

Making Suggestions in Business Meetings

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For John

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is of my own composition, and that it contains no material previously submitted for the award of any other degree. The work reported in this thesis has been executed by myself, except where due acknowledgement is made in the text.

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Abstract

In problem solving and decision making discussions, proposals and suggestions are crucial elements of the interaction. In analysis it is not a straightforward task to identify the acts of 'suggesting'. Traditional speech act typologies are inadequate because they tend to assume that categorical boundaries exist between different act types. In this thesis, therefore, I first establish a method of identifying SUGGESTIONS. I suggest that we use a system network in which different copatternings of paradigmatic choices constitute different types of directive acts. From the potential choices in the network, SUGGESTIONS are defined as acts in which the speaker proposes a future action which is optional and presented as beneficial or desirable to the addressee, the group, or the company in general (often all three at the same time).

Next, I investigate how these elements, in particular the evaluative meanings of benefit and desirability, are marked linguistically. The indicators are primarily lexical while some coincide with modal expressions indicating other modal meanings (e.g. necessity, obligation, ability, etc.). The modal meanings of benefit/desirability and other modal meanings conflate, modifying the latter in the process. Meanings of benefit and desirability in lexical choices are generally only recoverable through reference to textual context (i.e. what previous speakers have said about the topic in question) and the situational context of the speech event (i.e. business meetings and relevant values). Status and tact influence the constellation of modal meanings.

The values, roles and expectations linked to the speech event also explain the structure and shape of the chain of suggestions. Studies of other types of speech events have revealed common structural patterns (e.g. preferred responses to specific acts). The freest parts of meetings (i.e. not the opening, closing, or reporting sessions) are however characterised by a lack of such structure. Surprisingly often a SUGGESTION is not met by a direct evaluation of the SUGGESTION but just with another speaker's SUGGESTION. It turns out that what structures the discussions, instead, are values recoverable from the textual context which is itself anchored in the situational context. In other words, evaluative meanings of benefit/desirability, which are formulated by speakers, are based on values from the business culture. These values link up the contributions made by speakers across the entire meeting (or series of meetings) and create coherence. Interpersonal meaning is thus involved in coherence and text building; a textual function is derived from the interpersonal function.

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Contents

DECLARATION	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
CONTENTS	v
ABBREVIATIONS	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
<u>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>1</u>
1.1 CONTRIBUTIONS	1
1.2 OVERVIEW OF THESIS	3
1.3 CORPUS DESCRIPTION	4
1.3.1 LIGHTINGFIRM (LF)	6
1.3.2 PRINTINGFIRM (PF)	7
1.3.3 SELECTION OF MEETINGS	10
1.3.4 DATA COLLECTION AND TRANSCRIPTION	11

CHAPTER 2: MEETINGS IN THE WORKPLACE **13**

2.1	WORK PLACE MEETINGS – GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS	13
2.1.1	MODELING DECISION MAKING PROCESSES	14
2.1.2	MEETING STRUCTURES AND TYPES	17
2.1.3	CONTEXTS AFFECTING THE GROUP	21
2.2	TALK IN MEETINGS – CHARACTERISTICS	27

CHAPTER 3: STATE OF THE ART: ANALYSING GROUP INTERACTION **32**

3.1	GENERAL APPROACHES TO ANALYSIS OF DIALOGUE AND DISCOURSE	32
3.1.1	CONVERSATION ANALYSIS	33
3.1.2	CODING SCHEMES	35
3.1.3	ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACHES	38
3.1.4	CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS	39
3.1.5	SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS	41
3.1.6	OTHER FUNCTIONAL GRAMMARS	44
3.1.7	CHOICE OF FRAMEWORK	46
3.2	SPEECH ACTS	47
3.2.1	CODIFICATION OR INFERENCE?	47
3.2.1.1	Codification and inference: The Literal Force Hypothesis	48
3.2.1.2	Stronger focus on codification	50
3.2.1.3	(Almost) pure inference	52
3.2.1.4	Socio-semantic scales and networks	55
3.2.1.5	Linguistic features realising semantic choices	56
3.2.2	CATEGORISATION	58
3.2.2.1	Traditional categorisation	58
3.2.2.2	Degree membership	59
3.2.2.3	The basis of categorisation	62

3.3	EVALUATIVE MEANINGS	65
3.3.1	TRADITIONAL SEMANTIC ACCOUNTS	66
3.3.2	INDICATORS OF EVALUATION	67
3.3.3	LEXICAL ANALYSES	68
3.3.4	LEXIS AND CONTEXT	70
3.3.5	PROTOTYPICALLY LINKED EXPRESSIONS AND EVALUATIVE MEANINGS	75
3.4	MODALITY	76
3.4.1	DEFINING THE SCOPE OF MODALITY	76
3.4.2	MODAL CATEGORIES	78
3.4.3	DISTINCT OR FUZZY CATEGORIES?	82
3.4.4	CORE MEANINGS OR POLYSEMY?	84
3.4.5	NEW CATEGORIES AND RELATIONS	86
3.5	CONCLUSION	87

CHAPTER 4: UNIT OF ANALYSIS **88**

4.1	SOME EXISTING UNITS	89
4.1.1	BELOW CLAUSE LEVEL	89
4.1.2	THE CLAUSE	89
4.1.3	CLAUSE COMPLEXES	90
4.1.4	RHETORICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN CLAUSES	91
4.1.5	SPEECH ACTS	96
4.1.6	MOVES	97
4.1.7	PROPOSITIONS AND PROPOSALS	98
4.1.8	EXCHANGES AND TRANSACTIONS	99
4.1.9	URNS	100
4.2	A SET OF UNITS FOR THE ANALYSIS OF SUGGESTIONS	100
4.2.1	DEFINING THE CLAUSE RELATED DISCOURSE UNIT	100
4.2.2	MULTIPLE UNITS	106

CHAPTER 5: DEFINING DIRECTIVE ACTS – SUGGESTIONS **107**

5.1	MODELLING ACTS: SYSTEM NETWORKS	108
5.2	A MODEL OF SOME DIRECTIVE SPEECH ACTS IN MEETINGS	110
5.2.1	ACTION	111
5.2.2	AGENCY	115
5.2.3	EXPLICITNESS OF AGENCY	118
5.2.4	TIME OF ACT	120
5.2.5	OPTIONALITY	126
5.2.6	LEVEL OF RESTRICTION	131
5.2.7	OBLIGATION	133
5.2.8	BENEFIT OR DESIRABILITY	138
5.2.9	BENEFICIARY	140
5.2.10	EXPLICITNESS OF BENEFICIARY	141
5.2.11	BENEFIT TYPE	143
5.2.12	LINKING THE SYSTEMS	143
5.3	DIFFERENT COPATTERNING – DIFFERENT ACT TYPES	147
5.4	CONCLUSION	151

CHAPTER 6: BENEFIT AND DESIRABILITY IN SUGGESTIONS **154**

6.1	DEFINING AND IDENTIFYING BENEFIT AND DESIRABILITY	156
6.2	EVALUATIVE CATEGORIES	161
6.2.1	CLINES	162
6.2.2	REGISTER SPECIFIC FOREGROUNDING OF EVALUATIVE MEANINGS	167
6.3	INTERMEDIATE VALUES	167
6.3.1	VALUE SET	168
6.3.2	THE EXPRESSION OF VALUES	169

6.3.3	SYLLOGISTIC MEANING-MAKING	171
6.4	DIRECT PREDICATION OF EVALUATIVE PROPERTIES	173
6.4.1	DIRECT MARKERS OF DESIRABILITY: VOLITIVE VERBS	177
6.4.2	INDIRECT MARKERS OF DESIRABILITY AND BENEFIT: PERFORMATIVE VERBS	181
6.4.3	CONFLATED MODAL MEANINGS: POSSIBILITY AND D/B	183
6.4.3.1	<i>can</i> and <i>could</i>	184
6.4.3.2	Modal adverbs and adjectives of possibility	194
6.4.4	CONFLATED MODAL MEANINGS: NECESSITY/OBLIGATION AND D/B	197
6.4.4.1	Neutral necessity moving towards subjective obligation	198
6.4.4.2	Obligation	203
6.4.4.3	Obligation and mood	203
6.4.5	OPTIONALITY – SETTING, FACE, AND STATUS	207
6.5	PROPAGATION OF EVALUATIVE MEANING WITHIN SUGGESTIONS	212
6.6	COHESION AND COHERENCE BETWEEN SUGGESTIONS	214
6.7	CONCLUSION	222
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION		224
<hr/>		
1.1	APPLICATION	224
1.2	THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS	225
1.3	FURTHER WORK	227
APPENDIX A		231
BIBLIOGRAPHY		234

Abbreviations and Symbols

Companies

CF	CastingFirm
HF	HeatingFirm
LF	LightingFirm
PF	PrintingFirm

Evaluative and modal categories

Ab	ability
App	appropriateness
B	benefit
C	certainty
D	desirability
E	ease
I	importance
N	necessity
O	obligation
Poss	possibility
Prob	probability
U	usuality
V	volition

Text

CA	Conversation Analysis
CAD/CAM	Computer-aided design / Computer-aided manufacturing
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
FG	Functional Grammar
HCRC	Human Communication Research Centre (University of Edinburgh & University of Glasgow)
IPA	Interaction Process Analysis
NICE	Set of properties characterising modal auxiliaries (see 3.4.1)
NOC	New Order Controller
RST	Rhetorical Structure Theory
SFG	Systemic Functional Grammar
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
SoA	State of affairs
SYMLOG	SYstematic, Multiple Level Observation of Groups
TFG	<i>Theory of Functional Grammar</i> by Dik (1989 & 1997)

Transcription symbols

@	speech unintelligible
%	backchannel continuer, overlap with other speaker's turn
/	interruption
[P]	pause
[:]	lengthening of the vowel

List of Figures

2-1	Step-by-step decision making	14
2-2	Incremental decision making	15
2-3	Figure and ground – contextual factors constituting the ground for SUGGESTIONS	26
3-1	Halliday’s speech functions	50
3-2	Leech’s Interpersonal Rhetoric	53
3-3	Risselada’s subclassification of directives	60
3-4	Coates’ fuzzy set diagram of CAN	82
4-1	RST-analysis I	93
4-2	RST-analysis II	94
5-1	A system	108
5-2	A system network	109
5-3	Action	113
5-4	Agency	118
5-5	Explicitness of agency	118
5-6	Future act	124
5-7	Optionality	127
5-8	Restriction	132
5-9	Obligation	133
5-10	Benefit/desirability	139
5-11	Beneficiary	141
5-12	Explicitness of benefit	141
5-13	Benefit type	143
5-14	A network of semantic choices for SUGGESTIONS	144

6-1	The cline of ownership between desirability and benefit	157
6-2	Realisational paths for benefit and desirability	160
6-3	Clines between modal meanings	163
6-4	Conditional constructions and optionality	192
6-5	The obligation–necessity cline of subject involvement	197

List of Tables

1-1	Job description of attendees in LightingFirm meetings	6
1-2	Job description of attendees in PrintingFirm meetings	8
3-1	Martin's categorisation based on object of evaluation	69
3-2	Martin's categorisation based on origin of evaluation	69
3-3	Martin's categorisation based on type of evaluation	69
3-4	Lemke's seven semantic dimensions	71
3-5	A comparison of Graham's and Lemke's evaluative dimensions	73
5-1	'Action-by-human-agent'	114
5-2	'-action-by-human-agent'	115
5-3	'Explicit-agent'	119
5-4	'Implicit-agent'	119
5-5	'Future-act'	125
5-6	'Optionality'	128
5-7	'Speaker-allows-optionality'	133
5-8	'Speaker-obligation'	135
5-9	'Situation-obligation'	136
5-10	'Explicit-beneficiary'	142
5-11	Links between choices in the network	146
6-1	Open set of intermediate values	168
6-2	Grounds and value basis for evaluation	171
6-3	Occurrences of modal markers in SUGGESTIONS	176
6-4	Grounds and value basis for cohesive/coherence links in sequence	218
A-1	Job description of attendees in CastingFirm meetings	232
A-2	Job description of attendees in HeatingFirm meetings	233

Introduction

In workplaces, meetings form a crucial tool for decision making and problem solving. Meetings are formal gatherings where participants discuss suitable ways forward for the organisation and try to come up with solutions to problems that may have arisen. Essential in such discussions are ideas and suggestions for action which will benefit the group or organisation in which they are working. This thesis forms a study of such suggestions in workplace meetings and the persuasive element contained within the suggestions.

1.1 Contributions

Through the focus on suggestions and the persuasive elements, or on speakers' indications of the proposed actions as desirable and beneficial actions, the thesis contributes to the theory of speech acts and its application, and to research on modality. It also contributes to our understanding of text building and coherence in spoken dialogue in meetings.

Firstly, the study rethinks the concept of speech acts as we face the problem of categorisation (see 3.2), particularly in spontaneous spoken dialogue. As we approach the data from a functional point of view where we want to identify suggestions for action, we are in search of acts that do not necessarily coincide with syntactically independent units such as the clause and the sentence as assumed in traditional speech act theory. The analyses will reveal that we need to go across such units to identify the act of suggesting (see chapter 4). This insight is an elaboration of the functional perspective on speech acts taken by Systemic Functional Linguists (see 3.1.5).

Secondly, the study supports recent criticisms of speech act theoretical approaches which have assumed that acts may be classified within categorical taxonomies (see 3.2.2). The criticisms come primarily from analysts working in a functional-cognitive framework. In the meeting data we find that different acts have certain semantic and syntactic elements in common, and it is the differences and similarities in the combinations of elements that make acts resemble or differ from each other. Speech acts relate to each other on a continuum, and the analyses show that when we isolate one act type, such as the act of 'suggesting', we focus on an arbitrary subset of acts (5.3).

Thirdly, one of the main contributions of the thesis is to determine the elements that make up such a subset, here called SUGGESTIONS (5.2 and 5.3). I use small capitals to emphasise that the act type does not necessarily coincide accurately with folk perception. It will generally include acts of suggesting, proposing, advising, and recommending. The model, which isolates elements that make up SUGGESTIONS, may be adapted to identify other speech acts.

One of the obligatory elements of SUGGESTIONS is the speakers' indications that the proposed actions are desirable or beneficial to relevant parties. I present a study of how speakers make such indications (chapter 6). This study draws on recent work on evaluative meaning, particularly from within Systemic Functional Grammar. Speakers often employ modal meanings in their SUGGESTIONS, partly for reasons of politeness and tact. My main contribution here is, fourthly, a novel approach to modal meaning where distinct meanings are seen as marrying and interfering with each other. This makes some of the 'original' or individual modal meanings recede (6.4.3 and 6.4.4).

Conversation analysts have noted the tendency for speakers to use 'preferred' acts as responses to specific other acts within adjacency pairs. However, in the meetings, acts of SUGGESTING do not necessarily evoke overt agreements or disagreements as one might expect. In fact, the norms for what may follow a SUGGESTION seem very relaxed. The structuring principle of adjacency pairs is somewhat watered down. My fifth contribution is to show that speakers tend to insert cohesion and agreement markers even when the content of their utterance does not support or respond directly to the action element of the SUGGESTION made just before it. They respond to context-determined expectations and make their contributions sound cooperative, even if the form does not match the function and at the content level they are in fact not responding (2.1.2).

Sixthly, I will show that it is not just the surface markers of agreement and cohesion which structure the text. Had they been the sole structuring devices it would have been a peculiar situation since the markers often do not reflect content, as pointed out above. Instead, the values of benefit and desirability, as well as being core elements of SUGGESTIONS, function as a structuring principle within the discussions in the meetings. What has been seen as merely interpersonal meaning, or evaluative meaning, has a textual function as well.

1.2 Overview of thesis

In this chapter I conclude with a description of the corpus (1.3). Chapter 2 is a general description of business meetings. I describe characteristics of decision making processes, structures of meetings, and contexts affecting speakers at meetings (2.1). In 2.2 I characterise spoken language in meetings.

From this general introduction of interaction in meetings I move on to investigate how others have analysed such interaction (chapter 3). The chapter is a critical review of relevant approaches, first generally to analysis of dialogue and discourse (3.1), and then specifically to speech acts, evaluative meanings, and modality (3.2-3.4).

Before presenting an analysis of the data it is important to determine the unit of analysis. Chapter 4 contains a selective review of units used by other scholars (4.1) and a proposal (4.2) for a set of units that proves useful for the analyses to be performed in later chapters.

In chapter 5 I prescribe a model, a systemic network, for the identification of SUGGESTIONS (5.1), and point out that different combinations, or 'co-patterning', of elements within the model give different act types (5.2).

One of the core elements of SUGGESTIONS, as identified in chapter 5, is speakers' indications that the proposed act is desirable or beneficial to relevant parties. In chapter 6 I set out to reveal how this element is realised linguistically. The first section (6.1) defines the meanings of benefit

and desirability. In the subsequent sections I demonstrate different layers of the process of making evaluative meaning. First, benefit and desirability relate to other evaluative meanings such as modal meanings of ability, obligation, necessity, etc. Section 6.2 contains a description of the relationship between these meanings. Then I introduce a set of intermediate values (6.3), i.e. contextually grounded evaluations that speakers may refer to directly or implicitly as the basis for their evaluation of proposals and propositions as desirable or beneficial. From the overall, relatively abstract categories of evaluative meaning (6.2) and the values which speakers refer to implicitly or explicitly to establish the evaluative meaning (6.3), we then move to the level of concrete realisations of the evaluative meaning (6.4). In this section I identify different linguistic expressions that the speakers may use to signal benefit or desirability. In particular, I investigate speakers' use of modal expressions and the role of these expressions in establishing the meanings of desirability and benefit. In (6.5) I show how already established evaluative meanings interfere with other parts of the dialogue, affecting the evaluation of other elements of utterances. 6.6 exemplifies how benefit and desirability meanings link turns together within the discussions at the meetings.

Chapter 7 reviews and draws together the analyses presented in the earlier chapters and concludes with suggestions about future research.

1.3 Corpus description

In this section I briefly introduce the corpus of meetings and the companies from which meetings were recorded.

The corpus consists of 19 meetings (29 hours) from four different small-to-medium sized manufacturing companies in the UK. The meetings were selected from a database constructed for a wider survey by the Institute of Work Psychology at Sheffield University. The database originators chose meetings in cooperation with managing directors of the companies on the basis of the following criteria (Carletta *et al.* 1998): The groups must perform cross-disciplinary complex problem-solving. In other words, they must be involved in solving problems which group members could not solve on their own, and the group must be made up from individuals

drawn from different parts of the company so that they were not performing all of the daily work together. This latter constraint was included in order to ensure that the main part of the group's work was performed in observable, pre-scheduled meetings rather than in chance encounters.

Once the data had been collected, a group of researchers from the Human Communication Research Centre in the University of Edinburgh and the University of Glasgow classified the groups as 'autonomous' or 'traditional'. The difference lies in whether authority is invested in the group as a whole or in one group member: Autonomous groups, or 'self-managing teams' or 'empowered teams', are

teams of employees who typically perform highly related or interdependent jobs, who are identified and identifiable as a social unit in an organization, and who are given significant authority and responsibility for many aspects of their work, such as planning, scheduling, assigning tasks to members, and making decisions with economic consequences (usually up to a specific limited value)
(Guzzo & Dickson 1996: 324)

For my study I have selected a few meetings with autonomous groups and will only make occasional reference to other meetings. The reason for this selection within the database is that autonomous groups display better equality of participation, whereas in traditional groups senior managers are involved in more information giving and in two-party conversations. In autonomous groups two-party conversations also take up a surprisingly large amount of time, but the conversations are spread more equally among participants than in traditional groups. Whereas in traditional groups the same pairings recur and the person in whom authority is invested dominates the conversations, in autonomous groups more possible pairings are represented and nobody dominates as clearly as in traditional groups (Carletta *et al.* 1998). Choosing groups with more equal participation ensures that more people are involved in proposing future action. Presumably the set-up also allows for a higher quantity of genuine SUGGESTIONS than in traditional groups where the high-status member controlling the meetings often presents decisions already made and then expects ratification from the group. Such set ups would leave less opportunity for other participants to make SUGGESTIONS freely. This hypothesis is, however, as yet untested.

The meetings that I have selected as my main source of data are from two companies: A lighting firm (one meeting = 2 hours) and a printing firm (three meetings = c. 1.5 hours). My selection

criteria will be described in 1.3.3. In my analyses I shall make occasional use of data from some of the other meetings from the full corpus. I have therefore inserted descriptions of these in Appendix A. The descriptions and summaries of the meetings below are partially taken from the HCRC corpus manual (Carletta *et al.* 2001).

1.3.1 LightingFirm (LF)

LightingFirm is a medium sized manufacturer of specialist light sources for scientific instruments and was formed by a management buy-out led by the current managing director. The three recorded meetings are directors' meetings.

Job descriptions of the attendees are shown in Table 1-1 below:

Speaker	Job description
1	Managing director
2	Sales and marketing director
3	Operations manager
4	Director of finance
5	Member of the technical department (only attends LF1)
6	Accountant
7	Accountant

Table 1-1: Job description of attendees in LightingFirm meetings

LF3

The third meeting (LF3), which is the one I have chosen for careful analysis, is a one-off brainstorming meeting where the company's accountants are present. The aim of the meeting is to discuss possible flotation on the stock market. An accountant chairs the meeting. The directors have worked together for a number of years and know each other well socially.

Meeting LF3 begins with the chairman asking the directors of LightingFirm what their future working aspirations are. The chairman teases out a number of points and a lengthy discussion follows where the main topic is how much risk each director would be prepared to take.

There is considerable debate both about how much the company is worth and the pros and cons of a trade sale. The option of a listing is also discussed in relation to a new small companies market called AIM (Alternative Investment Market). Some participants express doubt as to who would be interested in investing in a small companies market.

The assets possessed by LightingFirm are mentioned as well as strategies to make it more attractive to investors. The participants discuss an acquisition strategy in depth; this includes an assessment of which firms are available to be bought, who would lend the company money, whether it would be wise to diversify into other markets, etc. The sales and marketing director highlights the changes in infrastructure which would be needed if LightingFirm were to grow in this way. They also discuss the possibility of taking on specialist product productions from large firms to ensure growth.

There is repeated discussion about what getting a listing would entail. The topics in question are the cost of a listing; how big a percentage of their shares each share holder would be prepared to sell; and what this would mean strategically for LightingFirm.

Tax planning for shareholders is also briefly mentioned as are potential markets in America.

At the end of the meeting, the chairing accountant suggests that he and the other accountant present together evaluate what is the best way forward. No decision is made in the meeting, only an implicit decision to work further towards a strategic decision.

1.3.2 PrintingFirm (PF)

PrintingFirm is a medium sized manufacturer of the printed dials and displays which make up part of a car dash board. The transcriptions are from a series of six meetings with the overall aim of devising a procedure to speed up and improve the quality of the manufacture of prototypes. The company was concerned that the almost complete failure to meet prototype delivery deadlines and the poor product quality caused a loss of customers. The group has some success in improving matters within the course of time of the six meetings, but at the end deadlines are

still not met satisfactorily, and the team commits themselves to further training programmes in order to improve the situation.

The number present at the meetings varies between four and six; there are ten different speakers altogether. As the meetings are multidisciplinary, not all speakers work together, and attendance and participation in discussion depend on the business being discussed. The meetings are professionally facilitated by a facilitator with no technical expertise in the area, and the team members are trained in problem-solving techniques. Decisions are consensual. The group is classified as autonomous because it has the power to make decisions affecting people outside the group, and this power is vested in the group as a whole.

Job descriptions of the speakers are shown in Table 1-2 below:

Speaker	Job description
1	Improvement team facilitator
2	New order controller
3	Product engineering manager
4	Marketing department
5	Logistics planning team leader.
6	CAD/CAM team leader (Computer-aided design/ Computer-aided manufacturing)
7	Senior manager (not part of the team)
8	Automotive sales department
9	Unknown
10	Automotive sales department

Table 1-2: Job description of attendees in PrintingFirm meetings

I have chosen to focus on the first three meetings:

PF1

Attendees: Speakers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6.

Two members (speakers 3 and 4) give the team a debriefing of a benchmarking exercise carried out to assess the company's performance on new orders processing in comparison to that of other companies. As part of the reporting, they identify a number of problems and present a

'wish list' of improvements and objectives desired by the team. They also announce the appointment of the New Order Controller (NOC; speaker 2). The NOC is supposed to look after new orders. In the present system the new orders are often neglected because prototyping is hard to schedule. Speakers 3 and 4 suggest that appointing a NOC would help solve the problem. All participants get involved in an identity constituting discussion where they debate where the source of the problem lies – with the customers or in the company – and what action should be taken accordingly. At the end, the group agrees that what they need to do is define the role of the NOC and decide on 'where to go from here', and they express their commitment to the agreed process of problem solving (i.e. through the NOC).

PF2

Attendees: Speakers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6

Obtaining funding for training and the actual training are reoccurring themes in this meeting. Additionally, the team spends a lot of time discussing the current procedure for processing new orders (prototypes) and how the procedure could be improved. They specifically highlight administration and the scheduling of manufacturing time. Once again the team makes clear their commitment to the project and their desire to work as a team.

PF3

Attendees: Speakers 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 9

Due to a crisis in the backlog of prototype orders (specifically for America) an additional speaker (speaker 7) has been invited to address the team. Speaker 7 emphasises that the backlog must be cleared, and the team discusses ways of doing this. Speaker 7 also suggests several refinements to the new procedure which is being developed to control future prototype production. For example, he wants to see the value of the order clearly displayed; he also insists that customers are kept informed of the status of their order. After speaker 7's departure from the meeting the team lick their wounds and again commit themselves to the success of the project.

1.3.3 Selection of meetings

I have selected the four meetings PF1-3 and LF3 for my exploratory analyses for the following reasons: First, as we have seen above, the meetings (except the first part of PF3 where speaker 7 from senior management is present) display reasonably equal participation. Second, in a couple of meetings as well as company objectives, personal aspirations or issues are at stake. This makes the discussions including the proposals for future action carry more weight.

In LF3 three of the four board members (speakers 1, 2, and 3) are major shareholders of the company. SUGGESTIONS for strategic moves are therefore closely tied in with their personal interests of financial comfort, security, professional challenge, etc. The SUGGESTIONS and the responsibility of deciding on a particular line of action would therefore not be taken lightly.

In the first part of PF3 speaker 7 from the senior management reprimands the team for not having produced results yet. The atmosphere is uncomfortable as the pride of the team members is hurt. The SUGGESTIONS made by speaker 7 are interesting since he has to pay even more attention to politeness needs than is normally necessary when SUGGESTING. This affects the linguistic expression of the proposals.

PF3 is an example where a speaker's role affects the linguistic production (speaker 7). Such role interference is the third reason for choosing the meetings. In LF3 the expert knowledge of speaker 6 (as well as his chairmanship) affects his contributions (mainly because the authority related to his knowledge and role makes him use downtoners which disguise his proposals). PF1 is another example: In the discussion of the source of the problem and of what line of action should be taken, job roles also affect the proposals made by the participants. (For example, speaker 4 from the Marketing Department defends the customers; his role related, supportive position towards the customers allows him to assert his proposals more strongly).

I included PF2 as well in order to get a continuous set of data of a reasonable size from PrintingFirm, each meeting being quite short.

The four meetings contain a total of 205 SUGGESTIONS as defined in chapter 5, and all the meetings from the two companies contain roughly 780 SUGGESTIONS. (The figure is an estimate based on the frequency of SUGGESTIONS within the four selected meetings.)

1.3.4 Data collection and transcription

When collecting the data, one of the researchers from the Human Communication Research Centre sat in on the meeting. For each company, the Chief Executive Officer gave a tour of the factory and an unstructured and unrecorded interview about the company's background. Teams allowed the group to record their meetings on condition that the researchers anonymised all transcriptions and provided the team with a feedback report. Both tape and video recording took place, but it was agreed that the video recordings were only to be used for the purpose of identifying speakers when transcribing the meetings.

Temporary employees (secretaries and postgraduate students of linguistics and psychology) transcribed the meetings. The aim of the transcriptions was to be able to determine who had the floor space, and to determine the utterance function. In places the transcriptions are not completely accurate. I have therefore checked through the examples I use to make sure that the wording is accurate. Intonation patterns have only been checked when particularly relevant to the interpretation of an example. In the examples reproduced in this thesis, I have in most cases used the original transcribers' punctuation, although it does not mirror intonational patterns very accurately. I have chosen to maintain it despite such inaccuracy in order to make reading of the examples easier than they would have been had there been no punctuation. I have overruled the punctuation when intonation patterns went against the punctuation and the intonation was crucial to my analysis.

When speech was unintelligible for the transcribers, it is marked with a '@' sign. The '%'-sign followed by a speaker number (e.g. %5) indicates a backchannel continuer overlapping another speaker's turn. In the transcripts the backchannel contributions are inserted after the turn in which they occur, and they are counted separately from the main turns. '/[speaker]' (e.g. /4) indicates that the speaker (here speaker 4) interrupts the speaker who currently has the floor.

Obviously, given the nature of the corpus and the fact that I only got access to it when the collection had finished I have less background information about the companies and the participants than would have been ideal. Such information is particularly crucial as my analysis is a contextually based semantic analysis. Despite this lack of direct inside knowledge of the meetings and groups, I have been able to get significant information indirectly through one of my supervisors, Dr. Jean Carletta, who took part in the project for which the corpus was collected.

As I have only access to tape recordings I have naturally not been able to include paralinguistic features in my study (except when the transcribers have included comments on the behaviour of the participants).

Meetings in the Workplace

The aim of this chapter is to define and characterise meetings. In the first section I will define meetings and describe the objectives and typical features of the type of meetings in the corpus. I will also identify significant contextual elements which affect participants in such meetings. The second section will contain a description of characteristic features of language in meetings.

2.1 Work place meetings – general characteristics

The corpus consists of meetings, i.e. ‘planned gatherings’ where the event has ‘some purpose or “reason”, a time, place, and, in some general sense, an organizational function’ (Boden 1994: 84). The purpose or ‘goal’ element (Drew & Heritage 1992: 21) in the meetings of the corpus relates to problem solving and/or decision making¹ on some specified issue. The ‘planned gatherings’ are gatherings of people who form ‘work groups’, i.e. groups that are

made up of individuals who see themselves and who are seen by others as a social entity, who are interdependent because of the tasks they perform as members of a group, who are embedded in one or more larger social systems (e.g. community, organization), and who perform tasks that affect others (such as customers or coworkers).
(Guzzo & Dickson 1996: 308-309)

¹ Heller & Hindle (1998: 156) see problem solving as part of any decision making process, although the latter term is typically used to describe processes where more wide-reaching strategic decisions are made rather than decisions related to a specific problem. Essentially, both processes are levels of strategic management. Johnson (1985: 420) identifies three levels of strategy in organisations: (1) corporate strategy; (2) competitive or business strategy; and (3) functional strategy. The LF group operates on the first level of corporate strategy where ‘strategy concerns the scope of the organization’s activities’. The PF meetings, on the other hand, deal with functional strategy (level 3) at the operations level where part of the strategic management is realised above the hierarchical level of the team itself.

The embedding in larger social systems affects the language production, as we shall see in chapter 6 (particularly 6.4.5).

2.1.1 Modeling decision making processes

The task of solving problems or making decisions is what creates the effect on others (as well as the group members themselves). Different scholars have modelled decision making differently. Traditionally, the processes of decision making, problem solving, and strategic management in general have been modelled normatively as logical and rational step-by-step processes. The following model is an example of this approach:

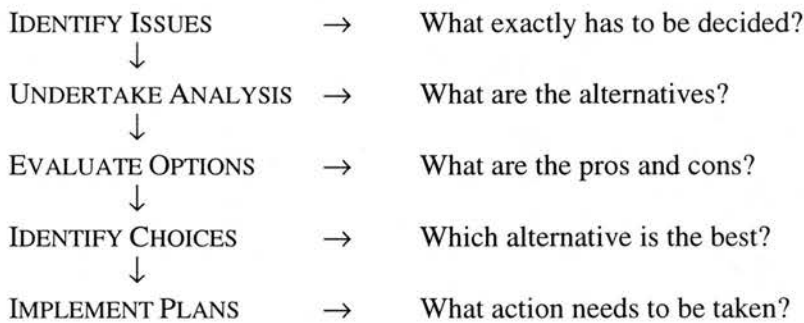


Figure 2-1: Step-by-step decision making (from Heller & Hindle 1998: 156)

However, empirical evidence on how strategy is actually formulated in organisations shows that the process is not as neat in reality (for a review of research in this area, see Johnson 1985). Rather, strategic decision making can be seen as an incremental process where strategy is a ‘pattern in a stream of decisions’ (Mintzberg 1978). In this view strategy is ‘the reconciliation of resources, environmental influences and value systems’ (Johnson 1985: 430). The decisions

emerge as the *outcome* of managerial experience within a social, political and cultural context, even if formal planning procedures exist (Johnson & Scholes 1997: 61; original emphasis)

This means that identification of issues, development and selection of adequate solutions, etc. do not happen in isolated steps. Rather, the phases are interactively linked as in the following model proposed by Johnson & Scholes:

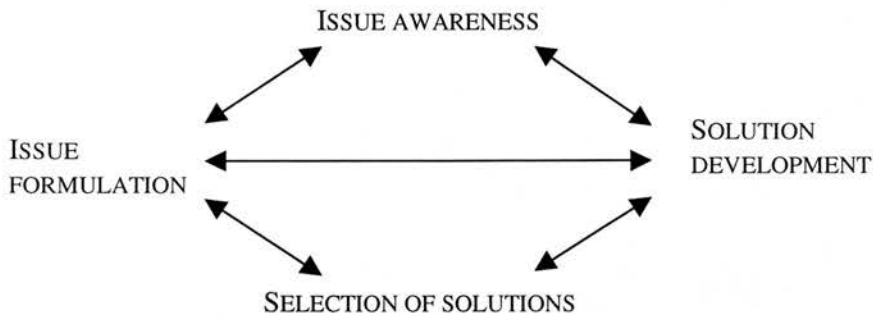


Figure 2-2: Incremental decision making (from Johnson & Scholes 1997: 60)

According to Johnson & Scholes, issue awareness is just as often a ‘gut feeling’ based on previous experience as it is an analytical process. Various stimuli build up a feeling that something needs to be done. When the accumulated stimuli reach ‘the triggering point’ where they cannot be ignored the problem enters the formal information systems of the organisations.

This is where the issue is defined and formulated. Here information gathering is essential but is often performed in an unstructured, subjective and informal manner. Again experience plays a central role. Typically, formally generated information is used to post-rationalise or legitimise the managers’ emerging view of the situation.

Solution development is when managers search for solutions on the basis of their knowledge of existing or already tried solutions.

Managers begin with a rather vague idea of a possible solution and refine it by recycling it through selection routines [...] back into problem identification or through further search routines. The process is based on debate and discussion within the organisation and collective management wisdom and experience.
(Johnson & Scholes 1997: 61)

Solution development often overlaps with the processes of selecting solutions. Again formal analysis is less dominant compared with the weight of managerial judgement, negotiation and bargaining.

The model sees decision making as a process that takes place within different spaces in the organisation. It is not confined to formal meetings. Members of organisations also solve problems and make decisions in corridors, on the phone, in pre-meeting briefings, etc. As pointed out in 1.3, sometimes the meeting is just intended as a 'rubberstamping' of decisions that the senior management has already made. This is less the case in autonomous groups which is one of the reasons for focusing on the autonomous groups in the corpus. Despite decision making and problem solving taking place at multiple locations, 'meetings remain the essential mechanism through which organizations create and maintain the practical activity of organizing' (Boden 1994: 81). Although 'decision' as an outcome (as opposed to a process) may not be visible in meetings (cf. March & Olsen 1976:11), in meetings crucial parts of the incremental process of decision making takes place. For these reasons meetings form the focus of this thesis.

The meetings in my corpus are examples of the incremental model. The participants in the meetings identify the issue in question, suggest causes, actions and solutions, and evaluate possible solutions rather simultaneously. We see an example of this in (1) below (I have inserted decision making components² in brackets and italics):

- (1) (*suggesting action:*)
and I think we've gotta look at the procedural side,
(*reporting: reason/identifying issue:*)
I mean that's why we're looking at the training, to try and minimise the admin effort that goes in at the front end,
(*reason/identifying issue continued:*)
which in turn delays it for the manufacturing effort at the back end so we're trying to telescope down the admin side of it,
(*suggesting solution:*)
and I think we should concentrate that in the short term,
(*reason/implied identification of issue/evaluating option:*)
which might then, in turn, create an opportunity for you and I [Speaker 5] to plan things a wee bit better.

² In contrast to Johnson & Scholes (1997) I talk about 'components' of the decision making process rather than 'phases' in order to avoid the illusion that the process consists of clear-cut time spans in which specific elements of the process are being dealt with in isolation.

(clarification of suggestion:)

I'm talking about [Speaker 5 or 6] to the power of two here, you in the front, and you in the back end, the manufacturing,

(reason/identifying issue:)

'cause it still takes too long to get the orders if you like on that sheet.

(PF2U99; 4)

The focus of this thesis is the part of the SOLUTION DEVELOPMENT component which has to do with identifying solutions, and it is closely interrelated with the part of the SOLUTION SELECTION component which has to do with evaluation of options. The evaluative element is both an integral part of SOLUTION DEVELOPMENT, i.e. where speakers suggest an option and evaluate the desirability or benefit of it (as in the fifth chunk in example (1)), and it is an isolated element where speakers evaluate another speaker's SUGGESTION rather than a SUGGESTION of their own (e.g. example (3) where speaker 4 responds to speaker 5 in (2)).

(2) And why don't you tell 'em that you'll no be accepting anything unless it's through the system?

(PF1 U117; 5)

[...]

(3) With all due respect, you can't tell your customer what to do.

(PF1 U119; 4)

It is the evaluative element tied in with proposals of solutions and actions that will concern us most in this thesis (see chapter 6).

2.1.2 Meeting structures and types

While different components of the decision making process mix within speakers' turns so as to make it difficult to separate them out, it is possible to identify a few clear stages of meetings. Boden suggests that in meetings openings and closings bracket out everyday life, i.e. create a frame within which participants can concentrate on the task and (mostly) avoid referring to concerns of no relevance to the task (1994: ch.4). It is generally straightforward to identify these stages. Reports, presentation of expert knowledge, discussion with no or minimal pre-allocated turn-taking patterns, informal and humorous social interaction are other common elements. These are more entwined and hard to isolate. Indeed, speakers tend to blend talk and task (Boden

1994: 81), and meetings often have a 'quasi-conversational' character (Drew & Heritage 1992: 28). SUGGESTIONS belong to stages of relatively free and unstructured discussion.

Conversation analysts have amply demonstrated that some sequences of 'talk-in-interaction' are sequentially structured. The patterns are particularly clear in sequences such as openings and closings (see for example Schegloff & Sacks 1973). Genre analysts (e.g. Hasan 1996; Eggins & Martin 1997; see also Labov 1972 on the structure of narratives) have also shown that in different settings and text types certain generic structures of stages prevail. Within such specified text stages utterances trigger responses. A first part of an adjacency pair or exchange typically requires a particular second part or a range of second parts (Schegloff & Sacks 1973; Schegloff 1972; Sinclair & Coulthard 1975). For example, a summons is typically met with an answer, or a question with an answer. There are expected and preferred second parts, and there are dispreferred choices which are structurally marked (e.g. Pomerantz 1984, Sacks 1987). If a speaker presents an assessment, preference for agreement will be indicated by a lack of markers such as qualifiers, prefaces, pauses, etc. The presence of such markers would indicate that the speaker might expect some disagreement. Pomerantz (1978) also suggests 'action-chains' as preference organisation extends beyond the adjacency pair (e.g. assessment is followed by assessment). Horvath & Eggins (1995) suggest that in conversation 'opinion texts' consist of the following basic elements: OPINION \wedge REACTION \wedge (EVIDENCE) \wedge (RESOLUTION). Opinions are expressions of attitudinal meaning. Such expressions are, as we shall see, part of SUGGESTIONS.

We find generic stages in the meetings (e.g. opening – reporting – discussion etc.). The discussion parts are, however, less clearly structured than data studied by the conversation analysts and Horvath and Eggins. In most cases there is some reaction in the form of backchannel continuers, and sometimes speakers support the previous speaker with a short utterance of agreement. There is a strong preference for such supportive reactions in stages of the meetings where it is particularly important for the participants to ensure a good atmosphere (e.g. in closings where they like to finish off stressing a consensus attitude). In such stages the participants do a lot of 'face work' where they try to make sure that they and others do not lose face (see Goffman 1955, Brown & Levinson 1987). Norms of politeness are at play here.

(4)

- U232 2 I think we ought to stop, like, doing through favours %3 we do that don't we.
- U38 3 Yeah
- U233 1 That's definitely got to stop.
- U234 2 |Speaker 5|, please do that for me %4 can I get in at this price, you know, that's /4
- U39 4 Yep
- U235 4 That's no professional, it's no way to run a business.
- U236 5 There's no system there.
- U237 3 No system at all.

(PF1 U232-237; speakers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

However, often the REACTION element of Horvath & Eggins model is missing, or else it is contained within another SUGGESTION. It is common for speakers only to signal responsiveness (i.e. reaction and uptake), for example through repetition of an expression or through an explicit reference to the connection between the two turns, while the speaker in reality uses the next turn to introduce another proposal. We see an example of this in (5) from LF3.

(5)

- U240 2 Well, we did make a major advance on improving the yield and understanding the technology but it is still very dependent on the people in the factory putting it together exactly right time after time after time, and what I'm looking for and what I think some of my projections for growth depend on are **the ability to be absolutely certain what we make meets the very best standards** that we can achieve now when everything is going right. Is that a reasonable view?
- U20 3 Yes
- U241 2 For two reasons: one, **we would need to guarantee that level of performance to the new customers** and secondly, most of the remaining customers are comparatively cheap customers, they're not people where I can make as handsome a margin as I do with some of my existing customers so therefore there will be an element of dilution

of the margin by taking, er, by taking those new customers. So therefore it's dependent on getting really good yields to effectively rebalance the, the margin equation. I could afford to sell ten percent cheaper if I could improve my, my yields ten percent and still make the same profit margin.

- U242 4 That comes back to my comment earlier that **we should be spending more on quality issues, buying automated machinery and such.**
- U243 6 Do you want to comment on that? @ on that?
- U244 2 Well, that's just one part of a rather big and complex equation.
- U245 3 We got, counter balancing the achievability of seven million by the route that we originally envisaged, **we have got the IFirm G opportunity** which if we turn that over would knock half a million off it immediately.

(LF3 U240-245; speakers 2, 3, 4, 6)

Three different SUGGESTIONS (in bold) are presented in an almost direct sequence (on the definition and identification of SUGGESTIONS, see chapter 5):

Speaker 2: we need to ensure quality

Speaker 4: we need to spend money on quality issues = buying automated machinery
(pretense 'elaboration')

Speaker 3: we should take the Firm G opportunity
(introduced in U192)

With the exception of U244, the only responses given are those implied by the alternative SUGGESTIONS. Speaker 4 (U242) makes an explicit link (underlined) to speaker 2's preceding SUGGESTION (U241), indicating that U242 will elaborate on the content of U241. But the pretended elaboration is not representative of speaker 2's SUGGESTION, as we can also see in speaker 2's comment in U244.

The response in U244, which is a direct evaluation of the SUGGESTION in the preceding turn, contains characteristic elements of dispreferred seconds: there is a delay created by the use of a

preface where the preface is a marker, *well*, and a declination component (see Pomerantz 1984; Atkinson & Drew 1979). The other turns following SUGGESTIONS do not contain such structural characteristics for dispreferred seconds. They do not challenge the SUGGESTIONS, and this partly explains why there is no need to mark them as dispreferred. However, they are not structurally simple as most preferred responses described by conversation analysts either. The linking elements (repetitions, deictic references, etc.) suggest that a topical response is the expected and favoured option. The speakers indicate cooperation in shape of responsiveness through linking (cf. Grice's cooperative principle; 1975: 46).

We could see the patterns in terms of Pomerantz' 'action chains' described above, where SUGGESTIONS may follow SUGGESTIONS without the two forming an actual adjacency pair. However, this pattern is not consistent either, and the interesting point is precisely that the speakers tend to signal response or reaction through their lexical choices while mainly doing something else with their turns. This shows a need to conform to a community of practice (Wenger 1998) where cooperative responses are expected but where it is obviously also accepted that the responses typically are new SUGGESTIONS as long as some sort of responsiveness is maintained, even if just in the surface structure.

2.1.3 Contexts affecting the group

The community of practice within the meetings is affected by contextual components of different types.

Halliday defines context of situation as having three components: field, mode, and tenor. I shall reproduce his definitions here because the components will form the basis for my discussion of how context affects the group and their language production at the meetings (see also chapter 6).

1. THE FIELD OF DISCOURSE refers to what is happening, to the nature of the social action that is taking place: what is it that the participants are engaged in, in which the language figures as some essential component?
2. THE TENOR OF DISCOURSE refers to who is taking part, to the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles: what kinds of role relationships obtain among the participants, including permanent and temporary relationships in which they are involved?
3. THE MODE OF DISCOURSE refers to what part the language is playing, what it is that the participants are expecting the language to do for them in that situation: the symbolic organisation of the text, including the channel (is it spoken or written or some combination of the two?), and also the rhetorical mode, what is being achieved by the text in terms of such categories as persuasive, expository, didactic, and the like.

(Halliday 1985a: 12)

Others have attempted to distinguish different elements of the otherwise diffuse concept of 'context' (see for example Ochs 1979; Hymes' SPEAKING grid, 1972: 56, described further in chapter 3.1.3). In my treatment of the contextual factors affecting the meetings I shall take Halliday's components as my point of departure and fit in some of the dimensions identified by others within his less elaborate distinctions.

Part of the field of meetings is the concrete setting (see Hymes' SPEAKING grid, 1972; Ochs 1979). The setting lets the speakers inscribe themselves within the work group as a social entity (see Guzzo & Dickson's work group definition quoted above in 2.1).

As we have seen, the setting of meetings involves a purpose or goal (e.g. Boden 1994: 84; see also Hymes 1972: 'ends'). We have identified the overall goal, or objective, as one of reaching a decision or solving a problem. In each meeting the objective is even more specific, as has become apparent in the description in 1.3.

The setting also affects the 'norms' of interaction and interpretation (Hymes 1972). Such norms are for example the sequential and generic structures that are expected in a meeting, although we have already seen that these are quite loose (which in itself is a norm of interaction in meetings). Other norms relate to the expected and acceptable level of formality, outspokenness or indirectness, content, inclusion of social chitchat, etc.

These elements are all specific to concrete settings and are intrainstitutional. Extrainstitutional set-ups and norms (from larger social systems; see the Guzzo & Dickson quote in 2.1) in turn affect these. (On the intra-/extrainstitutional distinction, see Bell 1995: 54.) Members are embedded in wider groups and contexts, not all overlapping (cf. McGrath's notion of 'partial nesting'; 1991). The overarching norm system for all participants stems from their membership in the community of the western world. In this community, certain values (e.g. prosper) and norms for interaction (e.g. aim for efficiency but allow for social identity and repair work to be included) are prominent. In chapter 6 I shall elaborate on the value systems of the meetings and the way these values are employed directly in the meaning making of SUGGESTIONS.

The tenor of the meetings differs. Berger *et al.* (1980) suggest that status and relations be seen from an 'expectation-states' point of view. That is, institutional roles, or roles arising out of the interaction itself, give rise to expectations of behaviour.

Once they have emerged, these expectations determine the different types of subsequent task-related interaction – both what takes place and what is seen to take place – in such a way that the expectation states are confirmed, hence maintained, by the very interaction that depends on them.

(Berger *et al.* 1980: 480f)

The construction and maintenance of expectation states in interaction takes place through turn taking and expressions of attitudes. As pointed out by Lemke (1992: 86), individual speaker's attitudes are inscribed in a wider 'community where there is a system of specific, divergent possible attitudes'. Specific attitudes are linked to social roles and positions ('SOCIOTYPES') which are precisely what establish Berger *et al.*'s expectation states. In chapter 6 (particularly 6.4.5) we shall explore the expression of attitudes and their tie to the expectation states of status differences in more depth.

Apart from the relations which emerge (and are maintained) through interaction itself, certain external factors are involved in establishing status differences. Verschueren (1985: 180) and Spencer-Oatey (1996) have shown that different types of power or authority exist (e.g. institutional, knowledge, moral, etc.) and lead to different statuses. The difference in authority is a matter of degree (see Leech 1983: 126). In autonomous groups (PF, LF) the role relations are obviously more equal than in traditional groups (e.g. CF, HF; see Appendix A) where the authority is invested in one person. Beyond straightforward institutional status (e.g. PF2: speaker

7 who is a senior manager), certain speakers take on the authority of expertise and knowledge (e.g. LF3: speaker 6 is an accountant and knows more about financial matters than the members of the board).

In describing role relations, social distance is also relevant. Leech's (1983: 126) Social Distance Scale refers to the degree of familiarity that exists between a speaker and a hearer (see also Brown & Gilman, 1972; Pérez Hernández, 1999: 74). The speakers at the meetings generally do not know each other well. They do not socialise outside the work environment, and before the series of meetings neither of them were close workmates. The only exception is the LightingFirm group where the directors have worked together for a number of years and know each other well, both workwise and socially. (That does not include the accountants in LF3.)

I shall refer to the status differences and social distance when relevant to the analysis of examples in chapters 5 and 6.

Finally, as regards mode, in the meetings multiple participants interact through the means of spoken language. They are co-present and can make use of paralinguistic elements such as facial expressions and gestures. These will not be dealt with in this thesis. Those chairing the meetings impose a certain control of turn-taking and topic development although certain sequences – typically those of interest to us here – are less restricted. The rhetorical mode of meetings is one of getting others to agree on certain action plans (i.e. a combination of persuasive and hortatory mode where the function is to convince others and get people to do things; see Graham, forthcoming).

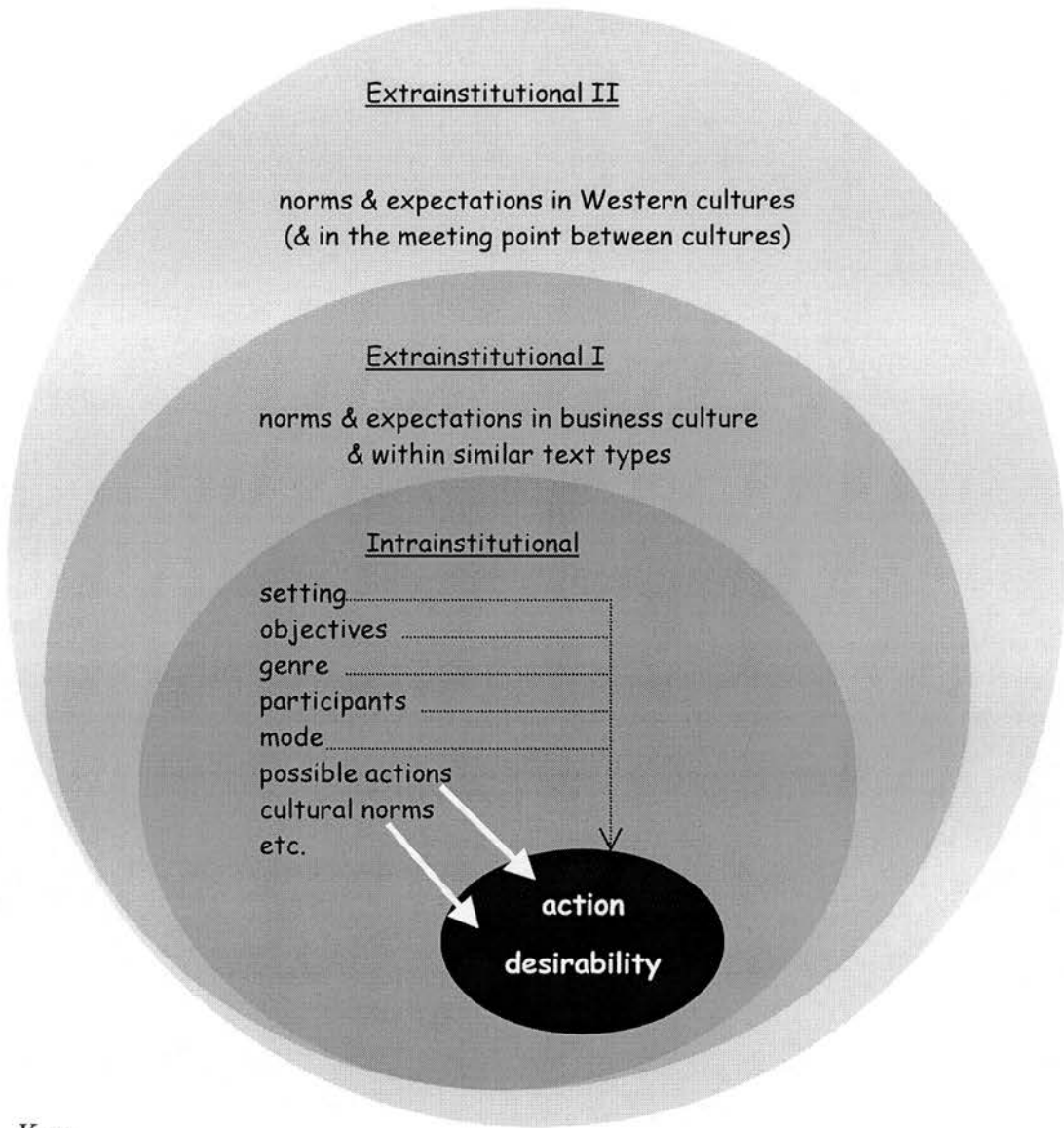
In order to understand the contextual factors in relation to the actual SUGGESTIONS in the meetings it is useful to apply the concept of Figure-Ground. Talmy (1978) examined spatial prepositions, as in 'the pen rolled off the table' and suggested that we can distinguish the figure object (the pen) from the ground (the table). The figure object is movable and may be localised relative to the ground, which is stationary. From this, Talmy moved on to show that the concept (and its related concept of 'relative referencing') is applicable to many other linguistic sentences such as assertion (figure) which is opposed presupposition (ground), or cause (figure) as opposed to result (ground). Hanks (1990, 1992, 2000) has applied the concept in his work on deixis where he claims that the Figure-Ground dichotomy can be applied to the internal semantic

structure of the individual grammatical forms of deictic reference. For example, a term such as 'this' incorporates within its own relational structure both figure (denotatum) and ground (indexical origo) (1992: 62). An origo ('pivot' or zero-point) is the indexical framework relative to which the referent is identified (e.g. the speech event in which the act of reference is performed) (1992: 51).

We may apply the Figure-Ground concept in a similar manner as when Talmy applied the concepts to assertions as figures on the grounds of presuppositions. We operate on this speech functional level rather than, as Hanks, with semantic structures internal to individual grammatical forms. SUGGESTIONS can be seen as figure. Speakers have picked out a particular action from a pool of potential actions in the ground. To the figure also belongs an indication that the specific action is useful and desirable compared to the desirability of the other actions in the ground.

Figure 2-3 is an illustration of the Figure-Ground concept. It demonstrates how SUGGESTIONS (figure) are picked out from a pool of potential actions (ground) with different values. Intrainstitutional potentials and values are inscribed and affected by wider extrainstitutional traditions and values. This is indicated through the system of (roughly) concentric circles. Whereas certain contextual elements (e.g. tried and evaluated actions) form the pool from which a specific evaluated action is chosen (signalled by full-drawn arrows), other elements (e.g. setting, status relations and expectation states) form a background without providing the same immediate set of options from which to choose. Instead, these elements shape the figure, i.e. the individual SUGGESTION (in Figure 2-3 a dotted arrow signals such shaping). More specifically, the context affects the linguistic choices made by participants (see Halliday 1977: 201-202). In chapter 6 we will return to the probabilistic relationship between certain contextual features (particularly tenor elements) and the linguistic shape of SUGGESTIONS.

Not only do the contextual elements establish a pool of SUGGESTIONS from which to choose and determine the linguistic construction of the SUGGESTIONS, the way context 'gets into' the meaning of the SUGGESTIONS also functions as an organising element in the discussions. We shall see later (6.6) how the benefit/desirability element of SUGGESTIONS draws heavily on field elements (e.g. business values) and link otherwise unrelated SUGGESTIONS together to form coherent discourse.



Key:

- figure
- ground; organised in concentric circles with the innermost circle specifying the contextual elements most specific to the speech event and the outermost circle the most general contextual elements
- figure is picked out from ground
- ⋯→ ground components shape figure

Figure 2-3: Figure and ground – contextual factors constituting the ground for SUGGESTIONS

2.2 Talk in meetings – characteristics

As the link between field / tenor and the construction of SUGGESTIONS will be dealt with in chapter 6, we shall here primarily investigate the effect of the mode on the linguistic production as we focus on characteristic features of the linguistic constructions at the meetings.

That the discussions are verbal and take place among multiple participants means, first, that the speakers are concerned with turn taking rules. Second, speech is unplanned (or semi-planned) and differs from written language when it comes to syntactic and lexical complexity.

As regards turn taking, in certain parts of the meetings the turn taking is not free (e.g. a session in LF3 where the chairman asks each of the directors in turn what their aspirations are). In the discussion parts, however, the turn taking follows more closely the freer type of turn taking found in informal group talk. This is possible because of the relatively small sizes of the groups. I have already pointed out that the sequential structure in these parts is unpredictable. One reason is that multiparty discussions are less orderly than dyadic discussions. Another reason is that speakers are trying to push their own agendas. This means that at times the immediate cohesion between turns is less strong than may appear to be the case. As we shall see in chapter 6, however, textual links rather than being located in the adjacency of turns are established between SUGGESTIONS through less obvious references to the desirability and benefit of the proposed actions.

Compared to written language, spoken language differs in its complexity. There is some disagreement as to which of the two modes contains more subordination (e.g. Poole & Field 1976, and Kroll 1977). Halliday (1989: 76-91) claims that written language is complex because simple syntactic constructions are loaded with many lexical items, and spoken language has a complex syntactic structure but low lexical density. However, as noted by Miller & Weinert (1998: 81), 'the properties of a body of spoken language are determined by the speakers and what they are doing'. Although we can identify tendencies within data of similar mode (i.e. spoken discussions), the mode does not automatically trigger a given set of syntactic characteristics. The relationship between the mode and certain linguistic features is probabilistic,

but field and tenor components of the individual discussion may also affect the linguistic choices made by the speakers.

In dialogue data, speakers often combine clauses without using syntactic indicators of linkage common in written language. They may combine seemingly independent clauses. For example, in cases of WH-clefts it is common for speakers in dialogue data to separate the WH-clause from the cleft clause. The cleft clause may be syntactically independent, and/or it may be separated from the WH-clause through an intonation phrase boundary. The WH-clause is often phonetically reduced and has a minimal content. Its principal function in such cases is to focus on, or make salient, the cleft head (Miller & Weinert 1998: 291). The WH-clause is thematised, and that in combination with the indefinite WH-deictic³ makes the clause a highlighting device: it highlights the proposition following it (Miller & Weinert 1998: 245). While we may look for syntactic integration in vain, there are clear links, albeit discourse links rather than syntactic links, between the clauses.

In the corpus of meetings we find numerous examples of constructions such as those described in the previous paragraph. In (6) there is an intonation phrase boundary after the copula, and the second clause is syntactically independent (an interrogative). (In the following examples I shall indicate intonational features in square brackets, [P] indicating pause and [:] indicating a lengthening of a sound.)

- (6) what we want to strive for now is [P] how do we come up with a system [P] that doesn't affect production [P] and we get our parts through the door quicker
(PF1 U196; 3)

Often the lack of integration is down to intonational patterns instead of syntactic disintegration. The clauses may be linked syntactically as in written syntax with the second clause a reduced clause with no grammatical subject and a verb with no tense. The second clause may also be an independent clause, but linked to the WH-clause by BE.

³ The WH-clause is an 'indefinite deictic' because it is 'used for pointing at entities not in the immediate situation of utterance because not yet mentioned.' (Miller & Weinert 1998: 48)

So far the findings from the PF meetings fit in with the general picture for spoken dialogue. What is interesting, however, is that in one of the groups (LF) there are more WH-cleft constructions with syntactic and rhythmical integration than is the norm for spoken dialogue. Example (7) from LF is an example where there is no syntactic or intonational break.

- (7) What we've got to do is actually set ourselves a challenge.
(LF3 U317; 1)

In most cases in LF, if there is a pause when speakers produce WH-clefts, it is more often hesitation pauses (in (8) for example signalled by the length of 'to') than actual intonation phrase boundaries.

- (8) What you want to try and do is to[:] [P] basically say that [P] with |Speaker 3| and |Speaker 2| I think there is a potential conflict of [P] the two in the two[:] personal [P] issues that they have raised [P] and therefore which is the most important?
(LF3 U440; 1)

This way the speaker indicates that the WH-clause is syntactically linked to another clause which is to follow. Other speakers therefore have less room to interrupt than they would have had the pause fallen after the WH-clause or the copula. (In Conversation Analysis terminology, in the latter scenario the pause signals a 'transition-relevance place' in the 'turn-constructual unit'; Sacks *et al.* 1974: 12).

Various factors are likely to be involved in making the directors in LF produce syntactically and rhythmically more integrated WH-clefts than the PF participants. My hypothesis is that the primary causes are differences in level of education and familiarity with the genre of meetings. The LF3 directors are generally educated to higher levels than the PF members. This is likely to make their spoken language take on more features of written syntax. Besides, as directors they are used to taking part in meetings and presenting their opinions and ideas. Several of the participants in the cross-functional PF group are less accustomed to 'meeting speak'. Knowing how to signal a continuation of one's turn even when one needs a planning pause to construct the next part of the contribution is a useful tool to make one's voice heard. Finally, the differences may be related to regional variance between Oxbridge English (LF) and Scottish English (PF). However, I suspect that the two first factors are the main causes.

In the example of clefts I used descriptive terms such as ‘integrated’ or ‘disintegrated’ syntactic constructions. Such terms are based on the syntactic norms of written language. Spoken language has a syntax of its own. It could for example be argued that spoken syntax allows for complete clauses as complements in WH-clefts, or, indeed, that the concept of complementation is problematic in spoken language due to the interrupted nature of constructions in speech. Clauses following BE in WH-clefts and ordinary copular clauses could be seen as some kind of discourse complement rather than a syntactic complement in spoken language. We do however need to take syntax of written language into account since some speakers have been exposed to more written language than others and therefore produce constructions that are more in line with written syntax than others do (e.g. LF vs. PF participants). It seems we need to operate with a double syntax in mind to be able to account for constructions and differences between them. In order to have a way of speaking about the constructions we find in the corpus, I shall apply the traditional terms for written syntactic constructions. I do, however, ask the reader to bear in mind that there is no evaluation involved when, for example, I describe a construction as ‘incomplete’ or as having ‘broken syntax’.

The example of WH-clefts supports Miller and Weinert’s claim that within a set of general characteristics of a particular mode, the linguistic constructions in the data depend on the speakers producing them (i.e. tenor).

Field is at play when we comprehend broken syntax as carrying complete meanings, or when we piece together syntactically separate clauses and clauses complexes. Frequently we are only able to make out the messages intended by speakers (e.g. SUGGESTIONS) on the basis of the field of the interaction because the field foregrounds certain meanings and values. For example, the field of meetings includes SOLUTION DEVELOPMENT which foregrounds benefit and desirability of actions because a primary objective of SOLUTION DEVELOPMENT is to ensure beneficial and desirable outcomes. It is such foregrounded meanings and values that trigger implicature and allows for speakers to create coherent text while using incomplete syntax and structures of seemingly unrelated clauses (see unit of analysis, chapter 4). It is, however, not yet clear on which specific linguistic and contextual elements such implicature is based. This is what we set out to investigate in chapters 5 and 6.

In this chapter I have described meetings. On the basis of the data I have confirmed research that views decision making as an incremental process. We have also seen how participants in decision making meetings accept a loose structure where SUGGESTION may follow SUGGESTION, and where direct feedback is often missing. Such patterns can be explained through reference to the contexts affecting the group. The contexts affect participants' perception of the shared goal (as one of reaching a decision or solving a problem, and as an overarching objective). They also affect participants' linguistic behaviour. I have identified some of the contextual factors affecting the group. The chapter also contains a few examples of how function overrules norms of syntax as they prevail in written language. Discourse functions account for the relationship between syntactically unrelated clauses, and the context of situation explains how other participants perceive the clauses as linked so that they together form a contribution that helps fulfil the task of decision making.

State of the Art: Analysing Group Interaction

By referring to contextual factors as directly affecting the linguistic production, I have already implicitly indicated that my methodological starting point is functional. Nevertheless, in this chapter I shall evaluate different approaches to discourse in order to establish which frameworks are most useful and why others fail to provide adequate tools for the specific purposes of this thesis. The methods will be evaluated on the basis of a few concrete questions as stated in 3.1. Following this broad discussion of various methods of analysis, we shall move on to discuss the state of the art in various more specific areas of relevance.

One of the claims of my thesis is that we do not have satisfactory tools with which to distinguish different types of act. Section 3.2 therefore contains an evaluation of various speech act approaches and taxonomies. This forms a background for chapter 5 where a novel way of identifying SUGGESTIONS is proposed. We shall see that one of the defining features of SUGGESTIONS is speakers' indications that the proposed action is beneficial or desirable. This leads us on to further investigations of the signalling of such evaluative judgements in chapter 6. Sections 3.3 and 3.4 explore the literature on evaluative meaning. Section 3.4 focuses specifically on modal expressions as means by which speakers indicate that the actions they propose are desirable and beneficial.

3.1 General approaches to analysis of dialogue and discourse

There is a host of methods for the analysis of meetings, small group interaction, dialogue in general, or discourse. The methods pitch their focus at different levels. They may synthesise the ideological systems behind speakers' behaviour, or investigate the sequential patterns of speakers' turns, or focus on grammatical phenomena. The following brief overview of some of

the leading work is by no means exhaustive but is only intended to clarify how the analytical method adopted within this thesis relates to the broader framework of dialogue analysis. I do not attempt to deal with all approaches to dialogue and discourse analysis, nor do I pretend that my general comments about each approach necessarily do justice to all variants of a specific method. There is no detailed description of all aspects of the methods. Such – and much better – descriptions can be found in the sources themselves, the creators and users of the specific approach. My presentation of the approaches will be based on a few questions that investigate to what extent the approaches meet certain criteria that have proved to be particularly important for analysis of the data in this thesis.

1. Does the analysis classify acts? If so, on what basis is the classification made?
2. On what basis does the method analyse functions and meanings of clauses/turns? Sequential organisation? Surface markers? Contextualised semantic analysis of expressions? How reliable is the semantic analysis?
3. To what extent is the method able to account for links between meanings/ clauses/ acts/ turns?

I have ordered the methods below according to the level of contextual, or background, knowledge that is used to establish meanings. The methods presented first (3.1.1 and 3.1.2) require no or minimal knowledge of setting and genre whereas the rest of the methods (3.1.3 - 3.1.5) build such knowledge into their analyses.

3.1.1 Conversation Analysis

Conversation Analysis (CA) was developed by a group of sociologists. Conversation analysts claim to focus on issues of conversation that are ‘relevant for the parties’ in the conversation (Schegloff 1997: 183) rather than imposing the analysts’ concerns which may be ‘extrinsic to the interaction’ (Schegloff 1998: 416). In other words, no contextual resource that is not directly referred to in the ‘talk-in-interaction’ is a valid factor in the analysis (see also Schegloff 1992). The CA contribution to analysis lies mainly at a technical level: sequential structure in conversation is a main focus of most conversation analysts (e.g. turn-taking, openings and closings, repairs, etc.). Indeed, the sequential order is what establishes meaning according to

Schegloff & Sacks (1973: 299), and analysts should study sequence rather than the 'semantic load' (e.g. Boden 1994: 109, 173) or 'sentence meaning' (Drew & Heritage 1992: 13).

Interestingly, close scrutiny reveals that even the most die-hard proponents of such 'endogenously grounded' (Schegloff 1997: 165) analysis of dialogue include 'exogenous' contextual factors in their analyses. Wetherell (1998: 402f) has pointed out that the conversation analysts cannot avoid imposing their categories on the speakers since they restrict their gaze to short fragments and leave the rest of the interaction unaccounted for. Such selective analysis necessarily imposes the theorists' concerns on the data. We also find concrete examples of the analysts drawing on contextual knowledge which is not directly signalled in the dialogue. For example, Schegloff (1992: 116-127) in his analysis of a Bush-Rather television encounter claims that the encounter slides from being an 'interview' with the sequential rules related to that particular type of interaction, to being a 'confrontation'. These categorisations, however, are based on conventions of encounters, and the perceived change is based on the fact that we as members of certain communities of practice expect a certain verbal behaviour within different interaction types. When such expectations are not met, we classify the interaction differently. The expectations are built on contextualised conventions. (See also Weatherall (2000: 287) for a demonstration of how Schegloff (1997) provides background information in another analysis.)

Some conversation analysts have acknowledged that contextual details are necessary. For example, Drew and Heritage acknowledge that institutional talk may involve certain constraints and 'inferential *frameworks* and procedures that are particular to specific institutional contexts' (1992: 22, original emphasis; for more 'culturally contexted CA' where ethnographic details are included, see also Moerman 1988, Firth 1995). However, conversation analysis still focuses on sequential organisation (question 2) rather than any in-depth semantic analysis of meanings where a build-up of meanings throughout the entire speech event (or series of speech events) takes place. Such meaning is sometimes essential to the recognition of SUGGESTIONS, as we shall see in chapters 5 and 6.

In the accounts of adjacency pairs and preferred and dispreferred responses (Schegloff 1972; Schegloff & Sacks 1973; Pomerantz 1984, Sacks 1987) the act type is typically identified (e.g. question-answer). However, no criteria for identification of act types have been established within CA (question 1), which is problematic in itself, especially since there appears to be some

confusion in labelling different acts (see Coulthard & Brazil 1981: 51 for examples). In structured parts of the meetings categorisation of the acts might not be too problematic. However, in the unstructured discussions where speakers may build up their SUGGESTIONS over several clauses and clause complexes (see chapters 2 and 4) we need a strict definition of the speech act to ensure consistency.

Generally, in its highly localised and fragmented analyses, CA misses crucial information which is only available if more detailed analysis of expressions is paired with analyses of the 'argumentative threads' (Wetherell 1998: 402f) which run through the entire speech event and even further through the broader cloth of similar speech events and discourses (question 3) (see chapter 6).

3.1.2 Coding schemes

Although it is risky business I will here venture into a brief evaluation of the adequacy of a number of approaches whose common denominator is a concern with coding of acts or moves as part of dialogue analysis. They may be unrelated otherwise.

One of the first analyses of dialogue in small groups was Bales' Interaction Process Analysis (IPA; 1951) which was later modified in his SYMLOG model (SYstematic, Multiple Level Observation of Groups; Bales & Cohen 1979, Polley *et al.* 1988). In IPA he suggests twelve categories for the analysis of small group interaction. Six of these categories relate to the task (gives/ asks for opinion/ orientation/suggestions), and six relate to social-emotional issues (shows solidarity/ antagonism, shows tension/ tension release, agrees/ disagrees). When applying the categories to the corpus of meetings, I found a lack of fit in numerous cases. A key feature within his set of categories is the distinction between 'fact' and 'opinion'. In the meetings, however, opinions and inferences are often dressed up as declaratives carrying an air of factivity. The evaluative element may only become apparent through reference to meaning that is established through an argumentative thread and links to the business culture. And here is the second problem I encountered: The identification of evaluative meaning in the acts is not

satisfactory because the coding is entirely local and discards meaning that is only identifiable through reference to wider contexts.

The immediate, last mentioned, or next anticipated social act of the other takes precedence over the more general social context.
(Bales 1951: 91)

In chapters 5 and 6 I demonstrate how the meaning and thus function of acts can only be determined satisfactorily through a semantic analysis which includes knowledge of the genre and cultural values that are salient in the particular context.

The problems that I encountered in applying Bales' model are characteristic of all the coding methods described in this section: There is a tendency to determine the function or type of act on an intuitive basis without consulting the wider discourse context (previous contributions, and not just the immediately preceding ones) and cultural background and event type (questions 1 and 2). Many methods ignore the fact that the same linguistic features may signal quite different things (cf. Tannen 1993a), or the fact that relativity of the linguistic features is only captured intuitively. Furthermore, the coding schemes make no semantic links between similar types of act across the entire speech event because of the local focus (question 3).

Various coding efforts of the so-called Birmingham School or related to it suffer from exactly these shortcomings. Sinclair and Coulthard initiated the analyses in 1975 with their analysis of classroom discourse (see also Coulthard & Montgomery 1981); Coulthard and Brazil (1981) present a more general model of exchange structure. The model, which has been adapted and used by many others since (e.g. the Human Communication Research Centre coding of dialogue in the HCRC Map Task Corpus; Carletta *et al.* 1996), operates with a number of units of analysis: Lessons, transactions, exchanges, moves, and acts. Apart from the categorisation and context problems mentioned above, the model does not show a satisfactory fit with the corpus of meetings as regards the units of analysis. In meetings the immediate exchange often does not fulfil the expectations, as we saw in chapter 2. When a speaker has proposed an action the subsequent speakers may leave the SUGGESTION unanswered and unassessed and present their own SUGGESTIONS instead. What we tend to get is an endless string of unfinished exchanges. The exchange is, therefore, not very useful for analysing the exchanges in decision making discussion. A similar criticism is valid for Conversation Analysis' focus on adjacency pairs. As

speakers tend to dress up their contributions to look like responses (through overt reference to the previous turn or through repetition of expressions), this disguise may well escape the attention of the coder if no semantic and contextualised analysis is involved. A correct coding depends entirely on the intuition of the coder.

The problem of unit of analysis does not stop here. The units of moves are problematic as well. The move is either defined for practical, task oriented dialogue (e.g. the HCRC coding manual), and the definition does not capture instances where the act of SUGGESTING spreads over several, at times unlinked, clauses, or else the definition of moves simply excludes such cases (e.g. Eggins & Slade's coding system, see below). I shall return to this discussion in chapter 4.

The Birmingham school has a certain affiliation with Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) which will be described more fully below in 3.1.5. From within this school coding approaches have developed. Berry's 'multi-layered approach to exchange structure' (1981), is an attempt to build into the Birmingham model Halliday's concept of the three metafunctions: the interpersonal, ideational, and textual metafunctions. These metafunctions are seen as underlying all uses of language (Halliday 1973; 1994). Berry succeeds in showing how moves function at different levels simultaneously, and she defines the moves more concisely as she identifies the exact functions of the moves. However, the identifications are made on very simple dialogue extracts, and, just like the approaches discussed previously, Berry's model would run into problems if it were to be used on SUGGESTIONS and the responses to them in meetings (question 1). In meetings, it often takes inference based on semantic analyses of components in the acts to classify the act. Berry's model does not provide tools for such analysis (question 2). The method is also highly localised, which hinders a sound semantic analysis just as in the analyses provided by Sinclair and Coulthard's and their followers (question 3).

The other attempt from within SFL is Eggins and Slade's speech function analysis (1997: ch.5; a speech function is equivalent to a speech act). This analysis is based on Halliday's concept of the clause as an interactive event where speakers give or demand either information or 'goods-&-services' (1994: 68ff). Eggins and Slade elaborate on the set of speaker choices which they insert in a tree, or a system network, mapping out the different options as these depend on previous choices of options (more on networks in chapter 5). The set of choices of act types is enormous, and if ever a classification of acts was problematic, it is this one. When I and a few other

analysts tried to code a short dialogue using Eggins and Slade's model we disagreed in up to half of the cases and were often very unsure about the category of an act. In addition, we encountered many instances of the well-known problem that a move often has multiple functions and requires multiple codings (see for example Burton 1981). Halliday's choices (give or demand information or goods-and-services) have not been properly integrated into the entire set of choices in Eggins and Slade's network. This causes great problems in a model that does not allow for multiple codings (e.g. a 'sustaining' move which 'prolongs' by 'elaboration' is also an example of the speaker 'giving information'; in Eggins and Slade's network these two choices cannot coincide). Leaving the technical problems aside, the model fails in the same areas as the previously mentioned methods: in meetings consistent classifications would be very difficult because of a lack of systematic contextualised semantic analysis which builds on knowledge obtained from previous moves and genre specific characteristics. Nonetheless, Eggins and Slade actually do combine their 'speech function analysis' with syntactic, semantic and genre analyses. The problem is that the findings at each level are not collated, so these other analyses do not inform the categorisation of moves.

To summarise this section, coding, in whatever guise it comes, is valuable for the ability to analyse and compare long stretches of text, but has a serious problem: the classifications are typically intuitive, and the basis for such intuition needs to be investigated more closely.

3.1.3 Ethnographic approaches

As will have become quite clear by now, preliminary analysis of the corpus of meetings has highlighted the need for contextual input in the analysis. Ethnographic approaches to communication put great emphasis on context and attempt to define relevant elements of it. Hymes (1972) introduced a list of contextual factors (the SPEAKING grid) that need to be taken into account in the analysis of interaction. Particularly relevant to the study of meetings are the following factors: **Setting/ Scene**, **Participants**, **Ends** (objectives), **Norms** of interaction/interpretation, and **Genre**. (See also the list of contextual dimensions in Ochs, 1979.) I have specified some of these factors in chapter 2. The method of 'ethnography of communication' is

anthropological participant observation, but this does not necessarily include careful study of concrete constructions, expressions, acts and semantic relations.

In contrast, Gumperz (e.g. 1982; 1992) and other 'interactional sociolinguists' (Schiffrin 1994: 97) analyse concrete exchanges more closely (e.g. Brown & Levinson 1987; Schiffrin 1987; Tannen 1989). Gumperz introduced the concept of 'contextualization cues', i.e. signalling mechanisms (including non-verbal signs) that relate what is said to contextual knowledge. Such knowledge contributes to 'contextual presuppositions' which are necessary for the participants to be able to make accurate inferences about what the speakers mean. The relevant contextual knowledge includes knowledge of particular activity types (cf. Goffman's concept of 'frames', now widely used alongside 'inferential schema' in cognitive psychology and artificial intelligence; cf. Minsky 1977, Tannen 1993b). Contextualisation cues may affect the basic meaning of a message as contextual knowledge adds and changes semantic elements of the message.

Coming to the study of language from anthropology and sociology, Gumperz and Goffman were not aiming at close linguistic analyses of the data. The analyses of several of the interactional sociolinguists are so focused on context and frames (e.g. Tannen's work) that at times it seems that the analyses are more based on assumptions and interpretations and less grounded in the actual produced contributions in the data. The conclusions may be correct, but the analyses would benefit from exposing what exactly happens in the produced clauses and between the clauses to make such meanings emerge. (There are examples of interactional sociolinguistics which is more data driven. Schiffrin's work is among these examples.)

3.1.4 Critical Discourse Analysis

Some critical discourse analysts could be accused of a similar lack of groundedness in the grammar. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is engaged with a study of text (spoken as well as written language) as embedded within discursive practices (i.e. the manner in which the text is produced, distributed, and consumed). All of this is again embedded within social practices of social structures and struggles (i.e. ideology and power struggles). The method is inspired by

Michel Foucault's approach to discourse analysis (e.g. Fairclough 1992: ch.3). At the textual level the method makes eclectic use of numerous other methods: Systemic Functional Linguistic tools, work on clause relations (see 3.1.2 and Hoey 1996), conversation analytical methods, 'interactional sociolinguistics' insights on politeness (Brown & Levinson 1987) or frames (see Ribeiro 1996), work on metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), etc. This wide range of analytical tools obviously creates a basis for sound textual analysis. However, often the political element of the analysis gets the upper hand in the analysis, basically because that is CDA's specific project:

One of the crucial tasks of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is to account for the relationships between discourse and social power. More specifically, such an analysis should describe and explain how power abuse is enacted, reproduced or legitimised by the text and talk of dominant groups or institutions. (van Dijk 1996: 84)

In fact, there is a tendency to use such big ideological words that the concrete language use under analysis almost disappears. Conversation analysts and critical discourse analysts (or researchers with a CDA sympathetic approach) have recently had a debate in *Discourse & Society* about the focus of analysis (Schegloff 1997, 1998; Wetherell 1998; Weatherall 2000). Schegloff criticises the grandiosity of CDA where in an act of 'intellectual hegemony' they impose their own frames of reference on the participants. Instead, he argues, the analyst should identify the world as it is already 'endogenously' constructed by participants. I have already criticised the method of CA and will not go further into the problems of the method here. But despite the problems in the approach articulated by Schegloff, there is an element of truth in his criticism of CDA. On the other hand, it is clear that certain social structures (e.g. gender) are pervasive in society and will affect linguistic behaviour, even if 'gender' is not the overt topic of the dialogue (Cameron 1998; Weatherall 2000). In meetings, it is mainly the authority gained through status or knowledge that affects the linguistic constructions (often causing the speakers to downplay this authority rather than exert it, as we shall see in chapter 6). A middle-of-the-road approach is to adopt a close data-driven approach (avoiding the restricted character of Schegloff's analysis) while keeping in mind the pervasiveness of certain social structures (rather than making these structures the main point of departure as in CDA). It is this approach which will be applied in this thesis.

In other words, the methods presented first in this chapter appear to lose too much meaning in the analytical process because the analysts do not take the setting and culture in which the

dialogue is produced sufficiently into account. On the other hand, critical discourse analysis sometimes misses crucial points in the actual dialogue because of preconceived ideas about power struggles inherent in discourse. To avoid these pit-falls, we will let the analysis be entirely driven by the contributions of the participants, but allow ourselves to focus on the 'semantic load' of these contributions.

3.1.5 Systemic Functional Linguistics

Systemic Functional Linguistics provides a framework for close data analysis *and* a focus on socio-semantics. The method incorporates lexical meaning in grammatical descriptions and allows for register and genre information to affect the analyses.

SFL builds primarily on the work of Halliday (e.g. 1973, 1978, 1994). The theory is concerned with explaining each element of language with reference to their function in contexts of use. All language use enacts certain functions. The main types of functions are 'ideational' (meaning as representation enabling us to understand the environment) and 'interpersonal' (meaning used to act on others). These two 'metafunctions' are combined with the 'textual' metafunction which describes the textual formation of the language production and links the meanings to context. Each function is realised grammatically through different linguistic features. The textual metafunction is realised through cohesive links, information structure, deixis, conjunctions, etc. The interpersonal metafunction is typically realised through mood and modality, person, attitudinal and comment noun phrases (or nominal groups as they are called within SFL) and adverbial phrases (groups). Transitivity (i.e. verbal process types and participant roles), tense, modification in NPs, circumstantial adjuncts, etc. realise the ideational metafunction (Halliday 1994: xiii, 36; 1973: 141).

One of the key insights of SFL is the concept of 'copatterning' of selection. Each utterance consists of a co-selection of different linguistic features from different linguistic systems (e.g. polar interrogative, second person, ability modality, certain lexical constraints, etc.). (SFL models choices in 'system networks' or trees; I will describe this way of modeling in chapter 5.) Co-selection gives the utterance a certain function (the set of features listed a few sentences ago

is likely to realise the act of requesting; Thibault & van Leeuwen 1996: section 4). Various 'lexico-grammatical' choices thus get a pragmatic function when combined.

SFL is seen as an 'importing' model of language as opposed to an 'exporting' model (Thibault & van Leeuwen 1996). 'Exporting' models see language as syntax, that is, a formal, autonomous system of internal sense relations where semantics is 'exported' (a matter for philosophers), and so is language as a means for interacting socially and for creating texts (a matter for pragmatics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, etc.). In contrast, SFL as an 'importing' model sees all these elements as integrated within the language system¹. The 'emotive' and 'conative' functions of language affect the structure of language. In fact, Halliday (1961, 1966; see also Hasan 1987) sees lexical choices with their semantic meaning as the most specific meaning compared to the more general meaning of grammar, but the two meanings are of the same kind ('the grammarian's dream' as 'lexis as the most delicate grammar'; Halliday 1961). Others oppose this position (e.g. Tucker 2000) but in general, SFL puts a great emphasis on lexical choice in relation to the structure of grammar (hence 'lexicogrammar' rather than 'grammar'; Halliday 1994: 15). Inferences based on contextual knowledge, genre and register, are also seen as affecting linguistic structure directly (e.g. Eggins & Martin 1997; Halliday 1985b: 25; Hasan 1995; Martin 1992).

The different linguistic levels are, however, not just mixed up in one unstructured hotchpotch. The levels (or 'stratas') are kept separate, but choices at one level are realisations of choices at another level (for a good illustration, see Martin *et al.* 1997: 95). For example, at the semantic (speech function) level the speaker may choose to make a statement (give information). This is (typically, i.e. 'congruently') realised through declarative mood at the 'lexicogrammatical' level. At the phonological level, a falling tone group is normally used to realise this mood and speech function choice. Mapping out congruent realisation patterns enables the analyst to account for incongruent patterns such as indirect speech acts.

¹ Leech (1983), and with him Butler (1988, 1990), accuse SFL of 'overgrammaticalization', i.e.

a tendency to seek a grammatical explanation (in terms of rules and categories) of the interpersonal and textual aspects of language (Leech 1983: 58)

where these should have been kept separate and complementary instead. I shall not go into the theoretical discussion here but just state that precisely the joining of different levels of linguistic elements provides analysts with pragmatically adequate tools that are not found in other approaches.

The method, which I have merely sketched, gives many valuable tools for analysing meetings. It provides a good framework for identifying and classifying speech act types, as we shall see in chapter 5 (question 1). It also allows for a detailed analysis of data where we can incorporate meaning that is only available through reference to situation, cultural context, previous meanings, etc. (question 2). Recently SFL scholars have attempted to account for evaluative meaning, which turns out to play a significant role in meetings and in SUGGESTIONS within meetings (see chapter 6 and below in 3.3). SFL has provided serious studies of how meanings link up across texts (cohesion and coherence studies: Halliday & Hasan 1976; Hasan 1985; Martin 1992; question 3).

There are, however, certain gaps and problems within the theory. The main problem is an exclusive and superfluous terminology which makes it difficult for the uninitiated to understand SFL-based accounts. The exclusive language also reflects a somewhat arrogant lack of acknowledgement of previous work done by scholars within other traditions. For example, Halliday's work on modality and Lemke's work on attitudinal meaning (1992, 1998), which is closely tied in with modal meanings, are not linked up in any way to work done outside SFL. Except in cases where the point cannot be made without using SFL terminology, I shall adopt traditional terminology. The reasons for this is, first, that it makes the thesis more readable to a general linguistic audience, and second, it allows me to refer to work other than just SFL. My basis is nonetheless functional and much in line with the SFL way of approaching language. Of course by adopting traditional terminology I may fail to convey some of the theoretical connections within the theory, but it is generally possible to convey the points without the SFL terms and there seems to be so much more to gain from doing it this way.

Certain theoretical problems are emerging. On the SFL e-mailing list there have recently been wide discussions of allocation of participant roles and classification of verb process types (transitivity). The method does not seem to support consistent analysis. In the analyses of evaluative meaning there are also major gaps, and some of the first attempts are inadequate or even problematic in their categorisations. (I shall return to that in 3.3.) What is needed is clearly meticulous studies of specific data sets to improve our understanding of the construction of evaluative meaning. Chapter 6 is such a data-driven study; the aim of the chapter is to describe aspects of evaluative meaning in SUGGESTIONS in meetings.

Despite the shortcomings and problems, SFL does provide an interesting account of language as a meaning-making tool, particularly through its incorporating contextual features in the model of language (although context itself, naturally, is not itself a level of language; see for example Hasan 1995: 204).

3.1.6 Other functional grammars

I shall here include only approaches that are what Butler calls ‘truly functional theories’, referring to theories that have as their essence a view of language as meeting communicative ends. The reason for this is that a study of the process of suggesting future actions in meetings is a communicative process for which we need tools that capture the communicative aspect rather than just the formal structures and relations. Theories that do not fall within the ‘truly functional’ category are those ‘which are primarily formal, but include the term “functional” in their names (the most obvious example being lexical functional grammar), and also [...] theoretical accounts which may include functionally-oriented statements...’ (Butler 1990: 1). We have already seen that SFL fits this bill. Functional Grammar (FG; first introduced by Dik in *The Theory of Functional Grammar. Part 1* (1989; TFG1) and *Part 2* (1997; TFG2)) is another theory that sees language as an ‘instrument for social interaction’ (TFG1, ch.3 & 4). As pointed out by Butler (1990: 2), the two approaches share a concern that linguistic rules are explained in ‘functional terms’ where ‘function’ is used in the sense of ‘motivated by the ways in which language is used’.

In his description of the layered underlying clause structure, Dik describes how a ‘predicate’ (designating properties or relations) is applied to an appropriate number of ‘terms’ (referring to entities). The result of this application is a ‘predication’ which in itself designates a set of ‘states of affairs (SoAs - ‘the conception of something that can be the case in some world’ (TFG1: 46)). The SoA can be located in time and space, and, at higher levels, the speaker’s attitude towards the propositional contents and the illocutionary force of the proposition can be incorporated by means of ‘operators’ and ‘satellites’. Operators are ‘grammatically rather than lexically expressed’ (TFG1: 138) and ‘satellites’ signal their modifying function by lexical rather than grammatical means (TFG1: 50).

Compared to SFL, Dik's FG does not convincingly lend itself to comprehensive text analysis. (For a comparison between the two theories, see Butler 1990.) Despite his functional programme, Dik appears very reluctant 'to engage wholeheartedly with pragmatic phenomena and textual macrostructure' (Butler 1990: 7). FG does not provide an adequate framework for contextualised semantic analyses of expressions. In TFG2 he does give what he describes as 'the bare outlines of what a theory of discourse should look like' (p.409). It is however 'no more than a sketch of a number of elements that should go into the making of a functional grammar of discourse' (p.410). In Connolly *et al.* (eds., 1997) others attempt to incorporate pragmatic and discourse concerns in the functional model. It is clear, though, that these are mere beginnings, as Connolly *et al.* (1997: 55) acknowledge: 'At discourse-level ... it may well be felt that FG is in need of significant further development before it can be regarded as fully adequate'.

The main development on discourse issues in the recent FG publications is an attempt to incorporate speech acts as part of the language model. For most this means a focus on the direct grammatical coding of illocutionary forces. There have been only very weak attempts to account for acts that are not as clearly coded in the grammatical structure. At most, scholars refer to conventional expressions which cause an 'illocutionary conversion' or 'modification' of acts, i.e. create indirect speech acts; e.g. TFG1; Hengeveld 1988, 1990; Vet 1990) (question 1). Risselada (1990, 1993) stands out because of her critique of previous attempts to account for speech acts. According to her, lexical and semantic indications as well as purely syntactic properties determine the illocutionary forces of speech acts. Her approach to speech acts forms an important basis for my modeling of speech act types (chapter 5) and will be described more thoroughly in 3.2, particularly 3.2.2.2. Even Risselada's pragmatically more adequate approach to speech acts, however, does not pay due attention to the way situational features affect the meaning construction and language structure (question 2). For the identification of speech acts it is important to take into account such a link between context and linguistic construction and meaning. This will be demonstrated in chapters 5 and 6.

In chapters 5 and 6 it will also become clear that evaluative meaning is a core element in SUGGESTIONS. Dik includes attitude or interpersonal aspects in his theory; these meanings are expressed in the operators and satellites at level 3 of his model. He mentions 'attitude specification' as part of 'interpersonal strategies' that speakers may adopt (TFG2: 427) but offers no further elaboration on the notion of attitudinal meaning. Again, the meanings are not

substantially grounded in the context, neither in the speech event type nor in meanings which can only be established through links to other meanings within the text (or meeting/ meeting series) as a whole (questions 2 and 3)².

In short, FG as a theory does not (yet) provide adequate tools for analysis of the type of text we are dealing with here, but certain studies within the framework will prove useful, particularly work on speech acts.

3.1.7 Choice of framework

All this goes to demonstrate that, generally speaking, I have found SFL to provide the most useful framework for analysis of meetings and their SUGGESTIONS. This is perhaps not surprising since SFL is the only theory describing language at so many different levels and incorporating non-linguistic factors to account for choices at linguistic level. Even though systemicists are zealous about their own theory building at every level, the framework is wide enough to be able to incorporate further insights from other methods. For example, the focus on context within SFL has its origin in Malinowski's (1923) and Firth's (e.g. 1957) writings, but there is no reason why ethnographic insights (e.g. Hymes' and Gumperz' models) should not enrich a SFL based understanding of context. Similarly, SFL studies of modal meaning could benefit from acknowledging the links between the SFL approach to modality and the multitude of non-SFL studies on the topic. It is such an inclusive approach that we will pursue here: SFL forms the theoretical framework within which a number of insights on specific issues from other methods will be inserted where appropriate. As already mentioned, I shall keep to traditional terminology where at all possible, partly out of a desire to be able to include non-SFL insights in my analysis.

² Reference to the context is not unknown within FG (e.g. Kroon's, 1997: 24f, reference to 'extratextual relations' between units of text and 'some aspect of the non-verbal interactional situation in which the text is embedded'). However, such meaning is not incorporated in the overall model of language as it is in SFL.

3.2 Speech acts

We saw in chapter 2 that SOLUTION DEVELOPMENT is an essential part of problem solving and decision making meetings, and that one of the core components of such processes is the identification of solutions, e.g. SUGGESTIONS of future, desirable actions. The act of SUGGESTING is a communicative and social act, signalled in speech, and as such a 'speech act'.

Making SUGGESTIONS the focus of the present study has led me into a minefield of controversies as regards the scope, categorisation, and linguistic codification of speech acts. It is far from straightforward to classify acts performed through speech, particularly as the link between the communicative function and the linguistic features is problematic. The questions we need to ask when attempting to study acts of SUGGESTING are therefore:

- 1) How do we identify acts of SUGGESTING? Or, more generally, on what basis can we categorise speech acts?
- 2) What is the link between linguistic features and the communicative function? Is the function signalled in the linguistic constructions ('linguistically codified'); do speakers and listeners rely on inference only; or do we use a combination of codification and inference when interpreting speech acts?

This section reviews different trends in the speech act literature as regards these two questions. The review will be selective and deal only with some of the approaches, with a special emphasis on concepts that will be of use later. Its goal is to form the basis for an alternative categorisation of speech acts, specifically applied to directive proposals in the meetings in my corpus (see chapter 5).

3.2.1 Codification or inference?

I start with the second question first since the answer to the first question on categorisation depends on the view we take on the extent to which speakers rely on linguistic elements or inference when interpreting the function of speech acts.

3.2.1.1 Codification and inference: The Literal Force Hypothesis

In a series of lectures from 1955 (published in 1962 as *How to Do Things with Words*) Austin first suggested a distinction between constatives and performatives. Performatives are sentences through which speakers perform acts, merely by uttering them (e.g. marrying, naming, promising, etc.). Later in the same series of lectures he contradicts the claim that performatives are acts and constatives are not, as he suggests that any utterance is a performance of an act. When producing an utterance, the speaker performs three kinds of acts: a locution, an illocution, and a perlocution. A locution is the simple uttering of an utterance. The illocution is the force of the utterance (e.g. stating, questioning). The perlocution is the effect that the utterance has on the hearer. Since Austin there has been much debate about the extent to which we can apply the concept of 'illocutionary force' and to what extent the force should be seen as anchored in the grammar of languages or not.

When only performatives were considered acts, the speech act, or communicative function, was fully codified in language (the performative verb). However, with the widening of the concept of speech acts to include other types of utterance, the possibility opened up that illocutions are not expressed explicitly and that inference may be necessary to determine the illocutionary force. Indeed, in 1969 and 1975 Searle presented a theory of 'indirect speech acts'³. The theory is built around the concept of 'literalness': A speech act will always have a literal force which is signalled either through a performative verb in the matrix clause, or by using one of the major sentence types in English (declarative, interrogative, imperative, associated with stating, questioning, and ordering respectively). Levinson (1983: 263-264) refers to this basic assumption as the 'literal force hypothesis'. Any approach that attempts to account for indirect speech acts while accepting this hypothesis will assume that indirect speech acts both have a literal force and, in addition, an indirect force derived from the literal force through an inferential process which takes contextual conditions into account. Such inference is triggered by some kind of indication that the literal force is inadequate in the specific conversational context (an 'inference-trigger'; see Levinson 1983: 270).

³ For a good review of different approaches to the concept of 'indirect speech acts', see Pérez Hernández (1999: ch.2)

Searle puts less emphasis on the linguistic codification of a particular act type than on a set of constitutive rules⁴ that are necessary for the utterance to count as a particular speech act with a specific force.

Other speech act approaches accepting the literal force hypothesis specify in more detail the scope of linguistic codification. One of these is Functional Grammar. In Dik's (1989, 1997) account some speech act constructions trigger a direct illocutionary force, but these are few, and most speech acts can only be accounted for through inference. Dik proposes four basic illocutionary types, based on the three main sentence types and, in some languages, a fourth type, Exclamative. A basic illocution may be turned into a derived illocution through grammatical illocutionary conversion. For example, a Declarative illocution may turn into an Interrogative illocution⁵ if a tag question is added (Declarative > Interrogative: *She is a nice girl, isn't she?*). There are seven such derived illocution types, based on grammatical and intonational features. Any illocution beyond the eleven codified illocutions (direct and derived) can only be determined through inference. (Hengeveld (1988; 1989) proposes a similar process of 'modification' of the force of the illocution.)

There has been some discussion within FG as to the codification of illocutionary forces, and some interesting alternatives have emerged, especially when FG and cognitive approaches interact (e.g. Risselada 1990; 1993; Pérez Hernández 1999). I return to their ideas below.

Morgan (1978), trying to account for such favorite indirect speech acts as *Can you pass the salt?*, deals with the relationship between conventions of language and conventions of usage. The conventions of language are those specifying the arbitrary relation between linguistic form and its meaning. They are part of the knowledge of individual languages. The conventions of usage are those specifying how certain utterances are to be interpreted as specific indirect speech acts (e.g. *Can you pass the salt?* understood as a request). If an utterance is highly conventionalised as a means to express a certain indirect force, the hearers can infer this force directly without first having to perceive the literal force and make the connection between the

⁴ The constitutive rules are felicity conditions. There are preparatory, sincerity, and essential conditions, as well as conditions relating to the propositional content. The latter type of condition is linguistically codified.

⁵ Note that Declarative and Interrogative are Dik's names for illocutions, not declarative and interrogative sentence types.

two (Morgan’s ‘short-circuited implicature’). Conventions of usage is an intermediate stage between conventions of language (literalness) and inference, and they may become conventions of language, i.e. linguistically codified:

As the statement of means become more and more specific, the convention approaches a convention of the language, a statement about literal meaning. As the connections between purpose and means become obscured, the relation between them is ripe for reinterpretation as entirely arbitrary, at which point the convention of usage is reinterpreted as a convention of the language.
(Morgan 1978: 269)

Although he does not focus much on the sentence type – act type correlation, Morgan’s approach gives linguistic codification a certain weight, while adding to it the conventions of usage rendering the force of a number of indirect speech act directly accessible for hearers.

3.2.1.2 Stronger focus on codification

Comparatively, SFL more than any other approach puts a great emphasis on linguistic codification of speech acts. Despite an initial focus on the relationship between sentence type and speech acts (or ‘speech functions’), the claim that speech functions are signalled linguistically goes far beyond sentence types. Many speech functions are not indicated through sentence type. This is the case for functions such as ‘threat’ or ‘blackmail’ (Halliday 1973: 75), or indeed for one of the four basic speech functions prescribed in SFL. In 3.1.2 and 3.1.5 we touched on these functions. They are congruent realisations of semantic choices as shown in Figure 3-1.

Commodity exchanged:		goods-&-services	information
		Role in exchange:	
Giving	offer	statement	
Demanding	command	question	

Figure 3-1: Halliday’s speech functions (after Halliday 1994: 69, fig. 4-1)

The speech function 'offer' has no direct association with a specific sentence type. But this asymmetry between the grammatical system of sentence types and the four basic speech functions is not considered a problem within SFL:

If one stratifies the relation between grammar and semantics, the problem disappears.
(Thibault & van Leeuwen 1996: 573)

Thibault & van Leeuwen go on to describe how different c patterning of selections on the lexicogrammatical level gives different speech functions (see 3.1.5). The lexicogrammatical selections include mood choice, but also person, modality, lexical constraints, etc. (Thibault & van Leeuwen also include prosodic and kinesic choices such as shaking one's head.) The sentence type is therefore just one element in a bigger equation.

Non-systemicists such as Risselada have also gone beyond sentence type while considering linguistic properties as signals of the illocutionary force. She suggests a weaker literal force hypothesis where she redefines the relationship between sentence type and speech act type as a relationship of *compatibility* rather than a literal meaning relation (Risselada 1993: 72).

They [sentence types] do not contain specific references to the interactional goals [...] that characterize the various speech act types. They are, however, compatible with them in such a way that for instance imperative sentences are very suitable for performing directives, and interrogative sentences for performing questions. Nevertheless, the value suggested here for interrogative sentences (i.e. presenting a proposition as open) makes them also a suitable expression means for the feature 'optionality' which is characteristic for directive subtypes such as requests (*can you, will you*), suggestions (*why don't you*), and some proposals (*how about*).
(Risselada 1993: 72)

While the sentence type makes certain interpretations possible, other linguistic properties help pinpoint the exact function of the utterance.

The illocutionary force of the various speech act types [...] is expressed by means of combinations of linguistic properties that together reflect one or more of the characteristic features of the speech act type involved.
(Risselada 1993: 74)

Pérez Hernández (1999) follows Risselada when specifying the linguistic properties used by speakers when they aim to perform various speech acts. I return to both approaches below.

SFL proposes a high level of codification without subscribing to the literal force hypothesis fully. Although sentence type and performative verbs may indicate specific speech functions, other indicators interfere and complicate the picture. Risselada's weaker literal force hypothesis supports this position. However, Risselada advocates that inference is involved in determining the force, while SFL theorists talk very little about inference. Inference is just part of the meaning-making process, based on speakers' lexicogrammatical choices (Thibault & van Leeuwen 1996: 567) Within speech acts, speakers not only choose mood, participant roles, tense, etc. but through their lexical choices add an interpersonal layer that may link the expression to the situation and culture in which the speech act is uttered (see Thibault and van Leeuwen's analyses, 1996: 567, 580). Thibault and van Leeuwen do not make the scope of the lexicogrammatical analyses very clear. In fact, it seems as if everything may be added to this layer of analysis through lexical layers of interpersonal meaning.

3.2.1.3 (Almost) pure inference

Leech takes an almost opposite view as he claims that only the ideational content is grammatical. Any interpersonal or textual aspects belong to pragmatics rather than grammar (1983: 56ff). This is the view held by most traditional theorists⁶. (Also Risselada (and Pérez Hernández), while stressing that a focus on a variety of linguistic realisations is necessary, operate with such a separate layer of pragmatic inference.) From this point of view, most of the elements that make people understand specific utterances as particular speech acts lie beyond the grammatical level and can only be accounted for through inference. There is no clear-cut, one-to-one relationship between on the one hand the semantic categories (proposition, question, mand) which are related to the syntactic sentence types (declarative, interrogative, imperative), and on the other hand the pragmatic categories ('assertion', 'asking', impositive) (Leech 1983: 114). To interpret such semantic categories, the hearer needs to make use of implicature, based on various Maxims (e.g. the Maxim of Tact) belonging to Principles (e.g. the Cooperative and Politeness Principles) within an Interpersonal Rhetoric (Leech 1983: 16; chapters 4-6; see Figure 3-2).

⁶ For a discussion of different ways of defining pragmatics and the relationship between grammar, semantics, and pragmatics, see Levinson (1983: chapter 1.2).

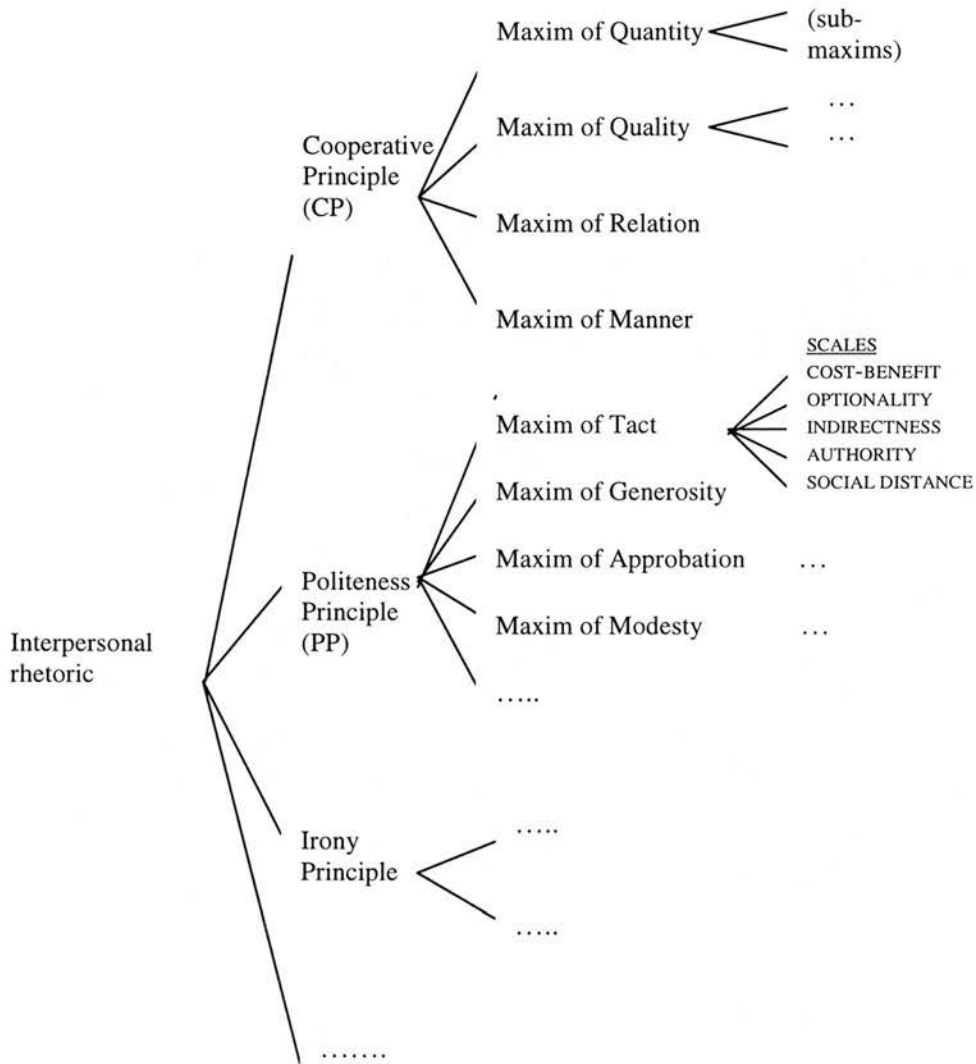


Figure 3-2: Leech's Interpersonal Rhetoric (after Leech 1983: 16 & 123ff)

The Maxims are non-grammatical in nature. Leech identifies pragmatic scales (e.g. a COST-BENEFIT SCALE, an OPTIONALITY SCALE, an INDIRECTNESS SCALE) which have a bearing on for example the degree of tact (1983: 123ff).

Although Leech's and the SFL approaches disagree on central issues, the two share crucial elements. They are both concerned with the manner in which speech acts are shaped by the social interactional needs of speakers rather than straightforward grammatical-pragmatic correlations. Despite their theoretical disagreement as to the position of interpersonal and textual

elements in relation to the grammar, both approaches acknowledge that these elements are crucial in determining which form speakers choose when wanting to express particular speech acts.

Other approaches that discard the literal force hypothesis and put all the emphasis on inference rather than linguistic codification seem to have more in common with the most highly codifying approach of them all, SFL (and Risselada's outline), than would appear to be the case at first sight. For instance, Sperber and Wilson's (1986) Relevance theoretical approach recognises three types of speech acts: The first group have to be communicated and identified in order to be performed. The second group are speech acts, that 'can be successfully performed without being identified as such either by the speaker or by the hearer' (1986: 245). To this group belongs the acts of suggesting, advising, etc. The third group contains speech acts such as saying, telling, and asking, or 'higher-level explicatures' in which the speaker's assumptions are explicitly communicated. We focus on the second group, since it contains the type of acts that concerns us in this thesis.

Sperber and Wilson claim that such act types are distinguished through propositional attitudes such as belief and desire (1986: 250).

We would like to suggest that the distinction between requestive and advisory speech acts is itself reducible to something deeper. Intuitively, a requestive speech act is one that represents a certain state of affairs as desirable from the speaker's point of view, whereas an advisory speech act is one that represents a certain state of affairs as desirable from the hearer's point of view.

[...]

What is essential to the comprehension of these utterances is not their assignment to the class of advisory or requestive speech acts, but a recognition that the state of affairs described is being represented as desirable from the speaker's point of view in the first case, and the hearer's in the second.

(Sperber & Wilson 1986: 250-51)

The hearer has to answer the following question: 'From whose point of view is the state of affairs described as desirable?' The answer is found through inference (1986: 251). However, while stressing the inferential nature of interpreting such speech acts, Sperber and Wilson also suggest that the propositional attitudes are linked to linguistic form (1986: 250).

What undeniably exists is not a well-defined range of syntactic sentence types but a variety of overt linguistic devices – e.g. indicative, imperative or subjunctive mood, rising or falling intonation, inverted or uninverted word order, the presence or absence of Wh-words, or of markers such as ‘let’s’ or ‘please’ – which can guide the interpretation process in various ways. While it may be possible to build a theory of syntactic sentence types around these devices, as far as we know this work has not yet been done.

(Sperber & Wilson 1986: 247)

It is this acknowledgement of the link between a wide variety of linguistic features (not just sentence type and performative verbs as in theories subscribing to the literal force hypothesis) and a ‘propositional attitude’ which brings Relevance theory, SFL, and Risselada’s and Pérez Hernández’s approaches closer to each other despite major disagreements on the role of inference.

3.2.1.4 Socio-semantic scales and networks

Recent work has focused on semantic variables such as Leech’s pragmatic scales within the Maxims (e.g. the COST-BENEFIT and OPTIONALITY SCALES). The work I have in mind here, apart from Leech’s work presented above, is work some of which has already been introduced briefly: Verschueren (1985), Risselada (1990; 1993), and Pérez Hernández (1999). The scales and variables are used to categorise speech acts and will be specified in 3.2.2.

One of the main claims of these approaches relates to the categorisation of speech acts. They suggest that the categories are fuzzy and that there is no one-to-one membership. What determines the type of a speech act is its position on various scales such as optionality or cost-benefit (see 3.2.2). By identifying such scales, the authors try to establish the frames, or idealised cognitive models (Pérez Hernández 1999, following Lakoff 1987), for certain types of speech acts (e.g. directives). Like Leech, their focus is on the social interactional needs of the speakers. But, as I have shown above, Risselada and Pérez Hernández go beyond this to actually highlight the linguistic properties that speakers make use of to communicate such interpersonal aspects. Pérez Hernández actually presents typical ‘realization procedures’ for various directive and commissive speech acts. I shall refer to some of these in chapter 5 as I map out some linguistic means by which different elements of SUGGESTIONS are realised.

A few scholars within SFL have provided socio-semantic networks which encode social interactional distinctions. These distinctions affect the form of speech acts. Turner (1973: 155) introduced a network of control strategies for a mother socialising a child (e.g. [imperative control] vs. [positional control]). Hasan (1988: 63) presented a network for yes-no questions. More recently, Murcia-Bielsa (2000: 136-137) has offered a network for instructions in English and Spanish. Such networks bear similarities to the criteria for identifying interrogatives as commands, mapped out by Sinclair & Coulthard (1975; e.g. [action proscribed] vs. [action not proscribed]). (See also Labov & Fanshel's (1977) rules for interpreting statements.)

There is no substantial difference between mapping out the semantic options in networks and listing 'dimensions', 'criteria' or 'variables', as Verschueren, Risselada and Pérez Hernández do. Apart from a joint interest in the linguistic realisations of the speech acts, this focus on semantic options is what makes their analyses and the SFL approaches outlined above fairly similar in practice, even though the theoretical disagreements have not disappeared.

3.2.1.5 Linguistic features realising semantic choices

We have seen a general movement away from strict categorisations of speech acts on the basis of conditions and rules (as with Austin and Searle) towards a focus on the fuzziness in categorisation. The fuzziness follows from the possibility for each realisation to combine different social aspects, and mix different linguistic structures and choices. The choices of social aspects and linguistic properties are interrelated. Some of the combinations may become conventionalised, most likely because they have proved to be a desirable combination of social effects (e.g. *Can you pass the salt?*: high optionality, low power and 'directivity', low cost to the hearer and a certain benefit to the speaker, etc.).

In describing speech acts, if one starts from a semantic network mapping out interpersonal elements, the network consists of open systems rather than closed systems such as syntactic systems. The open systems of interpersonal elements are realised by syntactic forms and lexical elements, but the syntactic form does not exercise great control on the shape of the semantic network. (The semantic network, on the other hand, does shape the syntactic form.) 'This has the advantage of making the network more sensitive to questions such as those concerning the

relations between language, social structure and education posed by Turner' (Martin 1981: 67), or, in our case, language, social structure and decision making. For example, interpersonal elements such as whether the action is proscribed or not may be realised in a number of ways linguistically, and the difference may reveal the relative positions of speakers on the social scales of authority and social distance. By studying the link between the linguistic realisation of speech acts and the semantic effects (some of which are constitutive elements of the speech act) we can reveal interesting situation- and register-specific patterns. What we need, therefore, is more register-specific studies where the aim is to establish sets of semantic options defining a particular speech act type and to identify the linguistic forms that go with these patterns, and to compare the linguistic forms with realisations of similar semantic options in other registers.

Another argument for making the point of departure the semantic elements rather than the linguistic realisations is that the number of possible linguistic structures, or co-selections of linguistic choices, is so enormous that the goal of exhaustive identification would be unattainable. Exhaustive identification would be implausible if we include in the study the situational context which enters the speech acts through lexical choices, indexicals, and certain syntactic structures (e.g. transitivity features and participant roles). It would be even more impossible if we make it our goal to map out all potential co-selections of linguistic choices within all registers. We may then lose sight of the semantic meanings such as optionality realised through different forms. In contrast, a study of the realisation of the semantic meanings across different registers would allow us to maintain a focus of essential, defining elements of a speech act type (e.g. benefit as a constitutive element of SUGGESTIONS) while studying different realisational patterns within different registers.

In chapters 5 and 6 I aim to carry out the first and second part of the task outlined above: I identify semantic options which are constitutive of SUGGESTIONS, and then I present patterns of realisations from the corpus.

3.2.2 Categorisation

Throughout the discussion of the weight of codification and inference above we have already dealt with a lot of the issues concerning categorisation of speech acts. We have seen that to identify speech acts, we need to specify a set of constitutive elements (presented in square brackets) such as [action proscribed] and [authority] for the act of ‘ordering’. Other elements are not constitutive but they still affect the shape of the speech act (e.g. [great social distance]/ [high formality] affects the shape of a request). For both types of elements the membership is a matter of degree rather than all-or-none membership. This fits in with research on the nature of human categorisation which shows that we conceptualise in cognitive continua instead of separate categories (cf. prototype theory; Rosch & Mervis 1975; Rosch 1977).

3.2.2.1 Traditional categorisation

Most traditional categorisations lack this prototypicality. I shall only describe Searle’s taxonomy here since it has been influential and the basis for a series of other taxonomies (e.g. Fraser 1974; Bach & Harnish 1979; Leech 1983). Searle (1979) proposed five speech act categories: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. The taxonomy is based on a number of criteria such as ‘Differences in the point (or purpose) of the (type of) act’, ‘Differences in the direction of fit between words and the world’, etc. (Searle 1979: 2-8). Much could be said about the categories, but I shall just join in with Vanparys’s general criticism of taxonomies with one-to-one membership:

Illocutions cannot be pigeonholed into homogeneous neatly bounded, mutually exclusive classes. Any valid classification necessarily consists of overlapping categories with varying degrees of membership and fuzzy boundaries.
(Vanparys 1996: 87)

The point of overlap between categories was also made by Leech (1983: 207) who points out that ‘*Advise, suggest, and tell*, for example, can be either assertive or directive’. This makes them lack centrality to the category of directives (Verschueren 1985: 150).

3.2.2.2 Degree membership

Instead of rigid categories we need categorisation which is based on criteria with degree membership.

Givón (1990) sees the three basic illocutionary categories (declarative, imperative, and interrogative illocutions) as non-discrete, prototypical categories (which may themselves be divided into prototypical sub-categories). His categorisation is limited to the sentence types because his concern is sentence grammar, not the functions of utterances. It cannot account adequately for the array of speech acts as functions when these are signalled more subtly than through sentence type.

In 3.2.1.4 I introduced Verschueren's, Risselada's and Pérez Hernández's approaches which all allow for degree membership and operate beyond sentence types. Here I shall specify the bases for categorisation in their models because in chapters 5 and 6 I shall draw on several of their scales and variables as well as Leech's scales introduced above in 3.2.1.3.

Verschueren (1985) suggests that directive speech acts can be defined along five dimensions. Some of these are scalar in nature. They are:

1. 'Degree of Directivity' (specifying the strength of the wish expressed by the speaker in trying to influence the hearer's subsequent course of action)
2. 'Social Setting'
3. 'Goals of Directing' (e.g. directing the hearer to an act of responding, coming or going, or giving or granting something; 1985: 164)
4. 'Directionality' (a scale where the two extremes are positive directionality (i.e. attempts to make the hearer do something) or negative directionality (i.e. attempts to make the hearer *not* do something)
5. 'Authority'. (Authority is seen as a matter of degree, and Verschueren identifies different types of authority such as power or institutional authority, knowledge authority, moral authority, etc.; 1985: 180)

When performing a register specific analysis such as the one performed in this thesis, the social setting is already defined (i.e. workplace meeting; see chapter 2).

Pérez Hernández (1999: 57) has pointed out that Verschueren’s list of goals of directing is incomplete. His list does not include ‘directing the hearer to an act of *doing* something’. SUGGESTIONS would belong to this type.

I shall refer to Verschueren’s differentiation of authority types later (chapter 6), but otherwise I find the scales and criteria presented in Leech (1983), Risselada (1993), and Pérez Hernández (1999) more useful for my purposes.

Risselada’s (1993: 33-36) *prototype typology* of illocutions is based on scalar criteria which may relate to the speaker (e.g. psychological state, intentions, or aims in performing the speech act involved), addressee (e.g. perlocutionary effect of the speech act, or the nature of the addressee’s reaction), or the speech act (e.g. what is the speech act about? Facts, emotions, or actions?). In this typology, speech acts relating to actions where the ‘orientation’ is the addressee are seen as directives. If the orientation lies somewhere between the addressee and speaker, the act is seen as a proposal.

Risselada subclassifies directives according to their position on the scales of ‘bindingness’ and ‘benefit’:

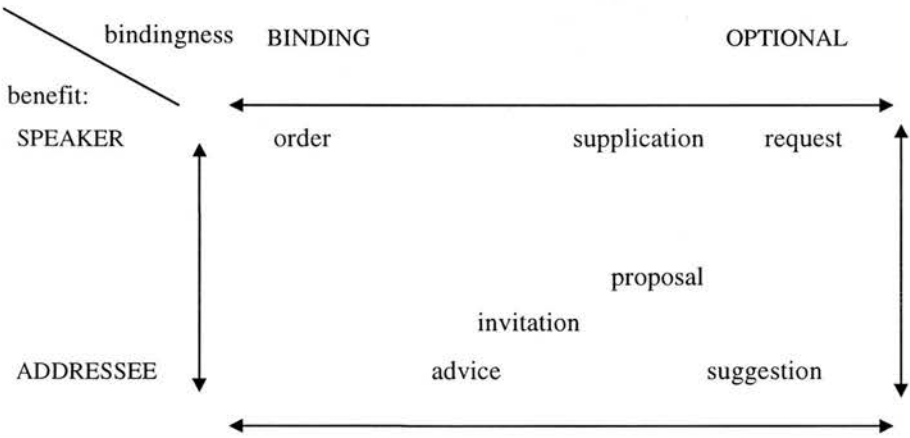


Figure 3-3: Risselada’s subclassification of directives (after Risselada 1993: 48)

Risselada’s subclassification of directives as modelled in Figure 3-3 is interesting from the point of view of the scales she introduces. I shall make use of these when dealing with SUGGESTIONS

in chapters 5 and 6. However, it is highly questionable how she determines the accurate position of the different act types such as ‘advice’, ‘proposal’, ‘suggestion’ on the scales. For example, what makes her position proposals and suggestions exactly where she does within the diagram? There exist no universal definitions of the act types. Risselada’s perception of them is necessarily idiosyncratic, which is in itself not problematic, but it ought to have been made clear that her scales are based on her perception rather than a universal set of categories.

A similar problem characterises Pérez Hernández’s approach. I shall outline her ‘variables’ (1999: 173-174) before taking up this discussion.

1. Agent type
2. Time of action
3. Degree of agent’s capability
4. Degree of speaker’s will (i.e. degree to which the speaker wishes the state of affairs expressed in the predication to take place)
5. Degree of addressee’s will (i.e. degree to which the addressee wishes the state of affairs expressed in the predication to take place)
6. Degree of cost-benefit (for speaker, addressee, and/or a 3rd person)
7. Degree of optionality (for the intended agent)
8. Degree of mitigation
9. Degree of power
10. Degree of social distance
11. Degree of formality of the context

Pérez Hernández’s debt, not just to Risselada and Verschueren, but also Leech is obvious. Several of these scales will form an essential part of the model defining SUGGESTIONS (chapter 5).

3.2.2.3 The basis of categorisation

Pérez Hernández characterises the 'idealised cognitive models' for directive and commissive speech acts on the basis of speech act verbs found in her corpus (e.g. *order*, *suggest*, *advise*). She argues that such illocutionary verbs reflect the way we conceptualise reality and, therefore, form a good starting point for a study of speech acts. Others have similarly defended a focus on the verbs (e.g. Verschueren 1985, Wierzbicka 1987: 492), even though Searle (1979: 9) previously pointed out that there is no reason to assume that a classification of illocutionary verbs represents a classification of illocutionary acts.

Differences in illocutionary verbs are a good guide but by no means a sure guide to differences in illocutionary acts.
(Searle 1979: 2)

...we should no more suppose that our ordinary language verbs carve the conceptual field of illocutions at its semantic joints than we would suppose that our ordinary language expressions for naming and describing plants and animals correspond exactly to the natural biological kinds
(Searle 1979: ix-x)

Although it may be 'perversely anti-Whorfian to suppose that ... the verbs with which our language equips us for discussing communicative behaviour require us to draw distinctions which are not significant in the behaviour itself' (Leech 1983: 198), individual speakers may make such distinctions idiosyncratically. This is particularly the case where the speech act verbs cover very similar ground. For example, Risselada's (1990: 17) differentiation between proposals and suggestions lacks evidence beyond her own impression of what 'propose' and 'suggest' mean.

The futility of building speech act descriptions on the use of particular verbs by individuals also becomes apparent in the disagreement between scholars as to what exactly makes speech acts for example 'suggestions'. For the proposition to be a suggestion, does the event specified in the proposition need to be desirable or beneficial to the addressee (Leech 1983: 217) or does it not (Fraser 1974: 150)⁷? Who is the agent of the future action to which suggestions refer? Is it the

⁷ Fraser supports his position with the following example:

addressee only (Fraser 1974, Searle 1979, Leech 1983, Verschueren 1985), or could the agent also be the speaker and the addressee jointly (Wierzbicka 1987: 187)? Is a suggestion an act where the speaker actually gets the addressee to carry out a future action, or is it just assisting the addressee in determining whether it is worthwhile carrying out the action (e.g. Fraser 1974, Verschueren 1985, Wierzbicka 1987)?

A study of the use of specific speech act verbs (and their cognate nouns) may be interesting in its own right, but speakers' fluid uses of the verbs do not justify categorisation according to them. We have established that the categories need to be non-categorical, but each speaker's use of speech act verbs is categorical:

...one substantial difference between talking about speech acts and talking about speech-act verbs is, of course, that the distinctions which are non-categorical or scalar in the former case are categorical in the latter case.
(Leech 1983: 198)

It is only collectively that speakers use the verbs non-categorically: One speaker's use of a particular verb may not overlap completely with another speaker's use.

As Mitchell notes,

Labels like "command", "request", "offer", "suggest(ion)", etc. tempt one to consider them as transparent semantic primitives, when in fact they are convenient lexicalisations of complex configurations of meaning.
(Mitchell 1981: 105)

Taking into account the fluid nature of the mass of speech acts that can be performed, it is problematic to categorise them on the basis of speech act verbs, or to label them with names identical to the speech act verbs. In most taxonomies using such labels, the difference between the verbs and the acts has not been clarified. This leads to subjective and intuitive folk categorisations (see for example Wierzbicka's (1987) speech act verb dictionary).

... I can suggest you stick your head in a pail of water or stop bothering me, neither of which you might hold favorably, and still have made a suggestion. (Fraser, 1974: 156)

What Fraser fails to mention is that his examples are most likely humorous statements. It is generally problematic when humorous examples are used to make generalisations about linguistic categories and features. Such examples are not prototypical examples of the categories.

The fact that many acts are not labelled in use (for example, as we shall see, there are astonishingly few examples of the verb 'suggest' in the corpus of meetings) and the differences in categorisation among speakers make it doubtful if we can even justify trying to establish detailed speech act categories at all. As noted by Wittgenstein (1958: 10-11) there are as many acts as there are roles in the indefinite variety of language-games (or speech events) that humans can invent. Sperber & Wilson were probably correct in claiming that many speech acts can be 'successfully performed without being identified as such' (1986: 245), and that it is certain properties of the propositions that make them specific acts rather than the speaker's and hearer's categorisation of the utterance as that particular act. For example, for advisory acts one such property is a representation of the state of affairs described as desirable from the hearer's point of view (1986: 250-251).

Instead of trying to establish a detailed and global taxonomy of speech acts it would be more sound to focus on specific properties of the propositions which distinguish individual, actually occurring instances of speech acts from each other. I have argued above (in 3.2.1.5) that it is wiser to start mapping choices of semantic properties (e.g. the degree of cost-benefit, the agency, the time of the action, etc.) rather than syntactic properties. By doing this we will be able to distinguish act types which may only differ in regard to one of these choices. That way we can capture the non-categorical nature of speech acts which have many semantic functions in common across the spectrum of different types and we will get a 'prototype typology':

A 'prototype typology' of speech acts [...] is based on a number of intersecting continua that each represents a particular criterion for classification [...]. Along these continua we find 'clusters' of speech acts which can be regarded as forming one speech act type (Risselada 1993: 33)

So far, anybody who has listed semantic properties of speech acts has done so on the basis of pre-identified act types, where the identification is based on speech act verbs or a general definition of some kind. It is, however, necessary to take one step further back and use maps of semantic properties of utterances to identify specific acts. In other words, only by identifying acts according to a defined set of criteria can we avoid falling into the trap of imprecise folk categorisation.

In chapter 5 I shall map out the elements that constitute what I have here called SUGGESTIONS. The label is merely a working label, or a mnemonic device (Mitchell 1981: 105), identifying the acts under study here and covering an arguably uniform set of speech acts. Naturally, there is a close overlap between the set of SUGGESTIONS and what is called 'suggestions' in folk categorisation, but acts of (folk term) 'proposing', 'advising', 'advocating' may also be included. What is important is the set of criteria, not the label, which is only an instance of meta-language.

3.3 Evaluative meanings

One of the defining properties of SUGGESTIONS that I will identify in chapter 5 is the presence of meanings of benefit and/or desirability. Such evaluative meanings are the focus of my study in chapter 6. Here I shall give an overview of the fairly embryonic literature on evaluative meaning.

The first task is to identify the object of study – evaluative meaning. Various approaches use different terms and scopes. Thompson & Hunston (2000) give a good overview of the elements that scholars have considered evaluative. Some approaches treat evaluative meaning as judgements along a good-bad parameter, others along a certain-uncertain parameter. Whichever parameter is the focus, there are many names. The former is called 'connotation' (e.g. Lyons 1977), 'affect' (e.g. Besnier 1993), 'attitude' (e.g. Halliday 1994). The latter is sometimes referred to as 'modality' (e.g. Halliday 1994; Perkins 1983); there is a good deal of overlap with Chafe and Nichols' (1986) 'evidentiality'. Martin's 'appraisal' covers both aspects (when White's 'engagement' network is included in the appraisal network; White 1998; Martin 1998; 2000: 165) and so does Biber & Finegan's (1989) 'stance' and Lemke's (1998) 'evaluative meaning'.

Some of the approaches see the two aspects as different types of meaning and give them different names (e.g. Halliday 1994, Bybee & Fleischmann 1995). Others emphasise the similarities of the two types of meaning and analyse them more or less as aspects of the same phenomenon (e.g. Biber & Finegan 1989; Conrad & Biber 2000, Thompson & Hunston 2000).

Here, I shall focus on studies that include the good-bad parameter (either exclusively or in conjunction with the certainty parameter) because, as Hunston (1985) points out, what is good or bad is related to the extent to which it achieves a set goal. Goal-achievement is a defining element of benefit and desirability meanings, as we shall see in 6.1. As a matter of fact, 'Desirability is most probably definitive of "what value is"' (Graham, forthcoming; original emphasis). Langworthy Taylor already observed this link in 1895:

The idea connoted by the term "value" is intimately associated with the most remote experiences of the human race. Ever since it has been possible to predicate desirability of anything, have values existed.

(Langworthy Taylor, 1895, p. 414).

The observation by Thompson & Hunston (2000: 25) that of the four parameters of evaluation (good-bad, certainty, expectedness, and importance) 'the most basic parameter, the one to which the others can be seen to relate, is the good-bad parameter' supports this view. (We shall see below how others suggest other categories of evaluation than these four.)

3.3.1 Traditional semantic accounts

In semantic accounts such as Lyons (1977) and Cruse (2000) we find various references to meaning making which include evaluative elements. Lyons distinguishes between expressive and social meaning where expressive meaning is meaning that co-varies with the characteristics of the speaker, and social meaning serves to establish and maintain social relations (1977: 51). However, he says very little about *how* such meanings are established and signalled in language, except for pointing out that paralinguistic features may be involved in 'modulation' of an utterance, that is, adding an attitudinal colouring to the utterance (1977: 65).

Cruse describes expressive meaning (either expressives alone or with a propositional content) and expressive amplifiers which may pick up and amplify any expressiveness in their context without prosodic assistance (e.g. 'they went on banging on the wall for ages'; 2000: 60). He also introduces modulation in the shape of enrichment where a semantic content is added beyond what is made explicit by the lexical item itself, or impoverishment (2000: 121f). Evoked meanings are usages characteristic of a specific register (2000: 61). Such usages may carry an evaluative meaning which originates in the specific culture of the register. Intensity differences

(e.g. *huge* vs. *large*) may also signal evaluative meaning. Like Lyons, Cruse does not spell out these processes and makes hardly any reference to the evaluative effect of e.g. evoked meanings and intensity differences.

Neither of these examples of traditional approaches to semantics account sufficiently for the interwoven meanings that together form more general evaluative meanings. The notion of 'evoked meaning' does allow for register specification, but there is no method of identifying the cultural values behind many evaluative meanings, neither is there any way of identifying evaluative meanings that are only established through reference to other evaluative meanings within the same text.

We need to turn to works that have dealt more specifically with evaluative meaning.

3.3.2 Indicators of evaluation

Pioneering work in the area of evaluation identifies indicators of evaluative meaning. These are mostly grammatical in nature. Studies of this kind either focus on the certainty parameter, or both the certainty and the good-bad parameter. Thompson & Hunston (2000: 20) point out that evaluations of certainty are typically exercised on propositions whereas affective evaluation tends to evaluate entities. This explains why studies including certainty evaluations often focus on grammatical indicators of evaluation while recent studies on affective evaluation are more lexically oriented.

Labov in 1972 discussed evaluative devices in spoken narratives. Evaluative devices are primarily intensifiers (e.g. repetition, expressive phonology), comparators (e.g. negative polarity, modals), correlatives (e.g. double attributives), and explicatives (e.g. causal relations signalled by *because*, *since*, etc.).

Biber & Finegan (1989) investigated the differences between various types of text in terms of the occurrence of linguistic elements (verbs including modals, adjectives, adverbs, etc.) that were classified within the stance categories of Affect (subcategories: Positive, Negative) and Evidentiality (subcategories: Certainty, Doubt). Conrad & Biber (2000) investigate stance in different genres on the basis of counts of various adverbials.

Thompson & Hunston (2000: 21f), summarising different approaches to evaluation, suggest that linguistic features that have been identified as signalling evaluation may be divided into three types:

- comparators (see Labov 1972): e.g. comparative adjectives and adverbs, adverbs of degree, comparator adverbs, expressions of negativity (morphological, grammatical, and lexical)
- markers of subjectivity: e.g. modals and other markers of (un)certainty, non-identifying adjectives, sentence adverbs and conjunctions
- markers of value: e.g. certain lexical items, indications of the existence of goals and their (non-)achievement

The third type is the most lexical in nature. A number of analysts, in particular adherents of Systemic Functional Grammar (see 3.1.5) such as Thompson and Hunston, have focused specifically on the lexical expressions of evaluations.

3.3.3 Lexical analyses

Some of the principal researchers in the field of lexical analyses of evaluative meaning belong to a SFL research group based in Sydney⁸. They have developed a method, 'Appraisal analysis', for analysing attitude as expressed in text (Martin 2000). Martin subdivides the Appraisal aspect into Attitude, Engagement (White 1998), and Graduation. Attitude is further subdivided into Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation, with each of these again being further subdivided into various categories. Appraisal may be 'construed directly in text' (i.e. 'inscribed') or 'implicated through the selection of ideational meanings which redound with affectual meanings' - or any other appraisal system (i.e. 'evoked' meanings; Martin 2000: 155). The analysis is constructed as a system network, is more or less exclusively concerned with lexical expressions of attitude, and mostly fails to capture meanings established through syntactic links (see 6.5), although the concept of 'evoked' meaning allows the analysis to look beyond the immediate lexical expressions.

⁸ Of other players Channell's (2000) corpus analysis of evaluative lexis deserves mention. She extracts the evaluative function of a word or expression from concordanced examples from a large corpus.

However, besides being blurred and difficult to apply, the categories are not terribly relevant for the study of desirability and benefit in SUGGESTIONS. They appear to be established on the basis of three criteria:

1. The object of evaluation:

Object of evaluation	Appraisal category
behaviour	Judgement
“aesthetic” quality of semiotic text/ processes and natural phenomena’ (Martin 2000: 146)	Appreciation

Table 3-1: Martin’s categorisation based on object of evaluation

2. The origin of evaluation: Is it an individual opinion or a norm in society?

Origin of evaluation	Appraisal category
normative/ moral evaluation	Judgement
personal evaluation	Affect, Appreciation

Table 3-2: Martin’s categorisation based on origin of evaluation

3. The type of evaluation:

Type of evaluation	Appraisal category
emotional evaluation	Affect
rational evaluation	Appreciation

Table 3-3: Martin’s categorisation based on type of evaluation

These criteria do not provide a very appropriate classification for my purposes. To start with the last criterion first, emotional evaluation is virtually non-existent in SUGGESTIONS in the meetings. In other words, the Affect appraisal system is more or less ruled out. As to the second criterion, moral Judgements happen, but typically the evaluations are based on cultural and

register specific norms (e.g. in meetings growth and strategy involving a certain level of risk are evaluated positively as a result of business norms) rather than an ethical system. Moreover, the Judgement/non-Judgement distinction in Martin's appraisal system is based more on the object of analysis (behaviour vs. processes and phenomena) than on the origin of the evaluation (second criterion). In meetings behaviour may be judged (i.e. 'Judgement'), but it would be judged on the basis of business norms rather than on moral or ethical grounds (i.e. not 'Judgement'). This clash between different aspects of the evaluation demonstrates that the categories do not capture the nature of evaluations in the meetings appropriately.

3.3.4 Lexis and context

Lemke's approach (e.g., 1992, 1998) has also arisen from the SFG interest in interpersonal issues in language. In his 'Orientational text semantics' he pieces together SFG insights and ideas from Critical Discourse Analysis (3.1.4) and Bakhtin's writings (e.g. Bakhtin 1935). To Lemke, the most important aspect of attitudes is the differing value-orientations within social communities rather than the individual expression of attitude. The aim should be to understand 'socio-cultural practices' and to identify different social voices within the text rather than just to identify the attitudinal stance of individual speakers, construed through the semantic resources of language. In more practical terms, Lemke has introduced various related analyses. One of them is an analysis based on the use of a semantic frame originally introduced by Francis (1995):

- (1) It is (Degree) [Attribute: evaluative] that [Proposition/Proposal]
(Lemke 1998: 36)

Using this frame, Lemke suggests that evaluative meanings fall into seven categories, or establish seven semantic 'dimensions'. He claims that this set of categories is 'comprehensive and exhaustive' (Lemke 1998: 39). Table 3-4 lists the semantic dimensions with Lemke's made-up examples of evaluative attributes of propositions and proposals:

DESIRABILITY / INCLINATION (D)

It is simply *wonderful* that John is coming / that John may come.

It is really *horrible* that John is coming / that John may come.

WARRANTABILITY / PROBABILITY (W)

It is quite *possible* that John is coming / that John may come.

It is very *doubtful* that/whether John if [*sic*] coming.

NORMATIVITY / APPROPRIATENESS (N)

It is quite *necessary* that John come / that John is coming.

It is entirely *appropriate* that John come / that John is coming.

USUALITY / EXPECTABILITY (U)

It is quite *normal* that John is coming / may come.

It is highly *surprising* that John is coming / may come.

IMPORTANCE / SIGNIFICANCE (I)

It is very *important* that John is coming / may come.

It is really quite *trivial* that John is coming / may come.

COMPREHENSIBILITY / OBVIOUSNESS (C)

It is perfectly *understandable* that John is coming / that John may
come.

It is quite *mysterious* that John is coming / why John is coming.

HUMOROUSNESS / SERIOUSNESS (H)

It is just *hilarious* that John is coming! / that John may come.

It is *ironic* that John is coming / may come.

It is very *serious* that John is coming / may come.

Table 3-4: Lemke's seven semantic dimensions (source: Lemke 1998: 37)

It is none of my concern here whether Lemke divides up the semantic space in an appropriate and correct manner. Lemke himself points to other scholars who have suggested slightly different categories (1998: 39-40). Generally, he fails to make any reference whatsoever to the traditional field of modality although there is substantial overlap between his 'dimensions' and traditional modal categories, particularly in the case of certainty (WARRANTABILITY/PROBABILITY) and necessity (NORMATIVITY). By neglecting insights from other modality studies Lemke misses an opportunity to account for the difference in nature between categories such as WARRANTABILITY/PROBABILITY and NORMATIVITY

/APPROPRIATENESS through reference to differences between epistemic and deontic or root modality.

Lemke recognises that only relatively few instances of evaluations are expressed explicitly as 'It is really nice/good/horrible/undesirable/... that [proposition/proposal]' (for the dimension of DESIRABILITY). This is characteristic for semantics of evaluation because of its

tendency toward 'prosodic' realizations, i.e. realizations that tend to be distributed through the clause and across clause and sentence boundaries.
(Lemke 1998: 47)

Lemke gives examples of incongruent realisations such as sentence adverbs ('Fortunately,...'), evaluative nominals ('...the excesses of...'), etc. (Lemke 1998: 43-44). He shows how an evaluation that appears to belong to one dimension (e.g. IMPORTANCE) may actually belong to another (e.g. DESIRABILITY) through 'metaphorical transference' (1998: 47). Furthermore, he demonstrates how

quite often evaluations propagate or ramify through a text, following the grammatical and logical links that organize it as structured and cohesive text as opposed to a mere sequence of unrelated words and clauses.
(Lemke 1998:49)

The propagation may be realised in different ways such as through cohesive devices or syntactically. In 6.5 I shall demonstrate how propagation takes place within the corpus of meetings.

Lemke's dimensions only include evaluations of proposals and propositions, not actions and events. (He indirectly suggests an extension of the model to include actions and events (1998: 38-39).) Graham (forthcoming) has taken Lemke's set of dimensions and modified them to include evaluations of actions, and also to fit a corpus of technology policy texts. The set of dimensions is slightly modified compared to Lemke's set. In Table 3-5 I have compared the two sets of dimensions. I have underlined dimensions where there are incongruences between the two sets. I have also **highlighted** a couple of 'dimensions' at the top of the list of Graham's dimensions because he points out that in his corpus

the dimensions of Desirability and/or Importance propagated across the top of, or were scaffolded by, or emerged from, evaluative interplay between positive and negative dimensions of all the broadest propositional evaluative dimensions, including degrees of Desirability and Importance themselves, seemingly in any “order” and polarity whatsoever.

(Graham, forthcoming)

GRAHAM'S DIMENSIONS	LEMKE'S DIMENSIONS
<u>Desirability</u>	DESIRABILITY/INCLINATION
<u>Importance / Necessity</u>	IMPORTANCE/SIGNIFICANCE
Warrantability / Probability	WARRANTABILITY/PROBABILITY
Comprehensibility / Obviousness	COMPREHENSIBILITY/ OBVIOUSNESS
Usuality / Expectability	USUALITY / EXPECTABILITY
<u>Utility / Usefulness</u> (proposals only)	-
<u>Difficulty / Ability</u> (proposals only)	-
Normativity / Appropriateness	NORMATIVITY/APPROPRIATENESS
-	<u>HUMOROUSNESS/SERIOUSNESS</u>

Table 3-5: A comparison of Graham's and Lemke's evaluative dimensions

The salience of the category of desirability in Graham's corpus is not surprising if the good-bad or desirability parameter is really the most basic parameter, as we saw above. The question is whether that is true for all types of corpora, and also whether the category of Importance is generally dominant within different registers. In chapters 5 and 6 we shall investigate these questions in relation to SUGGESTIONS in meetings.

Graham's main contribution is to show how evaluative meanings are created through a hierarchy of elements.

1. Dominant evaluative dimensions

Desirability and Importance/ Necessity

- 'The broadest and most abstract semantic level of propagated values.'

2. Other evaluative dimensions (as presented in Table 3-5)
 - ‘all of which can mediate, support, and propagate the semantic categories of evaluation in 1.’

3. Intermediate categories

Power, Respect, Freedom, Efficiency; Morality, Trust(worthiness), Legality, Virtuousness; Beauty, Intelligence, Wealth, Excellence (Quality), Consistency, Balance, Happiness, Stability, Complexity, Sophistication, Coherence, Restrictive; Quantity, Size (or Dimensions), Expense, Dependency, Innovativeness, Novelty.

 - These ‘may either be predicated of textual elements or propagated across long stretches of text. However, they are not typically deployed to evaluate propositions or proposals, and are “parts” of the broader semantic dimensions in 1 and 2.’

4. Lexical resources that directly construe an evaluation for an element in the text.
 - Graham uses Martin’s appraisal categorisation at this level.

It is not clear how Martin’s appraisal categories feed into the dimensions higher up in the hierarchy. Evoked meanings (Martin 2000: 155; see 3.3.3) will draw on values from level 3. Graham does not give any suggestions as to how his level 3 values relate to the appraisal system. Besides, although he claims that his approach is a synthesis of Martin’s and Lemke’s approaches, he makes very little use of the appraisal categories and at no point convinces the reader that such categorisation adds crucial insights to the analysis.

Graham introduces the concept of evaluative meanings as ‘syllogistic’ because elements of proposals and propositions and evaluations are related in an evaluative logic. Using deductive logic, it is often possible to determine the evaluation of an element through its relationship to another element:

X is desirable
 Y causes/gives X
 Y is desirable

Syllogisms will be used in chapter 6 to describe the construction of the meanings of desirability and benefit in the corpus of meetings.

Generally, both Lemke’s and Graham’s categorisations are not universal (even though Lemke claims that his are exhaustive and comprehensive, which is questionable, as we have seen). They are as yet relatively untested, and certainly the lack of integration of knowledge from all the

modality studies that have been done makes it necessary for us to examine the categorisations critically. Despite these shortcomings, Lemke's approach and Graham's elaboration of it give some valuable insights which I shall use as a basis in my analyses (chapter 6).

3.3.5 Prototypically linked expressions and evaluative meanings

The studies presented in 3.3.2 identified indicators of evaluative meanings, of which some were grammatical, others were lexical. Martin focuses on the lexical expression of evaluations (3.3.3), and so do Lemke and Graham (3.3.4), although some of their categories (e.g. Warrantability/Probability) are often expressed through grammatical elements such as modal auxiliaries. We saw in 3.3.2 that evaluations of what is good/bad, or desirable (and beneficial), which is what concerns us in chapter 6, are typically expressed lexically. However, as we shall see, some grammatical markings such as modal auxiliaries that primarily express other meanings may also function as signals that some evaluations along the good-bad parameter might be in play. The signalling function is created through a prototypical relationship between these expressions and evaluative meanings of benefit and desirability. In chapter 6 we investigate the link between evaluations of desirability and benefit and other modal meanings.

Not only do modal expressions at times signal meanings of benefit or desirability, these meanings in themselves can be seen as modal meanings if we define modality broadly. Expressions of modality are central to the expression of SUGGESTIONS as we define these in chapter 5. Therefore, we shall now turn to a description of the studies of modality that are most relevant to a study of SUGGESTIONS.

3.4 Modality

The field of modality is vast – indeed too vast to review in depth here. I refer to the synopses of previous work which we find in for example Palmer (1986, 1990), Perkins (1983), Coates (1983), and Høye (1997). The present overview will be highly selective, focusing on aspects of the field with direct relevance to my study of modal meanings in chapter 6.

3.4.1 Defining the scope of modality

There are significant differences as to what people perceive as ‘modal’. The basis for their categorisation of clause elements as modal elements may be logical (e.g. Rescher 1968, von Wright 1951), grammatical (e.g. Palmer 1986, 1990; Coates 1983), or semantic (e.g. Halliday 1994; Perkins 1983). Scholars using grammatical criteria to define the scope of their study (e.g. Palmer⁹, Coates, Bybee & Fleischman 1995: 2) typically acknowledge that modality is a semantic-grammatical phenomenon. It is complex in that it, like other semantic-grammatical features such as tense/time, number/enumeration, ‘Janus-like face both ways, towards form, and towards notion’ (Palmer 1990: 1; see also Jespersen 1924: 56). Despite his acknowledgement of the semantic aspect of modality Palmer defines modality as ‘the *grammaticalization* of speakers’ (subjective) attitudes and opinions’ (1986: 16; my emphasis). On the other hand, he suggests that

Modality is not, then, necessarily marked in the verbal element, nor is there any obvious reason why it should be, apart from the fact that the verb is the most central part of the sentence.

(Palmer 1986: 45)

Analysts of English grammar limit their study to the so-called NICE properties. Palmer introduced the properties (1965: 15; see also Huddleston, 1976: 333). The defining features involved are

⁹ Palmer (1990: 25) does however include a few marginal expressions for semantic reasons.

Feature	Example
Negative form with -n't	<i>I can't go</i>
Inversion with the subject	<i>Must I come?</i>
Code	<i>He can swim and so can she</i>
Emphatic Affirmation	<i>He will be there</i>

Palmer (1990: 4) adds a further three criteria in order to exclude the auxiliaries BE, HAVE, and DO. These are

No –s form of the 3 rd person singular	no <i>*mays, *cans</i> , etc.
No non-finite forms	no infinitives, past and present participles
No cooccurrence	no <i>*He may will come</i> etc.

From a semantic point of view modality has been defined as concerned with the 'opinion or attitude' of speakers (Lyons 1977: 452). Or, in Bybee and Fleischman's words,

Modality, [...], is the semantic domain pertaining to elements of meaning that languages express. It covers a broad range of semantic nuances – jussive, desiderative, intensive, hypothetical, potential, obligative, dubitative, hortatory, exclamative, etc. – whose common denominator is the addition of a supplement or overlay of meaning to the most neutral semantic value of the proposition of an utterance, namely factual and declarative. (Bybee & Fleischmann 1995: 2).

(In listing the different semantic nuances, Bybee & Fleischmann draw on Jespersen's list (1924: 320-321) of sub-categories of mood.)

In his book Perkins (1983) adopts a view of modality as a broader semantic concept and includes in his study lexical modal expressions (e.g. 'possible', 'possibly', 'possibility'). Hoyer (1997) also includes adverbial expressions in his study of the collocations of modal auxiliaries and adverbs.

While the grammatical properties give a firm basis on which to identify modality, the semantic basis is much more vague. However, if we include in the characterisation of modality the concept of 'possible worlds' (Leibniz; see Rescher 1979) as used in logical accounts it is possible to refine the definition of modality: Modality is a comment on or evaluation of an

aspect of a possible world rather than necessarily an existing world. In other words, we add a hypothetical aspect to the notion of evaluative overlay of meaning on propositions.

3.4.2 Modal categories

Recent categorisations are narrower than some of the earlier categorisations in the literature. I shall only mention a few of these early categories which are of particular relevance to our study of meanings of benefit and desirability in chapter 6.

Rescher (1968: 24ff) included in his list of categories 'Boulomaic' (relating to desire; e.g. 'it is hoped/desired/feared that p ' / 'X hopes/desires/fears that p ') and 'Evaluative' modalities (e.g. 'it is a good/bad thing that p '). Palmer has later suggested that boulomaic modality be renamed 'Volitive' modality (1986: 12). I shall adopt this term here. Evaluative modalities have since been dismissed as bad candidates for modality because they are mostly 'factive' and presuppose the truth of the expressed proposition (Perkins 1983: 12; Palmer 1986: 13).

There are more fundamental categorisations which cause contention: Most scholars agree that there are epistemic and non-epistemic modalities. Epistemic modality is 'concerned with matters of knowledge or belief on which basis speakers express their judgements about states of affairs, events or actions' (Palmer 1990: 42). This definition is non-controversial. It is much more difficult to determine the characteristics of the negative category.

Philosophers widely refer to deontic modality which is the logic of obligation and permission (see Von Wright 1951). It relates to 'the necessity or possibility of acts performed by morally responsible agents, and 'what it [the proposition with deontic modality] describes is the state-of-affairs that will obtain if the act in question is performed' (Lyons 1977: 823). Some add a category of dynamic modality (Von Wright 1951: 2; Palmer 1986; 1990; see also Perkins 1983; Hoye 1997) which is related to causal modality (cf. Rescher 1968). Dynamic modality is concerned with ability and disposition or volition of the subject of the sentence (Palmer 1990: 7). It refers to 'the relationship which exists between circumstances and unactualized events in accordance with natural laws – e.g. those of physics, chemistry, biology, etc.' (Perkins 1983: 11). Palmer further divides dynamic modality into 'neutral' or 'circumstantial' modality (referring to

what is possible or necessary in the circumstances; Palmer 1990: 37), and 'subject-oriented' modality (concerned with the ability or volition of the subject; Palmer 1990: 36).

Some discount dynamic modality as modality – even Palmer himself discusses whether it should be counted as modality (1986: 102ff). Let us leave aside subject-oriented dynamic modality which might be omitted from a study of modality on the grounds that it is concerned with the ability or willingness of the subject of the sentence, not with the opinion or attitude of the speaker. Besides, in 6.4 I will particularly refer to the category of neutral dynamic modality, not subject-oriented dynamic modality. There is no clear dividing line between deontic and neutral dynamic modality. Palmer acknowledges this (1986: 103). If neutral dynamic modality was rejected as modality we risk cutting out elements that also carry a deontic dimension. On the other hand, as Coates argues, it may not be sensible to distinguish deontic and neutral dynamic modality if the dividing line is so indeterminate:

By subdividing this category [of non-epistemic or root modality], Palmer is forced to choose arbitrary cut-off points, and to obscure the essential unit of the Root modals.
(Coates 1983: 21)

Coates claims that Palmer's categorisation

fails to capture the fact that all the meanings of non-epistemic MUST (for example) are related and can be shown to lie on a cline...
(Coates 1983: 21)

On this basis, Coates (1983: 20ff; 1995), and others with her (e.g. Silva-Corvalán 1995), suggest that we make a binary distinction between epistemic and non-epistemic or root modality¹⁰.

I agree with Coates' point that Palmer's categories hide the fact that different non-epistemic modalities are related on a gradience. In my data I have found numerous examples where the line between deontic and dynamic modality is very hard to identify (and when found may be hiding the interrelationship between two uses of a modal verb).

Others have categorised modality differently. Lyons (1977), for example, proposes a division into epistemic and deontic modality where deontic modality is subdivided into subjective and objective deontic modality. However, as Palmer points out,

The issue is little more than a terminological one. What is here called 'deontic' would be called 'subjective deontic', and 'dynamic' would be called 'objective deontic'. There is no point in pursuing it further.
(Palmer 1990: 131)

Bybee (1985) proposes that non-epistemic modality be divided into agent-oriented and speaker-oriented modality. The category of agent-oriented modality includes modal meanings that place conditions on an agent which is meant to lead the agent to complete an action specified by the main predicate. The conditions may be obligation, desire, ability, permission and root possibility. Speaker-oriented modality are signalled by markers of directives, i.e. imperatives, optatives, or permissives, through which a speaker tries to get an addressee to act. The categories cross-cut the traditional category of deontic modality. Bybee and Fleischman give the following reason for adopting this categorisation:

A prime motive for replacing the deontic category by an agent-oriented category is that the latter better reflects general morphosyntactic trends in expression type: i.e., there is a strong, quasi-universal tendency for agent-oriented modality to be expressed by verbs, auxiliaries or non-bound particles, whereas the remaining two types (speaker-oriented and epistemic) are often expressed inflectionally.
(Bybee & Fleischman 1995: 6)

I find the categorisation somewhat odd, particularly as it fails to recognise the probabilistic relationship between inflectional markers (e.g. imperative) and the effect of predicating conditions on an agent with regard to the completion of an action referred to by the main predicate (e.g. obligation). In other words, inflectional marking (imperative) is likely to indicate to the hearer that he or she is under some obligation to perform the action proposed by the verb as in (2) where the speakers place the listeners under some obligation to ensure effective communication.

¹⁰ Some rejects the term 'root' and suggest that we operate with 'non-epistemic' modality instead. Hoyer bases his rejection on the grounds that 'Root is an unfortunate term for it implies that this type of modality is the more basic' (1997: 44).

- (2) So keep the lines of communication shortened, right, okay.
(PF3 U96; 4)

Besides, it does not seem a fair generalisation to say that epistemic modality is mainly expressed inflectionally. There are lots of verbal and lexical indicators of epistemic modality (e.g. *could*, *must*, *possibly*, *perhaps*, etc.).

In the analyses in chapters 5 and 6 I propose to maintain Palmer's categorisation despite its shortcomings as reported above. The reason that I do not want to let go of Palmer's categories altogether is that they will prove useful in identifying different nuances of modal expressions in SUGGESTIONS in my analysis in chapter 6. Without being able to distinguish different ends on clines of meanings I would not be able to reveal how the modal meanings interrelate with the meanings of benefit and desirability in the SUGGESTIONS. Besides, neutral and subject oriented dynamic modality (possibility) normally excludes volition and possibly causation (except in common cases of dynamic modality where a deontic meaning is implied; see below, this section). In chapter 5 we shall see how volition and, in most cases, causation are crucial elements of SUGGESTIONS. It is useful to be able to isolate cases of modality that exclude elements of volition and causation as such cases are irrelevant to this study of SUGGESTIONS. While maintaining Palmer's categories, I want to emphasise that the modal meanings within the subcategories are interrelated through gradients. In my analyses I shall emphasise this connectedness (chapter 6).

3.4.3 Distinct or fuzzy categories?

With the discussion of dynamic and deontic modality as opposed to root modality I have already indicated that categories may be seen as distinct or fuzzy. Most theorists have operated with distinct categories. Coates (1983), however, proposes to view the categories as fuzzy (based on 'fuzzy set theory'; Zadeh 1965). She and Leech first suggested modelling modal categories along clines of gradience (Coates & Leech 1980; Leech & Coates 1980). However, data studies then made her revise her model as it became clear that

it was only true to say that one extreme of any cline was 'clearly distinct' – the other extreme seemed often to be as fuzzy as any intermediate point
(Coates 1983: 11)

However, she also found that the majority of examples clustered between the two extremes on a cline rather than at the endpoints. She takes that as proof that the clines are useless as a model. However, she does introduce gradients between different cores in fuzzy categories (e.g. the gradient of inherency between permission and ability).

Interestingly, Coates finds that within the fuzzy categories, 'examples occur less frequently at the core than outside it' (1983: 86). This raises the question whether her model is adequate if the core is not central in terms of frequency. The issue, however, can also be explained differently. She bases her observation on the distribution of CAN between permission, possibility, and ability, where possibility is seen as the area of overlap between the fuzzy categories of permission and ability (see Figure 3-4).

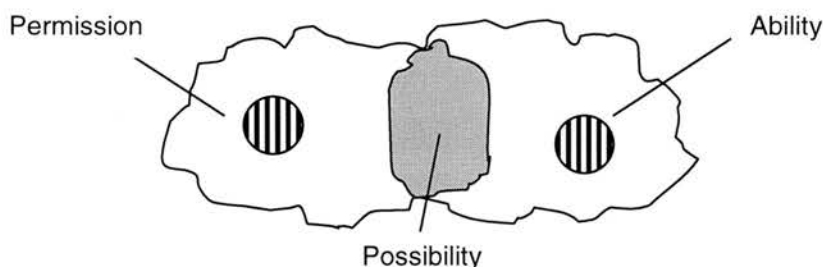


Figure 3-4: Coates' fuzzy set diagram of CAN (Source: Coates 1983: 86)

Examples of possibility are more frequent than examples of the two categories. It is not at all clear why Coates does not consider possibility a fuzzy category with a core in its own right rather than negatively, as peripheral examples of permission and ability. If we accept the gradients of restriction (between permission and possibility) and inherency (between ability and possibility), then possibility is defined as having no restrictions, and it is not inherent properties of the subject that make action possible (Coates 1983: 92-93). It is curious that in Coates' model possibility is seen as part of the fuzzy set of ability even though it is precisely defined through the absence of inherent properties of the subject, while ability is defined through the presence of such properties.

In example (3) the speaker refers to certain properties of 'a man' which enables him to make a specific type of boxes. The example contains the modal meaning of ability.

- (3) No, no, no, @ can do peach, kind of beige, er patrice boxes. He reckons he knows a man that **can** [Ab] do that. I contacted |Person 16| and he reckons he **can** [Ab] do that.
(HF1 U159; 1)

In (4), on the other hand, the possibility is not based on inherent properties of the subject.

- (4) Well, I'll see what **can** be done and give you a ring.
(The example is taken from Palmer's corpus (1990: 84))

It would be absurd to claim that (4) is an example of ability, but only a peripheral one because the possibility does not depend on inherent properties of the subject, which is in fact what characterises examples of ability. Why then categorise the modal meaning of *can* as ability at all? ((4) is taken from Palmers' corpus, because in my data most examples of neutral possibility coincide, or 'merge' (Coates 1983), with meanings of ability as they refer to something the participants can do. By stating the ability of the subjects and the possibility that the action may happen, the speakers also insinuate that such action ought to happen. A SUGGESTION has been made. We shall return to this process in chapter 6.)

Possibility seems more like a complementary category to the category of ability than a set of peripheral examples of ability. In exactly the same way, possibility appears to be a complementary category to permission.

What this shows is that Coates may correctly assume a core in fuzzy categories, but problematically model categories such as possibility as the overlap between two other categories instead of categories in their own right. The fact that she relates categories in an unconvincing way does not mean that we need to reject her notion of modal categories as fuzzy categories with a core. Even some scholars such as Palmer who operate with distinct categories acknowledge that

... the meanings of the modals cannot be described in terms of wholly discrete categories, but [...] categories merge or fade into one another, so that in some cases it is not possible in principle to decide between two possible categorizations.
(Palmer 1990: 21)

I shall present a more adequate model of the categories of ability and possibility and other categories of relevance to SUGGESTIONS in 6.2.1 (permission is excluded from my analysis because it is not an element of SUGGESTIONS.)

3.4.4 Core meanings or polysemy?

On a different level, but with relation to the controversy of category types, is another controversy: Do the modals have core meanings, or are their meanings dependent on their specific context of use?

A number of scholars argue for a monosemantic approach. There are for example Joos (1964), Bolinger (1977), Bouma (1975), Perkins (1983), and Silva-Corvalán (1995).

Others have happily proposed, for example, six meanings for MAY (Huddleston 1971: 297), or ten meanings for CAN (Kenny 1975: 131). Such a polysemantic approach is in line with Wittgenstein's who essentially proposed that any difference in a word's use is a result of and evidence for a difference in its meaning (see Wertheimer 1972: 49). Coates belongs to the polysemantic end of the scale. This is perhaps not surprising, taking into account that the fuzzy categories described in 3.4.3 allow for different uses scattered along various gradients.

Silva-Corvalán suggests (1995: 73) that the meaning of modal expressions be split up into invariant meanings (equivalent to Perkin's core meanings), contextualised meanings, and

prototypical discourse meanings. Contextualized meaning is ‘the message which the modal conveys, or the analyst infers that the modal conveys in a specific context’. Prototypical discourse meaning ‘refers to the most frequent message (contextualized meaning) that the modal conveys in a corpus of language data’ (1995: 26ff). Prototypical discourse meanings are related to Heine’s (1995) concept of ‘focal contextual frame’. A focal contextual frame is the body of knowledge most frequently evoked by the language user in order to provide an inferential base for the understanding of a particular utterance (Heine 1995: 27-28; see also Levinson 1983: 281). Silva-Corvalán argues that it is the contextual conditions rather than the invariant modal meanings that are fuzzy (1995: 85). She (and Perkins 1983 and others with them) therefore do not accept a polysemantic approach to modal meaning.

Hoye (1997, chapter 3.2) recognises overlap of meanings of modals but warns of ‘indulging’ in the semantic ambiguity of the modal expressions. He suggests that we follow Quirk *et al.* (1985) because their approach ‘recognizes the indeterminate nature of the modals but [...] also seeks to establish a basic framework where the modals are assigned major (but not necessarily ‘core’) meanings’ (1997: 77). We should give different uses equivalent status rather than judge how central or peripheral they are as in Coates (1983). Hoye points out, as I did above, that considering possibility a peripheral meaning to ability as Coates does (see Figure 3-4 in 3.4.3) is unconvincing. ‘Why should ability be more basic than possibility?’ (1997: 78). Instead of this core-periphery model he suggests operating with continua between the modal meanings. We see here how the question of core or polysemantic readings of individual modal expressions relates to categorisations of all modal expressions. A polysemantic reading may allow for a hierarchy in centrality of the meanings, i.e. fuzzy categories with cores, or it may propose clines with no judgements as to which of the expressions along the clines are more central.

Despite all controversies, there seems to be some common ground between mono- and polysemantic approaches. Most scholars dealing with the linguistic form of modal meanings would agree (more or less explicitly) that part of the meaning of modal expressions in actual use is derived from the context. A lot of the accounts just assume this as they account for meanings of concrete examples through reference to the environment in which the modal expression occurs. Perkins directs this criticism against Palmer:

Clearly, what Palmer is doing is giving an account of some of the possible environments of CAN
(Perkins 1983: 32)

For Perkins this means 'bypass[ing] the question of what CAN itself actually contributes to the meaning of a sentence'. On the other hand, any core meaning account for modals needs to retrieve the meaning of a modal, or the modal's contribution to the meaning of the sentence, from contextualised uses of it.

Core meanings are vague and theoretical. Modals have varied meanings, and, as Palmer argues (1990: 15), 'the more varied the different meanings are, the more vague and uninformative is the core meaning'. They also seem speculative since the so-called invariant/ core meanings do not exist out of context. In a functional study of contributions the object of study will therefore be contextualised and prototypical discourse meanings rather than abstract basic meanings. Indeed, in order to determine potential core meanings of modal expressions we would need to study them as contextualised meanings in many more different registers.

3.4.5 New categories and relations

Modal studies generally search for ways of identifying modal meanings, whether we consider them core meanings or not, and categorising them, whether in fuzzy or distinct categories. These processes are what I have described in the previous sections. There are certain sets of modal categories floating around in the literature, some categories more well established than others. As we saw in 3.4.2, it is not common to determine categories of benefit or desirability (except the overlap with the categories of boulomaic and evaluative modality). Nevertheless, we have seen that if we define modality broadly, these categories are modal, just as permission, obligation, necessity, etc. A study of benefit and desirability as modal categories is therefore needed. Furthermore, as we shall see in chapter 6, when studying benefit and desirability certain links between these modal meanings and other modal meanings will become evident. Also this area needs to be researched.

3.5 Conclusion

From the outset the goal of this thesis has been to study proposals for future action in meetings in the workplace. In order to do this it is necessary to be able to identify acts of that kind within the corpus. In this chapter we have seen that there is at present no unproblematic method for such identification of speech acts. The existing taxonomies are problematic for various reasons. What we need is a definition that captures small differences between acts while allowing us to establish a set of acts with a certain minimal number of features.

Once the definition of the category under study is established (SUGGESTIONS) it is crucial that we know how to identify SUGGESTIONS. We have seen in this chapter that most similar identifications of speech acts are based on intuition or surface markers. In focusing on one of the elements of the complex set of criteria establishing the category of SUGGESTIONS, meanings of benefit and desirability, we see that these elements are not easily identified either. A few scholars have tried to establish categories for lexical recognition of evaluative meanings. However, either the categorisations are based on criteria that are irrelevant to the specific study of SUGGESTIONS, or the categorisations blatantly ignore a wide set of categories that have been in circulation for decades, namely various modal categories. Of grammatical markers such as modal auxiliaries, most studies have focused on a limited set of modal categories which do not include the meanings of benefit and desirability. This also means that potential relations between such meanings and markers of other modal meanings have not been explored.

These challenges are the focus of my study in the chapters to come.

Unit of Analysis

When defining SUGGESTIONS and tracing speakers' indications that the action they suggest would be desirable and beneficial, we need to determine which units of text carry these acts and meanings. Identifying such a unit will affect our analytical approach as we will adopt a unit of analysis which most closely mirrors SUGGESTIONS. It is especially necessary to define a unit formally for a small quantitative analysis which I shall present in chapter 6.

The discussion of units is also of theoretical interest. It reveals that the functional notion of 'speech act' or 'speech function' in spoken language is not limited to units which are syntactically defined or related to syntactic boundaries (e.g. moves seen as units that select independently for mood). Hence, the discussion will have implications for the field of speech act theory, and in particular for the discussion of codification vs. inference (see 3.2.1).

Below, and in chapters 5 and 6, we will see examples from the corpus of how the participants often suggest actions in a rather imprecise manner and spread the SUGGESTIONS over several clauses and even clause complexes. This means that units used within existing approaches fail to capture all instances of SUGGESTIONS. I have already pointed out some of the problem areas in 3.1.2. Hence, we need to determine an alternative unit – or a set of units. I shall argue that rather than inventing yet another unit, we can solve the problem by operating at different levels of analysis with different units at each level. This enables us to describe all occurrences of SUGGESTIONS.

In this chapter I shall first demonstrate the shortcomings of each of the existing units when applied in isolation to the corpus of meetings (4.1). The section is not attempted as a comprehensive review of all units of analysis in use. I will merely focus on a number of commonly used units and their adequacy for my specific purposes. Section 4.2 contains my proposal and definition of the set of units that I shall use in the analyses in chapters 5 and 6.

4.1 Some existing units

In discourse and conversation analysis there are numerous units in use. The units belong to different linguistic levels: syntactic, semantic, or discourse functional. The following sections will review some of the units, starting with the smallest units first, primarily from within the approaches reviewed in chapter 3.

4.1.1 Below clause level

Below clause level we may focus on numerous syntactic and lexical elements. Some of these may function as indicators that some evaluation is going on and that a specific action is worthwhile. Typically such evaluation is expressed through lexical words and expressions (e.g. Martin 2000), but various syntactic elements such as adverbial phrases may also carry the evaluation (e.g. Biber & Finegan 1989; Conrad & Biber 2000). In chapter 5 we will see other examples, e.g. nominalisations with an adjectival modifier evaluating action (*more fruitful deals* (LF3 U309; 3); see also 6.4). Other elements may introduce an action and suggest human agency (e.g. *tell 'em* (PF1 U117; 5); see 5.2.1 and 5.2.2). We also find indications of who is the beneficiary of the proposed action, for example through prepositional complements (*for us* (LF3 U375; 4); see 5.2.9). All of these are key semantic elements of the acts of SUGGESTING, as we shall see in chapter 5. However, we need to see the elements strung together in bigger units in order to be able to establish that these components are indeed used to perform the act of SUGGESTING.

4.1.2 The clause

The clause strings together the constituents described above. Halliday (1994) uses the clause as one possible unit of analysis. It is used to analyse situations and their participants, information structure, and interaction (i.e. giving or demanding information or goods-and-services; see 3.1.2 and 3.2.1.2). The clause as site for interaction is controversial because there is no simple relation between the mood of a clause and the function it plays in an interaction (see for example Martin, 1992: 33, or Eggins & Slade 1997, ch.5, who propose an alternative unit, the move, for analysis

of interaction, or 'dialogue as the exchange of speech functions (speech act)', 1997: 169). We shall return to the move below.

While the clause may contain elements that point towards SUGGESTIONS and sometimes indeed realise SUGGESTIONS directly, often more than one clause is involved in the realisation, as in example (1).

- (1) I think it's important to be able, we work as one team, especially you and an' the guys in our office.
(PF2 U98; 5)

The clauses may be linked or unlinked intonationally, and they may be related or unrelated syntactically.

4.1.3 Clause complexes

Miller & Weinert (1998; ch.2) have convincingly argued against using the sentence as a unit of analysis for spontaneous spoken language and for application of Halliday's clause complex instead. The central argument is that spontaneous speech is organised round unintegrated syntactic structures. We saw an example of this in (1) above. Attempts to identify well-formed sentences in speech would, therefore, violate the data. I shall adopt this position here.

In straightforward examples of clause complexes realising SUGGESTIONS it is possible to identify a matrix clause and determine what the proposed act is through the verb of the matrix clause, as in example (2).

- (2) And why don't you **tell** 'em that you'll no be accepting anything unless it's through the system? ['em = the customers]
(PF1 U117; 5)

However, often inference is needed. This is especially the case when clauses identifying the proposed action are not syntactically linked to other clauses carrying other elements of the SUGGESTION. In chapter 5 we shall see that a SUGGESTION contains various elements. Apart from the action element, an indication that the act would be beneficial and desirable is essential. This

element and the action element may not be realised within the same clause or, indeed, clause complex but in clauses that are syntactically unrelated. We see an example of this below in (3) where the SUGGESTIONS are relatively difficult to isolate because the speaker wraps them up in a lot of clauses where the relationship is not necessarily clear. The SUGGESTIONS can be reconstructed as ‘You should make sure that you have sufficient cash behind any step you take’ in lines d-f.; ‘You should make a few small acquisitions’ in lines j-l; and ‘You should use somebody else's money if you want to make a bigger acquisition’ in lines l-m. The last SUGGESTION is most explicitly expressed and contained within a syntactically linked clause complex. The other two SUGGESTIONS, and particularly the first one, spread over several unlinked clauses.

(3)

- a. But, but your risk profile is, is bound, going to based on the fact that you are a good,
 - b. quality underlying business and you're not going to extend yourself on gearing and the, I
 - c. mean the amount of @ process was painful in the sense it concentrates the mind on, I
 - d. think it's an excellent discipline which you've learnt the lesson of well that cash is king
 - e. and when you learn how to monitor your cash I think you probably never forget that how
 - f. important cash is to the stability of a business. Erm, and, you know, you would not
 - g. willingly, I think, go back three years. If you were to borrow two million pounds to buy
 - h. another business would be, you know, possibly an unacceptable risk in the context of
 - i. what you might achieve. I just want to, I just want to add a little flesh on that, because an
 - j. acquisition is clearly linked in with a listing and, obviously what some people do, I mean,
 - k. thinking about it is, you know, making one or two small acquisitions just to get a taste for
 - l. it and seeing the sort of thing that go well, etc., and then if you want to make a big one,
 - m. use someone else's money to do it.
- (LF3 U200; 6)

4.1.4 Rhetorical relations between clauses

We can only recover the SUGGESTION ‘You should make sure that you have sufficient cash behind any step you take’ if we understand several of the clauses in the turn as related in some way, even if there is no syntactic or intonational indication of such links. The relations are of the kind suggested by Hoey (2001) or in Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST; see Mann & Thompson 1988). RST, which has become a popular tool in text analysis, is a further development of Winter's (1971, 1982) and Hoey's (1983) work on clause relations. Both Winter and Hoey's analyses and RST are set up to deal with written language, not dialogue. RST cannot account for any relations that go beyond single turns and is unable to describe dialogic language (Bill Mann

has acknowledged this shortcoming on the RST e-mailing list). This relates to the fact that RST attempts to analyse texts exhaustively, whereas clause relational analysis does not and is, therefore, more flexible. Both approaches, however, are useful in describing SUGGESTIONS that stretch over more than one clause. In some ways it is even more crucial to acknowledge the existence of relations in spoken language than in written language, because clauses in spoken language are often not linked as tightly formally as in written language (Miller & Weinert 1998: 76). What in written language would form a sentence of a main clause and subordinate clauses with appropriate subordinating conjunctions, or several main clauses connected by coordinating conjunctions, may in spoken language form a series of main clauses with no explicit indicators of a relationship. In order to recover a SUGGESTION stretching over several clauses, we need to be able to see that the clauses relate.

In (3) the action element is implicit and needs to be recovered through inference, whereas the benefit element of the action is indicated more explicitly (e.g. *important, stability of a business*, line f). The action element is recoverable through implicature, based on our field specific knowledge of the way proposals for actions (e.g. SUGGESTIONS) are constructed. If there is a hypothetical element in the construction, if something is desirable, and if some action could be taken to ensure that 'something', then the speaker is probably proposing that such action be taken. The listener's task is to recover the different elements from the different clauses within the turn. The listener reconstructs semantic and rhetorical relations between clauses to retrieve the link between these elements.

In Figure 4-1 and 4-2 we find RST analyses of parts of the turn in (3)¹. RST identifies hierarchical structure in text as it determines relations between 'nuclei' and 'satellites'. The analysis in Figure 4-1 shows that the nuclei of the analysis are the units *well that cash is king* and *I think you probably never forget that how important cash is to the stability of a business*. Most of the other units provide a background for these declaratives. The background alludes to some action which is never stated explicitly. For example, the utterance *and you're not going to extend yourself on gearing*, by using negative polarity dismisses an action which is evaluated as undesirable: *extending oneself*, hence insinuating that it would be desirable to avoid extending

¹ The turn is divided into units according to the specification given below in 4.2.1.

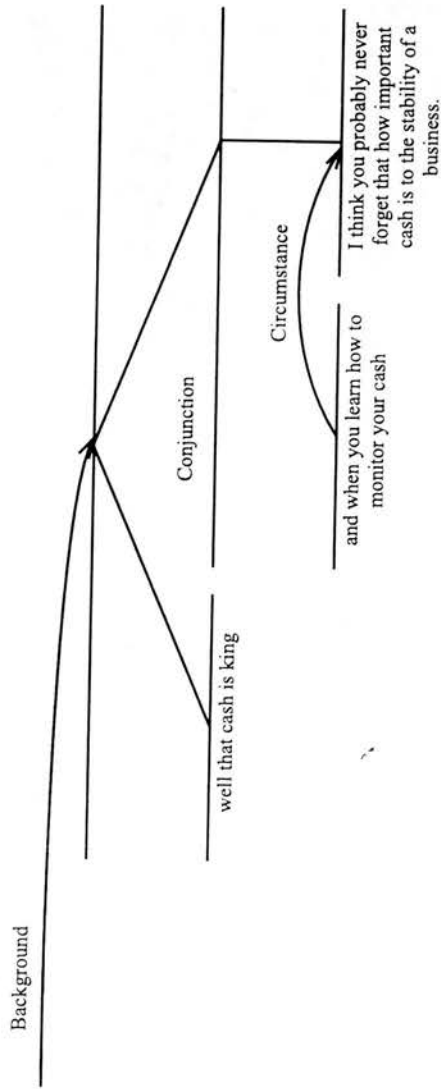
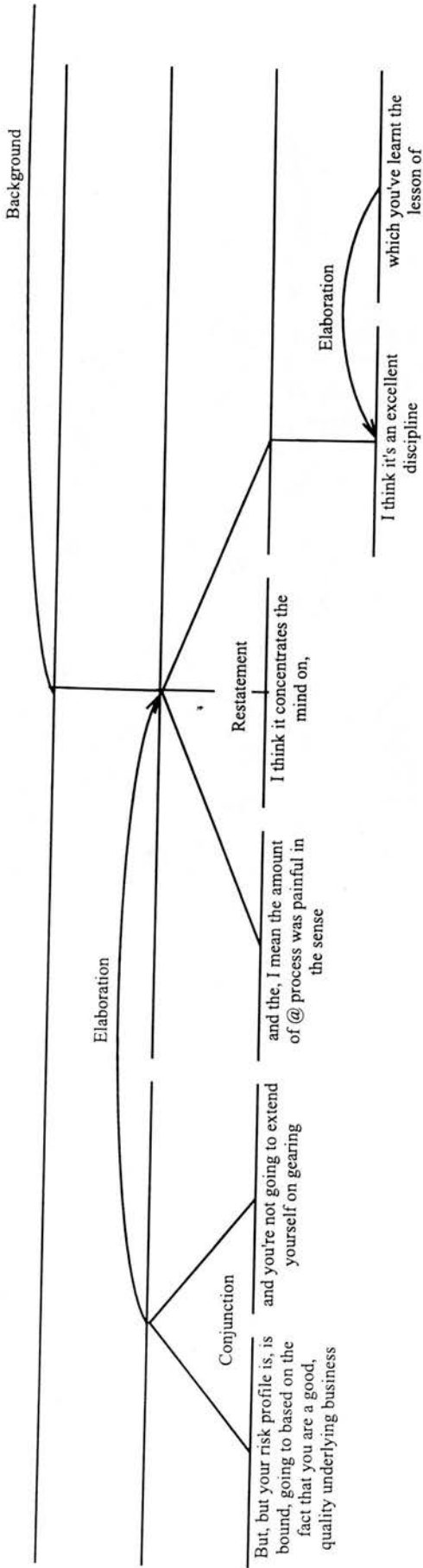


Figure 4-1: RST-analysis I

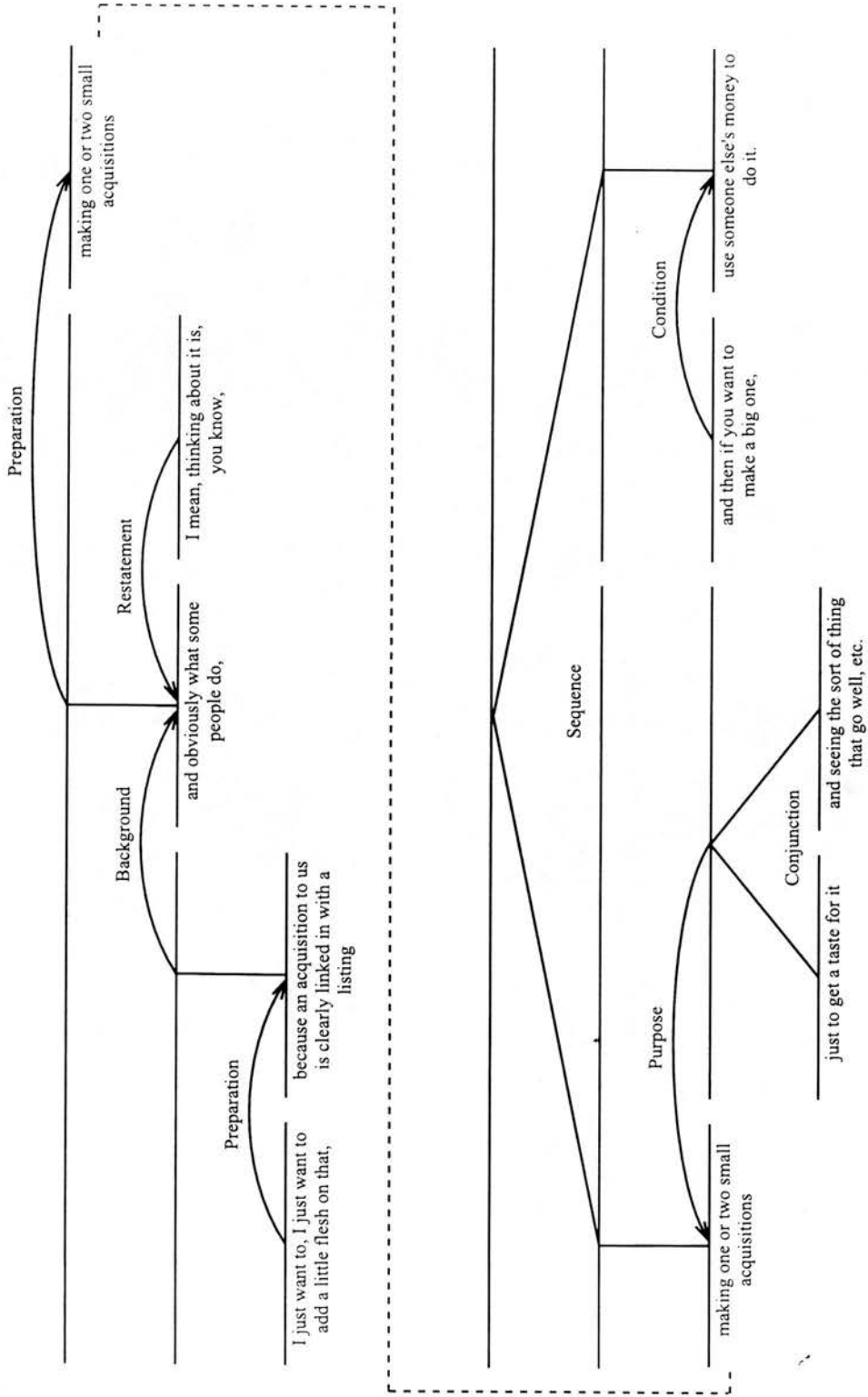


Figure 4-2: RST-analysis II

oneself. Or the utterance *the amount of @ process was painful* and an elaboration of one of its conjoined restatements, *which you've learnt the lesson of*, alludes to an action. (Usually, one learns a lesson by doing an action that misfires; the inferred advice is to avoid such actions). However, it is the nuclei (*well that cash is king* and *I think you probably never forget that how important cash is to the stability of a business*) which primarily trigger the reading of the text as one in which the speaker proposes some action. In both nuclei the speaker asserts the importance of cash. Listeners will assume that he does that with a specific purpose in mind. The different allusions to actions (or avoidance of action) in the rest of the construction together with the benefit elements indicated in the nuclei (*cash is king, how important cash is*) foregrounds a reading of the utterance as a SUGGESTION.

In Figure 4-2 the nuclei are both actions (*making one or two small acquisitions* and *use someone else's money to do it*). On their own they do not make SUGGESTIONS, however, because it is not clear who are supposed to perform or to have performed the actions, and whether the actions would benefit anybody. These elements are indicated in satellites. For example, for the last nuclei the actor is indicated in the clause setting the condition for the nucleus (*and then if you want to make a big one*). The benefit or desirability of the actions is indicated in a purpose construction (*just to get a taste for it and seeing the sort of thing that go well, etc.*) or, more implicitly, in a preparation unit (*what some people do*). In the preparation unit the speaker implies that the 'people' would not choose to do what they do if it was not beneficial to them, or else he would not report on their choice. This implication follows from his advisory role.

It would also be possible to account for the perceived relationship between clauses that are not syntactically linked by referring to cohesive ties (e.g. Figure 4-2: repetition: *acquisition/s*, pronominal reference: *making [...] acquisitions – it*). However, in Figure 4-1 the links are much less explicit. There are semantic links (e.g. *good quality underlying business – stability*; the 'good quality underlying business' is linked to the company not *extend[ing]* themselves which relates to them *monitor[ing their] cash*). However, if we follow Hoey's (2001) definition of cohesive patterns (which are relatively inclusive compared to earlier accounts for cohesion such as Halliday & Hasan 1976) these semantic links would not qualify as cohesive devices (such as 'complex paraphrasing'; see Hoey 2001: 64ff). The links are too vague and require too much inference. Listeners will relate the clauses on the assumption that since the clauses are strung

together within one turn they must relate to each other in some way or other which is relevant to the field and the purpose of the text production. This is when the semantic links will be explored.

For the reasons presented above it seems plausible to assume that speakers and listeners presuppose that clauses are linked by a set of functional and semantic relations. The set of relations may be debatable, and the aim of this discussion is not to present analyses with exact labels of relations (the relations are only 'plausibility judgements' anyway; Mann & Thompson 1988: 246). What I want to show through the examples above is just that relations exist beyond what is signalled syntactically, as already noted by RST and other scholars, and such relations link together different elements which together make SUGGESTIONS. For example, they make it possible for semantic elements of background units to affect our reading of a nuclei and make us infer that an action is being proposed (Figure 4-1).

Moreover, the examples show that the syntactic markers of relations do not necessarily coincide with the semantic relation between two clauses. For example, in Figure 4-2 two clauses are combined by *because*, but semantically there is no causal relationship between them. *I just want to, I just want to add a little flesh on that* is followed by the clause *because an acquisition to us is clearly linked in with a listing*. In the first clause (with a false start) the speaker specifies an action ('adding a little flesh', i.e. elaborating) and volition (*I ... want to*). The volitive verb expresses the modal meaning of desirability (see 6.4.1), and in a causal relationship this meaning would have been explained in the following clause ('I want X because Y' where Y explains how X fulfils a desired objective and is beneficial; see 6.1). However, the second clause in the example does not explain how elaborating on what speaker 6 has said before is beneficial. It is merely a proposition which may be verified or falsified. Semantically, there is, therefore, no causal relationship between the two clauses².

² This has important implications for quantitative analyses of relationships between clause-like units on the basis of grammatical surface markers. In spoken language conjunctions are not always reliable indicators of the relationship between clauses.

4.1.5 Speech acts

In the section above I have indicated that the basis on which we identify and determine the scope of a particular SUGGESTION is semantic rather than syntactic, although syntactic entities are involved in the realisation. A SUGGESTION is a speech act. As we have seen in 3.2.1 a lot of speech act theorists associate speech acts with sentence type. Even when inference is needed to determine the act type, the examples are typically acts expressed through one sentence. We saw that SUGGESTIONS in meetings may not conform to this pattern.

As pointed out in 3.1.2, the speech act, or act, is one of the units of analysis in, among others, the analyses of Sinclair & Coulthard (1975), the HCRC coding scheme (1996), and Eggins & Slade (1997; Eggins and Slade call acts 'speech functions'). We only need the example given above in (3) to see that we cannot straightforwardly identify speech acts on the basis of sentence types in spoken dialogue in meetings. This has implications for the discussion as to whether language users rely on linguistic features (codification) or on inference when creating and identifying speech acts (see 3.2.1). If codification is involved in the identification of speech acts – and I shall argue it is – linguistic features other than the sentence type are involved. Rather, a combination of linguistic features plays a part, one of which may or may not be sentence type.

4.1.6 Moves

Eggins & Slade (1997) treat speech acts as the semantic realisation of another unit, the move. The move is used in many accounts and defined very differently. Eggins and Slade describe it as 'a functional-semantic reinterpretation of the turn-constructive unit (TCU) of CA' (1997: 186). It is a clause which selects independently for mood (Martin 1992: 40; a definition adopted by Eggins and Slade). Prosodic criteria are also taken into account: Two clauses which may be syntactically independent and therefore select independently for mood may be produced with so-called 'run-on', i.e. no rhythmic or intonational break at the clause boundary. Eggins & Slade (1997: 189) treat run-ons as single moves.

Returning to example (3), we find an example of 'run-on'. The string *it's an excellent discipline which you've learnt the lesson of well that cash is king* is said with no intonational breaks, clearly indicating that the syntactically integrated relative clause and the non-integrated subordinate clause *that cash is king* are linked. (It is possible that the speaker has produced a similar utterance before, although not within this particular meeting, which would explain the presence of the non-integrated clause.) Even with this linkage, however, neither of the moves in the example captures the SUGGESTION relating to the cash requirement. This example shows that while we may choose to define moves as in Eggins & Slade (1997) for the act of proposing action in meetings it is problematic to claim a close realisation link between moves and speech acts.

In the HCRC Dialogue Structure Manual (1996) the move and its function are treated as unproblematic. Moves 'are simply different kinds of initiations and responses classified according to their purposes' (1996: 3; cf. Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975: 44: moves 'occupy places in the structure of exchanges' and 'are made up of acts'). Such a definition, and a classification of moves based on the definition, is realistic for the corpus which the HCRC manual was created to analyse. The corpus is a collection of task-oriented dialogues where one participant has to direct another participant along a map with landmarks, the first having a route drawn on his or her map. Such dialogues consist of relatively short moves (INSTRUCT, EXPLAIN, CHECK moves, etc.). For free discussion at meetings, however, the definition is not adequate, because initiations and responses may stretch over many clauses and are often entwined within turns.

In their definition of moves Greene and Capella (1986) cater for the idea that speakers often spread an idea or element of the interaction over several clauses.

Discourse is considered to be a series of moves where each move is akin to a step in a plan. In other words, given a goal which an individual wishes to accomplish through communication, s/he may formulate a sequence of moves expected to lead to goal accomplishment. Each move, then, is aimed at accomplishing some end state and represents a complete idea. The focus of a move is on what one's interlocutor will know, believe, or do at the end of the move. Moves may vary in length, but they typically encompass several clauses.

(Greene & Capella 1986: 148)

Greene and Capella's main contribution is to show that there is a tendency for move boundaries in spontaneous monologues to be associated with a decrease in speech fluency.

4.1.7 Propositions and proposals

Greene and Capella's definition of the move focuses on the ideational content of the discourse, and their move as 'a step in a plan' resembles the notion of propositions. The concept of propositions is, however, controversial (see Lyons 1977: 141-142). Some think of 'proposition' as a purely abstract concept, others see it as an objective entity, while others avoid using it altogether because neither of these understandings is considered satisfactory. Furthermore, some identify propositions with declarative sentences, others with statements, the definition of which is also controversial.

Halliday (1994: 70-71) distinguishes between propositions and proposals where propositions are statements or questions conveying information that can be 'affirmed or denied, and also doubted, contradicted, insisted on, accepted with reservation, qualified, tempered, regretted and so on' (1994: 70). Proposals refer to offers and commands or directives (i.e. the exchange of goods-&-services rather than information) which, unlike statements and questions, cannot be affirmed or denied but are complied with, disobeyed, rejected, etc.

If propositions and proposals are seen as strictly confined to sentences or clause complexes where the concept is closely linked up with the mood of the clause or matrix clause, these concepts are once again too narrow to apply in our study of SUGGESTIONS in meetings. However, if we understand the concepts as ideational units, or content units, risen above the immediate realisation in the interaction where the content forms a complete step in a plan towards a goal, then the concepts are useful for our analytical purposes. In other words, propositions and proposals are the content elements which are realised in moves in Greene and Capella's sense. (The moves themselves are realised in clauses).

4.1.8 Exchanges and transactions

Returning to the exchange level from the ideational level, Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) initiated a tradition of ranked units of analysis. The concept of 'rank scale' was introduced by Halliday (1961). It assumes that 'a unit at a given rank is made up of one or more units of the rank below [...] and combines with other units at the same rank to make one unit at the rank above [...]' (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975: 20). As we saw in 3.1.2, in their system of analysis moves are made up of acts, and moves themselves form exchanges which form transactions which again form lessons (in a school setting). In the HCRC coding scheme the highest level consists of transactions, which are subdialogues that accomplish one major step in fulfilling the task, on the next level down are conversational games (similar to exchanges), and the lowest level consist of moves. In 3.1.2 I pointed out how the exchange and therefore anything above the level of exchange are inappropriate units of analysis for meetings because speakers often neglect to finish off exchanges before they initiate new exchanges, i.e. make new proposals.

4.1.9 Turns

I have argued that at a semantic level several of the existing units that apply within one turn are too small, and units incorporating several turns (e.g. exchanges) are too wide and often unfinished in meetings. However, the CA unit, the turn, is not an adequate unit for our purposes either. The reason is simply that speakers may make several SUGGESTIONS within one turn.

4.2 A set of units for the analysis of SUGGESTIONS

What has emerged so far is that only Greene and Capella's move manages to capture SUGGESTIONS in meetings, and that such moves often involve several clauses that are unrelated syntactically, but linked semantically. For purposes of close analysis, however, apart from the unit encompassing SUGGESTIONS we will need a smaller unit. It is between such units that we might find semantic relations (see 4.1.4) which establish the 'idea' of the move, or the proposal.

4.2.1 Defining the clause related discourse unit

The clause related discourse unit is useful for the following reasons: As already mentioned, and as we shall see in chapter 5, SUGGESTIONS contain different elements such as a possible action and a possible benefit. Both elements are necessary to accomplish the goal of SUGGESTING an act, and both elements are necessary to form the 'complete idea' of a SUGGESTION. These elements, and indeed various ways of expressing the same element, may be presented in different clauses. For example, in (4) below I have emphasised desirable elements in **bold**, and action elements are underlined:

- (4) I had thought the next best opportunity to sell... would be to have managed our way through another recession where we had proved ourselves hopefully to be reasonably recession proof...
(LF3 U262; 2)

In fact, the action and benefit elements may form independent subpropositions or subproposals within the SUGGESTIONS. See for example (5) below where the main proposal goes along the lines of 'it is important that we pick the point for making an acquisition carefully'.

- (5) Er, I'm going to go back to the rates of growth and, whether, almost whether it's a trade sale or listing, **picking the point is an important issue**. So if you, if you let it run on, if you can't find any suitable acquisition and you let it run on, and you run out of ideas on market penetration and you peak at the plateau, at one million pounds profit, then it's obviously much more difficult to sell than it is rising steadily at 15 percent per annum.
(LF3 U251; 6)

Within the turn there are subpropositions such as 'it is an important issue to pick the point in time'; 'if you don't do anything you will run out of ideas on market penetration', etc.

Often the realisation of such sub-propositions and sub-proposals coincides with a syntactic clause, but the main realisation clause may also contain further clauses embedded in it. I have chosen to count as separate units clauses that may provide a distinct element of the notion of SUGGESTIONS (e.g. purpose clauses which often indicate the benefit and desirability of an action). Other types of clauses which do not tend to identify the action or benefit/desirability element will not be considered independent units (e.g. clausal postmodifiers of complement NPs and subject clauses; see examples in a. and b. below). Mostly, such clauses do not realise a sub-

proposition or sub-proposal on their own. Clauses which are used for tact purposes (e.g. reporting clauses such as *I think*, used as downtoners) will not be seen as separate units. Neither will comment clauses (e.g. *you know*) that fulfil a distinct discourse function rather than contributing to the direct realisation of a proposition or proposal.

In identifying a clause related discourse unit as one of the units of analysis I follow Mann & Thompson (1988) and Marcu (1999). In their RST analyses they have had to define a basic unit between which rhetorical relations can be found. Mann & Thompson (1988: 248) claim that unit size is arbitrary, but that the units ought to have ‘independent functional integrity’. It is with the aim of reaching such ‘functional integrity’ in mind that I have defined the discourse unit as specified below.

My unit differs slightly from both Mann and Thompson’s and Marcu’s. There are two main reasons for this: Firstly, the functional aim of the RST theorists is to enable analysis where rhetorical relations are captured. For some the objective is to capture as many of these relations as possible (Marcu 1999: 9ff). My functional aim is to be able to identify central elements of SUGGESTIONS within separate units. Secondly, the RST definitions are based on written texts. I shall redefine the unit to fit in with observations of the spoken language in the corpus as well as insights from Miller & Weinart’s (1998) description of spontaneous spoken language.

Below is a breakdown of points at which the discourse unit to be adopted here differs from the syntactic clause. The first two restrictions follow Mann & Thompson’s definition (1988: 248) closely; the rest are modifications based on the nature of spoken language and my functional aim of identifying defining elements of SUGGESTIONS.

The discourse unit coincides with syntactic clauses except in the following circumstances:

- a. Clauses that are themselves subjects in another clause are not counted as separate units (except when the subject clause is disassociated from the complement syntactically or intonationally – see f. below):
 - (6) **Picking the point** is an important issue.
(LF3 U261; 6)

- b. Clauses that are complements in another clause are not counted as separate units; e.g.
- reported clauses:

(7) I think **the first thing to do is**, I mean, you speak to |Person X|, see if we can get something organised.
(PF1 U254; 2)
 - postmodifiers of complement NPs, or Complementizer Phrases:

(8) and I think we've gotta look at the procedural side, I mean that's why we're looking at the training, to try and minimise the admin effort that goes in at the front end, which in turn delays it for the manufacturing effort at the back end so we're trying to telescope down the admin side of it, and I think we should concentrate that in the short term, which might then, in turn, create an opportunity **for you and |Speaker 5| to plan things a wee bit better.**
(PF2 U99; 4)
 - restrictive relative clauses:

(9) The problem is at the moment is we've really got to start putting that team round about |Speaker 2|, or he's gonna find it awfully hard, and he's really not going to be able to achieve the measures **that he's been set**, you know?
(PF2 U154; 4)
 - complement clauses in copular clauses where the embedded clauses are both syntactically and rhythmically integrated with the subject and the copula:

(10) What we felt we have to do is actually set ourselves a challenge.
(LF3 U317; 1)
- c. Incomplete clauses that are immediately followed by a corrective clause (i.e. false starts) are not counted as separate units; (other incomplete clauses will be considered independent clauses; see e. below).
- (11) What I'd like to see on here is, **if you don't think, if you think** this is not wise tell me, right? I'd like to see some kind of value on it
(PF3 U132; 7)

d. Discourse markers which are clauses themselves (comment clauses; Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1113f) are not counted as separate units (e.g. *I mean, you know, if you like*).

(12) But we've gotta do this as a team thing, we've gotta really be seen to be supporting each other. **I mean**, yesterday it could have been down to one of these old meetings, where it was, remember the old meeting? Who gave these dates? Was it you, Speccy?
(PF2 U162; 4)

e. Incomplete clauses that are not the result of stuttering and false starts are considered independent units (see U360 in (13)).

(13)

U349 6 What about thinking of something out slightly @, something not quite as synergistic?

...

...

U354 2 I think to answer your question, if we would be intrigued by taking over a, a chain of MacDonaldis who weren't performing the answer for me anyway is no.

U355 3 Yeah, that's a definite no.

U356 6 That's a little too but far away though if er

U357 1 It would be different for me though because I have a lot more experience of a wide range of industries. It depends what you're actually getting to, but, but yes, I mean if there was another [This Firm], whether it be in spectral resources or men's underwear, er, to me that's a business, er issue as opposed to a market issue. It may be a market issue within the business but, you know, it @ which is what [This Firm] needed in 1990.

U358 3 I would find it very hard to get excited about men's underwear.

U359 2 Yes

U360 1 All right, **ladies' underwear**.

[group laughter]

(LF3 U349, 354-360; speakers 1, 2, 3,6)

f. Clauses that may appear to be complement clauses of other clauses are considered separate units if syntactic and/or rhythmical and pitch elements indicate lack of integration within the

matrix clause (see description of the characteristics of spoken language in the meetings in 2.2.). Integration is seen as a continuum. Between the classic syntactic constructions with no pauses and with a single pitch pattern, and constructions where the WH clause and the clause following it may not even be linked by BE, we find various constructions where the immediate link between the clauses is weakened. The clause following BE may display the syntactic features of independent clauses while being intonationally and rhythmically attached to the subject and copular verb.

- (14) So the first thing I want you to do is we need to look at, we need to sit down you and I, and any other members of the team that wish to be present
(PF2 U172; 5)

Such clauses are seen as separate units.

We also get examples where a copular clause is initiated, but immediately following BE and preceding the clause after BE is a pause and possibly change of pitch. The syntactic structure may or may not be intact:

- (15) and I would recommend to the team that what we do is [Pause] **try and come up with a structure and a procedure**
(PF2 U116: 4)

The sequence following the WH-clause is here more like an imperative than a complement within a classic WH-cleft (see also Miller & Weinert's analysis of similar examples; 1998: 123). I consider the sequence an independent unit.

The copular clauses and WH-clefts where the clause following BE is not integrated into the matrix clause are typically used to highlight and focus on, i.e. to 'make salient', the second clause (cf. Miller & Weinert 1998: 122).

In summary, in a copular construction the complement clause needs to be both syntactically and rhythmically integrated within the matrix clause for the whole construction to be considered one unit. If the clause following BE is either syntactically independent or

separated from the subject and copula by a pause, we will deal with the elements as two separate units.

An explanatory note on this last criterion is appropriate. The choice of when to consider clausal elements independent units or part of other units is relatively arbitrary. The syntactic criteria are primarily based on written syntax. However, spontaneous spoken language does not necessarily follow the rules of written language. For example, in copular constructions in spoken dialogue complete clauses rather than nonfinite clauses tend to follow BE. It could be argued that spoken syntax allows for a complete clause as complement. On the other hand one could argue that the concept of complementation is problematic in spoken language due to the interrupted nature of constructions in speech. Perhaps clauses following BE in WH-clefts and ordinary copular clauses should be seen as some kind of discourse complement rather than a syntactic complement. In fact, this is where spoken language relies more on unexpressed rhetorical relations than written language does. The clauses are related as discourse units rather than syntactically. Separating clauses that are not syntactically linked, therefore, does not mean that we necessarily consider the clauses unlinked. They may even be linked within the 'complete idea' of a SUGGESTION.

4.2.2 Multiple units

The clause-like discourse unit defined in the previous section is a practical unit for analysis, but we have seen that we need to look both below and above it and use units at different levels. I propose to focus on lexical choices and phrases below clause level, at clause-like discourse units as defined above, and at groups of such clause-like units which are related syntactically and/or through rhetorical relations. In this thesis I shall not provide any map of rhetorical relations between clauses in SUGGESTIONS but just point out that such relations exist and that they enable SUGGESTIONS to stretch beyond syntactically delimited units of text. The number of clauses included in the unit is determined semantically as a unit that is a 'step in a plan' and 'accomplishing some end state and represents a complete idea' (cf. Greene and Capella's definition of the move presented above). For SUGGESTIONS I shall refer to such 'complete ideas' as proposals, following Halliday. Elements below clause level are ingredients forming the 'idea' of the proposal.

We have come a step closer to pinning down SUGGESTIONS, but so far we have only made cursory reference to the 'elements' that make up SUGGESTIONS. It is not yet clear what exactly these elements are. It is this question which will occupy us in chapter 5.

Defining Directive Acts – SUGGESTIONS

We have seen how SUGGESTIONS are of variable sizes within the speakers' turns. The form depends on where in the constructions we find different obligatory and optional elements that define SUGGESTIONS. We have not yet, however, pinned down the exact set of 'elements' or features that make a contribution a SUGGESTION. This is what this chapter sets out to do. It is also an attempt to reveal how these elements are realised through linguistic properties. In chapter 6 I will elaborate on realisation patterns for one of the defining elements, namely indications that the proposed act is desirable and beneficial.

In the speech act tradition, the type of acts we are interested in here would be seen as a subset of the category of 'directive speech acts' (Searle 1969; see also Quirk *et al.* 1985, chapter 11). In Searle's words, directives are where we try to get our hearers to do things (1979; 1983: 166). Palmer modifies this definition in order for it also to be able to account for the act of giving permission: Directives are 'initiating action' (Palmer 1986: 97). Givón (1990: 806) calls 'verbal acts by the speaker aimed at prompting the hearer to act' 'manipulative speech acts'.

As we have seen in chapter 3.2.2, the rigid boundaries of the traditional taxonomies of speech acts are problematic seen in light of the scalarity of human categorisation. An act may display more or less prototypical characteristics, and it may contain elements of more than one category of acts. For example, we saw in 3.2.2.1 how Verschueren (1985: 150) claims that 'to suggest' is not central in the category of directives because it is both assertive and directive. As shown in 3.2, Leech (1983), Givón (1990), Verschueren (1985), Risselada (1993) and Pérez Hernández (1999) have attempted to account for speech acts in terms of continua. I shall draw on their ideas as I suggest a model for identification of different types of acts below. The outcome will map out the subtle differences between act types and link up the different choices of features more clearly than in previous accounts. The tool will allow analysts to make more precise judgements of which type of acts they are dealing with in their analyses. It will also match the scalar nature of

human categorisation better than traditional typologies, because it allows us to distinguish between acts that may carry many similarities but differ on one count (e.g. who is the beneficiary). The model is developed to identify acts in meetings, but it can be easily adapted to other types of text. In this thesis, however, I shall refrain from making the strong claim that my model accounts for text types other than problem solving and decision making meetings.

5.1 Modelling acts: System networks

A system network is useful for modelling the different choices made by speakers when they present propositions as suggestions, advice, recommendations, requests, etc. Before I go on to present a model for directives, focusing on SUGGESTIONS, I shall briefly describe system networks as a modelling device.

In Systemic Functional Grammar (see description in 3.1.5), the formalism of *systems* is used to capture paradigmatic relations. Systems consist of an entry condition x and a choice of one or more features in opposition (e.g. a and b) and should be read as “if the entry condition of x applies then either a or b must be chosen” (Eggins 1994: 205).

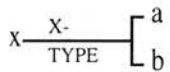


Figure 5-1: A system (After Eggins 1994: 205)

Systems may join up to create a system network (or inheritance network). The simplified mood network in Figure 5-2 below exemplifies the different parts of system networks:

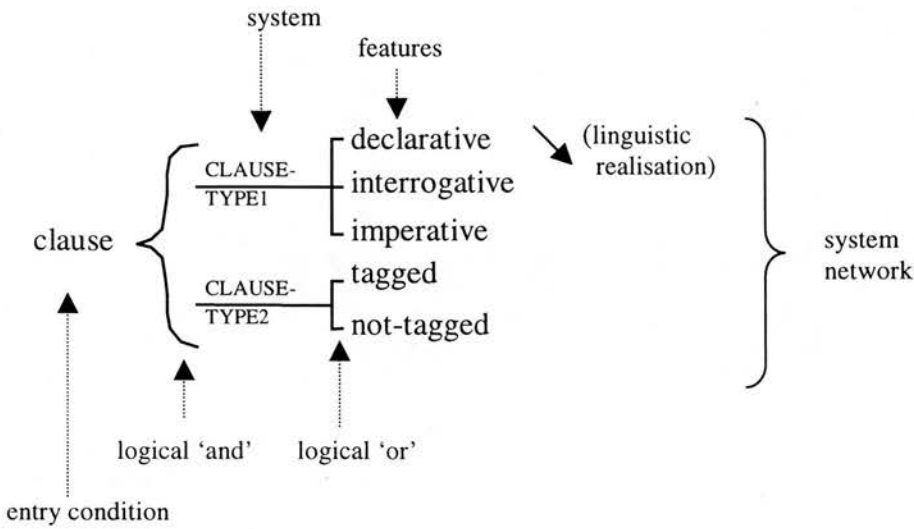


Figure 5-2: A system network (After Martin *et al.* 1997: 13)

System networks can be developed to a high level of ‘delicacy’, or descriptive specification, as choices lead to new choices, the feature of the first choice constituting the entry condition for the next system. The leftmost system in the network models the least precise choice, and as the network extends to the right, the level of specification increases.

System networks capture the logical structure of systems, not a temporal sequence of choices. To be complete, the system network needs realisation statements stating the output of particular choices. Such realisation statements present syntagmatic relations, whereas the network itself outlines paradigmatic relations.

I have chosen the system network as a method of modelling rather than a simple matrix mapping out features because choices in a network may depend on other choices. It is not possible to model such interdependency in a simple, two-dimensional matrix. The idea of different features restricting which features within a set are available is not an uncommon concept in linguistics as a whole (e.g. in phonology and Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar).

A system network presenting the paradigmatic relations that constitute SUGGESTIONS will map the different choices that are necessary for this particular act to happen. In the following sections I shall present the model and give examples of realisations.

5.2 A model of some directive speech acts in meetings

In my discussion of speech act taxonomies (see 3.2) I suggested that what we need is a way of identifying speech acts without prescribing rigid categories. Instead we need to establish the different combinatorial possibilities of variables or criteria. Such potential combinations, or different copatternings of options, should be clearly modelled to aid analysts in their attempt to identify different types of act. This is what the system network that I will present here is intended to do.

The variables are semantic specifications of what is being done in the particular speech act. For example, the proposition may specify some kind of future activity (i.e. a human agent acting) rather than a state, quality, (non-agentive) event, etc. (see 5.2.1). At the lexicogrammatical level the agentive dimension is realised through the lexical verb and its selection restrictions. Reference to future events is realised through various irrealis forms, e.g. certain modal auxiliaries, semi-auxiliaries, time adverbials, etc. (see 5.2.4). I shall not provide realisation examples just yet. At the moment my aim is merely to point out that for each of the semantic choices in the network a more or less elaborate network for lexicogrammatical realisations can be drawn. So we have a defining network at the semantic level which itself is based on complex lexicogrammatical networks.

In this chapter I shall provide just enough examples to illustrate the lexicogrammatical link for each of the semantic nodes in the identification network. The lists of linguistic realisation given below for each of the different semantic choices are not intended to be exhaustive. In chapter 6 I shall provide a more elaborate account of realisations of one of the systems in the network, namely the system of benefit and desirability options. It is also important to note that the examples given will typically be realisations of several end nodes in the complex network (e.g. agency: addressee; high-action-optionality; beneficiary: addressee; low-speaker-authority, etc.). It is the differences in the combination of choices that makes the acts differ. (See 5.3).

Some of the choices themselves represent degrees on a cline rather than categorical choices. The degrees of optionality and benefit/desirability are examples of this. In the network introduced below I indicate such scalar aspects through choices of ‘high’ or ‘low’ optionality, benefit/desirability, etc. I have chosen not to introduce any further intermediate choices (e.g. ‘medium’) because I find that analyses with that level of detail are very difficult to perform in an objective and sound way. They often appear to call for random choices of degree, as would scalarity indicated through relative ratings. Even though my model captures only limited scalarity at the level of individual choices, it does capture scalarity at the level of acts better than previous accounts. The many possibilities of patterns of co-selection in the network clearly model small differences of acts that would traditionally be seen as belonging to one category and where no distinction is possible.

I shall define a working ‘category’ of SUGGESTIONS as certain combinations of features. On the face of it, the category could appear to be one of all-or-none membership. However, I should like to emphasise once again that the category is not a natural category in the world, as it were, but just a factitious delimitation of an enormous mass of different acts that forms clusters. The defining features of the cluster of SUGGESTIONS are identified on the basis of the types of acts performed in the meetings. However, even if two acts fit in squarely within the category of SUGGESTIONS, they may differ as to how prototypical they are as SUGGESTIONS. Prototypicality is here understood in terms of the function or effect of the particular act, and the difference between the acts is defined through the differences in their feature combinations.

The entry condition for the network is ‘a move’ in Green and Capella’s sense (see 4.1.6 and 4.1.7).

5.2.1 Action

One of the first semantic oppositions we need to identify in order to distinguish different speech acts is the opposition between proposals that prescribe some kind of action with a human agent (at times the agent may be implicit) and propositions that do not.

In Dowty's (1991) treatment of thematic (or participant) roles, the many diverging lists of role categories in the literature have been reduced to the two role types of Proto-Agent and Proto-Patient. Each of these is defined in terms of potential contributing properties (P-entailments) such as volition and causation. The realisation of one of the potential properties is enough for a proposition to constitute the corresponding Proto-Role. This also means that there are degrees of membership in the role types as some participants realise more P-entailments than others (hence the reference to prototypes in the labels of the roles).

In the network identifying SUGGESTIONS, actions with human agency will be realised as propositions where at least one of the following combinations of Proto-Agent P-entailments are present: volition + causation + sentience + movement; volition + causation; or just volition (Dowty 1991: 577). These combinations correspond to the traditional role type of Agent. A Proto-Agent which is only realised through the P-entailment of sentience (traditionally Experiencer; *John knows/ believes/ sees/ fears, etc.*; Dowty 1991; 573) is an example of a proposition with a Proto-Agent which is not considered an 'action-by-human-agent' here because of the lack of volition and causation.

Action propositions with a human agent can generally be identified through the question, 'What did [agent] do?' (Brown & Miller 1991: 295) where [agent] is human. Human agents are people who perform acts which make 'the world match the words' (Searle 1979: 15). The state of affairs involved allows for an agent to have some control (Risselada 1993: 76). Such agency is prescribed by the selection restrictions of the verb. Indeed, the subject may be left implicit and the agentive nature of the verb solely present as part of the lexical entry of the verb (on explicitness of the agent see 5.2.3). We deal here with dynamic verbs [-static] (e.g. *buy*). The verbs are typically conclusive, i.e. they have an inherent terminal point [+telic] (e.g. *acquire [another company]*) although non-conclusive verbs may appear too [-telic] (e.g. *keep an eye on [the market]*). They may prescribe either a punctual or a durative situation [+/-punctual] (e.g. *stop / consider*). (On semantic properties of the verb, see Quirk *et al.* 1985: 200ff; Van Valin & LaPolla 1997: 92f.)

Propositional structures without such action by a human agent denote 'state' processes. A state process may constitute either of the following situation types described in Quirk *et al.* (1985:

200ff): quality, state, or stance. The proposition may also denote ‘action’ processes (‘state’ vs. ‘action’, see Brown & Miller 1991: 292ff) where the agent is not human or the properties of volition and causation are missing.

In this discussion I omit non-agentive situation types and focus on directive acts. The system in Figure 5-3, and the systems in many figures to come, identifies paradigmatic choices that differentiate acts that may form SUGGESTIONS (if other elements are chosen as well) and acts that do not. The slanted arrow indicates that linguistic realisations follow, and the bullet point list a number of realisations of the choice. Some of the realisation statements are obligatory elements of the semantic property chosen (e.g. ‘action-by-human-agent’). I have indicated in brackets if the realisation is obligatory. Other elements are optional, and yet other potential elements have not been inserted. Apart from the obligatory elements, the realisation statements should be seen as exemplifications of the type of realisations we get.

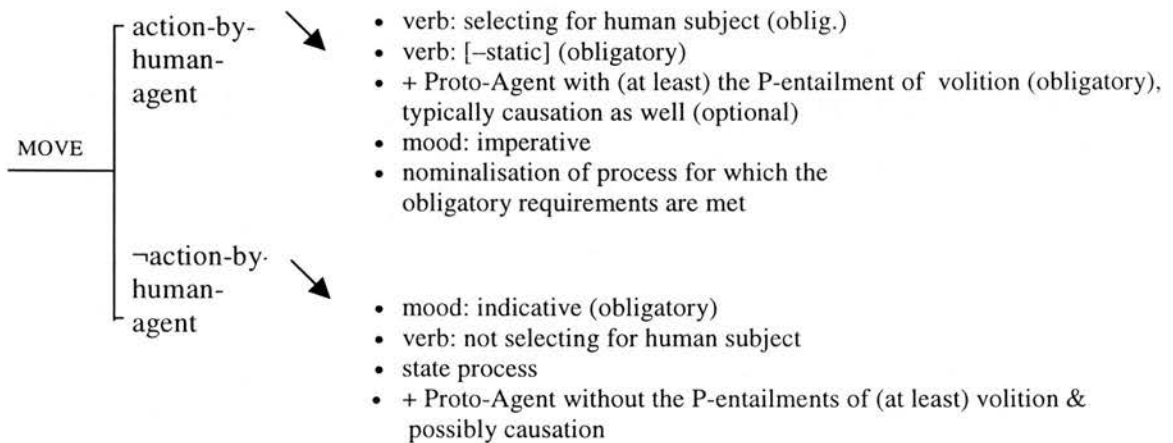


Figure 5-3: Action

'action-by-human-agent' – realisations

Obligatory and optional linguistic features ¹	Corpus examples
verb: [-static] ² , selecting for human subject (obligatory)	-
+ Proto-Agent with (at least) the P-entailment of volition (obligatory); often causation (optional)	(1) And last year we predicted our sales to within a quarter of a per cent for the budget (LF3 U182; 4) (2) And why don't you tell 'em that you'll no be accepting anything unless it's through the system? (PF1 U117; 5) (3) you could buy product lines in from other companies which we're also considering at the moment (LF3 U192; 4)
Imperative mood	(4) So let's let's let's go for this, let's run this for the month of January, let's say, right? Let's see what we can do in the month of January and then review it (PF3 U154; 7)
Nominalisation of process for which the two obligatory requirements above (verb: [-static], human agent ³ , and the Proto-Agent entailments requirement) are met.	(5) that I don't actually believe that standing still 's an option. I don't think there is such a thing as standing still (LF3 U196; 3)

Table 5-1: 'Action-by-human-agent'

¹ I have given no separate examples for obligatory features, as examples of optional features would realise the obligatory feature.

² A few static situation types can actually form part of a directive; the construction would thus assume agency:

Stance: *Don't just stand there (do something)*

State: *Don't be angry*

Imperatives with negative polarity can be seen as the negative image of what is really requested (that something be done). Or the request may be one of asking the addressees to do what is in their power to make the state cease or to facilitate a state. In both cases the underlying actual request no longer specifies a static situation type.

³ [+human], or indeed the subset of [+animate] may not be part of the nominalised verb's selection restrictions but realised through the clause structure or a cohesive link as in example (5).

'¬action-by-human-agent' – realisations

Obligatory and optional linguistic feature	Corpus examples
indicative mood (obligatory)	-
verb: not selecting for human subject	(6) and, I don't, we don't have any really concrete signs that tell us that our business is going to, going to decline (LF3 U196; 3)
state processes, e.g.	(7) Hi, I'm Speaker 3 , and I'm the Product Engineering Manager (PF1 U53; 3)
- identification (7)	(8) And working in a company like this is really, really comfortable (LF3 U182; 4) (+ embedded agentive, subjectless clause)
- attribution (8)	(9) So, I'm not a, not a person with any other significant personal means other than the shares that I have in the, in the business at the moment, which I can't do a lot with. (LF3 U125; 3)
- possessive (9)	
Proto-Agent with no volition & causation, e.g. sentience only (10)	(10) I enjoy my job, I like the company, I like working with the people I work with but I've got this niggling feeling at the back of my mind that I could and should be, be doing a different, a bigger job than I'm doing at the moment. (LF3 U129; 3)

Table 5-2: '¬action-by-human-agent'

If an action process with human agent is selected rather than a non-agentive process, then the next level offers several semantic oppositions. I shall go through these and the choices that depend on each of them in turn.

5.2.2 Agency

It is crucial to the type of act who is acting. A proposed future action where the agent is the speaker may constitute an offer or a promise (on the obligation element in such acts, see 5.2.7) or an act of informing the listener about the speaker's intentions. Infrequently speakers may suggest that they themselves perform a certain action:

- (11) I know you produce a list every day. Now, I get daily dispatches, it won't be every day, but maybe two a week or something like that, and I was thinking of putting that on your lists, to get it, because to me that's a good way of getting.
(PF2 U93; 2)

If the agent is the addressee(s), the speaker may be advising, suggesting, requesting, ordering, etc., depending on the level of optionality and obligation (see examples in 5.2.5 and 5.2.7). When the speaker and the addressee(s) share the agency (as in (12)) of the proposed action the speaker is suggesting an action, since the speaker can neither promise nor offer on behalf of others nor request an action of oneself.

- (12) Should we no **maybe** monitor it once we've got the drawings correct, and everything correct, and start from then?
(PF1 U81; 1)

Finally, the intended agent may be somebody else apart from the speaker and the addressee(s). We find such examples where speakers inform the addressees of a planned action to be carried out by somebody else (e.g. the management of the company) or they express that they expect a certain action to be carried out by somebody else (e.g. another company):

- (13) My guess is he's [an external shareholder] got a lot of money that he would be prepared to put in, I imagine, he would be prepared to put up a million pounds
(LF3 U302; 4)

In rare cases, speakers may suggest that a third party performs a certain action. Such an act is possible in business meetings, as somebody within the company will have the authority to make the intended agent(s) carry out the action. In 3.2.2.3 we saw that suggestions have typically been seen as proposals for action by the addressee, but also that Wierzbicka (1987: 187) argues that suggestions can be used to propose a joint action by the speaker and the addressee. The data from the meetings supports Wierzbicka's claim. Example (14) below illustrates how to these options needs to be added the possibility that one or more persons who are neither speakers nor addressees be identified as intended agent(s). This scenario is possible in meetings, and probably within any setting where some people have authority over others.

(14) I I would think, in the short term, in the short term, until something happens that we want to change it, |Person F|, erm, sorry , |Person M| and |Person W| should communicate delivery dates to the customer
(PF3 U98; 4)

In my system network, I have modelled the agency choices through three semantic choices (agent: 'speaker' or '¬speaker', 'addressee' or '¬addressee', 'other-agent' or '¬other-agent'). Each of the choices may combine with choices from the other systems so that, for example, 'speaker' and 'addressee' may be coselected. This captures the possibility that the speaker and addressee jointly constitute the intended agent, and it also allows for the speaker or addressee (or both) to form the agent together with a third party ('other-agent'). There is, however, one restriction in that the three choices of '¬speaker', '¬addressee' and '¬other-agent' cannot be coselected.

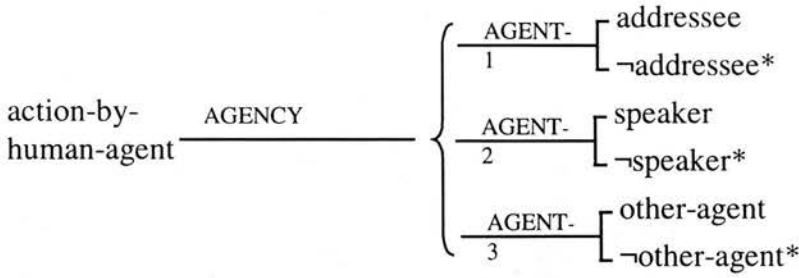
In (15) the agent is the speaker and other people different from the addressees, i.e. we find an exclusive use of *we*. Speaker 4 is informing team members of certain decisions and actions taken before they joined the team.

(15) We arranged benchmarking visits
(PF1 U62; 4)

In example (16), on the other hand, it is the addressee who is grouped with somebody else (the plural use of *you*).

(16) Is there times |Speaker 5| when you're the root cause?
(PF1 U137; 3)

It is clear from Speaker 5's answers (*We're getting there; We're very fortunate if we can even get them [= the customers] to pay for a taxi*) that *you* refers not just to speaker 5 but also to the group of people he is in charge of as Logistics Planning Team Leader.



Key:

*: The three choices cannot co-occur. (Co-occurrence of two choices marked * is acceptable.)

Figure 5-4: Agency

5.2.3 Explicitness of agency

Mostly, the agent is explicit and realised through nominal elements of the clause. However, sometimes it is left implicit.

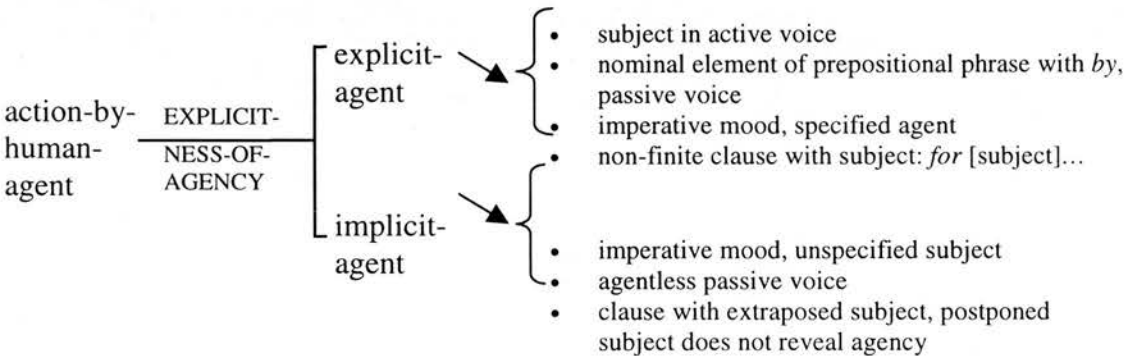


Figure 5-5: Explicitness of agency

Explicit agency may be realised through various linguistic means (see Murcia-Bielsa (1999: 100) on agency realisations in directives in instructional texts):

'Explicit-agent' – realisations

Obligatory and optional linguistic feature	Corpus examples
subject in active voice	(17) I think we could easily stretch ourselves a lot more than we do. (LF3 U190; 4) (18) They 'll say wait a minute, you're behind schedule on that, that and that. (PF1 U146; 5)
nominal element of <i>by</i> -prepositional phrase in passive voice	(19) Institutions invest in companies that are researched, that are known, that are recommended by analysts and so on (LF3 U292; 1)
imperative mood - specified agent: pronoun (20); identifying clause (21)	(20) Let's give ourselves a big round of applause. (PF1 U63; 5) (21) We need to, Speaker 2 , with all due respect you're the guy , get it done now and work it, if it's flawed (PF3 U172; 4)
non-finite clause with subject (<i>it is/would be</i> + [adjective] + (<i>for</i> [subject] + [infinitive]) / ([subject] + [gerund]))	(22) The catalogue of errors, it's hard for us to recover (PF1 U126; 3)

Table 5-3: 'Explicit-agent'

Implicit agency – realisations

Obligatory and optional linguistic feature	Corpus examples
imperative mood - unspecified <i>you</i> (23) - unspecified <i>we</i> (24)	(23) Let the record show that the meeting finished 13 minutes late (LF3 U566; 6) (24) Well, appoint a champion. Now, somebody's gotta take ownership on, and that's what's really needed. Give the champion support; the procedures; the systems; the personnel; and give them the authority, which is very important, and the machinery and training. (PF1 U106; 3) ⁴

⁴ Speaker 3's suggestion follows his own list of expressions of what we want (*We want tae improve our quality, and we want to get it right first time and we want to control the actual manufacturer, we wanna get more information, etc.*) followed by a rhetorical question, *what is the ideal situation?* (PF1 U106; 3)

agentless passive voice	(25) Even though his parts are out of schedule, because guys are trained no [meaning 'not'; Scottish English] to find transport costs. (PF1 U144; 5)
clause with extraposed subject, where the postponed subject does not reveal agency (<i>it is/would be</i> + [adjective] + [infinitive] / [gerund]; mood: declarative or interrogative)	(26) And if it is worth doing (LF3 U450; 6) [implicit agent: 'us']

Table 5-4: 'Implicit-agent'

5.2.4 Time of act

The prescribed act can be either a past, present or future act. My concern here is with acts that prescribe future activity.

Propositions referring to a past or present act will constitute acts of seeking or giving information on an activity in the past, or acts of accusing, blaming, praising, or boasting – all acts that will be performed in the indicative mood.

The semantic notion of 'future-act' is realised in the lexicogrammar through various irrealis elements some of which have already been mentioned in this chapter. The topic of 'future tense' in English has been much discussed in the literature ever since Fries in 1927 argued against talking about a 'future tense' in English. He shows how various other language features may be used as future tenses (e.g. verbs of wishing, possibility, having). Palmer (1990: 160ff; 1986: 216f)) supports the view that the modal verbs are not auxiliaries of the future tense. This view opposes the position of e.g. Wekker (1976) and Davidsen-Nielsen (1988) who have claimed that verbs like WILL and SHALL should be regarded primarily as future-tense morphemes. Davidsen-Nielsen suggests that it is possible to distinguish between primary, temporal auxiliaries, which may indicate future, and volitional modal auxiliaries. If any marker of the future tense should be recognised at all, Palmer argues, the modal auxiliary of *be going to* is a better candidate. However, like other modals also the auxiliary *be going to* may carry other meaning elements than just 'future', e.g. 'intention'. I would therefore not even count *be going to* as a specific marker of future.

Some of the features that can be identified in my data as indicating that the act is a future act rather than a past or present act will be described below. First, imperative mood, time adverbials referring to the future, and volitive verbs (e.g. *intend*, *wish*, *want*) mark future.

Next, the complex system of English modals provides lots of possibilities for indicating future. Epistemic modality may refer either to the past, the present, or the future. Epistemic predictions of the future, however, do not necessarily entail a human action of volition and causation (e.g. epistemic *will*)⁵.

In cases of deontic modality the proposition always refers to the future (Palmer 1990: 46f). This is because deontic modality is essentially performative in that speakers give permission, lay obligations on somebody, or make a promise or threat (Palmer 1990: 69). Also some uses that are not strictly performative (e.g. deontic *should* and *ought to*) refer to future acts, although sometimes there is a sense of non-actuality (the event has not or does not take place – Palmer 1990: 123).

Dynamic modality sometimes indicates future. While generally presenting a proposition in the present ('present willingness or ability'), it is typically implied that such willingness and ability will continue into the future (Palmer 1990: 47). However, the pure possibility or necessity of a process, as in neutral dynamic modality, does not prescribe a human agent's act with volition and an act that 'caus[es] an event or change of state in another participant' (Dowty's P-entailments). Neutral modality is, therefore, not relevant here. The mere ability of subjects in propositions (dynamic possibility) does not entail volition and causation either. However, in cases of dynamic necessity (rather than possibility) circumstances make a certain process or act necessary – the situation imposes an obligation on the subject (see 5.2.7). In its dynamic sense, *must* (as well as the semi-modals *have to*, *have got to*) 'does not allow for the event referred to not to take place' (Palmer 1990: 123). The performance of the act by the subject is, strictly speaking, not out of volition, but if the act is carried out it typically causes a change of state (causation). Sometimes dynamic necessity is less categorical and the act is not entirely necessary but just very highly recommended. In such cases the speaker has a choice and volition is involved. This would make the cases qualify for categorisation as 'action-by-human-agent'.

As we have tried to identify modality which involves a hypothetical or future action and volition and causation, we have seen how Palmer's dynamic modals of necessity are very close to being deontic rather than dynamic modals. The line between the two categories is very thin. It is generally the case for many examples of modals that even though they can be categorised as one type, by implication they have an additional function which would be of another type. For example, sometimes dynamic possibility may have an additional deontic meaning (which may by convention be the interpretation chosen by interlocutors). Presenting or questioning what one can do or what is possible often amounts to suggesting that 'what is possible will, or should, be implemented' (Palmer 1990: 86) or a reference to the willingness of the subject to perform the action (Coates 1983: 95). Speech act theorists' favorite example, *Can/could you pass the salt, please?*, illustrates this. An example from the meetings could be,

(27) We could do a summary of the advantages and disadvantages
(LF3 U280; 7)

Generally, any instance of dynamic possibility, be it subject oriented or neutral modality, where some element of benefit or desirability on the part of the speaker, addressee(s), or others is implied ('it would be useful for us to do a summary of advantages or disadvantages'; 'it would be of benefit to me if you pass the salt as I would like to add salt to my food') puts an obligation on the addressee or creates a desire to perform the suggested or requested act (see 5.2.8). In this manner, volition and/or causation is likely to be brought into play even though dynamic modality in itself does not entail these particular properties.

What I have demonstrated above is that various types of modality entail futurity. However, some types of modality with a reference to the future are not relevant here, as they do not prescribe future acts by a human agent (+ volition, (+ causation) – see 5.2.1). Some acts do not on the surface prescribe such human activity but do so through implication (see example (27), and example (37) below in Table 5-5).

⁵ I take 'intention' to entail 'volition' so that examples of modals of intention (e.g. *will/shall* = 'intention') carry the meaning of volition as well (see also Coates 1983: 173)

Closely related to modal verbs as indicators of future are semi-modals or semi-auxiliaries like *be going to*, *be bound to*, *have to*, *have got to*, *be willing to*, *be meant to*, etc. which also mark the time as future.

Conditionals are another way for speakers to indicate that an act is a future act. Generally, conditionals are predictive as one proposition is presented as causally dependent on the other and hence predictable from it (Palmer 1990: 170). Conditionals may be unreal, though, which takes the future element away and leaves us just with unreality. Many unreal conditionals (as marked with past tense) may still indicate (potential) future, even though they do not actually predict a certain act. This is for example the case when the modal *could* in its dynamic sense appears in the *if*-clause as in (28) and implication adds a deontic element as described above:

(28) Right, if someone could help me with these pages
(PF1 U112; 3).

Like with a modal in the *if*-clause, a dynamic modal in the main clause in an unreal conditional may (deontically) propose a future (hypothetical) action rather than just present it as unreal:

(29) If we found the company that was good for an acquisition we could do it even if it was a risk
(LF3 U192; 4).

With or without modal verbs, conditionals that are real prescribe future time, as do unreal conditionals with the deontic implication of proposing an action. Presenting a potential action in a conditional in most cases has a tentative effect which increases the options for the addressee(s) to perform or not perform the action (following Leech (1983) we refer to this as ‘optionality’; see 3.2.1.3 and 5.2.5). Optionality may or may not be linked to the speaker’s presenting the action as dependent on the addressee’s volition (*If you want to [...], then [action]*). Here the speaker questions the addressee’s desire for the action to be carried out; desirability is linked to benefit relations. I shall deal with indications of benefit and desirability later (see 5.2.8). Obviously conditionals do not always have these overtones of optionality, and the benefit/desirability element may only be contextually present. An example of this is (30) (benefit element: ‘it would be of benefit to you to find/have an institutional investor’):

(30) And one of the things that some people will look seriously at, and it happens all the time, is to get some more money from the existing institutional investor, or, if you haven't got one, find one
(LF3 U296; 6)

Conditional relations are not only realised through the *if*-construction. The subordinating conjunctions *when* and *once*, for example, combine condition with time (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1089). *Unless* is another conjunction that implies condition. A circumstantial adverbial may also encapsulate a condition (see example (44) in Table 5-5). Palmer has also amply shown how conditions can be implicit and implied through modals. (45) in Table 5-5 is an example of this from my corpus.

Implicit conditions as well as unreality are indicated through past tense even though a future sense is often implied. Past tense in subordinate clauses of indirect speech (or thought) is another manner in which future can be implied. As regards tense of the verb otherwise, present tense is commonly used to describe a future act as long as the future sense is marked through other means such as time adverbials.

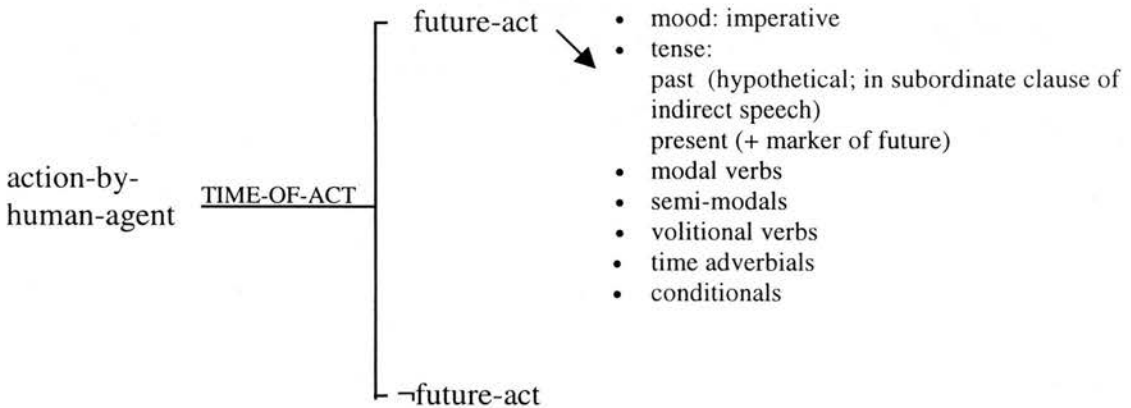


Figure 5-6: Future act

'future-act' – realisations

Obligatory and optional linguistic feature	Corpus examples
imperative mood	(31) Just, er, let's list down the things you consider the disadvantages of a trade sale now or in the next couple of years (LF3 U272; 6)
tense: hypothetical past (perfect) (+ modal verb + <i>be</i>)	(32) and I had thought the next best opportunity to sell if you use the word sell, would be to have managed our way through another recession where we had proved ourselves hopefully to be reasonably recession proof, and maybe picked up some rather, er, er, non-rigorous acquisitions along the way (LF3 U262; 2)
tense: past tense in subordinate clause of indirect speech	(33) I just said that in terms of maximising the best price of the business for a trade sale, that was that was right. (LF3 U265; 2)
simple present (+ other irrealis marker)	(34) and when you learn how to monitor your cash I think you probably never forget that how important cash is to the stability of a business. (LF3 U200; 6) (<i>when</i> → temporal (/conditional) enhancement)
modal verbs - deontic modality (35) - epistemic modality (36) - some instances of dynamic modality ((37): + deontic implication; (38): + volition)	(35) The question is, which you may choose not to answer, if other people in this room believe that the two individuals are capable of doing what they think it is they're capable of doing? (36) But you but you, the thing is you've got to ask a specific person. You might not go to him, but you would go to somebody else because you know that it could be done or you'd have a better chance of getting it done (37) I think we could easily stretch ourselves a lot more than we do (LF3 U190; 4) (38) I'll work it through with you because we've got new additions to the team (PF1 U63; 3)
semi-modals (e.g. <i>be going to, be bound to, have to, have got to, be willing to</i>)	(39) and, I don't, we don't have any really concrete signs that tell us that our business is going to, going to decline (LF3 U196; 3)
volitive verb (e.g. <i>intend, wish, want, would like to</i>)	(40) So, d'you want to start off? (PF1 U61; 1)
time adverbial	(41) So, I've got apologies from Person M and Person L who should be with us next week . (PF1 U61; 1)
subordinating conjunctions with future meaning (e.g. <i>when, once, as soon as</i>)	(42) and when you learn how to monitor your cash I think you probably never forget that how important cash is to the stability of a business. (LF3 U200; 6)
conditionals - real conditionals (43)	(43) if you buy a reasonably allied company, you've always got, as it were, a secondary bottom line there

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unreal conditionals with future implied (44) - implied condition (45) (implied condition: <i>if I were to decide... / if it was up to me...</i>; see Palmer 1990: 172 on implicit conditions) 	<p>of what you may be able to pull out of the two companies by making the most of the synergistic aspects of it as well. (LF3 U368; 2)</p> <p>(44) with a steady, positive stream of money, cash flow, you could take on, you could buy product lines in from other companies which we're also considering at the moment</p> <p>(45) And that is that with the team that we have at the moment at [This Firm] I would not really consider us in any acquisition going away from either the market we understand or the technology that we understand. (LF3 U369; 1)</p>
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Table 5-5: 'Future-act'

5.2.5 Optionality

If the time of the action is future, then the action can be presented as optional or obligatory, or rather with a higher or lower level of optionality or obligation (cf. Searle's criterion of the 'force or strength with which the illocutionary point is presented'). One of the continua by which Risselada subclassifies directives is a continuous scale of 'bindingness' where 'binding' constitutes one extreme and 'optional' another extreme (1993: 48; see also Leech 1983). Bindingness/optionality is defined as

the extent to which the action that is specified in the content of the directive is forced upon the addressee; or formulated differently, the extent to which the speaker leaves the addressee an option of non-compliance
(Risselada 1993: 46)

Devices for weakening the strength of manipulative speech acts (Givón 1990: 806ff) generally have the effect of indicating some optionality, although, at times, the indication is not genuine as when social norms require the addressee to act following the speaker's request, for example. Below I shall return to realisations where the act is presented as little optional or even highly obligatory, as I add a further level of delicacy to the choice of low optionality.

Optionality in English can be indicated in numerous ways. Givón's list of devices for weakening manipulative strength and Pérez Hernández's (1999) account of various speech act categories are

inspirations for the list given below of types of expressions that indicate optionality in directives where the agent is the addressee (and speaker and/or a third party).

Interestingly, it appears that speakers indicate optionality whether the intended agent is the addressee only or the addressee and speaker jointly. Supposedly, in the latter scenario it is still essential to demonstrate that the addressee is not obliged to perform the proposed action even though the speaker is also presented as responsible for the action. Furthermore, speakers probably use the markers of optionality to allow for an opt-out for themselves and lower their own commitment to the action. If speakers differentiated the levels of commitment of themselves as opposed to the addressees, two types of acts would be performed rather than one – one of promising and one of suggesting, for example.

When speakers present themselves as intended agents of a future action, it is the level of optionality that determines whether they are promising or suggesting. In promises speakers commit themselves to the act, thus leaving only little optionality. If the speaker indicates that the act is optional and that the addressees have a say as to whether it should be performed or not, the speaker is suggesting rather than promising.

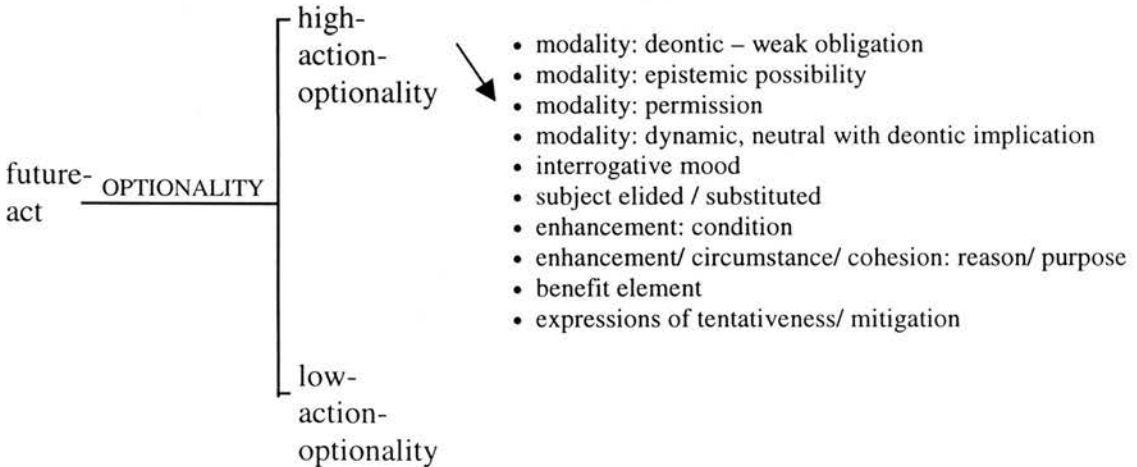


Figure 5-7: Optionality

Obligatory and optional linguistic feature	Effect	Corpus examples
Epistemic possibility (e.g. <i>may, can</i>)	A (seemingly) neutral statement that an agent may or may not choose to perform a specific action signals optionality.	(46) This may be a slightly unfair question which er, you may wish to comment on (LF3 U169; 6)
weak obligation (e.g. <i>should, ought to</i> (Coates 1983: 5, 59) – often mitigated by tentative expression; see below)	Weak obligation allows for optionality	(47) but I think we should be prepared to take such a, such a risk. (LF3 U192; 4)
dynamic, neutral modality with deontic implication (see 5.2.4)	The unreal sense of the dynamic modal <i>could</i> removes the immediate obligation on the intended agent.	(48) I think we could easily stretch ourselves a lot more than we do (LF3 U190; 4)
Interrogative mood (e.g. <i>Why don't you/we...!</i> / <i>How about...!</i> / <i>What if you/we...</i>)	Allowing for opt-out option for the speaker as the interrogative mood presents the proposition as (partially) open (Risselada 1993: 71) – making it non-imposing (cf. Givón 1990: 808)	(49) why don't you tell them that you'll no be accepting anything unless it's through the system? (PF1 U117; 5)
subject elided (e.g. <i>How about + [gerund] / Why not + [bare infinitive]</i> / Circumstance: Manner, with gerund (50))	Opt-out option even stronger as there is no reference to the intended agent. This allows addressees to infer that they are not the intended agent should they wish to do so (Perez Hernandez 1999)	(50) And because of the IFirm GI deal at the moment just generally we feel that there might be, bearing in mind that there is quite a major restructuring of the general lighting business going on at the moment anyway, er, more fruitful deals to be had by effectively taking over what are regarded now as uninteresting product, er product lines by the two big lighting manufacturers. (LF3 U309; 2)
subject substituted - other person(s) (51) - speaker (explicit condition) (52) - speaker (implicit condition; see	Strong opt-out – removing obligation to interpret the intended agent as the addressee	(51) And one of the things that some people will look seriously at, and it happens all the time, is to get some more money from the existing institutional investor, (LF3 U296; 6) (52) If I was you , in the short term I

5.2.4) (53)		would cover your backsides, (PF3 U106; 7)
alternative coordination	Explicit choice	(53) And that is that with the team that we have at the moment at [This Firm] I would not really consider us in any acquisition going away from either the market we understand or the technology that we understand. (LF3 U369; 1) --
Enhancement: Condition – action specified in <i>if</i> -clause	Hypothetical meaning minimises obligation on agent(s). Sometimes the main clause contains a consequence which is evaluated positively (in (56) the consequence is negative but with positive implications as revealed in the paratactically linked main clause (and it proves...). That way the speaker is presenting a result and indirectly a purpose/reason for the act. This part is open for contention by the addressee which increases the degree of optionality.	(54) We could either put 12 voltors in with converters or ways of lo... (HF1 U36; 1) (55) Right, if someone could help me with these pages. (PF1 U112; 3) (56) If we can benchmark, like, our performance, saying that what we're doing now has succeeded and we're making customers' delivery dates anything he's gotta do is gonna jeopardise it, and it proves he's got to be a wee bit more flexible to us (PF1 133; 3)
Enhancement: Condition – action specified in main clause - <i>if</i> -clause contains volitive verb (57) - no volitive verb (58) & (59)	<i>Conditionals with volitive verb in if-clause:</i> Explicating the intended agent(s)'s hypothetical desire for a certain state that would (or could) become real if the proposed act is performed. This leaves the intended agents with the option of contesting the presumption made about their state of mind. That way they have the option of rejecting the condition that makes the action feasible/possible.	(57) and then if you want to make a big one [acquisition] use someone else's money to do it (LF3 U200; 6) (58) or, if you haven't got one, find one, for like to bolster, beef the company up for a couple of years before the planned listing (LF3 U296; 6) (59) with a steady, positive stream of money, cash flow, you could take on, you could buy product lines in from other companies which we're also considering at the moment

Conditionals with no volitive verb:

Stating the conditions under which the action should or could be carried out.

Depending on what the described circumstances are, the intended agent may dispute them. It is less imposing to propose actions with conditions than it is to prescribe an action with no conditions attached.

This type of condition gives less optionality than conditionals with volitive verbs.

<p>Enhancement/ Circumstance: Reason (e.g. <i>because / because of</i>)</p>	<p>Appealing to addressee's rationality (Perez Hernandez 1999: 141) in making reason for action clear, i.e. negotiable. Thus allowing for rejection of action on the basis of disagreement with reason.</p>	<p>(60) and I was thinking of putting that [daily dispatches] on your lists, to get it, because to me that's a good way of getting (PF2 U93; 2) (61) And because of the [Firm G] deal at the moment just generally we feel that there might be, bearing in mind that there is quite a major restructuring of the general lighting business going on at the moment anyway, er, more fruitful deals to be had by effectively taking over what are regarded now as uninteresting product, er product lines by the two big lighting manufacturers (LF3 U309; 3)</p>
<p>Enhancement/ Circumstance/ Cohesive link: Purpose (e.g. <i>in order to..., (for) [subject] to.../ with a view to...; [...]. That's why...</i>)</p>	<p>Appealing to addressee's rationality (Perez Hernandez 1999: 173) in making purpose of action clear. This allows the addressees to judge whether the proposed action is reasonable or not.</p>	<p>(62) and the idea was that we wanted to keep a team around [Speaker 2], and that's why we're trying to do it this way is to keep the team with you so that you feel you've got support (PF1 U205; 4)</p>
<p>benefit/desirability for addressee(s) (& speaker) made clear (e.g. 2nd person + volitive verb +</p>	<p>The evaluation of the benefit or desirability of a given action may be contested by other participants which adds an element of optionality (cf. Perez Hernandez 1999: 154;</p>	<p>(63) and then if you want to make a big one [acquisition] use someone else's money to do it (LF3 U200; 6)</p>

conditional;
for more examples,
see chapter 6)

169). If the evaluation is introduced in a complex clause with conditional, purpose, or reason clauses, the proposition is more open for contention than when the evaluation is only implicitly present through the speaker's choice of words and reference to background knowledge or previous discourse.

expressions of tentativeness and mitigation (e.g. <i>I think, maybe, just</i>)	Pseudo-epistemic modalities functioning as deontic modality in mitigating expressions that mitigate imposition at the interpersonal level, thus increasing optionality.	(64) I think we could easily stretch ourselves a lot more than we do. (LF3 U190; 4) (65) Should we no maybe monitor it once we've got the drawings correct, and everything correct, and start from then? (PF1 U81; 1) (66) We might just take a natural break there. (LF3 U372; 6)
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Table 5-6: 'Optionality'

5.2.6 Level of restriction

If speakers indicate high optionality, the optionality may either originate in the speakers themselves, as when they give permission for agents to act, or the options may exist independently of the speakers. The difference between the two types is one of restriction (cf. Coates' suggestion that we can differentiate possibility and permission through a gradient of restriction; Coates 1983: 88ff). In the first case, the speaker restricts the freedom of the agent to act and makes it dependent on the speaker's permission. In the second case, the actions would be optional whether the speakers express such optionality or not.

There is a further difference between permission giving and SUGGESTIONS. In most cases of permission giving, speakers respond to other speakers asking for permission. Alternatively, the permission giver presupposes that the addressee wishes to be granted permission to perform the specific action. In other words, it is the speaker who is granted permission who is (seen as) putting the specific action on the agenda, not the permission giver. When speakers make SUGGESTIONS, they are the ones who initiate talk about the proposed action.

In the corpus permission giving is very rare. In the autonomous groups (see chapter 2) the speakers seek equality among themselves. This is likely to make them avoid giving permission and instead suggest actions. Besides, the task of the groups is not so much to seek acceptance or permission for certain actions, but to decide together which actions are most suitable in their attempt to meet their objectives. When we do find examples where speakers ask for permission, the construction is typically used as a preparation device for what comes next (e.g. (67)).

(67) **Can I, can I take one theme out of that** which is, might be relevant to this discussion which is the risk factor. Er, I think its been assumed by the other three of you that, er, underlying all this, is not to, not to risk what you've already achieved (LF3 U193; 6)

Such questions are rhetorical devices rather than real requests for permission as evidenced by the fact that other speakers typically do not respond to them.

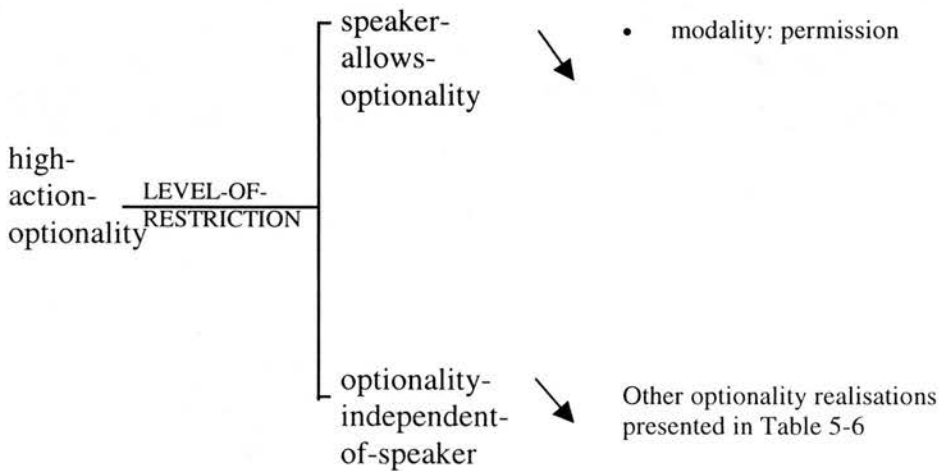


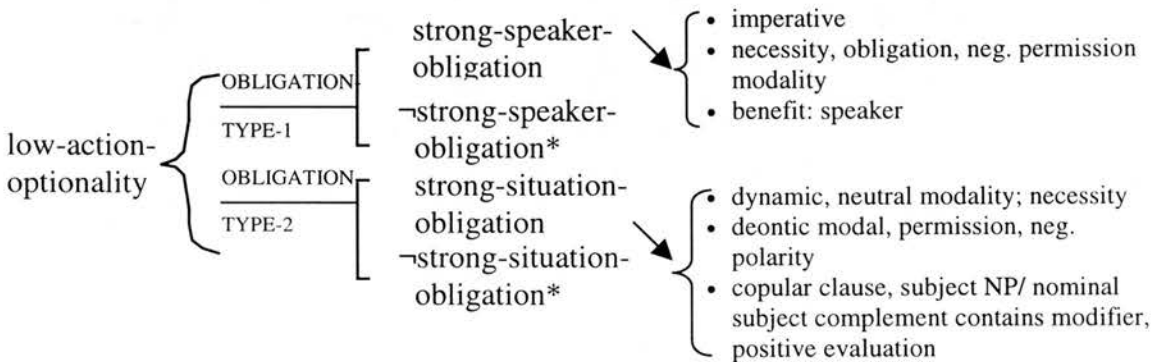
Figure 5-8: Restriction

Obligatory and optional linguistic feature	Effect	Corpus examples
permission (e.g. <i>may</i> , <i>can</i> ; very infrequent in the corpus ⁶)	When speakers give permission, they express the freedom for the addressee (or addressee and speaker jointly) to act.	(68) Yes, we can put it to Firm Fl (LF3 U485; 1; response to the question: 'Is that another question that we need to put to Firm Fl really?' in LF3 U484; 4)

Table 5-7: 'speaker-allows-optionalty'

5.2.7 Obligation

If the level of optionality is low, some kind of obligation is imposed on the intended agent. The obligation can take different forms. Either the speakers add the element of obligation, or else the situation makes it difficult or impossible to avoid having to perform the particular act.



Key:

*: The two choices cannot co-occur. If neither the speaker nor the situation imposes an obligation on the intended agent, then the action optionality is high and we would not have entered the 'low-action-optionalty' system but instead chosen the 'high-action-optionalty' system at an earlier level in the network.

Figure 5-9: Obligation

⁶ One could even argue that (68) is an example of dynamic neutral modality, although the question-answer sequence justifies a 'permission' reading.

'speaker-obligation' – realisations

When giving commands and orders speakers have a certain authority (see 2.1.3) which allows them to impose strong obligation on the addressee. In the meeting corpus that type of act is virtually non-existent (except in jokes). Promises, and to some extent offers, are also cases where the speakers impose obligation, but this time on themselves rather than on others (on agency, see section 5.2.2). I shall not deal with such cases here because my focus is directives.

As with commands and orders, in requests speakers impose a certain level of obligation on the addressee although the obligation in this case is much weaker. In other words, requests involve some optionality which, for example, may be indicated through interrogative mood (see 5.2.5). Again we are dealing with degrees rather than absolutes. I have indicated the scalar nature of the choices in the network: 'speaker-obliging-strongly', implying that the complementary choice of '¬speaker-obliging-strongly' contains both less strong obligations imposed by the speaker and instances where no obligation is indicated.

Neither promises nor commands are common acts in the corpus. Requests, on the other hand, are much more common. They typically display optionality features (see 5.2.5) which work to mitigate the obligation due to face needs and norms of politeness (e.g. Brown & Levinson 1987; Leech 1983; Butler 1988). Despite the surface indicators of high optionality, the level of option is lowered by an implicit obligation in the proposal. Addressees will understand an example such as (74) in Table 5-8 as imposing a significant level of obligation on them through inference, based on convention (for a discussion of the role of inference vs. codification, see 3.2.1). The inference tells them that the reason the speaker asks about the ability of the addressee to perform the action is that it would be of benefit or desirable to the speaker. Ruiz de Mendoza (1994; referred to in Perez Hernandez 1999: 102f) has argued that when speakers present themselves as beneficiaries it activates a model of social interaction according to which the members of a community feel compelled to change those states of affairs which are not desirable for others. (In orders and commands this activation is not necessary because the speaker's authority is sufficient to create a reason for the intended agent to act). Because of the optionality markers in such requests, the obligation imposed on the addressee in requests such as example (74) is lower than in cases with no optionality markers.

Obligatory and optional linguistic feature	Effect	Corpus examples
Imperative	No optionality	(69) And every day you progress that sheet there right, any problems, you put your head in my door every day and you say okay , okay okay, right? (PF3 U109; 7)
Deontic modality & semi-modals – necessity, performative (i.e. with speaker involvement) (e.g. <i>must</i>) (69) – obligation (subjective) (e.g. <i>should, ought to</i>) (71) – permission, negative (72)	No optionality	(70) ...then we' ll do those two... (HF1 U142; 1) ⁷ (71) The system should be a fortnight, not a fax and a phonecall. (PF1 U116; 3) ⁸ (72) With all due respect, you can't tell your customer what to do. (PF1 U119; 4)
benefit: speaker (on realisation: see 5.2.8)	Addressee under social obligation to maximise benefit / minimise cost to speaker (e.g. (74): it would be of benefit to the speaker if she understood the question).	(73) Okay and what, what I want what what I'd like ... (74) Sorry, can you repeat the question? (PF1 U104; 1)

Table 5-8: 'Speaker-obligation'

'Situation-obligation' – realisations

The other obligation type is cases where the obligation originates in the situational context. Relevant situational factors can be external to the company and the group (e.g. political, legal, social, ethical, labour- and market conditions, etc.). Or they can be company internal (e.g.

⁷ *will* is not normally considered a deontic modal, but it can occur, as in example (70), with 3rd person (plural) where the speaker imposes an element of obligation on the remaining set of participants specified by *we*. We can ascribe the element of volition to one of the intended agents, namely the speaker. This places deontic necessity on the rest of the set, i.e. the other participants, here the addressees.

⁸ The comment follows a description of how the customers do not follow procedures. The example can be seen as one of subjective obligation (moral: judgement of the customers' behaviour) as well as objective obligation (describing correct procedure) – see Coates (1983: 59). It can, therefore, also be presented as an example of 'strong-situation-obligation'.

obligations laid down by managers at a higher level in the company hierarchy, needs and necessities created by the set-up of the company, obligations that originate in the cultural web of the company, i.e. the history of the company, symbols, relations between people, etc.). They may also be group internal, i.e. based on rules established for that particular group, the dynamics between the individuals, and norms adopted from the greater contextual sphere (cultural, business, etc.) by individual participants. Finally, a concrete situation may exclude all but one way forward.

Obligatory and optional linguistic feature	Corpus examples	Situational factor
dynamic, neutral modality – necessity (e.g. <i>must, should, ought to, had better, need</i>)	(75) I, the, there is a tremendous amount of strategic and semi-strategic stuff that even a company of [This Firm]'s size ought to be doing (LF3 U168; 3) (76) Why should and must it be solved? Well, first of all to reduce the work in progress. Secondly, which I think is pretty important, we'll lose customers. Thirdly, to give job security. (PF1 U86; 3)	(75): Company external norms and ideals about links between company practice and strategic planning (76): Contextual expectations about what is good and bad for a business and its employees + element of company internal considerations linked to the norms in the Western capitalistic society (e.g. desirability of ensuring job security for employees)
semi-modals (dynamic, neutral) (e.g. <i>have to, have got to, be supposed to</i>)	(77) We know we're gonna have to be flexible with some things (PF1 U110; 3) [in our relationship with the customers] (78) That's what we're, that's just what this group's supposed to try to do. (PF1 U118; 3) ['that' = 'tell [the customer] that you'll no be accepting anything unless it's through the system?' (PF1 U117; 5)] (79) Well, you've gotta say to them [the customers], like, your system, you've gotta be hard with them sometimes.(PF1 U122; 5) (80) The more you let them away with it, the more they'll muck you	(77): Norms about good practice in the relationship to customers (= broad business norms which have been adopted at company and group level + market force concerns). (78): Company internal obligation: higher level managerial decisions prescribe actions at group level. Also group's attempt to establish their task and rules. (80): company & individual concerns about pride &

	about I think. (PF1 U127; 5)	economic consequences of being 'mucked about' (negative effect implied in (79), made explicit five turns later in (80))
deontic modal, permission, negative polarity (e.g. <i>can't</i>)	(81) With all due respect, you can't tell your customer what to do. (PF1 U119; 4)	Norms about good practice in the relationship to customers (related to market force concerns)
copular clause with subject NP or nominal subject complement	(82) And the important one is to control what's going out of the door to stop it coming back in. (CF2 U158; 2)	Situational factor not made explicit but just assumed.
containing modifier which signals positive evaluation	(83) picking the point is an important issue (LF3 U261; 6) (84) The obvious one is it needs to be set up with methods cards. (CF2 U188; 2)	

Table 5-9: 'situation-obligation'

When speakers present an action as a necessity due to circumstances (neutral modality; Palmer 1990), however convincingly they assert this obligation as being neutral it is the speakers' judgement that such obligation exists. It is also their choice to emphasise the particular situational factors that they refer to; any other factor could have been selected. So even though the propositions are presented as neutral, they are both loaded with norms and representing an obligation which the speaker places on the intended agent. The speaker adds a deontic element to the otherwise neutral modality. Palmer claims that *have (got) to*⁹ 'specifically denies any involvement by the speaker, and is, therefore, never performative' (1990: 70) and never has the speaker as deontic source (1990: 131). It seems to me that it may have a primary function as neutral modal but in the examples here (e.g. (79)) the speaker's judgement does interfere and impose a speaker originated obligation on the intended agent.

To be able to capture instances where situational aspects and speaker opinion are combined I have modelled the choice as in Figure 5-9 above. The figure contains two systems of obligation type, one in which the speaker may be obliging strongly or not, and one in which the situation may impose such strong obligation or not. This allows for both speaker and situation to impose

obligations on the intended agent(s). When low levels of obligation are chosen (i.e. ‘¬speaker-obliging-strongly’ or ‘¬situation-obliging-strongly’) the choice of ‘high-action-optionality’ would have been chosen earlier in the network. Above (in 5.2.5) I have given realisation generalisations and examples of optionality in proposals.

5.2.8 Benefit or desirability

In various connections above the concepts of benefit and desirability has been touched on. For example, we saw that if a proposed action by the addressee is marked as beneficial to the speaker it imposes a social obligation on the addressee. As opposed to that, when the action is presented as beneficial or desirable to the addressee it increases the addressee’s optionality (as the addressee can contradict the evaluation of the action as beneficial/desirable or decline to perform the act which might impose a cost on somebody else).

The alternative to high benefit is no or little benefit which in effect may mean high cost.

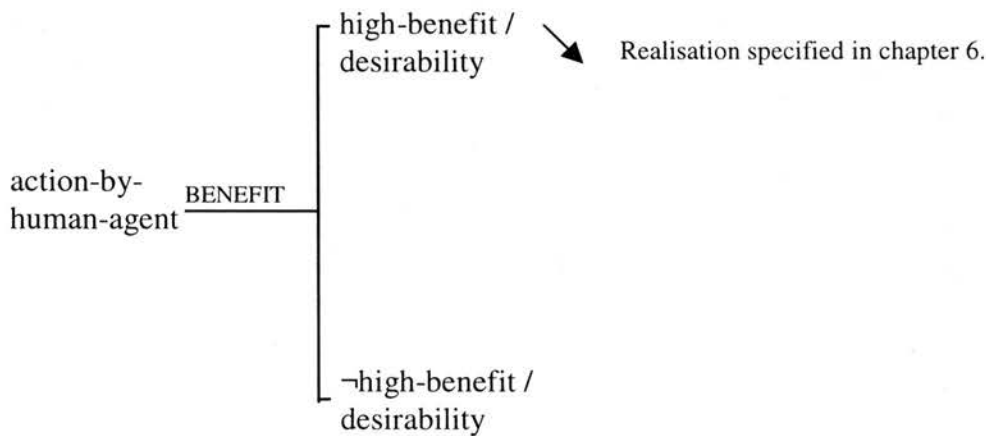


Figure 5-10: Benefit / desirability

Taking the choice of ‘high-benefit/desirability’ first, the concepts of benefit/desirability are closely related. If something is beneficial it is typically considered desirable as well. Maybe less

⁹ Coates (1983: 52ff) notes that *have to* and *have got to* should not be treated as equivalent. *have got to* has most of the formal defining modal properties whereas *have to* has not, and they do not cover the same

straightforwardly, it is also usually the case that what is desirable is also beneficial (cf. Murcia Bielsa 1999: 106). However, we need to define the relationship between these meanings more accurately. I shall return to this in 6.1. In chapter 6 I will also give examples of realisations of the choice of ‘high-benefit/desirability’.

It is worth noting here that it is the possible choice of benefit/desirability which makes the set of choices I have identified here differ from a set of properties proposed by Heine. Heine’s set describes agent-oriented modals.

- a. There is some force (**F**) that is characterized by an “element of will” (Jespersen 1924:320-1), i.e., that has an interest in an event either occurring or not occurring.
 - b. The event is to be performed typically by a controlling agent (**C**).
 - c. The event is dynamic (**D**), i.e., it involves the manipulation of a situation and is conceived of typically as leading to a change of state.
 - d. The event has not yet taken place at reference time, i.e., its occurrence, if it does in fact take place (see (e) below), will be *later than the reference time* (**L**).
 - e. The event is non-factual (Palmer 1986:96), though there is a certain *degree of probability* that it will occur (**P**).
- (Heine 1995: 29)

Coates adds to this list a sixth property which is necessary to distinguish epistemic and ‘Root Possibility’: Subjectivity (**S**) (Coates 1995: 59). Forms expressing epistemic possibility involve subjectivity, whereas root possibility does not.

To a wide extent, the set of properties coincides with the choices I have proposed above for the network, but there are a few essential exceptions. I have conflated S, F, and C into the agent, and L and P are conflated in the future choice. However, the most significant difference is my addition of the benefit/desirability choice. This element, then, is clearly a crucial defining property of SUGGESTIONS.

Van Eemeren and Grootendorst suggest that positive evaluation is essential for the performance of proposals (we can probably consider proposals part of the set of SUGGESTIONS).

semantic range (e.g. *have to* can be habitual in meaning unlike *have got to*)

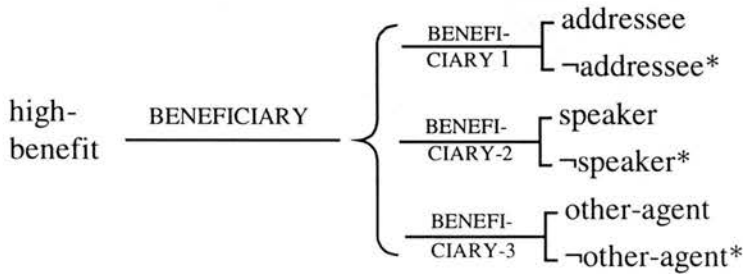
Performing a proposal presupposes that the speaker himself believes it to be a *good proposal*. According to the preparatory conditions for the performance of a proposal, the speaker also wants it to be accepted by the listener, otherwise his proposal would be pointless. *One way to get the proposal accepted by the listener, would be to show that it is in his interest.*

(van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1991: 162; my emphasis)

This supports the impression that indications of benefit and desirability are essential properties of SUGGESTIONS.

5.2.9 Beneficiary

The system network models the different choices of beneficiaries as for the agency choices, namely through three semantic oppositions (beneficiary: ‘speaker’ or ‘¬speaker’, ‘addressee’ or ‘¬addressee’, ‘other-beneficiary’ or ‘¬other-beneficiary’). This allows for the speaker and addressee to be beneficiary jointly, and it allows for the speaker or addressee (or both) to form the beneficiary together with a third party.



Key:

*: The three choices cannot co-occur. (Co-occurrence of two choices marked * is acceptable).

Figure 5-11: Beneficiary

5.2.10 Explicitness of beneficiary

The beneficiary of a particular proposed action may be made explicit or left implicit.

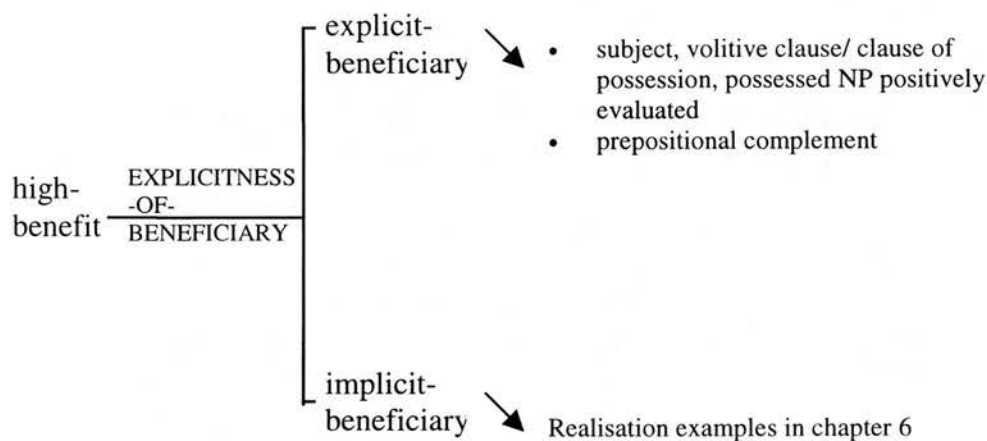


Figure 5-12: Explicitness of benefit

'Explicit beneficiary' – realisations

Obligatory and optional linguistic features	Corpus examples
subject	(85) and then if you want to make a big one [acquisition] use someone else's money to do it (LF3 U200; 6)...
- volitive clause (85)	
- clause of possession; the possessed NP positively evaluated (86)	(86) and the idea was that we wanted to keep a team around Speaker 2 , and that's why we're trying to do it this way is to keep the team with you so that you feel you've got support (PF1 U205; 4)
prepositional complement	(87) Well there's the MBOs, er, the MBOs, er four of them are doing that acquisition strategy for us and they came up with nothing very quickly. (LF3 U375; 4) [MBO = Management Buy-Out]
	(88) and the idea was that we wanted to keep a team around Speaker 2 , and that's why we're trying to do it this way is to keep the team with you so that you feel you've got support (PF1 U205; 4)

Table 5-10: Explicit beneficiary

'Implicit-beneficiary'

Examples where the benefit relation is left implicit are typically more difficult to identify. We – as well as other participants in the meetings – are left to make inferences about whether the speaker is making any evaluative judgement or not as to the desirability of the action. Basically, in such examples speakers make use of contextual aspects and positive lexical evaluations (or, in cases where the speakers suggest that they avoid costs, they use negative evaluation plus negation) to imply the benefit relation. See chapter 6 for further discussion of such implied meanings.

5.2.11 Benefit type

In the previous section I alluded to the fact that benefit may also take the shape of cost avoidance.

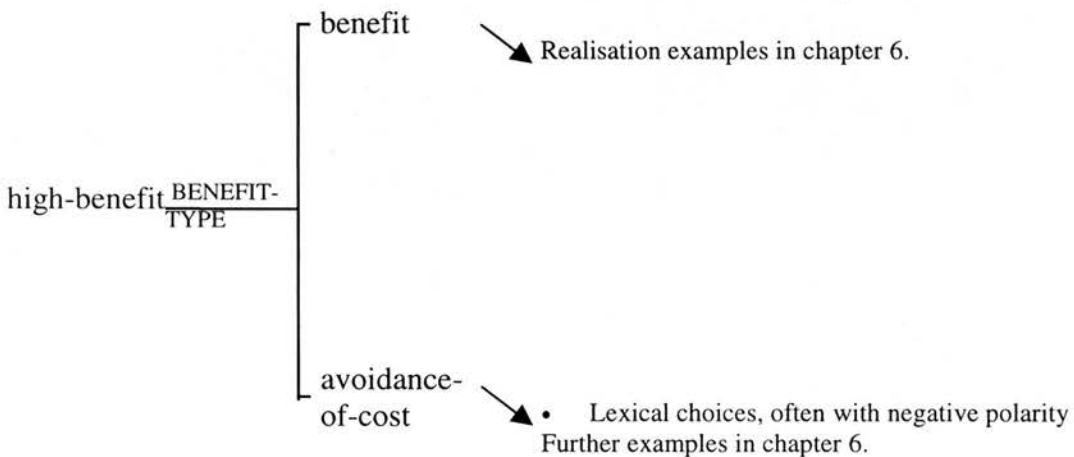


Figure 5-13: Benefit type

Straightforward benefit has been exemplified above, and I shall just give one example here of a speaker proposing an action with the aim of minimising/avoiding a cost (warnings is one such type of action but it is not common for the register of meetings):

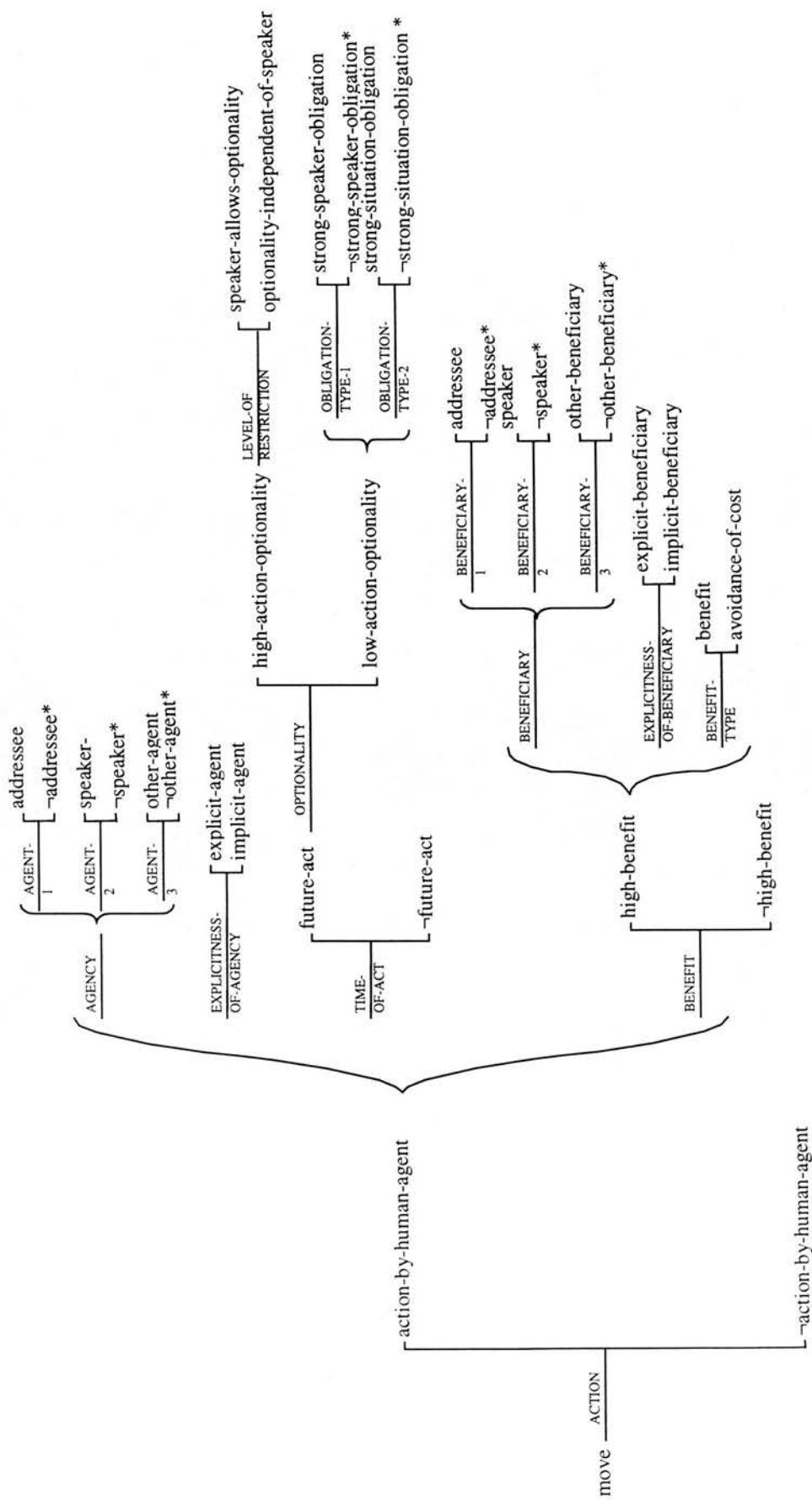
(89) And why don't you tell 'em that you'll no be accepting anything unless it's through the system?
(PF1 U117; 5)

To accept 'anything' (that customers do not follow procedures when ordering products) means missing deadlines, getting dissatisfied customers, lower profits, etc. Speaker 5 suggests measures that would cut down on such costs.

5.2.12 Linking the systems

All the paradigmatic choices outlined in the sections above can now be combined into one network as in Figure 5-14.

The systems are closely linked through the network. Obviously there is linkage between choices that depend on previous choices as we travel through the network towards higher levels of delicacy. However, also systems that are not marked as linked in the network may be related. For example, the co-selection of certain agents and beneficiaries will often affect the choices that need to be made in the optionality and obligation systems. The interrelationship between the choices in these networks has been touched on several times throughout this chapter. I have presented the different links between agent-beneficiary choice and optionality/obligation choice in Table 5-11 below. The table shows how different choices of agents and beneficiaries will allow for specific levels of optionality and obligation (either on the part of the speaker or the addressee). It is particularly the choice of beneficiary that affects the levels of optionality or obligation for the involved parties. The obligation column specifies who (or what) imposes the obligation on the agent. The combined and interrelated choices of, on the one hand, agent and beneficiary, and, on the other hand, level of optionality and obligation trigger different act types, as indicated in the rightmost column. This column contains labels for different act types, based on folk terms and speech act typologies (e.g. Wierzbicka 1987) that I otherwise consider problematic. The labels should not be seen as defining labels but just as indicators as to the type of act as traditionally perceived. It is important to note that the act is defined strictly in terms of the particular combination of semantic features, not the label. The list is not intended as an exhaustive account of how the co-selections of features presented here compare with other typologies (see also 5.3).



Key:
 : Within any one set of systems joined with an 'or'-gate, the choices marked with '' may not be co-selected.
 If the system contains three choices, two choices can be co-selected, but not all three.

Figure 5-1: System network defining directive act type

Agent*	Beneficiary*	Optionality	Obligation	Act type
addressee	addressee	high	-	advice, suggestion, permission
addressee	speaker	low	speaker	request, order
addressee	other	low/ high	(situation: moral obligation)	(suggestion)
addressee	addressee + speaker	low(ish)	speaker	request, (suggestion)
addressee	(no beneficiary)	high	-	ask for information
speaker	addressee	low	speaker (self-imposed)	promise, offer
speaker	speaker/ other / (no beneficiary)	low	speaker (self-imposed)	information
speaker	addressee + speaker	high for addressee(s)/ low for speaker	speaker (self-imposed)	suggestion
speaker	addressee + speaker	low for speaker/ n/a for addressee(s)	speaker (self-imposed)	promise
other	any	-	-	prediction
other	any	high for addressee(s)/ low for 'other-agent'	-	suggestion
other (substitution for addressee)	any	high	-	suggestion, request
addressee + speaker	addressee/ speaker/ addressee + speaker	high	-	suggestion
addressee + speaker	other	high	-	suggestion

*: in most cases when the addressee, the speaker, or the addressee and speaker jointly are agents or beneficiaries, the same choices for optionality/obligation would hold if a third party were added to the list of agents or beneficiaries.

Table 5-11: Links between choices in the network

I have focused on agent, beneficiary, optionality and obligation choices, omitting the choices of implicit/explicit agent or beneficiary, and choices of benefit/desirability as benefit *per se* or cost avoidance. The reason for this is that whether participants are presented explicitly or implicitly in a certain semantic role they fill that role and other choices that depend on the role will be the same. This is not to say that the optionality level, for example, cannot be raised or lowered depending on whether the agent is explicit or implicit in the proposal. But the general tendency will be the same, despite this amplification or mitigation. To illustrate my point, when the addressee is proposed as agent and as beneficiary, the optionality is high. If the agent furthermore is left implicit, the optionality level is raised even further, but the essential orientation towards high optionality does not change. Likewise, whether the benefit is one of direct benefit or avoidance of cost does not alter the general pattern of participant optionality and obligation.

The degree to which the intended agent is obliged to perform the proposed action or free not to is also closely related to the participants' relative role and authority. With the co-selection of the addressee as agent and the speaker as beneficiary, the speaker places an obligation on the addressee. The weight of that obligation, however, depends on the relative authority and power of the participants. If the speaker is more powerful than the addressee (through institutional authority, say) he or she can felicitously order the addressee to perform a certain action. If the reverse role distribution holds, commands and orders are not a valid option for the speaker.

Despite the direct influence of status relations on the copatterning in the network, I have chosen not to include an authority sub-network within the network presented in this chapter. In this I follow Risselada:

although these factors ['relative status of speaker and addressee, the presence or absence of sanctions, and whether the speech situation is institutional or not'] tend to *influence* the kind of directive that is chosen (...), they cannot be taken to directly *define* the directive subtype itself, since that would mean that in a given situation speakers do not have the option of choosing how they will present their illocutionary intentions.
(Risselada 1993: 47)

I have dealt with the effect of status differences in 2.1.3 and 6.4.5 instead.

5.3 Different c patterning – different act types

We have seen how different combinations of choices constitute different types of acts (e.g. see Table 5-11). In 3.2.2 we saw that different scholars categorise speech acts differently. For example, the term ‘suggestion’ does not cover exactly the same type of acts among different speech act theorists. In this section I shall suggest that we can define speech acts on the basis of combinatorial patterns of end notes in networks like the one presented in Figure 5-14 above.

It is crucial to avoid the trap of folk labels based on the speech act verbs (see 3.2.2.3), whether or not the categorisations are based on a corpus of texts where authors themselves label the acts as in Pérez Hernández (1999). Yet we need to be able to talk about the categories established through combinations of features. This is why I have proposed SUGGESTION as a working label. It is related to the folk term ‘suggestion’, but capitalised (e.g. SUGGESTION). As noted earlier, the notation is intended to remind readers of the fact that the label is not necessarily fully identical to the verb of ‘suggesting’ or the nominalisation ‘suggestion’.

Acts tend to cluster along intersecting continua (Risselada 1993: 33) such as the optionality and benefit/desirability continua described above. One such cluster consist of acts of SUGGESTING. The ‘boundaries’ between the clusters are very fluid. Also, some acts may appear as better, or more prototypical, examples of the act type. For SUGGESTIONS, for example, acts where the situation is putting the intended agent under obligation could be seen as less prototypical than acts with high action optionality (see Pérez Hernández 1999).

SUGGESTIONS are acts in which the following choices feature (features in brackets are optional, and features in curly brackets are possible but infrequent options):

action-by-human-agent:

agency:

agent = addressee (+ other-agent) /
addressee + speaker (+ other agent)
{speaker (+ other agent) / other agent}

explicitness-of-agency:

explicit-agent / implicit-agent

time-of-act:

future-act:

high-action-optionality:
optionality-independent-of-speaker /
low-action-optionality:
strong-situation-obligation

benefit/desirability:

high-benefit:

beneficiary = addressee (+ other-agent) / addressee + speaker (+ other agent)

benefit / avoidance-of-cost

I have put the agent choices of 'speaker (+ other agent)' and 'other agent' in curly brackets because they are infrequent in the corpus. Normally, the addressee must be (at least one of) the participant(s) forming the agency. Other cases are highly non-prototypical, but they are possible.

As I went through the different systems and their realisations above I gave numerous examples, all of which were realisations of more than just the particular feature I was discussing. Here I shall repeat a few of the examples, but this time showing how they combine to form SUGGESTIONS while also showing how a different choice in just one or a few of the systems constitutes an altogether different type of act (e.g. a REQUEST¹⁰).

Example (2), (49), and (89), repeated here as (90),

(90) And why don't you tell 'em that you'll no be accepting anything unless it's through the system?
(PF1 U117; 5)

is a realisation of the following choices:

¹⁰ REQUESTS could be defined as having the following semantic features:

action-by-human-agent:

agency: agent = addressee (+ other-agent)
explicit-agent / implicit-agent

time-of-act: future-act: low-action-optionality: strong-speaker-obligation

benefit: high-benefit:beneficiary = speaker (+ other agent)
benefit / avoidance-of-cost

action-by-human-agent:

agency:

agent = addressee

explicitness-of-agency:

explicit-agent

time-of-act:

future-act:

high-action-optionality:

optionality-independent-of-speaker

benefit/desirability:

high-benefit:

beneficiary = addressee + speaker (+ other-agent)

avoidance-of-cost

The example falls within the scope of SUGGESTIONS as defined above. Example (91), on the other hand, does not, even though the formulation is similar (*why don't you...*). Here the beneficiary is the speaker only. This affects the degree of optionality in that the speaker puts a social obligation on the addressee to do the action asked for:

(91) Why don't you go and get me a coffee, actually, there's hardly enough in that coffee pot just for me.
(PF1 U165; 5)

action-by-human-agent:

agency:

agent = addressee

explicitness-of-agency:

explicit-agent

time-of-act:

future-act:

low-action-optionality:

strong-speaker-obligation

benefit/desirability:
 high-benefit:
 beneficiary = speaker

 benefit

The main difference between the two examples is the different beneficiaries which affects the level of optionality. In the REQUEST the optionality is low because of the obligation laid down by the speaker. As we have seen, optionality and obligation in speech acts are scalar features (e.g. Leech 1983; see 3.2.1.3 and 3.2.1.4). The cut-off point between when an act is considered to have, for example, 'low-action-optionality' or 'high-action-optionality' is context dependent.

5.4 Conclusion

The previous section ended with two examples illustrating a central issue in determining act types. Examples (90) and (91) are interesting in that at the level of linguistic realisation of semantic choices the speakers use the same formula to perform their different types of acts (*why don't you...*: interrogative mood (*wh-*), negative polarity, etc.). Similarly, imperative mood may be used for REQUESTS as well as SUGGESTIONS (e.g. examples (23) and (24)). This co-occurrence of mood within two different act types relates to the fact that different moods are linked on continua (see Givón 1990: 814ff) so that a clause with interrogative mood may have imperative properties (e.g. *Pass the salt, would you please?* → *Would you please pass the salt?*). The closer to a prototypical interrogative, the more polite the request would be. Indeed, face needs and politeness norms (e.g. see Brown & Levinson 1987; Leech 1983) often blur the relationship between linguistic form and function.

The lack of direct correlation between surface form on the one hand and act type and function on the other hand reflects the classic concept of indirect speech acts (see for example Levinson 1983: 263ff). It seems to me that neither a literal approach (i.e. the act has the force traditionally associated with the performative verb or the mood type) nor a strong inferential approach gives us a satisfactory way of accounting for such acts. The key must be to recognise that the force of acts is established as speakers combine syntactic structures and lexical content. We see in (90)

and (91) how the propositional content and syntactic structures together determine the type of act. The propositional content can be reconstructed from lexical choices, cohesive and extra-textual links (register specific knowledge of how things are evaluated) as well as meaning arising from the syntactic form. Certain syntactic features (particularly mood) indicate a strong possibility that a certain type of act is intended (e.g. interrogative → asking for information). However, neither of the elements on their own is sufficient to determine what type of act we are dealing with, and conventions and inference schemas also play their part. Risselada has put it this way,

Because predication-internal features, such as tense, controllability, the person of the agent, auxiliary verbs, and even the main predicate itself may play a role in the 'illocutionary component' of an utterance, 'illocution' and 'content of the speech act' are not necessarily always neatly separated. Although the various indicators of an utterance's illocutionary force can be *identified*, they cannot always be *isolated* from properties of the content of the speech act.
(Risselada 1993: 77)

Somewhat in the same vein, systemic linguists argue that the social action performed through what is said (traditionally referred to as the 'illocution') and what is actually said (referring-and-predicating, or 'locution' in traditional terms) are not separate entities. The interpersonal function of language is engrained in the grammar and not just a matter to be dealt with within 'pragmatics' which is 'exported' from formal descriptions of language. Instead interpersonal elements are meanings which constitute major structuring principles of language form (see Thibault & van Leeuwen 1996: 562 and 3.1.5).

Above I have demonstrated how speakers express semantic functions such as 'optionality' and 'benefit/desirability' in the lexicogrammar. There is no one-to-one relationship between the functions and linguistic properties. This is why social functions of what is said can only be identified through copatternings of paradigmatic choices. The act type as a social action is a co-selection of semantic options as in the network above (see also Turner 1973 and Hasan 1988), and such semantic options are themselves realisations of lexicogrammatical choices. As Halliday puts it for the social actions of threatening and blackmailing:

...there is probably no category of 'threat' or 'blackmail' [...] to be found in the grammar of English. These are semantic not grammatical categories. But it may be possible to specify what are the grammatical realizations of semantic categories of this kind. For instance, 'threat' is likely to be realized as a transitive clause of action with *you* as Goal, and with a verb of a particular sub-class as Process, in simple future tense. [...] the semantic options are relatable to recognizable features in the grammar, even though the relationship will often be a rather complex one.
(Halliday 1973: 75)

Halliday does not spell out the different semantic choices that make up his acts (threat, blackmail). In this chapter I have shown that we can identify more specific semantic choices for the cluster of SUGGESTIONS than just the choice of SUGGESTING. However, the point is the same: lexicogrammatical features relate to the semantic choices at whichever level, as demonstrated in the realisation tables in this chapter. It is important to note, though, that the semantic choices are affected by register aspects which let the unwieldy concept of 'background knowledge' in through the backdoor. Register considerations often have a structuring affect on the language form as well. This aspect has not been spelled out in Thibault and van Leeuwen's account of a systemic functional approach to speech acts. However, it is very much in keeping with the systemic understanding of language where genre and register play important roles (e.g. Hasan 1996; Eggins & Martin 1997). Indeed, Martin (1981: 58), who suggests that speech acts ('speech functions') be identified in a network based on mood and basic types of adjacency pairs, states that the terminal features of his network may be subclassified 'on the basis of lexis or situational factors', and in less general analyses 'more situationally sensitive categories' should be established.

In the next chapter I shall spell out the lexicogrammatical basis for one of the semantic systems: the system of 'benefit/desirability'. The aim is to present a systematic account for the lexicogrammatical options that allow for speakers to present an action as beneficial or desirable. The register element will be incorporated in the analysis as I show how speakers, when expressing such evaluations, often draw on contextual knowledge which may be specific to the culture of meetings.

Benefit and Desirability in SUGGESTIONS

In the previous chapter we saw that part of what defines SUGGESTIONS is that they are proposals for future action that is beneficial and therefore desirable, typically to the addressee and possibly more participants (often the company as a whole).

The review in 3.3 presented some preliminary attempts to clarify how evaluative meanings are created and realised. It also showed that the area is as yet enormously underresearched. We may see benefit (B) and desirability (D) as modal meanings, but little help is to be found in the widely researched area of modality. Most modality studies have focused on strictly grammaticalised modal expressions such as the modal auxiliaries, and benefit and desirability do not belong to the set of modal meanings typically studied (e.g. necessity, obligation). They are only mentioned in passing as by-products of other types of meaning. The reason is obvious: The other modal meanings listed above all have modal auxiliaries and semi-modals that express them directly (e.g. necessity: *must, have to, have got to*, etc.; obligation: *must, should, ought to*; etc.). Benefit and desirability do not have any specific champions among the auxiliaries. (A few modal lexical verbs (Perkins 1983: ch.7), or performative verbs (Austin 1962), could be seen as primarily carrying the B/D meanings.) Despite this lack of explicit grammatical expressions, we may see the meanings as modal if we take a broader approach to modality which is not based on grammaticalisation. Indeed, it is precisely the lack of specific expressions of the modal categories which make these categories such an interesting object of study.

So how do speakers signal benefit and desirability? This chapter offers some answers, although it will by no means be an exhaustive account of the linguistic realisations of the modal meanings. The object of study (i.e. SUGGESTIONS in business meetings) is narrow. This is both a limitation and a strength. It enables us to reveal patterns that are not as clear when a variety of

text types are studied together. To understand the complexities of modal meanings, genre specific studies are crucial steps. Or, as Bybee and Fleischmann say, reporting on general agreement in discussion at the symposium on Mood and Modality held at the University of New Mexico in 1992,

many of the functions of modality are inextricably embedded in contexts of social interaction and, consequently, cannot be described adequately apart from their contextual moorings in interactive discourse.
(Bybee & Fleischmann 1995: 3)

(See also Guo 1995.)

This chapter focuses first on how speakers refer to contextual values to express benefit and desirability, and then on modal markers of the evaluative meanings. I will describe lexical signals, but since lexical indicators belong to open-ended classes, a study of them would be open-ended in itself. We shall therefore confine ourselves to indicating the significance of lexical means and their links to the intermediate values described in 6.3 and focus instead on the interplay between meanings of desirability and benefit on the one hand and other modal meanings on the other hand. I will show how the choice of a specific correlation of modal meanings is tied in with situational needs such as status, tact, etc. Until now most appraisal analysis has focused on lexis. A return to the grammatical level of modality but with clear semantic meanings as focus (and a simultaneous study of non-grammaticalised meaning) allows us to widen our understanding of how language users create evaluations. The most interesting aspect here is the way in which lexis and grammatical elements affect each other and mutually add evaluative meaning. The third part of the study analyses how evaluative meanings propagate across text.

In 2.1.2 we saw that the long stretches of meetings in which SUGGESTIONS mainly occur are much less structured than other stages of the meetings (e.g. openings and closings). And yet there is some sort of coherence in peoples' discussions at meetings. As we have studied SUGGESTIONS as one of the key components of the discussions more closely, the question is whether we can now identify any structuring principle in the discussion. Even though participants often neglect to give fulfilling responses to each other's SUGGESTIONS, can we

pinpoint any element that ties the SUGGESTIONS together across the discussion? We can, since the desirability and benefit elements of the SUGGESTIONS provide coherence.

In this chapter, I will first define what modal meanings of desirability and benefit are, and how they relate to each other (6.1). The meanings are realised either indirectly through reference to common values or more directly through various evaluational expressions. The first section will also contain a model outlining such realisational paths. The following sections will then take each layer of the model and elaborate on the meaning-making that takes place there. In 6.2 I suggest how desirability and benefit relate to selected other modal meanings. Section 6.3 maps out some of the values to which participants at the meetings make reference in order to signal the desirability or benefit of the actions they propose. Next comes a description of some of the linguistic patterns signalling the meanings of desirability and benefit (6.4). Section 6.5 is a brief insight into how the meanings of desirability and benefit propagate across clause boundaries, and in 6.6 I show how the meanings have a coherence creating function in the discussions.

6.1 Defining and identifying benefit and desirability

Meanings of benefit and desirability are evaluative meanings. We saw in 3.3 that evaluations are typically seen as either attitudinal or relating to the probability of a given state of affairs. Benefit and desirability are of the attitudinal kind. People set themselves objectives. In business the process of setting objectives is often formalised, and setting objectives implies that the objective is considered desirable. Any act that secures the objective is therefore desirable, but also beneficial if benefit is defined as the meeting of desired objectives. (See also Hunston's, 1985, notion that evaluation is defined in terms of goal-achievement.)

Benefit and desirability, however, do not always overlap. I follow a combination of Coates' (1983) and Hoyer's approaches (1997; see 3.4.3 and 3.4.4), modelling modal meanings as fuzzy categories with prototypical core examples and weaker examples in the periphery. Coates emphasises a negative complementary scope of categories. This scope is undefined and diffuse, and is here left untreated. Hoyer's influence manifests itself in my linking different fuzzy categories through clines. Indeed, in many cases it is such clines that define the categories

relative to each other. In the case of benefit and desirability, we may see them as two ends on a cline where the ownership of the objective is what separates the two meanings.

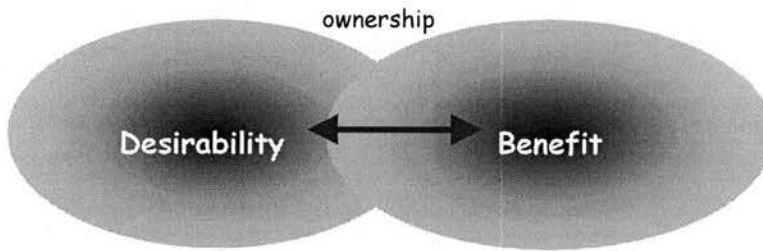


Figure 6-1: The cline of ownership between desirability and benefit

If the person desiring a certain objective is identical to the explicit or implicit beneficiary of the SUGGESTION, then the two categories will overlap as seen in the syllogism below:

Person M desires objective O_1	(O_1 is desirable for M)
Action A fulfils objective O_1	(A is beneficial for M)
Person M desires Action A	<u>(A is desirable and beneficial for M)</u>

If the person desiring the objective is not identical to the explicit or implicit beneficiary of the SUGGESTION, then the two categories do not overlap.

Person N desires objective O_2	(O_2 is desirable for N)
Action B fulfils objective O_2	(B is beneficial for N)
M desires that O_2 is fulfilled for N	(O_2 's fulfillment is desirable for M)
Person M desires action B	<u>(B is desirable but not beneficial for M)</u>

or

M does not desire that O_2 is fulfilled	(O_2 's fulfillment is not desirable for M)
Person M does not desire action B	(B is neither desirable nor beneficial for M)

We cannot, however, consider the meanings of benefit and desirability in complete isolation from other meanings. For example, the non-affective or non-‘attitudinal’ type of evaluative meaning relating to the probability of a state of affairs is connected to benefit and desirability. Typically, certainty is seen as a positive thing: ‘evaluations of certainty and uncertainty are not neutral with respect to cultural value’ – ‘knowledge is good and lack of knowledge is bad’

(Thompson & Hunston 2000: 25). However, the picture is less clear-cut in decision-making processes. Certainty has costs, and when considering the resources at hand decision-makers may not let the desire for certainty outweigh everything else. The two types of evaluative meaning are related when what is stated is the certainty or probability of a proposal rather than a neutral proposition. Stating the likelihood (certainty) that a proposition is true does not inherently make any evaluation of the desirability and/or benefit of the proposition. In contrast, when for example a meaning of certainty is part of the proposed action it will often evoke the evaluative meaning of desirability (unless the cost related to certainty is too high).

- (1) Well, we did make a major advance on improving the yield and understanding the technology but it is still very dependent on the people in the factory putting it together exactly right time after time after time, and what I'm looking for and what **I think** some of my projections for growth depend on are the ability to be absolutely **certain** what we make meets the very best standards that we can achieve now when everything is going right.
(LF3 U240; 2)

In (1) *certain* is part of the proposed action: 'we need to/should ensure quality / that what we make meets the best standards'. *I think* is a politeness down-toner. The down-toning effect is achieved as the speaker appears to be questioning the certainty of the proposition he is presenting: 'my projections for growth depend on...'. The expression carries no evaluation of desirability.

It is not just epistemic evaluations that relate to desirability and benefit. Also other evaluative meanings such as those presented as 'semantic dimensions' by Lemke are linked to them (see 3.3.4; see Figure 6-2 and 6.2 for my modifications of the set of meanings). For example, what is important ('Importance') is typically what is essential for a certain objective to be met. It is, therefore, also desirable and beneficial for the 'owner' of the objective. Appropriate action ('Appropriateness') is appropriate according to a set of norms. It is likely that objectives fall within the norms of a given culture (e.g. the business culture; or more specifically, the culture of accountants) and that action that would meet the objectives would fall within the category of appropriate action. Actions that are not difficult ('Ability/Ease') will typically be more attractive candidates for meeting an objective than difficult actions, although other factors may outweigh the advantage of ease. We shall return to some of the relationships in more detail in 6.2.

First we need to establish an initial model of how the meanings of desirability and benefit in SUGGESTIONS are established through a complex process of individual predications of properties which may propagate through the meetings while drawing on contextual meaning.

Figure 6-2 illustrates how the meanings of desirability and benefit are realised. Through an open set of expressions speakers predicate evaluative properties of elements in the text (i.e. participants, processes, circumstances, and qualities). The linguistic features which make us recognise a contribution as carrying evaluative meaning are comparators, markers of subjectivity, and markers of value (Thompson & Hunston 2000: 13-22; see 3.3.2). Speakers may use lexical expressions that evoke the meanings of desirability or benefit directly (e.g. *hopefully*, *important*). Such expressions are direct predications of the evaluative meanings and bypass the set of values. Alternatively, the speakers' choices of lexical or grammatical expressions may trigger inference to register specific values (e.g. *enlarge*, drawing on the value GROWTH). The values are evaluated according to the set of evaluative meanings at the top level of the figure (GROWTH in most examples is evaluated as desirable and beneficial). In the model, the meanings of desirability and benefit are positioned among other modal meanings in order to illustrate the relationship that exists between the meanings, as we saw above. Desirability and benefit are graphically prominent for reasons that will become clearer below (in 6.2). Any evaluative meaning may propagate through the meetings. Generally, the means of establishing evaluative meanings is highly diverse.

Let us begin with the categories of evaluative meaning.

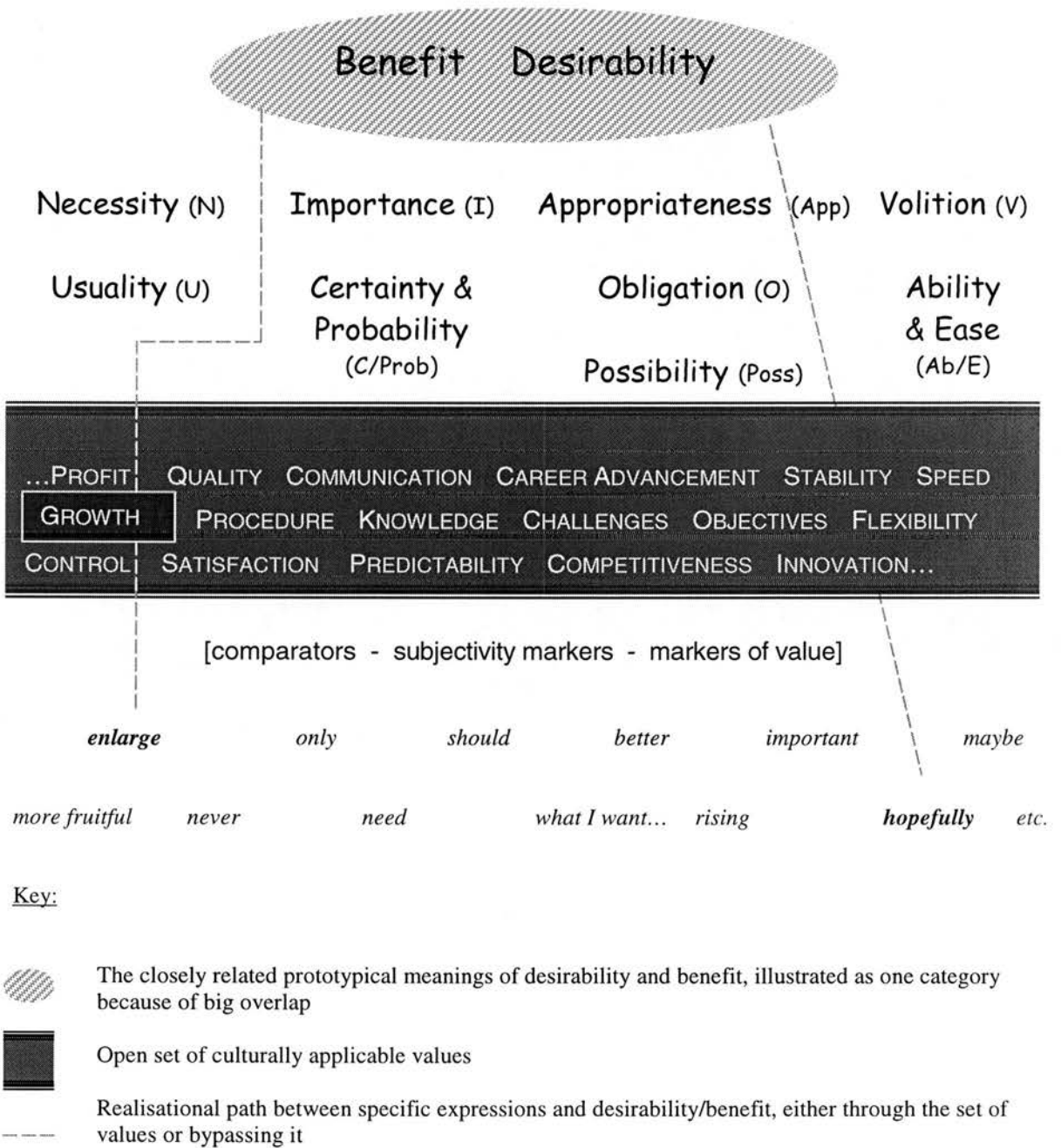


Figure 6-2: Realisational paths for benefit and desirability

6.2 Evaluative categories

I have chosen the evaluative categories in Figure 6-2 on the basis of applying a variety of modality studies and Lemke's and Graham's work on the corpus. I have described these studies in 3.3 and 3.4. As opposed to Lemke, I do not claim to have set up an exhaustive list of categories of evaluative meanings. Since we are specifically interested in benefit and desirability, I shall not try to marry Lemke's categories and common modality categories, although there are obvious overlaps. Apart from the two obvious candidates here, I shall only include other categories of evaluative meanings that are particularly prominent in the SUGGESTIONS in the corpus. For example, meanings such as Lemke's categories of 'Comprehensibility' and 'Humorousness' have been excluded from my model because neither of them features significantly in SUGGESTIONS. Instead, I have added the evaluative meanings of benefit and ability/ease. These dimensions correspond to Graham's 'Utility/Usefulness' and 'Ability/Difficulty' dimensions.

There is one further modification in that I follow Graham in extracting necessity as a separate category from Lemke's 'Normativity' dimension. Graham lumps necessity and importance together. Although they are closely linked, the categories of appropriateness, necessity, and importance are here kept separate. The reason for this is that any action that is presented as necessary is, in principle, no SUGGESTION (see 5.2.4 and 5.2.7). On the other hand, actions presented as appropriate or important may very well be SUGGESTIONS. Appropriateness and importance both relate to the desirability or benefit of an action, whereas necessity does not. We can distinguish between meanings of appropriateness and importance by identifying the semantic clines between them and benefit or desirability. Appropriateness involves norms which are often external to the individuals, whereas desirability reports the desires of the speakers (i.e. a cline distinguishing the origin of desirability as a set of norms or not norm based). Importance relates to desirability and benefit on a cline of global – local orientation. In examples of benefit, the action is beneficial to individuals directly involved in the discussion or closely attached to the group. In examples of importance, on the other hand, the benefit is more global and less attached to specific individuals (e.g. more related to benefits for the company). Below, I shall specify the relationship between benefit and desirability.

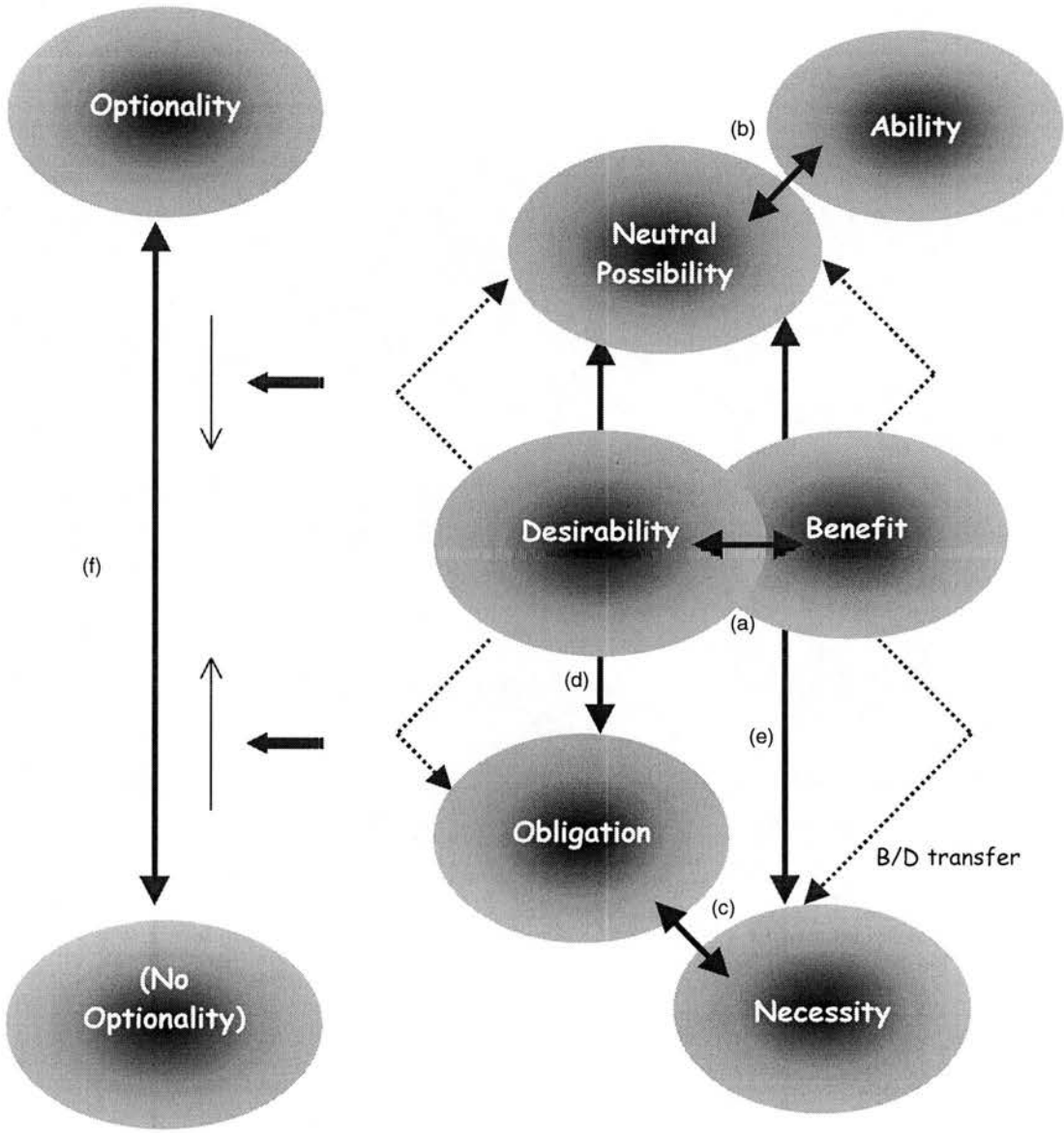
Even though I suggest that we view meanings of necessity, importance, and appropriateness as separate categories, the clines between them are fluid, and so are the clines between them and the categories of desirability/benefit. The clearest distinction runs between necessity and the other three categories.

In the model of modal meanings below in 6.2.1 I shall only insert necessity and desirability/benefit. The reason is meanings of appropriateness and importance do not occur frequently enough in the SUGGESTIONS in my data to deserve space in the model.

6.2.1 Clines

Following the same kind of modelling as applied in Figure 6-1, in Figure 6-3 I have drawn a model of the categories that are most prominent in the SUGGESTIONS in the corpus.

Figure 6-3 illustrates how different modal meanings relate to each other. Some meanings are related through semantic clines. These clines will be specified below. Other meanings are related through meaning transfer from one (benefit/desirability) to another (e.g. necessity). Such transfer affects the prototypicality of yet other meanings (optionality). Below and in 6.4.3 and 6.4.4 we will see how the interplay between the different meanings takes place.



Key:

- Transfer of the meaning of desirability or benefit
- Effect of transfer of the meaning of desirability or benefit
- Change in the relative position on the optionality cline
- Clines

Figure 6-3: Clines between modal meanings

The clines in Figure 6-3 are the following:

(a) **Desirability – Benefit:**

Cline: Ownership of objective (see 6.1)

(b) **Neutral Possibility – Ability:**

Cline: Inherency

I adopt Coates' definition of ability:

- (i) the subject is animate and has agentive function;
 - (ii) main verb denotes physical action/activity;
 - (iii) the possibility of the action is determined by *inherent properties of the subject* (this includes what the subject has learned)
- (Coates 1983; 14; my emphasis)

In cases of neutral possibility the possibility of the action is not determined by such inherent properties of the subject. It is, however, an independent category rather than just a peripheral example of ability (and permission) as suggested by Coates (see 3.4.3). In this I follow Palmer's way of categorising but with the modification that we need to see the categories as including more or less prototypical examples rather than equally representative examples. (Palmer's labels for the categories differ as well.)

(c) **Obligation – Necessity**

Cline: Subject involvement

If the necessity originates in the speakers (or the speakers and the norms of the culture in which they are embedded), the modal meaning is one of obligation.

If they do not originate in the speakers but in conditions beyond the control of the speakers, the modal meaning of necessity is created instead.

As with the ability – neutral possibility cline, in the following two clines neutral possibility is defined negatively as the opposite end of the other extreme.

(d) **Neutral Possibility – Obligation**

Cline: Degree of obligation

(e) **Neutral Possibility – Necessity**

Cline: Degree of necessity

(f) **Optionality – No Optionality**

Cline: Degree of optionality

Neutral possibility is generally defined negatively. It is opposed to necessity in that there is no necessity in a modal meaning of neutral possibility. Equally, there is no obligation element. As we saw in 3.4.3 there are no inherent properties in the subject (which would establish the modal meaning of ability). We also saw how Coates (1983: 88f) defines possibility as the negative end of a restriction scale where permission belongs to the other end. (Permission is excluded from the definition of SUGGESTIONS (see 5.2.6 and 5.3) and therefore left out of the model here.)

The categories of benefit and desirability could be seen as extending beyond what is shown in Figure 6-3. A situation or event that is necessary due to circumstances beyond the control of any involved parties may be desirable and a benefit as well. The fact that the speakers can do nothing to hinder the situation or event does not prevent the modal meanings from coinciding. Likewise, strong obligations laid down by an authority of some kind may be desirable/ beneficial to the addressee(s).

Dynamic modality, which includes neutral possibility, is not subjective; it 'involves neither the attitude nor the opinion of the speaker (except that it [the statement] is true)' (Palmer 1986: 102). Desirability/benefit does involve the attitude of the speakers, as the meanings are speakers' assessments of what is desirable/beneficial. This means that, in principle, desirability and benefit cannot co-occur with neutral possibility. What is interesting, however, is that the speakers very frequently choose exactly neutral dynamic expressions to express the subjective evaluation of the desirability/benefit of the proposed action. Below I shall suggest that the subjective meanings of desirability/benefit are transferred to the neutral possibility expressions clines (indicated by dotted arrow in Figure 6-3) so what initially seem to be neutral possibility meanings move

towards the obligation ends of the possibility–obligation/necessity clines. Similar transfers take place from desirability/benefit to the expressions of obligation and necessity so that these meanings move towards the possibility end of the clines.

Running alongside the clines of neutral possibility–obligation and neutral possibility–necessity is another cline, the cline of optionality. Optionality is another modal meaning which is not as clearly signalled as, for example, necessity and obligation, and it is not often dealt with separately. Obviously, if something is a necessity, the action is not optional, and high obligation also lowers the optionality to a minimum. Neutral possibility, on the other hand, leaves the action totally optional. When these modal meanings are the only ones expressed, it is fairly straightforward to determine the degree of optionality. However, when speakers include meanings of benefit and desirability, the degree of optionality changes. Actions that are not just possible but also desirable and/or a benefit to the speakers are optional, but the pressure is on for the addressee(s) to choose that particular option rather than any other possible action. So the optionality level is lowered slightly. As opposed to this, combining benefit/desirability with necessity or obligation raises the level of optionality (indicated with thin, single arrow in Figure 6-3). If for example an action is presented as necessary but the desirability of the action is also stated (e.g. in a purpose clause: ‘we have to [action], so that [D]’) the absolute necessity is dissolving into strong recommendation paired with some optionality. This claim will be supported with examples below (6.4.3 and 6.4.4).

Transfer and conflated or coinciding modal meanings may be used for reasons of tact and face protection (cf. Goffman 1955; Leech 1971; Brown & Levinson 1987) and in that respect be linked to the relative status of the speakers (see 6.4.5). There is, however, another straightforward explanation for the choices made by speakers: The modality system in English does not have any direct expression of benefit/desirability (with the exception of volitive verbs – see 6.4.1). When wanting to express this meaning, speakers have to choose other expressions which, through combinations with other lexical and syntactic choices, will establish the desired meaning. It is this process which we will investigate further as we move on to the direct or indirect predication of the evaluative meaning in 6.3 and 6.4.

6.2.2 Register specific foregrounding of evaluative meanings

It is not a result of idiosyncratic preferences that this thesis focuses on benefit and desirability as opposed to any of the other categories of evaluative meanings. In SUGGESTIONS – and indeed in the meetings – these categories are foregrounded. In 3.3.4 we saw that Graham’s political corpus foregrounded importance and desirability. We also saw that desirability is the most basic and common evaluative meaning and in fact is often seen as defining what value is.

In the meetings, benefit and desirability are closely linked and often inseparable in analysis. They reach their status of dominance through predications which directly evoke either of them, and through metaphorical transfer from other semantic dimensions which may either cancel out the original dimension or create multidimensionality. However, ultimately the foregrounding is based on the groups’ underlying objective which, in this corpus, is to ensure a certain beneficial outcome for the implicated parties, a benefit which is obviously highly desirable. (In LF3 the objective involves increasing competitiveness, income, etc. to raise the profit which will benefit the shareholders. In PF the objective is to solve a production problem to ensure customer satisfaction and efficiency which leads to higher competitiveness and income, which will benefit the shareholders.)

6.3 Intermediate values

Elements such as competitiveness, customer satisfaction, and efficiency (all three part of the objectives just mentioned) carry evaluative meaning. They are values which speakers may refer to directly or implicitly as the basis for their evaluation of proposals and propositions as desirable or beneficial. In Figure 6-2 above I have inserted values as a potential intermediate level between linguistic expressions and the categories of evaluative meanings.

6.3.1 Value set

The evaluation of the elements may differ across registers and between speakers. However, given the similarities in register and interests across the entire corpus there are no apparent great discrepancies among the speakers and meetings in terms of the set of values. The open set listed in Table 6-1 is extracted from the corpus. The list should not be seen as exhaustive, not even for business meetings as a genre, since companies, groups, and meetings vary as regards their underlying objectives.

CAREER ADVANCEMENT
CHALLENGES – (LIMITED) RISK
CLARITY OF OBJECTIVES
COMMUNICATION
COMPETITIVENESS
CONTROL
EFFICIENCY
FAIRNESS
FLEXIBILITY
GOAL ORIENTATION
GROWTH
INNOVATIVENESS
KNOWLEDGE
MAXIMISING RESOURCES
PLANNING – PROCEDURE
PREDICTABILITY
PROFIT (PERSONAL, CORPORATE)
QUALITY
RESPONSIBILITY – OWNERSHIP
SATISFACTION (CUSTOMER, EMPLOYEE/JOB)
SOLIDARITY
SPEED
STABILITY – SECURITY (FINANCIAL, JOB SECURITY)
TEAM PLAY

Table 6-1: Open set of intermediate values

The meetings in the corpus obviously also differ as to the underlying values. PERSONAL SECURITY and SATISFACTION alongside with possibilities for CAREER ADVANCEMENT are for

example a dominant factor in LF3, whereas CUSTOMER SATISFACTION and EFFICIENCY are crucial elements in the PF problem solving meetings. Even within one meeting, speakers may weight the values differently. For example, in LF3 the shareholders value PERSONAL SECURITY higher than the director without shares in LF3 (speaker 4) does. He emphasises the importance of CHALLENGE and LIMITED RISK instead. Just as the list is neither an exhaustive account for values in business meetings nor a weighted map of values, I have not made any indications as to the relationship between the different values. For example, CAREER ADVANCEMENT relates to increased power (CONTROL), greater PERSONAL PROFIT, and, hopefully, more JOB SATISFACTION.

6.3.2 The expression of values

Speakers use 'contextualization cues' to signal values (Gumperz 1982; see 3.1.3). Of the verbal cues (as opposed to the non-verbal ones), some express a value very explicitly (e.g. (2) and (3)). (I present the values in small capitals in square brackets after the highlighted expression carrying evaluative meaning.)

- (2) Yes, I've always seen that the flotation side of things is that probably the most **profitable** [PROFIT] way of going into a flotation for a company like [This Firm] would be with a **pre-prepared** game **plan** [PLANNING] building up a war chest from flotation and saying, "look what you're backing is this company with this type of track record with this type of management but now they will have the funds to, you know, do the same thing all over again."
(LF3 U295; 2)
- (3) What we felt we have to do is actually set ourselves a challenge. A tougher **challenge** [CHALLENGE] than we've been facing over the last 2 years, say. I mean, the first 2 years of the MBO was, was very tough, was very challenging and we'll just have to set ourselves some tough **goals** [GOAL ORIENTATION, CLARITY OF OBJECTIVES] for the future.
(LF3 U317; 1)

Or the verb may specify a process which is semantically closely aligned with one of the values (*enlarging* in (4))¹:

¹ Theoretically, the values could also be explicitly referred to through adverbs such as *efficiently*, *profitably*, *satisfactorily*, but such examples are more or less non-existent in the corpus. We can explain

- (4) And work, when you're working in that kind of environment you can sit down and **make plans** [PLANNING] for acquisitions, for **enlarging** [GROWTH] the company, you can, can see the strength to know where you're going to go.
(LF3 U182; 4)

In other cases more inference is needed from the listener in order to establish the underlying value:

- (5) So keep the **lines of communication shortened**, [COMMUNICATION; EFFICIENCY] right, okay.
(PF3 U96; 4)
- (6) but we've gotta make sure that, I mean I keep referring to the back end of this and we had a bit of fun about it this morning is that, **don't blame the champion**, [SOLIDARITY] you know, the champions are only **part of the team**. [SOLIDARITY; TEAM PLAY]
(PF2 U154; 4)
- (7) We could do a summary of the advantages and disadvantages [(overview → understanding →) KNOWLEDGE]
(LF3 U280; 7)

By applying Hunston's (2000: 200) use of the concepts 'grounds', 'basis', and 'value' we will be able to see where the inferential work needs to be done (see Table 6-2). The 'basis' is equivalent to the intermediate values in this section. In order to distinguish between value as I use it here and 'value' as opposed to 'grounds' and 'basis', I will refer to the latter type as 'evaluation' rather than 'value'. To emphasise the connection between 'basis' and value, I shall refer to this concept as 'value basis'.

In (5) and (6), for example, only the grounds are made explicit (indicated in Table 6-2 by grey shade). In (2), on the other hand, reference is made to the grounds and the value basis of the evaluation simultaneously. In comparison, examples of direct predication have an explicit evaluation as in example (8):

- (8) He can deal with the business centre, and **hopefully** get some information.
(PF1 U180; 3)

this by referring to the observations reported in 2.2 that spoken language typically has low lexical density compared to written language.

Example	Grounds	Value Basis	Evaluation
(5)	short communication lines	EFFICIENCY & SPEED of COMMUNICATION	positive (high EFFICIENCY & SPEED) [desirability/benefit]
(6)	no blaming	Level of SOLIDARITY	positive (high SOLIDARITY) [desirability/benefit]
(2)	profitable method	PROFITABILITY	positive (comparatively high PROFITABILITY) [desirability/benefit]
(8)	get information	KNOWLEDGE	positive (greater KNOWLEDGE – <i>hopefully</i>) [desirability/benefit]

Key:


 Shade indicates which part of the evaluative construction is made explicit.

Table 6-2: Grounds and value basis for evaluation

6.3.3 Syllogistic meaning-making

The relationship between the three elements of evaluative meanings could also be captured in syllogisms (cf. Graham, forthcoming). This method of exploring evaluations is particularly helpful when the proposal is not made totally explicit. In (9) an evaluative complex clause follows the somewhat ellipsed (also evaluated) proposal (*picking the point is an important issue* ~ ‘it is important that we pick the point for making an acquisition carefully’).

- (9) Er, I'm going to go back to the rates of **growth** and, whether, almost whether it's a trade sale or listing, **picking the point is an important issue**. So if you, if you **let it run on**, if you can't find any suitable acquisition and you **let it run on**, and you **run out of ideas** on market penetration and you **peak** at the plateau, at one million pounds profit, then it's obviously much **more difficult** to sell **than** it is **rising steadily** at 15 percent per annum. (LF3 U251; 6; bold is used to highlight elements used in my analysis)

The example is complex, and the proposal and evaluations can only be uncovered by following the way evaluations propagate through the entire turn. However, we will leave such detailed analysis till after we have studied the ways speakers predicate evaluative meanings directly. At this point, we will just use our common sense to establish that speaker 6 refers to growth, i.e. the value of GROWTH, which is assumed desirable and beneficial. Intervention is insinuated through description of lack of intervention (*let it run on*) which is portrayed as problematic, i.e. undesirable and not beneficial, particularly as it causes lack of GROWTH.

The implicit argumentation goes something like this:

(a)

Major premise: Growth is beneficial/desirable
Minor premise: No active intervention will eventually cause less growth
Conclusion: No active intervention is not beneficial/desirable

The speaker claims that *picking the point is important*. Here, acts that are important are acts that lead to the objectives being met, i.e. desirable and most likely beneficial acts. Since lack of active intervention is obviously negatively valued, it is fair to infer that what is important when it comes to *picking the point* is to avoid such lack of intervention. A time perspective also comes into the picture through the choices of verbal complexes such as *let it run on*. The speaker obviously wants to achieve something beneficial or desirable. Having established that no intervention is not beneficial or desirable (a), and having indicated that the choice of time for intervention is *important*, the speaker is likely to want the listeners to establish the following logical reasoning which leads to the speaker's actual proposal (in the minor premise and conclusion):

(b)

Major premise: Growth is beneficial/desirable
Minor premise: Active intervention (soonish) may cause growth
Conclusion: Active intervention soonish would be beneficial/desirable

The example and the syllogisms show how both intermediate values (middle level of Figure 6-2) and evaluative categories (top level of Figure 6-2) are involved. However, these elements of the evaluative meaning making are only available through some kind of direct semantic expression of meanings as well as through the interplay of meanings across text spans. We shall now turn to a study of the explicit indicators for such meanings.

6.4 Direct predication of evaluative properties

It is no coincidence that in Figure 6-2 (in 6.1) the realisational paths marking the route from linguistic expressions to evaluative meaning originate in a lexical verb and an adverb. Many of the expressions of benefit and/or desirability in the SUGGESTIONS are not grammaticalised (except, perhaps, in local grammars such as the ones suggested by Hunston & Sinclair, 2000, who identify common patterns used for evaluation – e.g. ‘*it* + link verb + adjective group + clause’). Mostly the indicators of benefit and desirability are lexical. The open-ended classes of adjectives and adverbs in particular provide a tremendous potential for expressing evaluative meaning. Some nouns carry evaluative meanings of benefit/desirability as well (see also Thompson & Hunston 2000: 14ff).

In (10) the dimension of benefit is inscribed through an adjective. (In the examples I present the evaluative category in square brackets after the highlighted expression carrying evaluative meaning. The meaning of the one-letter labels is specified in Figure 6-2 in 6.1.)

(10) Er, so therefore it would be **useful** [B] just to, for each of you to give a little speech, prepared or otherwise, as to what you would actually like out of life or out of [This Firm]. (LF3U103; 6)

The evaluative property of a phenomenon is captured in nominal form in (11):

- (11) No, but I think equally, whilst we've been keeping a weather eye on acquisitions that we may hear about or fall at our feet as it were, I, I don't think it's been a separate part of our strategy for the last couple of years and, er, the nearer we get to paying down our debt, the greater the **importance** [I] that takes as far as I can see.
(LF3 U380; 2)

- and in (12) through an adverb:

- (12) He can deal with the business centre and **hopefully** [D] get some information.
(PF1 U180; 3)

Lexical verbs may signal benefit or desirability, but we would normally depend on some intertextual anchor point, or intermediate basis value, to interpret the evaluation. We see an example of this in (4), repeated here as (13):

- (13) And work, when you're working in that kind of environment you can sit down and make plans for acquisitions, for **enlarging** [GROWTH → B/D] the company
(LF3 U182; 4)

The markers may also be more grammaticalised. Of grammatical markers, modal auxiliaries are the most common carriers of evaluative meaning in SUGGESTIONS. The modal auxiliaries do not in themselves evoke the evaluative meanings of benefit and desirability but rather modal meanings of necessity, possibility, obligation, etc. However, the meanings of benefit and desirability often conflate with such other modal meanings. I have already indicated the meaning transfer that takes place (see 6.2). Because of the conflation and meaning transfer it makes sense to study even modal expressions that may not at a first glance evoke the meanings of benefit or desirability.

In SUGGESTIONS in the corpus, apart from lexical choices evoking benefit or desirability directly or through reference to the intermediate values, modal auxiliaries are common markers. They mark 'subjectivity' rather than 'value' directly (Thompson & Hunston 2000: 21). However, they are so frequently used in expressions of 'value', or evaluation, that they are good indicators that evaluation is going on.

For the study presented here, I carried out a small quantitative analysis of frequently occurring modal expressions in SUGGESTIONS. I chose to analyse three meetings:

LF3: 19,054 words

PF2: 5,015 words

PF3: 4,694 words

(Total: 28,763 words)

In each meeting, I identified the SUGGESTIONS according to the definition stated in chapter 5. We have seen that SUGGESTIONS contain at least an action element and an element stating desirability or benefit. On the basis of this, I created a subset of the data which contained any clause-related discourse unit (see 4.2.1) that carried either an action element or a benefit or desirability element of a SUGGESTION. I found 431 discourse units containing either of these elements. 311 of these units contained a benefit or desirability element (they may contain an action element simultaneously).

Within this subset of the data, I checked for modal auxiliaries, but also for other types of modal expression such as common modal adverbs, and for mood. (See the discussion of the connection between mood and modal meaning in 6.4.4.3; this discussion relates to the discussion of the connection between mood and speech act in 3.2.1.) I used Mick O'Donnell's coding software (O'Donnell 2001) to identify the different textual elements within the subcorpus.

In Table 6-3 I have presented the results. Only the most common expressions are included, except when less frequent expressions (e.g. *must*) can be seen to form a group with other expressions (e.g. necessity markers), in which case I have also included infrequent types.

Because of the size of the sub-corpus, the results should be seen as no more than indicators of patterns and not as conclusive results.

	SUGGESTION discourse units containing action or evaluation of desirability/benefit (total of 431 discourse units)	
<i>would like to / 'd like to</i>	10	2.3%
<i>want</i>	8	1.9%
volitive verbs	18	4.2%
performative verbs	3	0.7%
<i>can</i>	29	6.7%
<i>could</i>	19	4.4%
<i>be able to</i>	1	0.2%
<i>can or could or be able to</i>	49	11.4%
<i>possible</i>	1	0.2%
<i>possibly</i>	2	0.5%
<i>maybe</i>	11	2.6%
<i>perhaps</i>	1	0.2%
<i>probably</i>	1	0.2%
possibility markers	65	15.1%
<i>have got to</i>	24	5.6%
<i>have to</i>	18	4.2%
<i>have got to or have to</i>	42	9.7%
<i>need (non-auxiliary)</i>	18	4.2%
<i>require</i>	2	0.5%
necessity markers ²	62	14.4%
<i>should</i>	20	4.6%
<i>ought to</i>	2	0.5%
<i>must</i>	1	0.2%
obligation markers	23	5.3%
imperative mood	34	7.9%
interrogative mood	9	2.1%
obligation markers & imperative mood	57	13.2%

Table 6-3: Occurrence of modal markers in SUGGESTIONS

² Necessity markers include participles: There are two occurrences of *needed*, but none of *required* because the participle excludes optionality and, therefore, is not present in SUGGESTIONS. I have not included any adjectives (apart from *possible*) and adverbs (e.g. *necessarily*) in the count either, because they are not used in SUGGESTIONS within the sub-corpus, or because they are only used in clauses with negative polarity or in constructions where negative polarity is inherent in the meaning of the clause (e.g. in the subordinating conjunction *without* in the example below):

er, a listing could be a, like, a good compromise allowing you to get the ability to make it disposable without necessarily having to dispose of all or most of your shares now.
(LF3 U267; 6)

Key (Table 6-3):

Shaded rows are sums of different expressions (e.g. the quantity of volitive verbs is the sum of the number of occurrences of *would like to/d like to* and *want*).

bold Bold letters indicate that the category is a category of specific expressions (rather than mood choice) and that it has a frequency of $\geq 4.0\%$

When checking through the sub-corpus for the most frequent modal expressions, I found that there are most occurrences of expressions of neutral possibility. Necessity markers form the next biggest group, and then follows obligation markers. Direct markers of desirability (volitive verbs) are less frequent than markers from any of the other groups. The least frequent group, however, is performative verbs such as *suggest, propose, recommend*, etc.

Of individual expressions *can* (possibility) is the most frequent and then follows (in order of frequency) *have got to* (necessity), *should* (obligation), *could* (possibility), *need* (necessity) and *have to* (necessity). Of non-verbal expressions *maybe* (possibility) is most common.

69.8% of the clauses in the SUGGESTIONS are declaratives, imperative mood accounts for 7.9% of the clauses, and 2.1% are interrogatives. (Not all of the clause-like units select independently for mood which is why the three mood types do not cover 100% of the units).

The impression gained from studies of the remainder of the corpus is that the pattern emerging from the quantitative analysis of the sub-corpus is likely to reflect the pattern for SUGGESTIONS in the corpus as a whole.

We will first look at categories of expressions that most directly indicate desirability or benefit before we focus on the interplay between other modal expressions and desirability/benefit meanings.

6.4.1 Direct markers of desirability: Volitive verbs

Volitive verbs are the most direct verbal exponents for the dimension or modal meaning of desirability. They do not directly evoke the dimension of benefit, although the close link between the two dimensions will often allow for the inference that the action is desirable precisely because of its potential benefit (i.e. the increased chance that the desired objective is fulfilled).

Want and *would like to* are the two volitive verbal expressions that occur with highest relative frequency in SUGGESTIONS as indicators of desirability. In the sub-corpus 4.2% of the action and B/D discourse units contain volitive expressions (slightly more occurrences of *would like to* than of *want*). The subject of these verbs may be 1st person singular (*I*; most common for *would like to*) or plural (*we*), or 2nd person (*you*) singular or plural. Volitive verbs are commonly found in conditional clauses or WH-clefts. Often these clauses function as preparations for the action clause. In case of WH-clefts the preparatory element stems from the highlighting function of the cleft for the subsequent proposal (cf. Miller & Weinert 1998: 122, 245; see also 2.2 and 4.2.1).

(14) and what we **want** [D] to strive for now is how do we come up with a system [PROCEDURE → D/B] that doesn't affect production, and we get our parts through the door quicker [SPEED → D/B]
(PF1 U196; 3)

Conditionals make it possible for the speaker to emphasise that the proposed action is optional for the addressee, and it makes the addressee's desires the centre of focus:

(15) Well, if you **want** [D] we'll phone IPerson B] of the IInstitution A] [implied: to get information: KNOWLEDGE → D/B] when we finish this meeting
(PF2 U128; 4)

Occasionally, however, we find the action element within the conditional clause with the volitive verb.

- (16) Well, if you **want** [D] to run along to the kitchen, I'm sure you'll get another cup
[SATISFACTION OF PHYSICAL NEEDS → D].
(PF1 U166; 1)

If the speaker is 1st person (particularly singular); if the volitive expression is not presented in a conditional clause; and if the speaker does not choose to use a topic highlighter such as a WH-cleft, then the expression *would like to* appears to be the preferred volitive choice. This is perhaps not surprising since the expression carries a hypothetical element which is less dominant in *want*. The hypothetical element raises the level of optionality. In some ways *I want* seems despotic whereas *I'd like to* accommodates the desires and positions of others more.

- (17) I'd **still like** [D] to raise them separately because the man plans are unique to that part and I've got certain critical concerns on them from, like, [Speaker 3] and [Person T] and stuff like that, additional sheets, different thicknesses or whatever, but, er, yeah, you could put the order on the actual master sheet, that's fine but I'd **still like** [D] an order for it
(PF3 U117; 2)
[man plans = documentation that relates to the specific parts supplied by the company]

(The adverb *still* indicates the speaker's disagreement with a proposition stated in the previous turn.)

The less imposing expression *would like to* is however also found in preparatory WH-clefts:

- (18) Okay and what, what I want [D] what what I'd **like** [D], what, I spoke, what we need [N] on top of that [Speaker 2] is, you've got all these different programmes, obviously, right, each one's got a separate sheet, but you need [N] one master sheet for print capacity, for instance, hard-copy capacity adhesive capacity, and if you've got that master sheet on the top, that's up to to myself and [Speaker 5] I suppose to make sure that that capacity is allocated fairly [FAIRNESS → D/B].
(PF3 U79; 7)

Also here the expression raises the optionality of the addressee. The speaker goes on to produce a string of self-corrections where the degree of obligation on the listeners is gradually lowered through change of subject and verb (*I want* → *I'd like* → *we need* → *you need*). These obligation-lowering self-corrections are no doubt related to the status of the speaker who is in a position of authority over the others. Gradually he downplays his authority and changes the obligation from originating in him as a speaker to have its origin in the situation. The change of verb from volitive verbs to a verb of necessity would appear to increase the obligation, but with

1st person subject the volitive verbs (particularly *want*) impose a relatively high level of obligation on the addressee.

Even so, in the meetings speakers use volitive expressions with 1st person singular subject in constructions that appear to leave enough optionality for us to count them as SUGGESTIONS (see definition in 5.3) – albeit borderline or non-prototypical cases. We see an example of this in (19).

- (19) What **I'd like to** see on here is, if you don't think, if you think this is not wise tell me, right?
I'd like to see some kind of value on it
(PF3 U132; 7)

We can explain how volitive expressions with 1st person singular subject achieve the status of SUGGESTION by referring to Heine's concept of 'focal contextual frames' (1995: 26ff) or Silva-Corvalán's 'prototypical discourse meaning' (1995: 73; see 3.4.4; see also reference to Goffman's concept of 'frame' and to the concept of 'inferential schema' in 3.1.3). In meetings the acts of SUGGESTING future actions form 'a cluster of related experiences' (Heine 1995: 26), i.e. a contextual frame, and this frame appears more 'focal' than for example information giving (except in reports, see 2.1.2) or commanding/requesting.

We also find WH-cleft constructions with 2nd person subject as in (20):

- (20) What **you want** [D] to try and do is to basically say that with |Speaker 3| and |Speaker 2| I think there is a potential conflict of the two, the two personal issues that they have raised, and therefore which is the most important?
(LF3 U440; 1)

This construction is not frequent but not unfamiliar either. If *want* is seen as an expression of desire, the construction is somewhat odd – how can anybody assert the desire of the addressee? However, *want* (used with a 2nd person pronoun) is also commonly used in a deontic sense as in 'you want to watch your step' (cf. the biblical use: 'The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want....' Where *want* has a meaning of necessity or 'need')³. Presumably the meaning of *want* here is closer to the necessity meaning than the desirability meaning. Maybe other WH-clefts

³ King James version. In the New International Version the wording is: '...I shall not be in want...'.

(with 1st person subjects) also draw on this semantic content. It is difficult to assess, though, and certainly in (18) the speaker seems to use *want* in the sense of desire. (Speaker 7 moves from definite desire bordering to demand, to desire which is modified by hypotheticality, to need which is beyond the power of himself and instead arisen out of external pressures. It would not be logical from the point of view of tactfulness and downplaying of authority if the sequence was [need → desire → need] rather than [desire/demand → modified desire → need].)

The examples above demonstrate that when expressing desirability through volitive verbs, the speaker makes choices as regards the subject and the extent to which the action is marked as hypothetical. These choices affect the level of optionality in the proposal. A 1st person subject (particularly singular) lowers the optionality compared to a 2nd person subject in a conditional clause. A preparatory WH-cleft appears to lower the obligation and thus increase optionality with 1st person subjects (possibly because of the separation of the desire element from the proposed act ('*What we want to do next is [action]*' as opposed to '*We want to [action]*').

6.4.2 Indirect markers of desirability and benefit:

Performative verbs

Whereas volitive verbs in most cases express desirability directly, performative verbs (Austin 1962) do not, although a small group of these typically imply desirability and/or benefit: *advise*, *advocate*, *propose*, *recommend*, *suggest*. We usually recommend something or advise somebody to do something or propose an action because we think that this 'something' or the act is desirable and/or beneficial to the addressee. I am here referring to the deontic uses of the verbs only, not epistemic *suggest* or *advise*, for example. In deontic uses of the verbs, the evaluation of the *that*-complement is inherent in the prototypical meaning of the verb (excluding humorous examples such as the one presented by Fraser, see 3.2.2.3).

- (21) |Speaker 4|, could I also **suggest** [D/B] that we agree [AGREEMENT → D/B], you guys agree who's going to talk to the customer.
(PF3 U97; 7)

In the sub-corpus I found three such examples within a total of 311 B/D clauses (1.0%). In fact, I checked through the entire corpus for SUGGESTION performative verbs and only found five occurrences in total (*to advise* does not occur).

Despite their scarcity I have inserted a section on performative verbs for two reasons. Firstly, the verb type is a clear, albeit indirect, indicator of B/D. Secondly, the low frequency of performative verbs in SUGGESTIONS supports the uneasy feeling I have as regards some speech act theorists' focus on 'speech act verbs' as the basis on which they build their categories (e.g. Wierzbicka 1987, Pérez Hernández 1999). I have already presented the problems of such an approach in 3.2.2.3, and the patterns we have seen here support my earlier conclusion. Although performative verbs do occur, most occurrences of the acts of 'suggesting', 'proposing', 'recommending', etc. are realised by other means than explicit performative verbs – at least in this corpus and text-type, and most likely within other text-types as well.

Alongside with the inherent meaning of desirability/benefit in the prototypical meanings of *suggest*, *recommend*, and *propose*, the verbs also evoke the inherent modal meaning of optionality. This meaning arises because optionality is typically one of the defining features of the acts of suggesting, recommending, proposing, etc., as we have seen in our definition of SUGGESTIONS in chapter 5. The (apparent) level of optionality may be modified through the use of other linguistic markers. For example, markers of hypotheticality (e.g. *could* in (21)) lower the imposition by the speaker on the addressees and signal increased optionality.

In both volitive verbs and the selection of performative verbs presented here the meanings of desirability and, in some cases, benefit, are present in the core meaning of the verbs. Other expressions pick the meaning up from the surrounding lexical items, just as the level of optionality of the performatives is influenced by the surrounding modal auxiliaries. In the following sections we will focus on expressions which pick up the meanings of benefit and desirability from surrounding expressions.

6.4.3 Conflated modal meanings: Possibility and D/B

Apart from the categories that either signal desirability or benefit directly (volitive verbs, 6.4.1), or indirectly (some performative verbs, 6.4.2), we can identify categories that are not themselves carriers of this meaning, and yet language users sometimes associate the meanings with them. This association is, I would claim, based on a conflation of meaning between markers of different meanings. For example, in the SUGGESTIONS in the meetings the modal meanings of possibility, necessity, and obligation are common. In themselves, they carry no evaluation as to the desirability or benefit of the proposals or propositions of which they are part. And yet, in the contexts of the SUGGESTIONS they appear to take on elements of such evaluation. I shall demonstrate this below and suggest an explanation.

The idea of 'conflation' of modal meanings is related to Coates' concept of 'merger' where 'two meanings co-exist in a both/and relationship' (1995: 61; see also Coates 1983: 16-17). Coates, however, applies the concept to single modal expressions which have both a root and an epistemic reading. The meanings co-exist. On the following pages, on the other hand, I shall give examples where one modal meaning from the textual environment (i.e. meanings of benefit and desirability) of another modal meaning (e.g. possibility) 'gets into' the latter meaning and alters it, even if the change is only very slight.

The meaning alteration is more in line with Leech's point that

these notions [logical notions such as 'permission' and 'necessity'] become moulded by the psychological pressures which influence everyday communication between human beings: factors such as condescension, politeness, tact, and irony.
(Leech 1971: 66-67)

However, Leech does not show how speakers use other modal meanings within their contributions to 'mould' the modal meanings of necessity, possibility, etc.

Here, I shall show how modal meanings are moulded as they co-exist with other modal meanings.

6.4.3.1 *can* and *could*

There are numerous occurrences of the modal auxiliaries *can* and *could* in the corpus. One or other of these verbs is present in 11.1% of the discourse units specifying action or B/D.

Can as an expression of permission is not relevant here because examples of permission are not considered part of SUGGESTIONS (see 5.2.6 and 5.3).

Epistemic *could* is rare in SUGGESTIONS because it relates to the truth or likelihood of propositions rather than the possibility of hypothetical actions in proposals. However, we do find the occasional example of epistemic *could* in clauses that specify the desirability/benefit of the action rather than the proposed action:

- (22) But yesterday we were yesterday was a yesterday was a good meeting because everyone said yeah, in actual fact the team, I think it was you {gesturing towards Speaker 3} that said it, we as a group gave those dates, we gave them five weeks ago, but we're only just telling you about it now, we're awful sorry about that so that's what we've gotta sort out. Alright, I think this **could** be [epistemic possibility] quite interesting [D]and it **could** also be [epistemic possibility] quite good fun [D].
(PF2 U164; 4)

The most frequently occurring type of *can* and *could* is dynamic possibility (neutral).

- (23) We **can** [Poss] draft up a procedure next week.
(PF2 U204)

'Pure' ability examples where the subjects possess certain properties that enable them to perform the action are not found in SUGGESTIONS because SUGGESTIONS only state the potentials of the subject.

- (24) No, no, no, @ can do peach, kind of beige, er patrice boxes. He reckons he knows a man that **can** [Ab] do that. I contacted |Person 16| and he reckons he **can** [Ab] do that.
(HF1 U159; 1)

The action in examples such as (2) in 3.4.3, repeated here as (24), is not proposed as a desired future action. The subject may or may not carry out the action in the future, but that is not the

point of the proposition. So there is no proposal and no SUGGESTION there. Besides, *can* (ability) is 'factive' – that is, 'the speaker is committed to the truth of the proposition expressed in the main predication' (Coates 1983: 91). This factivity obviously does not apply to proposals. In (24) the factivity is softened through the epistemic lexical verb *reckon* which reduces the speaker's commitment to the truth of the proposition.

The division between ability and possibility is, however, blurred (see also Coates 1983: 15). I do find a few examples of *can* = ability where the meaning of the modal slides towards possibility while the proposition simultaneously transforms into a proposal with implied deontic meaning:

(25) Here, we've only got various contact names, and the New Order Coordinator, really, will be trained up so he **can** [Ab] deal with all these sort of people. He **can** [(Ab →) Poss] deal with the business centre, and hopefully [D] get some information [KNOWLEDGE → B/D]. (PF1U180; 3)

I shall return to the transformation from proposition to proposal, from neutral possibility to desired action below.

In other examples circumstances may be stated which then enable the subject to perform the action (e.g. (26)). The enabling properties in such cases are typically external circumstances rather than properties of the proposed agent. Such examples could be seen as moving towards ability on the possibility–ability scale (the inherency scale), but they are not core examples of ability.

(26) And work, when you're working in that kind of environment [enabling circumstances] you **can** [(Ab) – Poss] sit down and make plans for acquisitions, for enlarging the company (LF3U182; 4)

Examples with *can* where the action element can be found in another discourse unit are not very common, but generally *can* in these examples rather than just indicating possibility also points towards an ability meaning. The action (in (27): 'we need to/should change the path of orders so they go directly to Speaker 2') has an enabling function: '[action] enables / allows [Speaker(s)] to [zz]'.

(27) Now if we can [Poss] change the likes of |Person W| and |Person M|, and they're not giving it to individual engineers, and give it all directly either to myself or |Speaker 2| but basically give it all to |Speaker 2| that's the first stage then |Speaker 2| **can** [(Ab) – Poss] say, what do we do, who gets this project, and I'll have a word with the guys and maybe discuss what's the requirements of that programme.
(PF2 U196; 3)

In the same way that 'pure' ability was dismissed as incompatible with SUGGESTIONS, so neutral possibility could be rejected as irrelevant. In cases of neutral possibility the point of the proposition is not to propose a future (desired) action. Merely stating the possibility of an action does not even give the speaker the opportunity of evoking the dimension of desirability in a supporting clause (e.g. purpose clause stating the reason that the action should be seen as beneficial/desirable). Nevertheless, sometimes the apparent modal meaning of possibility is paired with the meanings of benefit/desirability. In such cases the neutrality of the possibility is lost. We saw that in (25), and (28) is another example:


(28) But what's very, very important in my opinion, and it's only my opinion right, we *cannae* [not App] stop production for a week to do prototypes, we don't want to do that (not D) we **can** [Poss (→ App (→ D))] stop it for for two night-shifts for instance, right? We **can** [Poss (→ App (→ D))] do, let's say two night shifts this week we are going to be running prototypes. You just tell us that's the hours you need, we will plan it, or two days, just whatever you want, right?
(PF3 U84; 7)

In (28) *can* (which occurs twice apart from the negated version, *cannae*) is the *can* of neutral possibility, but the dimensions of appropriateness and benefit/desirability are evoked through a contrast effect:

<i>we cannae</i> xx [not App]	+	<i>we don't want to do that</i> [not D]
	vs.	
<i>we can</i> yy [implied: (more) App]	(+)	implied: <i>we do want to /</i> <i>we are willing to do yy</i> [(low) D]

The most common way, however, for the benefit/desirability dimension to be established in examples with *can* = neutral possibility is through value-laden main verbs or some other element in the non-finite clause following the auxiliary. Example (26) above, repeated here as (29), is one such example. Here the dimensions of benefit/desirability are evoked through implied

reference to value bases (PLANNING, GROWTH) which are both evaluated positively in the business context:

- (29) And work, when you're working in that kind of environment [enabling circumstances] you **can** [(Ab) → Poss (→ D/B)] sit down and **make plans** [PLANNING → D/B] for acquisitions,

for **enlarging** [GROWTH → D/B] the company
(LF3U182; 4)

As indicated by the arrows in (29) the positive evaluations within the proposal could be seen as affecting the neutral possibility of *can*. We could demonstrate the same process in the other examples above. Since what is possible is something beneficial and desirable, the mere possibility is beneficial and desirable. In some examples it takes quite a lot of inferential work and reference to the co-text as well as the business/meeting context to establish the evaluative dimensions.

That we sometimes interpret possible actions as desirable/beneficial is not a new thought. Palmer pointed it out:

CAN is often used not simply to say what one can do or what is possible, but actually to suggest, by implication, that what is possible will, or should, be implemented
(Palmer 1990: 86)

Palmer does not specify how language users establish such inferences, though (i.e. through evaluating the action as desirable, appropriate, etc.). He presents four different types of this use of *can*. One of them we find in SUGGESTIONS: *can* is paired with a second person pronoun which suggests 'that action be taken by the person addressed'. Palmer claims that in uses of *can* understood as 'will'/'should' where the subject is *we* used inclusively, 'it [the use] combines offer and suggestion' (the example given is the following: 'Do come early and we can have a drink') (Palmer 1990: 86). In workplace meetings, however, and most likely in a number of other settings, *can* used with *we* (inclusive) is common in SUGGESTIONS and similar to examples with a second person pronoun where no offer is involved. The reason is that the proposed action is often a joint action and the speaker is part of the team whose task it is to perform actions that solve problems or make decisions.

So far I have mainly focused on *can* and left *could* almost untouched (except for its epistemic use). Apart from acting as the past of *can* in some cases, *could* has also got a hypothetical sense which is used both for ability, permission, and neutral possibility. Just as Coates found that *could* = hypothetical neutral possibility (root possibility) was most common in her corpora, particularly in conversation, in SUGGESTIONS in the corpus of meetings this use is also dominant (e.g. (30)). In fact, the other types of *could* are virtually non-existent.

(30) I think we **could** [Poss (→ B/D)] easily [E (→ B/D)] **stretch ourselves** [MAXIMISE RESOURCES → B/D] a lot more than we do.
(LF3 U190; 4)

Using *could* = neutral possibility rather than *can* = neutral possibility does not change the basic meaning of the proposals, particularly as neutral possibility per definition carries a hypothetical element, even when realised through a present tense auxiliary. Nevertheless, there appears to be a tendency for speakers in the corpus to either favour *could*, or else *can* with another hypothetical element (e.g. conditional construction) as opposed to *can* with no marker of hypotheticality. Although, in most cases, straightforward substitution does not alter the meaning significantly, there are differences of nuance. There appears to be a change of tone which is primarily found in examples where an adverbial of enabling circumstances is linked to the clause specifying the action:

(31) And work, when you're working in that kind of environment [enabling circumstances] you

can [(Ab) – Poss]
<vs. **could** [Poss; hypothetical]>

sit down and **make plans** [PLANNING → D/B] for acquisitions, for **enlarging** [GROWTH → D/B] the company

(LF3U182; 4)

(32) with a steady, positive stream of money, cash flow, you

could take on, you **could** [Poss; hypothetical]
<vs. **can** [(Ab) – Poss]>

buy product lines in from other companies which we're also considering at the moment

(LF3 U192; 4)

In (26), repeated here as (31), if *could* was substituted for *can* the ability sense brought to the proposal by the enabling circumstances would lose strength. (Such substitution may not be acceptable as it would cause disagreement in tense between the auxiliaries in the adverbial clause (*are*) and the main clause (*could*). However, the argument holds as the same proposal could have been constructed with a prepositional adverbial as in (32) where substitution would not result in disagreement.) *Could* would emphasise the hypothetical aspect of the proposal (Perkins 1983: 50), thus exclude a reading that foregrounded the ability/neutral possibility and proposition elements as opposed to the proposal element. Such elements are more prominent with *can* even though the construction with *can* also evokes a hortatory reading of a proposal because of the inferred benefit/desirability meanings (see comments above). So, to recap, choosing *could* would emphasise the proposal-element as opposed to a neutral proposition. This would take away from the addressees the option of choosing to interpret the speaker's contribution as a neutral statement of possibility (and ability). The construction would thus increase the pressure on them to perform the proposed action.

Example (32) is a mirror example of (31).

In most other cases the opposite holds. In directives in general and SUGGESTIONS in particular *could* is typically more tentative and tactful and less intrusive than *can* (cf. Leech 1971: 119; Palmer 1990: 101; Coates 1983: 121). As suggested by Perkins (1983: 50), the scales of non-hypothetical–hypothetical; non-tentative–tentative; and non-indirect–indirect could all be seen as subsumed under the scale non-conditional–conditional. The conditional element gives space for the addressees to reject the proposals without significant threats of face loss for any of the involved parties. Let us take another look at (30), repeated here as (33):

(33) I think we **could** [Poss (\rightarrow B/D); hypothetical] easily [E (\rightarrow B/D)] **stretch ourselves** [B/D] a lot more than we do.
(LF3 U190; 4)

The proposal carries an implicit conditional (Palmer 1990: 172ff) which could be recovered as something along the lines of 'if we decided to', 'if we found the situation ripe for it', etc. The addressees could reject the proposal on the grounds that the condition does not hold. However, the opportunity for rejection is obviously much greater when the condition is made explicit. We find examples with both *can* and *could* which are explicitly conditional:

Action in main clause, *could*:

- (34) **If** we found the company that was good for an acquisition [enabling circumstances; GROWTH → B/D] **we could do it** [it = make an acquisition] [Neutral Poss (→ B/D)] even if it was a risk [RISK → not B/D, or B/D] (LF3 U192; 4)

Action in main clause, *can*:

- (35) And I, I think that maybe, er, you know that we do quite a lot of, er corporate finance including @ work ourselves, er, and while we've been going through your debt reduction and payment of preference shares, it's rather like |Firm F|, I mean, I know that you're interested but I've not put any serious amount of effort into it because I know you, you wouldn't pay very much and, er, your priorities are elsewhere. But **if** the time is approaching when you might seriously consider something [= an acquisition] **then, then we can all start maybe to gear that up** [cohesive link: put more concentrated effort into looking for objects of acquisition] [concentrated effort to achieve objective: PROFIT, GROWTH, EFFICIENCY → B/D] (LF3 U480; 6)

Action in *if*-clause, *could*:

- (36) Another thing if you're scheduling is to go for windows to allow a wee bit of flexibility [FLEXIBILITY → B/D] to let them have a drop-dead date, so that if there's anything happens, which will happen like |Firm J| came up on Monday, that wasn't really on any schedule, that was just you dropping your tools and getting on with it, but **if we could put windows** [cohesive link: FLEXIBILITY → B/D] so that you've got a wee bit of flexibility [FLEXIBILITY → B/D], you know that you've got to achieve it by a certain day, erm, I think that should make it a wee bit more, a wee bit better [B/D]. (PF2 U145; 4)

Action in *if*-clause, *can*:

- (37) Well, this week's really been concentrating the likes of |Person V| and |Person T|, we've just been only giving |Speaker 2| information as and when he needs it [no PROCEDURE → not B/D], and everyone's in a rush [not B/D] and **if we can turn that around** [contrast → B/D], you know (PF2 U102; 3)

When action is prescribed in the main clause, the contribution may just be one of asserting that if a given condition holds then a certain proposition about the possibility of an action also holds.

Just as with other examples of neutral possibility, the proposal element will here have to be established contextually or through other markers in the contribution (e.g. *maybe* in (35)).

The examples have been formalised in Figure 6-4 below.

The figure suggests that the way conditionality is constructed affects the level of optionality. The conditional construction generally ensures optionality, and the differences are small on a full scale of optionality–non-optionality. They are nonetheless interesting, particularly as part of the differences relates to the salience of the semantic meaning of benefit/desirability.

On the vertical line in the model, representing the difference between whether the action is in the main or in the conditional clause, the construction favours a reading with a direct expression of desirability/benefit. This meaning may be implicit, as in (37): *if we can turn that around* → ‘it would be good [B/D]’ / ‘it would increase the communication [COMMUNICATION → B/D] and efficiency [EFFICIENCY → B/D] and therefore the income [PROFIT → B/D], etc.’. Whether implicit or not, the B/D element appears to be more salient here than in examples where the action is in the main clause and the interlocutors need to infer the B/D element from lexical choices, cohesive links, and intermediate values (as in (34) and (35)). The stronger the presence or implication of the dimensions of benefit/desirability, the greater the pressure to perform the action (cf. Murcia Bielsa 2000: 131).

On the surface, actions in conditional clauses are hypothetical, which should allow addressees to reject them (e.g. in (36): ‘it is not possible to “put windows”’ or ‘well, we couldn’t really because...’). However, this way of presenting a proposal (or a directive in general) has become conventionalised as a way to increase the politeness and tact by increasing the apparent optionality of the addressee. In examples where the action (with *can/could*) is in the main clause, on the other hand, the condition can easily be rejected by the addressee (e.g. (34): ‘but there are no/not many companies ripe for acquisitions’; (35): ‘but we are not ready yet’ which could

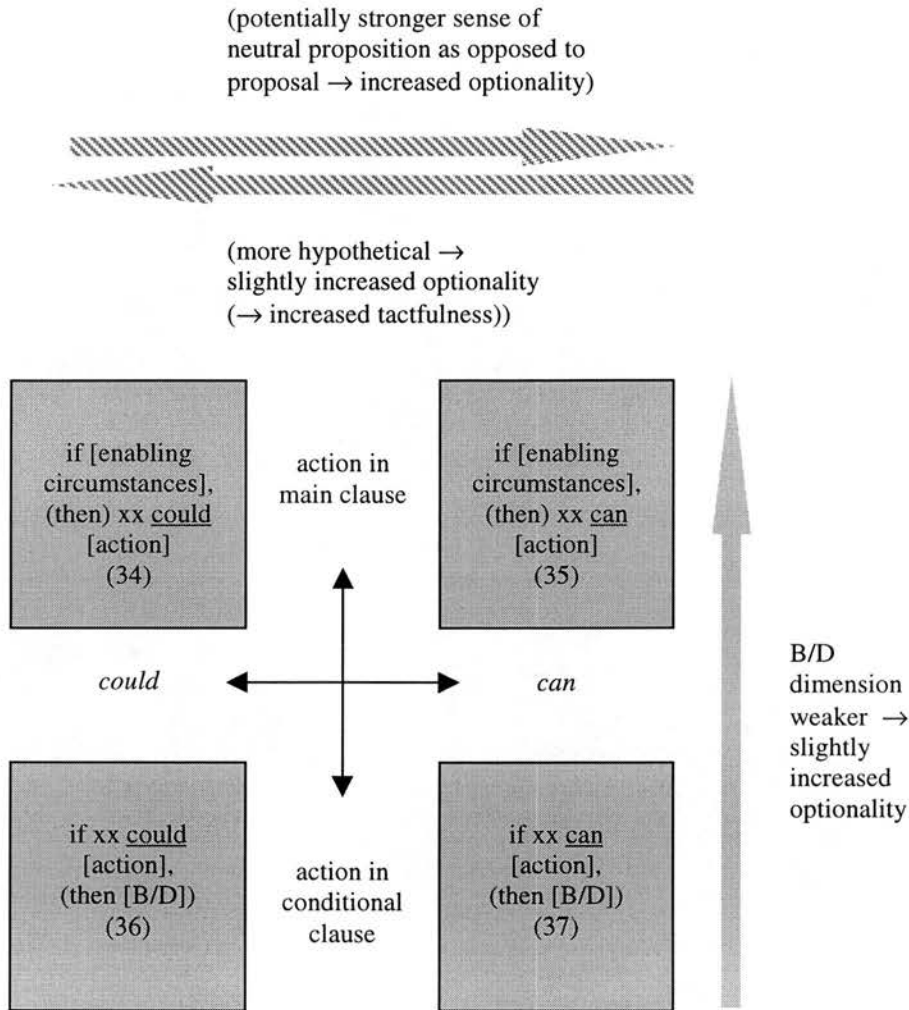


Figure 6-4: Conditional constructions and optionality

trigger a response such as ‘I didn’t say that we should do it *now* but only *if* and *when* we are ready’). The conditional in examples where the action is in the conditional is a rhetorical down-toner rather than a true conditional. As opposed to this, the conditional in examples where the action is specified in the main clause is genuine, and the conditions may therefore be questioned.

On the horizontal line are the contradictory forces that we have already seen in examples (31) and (32): Increased hypotheticality and thus optionality make *could* more tactful than *can*, but *can* may allow for a neutral proposition reading while *could* favours a proposal reading, thus

potentially giving *can* examples higher optionality. The difference between the two outer positions depends on the strength of the B/D element. In examples with *can* where the B/D element is weak, the proposition reading will be stronger than in examples where the B/D element is stronger (e.g. 0). In (35) the B/D element is weak, but the proposal reading is enforced by the adjunct *maybe*.

We have seen that there is no simple one-to-one relationship between the modal auxiliaries *can* and *could* and their modal meaning. Meanings of benefit and desirability from other elements of the clause complexes interfere and change the reading of these verbs. The strength of the B/D elements, as signaled through lexical choices or implied through different constructions such as different variants of the conditional construction, affects the extent of the meaning change from neutral modal possibility and to the obligation of a mild directive, a SUGGESTION.

6.4.3.2 Modal adverbs and adjectives of possibility

In the count of examples in which the modal meanings of possibility and desirability/benefit conflate, I have included examples with adjectives (*possible*) and adverbs (*possibly, maybe, perhaps, probably*). However, I only counted what I have called the deontic occurrences of the adjuncts.

Traditionally, the adjuncts have been seen as the speaker's comment on the degree of truth of propositions (i.e. a purely epistemic use). For example, Quirk *et al.* (1985: 620) classify the adjuncts *possibly, maybe, perhaps, and probably* as 'content disjuncts' that 'express some degree of doubt'. Perkins (1983: 89) states that, except for *hopefully*, all the modal adverbs (including the ones dealt with here) 'primarily express epistemic modality'. Halliday groups the adjuncts under Mood adjuncts⁴ of probability (1994: 82). Most examples of the adjuncts in the corpus are however not of the epistemic kind. Instead, they have a deontic function. The corpus does contain examples where the speaker seems to be commenting on the probability of a proposition.

⁴ The Mood adjuncts 'are so called because they are most closely associated with the meanings constructed in the mood system: those of polarity, modality, temporality and mood.' (Halliday 1994: 82). (In Systemic Functional Grammar the term 'mood' is used both for declarative, interrogative mood, etc.,

In various examples stated below such an epistemic reading is possible, but it can be shown that the main function of the adjuncts is deontic.

In (38) *maybe*₂ could be seen as modifying the copula in the copular clause *a second part of that is to...*

(38) But also I think today **maybe**₁ we could establish what ISpeaker 2l's job requirement's gotta be from all of us, what do we all need from him? And **maybe**₂ a second part of that is to, actually, **maybe**₃ come up with some sort of contingency plan if the funding's rejected. So that if it is rejected us people on this table can **maybe**₄ still complete the actions. And basically it's really just about brainstorming for ISpeaker 2l's job.
(PF2 U92; 3)

In most examples the adjunct modifies either a modal auxiliary (typically *can* or *could*; e.g. *maybe*₁ & 4) or the main verb (e.g. *maybe*₃). When modifying a modal auxiliary, the adjunct appears to be a comment on the degree of probability or truth of a possibility (or obligation: *we probably ought to...*(LF3 U202; 3); or necessity: *perhaps we need [you] to...*(PF2 U186; 4)). Curiously, when modifying a main verb, the main verb is mostly non-finite as in (39).

(39) So, so more activity in looking at the attitude of the investors and **possibly** to do a bit of kicking IFirm F1 regularly and looking around in the UK for structured ways of possible acquisition holders.
(LF3 U537; 6)

In most cases, the proposal could be seen as part of lists of what the speakers think should be done, or as recaps of their previously stated proposals (39). The constructions are in a way ellipted. Example (39), for example, could be seen as an ellipted version of the following constructions:

(39)' So, we need to/should/ought to arrange more activity in looking at the attitude of the investors, and we possibly need/should/ought to do a bit of kicking...

(39)'' So, the main thing is more activity..., and the main thing is possibly to...

and for the subject and finite element of clause structure, the so called 'interpersonal element of clause structure' (this element is written as 'Mood'; Halliday 1994; Martin *et al.* 1997: 61 – footnote).

The reading in (39)'' is likely because speaker 6 a few turns earlier (U534) has used the phrase *the main thing is [...] possibly to...* According to Giles' Accommodation Theory (Giles *et al.* 1991) speakers tend to return to already produced expressions.

The modal adjuncts *maybe* and *possibly* are epistemic adjuncts modifying propositions, but their main function is to mitigate imposition rather than express uncertainty. The adjuncts are clearly commenting on hypothetical processes. In fact, if we assume that (39)'' is the non-ellided version of (39), it is possible to see the ellipsis as a means to strengthen the link between the adjunct and the verb complex of action (*to do a bit of kicking*) rather than between the adjunct and the copula. The former favours a reading of hypothetical action, i.e. a proposal, whereas the latter favours a reading of the contribution as a neutral proposition.

When the adjunct modifies a modal auxiliary, I would also claim that it connects to the process of the main verb, and that the syntactic link to the modal auxiliary is semantically subsumed under a semantic link between the adjunct and the main verb (particularly for the adjunct *maybe*). In (40) *maybe* is placed in the middle of the verbal complex (cf. Martin *et al.* 1997: 116f) and not adjacent to the modal auxiliary. This construction highlights how the adjunct is modifying the process specified by the lexical verb complex rather than the possibility (i.e. *can*) of this process happening.

(40) But if the time is approaching when you might seriously consider something then, then we can all start **maybe** to gear that up.
(LF3 U480; 6)

Just like most occurrences of the modal auxiliaries *can* and *could*, the adjuncts signal the modal meaning of neutral possibility. (In fact, in several examples they reiterate this modal meaning as which is also expressed through a modal verb such as *can* or *could* in (38) and (40)). In the SUGGESTIONS the adjuncts operate in the environment of meanings of desirability/benefit. This suggests to the addressee that it would be worthwhile to perform the action. The possibility is no longer so neutral and not just one option among other (just as good) options. The effect is a mild pressure (obligation) on the intended agent to perform the proposal. Speakers employ the adjuncts to mitigate this obligation element. As they signal possibility they raise the optionality. (The mitigating function is in most cases primarily a face saving trick rather than a true lowering of obligation.) While the adjuncts minimise the level of obligation, they are also linked to

obligation as a modal meaning, as they push the proposal along the scale of obligation–neutral possibility (hence also along the scale of optionality).

Since a prominent function of the adjuncts is politeness and face-saving, it may be inaccurate to count them as part of the possibility meanings in the corpus. Nonetheless the possibility meaning is not cancelled out, and the adjuncts are included in the count in spite of their potentially misleading ambiguity.

It was shown above that meanings of neutral possibility in SUGGESTIONS tend to lose their neutrality as they are affected by surrounding meanings of desirability/benefit. When speakers present acts as possible *and* desirable they are likely to intend that the addressee interpret the act as the preferred choice compared with other possible choices where the speaker makes no allusions as to the degree of desirability. The two meanings conflate, as it were, or there is a transfer of desirability/benefit meanings to the markers of possibility. The transfer changes the meaning from neutral to preferred possibility or option. This difference in preference affects the level of optionality slightly. Whereas there is no pressure on addressees to adopt options that are merely possible, the pressure increases slightly when acts are singled out as desirable. This is not to say that they carry high obligation. It does, however, explain why speakers use dynamic modal expressions in SUGGESTIONS which are directives (albeit with high levels of optionality) and in which we could therefore expect (weak) deontic modal expressions instead (e.g. *should*, *ought to*). I have illustrated the effect of meaning conflation or transfer in Figure 6-3 above.

A similar effect, but reversed, is found for the other two types of common modal meanings in the SUGGESTIONS, necessity and obligation.

6.4.4 Conflated modal meanings: necessity/obligation and D/B

In 6.2.1 (c) I suggested that the modal meanings of necessity and obligation should be seen as fuzzy categories that are interrelated through a cline (see Figure 6-2 in 6.2.1, and Figure 6-5 below).

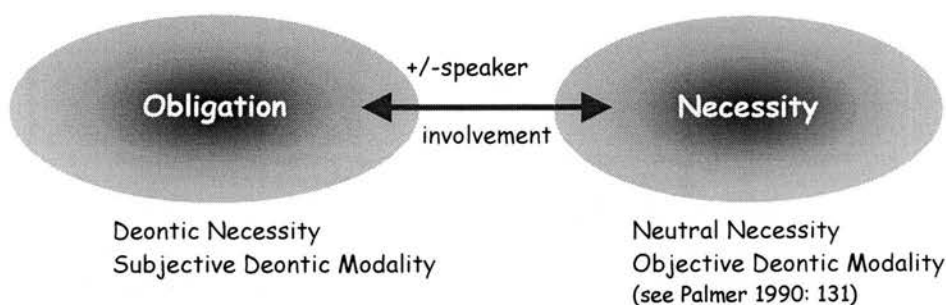


Figure 6-5: The obligation–necessity cline of subject involvement

The cline is one of speaker involvement. By this I mean the extent to which the necessity originates in the speakers (or the speakers and the norms of the culture in which they are embedded) or in external conditions that are not under the influence of the speakers. The level of speaker involvement, or subjectivity, of different modal expressions is debatable.

Particularly the semi-auxiliaries *have got to* and *have to* have proven controversial. Some see both expressions as purely objective or neutral, excluding speaker involvement (e.g. Palmer 1990: 116; Perkins 1983: 60f). On the other hand, Coates (1983: 4.3) argues that there is a difference between the two expressions, and that *have to* expresses objective modality while *have got to* expresses subjective modality. Miller (1980) found in his survey of expressions of necessity and obligations in a corpus of spoken Scottish English that speakers saw *have got to* as signalling external compulsion. For *have to* the preference for external compulsion compared to internal compulsion was weaker. Myhill & Smith (1995: 248) treat *have to* as obligation rather than necessity, probably because they see some speaker involvement.

Below we will see how seemingly neutral modality turns deontic and subjective as the meaning is paired with the modal meanings of benefit and/or desirability. The process is similar to the process of transfer between benefit/desirability and possibility. Such conflation or transfer may account for and provide a solution to the controversy of how to interpret *have got to* and *have to*.

Because of the movement from objectivity to subjectivity as modal meanings marry, I have chosen to treat obligation and necessity within one section. It would seem artificial to separate

out neutral, objective meanings of necessity first and then immediately after transfer them to the category of subjective meanings of obligation. It is, however, still meaningful to be able to distinguish between the levels of subject involvement. This is why I retain Palmer's categories and terminology while emphasising the close links between them (cf. Coates 1983).

6.4.4.1 Neutral necessity moving towards subjective obligation

In Table 6-3 we saw that necessity markers are the next most frequent type of modal expressions in SUGGESTIONS in the sub-corpus. After *can*, *have got to* is the most frequent expression overall. Non-auxiliary *need* is used frequently as well, and so is *have to*.

In most examples with *have to* in the corpus, the semi-auxiliary indicates strong necessity ('it is imperative/obligatory that...'; Coates 1983: 32) with no benefit aspect.

(41) And equally, we **have to** [N] accept that it's [= making acquisitions] not going to be cheap as well
(LF3 U480; 2)

It is also often used with negative polarity where the desirability element relates to a hypothetical and desirable situation which is in contrast with the negative conditions under which the participants are forced to operate.

(42) I wish [D] we didn't **have to** [N] rely on favours [not B/D] to get the job done
(PF1 U106; 3)

In both such cases the modal meaning is objective necessity – the necessity is beyond the speakers' control. This finding is in keeping with other modality accounts (e.g. Palmer 1990: 114ff, Perkins 1983: 60f; Coates 1983: 4.3). However, *have to* may also lie further towards the subjective deontic meaning on the subject involvement cline (see Figure 6-5):

(43) What we felt we **have to** [N → App] do is actually set ourselves a challenge [CHALLENGE → B/D]. A tougher [(not B/D) – overridden] challenge [CHALLENGE → B/D] than we've been facing over the last 2 years, say. I mean, the first 2 years of the MBO was, was very tough [not B/D], was very challenging [B/D] and we'll just **have to** [N → App] set ourselves some tough [(not B/D) – overridden] goals [GOAL ORIENTATION; CLARITY OF OBJECTIVES → B/D] for the future.
(LF3 U317; 1)

Here the proposed action is not entirely necessary: there are other options. (It is not an absolute necessity to accept something inevitable as in (41) either, but it is the only sensible approach. In (43), on the other hand, other options are more realistic. This takes away more of the necessity in the proposal.) When one option among several is selected, the choice is subjective and based on a subjective evaluation of relative desirability and benefit. Such evaluation is indicated in (43) through lexical choices (*challenge*, *goals*). In other words, the speaker evaluates the situation such that the only way forward (if a desired objective is to be achieved) is to act as proposed. The fact that the field of options is restricted by subjective judgement rather than external circumstances removes some of the real necessity from the proposal and leaves some possibility for objection from other speakers (i.e. raised optionality). The subjective element pushes the meaning towards the deontic/obligation end of the cline illustrated in Figure 6-5.

The presence of desirability and/or benefit elements in the environment of the necessity (or obligation) markers makes the expressions cluster with expressions carrying the meaning of importance. In Coates' investigations of clusters of meaning, *must* clearly clustered with *it is important* (1983: 32). Deontic *must* may be weaker than *have got to* or *have to*, and it may differ from them by being subjective, i.e. include speaker involvement in the utterance (Coates 1983: 32; Lyons 1977), whereas the other two expressions are potentially objective. However, *have got to* and *have to* may also cluster with *it is important* when desirability is expressed and the expressions lie closer to the subjective end of the cline in Figure 6-5. *Must* is not common in the corpus, but it is still informative to compare an example of *must* as an expression of obligation with an expression which has typically been seen as a modal meaning of necessity:

(44) But I go back to the point if you're talking about institutional investors I mean, er, you do have this problem of it's **got to** [N (→ I/App/D/B)] be a reasonable [App/D/B] chunk but it

mustn't [O/not App → not B/D] be too [not B/D] large [~~B/D~~ or not B/D? → not B/D] a percentage of the company

(LF3 U487; 1)

In (44) the two modal expressions *have got to* and *must* create a slight difference in nuance. *Have got to* signals that external factors are involved in determining the size of the 'chunk' of the company to be taken over by investors⁵. The speaker however modifies this meaning through the adjective *reasonable*, thereby evaluating the appropriateness of the size of the investment. The subjective evaluation is based on the norms of the specific business culture. *Must* and negative polarity, on the other hand, carry the subjective meaning directly. There is no need for a meaning transfer from the environment to obtain a subjective meaning. (This does, of course, not exclude evaluation in the environment as here through the adjective *large* and the accompanying degree adverb of excess *too*).

However, more interesting than the differences is the similarity in meaning between the two expressions. Speaker 1 creates a rough equation between the expressions by positioning them on either side of the contrast conjunction *but*. This equation (together with their closeness in meaning) links them cohesively (through a contrast relation) and pulls them closer together on the necessity-obligation cline (Figure 6-5).

Just as the examples with *have to* and particularly *have got to* may take on a subjective meaning, so *need* may adopt a deontic meaning from the context. Non-auxiliary *need* (i.e. *need* which is not characterised by the NICE-properties; see 3.4.1) is very common in the corpus. It is typically classified as a modal expression of necessity. In (45) the speaker signals this meaning clearly as

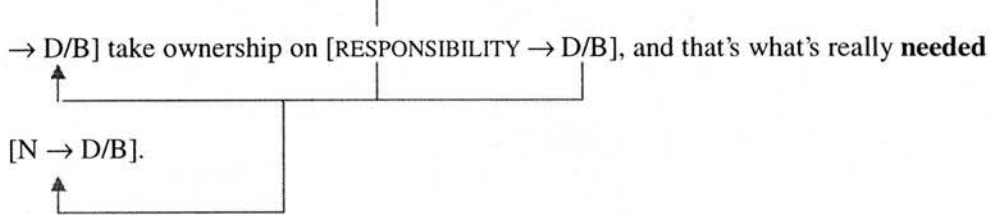
⁵ The action is implied as *it* refers to 'investment' which is a complex lexical repetition of *investors* (the items are 'paraphrased in such a way that a paraphrase of one of the words may contain the other' and 'the items share a common context' (Hoey 1991: 60); see also Halliday & Hasan (1976) who treat items formed on the same root as repetitions).

he lets the expression *it may not be necessary* in an appositive construction act as a paraphrase for *there's no need*.

- (45) But it's quite possible you, you might still, er, and this is, becomes an AIM point again, er, as you see how AIM develops, **there's no need** to do anything immediately, er, **it may not be necessary**, no one may think it important for you to do an acquisition before you get a listing. Maybe be quite comfortable, in 18 months time to say steady pockets growth, let's say 20 percent per annum if things are going well, like the look of that, happy to back it. ~
(LF3 U480; 6)

Also in other examples with *need* is the necessity meaning prominent. However, frequently the verb (like *have got to* and *have to*) may be impregnated with subjective evaluation of appropriateness, importance or desirability/benefit.

- (46) But what is the ideal situation [D]? Well, appoint a champion. Now, somebody's gotta [N



(PF1 U106; 3)

- (47) And we **need** [N → B/D] a plan [PLANNING, PROCEDURE → B/D],

and we've got to [N → B/D] share the plan [COMMUNICATION → B/D], this is under-communication, share the plan [COMMUNICATION → B/D] and stick to it [PLANNING, PROCEDURE → B/D].

(PF1U248; 4)

Need also occurs in a form which could be paraphrased by a passive construction, as it implies an agent different from the subject of the clause:

- (48) But [Firm F], like any other investor, they **need** [N → B/D] constantly reminding and their attention to, of course [cohesive link to earlier contribution: 'make [Firm F] take us into account as a potential investment': B/D], I, I feel very confident in [Firm F]'s internal Monday morning meetings, not a high proportion is devoted to look at possible acquisitions or, er, trade partners for [This Firm], you know it's the latest twenty million pounds deal they're focusing on so, yes, I'm sure it's in the back of their mind but certainly pressing them regularly, as we would like them [B/D] to, er, to think about it is accepting five minutes

every time they have a meeting every, every two or three weeks, we're going to say, you know, "is there anything that you think might be quite interesting?", "well, actually yes now that you come to mention it".

(LF3 U478; 6)

Paraphrased this example could sound like this: 'We need to remind Firm B constantly...' or 'It is (necessary)/important that we remind Firm B constantly' / 'It would be desirable/beneficial if we remind Firm B ...'

In this section we have seen examples of expressions that appear to express the meaning of necessity but often take meaning from the surrounding context to include elements of subjective evaluation which makes them expressions of deontic modality rather than neutral necessity. As soon as the speaker evaluates the importance, appropriateness, desirability, or benefit of the hypothetical action, the modal meaning is no longer neutral. As a matter of fact, it is this inclusion of subjective evaluation that makes the statements SUGGESTIONS rather than neutral descriptions of situational conditions (see the definition of SUGGESTIONS in 5.3).

6.4.4.2 Obligation

A few expressions have conventionally been categorised as expressions of obligation (e.g. *must*, *should*, *ought to*). *Should* is found frequently in the corpus; *must* (we have already seen an example with *must* (44)) and *ought to* are must less common.

(49) One thing [Speaker 3] and I spoke about was that if we had to go to the building next door, we'd effectively be sitting there with, you know, excess space, whether we **shouldn't** [App → B/D] take, you know, a much more aggressive stance [PUSHING OWN AGENDA → B/D] both with [Firm G] and [Firm H] in terms of saying "what else have you got available at this moment if anything?"

(LF3 U416; 2)

(50) I think we **ought to** stop [B/D], like, doing through favours [NO PLANNING – PROCEDURE → not B/D] we do that don't we.

(PF1 U232; 2)

As we have seen, other expressions move from neutrality to subjectivity, i.e. towards obligation rather than necessity, through contextual meaning transfer. The subjective judgement of what is

important and should be done may however be signalled through other means than lexical choice and traditional modal expressions. Mood choice also plays a significant role.

6.4.4.3 Obligation and mood

I have included examples of imperative mood in the count of markers of obligation. In 3.2.1 we saw how the relationship between the different moods and speech acts is a complex one. Similarly, the relationship between mood and modal meanings is very complex. There is no one-to-one relationship between categories from the two systems, e.g. between imperative and obligation. Nevertheless, like the relationship between sentence types and illocutionary values can be seen as one of compatibility as in Risselada's weaker version of the Literal Force Hypothesis, so mood (e.g. imperative) and modal categories (e.g. obligation) can be seen as relating to each other through compatibility. And, indeed, the corpus examples with imperative mood signal obligation of varying strength.

In several cases it was, however, difficult to determine whether the subjectless construction represented imperative mood or simply ellipsis of the subject, i.e. bare verb constructions. In such cases the speaker could have ellipted auxiliaries marking possibility or obligation. In (51), for example, the syntax suggests imperative mood for the clause *Maybe be quite comfortable...*, but the clause initial *Maybe* as well as the link back to the incomplete clause *you might still...* suggests that the modal meaning of possibility has a strong presence in the SUGGESTION. Furthermore, Speaker 6 seems to have a habit of leaving clauses incomplete. What this suggests is that we could read the construction as a declarative with ellipted *you could* in which case the SUGGESTION would emphasise possibility rather than obligation. Even if the mood is truly imperative (obligation), the meaning is pushed towards the possibility end on the obligation cline because of the presence of the possibility element *maybe*.

(51) But it's quite possible you, you might still, er, and this is, becomes an AIM point again, er, as you see how AIM develops, there's no need to do anything immediately, er, it may not be necessary, no one may think it important for you to do an acquisition before you get a listing. **Maybe be quite comfortable, in 18 months time to say steady pockets growth**, let's say 20 percent per annum if things are going well, like the look of that, happy to back it.

(LF3 U480; 6)

(52) is another example where broken syntax, which is so common in spoken language, may cancel out the imperative mood. We may either assume ellipsis, or the link between the incomplete clauses softens the imperative so that it ends up only carrying very little obligation:

(52) But the likes of the new orders and all that, it's unusual for new orders, if we plan it from day one, and arrive at dispatch dates and all that, it's unusual for that to be pulled forward, right? What happens is that the date slips and then it becomes a panic at the back end so we're trying to, we're well aware the front end of the process is too unwieldy at the minute, and that's really why we plumped for some kind of champion to look after it, and it's taken us two years to convince, er... Yeah, convince ourselves that that was the way to go, but I think we bought into it in a big way, **but we've gotta make sure that**, I mean I keep referring to the back end of this and we had a bit of fun about it this morning is that, **don't blame the champion**, you know, **the champions are only part of the team**. The problem is at the moment is we've really got to start putting that team round about [Speaker 2], or he's gonna find it awfully hard, and he's really not going to be able to achieve the measures that he's been set, you know?

(PF2U154; 4)

If cutting out the clauses *I mean I keep referring...*, the clause *don't blame the champion* could be seen as a continuation of *but we've gotta make sure that* where only the subject *we* is missing. The intonation patterns suggest that there is no ellipsis. Even so, there is a clear link back to *but we've gotta make sure*. This signals that the speaker is included as one of the proposed agents, and it moves the emphasis from the strong obligation of the imperative to the less imposing obligation of the declarative.

A lot of the imperatives begin with *let's...* Such constructions are less imposing than most other imperative forms:

(53) So **let's let's let's go for this, let's run this** for the month of January, let's say, right? **Let's see** what we can do in the month of January and then review it, right?

(PF3U154; 7)

All of this suggests that strong obligation is not favoured. As Coates says, strong obligation is only really common in school and at home (1983: 38). We might add the army and police forces. In other places it is too face threatening to leave so little optionality, and obligation has to be softened by some linguistic means.

However, it is not the fact that speakers soften obligations by wrapping imperatives up in surrounding clauses and make them lose their imperativeness which is of most interest to us here. In most cases, also where we have true imperatives with implied 2nd person as agent rather than third person (*we* inclusive), the speaker softens the obligation element by including a benefit/desirability element in their construction. In (51) the speaker has attached a purpose clause to the potential imperative: *to say steady pockets growth* [GROWTH; CONTROL; STABILITY – SECURITY → B/D]. As indicated, the purpose clause specifies the potential benefit of the proposed action. In (52) a cause clause is added: *you know, the champions are only part of the team* [TEAM PLAY; SOLIDARITY → B/D]. (The effect of benefit/desirability elements within imperatives is perhaps clearest in examples such as ‘Have some more coffee’ which has almost completely lost the directive element typically associated with imperatives.)

We end the treatment of relations between different modal meanings (including imperative mood) with a brief note on interrogative mood as well. The link between mood and any specific modal meaning is even less clear for interrogatives than for imperatives. However, in the few examples I have found the speakers use interrogative where they mean to include obligation in their contribution, but where it is essential to soften the obligation.

(54) **What about** thinking of something out slightly @, something not quite as synergistic because there are a lot more under-performing companies around [BIGGER MARKET → B/D] than there are companies that are going to give you the immediate production type synergy's that you are looking for.
(LF3 U349; 6)

(55) And **why don't you** tell 'em that you'll no be accepting anything unless it's through the system [PROCEDURE → B/D]?
(PF1 U117; 5)

In the disguise of neutral option, the speakers include an element of benefit/desirability, and thus present their evaluation of the action as a preferred choice, leaving some obligation on the addressees to follow the evaluation or justify if not. The mood increases the optionality. At the same time, the expressions are highly conventionalised (*why don't you...*, *how about...*) as indicators of SUGGESTIONS. In fact, the forms evoke expectations in the listeners that the speaker presents an action which he or she thinks ought to be carried out. The listener presupposes that the contribution is a SUGGESTION, purely on the basis of the form. The construction has taken on

a meaning of benefit/desirability through its focal use in the context of decision making. This, together with the presence of benefit/desirability meanings, reduces the optionality level from neutral possibility to weak obligation.

In this section on obligation and necessity we have seen how meanings may traverse the clines through influence from desirability and benefit elements (please refer to Figure 6-2, p. 160). What appear to be statements of neutral necessity get a deontic meaning and become obligation as the speakers demonstrate the desirability or benefit of the action. Expressions of obligation may themselves be softened by such B/D elements and move slightly upwards on the obligation and optionality clines. Even the interpretation of mood choices is affected by B/D elements. On the one hand, the obligation of imperatives are softened by such elements, while on the other hand the elements add obligation to interrogatives.

6.4.5 Optionality – setting, face, and status

All the findings above show that when speakers in SUGGESTIONS signal that an action would be desirable or beneficial, the modal meanings of desirability or benefit often enter into a complex relationship with other modal meanings. Seemingly neutral statements of possible or necessary action become value laden through meaning transfer from desirability and benefit as the speakers impose their evaluation of what ought to be done. This meaning transfer affects the level of optionality for the intended agent. Apparent necessity paired with the speaker's evaluation of the benefit of the action indicates alternative options and raises the optionality. Markers of obligation are softened by the presence of meanings of benefit or desirability so that the optionality increases. Statements of seemingly neutral possibility lose their neutrality when combined with the speakers' evaluation of benefit/desirability. This raises the pressure for the specified option to be chosen rather than any other option which has not been highlighted as beneficial or desirable in a similar way. The optionality is thus lowered slightly.

Of course it is possible to ask how we can justify interpreting benefit/desirability as so dominant that other modal meanings are transformed by that evaluative meaning. Would it not be just as correct to assume, for example, that the neutrality of possibility and necessity cancels out the

value-laden nature of the markers of benefit/desirability? I have already given a partial answer: Focal contextual frames provide the clues for participants to interpret the contributions in this manner. Participants combine assessments of the following factors (cf. Heine 1995: 28) to determine how to interpret a contribution:

- (a) social norms: In the business world in general and in business meetings in particular people strive to identify action which helps achieve desired objectives.
- (b) knowledge of the world: Subjective judgements usually penetrate seemingly neutral statements, and neutrality is often used to ensure as low face threat to addressees as possible.
- (c) contextual clues: Markers of value, subjectivity, or comparison are signals that the speakers are contributing to the joint goal of identifying suitable actions.

The meeting framework within the broader cultural framework of business thus provides a focal contextual frame which makes the readings presented in this chapter feasible. Furthermore, in the language community in general a modal expression such as for example *have got to* appears to carry a core meaning of necessity (external conditions beyond the control of the speakers make the proposal/proposition necessary). In the corpus of meetings, speakers mainly use the expression within SUGGESTIONS where the expression takes on a meaning of subjective evaluation of what would be desirable. This use becomes the most frequent use in the corpus of data, i.e. the 'prototypical discourse meaning' (Silva-Corvalán 1995: 73; see 3.4.4).

The speakers choose to use conventionalised modal expressions, partly as part of a contextual frame, and partly in order to accommodate the face needs of other participants. Obviously the need for speakers to protect the addressees' face and avoid strong imposition of obligations on them has been a significant factor in conventionalising the specific expressions. The face of addressees is protected when they are left with as much room for maneuvering as possible, i.e. with as high optionality as possible. This explains why expressions of neutral possibility (*can* and *could*) are so common in the SUGGESTIONS (see Table 6-3). It also explains why speakers use weak expressions of volition (*would like to*), and when a stronger expression is used (*want*) why it is commonly used with a second person subject, in preparatory moves (e.g. WH-clefts) or

conditionals rather than head-on as strong claims of the speaker's will (*I want*). Finally, it clarifies why speakers sometimes choose to use interrogative mood, although that choice is relatively seldom, and why imperative mood, when used, typically is very weak and softened by various linguistic means.

It takes a bit more reconstruction to explain why expressions of strong necessity and obligation are used frequently (see Table 6-3). Particularly the high frequency of *have got to* is puzzling, because, relatively speaking, the expression is much less frequent in ordinary conversation.

In their book, Biber *et al.* (1999) provide statistics for the occurrence of modals and semi-modals in a 6,410,300 word corpus of British and American English conversation. In British conversation, *have got to* accounts for 0.09% and *have to* for 0.18% of the words (Biber *et al.* 1999: 488). There are more occurrences of *have to* than of *can* or *could* (as possibility) and (deontic) *should* as well. In SUGGESTIONS, on the other hand, speakers use *have got to*, *can*, *could*, and *should* more than *have to*. In Biber *et al.*'s corpus, *have got to* is less frequent than any of these other expressions, whereas in SUGGESTIONS only *can* beats *have got to*. In other words, *have got to* is relatively more frequent in SUGGESTIONS than in general conversation, and *have to* is much less frequent.

Why would speakers use *have got to* so much more frequently in SUGGESTIONS in meetings than they do in ordinary conversation? A straightforward explanation might relate to the possibility that the speakers honestly see the prescribed action as the only possible way out. However, as shown above, they do include evaluations of desirability/benefit. This shows that what they present as the only option is what they evaluate as the only option that would ensure that the group meets its objective. Without this objective in mind other options may be at hand.

The evaluations also open the possibility that other participants will contest the choice of action. By choosing expressions of necessity, the speakers protect their own face as they pretend to be objective and that way disclaim the responsibility for the choice of action. It is supposedly external factors that decide the choice of action, not the speaker's judgement. Besides, expressions of necessity have a more persuasive effect than weaker expressions of possibility. The situation type of business meetings taken into account, persuasive strength is obviously a desired effect which is in strong competition with participants' face needs.

Similar explanations account for the use of *need* and the occasional use of *have to* as necessity-rendered-subjective. It appears as if *have got to* allows for greater input of subjective evaluation than *have to* in the corpus. This contradicts Palmer's (1990: 131) and Perkin's (1983: 60f) treatment of the two expressions as roughly equivalent and both excluding subjectivity. Instead, it supports Coates' (1983: 53) claim that *have got to* may carry more subjectivity than *have to*. This provides an explanation for the fact that *have to* is so much more infrequent in SUGGESTIONS compared to general conversation while the opposite holds for *have got to*.

There are, naturally, individual differences between the speakers as to how they present their proposals. I performed a small test count of the relative frequency among individual speakers of the expressions dealt with here. Once again, the results are merely indicators of patterns on which we cannot draw any firm conclusions. It is however possible to make a few tentative suggestions. I shall focus on four speakers here, two from the LF3 meeting, and two from the Printing Firm (all meetings taken together). In each company, one of the speakers has some sort of authority (cf. Verschueren's differentiation of authority types, 1985: 180). Speaker 6 in LF3 has expert knowledge on the financial matters that dominate the meeting, and, as an outsider with no vested interest in the outcome, is chairing the discussion. Speaker 7 in PF is a member of the senior management and has joined one of the meetings to inform the team that they need to perform better. The other two speakers have plenty of specialised expertise but no particular authority relative to the other participants.

The first observation is that there are obvious individual idiosyncrasies at play when speakers choose their expressions. For example, speaker 2 in LF3 (as the only speaker in the corpus) consistently prefers to use *have to* in most of his SUGGESTIONS. Speaker 3, PF, on the other hand, uses exclusively *have got to* as marker of necessity, never *have to*.

The other pattern that emerges is that speakers with authority generally favour possibility expressions (e.g. speaker 6, LF3) rather than necessity expressions, whereas speakers with no specific authority within the meetings display a slight preference for necessity expressions (e.g. speaker 2, LF3). The pattern is not clear and we ought to check the statistical significance of the differences before making any categorical statements (such investigations fall beyond the scope of this study). However, if the observation is correct it suggests that speakers with a certain authority seek to downplay this authority, possibly to signal that the speech act is one of

proposing rather than ordering (cf. Pérez Hernández 1999: 167). Face wants are also at play. It is less threatening for a less authoritative person to minimise optionality than it is for a person with authority to do so. In fact, the former may have to do it in order to be heard. People with authority are usually heard because of the expectation states created by status information (Berger *et al.* 1980). Speaker 7, PF, uses relatively more necessity expressions (particularly *need*) than e.g. speaker 6, LF. Whereas speaker 7 is concerned that the problem is solved, and therefore that the members of the team get their acts together, speaker 6 is concerned that the other speakers' wishes and needs are met. This difference originates in the different remits of the meetings. For example, the aim of the LF3 meeting is indeed to identify a strategic plan that fulfils the stakeholders' wishes. It is also obvious, however, that speaker 6's style differs significantly from other participants' style as he fulfils his role as facilitative chairman. Despite his expertise on the issues under discussion, it is not his shares that are at stake, and he takes a careful and probing approach. Compare for example his overly hedged contribution in (56) in which he presents a proposal as a possibility, but where its benefit/desirability is only indirectly recoverable, and speaker 7's (PF) much more direct proposal bordering to a demand (i.e. leaving very little optionality) (57):

(56) And I, **I think** that **maybe**, er, you know that we do quite a lot of, er corporate finance including @ work ourselves, er, and while we've been going through your debt reduction and payment of preference shares, it's rather like |Firm F|, **I mean**, I know that you're interested but I'm not put any serious amount of effort into it because I know you, you wouldn't pay very much and, er, you're priorities are elsewhere. But **if** the time is approaching when you **might** seriously consider something then, then we **can** all start **maybe** to gear that up.

['that' refers to 'teasing out a bit the terms on which [investors] will be prepared to put up money to make an acquisition']

[KNOWLEDGE; ADAPTING TO MARKET → B/D]

(LF3 U480; 6)

(57) Um, **I'd like** [D] to see a separate Gantt chart for every AA form, not for every part number, right? Just **keep keep it simple, rationalise it** as much as you can, right, then it'll make a lot of sense to people like |Speaker 6| and people that |Speaker 6| and me certainly, you know?

[TRANSPARENCY; KNOWLEDGE → B/D]

(PF3 U136; 7)

[Gantt charts are diagrams, illustrating the time course of a project graphically. Each task within the project is illustrated separately as a graph, showing its beginning and end, and project milestones are indicated.]

So, to recap, speakers' individual preferences as well as their status affect their choices of modal expressions. Whichever expression is chosen, in SUGGESTIONS they have to live their life side by side with indicators of benefit/desirability which modify the expression and adapt the related level of optionality allowed for the addressees.

6.5 Propagation of evaluative meaning within SUGGESTIONS

Although the model in Figure 6-2 and the structure of the previous sections (6.2-6.4) gives the impression that the evaluative meanings of benefit and desirability are created on distinct levels, actual meaning-making of course integrates all levels simultaneously. The aim of the model is to distinguish different elements of this complex process. Linguistic expressions involve both the intermediate level of the model where elements are anchored to the context through values, and the top level of evaluative meanings, except when predicating evaluative meaning directly (e.g. *benefit*) in which case the intermediate values are bypassed.

Once established through such complex meaning-making, evaluative meaning of benefit/desirability may propagate through the text (see 3.3.4). That way, clauses, which in isolation may contain no B/D element, gain such an element from other parts of the text. In this section I shall give an example of propagation of B/D meanings in SUGGESTIONS. The analysis prepares the ground for my discussion in 6.6 of coherence in the meetings.

I have discussed example (9) (repeated below as (58)) above, but the discussion here will go more in depth. In the example an evaluative complex clause follows the somewhat elliptic (also evaluated) proposal (*picking the point is an important issue* ~ 'it is important that we pick the point for making an acquisition carefully').

(58) Er, I'm going to go back to the rates of growth and, whether, almost whether it's a trade sale or listing, picking the point is an important [I] issue. So if you, if you let it run on [-GOAL ORIENTATION, -PLANNING, -SPEED, -EFFICIENCY → not B/D], if you can't find any suitable [App] acquisition [B/D – negated by negative polarity] and you let it run on [-GOAL ORIENTATION, -PLANNING, -SPEED, -EFFICIENCY → not B/D], and you run out of [not B/D] ideas [B/D] on market penetration [COMPETITIVENESS → B/D] and you peak at the plateau, at one million pounds profit [(+PROFIT → B/D) < -GROWTH → not B/D], then it's obviously much more difficult [not E] to sell [part of objective → D] than it is rising steadily [GROWTH; PROFIT → D] at 15 percent per annum.
(LF3 U251; 6)

For something to *run on* is considered problematic in business. It means lack of direction (objective), planning, and speed, and it therefore equals inefficiency. The negative evaluation is enforced in the next conditional clause *if you can't find any suitable acquisition*. An acquisition is one of the options that are being evaluated in this particular meeting. Acquisitions are seen as having some advantages but also some disadvantages. The desirability of an acquisition is naturally closely linked with the suitability of a specific acquisition, which means that a *suitable acquisition* is a positive thing. Inability to find one is therefore negative. To *run out of* something is bad, and particularly if that something is something positive, such as *ideas (on market penetration)* (which ensures COMPETITIVENESS (B/D)). In these clauses, the speaker builds up a negative evaluation [not D], and this evaluation propagates through to the next clause *and you peak at the plateau, at one million pounds profit*. Seen in isolation, this clause could easily evoke a positive evaluation. 'Peaking at a plateau' carries potential negative connotations of stagnation [-GROWTH: not B/D], but the majority of the negative evaluation comes from propagation of negative evaluation from the preceding clauses.

This reading of the coordinated conditional clauses is subsequently verified by the main clause which contains a comp-element and is linked to a comparative clause (*then it's obviously much more difficult to sell* [-Ability/Ease; -(long term) PROFIT: not B/D] **than** *it is rising steadily at 15 percent per annum* [+GROWTH; +(long term) PROFIT: B/D]).

The propagation described here is syntactic (Lemke 1998: 50-51) and achieved through coordination which creates an appositive effect. The clause *and you peak at the plateau, at one million pounds profit* carries the conditionality of the two conditional clauses *if you let it run on* and *if you can't find any suitable acquisition* because of the coordination between the clause and the conditionals. It also takes over the evaluative dimension of the conditional clauses. The

coordinated complex of conditional clauses is also linked through subordination to the main clause with its comparative clause *then it's obviously much more difficult... than it is...*, and the negative evaluation of the conditional complex spills into the main clause.

The propagation is also cohesive (cf. Lemke 1998: 50). In the first clause of (58), speaker 6 refers to *the rates of growth*. The verb phrase *run on* indicates movement along a line while *peaking* indicates the 'heights' of such a line. Normally GROWTH is conceptually perceived as an upward going curve [+GROWTH: B/D]. Peaking means a potential downturn which is incompatible with continuous growth [-GROWTH: not B/D]. This is why, despite the relative desirability of a one million pound profit, peaking is negative. The cohesive link is not just based on this graphic image but also on a time element: A contrast is established between the non-duration aspect of *point* as opposed to the duration aspect of *run on*. This link is essentially what ties the explicit evaluation of importance to the implicit evaluations of benefit/desirability as it allows for the evaluation of the contrast as un-desirable and non-beneficial to propagate into the proposal with a reversed evaluation. The reversal is partly established through the incompatibility of the semantic dimension of importance with un-desirability, and partly through the semantic opposition described above between *picking the point* and the duration aspects in the clause complex following the proposal.

This is just one example of propagation of benefit/desirability meanings within one SUGGESTION. The example verifies the point made in chapter 4 that SUGGESTIONS may spread over numerous clauses and across several clause complexes. It also demonstrates the complex interplay between different elements in meaning making, just as it shows how seemingly neutral clauses receive evaluative meaning through propagation of such meaning from clauses where speakers signal it more explicitly.

Propagation of evaluative meanings is not restricted to adjacent clauses. They may propagate across spans of clauses (e.g. the evaluative meanings connected to the graphic image of a curve in (58)). They may even propagate across turns of different speakers.

6.6 Cohesion and coherence between SUGGESTIONS

We saw in 2.1.2 that parts of meetings where relatively free discussion takes place have less clear sequential structure than openings and closings. Speakers often neglect to give direct feedback to previous speakers' SUGGESTIONS. Instead, they take the opportunity of the floor to present their own SUGGESTION. I shall return to example (5) from 2.1.2 (repeated here as (59)) and demonstrate how, despite the lack of direct responses, the speakers do in fact create coherent dialogues⁶. The coherence of the dialogue has its origins in the contextual values to which participants relate various expressions and statements, and in the evaluative meaning associated with the values, i.e., in most cases, meanings of benefit and desirability. The values are linked together and take on a textual function. Hence, they combine an interpersonal and a textual function.

The point of interest in the analysis is cohesive links and indicators of coherence between turns, not within turns. This is why in (59) I have mainly indicated links between turns. The thin, grey lines indicate cohesion based on explicit cohesion markers such as demonstrative pronouns or lexical repetition and examples of 'simple' and 'complex paraphrase' where some sense relation exists between the expressions. (On different types of repetition, see Hoey 1983: chapter 3. I use his categories here.) The thicker, black lines indicate links between different intermediate values and the evaluations attached to these values.

⁶ I adopt Hasan's and Hoey's definition of the concepts of coherence and cohesion. Coherence is 'the property of "unity", of "hanging together"' (Hasan 1984: 181). Textual coherence is 'a relative, not an absolute property' (Hasan 1984: 184); a text can be more or less coherent. Hoey shows how this position allows for a distinction between coherence and cohesion as one where 'cohesion is a property of the text, and ... coherence is a facet of the reader's evaluation of text' (Hoey 1991: 11-12). Or, as Bublitz puts it, 'coherence is not a text-inherent property at all (as are cohesion and connectivity). It is not given in the text invariantly and independently of an interpretation, but rather 'comes out' of the text in the sense that it is based on the language of the text, in the same way as it is based on additional information provided *inter alia* by the linguistic context, the socio-cultural environment, the valid communicative principles and maxims and the interpreter's encyclopedic knowledge. [...] it is not texts but rather people that cohere when understanding texts...' (Bublitz 1999: 2).

(59)

U240 2 Well, we did make a major advance on improving the yield [PROFIT → B/D] and understanding the technology [KNOWLEDGE → B/D] but it is still very dependent on the people in the factory putting it together exactly right [DEPENDENCY ON HUMAN FACTOR → not B/D] time after time after time, and what I'm looking for and what I think some of my projections for growth [GROWTH → B/D] depend on are **the ability to be absolutely certain** [C → B/D] **what we make meets the very best standards** [QUALITY → B/D] that we can achieve now when everything is going right [D]. Is that a reasonable view?

U20 3 Yes

U241 2 For two reasons: one, **we would need to guarantee** [GUARANTEE → C → B/D] **that level of performance** [QUALITY → B/D] **to the new customers** and secondly, most of the remaining customers are comparatively cheap customers, they're not people where I can make as handsome a margin [LOW PROFIT → not B/D] as I do with some of my existing customers so therefore there will be an element of dilution of the margin [LOW PROFIT → not B/D] by taking, er, by taking those new customers. So therefore it's dependent on getting really good yields [HIGHER INCOME → B/D] to effectively rebalance the, the margin equation [ACCEPTABLE/GOOD PROFIT MARGIN → B/D]. I could afford to sell ten percent cheaper [COMPETITIVENESS → B/D] **if I could improve my, my yields ten percent** [HIGHER INCOME → B/D] **and still make the same profit margin** [ACCEPTABLE/GOOD PROFIT MARGIN → B/D]

U242 4 **That** comes back to my comment earlier that **we should be spending more on quality issues** [QUALITY → B/D], **buying automated machinery and such** [AUTOMATISATION → LOWER COSTS → BETTER PROFIT MARGIN → B/D / → HIGHER QUALITY → B/D].

U243 6 Do you want to comment on that? @ or that?

U244 2 Well, that's just one part of a rather big and complex equation [SIMPLISTIC VIEW → not B/D].

U245 3 We got, counter balancing the achievability [DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE → not B/D] of **seven million** [PROFIT → B/D] by the route that we originally envisaged, **we have got the [Firm G] opportunity** [INCOME OPPORTUNITY → B/D] which should we turn that over **would knock half a million off it immediately** [ENSURE PART OF PLANNED PROFIT → B/D].

(LF3 U240-245; speakers 2, 3, 4, 6)

We saw in 2.1.2 that the three SUGGESTIONS presented by speakers 2, 4, and 3 are, in paraphrase, the following:

Speaker 2: we need to ensure quality

Speaker 4: we need to buy automated machinery

Speaker 3: we should take the Firm G opportunity (i.e. take over Firm G's production lines; this SUGGESTION was first introduced in U192)

It is the action elements of the proposals that are presented in these paraphrases. And they are the elements that do not match up as responses to the previous SUGGESTION.

The speakers do use a few cohesion markers to signal cohesion and thus responsiveness between their turns. For example, speaker 4 uses pronominal reference to refer back to speaker 2's contribution: *That comes back to...* (see also U243 and U244). He also uses simple paraphrase to create a link between the two turns: *quality issues* as a paraphrase of *the very best standards*. Whereas speaker 4 inserts cohesive markers, there are no explicit links between speaker 3's turn, U245, and the previous turns. However, as shown in (59), there are semantic links between the turns. By adding contextual knowledge to the semantic content (cf. Brown & Yule 1983: chapter 7) and establishing the value basis for the utterances, we are able to establish links. Table 6-4 demonstrates how, as it shows how the expressions (the grounds) trigger value bases, which are all evaluated positively as desirable or beneficial states or properties.

Whether there are no cohesive links between the turns (e.g. U245 and the rest of the turns in the extract) or the speakers insert cohesive links (e.g. U242: *That comes back to...*), in the example there are no links between the action elements of the SUGGESTIONS. Even the semantic links that are implicitly present (i.e. value basis links) do not relate to the action elements. The values that establish links and allow for the interlocutors to perceive the dialogue as coherent are all evaluative. They are interrelated in a complex way which will not be explored in this thesis, and they carry a meaning of benefit/desirability. As we have seen, the benefit/desirability element is related to the overall objective of the meetings (indeed, benefit and desirability are, as we have seen, defined in terms of the speakers' objective). The objective forms the 'superordinate global topic' of the discussion (Bublitz & Lenk 1999: 168), and it allows the interlocutors to employ a top-down process (Brown & Yule 1983: 168) when attempting to recover the coherence within

Example	Grounds	Value Basis	Evaluation
U240; U241 sp.2	the very best standards; that level of performance	QUALITY	Positive [desirability/ benefit]
U242 sp.4	quality issues	QUALITY	Positive [desirability/ benefit]
U241 sp.2	improve my yields ten percent	RAISE INCOME	Positive [desirability/ benefit]
U245 sp.3	We have got the IFirm GI opportunity	INCOME OPPORTUNITY (co-textual reference to U192)	Positive [desirability/ benefit]
U241 sp.2	still make the same profit margin	GOOD PROFIT MARGIN	Positive [desirability/ benefit]
U242 sp.4	buying automated machinery	IMPROVE PROFIT MARGIN	Positive [desirability/ benefit]
U245 sp.3	should we turn that [the IFirm GI opportunity] over [it] would knock half a million off it [the profit we aim for] immediately	ENSURE PART OF PLANNED PROFIT	Positive [desirability/ benefit]

Key:



-  Shade indicates which part of the evaluative construction is made explicit.
-  Lighter shade indicates that the value is only made explicit through the cohesive device of simple paraphrase (Hoey 1991)

Table 6-4: Grounds and value basis for cohesive/coherence links in sequence

the discussion. In other words, they start from the assumption that contributions will relate to the overall objective of the meeting and then make sense of the contribution in that light. They assume that other speakers are indeed coherent according to the 'default principle of coherence' (Bublitz & Lenk 1999: 157) which follows from Grice's more general principle of cooperation (Grice 1975).

Within the genre of business meetings, it appears to be acceptable (and common) to avoid reference to other speakers' specific proposals for action and instead make coherent dialogue through repeated reference to the general objective of the group. By making the general objective the focal point of reference, the participants do not necessarily make any progress in deciding on a concrete, viable action. In fact, most of the meetings in the corpus end without the participants having reached any concrete decision on which action to take. At most, they agree to continue to think about and search for a possible solution (e.g. LF3), or they agree that they are committed to the task of solving the specific problem (e.g. PF1). Presumably, a concerted effort by participants in meetings to focus on the action element would make their decision making and problem solving processes more effective. However, there are usually reasons for speakers carrying out their discussions in this manner (e.g. powerful members may get their ideas through because of a tacit assumption that out of a set of suggestions, those presented by the most powerful members should be adopted). In order to identify exactly how alternative interaction would affect the outcome, we would need to study responsive patterns in dialogue further. Such a study would have to include social elements such as preferred and expected paths of decision making in relation to the roles of the participants.

In this section I have made the point that values and evaluative meaning are what make the discussions in the meetings coherent. This point also has theoretical implications. It shows that the same linguistic element may have different functions simultaneously: an interpersonal function (evaluative) and a textual function, as when values and evaluative meaning are involved in linking contributions.

We saw in 3.1.5 that Halliday defines the textual function as relating to the textual formation of the language production and links between meanings and context. It is realised through theme,

voice, deixis, conjunction, collocation (i.e. the collocational organisation of vocabulary), information structure, and cohesion (Halliday 1973: 141).

I have claimed above that the values and evaluative meanings of benefit and desirability make the discussions in the corpus coherent but also that they have a textual function, even though coherence building is not involved in the textual function, if we use Halliday's definition. However, the concepts of cohesion and particularly coherence are, as yet, defined only in very general, even vague, terms. I have indicated the most common definitions above in footnote 6. Most scholars make it clear that cohesion and coherence are separate aspects of text building and text perception. However, there is a gray zone between the two aspects. If we adopt Hoey's categories of lexical repetition (i.e. simple and complex lexical repetition, simple and complex paraphrase), as I do here, we have left the 'safe' area of concrete cohesive indicators (such as pronominal reference, substitution, exact lexical repetition, etc.). Hoey acknowledges that his concept of complex paraphrase is 'a can of lexical worms' (1991: 64) and he suggests a conservative method of inclusion where we only take expressions that fit into a 'link triangle' as examples of complex paraphrase. Hoey gives an example where 'writings' and 'author' are related through the word 'writer', even though 'writer' need not be found in the text. The cut-off line is, however, not as clear as that. How far can we take it in establishing a linking expression? For example, we could argue that *seven million* in U245 and *profit (margin)* in U241 are related through the phrase 'xx million pounds of income less costs'. Or we could see the link as one of ellipsis: *counter balancing the achievability of seven million [pounds profit] by the route that we originally envisaged*. We need co-textual information to interpret the seven million as a desired profit (rather than loss, gross income, etc.). The speakers need to fill in gaps in their knowledge through referring to information in the co-text, but in the text itself there are traces of this information (e.g. *seven million; the [Firm G] opportunity*, a previous mention of [Firm G] and the possibility of buying its product lines, etc.). I am not claiming that everything that has previously been seen as instances of coherence is in fact examples of cohesion. Far from it. The point is, rather, that the two concepts are not as clearly distinct as it may appear in recent writings on the topic. Both very obvious links and mere traces of relationships between text elements have text building functions. Some links demand more inference from the interlocutors than other links, and this is where we move into the sphere of coherence. The need for inference, however, does not retract from the fact that the links between text elements are indicated in the text, if only through traces. Interlocutors need co-textual and contextual information to establish coherence,

but they also sometimes need such information to determine if two expressions are indeed cohesive. Hoey draws on contextual information to help determine whether a set of expressions forms examples of paraphrase (Hoey 1991: 63). We also need extra-textual information to identify instances of 'collocation' which include, for example, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, complementarity (e.g. Halliday & Hasan 1976: 284ff). In the corpus of meetings, we need knowledge of the genre and register, and particularly of the values associated with the business culture, to be able to establish links of paraphrase, synonymy, antonymy, etc. Indeed, as we have seen, it is these values which establish most links in the dialogues. The values trigger inference and make participants interpret contributions as coherent, but they also enable the language users to establish cohesive links. Coherence and cohesion are two separate processes, but often cohesion is only established because speakers realise the contextual connections (i.e. establish coherence) which cohesion textualises (see Seidlhofer & Widdowson 1997: 207). So while the processes are entirely different and separate, they are also closely entwined.

Links between meanings have a text organising function, even if we can only recover the links through reference to context (i.e. through the process of identifying coherence). Textual traces that trigger the perception of coherence have a textual function. The interpersonal meanings evoked through lexical expressions or verbal markers in the discussions link the contributions together and make the discussions coherent. They have a text organising function and as such a textual function through the textual traces that allow us to perceive the linkages in the interaction. I am aware that proponents of a sharp distinction between cohesion and coherence may argue that the interpersonal elements in the corpus are not textual but purely inferential. However, as my argument above shows, text and inference is typically linked. Usually we base our inference on elements in the text (except when there are no elements that could trigger an adequate inference in which case the language users rely only on the default principles of coherence (Bublitz & Lenk 1999) and cooperation (Grice 1975)). I would argue, therefore, that in the corpus links between turns where the lexical items make certain values salient are textual (as well as inferential) links. Therefore, it is common for the evaluative meanings in the discussions to have a textual function.

This point is compatible with Thompson and Zhou's findings (2000). They have investigated evaluative disjuncts and found that such disjuncts have a textual function as well as the interpersonal function. Evaluative disjuncts are more direct realisations of the interpersonal

function than many of the expressions realising evaluative meaning found in the corpus of meetings. Less inference is needed, and the disjuncts are clearer examples of cohesion markers than the evaluations and values studied in this thesis. Nonetheless, the parallel holds.

I have merely identified a structuring effect here. There is plenty of scope for investigating this effect further in future research.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown, following Lemke and Graham, how the semantic elements of benefit and desirability in SUGGESTIONS are established through different levels in a semantic hierarchy. At the bottom level, lexical choices and grammatical categories function as direct indicators of the evaluative meanings. At the next level up, lexical and syntactic elements make certain values salient for the speakers. According to the setting and genre of business meetings, the values are syllogistically ascribed a positive or negative evaluation. Some of the evaluative categories at this level are more common than others and can even be seen as propagating 'on top' of other evaluative categories. In the meetings in my corpus, the most prominent categories are desirability and benefit.

Interestingly, this process may be triggered by linguistic cues that do not in themselves predicate the meanings of desirability and benefit. We have seen how modal expressions, while signalling their elementary meanings of e.g. necessity, obligation, or possibility, also signal benefit or desirability as a meaning transfer takes place from other parts of the SUGGESTIONS. The choice of different combinations of meanings, i.e. the choice of modal markers in SUGGESTIONS, is typically related to status and face needs.

Once the desirability or benefit of a proposed action is established in one place in the discourse it is likely to propagate through to other clauses. Such propagation is partly working at SUGGESTION level, and partly at the level of the entire discussion as the meaning of benefit and desirability in one SUGGESTION may form the co-textual basis for other contributions to be interpreted as evaluative.

Not only do the meanings spread, as it were, they also link up. The processes of spreading and linkage are interrelated as a B/D-meaning which is established on the basis of another more clearly predicated B/D-meaning will also be linked textually to the first meaning. It is partly links of evaluative meanings which make the discussions coherent, even when the proposed actions appear to be a linear string of unrelated proposals. The evaluative meanings are signalled in the text, and as such they have a clear structuring, thus textual, function alongside their interpersonal function.

Conclusion

This thesis has made contributions in the theoretical field of discourse analysis, but perhaps its most important contribution is to establish a sound framework from which more comprehensive analyses, reviews, audits, etc. of interaction in workplace meetings can be carried out.

7.1 Application

If we want to determine the success of an interaction, we need to analyse speakers' contributions as regards their relevance to the overall goal of the interaction and investigate to what extent the speakers respond to each other's contributions meaningfully as measured by the overall objective of the group. In interactions where the goal is more than simply the building of relationships, meaningful contributions and responses also engage in defining the relationship between the interactants. Normally participants will strive to build relationships constructively. If a contribution is relevant to the set objective but breaks down the trust and willingness to interact between the communicating parties, nothing is gained.

The goal of the meetings in the corpus is to make decisions that are either strategically important for the future of the company (LF) or to establish practical outlines of actions that would help solve a problem (PF). For the discussions to be successful the outcome of the meetings ought to be that the participants agree on a suitable action to be taken while ensuring that the relationship between the participants remains intact (or is strengthened). It is in the participants' interest to present their ideas on what would be a suitable way forward in a persuasive manner while also making sure that neither their co-participants nor they themselves lose face. Persuasion and tact must go hand in hand.

From an applied perspective, the ultimate goal of a study of interaction in meetings would be to determine the successfulness of the interaction in terms of idea generation, verbal and practical uptake of the ideas, and social grease which makes the interaction and co-operation run smoothly. This thesis merely forms the basis for such an integrated study. It establishes the foundation on which we can identify contributions where speakers present ideas for what would be an adequate step to take, seen within the situation of the company and the remits of the group. In other words, it gives us a framework within which we can identify SUGGESTIONS, i.e. a subset of verbal acts which relates to a future act that is considered desirable given the objectives of the group. We have touched on the uptake of SUGGESTIONS, but much more work needs to be done here. To establish a comprehensive picture of the interaction we need to perform a systematic study of uptake, the combination of persuasion and tact in speakers' contributions and the effect of role relations on uptake and SUGGESTION production. However, such studies are only possible on the basis of a framework which allows us to identify SUGGESTIONS (or any other subset of acts which captures idea generation) consistently. This thesis provides such a framework.

We have seen how SUGGESTIONS can only be identified as contributions that carry a certain set of semantic properties. They are contributions that refer to a future action by an agent who most likely includes the addressee, and they indicate that the action would be beneficial or desirable to the addressee or the group. The set of properties overlaps with other sets which could be seen as defining other types of acts (e.g. the act of REQUESTING where we could identify the main difference as the difference in beneficiary). The defining sets reflect the characteristics of the particular interactions studied.

7.2 Theoretical implications

As we have seen, our approach to SUGGESTIONS has some theoretical implications for speech act theory. It supports the view of systemicists such as Halliday and Thibault and van Leeuwen who reject a strict distinction between locution and illocution (see 3.1.5). And it relates to Risselada's claim that the 'illocutionary force' of speech acts is expressed through combinations of linguistic properties (see 3.2.1.2). The 'force' or function of an utterance is clearly linked to what is said, even if we need to recover some of the meaning from the context. However, it is not nece

ssarily tied in with the sentence type, as supporters of the Literal Force Hypothesis would have it (see 3.2.1.1). This is particularly evident in the fact that different elements of SUGGESTIONS may reside in different, syntactically unintegrated clauses. As claimed by Risselada, there is no more than a probabilistic relationship between sentence type and speech function (see 3.2.1.2).

The properties that make a contribution a SUGGESTION are not directly recoverable in all cases, as we saw in chapter 6. In particular, the elements of desirability or benefit often require interpretative work via a complex set of mechanisms. The meanings may be inscribed through lexical expressions. However, more often than not the evaluations are evoked through reference to other meanings and values. I have presented a non-exhaustive list of values underlying the interaction in the groups (6.3.1). Often we refer to 'contextual values' as something that is just there, but values are in fact born in discourse. Some of that discourse has happened prior to the specific interactions with which we are concerned. Some, however, takes place within the meetings, and the evaluative meanings propagate from one use to another within different turns in the interaction. For example, speaker 4 in LF3 refers to 'risk' as something desirable (because the company is at risk of stagnating if they do not take some radical steps). This use affects the subsequent uses of the word, since some of the positive evaluation rubs off on them. Complex, intertwined processes of giving and taking evaluative meanings connect the actual discourse and the overall value system perceived as characterising interactions in business meetings. The perceptions are based on focal contextual frames (Heine 1995; see 6.4.1) which have arisen out of numerous business meetings. The focal contextual frames are also what make us see certain constructions (e.g. *why don't you...*) or expressions, typically understood as carrying another meaning (e.g. modal expressions of necessity, possibility or obligation), as signals of evaluative meaning (6.4.3. and 6.4.4). In fact, the expressions take on evaluative meaning from the textual environment and are no longer just carriers of the original meanings. It is such transfers which have, over time, become part of the prototypical discourse meanings (Silva-Corvalán 1995; see 6.4.1) of the expressions (when used at meetings and surrounded by such often implicit evaluations).

The evaluative meanings would not propagate within the interactions if the individual contributions were not linked in some way or other. They propagate along the links, but we have also seen (6.6) that they are involved in creating the links. They have a textual function as they tie together meanings and adjacent pairs which may otherwise seem unrelated. The evaluations

may even override cohesive links when these have been inserted to make a turn appear to respond to a proposal for a specific action while there is no semantic link between the references to actions. In such cases the semantic link is typically based on the evaluations of desirability and benefit and their relationship with the overall objective of the interaction.

7.3 Further work

The treatment of cohesion and coherence in this thesis is only a preliminary to what ought to form a study in itself, as already pointed out. The distinction between the action and benefit/desirability element of SUGGESTIONS is a useful starting point. We have seen how speakers often relate their contributions to other contributions through some reference to the benefit/desirability of the proposed action rather than to the action itself. The uptake appears to fulfil the expectations of the participants in the meetings. A possible reason for the acceptability of the somewhat incomplete uptake patterns may be that it allows more powerful participants to get their way, whether their authority originates in their role within the company or society, or in their expertise. It also gives the speakers a subtle tool to steer the discussions their way. Reference to the benefit/desirability of actions rather than to the specific action proposed by the previous speaker is one way of controlling the discussion and presenting one's own ideas. If in addition they use cohesive devices to appear to be summarising previous speakers' proposals, then there is a greater chance that they succeed in making their proposal pass unnoticed and without any objections from other participants.

If we as analysts want to make useful recommendations to organisations we need to know more about how authority and control affects how speakers construct their SUGGESTIONS and their uptake, i.e. the degree to which they refer to actions proposed by others or just benefit/desirability of actions. We would have to compare their roles (including at least organisational status and expertise) with the uptake, measured in terms of presence or absence of reference to the action proposed by other speakers. The comparison should also include a count of cohesive markers relating to previous turns where such counts are compared with the uptake of proposals for action.

The further studies outlined above relate to the uptake of SUGGESTIONS, but there are also areas within SUGGESTIONS that deserve more investigation. Related to the issue of roles and authority it would be useful to determine quantitatively who uses which combinations of modal markers and benefit/desirability indicators in their SUGGESTIONS. In 6.4.5 we saw an example of a speaker with more authority using modal expressions of possibility whereas a speaker with less authority used expressions of necessity more frequently. We ought to check whether this difference is consistent for more speakers within the same type of groups, but also between different types of groups.

This leads us to another vast area of further study. This thesis has described the characteristics of SUGGESTIONS only within one specific setting and with ethnically homogenous groups. It would be useful to extend the study, including the extensions of the study outlined in the previous sections, to other settings and registers, and to groups from different cultural backgrounds or with mixed ethnicity. I would expect that a cultural mix would affect the patterns related to authority and, related to that, politeness, significantly. In other words, the SUGGESTIONS are likely to look differently, and the uptake would probably differ notably as well. By studying SUGGESTIONS across many different settings we would be able to be more specific about the linguistic realisations of the semantic choices that characterise moves as SUGGESTIONS.

There is much more work to do on the realisations. First, my reference to intonation patterns is very sporadic. It is well known that speakers use intonation to signal evaluative meanings. (For example, Pérez Hernández (1999) suggests that fall-rise intonation may indicate optionality.) More work should be done on how intonation patterns are involved in realising the benefit/desirability element of SUGGESTIONS. Voice quality is also a potential carrier of evaluative meaning.

Second, in chapter 4 I claimed that syntactically non-integrated clauses within individual SUGGESTIONS were related through rhetorical relations. The concept of rhetorical relations is not uncontroversial, and such a claim ought to be supported by closer studies of how exactly clauses within SUGGESTIONS are related. Furthermore, it is likely that a study of the position of the B/D element would reflect the role of the speakers. For example, do they express the B/D element in the nucleus or in satellites? We might hypothesise that speakers with less authority would use more satellites linked to the nucleus by relations of purpose or cause to express the B/D element,

as they might need to justify their SUGGESTION more than speakers with more authority. On the other hand, speakers with authority might use relations of purpose or cause to downplay their authority and avoid appearing too dictatorial.

Third, I claimed in chapter 6 that modal expressions of necessity, possibility or obligation receive elements of benefit/desirability and move towards the middle on the optionality cline. It could be interesting to measure how often modal expressions of other modal meanings conflate with meanings of desirability, i.e. exactly how 'prototypical' the conflated meaning is. To do this, a potential future study could be a corpus-based concordance study of collocational patterns of some of the modal auxiliaries. The study would check the environment in which the auxiliaries occur for evaluations of desirability and/or benefit (cf. Channell's study of the 'pragmatic meaning' of certain words and phrases; 2000).

Fourth, we have seen that membership of the categories of speech functions such as SUGGESTIONS is non-categorical. Some combinations of properties are more prototypical than other combinations. By identifying the individual properties that make a verbal act an act of SUGGESTING (as opposed to requesting, promising, etc.) we have captured the continuous relationship between different types of acts. It is, however, more than anything else the scalar nature of some of the properties that makes the individual categories scalar. In chapter 6 we saw how optionality is scalar, and so is obligation and benefit/desirability. The model defining SUGGESTIONS, as outlined in chapter 5, does not capture this scalarity satisfactorily. An adequate description of the acts would find a way to include the non-categorical characteristic of verbal acts.

Even though it is more than four decades since Austin first pointed out that when we use language we perform acts, we are still struggling to find sound methods of identifying the acts, let alone describing how speakers respond to the acts. Conversation analysis has taken us a long way in understanding responses and structure in sequences of talk but only in structured and predictable sequences. Decision making in workplace meetings is complex business. Not only is the goal of the interaction complex – how exactly does one identify the best decision? – but in the interaction itself different desires contradict each other as participants strive to persuade others, save face, be relevant, take control, leave options open, and so on. It is important to isolate these elements and work from the basic act of presenting ideas, or SUGGESTING

appropriate future actions. From there we can gradually work around the other closely entwined elements of the process. This thesis attempts to specify the different elements that make up such basic acts and as such is a first step in a much more comprehensive study of decision making in workplace meetings.

Appendix A

The descriptions of the companies below are partially taken from the HCRC corpus manual (Carletta *et al.* 2001).

CastingFirm (CF)

CastingFirm is a small manufacturer of industrial valves. The meetings recorded are of the Gross Margin Weekly Review team which consists of a variety of employees from different areas of the company, including the shop floor, office staff and in the first two meetings the managing director of the plant (speaker 2).

The function of the meetings is to review the progress of orders from a cashflow perspective and discuss technical, manpower and any other problems which may prevent the company from reaching its income/output targets. The agenda is taken from the previous weeks meeting, hence each meeting discusses progress on more or less the same items. In most cases the decisions appear to be imposed on the team by the chair. All meetings are classified as managed group meetings.

The number of attendees at the meetings varied between 6 and 10; there are 12 different speakers altogether. The meetings were held strictly weekly and lasted for an average of an hour. Speaker 11 chaired meeting 4; all other meetings were chaired by speaker 1.

The job titles of the various speakers are outlined in Table A-1 below.

Speaker	Job description
1	Methods and development manager
2	Managing director
3	Production planning
4	Operations manager
5	Patterns foreman
6	Metallurgist
7	Engineering and safety officer
8	Progress engineer
9	Methods trainee
10	Unknown
11	Technical manager
12	Unknown

Table A-1: Job description of attendees in CastingFirm meetings

Heating Firm (HF)

HeatingFirm is a medium sized manufacturer of fan heaters for caravans and holiday homes. The recorded meetings are of a task team in charge of the development of an, as yet, un-named new product. The product is a different type of fan heater designed specifically for static caravans as opposed to mobile caravans, the difference being that static caravans can have a 240 volt power supply while mobile ones can only have 12 volts. The aim is to produce prototypes of the product by October, two months or so from the date of the first meeting. The minutes are prepared, rather unusually, during the meeting on a special white board which photocopies what is written on it.

The number of attendees at the meetings varied between 5 and 10; there are 12 different speakers altogether. The meetings were held approximately weekly and lasted for an average of an hour. Speaker 1 chaired the meetings.

Job descriptions of the speakers are shown in Table A-2 below.

Speaker	Job description
1	Design director
2	Product marketing manager
3	Product leader
4	Work experience student
5	Electronics designer
6	Quality assurance manager
7	Material resources manager
8	Unknown
9	Marketing
10	Manufacturing supervisor
11	Unknown
13	Unknown

Table A-1: Job description of attendees in HeatingFirm meetings

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