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## Meaning and function of Spanish formulesmes and pragmatemes vs. illocutionary verbs

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### Abstract

From the perspective of Pragmatics, some scholars claim that the taxonomy of illocutionary acts should be revised. The aim of this paper is to propose such a review by means of a research field in which Lexicography and Pragmatics overlap. As we attempt to prove, formulesmes offer the advantage of being a narrower field of study than free utterances. Formulesmes (*Have a nice day!*) have been defined within the Meaning Text-Theory as a type of cliché and Pragmatemes (*Happy birthday!*) as a type of formuleme more restricted by the extralinguistic situation (someone's birthday). E-dictionaries require a formal method to express both the meaning and the function of formulesmes, yet this lexicographic development may well elicit problems. Within Meaning-Text Theory pragmatemes have been formalized to date by Lexical Functions. However, we have observed that this tool is unsatisfactory for didactic purposes. Therefore, in the Spanish e-dictionary *Diretes*, we have attached each formuleme to one illocutionary verb that we call "Pragmatic Function" (such as *to wish* and *to congratulate* for the examples above). In order to identify whether a formalization by means of Pragmatic Functions could be both possible and successful, we have formalized more than two hundred formulesmes (sixty of them pragmatemes). Although the project is in progress, up to now any kind of formuleme (being or not pragmateme) was successfully analyzed by means of thirty Pragmatic Functions created *ad hoc*. Pragmatic Functions could be useful not only for the formalization of formulesmes and pragmatemes when teaching Spanish, but also to revise the list of illocutionary verbs from the perspective of Phraseology and Lexicography.

**Keywords:** *E-lexicography, formulesmes, illocutionary verbs, lexical functions, pragmatemes, pragmatic functions*

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## Значение и функции испанских формулем и прагматем в сравнении с иллокутивными глаголами

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### Аннотация

С точки зрения прагматики некоторые ученые утверждают, что таксономию иллокутивных актов следует пересмотреть. Цель статьи – определить исследовательскую область пересечения лексикографии и прагматики, что может способствовать уточнению списка иллокутивных глаголов. Мы пытаемся доказать, что преимущество формулем как объектов исследования в том, что они являются более узкой областью исследования, нежели свободные высказывания. В теории «Смысл – Текст» формулемы (*Have a nice day!*) определяются как разновидность клише, а прагматемы (*Happy birthday!*) – как тип формулем, более ограниченных экстралингвистической ситуацией (чей-л. день рождения). Для электронных словарей требуется формальный метод выражения значения и функций формулем, однако их лексикографическая обработка может вызвать проблемы. На сегодняшний день в рамках теории «Смысл – Текст» прагматемы подвергались формализации на основе лексических функций. Однако мы полагаем, что этот инструмент не соответствует нашим дидактическим целям. В связи с этим в испанском электронном словаре *Diretes* мы присоединили к каждой формулеме один иллокутивный глагол, который мы называем «прагматической функцией» (например, *to wish* и *to congratulate* по отношению к вышеприведенным примерам). Чтобы определить, может ли формализация с помощью прагматической функции быть возможной и успешной, мы формализовали более двухсот формулем (их них шестьдесят прагматем). Хотя проект еще не завершен, каждая формулема (независимо от того, относится ли она к прагматемам) была успешно проанализирована с помощью тридцати прагматических функций, созданных *ad hoc*. Как мы пытаемся доказать, прагматические функции могут быть полезны не только для формализации формулем и прагматем при преподавании испанского языка, но и для пересмотра списка иллокутивных глаголов с точки зрения фразеологии и лексикографии.

**Ключевые слова:** электронная лексикография, формулемы, иллокутивные глаголы, лексические функции, прагматемы, прагматические функции

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### Dedication

Before going into the subject of this paper, I would like to dedicate a few brief words to the person who inspired this research. When I met Igor Mel'čuk for the first time in my life in 2004, he was a famous researcher and professor and I was starting as a PhD student. For nine months I attended the four courses he gave at the University of Montreal, those being Morphology, Lexicology, Semantics and the PhD course.

I found each one of them extremely interesting and truly inspiring with the last one being the most fruitful. This was because each day Professor Mel'čuk started

by asking if we had any questions. Any of the six students would sometimes express doubt and ask questions accordingly, and I usually chose one or two of the many questions I had, and he spent most of the time talking about those questions. At the finalization of the course I felt extremely grateful for those personalized classes from Igor Mel'čuk about Lexical Functions applied to the Spanish Language.

However, probably the most important subject I learned during my stay in Montreal was in regards to being a good teacher. Professor Mel'čuk would start each course giving us a sequenced syllabus, and much to my surprise he constantly delivered, explaining each theme in three hours! He was always available for his students and also answered our emails in less than one hour. He was also free for tutorials at any given time, even if it was for one tutorial each week, as it was in my case.

He was an expert in more than thirty languages and would ask the students questions related to their mother tongue. He proved to know the Spanish grammar better than me. Commonly he accompanied his lessons with frequent jokes demonstrating not only a vast knowledge of many subjects but also a great sense of humour.

Having said all that, if I had to choose only one feature of his academic repertoire, I would probably choose his generosity. To cite two simple examples, during the Meaning-Text Theory Conference in 2009 he drove people from the airport to their residence more than ten times in two days, acting as a taxi driver instead of the creator of the Meaning-Text Theory (MTT) model. On one of those days I saw him in the hall of our residence talking for more than two hours with the young researcher Dina El Kassas. I met her some days later at the airport and asked her about this conversation. She told me that Professor Mel'čuk had attended her presentation at the conference, felt that she was somewhat lost in her research and very generously chose to discuss this with her. Dina shared with me her gratitude for his spontaneous assistance. Sadly, she passed away seven years later. Our memory is with her.

I could continue writing of more fond memories and moving anecdotes of Professor Mel'čuk, in lieu of a research paper dedicated to him, as I think I learned not only by hearing or reading him, but very fundamentally by seeing him. However, thinking about him as a potential reader of this paper, I will change the subject and focus on pragmateme which is a concept I learned from him.

## 1. Introduction

Formulemes have been defined within the Meaning Text-Theory as a type of cliché with a specific abstract referent, such as a wish, and/or a specific event associated with them (Mel'čuk 2015a): for instance, *Happy birthday!* and *Have a nice day!* are attached to a birthday and to a farewell respectively. Pragmatemes are expressions restricted by the extralinguistic situation (Mel'čuk 1995, 1996, 2008, 2013, 2015b) and can be expressed by means of lexemes, idioms, collocations and clichés: meaning that a collocation such as *wet paint* (on a sign), an idiom such as

*hold the line* (in a phone call), a lexeme such as *rest!* (a military command) or a cliché such as *no parking* (on a sign) all function as a pragmateme (Mel'čuk 2020: 16–18).

Consequently, pragmatemes are a crosscategorical concept which corresponds to phrasemes restricted by the extralinguistic situation with an utterance value (Ovejas 2021). As Ovejas proposes, a pragmateme is a speech act for which there is, at least, one of the following parameters: medium, space, time or event (Blanco Escoda & Mejri 2018) and the relation between the speakers (Barrios 2020a). Analyzing the four examples in the previous paragraph, we find at least one of those parameters for each pragmateme: the medium (such as a sign), the space (such as a place where it is forbidden to park), the time (such as the end of military standing to attention), the event (such as a telephone call), and the relation between the speakers (such as military hierarchy). According to Barrios & Ovejas (2019a), the concept of pragmateme is a *continuum*. Ovejas (2021) claims that some pragmatemes are essential or more typical and some others are outlying.

As Mel'čuk summarizes through various ideas in a number of his preliminary papers, from the semantic point of view a pragmateme is “a linguistic expression that does not represent logical propositions and therefore cannot be negated or questioned”; and from the syntactic point of view, a pragmateme is a “full utterance equivalent to an independent clause” (2020: 19).

Whilst pragmateme is a crosscategorical concept, formuleme corresponds to only one concept: a subtype of cliché, which is in turn a compositional semantic-lexemic phraseme, and corresponds to daily speech formulas (*see you later*), technical formulas (*to sum up*), commands (*all hands on deck*), and proverbs (*all good things come to an end*) (Mel'čuk 2020: 14). The concept of formuleme is close to that of pragmateme, to the point that *Happy birthday!* and *Have a nice day!* are simultaneously formulemes and pragmatemes: *Happy birthday!* is a formula used on the day of someone's birthday (it contains at least the parameter of time), and *Have a nice day!* is a formula used in a farewell (it contains at least the parameter of event).

The concept of pragmateme can be understood in a narrow sense (Mel'čuk 1995), which includes expressions such as *for rent*, *drive slow(ly)*, *do not enter*, *beware of the dog*, etc. (Mel'čuk 2015a: 29); or in a broad sense: “a formuleme is a pragmateme if it is pragmatically constrained” (Mel'čuk 2015a: 29). Most researchers follow the broad sense (Blanco Escoda 2013, 2014, Gader, Olliger & Polguère 2014, Polguère 2016, Barrios 2017, 2020, Barrios & Ovejas 2019). Ovejas (2021) includes under this concept phraseological schemes, such as *fabricado en (X lugar)* (made in (X place)); *tiene la palabra (alguien)* (to give (someone) the floor)<sup>1</sup>; *la paz sea con vosotros* (peace be with you, in a religious ceremony).

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<sup>1</sup> As far as we know, this expression is used in a slightly different sense in Spanish than in English: in Spanish it is used to introduce someone, such as a speaker, just one second before this person starts to present at a conference. It is always used as a formula in 3rd person: for instance, *el profesor Polguère tiene la palabra*, Professor Polguère has the floor.

We structured this paper in the following way: Section 2 summarizes how we formalize pragmatemes and formulemes; Section 3 focuses on illocutionary acts; Section 4 presents the hypothesis, the data we use and the methodology; Section 5 presents the results obtained; Section 6 exhibits a number of problems that arose in the course of research; finally Section 7 summarizes the conclusions.

## 2. Formalizing pragmatemes and formulemes

E-dictionaries require a formal method to express both the meaning and the function of pragmatemes and formulemes, however this lexicographic development can elicit problems (Cowie 2011). Meaning-Text Theory (MTT) is a model applied to lexicographic projects in several languages (see, among others, Mel'čuk & Zholkovsky 1984, Iordanskaja & Paperno 1996, Apresjan et al. 2003, Alonso Ramos 2004, Mel'čuk & Polguère 2007, Polguère 2014, 2018, Alipour, Robichaud & L'Homme 2015, Apresjan 2018, Mel'čuk 2018, Barrios & Boguslavsky 2019b, Barrios 2020b).

Within MTT pragmatemes have been formalized to date by Lexical Functions (Polguère 2007, 2016, Fréchon et al. 2012, Blanco 2013). A Lexical Function (LF) is a formal tool which associates a given lexical expression L (such as *to sleep*), which is called the argument or keyword, with a set of lexical expressions, which are called values (such as *deeply, profoundly, like a baby, like a log*). The formalization of this concrete lexical relation is created via a function called Magn (in Latin Magnus) which means 'intense', 'big', as shown in (1.a). A similar technique has been applied to formalize pragmatemes, with the particularity that in this case LFs are created *ad hoc* for each pragmateme, as shown in (1.b) by an example taken from Mel'čuk (2008):

- (1) a. Magn(to sleep) = *deeply, profoundly, like a baby, like a log*  
b. [This object was] recently painted: *Fresh paint* [on a sign, to avoid someone touching it]

In Barrios (2020a), we claim that LFs seems to be unsatisfactory for the formalization of a large set of pragmatemes and formulemes. We strive to summarize the arguments we presented in this paper by means of the examples in (1): (1.a) shows a very productive LF, Magn, which covers hundreds of collocations, such as *torrential rain, heavy drinker, confirmed bachelor, crass mistake*, etc.; whilst (1.b) is a compositional expression (*recently painted*) created *ad hoc* for the pragmateme *fresh paint* which demands extra-linguistic information (on a sign, to avoid someone touching it).

Specifically due to the great importance of extra-linguistic features in understanding the function of each pragmateme, we propose the concept of Pragmatic Function, a tool relevant in the case both of LFs and illocutionary verbs. We define this concept as shown in (2):

- (2) A Pragmatic Function (PF) is a function that expresses a speech act (such as to thank, to order, to greet, to congratulate, to evaluate, to warn, etc.)

and is associated with a given extra-linguistic situation (such as an encounter, or something freshly painted) which is called the argument, with a set of expressions (pragmatemes, formulemes) which are called values (such as *how do you do*, *how are you going*; *wet paint*, *do not touch*) (Barrios 2020a: 24–25).

In such a way we propose formalizing pragmatemes and formulemes by means of PFs, adding some semantic features when necessary via some adverbs, such as *formally* or *colloquially*, as shown in (3); or even changing the referential expression (the extra-linguistic situation) written in brackets, as shown in (4) (Barrios 2020a: 25):

- (3) a. To greet formally (greeting encounter) = how do you do?  
b. To greet colloquially (greeting encounter) = how are you going?
- (4) a. To warn (something freshly painted) = wet paint; do not touch<sup>2</sup>  
b. To warn (a house/room freshly painted) = fresh paint

In order to apply PFs to the e-dictionary *Directes* (Barrios 2020b) with a more sophisticated system and more explicative power than in (3) and (4), we created a new table in the relational database of the dictionary. Figure 1 shows various columns via which we describe the meaning and the extra-linguistic information related to pragmatemes and formulemes.

The first column shows the pragmateme or formuleme; columns 2–4 present the lexical anchorage (words to which this pragmateme or formuleme would be attached in the dictionary); in 5 we note if it is a pragmateme (because it is a crosscategorical concept) and in 6 if it is an answer to any preliminary question (for a similar reason); 7 describes the PF and 8 – the scenario; 9 offers an example of a typical situation; 10 gathers the names of the typical places where it occurs; and 11 details the feeling of the speaker when using this pragmateme or formuleme. There are additional columns in the database, such as the attitude of the speaker and/or potential attitude of the listener after hearing this expression; lack of space does not allow the presentation of all the features we are working with.

In *Directes* we work with the concepts of phraseological schemes and proverbs functioning as pragmatemes, formules, etc. We also utilize the concept of pragmateme (as defended in Barrios & Ovejas 2019 and Barrios 2020a), and that of stereotyped speech act (SSA) (Kauffer 2013). An SSA shares almost all the characteristics of the pragmateme described in Section 1 but the extra-linguistic situation is less restricted than that of the pragmateme. Subsequently, if someone says *what a pity!*, the extra-linguistic situation associated with this expression only demands an event classified as something bad, and a feeling of compassion or pity on the part of the speaker, but there exists no scenario or other lexical anchorage different from *pity* or *compassion* (observe that they are abstract words whereas

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<sup>2</sup> We acquired these examples of the use of *wet paint* and *do not touch* in several images on the Internet attached to objects recently painted, while the images of *fresh paint* were of houses and rooms.

*ship, drown or rescue for Man overboard!* are concrete words). For this reason, it is possible to identify hundreds of typical situations attached to any SSA.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
id-L	Lexical Anchorage 1	Lexical Anchorage 2	Lexical Anchorage 3	Pragmatema	Answer	Pragmatic Function	Scenario	Typical Situation	Place	Feeling
¡hombre al agua!	barco	ahogarse	rescate	Sí	No	Alertar_ para que se rescate a alguien	Alguien ha caído de un barco y puede ahogarse.	Un marinero cae en una maniobra con mar picada, y otro compañero lo ve, y grita: ¡hombre al agua!	Barco	Alarmado
Man overboard!	ship	drown	rescue	Yes	No	To warn to rescue someone	Someone has fallen off the ship and could drown	Navigating in a rough sea during some manoeuvres, a sailor falls off the ship and someone else cries: ¡man overboard!	Ship	Alarmed

Figure 1. Description of the pragmateme “Man overboard!” in the Spanish e-dictionary *Diretes*

As *Diretes* is a project in progress, we rely on the web page<sup>3</sup> where it is possible to show, for the present time, only some of the data from our database. For instance, if someone writes *hombre* (man) in the search engine of the web page, the response will be a set of dictionary entries containing the word *man*, among them some idioms, the pragmateme *hombre al agua* (Man overboard!) and the phraseological scheme *pobre hombre* (lit. poor man), such as shown in Figure 2.

<a href="#">hombre</a>	sustantivo
<a href="#">hombre anuncio</a>	locución nominal
<a href="#">hombre bala</a>	locución nominal
<a href="#">hombre de negocios</a>	locución nominal
<a href="#">hombre de paja</a>	locución nominal
<a href="#">hombre del saco</a>	locución nominal
<a href="#">hombre lobo</a>	locución nominal
<a href="#">hombre orquesta</a>	locución nominal
<a href="#">hombre rana</a>	locución nominal
<a href="#">gentilhombre de placer</a>	locución adjetiva
<a href="#">¡hombre al agua!</a>	fórmula oral o escrita
<a href="#">¡pobre hombre!</a>	estructura productiva

Figure 2. Results after writing *hombre* (man) in the search engine of the Spanish e-dictionary *Diretes*

<sup>3</sup> Available in: <http://diretes.es/>.

Currently, due to the development status of the program, we cannot automatically recover the lexical anchorage from database to web page, and therefore we cannot arrive at *Man overboard!* from the entries of *ship*, *drown* and *rescue* as was hoped (we will endeavour to develop better software in the coming years). For this reason, if we click on *¡Hombre al agua!* (see the next to final line in Figure 2) the dictionary shows only some of the data collected in the database, as Figure 3 shows, especially when compared to 1:

### ¡hombre al agua!

Categoría gramatical: fórmula oral o escrita

Definición mínima: Se dice cuando alguien cae al agua desde un barco.

Definición expandida: Normalmente se grita en barcos de marina mercante o militar para avisar de que hay que rescatar a q

Etiqueta semántica: Formulema

Función pragmática: Avisar de que alguien ha caído de un barco y puede ahogarse.

Contexto de situación típica 1: Un marinero cae en una maniobra con mar picada, y otro compañero lo ve, y grita: ¡hombre al agua!

Escenario: Barco

**Figure 3. Entry of the dictionary for the pragmateme *¡Hombre al agua!* (Man overboard!) in *Diretes***

In order to ascertain whether the formalization we are working with would be both possible and successful, we have, as a pilot test, formalized more than two hundred formulemes (sixty of them pragmatemes) of the Spanish e-dictionary *Diretes* by means of Pragmatic Functions created *ad hoc*. At the conclusion of our task we had collected thirty PFs similar to *to warn*, specified by different paraphrases, in like manner to *to rescue someone* (see column 7 from Figure 1).

In Section 5, we will present some of the results of the analyses. Our data proves that PFs were more appropriate for our didactic purpose than LFs created *ad hoc*, and that any kind of formuleme (whether pragmateme or not) can be analysed by this method.

### 3. Illocutionary acts

Regarding the Pragmatic perspective, few researchers have addressed the issue of how to compile a complete and coherent inventory of illocutionary verbs. Searle's taxonomy was proposed (1968) and revised by the author (1975, 1979, 1990). It was also presented in a coherent proposal for Illocutionary Logic (Searle & Vanderveken 1985). Vanparys analyzed the valence potential of 120 illocutionary verbs in written and written-to-be-spoken language from a cognitive perspective, concluding that “a that-clause portrays the content as a more or less independent entity, while an infinitival complement presents it as being more dependent on the speech act” (1996: 221). More recently Weigand offered a dialogic taxonomy of minimal games based on Searle's monologic speech act taxonomy (2010: 154).



After his revisions, Searle (1990) recognized that there should be few changes implemented:

There are five, and only five basic things we can do with propositions: we tell people how things are (assertives), we try to get them to do things (directives), we commit ourselves to doing things (commissives), we express our feelings and attitudes (expressives), and we bring about changes in the world so that the world matches the proposition simply by virtue of the utterance (declaratives) (Searle 1990: 410).

As the author claimed, his proposal was not to offer a list of illocutionary verbs but to revise Austin's taxonomy by means of a richer theory, and to offer a taxonomy of illocutionary acts. Responding to some critics, particularly related to certain verbs, he comments: "*remark* and *comment* are not names of types of illocutionary acts, they are illocutionary verbs" (Searle 1990: 417).

From our point of view, as outsiders to Searle's theory, this is one of the most interesting points of the controversy. As Austin stressed, some words, such as *hereby*, are a "useful criterion that the utterance is performative" (Austin 1962: 57). The equivalent to *hereby* in Spanish is *por la presente*: words and idioms play a crucial role by marking the situational context, in this case, an official document. In MTT, *hereby* is considered a pragmateme. In fact, some of the most well-known examples of Austin's proposal (*I declare you married*<sup>4</sup>, *I name this ship*, *I give and bequeath*) are also pragmatemes (they are fixed and attached to particular situations in the real world).

On the other hand, there are performative words, such as *promise*, that can be used both as performative (*I promise you*) and non performative (*you promised*) (Austin 1963: 59). Thus, the item can be labeled as an illocutionary verb depending on the grammar. We can conclude that illocutionary force is expressed both by vocabulary and by grammar, and the combination of both conditions offers a wide variety of possibilities. Searle accepted this idea of Austin's, and questioned whether there are some "kernel elements in illocutionary force on which these various operations are performed", as well as if "there is a finite list of these elements" (1990: 410).

Analyzing some of the data of Searle's work, we realized that we can identify idioms, formulemes and pragmatemes attached to different types of illocutionary acts. Table 1 shows certain examples we created for different types of assertives, the first group in Searle's taxonomy (we take the subtypes from Searle 1975: 347):

We attempted to classify our data and found illocutionary verbs, such as *mention* and *comentar* (to comment) present in compositional (semantically clear) discourse markers, which in turn are formulemes (see lines 4 and 5). We also found formulemes (*Elementary, my dear Watson; What else does he want?*) and pragmatemes (*I declare you married*) which are *per se* performative utterances (see lines 7, 9 and 11).

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<sup>4</sup> We consider this expression here instead of the original answer written by Austin (*I do*) because he realized it was a mistake, although he could not change it in the original book, as explained in note 2 (Austin 1968: 5).

Table 1. Types of assertive from Searle’s taxonomy with some examples and our comments

TYPE OF ASSERTIVE	EXAMPLE (IN ENGLISH)	EXAMPLE (IN SPANISH)	COMMENTS
Statements <i>Afirmación</i>	Aristotle <b>postulates</b> that man is a political animal	<i>Aristóteles afirma que el hombre es un animal político</i>	Performative-looking word potentially used as non performative <sup>5</sup>
Assertions <i>Aseveración</i>	He’s not living there, <b>that’s for sure</b>	<i>Él no vive ahí, eso seguro</i>	Discourse marker: concluding an assertion.
	I <b>assure</b> you I <b>will do my best</b>	<i>Te aseguro que haré todo lo que pueda</i>	Illocutionary verb + false assertion (promise) & formuleme (I’ll do my best)
Remarks <i>Comentario</i>	<b>Not to mention</b>	<i>Sin mencionar que (...)</i>	Illocutionary verb <i>mentar</i> as part of a compositional discourse marker: before adding information
Explanations <i>Explicación</i>	(lit. I’ll commentate on)	<i>Te comento, (...) (oral use)</i>	Illocutionary verb <i>comentar</i> as part of a compositional discourse marker: before adding information and explaining something
Declarations <i>Declaración</i>	He made a <b>statement</b> to the press	<i>Hizo una declaración a la prensa</i>	Performative-looking word used as non performative <sup>6</sup>
	I <b>pronounce/declare you married/ man and wife/ You may seal your vows with a kiss</b>	<i>Yo os declaro marido y mujer</i>	Pragmateme. Performative utterance. Function: marry two people
Deductions <i>Deducción</i>	Aristotle <b>deduced</b> that Earth is spherical	<i>Aristóteles dedujo que la Tierra es redonda</i>	Performative-looking word used as non performative
	<b>Elementary, my dear Watson</b>	<i>Elemental, querido Watson</i>	Formuleme. Performative utterance. Function: emphasise the deduction
Arguments <i>Argumento</i>	He has good reasons for leaving this job	<i>Tiene motivos justificados para dejar ese trabajo</i>	Non performative-looking sentence used as performative (the speaker believes that what he says is true)
	<b>What more does he want?</b>	<i>Qué más quiere?</i> <sup>7</sup>	Formuleme. Performative utterance. Function: to complain (someone demands some logical arguments speaking with some other person about a third person, maybe a boss, who is not satisfied with the speaker)

<sup>5</sup> We claim that in this example it could be a non performative use because the speaker could say: Aristotle **postulates** that man is a political animal but I claim it is not true. Here we use Austin’s terminology, although it corresponds to Searle’s words, to an illocutionary verb used in a non-illocutionary act, as we will see later.

<sup>6</sup> Again, from here on we use Austin’s terminology (1963) within the Table 1 . We believe it to be clearer for the didactic intention of this Table.

<sup>7</sup> Apparently this expression is a question when someone is searching for arguments in order to understand the attitude of another person, whilst concurrently this person is complaining.

The last examples (lines 7, 9 and 11) were the catalyst for us to design and develop the research we aim to showcase in the next sections, specifically because these kinds of formulesmes and pragmatemes are idiomatic (fixed), hence the grammar does not relate to their function.

#### 4. Hypothesis, data and method

Our hypothesis is that formulesmes and pragmatemes constitute a set sufficiently bound to be properly analyzed as speech acts and, at the same time, a set large enough to allow us to create a representative list of illocutionary verbs.

One datum that would initially support our hypothesis is that there should be at least one pragmateme or one formuleme for each illocutionary act in the didactic material focused on Pragmatics. We will attempt to explain in a few words the argument that supports this idea. From our perspective, we use idioms and proverbs because of linguistic economy to express productive concepts in a particular language, avoiding the need to look for a novel expression each time. Languages have expressions for frequently used meanings because of “the possibility of an internal economy of speech” (Zipf 1949: 20). We could “therefore expect that fundamental speech act types have economically short grammatical expressions at their disposal” (Weigand 2010: 155).

Assuming that, as pragmatemes and formulesmes express frequent utterances in a fixed way, linguistic economy reasons would equally compel speakers to select a well-known expression (well-known implies easier to be understood by the listener) to assure the felicity (which means well understood by the listener) of the illocutionary act.

We will try to verify if our hypothesis is valid working with two main sources of data:

a) the didactic material created by the *Instituto Cervantes* for the teachers of Spanish as a Second Language, called *Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes* (PCIC), available from the Internet<sup>8</sup>;

b) the list of pragmatemes, formulesmes, SSA, phraseological schemes, and proverbs functioning as Speech Acts, collected and formalized to date in the Spanish dictionary *Diretes* (see Section 2).

As the second source was presented in Section 2, we will summarize here some of the characteristics of the first. The relevant part of the PCIC dedicated to Pragmatics is a repertoire of one hundred and twenty functions classified in six groups:

- a) to give and ask for information;
- b) to express opinions, attitudes and knowledge;
- c) to express pleasure, desires and feelings;
- d) influencing the interlocutor;

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<sup>8</sup> [https://cvc.cervantes.es/ensenanza/biblioteca\\_ele/plan\\_curricular/niveles/05\\_funciones\\_introduccion.htm](https://cvc.cervantes.es/ensenanza/biblioteca_ele/plan_curricular/niveles/05_funciones_introduccion.htm)

e) to relate socially with other people;

f) to structure the discourse.

In turn, all of these groups can be classified in several groups. For instance, in the third group (c), the PCIC offers the Spanish versions of *to toast*, *to offer condolences*, *to congratulate*, *to welcome*, etc.; whilst in the sixth group (f) there are expressions for greetings, telling stories, etc. All of the material is also classified by levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2).

For each sub-group and for each level, the PCIC collects several examples. Most of them correspond to utterances freely written by the creators of the material, but for some functions there are many examples of pragmatemes and formulemes, such as in (a) to ask for information: *what's your name?*, *how old are you?*, *where are you from?*; in (b) to express disagreement: *I don't think so*; in (c) to ask about feelings: *how are you?*; and many more<sup>9</sup>. The list of one hundred and twenty functions of the PCIC likely constitutes so far the most complete list of Spanish Speech Acts (see Section 3).

We followed a very simple research methodology: initially we checked the complete list of examples of the PCIC and confirmed that there is at least one pragmateme or formuleme for each function it proposes<sup>10</sup>. Assuming that it partially validates our hypothesis, we then decided to analyze the PCIC's examples and to compare their function with the list of our Pragmatic Functions created *ad hoc* for the Spanish e-dictionary *Diretes*, as we have seen in Section 2.

## 5. Results

As we mentioned in Section 4, as a result of the analysis in *Diretes* we obtained a list of thirty Pragmatic Functions created *ad hoc* to express the function of more than two hundred Spanish pragmatemes. In Table 2 (second column) we portray eighteen of these PFs (lack of space prevents us from illustrating more results), and we endeavour to relate these PFs to Searle's taxonomy (see Section 4). The third column shows a number we will use to comment on some of these pragmatemes in a straightforward manner. The fourth shows Spanish pragmatemes and the fifth the English equivalents. Regarding assertives and declaratives, until now these types of speech acts involve fewer pragmatemes than the other types. However, this seems to be not relevant for now because hundreds of pragmatemes and formulemes remain to be analysed.

As Table 2 shows, there are English equivalents for some of the Spanish pragmatemes and formulemes (as we cannot deal with varieties of Spanish, we only work with the Spanish of Spain). However, this concept should be applied cautiously. For instance, in (13) *es así de claro* seems to be slightly different to *it's*

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<sup>9</sup> In the interest of reading clarity, we have written the English equivalents to the Spanish expressions of the PCIC.

<sup>10</sup> We will present some of the problems we identified in Section 5.

*that clear*: apparently the English expression can be used assertively, while the Spanish expression is used to express attitude, usually after evaluating something or someone.

Table 2. Pragmatemes and Formulemes, as well as its Pragmatic Functions in *Diretes*

Searles's taxonomy	Pragmatic Functions in <i>Diretes</i>	N.	Spanish pragmatemes and formulemes in <i>Diretes</i>	English equivalents or explanation of use
Assertives	Deducting	1	<i>Elemental, querido Watson</i>	<i>Elementary, my dear Watson</i>
Directives	Encouraging people to play like a child or enjoy themselves with jokes	2	<i>Ábrete Sésamo</i>	<i>Open Sesame</i>
		3	<i>Frío, frío</i>	<i>Cold, cold</i>
		4	<i>Pide un deseo</i>	<i>Make a wish!</i>
		5	<i>Cierra los ojos</i>	<i>Close your eyes!</i>
	Manipulating	6	<i>No hay por dónde cogerlo</i>	<i>There is no way to take it</i>
	Ordering	7	<i>Pasemos página</i>	<i>Let's draw a line on the past</i>
Ordering with arrogance	8	<i>Porque lo digo yo y punto</i>	<i>Lit. Because I say it and that's it</i>	
Commissives	Pledging sth	9	<i>¡Cuenta conmigo!</i>	<i>Count on me!</i>
	Relinquishing responsibility	10	<i>Eso es cosa tuya</i>	<i>It's up to you</i>
Expressives	Expressing an excuse	11	<i>No pude hacer otra cosa</i>	<i>Lit. I cannot do another thing</i>
		12	<i>Ha sido sin querer</i>	<i>It was unintentional</i>
	Emphasising	13	<i>Así de claro</i>	<i>Lit. That clear</i>
	Emphasising and expressing refusal	14	<i>Por encima de mi cadáver</i>	<i>Lit. Above my cadáver (used to refuse)</i>
		15	<i>Ni por todo el oro del mundo</i>	<i>Not even for all the gold in the world</i>
	Expressing evaluation	16	<i>Ni fu ni fa</i>	<i>Not good, not bad</i>
		17	<i>Esto es pan comido</i>	<i>That's a piece of cake</i>
		18	<i>A la vejez viruela</i>	<i>Lit. To old age, smallpox</i>
		19	<i>Has hecho muy bien</i>	<i>You did the right thing</i>
	20	<i>Estás muy equivocado</i>	<i>You're very wrong</i>	
	Expressing negative reproach	21	<i>A buenas horas, mangas verdes</i>	<i>Lit. At good hours, green sleeves</i>
	Expressing positive reproach	22	<i>Qué calladito te lo tenías</i>	<i>Lit. How quiet you had it</i>
	Expressing positive feeling	23	<i>Dichosos los ojos</i>	<i>Lit. Blissful the eyes</i>
	Expressing approval	24	<i>Así está bien</i>	<i>Lit. Like this is good</i>
Expressing indifference	25	<i>A mí qué me cuentas</i>	<i>Why do I care about that?</i>	
Expressing relief	26	<i>Hogar, dulce hogar</i>	<i>Home, sweet home</i>	
Declaratives	Getting married	27	<i>¡Sí, quiero</i>	<i>Yes, I do</i>

In (19) there is an SSA which is quite frequently used in Spanish, *has hecho muy bien* (lit., you did very well). Because of the influence of dubbing actors in English or American films, we frequently hear *has hecho lo correcto* which is literally *you did the right thing*. However, whereas the English expression seems to be strongly attached to US culture, its literal translation does not correspond very

well to Spanish culture. Something similar occurs with *lamento su pérdida* (I mourn your loss): in Spain we say *le acompaño en el sentimiento* (lit. I accompany you in your feelings), but again, the film's translators translate the English pragmateme word for word.

In (24) the Spanish expression is apparently equivalent to the English one, but it is a false equivalence. In fact the equivalent to *that's right* is *de acuerdo, está bien*. The form *así está bien* is used in Spain in more restricted extra-linguistic situations, for instance, when someone is adding milk to your coffee and you want her to stop.

Finally, as far as we know, in (26) the pragmateme *hogar dulce hogar* is slightly different from the English one: In Spain it is not associated with homeland, it is said when some arrives home, for instance, after several hours out in the cold, or after a number of days living in some other place, the speaker expresses the joy of returning home. We do not consider possible ironic uses in this case.

At this juncture we should add that there are some pragmatemes and formulemes from *Directes* without a clear link to one of the five types of Searle's illocutionary acts (see Section 3). For instance, while we have labeled as directives intimidating (*ándate con ojo*, watch your back) and warnings (*ojo al parche*, keep an eye on), there is a need to revise pragmatemes labeled as manipulating (see the one in 6, Table 2): when someone says *no hay por donde cogerlo* (there is no way to take it) this person is evaluating and, at the same time, trying to influence the opinion of the listener.

## 6. Problems which arose

Several problems arose while analysing our data, and we will briefly present some of them.

The first relates to the richness of linguistic information of the illocutionary verbs. If we return to Figure 1, initially in our database we only used the verb *Warn* to express the function of the pragmateme (what we call PF, see Section 2). The meaning of *to warn* demands that someone (X) warns someone else (Y) about something (Z): we realized that, because of its argument structure, we can use this verb as an illocutionary verb by focusing the meaning on one or another argument. For instance, as we see in Section 2, if someone cries *Man overboard!* to some other people on a ship, someone usually tries to rescue the person who fell from the ship. The speaker (X) wants someone (Y) to save this person (Z).

Similarly, if someone cries *Mayday! Mayday!* on a ship (or in some other place) to some other people, those others would attempt, to whatever possible extent, to help them to avoid imminent danger. The speaker (X) wants some other people (Y) to save the crew and passengers on board from serious danger (Z).

However, if someone cries *Fire!*, other people who hear this cry would run far away from the place where it is taking place; likewise if someone cries *A bomb!*, the speaker (X) wants other people (Y) to be safe from fire/bomb (Z). For this reason, we chose to specify where the focus of *warning* was directed, adding some semantic features to the PF, as (5) shown:

- (5) a. To warn\_ someone to run: *A bomb!; Fire!*  
b. To warn\_ to rescue someone: *Man overboard!; Mayday! Mayday!*

The reader is potentially thinking that someone could cry *Man overboard!* before leaping to help this person. In this case, the speaker (X) wants someone else (Y) to know he is going to rescue this person (Z). Observe that the question then arises as to whether the illocutionary verb should be *to inform* instead of *to warn*. Should we introduce two lexical entries for these two different speakers' intentions? Should we write *to inform that the speaker is going to rescue someone*? As yet we have no answer. Most probably we need to work on the terminological field in order to know how many pragmatemes would be adequate for the potentialities of this last PF. We wonder if this situation is frequent in everyday life. Our picture of illocutionary words is thus still incomplete.

The second problem relates to the examples of the PCIC's lists we were consulting. We present some of them in (6)<sup>11</sup>:

- (6) a. *No seas miedica y tírate ya, hombre* (Don't be a chicken and just throw yourself off, man!)  
b. *¡Lánzate!* (Jump!)
- (7) a. *Te echo una mano/ un cable/ un capote* (Lend a hand/ a cable/ a cap)  
b. *¿De cuánto estás? vs. ¿De cuánto está?* (Literally How many (months) are you? vs. How much is she?)
- (8) a. *Toda la vida cuidando de vosotros para que luego me tratéis así* (Literally All your life taking care of you and later you treat me like this)  
b. *Toda la vida cuidando de ellos para que luego me traten así* (Literally All your life taking care of them and later they treat me like this)

In (6) we show an example of PCIC (6.a) which is written without any explication of the extra-linguistic situation. As the Spanish verb *tirarse* (to jump) is attached to a physical movement, this utterance would usually be said close to a swimming pool, when someone (typically a child) is trying to jump off a diving board without success. The PCIC does not say anything about any context or about the expression in (6.b): the verb *lanzarse* (to launch) is used not in a physical but in a figurative sense, as in *come on and enrol in the master degree!*).

In (7) we show the problem of idioms and phraseological schemes used as pragmatemes: (7.a) reflects three PCIC utterances based on idioms and (7.b) shows a phraseological scheme without an equivalent in English, *¿De cuánto estás?* (lit. how much are you?). This is a pragmateme used by the speaker when asking a pregnant woman how many weeks or months the baby is.

In such cases, regular expressions are relied on: the idioms  *echar una mano/ un cable/ un capote*, lit. lend a hand/ a cable/ a cap, and the productive structure *estar + de + X + semanas/meses* (lit. to be + of + X + weeks/months). The

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<sup>11</sup> All the examples preceded by the letter (a) come from the PCIC, whilst the ones preceded by the letter (b) are written by us to show the kind of problems we encountered working with this material.

phraseological scheme explains the frequent use of this verb in indirect style, such as speaking about a pregnant woman (the speaker asks someone how many weeks or months along is (the baby) (of) a pregnant woman which is not present at this moment). Should we teach the pragmatemes without any reference to the regular expressions through which they are formed?

In (8) we show two sentences with minimal grammatical difference: (8.a) uses the second person and (8.b) the third person. However, as in other cases, minimal grammatical differences involve relevant pragmatical deviation: (8.a) is a reproach whilst (8.b) is a grumble. We do not find any relevant explication regarding these circumstances in the PCIC.

Consequently, we claim that any didactic material, whatever it may be, a dictionary such as *Directes* or an on-line resource like the PCIC, should be enriched with explications that can solve the problems we mention in this Section, even if the solutions are not evident.

## 7. Conclusions

The set of Pragmatic Functions could be useful not only for the formalization of formulemes and pragmatemes in other languages but also as a catalogue of illocutionary verbs based on phraseology.

However, given the small sample, vigilance must be observed: size limitations of our present research give rise to many questions which will most likely be challenging for years to come. Detailing any small feature related to the function and the extra-linguistic situation for each pragmateme is a huge, necessary and demanding task.

Returning to our hypotheses, and recognising that our study is a simple pilot test, data indicate that formulemes and pragmatemes constitute a set sufficiently bound and, concurrently, large enough to create a representative list of illocutionary verbs. However, their analysis will take more time than was anticipated when we commenced this study.

Further studies, which take the number of parameters into account will need to be undertaken in order to clarify if there is a relation between the parameters and the position of the pragmateme related to the continuum of this concept: could it be possible that the larger the number of parameters, the more central the pragmateme is? Does the presence of more parameters hold for the more essential pragmatemes, while fewer parameters imply more outlying pragmatemes? In other words, are the number of parameters directly attached to the degree of typicality of the pragmateme?

Another important issue to resolve for future studies is the relation between the idiomaticity of one expression and its categorization: are outlying pragmatemes responding to grammar rules or phraseological tendencies? Should the phraseological schemes, such as *made in X*, be analyzed as phrasemes or as productive constructions?

We would like to conclude this paper with the two first pragmatemes we mentioned in the Introduction, using both now in direct speech, saying:



Dear Igor Mel'čuk, *Happy birthday* and *have a nice day* and a lovely new decade! Pragmatemes exist in this world thanks to you. We wish you ninety more years to discover new concepts in the immense world of words. *Thank you for everything!*

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