Grounding, semantic motivation, and conceptual interaction in indirect directive speech acts ☆

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Abstract

In this paper we attempt to develop the still programmatic but insightful proposal made by Thornburg and Panther (1997) and Panther and Thornburg (1998), according to which the identification of the intended meaning (or illocutionary force) of indirect requests (and by extension of indirect speech acts in general) is based on conceptual metonymies operating on the grounds of the different components of *illocutionary scenarios*. We build into Panther and Thornburg's account other aspects of indirect directives which they have not considered yet. Thus we examine issues such as the semantic motivation of indirect directives, the prototypicality degrees of the constructions used to convey them, their instantiation potential, their image-schematic basis, and the cognitive motivation of some of their features in discourse. We argue that calculating the illocutionary force of an utterance is ultimately a matter of conceptual interaction between propositional, image-schematic, metonymic, and metaphorical idealized cognitive models or ICMs. © 2002 Elsevier Science B.V. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

Within the field of speech act studies, a great deal of attention has been devoted to the problem of the interpretation of indirect speech acts or ISAs. Most proposals on this topic assume that the identification of the speaker's communicative intention requires some inferential work on the part of the hearer. Some theorists, following the Searlean tradition (Searle, 1975), have suggested that this is done on the basis of what is literally conveyed (cf. Morgan, 1978), while others have claimed that even the literal meaning of an utterance is dependent on special inferencing strategies (cf. Bach and Harnish, 1979; Leech, 1983; Sperber and Wilson, 1995). Working within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics, Panther and Thornburg (1998: 756) point to two shortcomings of traditional inferential accounts: one, the fact that speakers usually draw the necessary inferences very quickly and effortlessly is not satisfactorily explained; and two, these accounts do not offer a systematic description of the inference patterns involved and of their cognitive grounding. Panther and Thornburg further suggest that these weaknesses may be overcome if it is assumed that illocutionary meaning is represented in the form of *illocutionary scenarios* (a type of generic knowledge organisation structure).[1] Thus, in their own proposal, illocutionary scenarios consist of the felicity conditions for each type of speech act and, in turn, indirect speech acts are explained in terms of a metonymic operation in which one of the felicity conditions *stands for* the whole illocutionary scenario. In this fashion, Panther and Thornburg are capable of providing a cognitive account of indirect requests like *Can you close the door?, Will you close the door?, Do you have hot chocolate?*, and the like. The capacity and willingness of the hearer and his possession of an object are all pre-conditions for the performance of a request and they can be used metonymically to stand for the whole speech act category. Panther and Thornburg's proposal also accounts for the fact that the intended meaning of indirect illocutions is readily and economically inferred by the hearers. However, their theory has still to be developed further in order to account for at least the following aspects of indirect speech acts: (1) the semantic motivation for other types of indirect requests which make use of a oblique modal (e.g. *Could you close the door?, Would you close the door?*) or a negative modal (e.g. *Can't you close the door?, Won't you close the door?*); (2) the higher degree of prototypicality of certain utterances as members of a given illocutionary category (for instance, an utterance like *Can you just hold this for a second?* is intuitively a better example of a request than a similar sentence like *Can you hold this?*, despite the fact that both of them equally activate the capacity condition of the request scenario); (3) the importance of considering social variables, like power or social distance, in order to account for the instantiation potential of

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[1] We understand that Panther and Thornburg's scenarios are a more abstract version of the situational knowledge constructs proposed by researchers like Sanford and Garrod in the early 1980s in their account of written discourse. However, since, according to Sanford and Garrod (1981: 57–58), a scenario is "an information network called from long-term memory by a particular linguistic input", the label 'scenario' is an adequate description of both specific situations and generic event patterns. We shall return to this issue below.

utterances like, for instance, *Can you get me a cup of coffee?*, which may be regarded as either an order or a request, depending on the power relationship that holds between the speakers; (4) the cognitive grounding of directive speech acts in experiential gestalts like image-schemas; and (5) the cognitive motivation of some aspects of directives at discourse level, such as the restrictions involved in certain adjacency pairs based on the expectations created by illocutionary categories (e.g. request-compliance/refusal).

In order to find a plausible explanation for these issues, we shall argue that illocutionary knowledge is best organised in the form of propositional idealised cognitive models or propositional ICMs (Lakoff, 1987).[2] Furthermore, although in principle we agree with Panther and Thornburg that metonymy is instrumental in the production and interpretation of linguistic actions, we intend to show that a fuller understanding of the way indirect directive illocutions are produced and interpreted may involve the interaction of two further mental constructs: image-schemas and conceptual metaphors.[3] Thus, Section 2 is devoted to the discussion of the role of propositional ICMs and conceptual metonymy in the explanation of some significant aspects of indirect directives, namely, their semantic motivation, their degree of prototypicality, and their instantiation potential. In Section 3, some further semantic and discursive aspects of these acts, such as the potential conversational moves which may follow a given instance of directive, are shown to be cognitively grounded in the interaction between image-schemas and conceptual metaphors. Finally, Section 4 illustrates how the four types of conceptual structure interact in the understanding of a particular instance of request.

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[2]   In Cognitive Linguistics, more specifically Lakoff (1987), it is generally assumed that knowledge organisation follows four kinds of structuring principle: propositional structure, image-schematic structure, metaphoric mappings (i.e. sets of correspondences across discrete conceptual domains) and metonymic mappings (domain-internal conceptual correspondences). By and large, the cognitive semantics literature has come to identify propositional ICMs with Fillmore's (1985) frames, image-schemas with Johnson's (1987) analysis of abstract topological structures, and metaphoric and metonymic mappings with the proposals in Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Lakoff and Turner (1989). As will be evidenced in the course of our discussion, propositional ICMs are broader in scope than – but do not exclude – Panther and Thornburg's scenarios.

[3]   The above observation amounts to claiming that the understanding of indirect directive speech acts requires two different types of mental tool: non-operational ICMs (i.e. propositional ICMs and image-schemas), which are static in nature and consist of stored information, and operational ICMs (i.e. metaphorical and metonymic ICMs), which are the result of a productive cognitive operation which exploits non-operational ICMs. Thus, a metaphor, for instance, is the result of a dynamic cognitive operation: a conceptual mapping whereby one conceptual domain is understood in terms of another (typically an image-schema or a propositional ICM, that is to say, a non-operational ICM). The distinction between operational and non-operational ICMs is dealt with in detail in Ruiz de Mendoza (1996, 1999a).

2. Semantic motivation, degree of prototypicality and instantiation potential of directive indirect speech acts: The role of propositional ICMs

Panther and Thornburg (1998: 759) put forward the following simplified scenario for requests:

(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 essence, Panther and Thornburg's account suggests that, through a metonymic cognitive operation, each of the components of this scenario may *stand for* an act of requesting. Now, consider the following utterances:

(1) Can you close the door?
(2) Will you close the door?
(3) Could you close the door?
(4) Would you close the door?
(5) Can't you close the door?
(6) Won't you close the door?
(7) Can you hold this?
(8) Can you hold this for a second?
(9) Can you hold this for a second, please?
(10) Can you get me a cup of coffee?
(11) Bring me a cup of coffee right now.

A metonymic approach to illocutions, like the one outlined above, is capable of accounting for the fact that all these utterances are usually understood as directives, because by focusing on the specific components of the scenario (the so-called pre-conditions, i.e. ability and willingness) they somehow seem to be capable of evoking the whole of it. Moreover, the assumptions that (1) we have illocutionary scenarios stored in our long-term memory and that (2) each of the components of the scenario may stand for the whole scenario may further explain why the speaker's intended meaning is so readily inferred by the hearer. This makes Panther and Thornburg's proposal very appealing. First, the existence of illocutionary scenarios is hardly disputable. In our view, these are but the result of speakers abstracting away from a number of stereotypical everyday life directive situations. As such, they are but a variety of situational ICMs.[4] Second, accounting for inferential activity adequately

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[4] To give an example of less abstract situational ICMs consider Schank and Abelson's (1977) classical restaurant script where we think of customers, waiters, the chef, etc. performing a number of stereotyped

requires an explanation not only of what conceptual structure is relevant but also of how it is called up. Metonymies, in harmony with Langacker's (1993) notion of the 'reference-point' phenomenon, are points of access to non-explicit (not necessarily implicated; see Ruiz de Mendoza, 1999b) conceptual structure. Being not only a potentially conventional conceptual structure but also an operational model, a metonymy becomes doubly economical: on the one hand, its conventional nature takes processing cost off a speaker's processing system; on the other hand, its operational nature allows speakers to use metonymies to regulate inferential activity.

Nevertheless, there are several semantic features of indirect directives which are left out by a theory based exclusively on illocutionary scenarios. Below, we shall consider some of them: the power relationship between the speakers, the degree of politeness of illocutionary acts, the degree of cost-benefit of the requested action, and the degree of optionality conveyed by the illocutionary act. We want to argue that if features of this kind are not taken into consideration in the semantic description of directives, the resulting theory will be incapable of accounting for several relevant aspects of the production and understanding of these acts. Firstly, it will not be able to account for the communicative consequences, in terms of politeness effects, of using oblique and/or negative modals. Thus, in sentences (3) and (4), the speaker uses oblique modals in order to activate the capacity and willingness conditions, a choice which results in an increase in the degree of politeness of the requests. In contrast, the use of negative modals in (5) and (6), decreases the optionality of the addressee to refuse to carry out the action and thus renders the acts impolite. Secondly, the information contained in illocutionary scenarios is not enough to explain why the use of the adverb *please* and/or a time expression (i.e. *for a second*) in sentences (8) and (9) makes them better examples of requests than the similar utterance in (7), in which neither of those elements is present. As will become more evident later on and as was the case with examples (3) to (6), these fairly subtle differences between almost identical realisations of the act of requesting are related to the cost-benefit variable as well as to politeness phenomena. Finally, it is important to draw attention to the fact that an utterance like (10) may have at least two different interpretations (i.e. as a request or as an order) depending on the power relationship which holds between the speakers in a particular interactional exchange. If the speakers were equals (e.g. two workmates), the most likely interpretation of sentence (10) would be that of a request which may be challenged by the addressee. If the speaker were the hearer's superior (e.g. his boss), the same utterance would become more impositive and would be readily interpretable as an order, albeit a polite one (cf. the imperative in (11) which would be much less polite).[5] Problems of this kind

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actions regarding the way they are assumed to interact in an also stereotyped scenario. Plan-goal sequences, as put forword by Schank and Abelson and by proponents of story grammars like Rumelhart (1975) and Thorndyke (1977), or problem-solution structures, as described by discourse analysts (e.g. Hoey, 1994), would be different cases of abstract situational ICMs in that their focus is descriptive rather than interactive (i.e. their ultimate aim is not to get people to do things).

[5]   It may be observed that often imperatives are used in contexts where urgency is an extra factor, which removes the impoliteness ingredient. Urgency suggests that the state of affairs described is not beneficial to the speaker; by convention, the addressee is expected to help the speaker deal with his/her problem if possible. See description of the Cost-Benefit ICM later on in this section.

should also be addressed by a cognitive theory of illocution. Moreover, according to Panther and Thornburg's proposals, sentences (10) and (11) would differ as to the degree of strength of the obligation involved. (11) puts H under a stronger obligation and, therefore, it is understood as an order. (10) conveys a weaker obligation and is more readily understood as a request. But these authors do not seem to indicate if this degree of strength is predictable from a more specific kind of directive scenario. Therefore, the cognitive grounding for this difference remains to be determined.

We would like to suggest that the problems we have just outlined can be overcome if illocutionary scenarios are elaborated and integrated into a more general type of knowledge organisation structure, i.e. *propositional ICMs*. The propositional ICM for each directive subtype should take into account, together with the information contained in a scenario, the following parameters, which are themselves ICMs:[6]

1. *Cost-benefit:* an assessment of the cost and/or benefit that the action A involves for the speaker and/or the hearer.
2. *Optionality:* an assessment of the degree of optionality conveyed by a speech act (i.e. the degree to which the speech act restricts the addressee's freedom to decide whether or not to carry out the requested action).
3. *Power:* an assessment of the power relationship that needs to hold between the speakers in order to be able to perform a speech act.

By way of illustration, consider our formulation of the ICMs of the acts of requesting and ordering below:

ICM of Requests	*ICM of Orders*
Panther and Thornburg's Scenario plus:	Panther and Thornburg's Scenario plus:
(i) A represents a *cost* to H and a benefit to S	(i) A represents a *cost* to H and a benefit to S
(ii) High *optionality* (politeness)	(ii) Low *optionality* (lack of politeness)
(iii) The *power* relationship between S and H is immaterial	(iii) S is more *power*ful than H

Furthermore, in order to distinguish between certain subtypes of directive, it will also be necessary to elaborate some of the components of the illocutionary scenario itself. The difference between the acts of requesting and begging, for instance, lies basically in the degree of the speaker's willingness that the action A be carried out by the hearer. The speaker's desire that the action be performed is higher in the case

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[6]   Leech's (1983) well-known pragmatic scales of cost-benefit, optionality, and power are here re-interpreted as some of the parameters which make up illocutionary ICMs. They are thought of as knowledge items and, therefore, as belonging to the realm of semantics. For a detailed discussion of this elaboration of Leech's scales, see Ruiz de Mendoza (1993, 1994) and Pérez (1996, 1997).

of beggings, which motivates some of the features that characterise the performance of this latter act (e.g. insistence, recognition of the addressee's power to fulfil the speaker's wish and the resulting politeness effect). Compare the following examples of the acts of requesting and begging:[7]

(12) Will you take me to the movies? (Request)
(13) *Please, please,* take me to the movies, *will you? Please!* (Begging)

On the one hand, the insistent use of linguistic elements which instantiate the variable of optionality (i.e. *please, will you?*) in sentence (13) counts as a recognition of the addressee's power to fulfil the speaker's wishes. In this manner, the speaker minimises his importance at the same time that he maximises that of the addressee, thus increasing the degree of positive politeness of the act. On the other hand, the repeated use of the adverb *please* and the imperative sentence type result in an increase of the degree of insistence of the directive act in (13). This points to a higher desire on the part of the speaker that the requested action be performed by the addressee and leads to the interpretation of the utterance as an act of begging. The component 'speaker's desire' or 'speaker's will' was already included in Panther and Thornburg's scenarios, but it was treated as a binary feature (i.e. either the speaker wants the addressee to do A or he does not want the addressee to do A). Nevertheless, as the comparison of requests and beggings above shows, it is possible to distinguish different 'degrees of speaker's desire' as characteristic for directive illocutions.[8]

Therefore, we propose that the BEFORE component of the scenarios for these two types of act may take the following form:

Scenario for Requests
The BEFORE: H can do A
                      S wants H to do A (degree of wanting: *high*)

Scenario for Beggings
The BEFORE: H can do A
                      S wants H to do A (degree of wanting: *very high*)

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[7] The interpretation of these utterances as a request and a begging respectively is assumed to take place in an *unmarked* context. By this term, we understand the kind of stereotypical and/or prototypical context which more readily comes to mind when hearing/reading the utterance in the absence of other explicit contextual clues.

[8] Verschueren (1985) refers to this scale of 'degrees of speaker's desire' as the *directivity dimension*, which, together with social setting, goals of directing, directionality, and authority, is one of the five dimensions along which he defines directive categories. The variable of authority corresponds to our power parameter. The other three variables (i.e. social setting, goals of directing, and directionality) are useful in distinguishing further subordinate types of directive speech act (e.g. summoning, instructing, etc.) as different from those which are the object of our study (i.e. basic level directives like ordering, requesting, begging, threatening, etc.).

In the case of other directives, like the act of advising, the speaker's desire that the hearer should perform the action is lower than in the case of requests, orders, or beggings. This is a consequence of the fact that the carrying out of the action A represents a benefit to the hearer rather than to the speaker. The propositional ICM for advising, therefore, would differ from the others in the following aspects:

ICM of Advising
The BEFORE component of the scenario:
S wants H to do A (degree of wanting: *low*)
(i) A involves a *benefit* to H and no cost or benefit to S[9]

Going back to examples (1) and (2) above, we can now show the higher explanatory power of an account of indirect speech acts based on propositional ICMs like those put forward above. Let us reproduce these two examples as (14) and (15) below for convenience:

(14) Can you close the door?
(15) Will you close the door?

Thornburg and Panther (1997: 213–214) claim that the metonymy ABILITY TO PERFORM AN ACTION FOR A LINGUISTIC ACTION suffices to account for the fact that sentence (14) is readily understood as a request. A similar explanation could be put forward for (15), where the speaker's questioning of the addressee's willingness to perform an action may stand metonymically for the linguistic act of requesting. Nevertheless, while it is true that these metonymic mappings may activate a directive interpretation, it would not be correct to say that they lead to an understanding of those utterances as requests (as opposed to orders, beggings, etc.). All directive acts (including requests) share the components (i.e. ability and willingness) to which those two metonymies refer. Therefore, if no other components were activated by (14) and (15), their interpretation as requests would not be so straightforward. However, if we turn to our elaborated version of Panther and Thornburg's scenario for requests, it becomes apparent that a further specific component of requests is also metonymically activated by (14) and (15), namely, that of *high optionality*. Invoking either the willingness or capacity conditions by means of an *interrogative sentence type* allows the speaker to communicate the fact that the hearer's freedom to decide whether or not to perform the action is not undermined by the speech act. Compare (14) and (15) with the following examples based on declarative and imperative sentence-types, in which the degree of optionality conveyed is lower:

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[9] 'Advising', like 'warning', is a largely altruistic type of act. It counts as an attempt to help or benefit the addressee and it does not usually involve greater cost to the speaker than that of producing the utterance. The fact that 'advising' does not prototypically involve a cost or a benefit to the speaker distinguishes this illocutionary category from other directives like 'offering' (which involves a cost to the speaker) or 'requesting'/'ordering'/'suggesting' (which involve a benefit to the speaker).

(16) You will close the door.
(17) Close the door.

The discussion above shows that the activation of the optionality component is also necessary for the understanding of sentences (14) and (15) as requests and that, therefore, the degree of optionality of a speech act constitutes a piece of information that should be included in the corresponding ICM.

Let us now go back again to examples (3) and (4), which are even clearer instances of requests than (14) and (15). (3) and (4) are reproduced as (18) and (19) below:

(18) Could you close the door?
(19) Would you close the door?

  Their interpretation as orders, threats, or beggings, for instance, is highly unlikely in an unmarked context. Panther and Thornburg predict that the degree of prototypicality of an instance of illocution increases with the number of components of its corresponding scenario which are metonymically activated. On this basis, it should be possible to predict that (18) and (19) instantiate a higher number of elements of the request scenario than (14) or (15). This additional element can be found in our propositional ICM of requesting: the use of the oblique modals increases the optionality and, as a result, the politeness, of these directive utterances and these features set requests apart from other directives like orders, threats, warnings, etc.[10]

  Our discussion of examples (18) and (19) reveals the need of taking into account the notion of *optionality* and its accompanying politeness effects not only in order to distinguish requests from other directive subtypes such as orders, but also in order to account for the subtle meaning differences of the diverse realisations of requests. As we shall see now, the use of negative modals in examples (5) and (6) also requires the introduction of politeness-related facts for their correct interpretation. (5) and (6) are reproduced as (20) and (21) below:

(20) Can't you close the door?
(21) Won't you close the door?

  These utterances activate the ability and willingness pre-conditions for directives by means of the corresponding modals, as well as the optionality component through

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[10]   As noted by Taylor (1995: 152–153), the nature of oblique modals as markers of politeness is based on a cognitive process involving double metaphorisation. First of all, *time* is metaphorically conceptualised in terms of *space*, as is evident from expressions like *distant past* or *near future*. Then the schema of distance and proximity is further applied to the notion of *social involvement*. As a result, by using the oblique modals, the speaker creates conceptual distance between himself and the speech act that he is performing, and also between his illocutionary goal and the illocutionary means used to achieve it. In other words, the speaker's involvement in the achievement of his goal correlates with conceptual distance. This amounts to an indication that the state of affairs is not regarded by the speaker as highly beneficial to him and, in this way, the hearer is given greater optionality to refuse to bring about the state of affairs.

the choice of interrogative sentence-types. Therefore, they still qualify as instances of the act of requesting. As long as they are produced with a rising, question-like intonation, their interpretation as other kinds of directive (e.g. orders) is unlikely. Nevertheless, there is a major difference between them and examples (14)–(17). While the latter are polite and represent central members of the category of requests, the former lack politeness and, therefore, count as peripheral instances of requests. Their lack of politeness turns them into boundary cases. So much so that it would suffice to use a falling intonation to favour their interpretation as strong orders.

The absence of politeness explains why (20) and (21) are not such good examples of request if compared to (14)–(15). It remains to be explained, however, why the use of the negative modals yields this communicative effect of *impoliteness*. In order to do so, it is necessary to refer to an independent ICM of social interaction, the *ICM of Cost-Benefit*, which contains information about some of the cultural conventions which also need to be taken into account in understanding acts like directives and commissives in English. The speakers' compliance with these conventions will make their behaviour polite. Our formulation of the ICM of Cost-Benefit is tentative and possibly partial, but it includes the necessary amount of conventional information for the purposes of our discussion.

ICM of Cost-Benefit[11]
(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.[12]

In its application to language use, convention (a) would explain why a simple declarative sentence like *It is cold in here*, when it depicts a negative state of affairs for the speaker, can function effectively as a request. The speaker is exploiting his knowledge of politeness conventions. He knows that if the addressee wants to be polite, he will do something to change that state of affairs (e.g. close a window, switch on the central heating, etc. depending on the specific situation). Hence, his utterance has a fair chance of having the same effect as a more direct request.

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[11] It must be noted that in the description of this ICM, A and B denote 'different classes of individuals', and not 'the speaker' and the 'addressee' as in the previous illocutionary ICMs, which involved linguistic factors.

[12] Part (c) of this ICM may appear as too strong a claim. In a superficial interpretation, it may be understood as stating that a person A is always expected to bring about a state of affairs which is manifestly beneficial to a person B. However, in most cases of everyday life interaction this expectation is considerably weakened or even cancelled altogether, since a similar expectation applies to B with respect to A. Additionally, it must be noted that there is linguistic evidence that points to the relevance of part (c) of this ICM. It allows us to explain why utterances which make explicit that a state of affairs is beneficial for someone can be understood as requests (see comments on declarative sentences like *I want some ice-cream* below).

Similarly, the interpretation of a sentence like *I don't like being teased* as a request for the addressee to stop teasing the speaker would be explained by convention (b) of the ICM of cost-benefit, which makes unnecessary the use of a more direct and, consequently, less polite request such as *Stop teasing me, (please)!* or *Can you stop teasing me?*

In turn, convention (c) accounts for the directive force of yet another type of declarative sentence, namely, that which expresses the speaker's likes, wishes, or desires (e.g. *I want some ice-cream, I fancy an evening out, I really like that dress*). By virtue of convention (c), if the addressee wants to be polite, he is expected to do what he can in order to satisfy the speaker's wishes. The effect achieved is similar to that of a directive act, namely, to move the addressee to doing something for the benefit of the speaker.

Going back to examples (20) and (21), in using the negative interrogative, the speaker is communicating the idea that he would find it difficult to believe that the addressee lacks the capability to perform the requested action. This amounts to assuming that the addressee *has* this capability and that, therefore, he should perform the requested action in order to comply with point (a) of the ICM of Cost-Benefit. The fact that the speaker is assuming that the addressee is capable of carrying out the action renders a speech act impolite, because it leaves the addressee very little chance to refuse to do as requested (i.e. low optionality). The positive counterparts of the utterances in (20) and (21), *Can you close the door?* and *Will you close the door?*, do not communicate any assumption about the addressee's capability and, therefore, give him greater freedom to decide on his course of action. The fact that the addressee is given a greater degree of optionality results in a higher degree of politeness of the speech act.[13]

Let us now consider again examples (7)–(9) which are reproduced as (22)–(24) below for convenience:

(22) Can you hold this?
(23) Can you hold this for a second?
(24) Can you hold this for a second, please?

These examples are good illustrations of the relationship that holds between the instantiation potential of directive expressions and their degree of prototypicality as members of a given directive category: the higher the number of components of a

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[13] It may be argued that these examples could be accounted for as cases of violations of the negative politeness principle (cf. Brown and Levinson, 1978). Nevertheless, as shown in Pérez (1999a), Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness is biased towards the interactional dimension of politeness. This is a consequence of its being founded on a metaphorical understanding of politeness as preservation of 'face' (i.e. people's public image). The transactional aspect of politeness, that is to say, its use as a means of achieving objectives – as when we praise someone to gain his favours – if not completely ignored, is certainly relegated to a secondary position. This is why we have preferred to make use of a broader Cost-Benefit ICM, which takes into consideration both the interactional and the transactional sides of politeness.

given directive ICM that are activated through metonymy, the more prototypical the instance of speech act will be. The utterance in (22) only activates the pre-condition of the hearer's ability to perform the action A. Given that this pre-condition is shared by requests and simple informative questions and that no other feature of requests is instantiated, the interpretation of the utterance as either one or the other is very much dependent on the context. In (23), the time expression *for a second* counts as an attempt by the speaker to minimise the cost of the requested action. In other words, the time expression *points to* the component of cost-benefit of the ICM of requesting (i.e. a request represents a cost to the addressee and a benefit to the speaker). In this way, the interpretation of the sentence as a request rather than as a simple question is favoured. Finally, in addition to the activation of the pre-condition of ability and the pointing to the cost-benefit component, sentence (24) further instantiates the optionality component of the ICM of requesting by means of the adverb 'please' (= 'if you want to'). Thus, its reading as a simple question can be completely ruled out. It should be noted that it is precisely the activation of a higher number of parameters of the ICM of requesting which makes this utterance a proto-typical member of the corresponding illocutionary category. As is supported by our analysis of examples (22)–(24), pragmatic information of this kind (i.e. cost-benefit, optionality, etc.) is crucial in the description of speech act categories and should be included in the corresponding illocutionary ICMs.[14] Otherwise, it would be impossible to explain why several instances of requests, like (22), (23), and (24), which are very much alike as far as their formal realisations are concerned, differ as to their degree of prototypicality.

3. Metaphorical and image-schematic grounding of indirect directive speech acts

So far, the way in which people process indirect speech acts has been shown to require the interaction of two types of mental constructs: propositional ICMs (both specific illocutionary ICMs, like the one for requests described above, and, more general, interactional ICMs, like the cost-benefit ICM) and metonymies. In this section, it is our goal to show that the way we understand indirect directives requires yet another two types of conceptualising tools: metaphor (i.e. a form of operational ICM) and image-schematic structure (i.e. a form of non-operational ICM). The utterances under consideration are the following:

(25) Can you get me a cup of coffee?

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[14]   The idea that social, interactional, and pragmatic knowledge can be organised in the form of cognitive models was first suggested by Sweetser (1987) and is currently accepted by most cognitive linguists (Lakoff, 1987). See also Pérez (1998, 1999b) and Ruiz de Mendoza (1993, 1994, 1999c) for some studies on interactional and illocutionary propositional ICMs. The related view that much of what has for some time been studied within the field of pragmatics may be dealt with more adequately within a semantic theory is consistent with modern cognitive linguistics thinking (see Langacker, 1998).

(26) Bring me a cup of coffee right now.

According to Panther and Thornburg's scenario for directives, these two utterances would differ as to the strength of the obligation to which the speech act puts the addressee. The degree of obligation is weaker in (25), which is understood as a request, and stronger in (26), which comes across as an instance of the category of orders. If we consider our ICMs of requesting and ordering, it becomes clear that this is not the only difference. The two examples also differ as to the degree of optionality that they convey. The use of the interrogative sentence type in (25) yields a higher level of optionality than the use of the imperative in (26).[15] The degree of obligation and the degree of optionality of the acts are, in fact, two sides of the same coin and together they determine the degree of strength of the speech act under scrutiny. What is of major importance to our purposes, however, is the fact that attributes like *weak* or *strong* are being applied to speech acts in the first place. Literally, *strength* is a property of living creatures (i.e. people, animals) and forces. Speech acts are neither of these, but in spite of this, they are still understood as liable to be described in terms of their strength. The solution to this puzzle can be found by exploring the way in which the notion of *speech act* is conceptualised. When performing a directive illocution, the speaker is carrying out a special kind of action: one that causes the addressee to do something himself. That is to say, the speaker is performing an action which is interactional in nature. In connection to this, Johnson (1987: 57ff.) suggested that it would be possible to put forward a metaphorical conceptualisation of directive speech acts as *forces*. We would not like to go so far as to claim that directive speech acts should be reinterpreted only metaphorically. Nevertheless, it seems plausible to posit that part of their conceptual make-up does have a pre-conceptual grounding in the force image-schema, which is evidenced metaphorically. We make use of our knowledge about forces to understand the effect that our directive speech acts can have on our addressees, and therefore, just as forces display degrees of strength, so do directive speech acts. The metaphorical correspondences between directive illocutions and the force image-schema have an experiential basis because just like forces move objects in space, speech acts are capable of figuratively 'moving' (i.e. getting) the addressee to perform a certain action.[16]

We attempt to show that the pre-conceptual basis of directive speech acts in the force image-schema is essential in order to understand why different illocutions can

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[15] The different degrees of optionality conveyed by these two utterances trigger further differences regarding politeness. Thus, the higher optionality of example (25) correlates with a higher level of politeness.

[16] The existence of a direct experiential basis for our understanding of directive speech acts as forces is in accordance with the findings of both evolutionary linguistics and child language acquisition studies. On the one hand, evolutionary linguistics has found that the directive function of language is, together with the representative or ideational function, one of the first functions that arise in primitive communicative systems (see Popper, 1972: 106ff.). On the other hand, studies carried out on the acquisition of language by young children reveal that directing someone to do something, or the use of language as a moving force, is present in the very first stages of language acquisition and even in the pre-linguistic early speech sounds of infants (see Halliday, 1978: 19–20, 1992: 21).

be said to vary in strength and, more specifically, why sentences such as (25) and (26) differ as to their strength. In other words, we attempt to demonstrate that only by considering the experiential grounding of directive speech acts in the force image-schema is it possible to explain why the use of the interrogative sentence about ability in (25) yields a weaker directive (i.e. request) than the use of the imperative sentence in (26). We can advance that these two utterances are grounded in two different force image-schemas from which they inherit their particular and distinguishing degrees of strength. To begin with, let us establish the correspondences between the 'force' image-schema and the domain of directive speech acts (see Table 1).[17]

Table 1
Correspondences between the 'force' image-schema and the domain of directive speech acts

Force image-schema	Domain of directive speech acts
Force Agent (Agonist)	Speaker
Force Target (Antagonist)	Addressee
The agonist acts causally on the antagonist	The speaker acts causally on the addressee (by attempting to move him/her to act in a certain way)[18]
Intrinsic force tendencies of Agonist and Antagonist (i.e. the degree of force of the agonist may be higher or lower than that of the antagonist; both agonist and antagonist may show intrinsic force tendencies towards action or towards rest)	Degree of social power of speaker and addressee and degree of speaker's and addressee's will
Resultant force balance	Degree of strength of the directive speech act
Forces interact physically	Speaker and addressee interact socially
Forces may be totally or partially blocked by obstacles (i.e. physical barriers)	Directive speech acts may be hindered and/or impeded by several factors (i.e. addressee's lack of ability or willingness to perform an action, addressee's lack of possession of the requested object, etc.)
Forces are events (i.e. they have a source, a development, and an end).	Speech acts are events (i.e. they have a BEFORE, a CORE, and an AFTER as captured in Panther and Thornburg's scenarios)

[17]   The logic of force dynamics has been amply dealt with in Talmy (1988). We have borrowed the necessary terminology from this author (e.g. agonist, antagonist, intrinsic force tendencies, resultant force balance, etc.). In brief, an *agonist* is the focal force entity which is opposed by another force element (i.e. the *antagonist*). Depending on their relative strengths (i.e. *intrinsic force tendencies*), the opposing force entities yield a resultant or overt occurrence either towards action (i.e. if the intrinsic force tendency of the agonist is stronger than that of the antagonist) or towards inaction (i.e. if the antagonist's is stronger than the agonist).

[18]   It may be argued that directives are not strictly 'causal'. Even 'orders', which are one of the most impositive types of directive act, can be rejected. This is part of their conceptual make-up, even though it may be empirically true that most of them are complied with. The fact that directives can be rejected does not mean, however, that they are not really causal. They are performed with the intention of moving the addressee to do something. In those cases in which there is non-compliance, what we have is a clash of forces in which the intrinsic force tendency of the antagonist (i.e. the addressee) overcomes that of the agonist (i.e. speaker).

We need to make several observations. First, in spite of their abstract nature, image-schemas can function as the source domain of a conceptual metaphor because they are generalisations built on the basis of a set of images or experiences and not just abstract concepts in themselves. Second, not only directive speech acts, but also commissives, assertives, expressives, and declarations are grounded in the force image-schema.[19] Finally, the conceptualisation of speech acts as *forces* instead of simply as *actions* has the obvious advantage that the causal and interactional aspects of illocutionary acts are not lost to their description. Just as forces are subject to the interactional laws of physics, speech acts will have to comply with the principles of social interaction operating in each culture.

Johnson (1987: 45ff.) distinguishes several subtypes of force schemata like COMPULSION, BLOCKAGE, COUNTERFORCE, REMOVAL OF RESTRAINT, ENABLEMENT, or ITERATION, which will be useful in our ensuing discussion of the experiential grounding of directive illocutions. It should be noted, however, that Johnson's typology of force schemata makes use of several notions (i.e. 'restraint', 'counterforce', and 'blockage') which denote different types of 'obstacles' which may have the same effect of 'hindering' the intrinsic force tendency of the agonist. The use of these concepts in Johnson's work is largely intuitive. We would like to offer a working definition of them for the purposes of our discussion. We suggest that 'restraints', 'counterforces', and 'blockages' may be subsumed under the general concept of 'obstacle'. The differences among them can be accounted for in relation to the variables of dynamism and control. A 'counterforce' is a form of (either controlled or uncontrolled) dynamic obstacle; 'restraints' are non-dynamic and controlled; and 'blockages' are non-dynamic and uncontrolled.

As will become apparent in the discussion below of several examples of directive acts taken from the British National Corpus (BNC)[20] and several film scripts, these subtypes of force schemata underlie our understanding of different kinds of directive speech act. It is not our aim to present the following study as exhaustive. Our intention is mainly to draw attention to an aspect of illocution (i.e. the role of image-schematic structure in the conceptualisation of directive speech acts) which – to the best of our knowledge – has been largely neglected so far.

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[19] Although this goes beyond the scope of this paper, it should be noted that commissives are grounded in a particular type of reflexive force schema, which is applied to the speaker himself and moves him to perform an action to the benefit of the addressee. Declarations, assertives, and expressives, on the other hand, can be conceptualised as forces which are intended to operate a mental change in the hearer. In other words, they move the hearer to add information or modify the information already contained in his conceptual system.

[20] Like most corpora, the BNC is not annotated for speech acts. In order to obtain instances of indirect directive speech acts from this corpus, we have taken advantage of the fact that certain illocutions are naturally tagged. These are those speech acts which are, so to speak, *announced* or made explicit by the writer by means of the use of the corresponding performative verb (e.g. 'Step up here,' *ordered* Prof. Smith). Therefore, by running a concordance program (XKWIC) on performative verbs, we have been able to extract a portion of the indirect directive speech acts contained in the BNC.

3.1. Orders and the 'compulsion' image-schema

The COMPULSION schema is defined by Johnson (1987: 45) as a force that cannot be resisted. Hence, no barriers or blocking counterforces can prevent the force from affecting its target. This schema clearly lies at the basis of our understanding of the directive subtype of ordering. As captured in the corresponding ICM, the speaker uttering an order needs to be more powerful than the addressee. This power asymmetry is in theory enough to ensure the success of the act and to overcome any actual barriers or blockages to the force of the order. Therefore, orders are intended as inexorable forces which always reach their targets. As will be shown below, however, sometimes the speaker's intention clashes with other contextual or social factors. But before we turn to that, let us suggest a possible graphic representation of an instance of successful order, such as the one exemplified in (27), which makes use of the force image-schema of COMPULSION:[21]

(27) 'The rest of you exit, *now*,' he ordered abruptly. 'Yes, sir' they replied all in one voice. (BNC)
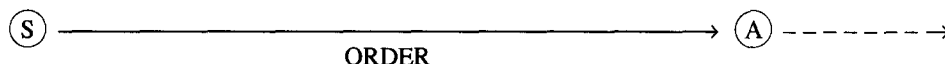

Fig.1. Image-schematic representation of the an order, where S = Speaker, A = Addressee.

The addressee's answer (i.e. 'Yes, sir') suggests that there is no 'counterforce', that is to say, there exists no challenge to the directive force of the previous utterance. The force of an order, founded on the speaker's superiority over the addressee, is such that it restricts the possible quality of the conversational moves of the addressee to just three kinds: accepting the order as in the example above, challenging the order (e.g. *No, sir, we won't*), or (apparently) ignoring the order (e.g. *Have you seen John?*). On most occasions, if the power of the speaker over the addressee is mutually manifest to both participants, then the act of acceptance is the most prototypical conversational move following an order. However, other factors (e.g. the lack of real power on the part of the speaker, an unfair or unjustified order, etc.) may move the addressee to either challenge or ignore the speaker's order. These moves count as the building up of barriers to the force of the order. In these latter cases, a third conversational turn is predictable: the speaker may make use of

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[21] Johnson (1987: 45ff.) provides graphic representations for most of the force gestalts dealt with in this paper (i.e. compulsion, removal of restraint, blockage, counterforce, and diversion). The image-schematic representations in Figs. 1 to 8 are adaptations of Johnson's original drawings. The graphic representation of the iteration schema (Fig. 5) has been added by the authors of the present article.

more impositive kind of speech act, such as a threat, so as to overcome the obstacle, as in the following example:[22]

(28) – Vernon : Give me that screw ...
      – Bender: I don't have it ...
      – Vernon: You want me to yank you outta that seat and shake it out of you?
      (From *The Breakfast Club* film script)

3.2. 'Can/will you' requests and the 'removal of restraints' image-schema

Other directive speech acts are uttered by speakers who are either less powerful than the addressee or who do not want to make use of their power to impose on the addressee. This is the case with some forms of request such as those which make use of interrogative sentences with a modal verb (i.e. 'can'/'will you' requests). Since these acts represent a cost to the addressee and since the success of the act is not intended to be ensured by the exertion of power, it is possible to find potential obstacles to its realisation. These obstacles may be overcome through a varied range of linguistic mechanisms (i.e. minimisation of cost, maximisation of optionality, etc.). In these cases, the force image-schema involved seems to be that of REMOVAL OF RESTRAINT. The image-schematic representation of an unsuccessful request (i.e. a request blocked by a certain obstacle), like the one captured in the conversational exchange below, would be the following:

(29) 'Can you help your brother with his homework today?' 'No, I'm sorry, dad. I can't. I've got to go to the gym.' (BNC)
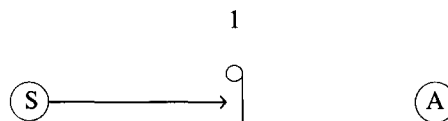
1

Fig. 2. Image-schematic representation of an unsuccessful instance of request, where 1 = Obstacle: Addressee's lack of ability to perform the requested action.

In the piece of interaction schematised above, the addressee is unaffected by the directiveness of the speech act, whose force is blocked by obstacle 1 (i.e. the impossibility for the addressee to perform the action). On other occasions, the potential obstacle is not operative or has already been removed. Consider the following conversation:

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[22] As will become apparent in Section 3.3, threats are hybrid speech acts: half-directive, half-commissive. It is precisely the fact that they involve the commitment of the speaker to do something negative to the addressee in case of the latter's non-compliance, that makes threats more impositive than orders.

(30) A: Mandy, will you please get me a cup of coffee?
      B: Yes, of course. Sugar? Milk? (BNC)

The use of the adverb 'please', which activates the parameter of optionality and hence increases the politeness of the speech act, works to remove a specific prospective restraint on the performance of the act (i.e. the potential unwillingness of the addressee to carry out the action expressed in the predication).[23] An image-schematic representation of this piece of interaction is provided below (Fig. 3).

$$\text{(S)} \xrightarrow{\quad\overset{\displaystyle 1}{\underset{\bigcirc}{}}\quad} \text{(A)}$$
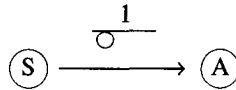
Fig. 3. Image-schematic representation of a successful instance of request.

The fact that 'can/will you' requests are grounded in the removal of a restraint schema (see the next section) restricts the potential subsequent conversational moves to two: refusal to comply with the request (e.g. (29)) and agreement to comply with the request (e.g. (30)). The force of a request, as depicted in the removal of the restraint, is not as strong and inexorable as that of an order. On the contrary, the force of a request is more tentative, as it takes into account the possible existence of an obstacle and, therefore, an act of challenging is not an expected conversational turn. Since the force of the request is more tentative and the degree of optionality given to the addressee is greater, the latter has the option to refuse to do as requested, which amounts to not removing the restraint under consideration. There is no need for challenging.

3.3. Threats and the 'blockage' image-schema

Johnson (1987: 45) has also pointed out that, in our interaction with other objects or people, we often encounter obstacles that block or resist our force. Unlike in the case of REMOVAL OF RESTRAINT, the obstacle in a BLOCKAGE schema is not potential but actual and there is virtually no possibility of removing it. We find that the blockage schema plays an essential role in our understanding of extremely impositive speech acts like threats. A person uttering a threat anticipates that there is going to be some resistance on the part of the addressee in granting his request (i.e. blockage). He assumes that he is going to encounter this resistance because the proposed action involves a cost to the addressee. The speaker attempts to overcome this blockage by making the addressee understand that his refusal to carry out the requested action will result in a greater cost to him. He manages to do

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[23] Imperatives can be similarly mitigated by means of 'please' (e.g. *Get me a cup of coffee, please*). Conventionally, 'please' activates the variable of optionality (cf. 'if you please'), just in the same way as question tags like 'will you?' (cf. 'if you will').

so by committing himself to performing a future costly action against the addressee if the latter refuses to do as told. Threats have often been considered a hybrid directive-commissive illocutionary category (Bach and Harnish, 1979; Hancher, 1979). The directive flavour of threats derives from the fact that the speaker's intention when uttering a threat is to cause the addressee to perform a future action which is beneficial to the speaker and costly to the addressee. The commissive side of threats stems from the speaker's commitment to perform a costly action against the addressee if the latter refuses to comply with his wishes. Interestingly enough, this makes threats a more impositive act (i.e. more restrictive for the addressee) than a pure directive. The existence of an *alternative unavoidable cost* differentiates threats from other illocutionary types like requests or beggings. In the case of orders, there is also a second, implicit alternative cost: the speaker is more powerful than the addressee and the latter is aware that his non-compliance may lead the speaker to use his power against him. However, such a second cost is never overtly communicated (as it is the case with prototypical threats). Consider the following example of threat and its image-schematic representation as a case of overcome BLOCKAGE:

(31)   Yesterday, 53-year-old Susan Carpenter told how she allowed him to go inside her house after he threatened to murder her if she refused to do so. She said he shouted: 'Let me in or I will blow your head off.' (BNC)
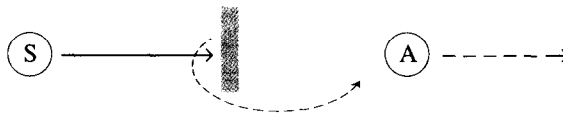

Fig. 4. Image-schematic representation of a successful threat.

The blockage (i.e. the addressee's expected unwillingness to perform the costly action) is not removed, but in spite of this, the speaker's intention is successful. This is so because of the existence of an unavoidable alternative cost, as mentioned before. This peculiar nature of threats has as a consequence that the most prototypical conversational moves following a threat would be those of acceptance (as in (31) above) or challenging, as in the following conversation:

(32)   Pumpkin lets go of his gun and places both hands on the table. Yolanda can't stand it anymore.
T1. Yolanda (holding her gun): Okay, now let him go!
T2. Jules (also holding her gun): Yolanda, I thought you were gonna be cool. When you yell at me, it makes me nervous. When I get nervous, I get scared, that's when motherfuckers get accidentally shot.
T3. Yolanda: Just know: you hurt him, you die.
(From the *Pulp Fiction* film script)

Jules's implicit threat to get Yolanda to give in and put her gun down (T2) is met by Yolanda's explicit threat which counts as an attempt to make Jules respect Pumpkin's life (T3).

3.4. Beggings and the 'iteration' image-schema

The main difference between beggings and other directives is connected with the degree to which the speaker wishes the addressee to carry out the desired action. In the case of beggings, the degree of speaker's will tends to be higher than in the case of other similar directives like requests. This higher degree of speaker's will has a typical, but not exclusive or unique, linguistic manifestation in the use of repetitions, which of course may be used to increase the insistence of virtually any type of directive.[24] The following example illustrates this feature:

(33)   'I need you, I need somebody.' He clutched at her arms and she held him tightly like one holding a child. *'Don't leave me*, Eva. *Never leave me*!! *Promise me you won't. Promise me!'* he begged. 'I promise,' she whispered. 'If you leave me it's all over.' (BNC)

This example suggests that, on some occasions, the conceptualisation of the act of begging is linked to the force image-schema of ITERATION, which may be represented as follows:
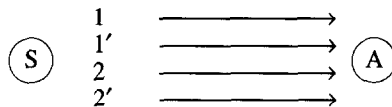

Fig. 5. Image-schematic representation of the act of begging.

Just as in real life we observe that several repeated attempts to carry out an action will yield a higher likelihood of success, linguistic insistence also increases the chances of a speech act being successful. The idea here is that the speaker wants to remove any potential obstacle (typically the addressee's unwillingness) by making it explicit, through repetition of the request, that the speaker really wants the action to be carried out, but also, through the repeated use of politeness mechanisms, that he is not trying to impose on the addressee.

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[24]   The use of repetitions is usually a reflection of a strong desire to obtain something. Thus, other directives may also be made more insistent through the use reduplications: *Come here! Do come here!* (insistent order); *Have some cake ... come on ... do have some cake!* (insistent offer). Nevertheless, the use of repetitions in the performance of other directives (i.e. orders, requests, offers, etc.) yields peripheral instances of these illocutionary categories (i.e. insistent orders, requests, offers, etc.). In contrast, the use of reduplications is felt as a natural realization procedure in the case of beggings. It may be suggested that instances of begging which include repetitions qualify as prototypical members of this category.

The expected conversational moves are the same as those for requests (i.e. acceptance or refusal). However, in the case of beggings, due to the speaker's insistence, acceptance to carry out the requested action is more likely to take place.

3.5. Suggestions and the 'iteration', 'counterforce' and 'diversion' image-schemas

Two further force gestalts are found to be involved in the understanding of suggestions: COUNTERFORCE, which (as pointed out above) is a kind of obstacle, and DIVERSION. Suggestions are characterised by their high degree of optionality. The addressee can choose freely whether to carry out the proposed action or not. Consider the following example of suggestion taken from the BNC corpus:

(34) Arakny said nothing about it as she turned and looked over the horse and the wagon, the wood basket and grill on its side. 'Why don't you build a fire and we'll have tea?' she suggested. 'I've got a better idea. Why don't we go to the coffeeshop for tea?' Olly suggested back. (BNC)

In this example, the force of Arakny's suggestion (henceforth 'force 1') is met by the force of Olly's counter-suggestion ('force 2'). In image-schematic terms, when two such forces collide face-to-face, neither can go anywhere unless one of them ceases to exist or is minimised. In a situation like this, the image-schematic understanding of suggestions provides us with an inference pattern which allows us to expect three potential outcomes for this particular interactional exchange:

(a) If force 2 is stronger than 1, the result is a change in force vectors. This force image-schema has been referred to by Johnson (1987: 46) as DIVERSION:
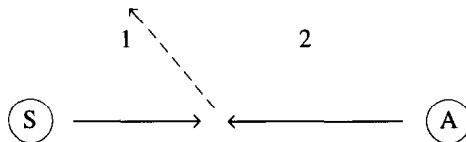
Fig. 6. Image-schematic representation of Arakny's unsuccessful suggestion.

In this case, the force of Olly's suggestion is stronger than that of Arakny's and, therefore, both follow Olly's suggested course of action. A simplified version of the conversational exchange represented by this image-schematic representation could be the following:

(35) Arakny: Why don't we build a fire and have tea?
      Olly: I've got a better idea. Why don't we go to the coffeeshop for tea?
      Arakny: OK. That sounds fine to me.

(b) Force 1 may be exerted again as force 1' (iteration) and the insistence may counteract force 2; the result is the opposite change in force vectors:
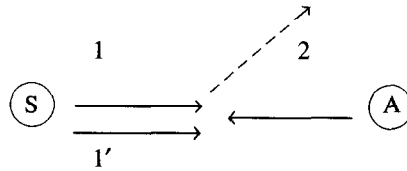

Fig. 7. Image-schematic representation of Olly's unsuccessful suggestion.

Olly's counter-suggestion is met by a third counter-suggestion by Arakny so that the latter's may finally overcome Olly's opposition. The actual conversational exchange schematised in Fig. 7 could have been as follows:

(36)   Arakny: Why don't we build a fire and have tea?
       Olly: I've got a better idea. Why don't we go to the coffeeshop for tea?
       Arakny: Coffeeshops are crowded at this time of the day. I build the fire and you help me.
       Olly: All right ...

(c) Both forces are equally strong, the tension between them is not resolved and, as a consequence, there is no action (i.e. both suggestions are unsuccessful). A possible image-schematic representation of this outcome is given below:
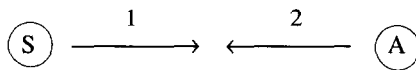

Fig. 8. Image-schematic representation of two opposing and equally strong suggestions.

The following (constructed) dialogue illustrates this third conversational possibility:

(37)   Arakny: Why don't we build a fire and have tea?
       Olly: I've got a better idea. Why don't we go to the coffeeshop for tea?
       Arakny: I don't think that's a good idea. I'd better see you tomorrow.
       Olly: Fine, if that's what you want.

This suggests that the implications of an image-schematic understanding of directives go beyond the illocutionary aspects of language and are also found to be relevant in order to account for at least some of the restrictions involved at the level of

discourse. It also suggests that conversational moves may be equally grounded in experiential force gestalts.[25]

4. An illustration of conceptual interaction in the understanding of one instance of indirect directive request

Our initial aim has been to provide arguments supporting the claim that the understanding of directive illocutions makes use of the four types of conceptual construct put forward by Lakoff (1987): propositional, metaphoric, metonymic, and image-schematic ICMs. In this section, it is our aim to illustrate how the different types of conceptual structure interact in order to make possible the understanding of a particular instance of directive request. Consider again example (25), which is reproduced here as (38):

(38) Can you get me a cup of coffee?

Fig. 9 schematises the particular conceptual interaction which takes place in the understanding of example (38).

First, the speech act may be metaphorically understood in terms of the force image-schema. The essential ingredient in this metaphor is the mapping from physical to social interaction. This allows the ability condition of the directive ICM to be regarded as one of the potential obstacles that may block the force of the act and, therefore, asking about this condition is a way of getting the addressee to make explicit whether such lack of ability is an obstacle or not. In recognising that what is being asked falls within the range of his abilities, the addressee is strongly compelled to take this part of the utterance as an indication that he is being requested to carry out the specified action. In other words, the ability condition is thus capable of metonymically standing for a request. Moreover, as with any other case of metonymy, this connection is not arbitrary or chaotic. In lexical metonymies (e.g. *She eats rabbit*) it is usually the predicate that triggers off the metonymic link (e.g. by profiling the domain of the animal's meat which is edible). In speech act metonymies there are conventional factors, like part (a) of the ICM of Cost-Benefit, which work in much the same way. The question about the addressee's capability to perform a certain action reminds him of the social convention according to which he is expected to change a state of affairs which is negative for the speaker, provided he has the capacity to do so.[26]

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[25]   In principle, our analysis suggests that it should be possible to find a cognitive motivation for fundamentally structural notions such as *adjacency pairs* and *conversational turns*, coming from Conversational Analysis, at least if related to directive speech acts. See footnote 12.

[26]   In connection with this, see footnote 12 for a discussion of the factors which may counteract the imposition placed by this type of social convention.
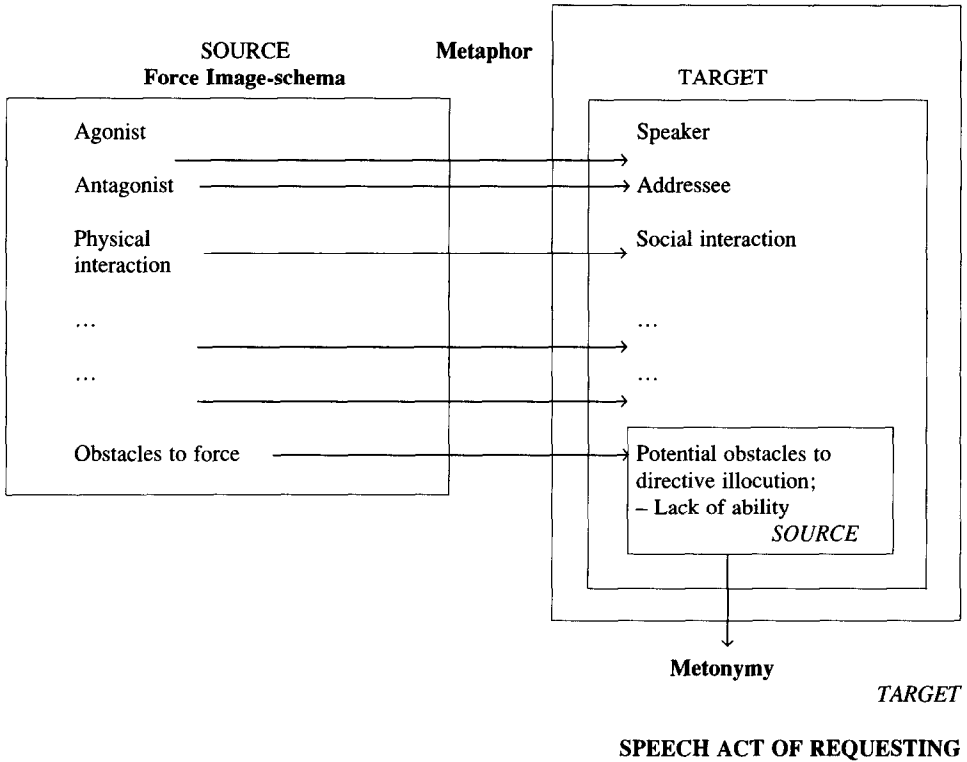
Fig. 9. Conceptual interaction in the understanding of an instance of request.

5. Conclusion

In this paper we have examined some cognitive-related aspects of the performance and interpretation of indirect directive speech acts. First, we have argued that current accounts of directive categories in terms of scenarios do not exhaust the wealth of knowledge that speakers have about illocutionary acts. In order to substantiate this claim, we have provided evidence that interactional aspects like politeness, optionality, speaker's relative power status, and degree of speaker's willingness are essential in the interpretation of several instances of indirect requests. Consequently, we have proposed that speech act categories are better described in terms of propositional ICMs, which would include Panther and Thornburg's scenarios, plus all the other pieces of information needed in the interpretation of a given illocutionary act. Second, we have made the claim that a metonymic operation on propositional illocutionary ICMs, as proposed by Panther and Thornburg, is not always enough in order to explain the performance of indirect directives. In this respect, we have shown that the understanding of at least some

instances of directives involves a more complex type of conceptual interaction process, which exploits other conceptual constructs such as metaphors and image-schemas.

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