

## PRAGMATIC MARKERS

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### 1. Introduction

Simply stated, I take pragmatics to be an account of the process by which the language user takes a sentence representation provided by the grammar and, given the context in which the sentence is uttered, determines what messages and what effects the speaker has conveyed.<sup>1</sup> My concern in this paper is with a part of that process, namely, the ways in which the linguistically encoded information of sentence meaning provides an indication of the direct, literal messages intended by the speaker.

Let me set the framework within which I will be working. First, I assume that every sentence has a Direct Message Potential. Derived from sentence meaning, this is a specification of those messages that can be potentially communicated by the utterance of the sentence. Of course, the message potential of a sentence is seldom realized completely. Performance features and context typically modify what is actually conveyed by the utterance, excluding some messages, modifying others, and adding still others. The sentence "Sit down," for example, has the potential of conveying a request, among other messages, by virtue of its meaning. Imposing the appropriate rising intonation when uttering this sentence can modify the message from a request to a question, and an angry tone of voice can add the message, not present in the linguistic encoding, that the speaker is upset. But what I will look at in this paper is the starting point of the process of pragmatic interpretation: The message potential that derives from the meaning of the sentence itself, before any consideration of performance or context occurs.

Second, I assume that sentence meaning, the information encoded by linguistic expressions, can be divided up into two separate and distinct parts. On the one hand, a sentence typically encodes a proposition, perhaps complex, which represents a state of the world which the speaker wishes to bring to the addressee's attention. This aspect of sentence meaning is generally referred to as the propositional content (or content meaning) of the sentence. On the other hand, there is everything else: Mood markers such as the declarative structure of the sentence, and lexical expressions of varying length and complexity. It is on this "everything else" that I will focus. Specifically, I propose that this non-

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<sup>1</sup> There are many versions of what constitutes pragmatics. The reader is referred to Blakemore (1992), Green (1987), Levinson (1983), Mey (1993), and Verschueren (1987) for differing and at times conflicting treatments of the subject.

propositional part of sentence meaning can be analyzed into different types of signals, what I have called Pragmatic Markers (cf. Fraser 1990), which correspond to the different types of potential direct messages a sentence may convey. These pragmatic markers, taken to be separate and distinct from the propositional content of the sentence, are the linguistically encoded clues which signal the speaker's potential communicative intentions.

Messages, and hence their associated pragmatic markers, fall into four types. First, there is a single, basic message, which uses the sentence proposition as its message content. Basic markers, which signal more or less specifically the force (the kind of message in contrast to its content) of the basic message, include sentence mood and lexical expressions. These markers are illustrated by the examples in (1), with the pragmatic marker in boldface type.<sup>2</sup>

- a) **I regret** that he is still here.
- b) **Admittedly**, I was taken in.
- c) The cat is very sick.

Sentence (1a) is an expression of regret, and sentence (1b) an admission. Sentence (1c) has no lexical basic marker, as do the first two, but its declarative mood signals that it is the expression of belief (a claim, a report) that the state of the world expressed by the propositional content is true.

Second, there are commentary messages, which provide a comment on the basic message. Commentary messages, and hence the presence of commentary markers, are optional - a sentence need not contain any. When they do occur, their message is typically very general, with a single word often signaling both the message force and content. Obviously, they constitute pragmatic idioms. The sentences in (2) illustrate this type of marker.

- (2) a) **Stupidly**, Sara didn't fax the correct form in on time.
- b) Frankly, we should be there by now.

In (2a), for example, the basic message is (arguably) a report while the commentary message, signaled by *stupidly*, is that the speaker believes Sara's failure to act to have been stupid. In (2b), the *frankly* signals that the basic message which follows is, in the speaker's opinion, not going to be well received by the addressee.

Third, there are parallel messages, also optional, which signal an entire message separate from the basic and any commentary messages. The sentences in (3) are illustrative of parallel markers.

- (3) a) **John**, you are very noisy.
- b) **In God's name**, what are you doing now?

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<sup>2</sup> I use the terms "force" and "content" in roughly the same way as they are used in discussions of illocutionary acts. However, I avoid use of the latter term since my focus is on the messages people communicate rather than the illocutionary acts they perform.

In (3a), for example, the speaker, in addition to the basic message of a claim that John is being very noisy, is conveying a message, signaled by *John*, that it is John who is being addressed, while in (3b), the *in God's name* signals exasperation on the part of the speaker.

Finally, there are discourse messages, again optional, which signal a message specifying how the basic message is related to the foregoing discourse. The sentences in

(4) illustrate these markers.

- (4) a) Jacob was very tired. **So**, he left early.
- b) Martha's party is tomorrow. **Incidentally**, when is your party?

Here, in (4a), the *so* signals that the report that he left early is a conclusion based on the message conveyed by the preceding sentence, while in (4b), the *incidentally* signals that the following basic message is going to reflect a shift in topic.

To summarize to this point, a basic marker signals the force **of** the basic message, a commentary marker signals a message which comments **on** the basic message, a parallel marker signals a message **in addition to** the basic message, and a discourse marker signals the **relationship** of the basic message to the foregoing discourse. Although it is rare to find all four types of pragmatic markers in a single sentence, it does occur, as in (5).<sup>3</sup>

- (5) I appreciate that you are a member of the Police Benevolent Association and a supporter of the baseball league. **However, quite frankly Sir, I estimate** that you were going a bit more than 86 miles per hour.

Before looking at these four types of markers in detail, I want to make a few general remarks. First, to reiterate a point made above, pragmatic markers are not part of the propositional content of the sentence. They are separate and distinct. It follows from this that for a given lexical expression (e.g., *truthfully*, *amazingly*) in a particular sentence, there is no overlapping of functions. When an expression functions as one type of pragmatic marker, it does not function as a part of the propositional content; and vice versa. In addition, when an expression is functioning as one type of pragmatic marker, it cannot at the same time function as a second type. In some cases when there are homophonous expressions, for example, *truthfully*, the expression cannot occur in the same frame, so there is no question of ambiguity. For example, in (6a),

- (6) a) **Truthfully**, you should have answered.
- b) You should have answered truthfully.
- c) **Truthfully**, you should have answered truthfully.

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<sup>3</sup> Various phonological phenomena such as intonation and stress can, at times, take the place of these lexical pragmatic markers, particularly commentary markers. However, I will not consider them in this paper.

the speaker signals that the manner of speaking is truthful, not disingenuous, whereas in (6b), the *truthfully* is part of the proposition and modifies the manner of answering. The interpretation of the expressions cannot be interchanged. In fact, (6c) shows that the two meanings can co-exist with no problem. However, there are a few cases like "Now where are we?" where there is an ambiguity. Is it the adverbial *now*, with a time interpretation; or is it the discourse marker *now*, with a focusing function? When there is a comma intonation present, it is always the latter.

Second, pragmatic markers carry meaning. But whereas basic, commentary, and parallel markers, like the sentence proposition, have representational meaning, in virtue of which they denote concepts, the discourse markers have procedural meaning and specify how the sentence of which they are a part is related to the preceding discourse. I will address these points as we go along.<sup>4</sup>

Third, pragmatic markers signal messages that apply only to the direct basic message. They do not apply to any indirect messages which may be implicated by the direct basic message. For example, the indirect interpretation of (7a)

- (7) a) **Unfortunately**, I am cold.
- b) **Confidentially**, would you like a drink?
- c) **Candidly**, he is married to his work. (=He is dedicated to his work.)
- d) **I suspect** his mind rusted on vacation. (=I suspect he got a little out of practice.)

as a request to turn up the heat is unaffected by the commentary marker *unfortunately*. Similarly, the indirect message in (7b), that the speaker is asking if the addressee will stay and talk with him after being brought the drink, is unaffected by the marker *confidentially*. In (7c-d) where the direct message is taken to be figurative not literal, the pragmatic markers apply to the figurative, direct interpretations, but not to any indirect interpretations.<sup>5</sup>

Fourth, nearly all pragmatic markers may occur in sentence-initial position (*though* is one exception) and usually occur there. There are occasions when they will occur medially or finally, as in (8), but in these cases the marker is set off by a comma intonation to distinguish it from a homophonous form used as part of the proposition.

- (8) a) John is, **I admit**, the best person by far for the job.
- b) She was, **confidentially**, a bright scholar and a fantastic athlete.
- c) Harry is going to go, **however**.

Finally, pragmatic markers are drawn from all segments of the grammar. Verbs, nouns, and adverbs as well as idioms such as *ok* are all pressed into

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<sup>4</sup> In Fraser (1987) I wrote of pragmatic formatives signaling rather than having a content meaning. Blakemore (1987) introduces the contrasting terms *representational* versus *procedural meaning*, and I have adopted this terminology.

<sup>5</sup> Figurative use doesn't change the force of the basic message but only its content.

service as pragmatic markers. But for the most part, the meaning of the expression, when used as a pragmatic marker, is the same as when it is used as a propositional formative and it is only its function which differs. In those cases where there is a difference, the lexical expression must be marked for the different meaning.

With these preliminary comments out of the way, let us turn now to a detailed examination of the types of pragmatic markers.

## 2. Basic markers

Basic markers have representational meaning which means they contribute conceptual information over and above that of the propositional meaning. Specifically, they represent information which signals more or less specifically the force of the direct basic message of the sentence. This meaning distinction between propositional content and basic pragmatic markers was proposed by Searle (1969: 30), who wrote:

We can distinguish two (not necessarily separate) elements in the syntactical structure of the sentence, which we might call the propositional indicator and the illocutionary force indicator. The illocutionary force indicator shows how the proposition is to be taken, or to put it another way, what illocutionary force the utterance is to have; that is, what illocutionary act the speaker is performing in the utterance of the sentence. Illocutionary force indicators in English include at least: Word order, stress, intonation contour, punctuation, the mood of the verb and the so called performative verbs. (page 30)

While not agreeing with Searle completely, I will work within the spirit of his suggestion and will consider structural, lexical, and hybrid basic markers. In the following section I will consider the following basic markers:

- A. Structural basic markers
- B. Lexical basic markers
  - Performative expressions
  - Pragmatic idioms
- C. Hybrid basic markers
  - Declarative-based hybrids
  - Interrogative-based hybrids
  - Imperative-based hybrids

### A. *Structural basic markers*

The first and most general of the basic markers is the syntactic structure of the sentence itself, its mood. Except for some idiomatic structures, every English sentence falls into one of three syntactic types (declarative, imperative, or interrogative) and each type signals a general force for the basic message.

The declarative structure signals the expression of belief by the speaker that the sentence propositional content represents (or did, or will represent) a true state of the world. The speaker of "John slid down the slope," for example, is committed to expressing the belief that John slid down the slope, although what

type of belief - a claim, an assertion, an admission, a confession, or an acknowledgment - is left open. Stylistic variations of the canonical declarative form which retain the sentence propositional content do not alter the speaker's commitment of belief.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast, the imperative structure signals the speaker's expression of desire that the addressee bring about the state of the world described in the propositional content. The action desired may be verbal, as in (9a), or non-verbal, as in (9b).

- (9) a) Tell me the answer.
- b) Bring that book over here.

Unlike the declarative structure, the imperative mood has no stylistic variations.

The third major structure of English is the interrogative mood. Similar to the imperative, it signals speaker expression of desire, in this case for addressee verbal response. Here we find syntactic variations distinguishing between YES/NO-questions, (10a-b), and WH-questions, (10c-f), with the latter type having a number of stylistic variations, some involving more than one WH word:

- (10) a) Did you see him?
- b) Can you do that?
- c) Who are you?
- d) Who did you see?
- e) You saw whom?
- f) Who did you see where?

As with declarative sentence variations, if the propositional content remains constant, the speaker attitude associated with the interrogative form, the expression of desire that the addressee make a verbal response, does not change.

It is interesting that the three major syntactic constructions of English signal only two (belief and desire) of the many propositional attitudes a speaker might hold toward the message (propositional) content. Except for a few special cases, which will be discussed below, speaker attitudes of commitment, intention, praise, blame, or anger are not signaled by specific syntactic structures. There is no syntactic structure which signals the speaker's intention to convey a promise, an

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<sup>6</sup> Given that a declarative structure signals the expression of speaker belief, how is it possible for a speaker to lie? The answer lies with the fact that just because the linguistic form signals a commitment on the part of the speaker to be expressing the belief that such and such is the case, there is no requirement that the speaker actually believes this. The declarative structure signals only that the speaker intends to convey belief about the sentence content; the choice of the declarative structure is sufficient reason for the addressee to hold the speaker to this commitment. There is no requirement that using a language from which entails a speaker belief thereby commits the speaker to the belief. Language can't commit people to mental positions although it can make them responsible for expressing them. And it can place the speaker in a position of being sanctioned if it is subsequently discovered that the belief signaled by the linguistic form was not held by the speaker. This is particularly true of acts of commitment such as promising or swearing to do something.

apology, or a criticism as there is for a claim and a request.

## B. Lexical basic markers

In contrast to only three structural basic pragmatic markers, there are many lexical basic pragmatic markers. They can be analyzed into two major groups: Performative expressions, which essentially refine the force signaled by the sentence mood, and pragmatic idioms. I will consider these in turn.

### Performative expressions

Surely the most well-known lexical device for signaling the basic message force specifically is the performative expression, illustrated in the following examples.<sup>7</sup>

- (11) a) **I promise** that I will be there on time.  
 b) **I (hereby) apologize** for running over your cat.  
 c) **I (hereby) request** that you stay just a bit longer.

These canonical performative expressions contain a first person singular subject, in some cases an object *you*, and a verb in the non-negative present tense which denotes a propositional attitude specifying the speaker's view towards the following proposition. There are literally hundreds of performative verbs which serve as basic markers and specify, more precisely than the sentence structure, the basic message force.

The performative expression is the first of what will be several instances of standardized forms throughout the paper. For example, sentence (11a) does not literally mean that the speaker is conveying a promise. Rather, it constitutes a direct report by the speaker of what the speaker is presently doing (I ignore the habitual reading of the sentence). As Bach & Harnish (1979) argue, this sentence only indirectly conveys a promise. Nevertheless, the performative expression *I promise (you)* has become standardized, with the result that it is routinely heard not in its reporting sense but in its promising sense. The direct meaning has, in the words of Morgan (1978) become "short circuited." Thus, sentence (11a) is effectively ambiguous. We have two separate meanings: i) an expression of belief (a report) that I promise that I will be there on time; and ii) a promise that I will be there on time.<sup>8</sup>

Let us now turn to some of the numerous variations.

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<sup>7</sup> There are ordinary performative expressions such as *I claim*, *I promise*, and *I request* which deal with everyday messages, and institutional expressions such as *I baptize you...*, *You are fired!*, *You're out!* which depend on an institution and the appropriate speaker for their success. We will not consider these latter types in this paper.

<sup>8</sup> All expressions with the same meaning do not qualify as a standardized form. The semantic equivalent of *I promise*, which is "With this utterance I intend to express the belief that I am committing myself to undertake to bring about the following state of affairs," is not standardized. Indeed, it is hardly intelligible.

- (12) a) Non-first-person, singular subject : **We invite you** to apply again, Mr. Jones.  
 b) Negative verb: **I don't agree** that she is the best. (=disagree)  
 c) Displaced performative expression: John is, **I admit**, not quite all there.  
 d) Passive voice: **You are cautioned** to avoid all liquid after 9 p.m.  
 e) Progressive: **I am (hereby) asking** you to be there on time.  
 f) Adverbials: **Admittedly**, we were expecting a much younger person.  
 g) Nominals: **My request** is that you go at once.

Another form of performative expression is the so-called hedged performative, illustrated by (13).

- (13) a) **I must ask you** to leave now.  
 b) **I can promise you** that it will not happen again.  
 c) **I will accept** it in the name of the Director.  
 d) **I want to thank you** for the advice.  
 e) **I would propose** that we make a try at it.  
 f) **I might advise you** to wait a bit.

In each case, the performative expression has a modal auxiliary in pre-verb position.<sup>9</sup> Like the canonical performatives just discussed, these forms are also standardized, not idiomatic expressions, although they are weaker in requiring the addressee to select the performative interpretation (cf. Fraser 1981).

### Pragmatic Idioms

In addition to the standardized forms, there are pragmatic idioms, expressions for which there is no plausible inferential path leading from literal, direct meaning to the accepted basic pragmatic signal. There are both force idioms, which signal the intended basic message force, and message idioms, which signal the entire basic message. I will now survey some of them.

Examples of force idioms are the expressions *please (kindly)* and *perhaps (maybe)*. When *please* occurs before an imperative structure, it signals that the speaker intends the utterance to be taken as a request, and only as a request. In each of the following sentences,

- (14) a) Can you **please** help me?  
 b) I'd like you to **please** sit down.  
 c) I (hereby) ask you to **please** leave.  
 d) May I **please** look at that vase?

the sentence, because of the presence of *please (kindly)*, has the direct basic force of a request rather than any other force for which it might be eligible. Similarly, when *perhaps(maybe)* occurs before an imperative, it narrows the force

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<sup>9</sup> Although not shown, the periphrastic versions such as *have to* for *must*, *be able to* for *can*, and *be going to* for *will* can typically be used with the same effect.



of the utterance to a suggestion, as the sentences in (15) reflect.<sup>10</sup>

- (15) a) **Perhaps** you should sit down and rest a bit.  
 b) **Perhaps**, take an aspirin.  
 c) Why don't you **perhaps** see a doctor?

One group of force idioms signals a speaker suggestion. This is illustrated in (16), with the degree of urgency different with the individual phrases.

- (16) a) **How about** going?  
 b) **What do you say (that)** we leave?  
 c) **By all means**, try it.  
 d) **Let us (Let's)** try it again.  
 e) **You'd better** sit down.

Another subgroup of force idioms are those signaling the speaker's intention to express a wish:

- (17) a) **If only** John were here now.  
 b) **Long live** the Queen.  
 c) **Would that** we were home now.

Historically, many of these forms were known as the optative mood but this nomenclature has now become archaic.

There is a relatively large residue of force idioms signaling a basic message force which don't fit neatly into any category. Some of them don't have a full proposition but merely a noun phrase, and nearly all require a specific form of the proposition. I simply list some of them here.

- (18) a) Refusing: **I'll be damned if** I'll help him.  
 b) Claim note worthiness: **How about** those Bulls.  
 c) Expressing Pride: **If I may say so myself**, no one else can do it so well.  
 d) Expressing Displeasure: **Where does he get off** saying something like that?  
 e) Reporting: **In case you didn't hear**, the Red Sox lost.  
 f) Announcing: **If it isn't** Einstein.  
 g) Warning: **Mark my words**, he will never finish on time.  
 h) Challenging: **Me** take out the garbage?  
 i) Expressing amazement: **To think** we elected Reagan twice.

Let us turn now to message idioms which signal the entire basic message. These are simple expressions, (19a-d), proverbs, (19e-g), and rhetorical questions,

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<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, if *please* or *perhaps* (*maybe*) are placed in a sentence which does not have the potential of a request or suggestion, the sentence becomes unacceptable. Note that these forms go only awkwardly with an explicit request or suggestion ("I request that..." or "I suggest that...") presumably because their presence would be redundant.

(19h-i).

- (19) a) **Get a horse.** [Directive to hurry up]  
 b) **Where's the fire.** [Challenge for necessity of speed]  
 c) **I smell a rat.** [Claim that all is not well]  
 d) **Get lost! Screw off! Beat it!** [Directive to leave]  
 e) **A rolling stone gathers no moss.**  
 f) **A stitch in time saves nine.**  
 g) **Waste not, want not.**  
 h) **Is the Pope a Catholic?**  
 i) **Does a snake do push-ups?**

For some of these idioms, such as those in (19a-c), the original source is relatively transparent; for others, the history is more obscure.

Another group of message idioms consists of what are known as interjections, emotive words or phrases which stand alone and function as separate sentences. They group into several classes, none of which has a large population, as seen in (20).<sup>11</sup>

- (20) a) Express receipt of new information (Ah! Oh! Aha! I see.)  
 b) Express desire for attention (Ahem! Psst! Hey!)  
 c) Express pleasure (Hooray! Wow! Ooh! Is that right?)  
 d) Express displeasure (Damn it! Phooey! Pooh! Ugh! Yuk! Ow/Ouch! Boo!)  
 e) Express agreement (Uh-huh. Yes! Yeah! Yup! OK!)  
 f) Express disagreement (Uh-uh. No! Nope! No way!)  
 g) Express desire for clarification (Eh? Huh? What?)  
 h) Express apology (Oops! [Also to express dismay])  
 i) Express desire for noise reduction (Shhhh!)  
 j) Express relief (Whew!)

Relevant for these interjections is the fact that they are often assigned a meaning which is in fact carried by the intonation imposed on them and not by the form itself. Consider the following interchange:

- (21) A: The Celtics finally won last night.  
 B: **Oh!**

The *Oh!* in this example, by virtue of its meaning, conveys the information that the speaker has just received new information and understood it. The *Oh!*

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<sup>11</sup> Similar to many of the cases already discussed, interjections can occur with other meanings. *Boo!*, for example, is used as the form to surprise someone; *Ouch* is used to signal pain; *OK* is used as a discourse marker to signal speaker intention to reorient the ongoing conversation.

response would not be appropriate if the first speaker's utterance were "Your name is John," except, perhaps, in assigning names for the class play. However, the speaker might choose to utter *Oh!* with an intonation to signal surprise, displeasure, disinterest, or concern. Whatever the intonation - some must be imposed - it generally contributes to the interpretation of the utterance *Oh!*, but the semantic meaning of *Oh!* remains invariant throughout.

### C. Hybrid basic markers

To this point, the basic pragmatic markers discussed have been either structural (e.g., the declarative structure) or lexical (e.g., performative expressions). There are, however, a number of markers which involve a specific structure in combination with certain lexical conditions, what I will call a "hybrid basic marker." There are three general types: Declarative-based, interrogative-based, and imperative-based.<sup>12</sup>

#### Declarative-Based Hybrids

In this group are two relatively similar structures, both of which consist of a declarative sentence followed by a brief tag. The first, shown in (22), is the so-called Tag Question, a declarative followed by a sentence-final interrogative tag which consists of the declarative tense-carrying element with a change of polarity followed by the sentence subject in pronominal form.

- (22) a) John saw Mary, **didn't he?**  
b) John didn't see Mary, **did he?**

While the initial declarative sentence alone signals a basic message of speaker belief (e.g., in (22a), that the speaker intends to convey the claim that John saw Mary), the presence of the tag renders (22a) an entirely different basic message, namely, a request that the addressee confirm that John saw Mary.<sup>13</sup>

The second structure, the so-called Positive Tag Question, consists of a declarative sentence followed by a tag with the same polarity.

- (23) a) John dated Mary, **did he?**  
b) You broke it, **did you?**  
c) So you expect a raise, **do you?**  
d) He won't go, **won't he?**

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<sup>12</sup> See Harnish (1983) for a discussion of some of these cases held under the label "minor moods."

<sup>13</sup> The tag question, which is an idiom in these cases, permits at least two distinct marked intonation patterns which, themselves, serve as phonological parallel markers. The first, with a final-tag rising intonation, signals the speaker is interested in the answer, and indicates that he/she is willing to be found wrong. The second, with a final-tag falling intonation, signals speaker confidence in the content for which confirmation is being requested.

While these structures are found usually with the positive declarative form as in (23a-c), negative cases such as (23d) do exist. Although not obligatory, these tag questions are often prefaced with an initial *so* as in (23c). As with the Tag Question, the basic message force in these cases is that of a request for confirmation. However, there is a difference here, since the speaker of sentences such as those in (23) is relatively confident in the accuracy of the propositional content and only wishes the tentative conclusion confirmed.

### Interrogative-Based Hybrids

The first group of interrogative-based forms is well known, and is illustrated by the following sentences:

- (24) a) **Can (could/can't/couldn't) you** do that?  
 b) **Will (would/won't/wouldn't) you** do that?  
 c) Do that, **can (could/can't/couldn't) you?**  
 d) Do that, **will (would/won't/wouldn't) you?**

Nominally these are simply interrogative sentences in which the speaker is expressing a desire for a yes/no response. However, these forms have become standardized and such sentences are characteristically heard directly as a speaker request for action either in their interrogative form or their inverted form (24c-d).<sup>14</sup>

Examples of the second interrogative-based form are shown in (25).

- (25) a) **May I** see that vase?  
 b) **May I** be seated?  
 c) **May I** have the second one from the left?

Although these cases appear to be simple requests for permission, the *May I* has become standardized to signal a polite request, when used with verbs such as *see*, *have*, *look at*, *hold*, and *touch* which denote a future state of the speaker under the addressee's direct control.

A third interrogative-based form involves reduced *why*-questions, which have the standardized force of a suggestion to do the opposite of the action denoted. The sentence in (26a) has the interpretation of (26b),

- (26) a) **Why** take an aspirin now?  
 b) **I suggest that** you do not take an aspirin now.  
 c) **Why not** take an aspirin now?  
 d) **I suggest** you take an aspirin now.

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<sup>14</sup> There are strict constraints on this standardized form: Only the simple modal forms (e.g. *can*) and not the periphrastic version (e.g., *are you able*) occur in the standardized form; the modal cannot be stressed; the modals are restricted to *can* and *will* and their variations; the verb must be one of coluntary action; and the subject noun phrase must be acceptable as the (implied) imperative subject.

and conversely, (26c) has the interpretation of (26d).<sup>15</sup>

### Imperative-based hybrids

There are two imperative-based hybrids. However, in contrast to the standardized expression in the cases just discussed, these forms must be taken to be idiomatic. The examples in (27) are illustrative of the first case.

- (27) a) Talk, or I'll shoot. (If you don't talk, I'll shoot.)  
 b) Don't smile, or I'll clobber you. (If you smile, I'll clobber you.)  
 c) Eat up, or you'll be hungry. (If you don't eat up, you'll be hungry.)

This structure signals an initial speaker directive, usually an order although in (27c) it could be heard as a suggestion, followed by a declarative stating the consequences for not complying with the directive. When the speaker is the subject of the statement, the declarative is usually heard as a threat. In each case, there is an implied initial *either* with an *else* following the *or*, as in "Either talk or else I'll shoot." Now, although an "either... or else" sentence need not be interpreted as a conditional (the sentence "Either be quiet or else leave the room" is not), when the second conjunct is a declarative sentence, this is the interpretation.

The second imperative-based basic pragmatic marker is illustrated in (28).

- (28) a) Wash, and I'll dry. (If you wash, I'll dry.)  
 b) Smile, and the world will love you. (If you smile, the world will love you.)

In contrast to the *or* case just discussed, the imperative here does not signal speaker desire but signals that a conditional interpretation is required. In (28a), for example, the interpretation is "If you wash, then I'll dry." And in contrast to the negative force of the previous cases, the declarative here takes on the force of a strong claim, which may or may not be adversely interpreted.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. Commentary pragmatic markers

The focus in the last section was on basic pragmatic markers, those structural, lexical, and hybrid forms which signal information about the speaker's basic communicative intentions. In this section I want to look at commentary markers, lexical expressions which have both a representational meaning specifying an entire message, and a procedural meaning signaling that this message is to function as a comment on some aspect of the basic message. Examples of com-

<sup>15</sup> There is even a more limited reduced why-question form for "Why don't you," usually rendered as *whydoncha*, which is only used as a suggestion signal.

<sup>16</sup> I am ignoring sentence like "(Drink) one more beer, and I will drive you home," and "(Make) another remark like that, and you are dead meat," which require another analysis.

mentary markers are presented in (29).<sup>17</sup>

- (29) a) **Frankly**, we are lost.  
 b) **Stupidly**, we got lost.  
 c) **Reportedly**, you are in deep trouble.  
 d) **I insist** that we are not lost.

As I mentioned above, the message conveyed by commentary markers is typically general rather than specific. I will now examine the following commentary pragmatic markers:

- A. Assessment markers
- B. Manner-of-speaking markers
- C. Evidential markers
- D. Consequent effect markers
- E. Hearsay markers
- F. Mitigation markers
- G. Emphasis markers

#### A. Assessment markers

Assessment markers signal the speaker's evaluation of the state of the world represented in the proposition. In (31a), for example,

- (31) a) **Amazingly**, Derrick passed the exam.  
 b) **Fortunately**, he is covered by medical insurance.  
 c) **Sadly**, Mary arrived 5 minutes too late to meet the deadline.

the speaker is sending two messages: The basic message that Derrick passed the exam, and the comment that the speaker finds it amazing that Derrick passed the exam. These assessment markers, primarily adverbs, include those in (32),

- (32) amazingly, amusingly, annoyingly, appropriately, artfully, astonishingly, cleverly, conveniently, cunningly, curiously, delightfully, disappointingly, disturbingly, foolishly, hopefully, ideally, importantly, incredibly, inevitably, ironically, (in)correctly, justifiably, justly, luckily, mercifully, naturally, oddly, predictably, prudently, refreshingly, regrettably, rightly, sadly, sensibly, shrewdly, significantly, stupidly, suspiciously, thankfully, tragically, (un)luckily, (un)expectedly, (un)fortunately, (un)happily, (un)reasonably, (un)remarkably, understandably, wisely, wrongly

and their variations, for example, *It was remarkable that...*, *What is more remarkable is that...* and *That S was remarkable*.

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<sup>17</sup> Excluded as commentary markers are hedges such as *technically*, *ideally literally*, *officially*, *theoretically*, which are actually preposed adverbials and are part of the propositional content. Hence, they are not pragmatic markers. A different approach to some of these formatives can be found in Espinal, 1991, and in Wilson & Sperber, 1993.

### B. Manner-of-speaking markers

These are markers with which the speaker can signal a comment on the manner in which the basic message is being conveyed. In (33a), for example,

- (33) a) **Frankly**, you need to stop now.  
 b) **Bluntly**, how are you going to get him off the hook?

the speaker, in addition to the basic message that you need to stop now, is informing the addressee that the message is being conveyed in a frank way. Similarly, in (33b), in addition to the basic message, the speaker is informing the addressee that, in the speaker's view, the message is being conveyed in a blunt manner. Adverbials falling into this group include the following,

- (34) bluntly, briefly, candidly, confidentially, crudely, fairly, frankly, generally, honestly, ironically, metaphorically, objectively, personally, precisely, roughly, seriously, simply, strictly, truthfully

and their variations, for example, *to speak candidly*, *roughly speaking*, *to be honest*, and *in all seriousness*. In addition to these variations, there are other elaborations and idiomatic phrases such as *rephrased*, *worded plainly*, *stated quite simply*, *off the record*, *quite frankly*, *speaking frankly though not as frankly as I'd like to*, *in the strictest confidence*, *to be quite blunt about it*, and *Y'know*.<sup>18</sup>

One figurative use of language is included among these markers: metaphor. We find sentences like

- (35) **Metaphorically (speaking)**, he is a camel.

This is the only instance of "announcing" figurative usage. We do not find "Hyperbolically speaking, he..." or "Synecdochically speaking, she..." We do find "Ironically, he paid his bill only yesterday," but this is a comment on the significance of the basic message content (i.e., an assessment marker), not a comment on the manner of the speaker's performance.

### C. Evidential markers

Another class of commentary markers includes the evidential adverbs (cf. Chafe 1986) which signal the degree of confidence, positive or negative, weakly or strongly, held by the speaker about the truth of the basic message. They are illustrated by the examples in (36).

- (36) a) **Certainly**, Harry will go.  
 b) **Conceivably**, Tim is right.

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<sup>18</sup> Contrary to Schiffrin (1987) who treats *Y'know* as a discourse marker, I am including it as a member of this group of markers, since in sentences such as "Y'know, I think you're wrong," it has an interpretation analogous with *confidentially*.

- c) **Indeed**, I promise to be on time.
- d) **Undeniably** I blame you for all my troubles.

Interestingly, those evidential markers, such as *certainly*, *indeed*, *undoubtedly*, *undeniably*, *no way*, and *clearly*, which do occur with some but not all performatives, are those reflecting a strong degree of confidence, positive or negative, while markers with a less strong degree of confidence such as *possibly*, *conceivably*, *evidently*, and *supposedly* never occur with a performative. Evidential markers include the following,

- (37) assuredly, certainly, clearly, conceivably, decidedly, definitely, doubtless, evidently, incontestably, incontrovertibly, indeed, indisputably, indubitably, (most/ quite/ very) likely, obviously, patently, perhaps, possibly, presumably, seemingly, supposedly, surely, (un)arguably, undeniably, undoubtedly, unquestionably

and their variations, for example, *It is certain that*, *It is perhaps the case that*, and *Without question*.

#### D. Consequent-effect markers

This group is illustrated by the sentences in (38).

- (38) a) **By way of explanation**, Peter is finally divorced.
- b) **If I may illustrate the point**, consider the argument initially made in the debate.
- c) **To clarify**, no one is permitted to smoke in this building!
- d) **I repeat**, that I accept responsibility for that goof.

The marker *by way of explanation*, for example, signals a comment on the basic message that the message which follows is intended to serve as an explanation, a consequent (perlocutionary) effect, independent of the message meaning. Similarly, *If I may illustrate the point*, *to clarify*, and *I repeat* signal that the speaker intends the message following to serve as an illustration, a clarification, and a repetition, respectively.

This class of markers contains two types of expressions. There are those in (39),

- (39) at the risk of repeating, finally, first, in general, in short, lastly, moving right along, next, once again, overall, so far, thus far, to add, to begin, to clarify, to close, to comment, to conclude, to continue, to explain, to illustrate, to interrupt, to note, to open, to repeat, to start with, to stop, to sum up, to summarize, up to this point

and their many variations, for example *By way of clarification*, *If I may clarify*, *Clarifying*. In addition, there are what Bach & Harnish (1979: 209) call "locutionary performatives," verbs such as

- (40) add, begin, close, comment, continue, enumerate, formulate, list, mention, note, open, reformulate, remark, repeat, say, utter



which, when used in a performative-like expression (e.g., "I repeat that John is sick"), are true just in case what the speaker says in issuing them is what the speaker predicates of the utterance. These markers serve to explicitly announce what sort of effect the speaker intends to have on the addressee.<sup>19</sup>

### E. Hearsay markers

In contrast to evidentials, which signal the speaker's confidence in the truth of the basic message content, hearsay markers are comments about the type of source of the speaker's information. Examples of hearsay markers are seen in (41).<sup>20</sup>

- (41) a) **Reportedly**, the game was postponed because of rain.  
 b) **It is claimed** that Susan did not kill the two boys.  
 c) **One hears that** the jury for the O.J. trial had many internal problems.  
 d) **Allegedly**, the justice system in the U.S. has improved over the years.

In (41d), for example, the speaker is sending two messages: First, a basic message, a claim about the U.S. system of justice, and second, a comment on this claim that reports that the source of the information was allegation. The class includes

- (42) allegedly, I have heard, it appears, it has been claimed, it is claimed, it is reported, it is rumored, it is said, one hears, purportedly, reportedly, they allege, they say, they tell me.

### F. Mitigation markers

A sixth type of commentary pragmatic markers are markers of mitigation, which signal the speaker's desire to reduce the face loss associated with the basic message (cf. Brown & Levinson 1988; Fraser 1991). There are many varieties, but I shall consider only two.<sup>21</sup> The first are the pseudo-conditionals, illustrated in the following sentences:

- (43) a) **If I may interrupt**, when is the next train?  
 b) **If it's not too much trouble**, could you help me?  
 c) **If you don't mind**, bring it to me about 7 this evening.  
 d) **Unless I misunderstood you/Unless I'm hearing it incorrectly**, he has

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<sup>19</sup> Many of these locutionary performatives occur in the negative with the same effect: "I will not mention that John is coming tonight" or "I need not comment that your paper is long overdue."

<sup>20</sup> In contrast to Ifantidou-Trouki (1993), I find these markers to be separate from the propositional content. Also, see Katriel & Dascal (1984) for another view of such markers.

<sup>21</sup> Not all mitigation takes the form of markers, for example, the *must* of the hedged performative "I must ask you to leave that here" or the mitigated request form, "Would you be willing to help me today?"

gone.

Despite their appearance, these are not conditional sentences. Rather, they constitute a basic message with a mitigating comment on it.<sup>22</sup>

The second variety of mitigating markers includes the following expressions, all ending with *but*,

- (44) I don't mean to pressure you but, I see your point but, I'm no expert but, I'm sorry to have to ask you this but, That may be true but, You have a point but, You're entitled to your opinion but,

which occur in sentences like:

- (45) a) **That may be true, but** you still have to clean up your room before you go out.  
 b) **I'm no expert, but** it doesn't look like you bought the right gas tank.  
 c) **You are, of course, entitled to your own opinion, but** are you sure that's a safe thing to do?

Here, as above, the basic message that follows these mitigation markers, is typically disadvantageous to the addressee and thus susceptible to mitigation.

### G. Emphasis markers

The final group of commentary markers has the function of emphasizing the force of the basic message. This group is illustrated by expressions such as,

- (46) by no means, by no stretch of the imagination, definitely, DO VP, I cannot too often point out that, I emphasize (strongly) that, I insist that, if I ever heard one, indeed, mark my words, on earth, really, that's a X, to say the least, without exaggeration,

which occur in sentences like:

- (47) a) **I insist** that you stop it this instant.  
 b) **I cannot too often point out** that dressing well is the key to success.  
 c) **Mark my words:** Sam will end up in jail.  
 d) **DO** stop!  
 e) Where **on earth** are my slippers?

Some of these markers are performative-like expressions (*I insist*), but they are not true (illocutionary) performatives since they are not used here to signal the speaker's basic communicative intention, such as would be done with *I promise*, but rather to signal an emphasis on the basic message. It is interesting that some of these markers impose limits on the structure and content of the following

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<sup>22</sup> There are expressions of the same form such as "If you're so smart/If/Since you're so clever, where is the can of fruit punch?" but where the introductory expression is a part of the propositional content.

sentence, as the following examples illustrate.

- (48) a) \*By no means, don't take the A train. (*by no means* requires a positive directive)  
 b) \*Really, I order you to try to do it. (*really* requires suggestions not orders)

#### 4. Parallel markers

The third type of pragmatic marker is the parallel marker, whose function is to signal an entire message in addition to the basic message. There are a number of small classes, but I present only three:

- A. Vocative markers
- B. Speaker displeasure markers
- C. Solidarity markers

##### A. Vocative markers

The first group contains the vocatives, which include

- (49) a) **Standard Titles:** John, Mr. President, Colonel, Mom, Your Honor, Father Brown  
 b) **Occupation Name:** Waiter, doctor, nurse, driver, judge  
 c) **General Nouns:** Brother, boys, guys, ladies and gentlemen, man, young lady  
 d) **Pronominal Forms:** You, somebody, everyone, anyone,

and are illustrated by the following examples:

- (50) a) **Mr. President**, what position are you taking today?  
 b) **Waiter**, please bring me another fork.  
 c) Good evening **ladies and gentlemen**, welcome to the home of the Black Bears.

By using one of these vocative forms, for example, *waiter*, the speaker is explicitly sending the message that the addressee of this message is the waiter.

##### B. Speaker displeasure markers

A second group of parallel markers signals the speaker's displeasure. This is illustrated in (51),

- (51) a) Get your **damned** shoes off of the table!  
 b) Where **in blue blazes** is that young son of mine; it's already 3 am.  
 c) John. Come over here **right now**!

where the parallel marker signals a message of the speaker expressing annoyance, but it is not usually clear whether the addressee or the situation is the target of the anger. This group of markers includes

- (52) damned, damn well, for the love of God/Mike, for the last time, how many times have I told you, in blue blazes, in God's name, in heaven's name, on me, right now, the hell, the devil, the heck.

### *C. Solidarity markers*

A third group of parallel markers signals solidarity (53a-b) or lack thereof (53c-d), as illustrated by the following examples:

- (53) a) **My friend**, we simply have to get our act together and face this problem.  
 b) **As one guy to another**, we're in deep trouble.  
 c) **Look, birdbrain**, this has been sitting in the "in box" for over a week. What's the story?  
 d) **As your superior**, I am authorized to tell you that you have been selected to go.

In these cases, the speaker is sending a message expressing (un)solidarity with the addressee.

## **5. Discourse markers**

The fourth and final type of pragmatic marker is the discourse marker, an expression which signals the relationship of the basic message to the foregoing discourse. In contrast to the other pragmatic markers, discourse markers do not contribute to the representative sentence meaning, but only to the procedural meaning: They provide instructions to the addressee on how the utterance to which the discourse marker is attached is to be interpreted (cf. Schiffrin 1987; Blakemore 1987, 1992; Fraser 1990, 1996a). Consider the following example.

- (54) A: Mary has gone home.  
 B: a) She was sick.  
 b) **After all**, she was sick.  
 c) **Thus**, she was sick.  
 d) **Moreover**, she was sick.  
 e) **However**, she was sick.

Speaker B's response to A's assertion that Mary has gone home may take many forms. B may simply utter (54a), and leave the addressee with no explicit lexical clues as to what relationship the utterance bears to the former, although there may be intonational and/or contextual clues. However, by using a discourse marker, the relationship is made explicit. *After all* in (54b) signals that the

utterance counts as an explanation; *thus* in (54c) signals that it counts as a conclusion using the earlier utterance as the basis; *moreover* in (54d) signals that there is something more relevant about Mary, in addition to her going home; and *however* in (54e) signals that contrary to what the addressee might think about when Mary would go home, this time Mary was sick. Discourse markers group into four main categories:

- A. Topic change markers
- B. Contrastive markers
- C. Elaborative markers
- D. Inferential markers

#### A. Topic change markers

These markers, illustrated in (55),

- (55) a) I don't think we can go tomorrow. It's David's birthday. **Incidentally**, when is your birthday?  
 b) **Speaking of Marsha**, where is she these days?

signal that the utterance following constitutes, in the speaker's opinion, a departure from the current topic. Topic change markers include:

- (56) back to my original point, before I forget, by the way, incidentally, just to update you, on a different note, parenthetically, put another way, returning to my point, speaking of X, that reminds me.

#### B. Contrastive markers

The second group of discourse markers are the contrastive markers, signaling that the utterance following is either a denial or a contrast of some proposition associated with the preceding discourse (Cf. Fraser 1996b). These are illustrated by

- (57) a) A: We can go now, children. B. **But** we haven't finished our game yet.  
 b) John won't go to Poughkeepsie. **Instead**, he will stay in New York.  
 c) Jane is here. **However**, she isn't going to stay.

The class of contrastive markers includes:

- (58) all the same, anyway, but, contrariwise, conversely, despite (this/that), even so, however, in any case/rate/event, in spite of (this/ that), in comparison (with this/that), in contrast (to this/that), instead (of doing this/that), nevertheless, nonetheless, (this/that point) notwithstanding, on the other hand, on the contrary, rather (than do this/that), regardless (of this/that), still, that said, though, yet.

#### C. Elaborative markers

Elaborative markers constitute the third class of discourse markers and signal

that the utterance following constitutes a refinement of some sort on the preceding discourse. Examples of elaborative markers are illustrated in (59).

- (59) a) Take your raincoat with you. But **above all**, take gloves.  
 b) I think you should cool off a little. **In other words**, sit down and wait a little bit.  
 c) He did it. **What is more**, he enjoyed doing it.

Expression of elaborate markers include:

- (60) above all, also, alternatively, analogously, and, besides, better, by the same token, correspondingly, equally, for example/instance, further(more), in addition, in any case/event, in fact, in other words, in particular, indeed, likewise, more accurately, more importantly, more precisely, more specifically, more to the point, moreover, on that basis, on top of it all, or, otherwise, similarly, that is, to cap it all off, too, what is more.

#### **D. Inferential markers**

Finally, there is a class of inferential discourse markers known as inferential markers, expressions which signal that the force of the utterance is a conclusion which follows from the preceding discourse. These are illustrated by the examples in (61),

- (61) a) Mary went home. **After all**, she was sick.  
 b) A: Marsha is away for the weekend. B: **So**, she won't be available Saturday.

and included in this class are,

- (62) accordingly, after all, all thing considered, as a consequence, as a logical conclusion, as a result, because of this/that, consequently, for this/that reason, hence, in this/that case, it can be concluded that, it stands to reason that, of course, on this/that condition, so, then, therefore, thus

and their variations, for example, *as a consequence* and *in accordance with*.

## **6. Conclusion**

What I have presented above should be viewed as support for three claims. The first claim is that the sentence (read "semantic") meaning is comprised of two parts: A propositional content; and a set of pragmatic markers. The second claim is that the four types of messages exhaust the messages encodable by aspects of sentence meaning: A single basic message (the message which uses the propositional content of the sentence as its message content); commentary messages (messages commenting on the basic message); parallel messages (messages which are in addition to the basic message); and discourse messages (messages signaling the relationship between the basic message of the current sentence and the preceding discourse). The third claim is that corresponding to

these message types are pragmatic markers which signal the particular message.

These claims may be correct, in which case we will have made progress, or they may be false. There may be aspects of sentence meaning other than the propositional content and pragmatic markers. For example, are pause markers such as *well* or *ahhh* to be considered a part of sentence meaning not, as I would propose, relegated to the domain of utterances? Or, are there more than four types of messages, say five or six; or worse yet, is there no clear way of distinguishing one type of message from the other? Or, are there messages which are signaled other than by lexical or structural means and for which there are no pragmatic markers? Less critical but nevertheless interesting is the question of whether a pragmatic marker, e.g. *frankly*, *please*, *now*, *on the other hand*, or *incidentally*, truly has only one function in a given sentence, as I have claimed, or are some of them polysemous? Then there are questions about the details of the pragmatic markers: What is the order of pragmatic markers? Is there an order for the classes, for example, Discourse Marker-Parallel Marker-Commentary Marker-Basic Marker, or does it depend on the particular markers involved? And within a specific class, for example, the Manner Commentary Markers, can more than one marker be present and if so, is it systematic or idiosyncratic? These are some of the issues awaiting further research.

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