A CONSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH TO CONDOLENCES[1]

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ABSTRACT. *Drawing on preliminary insights in Pérez (2001), Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza (2002), and Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007), the present contribution presents a constructional approach to the study of illocutionary meaning. In so doing, I analyze the speech act category of condoling in order to establish the relationship between its semantic makeup and the linguistic realization procedures provided for its realization. From this perspective, illocutionary constructions are defined as pairings of the semantic conditions of the conceptual representation of a speech act category and those mechanisms which activate them linguistically. The results of the analysis allow for different degrees of implicitness in the production and understanding of illocutionary meaning, as well as for the existence of conventionalized expressions associated to the realization of speech acts.*

Keywords: Illocutionary meaning, cognition, conceptual metonymy, conventionalization, idiomatic construction, condoling.

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UN ENFOQUE CONSTRUCCIONAL DE LAS CONDOLENCIAS

RESUMEN. *Siguiendo a Pérez (2001), Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza (2002) and Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007), el presente artículo presenta un enfoque construccional del estudio del significado ilocutivo. Con este fin, examino el acto de habla de condolerse para establecer la relación entre la estructura semántica y los procedimientos lingüísticos utilizados en su realización. Desde esta perspectiva, las construcciones ilocutivas se definen como asociaciones de las condiciones semánticas de la representación conceptual de un acto de habla y los mecanismos que las activan lingüísticamente. Los resultados de este análisis dan cuenta de los diferentes grados de implicidad en la producción y la comprensión del significado ilocutivo y de la existencia de expresiones convencionalizadas asociadas a la realización de los actos de habla.*

Palabras clave: Ilocución, cognición, metonimia conceptual, convencionalización, construcción idiomática, condolencia.

1. INTRODUCTION

While the most diverse theories have been formulated to account for speech act meaning since Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) seminal publications, the research on the issue has fallen within two opposed perspectives, characterized by the weight they place on codification or on inference in illocutionary performance. These various treatments of speech act meaning are represented by inferential theories put forward by pragmatists (Bach and Harnish 1979; Leech 1983; Levinson 2000, among others) and grammar-oriented accounts, traditionally associated to functional grammar theories (Dik 1989, 1997; Givón 1990; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004). The theories in the first group generally posit the hypothesis that the production and interpretation of speech acts always results from inferential activity (although in some accounts it is argued that convention also plays a role, see Morgan 1978). By contrast, those in the second group claim that at least the illocutionary categories based on the three sentence types are directly understood without the need of inference. The remaining illocutionary values arise from different types of derivation processes or from the options offered by the language system. In spite of their positive advantages, none of these approaches provides an integrated explanation of the functioning of illocution. Inferential theories, on the one hand, cannot explain how the use of certain realizational procedures can produce an illocutionary value effortlessly (e.g. the request *Could you give me a*

glass of water?). Functional positions, on the other hand, ignore the motivation and the diverse pragmatic constraints (i.e. social variables and politeness matters) that apply to speech act meaning.

The integration of both proposals can bring about important benefits for the development of a comprehensive approach to illocution. In this respect, the adoption of a cognitivist framework sheds light on the issue by addressing cognitive aspects (i.e. knowledge organization structures, cognitive continuums, prototypicality, etc.) that have been overlooked in previous proposals. In Cognitive Linguistics, illocutionary meaning is treated as the result of performing metonymic operations supporting inferential schemas that apply to cognitive models (Panther and Thornburg 1998, 2004). Recent cognitivist studies have also given evidence supporting the existence of conventional speech acts and illocutionary constructions, defined as linguistic configurations specialized for an illocutionary value (Panther and Thornburg 1999, Pérez 2001; Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza 2002; Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi 2007; Baicchi and Ruiz de Mendoza 2011; Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza 2011). Such a conception of illocutionary constructions breaks the limitations imposed by traditional speech act theories by integrating inference and codification as the extreme ends in a continuum with varying degrees of intermediate realizations.

Elaborating on the view of illocutionary construction that has been proposed in these cognitivist approaches, this study puts forward an account of illocution according to which the pieces of knowledge that structure speech act types are paired with linguistic devices through which they can be communicated. Working within this theoretical framework and based on data drawn from electronic corpora, the present contribution carries out a description of the meaning conditions of the illocutionary category of condoling and the constructional realizations associated to their expression. In other words, I will explore the conceptual structure of the act of condoling and how different illocutionary constructions provide the addressee with access to the corresponding cognitive model. The linguistic realization of condolences will be shown as based upon lexico-grammatical resources with a given instantiation potential for relevant parts of their corresponding semantic structure in relation to the context of situation. I will prove that the higher the number of parts of the cognitive model which are activated through a construction, the higher it is its degree of codification and vice versa. The illocutionary constructions with a high instantiation potential constitute adapted vehicles for the expression of a speech act category. Conversely, those unable to supply relevant points of access to the cognitive model in consideration require complementary inferential activity to produce an illocutionary value which can become conventionalized.

The remainder of this paper is as follows. First, I will discuss the main theoretical assumptions held within cognitive approaches to illocution. Second, I will provide an outline of the treatment of illocutionary acts based on illocutionary constructions, cognitive models and realization procedures. Third, I will put forward a description of the semantic grounding and conventions associated with condolences and present the constructional realizations associated to their performance. Finally, I will conclude by summarizing the essential points of this proposal and by suggesting some potential lines for further research.

2. THE COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE ON ILLOCUTION

Working within Cognitive Linguistics, Panther and Thornburg (1998: 756) address illocution by pointing to the problems that the lack of consideration of the cognitive mechanisms causes in inferential approaches, which are, first, the fact that, although based on inferential patterns, speakers are able to grasp the force of a speech act very quickly; and second, that they ignore the inference mechanisms involved in the interpretation of illocution and their cognitive grounding. In order to overcome these two shortcomings, Thornburg and Panther (1997) and Panther and Thornburg (1998, 2004) propose that our knowledge of illocutionary meaning is organized in the form of illocutionary scenarios. This type of organizational structure is shared by the members of a linguistic community and is stored in long-term memory. Illocutionary scenarios can be exploited metonymically by activating relevant parts in them. For example, an utterance such as *Do you have any soda?* activates one of the pre-conditions for the performance of a request, namely, the addressee's possession of the required object. This pre-condition gives metonymic access to the whole speech act category.

Panther and Thornburg's proposal has gone through revision by Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza (2002), who claim that there is more than simply a scenario and a metonymy at work in pragmatic inferencing. Based on preliminary work in directive illocutions (Ruiz de Mendoza 1999; Pérez 2001), Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza (2002) argue that scenarios need to be complemented by cognitive models capturing socio-cultural variables like power, politeness, optionality and cost-benefit. One of these models is the so-called *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, which was first formulated by Ruiz de Mendoza (1999), and Pérez and Ruiz de Mendoza (2002) as a development of Leech's (1983) cost-benefit pragmatic scale. The model stipulated that we are expected to help other people if it is within our range of abilities. In a later formulation by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi

(2007) and Baicchi and Ruiz de Mendoza (2011), the model is defined as a complex cultural model based on the concept of *mutual manifestness* proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1995) within Relevance Theory. Here I reproduce the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, as formulated by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007: 111-112).

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

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

(c) If it is manifest to A that a potential state of affairs is beneficial to B, then A is expected to bring it about provided he has the capacity to do so.

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

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

(f) If it is manifest to A that a state of affairs is beneficial to B and B has brought it about, A should feel pleased about it and make this feeling manifest to B.

(g) If it is manifest to B that A has changed a state of affairs to B's benefit, B should feel grateful about A's action and make this feeling manifest to 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 his feeling manifest to A.

(j) If it is manifest to A and B that a particular state of affairs is not beneficial to B but A has no power to change it to B's benefit, A should still feel sympathy for B over the non-beneficial state of affairs and make this manifest to B.

(k) If it is manifest to A that A is responsible for a certain state of affairs to be to A's benefit, A may feel proud about this situation and make it manifest to B.

The semantic base of speech act categories exploits the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* by means of conventional and non-conventional resources. The latter simply consist of expressions with instantiation potential for relevant parts of the model (e.g. a piece of advice like *You should buy a good dictionary*),

which is regulated through metonymic access, as is postulated by Panther and Thornburg. The former represent cases of expressions that were originally involved in the activation of parts of the model and have become *entrenched* (in Langacker's words, 1999) with frequent use in appropriate contexts. One example is the as *Can You VP?* sequence for requests (cf. *Can you pass me the salt?*), whose value was initially inferred on the basis of the activation of part (c) of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*, according to which we have to satisfy other people's needs; and which has become largely conventionalized for the performance of this illocutionary category. The same part of the model provides the background for the conventionalization of other related constructions for requests, such as *Could You VP?*, *Will You VP?*, and *Would You VP?*, among others. Section 5 below explores the theoretical implications of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* for the expression of condolences.

3. THE CONVENTIONALIZATION OF ILLOCUTIONARY MEANING

The research on the conventionalization of illocution from a cognitive perspective is somewhat scarce. The first piece of research that concentrates on the issue is carried out by Pérez (2001), who describes the prototypical realization procedures for directive and commissive speech acts. Her approach shows that the expressions that are capable of activating more parts of a scenario tend to be used more prototypically in the performance of the corresponding illocution. However, this research does not defend a constructional status for these formulations, and rather regards them as formal properties capable of activating the semantic variables of an illocutionary cognitive model (for instance, the use of imperative sentences in orders, mitigators in requests and modality markers in advising). Following the lead of Pérez (2001), Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) carry out a description of the conventional formulas used in the expression of interpersonal categories (i.e. directive, commissive and expressive), evidencing a pervasive role of the constructional component in illocutionary expression. For these authors, certain configurations with instantiation potential for relevant parts of illocutionary cognitive models (Panther and Thornburg's scenarios) become entrenched as inferential shortcuts (e.g. the *Could You Please VP?* sequence for polite requests). Configurations of this type acquire a constructional status and are defined by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007: 108) in the following way:

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

Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) thus develop a constructional account of illocution where constructions contain non-parametrizable (or fixed) (*Can You* in *Can You VP*) and parametrizable (or modifiable) (*VP* in *Can You VP*) elements. In their thinking, constructional conventionalization results from the cultural generalizations specified in the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. In other words, the expression of illocutionary meaning is highly constrained by cultural conventions of appropriate behavior. For example, the utterance *I would like to have dinner in a romantic restaurant* is interpreted as a request based on the generalization that we have to satisfy other people's wishes if we are able to do so. This stipulation lies at the base of other constructions based on expressions such as *I Would Like VP*, *It Would Be Nice VP* or *It Would Be A Good Idea VP* for requesting. The degree of entrenchment of linguistic expressions of this type is such that speakers do not need to make use of any inferential mechanism to arrive at their illocutionary value.

The adoption of a constructional approach to illocution like the one proposed by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) presents three important advantages. In the first place, that conventionalized sequences help us to better reach the correct illocutionary value of utterances. If a construction like *Why Don't You VP?* has a default value as a piece of advice, the addressee is automatically led to its interpretation and act as proposed by the speaker. Second, it makes it possible to perform speech acts without resorting to grammatical sentence types, as has been propounded in functional grammar accounts (Dik 1989, 1997; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004) based on the research carried out by Sadock and Zwicky (1985).[2] The third advantage has to do with the fact that additional meaning implications that are not dependent on the linguistic forms can be derived from contextual information and mutual background knowledge of the speakers, which makes the conventionalization process compatible with inferential activity from the context.

The present analysis takes sides with the notion of conventionalization put forward by Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2007) based on the cultural constraints imposed by the generalizations stipulated in the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model*. From this perspective, the expression of illocution is accounted for here in the

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[2] In particular, Dik (1989, 1997) claims that sentence types must be interpreted in terms of illocutionary functions, and basic illocutions can be transformed into a different illocutionary value through a process of illocutionary derivation (e.g. the imperative *Hand me that paper* becomes a request with the addition of *please*). The Dikkian account of illocution has been largely criticized within constructionist approaches (see Mairal and Ruiz de Mendoza 2008, 2009; Ruiz de Mendoza and Gonzálvez-García 2011), who claim that the existence of default interpretations that are not predictable from grammatical forms points towards a non-derivational approach to illocution.

form of illocutionary constructions that pair the meaning conditions that make up the cognitive model or illocutionary scenario of and a number of linguistic realizations. The formal composition of illocutionary constructions includes the sentence type and other lexico-grammatical features. The meaning conditions defined in the illocutionary cognitive model capture the semantic characterization of the speech act under consideration and a wide range of pragmatic information (e.g. the relationship holding between the speakers, the degree of formality of the contexts, etc.). Understanding constructions in this way permits to explore both the conceptualization of illocution and the cultural generalizations that impose different degrees of conventionalization on the expression of speech act categories. The present analysis intends to provide a preliminary account of the constructional composition of illocution in the expression of condolences by showing how their realization is motivated and constrained.

4. THE SEMANTICS OF CONDOLENCES

The small number of studies devoted to the analysis of the act of condoling focus on its social function (Norrick 1978; Wierzbicka 1987). These accounts regard condolences as formulaic acts that arise from politeness conventions. Condolences make manifest to others that we are aware that they are experiencing a misfortune and express our sorrow for being unable to help. The socio-cultural motivation of condolences is described in one of the conventions of the *Cost-Benefit Cognitive Model* (Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi 2007) as follows:

> *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.*

Condolences are thus based on the assumption that the addressee is involved in a state of affairs that is negative for him. We condole when someone else is in times of adversity: either feeling unhappy due to a misfortune or grieving the loss of a loved one. It is also presupposed that the speaker is unable to change that negative state of affairs into one that is positive for the addressee. This is a crucial characteristic of condolences. In complying with the principles of interaction, the speaker should help the addressee if it is within his range of abilities. These cases give way to acts of requesting. If he cannot help the addressee, then the speaker should offer condolences about the bad situation he is facing. This convention shapes the background for the cognitive model for condolences.

This model derives from generalizations over cases of interaction where people express sympathy at others who are suffering a misfortune. Some of these cases of interaction may be the following:

(a) It is manifest to A that B is involved in a negative situation. A is unable to change the situation to B's benefit. A expresses sympathy to B. B may accept A's expression of sympathy.

(b) It is manifest to A that B is involved in a negative situation. A is unable to change the state of affairs to B's situation. A offers help in case he can ease B's pain. B may accept A's help.

(c) It is manifest to A that B is involved in a negative situation. A offers support to B. B may accept A's support.

(d) B is involved in a negative situation but pretends he is not. A is deceived and expresses sympathy about B's misfortune.

To these cases of interaction there is a corresponding set of common elements which make up the cognitive model of condolences:

(e) It is manifest to A that B is involved in a negative situation.

(f) A is unable to change the situation to B's benefit.

(g) A feels sympathy about B's misfortune.

(h) A makes this feeling manifest to B.

(i) B may accept A's expression of sympathy.

The parameters of this cognitive model are either partly or fully activated through different constructional realizations. Some are exemplified in the utterances:[3]

(1) I'm *very sorry* for your loss. I know it's got to be painful. (Coca)

(2) I share your sorrow. I wish I *could ease the pain of* your great loss. (Google Books)

(3) Sir, *my condolences* on the death of your secretary. (Bnc)

(4) I was extremely fond of him, as I knew him very well indeed, and *my sympathy goes* out to his widow and family in their great sorrow. (Google Books)

(5) Please *accept my condolences* on the death of your cousin. (Google Books)

Each of these utterances instantiates one different part of the cognitive model formulated above and can be interpreted as a condolence in the appropriate

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[3] The examples upon which this analysis is based have been retrieved from the British National Corpus (BNC), the Corpus and Contemporary English (COCA) and Google. These corpora have been selected because they contain data that reflects present-day language use. Google has been used to complement the sometimes scarce amount of examples drawn from the BNC and the COCA.

context. Utterance (1) activates the fact that the speaker's sympathy arises from his assumption that the addressee is involved in a harmful situation. Utterance (2) points to the part of the model that presents the speaker as unable to change the negative state of affairs affecting the addressee. The expression of sympathy is, however, implicit. By contrast, in (3) and (4) the speaker's feelings are overtly expressed. The lexical transparency of the sequences used in these utterances makes them capable of activating the full cognitive model and thereby producing an easy condoling interpretation. Finally, in (9), which also displays a high degree of codification, activates the addressee's expected response to the speaker's condolence. That response is logically the acceptance of the act, since cultural conventions lead us to express gratitude when other people sympathize with our feelings. The next section studies the motivation of these and other constructional realizations for condoling.

5. THE EXPRESSION OF CONDOLENCES

5.1. DECLARATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS FOR CONDOLENCES

The performance of condolences displays a notable preference for the use of declarative constructions. In this, they resemble other expressive speech acts, which show a general tendency towards the use the declarative form. Declarative sentences allow speakers to make their feelings clear by means of a statement. Nonetheless, the declarative sentence type is characterized by its low level of specification for a given illocutionary category. In order to produce an explicit instance of condoling, it is necessary to codify the value of the declarative form. Let us see how these devices are arranged into particular configurations which, by pointing to different parameters of the corresponding cognitive model, facilitate the interpretation of an utterance as a condolence.

(6) *I X$_{VP}$ My Condolences (X$_{PREP}$)*
    I respectfully *express my condolences*. (Google Books)

The explicitness of this construction type manages to produce a default condoling reading. In its most conventional form, it consists of a fixed part (i.e. the condoling value) and two parametrizable elements (i.e. the subject and the verb). The subject needs to point to the speaker as the person who is offering condolences in order to comply with the semantics of the act. The verb phrase can be realized either by verbs of expressing or giving denoting a controlled action and a benefit to the addressee. The verbs used in the following utterances are representative of the ones found in the construction:

(7)   I *extend my condolences* to his parents, family and friends. (Coca)

(8)   I *offer my condolences* to the fathers who have lost their young offspring. (Google Books)

Although these realizations produce the same condoling value, they convey different meaning implications depending on the verb they use. In (7), the use of the verb *extend* aims at making the condolence more inclusive. This verb fits in contexts where the act of condoling is addressed to more than one person. The use of this verb in these situations conveys the idea that the speaker needs to make his feelings manifest to all the addressees in spite of knowing they are already aware of his grief. The use of *offer* in (8) is not marked by contextual variables, as was the previous case, but by the speaker's intention to express his feelings to support the addressee. The fixed part of the construction is, however, so explicit that the verb phrase can be left out without causing difficulties in its interpretation as a condolence:

(9)   "*My condolences*", he said. "Your father was a great man". (Coca)

The absence of the verb phrase gives rise to a constructional variant that places the emphasis on the speaker's feelings rather than on his intention to make such feelings manifest to the addressee. This has the communicative consequence of making the purpose of condoling even more explicit. A similar type of realization for the act of condoling is illustrated in the example below:

(10) *I X_{VP} My Sympathy (X_{PREP})*
I *express my sympathy* to you at the loss of your brother officer, Michael. (Google Books)

This construction is another way of making explicit condolences. In this case, it is not the condoling meaning which is made explicit by the lexical components of the construction, but the feelings of sympathy. The expression of the speaker's sympathy is the purpose of the act and its manifestness produces a default condoling reading. As was with the previous case, the construction is compatible with verbs of expressing or giving. These verbs denote the idea that the speaker is expressing his sympathy to satisfy the addressee and his feelings are therefore something to be appreciated. Consider:

(11) I *express* my sympathy for the hardships they suffered and offer my apology for the situation they found themselves in. (Coca)

(12) I *offer my sympathy* and grieve with you, Peter. (Google Books)

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These examples illustrate the subtle meaning differences that result from using either an expressing verb or a giving verb in the construction. When a verb of expressing is used, as is the case in (11), the speaker's purpose to make his feelings manifest is emphasized. When a verb of giving is used, as in (12), the idea that the expression of sympathy seeks to benefit the addressee is conveyed. In other cases, the verb phrase can be left out to make the speaker's feelings even more explicit:

(13) And *my sympathies* once again to your lovely wife. (Bnc)

The absence of a subject pointing to the speaker as the person expressing condolences and a verb phrase specifying his willingness to express his feelings does not affect the condoling value. In (13), the construction makes use of a variable element specifying the identity of the addressee. This is done when the person the speaker is talking to is not the receiver of the condolence and this person is asked to communicate the speaker's feelings to someone else. This type of element may be also used before the fixed part of the construction in order to emphasize the addressee's identity. See, for instance:

(14) *To* and all the family *our deepest sympathy*. (Bnc)

The variable element can be alternatively realized by a verb phrase with the aim of highlighting the transfer involved in the expression of the speaker's feelings:

(15) *My deepest* sympathy *goes out* with you. (Google Books)

In cases like the one exemplified in (15), the condolence is regarded as a transfer from the speaker to the addressee. At the same time, the use of the verb *go* in the variable element implies that the expression of sympathy attempts to comfort the addressee.

(16) *I Am Sorry (X$_{PREP}$)*
   I am sorry for your loss, Jane. I know what it is to be orphaned. (Coca)

In spite of its instantiation potential for the speaker's feelings, the condoling value of this construction is rather implicit. Here it is not sympathy that the speaker expresses but sorrow, which makes the construction equally appropriate for apologies and condolences. It is the information provided by the context that determines its interpretation as one or the other. Let us provide an example:

(17) *I am sorry.* Your head must hurt. Come back here to the guest bedroom. (Coca)

Both in apologies and condolences, the speaker feels sorrow about a negative state of affairs affecting the addressee. The difference is that in apologizing, the negative situation has been brought about by the speaker, while in condoling it is a misfortune the addressee has to cope with. This difference needs to be manifest to both participants in order for the construction to achieve its illocutionary goal.

(18) *I Am Saddened (X$_{PREP}$)*
I am saddened by his loss and I extend my deepest sympathies to his family. (Google Books)

This construction makes the condoling value explicit through the use of a first person subject and a verb phrase expressing sadness plus a prepositional phrase denoting the negative state of affairs affecting the addressee. The manifestness of the speaker's sadness together with the specification of the action the speaker is condoling for activates the corresponding parts of the cognitive model. The instantiation of these two components of the act yields a straightforward interpretation of an utterance as an instance of this illocutionary type.

(19) *My Thoughts And Prayers (X$_P$)*
My thoughts and prayers are with you during this difficult time.

Without making explicit the illocutionary value, this construction represents a highly conventional means of giving condolences. The condoling value of the construction is easy to grasp. The speaker attempts to comfort the addressee by expressing concern about the negative situation in which he is involved. Higher degrees of emphasis can be given to the addressee as the person who receives the speaker's condolence by specifying his identity through a second person subject. By way of illustration, consider:

(20) You are in *my thoughts and prayers*. Please let me know if there is any way I can help. (Google Books)

Utterance (20) makes explicit that the addressee is the person who is receiving the speaker's condolences. This procedure is generally used when it is necessary to highlight the identity of the addressee as the person who is immersed in the negative state of affairs.

(21) *My Heart Is With You (X$_{PREP}$)*
My heart is with you in your sorrow. (Google Books)

This type of realization describes the speaker's feelings for acting in a way that is negative for the addressee. The use of this sequence has the same

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instantiation potential as the one analyzed in relation to the previous construction. The manifestness of the speaker's sympathy to the addressee is instantiated, as can be observed in example (21). It may be noted, however, that the construction is not capable in itself of yielding a condoling reading. This is due to the implicitness of the speaker's feelings. Without a specific reference to the negative state of affairs affecting the addressee, the interpretation of the construction as a condolence hangs on contextual information. Here is an example in which the construction congratulates the addressee:

(22) *My heart is with you in* your noble effort. (Google Books)

In (22), the speaker expresses joy about an achievement brought about by the addressee. This is possible as the construction only indicates that the speaker sympathizes with the addressee without specifying that it is on a negative state of affairs. If it is a misfortune that has occurred to the addressee, the illocutionary meaning is a condolence. Conversely, if the state of affairs is beneficial for the addressee, the construction is performing the act of congratulating.

5.2. *IMPERATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS FOR CONDOLENCES*

Imperative sentences issue command and fit in implicit cases of condoling in which the speaker requests for permission or acceptance of his feelings of sympathy about the negative situation in which the addressee is involved. This explains the small number of condolences which are based on the imperative form:

(23) *Let Me X_{VP} My Condolences/My Sympathy (X_P)*
With all the honesty I can conjure, *let me* give you *my condolences* on the death of your friend. (Google Books)
Let me extend my sympathy to you in your grief. (Google Books)

On some occasions, the speaker's uncertainty about the addressee's willingness to receive condolences requires the use of tentative instances. By using an imperative asking for permission to express sympathy, the speaker performs implicit acts of condoling which manage to adapt to such situations. The condoling meaning is easily conveyed through the use of a predication making explicit the illocutionary value.

(24) *Permit Me X_{VP} My Condolences/My Sympathy (X_P)*
On a more personal note, *permit me* to express *my condolences* on the loss of your son. (Google Books)
Permit me to assure you again of *my sympathy* for you in your unfortunate situation. (Google Books)

In this construction the use of the verb *permit* conveys higher degrees of formality. At the same time, the use of the imperative indicates that the speaker is not willing to trouble the addressee in expressing his condolences. The use of the construction functions as a reminder to the addressee that the speaker believes it is necessary to express sympathy given the circumstances.

(25) *Accept My Condolences/My Sympathy*
Please *accept my condolences*. (Coca)
There is probably nothing anyone can do, but please *accept my sympathy*. (Coca)

This realization is probably the most explicit of the imperative constructions for condoling. Its high degree of codification instantiates the addressee's expected response to the speaker's condolences. Because of this it is often unnecessary to make use of additional realization procedures conveying the intended meaning. This use of the imperative form seems adapted for formal contexts where the relationship holding between the participants is distant and the expression of sympathy needs to be more tentative. In some cases, the speaker may use mitigating devices in order to decrease the degree of force. The two instances exemplified in (25) make use of the adverb *please*. Such a device reduces the impact of the act and makes the imperative more appropriate for the warmth that is characteristic of condolences.

5.3. *INTERROGATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS FOR CONDOLENCES*

Interrogative constructions prove the least adapted means for the performance of condolences. This is due to their open nature. The interrogative sentences present an open proposition that seeks a response from the addressee. The act of condoling expresses the speaker's sympathy and its realization does not depend on the addressee's response. The few instances of condoling based on the interrogative sentence found are considered below:

(26) *May I X$_{VP}$ My Condolences/My Sympathy?*
May I offer my condolences on your recent loss? (Google Books)
Terrible. Terrible. *May I offer my sympathy*? (Google Books)

Even though this constructional type shows little productivity, it constitutes a fairly codified means for the expression of condolences. The construction asks for permission to express condolences to the addressee, which is but a natural consequence of the politeness conventions. The fact that the speaker intends to express sympathy for the addressee is in itself capable of instantiating the whole cognitive model for the act of condoling. As can be

observed in (26), interrogative requests for permission to give condolences convey lower degrees of imposition than their imperative counterparts, which has the effect of softening the force conveyed. Constructions of this type are associated to contexts in which the participants are not acquainted with each other.

(27) *Will You Accept My Condolences/My Sympathy?*
      Will you accept my condolences? (Google Books)
      Will you accept my sympathy in your sorrow? (Google Books)

In this construction, it is the willingness of the addressee to receive condolences that stands for the request for permission to perform the act. The construction gives access once again to the part of the cognitive model of condoling that specifies the addressee's expected response to the speaker's expression of sympathy.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This work represents a preliminary case study of the motivation and constraints of the illocutionary constructions associated with the performance of condolences. The present analysis, although necessarily incomplete, argues for a description of condoling in terms of cognitive models and determines the level of conventionalization of constructions according to their instantiation potential for the corresponding conceptual representation. The illocutionary constructions used in the expression of condolences have been organized according to their degree of codification. The greater the number of conditions of the cognitive model which are activated by a construction, the more conventional the construction is for the performance of condolences. Declarative constructions, due to their compatibility with the semantics of expressive acts, are more capable of instantiating central parameters of the model of condoling. By contrast, imperative and interrogative constructions constitute poor vehicles for the expression of condolences due to their low instantiation potential, being capable of activating only the expected response on the part of the addressee.

The results of the analysis make apparent the need of approaching the study of illocution from a constructionist perspective that integrates both inference and codification in the explanation of speech acts and paves the way for the formulation of conventional formulas as constructions in the expression of illocution.

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