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**CONSTRUCTIONS, MENTAL REPRESENTATIONS, AND SOCIOPRAGMATICS:
THE CASE OF PSEUDO-DIRECTIVE CONSTRUCTIONS**

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1. WHAT THIS PAPER IS ABOUT

- i. Developing a framework so as to account for the socio-pragmatic nature of constructions;
- ii. Design this framework so as to integrate constructional considerations into pragmatic issues;
- iii. Conversely, accounting for constructional variation (and language change) with reference to socio-pragmatic factors.

2. MOTIVATIONS FOR THIS PAPER

2.1. Previous personal research on constructional meaning and pragmatics

Desagulier (2003, 2005) on <you (don't) want to VP> in deictic contexts.

- **ADVICE**

- (1) *Rep. LINDER You know, John, you've brought us other reports where there were dangers, where most of the time it works, but sometimes it doesn't. And I always find myself asking, "How do you know who to go to?" RITTER It's very tough in any of these cases. **You want to** go to someone who does a lot of these operations' cause they tend to have fewer complications. (BYU-COCA, Golden Years Behind Bars; The Joker; Goodbye Wrinkles; The Drug War Status Report, ABC_2020, 1990-01-19)*

- **WARNING (FRIENDLY OR LESS SO)**

- (2) *Yes, yes Well Chairman, I'm assuming that er, the P A G, assuming you're accepting, will want to discuss with officers the issue id of identification of er, homes for the elderly? Is that agreed? **You want to be** very **careful** er, Mr Chairman, how we put out erm, information, I mean, let's face it, you know, you start sort of raising a lot of hairs if you're not careful and if, if, even if it's totally irrelevant people will latch on to a particular com comment and make it their own. (BYU-BNC, Shropshire County Council Social Services Committee: committee meeting (Pub/instit). Rec. on 11 Jan 1994 with 10 partics, 329 utts)*

MAIN CONSTRUCTIONAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE DEICTIC MEANING

- <you (don't) want to VP>, must appear as a main clause in an affirmative sentence;
- high degree of morphosyntactic coalescence between *want* and the *to*-infinitive (=> a sign of ongoing auxiliarization);
- the construction is Addressee-oriented (Subj=*you*) and may occasionally include Speaker (Subj=*we*)

EXTRALINGUISTIC, SITUATION-SPECIFIC FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE CONSTRUCTIONAL MEANING

- COGNITIVE STRATEGY

The construction profiles a specific construal of the event:

- ⇒ a covert coding of Speaker's authority and an overt coding of Addressee's freedom of non-compliance are blended into the same construction.

- PRAGMATIC STRATEGY

No direct match between the sentence type and the illocutionary force.

- ⇒ indeed, the declarative sentence type <Addressee wants to do X> profiles an illocutionary act which takes the form of an apparent statement – "S comments upon Addressee's objective need

of doing X” – but is used with a directive illocutionary force: “Speaker wants Addressee to do X”.

- S** appears to put the cards in H’s hand to avoid explicit coerciveness
does not put all the cards in H’s hand for pragmatic clarity
- A** freedom from imposition ▶ freedom of decision
nonetheless feels a certain pressure towards the realization of the process
- S/A** both relieved of direct responsibility
engaged in collaborative work
can adjust, retract, or adapt to communicative development

○ INTERACTIONAL FACTORS

The construction occurs frequently when there is *ad hoc* negotiation regarding the role of each participant. The role expectations of participants are subject to momentary negotiation, either because the conception of what behavior is proper for both speaker and addressee is unclear, or because participants lack any common ground relative to a new discourse situation.

Speaker appears as willing to help by presenting an action which Addressee may benefit from. Addressee may chose to take the directive for what it is or ignore it and stick to the assertive interpretation.

☞ **What should we make of these pragmatic & interactional factors in a construction grammar framework?**

2.2. Croft’s latest contribution on what “cognitive” should mean for CL

“(…) cognitive linguistics is in danger of construing itself too narrowly as an approach to *language* (...). This is not to say that the foundations of cognitive linguistics are invalid. (...) But they are incomplete. In particular (...) they are too solipsistic, that is, too much ‘inside the head’. In order to be successful, cognitive linguistics must go ‘outside the head’ and incorporate a social-interactional perspective on the nature of language.” (Croft: to appear)

4 TENETS OF CL	CROFT’S REVISION
(i) grammatical structures and processes in the mind are instances of general cognitive abilities	(i’) grammatical structures and processes in the mind are instances of general social cognitive abilities (joint action, coordination, convention)
(ii) grammar is symbolic and meaning is an essential part of grammar	(ii’) grammar consists of a semiotic triangle: the form, the meaning, the community in which the meaning is conventional
(iii) meaning is encyclopaedic	(iii’) meaning is shared
(iv) meaning involves construal (conceptualization)	(iv’) meaning involves construal for the purpose of communication

2.3. What is at stake for construction grammars

“Tenet 4. Constructions are understood to be learned on the basis of the input and general cognitive mechanisms (they are constructed), and are expected to vary crosslinguistically.” (Goldberg, 2003: 219).

⇒ True, but we should integrate a more specific approach and focus on Speaker/Addressee interaction and see construction of meaning as a joint action.

Indeed, every communicative situation is unique. Even if each communicative act involves the interpretation of the current joint enterprise against the background of previous joint operations, this is an active process that requires calculation in light of the local situation being communicated.

This potential indeterminacy may be reflected at the linguistic level in the tentative attribution of the semantic components to the syntactic components of the directive constructions.

I want to show that form-function reanalysis occurs even in conventional directive constructions, and involves Speakers and Addressees alike.

3. CASE STUDY: PSEUDO-DIRECTIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

3.1. Definition

Pseudo-directive constructions occur when Speaker attempts to get Addressee to do something without giving the impression of impinging upon Addressee's assessment that (s)he has a freedom of choice.

Pseudo-directives can be realized compressively (cf. <you (*don't*) want to VP> above) or expansively (cf case study below).

3.2. Correlated issues

- LITERAL MEANING VS CONSTRUCTIONAL MEANING

Literal force hypothesis: the illocutionary force of the utterance is reached via a two-step procedure whereby inferential processes operate after the literal content of the utterance has been derived. (ex. Clark and Schunk, 1980)

Experimental research in psychology has made this position untenable (Gibbs, 1983; Papafragou, 2000). Direct speech acts and their correlated literal interpretations do not invariably exhibit priority over their indirect, non-literal counterparts.

Interestingly, Gibbs concedes that people may occasionally examine the literal interpretation of indirect requests, especially when these are innovative, thus unfamiliar.

⇒ We are ready to extend this observation to conventional requests.

Papafragou (2000) mentions "ample evidence" that children have at their disposal a vast array of "form-force mappings". An assumption based on experimental research, most of which carried out in the 1970s (Ervin Tripp, 1977; Dore, 1977, *inter alia*). However, careful examination of this empirical data leads us to different conclusions regarding the lack of importance of the LFH in language acquisition. For instance, Ervin-Tripp (1977) shows that when it comes to directives, very young children do have at their disposal a wide range of syntactic alternations deeply embedded in social features, but with the notable exception of "forms of request that do not explicitly identify what is wanted – question directives of an indirect type, and affirmative hints" (1977: 188). While adults commonly conceal the explicit goal of a request so as to offer the addressee greater options not to comply, children on the other hand find it hard to understand directives that do not refer to what the speaker wants. Actually, it is not until the age of 5 or 6 that children prove able to depart from the literal meaning of requests and produce tactful deviousness by not referring to the intended goal (Garvey 1975).

The 'literal' meaning is also quite present in courtroom interaction (Mosegaard Hansen, 2008)

- **HEDGING AND INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS**

The idea that speech acts can be modified by certain verbs and syntactic constructions is far from new and has been described at length in works on ‘hedged performatives’, past and recent (cf. inter alia, Fraser, 1975, 1980; House and Kasper, 1981; Hübler 1983; Leech, 1983; Blum-Kulka and Ohlstein, 1984; Lauwereyns, 2002; Tchizmarova, 2005)¹.

While there is a general tendency to say less and mean more when giving an order or formulating a request, hedged performatives occur with a significant quantity of form (i.e. they say more).

⇒ But saying more is not necessarily equated with being more informative, and not being fully informative does not always entail meaning less.

- **POLITENESS**

The defining trait of pseudo-directive constructions is not so much politeness (though it is not totally absent) as the *ad hoc* construction/negotiation of identities in discourse.

- **PERSPECTIVE ACCOMMODATION (S/A), CONSTRUAL, AND ITS RELATION TO GRAMMAR**

In CL, constructions indicate a certain construal regarding a specific situation. It is normal to expect that some constructions allow for adaptability to situations where there is ongoing negotiation concerning the mutual expectations of participants.

3.3. <I am going to have to ask you to X>

A CONSTRUCTION CONVENTIONALLY EMANATING FROM AUTHORITY FIGURES:

- (3) *I told you again not to take any photographs. I'm going to have to ask you to stay behind.* [policeman to photographer]
- (4) *I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to check with the Defense Department.* (Tom Casey, Director Office of Press Relations Bureau of Public Affairs, online discussion regarding Iran's nuclear program and other U.S. foreign policy issues)
- (5) *Mister, you can say anything you want about me, but I'm gonna have to ask you not to talk about my horse that way.* (movie *Hidalgo*, 2004).
- (6) [Cathy Berta, a 66 retired school teacher, is part of a protest rally against Dick Cheney; she is carrying a sign that says: “No, You Can’t Have My Rights, I’m Still Using Them” and a little American flag on a stick. But the police won’t let her, or anyone else, carry the flags.]
Police officer – *I'm going to have to take your stick.*
Cathy Berta - *I know you're just doing your job.* [<http://www.progressive.org>]

The driving force of the illocutionary intent (Speaker wants Addressee to X) is realized as a performative (*Speaker asks Addressee to X*) and disguised as something impending (*going to*) and extrinsic from the speaker’s own will (*have to*) ⇒ cumulative hedging

ON SOME OCCASIONS, IF THE STATUS OF THE AUTHORITY FIGURE IS UNCLEAR, SOME VARIATION MAY OCCUR:

Improv Everywhere, Mission “Best Buy” (<http://www.improveverywhere.com>)

- (7) Employee - ***I'm going to have to ask you to leave.*** [3-fold hedged performative]
Participant - *You're kicking me out?* [1st request for literal meaning]
Employee - *No, I'm not saying that.*
Participant - *Ok, then I can stay? (...)*
Employee - ***I'm asking you to leave.*** [hedged performative]
Participant - *Are you kicking me out?* [2nd request for literal meaning]
Employee - *No.*

¹ For an extensive list of publications on hedging, see Schröder and Zimmer (1997).

Fig. 1 *S asks A to X*

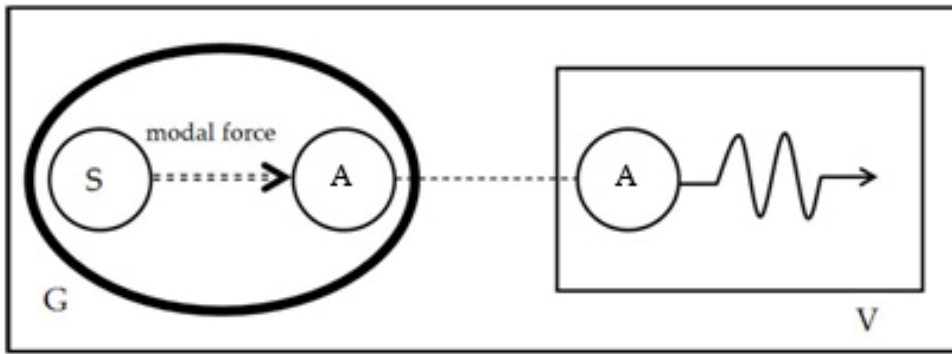


Fig. 2 *I have to X*

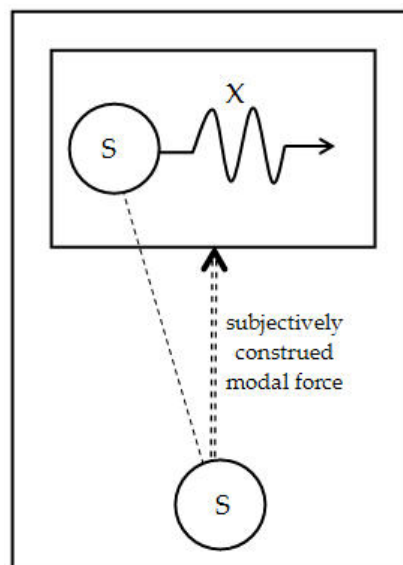


Fig. 3 *I'm going to X*

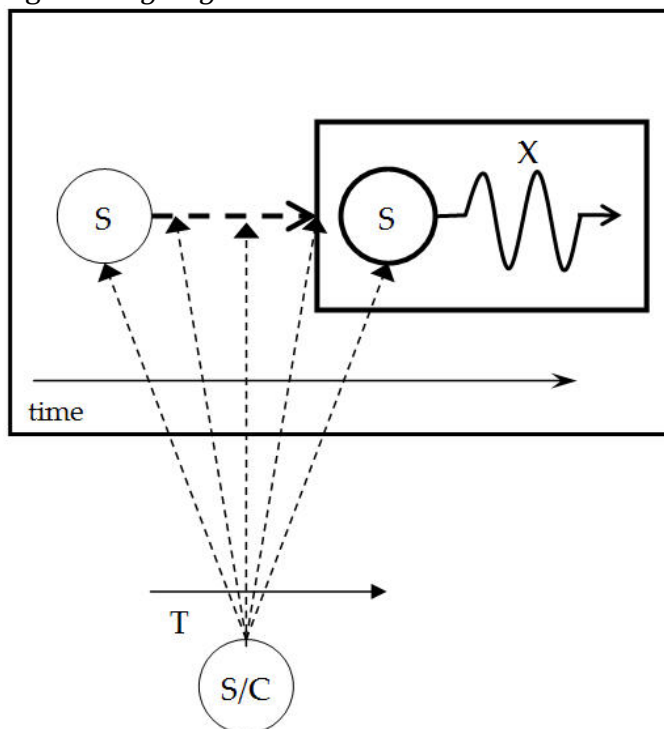


Fig. 4 *I'm going to have to ask you to X* (cumulative hedging)

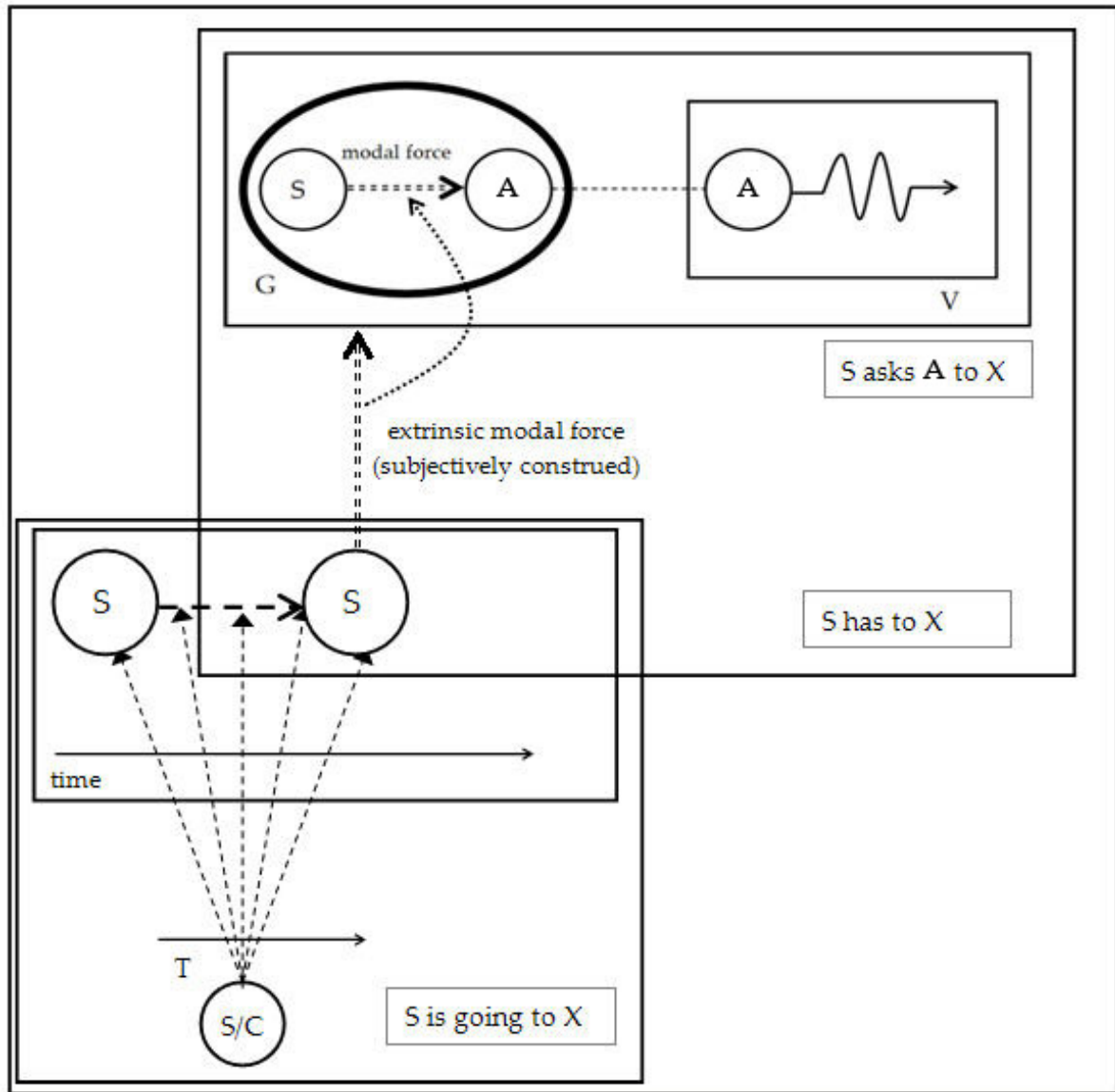
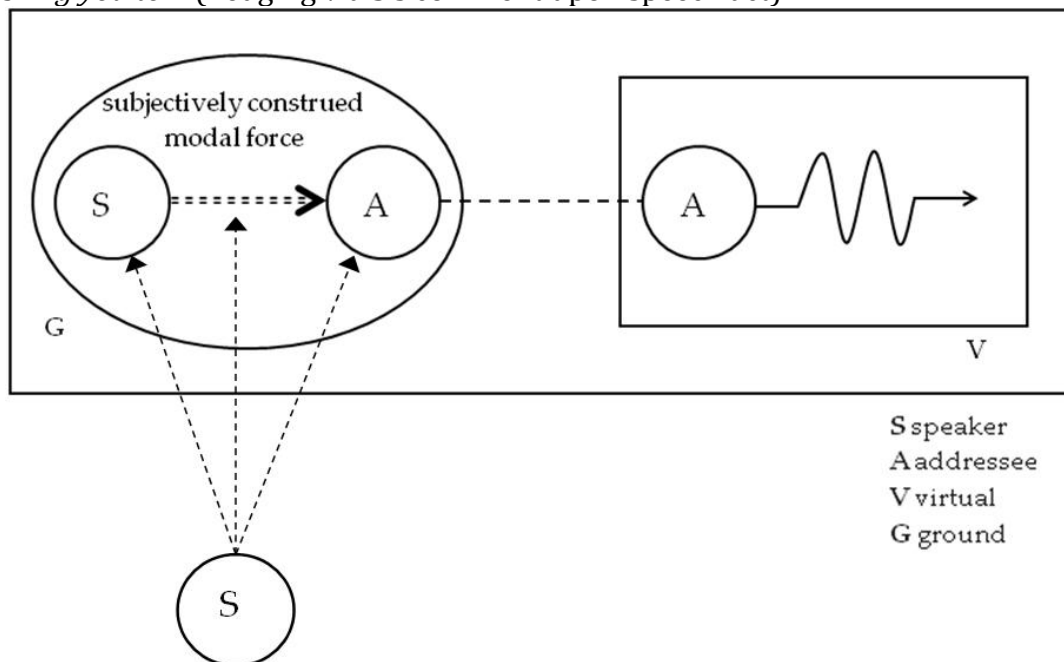


Fig. 5 *I'm asking you to X* (hedging via S's comment upon speech act)



Even if the literal meaning is occasionally the focus of attention, and even as the options left open are numerous, *<I am going to have to ask you to X>* still counts as a full-fledged construction with a conventionalized form/meaning mapping.

3.4. Other situation-specific pseudo-directive strategies

CONVERSATIONAL STRATEGIES OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Smith (1992), Sunaoshi (1995) on innovative directive strategies in Japanese.

Takano (2005): professional Japanese women in positions of authority and leadership.

Treomel-Ploetz (1994), *<Let me put it this way>* & Conversational strategies of women in leadership positions.

4. PERSPECTIVES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

4.1. Language acquisition

“Our knowledge of how children learn these pragmatic strategies – involving an understanding of the choices other people make based on an assessment of the listener’s knowledge and perspective – is very meager at this point. There are almost no experimental studies that manipulate the shared joint attentional scene between a child and an adult (perhaps created by discourse) and look at the constructions the child uses as a result.” Tomasello (2003: 314):

4.2. Sociolinguistics

Lormont Project (with Michel de Fornel, EHESS, forthcoming)

4.3. Gesture studies

Gesture sequences as constructions (with Simon Harrison, ENS Lyon, forthcoming)

5. CONCLUSIONS

Even if a conventional construction can be considered as a “prepackaged assembly” (Langacker, 1987: 57), in the sense that speakers do not need to reflect on its internal complexity, some constructive effort is nevertheless needed in contexts where the symbolic power that participants have over each other is problematic.

However, every communicative situation is unique. Even if each communicative act involves the interpretation of the current joint enterprise against the background of previous joint operations, this is an active process that requires calculation in light of the local situation being communicated.

This potential indeterminacy may be reflected at the linguistic level in the tentative attribution of the semantic components to the syntactic components of the directive constructions.

The indirect framing of a directive construction is not just the property of an utterance limited to the sentence unit: it is constructed on the basis of a subtle combination of form and meaning at the crossroads of strict conventions and situation-specific variation.

More importantly, grammatical constructions go hand in hand with the construction/negotiation of identities through verbal interaction.

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CORPORA

BYU-COCA: Brigham Young University Corpus of Contemporary American English

BYU-BNC: Brigham Young University British National Corpus