

A Cognitive Grammar account of sentence types in English*

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Hamawand, Zeki. 2020. A Cognitive Grammar account of sentence types in English. *Linguistics Research* 37(3): 639-670. This paper provides new insights into sentence types in English, based on Cognitive Grammar. The paper applies three of its theories of meaning to sentence types. One theory is that a linguistic expression is polysemous, having more than one function. On this basis, the paper argues that a sentence type has a wide range of functions that gather around a central function. Another theory is that the meaning of a linguistic expression is best understood in terms of the domain to which it belongs. On this basis, the paper argues that sentence types form sets in which they highlight not only similarity but also difference. A further theory is that the use of a linguistic expression is governed by the particular construal imposed by the speaker on its content. On this basis, the paper argues that the use of a sentence type results from the particular construal the speaker chooses to describe a situation. The aim of the paper is to present a new conception of sentence types, using the tools of Cognitive Grammar. A sentence type has been found to be polysemous in nature, associated with pragmatic functions, and the result of construal imposed on its content. (Kirkuk University)

Keywords category, prototype, periphery, domain, facet, construal, perspective

1. Introduction

This paper deals with sentence types in English. Broadly, the term *sentence* is taken to denote a collection of words put together to convey meaning. Sentences can be classified according to two parameters: structure and purpose. On the basis of their structure, sentences can, as Greenbaum and Nelson (2002: 16) state, be classified into four kinds depending upon the number of clauses they contain. A simple sentence has one independent clause. It asserts one proposition, as in *Frank plays basketball*. A compound sentence has two independent clauses joined by a

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coordinating conjunction. It asserts two propositions, as in *Frank plays basketball, but Jack plays volleyball*. A complex sentence has one independent clause and one dependent clause joined by a subordinating conjunction. It asserts a principal proposition and a qualifying proposition, as in *Frank plays basketball while Jack plays volleyball*. A compound-complex sentence has two independent clauses joined to one or more dependent clauses, as in *Frank plays basketball, but Jack plays volleyball because he finds it more interesting*.

On the basis of their purpose, simple sentences, as Langacker (1991: 503-506) contends, can be classified into four kinds depending upon the primary communicative function (illocutionary force) they perform. A declarative sentence issues a statement, as in *The day was lovely*. An interrogative sentence poses a question, as in *Are you ready to go?* An imperative sentence gives a direction, as in *Leave your boots at the door*. An exclamatory sentence shows a strong emotion, as in *What smart students these are!* Based on the speaker's experiences, these sentences can, however, have other functions. This is quite natural in language where linguistic forms usually display a variety of indirect functions which constitute either extensions or elaborations of the direct ones. To make the point clear, let us take some examples. In *She resigned from her job?*, the sentence is syntactically a declarative but semantically a question. In *What do I care?*, the sentence is syntactically an interrogative but semantically a statement. In *I'd love some cake*, the sentence is syntactically a declarative but semantically a directive. In *Isn't the child adorable?*, the sentence is syntactically an interrogative but semantically an exclamation.

A glance at the above-mentioned examples shows that the form and function of sentences do not always match. The form of a sentence correlates with different discourse functions. Therefore, there is no one-to-one relationship between sentence form and function. That is, the relationship between sentence type and function is not one-to-one but many-to-many. The current study confines itself to sentences classified according to purpose, i.e. declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory sentences. Concerning this phenomenon, three questions are posed.

- Does a sentence type exhibit multiple meanings, and if so, on what basis are its meanings organised? That is, do the meanings derive from a primary

one, and if so, how is the primary meaning identified?

- Do sentence types form semantic sets, and if so, on what basis are they grouped together? That is, do they represent different facets within the sets, and if so, how do they contrast with one another?
- Do pairs of sentence types have different readings, and if so, in what respect are they different? That is, is the difference supported by evidence, and if so, where does it come from?

The theoretical aim of the study is to show that linguistic structure is shaped by actual use. The descriptive aim is to identify the direct and indirect functions of sentence types in addition to the factors responsible for triggering their syntactic forms. The ultimate aim is to show how instrumental the tools of Cognitive Grammar are in resolving questions concerning the specific behaviour of a sentence type and the way it contrasts with its counterparts.

For the sake of illustration, let us take a situation that involves the concept of *care*. The speaker can construe the content of this situation in substantially alternate ways, as the examples below show:

- (1) a. She is careful.
 b. Is she careful?
 c. Be careful.
 d. How careful she is!

The sentences cited in (1) involve the same content, but they differ primarily in the way the situation is described. They all revolve around the concept of care, but they take different syntactic forms. In (1a), the sentence is declarative, a sentence that makes a statement. Such a sentence highlights the speaker and his/her experience. In (1b), the sentence is interrogative, a sentence that asks a question. Such a sentence highlights the hearer and the response. In (1c), the sentence is imperative, a sentence that issues a directive. Such a sentence highlights the hearer and the action. In (1d), the sentence is exclamative, a sentence that expresses a feeling. Such a sentence highlights the speaker and the emotion. Despite their superficial similarity, these sentences are distinguishable. The difference is ascribed to both linguistic and contextual factors. The question

posed then is: what factors are responsible for the choice of one structural instance over another? More precisely, what type of construal is imposed on the scene and hence responsible for its syntactic form?

To carry out the task, I organise the paper as follows. Section 2 provides a brief review of the literature. Section 3 gives a brief overview of the Cognitive Grammar approach adopted in the present study, and elaborates on the main theories of meaning underlying its analysis of language. Section 4 characterises categories of sentence types. For this purpose, the section is divided into four parts. Each part tackles one type of sentence. The first part examines declarative sentences. The second part tackles interrogative sentences. The third part treats imperative sentences. The fourth part probes exclamative sentences. Section 5 underlines the domain evoked by the sentence types together with the specific facet which each sentence type represents. Section 6 identifies construals of the sentence types. The section presents the semantic dimensions that affect the interpretation of ambiguous sentence types and govern the choice of one sentence type over another in the case of alternation. Section 7 recapitulates the main findings of the study.

2. Literature review

The area of sentence types in English has been of concern to linguists interested in the syntax of the language. A number of studies have been carried out in this regard. They are rooted in different grammatical frameworks. These studies are indispensable references for any research in the analysis of sentence types. They bring interesting insights to the study of language in general, but they present some limitations with reference to the central questions concerning sentence types.

In the pre-cognitive era, there were a few studies on sentence types. Some grammarians focused on specific sentence types in English. Examples of such studies include Davies (1986) on imperatives, Huddleston (1994) on interrogatives. Other grammarians carried out cross-linguistic studies of sentence types. Examples of such studies include Siemund (2001) on interrogatives, Michaelis (2001) on exclamatives, Aikhenvald (2012) on imperatives. However,

perusing these studies for answers to the central questions shows that they have some shortcomings. Firstly, they give a sketchy account of the topic under investigation. They overlook detailed descriptions of the multiple meanings of the sentence types. Secondly, they make no reference to alternatives that are related to the sentence types. They fail to show that the sentence types have something in common as well as something to distinguish them. Thirdly, no mention is made of pairs of seemingly similar sentence types. They do not hint at the factors that determine their selection.

In the cognitive era, the issue of sentence types has been scarcely tackled by cognitive grammarians. To my best knowledge, two studies existed. Panther and Koepke (2008) applied the prototype theory to the description of sentence types, showing how imperative sentences are related to the declarative ones. Takahashi (2012) provided a cognitive analysis of only the English imperative. Although these studies offer some useful hints on the topic of sentence types, they have not provided a unified explanation for the full array of semantic properties of sentence types. Although their treatments are cognitive-based, they offer little for our understanding of the topic. Firstly, they have described either individual sentence types or applied just one theory of meaning to their analysis. Secondly, they treat sentence types in isolation, and so fail to identify points of similarity and dissimilarity between them. Thirdly, they have not accounted for the differences in meaning between alternative pairs of sentence types. Therefore, to gain a better insight into the topic of sentence types, a new system with the right properties is needed.

3. Theoretical framework

To answer the questions regarding sentence types, the present analysis adopts Cognitive Grammar as described in Langacker (1987, 1988, 1991, 2000, 2008). Cognitive Grammar rests on a number of fundamental tenets. First, language is inherently symbolic. Any linguistic expression is represented by three structures: a phonological structure linked to a semantic structure by a symbolic relation. It tries, therefore, to clarify the interaction between form and meaning in the make-up of linguistic expressions. Second, grammatical structure does not

assume any underlying structure. Rather, it is entirely overt and associated with a particular way of conceptualising a given situation. It attempts, therefore, to describe the cognitive processes that trigger the formation of linguistic expressions. Third, grammar is usage based. Knowledge of language is derived from actual use. It is dynamic and evolves in accordance with speakers' experiences. It tries, therefore, to explain language structure built up from specific utterances on specific occasions of use.

Cognitive Grammar is built on crucial theories of meaning, three of which are relevant to the analysis of sentence types. The first is that a sentence type forms a category subsuming all its functions which gather around a central function. This theory addresses linguistic polysemy, whereby a sentence type has distinct but related functions. The second is that the meaning of a sentence type is best understood in terms of the domain to which it belongs. This theory addresses linguistic relationship, whereby sentence types cluster in sets in which they show similarity by representing the overall concept of the set and difference by having distinct functions within the set. The third is that the use of a sentence type is determined by the particular construal which the speaker implements to describe a situation. This theory addresses linguistic alternation, whereby two or more sentence types can alternate in the same position, but each alternative has a distinct function to in the language. In what follows, I give a detailed explanation of each theory.

4. The category theory

Cognitive Grammar builds linguistic description on the *category* theory, as developed by Rosch (1977, 1978), and demonstrated by Langacker (1987, 1991), Lakoff (1987) and Taylor (1989). According to this theory, most lexical items are polysemous in nature in the sense of having numerous meanings. A *category* is a network of a linguistic expression, which is made up of multiple meanings exhibiting minimal differences. The category is organized in terms of prototype and periphery. The prototype is the member that has the key properties of the category. The peripheral members have some, but not all, of the properties of the category. They inherit the general properties of the category, but differ in

specific details. In the present study, the characterization of a sentence undergoes the same process. A sentence, I argue, is polysemous, and so forms a category of distinct but related types. The declarative sentence type acts as the prototype of the sentence category. The interrogative, imperative and exclamative sentence types act as peripheries of the sentence category. These peripheral sentence types result from operations performed on the prototypical declarative in some way, such as change of word order, subject-auxiliary inversion, etc.

Each sentence type forms a category of its own, organized into prototype and periphery. The category exhibits properties of two kinds. Structural properties include word order patterns. Functional properties include specific illocutionary functions. The prototype of a sentence type contains the direct, primary function. It is the most salient example of the sentence type category. It assembles the key properties of the sentence type category. The periphery of a sentence type contains other indirect functions which are derived from the prototype via the dynamic processes of semantic extensions. The remaining functions contain some, not all, of the properties of the sentence type category. The different functions of a sentence type are, therefore, not equal. They need not conform rigidly to the prototype. They gain membership in the category based on similarity to the prototype, rather than identity with it. Categorization is then the cognitive ability to group together the multiple functions of a sentence type in a network-like category.

Whereas sentence structure refers to the form of sentences in a language, sentence purpose refers to the function of sentences. Based on their purpose, sentences are categorized into four types: declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory. The different sentence types suit different purposes. Each type of sentence can serve various functions. Speakers choose the types which best carry out their communicative intentions. Therefore, there is no one-to-one relationship between the form and function of a sentence. Since sentence types can realise different functions, they are seen not in isolation but in relation to each other. This classification stems from the assumption that linguistic forms symbolise speakers' conceptualisation of the world as they experience it, and structural patterns found in language reflect their intentions. In explaining how to use and interpret linguistic forms, speakers draw on contextual factors.

In producing language, speakers perform speech acts. As described in Searle (1969), Leech (1983) and Hamawand (2016: 54-55), a speech act is an act which a speaker performs by using an utterance to communicate. Speech acts can be direct and indirect. A direct speech act has a locutionary effect, the literal meaning of an utterance which is expressed by the particular words which it contains. In a direct speech act, an explicit relationship exists between the form and function of an utterance. In *It is cold in here*, for example, the direct meaning is a statement about the degree of temperature. An indirect speech act has an illocutionary force, the non-literal meaning of an utterance which conveys the intention of the speaker in an appropriate context. In an indirect speech act, an implicit relationship exists between the form and function of an utterance. In *It is cold in here*, for example, the indirect meaning is a request asking the hearer to close the window. This shows that a sentence can acquire extra illocutionary force through implicature, the act of suggesting something without saying it directly.

In what follows, I give a synchronic characterisation of each of the four sentence types.

4.1 Declarative sentences

Form

The **declarative sentence is the basic sentence type in the sense that other sentence types can be described with reference to it.** This is exemplified in *Nancy mailed the letter* (positive) and *Nancy did not mail the letter* (negative). **The declarative sentence displays a few formal properties which distinguish it from other sentence types.** (Panther and Koepcke 2008: 90). **First, it has the word order SVC (subject-object-complement).** In *Nancy mailed the letter*, **Nancy is the subject, mail is the verb and the letter is the complement.** **Second,** it has a lexically realised subject. The subject is in the nominative case. In the example, the subject is realised by *Nancy*. **Third,** the verb agrees with the subject in person and number. In the example, the verb takes *-s* as part of **forming the third-person singular.** **Fourth,** the verb form is in the indicative mood. In the example, the verb form is in the indicative mood making a statement. **Fifth,** the verb is in the active voice. In the example, the subject of the verb performs the

action of mailing. Finally, the intonation is falling.

Meaning

The declarative sentence is polysemous with a central function and a wide range of function extensions and elaborations. These functions result from the speaker's experiences with language across the totality of usage events in life. The usage events undergo processes of entrenchment and schematization. Entrenchment refers to the establishment of usage events through repeated uses. Schematisation refers to the formation of a general pattern in which the constituents vary. The **declarative sentence** is organized into prototypical and peripheral functions. The prototypical function of a **declarative sentence** is making some assertion about reality. That is, the direct purpose of a declarative sentence is to make a statement, convey information or argue a point. It is conventionally associated with the speech act of providing information. It expresses a proposition. It has both locution and illocution functions. It conveys the belief of the speaker that the proposition expressed is true or will turn out to be true. **The analysis is evidenced by** sentences such as the following:

- (2) a. The children are staying at home.
- b. Sarah is an intelligent student.

The sentences in (2) involve statement scenarios. The sentences represent the standard communicative function of a declarative sentence, which is assertion. The speaker makes a commitment to the truth of the proposition. The speaker has evidence, motivation and background knowledge for performing the speech act, which is of interest and importance to the hearer. As Langacker (2008) stresses, this type of sentence specifies only a minimal speaker-hearer interaction, where the interlocutors apprehend one another and attend to what is said. That is, both the speaker and hearer subscribe to the proposition. In (2a), the statement scenario evokes a usage event in which the speaker describes the children as staying at home. In (2b), the statement scenario evokes a usage event in which the speaker describes Sarah as being intelligent.

However, based on the speaker's experiences, a declarative sentence can have peripheral functions. These are indirect speech acts which have illocutionary

potentials from which conversational implicatures are derived. This is borne out by sentences such as the following:

- (3) a. The sun rises in the east.
 b. My friend is a good writer.
 c. I will never smoke a cigar.
 d. Your work is really magnificent.
 e. I'm sorry for being late.
 f. I'd sell the car if I were you.
 g. You may use my phone.
 h. I can lend you a hand with the homework.
 i. It's going to rain any minute now.
 j. I would like some cake.
 k. There are bumps in the road.
 l. You ought to observe the rules.
 m. She lives in the country?
 n. I want some glue. You want some what?

The sentences in (3) are declarative. The sentences have the form of a declarative, but have different communicative functions. In (3a), it describes a fact. In (3b), it describes opinion. In (3c), it describes promise. In (3d), it describes compliment. In (3e), it describes apology. In (3f), it describes advice. In (3g), it describes permission. In (3h), it describes offer. In (3i), it describes prediction. In (3j), it describes request. In (3k), it describes warning. In (3l), it describes obligation. There are other common ways of expressing obligation, but they work in slightly different ways. **Ought to** is used to express an objective truth, something like laws, duties and regulations that cannot be avoided. *Ought to* is not as strong as *must*. *Must* is used to express obligation that comes from the speaker. It isn't a law or a rule. **Have to** is used to express obligation that comes from somebody else. It's a law or a rule that is unavoidable.

In the sentences in (3m) and (3n), the speaker seeks confirmation rather than information. In (3m), it describes a question. A declarative question is a yes/no question which lacks the syntactic attributes of a canonical interrogative such as

subject-verb inversion. Instead, intonation alone makes it function as a question. Such a sentence is signalled by means of a rise in the intonation near the end instead of by a different syntactic form. In (3n), it describes an echo question: a question which repeats all or part of a previous utterance, either because the hearer did not hear what was said or because its content causes surprise or disbelief. An echo question is spoken with a rising intonation and a strong emphasis on the *wh*-word. The list of examples mentioned so far demonstrates how the pragmatic functions of sentences can be singled out via actual utterances. Likewise, the examples emphasise the crucial role of context in the interpretation of sentences.

4.2 Interrogative sentences

Form

The **interrogative sentence is the sentence type in which** there is subject-verb inversion, where the verb generally precedes the subject. **Interrogative sentences fall into three major types, depending on their syntactic and semantic properties. The sentence types have different syntactic structures and are typically used for different types of inquiries. The first is** yes-no questions **or polar interrogative sentence** (rising intonation). **These** questions inquire about the truth or falsity of the proposition they express. This is exemplified in *Does Mary like dancing?* (positive), *Doesn't Mary like dancing?* (negative). The second is wh-questions or constituent interrogatives (falling intonation). These questions seek the kind of information specified by the interrogative word. This is exemplified in *What does Mary like?* (positive), and *What doesn't Mary like?* (negative). Therefore, the response in wh-questions is more informative than yes-no questions. The third is alternative questions. These questions require the hearer to select among the alternatives presented, as in *Do you like tea or coffee?*

Meaning

The interrogative sentence has multiple meanings. It constitutes a complex network of interrelated functions. One function, described as prototypical, serves

as a standard from which other functions, described as peripheral, are derived via semantic extensions. The functions are related to each other like the members of a family, where they share some general properties but differ in specific details. These functions are usage events, actual instances of language use, which arise from the speaker's interaction with language. They get entrenched due to their repeated uses. The prototypical meaning of an interrogative sentence is requesting information. It expresses a question, and ends with a question mark. That is, the direct purpose of an interrogative sentence is to request someone for information. The speaker expects the hearer to do something verbally or nonverbally. This is illustrated by sentences such as the following:

- (4) a. Is Nancy a nurse?
- b. Which girl is a nurse?

In (4), the questions are typically interpreted as requesting information from the hearer. They are conventionally associated with the speech act of requesting information. A question denotes a set of propositions, and the speaker wants to know which proposition in the set is true in the actual world. So, the speaker asks the hearer to specify which proposition is true. The sentence in (4a) contains a yes-no question. The speaker wants to know if Nancy is, or is not, a nurse. The sentence is typically used to inquire about the truth or falsity of the proposition it expresses. The sentence in (4b) contains a wh-question. The speaker wants to know which of the girls, Nancy, Jane, Cathy or Irene is a nurse. The sentence provides the kind of information specified by the interrogative word. As can be seen, the set of propositions denoted by a wh-question is quite large. The sentence *Is Nancy a nurse or a doctor?* is an alternative question. It is uttered to gather information that is presently unknown to the speaker. The speaker seeks to know if Nancy is a nurse or a doctor.

However, not every interrogative sentence performs the direct speech act of requesting information. There are other types of interrogatives which have indirect marginal functions, which vary relative to the speaker's intention and contextual situation. These are associated with specific illocutionary meanings and mental attitudes of the speaker. They represent pairings of grammatical structure with pragmatic use. This is illuminated by sentences such as the

following:

- (5) a. Are you simply ignorant?
- b. Do you know what time it is?
- c. Isn't the view wonderful?
- d. They are late, aren't they?
- e. Do you want another cup?
- f. Will you forgive my slip?
- g. Why do these things always happen to me?
- h. He is a musician. He is what?
- i. Who do you think you are?
- j. Why don't you come in?
- k. Why don't you see a doctor?
- l. Don't you think she is smart?
- m. Shall we go swimming?
- n. Why is the essay full of mistakes?

The sentences in (5) are interrogative. The sentences are structurally interrogative, but have different pragmatic functions. In (5a), it expresses a comment. In (5b), it expresses a request. In (5c), it expresses a compliment. In (5d), it expresses confirmation. In (5e), it expresses an offer. In (5f), it expresses an apology. In (5g), it expresses a statement. In (5h), it expresses a repetition. In (5i), it expresses a threat. In (5j), it expresses invitation or a call for action. In (5k), it expresses advice. In (5l), it expresses opinion. In (5m), it expresses suggestion. In (5n), it expresses criticism. The examples demonstrate that the relationship between the form and illocutionary function of a sentence type is determined by pragmatic clues available in the discourse situation. The communicative purpose which a speech act serves to convey depends on the particular context in which it is performed.

4.3 Imperative sentences

Form

The **imperative sentence** usually has no subject. The subject is understood as *you*. The sentence is uttered with a falling intonation. An imperative can end in either a period or an exclamation point. This is exemplified in *Kill the insect* (positive) and *Don't kill the insect* (negative). The imperative exhibits some formal properties. First, the phonological realization of the subject seems to be optional, as in *Be quiet* and *You be quiet*. One form of imperative is non-specific, urging an action to be taken by any hearer, as in *Everyone keep silent*, and *Somebody open the door*. Another form of the imperative is specific, urging an action to be taken by the hearer, as in *John, open the door*. A further form of imperative is inclusive, urging an action to be taken by both hearer and speaker, as in *Let's go for a swim*. Second, the imperative cannot bear tense, modals or aspect markers, as in **Passed the sugar please*. Third, the imperative requires *do*-support for emphasis, contrast and negation, even for *be* and *have*, as in *Do take it*, *Don't be silly* and *Do have a seat*. (Biber et al. 2000: 219) Unlike a declarative sentence type which describes how things are, an imperative sentence type describes how things should be. Unlike an interrogative sentence type which is a call for information, an imperative sentence type is a call for action.

Meaning

For the imperative sentence, many possible functions exist. Its semantic structure is organized in terms of prototypical and peripheral instances, in which the latter extend from or elaborate the former. The instances are usage events, which are used in context to accomplish actual communicative acts. Because the instances are frequently encountered, they become entrenched and form patterns of use. The prototypical function of an imperative sentence is to make orders, commands, and requests. That is, the direct purpose of an imperative sentence is to call for action. The schema of the imperative is a construction in which the speaker exercises different degrees of force on the hearer to fulfil an action in the future. The prototypical instances convey a high degree of force, producing direct speech acts. By contrast, the peripheral instances convey a low degree of force, producing less or non-direct speech acts. (Takahashi 2012) A general feature of imperatives is that of potentiality, i.e. the state of affairs indicated by the imperative has to be fulfilled by the hearer in the future. Unlike exclamatory sentences, imperative sentences are more intentional. They require an audience.

The aim of imperative sentences is to force the hearer either to do or not to do something. This is manifested in sentences such as the following:

- (6) a. Sit down!
- b. Clear the table immediately!
- c. Turn the volume down, please.

The sentences in (6) are imperative. In schematic terms, these are prototypical imperatives in which the speaker forces the hearer to carry out actions in the immediate future. The hearer should act in such a way that the propositional content of the locutionary act is made true. In (6a), the prototypical meaning is that of order, an instruction that must be obeyed by the hearer. The imperative presents the propositional content as a task for the hearer to carry out. In *Do sit down*, the *do* is placed before the imperative verb to make it less abrupt and more persuasive. In (6b), the prototypical meaning is that of command, an order that the hearer has to follow, as long as the speaker has power over the hearer. In (6c), the prototypical meaning is that of request, an act of asking politely or formally for something. In this case, the sentence includes the politeness marker *please*.

However, based on the speaker's experiences, an imperative sentence type can have peripheral functions. These are indirect instances of the imperative with illocutionary force. These instances do not exhibit all of the attributes of the prototypical imperative. They are obviously less manipulative than the prototypical imperative. In these instances, the speaker is hardly commanding the hearer to perform an action. The speaker exercises less force on the hearer to achieve the communicative goals highlighted by the social contexts. This is exemplified by sentences such as the following:

- (7) a. Take vitamins so as to remain healthy.
- b. Brush your teeth before you go to bed.
- c. Shake well before using.
- d. Take as many as you need.
- e. Watch out for the ditch!
- f. Get well soon.

- g. Come and have lunch.
- h. Please write soon.
- i. Tell me what you want.
- j. Go to the pictures.
- k. Don't pick the flowers.
- l. Go right at the next corner.

The sentences in (7) are imperative. In schematic terms, these are peripheral imperatives in which little or even no force is exercised on the hearer to carry out actions in the immediate future. They are structurally imperative, but they have different functions. Depending on the context, these sentences denote illocutionary acts of recommendation and advice. When a speaker recommends or advises someone to do something, it does not necessarily place the hearer under an obligation to do it. (Quirk et al 1985: 831) In (7a), it denotes recommendation. In (7b), it denotes advice. In (7c), it denotes instruction or procedures. In (7d) it denotes permission. In (7e), it denotes warning. In (7f), it denotes good wishes. In (7g), it denotes invitation. In (7h), it denotes plea. In (7i), it denotes inquiry. In (7j), it denotes suggestion. In (7k), it denotes prohibition. In (7l), it denotes direction. The examples illustrate that language provides its speakers with a substantial array of sentences to accommodate different discourse needs. The illocutionary force which a speech act expresses is a matter of context. The illocutionary force has no direct correlation with sentence form and primary sentence meaning.

4.4 Exclamatory sentences

Form

The **exclamatory sentence** has a special sentence structure, beginning with *what* or *how*, as in *What a lovely view it is!*, and *How lovely the view is!* The rest of the clause after the *wh*-word is often omitted so that a verbless sentence results, as in *What a lovely view!*, and *How lovely!* An **exclamatory sentence** is used chiefly to express strong feelings. In writing, it ends with an exclamation mark. In speech, it is marked by a falling intonation. Exclamations can vary from

single exclamatory words called interjections as in *Wow!* to full sentences as in *It's so lovely!* For **an utterance to express exclamation, its content must be salient and emotional**. An exclamatory sentence is a more forceful version of a declarative sentence. Just like a declarative sentence, an exclamatory sentence makes a statement, but it also conveys strong emotion. They are emotional reactions to a situation, yet they can be stifled if needed.

Meaning

The exclamatory sentence means several different things. It forms a category of distinct but related functions. The peripheral functions are the result of a dynamic process of meaning extension from the prototype. The prototype has most, if not all, of the properties of the exclamatory category. The periphery has some or few of the properties characterizing the category. The periphery inherits the specifications of the category, but fleshes out the category in more detail. The functions of the exclamatory category are not regarded as homogeneous. Rather, they exemplify the exclamatory category to varying degrees. The functions represent usage events, situated instances of language use which are contextually embedded. Due to their frequency of use, they acquire the status of a habit or a cognitive routine, and get established as linguistic units. The prototypical function of an exclamatory sentence is to express surprise, no matter whether it is positive or negative. This is exemplified by sentences such as the following:

- (8) a. How wonderful the view is!
b. What a mess this room is!

The sentences in (8) are exclamatory. The speaker's goal is not really to inform the hearer about some situation, but to express an emotional response to what is taken to be a fact. More specifically, exclamations convey the speaker's emotion that a situation is unexpected which evokes surprise. In (8a), the surprise is positive. In (8b), the surprise is negative.

However, based on the speaker's experiences, an exclamatory sentence has a variety of peripheral functions. These functions do not exhibit all of the properties of the prototypical exclamation. They convey the speaker's emotional

response to a situation and are thus used as indirect speech acts. This is indicated by sentences such as the following:

- (9) a. Isn't his work splendid!
 b. We just won the lottery!
 c. You're adorable!
 d. I'll certainly miss this place!
 e. I can't figure this out!
 f. I'm sick of this!
 g. I don't know what happened here!
 h. He is such an idiot!

The sentences in (9) are exclamatory. Depending on the context, these sentences denote different illocutionary acts. In (9a), it exhibits compliment. In (9b), it exhibits happiness. In (9c), it exhibits love. In (9d), it exhibits sorrow. In (9e), it exhibits frustration. In (9f), it exhibits anger. In (9g), it exhibits confusion. In (9h), it exhibits criticism. The examples show that the sentences have additional communicative uses other than the one normally associated with the prototype.

Before going any further, let us draw some conclusions from the preceding discussion about the sentence types. One conclusion is that each sentence type forms a category of its own, which includes its multiple meanings. Another conclusion is that the meanings of a sentence type gather around one representative meaning, referred to as the *prototype*. A further conclusion is that the category of a sentence type is a powerful conceptual framework which allows us to see how the different meanings are related to one another. A look at the categorial descriptions shows that there are meanings which the sentence types share. Although the meanings are apparently similar, they are different in actual use. To solve this, they are grouped into sets, referred to as *domains*. It is within these domains that the sentence types can stand against each other as rivals. So, a *domain* is concerned with a knowledge configuration in which the sentence types gather showing similarity in general but dissimilarity in the specifics. Two sentence types may stand for one concept but differ in the specifics. This cognitive tenet will be elaborated on in the next section.

5. The domain theory

Cognitive Grammar builds linguistic description on the *domain* theory, as demonstrated by Langacker (1987, 1991). The theory centres around the idea that the meaning of a linguistic item can best be described with reference to the domain to which it belongs. A domain is a knowledge structure with respect to which the meaning of a linguistic item can be characterised. The structure of a domain usually has a number of facets, knowledge of which is necessary for the appropriate use of the lexical items. A *facet* is a portion of a domain which represents a particular concept. Each facet is expressed by an appropriate form of language. Domains consist of linguistic items. The meaning of any item is best understood with reference to the meaning of the other items in the domain. Regarding the present topic, I argue that sentence types denoting the same concept are shown to form domains, in which they represent discrete facets, and so have different roles in language. The meaning of a sentence type depends on the domain to which it belongs, and within which it names a specific facet. Sentence types converge into five domains. They are assembled into the domains because they are conceptually related, elaborating the same concept. In addition, they represent crucial aspects of social interaction.

5.1 The domain of advice

Conceptually, the domain of advice is an area of knowledge which refers to an opinion about what could or should be done in a particular situation. Advice can be expressed in several ways. They differ in terms of strength. Advice can be weak, mild or strong. Weak advice lacks in enthusiasm, resolution or firmness. It is not great in effect. Linguistically, it is realised by the declarative sentence type. The declarative is used chiefly to denote advice in normal situations. Mild advice is gentle or kind in disposition, manner or behaviour. It is moderate in effect. Linguistically, it is realised by the interrogative sentence type. The interrogative is used chiefly to offer advice in temperate situations. Strong advice is clear, loud and emphatic. It is great in effect. Linguistically, it is realised by the imperative sentence type. The imperative is used chiefly to offer advice in extreme situations. Even though the sentence types denote advice,

they are not alike in behaviour. Each signals a difference in meaning.

Let us now analyse some data to see if the sentence types behave in semantically distinct ways within the domain.

- (10) Our colleague is unwell.
- a. You should visit him.
 - b. Why don't you visit him?
 - c. Consider visiting him.

The sentences cited in (10) represent the domain of advice, but each sentence symbolises a different facet. In (10a), the sentence type is declarative. This is a weak way of giving advice. The use of *should* serves to express a subjective opinion; it is more of a suggestion or a desirable goal. *Should* is used to give advice to someone informing him that something is a good idea or a nice thing to do. Remember that a declarative sentence type provides information. Accordingly, it is weak in force. In (10b), the sentence type is interrogative. This is a mild way of giving advice. It is a polite way of giving advice and is more appropriate for people you don't know that well, or if you are giving advice on a sensitive topic. This is a formal way of giving advice. To make advice less direct, we can use a question to make the person we are advising consider the advice we are giving. Remember that an interrogative sentence type asks for information. Accordingly, it is neutral in force and allows the hearer to think about the answer.

In (10c), the sentence type is imperative. This is a strong way of giving advice. It lets the hearer know that the advice is really important. This form is usually used with close friends and is generally much more informal. Remember that an imperative sentence type makes a demand or gives a direct command. Accordingly, it is strong in force and tells the hearer to act right away.

Another way of giving advice is by means of the structure *If I were you*. The sentence *If I were you, I would visit him* is a popular way of giving advice which is much softer than the imperative *Consider visiting him*, and much more sympathetic than the declarative *You should visit him*. By imagining yourself being in that person's position, this form allows you to tell the listener what you would do in their situation.

5.2 The domain of request

The domain of request is a conceptual area which refers to the act of asking someone for something, or asking someone to do something. There are many different ways of making requests in English. They differ in terms of the degree of politeness. Requests can be least polite, impolite and polite. A least polite request (most direct) is an act of asking for something in which the person shows an arrogant lack of respect. Linguistically, it is coded as an imperative sentence type. An impolite request is an act of asking for something in which the person is rude to other people. Linguistically, it is coded as a declarative sentence type. A polite request (least direct) is an act of asking for something in which the person is considerate of other people. Linguistically, it is coded as an interrogative sentence type.

Let us now check the data to see if the sentence types have different semantic preferences within the domain.

(11) I bought a present.

- a. I want/need you to wrap it for me.
- b. Could/Would you wrap it for me, please?
- c. Wrap it for me.

The sentences cited in (11) stand for the domain of request, but each sentence designates a different facet. In (11a), the sentence type is declarative. The use of *want* or *need* is very direct and sounds impolite. It is usually used for urgent requests. This is not used to make requests unless the speaker wants to be very direct. In formal letters and formal emails, we can use the expression *I would be grateful if you could wrap it for me*. In (11b), the sentence type is interrogative. We use the modals *could* and *would* as polite or indirect ways of asking someone to **do something**. *Can* and *will* are informal and less polite, as in **Can you wrap it please?** and **Will you wrap it for me please?** In (11c), the sentence type is imperative. It is a very direct form in English and should be used with care in order to avoid the perception of impoliteness. It is not used except in cases where people are very familiar with one another.

5.3 The domain of compliment

Conceptually, the domain of compliment is an area of knowledge which refers to a remark expressing praise, admiration or approval. A number of expressions are used to compliment others in English, on appearance for example. Yet, they differ in terms of formality. There are three levels of formality: formal, semi-formal and informal. A formal compliment is one that is serious rather than friendly, and is used especially in official situations. In a formal compliment, we ask permission to pay compliments. This is to ensure that no one gets the wrong idea about your intention. Linguistically, it is coded as an interrogative sentence type. A semi-formal compliment is one that is neither formal nor informal. It is used in day-to-day interaction with colleagues. Linguistically, it is coded as a declarative sentence type. An informal compliment is one that is spontaneous and used when interacting with close friends. Linguistically, it is coded as an exclamative sentence type.

Let us now carry out a check on some data to see if the sentence types occur in different environments within the domain.

- (12) She is wearing a new dress.
- a. Your dress is really elegant.
 - b. May I say how elegant your dress is?
 - c. What an elegant dress!

The sentences cited in (12) signify the domain of compliment, but each sentence signals a different facet. In (12a), the sentence type is declarative. This is a semi-formal compliment, used in day-to-day interaction with colleagues. This is said when one definitely does not want to get too intense. In (12b), the sentence type is interrogative. This is a formal compliment, in which someone asks for permission to make the hearer a compliment. In (12c), the sentence type is exclamative. This is an informal compliment, used when interacting with close friends.

5.4 The domain of suggestion

Conceptually, the domain of suggestion is an area of knowledge which refers to an idea or a plan put to someone for consideration. If one makes a suggestion, one mentions a possible course of action to someone. It is a proposal that might be useful, helpful or enjoyable. A suggestion can be weak, mild or strong. A weak suggestion lacks in enthusiasm, vigour or firmness. Linguistically, a weak suggestion is expressed by the declarative sentence type. A mild suggestion is gentle or temperate in character. It shows more interest in the hearer's choice. Linguistically, a mild suggestion is expressed by the interrogative sentence type. A strong suggestion has force of character. It sounds rather imposing, just like an order. Linguistically, a strong suggestion is expressed by the imperative sentence type. The declarative is used when the speaker just makes a suggestion. The interrogative is used when the speaker adopts a neutral position. The imperative is used when the speaker exercises influence on the hearer's choice.

Let us now examine some data to see if the sentence types are associated with distinct patterns within the domain.

- (13) He feels tired.
- a. You could take a rest.
 - b. Why not take a rest? Why don't you take a rest?
 - c. Take a rest.

The sentences cited in (13) imply the domain of suggestion, but each sentence indicates a different facet. In (13a), the declarative sentence type containing *could* is used to make a weak suggestion. This is used when the speaker does not want to sound too forceful. In (13b), the interrogative sentence type is used to make a mild suggestion. The speaker often uses *why not* to make a general suggestion, and *why don't* to make a specific suggestion. The speaker often uses *how about* and *what about* to make suggestions about food or drink, as in *How about some lunch?* and *What about a coffee?* In (13c), the imperative sentence type is used to make a strong suggestion. The suggestion is direct; it is especially addressed to someone who is present.

5.5 The domain of apology

Conceptually, the domain of apology is an area of knowledge which refers to an admission of error or discourtesy accompanied by an expression of regret. It is a regretful acknowledgment of an offense that has caused inconvenience or unhappiness. The speaker is saying that s/he did something s/he should not have done, and now s/he feels unhappy about it. In English, there are several ways of apologising. Apologies differ in degrees of sincerity. A fake or insincere apology is one which does not have regret or remorse for doing the wrong. Linguistically, it is expressed by a declarative sentence type, one in which the word *sorry* is immediately followed by the word *if*. A sincere or genuine apology is one which has regret, which is to feel sorry, disappointed, or distressed about the wrongdoing. Linguistically, it is expressed by an interrogative sentence type. An empathetic apology is one which is a sincere admission of sorrow, where the speaker expresses a heartfelt apology. Linguistically, it is expressed by an imperative sentence type.

Let us now peruse some data to see if the sentence types really have different usages within the domain.

- (14) a. I am sorry if I hurt your feelings.
- b. May I offer my apologies for hurting your feelings?
- c. Please accept my apologies for hurting your feelings.

The sentences cited in (14) indicate the domain of apology, but each sentence epitomises a different facet. In (14a), the sentence type is declarative. This formal structure is seen as being an insincere admission of sorrow, where the speaker may apologise without feeling remorseful. The feeling is intellectual. In (14b), the sentence type is interrogative. The use of this sentence type is to show that the fault was unintentional. In (14c), the sentence type is imperative. This sentence type represents apology in an informal manner. The feeling is emotional. It is used only with close friends.

Before going any further, let us draw some conclusions from the preceding discussion about the sentence types. First, sentence types share similar concepts.

They gather in domains. Second, sentence types occupy different facets within the domains. They represent different experiences. Third, sentence types have specific functions to perform. Each sentence type has its own peculiarity which makes it different from its counterparts. A look at the description shows that in some cases one sentence type can have more than one meaning, and in other cases two sentence types compete to describe the same situation. How to interpret or when to use a sentence type is a matter decided by the speaker. The choice of the speaker comes under the rubric of *construal*. Construal is concerned with the ways the speaker conceives a situation and chooses the right expressions to realise them in language. Two sentence types that stand as rivals construe a situation in different ways. The elaboration of this cognitive theory will be the task of the following section.

6. The construal theory

Cognitive Grammar builds linguistic description on the *construal* theory, as demonstrated by Langacker (1987, 1991). According to the theory, the meaning of a linguistic expression, as Langacker (1997: 4-5) states, does not reside in its conceptual content alone, but includes the particular construal imposed on that content. As described by Langacker (2008: 43), *conceptual content* is the meaning inherent in a situation, while *construal* is the act of describing that content and representing it linguistically in discourse. Construal refers to the ability of the speaker to conceive the conceptual content in alternate ways and choose the appropriate structures to express them. In the present analysis, I argue that the choice of a sentence type correlates with the particular construal imposed on the situation. The construal that is at the disposal of the speaker here is called *perspective*. According to Langacker (1990: 7), perspective refers to the act of the particular view taken on a situation. In the light of this, sentence types which evoke the same content are neither identical in meaning nor interchangeable in use. They differ in terms of the alternate ways the speaker construes their common content. They represent different conceptualisations, and so are realised linguistically differently. Each sentence type encodes a different meaning.

6.1 Individual sentence types

In some cases, language products are clear, and so have single interpretations. Having just one interpretation eliminates any chance of confusion or misunderstanding. In other cases, however, language products are open to distinct interpretations. Such products are ambiguous: having two or more possible meanings. Ambiguity actually makes language more efficient. It allows listeners to disambiguate sentences with the help of context. With reference to the topic, many individual sentence types are ambiguous. Their intended meaning cannot be definitively resolved in isolation. Their meaning can be interpreted in multiple ways. In such cases, hearers recover the intended message by relying on various contextual factors such as the social situation, the current state of an interaction, the background knowledge and the cooperativeness between speaker and hearer. The illocutionary force, of an utterance is the result of such contextual factors. By way of illustration, consider the following examples:

(15) The police are coming.

The sentence type under (15) is declarative. There are two ways of reading it. The semantic (propositional) content signals a statement which means the police are coming. This meaning emerges when the sentence is interpreted out of context. The pragmatic content signals two illocutionary meanings. Either the sentence signals a warning on a specific occasion like doing something illegal. This meaning emerges when the sentence is interpreted in a particular context. Or the sentence signals relief on a specific occasion, when there is an accident. The sentence is thus poised between statement on the one hand and warning/relief on the other. This shows that a linguistic form is ascribed more than one semantic or pragmatic value. In such cases, the interpretation rests upon contextual factors such as the current situation in which the sentence is uttered.

(16) Can you pick me up later?

The sentence type under (16) is interrogative. The sentence is indeterminate between a question and a request. Only by resorting to contextual factors such as speaker-hearer interaction can one specify the interpretation. The descriptive conventions of English entail that the speaker is evoking a pick-up situation type. The semantic content is that the sentence functions as a question. The pragmatic content is that the sentence functions as a request. The sentence has thus an illocutionary potential that goes beyond that of a mere question.

(17) Sit here.

The sentence type under (17) is imperative. The semantic content indicates a command evoking the answer *Yes, sir*. The pragmatic content indicates that the sentence has different illocutionary force in different contexts. It could be used as a request evoking the answer *Okay*. It could be used as an offer evoking the answer *No thanks*. It could be used as advisory evoking the answer *What a good idea*. It could be used as an exhortation evoking the answer *Thank you* (cf. Clark 1996: 213). Only by soliciting the background knowledge can one determine the right interpretation.

(18) Oh, what a great job you've done!

The sentence type under (18) is exclamative. This sentence is ambiguous, and so can have two readings. In the first reading, it denotes admiration. The speaker is appreciative, praising the hearer for doing the job. It is a compliment which reflects truly positive feelings. In speech, it is marked by a falling tone of voice, conveying surprise at the hearer's ability to do the job so well. In the second reading, it denotes insult. The speaker is sarcastic, mocking the hearer or showing scorn. It is said in the wrong tone of voice.

6.2 Pairs of sentence types

In other cases, two sentence types can occur in the same environment. Even so, the sentences are not in free variation, nor could they be regarded as

paraphrases of each other. It is argued that a structural variation is accompanied by a semantic difference, or that a syntactic form is associated with a particular meaning. The choice is imputed to semantic and pragmatic considerations which motivate their syntactic forms. Semantics concerns the explicit meaning which a sentence type has. Pragmatics concerns the implicit meaning which a sentence type has and which the listener infers. Inferring refers to the listener's cognitive ability to interpret the message sent to him by the speaker by resorting to the clues provided by the overall situational and discourse context. The inference drawn relies on the listener's knowledge of the event expressed by the sentence type and on the clues provided by the discourse context. Consider, by way of illustration, the following pairs of sentence:

- (19) a. She was wearing blue jeans.
 b. She was wearing blue jeans!

The semantic content of the sentences in (19) is the proposition that she was wearing blue jeans. Nevertheless, each sentence represents a different construal of the content, and so has its own definition. In (19a), the sentence is a statement. Its illocutionary force is one of assertion, in which the speaker believes the content and wants to communicate it to the hearer. In (19b), the sentence is an exclamation. Its illocutionary force is one of surprise, in which the speaker believes the content and wants to communicate it to the hearer. It is uttered with emphasis and a falling intonation. Although alike on the surface by having the same arrangement of words, the sentences are different in meaning because they express different functions. Namely, whenever a language has two linguistic forms with the same proposition but different syntactic forms, they are not in free variation. They vary along the parameter of illocutionary force.

- (20) a. Shouldn't you use another route?
 b. You should use another route.

The semantic content of the sentences in (20) is the proposition of using a route. However, each sentence signifies a different construal of the base, and so has a distinct use. In (20a), the sentence type is a question. Its illocutionary force is

one of advice. In (20b), the sentence type is a statement. Its illocutionary force is one of advice. The sentence in (20a) is more polite than the one in (20b) because it is framed as a question that more easily allows the hearer to reject the advice. This shows that the two sentence types may interchange, but they are not alike in meaning. They differ in the syntactic form which they take and the implicit meaning which they convey. Following the cognitive assumption, the two sentence types are not synonymous. Each represents a distinct perspective which the speaker takes of a situation. Depending on context, there is always some kind of conceptual motivation determining which sentence type to use and when.

- (21) a. Isn't Nancy clever?
 b. How clever Nancy is!

The semantic content of the sentences in (21) is the proposition that Nancy is clever. However, each sentence signifies a different construal of the base, and so has a distinct use. Yet, each sentence incarnates a different construal, and so has its individual meaning. Sentence (21a) is syntactically an interrogative, but pragmatically it is an exclamation expressing praise. The speaker awaits agreement from the listener, which is related to the prototypical function of an interrogative. Sentence (21b) is syntactically an exclamative, but pragmatically it is an exclamation expressing surprise. The speaker expresses emotion, and does not await agreement from the listener, which is related to the prototypical function of an exclamative. The gist of the argument is that there is no environment in which two sentence types can be said to be in complementary distribution. A structural variation is accompanied by a corresponding semantic difference. Variations in structure are influenced by pragmatic intentions. The sentences demonstrate that the same string of words symbolises different messages and correlates with different meanings. For contrast in syntax, see Kim (2012) and Song and Oh (2017).

7. Concluding remarks

The main intent of this paper has been to provide insight into the meaning of sentence types in English. The study has adopted Cognitive Grammar and utilized three of its theories for their characterization. From the analysis, some consequences ensue. First, a sentence type is polysemous, having a wide range of functions. The functions form a complex category, which is structured in prototype-periphery terms. Second, a sentence type is associated with more than one pragmatic function. With increasing linguistic experience, more functions evolve and get entrenched in the speaker's mind. Third, in certain cases more than one interpretation for a sentence type is available. The interpretation is determined by contextual factors available in the discourse situation. Fourth, a sentence type is considered a pairing of form and function. The match between the form and function does not always hold true. Very often, speakers mean more than what they say. Fifth, the semantic structure of a sentence type is not rigid; it takes on new functions to cope with new experiences.

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