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Cognitive Motivation and Linguistic Realization

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Introduction

In order to deal with the metonymic grounding of illocutionary meaning, Panther & Thornburg (1998) have proposed the existence of illocutionary scenarios. These are complex structures generally consisting of three main parts: a before, a core, and an after, which specify traditional Searlean felicity conditions in a cognitive-model theory format. These scenarios are accessed metonymically. Pérez & Ruiz de Mendoza (2002), on the basis of previous work by Ruiz de Mendoza (1999) and Pérez (2001), have refined Panther & Thornburg’s account to make it include additional pragmatic variables like power and solidarity relations (necessary to differentiate requests from orders, for example), and a cognitive version of Leech’s (1983) well-known cost-benefit scale (useful to assess the degree of politeness of directives and commissives). In this paper, it will be our purpose to explore how illocutionary scenarios are constructed and exploited linguistically to convey illocutionary meaning. We will first argue that illocutionary scenarios (e.g. requesting, offering, apologizing) are high-level situational models constructed through the application of the high-level metonymy SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC to multiple low-level situational models. Once created, an illocutionary scenario may be accessed metonymically. Such scenarios are then applied to specific situations through the converse metonymy, GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC. On the basis of a corpus of examples derived from different sources (novels, film scripts, forum emails), we have identified central and peripheral elements of illocutionary scenarios belonging to most directive, commissive and expressive speech act categories. We have identified elements common to all of them and have constructed a broader higher-level description that we call the Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model. The corresponding notion in Leech’s pragmatic theory was formulated to apply to directive and commissive speech acts. However, we have found that the scale also applies to expressive speech acts to the extent that they are regulatory of speaker-hearer interaction. Our cost-benefit model is thus a cluster of submodels that show family resemblance connections. Finally, we study a number of conventional and non-conventional linguistic realizations of the various parts of the Cost-Benefit model and explore the way in which such realizations are used to produce illocutionary meaning. We argue in this connection that the non-semantic part of a construction has a realizational potential that may be captured by means of sets of semantic conditions based on the Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model.

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2. Speech Acts in Cognitive Linguistics

It is well known that the interpretation of indirect speech acts has drawn a great deal of attention. Most proposals assume that some inferential work on the part of the hearer is required in order to identify the speaker’s communicative intention. Following the Searlean proposal (Searle 1975), many linguists claim that the interpretation of the intended meaning is done on the basis of what is literally conveyed (Morgan 1978). Conversely, other linguists contend that even the literal meaning of an utterance is dependent on inferencing strategies (Bach & Harnish 1979; Leech 1983; Sperber & Wilson 1995).

Working within the field of Cognitive Linguistics, Panther & Thornburg (1998:756) have discussed the traditional inferential analyses of indirect speech acts and pointed to two shortcomings in those approaches, which do not take into satisfactory consideration the cognitive import of inference patterns:

1. In spite of indirect interpretation being based on inferential processes – which are, at least theoretically, rather time-consuming - speakers are able to grasp the ulterior indirect force of a speech act very quickly, and to draw the needed inferences almost effortlessly;

2. Traditional inferential theories do not systematically describe the inference patterns involved in the interpretation of indirect illocutions and their cognitive grounding.

In order to deal with these shortcomings, Thornburg & Panther 1997 and Panther & Thornburg 1998 propose that our knowledge of illocutionary meaning may be systematically organized in the form of what they call *illocutionary scenarios*. This type of generic knowledge organization structures is shared by the members of a linguistic community and is stored in our long-term memory. Illocutionary scenarios may be accessed metonymically by invoking relevant parts of them. By way of illustration, indirect requests like *Can you open the door?*, *Will you close the window?*, *Do you have hot chocolate?* exploit all pre-conditions for the performance of a request, i.e. the ability and willingness of the hearer, and his possession of the required object. Such pre-conditions are used to stand for the whole speech act category.

Let us describe Panther & Thornburg’s “request scenario” (Panther & Thornburg 1998:759) below for convenience:

(i) The BEFORE:
   The hearer (H) can do the action (A)
   The speaker (S) wants H to do A

(ii) The CORE:
   S puts H under a (more or less strong) obligation to do A
   The RESULT: H is under an obligation to do A (H must/should/ought to do A)

(iii) The AFTER:
   H will do A
In their view, by means of a metonymic cognitive operation, any of the components of the scenario may stand for an act of requesting. It is the specific linguistic items present in the utterance that determines the activation of one component of the scenario or another. Compare the following utterances:

(a) *Can you bring me my sunglasses?*
(b) *Will you bring me my sunglasses?*
(c) *You will bring me my sunglasses, won’t you?*

Utterances (a) and (b) activate the BEFORE component. While the modal verb *can* points to the hearer’s ability to perform the action, the future auxiliary *will* points to the willingness of performing the action.

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**Figure 1. Ability for request to perform an action**

![Figure 1. Ability for request to perform an action](image1.png)

**Figure 2: Willingness for request to perform an action**

![Figure 2: Willingness for request to perform an action](image2.png)
However, in utterance (c) will instantiates the AFTER component of the request scenario:

\[ \text{Target} \]
\[ \text{REQUEST TO PERFORM AN ACTION} \]
\[ \text{(Request scenario)} \]

\[ \text{Source} \]
\[ \text{FUTURE ACTION} \]
\[ \text{(AFTER component)} \]

Figure 2: A future action for the request to perform the action

In a nutshell, by means of the explicit mention of one of the components of the scenario, it is possible for the speaker to afford access to the hearer to the whole illocutionary category of ‘requesting’, in such a way that the utterance is effortlessly interpreted as a request. From this premise follows that the higher the number of components overtly instantiated, the easier the illocutionary intention of the speaker is recognized, and the other way round.

2.1 Illocutionary Scenarios as High-Level Situational ICMs

Storage in our long-term memory in the form of scenarios and metonymic instantiation are the two elements that make Panther & Thornburg’s proposal highly innovative and interesting from a cognitive perspective. This is so since in this proposal illocutionary meaning is directly tied to the notion of idealized cognitive model or ICM (cf. Lakoff 1987).

According to Lakoff 1987, our understanding and conceptual representation of reality is organized in the form of idealized cognitive models. ICMs are principle-governed cognitive structures of at least the following kinds: propositional (sets of predicate-argument relationships or ‘frames’ á la Fillmore 1985), image-schematic (pre-conceptual topological representations whereby, following Protagoras’ epistemology, our body is the experiential measure of all things; cf. Johnson 1987; Lakoff & Johnson 1999), metaphorical (set of correspondences, or mappings, across two conceptual domains cf. Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1993), and metonymic (mappings within a single domain; cf. Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Barcelona 2002). It is evident that illocutionary scenarios are a form of propositional structure, but there are other qualitatively distinct notions like ‘mother’ or ‘buying’ that make use of the same kind of structuring principle, i.e. propositional structure, while clearly evincing a very distinct nature. In our view, in order to characterize the notion of illocutionary scenario adequately, it is necessary to produce a more refined description of
ICM types. As will be evidenced later, doing this will prove useful in order to fully understand the way the notion of illocutionary scenario can be incorporated into a comprehensive theory of illocutionary meaning from a cognitive perspective.

The first refinement concerns the dynamic versus non-dynamic nature of ICMs. Thus, we propose to distinguish between operational and non-operational ICMs. While propositional and image-schematic ICMs are non-operational since they are static in nature and consist of stored information, metaphor and metonymy are operational in that they are the result of a productive cognitive operation that exploits non-operational ICMs (see Ruiz de Mendoza 1996, 1999).

A second refinement is related to the ontological nature of cognitive structures on the propositional level of representation. Here we make a distinction between situational and non-situational ICMs. The former ICMs encompass frames like taking a taxi, ordering a meal, or going to the dentist, whereas non-situational ICMs refer in a more general fashion to the objects (‘mother’), events (‘earthquake’) and relations (‘kissing’).

Finally, ICMs can be further described at two levels of conceptual representation: non-generic (or low-level), and generic (high-level). The low-level of conceptual representation (e.g. ‘mother’, ‘taking a taxi’) is created by making well-entrenched, coherent links between elements of our encyclopedic knowledge store; the high level (e.g. ‘cause-effect’, ‘action’, ‘process’) is created by deriving structure common to multiple low-level models. Interestingly enough, it is a high-level ICM, the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy, that is operationally used to derive generic-knowledge or high-level propositional structures from lower-level ones. The converse metonymy, i.e. GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC, is then used to apply higher-level structures to lower-level situations. Radden & Kövecses (1999: 34) have already hinted at the importance of these metonymies, for example in the interpretation of proverbs. Consider the following proverb (which we borrow from Lakoff & Turner 1989):

**Blind blames the ditch**

Imagine that the proverb has been uttered by someone as a critical remark on a bad football player who has unfairly blamed the team’s coach rather than himself for his poor performance. Obviously, the proverb has been constructed on the basis of numerous observations on the way some people behave when they feel unable to cope with a challenging situation, but they do not want to acknowledge their inadequacy. The specific situation of a blind person blaming the ditch rather than his own inability metonymically stands for the generic situation (i.e. the high-level knowledge structure) we have just described. Then, through GENERIC IS SPECIFIC, the generic situation is applied to other specific cases (other low-level situations like the player’s blaming somebody else for his own failure).

With these basic notions established (see also Ruiz de Mendoza 2005, forthcoming), we can now argue that it is exactly the quick and easy retrieval from our long-term memory
of a stored illocutionary scenario that allows us to identify the nature of illocutionary scenarios. They are the way in which language users construct interactional meaning representations abstracted away from a number of stereotypical every-day illocutionary situations where people try to have their needs satisfied through weakly directive expressions of various kinds. If this is so, we are allowed to assign illocutionary scenarios the status of high-level situational ICMs. Non-illocutionary situations are, in contrast, low-level (interactional) representations, such as going to the dentist, taking a taxi, and teaching a class. These situations may also be exploited metonymically, but the result is not illocutionary meaning, but implicated meaning. Consider the following exchange:

A: How did you learn so much Ancient Greek?
B: There’s a weekly seminar in my college.

Simply mentioning the availability of means to learn Greek stands for the idea that B attended the seminar regularly and thus learnt Greek. The relevant implication that makes B’s utterance fully meaningful is derived from low-level situational knowledge (very close to Schank & Abelson’s 1977 notion of script) about teaching and learning.

Now, consider:

A: I fancy eating out in a Chinese restaurant.
B: Great. Let’s go the Chen Fui’s tonight.

B’s understanding of A’s utterance as a request to take her out to have dinner in a Chinese restaurant is based on the recognition of A having some need that she wants to be satisfied. Every day we encounter situations where people make manifest to other people specific needs with the expectation (or, at least, the hope) that they will get what they want. From these situations we derive generic knowledge that is then reapplied to other situations with which they share relevant features.

Evidently, this kind of account captures the relevant similarities and differences between implicated meaning and illocutionary meaning: both are derived metonymically by the linguistic expression providing the hearer with access to a situational ICM; however, in the case of illocutionary activity, the ICM is a high-level knowledge structure, while implicatures seem to be the result of exploiting low-level representations.

3. Some Further Features of Illocutionary Constructions

As noted by Pérez & Ruiz de Mendoza (2002), illocutionary activity is more than a matter of metonymically activating relevant (parts of) illocutionary scenarios. There are other features that play a role in the process, which have not been taken into account by Panther & Thornburg. We specifically refer to:
• The power relationship between interlocutors.
• The degree of optionality conveyed by the illocutionary act.
• The degree of politeness.
• The degree of prototypicality of certain utterances over others.
• The degree of cost-benefit of the requested action.
• The semantic motivation for other types of indirect speech acts as expressed by an oblique modal (could, would) or a negative modal (can’t, won’t) in the case of requests.
• The cognitive grounding of speech acts in experiential gestalts.

These features relate in many ways, as we hope to clarify in the following subsections, which will mainly refer to requests.

3.1 Power Relationship

This notion is dealt with by Leech (1983: 126) under the name “social power”, i.e. the asymmetrical relation between two participants that hold different positions in a social hierarchy of authority. Verschueren (1985) and Spencer-Oatey (1996) make a distinction between different kinds of power relationship: moral, institutional, knowledge, etc. These distinctions are immaterial for our understanding of the notion of power (a refinement of Leech’s) as the asymmetrical relationship whereby a participant regards himself as potentially capable of imposing his own will on other participants, whatever the reason(s) why.

The power relationship between interlocutors heavily constrains a speaker’s choice between different grammatical options. The following directive utterances may clarify the issue:

(a) Bring me my sunglasses.
(b) Can you bring me my sunglasses?

The first example is an instance of an explicit order realized by means of the imperative construction, and it puts the hearer under a strong obligation to do what he is asked for. In such case, the speaker has a higher degree of power than the hearer. The use of the modal can in the second example can give rise to two different readings. On the one hand, the speaker may share the status with his hearer and choose a polite formula which conveys a weaker obligation so the utterance is readily interpreted as a plain request. On the other hand, we must observe that the “can you” construction is often used by speakers with a higher status to achieve a greater degree of politeness by giving the addressee some (apparent) degree of optionality. In such a case, the addressee is not expected to refuse even if the more polite “can you” form is selected, so the utterance is actually a covert form of (polite) command.
3.2 Degree of Optionality and Degree of Politeness

By optionality we mean the degree of freedom that the speaker gives the addressee to decide whether he wants to perform or not the required action (cf. Leech, 1983). Since restricting someone’s freedom is generally perceived as negative in our social system, optionality degrees correlate with politeness degrees. As such, optionality is strictly intertwined with the degree of politeness between the interlocutors. Compare the following two utterances:

(c) Could you close the door?
(d) Would you close the door?

The capacity and willingness conditions are activated through the use of oblique modals, which have, as a communicative consequence, the result of increasing the degree of politeness of the requests. In a similar fashion, the use of negative modals has the opposite result of decreasing the optionality of the hearer, who may refuse to carry out the action required, thereby rendering the act impolite:

(e) Can’t you close the door?
(f) Won’t you close the door?

Optionality here is based on an interesting communicative strategy. The speaker acts as if he were surprised to see that the hearer is unable or unwilling to perform the required action. The underlying idea is captured by the following paraphrase: “You should have closed the door, but you haven’t, which surprises me. Is it because you are unable or unwilling to do so?” The addressee will generally find it difficult to refuse since it is obvious that he has the capacity to close a door and, by cultural convention, he is expected to be willing to help other people.

3.3 Degree of Prototypicality

Optionality and politeness are characteristic features of requests so that the higher the degree of optionality and politeness, the higher the degree of prototypicality of the requests. The degree of politeness is often reinforced by the use of mitigating devices, i.e. linguistic items like could/would, please, etc. Consider the requests below:

(g) Can you hold my box?
(h) Will you hold my box?
(i) Can you hold my box for one moment?
(j) Can you hold my box for one moment, please?
(k) Could you hold my box?
(l) Would you hold my box?
(m) Would you mind holding my box?
(n) I wonder if you could hold my box.

Mitigating devices convey slight differences between almost identical realizations of the speech act. Nevertheless, although mitigating devices do not activate any part of the basic
scenario – as is conceived by Panther & Thornburg – we intuitively feel that they do produce prototypicality effects. This is a further reason why we stick to Pérez & Ruiz de Mendoza’s proposal (2002) that illocutionary scenarios are more complex structures than those figured out by Panther & Thornburg. Not only does the scenario comprise three components, which can be metonymically activated, but it also contains variables instantiated by further linguistic items, like mitigating devices (for one moment, I wonder if) or inserts (please), which are instances of (low) power and (high) optionality parameters. With such elements being part of the scenario, it is not unreasonable to postulate that prototypicality effects are greater the higher the number of (complex) scenario elements.

To sum up, we strongly believe that the semantic description of illocutionary categories in terms of scenarios is not sufficient to account for the multi-faceted amount of information that language users possess about interactional communication. In our view, illocutionary scenarios should be elaborated and integrated into a more complex type of high-level knowledge structure of the propositional kind but ready to be exploited metonymically.

3.4 Degree of Cost-Benefit

As sketchily anticipated in the formulation above, lack of politeness corresponds to low degrees of optionality and, as such, it instantiates an order rather than a request. To put it differently, the absence of politeness, as is the case with the use of negative modals, results in bad, or at least, non-prototypical, examples of requests. To illustrate the cline from an order - which, by definition, lacks politeness – to a polite request, we can here refer to the cost-benefit scale proposed by Leech (1983:107-110)\(^2\).

Consider the following utterances:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>cost to H</th>
<th>less polite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Wash the dishes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bring me my slippers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sit down.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Enjoy your holiday.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Have some more tea.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>benefit to H</th>
<th>more polite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Depending on the context, the relevant value on the scale becomes benefit to the hearer and cost to the speaker. The same imperative construction thus gives rise to different outcomes in terms of politeness. We will come back to this issue in a later section.

\(^2\) A full account of our view of the Cost-Benefit model in terms of ICMs will be introduced in section 5
4. Some Illocutionary Scenarios

It is possible to develop the Lakoffian proposal for propositional ICMs (Lakoff 1987:285) to make it sensitive to the requirements of a cognitive account of illocutionary meaning. We may envisage an illocutionary scenario as a high-level situational ICM consisting of an ‘ontology’ – i.e., the different values of the variables relevant to its description – and a ‘structure’ – i.e. the interplay between the variables. In a discussion of illocutionary ICMs, variables are largely culture-specific to an extent that the label conventions will be preferred to refer to them. Such cultural conventions carry pragmatic information like the ones exemplified in section 3: social power, social distance, politeness, optionality, cost-benefit, and so on. Those conventions are realized through the use of lexico-grammatical resources, like mitigating devices, oblique modals, etc., which, having a ‘meaning potential’ in the sense of Halliday 1978, realize the semantic make-up of illocutionary categories.

To sum up, illocutionary constructions may be 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). The direct consequence is the production of indirect speech acts by means of different degrees of explicitness. In turn, explicitness is dependent on the speaker’s communicative intention and on the availability of contextual information. For example, for the utterance *I am alone* to be interpreted as a request, it must be clear by the context that the speaker does not like to be alone (cf. *I am alone and that’s how I want to be*, which cancels out that presumption). Contextual information thus contributes to the explicitness of the message, and allows us to derive the implicit part by means of metonymy (with a condition-consequence reasoning process along the following lines: ‘if the speaker is alone and he does not like to be alone, then he is asking me to stay with him or to find someone that can bear him company’).

In what follows we suggest what form illocutionary scenarios may actually take and illustrate how they may be realized linguistically. However, one word of caution is needed. Our description of illocutionary scenarios sometimes contains elements that may not be used to stand for the corresponding illocutionary category. This is the case of begging, promising, and apologizing, for example. The importance of this observation will become more evident in section 5, where we argue - with other theorists but from a different perspective - against the relevance of classifying speech acts except for non-theoretical reasons of descriptive convenience. For the time being, it is enough to know that the linguistic realization of some elements in some illocutionary scenarios may activate other speech act categories (but not other scenarios).

4.1 Requesting

In the case of requests, for instance, we derive the generic structure from many every-day situations where people want something and try to get someone to solve their needs. Let us indicate some possible low-level scenarios for requesting:
1. A person needs something. The person makes this situation manifest to another person. The second person takes care of the first person’s need.
2. A person needs something. The person makes someone aware that he has the capacity to provide him with what he needs. The second person ignores the first person’s need.
3. A person is asking for something from someone in a position of authority by appealing to his willingness to help. The second person is moved to help.
4. A person who is not in real need is asking for help while pretending that he is in a needful situation. The second person is deceived and is moved to help.

To the above low-level scenarios correspond a set of common elements belonging to the generic structure:

(a) A person appears to be in need of something.
(b) The person asks for whatever he/she appears to be in need of.
(c) The person makes other people aware of their ability to supply for his/her needs.
(d) The person appeals to the addressee’s willingness to help.
(e) The addressee may be persuaded to help or not.

The generic structure is realized by means of linguistic expressions or, to use a more refined terminology, realization procedures (Ruiz de Mendoza 1999; Pérez 2001):

1. I am cold
2. Do you think I could have a sweater?
3. You could give me a sweater, couldn’t you?
4. Will you give me sweater?
5. You will give a sweater, won’t you?

Whereby all the above realization resources qualify as requests in the appropriate context. These expressions profile a shared logic-semantics representation.

4.2 Ordering

In some cases of the act of requesting above, we have seen that there is a slight difference between a request and an order, which depends of the degree of power between the two interlocutors.

The ordering speech act is generally conveyed by means of an imperative realizational formula which verbalizes at least the following low-level scenario:

1. A person needs something. The person makes this situation manifest to the hearer in such a way that the H cannot refuse to perform the required action.

In terms of generic structure, an act of ordering is expressed by exploiting the following common elements:
A person appears to be in need of something

The person orders to the addressee to perform the action which satisfies his need

The hearer is compelled to satisfy the speaker’s need

All the examples of linguistic realizations for orders are constructed through the imperative construction, e.g. Do that/Don't do that.

1. Don’t be told what to do
2. Make your bed at once
3. You mind your own business, and leave this to me!

However, there are cases in which the imperative construction may trigger different speech acts, like advising, offering, and warning. Precise distinctions between speech acts are not possible since the illocutionary force is strictly intertwined with the context, the authority of the interlocutors and their relative benefits of the action.

4.3 Begging

A request and a plea are quite similar since they share the same degree of optionality but they differ in terms of the speaker’s willingness, which is much higher in begging than in requesting.

Some possible low-level scenarios for begging encompass the following:

1. A person is in real need of help from another person who is reluctant to assist him in the required manner. The person asks for help repeatedly and makes it manifest that he is in real and/or urgent need and very unhappy about his situation. The second person is moved to compassion and helps the first person.
2. A person is asking for mercy in an insistent manner from someone in a position of authority who would generally be presumed to be reluctant to show compassion because this could be interpreted as a form of weakness on his part. The second person is not moved by the plea for mercy.
3. A person who is not in real need is asking for help while pretending that he is in a really unhappy situation. The second person is moved to compassion and helps the first person.

To these low-level scenarios correspond some common elements of generic structure:

(a) A person appears to be in need of something.
(b) The person asks for whatever he/she appears to be in need of.
(c) The person makes an open show of his/her purported bad situation.
(d) The person appeals to the addressee's generosity.
(e) The addressee may be moved to compassion or not.

The realization resources for the generic structures may be exemplified by the following utterances:
1. Please, have mercy on me
2. I have three children to take care of and we have no food.
3. Give us just a little bite to eat
4. Thank you, sir; God will reward you

Note that, in contrast to what is the case with requests, in begging the ‘after’ component of the scenario may hardly be used to stand for the whole speech act. This is so because this component creates a clash between the idea that the speaker is not sure that he will be helped and the certainty of expressing the outcome of the situation.

4.4 Advising

An imperative realizational formula may be taken as a piece of advice (e.g. Buy that car). The low-level scenario encompasses at least the following:

1. A speaker indicates to the hearer that a potential state of affairs is beneficial to H.

In terms of generic structure, an act of advising is expressed by exploiting the following common elements:

(a) A person appears to be in need of something.
(b) The person advises the hearer that there is a state of affairs which may be beneficial for him
(c) The hearer is expected to perform the action which is beneficial to himself.

The examples of linguistic realizations for an act of advising are constructed through the imperative construction, the interrogative construction, or through the use of a conditional construction:

1. Why don’t you take an aspirin for your headache?
2. I’d buy that house if I were you.
3. Don’t be deceived by his elegant clothes.

The illocutionary force of an utterance is obviously dependent on the context. The examples above can thus be interpreted as cases of advising but also as recommendations.

4.5 Offering

An imperative construction may be taken as an offer (e.g. Drink some more tea) when a speaker brings about a potential state of affairs that appears to be beneficial to the hearer.

Some low-level scenarios can be activated in the case of an act of offering:

1. A person appears to be in need of something. The speaker offers whatever the addressee appears to be in need of.
2. A person appears to be in need of something. The speaker offers his help in order to satisfy the addressee’s need

The common elements of the generic structure may be the following:
(a) A person is in need of something
(b) The speaker offers to perform the action which satisfies H’s need
(c) The speaker expresses his willingness to help

Below are some realizational expressions which can be uttered in the act of offering:

1. Do you want another cup of coffee?
2. Would you like some more tea?
3. Remember that I’m always ready to help
4. Have a slice of cake

4.6 Promising

Promising corresponds to doing something beneficial for the addressee. In other words, if it is manifest to the speaker that a potential state of affairs is beneficial to the hearer, then S is expected to bring it about. These are some possible low-level scenarios involved in promising:

1. A person detects another person’s desire to obtain something. The first person makes the second person aware that he is willing to give the second person what he desires and that he has the capacity to do so. The first person later gives the second person what he desires.
2. A person tells another person that he will definitely do something that the second person desires, but the first person is not being sincere and eventually does nothing.
3. A person accepts responsibility for carrying out a task that is required of him. The person carries out the task.

The generic structure of promising encompasses some common elements, like the following ones:

(a) There appears to be a certain need or a desire that has been identified by a person.
(b) The person shows his willingness and his capacity to address the desire or to solve the need.
(c) The person may or may not be sincere about his willingness to address the desire or to solve the need.
(d) The person makes it manifest that he will somehow address the desire or solve the need.
(e) The person may or may not address the desire or solve the need.

Some examples of linguistic realization of the different scenario elements are listed below:

1. I know you’d like to have that bicycle.
2. Let me find out if I can buy the bicycle for you.
3. I’ll buy you the bicycle for your birthday.
4. I know I told you I would buy that bicycle, but I couldn’t afford it.

Note that, in the appropriate contexts, examples (1)-(3) qualify as instances of the act of promising. However, (4) is simply a way of giving an excuse for a broken promise, so the activation of this scenario element cuts across speech act categories.

4.7 Warning

A warning (e.g. *Don’t touch that wire!* ) is a way of making the hearer aware of the non-beneficial consequences that a course of action will have for him. In an indirect way, the speaker is trying to get a state of affairs to change to the benefit of the addressee.

The low-level scenarios encompass at least the following:

1. A speaker who realizes that a potential state of affairs is not beneficial to B. the speaker warns the hearer about such state of affairs.

The common elements of the generic structure are listed below:

(a) A person appears to be in danger.
(b) The speaker makes the addressee aware that there is a state of affairs that is not beneficial to the addressee.
(c) The addressee is expected not to become involved in the non-beneficial state of affairs.

The realizational formulas for warnings are typically constructed through the imperative construction:

1. Mind the head!
2. Be careful!
3. Watch out!

As with begging and promising, the ‘after’ component may hardly be used to stand for an act of warning (since not becoming involved in a negative state of affairs makes it unnecessary to issue the warning).

4.8 Congratulating

When one is pleased about someone else’s behavior, it is likely that he wants to express his feelings. The low-level scenario underlying such situation entails:

1. A person who has realized a state of affairs that is deemed to be beneficial for others.

The common elements of the generic structure can be briefly summarized as follows:

(a) A person has done something good.
(b) The speaker wants to express his own congratulations for the beneficial action.

Such satisfaction may be expressed through the following realizational resources:
1. I’m glad it worked out fine
2. Happy you’ve won the competition
3. It was great of your to do so
4. Well done!

4.9 Thanking

The speech act of thanking entails a previous situation in which someone is the originator of a particular state of affairs that is beneficial for the speaker.

1. A person does something in such a way as to create a state of affairs beneficial for someone

The common elements of the generic structure comprises at least the following:

(a) A person has done something that is beneficial for someone else.
(b) The speaker appreciates the action that is positive for him.
(c) The speaker wants to express his thankfulness.

Thankfulness may be communicated by realization procedures like the ones listed below:

1. Thank you for giving me a hand.
2. Thanks a lot for what you’ve done!
3. I really appreciate all you’ve done for me.

4.10 Apologizing

The speech act of apologizing shares many features with that of thanking, with the one stigmatizing almost the opposite action of the other. When the speaker realizes that he has not acted as expected, he should feel regretful about this situation and make this feeling manifest to the hearer.

The low-level scenarios below illustrate some possible situations for an apology to take place:

1. A person feels that he has done harm to another person. He is sorry about it and makes this manifest to the other person. The other person tries to play down the importance of the harmful event.
2. A person knows he has hurt another person’s feelings. He does not regret what he has done, but still prefers to make the other person believe that he regrets what he has done. The other person, who does not trust the sincerity of the offender's repentance, ignores the expression of regret.
3. A person is not really sure if another person has taken offence from his behavior and decides to express regret just in case. The other person reveals to the first person that no offence was taken.

The common elements (i.e. generic structure) may appear to be like the following:
(a) A person detects the possibility of having done harm to another person. 
(b) The person shows his regret about what he has done. 
(c) The person’s sorrow may or may not be sincere. 
(d) The other person may or may not accept the expression of regret. 

Below we reproduce some examples of linguistic realization for the speech act of apologizing:

1. Maybe this was all wrong, was it?
2. I’m awfully sorry I couldn’t come.
3. It was nothing; don’t worry about it
4. When will you stop acting like a child!

4.11 Pardoning

The speech act of pardoning is a correlate act to that of apologizing, with which it shares some of its components. Some possible low-level scenarios are the following:

1. A person gives rise to a state of affairs which is non-beneficial for the other.
2. A person expresses his regret for his negative action or behavior.
3. The speaker wants to forgive the hearer.
4. The speaker makes his feeling manifest to the hearer.

The common elements of the generic structure can be briefly summarized as follows:

(a) Sometimes people behave incorrectly.
(b) In such a situation people are expected to show their regret over their behavior.
(c) Any person affected by the incorrect behavior is expected to express his forgiveness (even in the absence of apologies).

The following are common realizations of the scenario elements:

1. Don’t worry!
2. It’s OK.
3. Don’t do it again, OK?

4.12 Commiserating

When something unpleasant happens to someone, we may wish to express our pity or sympathy with him. A low-level scenario for such situation consists of at least the following elements:

1. Something unpleasant happens to a person. Other people feel unhappy for what has happened and try to share their feelings with the person. The person expresses his appreciation for this.
2. [The same situation as in [1] but the person reacts angrily.

The common elements for this generic structure may be thus summarized:
(a) Someone suffers from an unpleasant action or behavior.
(b) The speaker feels sympathy for the hearer.
(c) The speaker makes his feeling manifest to the hearer.
(d) The hearer is expected to react positively to the expression of sympathy (but he may react negatively).

Realizational resources for this speech act may be the following:

1. I’m terribly sorry for what happened.
2. It’s a real pity that this happened to you.
3. I cannot believe this happened to you!
4. Please, just leave me alone.

4.13 Boasting

By way of concluding our sketchy overview of some illocutionary scenarios, we want to mention the situation in which someone feels proud for one of his actions. Some low-level scenarios may be as follows:

1. A businessman succeeds in a difficult business venture. He is discussing the details with other business people over a cup of coffee and expresses excessive pride about his success.
2. A twelve-year-old boy manages to get rid of a nasty school bully for the first time. He tells his friends about his feat but in his excess of pride he exaggerates over the details.

The generic structure comprises at least the following common elements:

(a) A person feels that he is responsible for a beneficial action.
(b) He is proud for the action.
(c) The person makes his feeling of (usually excessive) pride manifest to the hearer.

Boasting can be expressed by uttering one of the following expressions, although many others may be added to the list:

1. This is the best cake I’ve ever baked!
2. I’m simply an artist!
3. I did a really great job with this!
4. I’ve never been prouder of myself!

5. The Cost-Benefit ICM

From the semantic makeup of various kinds of illocutionary scenario, like the ones illustrated above, it is still possible to derive further generic structure. A previous (and partial) attempt to do this may be found in Pérez & Ruiz de Mendoza (2002). Here we provide a more elaborated version:
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.

If it is manifest to A that a potential state of affairs is beneficial to B, then A is expected to bring it about.

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.

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.

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.

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.

If it is manifest to B 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.

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 this feeling manifest to A.

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, still A should feel sympathy with B over the non-beneficial state of affairs and make this manifest to B.

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.

As is evident from the description above, the Cost-Benefit ICM generalizes over specific characteristics of illocutionary scenarios of different kinds and finds common structure plus logical implications and interactional connections among them. There is something crucial about this proposal. For quite some time, there has been a lot of (mostly fruitless) debate over speech act categories. Within inferential pragmatics, some theorists, notably Sperber & Wilson (1995), have long contended that we do not store speech act categories like warnings, offers, requests, etc., in our minds, but rather that we work out the illocutionary meaning of utterances without having specific categories in mind. The classification plays no role in comprehension. Thus, what makes an utterance a warning is not the fact that the speaker ostensively communicates that he is warning the addressee, but that he ostensively communicates an assumption with a certain property (the utterance makes the speaker aware of the harmful consequences of a certain course of action). Sperber & Wilson make provision for a few speech acts (e.g. promising and thanking) to depend on categorization to be recognized as such, since they have a strong institutional dimension. However, most other acts do not need to be identified as such in order to be successfully performed (e.g.
requesting, warning, threatening, denying, asserting). Not only does our Cost-Benefit ICM live up to the pragmatic constraint on illocutionary meaning derivation proposed by Sperber & Wilson, but takes it to its logical extreme. In effect, even cases of promising and thanking can be processed effectively without thinking of the institutional category they belong to. Thus, an utterance is a promise by virtue of communicating that the speaker will act in a way that is desired by the addressee (who considers the action beneficial for himself), not by virtue of the speaker communicating that he is making a prediction. Additionally, note that many threats, which are not classified by Sperber & Wilson as categorizable institutional acts, take the form of promises with negative consequences for the addressee (e.g. I’ll sue you; I promise I’ll sue you).

The Cost-Benefit ICM makes evident all the connections between different speech act categories. Thus, both promises and some requests exploits part (c) of the ICM but in different ways. Thus, a promise like I will take you out to dinner is a form of reassuring the addressee about the speaker’s intention to meet the addressee’s expectation that the speaker will cater for her desires. An indirect request like I fancy an evening out is based on the idea that the speaker wants the addressee to become aware of her needs or desires, which is the first element of part (c) of the ICM.

One crucial advantage of the Cost-Benefit ICM, apart from the greater degree of elegance of the formulation, since it covers all kinds of illocutionary activity, is that it allows us to dispense with the cumbersome issue of speech act classification.

We will now exemplify a number of speech acts in order to illustrate how the Cost-Benefit ICM may be useful in determining the cognitive motivation and linguistic realizations of some illocutionary constructions.

Considerations of cost or benefit to speaker and hearer are an essential part of understanding the illocutionary value speech acts. We will now illustrate the cognitive version of the pragmatic scale proposed above by exemplifying some conventions.

For example, the declarative sentence below exemplifies the convention (a) of the Cost-Benefit ICM in that it describes a negative state-of-affairs for the speaker and functions as a request:

- It’s hot in here

And if the hearer wants to be polite, such an indirect request has the same effect as a more direct one.

Convention (b) makes unnecessary the use of a more direct and, consequently, less polite request:

- I don’t like being teased

Convention (c) is triggered by the following declarative utterance:

- I fancy an evening out

Here it is sufficient to expect that the hearer will do his best to satisfy the speaker’s wish.
The use of a negative-interrogative question illustrates the idea that the speaker knows that the hearer has the ability to perform the requested action, but that he is not willing to do so [convention (d)]:

- *I need more money*

Allowing for a low degree of optionality, the speaker’s speech act is impolite since he almost obliges the hearer to perform the action; the force of this request is thus close to that of an order.

Again, the use of a negative-interrogative question is an impolite speech act that entails a low level of optionality on the part of the hearer [convention (e)]:

- *Why don’t you buy those books?*

These formulations are based on a socio-cultural convention according to which we are generally expected to be helpful to other people and not do harm to them. In much the same way, we are entitled to be helped and not harmed. The concept of manifestness is used throughout the description of the ICM. A state of affairs is manifest to a person if the person can make a mental representation of it (Sperber & Wilson 1995). In constructing their messages, speakers trust that their addressees will be able to make a mental representation of what they want to communicate; even if it is a partial representation, they trust that it will be enough for their communicative purposes. The speaker may make use of more or less explicit mechanisms to make his illocutionary goal manifest to the hearer. Thus, the utterance *I'm thirsty* may function as a request to the extent that it is capable of making manifest to the hearer that there is a non-beneficial state of affairs affecting the speaker; in principle, it involves greater communicative risk than *Could I have a glass of water?*, which is based on a conventional request-construction.

Convention (f) illustrates the case in which the speaker is pleased about something and expresses his feeling to the hearer. A high percentage of congratulating corresponds to exclamations:

- *Well done! A great job!*

The same realizational resource is exploited in the case of the expression of thankfulness [convention (g)] whereby the speaker makes his gratitude manifest to his hearer:

- *Thank you a lot for your help!*

Any time a person behaves in an unexpected way and desires to apologize himself for his wrong action, he expresses his regret as in the utterance below [convention (h)]:

- *I’m sorry I couldn’t attend your lecture*

The expression of regret may be replied [convention (i)] by communicating one’s forgiveness for the other person’s inaction:

- *Don’t worry, it’s ok*
Convention (j) exemplifies the case in which the speaker desires to express his feeling of sympathy to the hearer for a non-beneficial state of affairs:

- *I’m sorry your sister died*

The declarative utterance below exemplifies the case in which the speaker is proud of his actions:

- *This is the best cake I’ve ever baked*

By means of convention (k), the speaker exults for being responsible of a positive state of affairs.

6. Conventional Realization of Requests

Grammatical devices differ in their potential to activate the relevant part of the semantic base of an illocutionary construction. The greater the ability of a formal string to activate a crucial element of the semantic base, the more prototypical the string may be said to be. To illustrate this point, take into consideration the case of request.

In the request scenario we may identify four features which refer in turn to the speaker’s perlocutionary effect he requires to be satisfied in a specific situation, whose semantic base exploits the cost-benefit ICM by means of conventional linguistic resources. Let us image that the speaker wants someone to bring him his sunglasses; the request scenario could be represented as follows:

(i) Illocutionary goal: getting H to go and bring S his sunglasses.
(ii) Situation: a lot of sunlight is bathing the garden, which bothers S.
(iii) Semantic base: the cost-benefit ICM.
(iv) Some conventional linguistic realizations:
   b. Can/Could you + please + VP? (*Can/Could you please pass me that box?*)
   c. Can’t you VP? (*Can’t you close the door?*)
   d. Will/would you VP? (*Will/Would you buy some bread?*)
   e. Won’t you VP? (*Won’t you bring me those letters?*)
   f. Imp + can you? (*Close the door, can you?*)
   g. Imp + will you? (*Open the window, will you?*)

6.1 Lexico-Grammatical Devices

Let us now consider in detail the following lexico-grammatical devices for the expression of requests and the way each realizational formula exploits the semantic base of the construction.

(a) Can/could you VP? \(\rightarrow\) *Can/could you close that window?*
Through application of part (a) of the cost-benefit ICM, H should have closed the window without being asked to do so; S then inquires about H’s capacity to close the window.

In most contexts, the 'can you/could you' construction gives easy access to the whole high-level scenario, which is then applied to the specific situation through the GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy. However, there may be cases of ambiguity. For example, *Can you lift that heavy box?* may just as well be a question about the hearer’s capacity to lift the box, unless we have a well-defined context where it is evident that the speaker needs the box to be lifted.

(b) Can/Could you + please + VP? ⇒ *Can/Could you please close the window?*

The cognitive operation of mitigation is here coded by means of an interpersonal adverb – please - whose function is that of increasing the degree of politeness. This is the typical case in which the cost-benefit ICM intertwines with the politeness ICM.

(c) Can’t you VP? ⇒ *Can’t you close the window?*

Through application of part (a) of the cost-benefit ICM, H should have closed the window without being asked to do so; since in normal circumstances S may expect that H has the ability to close the window, S inquires about any unexpected inability on the part of H to perform the action.

In unmarked contexts, this construction has a strong power to give access to the whole directive scenario, especially because it suggests that the speaker expects the hearer to be able to perform the required action anyway. In a marked context, it is possible to cancel out the preferred request interpretation of this construction: *Can’t you hear the wind howl?* In a context where H is not expected to do anything about the situation, especially because of the use of a perception rather than an action verb.

(d) Will/would you VP? ⇒ *Will/would you close the window?*

Through application of part (a) of the cost-benefit ICM, H should have closed the window without being asked to do so; S then inquires about H’s willingness to close the window. In unmarked contexts, this construction will yield a preferred request reading. But it may work as a question: *Will you find more love in her than in me?*

(e) Won’t you VP? ⇒ *Won’t you close the window?*

Through application of part (a) of the cost-benefit ICM, H should have closed the window without being asked to do so; since in normal circumstances S may expect that H should be willing to close the window, S inquires about any unexpected unwillingness on the part of H to perform the action.
In unmarked contexts, this structure has a strong power to produce a request, since it suggests that the speaker expected the hearer to perform the action anyway. In marked contexts, it is possible to use it to ask questions: *Won't you be my neighbor next year?*

(f)

\[ \text{Imp + can you? } \rightarrow \text{Open the window, can you?} \]

The rationale here is the same but there is a greater degree of conventionalization of the illocutionary value. Compare:

- *Can you lift that heavy box?* [may be read as a question about H’s ability]
- *Lift that heavy box, can you?* [may only be read as a request]

It should be noted that devices like some tags (*can you/will you*) and inserts like *please* affect the construction differently depending on whether the conditions for commands, advising or offers hold:

- *Do that, will you?* [tag mitigates command]
- *Buy that car, will you?* [tag reinforces piece of advice]
- *Eat some more cake, will you?* [tag reinforces offer]

(g)

\[ \text{Imp + will you? } \rightarrow \text{Open the window, will you?} \]

The degree of conventionalization of the illocutionary value in the examples below is even greater. Compare:

- *Will you buy the tickets tomorrow?* [may be read as a question about the future]
- *Buy the tickets tomorrow, will you?* [may only be read as a request].

### 6.2 Some Less Conventional Linguistic Realizations:

Consider now some further linguistic realizations:

- (h) I need
- (i) I want
- (j) I wish
- (k) If only I had
- (l) I’d rather
- (m) You’d better

Take the case of a declarative construction:

(h)

\[ I \text{ need a coat} \]

Through the application of part (d) of the cost-benefit ICM, S manifests that a potential state of affairs is beneficial to S and S is expected to make this manifest to H. In turn, H is required to activate an inference to do what he is expected to do, i.e. to bring S a coat. It
means that a declarative construction may serve to perform a request. The same applies to the utterance below:

(i)  
*I want a glass of wine*

The rationale here is the same as before, but the manifestness of the speaker’s desire is made even more explicit and, along a cline going from requesting to ordering, (i) is closer to the ordering end.

(j)  
*I wish this room were warmer*

The *wish* construction exploits part (d) of the cost-benefit ICM, whereby S makes his wish manifest to H, who is expected to infer S’s wish and to satisfy such wish, e.g. by heating the room.

(k)  
*If only I had my newspaper!*

The rationale here is the same as in (j) but the construction is a bit more indirect. The same can be said for the construction below:

(l)  
*I’d rather like a cup of coffee*

(m)  
*You’d better leave at once*

The request of leaving by means of a statement shows a very low degree of conventionalization and the utterance may be interpreted as a threat.

To the above unconventional linguistic realizations, some others may be added which accommodate along a less prototypical cline:

(n)  
*Can’t you see there is wind coming in?*

In this realization, S treats H as if, counter to all expectations, H had not realized that there is a situation that affects A negatively.

(o)  
*There is too much wind coming in through the window.*

Here S treats H as if H had not realized that there is a situation that affects A negatively and tries to make the situation manifest to H.

(p)  
*Aren’t you feeling cold?*

The rationale here is that if H felt cold, H would know that S may feel cold too; S inquires as to whether H feels cold in order to make H aware that S may feel cold too and closes the
window in the application of part (a) of the cost-benefit ICM. Note that on the basis of this part of the cost-benefit ICM, H also has a right to believe that S should close the window if S knows that it is cold, which could make it easier for H to challenge S in this case.

So far we have seen that the pragmatic cost-benefit scale (and therefore our re-elaboration in terms of cognitive model theory) applies to traditional directives and commissives, as already shown by Leech 1983, but it also applies to expressive speech acts to the extent that they are regulatory of speaker-hearer interaction. The Cost-Benefit ICM may be thus defined as a cluster of sub-models (which may be regarded as “scenarios” because of their situational nature), which roughly correspond to the traditional three-fold division of speech acts into directives, commissives, and expressives. In other words, the Cost-Benefit ICM generalizes over specific characteristics of illocutionary scenarios of different kinds and finds common structure plus logical implications and interactional connections among them.

Finally, in Leech’s cost-benefit scale, a benefit to H will involve a cost to S and vice-versa. However, in the formulation of the Cost-Benefit ICM we propose, explicit mention of cost has been avoided since it may be derived as a logical implication when relevant (e.g. bringing about a state of affairs which is beneficial to H may involve a cost to S). Our formulation has the advantage of including non-directive and non-commissive items as part of the ICM, which endows the model with greater parsimony and explanatory power.

7. Concluding Remarks

Our analysis of illocutionary constructions, although necessarily incomplete, has been enough to show that their semantic base consists of high-level situational meaning. In this respect, we have given evidence that the Cost-Benefit ICM, postulated by Pérez & Ruiz de Mendoza (2002), captures all the relevant information from high-level scenarios associated with all speech act categories. We have further examined the rationales for a number of conventionalized directive realizational formulas and have explored their realizational potential. We have finally argued that the linguistic realization of illocutionary meaning is based upon the use of different lexicogrammatical resources that exhibit an instantiation potential for relevant parts of the semantic base of constructions, in connection to a context of situation (which may also instantiated relevant parts of the semantic base).
References


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