivas debe por tanto precisar el alcance de su componente idiomático y sus elementos variables.

La concepción de construcciones ilocutivas que adopta este trabajo parte de estudios previos realizados dentro del marco cognitivista y que han desarrollado algunos de los postulados sobre los que se asienta el enfoque del MLC. El primero de ellos es el realizado por Pérez (2001), que analiza la base semántica de los actos de habla directivos y sus procedimientos de realización formal más comunes. Este estudio, sin embargo, no postula la existencia de construcciones ilocutivas como las formuladas en el MLC con

elementos fijos y variables, ni tampoco familias de construcciones. En un trabajo posterior, Pérez y Ruiz de Mendoza (2002) contemplan la fundamentación metafórica y metonímica, siguiendo en parte a Panther y Thornburg (1998), de las operaciones de derivación del significado ilocutivo, pero caen en el error de postular operaciones metonímicas donde no existe ningún mecanismo inferencial debido al alto grado de convencionalización de la asociación de forma y sentido. Finalmente, los trabajos de Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011), ya encuadrados dentro de la perspectiva del MLC, subsanan estos defectos parcialmente para actos de habla interpersonales sobre la base de un reducido número de ejemplos. Era, por lo tanto, necesario completar este estudio con un análisis basado en ejemplos de uso y estableciendo de forma explícita todas las conexiones entre diversas construcciones en el terreno ilocutivo. Por ello, nuestro objetivo consiste en dar cuenta de las diferentes construcciones ilocutivas de los actos de habla interpersonales con el fin de desarrollar la perspectiva de la ilocución del MLC.

### **3. EL ACTO DE HABLA DE ORDENAR**

Los trabajos más relevantes centrados en la descripción del acto de habla de ordenar son los realizados por Wierzbicka (1987), quien ha enfocado su estudio en la semántica de las órdenes, y por Pérez (2001), quien, dentro del paradigma cognitivo, ha formulado un modelo cognitivo de ordenar y ha detallado los procedimientos de realización capaces de instanciar semánticamente su composición. Ambas propuestas nos han proporcionado un buen punto de partida para llevar a cabo una descripción de la estructura semántica de ordenar y proponer una definición de un modelo cognitivo situacional de alto nivel para este acto de habla. Nuestro modelo de ordenar se ha basado además en los dos subdominios del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* que Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) postulan como la base conceptual de ordenar. De esta manera, hemos formulado un modelo cognitivo basado en los principios culturales de interacción del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* capaz de dar cuenta de los principales rasgos semánticos y pragmáticos de ordenar. Dicho modelo se compone de una serie de parámetros, que son la autoridad del hablante sobre el oyente, el deseo del hablante de que el oyente realice una acción y la manifestación de ese deseo, la obligación del oyente de satisfacer el deseo del hablante y la



suposición de que el oyente actuará de acuerdo con dicha obligación. La activación de uno o más parámetros relevantes de este modelo cognitivo da lugar a una interpretación de orden. El grado de codificación de las realizaciones construccionales varía de acuerdo con la capacidad de la realización en cuestión para activar los parámetros relevantes de ordenar. Algunas de estas realizaciones construccionales pueden convencionalizarse mediante un uso frecuente en contextos de orden apropiados y dar lugar a un valor de orden por defecto.

El análisis de las realizaciones construccionales empleadas para ordenar recoge secuencias con diversos grados de codificación y convencionalización. Los datos extraídos del corpus muestran una clara preferencia por el uso de las construcciones imperativas en la expresión de órdenes. Las construcciones imperativas solicitan la realización de una acción y por tanto constituyen un procedimiento excelente para los actos de habla directivos en general, y las órdenes en particular. Las órdenes imperativas formadas únicamente por una estructura verbal ( $X_{IMP}$ ) no pueden considerarse como construcciones en el sentido estricto debido a su carencia de elementos fijos o idiomáticos. Las secuencias imperativas que sí poseen componente construccional son aquellas compuestas por elementos fijos que acompañan al verbo en imperativo. Las más codificadas son  *$X_{IMP}$  It Is An Order*, que explicita el valor de ordenar,  *$X_{IMP}$  Please*, que utiliza un mitigador y se adecúa a contextos de formales, y *Let's  $X_{VP}$* , que únicamente produce órdenes en casos específicos en los que el hablante utiliza su autoridad para conseguir la participación del oyente en una acción conjunta. Las construcciones declarativas también son capaces de producir órdenes de forma efectiva, aunque precisan de elementos lingüísticos específicos para codificar el valor de ordenar. Una forma de hacer explícito el valor de ordenar es mediante el uso de un verbo performativo (*I Order You  $X_{VP}$* ), un recurso capaz de instanciar todo el modelo cognitivo. También se pueden emplear verbos de deseo, como en la construcción *I Want You  $X_{VP}$* , que, a pesar de hacer referencia explícita al deseo del hablante de que el hablante realice una acción, sólo puede interpretarse como una orden en el caso de autoridad manifiesta del hablante. Otro recurso empleado en la codificación de la forma declarativa son los verbos modales de obligación, que dan lugar a construcciones como *You Have Got To  $X_{VP}$* , *You Must  $X_{VP}$* , *You Are Going To  $X_{VP}$*  y *You Are To  $X_{VP}$* , con capacidad de instanciación para el parámetro del modelo cognitivo que pone de manifiesto la obligación del oyente de actuar de acuerdo con los deseos de un hablante autoritario.

Finalmente, las construcciones interrogativas son las que menos capacidad muestran para instanciar el parámetro del modelo cognitivo

relacionado con la autoridad del hablante y por tanto son las menos específicas para ordenar. Construcciones convencionalizadas para diferentes actos de habla, como *Can You X<sub>VP</sub>?* y *Can You Please X<sub>VP</sub>?* para peticiones y *Why Don't You X<sub>VP</sub>?* para consejos pueden producir valores de orden mediante el uso de una entonación descendente, normalmente asociada a contextos de hablantes autoritarios.

#### 4. EL ACTO DE HABLA DE PEDIR

De nuevo la definición de la estructura semántica del acto de habla de pedir toma como punto de partida los trabajos de Wierzbicka (1987) y Pérez (2001) y propone los dos subdominios del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* formulados por Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) como la base conceptual de las peticiones. Los subdominios del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* relacionados con las peticiones son los mismos que se proponen en la descripción de las órdenes. Sin embargo, hay un componente que diferencia la interpretación de estos dos subdominios, y tiene que ver con la relación entre hablante y oyente. En las órdenes, la obligación del oyente de realizar la acción requerida no sólo deriva de los principios de interacción cultural sino también de la autoridad del hablante. En las peticiones, el oyente tiene una mayor libertad para decidir si realiza o no la acción, puesto que no se encuentra bajo la autoridad del hablante. Esto no significa, sin embargo, que la opcionalidad del hablante no esté condicionada, puesto que los principios del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* le obligan a actuar de acuerdo con los deseos del hablante si tiene capacidad para ello. Es por este motivo que las preguntas acerca de la capacidad o la disposición del oyente para realizar una acción constituyen recursos altamente especializados en la expresión de las peticiones, puesto que poseen un gran potencial de instanciación respecto a los principios de interacción que definen la base conceptual del acto de habla de pedir. Basándonos en los principios de interacción del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* que definen las peticiones, hemos propuesto un modelo cognitivo de alto nivel que recoge las características fundamentales semánticas y pragmáticas de pedir. Este modelo está formado por una serie de parámetros, que son, por una parte, la necesidad del hablante de obtener algo y la manifestación de dicha necesidad al oyente, y por otra, la manifestación de la capacidad y la disposición del oyente para satisfacer la necesidad del hablante y la suposición de que el oyente satisfará o no la necesidad del hablante en la medida de su capacidad

y su disposición. Este modelo cognitivo se realiza mediante el uso de construcciones con potencial de instanciación para uno o más parámetros. La capacidad de dichas construcciones para activar los parámetros relevantes del modelo determinará su grado de codificación y convencionalización para realizar peticiones.

El estudio del corpus muestra una marcada tendencia del uso de construcciones interrogativas en la expresión de peticiones. La preferencia por las construcciones interrogativas es cuanto menos previsible. El modo interrogativo plantea al oyente una proposición que puede o no realizar de acuerdo con su disposición, lo que se ajusta en gran medida al propósito de las peticiones. Las dos construcciones interrogativas más frecuentes en el corpus son *Can You/Could You X<sub>VP</sub>?* y *Will You/Would You X<sub>VP</sub>?*, que, a pesar de su alto grado de codificación, dependen del tipo de realización del elemento variable X para expresar peticiones. Para producir un valor de petición, la acción X debe denotar una acción intencional con un componente de beneficio para el hablante, que puede hacerse explícito mediante mitigadores (ej. *please*) o indicadores de beneficio (ej. *for me*). La explicitación del componente de beneficio de las peticiones da lugar a variantes construccionales como *Can You/Could You Please X<sub>VP</sub>?* y *Will You/Would You Please X<sub>VP</sub>?*, que producen un valor de petición por defecto. Otra construcción interrogativa capaz de generar peticiones codificadas es la secuencia *Do You/Would You Mind X<sub>VP</sub>?*, que posee potencial de instanciación para el parámetro del modelo relacionado con la disposición del oyente de ayudar al hablante.

El análisis de los datos también revela un gran número de construcciones imperativas de petición. Este tipo de construcciones, sin embargo, precisa de mecanismos específicos capaces de reducir la imposición de la forma imperativa para garantizar la opcionalidad del oyente. Estos mecanismos pueden ser, o bien el adverbio *please*, que apela a la disposición de ayudar por parte del oyente, y genera construcciones del tipo de *Please X<sub>IMP</sub>*, o bien coletillas interrogativas que recuerdan al oyente que posee la capacidad o la disposición de realizar la acción, y que dan lugar a construcciones como *X<sub>IMP</sub> Can You/Could You?* y *X<sub>IMP</sub> Will You/Would You?*, adecuadas a las reglas de cortesía, o bien otras como *X<sub>IMP</sub> Can't You /Won't You?*, descortesas por presuponer la incapacidad o la falta de disposición de ayudar por parte el oyente.

Las construcciones declarativas son las que exhiben el menor grado de especificación para realizar peticiones. La especificación de la forma declarativa, no obstante, puede incrementarse y dar lugar a construcciones convencionalizadas como *I Need X<sub>NP</sub>* y *I Want X<sub>NP</sub>*, capaces de manifestar la

necesidad del hablante, o *I Wonder If You Can X<sub>VP</sub>* y *I Would Appreciate If You X<sub>VP</sub>*, con potencial de instanciación para la capacidad del hablante de realizar una acción beneficiosa para el oyente.

## 5. EL ACTO DE HABLA DE ACONSEJAR

El acto de habla de aconsejar tiene dos sentidos diferentes, según Wierzbicka (1987) y Pérez (2001), estando el primero relacionado con un mero aporte de información al oyente, y el segundo con la propuesta de una determinada acción cuya realización se presenta como beneficiosa para el oyente. Mientras que el primer sentido de aconsejar puede considerarse puramente informativo, el segundo posee un componente interpersonal y constituye por tanto el acto de habla abordado en este estudio. Dejando a un lado los análisis realizados por Wierzbicka (1987) y Pérez (2001), que están enfocados en la caracterización semántica del acto de habla de aconsejar, la mayor parte de los estudios (Hudson, 1990; Boatman, 1987) se centran en la distinción entre los consejos solicitados y no solicitados. El análisis cognitivista de la descripción y los procedimientos de realización de aconsejar llevado a cabo por Pérez (2001) pone de manifiesto importantes similitudes entre consejos solicitados y no solicitados, lo que nos lleva a considerar esta distinción únicamente para discernir la utilidad de ciertas construcciones en uno u otro caso. El modelo cognitivo situacional que proponemos para aconsejar generaliza sobre múltiples casos de interacción, con lo que posee estructura semántica común a diversos tipos de consejos y puede ser activado metonímicamente tanto por los solicitados como por los no solicitados. La formulación de este modelo cognitivo ha sido realizada tomando como base el subdominio del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* que Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) definen como la base conceptual de aconsejar. Dicho subdominio obliga al hablante a cambiar una situación negativa para el oyente en la medida de lo posible. Los parámetros del modelo cognitivo de aconsejar que proponemos son la creencia del hablante de que una acción es beneficiosa para el oyente, la manifestación de dicha creencia, y la suposición de que el oyente realizará la acción propuesta por el hablante si lo considera conveniente. La activación de uno o más parámetros de este modelo produce consejos con mayor o menor grado de codificación. Este proceso inferencial está guiado por el subdominio del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* que estructura los consejos y puede dar lugar a construcciones convencionalizadas.

El análisis de los datos revela una notable preferencia por el uso de construcciones declarativas. La forma declarativa resulta más apropiada para dar consejos que la imperativa, debido a su efecto impositivo en el oyente. También es más adecuada que la interrogativa, puesto que la opcionalidad del oyente se da por garantizada. El bajo grado de especificación de la forma declarativa requiere el uso de mecanismos que hagan explícito el valor de aconsejar. Estos mecanismos incluyen verbos performativos (*I Advise You X<sub>VP</sub>*) o verbos de obligación, que dan lugar a construcciones como *You Have Got To X<sub>VP</sub>*, *You Must X<sub>VP</sub>*, *You Should X<sub>VP</sub>*, *You Ought To X<sub>VP</sub>*, *You Can X<sub>VP</sub>*, *You Need X<sub>VP</sub>*, todas ellas con capacidad de instanciación para el parámetro del modelo de aconsejar relacionado con la necesidad del oyente de cambiar una situación negativa en una positiva. Otro modo de codificar el valor de aconsejar de la forma declarativa es mediante la explicitación de los beneficios que implica la acción propuesta, como es el caso de las construcciones *X<sub>VP</sub> Is A Good Idea* y *X<sub>VP</sub> Is The Best Option*, que apelan al razonamiento del oyente como forma de persuasión.

Las construcciones imperativas también son capaces de generar consejos con alto grado de codificación, aunque es necesario reducir la imposición del modo imperativo. Las construcciones imperativas más productivas para dar consejo son *Consider X<sub>VP</sub>* y *Think About X<sub>VP</sub>*, que solicitan la reflexión del oyente sobre los beneficios de la acción propuesta.

La incompatibilidad entre el tipo de opcionalidad que caracteriza el acto de habla de aconsejar y la expresada por la forma interrogativa se pone de manifiesto en el escaso número de consejos interrogativos en el corpus. Las construcciones interrogativas de consejo son *Why Not X<sub>VP</sub>?* y *How About X<sub>VP</sub>?*, que requieren una reflexión sobre la acción propuesta por parte del oyente. Las construcciones interrogativas activan el mismo componente que las imperativas, pero son menos impositivas y por tanto más apropiadas.

## **6. EL ACTO DE HABLA DE OFRECER**

Existe una discrepancia en la categorización del acto de ofrecer, puesto que contiene elementos tanto de los actos de habla directivos como de los compromisivos. Los trabajos de Searle (1975), Leech (1983) y Wierzbicka (1987) se centran en el componente de ofrecer relacionado con el compromiso del hablante de realizar una acción con el oyente y por tanto lo consideran puramente compromisivo. Otros autores (Hancher, 1979; Pérez, 2001), basándose en el componente directivo de ofrecer relacionado

con la propuesta de una acción al oyente, sitúan las ofertas en una categoría de actos de habla híbridos con rasgos directivos y compromisivos. Tanto la descripción del acto de habla de ofrecer como el estudio de las realizaciones construccionales empleadas en su expresión muestran rasgos de ambas categorías, razón por la que nuestro análisis se adhiere a la propuesta de Hancher (1979) y Pérez (2001), y considera tanto elementos directivos como compromisivos en la definición de las ofertas y en el análisis de su realización. En lo que respecta a la descripción del acto de habla de ofrecer, proponemos un modelo cognitivo de alto nivel que recoge sus principales rasgos semánticos y pragmáticos y que generaliza sobre múltiples casos de interacción. Dicho modelo se basa en el subdominio del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* que Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) proponen como base conceptual de ofrecer, de acuerdo con el cual el hablante debe hacer al oyente consciente de las acciones que son beneficiosas para él. De esta forma, los parámetros del modelo cognitivo de ofrecer que proponemos son la creencia por parte del hablante de que la realización de una acción puede ser beneficiosa para el oyente, la capacidad del hablante de realizar dicha acción y la manifestación de esa capacidad al oyente, y la suposición de que el oyente aceptará la propuesta del hablante dependiendo de su propio interés. La activación de uno o más parámetros de este modelo cognitivo genera una oferta. Las construcciones empleadas en la expresión de ofertas exhiben diferentes grados de codificación y de convencionalización dependiendo de su potencial de instanciación.

El estudio de las construcciones de ofrecer muestra una significativa tendencia por el uso de construcciones interrogativas. La preferencia por el uso de la forma interrogativa tiene que ver con el carácter opcional de las ofertas, en las que se presenta una acción que se realizará únicamente si el oyente lo desea. La forma interrogativa propone una proposición para la evaluación del oyente y constituye por tanto un recurso completamente adaptado a las condiciones semánticas del acto de habla de ofrecer. Las construcciones interrogativas más codificadas son, por una parte, las secuencias *Do You Want Me X<sub>VP</sub>?* y *Would You Like Me X<sub>VP</sub>?*, que preguntan explícitamente al hablante si desea que el hablante realice una acción, y, por otra, la secuencia *You Need Help X<sub>VP</sub>?* que muestra la disposición del hablante de realizar una acción a favor del oyente. Otra forma de codificación de la forma interrogativa es solicitar el permiso del oyente para ayudarlo, como es el caso de la construcción *Can I X<sub>VP</sub> You Y<sub>VP</sub>?* y sus variantes. Otras construcciones interrogativas más implícitas incluyen secuencias como *Is There Anything I Can X<sub>VP</sub>?*, que inquiriere

acerca de la situación en la que se encuentra el oyente y de si precisa de ayuda, o *Will You Let Me X<sub>VP</sub>?*, que parte de la creencia por parte del hablante de que el oyente rechazará la oferta.

El número de construcciones declarativas de ofrecer es mucho menor y exhibe un grado de especificación más bajo. Las construcciones declarativas *There Must Be Something I Can X<sub>VP</sub>* y *I Could X<sub>VP</sub> You Y<sub>VP</sub>* son bastante más implícitas que sus versiones en interrogativas. Se puede, no obstante, especificar el valor de ofrecer de la forma declarativa mediante el uso de verbos performativos (*I Offer You X<sub>VP</sub>* y *I Am Offering You X<sub>VP</sub>*), que poseen potencial de instanciación para el modelo cognitivo completo.

Las construcciones imperativas son las que muestran el menor grado de especificación para realizar ofertas. La imposición característica de la forma imperativa es incompatible con la naturaleza opcional de las ofertas. El corpus recoge solamente tres construcciones de ofrecer imperativas, que reducen el grado de imposición inherente al modo verbal mediante solicitudes de permiso al oyente, como en el caso de *Let Me X<sub>VP</sub> (For You)* o mediante proposiciones condicionales como en *X<sub>IMP</sub> If You Are Interested* y *X<sub>IMP</sub> If You Need Help*, ambas pertenecientes a la misma familia.

## 7. EL ACTO DE HABLA DE PROMETER

El escaso número de estudios sobre el acto de habla de prometer se limita a los trabajos llevados a cabo por Searle (1969), durante el desarrollo de la teoría de los actos de habla, Leech (1983), desde un enfoque inferencialista, y Wierzbicka (1987) y Pérez (2001), ambos semanticistas. La descripción de las promesas realizada por Searle se centra en la formulación de una serie de condiciones de realización. Searle define las promesas como un compromiso por parte del hablante de realizar una acción (condición de contenido proposicional), satisfaciendo los deseos del oyente (condición preparatoria) y con intención de cumplirlo (condición de sinceridad). El compromiso asumido por el hablante le obliga a realizar la acción prometida (condición esencial). La definición de las promesas de Leech excluye la condición esencial y propone una reformulación de la condición preparatoria, que requiere la suposición por parte del hablante de que la acción prometida es beneficiosa para el oyente, independientemente de que este desee o no que sea realizada. Esta postura se acerca más a la adoptada por Wierzbicka (1987) y Pérez (2001), quienes mantienen que la realización de las promesas presupone un beneficio para el oyente. Tanto Wierzbicka (1987) como Pérez (2001) centran su estudio en la obligación

que las promesas imponen en el hablante, una obligación que, tal como señala Pérez (2001) surge de los principios de interacción social. Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) dan cuenta de la convención cultural que define las promesas en el subdominio del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* según el cual el hablante debe llevar a cabo las acciones que considera beneficiosas para el oyente. Nuestra descripción toma como punto de partida el análisis de los rasgos semánticos del acto de habla de prometer propuesta por Pérez (2001) y estructura la definición de las promesas en un modelo cognitivo de alto nivel basado en el subdominio del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* formulado por Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011). Este modelo se compone de una serie de parámetros, como son la creencia por parte del hablante de que una acción puede beneficiar al oyente y la capacidad del hablante de realizar dicha acción, la manifestación por parte del hablante de su intención de actuar en beneficio del oyente y la suposición de que cumplirá su compromiso. Este modelo cognitivo se realiza mediante el uso de construcciones con potencial de instanciación para diversos parámetros. El potencial de instanciación de cada construcción para los parámetros más relevantes del modelo determinará su grado de codificación y convencionalización.

El análisis de los datos muestra una absoluta preferencia por el uso de las construcciones declarativas en la expresión de las promesas. El corpus no contiene ejemplos de construcciones interrogativas ni imperativas. Tal como argumenta Pérez (2001), la forma imperativa es incompatible con la realización de las promesas, puesto que está relacionada con los deseos del hablante y las acciones del oyente, mientras que las promesas tienen que ver con los deseos del oyente y las acciones del hablante. La forma interrogativa, por su parte, presenta una opción para su evaluación por parte del oyente, lo que no es aplicable en el acto de prometer, donde dicha evaluación la realiza el hablante. La realización de las promesas, por lo tanto, está limitada a las construcciones declarativas, cuyo grado de codificación es tan bajo que precisan de determinados elementos lingüísticos para producir un valor de promesa. Uno de los mecanismos más recurrentes empleados a tal efecto es el uso de verbos performativos, que poseen la capacidad de instanciar el modelo cognitivo completo de prometer. De esta forma se originan construcciones del tipo de *I Promise (You) X<sub>VP</sub>/I Promise (You) X<sub>NP</sub>* y *I Promise (You) I Will/I Promise I Won't X<sub>VP</sub>*, ambas pertenecientes a una familia de construcciones cuyos elementos fijos varían de acuerdo con implicaciones de significado, o *I Assure (You) X<sub>VP</sub>/I Assure (You) X<sub>NP</sub>* y *I Guarantee (You) X<sub>VP</sub>/I Guarantee (You) X<sub>NP</sub>*, en



casos en los que el compromiso asumido por el hablante es menor. Es posible también expresar el valor de compromiso mediante el uso del futuro en primera persona, como es el caso de las construcciones *I Will X<sub>VP</sub>* y *I Am Going To X<sub>VP</sub>*, mediante las cuales el hablante expresa su intención de realizar la acción presentada como beneficiosa para el oyente. Otras construcciones en las que el valor de prometer es más implícito son las formadas por *I Will Make Sure X<sub>VP</sub>*, en la que el hablante no se compromete a realizar la acción él mismo sino a asegurarse de que dicha acción tenga lugar, y *There Will Be X<sub>VP</sub>*, que hace referencia a los beneficios que el oyente obtendrá de la realización de la acción y cuya interpretación como promesa depende en gran medida del contexto.

## 8. EL ACTO DE HABLA DE AMENAZAR

Las opiniones son controvertidas en cuanto a la categorización del acto de habla de amenazar. Searle (1979) clasifica las amenazas como puramente directivas, puesto que tienen la finalidad de conseguir que el oyente realice una acción. Leech (1983) categoriza las amenazas como actos compromisivos debido al compromiso asumido por el hablante de causar daño al oyente. Otros autores, como Bach y Harnish (1979) y Hancher (1979) sitúan las amenazas dentro de una categoría de actos de habla híbridos con rasgos directivos y compromisivos. Estudios más recientes (Risselada, 1993; Pérez, 2001) mantienen que no es necesario postular una categoría para clasificar actos de habla híbridos, puesto que estos actos de habla simplemente ocupan posiciones intermedias entre categorías que ya existen. La descripción realizada por Pérez (2001) muestra los rasgos semánticos que las amenazas comparten con otros actos de habla, tanto directivos como compromisivos. Sin embargo, de acuerdo con Pérez (2001), son las características que definen al acto de amenazar las que lo posicionan como compromisivo, y tienen que ver con el compromiso asumido por el hablante de causar daño al oyente en caso de que no realice una acción, y la suposición de que el oyente tratará de evitar el daño que causaría el hablante. Los datos extraídos del corpus respaldan la definición propuesta por Pérez (2001), ya que las construcciones más codificadas empleadas en la expresión de las amenazas poseen potencial de instanciación para cada uno de estos dos rasgos. Nuestra perspectiva se basa en la categorización de las amenazas como acto de habla que deriva del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* (Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi, 2007; Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza, 2011), de acuerdo con el cual el hablante debe

hacer al oyente consciente de las situaciones potencialmente beneficiosas para él. Curiosamente, este subdominio del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* constituye también la base conceptual de las promesas. La diferencia es que en las promesas, el hablante se compromete a realizar una acción beneficiosa para el oyente, mientras que en las amenazas, la acción es dañina para el oyente. En las amenazas este subdominio se activa de tal forma que el hablante debe hacer al oyente consciente de las situaciones potencialmente dañinas para él, partiendo del supuesto de que el oyente pretenderá eludir cualquier daño potencial. Esta propuesta coincide en gran medida con la de Pérez (2001) y por tanto toma su trabajo como punto de partida para realizar la descripción de los rasgos semánticos y pragmáticos de amenazar y formular el modelo cognitivo que da cuenta de ellos. El modelo cognitivo que proponemos para las amenazas se compone de los parámetros relacionados con el deseo del hablante de que el oyente realice una acción y la creencia de que el oyente no desea realizar dicha acción, la manifestación por parte del hablante de causar daño al oyente en el caso de que no realice la acción, y la suposición de que el hablante podrá sentirse intimidado. El potencial de instanciación de una construcción para uno o más parámetros de este modelo producirá amenazas con mayor o menor grado de codificación que podrán convencionalizarse mediante un uso frecuente en determinados contextos.

El rasgo más característico de la expresión de las amenazas tiene que ver con la combinación de las formas imperativa y declarativa en las construcciones. La forma imperativa posee la capacidad de activar la parte de las amenazas relacionadas con la imposición de la acción, mientras que la declarativa instancia la que tiene que ver con el daño potencial al oyente en caso de disconformidad. A pesar de ello, diferenciamos una serie de construcciones fundamentalmente imperativas, ambas pertenecientes a la misma familia (i.e.  $X_{IMP} Or I Will Y_{VP}$  y  $X_{IMP} Or You Will Y_{VP}$ , que expresan explícitamente tanto la acción que debe realizar el oyente como el daño al que se expone. En cuanto a las construcciones declarativas, destacan entre las más específicas *If You  $X_{VP}$  I Will  $Y_{VP}$*  y *If You  $X_{VP}$  You Will  $Y_{VP}$* , y sus variantes y manifestaciones, incluyendo *If You  $X_{VP}$  I Will Kill You* y *If You  $X_{VP}$  You Are Dead*, todas ellas menos impositivas que sus versiones en imperativo. Otras construcciones declarativas de amenaza más implícitas son *I Will Be Watching You*, que intimida al oyente haciéndole sentirse vigilado y *You Will Regret  $X_{VP}$* , que hace referencia al daño que sufrirá el oyente en caso de disconformidad. Aún más implícitas son las construcciones *I Will Punish You*, con potencial de instanciación para el parámetro de las amenazas relacionado con el daño que el hablante pretende

causar al oyente, y *I Warn You X<sub>VP</sub>*, que utiliza un verbo de advertencia para eximir al hablante de la responsabilidad de herir al oyente.

Las construcciones interrogativas son las que se muestran menos codificadas, puesto que la forma interrogativa no es capaz de expresar la imposición propia de las amenazas. El corpus revela únicamente dos construcciones interrogativas que pueden emplearse para amenazar, que son *Do You Want X<sub>VP</sub>?* y su variante *Do You Want Me X<sub>VP</sub>?*, ambas asociadas con la expresión de ofertas. En contextos muy marcados, es posible anular el valor de ofrecer de estas construcciones siempre y cuando el elemento X denote una acción intencional con un componente de daño para el oyente.

## 9. EL ACTO DE HABLA DE FELICITAR

El número de teorías formuladas acerca de la naturaleza de los actos de habla expresivos es considerablemente menor que las dedicadas a los actos directivos y compromisivos. La escasez de trabajos centrados en el estudio de los actos de habla expresivos tiene que ver en parte con su fin ilocutivo, que no consiste en introducir o realizar una acción sino en expresar un sentimiento. Por este motivo Searle (1975) sostiene que los actos de habla expresivos carecen de dirección de adecuación. Otra de las razones que explican el limitado número de estudios sobre actos de habla expresivos es su capacidad para determinar el significado de mensajes ambiguos mediante la expresión de los sentimientos del hablante, como en el caso de advertencias o amenazas, en cuya interpretación influye notablemente el grado de enfado manifestado por el hablante (Gilbert, 1999). De los pocos trabajos elaborados sobre actos de habla expresivos, destacan el de Habermas (1984), puramente pragmaticista, y el de Wierzbicka (1987), desde un punto de vista semántico. Habermas (1984) define los actos de habla expresivos en relación a la subjetividad del hablante y la presuposición de veracidad. Sin embargo, Habermas no realiza un estudio específico de los rasgos pragmáticos de los actos de habla expresivos. En cambio, Wierzbicka (1987) lleva a cabo una descripción semántica de un buen número de actos de habla expresivos, entre ellos el acto de habla de felicitar, lo que nos ha ayudado en gran medida a definir la estructura semántica de las felicitaciones y formular un modelo cognitivo situacional de alto nivel para este acto de habla. Dicho modelo se ha basado en el subdominio del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* que Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) postulan

como la base conceptual de las felicitaciones, según el cual el hablante debe manifestar alegría ante el bien del hablante.

El modelo cognitivo del acto de habla de felicitar se compone de los parámetros relacionados con la presunción del hablante de que el oyente se siente feliz ante un reciente suceso, la manifestación por parte del hablante de su alegría por el suceso que resulta favorable para el oyente, y la suposición de que el oyente agradecerá la expresión de alegría por parte del hablante. La activación de uno o más parámetros de este modelo da lugar a una interpretación de felicitación. El grado de codificación de las realizaciones construccionales varía de acuerdo con su capacidad para activar los parámetros relevantes del modelo.

El estudio de las construcciones de felicitar muestra una significativa tendencia por el uso de construcciones declarativas. Las construcciones declarativas expresan una proposición y por tanto representan un procedimiento excelente para la realización de los actos de habla expresivos. No obstante, es preciso recurrir a elementos lingüísticos capaces de especificar el valor de felicitación de las construcciones declarativas. Dichos elementos pueden ser, por una parte, verbos performativos, con potencial de instanciación para el modelo cognitivo completo de felicitar, como en el caso de las construcciones *I Congratulate You* y *I Compliment You* y sus variantes, que incluyen formas con verbos modales expresando el deseo o la obligación del hablante de expresar felicitación y sintagmas preposicionales haciendo referencia al suceso que resulta favorable para el oyente. Es posible emplear verbos de elogio que se adaptan a los casos en los que el hablante felicita al oyente por haber realizado un logro, como en las construcciones *I Commend You* y *I Praise You* y sus variantes. Otras construcciones que se adaptan a este tipo de casos son *You Did Well* ( $X_{PREP}$ ), *Well Done* ( $X_{PREP}$ ) y *Great Job* ( $X_{PREP}$ ), todas ellas con capacidad de instanciación para el parámetro del modelo cognitivo relacionado con el logro obtenido por el oyente. Finalmente, cabe destacar las construcciones *I Am Proud Of You* ( $X_{PREP}$ ) y *I Am Happy For You* ( $X_{PREP}$ ), ambas pertenecientes a la misma familia, en las que el hablante manifiesta su alegría por el oyente.

Las formas interrogativa e imperativa no se adecúan fácilmente al propósito de los actos de habla expresivos. La primera propone una proposición para evaluación y la segunda impone una acción. Las únicas construcciones interrogativas e imperativas que pueden emplearse en la expresión de las felicitaciones son aquellas en las que el hablante pide permiso al oyente para manifestar su alegría. De esta forma, encontramos construcciones interrogativas como *Can I Congratulate You* ( $X_{PREP}$ )? y *May*

*I Congratulate You* ( $X_{PREP}$ )? e imperativas como *Let Me Congratulate You* ( $X_{PREP}$ ), que se ajustan en gran medida a la producción de felicitaciones.

## 10. EL ACTO DE HABLA DE AGRADECER

Dentro de los estudios centrados en la descripción de los actos de habla expresivos, el acto de habla de agradecer es uno de los que más atención ha recibido, debido fundamentalmente a su vinculación con las normas de cortesía. Es norma de cortesía agradecer los favores o beneficios recibidos. Por este motivo, un buen número de autores (Searle, 1975; Norrick, 1978; Bach y Harnish, 1979; Franken y Dominicy, 2001) mantiene que en muchos casos los agradecimientos no son sinceros, puesto que es la expectativa social la que induce a su realización. Wierzbicka (1987) distingue dos formas diferentes de agradecer, una que cumple estrictamente con las normas de cortesía y otra que realmente expresa gratitud. Wierzbicka (1987) considera acto de habla únicamente la segunda. Esta distinción resulta útil para explicar el componente de obligación inherente a los agradecimientos que surge de las normas de cortesía, que se explican en los subdominios que componen el *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* formulado por Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011). El modelo cognitivo de alto nivel de agradecer formulado en nuestro estudio se basa en el subdominio del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* propuesto como la base conceptual de los agradecimientos. Dicho modelo se compone de una serie de parámetros, que son el reconocimiento por parte del hablante de haber recibido un beneficio del oyente, la manifestación del agradecimiento del hablante hacia el oyente, y la suposición de que el oyente se sentirá complacido por la expresión de gratitud del hablante. El potencial de instanciación de una construcción para uno o más parámetros de este modelo producirá expresiones de agradecimiento con mayor o menor grado de codificación que podrán convencionalizarse mediante un uso frecuente en contextos apropiados.

El análisis de los datos muestra una clara preferencia por el uso de las construcciones declarativas en la expresión de los agradecimientos. Esta preferencia no es sorprendente si tenemos en cuenta la compatibilidad entre la función de la forma declarativa y los rasgos semánticos de los actos de habla expresivos. La construcción declarativa más codificada es *I Thank You For X* y sus variantes, con verbos modales expresando el deseo o la obligación del hablante de realizar el agradecimiento. El alto grado de codificación de esta construcción permite su realización sin el sujeto de la

primera persona, dando lugar a las variantes *Thank You For X* y *Thanks For X*, en las que el mero uso del verbo performativo es suficiente para activar el modelo completo de agradecer. El uso de adjetivos performativos también produce construcciones codificadas, como es el caso de *I Am Thankful For X* y *I Am Grateful For X*, ambas capaces de producir un valor de agradecimiento por defecto. Otras construcciones declarativas más implícitas incluyen secuencias como *I Appreciate X* y *It Means A Lot To Me X*, que expresan los sentimientos de gratitud por parte del hablante.

Las formas interrogativa e imperativa no se ajustan bien al propósito de los actos de habla expresivos, y se muestran poco productivas en la expresión de agradecimientos. Las únicas construcciones interrogativas e imperativas apropiadas para realizar agradecimientos son aquellas en las que el hablante pide permiso al oyente para expresar su gratitud. El corpus recoge ejemplos de construcciones interrogativas como *Can I Thank You For X?* y *May I Thank You For X?* e imperativas como *Let Me Thank You For X*, que de esta manera sí logran adecuarse a la expresión de agradecimientos.

## **11. EL ACTO DE HABLA DE DISCULPARSE**

La descripción de la estructura semántica del acto de habla de disculparse de nuevo toma como punto de partida el trabajo de Wierzbicka (1987), que analiza los principales rasgos de las disculpas y se fundamenta en el subdominio del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* que Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) proponen como la base conceptual de este acto ilocutivo. Dicho subdominio obliga al hablante a mostrar arrepentimiento por un daño causado al oyente. Esto no significa que la realización de las disculpas obedezca meramente las normas de cortesía. Al disculparnos, asumimos nuestra responsabilidad por la falta cometida, lo que implica admitir nuestro error y responder ante la persona afectada. Es por este motivo que las disculpas, aún estando motivadas por las normas de cortesía, no pueden realizarse si el hablante no reconoce su falta. La admisión de responsabilidad por la ofensa no constituye, sin embargo, el propósito de las disculpas, sino la expresión de arrepentimiento por el daño que dicha ofensa haya causado al oyente. De este modo, el objetivo de las disculpas no es el de obtener perdón, tal como mantiene Fillmore (1971). La obtención de perdón por parte del oyente no es el fin de la disculpa sino que surge como consecuencia de la expresión de arrepentimiento del hablante. Basándonos en el principio de interacción del

*Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* que define las disculpas, hemos propuesto un modelo cognitivo de alto nivel que recoge las características fundamentales de esta categoría ilocutiva. El modelo está formado por una serie de parámetros, como son el reconocimiento por parte del hablante de haber causado un daño al oyente, la manifestación del arrepentimiento del hablante hacia el oyente, y la suposición de que el oyente disculpará la falta cometida por el hablante. La activación de uno o más parámetros de este modelo por parte de una construcción da lugar a un valor de disculpa. El grado de codificación de las construcciones varía de acuerdo con su capacidad para activar los parámetros relevantes del modelo.

Los datos extraídos del corpus muestran una notable tendencia hacia el uso de las construcciones declarativas en la expresión de las disculpas. La preferencia por la forma declarativa es característica en la realización de los actos de habla expresivos debido a la compatibilidad de sus rasgos semánticos. Sin embargo, la declarativa es la que presenta el menor grado de especificación de las tres formas verbales y es necesario hacer explícito el valor de disculparse por medio de elementos lingüísticos más específicos. La manera más recurrente de codificar el significado de disculpa en la forma declarativa es sin duda el uso de un verbo performativo, como es el caso de la construcción *I Apologize* y sus variantes, que incluyen formas con verbos modales expresando el deseo o la obligación del hablante de disculparse y sintagmas preposicionales haciendo referencia a la ofensa causada. Se pueden emplear verbos similares que, sin ser performativos, explicitan la intención ilocutiva, como en la construcción *I Regret*, que posee capacidad para activar el modelo completo de disculparse. Otro de los recursos empleados en la codificación de la forma declarativa son los adjetivos que expresan arrepentimiento, que dan lugar a construcciones como *I Am Sorry (About X<sub>VP</sub>)*, *I Am Ashamed (About X<sub>VP</sub>)* y *I Feel Terrible (About X<sub>VP</sub>)*, con potencial de instanciación para el parámetro del modelo cognitivo que pone de manifiesto los sentimientos del hablante. Construcciones declarativas en las que el valor de disculparse es más implícito y cuya interpretación depende en gran medida del contexto son las formadas por *I Was Wrong (X<sub>VP</sub>)* y *I Made A Mistake (X<sub>VP</sub>)*, que hacen referencia a la falta cometida por el hablante.

Las formas imperativa e interrogativa se muestran poco productivas en la realización de disculpas, lo que se debe fundamentalmente a la incompatibilidad entre los modos imperativo e interrogativo y la expresión de los sentimientos del hablante. En otros actos de habla expresivos es posible construir secuencias codificadas solicitando permiso al oyente para manifestar los sentimientos del hablante. Este no es el caso de las disculpas,

posiblemente debido a que la expresión de arrepentimiento no requiere el permiso del oyente sino su aceptación. Por ello, las secuencias imperativas e interrogativas que se muestran adecuadas son aquellas en las que el hablante le pide al oyente que acepte sus disculpas. Así, encontramos construcciones imperativas simples como *Forgive Me* y *Excuse Me*, o la secuencia más compleja *Accept My Apologies*, y sus variantes, que incluyen formas con *please* y sintagmas preposicionales haciendo referencia a la falta cometida por el hablante, e interrogativas como *Will You Forgive Me?* y *Will You Excuse Me?*, bastante más mitigadas.

## 12. EL ACTO DE HABLA DE PERDONAR

Según Wierzbicka (1987), el acto de habla de perdonar engloba diversos actos, cada uno de ellos con una dimensión de culpabilidad diferente. Por una parte, está *perdonar*, que tiene que ver con grandes ofensas de tipo personal. Cuando perdonamos a alguien, decidimos no guardarle rencor. Por otra parte, está *disculpar*, que se relaciona con pequeñas ofensas y gira en torno a normas de interacción social. Cuando nos disculpamos, tratamos de excusar nuestra falta en base a unas circunstancias. *Justificar* es muy parecido a disculpar, pero no implica culpabilidad, sino que se limita a exponer las razones que justifican la falta. El uso de uno u otro verbo se adecúa a diferentes tipos de interacciones y por tanto da lugar a construcciones más o menos apropiadas a determinados contextos. Wierzbicka (1987) reconoce otras dos formas de perdonar, ambas especializadas para registros específicos, que son *absolver*, en el ámbito religioso, e *indultar*, en el jurídico. A excepción de estos dos últimos, debido a su fuerte especialización, cada uno de los actos de habla descritos por Wierzbicka (1987) se incluye dentro de la categoría de perdonar definida por Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011), que deriva del principio cultural del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* de acuerdo con el cual el hablante debe perdonar al oyente si éste muestra arrepentimiento por haber cometido una falta. Tomando el trabajo de Wierzbicka (1987) como referencia, formulamos un modelo cognitivo basado en el principio del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* que Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) proponen como base conceptual de perdonar. Este modelo se compone de los parámetros relacionados con el reconocimiento por parte del oyente de haber ofendido al hablante, la manifestación del arrepentimiento del oyente hacia el hablante, y la expresión de perdón de el



hablante hacia el oyente. El potencial de instanciación de una construcción para uno o más parámetros de este modelo producirá expresiones de perdón con mayor o menor grado de codificación que podrán convencionalizarse mediante un uso frecuente en determinados contextos.

La característica más significativa de la realización de expresiones de perdón tiene que ver con la absoluta preferencia por el uso de las formas declarativa e imperativa. Como ocurre en otros actos de habla expresivos, la forma declarativa es la que se muestra más productiva, debido a su capacidad para expresar los sentimientos del hablante de manera efectiva. No obstante, el bajo grado de codificación de la forma declarativa hace que sea necesario emplear determinados elementos lingüísticos para hacer explícito el valor de perdonar. Sin duda, el recurso más efectivo es el uso de verbos performativos, como en las construcciones *I Forgive You*, *I Excuse You*, *I Pardon You* y *I Absolve You*, cada una de ellas especializada para contextos específicos. Este tipo de construcciones presenta numerosas variantes, que incluyen formas con verbos modales expresando el deseo o la obligación del hablante de perdonar y sintagmas preposicionales haciendo referencia a la falta cometida por el oyente, así como formas en pasado y en futuro, que expresan la intención o el compromiso del hablante de perdonar al oyente. Se pueden utilizar también secuencias no performativas capaces de explicitar el valor ilocutivo de perdonar, como la construcción *I Accept Your Apologies* y sus variantes, ligada estrictamente a contextos de disculpa. El resto de las construcciones declarativas de perdonar son implícitas y requieren un contexto específico para ser interpretadas como expresiones de perdón. Muchas de ellas producen un valor de perdonar mediante la instanciación del parámetro del modelo cognitivo relacionado con la ofensa cometida. Así, encontramos construcciones como *You Did Wrong* y *You Made A Mistake*, en las que el hablante atribuye la falta del oyente a un mero error, lo que indica implícitamente un valor de perdón. También es posible producir expresiones de perdón mediante la forma declarativa minimizando la importancia de la ofensa cometida, como es el caso de las construcciones *It Is Nothing* y *No Offense Taken*, que indican que la falta del oyente no ha afectado al hablante, y *No Need To Apologize*, que asegura al oyente que no tiene motivo para disculparse.

La forma imperativa se muestra bastante menos productiva en la expresión de perdón. Únicamente encontramos dos construcciones imperativas de perdón, ambas pertenecientes a la misma familia (i.e. *Don't Worry* y *Don't Upset Yourself*), en las que el hablante le pide al oyente que no se preocupe por haberle ofendido.

El corpus no contiene ninguna expresión de perdón basada en la forma interrogativa. Este tipo oracional presenta proposiciones para la evaluación del oyente, lo que no se adecuaba a la realización de los actos de habla expresivos en general, y el acto de perdonar en particular, ya que éste surge como respuesta a una disculpa y no puede, por tanto, ser expresado en interrogativo.

### **13. EL ACTO DE HABLA DE CONDOLERSE**

Los pocos estudios que se han llevado a cabo sobre las condolencias adoptan una perspectiva sociolingüística y se centran en la descripción de las normas de cortesía que inducen a su realización. El trabajo realizado por Maloney (2009), en particular, analiza la función social de las condolencias y examina las formas de expresión más apropiadas. Este análisis nos ha proporcionado un buen punto de partida para llevar a cabo una descripción de la estructura semántica del acto de habla de condolerse. La función social de las condolencias que Maloney (2009) propone en su estudio y que Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) formulan en uno de los subdominios del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* es la de mostrar pesar ante el dolor ajeno. Tal como argumentan Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011), el hablante debe ayudar al oyente si posee capacidad para ello, y expresar tristeza en caso de no poseer dicha capacidad. La formulación de estos autores permite relacionar las condolencias con un amplio número de interacciones y desligarla de los pésames.

Una vez realizado el análisis de los principales rasgos semánticos y pragmáticos de las condolencias, hemos formulado un modelo cognitivo situacional de alto nivel que recoge la estructura conceptual de este acto de habla. Este modelo generaliza sobre múltiples casos de interacción, y se basa en el subdominio del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* que Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) proponen como la base conceptual de las condolencias. El modelo cognitivo de condolerse está formado por una serie de parámetros, que son la creencia por parte del hablante de que el oyente se encuentra en una situación que requiere ayuda, la incapacidad del hablante de ayudar al oyente a cambiar dicha situación, la manifestación del pesar del hablante hacia el oyente y la suposición de que el oyente se sentirá complacido por la expresión de pesar del hablante. El grado de codificación de las construcciones varía de acuerdo con su capacidad para instanciar uno o más parámetros del modelo.

Como es el caso de otros actos de habla expresivos, la forma declarativa es la más productiva en la realización de las condolencias. La capacidad de la forma declarativa para expresar el pesar del hablante la convierte en la manera más eficaz de realizar condolencias. Las construcciones declarativas de condolerse más codificadas son las expresiones performativas, que incluyen las formas *I X<sub>VP</sub> My Condolences* y *I X<sub>VP</sub> My Sympathy*, ambas pertenecientes a la misma familia y con distintos matices de significado. El elemento variable de estas construcciones denota una acción de expresión o entrega, haciendo referencia a la manifestación de sentimientos por parte del hablante hacia el oyente. Estas construcciones presentan diversas variantes, que incluyen formas con verbos modales expresando el deseo o la obligación del hablante de condolerse y sintagmas preposicionales describiendo la situación de adversidad en la que se encuentra el oyente. Algunas de estas variantes carecen de sujeto, como es el caso de las construcciones *My Condolences X<sub>PP</sub>* y *My Sympathy X<sub>PP</sub>*, lo que da más relevancia a la expresión de pesar del hablante. Este tipo de estructuras son más breves y más explícitas que las versiones con sujeto y por ello más efectivas. Las construcciones declarativas performativas de condolerse son las más numerosas. El corpus contiene ejemplos únicamente de una construcción declarativa no performativa, la secuencia *I Am Sorry X<sub>PP</sub>*, bastante más implícita, que precisa de un contexto específico para producir una interpretación de condolencia.

La forma imperativa es mucho menos productiva en la expresión de condolencias. Esto se debe a la incompatibilidad entre la función de la forma imperativa y el propósito del acto de habla de condolerse. Es posible, no obstante, realizar condolencias imperativas por medio de construcciones como *Accept My Condolences* y sus variantes, en las que el hablante le pide al oyente que acepte su pesar, y *Let Me X<sub>VP</sub> My Condolences*, en la que el hablante solicita permiso para condolerse.

No hallamos ejemplos en el corpus de condolencias basadas en la forma interrogativa. Este tipo oracional presenta proposiciones para la evaluación del oyente, lo que no resulta apropiado para la realización de actos de habla expresivos como condolerse.

#### 14. EL ACTO DE HABLA DE JACTARSE

El acto de habla de jactarse a menudo se considera ofensivo en nuestra cultura. Es norma de cortesía mostrar humildad hacia uno mismo y alabar a los demás. Por este motivo, los estudios que abordan el acto de habla de

jactarse, en su mayoría desde una perspectiva sociolingüística, se centran en su transgresión a las normas de cortesía. La descripción de las jactancias formulada en el *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* propuesto por Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) difiere con este tipo de teorías. De acuerdo con los citados autores, las jactancias no sólo no son ofensivas, sino que surgen como respuesta a un principio de interacción cultural. Este principio se describe en uno de los subdominios del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio*, según el cual el hablante debe expresar satisfacción ante un suceso favorable o la obtención de algo que desea. Los datos extraídos del corpus respaldan la propuesta de Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) en buena medida. Hay casos en los que se produce un despliegue excesivo por parte del hablante que se percibe socialmente como inadecuado y resulta ofensivo. Hemos encontrado construcciones convencionalizadas de jactarse en las que el hablante afirma superioridad sobre el oyente. Sin embargo, las jactancias efectivas son las que no sitúan al oyente en una posición de inferioridad y consiguen expresar la satisfacción del hablante de acuerdo con los principios de interacción cultural.

El modelo cognitivo situacional que proponemos para jactarse generaliza sobre múltiples casos de interacción, con lo que posee estructura semántica común a diversos tipos de jactancias y puede ser activado metonímicamente tanto por los que se adecúan a las normas de cortesía como por los que no lo hacen. La formulación de este modelo cognitivo ha sido realizada tomando como base el subdominio del *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio* que Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011) definen como la base conceptual de las jactancias. Los parámetros del modelo cognitivo de jactarse que proponemos son la existencia de un suceso que resulta favorable para el hablante, la manifestación por parte del hablante de su orgullo por llevar a cabo dicho suceso, y la suposición de que el oyente también se sentirá orgulloso del hablante. El potencial de instanciación de una construcción para uno o más parámetros de este modelo dará lugar a jactancias con mayor o menor grado de codificación.

El análisis de los datos muestra una clara tendencia por el uso de las construcciones declarativas en la expresión de las jactancias. La forma declarativa es la que mayor capacidad posee de las tres para expresar la satisfacción del hablante y por tanto es la más apropiada para la realización de las jactancias. Las construcciones declarativas de jactarse más codificadas son las expresiones comparativas de superioridad, como es el caso de *I Am Better X<sub>PREP</sub>* y *I Am The Best X<sub>ADJ</sub>*, por una parte, y *No<sub>NEGPR</sub>*

*Better Than Me* y *No<sub>NEGPR</sub> As Good As I Am*, por otra, que utilizan la forma comparativa para poner de manifiesto la superioridad del hablante, lo que, a pesar de incumplir las normas de cortesía, produce un valor de jactancia por defecto. Este tipo de construcciones presenta diversas variantes, que incluyen formas con sintagmas nominales especificando las personas con habilidades inferiores al oyente, y formas en pasado, que hacen referencia a logros anteriores del hablante. Es posible lograr un efecto similar y menos ofensivo mediante el uso de construcciones como *I Am Good X<sub>PREP</sub>*, que le permite al hablante resaltar sus cualidades sin resultar ofensivo. Aún más apropiadas son construcciones como *I Am Proud Of X<sub>VP</sub>* y *I Did X<sub>NP</sub> Well*, que meramente describen el sentimiento de satisfacción del hablante y por tanto se adecúan más al propósito de las jactancias. Igualmente efectivas son las construcciones *I Managed X<sub>VP</sub>* y *I Achieved X<sub>VP</sub>*, ambas pertenecientes a la misma familia, y centradas en la descripción del logro obtenido por el hablante. Estas construcciones son, no obstante, mucho más implícitas y requieren un contexto determinado para producir un valor de jactancia.

La forma imperativa se muestra mucho menos productiva en la expresión de jactancias. Sólo hemos encontrado dos construcciones de este tipo que se ajustan a la producción de jactancias: *Let's Face I X<sub>ADJ</sub>*, mediante la cual se le pide al oyente que acepte la superioridad del hablante, y *See I X<sub>ADJ</sub>*, que impone la excelencia del hablante sobre el oyente.

La forma interrogativa es la que menos se ajusta al propósito de las jactancias. El corpus recoge únicamente dos construcciones interrogativas que pueden emplearse para realizar este acto de habla, que son *Am I Not X<sub>ADJ</sub>?* y *Is X<sub>NEGPR</sub> As Good As Me?*, ambas mucho más implícitas que sus versiones en declarativo.

## 15. CONCLUSIÓN

Las teorías cognitivistas que se han formulado acerca de la expresión del significado ilocutivo han demostrado la existencia de un componente construccional en la ilocución (Pérez, 2001; Pérez y Ruiz de Mendoza, 2002; Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi, 2007, Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza, 2011; Pérez y Ruiz de Mendoza, 2011). Esta tesis ha sido defendida en base a la elegancia explicativa del *Modelo Léxico Construccional* (MLC), el cual mantiene (Ruiz de Mendoza y Mairal, 2008; Mairal y Ruiz de Mendoza, 2008, 2009) que el significado ilocutivo deriva de la activación metonímica de modelos cognitivos de alto nivel que estructuran la caracterización

semántica de los actos de habla. El potencial de instanciación de una construcción para uno o más parámetros relevantes de un determinado modelo ilocutivo produce actos de habla con diversos grados de codificación que pueden llegar a convencionalizarse. De esta forma, se asume que construcciones como *Can You X<sub>VP</sub>?* y *Will You X<sub>VP</sub>?*, que instancian respectivamente los parámetros del modelo cognitivo de peticiones relacionados con la capacidad y la disposición del oyente para satisfacer la necesidad del hablante, adquieren un valor como peticiones mediante un uso frecuente en determinados contextos. Sin embargo, construcciones como *I Need X<sub>NP</sub>* y *I Want X<sub>NP</sub>*, que instancian el parámetro del modelo que tiene que ver con la manifestación de la necesidad o el deseo del hablante, requieren actividad inferencial para producir un valor de petición. A lo largo de este trabajo de investigación hemos aportado evidencia lingüística a favor del enfoque construccionista de la ilocución adoptado en el MLC y hemos realizado una descripción preliminar de un nutrido grupo de actos de habla interpersonales con el fin de desarrollar el nivel ilocutivo del modelo.

Los datos extraídos nos han permitido detallar la composición semántica de las construcciones ilocutivas estudiadas. Tomando como base el *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio*, propuesto por Ruiz de Mendoza y Baicchi (2007) y reelaborado por Baicchi y Ruiz de Mendoza (2011), hemos precisado hasta qué punto existe una motivación cultural en el componente formal de las construcciones para determinar el alcance de sus componentes fijos y variables. Hemos dotado al análisis de adecuación pragmática y cognitiva al hallar la relación entre modelos cognitivos situacionales de actos de habla y su fundamento en el *Modelo Cognitivo de Coste-Beneficio*, así como al dilucidar el potencial de instanciación de los distintos elementos de un mismo modelo ilocutivo por las diversas construcciones que hacen uso del mismo.

Esta propuesta debe ser, sin embargo, ampliada a través de estudios adicionales de las relaciones entre construcciones ilocutivas y la postulación de familias de construcciones emparentadas por rasgos formales y semánticos en común con el fin de postular construcciones de ámbito amplio, cuya realización sintáctica dependa de conjuntos de principios restrictores más que de condiciones locales de aplicación. Asimismo, resulta necesario ahondar en las condiciones de inclusión de las construcciones ilocutivas dentro del MLC, explicitando las condiciones para la subsunción construccionista desde niveles inferiores y hacia el nivel discursivo.