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Motivation and constraints of illocution in the lexical constructional model: the case of the *Aux NP* construction

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses the motivation and constraints of illocutionary meaning production. Within the framework of the *Lexical Constructional Model* (LCM), I explore how our knowledge of illocution is understood in terms of high-level situational models which are activated to produce speech act meaning and the way such operations motivate the conventionalized value of linguistic expressions. In so doing, I analyze the realization procedures of the *Aux NP* construction in relation to their potential to exploit the semantic base of requestive acts. I will study the most conventional linguistic realizations of the construction and explore the way in which such realizations are used to produce a requestive meaning. The resulting account provides a comprehensive understanding of the constructional nature of illocutionary meaning on the basis of naturally occurring data.

Keywords: *Illocution, cognitive models, conceptual metonymy, conventionalization, idiomatic construction, requestive speech acts, Lexical Constructional Model.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The existence of conventional speech acts was first dealt with by Searle (1975) early in the development of speech act theory. While pragmaticists have generally neglected the conventionalization of illocution (Leech 1983; Sperber and Wilson, 1995, *inter alia*), the systemic-functional approach (Halliday 1994; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004) and Dik's (1989, 1997) functional account have devoted a great effort to formalize the value of conventional speech acts. In general terms, functional grammar theories have argued for sentence types as codified carriers of basic illocutions, the remaining resulting from derivation processes or from the language options. Alternatively, the cognitive linguistic approach has accounted for illocution in terms of metonymically grounded inferential schemas which become conventionalized through usage (Pérez 2001; Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza 2002; Panther and Thornburg 2003; Stefanowitsch, 2003; Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi 2007; Brdar-Szabó 2009). Conventional illocutions have been discussed as

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constructions (i.e. form-meaning pairings, like those described by Lakoff 1987; and Goldberg 1995, 2006) that have entrenched speech act values.

On the grounds of the observations on the constructional nature of speech acts, the *Lexical Constructional Model* (LCM) (Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal 2008, 2011; Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza 2009; Butler 2009) has incorporated illocution as part of a meaning construction system. The LCM, which draws insights from functional models of language, Cognitive Linguistics and constructionist approaches, especially from the work by Goldberg (1995, 2006), is concerned with the connections between syntax and all aspects of meaning construction, positing four levels of representation: level 1 deals with lexical and constructional argument structure, level 2 with implicated meaning captured by low-level models, level 3 with conventionalized illocutionary meaning and level 4 with discourse aspects, 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. The integration of lower-level structures into higher-level ones is regulated by two cognitive processes, constructional subsumption and cued inferencing. Constructional subsumption is the constrained incorporation of lower level structures into higher level configurations. Cued inferencing is a form of linguistically guided interpretation based on cognitive operations such as metaphor, metonymy, reinforcement and mitigation, among others. The LCM aims at the highest possible degree of explanatory adequacy, insofar as it avoids the proliferation of analytical categories. Instead, it assumes that all levels of linguistic description and explanation may make use of the same or at least comparable cognitive processes. This assumption is termed the *equipollence hypothesis*, which has enabled the model to achieve a high degree of regularity and parsimony in the study of meaning construction. Several linguistic processes have been attested to be pervasive in different levels of meaning construction, such as lexical-constructional integration, subsumption, metaphor and metonymy and inferential activity.

The illocutionary component of the LCM treats constructions as form-meaning pairings like other kinds of construction. What distinguishes illocutionary constructions from the others is the idiomatic nature of the linguistic form and the situational generic grounding. Constructions with an illocutionary meaning have also been dealt with at the

layer of argument structure, as in the case of the manipulative subjective-transitive construction (e.g. *I want you out by lunchtime*) studied by Ruiz de Mendoza and Gonzálvez (2010). Even though the LCM has not provided an inventory of illocutionary constructions, its explanatory apparatus is consistent with the descriptions developed by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007). In their approach, illocutionary constructions are discussed in terms of the metonymic activation of high-level scenarios in application of a number of socio-cultural conventions stipulated within a description labeled the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. This article develops the illocutionary layer of the LCM by analyzing how cognitive models are exploited by speakers to produce speech act meaning and the way such operations motivate the conventionalized illocutionary value of linguistic expressions. In so doing, it analyzes the cognitive grounding of the *Aux NP* requestive construction and its various realization procedures. On the basis of the LCM notion of situational meaning, this work formulates a generic structure for requestive acts and examines the reasoning schemas behind the different lexico-grammatical resources used for their expression.

The understanding of illocution in terms of the constructional realizations that activate pieces of knowledge makes necessary to provide a refined description of the cognitive model types involved and of all the mechanisms that take part in meaning derivation. This is not only for the LCM account but also for other cognitively-oriented theories where illocutionary expression is considered realizational of semantic structures. This will be made apparent by a brief revision of the shortcomings presented by cognitive approaches to illocution. Then it will be shown how these shortcomings are overcome within the constructionist perspective of the LCM, which has been preliminary outlined by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007). It will be further explained the cognitive model types underlying implicit meaning derivation and how the activation of high-level scenarios yields illocutionary acts which may become conventionalized. The analytical tools proposed by the LCM will be used to study the conventional and non-conventional realizations of the *Aux NP* construction and the way such realizations produce requestive illocutions, giving evidence of their explanatory adequacy.

II. THE COGNITION OF ILLOCUTION

Within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics, Panther and Thornburg (1998: 756) have addressed illocution by pointing to the problems that the lack of consideration of the cognitive mechanisms has caused in inferential approaches, which are, first, the fact that, even though illocutionary interpretation is based on inference, speakers can grasp the indirect force of a speech act effortlessly (e.g. the request value of *Could you pass me the salt?*); and second, that they ignore the inference mechanisms involved in the interpretation of illocution as well as their cognitive grounding. In order to overcome these two shortcomings, Panther and Thornburg (1998, 2004) propose that our knowledge of illocutionary meaning is organized in the form of scenarios, which are conceptual constructs of meaning representation abstracted away from prototypical situations where people attempt to get their needs satisfied through expressions of different kinds. Illocutionary scenarios are stored in long-term memory and can be accessed metonymically by activating relevant parts in them. For example, indirect requests such as *Can you open the window?*, *Will you shut the door?* and *Do you have hot coffee?* activate pre-conditions for the performance of a request, which are the addressee's ability and willingness to help, and his possession of the required object. The activation of these pre-conditions affords access to the whole speech act category of requesting.[1]

The key elements that make Panther and Thornburg's proposal interesting from a cognitive perspective are storage in long-term memory and metonymic instantiation. Their formulation has been revised, however, due to the lack of consideration of socio-cultural variables that affect inferencing. These variables are listed by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007: 103) as the following: (i) the power relationship between speakers, (ii) the degree of optionality conveyed, (iii) the degree of politeness, (iv) the degree of cost-benefit, (v) the degree of prototypicality, (vi) the semantic motivation of different kinds of indirect speech acts, and (vii) the cognitive grounding of illocutions. In Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's proposal, following preliminary work by Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza (2002), socio-cultural variables of this kind are captured by cognitive models that combine with scenarios and form what they call high-level situational models.

High-level models are constructed on the basis of generalizations over cases of everyday interaction where people attempt to satisfy or report their needs. Everyday interaction is captured by low-level situational models, which consist in life scenarios such as taking a taxi, going to the dentist, teaching a class, and the like (see Ruiz de Mendoza, 2007, for a thorough description of cognitive model types). The activation of low-level scenarios produces implicated meaning. An example is provided by *I waved down a taxi*, where the waving sign implies that the speaker got into the taxi, he asked the driver to take him to the destination, and that he arrived safely. The implicature is obtained through the metonymic access to one relevant part of a low-level model about taking a taxi. The abstraction over the common structure shared by low-level models allows us to construct higher-level representations. For instance, from our observation of people begging in a wide range of contexts, we derive generic structure which makes up the high-level model of begging and allows us to interpret each specific instance.[2] In contrast to low-level models, high-level models capture a number of socio-cultural generalizations that carry different types of pragmatic information like optionality, politeness and cost-benefit variables. These variables derive from a single description called the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, which is defined by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) as a high-level model based on the concept of mutual manifestness proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1995). The *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* captures the relevant socio-cultural information of high-level scenarios associated to illocutionary meaning. Let us reproduce Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's (2007: 111) formulation of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* in order to explain how it underlies the construing of illocutionary meaning:

(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 A.

(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 it 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.

Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi place the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* at the core of the derivation of illocutionary meaning. In their view, the activation of relevant parts of the model creates an inferential path which can become conventionalized. A case in point is the *Can You VP?* sequence for requests, which was originally intended as a way of reminding the addressee to help if it was within his range of abilities. This value was obtained through the activation of part (c) of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. This convention structures the high-level model of requests and shapes their definitional parameters (i.e. optionality and politeness). The repeated use of the *Can You VP?* expression in request contexts conventionalized their meaning to the extent that it ended up yielding a default illocutionary value. Conventional forms of this kind have constructional status, that is, they are the formal part of form-meaning pairings conveying an illocutionary act. By contrast, those expressions which are unable to supply relevant points of access to the convention that shapes the conceptual

representation of a speech act category require inferential activity to produce illocutionary meaning, which is regulated through metonymic access to high-level models, much in the same way as Panther and Thornburg (1998, 2004) have claimed. The theoretical implications of constructional conventionalization in terms of the application of socio-cultural norms are approached at a later stage in this article.

III. ILLOCUTIONARY CONSTRUCTIONS

Since Searle (1975) acknowledged that certain linguistic forms became conventionally accepted for the performance of an indirect illocutionary force, the research on the issue has received a great deal of attention. One of the most important contributions to the subject has been carried out by functional grammar theories (Dik 1989, 1997; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004), which have been largely criticized for overgrammatizalizing illocutionary phenomena which could be accounted for within the domain of pragmatics (see Leech 1983: 56; Butler 1996: 66, for criticism in this direction). Nevertheless, although the emphasis placed within functional approaches on the grammatical side of language lacks of consideration of inferential reasoning, this position has managed to incorporate into grammar a number of relevant illocutionary distinctions which had been assigned to pragmatics. The development of a constructional approach like the one put forward in this study comes closer to the work by other functionalists like Risselada (1993), who disagrees with the idea that grammatical mood codifies basic speech act types, given the wide variety of illocutionary meanings that each mood option has, and rather suggests assigning a certain illocutionary value to each sentence type and counting them as reference points. Risselada's (1993: 74) approach to illocution is based on the assumption that the illocutionary force of speech act types is expressed by means of combinations of the linguistic properties that reflect the characteristic features of the speech act involved. In its most explicit form, an utterance expresses all the essential features of a speech act category. Implicit utterances, by contrast, are due to pragmatic variables such as power or politeness or to the fact that the shared background knowledge provides speakers with the necessary information to derive their illocutionary value.[3] Even though Risselada does not explicitly talk about constructions in her account, her proposal covertly points to a constructional view of illocution. Her

pairings of formal properties of speech acts with illocutionary meaning cannot be regarded otherwise. This theory is in line with cognitively-oriented approaches such as the one put forward by Ruiz de Mendoza (1999), later developed in Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's (2007) work. Ruiz de Mendoza's notion of *specialization of function*, like Risselada's *degree of explicitness*, defines the ability of a given expression to activate a higher or lower number of meaning conditions of a speech act type.

Following Risselada's and Ruiz de Mendoza's insights and working within Cognitive Linguistics, Pérez (2001), puts forward an approach to illocution according to which the meaning conditions of speech act categories were paired with the linguistic means through (i.e. realization procedures) which they were communicated.[4] The notion of illocutionary construction posited by Pérez refines Risselada's and Ruiz de Mendoza's work in two aspects. In the first place, Pérez extends the concept to include linguistic properties such as sentence type, grammatical resources, lexical elements and suprasegmental features. This is quite an advantage, since they serve to increase the level of specialization of an expression to convey an illocutionary force. The type of illocutionary construction put forward in the present study also captures the array of properties proposed by Pérez. The second refinement is that the semantic makeup of illocutionary constructions is accounted for in terms of propositional ICMs specifying the meaning conditions of a speech act category. In this way, Pérez views constructions as pairings of form and function, where form consists in realization procedures capable of activating the semantic variables of an ICM. The higher the number of variables that are activated by a realization procedure, the more prototypical the realization is for the expression of an illocutionary act. However, Pérez does not refer to these realizations as constructions with fixed and modifiable elements.

In contrast to Pérez, Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) do recognize a constructional status for those formulations with instantiation potential for the corresponding scenario. As has been explained above, these authors contend that expressions which become entrenched as inferential shortcuts acquire a constructional character. The *Can You VP?* construction mentioned before is a case in point. Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's proposal regards constructions as conventionalized linguistic forms whose capacity to activate parts of a scenario becomes conventionalized. Such a conception of the term is

similar to the one put forward by Pérez, although differs from the latter in two essential aspects. The first difference concerns the semantic structure of the construction, structured in the form of cultural high-level models. As has been explained, high-level models are conceptual representations of abstract knowledge of illocutionary meaning. The formulation of high-level models to account for illocution seeks to capture the multi-faced amount of information that speakers possess during communication. Later it will be shown that the description of illocutionary acts in terms of high-level models attains a greater degree of explanatory adequacy. The second difference has to do with the formal composition of illocutionary constructions. Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi consider all the realization procedures specified by Pérez (e.g. grammatical resources, lexical items, intonation, etc.), with the difference that they are arranged into stable structural configurations. A description of illocutionary acts in terms of Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's constructions is very attractive for the following reasons: (i) it accounts for the motivation of form from meaning, and (ii) it makes it possible to build into grammar a wide range of illocutionary values.

The LCM elaborates on the view of illocution that has been proposed by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi. Illocutionary constructions are conventionalized linguistic forms whose capacity to activate parts of a high-level scenario becomes conventionalized. The LCM approach, however, refines their account by placing a stronger emphasis on the constructional composition of illocution and regard illocutionary constructions as form-meaning pairings made up of fixed (*Can You* in *Can You VP?*) and modifiable (*VP* in *Can You VP?*) elements. The fixed elements cannot be changed without altering the meaning implications conveyed and the variable elements can be parametrized in a constrained way. Constructions may also incorporate further elements with a wide range of meaning implications (e.g. the adverb *please* or beneficiary indicators in the case of requests). Illocutionary constructions may also have to a degree of variation in their form with a consequent variation in their meaning. Sequences like *Could You VP?* and *Do You Think You Could VP?* are variations of the *Can You VP?* construction. The meaning variation of these constructional variants is associated with degrees of indirectness and politeness as well as differences in register. Because of this, the LCM accounts for constructions that have elements in common in terms of family resemblance relationships (Ruiz de Mendoza and Gonzálvez 2010).[5] A case in point is

the *Aux NP* construction, which can be realized in many different ways to produce requestive speech acts. The constructional realizations of the *Aux NP* form are analyzed to explore their grounding in the conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* and the interplay between linguistic structures instantiating requests and their conceptual motivation. Throughout the analysis I provide evidence in support of the LCM approach to illocution in terms of high-level scenarios and conventional constructions.

IV. REQUESTIVE SPEECH ACTS

Requestive speech acts ask other people to act in the way we want them to. Requestive illocutions ranges over many diverse acts like asking, ordering or begging. Before we go into the differences among these values, it should be noted that they are all included by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) within a broad category of illocutionary acts that instruct the addressee to act to the speaker's benefit. Let us consider the conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* that structure the cognitive grounding of requestive acts:

> *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*.

Even though requestive illocutions are understood against the same socio-cultural background (that we have to satisfy other people's needs), they are distinct in nature. We should first differentiate ordering from requesting and then requesting from begging. What distinguishes ordering from requesting has to do with the ratings of the power variable. In orders, speakers hold a position of authority over their addressees. Because of this authority, the speaker who utters an order works under the expectation that the addressee will carry out the action. The addressee's lack of optionality to decide upon the realization of the action triggers off the required response. This is not the case with requests, which are performed by speakers who do not have any kind of authority over their addressees. However, this does not mean that the addressee's optionality is unconstrained, since his choice is restrained by the conventions that bind him to help the

speaker if it is within his range of abilities. The power component that makes orders different from requests has led Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi to address these categories as distinct illocutions. By contrast, requesting is considered within the same category as begging, in spite of presenting important differences. Unlike requests, in begging the speaker believes that the addressee is not desirous to give him what he wants and adopts a submissive role to obtain the addressee's compliance. This distinction is manifested through different constructional realizations. While requests tend to use mitigators or beneficiary indicators, beggings use repetitions and exclamations. Nevertheless, acts of requesting and begging display the same cost-benefit ratings and are considered within the same category. In keeping with Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi's account, this study of requestive speech acts agrees in differentiating orders from requests based on the power variable and also in considering begging as a special form of requesting.

The present analysis will only consider the illocutionary acts contained within the category of requesting. Although the *Aux NP* form can be found in the performance of orders, as will be shown in next section, the meaning conditions of the construction are directly tied to the semantics of requesting and needs to be approached in relation to requests. To see how the various linguistic realizations of the construction express requestive values, it is necessary to define the meaning conditions that make up the generic structure of this illocutionary category. Hence I will put forward a high-level scenario for requests by generalizing over the features of requesting scenarios grounded in the two conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. We derive the generic structure of requests from everyday situations where we attempt to get our needs satisfied by other people.[6] Two possible low-level scenarios for requesting encompass a situation in which a person in a needful situation makes somebody else aware of his ability to help and a situation in which a person is asking for help while pretending he is not in need. These low-level scenarios have elements in common upon which the high-level scenario may be constructed. This generic structure captures the semantics of the act of requesting:

(a) A person is in need of something.

(b) The person makes somebody else aware of the need.

(c) The person makes this other person aware of his ability to help.

(d) The person appeals to the addressee's willingness.

(e) The addressee may be persuaded to help.

The realizational resources for this scenario may be exemplified in the following utterances:

(1) I am thirsty.

(2) Maybe I could have a glass of water.

(3) Can you give me a glass of water?

(4) Would you give me a glass of water?

(5) You will give me a glass of water, won't you?

The above realizations instantiate relevant parts of the scenario formulated for requests. Utterances (1) and (2) point to the manifestness of the needful situation in which the speaker finds himself. Utterances (3) and (4) address the addressee's ability and willingness to satisfy the speaker's need respectively. These examples are instances of the *Aux NP* construction parametrizing the meaning value with different degrees of mitigation. To finish with, utterance (5) spells out that the addressee should be willing to help in compliance with socio-cultural conventions. As will be shown in the next section, the use of various realization procedures in requests displays peculiarities in meaning that reveal different forms of construing a shared conceptual representation.

V. THE *AUX NP* CONSTRUCTION

The *Aux NP* construction is probably the most conventional form for the performance of requests. The formal part of this construction consists of an auxiliary plus a second person subject and a variable verb. The high-level scenario for requests constitutes the semantic base of the construction. This scenario is a manifestation of the conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* according to which speakers should be willing to help others if it is within their range of abilities. The requestive meaning of the construction was originally derived by means of an inferential schema giving access to these conventions, and has become conventionalized through usage. Let us see how this meaning value is parametrized through various realization procedures.

V.1. The *can you* realization

The different realization procedures of the construction are primarily related to the auxiliary verb, as the subject pronoun is almost invariable.[7] The auxiliary is realized by a modal verb.[8] Modal verbs capture the relations between participants and the realization of the state of affairs in which they are involved (Dik 1989: 205). They include distinctions related to ability and willingness and also to the obligation or permission imposed on participants. One of the most recurring modals used is the form *can*, mostly due to the fact that the parameter of the addressee's ability is relevant to requests. In application of the conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, the *can you* form asks the addressee about his capacity to do something for the speaker. Asking the addressee about his capacity to act makes him aware that he is indeed able to carry out the action and reminds him that he is culturally bound to act if he has the ability to do so. In most contexts, this realization gives easy access to the high-level scenario, which is then applied to the specific situation. However, there may be cases where this procedure does not fit to be used as a request. By way of illustration, consider the following examples:[9]

(6) Can you *see* into the future? (Google Books)

(7) Can you *smell* the flowers? (Coca)

(8) Can you *drive* a truck? (Google Books)

(9) Can you *speak* German? (Bnc)

Utterances above are cases of the construction that function as mere questions.[10] This is due to the parametrization of the variable verb, which needs to be realized by an action-controlling denoting action involving some kind of benefit to the speaker in order to yield a request interpretation. In (6) and (7), the verb denotes a non-controllable activity, which is incompatible with the nature of requesting. In (8) and (9), the verb designates a controllable action but there is no indication of the potential benefit to be obtained by the speaker. These utterances could only be interpreted as requests in marked contexts where it is clear that the speaker is interested in getting the action carried out and that the performance of the action involves some benefit to the speaker. The fact that the

action is beneficial to the speaker is generally made explicit through the use of a beneficiary indicator. The instances of the construction featuring this characteristic convey an easy request value:

(10) Can you bring *me* my purse? (Google Books)

(11) Can you get *me* a drink? (Coca)

(12) Can you write down a recipe *for me*? (Google Books)

A similar effect is achieved through the use of mitigating devices, which have the function of softening the directive force of the request or of urging the addressee to act in the way described:

(13) Can you *please* give me a second? (Coca)

(14) Can you *kindly* open the door? (Google Books)

The request interpretation is coded here by the interpersonal adverbs *please* and *kindly*, whose function is that of increasing the degree of politeness. The mitigation brought about by resources of this kind is motivated by the need to soften the impact of the request by increasing the degree of the addressee's optionality. Granting someone with optionality is regarded as a sign of politeness in our social system and optionality and politeness are thus closely intertwined. Even higher degrees of politeness can be achieved through the use of other mitigating strategies, like the replacement of *can* for *could*. Past modals increase the indirectness of requests, thereby offering the addressee a greater degree of optionality to comply with the speaker's wishes (see Taylor, 1995, and Pérez, 2001, for an explanation of the mitigation of past modals in cognitive terms).[11] The following examples illustrate this:

(15) Could you pass me the sugar? (Google Books)

(16) Could you complete the questionnaire for me? (Google Books)

Utterances (15) and (16) above display the highest degree of specialization as realization procedures for requests. First, because the past form of the modal does not only point to the addressee's ability to carry out the action but also to his willingness by giving him optionality. This activates one further variable of the scenario: mitigation. Thanks to the mitigating properties of past modal verbs, these two examples manage to

make this aspect of requests explicit. And second, because the speaker's interest in getting the action carried out is conveyed through beneficiary indicators (i.e. *me* and *for me*). The instantiation of these parts of the high-level scenario makes the interpretation of these utterances as instances of requesting straightforward. The degree of mitigation conveyed by the past form of *could* can be further increased with the addition of the adverb *please*. There are occasions on which higher degrees of mitigation are required in the performance of a request. Consider situations in which the cost of the requested action is significant, as in (17), or in which the context of the utterance is formal, as in (18):

(17) Could you *please* hurry home and watch the children for me? (Google Books)

(18) Could you *please* bring me a cup of hot coffee? (Coca)

The diverse mitigation strategies found in (17) and (18) give rise to subtle formal realizations which, by activating a higher number of variables of the scenario, constitute even more specialized procedures.

V.2. The *will you* realization

Another common way of parametrizing the auxiliary verb of the *Aux NP* form is through the use of the modal *will* appealing to his willingness to act to the speaker's benefit. Through application of the conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, the addressee should be willing to perform an action to the speaker's benefit. The *will you* form enquires about the addressee's willingness to act. In unmarked contexts, this realization procedure yields a preferred conventional request interpretation, but it may function as a question:

(19) Will you find true love? (Google Books)

(20) Will you ever go back to the world of business? (Coca)

Likewise, this type of realization could be used to perform different speech acts like advising and offering. This is so because the modal *will* is affected in various ways depending on the conditions that apply in each particular interaction. The following are some examples of such a situation:

(21) Will you buy that car? It's such a beauty. (Coca)

(22) Will you eat some more cake? (Google Books)

For this realization procedure to produce a request reading, the specified action has to be beneficial for the speaker. This information can be clear from the context or made explicit through beneficiary indicators. Its explicitation obviously results in more codified instances of requesting. Observe how the manifestness of this part of the high-level scenario increases the degree of specialization to the extent that it is not possible to interpret utterances as instances of a different speech act:

(23) Will you lend *me* money? (Coca)

(24) Will you buy *me* a pencil set for Christmas? (Bnc)

The impact of the resulting request can be mitigated through the use of *please*. This adverb generally indicates that the speaker seeks a benefit from the realization of the action, but it may occasionally have the opposite effect. In some cases, the adverb may produce forceful demands by implying that the addressee should have acted as required without being told to do so. This use of *please* is reinforced by an imposing falling intonation. This type of intonation is often used by people who have some kind of authority over their addressees. Compare the different uses of the adverb in (25) and (26) below:

(25) Will you hold the door open for me, *please*? (Google Books)

(26) Will you *please* bring me my back my bag? (Coca)

As was the case with the previous type of realization, the request meaning can be further specified by means of a past form. It has already been explained that the past tense displays a mitigation that seems appropriate for the politeness that is expected in the performance of requests. By increasing the addressee's optionality, the use of the form *would* softens the force of the act and points with increasing certainty to a request interpretation:

(27) Would you drive me to the station? (Bnc)

(28) Would you give me a hand with the washing up? (Google Books)

Because of its instantiation potential for the mitigation that is proper of requests, the *would you* sequence represents a highly conventionalized procedure. Needless to say that the combination of this type of realization with the adverb *please* results in even more polite and thus adapted instances of requesting as in the following examples:

(29) Would you please tell me where the library is? (Google Books)

(30) Would you please pass the steak sauce? (Coca)

As may become apparent by (29) and (30), the use of these resources increases the degree of politeness of this realization that fits best in formal contexts where there is a distant relationship between participants.

V.3. Negated modals

The use of negated modals is another type of realization procedure of the construction under scrutiny, although its request meaning is less explicit than in the previous cases. The reasoning schema behind this realization affords metonymic access to the parts of the scenario where the speaker appeals either to the addressee's ability or willingness to comply, but the negated form of the modal presupposes the addressee's refusal, which gives rise to unmitigated requests marked by their impoliteness. Let us see how this meaning is conveyed through the negated form of *can* in the examples:

(31) Can't you behave properly? (Coca)

(32) Can't you wipe your feet on the rug? (Google Books)

Through application of the conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, the addressee should have acted as required without being asked to do so. Since in normal circumstances, the speaker would expect that the addressee has the ability to act, he enquires about any unexpected inability on the part of the addressee to carry out the action. In unmarked contexts, this realization procedure has a strong power to activate the directive scenario, particularly because it makes explicit the speaker's expectation that the addressee has the ability to perform the action. The request interpretation of the construction can be cancelled out uttered in a marked context where the addressee is not abided to do anything about the situation described (cf. *Can't you hear the whistle blowing?*).

We may find a related realization procedure making use of the negated form of *will*. In this case, the verb used does not assume the addressee's inability but rather his unwillingness to comply with the speaker's wish. See how this type of realization gives rise to a request:

(33) Won't you sit quiet? (Coca)

(34) Won't you close the window? (Google Books)

In (33) and (34), the addressee has not carried out the required action counter to expectations and the speaker enquires about any unexpected unwillingness on this part. This realization procedure produces a request interpretation by reminding the addressee that he is abided to act by socio-cultural conventions. The sequence can be nonetheless function as a question (cf. *Won't you buy clothes online anymore?*) in contexts where the addressee is not expected to act. Realizations with negated modals can be performed as well by means of the imperative sentence type. Take the case of the following examples:

(35) Calm down, can't you? (Coca)

(36) Hurry up, won't you? (Google Books)

In contrast to interrogative-based realizations, the use of imperative sentences indicates irritation on the part of a speaker who is urging the addressee to act. The resulting request is thus more forceful and the optionality of the addressee is notably reduced.

V.4. Conditional forms

Conditional forms are recognized as a conventional pragmatic mitigator of directive values (see Dancygier and Sweetser, 2005 and Fauconnier, 1985, among others). In the case of requests, the use of the conditional tense is meant to distance the addressee from the required action. This opens up the degree of addressee's optionality, which reduces the force of the act by increasing the indirectness of the request. The most common ways of using a conditional in the construction are the following:

(37) Would you mind if I use your bathroom? (Coca)

(38) Would you mind handing me that book over there? (Google Books)

Utterance (37) is a request for permission. These differ from prototypical cases of requesting in that both the speaker and the addressee are expected to perform the action: the speaker will carry out the action that the addressee will grant permission. Requests for permission are therefore conditional. The action will be carried out only if the addressee gives his consent. This conditional character finds an adapted vehicle for expression in this realization procedure. This case differs from the one observed in (38). Utterance (38) exemplifies a request that makes use of the conditional appealing to the addressee's willingness to comply. In application of the conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, we are expected to do our best to help others and, at the same time, they expect not to be put to too great an effort in that respect. The conditional form tells the addressee that if the carrying out of the action is too costly for him, he can choose not to do it. The same realization can be used with the opposite meaning, that is, reducing the addressee's freedom by reminding him he should act as required in compliance with the principles of interaction:

(39) Would you mind not smoking? (Coca)

In (39), the addressee is treated as if he had not realized that he is acting in a way that is negative for the speaker. The conditional form appeals to his willingness to stop the negative action in compliance with socio-cultural conventions. The resulting act is forceful and impolite. In addition to these conventional realization procedures, there are others that accommodate along a prototypical cline. Consider:

(40) Would you be so kind as to bump up the temperature in here by a degree or two? (Coca)

(41) Would you be so kind as to water my plants while I'm away? (Google Books)

The previous type of realization mitigated the act of requesting by increasing the addressee's optionality in relation to the cost-benefit variable. The realization procedure illustrated in (40) and (41) above, the mitigation is upgraded in relation to the politeness parameter. By enquiring about the addressee's willingness, the speaker is in fact reminding the addressee that he is bound by conventions to act if it is within his range of abilities. When the required action is presented as seeking a benefit for the speaker, the conditional softens the force of the act and functions as a mitigating device. By contrast, when the action is presented as an alternative of something negative being

done by the addressee, the conditional is used to force the addressee to consider the underlying conventions, thereby rendering an impolite act:

(42) Would you be so kind as to remove your feet from the table? (Google Books)

In the example, the speaker treats the addressee as if he were not observing the conventions of politeness, giving rise to an impolite request that forces the addressee to act as required.

V.5. Summary of realization procedures of the *Aux NP* construction

Table 1 below provides a non-exhaustive description of the meaning conditions of the high-level scenario for requests and the ways in which they attain linguistic expression through the various realizations of the *Aux NP* construction.

Table 1. Realization procedures of the *Aux NP* construction

Request scenario	**Realization procedures**
Speaker's need	Beneficiary indicators (*for me*)
Speaker's willingness	Conditional forms, beneficiary indicators (*for me*)
Addressee's ability	Can you…? Could you…? Can't you…?
Addressee's willingness	Will you…? Would you…? Won't you…?
Cost-benefit ratings	Would you mind…? Would you be so kind…?
Optionality	Past modals (*could*, *would*), use of *please*, conditional forms, beneficiary indicators (*for me*)
Mitigation	Past modals (*could*, *would*), conditional forms, interpersonal adverbs (*please*, *kindly*), mild intonation and stress

VI. CONCLUSION

The present work is a case study of the constructional composition of illocutionary meaning within the LCM. The type of illocutionary constructions postulated here pair

the semantic makeup of speech acts with the constructional realizations through which they are communicated. The formal composition of constructions includes properties such as sentence type, grammatical elements, lexical properties and suprasegmental features. The meaning conditions defined in the high-level scenario include semantic variables and pragmatic features like power, politeness, optionality and cost-benefit variables. Such variables are culture-specific and their realization is related to the context of situation of each interactional exchange. High-level scenarios provide the base of a vast number of illocutionary constructions for a speech act type. The different meaning conditions of high-level scenarios are activated through diverse linguistic resources, giving rise to constructions with different degrees of codification. The higher the degree of codification of a construction, the easier it is to grasp the intended meaning and the more specialized the construction is. Conversely, if a construction is implicit but still attains important levels of effectiveness by giving access to relevant parts of a scenario, it is likely to be conventionalized for a specific illocutionary value. The process whereby constructions become conventionalized is constrained by socio-cultural conventions of the kind postulated within *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. The interpretation of non-conventional constructions requires the use of inference and relies on the realization of variable elements and contextual information or shared background knowledge.

This study examines the applicability of the analytical tools put forward by the LCM to account for the various realization procedures of the *Aux NP* construction in relation to their potential to activate the semantic base of requesting speech acts. Once described the high-level scenario for the category of requesting, I have identified the different ways in which the realizations of the *Aux NP* construction provide the addressee with access to the relevant parts of the scenario. The formal composition of the construction has proved both realizational of lexico-grammatical devices and conventionally associated with them.

The analysis carried out has provided evidence in support of the LCM approach to illocution. However, the results suggest that further research on the subject is still needed. It would be advisable to develop the description of the conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* in order to account for the distinctions among the various

realization procedures of different requestive acts and also to study the relationship between form and meaning among other constructions performing requests.

Notes

[1] In later work, Panther (2005) has gone further and referred to metonymy as an inference schema rather than a substitution relation or a reference point phenomenon, as has been defended by many cognitive linguists (Langacker 1993; Kövecses and Radden 1998, *inter alia*). Specifically, Panther has argued that metonymies provide natural inference schemas which are regularly used by speakers in meaning interpretation. The role of metonymy as an inference schema has been supported by later research carried out by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007), who identify metonymy at the base of illocutionary derivation. The present proposal adheres to such a conception of metonymy in order to account for the illocutionary meaning that derives from the activation of scenarios and which later on becomes entrenched (in Langacker's terms, 1999: 105) through a conventionalization process.

[2] In the LCM, interactional knowledge is structured in the form of situational cognitive models, to be differentiated from non-situational models. Situational cognitive models capture the interaction among entities within a specific time and place. Non-situational cognitive models include variables which are not dependent on time and place. Cognitive operations on non-situational models regulate inferred meaning at the core grammar level, yielding conversion processes and constructional alternations. Operations like metaphor and metonymy on situational models guide pragmatic inferencing (implicature derivation, illocutionary meaning and discourse connections).

[3] Risselada's (1993) definition of *explicit* and *implicit* speech acts is equivalent to the traditional distinction between *codified* and *inferred* speech acts. The degree of explicitness or codification is in both cases determined by the number of meaning conditions of the speech act under consideration which are instantiated by the linguistic form.

[4] The term *realization procedures* was first introduced by Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal (1997) to define the options offered by the linguistic system for the realization of a communicative strategy. In later work by Pérez (2001) and Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007), this notion is used referring to entrenched lexico-grammatical devices with instantiation potential with respect to cognitive models. In the present work, realizational procedures which have become conventionalized are regarded as constructions in their own right.

[5] The notion of *family resemblance* was originally propounded by Wittgenstein (1978) to make reference to those categories whose members do not share a set of common attributes but rather display a network of similarities.

[6] For similar descriptions of requesting from a constructionist perspective, see Pérez (1996, 2001) and Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007).

[7] It is possible, however, to find contexts in which the subject pronoun does not point to the addressee (cf. *Will he stop making noise?*). Instances of this type represent implicit requests to the addressee to get a third person to carry out the action. Except for these cases, the realization of the construction involves a second person subject (i.e. *you*).

[8] A useful accounts of modal verbs in terms of force dynamics from a cognitive perspective can be found in Talmy (1988).

[9] The description of the realization procedures of the *Aux NP* construction results from the analysis of a corpus of one hundred and sixty-five instances of the construction. The data upon which the study is based has been drawn from the original editions of the British National Corpus (BNC), the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), WebCorp and Google Books.

[10] To resolve the ambiguity of the *can you* form, the LCM postulates two different constructions. One is the polar interrogative construction, which is interpreted as a question about ability and whose constituents are realized by *can you* sequence (e.g. *Can you write Morse code?*), and another that functions as a request, where *can you* is idiomatic (e.g. *Can you bring my glasses?*) (see Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza 2009).

[11] Taylor explains the origin of the past tense as a mitigator as a cognitive process involving a double metaphorization. There is a first metaphor that structures the time domain in terms of space, as illustrated by expressions like *near future* and *distant past*, and a second metaphor that structures distance in terms of social involvement. Pérez further argues that the distance that triggers the mitigating effect has to be established both between the speaker and the speech act and between the intended speech act and the actual speech act.

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