THE DIRECTIVE-COMMISSIVE CONTINUUM[1]

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1. Introduction

Speech acts like *threats*, *invitations*, and *offers* were originally assigned either to the directive (threats, invitations) or the commissive (offers) categories of the illocutionary taxonomy (see Austin 1962; Searle 1979). Subsequent studies have displayed a great deal of variation in the categorization of these three types of speech act. *Invitations* and *offers* are still seen as belonging to the directive and commissive categories respectively by authors such as Leech (1983) and Wierzbicka (1987). In contrast, Tsui (1994) regards both *invitations* and *offers* as a type of requestive act and includes them in the same category as requests. In turn, *threats* are classified as commissive, rather than directive, by Leech (1983), because they are speaker-oriented (i.e. they make reference to a future event X for which the speaker is assumed to be responsible). Furthermore, Bach and Harnish (1979) and Hancher (1979) claim that these three illocutionary subtypes have a hybrid nature and suggest that they should be thought of as members of a new commissive-directive category. Moreover, they argue that these acts are "equally commissive and directive; neither force dominates" (Hancher 1979: 6).

Bach and Harnish's (1979) and Hancher's (1979) positing of a new ad hoc category of commissive-directives is motivated by the need to account for the fact that these three illocutionary acts include features of both directive and commissive illocutions. On the one hand, as is the case with directives, these three illocutionary

types are intended to move the addressee into the performance of some kind of future action. Threats and invitations count as attempts to make the addressee carry out a physical action, and offers are aimed at motivating either a physical or a verbal action (i.e. either the physical acceptance of the object that is being offered or the verbal acceptance of the offer for help, etc.). On the other hand, as is the case with commissives, the three of them also involve a potential action by the speaker. Threats base their harsh nature on the fact that, if the addressee does not perform the requested action, the speaker will do something against the addressee (e.g. *If you don't stay quiet, I'll punish you*). Invitations bind the speaker to a future action which involves allowing or facilitating the state of affairs in which the addressee will perform the action expressed in the invitation (if one invites someone else to a party, one will then have to allow that person to take part in it). Finally, offers also involve a future action by the speaker (the giving of the object that has been offered, as in *Do have some more cake!*, or the performance of the action expressed in the offer, as in *Can I help you with your homework?*).

In the present paper, the hybrid nature of these three illocutionary types is analysed from a cognitive perspective. Taking into account the findings of Prototype Theory (Rosch 1978) on the nature of human categorization,[2] the existence of intermediate borderline instances of speech acts, such as those included in the so-called *commissive-directive* category, is only predictable. However, I would like to argue that this new, clearly delimited illocutionary category is not a homogenous group of illocutions which occupies an exactly intermediate position between the two extremes of prototypically directive (e.g. orders, requests) and prototypically commissive (e.g. promises, guarantees) illocutions. I hope to demonstrate that prototypical directives and commissives fade into one another forming a continuum. Between these two extremes it is possible to find several illocutionary categories which may be closer to one or the other end of the continuum. I will argue that threats are closer to the directive end and offers to the commissive end, while invitations lie somewhere in the middle.

The paper is organised as follows. Sections 2 offers a description of the semantics of the three speech act types under scrutiny. On the basis of the findings reported in section 2, it will be argued that (1) it is neither necessary nor cognitively realistic to posit the existence of a new superordinate illocutionary category of *directive-commissive* acts, and that (2) there is evidence suggesting the existence of a cognitive continuum between directive and commissive illocutions, along which the three categories under consideration can be accommodated. In contrast to Hancher's claim that neither the directive nor the commissive force predominates in these acts, it will also be made apparent that threats, invitations and offers each consist of a combination of directive and commissive semantic features in different proportions. The relative weight of their meaning components will result in some of these acts being

closer to the directive or commissive end of the illocutionary continuum. Finally, section 4 contains the main conclusions which can be drawn from the discussion in the two previous parts of the paper.

2. The semantics of the acts of threatening, inviting, and offering

The ensuing semantic description of the semantics of threatening, inviting and offering is presented in the form of *propositional idealized cognitive models* (henceforth *propositional ICMs*) of the type proposed by Lakoff (1987).[3] Each illocutionary ICM contains a characterization of the corresponding speech act in relation to the following nine variables:

(1) *Agent type:* the person who performs the action expressed in the predication can be the speaker, the addressee, and/or a third party.
(2) *Time of the action:* the action presented in the predication can take place in the past, present, or future time.
(3) *Degree of speaker's will*: degree to which the speaker wishes the state of affairs expressed in the predication to take place.
(4) *Degree of addressee's will*: degree to which the addressee wishes the state of affairs expressed in the predication to take place.
(5) *Degree of cost-benefit*: degree to which the realization of the state of affairs expressed in the predication represents something positive (i.e. benefit) or something negative (i.e. cost) for the speaker, the addressee, and/or a third person.
(6) *Degree of optionality*: degree to which the person who is to materialise the state of affairs expressed in the predication is free to decide upon his subsequent course of action.
(7) *Degree of mitigation:* degree to which the force of the speech act is softened.
(8) *Degree of power:* the relative position of the speaker and the addressee in a hierarchy of authority.
(9) *Degree of social distance:* the relative position of the participants in a continuum of intimacy.

The choice of these variables deserves some explanation. First, some of them have been chosen because they have already been shown to be productive in the literature. Variables like *agent type* and *time of the action* have been used in the description of speech act categories ever since the first classification attempts were made by Austin (1962) and Searle (1979). The variable of *speaker's will* has been taken from Verschueren (1985), and those of *cost-benefit*, *optionality*, *social distance*, and *power* from Leech (1983), although they have been widely used by other authors as well (see Bach and Harnish 1979; Risselada 1993; Searle 1975; Verschueren 1985). Second, to these, I have added two more variables –those of

addressee's will and *mitigation*– which have been found to be relevant to the description of the illocutionary categories under consideration in the course of this study. Third, most of these variables are scalar in nature, which allows for different degrees of implementation and, therefore, makes it possible to account for the greater or lesser degree of prototypicality of members of a particular illocutionary category. Finally, it should be emphasised that these nine variables do not exhaust all the dimensions which could be considered in relation to directive and commissive speech acts. However, since all cognitive models are inherently incomplete (see Ungerer and Schmid 1996: 48), I have limited the number of variables to be analysed to these nine for working purposes.

The final illocutionary ICMs will be the result of analysing over a hundred instances of each illocutionary type under consideration in relation to the nine variables outlined above. The examples have been taken from the British National Corpus (henceforth BNC) by means of the concordance program XKWIC, as well as from a number of film scripts and magazines.[4]

2.1. The ICM of Threatening

The following example is a central member of the category of threatening:

(1) Child: A banana (laughs, makes noise).
Mother: I sh I shall put you to bed.
Child: Oh no.
Mother: I will if you don't calm down.
(British National Corpus)

Example (1) illustrates the semantic features shared by the propotypical instances of threats in our corpus:

Agent Type and Time of the Action. Prototypical threats present two predications which designate two different states of affairs. Each predication has a different agent type and both refer to non-past actions.

Example (1)
State of affairs 1: to put the addressee to bed
Agent of state of affairs 1: the speaker
Time of the action: non-past
State of affairs 2: to calm down
Agent of state of affairs 2: the addressee
Time of the action: non-past

Addressee's Will. Since in the production of a threat the speaker works under the assumption that he is asking the addressee to do something costly, he expects the degree of addressee's will to be low. In general this is the case. By way of illustration, consider example (1) above in which the mother's threat to put the child to bed is met with the child's expressive rejection (i.e. *Oh, no*). However, it is not always possible to be totally sure whether the addressee will consider a certain action to be costly or not. Sometimes what we regard as negative or costly is seen as positive or not so negative by others. Consider the following example:

(2) "We moved from Norwalk", she says, "because I had to have a bigger garden. I said to Paul: "Either we move or I will plow up your driveway and turn it into a rock garden". "*Unshaken by this threat, Paul, a calm man, expressed his willingness to cooperate*, on one condition: the new house must have a [...]".
(British National Corpus)[5]

In this situation, the addressee does not see moving to a bigger house as such a negative choice and, therefore, he shows some willingness to cooperate. Taking this into account, it should be concluded that what is essential to the performance of a threat is that the speaker works under the assumption that the degree of addressee's will is going to be low. Whether the addressee actually wishes to carry out the action or not is, nevertheless, dependent on each particular interaction and on the nature of the action that he is being asked to carry out.

Cost-Benefit. Prototypically, the instances of threats in our corpus involve a benefit to the speaker and a cost to the addressee. The nature of this cost is different from that involved in other directive acts, such as requests or beggings, and deserves further explanation. In uttering a threat, the speaker seeks to influence the addressee's behaviour to his own benefit. Moreover, as stated above, the speaker works under the assumption that the proposed action involves a cost to the addressee. Because of this, the speaker anticipates a potential resistance by the addressee to grant his request, which he attempts to overcome by telling the addressee that his refusal to do as he is told will result in a greater cost to himself. Hence the *alternative unavoidable cost* which has been found to characterise threats and which differentiates them from other illocutionary types like requests or beggings.[6]

Speaker's Will. Because threats prototypically result in a benefit to the speaker, it is not surprising that they display a high degree of speaker's will. The speaker's wish that the addressee should carry out the proposed action is similar to that of beggings and lower than that which characterises other directives like ordering, requesting, suggesting, warning, or advising. Such a high degree of speaker's will explains the lack of mitigation which characterises threats, as well as the use of coercive and highly impositive devices whose function is to secure compliance on the part of the addressee so that the speaker can achieve his goal.

Optionality. The fact that the addressee is offered a choice between two possible states of affairs (i.e. to do as he is told or to face the consequences) does not, however, increase the optionality of this speech act type. As has been shown in

relation to the cost-benefit variable, the second choice is even more costly than the first and, as a consequence, the addressee is forced to carry out the suggested action. The choice between two costly states of affairs leads to a low degree of optionality and, in turn, to the coercive reading that is one of the most outstanding features of threats.[7]

Mitigation. The fact that the speaker prototypically has the capacity and power to carry out his threat, together with the fact that the degree of speaker's will is significantly high in the case of central instances of threats, results in the lack of mitigation of prototypical threats.

Social Distance. Threats can be performed whatever the social distance between the speakers. However, it has been observed that the existence of a small social distance between the speaker and the addressee makes it necessary to increase the degree of mitigation of the act. Consider example (6):

(3) Conversation between friends: "Man, you best back off, I'm getting pissed". (from the film script of *Pulp Fiction*).

In (3) there is an implicit formula (i.e. *I'm getting pissed*). The scene in which this utterance takes place in the film leaves no doubt that the speaker's intention is to get his friend to stop bothering him by means of a threat. A contextually appropriate paraphrase of the speaker's communicative goal may be the following: "you best back off, because if you don't, I promise I'll hurt you". The force of the threat, however, is mitigated through the use of the highly implicit expression *I'm getting pissed*. Via a metonymic operation, the speaker is referring to the cause and letting the addressee infer the effect: if someone "gets pissed" with someone else, he may want to hurt that person in some way. The use of mitigation is motivated by the high degree of intimacy that exists between the speakers (i.e. they are good friends) and it has the consequence of turning the speaker's illocutionary act into a weak threat, which could even be understood as just a warning or a piece of advice.

Power. Threats prototypically require a speaker who has some kind of power over the addressee. This power guarantees that he will be capable of carrying out the threat. Hence its relevance. Lack of power turns threats into mere bluffs, especially when such lack of power is manifest to both participants. Consider the following example:

(4) MO2: So I say: "Look, you complete turd, give us a job now or I'll nut you".
MO1: *Mm. You must be joking. There's no way we can do that.*
MO2: Shit. What do you mean?
MO1: He'll never give us a job. (British National Corpus)

MO2's suggested strategy of threatening someone into giving them a job is considered inappropriate by MO1 (see his reply in italics). He realises that one cannot threaten someone who is in a superior position.

2.2. The ICM of Inviting

Consider the following central instance of the category of inviting: [8]

(5) "Go on," he invited softly, "touch me. You know you want to". (British National Corpus)

This example illustrates the illocutionary category of inviting, whose main semantic features are summarised below:

Agent Type and Time of the Action. All instances of inviting in our corpus present the addressee as the agent of the action expressed in the predication. Likewise, the specified action is to take place in a non-past time, either present or future. As illustrated by (5), the specific course of behaviour that the speaker commits himself to in the performance of an invitation is not generally made explicit. This may justify the position held by Searle, Leech, or Wierzbicka, who focus only on the directive side of invitations and overlook their commissive component. Nevertheless, a closer analysis of examples like (5) seems to support Hancher's reflection on the existence of a commissive ingredient in connection with the act of inviting. Thus, in (5) the speaker is committed to allowing the addressee to touch him. I shall now endeavour to offer a possible explanation for the existence of this alleged commissive side of invitations.

Invitations count as attempts to get the addressee to carry out an action which is assumed to be beneficial to him (see discussion of the cost-benefit variable below). This means that, in uttering an invitation, the speaker is creating in the addressee expectations that he will obtain a benefit upon completion of the specified action. If the speaker fails to carry out his share of the specified action, he will be shattering those expectations and, as a result, will bring about a negative state of affairs for the addressee. In this connection, Ruiz de Mendoza (1999) has proposed the existence of a convention of politeness, according to which people living in our society are expected to alter those states of affairs which are negative for others. A corollary of the politeness convention is that people living in society are expected not only to alter negative states of affairs, but also not to cause a negative state of affairs to hold for others. The convention of politeness would thus need to be extended to include this idea, as reflected in point (b) below:

CONVENTION OF POLITENESS (extended version)

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

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

Invitations generally create some expectations in the addressee. The application of point (b) of the convention of politeness implies that if the speaker fails to do his part of whatever is necessary to bring about the future state of affairs, he will be disappointing the addressee's expectations. In this way, he will be creating a negative state of affairs for the addressee, and therefore, breaking the convention. Hence the commitment which makes up the commissive side of invitations to which Hancher and others have referred. In short, the fact that the act of inviting (1) presents the addressee as the agent of a future action, (2) involves a future benefit for the addressee, and (3) involves the speaker's cooperation in carrying out the future action, explains its mixed commissive-directive nature.

Addressee's Will. According to the data in the corpus, the performance of acts of inviting requires the speaker's assumption that the degree of addressee's will is high (see example 5 above). Sometimes, however, the speaker's assumption may be ungrounded and in these cases, the performance of an invitation gives way to a socially conflict-producing situation like the one captured in the following example:

(6) "Come in", he invited Lisa. "Come in and meet Nina". *The only thing Lisa wanted to do was flee*, but she summoned the strength from somewhere to step back into the office, pinning a brave smile to her face. (British National Corpus)

The speaker asks Lisa to meet Nina on the assumption that she would like to meet her. But Nina is the speaker's girlfriend and Lisa is in love with the speaker. Lisa does not want to meet Nina, but she feels forced to do so in order not to reject the speaker's invitation. As will be made clear in the discussion of the cost-benefit variable below, invitations usually involve a benefit for the speaker as well as for the addressee. In example (6) the speaker starts to introduce his friend Lisa to his girlfriend. Because the speaker also benefits from the action, a rejection on the part of the addressee would be considered a *faux pas*. The speaker's wrong assumption with respect to the addressee's wishes has given rise to an uncomfortable and conflictive scenario.

Cost-Benefit. Both Leech (1983: 217) and Wierzbicka (1987: 82) characterise the act of inviting as involving a benefit to the addressee and at the same time a cost to the speaker. The data in the present corpus, however, suggest a different picture: invitations do result in a benefit to the addressee, but they do not involve a cost to the speaker. In most cases, the bringing about of the specified action also involves some kind of benefit to the speaker, and in those cases where this is not the case, the carrying out of this action cannot properly be said to be costly to the speaker. Consider the following example:

(7) "What's wrong with you?" she asked. "Oh, nothing", said Scarlet. "I'm just sick of everything". "Join the club", said Connie, but she was glad to see her weak and neurotic neighbour. Never, she swore, never would she let life mess her around the way it had messed Scarlet. "Tell Connie all about it", *she invited, relieved to have, for a time, someone other than Memet upon whom to focus her attention, someone more miserable than herself.*
(British National Corpus)

The speaker in example (7) also benefits from the bringing about of the specified state of affairs, as the narrator explains in the highlighted sentence: it is good for her to talk to someone who is even more miserable than she is.

Optionality. Wierzbicka (1987: 82), who has considered the parameter of optionality in relation to the act of inviting, claims that the addressee's freedom to decide upon the performance of the specified action is unlimited (i.e. invitations involve a high degree of optionality). The analysis of the examples in the corpus, however, suggests that the optionality of the addressee is always somehow restricted and that, in some situations, the degree of optionality may be even further reduced. This somehow constrained optionality is due to the fact that invitations involve a benefit not only to the addressee but also to the speaker. If I invite someone to a party, for example, I do so because I want him to come. Therefore, if he decides to accept my invitation, I also benefit in some way (i.e. from the presence of someone I like at my party). A rejection of an invitation, therefore, may bring about a negative state of affairs for the speaker (i.e. it goes against his desires). In this way, the addressee's freedom to accept or reject an invitation is found to be constrained by the workings of the convention of politeness put forward above.
The optionality of the speaker is likewise constrained by the convention of politeness. Thus, one cannot issue an invitation for a party and then refuse to allow the addressee to attend without breaking the convention.

Mitigation. Because invitations generally involve a benefit to both the speaker and the addressee, the required levels of mitigation are low. Mitigation is a prototypical feature of those speech act types which involve a cost to the addressee (e.g. orders, requests).

Speaker's Will. In contrast to Wierzbicka's (1987: 82) observations, the instances of invitations in this corpus suggest that there exists a certain degree of speaker's will in the performance of invitations. The degree of speaker's will varies greatly, but it is always present. On some occasions the degree of speaker's presence is high:

(8) "*Come in, please, come in* and share our meal", they invited. *After so much genuine persuasion*, Shelley thanked them and sat down at the table.
(British National Corpus)

In other cases, it is so low that it verges on indifference:

(9) "Come in and sit down", invited the doctor.
(British National Corpus)

The values attributed to the speaker's will parameter are usually determined by the degree to which the specified action is desirable for the speaker. As shown in the discussion of the cost-benefit variable, this usually ranges from *beneficial* to *non-costly*. In (9) the doctor does not have any special interest in the addressee's performing the specified action. It is just part of the doctor-patient scripted interaction to invite him to take a seat. The performance of the action is not perceived as beneficial to the speaker, but neither is it perceived as costly, which explains the speaker's indifference. In (8), on the other hand, the speaker wants the addressee to stay and eat with him. Thus, the carrying out of the specified action is beneficial to the speaker as well as to the addressee, which accounts for the former's stronger will.

Power. The analysis of the corpus suggests that no special power relationship between the speakers is needed in order to perform an invitation. We can invite people to do something whether they are above or below us in a hierarchy of power. As is the case with all those illocutionary types which involve some benefit to the speaker (e.g. orders, requests, etc.), the stronger the speaker, the more compelled the addressee will feel to carry out the specified action. Refusing to do something which benefits someone who is more powerful may result in some form of retaliation which is best avoided.

Social Distance. The effects of social distance on the performance of invitations are, according to the data, non-existent. Invitations can be performed whatever the social distance between the speakers. This clearly results from the fact that invitations are usually beneficial to both parties. It is also true, however, that some invitations (e.g. to a party) will not usually be extended beyond social boundaries).

2.3. The ICM of Offering

The propositional ICM of the act of offering includes the following pieces of information:

Agent type. Over three quarters of the offers included in the corpus present the speaker as the agent of the action expressed in the predication. The following example illustrate this:

(10) "I'll walk you back to your hotel", I offered.
(British National Corpus)

There is, however, a group of offers which present the addressee rather than the speaker as the agent:

(11) Speaker offering a strawberry to the addressee: Do try one!
(from the film script of *Pretty Woman*)

These instances of offer which present the addressee as the agent often involve the transfer of objects (e.g *strawberry*) from the speaker to the addressee. Transferring necessarily involves both the speaker's giving and the addressee's taking. Because of this, those instances of offer which have to do with the transfer of objects can present either the speaker or the addressee as the agent, as in the following examples:

(12) Have another biscuit

(13) May I offer/give you another biscuit?

Nevertheless, even in those cases in which the addressee is presented as the agent (e.g. 11-13), it is implied that the speaker is also committed to the performance of an action. Thus in (11), Edward is committed to giving Vivian the strawberry and in (12) and (13), the speaker is committed to giving the addressee the biscuit. It can be concluded that offers generally involve an action by the speaker and that, in those instances of offering in which the transfer of an object is involved, both the speaker and the addressee are to perform certain actions (i.e. giving and taking).[9] Nevertheless, the picture is even more complicated than this. In a broader sense, all instances of offering -not just those involving a transfer of objects- require the addressee to perform a certain action, namely, accepting or rejecting the speaker's offer. This is a more passive kind of action, since it merely involves a linguistic reply, but it is an action nonetheless and, because it needs to be carried out by the addressee, it gives the act of offering its directive flavour. Let us summarise our discussion so far. There seem to be at least two types of offering: (1) those which involve the transfer of an object from the speaker to the addressee, and (2) those which simply involve the performance by the speaker of an action which is beneficial to the addressee. On the one hand, type (1) offers involve a physical action by the speaker (i.e. the action of giving), and two actions by the addressee (i.e. the linguistic action of accepting or rejecting the offer and the physical action of accepting or taking the object that is being offered). On the other hand, type (2) offers involve a physical action by the speaker (i.e. the bringing about of a beneficial state of affairs for the addressee) and a non-physical one by the addressee (i.e. accepting or rejecting of the offer). As shown above, these meaning differences between type (1) and type (2) offers also motivate some formal differences (i.e. type (1), but not type (2), offers are compatible with the use of imperative sentences which present the addressee as the agent.

Time of the Action. All instances of offers in the corpus refer to non-past –either present or future– actions. Examples (10) to (13) above illustrate this.

Addressee's Will. The speaker who utters an offer does not know whether the addressee wants him to carry out the action expressed in the predication. Nevertheless, in general, he has reasons to believe that the degree of addressee's will is going to be high, since he is working under the assumption that what he is offering to give or to do is beneficial to the addressee (see discussion of the cost-benefit variable below).

Cost-Benefit. The person who makes an offer either knows for certain that what he intends to do is beneficial to the addressee –this is usually the case if the latter has overtly informed him to this effect–, or works under the assumption that the action he intends to carry out is beneficial to the addressee.

Optionality. The optionality of the speaker, who will be the agent of the proposed action, is constrained by point (b) of the convention of politeness (see section 2.2.): one cannot offer to do something for someone else and then decide against it, unless the hearer has rejected the offer. Otherwise, it would not be polite. On the contrary, the addressee's freedom to accept or reject the offer is not so constrained. Since he is the only beneficiary of the action, he is free to decide whether he wants the speaker to carry out the specified action or not. Nevertheless, he is invariably expected to reject or accept the offer. Ignoring the speaker's offer by not responding to it would also count as a violation of the convention of politeness. The speaker who makes an offer is showing concern for the addressee. When we show concern for someone, we expect this situation to be reciprocal. An offer which meets no response may be interpreted as lack of concern for the speaker on the part of the addressee, which would create a negative state of affairs for the speaker, and count as an instance of impolite behaviour on the addressee's part.

Mitigation. Because offers prototypically seek the addressee's benefit, they do not need to be highly mitigated. Nevertheless, the degree of mitigation of the act of offering tends to increase in those situations in which the addressee is more powerful than the speaker, or the social distance between the speakers is great:

> (14) In the flight to L.A., the stewardess notices Joe and approaches.
> -Stewardess: Can I get you anything, sir?
> -Joe: No, thank you. No, I changed my mind. Some club soda, please.
> (from the film script of *Joe Versus The Volcano*).

Example (14) depicts a situation in which the social distance between the speakers is considerable and, moreover, the addressee's social power is greater than the speaker's. The use of less mitigated expressions in those contexts (e.g. *I'll bring you a coffee*) would have constrained the addressee's optionality by not giving him a chance to reject the offer without openly confronting the principles of the convention of politeness.

Speaker's Will. There are offers which stem from the speaker's own volition. These usually correspond to scenarios in which the social distance between the participants is small. In this case the degree of speaker's will is also high. Nothing forces the speaker to perform the offer except his own desire to be useful to others. In contrast, there are offers which the speaker is forced to make, even against his will, because they are part of his social role. Consider, for instance, example (14) above. In this case it is part of the stewardess' job to make offers. Logically, in cases like this the degree of speaker's will may be lower.

Power and Social Distance. The production of offers is not restricted to any special configuration regarding power or social distance parameters. Whatever the value taken on by any of these variables, it is possible to perform an act of offering. As was the case with invitations, this may be explained by the fact that the act results in a benefit to the addressee.

3. The directive-commissive illocutionary continuum

The description of the propositional ICMs of the acts of threatening, inviting, and offering outlined in the previous section has evidenced the fact that each of these speech act types displays both directive and commissive features. This supports both Bach and Harnish's (1979) and Hancher's (1979) insights into the hybrid nature of these illocutionary categories. These authors' claim, however, is stronger and more far-reaching. They go on to postulate a new superordinate illocutionary category, which they label *directive-commissive*, and which is to include those speech acts which are not fully directive, nor commissive, but rather display features of both categories in equal proportions. Hancher's radical stance on this issue is captured in the following quotation:

> *Offering, tendering, bidding, inviting, volunteering*, and *formal challenging* are all hybrid speech acts that combine directive with commissive illocutionary force. As such they need to be specially provided for in Searle's taxonomy. Let us call them *commissive-directives*. [...] **commissive-directives are equally commissive and directive; neither force dominates.** (Hancher 1979: 6; emphasis mine).

Following the principles of the classical model of categorization, Searle (1979: 17) establishes such rigid types of illocutionary categories that they are unable to accommodate hybrid illocutions (e.g. threatening, inviting, offering, warning, or advising) without problems. Hancher (1979: 6) is aware of this drawback in Searle's illocutionary taxonomy. He observes that certain speech act types, like threats, invitations or offers, have been forced into the mold of

certain illocutionary categories –either directive or commissive– to which they do not fully belong. In order to overcome this weakness of Searle's classification, Hancher posits the existence of a new *sui generis* hybrid category of commissive-directives. I would like to argue that Hancher's new independent *ad hoc* illocutionary category is the product of an unconscious influence of the classical theory of categorization. Moreover, I hypothesise that Hancher's all-or-nothing category of commissive-directives, if it exists as such, is not a homogenous group of illocutions situated exactly midway between the two extremes of prototypically directive (e.g. orders, requests) and prototypically commissive (e.g. promises, guarantees) illocutions. Between these two extremes it is possible to find several illocutionary categories which may be closer to one or the other. In accordance with the findings of cognitive linguistics on the nature of categories, my claim is that there exists a cognitive continuum between the directive and commissive superordinate illocutionary categories and that some illocutionary acts, like threats, are closer to the directive end, while others, like offerings, are nearer the commissive side of the continuum. Invitations lie somewhere in the middle. The rest of this section provides evidence supporting this hypothesis.

Consider the following table, which summarises the directive and commissive elements of the three illocutionary acts under consideration:

	DIRECTIVE FEATURES	COMMISSIVE FEATURES
ACT OF THREATENING	**Agent 1:** addressee **Time 1:** future **Addressee's will:** low **Speaker's will:** high **Cost-benefit:** benefit to speaker/cost to addressee **Optionality (addressee's):** low, constrained by speaker's power **Optionality (speaker's):** high **Mitigation:** low due to the speaker's power over the addressee **Power:** speaker's higher than addressee's **Social distance:** irrelevant due to the speaker's superiority over the addressee	**Agent 2:** speaker **Time:** future

	DIRECTIVE FEATURES	COMMISSIVE FEATURES
ACT OF INVITING	**Agent 1:** addressee **Time 1:** future **Cost-benefit:** benefit to speaker **Optionality (addressee's):** constrained because the action is beneficial to the speaker (convention of politeness)	**Agent 2:** speaker (Passive) **Time 2:** future **Addressee's will:** high **Speaker's will:** variable (high-low) **Cost-benefit:** benefit to addressee **Optionality (speaker's):** unconstrained because the action is beneficial to the addressee **Mitigation:** low because invitations involve a benefit to both the speaker and the addressee **Power:** no special power relationship needed due to the intrinsically beneficial nature of invitations[10] **Social power:** irrelevant due to the fact that invitations are inherently beneficial
ACT OF OFFERING	**Agent 1:** addressee (Passive) **Time 1:** future	**Agent 2:** speaker **Time 2:** future **Addressee's will:** high **Speaker's will:** variable (high-low) **Cost-benefit:** benefit to addressee/ cost to speaker **Optionality (speaker's):** constrained by the convention of politeness **Optionality (addressee's):** unconstrained because the benefit is to the addressee **Mitigation:** low because offerings are intrinsically beneficial **Power:** no special power relationship needed due to the intrinsically beneficial nature of offerings **Social Power:** irrelevant due to the fact that offerings are inherently beneficial

TABLE 1. The ICMs of threatening, inviting, and offering.

As advanced by Bach and Harnish (1979) and Hancher (1979), these three speech act categories are hybrid in nature and share semantic features of both directive and commissive illocutions. Nevertheless, Table 1 reveals other relevant pieces of information, which lead us to believe that, in contrast to Hancher's expectations, threats, invitations, and offerings are not "equally commissive and directive". On the contrary, the directive force seems to predominate in the case of threats, while the commissive force is stronger in the case of offerings and, to a lesser extent, in that of the act of inviting. Let us consider the arguments supporting this claim in more detail.

To begin with, a quantitative difference is observed: the number of directive and commissive elements contained in the propositional ICMs of each of these illocutionary categories differs. Thus, the ICM of threats clearly outnumbers the other two categories in the amount of directive features that it includes. In turn, the ICM of inviting contains a considerably higher number of commissive elements. And finally, the act of offering consists mainly of commissive features.

Furthermore, in those cases in which these speech act types display both the directive and the commissive variable, there is also a qualitative difference in the way each of the categories instantiates them. The three variables affected by this phenomenon are those of agent type, cost-benefit, and optionality. Let us consider each of them in turn.

The Agent Type Variable

Prototypical directive categories, such as orders or requests, present the addressee as the agent of a future action. In contrast, commissive speech acts have the speaker as the agent. As displayed in the table, the three speech act types under consideration involve a double agent. That is to say, both the speaker and the addressee are presented as the agents of two different future actions. Nevertheless, as will be made clear below, the relative weight that each of these three illocutionary categories assigns to the directive (i.e. addressee as agent) and commissive (i.e. speaker as agent) features differs largely. In highlighting either one or the other, each of these speech act types approaches more closely the directive or commissive end of the illocutionary continuum.

The analysis of our collection of threats shows that what is essential to this illocutionary category is the speaker's high desire that the addressee carries out a future action which is to the benefit of the speaker. Thus, the directive feature *addressee-as-agent* appears as being more relevant than the commissive variable *speaker-as-agent*. To begin with, some threats do not even make explicit the commissive element:

(15) Soldier to prisoner:

I am getting pissed off. Stop making that sound, you hear me? Or you'll regret it. (British National Corpus)

Moreover, when the commissive element (i.e. *speaker-as-agent*) is overtly expressed, it is used merely as a coercive means intended to get the addressee to carry out the future action:

(16) Get to the back of the class or *I will kill you.*
(British National Corpus)

In other words, the commissive feature *speaker-as-agent* included in the category of threats is only ancillary to the real purpose of this speech act type, which is to get the addressee to perform an action.

In the case of invitations and offers, the agent feature is best considered from a comparative perspective. Compare the following utterances:

(17) Come and stay for the weekend. (Invitation)

(18) Shall I close the window for you? (Offer)

Both acts of inviting and offering require the involvement of both the speaker and the addressee in the bringing about of a future state of affairs. The invitation in (17) requires an active involvement on the part of the addressee (i.e. to carry out the specified action, namely, to physically go to the speaker's home) and a passive involvement on the part of the speaker (i.e. to honor his invitation by not backing out at the last minute). In contrast, the offer under (18) asks for an active involvement of the speaker (i.e. to carry out the specified action: to close the window), and just a passive involvement on the part of the addressee (i.e. to accept or reject the speaker's offer). In spite of their mixed nature, this brings acts of inviting closer to the category of directive speech acts (which involve actions by the addressee) and acts of offering closer to the other end of the scale, the category of commissive illocutions (which involve actions by the speaker). These observations are summarised in Figure 1 below:

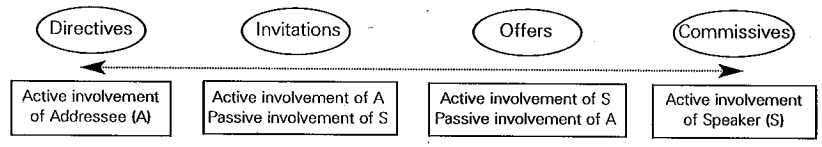

FIGURE 1. The agent variable and the directive-commissive continuum

The Cost-Benefit Variable

Regarding the variable of cost-benefit, central cases of directives involve a cost to the addressee and a benefit to the speaker (cf. orders, requests), while prototypical

commissives result in a cost to the speaker and a benefit to the addressee (cf. promises). In the present study, it has been observed that, when performing a threat, the action that the addressee is asked to carry out is costly to him and beneficial to the speaker (see example 16 above), just as is the case with prototypical directives. In contrast, when performing an invitation, the future action is beneficial to both the speaker and the addressee. Finally, as with central members of the commissive category, when performing an offer, the action is beneficial to the addressee and costly to the speaker. Figure 2 below displays the position of each of these illocutionary categories along the directive-commissive continuum in relation to the cost-benefit factor:

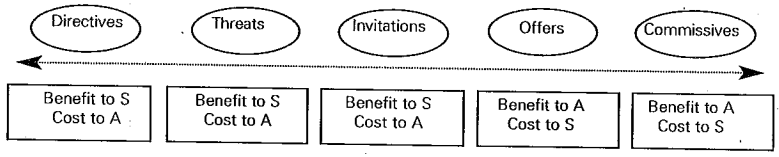

FIGURE 2. The cost-benefit variable and the directive-commissive continuum

The Optionality Variable

Finally, let us consider the variable of optionality. Prototypical directives allow little or no optionality to the agent (addressee) to decide whether or not to carry out the proposed action. In the case of orders, for instance, the addressee's freedom is constrained by the superiority of the speaker over the addressee. In the case of requests, it is constrained by the convention of politeness, according to which one is expected to attempt to alter any state of affairs which is not beneficial to other people. As regards commissives, the optionality of the agent (speaker) is also constrained by the convention of politeness, as has already been shown (see point (b) of this convention and subsequent discussion in Section 2.2).

Since the three illocutionary types under consideration involve two different agents, it is necessary to consider the degree of optionality of both. As far as threats are concerned, the optionality of the addressee is constrained by the speaker's power over him, and the optionality of the speaker is completely unsconstrained (i.e. the speaker is free to materialise his threat or not). That is to say, threats behave like prototypical directives (cf. orders). If we consider the act of inviting, it is observed that the optionality of the speaker is constrained by the convention of politeness: one cannot raise the addressee's expectations about a future beneficial state of affairs and then refuse to do one's part in helping to bring about that state of affairs. In this, invitations resemble commissives. Nevertheless, curiously enough, the optionality of the addressee is also constrained by the

convention of politeness. As shown in Section 2.2, invitations are also beneficial to the speaker and, therefore, turning down an invitation counts as bringing about a negative state of affairs for him, which goes against point (b) of the aforementioned convention. In this, invitations are like some central members of the directive category (e.g. requests). In sum, the functioning of the optionality attribute in the case of invitations is half way between that of directives and commissives. Finally, offers behave exactly like commissives in the sense that the speaker's optionality is constrained by the convention of politeness and the addressee's optionality is completely unconstrained (i.e. the addressee is free to accept of reject the offer because he is the only entity affected by the outcome of his decision). Figure number 3 shows the position of threats, invitations, and offers along the directive-commissive continuum in connection with the optionality attribute:

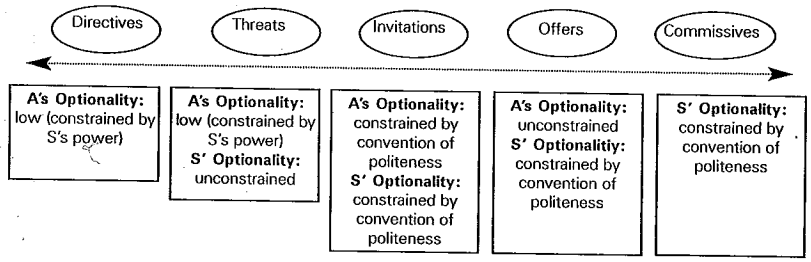

FIGURE 3. The optionality variable and the directive-commissive continuum

As Figure 3 shows, regarding the optionality variable, threats are once more maximally directive, offers are maximally commissive in nature, and invitations occupy an intermediate position.

4. Conclusion

From the above discussion it can be concluded that, in contrast to Hancher's views, the alleged members of the category of commissive-directives are not equally commissive and directive. In some cases (e.g. threats) the directive component predominates. In other cases (e.g. offers), it is the commissive component which carries a heavier weight in the definition of the speech act type. In short, there is not so much an intermediate category (i.e. commissive-directive), but rather an illocutionary continuum between the extremes of directive and commissive speech acts. The following figure illustrates this point:

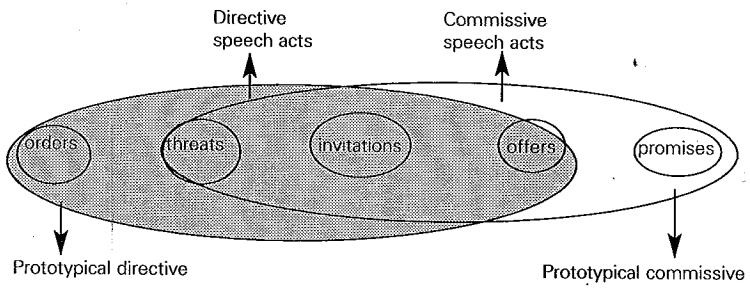

FIGURE 4. The directive-commissive continuum

Along this continuum, we find that the act of offering is closer to the commissive end of the cline, the act of threatening is closer to prototypical directives, and the act of inviting occupies an intermediate position between the two. It can also be concluded that it is not necessary to posit a new category of commissive-directives for acts of this kind. In the light of cognitive linguistics and prototype theory, they can be accommodated as borderline cases between the two extreme categories of directive and commissive illocutions.

Notes

[1]. Financial support for this research has been given by the DGES, grant no. PB96-0520, Ministry of Education and Culture, Spain. Correspondence to Lorena Pérez Hernández. University of La Rioja. Department of Modern Languages. C/ San José de Calasanz, s/n. 26004. Logroño. La Rioja. E-mail: lorena.perez@dfm.unirioja.es. I would like to thank the two anonymous referees for their valuable comments on a preliminary version of this paper. All flaws are of course entirely my own responsibility.

[2]. The classical theory of categorization states that all entities that share a given property or set of necessary and sufficient properties are equally good members of the corresponding category. On the contrary, prototype theory, as postulated by Rosch (1978), maintains that members of a given category, far from having equal status, show different degrees of membership: some category members have a special cognitive salience that makes them stand out as better examples of their category than others.

[3]. A propositional ICM is a type of knowledge organisation structure which, in Lakoff's (1987: 285) own words, does not make use of imaginative devices like metaphor, metonymy, or mental imaginery. Propositional ICMs are preferred here to other types of knowledge organising devices, such as scripts, frames, scenarios, and the like, because of their broader scope. As pointed out by Ungerer and Schmid (1996: 211), propositional ICMs are of a more general nature than those mentioned above in the sense that the latter are just possible types of propositional cognitive models.

[4]. The magazines chosen are the following: *Company magazine* (a publication directed to young professional women which includes articles about varied themes of current interest, as well as sections of advice on health, beauty, and relationships; published in London by National Magazine Company Ltd.), *Housekeeping magazine* (a text aimed at middle to middle-aged and older women which contains sections on decoration, cooking, health, and other articles on subjects of interest to them; published in London by National Magazine Company Ltd.), and *Photo Answers Magazine* (a publication of a more specialised nature which addresses topics of interest to both professional and amateur photographers. It includes many sections in which the reader is advised on how to take good photographs and on related issues; published in Peterborough by EMAP Apex). The scripts, selected on availability grounds, have been taken from the Internet or from video collections on sale.

[5]. The British National Corpus deals with modern English. However, non-British English and foreign language words do occasionally occur in the corpus (cf. http://info.ox.ac.uk/bnc/what/basic.html). Example (2) illustrates this, the word "plow" being American English.

[6]. In the case of orders, there is also a second alternative cost implicit: 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 is the case with threats. The reasons for this can be twofold: (1) The speaker believes that his superiority over the addressee is enough to secure the latter's compliance. (2) The speaker's will is not strong enough to perform a coercive and, therefore, socially conflict-laden speech act like a threat.

[7]. Nevertheless, since the low degree of optionality of this speech act type hinges on the speaker's power to actually carry out the threat, and since the latter is a scalar parameter, the degree of optionality of threats will be expected to vary depending on the values taken up by the power variable.

[8]. Acts of inviting are generally defined as attempts to get the addressee to attend or participate in a given event. Nevertheless, as pointed out by Verschueren (1985: 172), invitations can also count as simple attempts to get someone to do something in a polite way. Wierzbicka (1987: 81) makes a similar observation. Around two thirds of the invitations in the corpus fall within the first subgroup distinguished by Verschueren (i.e. attempts to get the addressee to come to a place or join an activity). The rest are just instances of polite attempts to get someone to perform some other type of action –as will become apparent in our description of the ICM of inviting, this speech act type represents a benefit to the hearer and, sometimes, also to the speaker. In this sense, they somehow approach the category of requestive acts. Nevertheless, it should be noted that requests invariably represent a cost to the addressee. In spite of the fact that invitations to an event are a significant portion of the total number of acts of inviting that take place in everyday interaction, they are just a specific subtype of the other more general type of inviting act (i.e. polite requests for some action). Both kinds of invitation share the same meaning conditions and are, therefore, members of the same category, whose ICM is described in this section.

[9]. As aptly noted by one of the anonymous reviewers, the "giving" on the part of the speaker does not necessarily involve an actual physical action. It is possible to offer someone an strawberry by saying *Have strawberry*, without moving an inch. It is also a common scenario, however, to find the speaker bringing the offered object closer to the addressee. In example (11), this is precisely the case. The speaker performing the offer approaches the addressee with a receptacle full of strawberries and puts the receptacle close to the addressee so that she can take one.

[10]. This means that the act of inviting can be successfully performed whatever the power relationship that holds between the speakers. The speaker does not need to be more powerful than the addressee, as is the case with threats, in order to perform a successful invitation. The relative power of the participants, however, may have, and it usually has, a bearing on the type of invitation that is performed. A powerful addressee may require a more polite and highly mitigated invitation.

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EFICACIA DEL *WORD ASSOCIATION TEST* Y DEL *PATHFINDER* PARA MEDIR EL APRENDIZAJE LÉXICO DEL INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA

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1. Introducción

En esta investigación se proponen dos métodos diferentes con los que se espera obtener los mismos resultados, el *Word Association Test* o *WAT* (Verplanck 1992) y el *Pathfinder* (Schvaneveldt *et al.* 1985; Schvaneveldt 1990). Se mantiene como hipótesis de esta investigación la capacidad de ambos métodos para medir el conocimiento léxico por las siguientes razones:

1. Los dos métodos trabajan con términos relacionados, aunque éstos se obtienen de forma diferente. Así, en el caso del *WAT* son los sujetos los que proporcionan las palabras relacionadas mientras que en el del *Pathfinder* éstas se les da a los sujetos.
2. Los dos métodos se han empleado en tareas de aprendizaje léxico. El *WAT*, el cual tiene su origen en la poca satisfacción que se sentía hace más de 30 años frente a las pruebas de opción múltiple, se ha usado para medir el dominio de cierto grupo o grupos léxicos de forma rápida con un amplio número de estudiantes (Verplanck 1992). Asimismo, el algoritmo *Pathfinder*, procedimiento que tiene validez psicológica y es fidedigno por la transformación que hace de los datos (Cooke *et al.* 1986; Cooke 1992; Goldsmith *et al.* 1991; Gonzalvo *et al.* 1994; Pitarque y Ruiz 1997), permite medir en poco tiempo las relaciones estructurales de los estudiantes.

Estas características hacen pensar en una posible confirmación de la hipótesis que aquí se mantiene, lo que llevaría a afirmar sin temor a equivocarse que ambos