Distinguishing between different indirect directive constructions:
Six-parameter approach

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In English and all the other languages, people perform directive speech acts either directly or indirectly. Directive acts can be expressed in many indirect ways and previous research has suggested a variety of relevant features involved -- including COST, DISTANCE and STATUS (Leech 1983: 176; Brown & Levinson 1987), "potential obstacles" (Gibbs 1986: 194), hearer's POWER/STATUS (Givón 1993: 265). However, previous theories are unable to satisfactorily explain the choice of one particular kind of indirect directive form as opposed to another in actual contexts.

This paper argues that the 6-parameter and value approach recently explored by the author in an analysis of the English imperative (Takahashi 2012) provides a way of dealing with this problem. It demonstrates how this model works, by focusing on three common constructions: *Would you mind VPing?, Would you VP?* and *Can you VP?*. By analyzing approximately one hundred examples of these forms used in four different American fictional novels in terms of six separate parameters (i.e. POWER, DESIRE, ABILITY, COST, BENEFIT and OBLIGATION), the paper presents the following findings. First, *Would you mind VPing?* differs sharply from *Would you VP?* in OBLIGATION, since no sense of OBLIGATION is assumed in the former (though not in the latter) construction. Second, a subtle contrast was observed in COST and BENEFIT as well. With *Would you mind VPing?* (as opposed to *Would you VP?*), the speaker typically assumes the required act imposes a heavy cost on the addressee and benefits only the speaker. These combined features account for the fact that one would normally ask a neighbor "(I hate to do this to you but) *would you mind* driving my son to school today?" (instead of *would you VP?*). Third, *Can you VP?* distinguishes itself from *Would you mind VP?* as well as *Would you VP* in ABILITY. Quite unlike the latter forms, the addressee's ABILITY to act may be questioned though it is usually assumed. *Can you VP?* also differs from *Would you mind VPing?* in COST, on the one hand, and from *Would you VP?* in OBLIGATION, on the other. The degree of COST varies a great deal with the request with *Can you VP?* (unlike *Would you mind VPing?*), while not much OBLIGATION is taken for granted (in contrast with *Would you VP?*). These parametric differences explain why *Can you possibly lend me your blue sweater?* (but neither *Would you mind VPing?* nor *Would you VP?*) is an appropriate way of making a request when the addressee, the speaker's roommate, may have taken that sweater to the dry cleaners though she usually lets her borrow it (Gibbs 1986: 191).

These findings are integrated into image-schematic representations of force interactions (Johnson 1987) by revising the ICMs of indirect directives originally proposed by Pérez Hernandez and Ruiz de Mendoza (2002). It is demonstrated that the model's predictive power is fairly robust and that, where the choice of directive strategy varies among individual speakers, the speakers' assessments of the relevant parameters vary.

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