USE OF THESESS

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Desire in language and thought:
A study in crosscultural semantics

Jean Harkins

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of The Australian National University

December, 1995
DECLARATION

Except where otherwise acknowledged,
this thesis is my own work.

[Signature]
15 December 1995
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Abstract

This thesis is a semantic-typological study of desiderative constructions in languages of the world. Focussing on both meaning and grammatical structures, it explores how the properties of desiderative expressions in languages of the world reflect universal elements and language-specific configurations of meaning. Chapter One sets out the nature and scope of the work, explaining the purpose of examining desiderative constructions across languages, and outlining the theoretical context and orientation of the study. Chapter Two presents a typological overview of desiderative expressions in a selection of languages from diverse genetic groups throughout the world, noting crosslinguistic trends in lexical relations and syntactic patterns associated with desiderative constructions. Chapter Three focusses on grammatical properties of desiderative expressions across languages, exploring how the semantics and grammar of different construction types interact with the meanings of individual lexemes to encode a range of desiderative meanings. Chapter Four examines multi-functional grammatical morphemes with desiderative functions, using the principles of NSM analysis to investigate whether they have a single meaning or semantic core, or are truly polysemous. A set of procedures is proposed for specifying how many meanings a grammeme has, and how these relate to its various grammatical functions. Chapter Five compares constructions where a desiderative expression takes a complement clause (as in English I want to dance), and those where a desiderative grammeme occurs within the same clause that represents the wanted event (as in the Kayardild equivalent Ngada wirrka-ju), and explores the interpropositional nature of desiderative meaning. Chapter Six pursues the question of WANT as a semantic and lexical universal, view of the diversity of desiderative constructions across languages. Specific criteria are proposed for the assessment of semantic equivalence across languages, and for distinguishing language-specific phenomena from potentially universal elements and configurations of meaning. This leads to a proposal for a universal syntax' of desiderative meaning. The influence of cultural values and attitudes on the expression of desire is explored with a view to explaining aspects of the interaction between social and linguistic structure and its impact on the range and types of desiderative constructions found in different languages, and how a theory of language universals might deal with processes of language change.
Acknowledgements

A project of such duration incurs more debts of gratitude than can possibly be enumerated here; these acknowledgements are inevitably incomplete. Above all I am indebted to my supervisors, Anna Wierzbicka and Bob Dixon, who were unfailingly encouraging, stimulating, patient, and most generous with comments and advice; such quality of supervision is something one can only hope to pass on in part to one’s own students. I am grateful to many other colleagues for lengthy discussions of the issues considered here; these include Gedda Aklif, Avery Andrews, Bob Bugenhagen, Tim Curnow, Tony Diller, Tamsin Donaldson, Mark Durie, Robert Early, Nick Evans, Cliff Goddard, Chuck Grimes, Harold Koch, Ulrike Mosel, Masa Onishi, Andrew Pawley, Bert Peeters, Orawan Poo-israkij, Tim Shopen, Ryo Stanwood, David Wilkins, and others whom I apologise for omitting. Several non-linguists have also endured ear-bashing and given helpful input to aspects of this work, and I thank in particular Peter Clark, Mark Deffenbaugh, Libby Fitzgerald, Gail Reekie, Lynden Lawton, Asafou So’o, Rose-Mary Swan, Mereana Otene Waaka, and Stella Wilkie. The financial support of the Australian National University is gratefully acknowledged. Graphic design for the map was by Louise Campbell.

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Abbreviations and conventions
(Spelling and punctuation are in accord with standard Australian English practice.)

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**List of languages**

The languages referred to in the text and notes are listed here with an indication of their genetic affiliations (generally following Ruhlen 1987) and traditional locations, corresponding to the numbers on the map.

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Chapter 1

Desiderative constructions and crosscultural semantics

When all the desires that dwell in the heart are cast away, then does the mortal become immortal, then he attains Brahman. Brhad-āranyaka Upaniṣad (Radhakrishnan 1953:273)

There is no more intimate, more radical self-expression of the conscious individual than that which is conveyed by the term ‘desire’. It is the one genuine subjective register of character. A man is known by his works, but he knows himself by his desires. C.A.F. Rhys Davids (1911:666)

The wish, i.e. some want, is the condition which precedes every pleasure. But with the satisfaction the wish and therefore the pleasure cease. Thus the satisfaction or the pleasing can never be more than deliverance from a pain, from a want. Arthur Schopenhauer (1950,v.1:411-412)


Is desire really innate and universal? Does it lie at the core of the human condition, in every place, time, and human society? Many of the philosophical and religious traditions of the world grapple with questions of desire, the human will, the problem of wanting what is not, and what is the relationship of these phenomena to human biology, instinct, feeling, thought, intention, choice, and action.

This study does not aim to answer any of these big questions. It will, however, consider why and how they should come to be asked, by students of human nature in many different places, times, cultural traditions, and languages. For if experiences of desire, wanting, and will are thought, written and spoken about as important aspects of human life, then it could be expected that these experiences would be represented in all human languages: that this might be a clue to a linguistic universal. And this is a matter that can be investigated empirically.
1. Desideratives and crosscultural semantics

By looking at actual linguistic data, at words and grammatical constructions from languages from around the world, it should be possible to establish, on a strictly factual basis, the answers to two questions: Are experiences of desire or wanting expressed in all human languages, or a reasonable sample thereof? And if so, is it possible to identify any specific linguistic elements, characteristics or tendencies that such expressions have in common, that could be regarded as universal across languages?

Such an empirical investigative enterprise runs immediately into the problem of how to deal with the many differences between languages. Whatever language is taken as a starting point, no other language has words and constructions exactly matching those of the first language, to express desire or any other aspect of human experience. Bilingual dictionaries, for example, usually give some equivalents for 'want' or 'desire', but these words display such dramatic differences in semantic content and grammatical behaviour in different languages that they cannot be assumed to refer to the same human experience. Only careful analysis of the nature of the similarities and differences can reveal to what extent they really refer to the same concept.

In many languages there is no term exactly equivalent to 'desire' because the words that often refer to desire can also refer to a variety of more or less related experiences, such as needing, liking, seeking or looking for something, and so on. This would pose no problem if the same set of ideas were always related to desire, but this is not the case. The range of use of such terms is different in each language, and it is necessary to have some basis for assessing whether words like, for example, di 'want, like, seek, look for' in Ewe or suka 'like, want' (but not 'look for') in Buru, can be considered to refer to desire.

Grammatical differences between languages raise a similar set of questions. Terms referring to something like desire display a great variety of grammatical properties: some languages have transitive verbs like Ewe di or English want, while others employ different parts of speech like the Japanese adjective hoshii 'desirable'. Some languages appear to have no word at all corresponding to 'desire' or 'want', but indicate desire for something by means of grammatical markers attached to the words for what is desired. Again in these cases, there is a need for some basis for determining to what extent these expressions refer to the same thing.

The concept of wanting is also central to other important grammatical categories and constructions found in large numbers of
languages. For example, many causative constructions encode not only a cause-effect relation, but also that the agent intends or wants to produce the effect (e.g. *I got her to go home*). Purpose constructions (e.g. *I climbed the tree to get a coconut; She lay down to sleep*) convey that an action is performed because the performer wants something else to happen. Imperatives, jussives and hortatives convey wanting someone to do something, vocatives convey wanting to speak to the addressee, and so on.

Not only the words and grammatical constructions, but the customs and conventions for referring to desire in different languages vary tremendously. In some societies, people are expected to express what they want freely and openly, while in others, the direct expression of desire is strongly discouraged. These differences affect both the frequency of use and the range of functions of desiderative expressions in different languages, and this too raises questions about the supposed universality of desire. Do groups of people who express what they want directly and often, and groups who view this as inappropriate, have the same concept or experience of desire?

This study aims to explore each of these questions about the linguistic expression of desire and related notions, and to arrive at an assessment of the empirical evidence for and against the existence of a linguistic universal or universals in the area of desiderative meaning. In so doing, it draws upon and develops a set of theoretical principles and practical procedures for analysing the ways in which linguistic meanings and functions are arranged and encoded in different languages and cultures. This approach, which could be termed crosscultural semantic analysis, offers insight into the nature of lexical and grammatical relationships, social and cultural patterns of language use and language change, and ultimately perhaps into the structure of human cognition.

### 1.1 Why study desiderative constructions?

The present work takes a fresh approach to studying human conceptualisation through language, and to analysing linguistic data in depth. It focusses both on meaning and on grammatical structures, showing how the grammatical properties of desiderative expressions in different languages reflect universal elements and language-specific configurations of meaning. This approach treats semantics as prior, but
1.1 Why study desiderative constructions

essentially inseparable from syntactic structure. It is only through detailed study of the structural organisation of languages that the elements of meaning and the configurations in which speakers combine them to form meaningful (meaning-full) utterances can be accessed.

Apart from its relevance to the philosophical question of the universality of desire in human experience, and human beings’ conceptualisation of their experience, the expression of desire and related notions in language is richly deserving of study for a variety of other reasons. It is central, perhaps universal among the functions of human language, both in self-expressive and communicative functions. Expressing what one wants is an important form of self-expression for most human beings. It also forms the basis of much interpersonal communicative behaviour, including requests, directives, imperatives, and explanations of reasons for actions. Although cultural constraints on individual self-expression vary widely, and some groups favour highly indirect modes of communicating desire in most contexts, people everywhere have ways of saying, directly or indirectly, what they want.

The linguistic forms whereby people do this are many and varied, but they often reveal a great deal about the semantic and grammatical structures of the languages in which they are expressed. The semantics of desiderative expressions may provide clues to cultural values, worldview, and patterns of thought. For example, desiderative meanings in some languages, like French or Buru, are associated with particular modal categories such as subjunctive or irrealis; in some languages, like Arrernte or Yidiny, they are associated with bodily parts or processes. In some languages, like Japanese, the direct expression of desiderative meanings may be avoided altogether in many contexts.

The grammar of desiderative expressions in every language displays important grammatical categories and syntactic processes. Languages deploy some of their most complex grammatical apparatus for the purpose of linking, for example, a desiderative verb and a dependent clause expressing the desired event (e.g. Spanish Quiero [que vengan aquí] ‘I want [them to come here]’), or an action clause and a subordinate clause expressing the desired outcome of the action (e.g. Arrernte Itne alengke-iwelheke [itne akertnengentyele areketyenge] ‘They hid [so that they couldn’t be seen from above]’). Investigation of such constructions can contribute much to the understanding of the grammar of any language.
1.1 Why study desiderative constructions

Desiderative notions may be centrally involved in a number of other important semantic and grammatical categories. For example, the meanings of many emotion terms include a desire or impulse to perform some action, as in the case of anger, where the experiencer wants to do something to the person who has aroused the anger. Wanting is also central to the meanings of speech acts, which by their very nature have an illocutionary purpose, something that the speaker wants to do by means of the act of speaking. The speaker may want to cause someone else to know something (as in telling, informing, promising), to do something (as in ordering, pleading), to think about something (as in advising, hinting), to join in (as in discussing, chatting); or the speaker may want to express thoughts or feelings (as in exclaiming, guessing).

Wanting may also be crucially involved in grammatical categories and associated syntactic processes. For example, in many languages the transitivity properties of verbs like ‘kick’ or ‘break’ (compared with intransitives like ‘fall’ or ‘die’) have a semantic basis involving an agent who wants something. The action is performed because the agent wants to do it, or wants to produce a particular effect on the patient. Other grammatical processes in a number of languages are sensitive to factors like volition or control, and these too may be understood in terms of wanting. Volition involves an agent’s wanting to do something, and control involves being able to do or cause an action or event that one wants.

Therefore, a study of desiderative constructions across languages has the potential to contribute significantly to the understanding of linguistic structure, and possibly also of cognitive structure. At the very least it will yield a rich harvest of observations and comparisons of semantic and grammatical characteristics of diverse languages. If desire in some form is found to be semantically universal, this could provide a key to understanding and explaining many phenomena that can be observed across languages, from illocutionary purposes to transitivity. And if any language universals can be identified in this area, this would constitute substantial evidence for the universality of desire both in human experience and in human cognition as reflected in language. Such findings would of course have major implications for cognitive science.

Investigation of desiderative constructions across languages will also yield observations of importance in crosscultural communication, both among individuals and at the level of international trade and
1.1 Why study desiderative constructions

political relations. In any international or interethnic endeavour it is necessary for the parties to communicate effectively with one another about their desires and what they want to achieve. A better understanding of what is similar and what is different about the expression of desire and related notions in languages of the world could contribute substantially to improving intercultural relations.

The major part of what follows is a descriptive account of the interactions of meaning and structure in desiderative expressions in a variety of languages. The discussion is cast within the broad ambit of linguistic description as developed through the work of Sapir, Bloomfield, Chomsky, Comrie, and a great many others. Concepts in linguistic theory are drawn upon as needed in the service of the main descriptive task, but the use of jargon and symbols has been avoided wherever possible, since it is maintained that these too would have to be explained in natural language terms.

The rest of this chapter sketches the theoretical context and orientation of this study, and the descriptive principles it employs. Although based firmly on linguistic description, it draws upon and has many implications for other disciplines; space permits only a very brief mention of some of the most relevant ideas from philosophy, psychology and anthropology. This is followed by an outline of theoretical preliminaries to the linguistic analysis, with more detailed background information on the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) method that is used as the basis for description of meanings.

Detailed notes and references are provided at the end of each chapter, including exact references to direct quotations, works and authors mentioned in passing, and sources of examples. A wide range of sources is drawn upon, both for individual languages and for alternative views on theoretical points, and details of these are thus made available without obstructing the reader's progress through the main argument.

1.2 Theories of desire in human experience and conceptualisation

Students of human nature have pondered the nature of desire and wanting, from at least the time of the earliest records of quite diverse intellectual traditions. In China in the sixth century BC, Lao Tzu taught that desire was part of human nature, but that true inner peace lies in
freedom from it: ‘...if I cease to desire and remain still, the empire will be at peace of its own accord.’ Hindu and Buddhist writings of similar antiquity identified desire (Sanskrit kāma) as one of four basic drives in human nature. The Hindu sacred text Bhagavadgītā teaches that fulfillment involves freedom from desire and passions. One of the Four Noble Truths of Buddhist teaching is that all human sorrow and suffering arise from desire; liberation comes with the cessation of desire. The theme of wanting as a central human problem from which liberation is to be sought is also found in Neo-Platonist, Christian and Sufi mystical traditions. Contemporary philosophers like Schopenhauer have shared the view that wanting is part of the human plight: ‘...so long as our consciousness is filled by our will, so long as we are given up to the throng of desires with their constant hopes and fears, so long as we are the subject of willing, we can never have lasting happiness nor peace.’

Aristotle saw desire as an integral part of human nature, and as essential to all human action based on choice: ‘The origin of action... is choice, and that of choice is desire and reasoning with a view to an end.’ In his view, desire necessarily involves mental representation of what is desired; and reasoning and choice follow from this as the way to bridge the gap between wanting itself and attainment of the desired end. Aristotle distinguishes desire from feeling and emotion because of its active, goal-oriented character. The relationship of wanting with thought leading to action is explored by many later philosophers.

The Stoics saw desire as one of four basic emotions (along with fear, joy and sorrow), and characterised it as an inclination towards an expected good. Ever since, debates about the nature of desire have focussed on, among other issues, the relationship of wanting with thinking, doing, needing, and what is good and bad for people. Hebrew scholars identified two aspects of desire, the desire for evil (yetzer ha-ra) and the desire for good (yetzer ha-tov), viewing the former as innate and the latter as emerging only when one becomes a spiritually mature person (bar/bat mitzvah). On the other hand, Thomas Aquinas considered that no evil as such can be desirable, or directly wanted. Wanting was effectively equated with thinking of its object as good or pleasant in J.S. Mill’s suggestion that these are ‘two different modes of naming the same psychological fact’. But others have proposed that we neither think of something as good because we want it, nor want it because we think it good, but that wanting and valuing are independent of one another.
A related question is how wanting may be related to needing. Locke's idea was that wanting something creates a feeling of uneasiness and hence need, while others have thought that precisely the reverse is true, that the need for something generates the desire for it. This view is suggested by Schopenhauer, in the quotation at the start of this chapter. Some languages show lexical and semantic relations between 'wanting' and 'good', 'thinking', 'feeling' or 'needing', and the linguistic evidence examined in this study may shed some light on the nature of such relationships in human conceptualisation.

The view that 'desire is the very nature or essence of a person' was expressed by Spinoza, and this theme has been taken up in contemporary psychological theory, most notably by Lacan. Spinoza asserted that there are only three basic human emotions: joy, sorrow and desire, and of these he considered desire the most important. The questions of how desire or wanting is related to emotions, self-concept, and motivation have been explored by many psychologists.

Although the pioneering psychologist William James saw emotions as deriving from physical arousal, he considered will (wanting) to be basic, irreducible to knowledge or appetite. Of several proposals by researchers seeking to delineate sets of basic human emotions, only those of Arnold and Frijda include desire or wanting as such, but in many other studies of emotions it is treated as a basic parameter or component of emotional states. In a major study of the cognitive structure of emotions, Ortony and colleagues identify 'desirability' as a central variable in the cognitive appraisal of emotion-inducing situations. They differentiate their use of 'desire' from wanting an outcome, viewing it instead as a function of the beneficial (good) consequences of the outcome; but in their system, desirability is computed with reference to goals, which are ultimately defined as 'things one wants to get done' and 'things one wants to see happen'.

Much of modern psychological theory has taken as given that people want pleasant experiences, that is, whatever makes them feel something good, and want to avoid unpleasant experiences, or whatever makes them feel something bad; or that they want what they think will make them feel good rather than bad. The troublesome paradox that we often choose to do things that we know are bad for us and will ultimately cause us to feel something bad, and choose not to do things that are good for us and will make us feel better, has of course been explored. Research
in the psychology of moral development, as well as in addiction and compulsion, has had to distinguish wanting from both feeling (positive/negative or pleasure/pain) and from appraisal of value (good/bad).

Such distinctions have, however, been made in a fairly ad hoc way, with little agreement between researchers in the use of terminology. Generally, appraisal and valuing are recognised as essentially cognitive processes (thinking about a situation, or thinking of something as good or bad), while pleasure, pain and so on are seen as 'affective' states (feeling something good or bad). The status of 'will' or wanting is usually less clear; wanting is often seen as arising from appraisal or affect (thinking or feeling) but is not entirely reducible to either.

While the role of wanting in child development and the formation of concepts of self is discussed from varying theoretical standpoints, there is some agreement that experiences of not getting what one wants are of great importance in the development of an awareness of separateness from the environment and other people. People who too rarely get what they want may develop feelings of inadequacy and lack of self-efficacy, leading to depression, in infancy or later in life. On the other hand, some Japanese psychologists have observed that the attention paid in their culture to thinking of what others might want and supplying it in advance may contribute to the development of a Japanese concept of self as interdependent and part of a network of relations rather than separate from others.

Studies of children's language acquisition in several different cultural settings indicate that wanting and not-wanting (rejection) are among the first concepts that children use words to express. Wellman reports that two-year-olds 'use such desire words as want and related emotion words such as happy' in spontaneous language use, even before other early words like think, know and surprise, and that even at this stage children clearly understand complex predicate complement constructions like Sam wants to find his rabbit. Other studies discussed by Harris report that most children talk about both their own and other people's desires well before two years, by which age words like want and see are produced by almost all children, while early emotion terms happy, mad are 'a bit less prevalent' but still used by most two-year-olds, and cognitive terms know, think develop a little more slowly; at this stage, references to self are more frequent than references to others.
1.2 Theories of desire in human experience

A comprehensive review of children's earliest word combinations across languages by Braine found that such patterns include both patterns like 'want + X', and rejection 'no + X', not only in English but also in Samoan, where combinations like *fia moe* 'want sleep' and *fia 'ai lole pepe* 'want eat candy baby' are found at 26 months. In English, combinations *want this, want jump* and *want daddy fix it* are found at 21 months, and in Swedish, *jag vill inte 'I don't want', vill inte ha den 'don't want to have it' and den vill inte stå 'it doesn't want to stand' occur at about the same age. Imperative verb forms are also very common at this stage, not only the unmarked imperative verbs of English, Swedish and Samoan, but also Hebrew verb forms correctly marked for imperative and gender. In Japanese, Clancy found *iya 'I don't want' among the earliest words at the one-word stage, and the desiderative inflection -*tai 'want* at the two-word stage. Even in Kaluli, where wanting is expressed by a serial verb construction with future marking and the verb 'do', two-year-olds correctly produce constructions like *deyo gilimeno dowab* [fire light:1FUT do:3PRES] 'I want to light the fire'.

In English and Italian, *want* and *volere* are the earliest verbs used for sentence embedding, and for a long time the only ones. By six years, most children can readily articulate highly complex, recursive structures like *She didn't want her friend to know that she really feels happy that she won*. Studies also show a close relation between children's expressions of desire and modality and their acquisition of future tense. Most early speech relates to the here and now, but even before two years, children express intentions and desires concerning potential subsequent events. Bates, Elman and Li report that 'in Mandarin Chinese, children often use the modal verbs *hui 'can* and *yao 'want* to express their intentions, which prepares for the occurrence of future marking' (cf. section 2.5 below); and Trabasso and Stein show how children's understanding of goals (what people want) contributes to the development of future time expressions.

A critique of modern and/or Western emphases on an individuated self has developed through crosscultural studies in psychology and anthropology, as well as through postmodernist theories, with their focus on subjectivity and social practice rather than internal experience. Russell and Lutz have pointed out that 'emotion' itself is a cultural category, constructed within a particular social context. While people everywhere do seem to experience a range of feelings, the conceptualisation of specific feelings, how they are categorised, whether they are considered important
as inner experiences or determinants of people’s actions, and how they are related to social and political constructs such as gender, varies greatly from one cultural context to another.

One might expect that this would call into question any notion of individual desire or wanting, particularly if the notion of self is seen as a variable sociocultural construct. But in fact this is not the case: the concept of wanting is at least as central to these recent ideas about human subjectivity, as it is to the concept of the autonomous individual. No matter how different the content and categorisation of kinds of feeling may be across cultures, most (perhaps it is not too bold to say all) psychological, anthropological and sociological accounts make reference to people’s wanting to do things associated with their feelings, whether this is described in terms of impulses, action tendencies, goals, or social practices.

Linguistic analyses of the semantic content of emotion terms in a wide variety of languages and cultures support the view that wanting is basic to most emotions. For example, concepts of love, affection, compassion and so on have been shown to vary greatly across languages and cultures, but in each case, wanting is one component of the concept: wanting to be with or to do good things for the other person, wanting good things to happen or bad things not to happen to that person. Similarly, concepts akin to anger are constituted differently in each language and cultural group, but most such concepts involve wanting to do something about the situation, or to some other person involved in it.

Postmodernist theories of the social and cultural construction of identities have also seen desire or wanting as playing a central part in conceptualisation and the construction of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Indeed, there would be no construction of identities if humans did not want to produce effects in the world or in a network of relations: to engage in social practice as active, speaking subjects. Lacan even sees desire as fundamental to the origin of human language, as people experience lack (manque) and hence desire to fill the empty space, and develop language as a means of referring to what isn’t there, to something in its absence.

Such a concept of desire does not necessarily imply any fixed, individuated self as the locus of wanting, a view anticipated by Hume, and reflected also in Gurdjieff’s assertion that ‘Man has no permanent and unchangeable I. Every thought, every mood, every desire, every sensation says “I”... Man’s every thought and desire appears and lives quite
separately and independently of the Whole.' Despite the concern of poststructuralists to challenge universalist views of human nature, it seems that conceptual and linguistic universals such as wanting and even 'I' (a different 'I' every time, perhaps, but still an 'I') would not be incompatible with, and indeed may be fundamental to a conceptual capacity for constructing subjectivity.

The linguistic evidence concerning how such possible universals are represented in the many different human languages becomes of even greater importance as cognitive science comes to grips with how human conceptual structures operate in the mental representation of experience and action, from the formation of identities to the cognitive structure of emotions, causal relationships, spatial perception and so on. The present work tries to show how the study of empirical linguistic evidence for just one element in the linguistic representation of meaning can contribute to a larger picture of relations between desire and other elements of human conceptualisation, and how such relations between elements may operate in the building up of cognitive structures.

1.3 'Wanting' in cognition and language

The discussion thus far has used the terms 'desire' and 'want' or 'wanting' more or less interchangeably. From the point of view of lexical semantics, however, they are not exactly the same. Terms like 'desire' and 'will', 'volition' and 'intention' are more commonly used in the register of academic discourse than the everyday verb 'want' for a variety of reasons, but as demonstrated in the next chapter, such words are semantically complex and can be decomposed in terms of more basic elements such as 'want'. This semantic complexity facilitates precision in referring to particular configurations of meaning, and hence the complex terms are often more suitable in academic writing, but for the purpose of crosslinguistic investigation the simpler term 'want' will be used when referring to a basic element of desiderative meaning. The question of the comparability of the word want and other English desiderative terms with desiderative expressions in other languages is explored extensively in the following chapters.

This study represents the first systematic comparison of desiderative expressions across languages. As such, it takes a typological approach to
the question of language universals, but a more strictly semantically-oriented approach than the typological work of Greenberg, Comrie, Nichols or Bybee. This semantic-typological orientation is influenced in particular by Nedjalkov and Sil’nickij’s proposed typology of causative constructions, although it goes far beyond any other typological work in seeking to identify underlying semantic universals.

The absence of any other linguistic studies of desiderative constructions as such is worthy of some comment. Wanting is not associated with any single obvious grammatical category in most languages, other than the handful of languages that have morphological desiderative marking. It is not as obviously reflected in syntactic structure as is, for example, causation, which has more direct effects on the valency of predicates. It is something of a covert category, lurking relatively unobtrusively behind some other more obvious linguistic phenomena like imperative and purposive constructions as well as causatives and many modals. Most detailed investigations of such categories recognise its semantic import, but usually discuss it in more abstract and technical-sounding terms such as ‘volition’, ‘intention’ and ‘control’.

These terms also have the cultural advantage of sounding more objective and scientific than ‘wanting’ or ‘desire’. The recent proliferation of studies on emotion is a refreshing sign of change, but until recently anything so intangible as wanting or feeling was generally considered hopelessly unsuitable as a subject for serious scientific inquiry, within those cultures that promote this form of intellectual activity. Thus, both the history of linguistic inquiry, and the cultural context within which it is conducted, have militated against the recognition of desiderative expressions as a category worthy of investigation.

The semantic focus adopted here leads almost immediately to a close examination of grammatical constructions whereby desiderative meanings are expressed. This follows from a Saussurean view of language as an integrated system in which everything works together to convey meaning; where grammar is neither autonomous from semantics, nor ineffable; and where syntactic properties are important clues to semantic content, and indeed, can ultimately be predicted on the basis of semantic representations. These ideas are central to the work of Anna Wierzbicka, particularly in her studies of the semantics of grammar.

Although the research programmes of the two scholars differ greatly, the same general principles are shared by R.M.W. Dixon, and are
reflected in the many excellent descriptive grammars produced by what has been called the 'ANU school of grammatical description'. According to one of the practitioners, D.P. Wilkins, this body of work is informed by a shared perception that: 'Above all, a description of a particular language must attempt to be true to the extraordinary complexity of the linguistic system and to the intricacy of the system's relation to both the social and the cultural context of the speakers of the language, regardless of whether or not current theory has a way of dealing with or explaining the details which must be described.' The present work is a serious attempt to extend current theory, so as better to deal with and explain the details of a particular set of constructions, comprising the desiderative expressions of different languages, in a way that captures the relations of their grammatical properties to meaning and to social and cultural context.

This approach to grammatical description is as sensitive to the finer details of grammatical constructions as it is to major syntactic mechanisms, and draws upon grammatical theories as and when they provide useful perspectives on the linguistic data. Functional theories of grammar are particularly compatible with such an orientation. The description of desiderative constructions here has been influenced by the insights of both Role and Reference Grammar and Lexical-Functional Grammar, particularly with regard to the associations of semantic roles with predicates, and the nature of interclausal relations.

Grammatical relations, as seen by Foley and Van Valin, must ultimately be described in terms of semantic roles. Their illuminating account of actor/undergoer properties on a scale relative to but not to be confused with an agent-patient hierarchy of thematic roles has influenced the description given here of semantic and grammatical roles of arguments in desiderative constructions. Another particularly helpful perspective on both argument roles and interclausal relations is provided by Andrews, who distinguishes between semantic roles (determined by predicate semantics), grammatical functions (the grammatical treatment of semantic roles at clause level), and grammatical relations, representing the interaction of semantic roles and grammatical functions interclausally.

Important though the functions of lexicogrammatical components in constructions are, it is equally important for the present discussion to distinguish carefully between functions and meanings. This distinction is crucial to the analysis of some highly ambiguous desiderative constructions in the following chapters. The treatment of ambiguity owes
much to the insights from pragmatics, and in particular to Kempton’s view of propositional content as radically underdetermined semantically, and her analyses of principles of inference invoked in language use to generate interpretations. Both Leech’s and García’s analyses of the interaction of pragmatic principles with the rules of semantics and syntax have contributed to the views developed in this work.

However helpful the insights gained from these various theoretical approaches, the radically semantic orientation of the present study holds that all the grammatical and functional relations they describe are analysable in terms of meaning; that meaning is not reducible to anything else, and hence language is semantics all the way down. This radically intensional view of meaning, shared by semioticians from Peirce to Eco, maintains that it is not possible to escape from the realm of meaning or to reduce it to anything else: not to structural relations, not to mathematical relations, not to truth conditions, not to neurophysiological responses, and not to patterns of usage.

Semantics all the way down to what, then? To indivisible elements of meaning, a set of primes: semantic primes, not mathematical, logical, structural, ontological or phenomenological ones. Everything in language conveys meaning, and any complex meaning or combination of meanings can be analysed or decomposed into a combination of simpler meanings, until one reaches a set of elements so basic that no further decomposition is possible: these are the semantic primes. The main contemporary advocate and prolific practitioner of this approach, Anna Wierzbicka, has documented the history of these ideas in philosophy and linguistics, but only Wierzbicka herself has developed them for practical use in a wide-ranging and highly productive programme of linguistic research. The resulting Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) methodology is described in more detail below.

Even if it is true that all languages can ultimately be analysed into a set of basic elements, there is no a priori reason for supposing the set would be the same for every language. The great diversity of the world’s languages, cultural and social practices, each with its distinctive internal structure of conceptual associations and configurations of meanings, stands both as a monument to human intellectual creativity, flexibility and diversity, and as a monumental challenge to any universalistic view of human nature or human conceptualisation. An important part of the agenda of modern descriptive linguistics has been to dispel erroneous
assumptions about language, race, intellectual functioning and social structure, that were based on European linguistic and cultural ethnocentrism. This, together with the practical task of documenting the languages of the world and describing their many and diverse structures, has resulted in a general trend away from looking for universals of linguistic meaning, in contrast with a lively interest in identifying universals of linguistic structure.

The results of Swadesh's search for universals of vocabulary, though still useful in fieldwork and comparative linguistics, yielded so many crosslinguistic differences and counterexamples as to make any search for lexical universals appear hopelessly unrealistic. The crosslinguistic lexical surveys of C.H. Brown have found many translation equivalents whose semantic content nonetheless differs significantly. Other attempts to identify notional universals in terms of semantic markers, features, categories, or semantic types have tended to produce theoretical constructs more complex and abstract than the linguistic elements they seek to describe, or to reveal tendencies and implicational relations that are not necessarily represented in every individual language. Hence not only the notion of semantic primitives, but any notion of semantic universals at the level of surface structure, represented in every language, is regarded by many linguists as misconceived, and in any case entirely marginal to the proper concerns of linguistic science.

This study of desiderative expressions poses a significant challenge to such views, in that it not only evaluates empirical evidence for and against the existence of universals of desiderative meaning, but also proposes formal criteria for the identification of such universals in surface structure across languages. It maintains that semantic universals cannot be proven or falsified by enumerating or cataloguing observable similarities or differences across languages, but only by establishing principles of semantic equivalence that are valid across languages as a basis for assessing whether or not, for example, any particular language does or doesn't have a word for 'want' or the means to express such a concept.

1.4 Crosscultural semantic analysis in cognitive science

The methodology adopted here for analysing and comparing the meanings of desiderative constructions in different languages is, as
indicated above, the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) method of semantic analysis. The NSM approach has already proved its usefulness in detailed analyses of the meanings of lexical items, grammatical constructions, illocutionary acts, conversational routines, and other aspects of language use in a wide range of structurally and genetically diverse languages. It has also been of demonstrated effectiveness in describing and explaining crosslinguistic differences and similarities in areas as diverse as the semantics of emotion vocabularies, moral and ethical concepts, the grammar of causative constructions, the pragmatics of interjections and conversational responses, and the relationship of language use to cultural values.

The method is particularly suitable in approaching a crosslinguistic study of desiderative constructions for three main reasons. First, it provides a means of comparing meanings expressed in different languages in terms that are essentially independent of any particular language or culture, yet can be expressed in any language. Second, it is capable of providing a unified account of lexical, grammatical, and language-use phenomena, all of which have to be considered in comparing desiderative expressions across languages. Third, this method has the capacity to represent theoretical claims in highly specific and accessible forms that are open to empirical verification or falsification.

In the NSM approach, the meaning of any lexical or grammatical form can be represented in the form of a semantic explication. This is an explanatory definitional paraphrase that seeks to represent all and only the elements of meaning that are necessary and sufficient to account for all instances of use of the item that is being explicated. The primary empirical test of such a paraphrase is that it should be substitutable for the item itself, without loss of meaning. Substituting an often lengthy paraphrase for a single unit usually entails loss of naturalness and ready comprehensibility, by comparison with the immense power of natural languages to group many elements of meaning into a smaller number of conceptually manageable chunks. Applying the substitutability test may therefore involve a detailed process of checking that all elements of meaning represented in the paraphrase correspond to the original. This procedure is of course founded on an assumption that meanings can be analysed in a fully determinate way; that complex meanings can be decomposed into combinations of simpler ones, without circularity and without residue. Although this principle is a controversial one in semantic theory, nothing
in its application here must be accepted 'on faith'; all explications of meanings in the following chapters can be tested against actual language data.

A semantic explication or statement of meaning in NSM is constructed using a restricted and standardised metalanguage based on natural language. The lexicon of this 'natural semantic metalanguage' consists of a set of basic terms like 'I', 'you', 'someone', 'say', 'think', 'do', 'happen', 'this', 'because' and so on; the full set of NSM terms used here is shown in Table 1 below. These terms are based on the hypothesised system of universal semantic primes referred to above, and ongoing research into the translatability of NSM explications across a range of languages thus far supports their crosslinguistic applicability. The mini-lexicon of this metalanguage has undergone considerable expansion, discussion, revision and testing in more than twenty years of NSM research. The set of 55 terms listed here is the most recent inventory, but ongoing research may lead to further changes. The terms used in the present study are among the more well-established members of the set of hypothesised primes; they do not include all of the elements listed in Table 1 because some (e.g. ALIVE, TWO, SMALL, UNDER, ABOVE) are not relevant to any of the desiderative constructions examined here.
### 1.4 Crosscultural semantic analysis

#### Table 1
**NSM LEXICAL/SEMANTIC PRIMES**  
(as proposed in Wierzbicka, 1995)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substantives</td>
<td>I, YOU, SOMEONE/PERSON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PEOPLE, SOMETHING/THING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental predicates</td>
<td>THINK, KNOW, WANT, FEEL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech</td>
<td>SEE, HEAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions, events, movement</td>
<td>SAY, WORD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existence, life</td>
<td>DO, HAPPEN, MOVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determiners</td>
<td>THERE IS, ALIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantifiers</td>
<td>THIS, THE SAME, OTHER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribu's</td>
<td>ONE, TWO, SOME, ALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MANY/MUCH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribu' s</td>
<td>GOOD, BAD, BIG, SMALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>WHEN, NOW, AFTER, BEFORE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WHERE, HERE, UNDER, ABOVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BECAUSE, IF, IF...WOULD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercusal linkers</td>
<td>NOT, MAYBE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clause operators</td>
<td>CAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metapredicate</td>
<td>VERY, MORE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensifier, augmentor</td>
<td>KIND OF, PART OF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity</td>
<td>LIKE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The English verbs *like* and *love* (as in *Jane likes Mary, Jane loves Mary*) are shown below as a preliminary illustration of how an NSM paraphrase is constructed by combining such basic elements of meaning together. The aim here is to demonstrate the form of semantic representation used in the following chapters, rather than to focus on the detailed content of these particular words, but this may also illustrate the accessibility of such formulae to the reader's intuitive agreement or disagreement with various individual components as well as to more systematic testing against examples of the words' use.

*Like* indicates a fairly general positive disposition, while *love* involves a more specific set of attitudes and feelings; hence the explication for *like* is more brief and general than that for *love*. One can *like* people whom one sees frequently or rarely, or who are comparative strangers, and one may think of them often or seldom. All that is implied is that one usually feels positively toward them when one does think of them; usually but not always, because it's possible to feel negative things such as annoyance toward people *v* hom one basically likes. This overall positive orientation typically results in enjoying their company, and perhaps being willing to do occasional favours for them, but one can *like* someone from a distance, so references to being with the person or doing things for them would make the explication too specific to apply in every instance of the use of the word *like*. These aspects of the word's meaning are expressed in the following NSM formula:

\[
\text{*like* (X likes Y)} \\
\text{when X thinks about Y, X often feels something good} \\
\text{sometimes X wants to do something because of this}
\]

People usually *like* many more people than they *love*, because *love* encompasses more specific elements of meaning, and fewer relationships involve all of these specific things. Explications for *love* proposed by Wierzbicka and by Goddard differ in some details, but agree on the main elements shown here:
1.4 Crosscultural semantic analysis

love (X loves Y)
X knows some things about Y
X thinks many good things about Y
X wants to do good things for Y
X often wants to be with Y
when X thinks about Y, X often feels something good

While much more could be said about each of these sample explications, their purpose here is to illustrate some of the key features of NSM analysis that are of importance in the following chapters on desiderative constructions. Because NSM theory takes the utterance, rather than the word or morpheme, as the basic unit by which speakers convey meaning in any language, each word or morpheme is explicated as it occurs in a specific syntactic frame, such as X likes Y. One can then test whether or not a similar explication can be used for the same word in other constructions. Obviously the above explication does not apply to the adjective like (as in X is like Y); no combination of meanings can be found that applies to both the verb and the modifier. Thus there are semantic as well as syntactic grounds for regarding like as polysemous, and it can be seen from Table 1 that the modifier is in fact one of the hypothesised semantic primes. Syntactic formulae like X likes Y are the only uses of arbitrary signs or conventions permissible in the NSM method, and even this device is purely for ease of visual reference; 'X' and 'Y' could always be represented in the appropriate 'pure' NSM terms such as 'this person/thing', 'this other person' and so on.

Each of these explications represents a hypothesis that this is the minimum set of elements of meaning conveyed whenever the word is used in 'he specified sense and context. Because the hypothesis is readily intelligible and fully specific, it can be tested both directly and indirectly: directly via native speakers' knowledge of what the word conveys, and indirectly by checking its substitutability across a range of attested uses of the word. Each component is constructed through a process of experimentation too lengthy to reproduce here, but it will be noted that the method is powerful enough to pinpoint differences in meaning that conventional dictionary definitions can only hint at, using complex phrases and terminology like 'find agreeable or congenial' (for like) and 'entertain a strong affection for' (for love).
Moreover, NSM explications aim at predictive as well as explanatory adequacy. These examples have the power to predict not only semantic but also grammatical properties of *like* and *love*. Both verbs have animate, usually human subjects, as predicted by the segments ‘X feels’ and ‘X thinks’. The verb *like* can take either an animate or an inanimate object, and the explication proposed above could apply to either *Jane likes Mary* or *Jane likes chocolate*. However, the third and fourth lines of the explication proposed for *love* suggest that its object would typically be a person. English dictionaries and native speakers tend to agree that the non-interpersonal use of *love* (as in *Jane loves chocolate*) is a different meaning, much closer to *like*; its explication would contain no reference to wanting to do good things for Y or to be with Y.

The prime elements included in an NSM explication are combined together according to a set of combinatorial principles that are also held to be universal, and are realised through the basic syntactic structures of each natural language. This accounts for the occurrence in these examples of English words that are not included among the primes in Table 1. For example, the elements *because* and *this* are linked by the preposition *of* in English, while the same semantic linkage is realised by a variety of other grammatical devices in other languages (for example, the ablative inflection in Arrernte *ikwere-nge* ‘because of this’, see 4.1 below).

The only complex constructions allowable in the NSM method are those language-specific devices required to realise specified combinatorial relations between primes, sometimes also indicated for convenience by commas or indentations in explications. The prime WHEN, for example, can link two events in a combinatorial relation realised in English by the syntactic device of subordination, as in the sample formulae above. Explications sometimes include language-specific variants of combinations of primes, as in the above where the English terms ‘often’ and ‘sometimes’ represent combinations of WHEN with MANY and SOME; such expressions may only be used if fully explicable in terms of primes. Although derived from natural languages (in this case English), the semantic primes used in NSM explications are much more tightly constrained than the corresponding words in the full natural language. Each prime represents only one meaning, where in ordinary use many of them are polysemous; for example, ‘feel’ in the formulae above is only a psychological predicate, not an action (as in *feeling* something with one’s hand).
The combinatorial properties of semantic primes may also be thought of in terms of 'valency options', provided care is taken to distinguish semantic valency from grammatical valency. For example, the primes KNOW, THINK and SAY can each combine with two other elements (in addition to a knower/thinker/sayer): something that is known, thought or said; and something or someone 'about' which this is known, thought or said. In English grammar the former is represented as the grammatical object of the verbs know, think, say, while the latter is presented in a prepositional phrase introduced by about. BE and DO can each combine with another element in relations represented in English by the preposition with; and DO can also combine with a beneficiary introduced in English by the preposition for (as in 'do good things for Y').

Grammatical structures specific to individual natural languages also produce a form of contextual variation, termed 'allolexy' in NSM theory. For example, the rules of English grammar dictate that the element I occurs as the grammatically conditioned variant me in specific syntactic contexts (as in 'about me'), and the negator no/no. occurs preverbally as don't (as in 'don't know'). The criterion of naturalness also leads to the representation in English of 'this someone' by 'this person', and of 'some somethings' by 'some things' (where the plural marker is also applied by a rule of English grammar to agree with the quantifier 'some'). The prime element DO is often represented in English by the phrase 'do something'. The following chapters have much to say about valency options and allolexy in desiderative constructions.

Thus, while the NSM hypothesis is that the basic semantic elements are available in any language as a subset of the full natural language, there is a considerable degree of language-specific variation in their representations. In approaching the crosslinguistic study of desiderative constructions, it is important to be able to distinguish universal from language-specific properties of these constructions, and to give satisfactory explanations of both. The NSM approach provides a theoretical basis for drawing such distinctions, and the present work makes a substantial contribution to identifying and articulating principles and procedures for practical application in crosscultural semantic analysis. The term 'crosscultural' is preferred to 'crosslinguistic' in this context because the same language may be used by different cultural groups to represent culture-specific lexical, grammatical and illocutionary meanings, as
demonstrated by the present writer in a study of Australian Aboriginal English.

Although each NSM explication represents a hypothesis that can be tested, these hypotheses can only be proven to the extent that no counterexamples are encountered in natural language. There is no absolute, incontrovertible proof; it is a strength rather than a weakness of the theory that all aspects of it are open to being disproven, or at least to being shown to require modification, on the basis of empirical evidence. If an example is found where the explication is not fully substitutable for the definiendum, it is often more appropriate to adjust the content of the explication on the basis of the new evidence, than to abandon it as a hypothesis altogether. Thus NSM, like many theoretical models in linguistic and cognitive science, serves as a research tool as well as a theoretical construct, and shows itself powerful enough to deal with real data.

In the initial stages of this project, numerous attempts were made to construct explications for desiderative constructions that did not rely upon any specifically desiderative element of meaning. Many of these attempts proceeded along lines suggested by some of the philosophers mentioned above, by trying to represent 'want' (as in 'X wants Z') in terms of other meanings such as 'good' (Z is good for X; because of this X feels something good toward Z), 'feel' and possibly 'think' (X thinks: if I have/ do Z I will feel something good), or something like lack or need (X doesn't have/ do Z; because of this X feels something bad; or, if X doesn't have/ do Z, X will feel something bad / something bad will happen to X).

Each of these hypotheses was disproved by failure of the substitutability test, particularly when it came to defining other words and constructions that seem to depend upon an element of desiderative meaning. For example, in contexts like the love example above, the component 'X wants to be with Y' could perhaps be recast as 'when X is with Y, X feels something good' (though of course this isn't always the case in even the most loving of relationships); but the same strategy would not work for 'X wants to do good things for Y', which means more than just 'when X does good things for Y, X feels something good'.

Another example is that of imperatives (e.g. Stop!), which in all languages include a component of meaning along the lines of 'I want you to do this'; this is of course one of the criteria by which imperatives are categorised as such. This semantic combination cannot be reduced to any
of the above proposals (if you do this I will feel something good, or if you
don't do this I will feel something bad, etc.) without substantial loss or
alteration of meaning. But these failures to disprove the existence of an
indivisible element of desiderative meaning (WANT) by no means
constitute positive proof of its existence as a semantic prime, as
demonstrated in the following investigation of evidence for and against it.

The practical utility of a method of linguistic analysis that enables
complex meanings to be made explicit has led to the enthusiastic
application of aspects of the NSM approach in education and crosscultural
communication as well as in linguistic fieldwork and practical linguistic
description. But in earlier stages of its development as a research
paradigm, the radical content-orientation of NSM seemed to leave it too
unconstrained for theoreticians attuned to structural theories of grammar.
Criticism was frequently directed at the fact that NSM did not have a
clearly articulated theory of the syntax of the metalanguage itself, and was
therefore presumably unable to say much about the syntax of natural
languages. In reality, the theory has always held that meaning itsef must
provide all the structure that there can be in language; that any formalised
specifications of structure must themselves be defined in language, for
there is no escape from the realm of meaning.

Recent developments in NSM research are yielding a much clearer
picture of just how meanings are structured. Major studies by Wierzbicka
and others into the nature of grammatical and pragmatic meanings have
demonstrated how all the meaningful elements of an utterance, from
morphemes and particles to syntactic constructions as well as prosodic
elements, operate together to convey meaning. At the same time,
Wierzbicka and other NSM practitioners have continued to refine and
simplify the metalanguage, eliminating complex syntax and reducing the
combinatorial sequences to the minimum set needed for the purpose of
explicating meanings.

This has led to the current fairly intense research focus on the
combinatorial properties of individual semantic primes, and to the present
study's concern with separating out what is universal from what is
language-specific in the combinations and constraints on combinations of
meaning in desiderative constructions. These theoretical developments
have emerged in the non-linear fashion characteristic of NSM as a
thoroughly grounded theory, in which theoretical models emerge only as
a product of intense engagement with empirical language data and the
practical work of describing it. The far-reaching consequences of the emerging model of a universal syntax based exclusively on meaning refute any notion that empirically based linguistic research is incompatible with a genuine commitment to the construction of an explanatory theory (or indeed, vice versa).

As the combinatorial properties specific to each prime element are identified, the essential character of NSM as a formal semantic system becomes clearer. By eschewing any premature imposition of formalism for its own sake, NSM research has been able to proceed on the basis of principles derived solely from natural language, to a point where formal relationships become identifiable as properties of semantic elements themselves.

The emerging system of prime elements plus combinatorial rules that are properties of these primes, rather like the bonding properties of atoms of the different chemical elements, constitutes a far more powerful relational network than any other contemporary theory of ‘formal semantics’ can provide. Truth-conditional models are inevitably constrained to binary (true/false) oppositions in a way that natural language is manifestly not (in addition to the problem of their reliance on what may be a fundamentally ethnocentric conception of truth). More powerful semantic models based on higher-order intensional logic, despite their success in preserving internal consistency within a more flexible system, still depend on a set of relational concepts far too restricted to explain many of the ambiguities and apparent anomalies of natural language, from the illocutionary properties of quantifiers to the interpretation of tautologies.

By deriving all of its relational principles from natural language, the NSM approach is able to provide a coherent account of relations between forms and functions, while avoiding the pitfalls of autonomous syntax. The most recent developments in this theoretical framework have involved exploration of the mapping between primitive elements of meaning and their surface lexical and syntactic representations in a wide range of natural languages. This has brought renewed attention to problems of ambiguity, ‘polyadicity’ (predicate argument structure in relation to grammatical functions), and the possibilities and constraints on combinations of meanings in surface grammatical representation.

The present study of desiderative expressions is the first in-depth investigation of a single hypothesised semantic prime, namely WANT, as
represented across a range of typologically diverse languages. It goes well beyond even the most recent studies of lexical universals to consider all possible configurations of desiderative meaning. The question of WANT as a semantic universal, and how it is or is not represented in various meaning combinations across languages, is relevant to most of the key issues in current NSM research. While the findings presented here must necessarily be regarded as a very preliminary offering, they are nonetheless quite promising.

There is found to be abundant evidence that desiderative meanings are indeed expressed in all of a highly diverse though necessarily finite selection of languages from different parts of the world. The language-specific representations of these meanings in lexical material and grammatical constructions present important issues of lexical polysemy, structural ambiguity, combinatorial potentials and constraints, and pragmatic conventions. It is demonstrated that all of these issues as they affect desiderative expressions can be and are resolved in the everyday application of natural language principles by speakers, and that these principles provide a key to analysing how universal elements of meaning in specifiable combinations are mapped into surface representations according to language-specific lexical, grammatical and pragmatic systems.

The systematic identification of universal and language-specific properties of desiderative constructions has far-reaching implications for linguistics and cognitive science. It offers a coherent account of why surface-level lexical universals do not appear in a 'pure' or superficially obvious form in every language, and how their representation is modified not only by language structure but also by social and cultural influences. A common core of desiderative meaning shared across languages and identifiable with the NSM universal WANT is found to have important relational properties as an interpropositional operator, suggesting that substantive and relational universals may not be mutually exclusive categories.

A set of universal combinatorial properties of this prime element WANT is found to be specifiable across languages, and WANT is distinguishable from certain other universals on the basis of this 'universal syntax' of desiderative meaning. This set of relational potentials and constraints may provide clues to the operation of 'desire' in conceptual structure, for example in cognitive representations and processes involved in purposeful or goal-oriented behaviour, and in
emotion concepts and related behaviour. Moreover, if individual sets of combinatory properties and contrasts are identifiable in like manner for each of a full set or network of semantic primes, the result could be the first fully computationally tractable model of natural language.

Such a model of semantic structure has the potential to go beyond the present level of debates about the interaction of language and culture, and of conceptual universalism versus cultural relativism. It may not really matter whether semantic primes like WANT represent innate ideas, or potentials in the cognitive faculty that emerge in conceptual structure only as human beings interact with the world. If it is possible, as argued here, to distinguish in a principled way between what is universal and what is specific to individual languages, and to explain both in terms of a set of elemental meanings with fully specifiable combinatory properties, this meaning-based model provides a unified account of linguistic and cultural constructs that need not designate either as prior, and that accommodates both similarities and differences without having to declare either more important than the other.

1.5 Outline of chapters

This introductory chapter has set out the nature and scope of this work, explaining the purpose of examining desiderative constructions across languages, and outlining the theoretical context and orientation of the study. Chapter Two presents a typological overview of desiderative expressions in a selection of languages from different genetic groups throughout the world, outlining crosslinguistic trends in lexicalisation of 'want' and related notions, patterns of polysemy and lexical relations, syntactic patterns associated with desiderative constructions, and other construction types involving desire, such as imperatives, purposives, aversives.

Chapter Three focusses on the syntactic properties of desiderative expressions across languages, including patterns of wordclass membership, transitivity, complement structures, and grammaticalisation of desideratives. It explores how the semantics and grammar of different construction types interact with the meanings of individual lexemes to encode a range of desiderative meanings.
Chapter Four proceeds to a detailed examination of languages that have grammatical morphemes which express wanting in many contexts, but have also a variety of other functions as markers of tense/aspect/mood. In detailed case studies of the Kayardild 'desiderative' inflection -da and the Buru TAM marker and complementiser la, the principles of NSM analysis are used to investigate whether such multifunctional grammemes have a single meaning or semantic core, or whether they are truly polysemous. A set of procedures is proposed for discovering and specifying how many meanings a grammeme has, and how these meanings relate to its various grammatical functions.

Chapter Five addresses a striking contrast between constructions where a desiderative expression takes a complement clause (as in the English I want to dance), and those where a desiderative grammeme occurs within the same clause that represents the wanted event (as in the Kayardild equivalent Ngada wirrka-ju). A close examination of the relationship of desiderative morphemes to the clause or clauses over which they operate suggests that WANT may function as an interclausal or interpropositional operator in all languages, but that language-specific syntactic mechanisms govern how WANT combines with other semantic elements in each natural language, and hence in a semantic metalanguage that is a subset of each natural language.

Chapter Six pursues the question of WANT as a semantic and lexical universal, in view of the diversity of desiderative constructions across languages and the particular constraints that each language imposes on the lexical and grammatical means of expressing wanting. Specific criteria are proposed for the assessment of semantic equivalence across languages, and for distinguishing language-specific phenomena from potentially universal elements and configurations of meaning. This leads to a proposal for a 'universal syntax' of desiderative meaning. The influence of cultural values and attitudes on the expression of desire is explored with a view to explaining aspects of the interaction between social and linguistic structure and its impact on the range and types of desiderative constructions found in different languages, and how a theory of language universals might deal with processes of language change.
Chapter 2

Toward a typology of desideratives

Desideratives have not been given the kind of attention in crosslinguistic studies that has been devoted to certain other semantic and grammatical categories of constructions, perhaps most notably the causatives. The reasons for the comparative neglect of desideratives are, as suggested earlier, partly linguistic, partly historical, and partly cultural. The present work is intended as a start at remedying this, and in so doing perhaps to discover some of what a crosslinguistic study of these constructions can teach us both about the linguistic description of particular languages, and about patterns and trends across languages.

To this end, a broad range of desiderative words and constructions was examined in over fifty languages selected from different language families throughout the world (as shown in the map preceding Chapter 1). The purpose of this exercise was to see whether there are any similarities in the ways different languages handle desiderative notions; whether such notions are indeed expressed in all languages, and to what extent there is a meaningful basis for treating desideratives as a crosslinguistic typological category. Only after examining these questions would one be in a position to look at the possibility of universals in the expression of concepts of desire or wanting across languages and cultures.

Desiderative constructions involve the interaction of many aspects of linguistic structure, including morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. In approaching a study of the linguistic expression of desiderative concepts, it is necessary to establish as a starting point a broad characterisation of desiderative notions, before proceeding to look at how these are dealt with in a range of languages. The most typical desiderative situation is one in which someone, usually a human being, wants something: either an object of some kind (e.g. I want a cup of water), an action (I want to drink some water), an action by another person (I want you to give me some water), or an event of some other kind (I want it to rain soon). The desired event is often a voluntary action by a person, but we should also consider situations where what is wanted is an involuntary action, state or process (e.g. I want to sneeze/sleep/grow tall/be admired).
Although the English examples given above all involve a construction with the main verb *want* and an object or a complement clause, the desiderative situations described are independent of any linguistic parameters. For example, a situation where one person wants an action by another person (e.g. *I want you to give me some water*) is frequently given linguistic expression in the form of an imperative (*Give me some water!*). Interestingly, most if not all human languages seem to have imperatives (as well as a range of directive and request forms that differ from language to language). Although the morphology and syntax of imperatives varies somewhat, no language was found in which it is impossible to say things like 'Go away!' or 'Give me water!' indicating that the speaker wants the addressee to do something. Desiderative situations may also be expressed in many languages by means of morphological devices, such as desiderative, optative or purposive affixes; by particles or auxiliaries (like *will* indicating desire or intention, as in *She will smoke, despite her asthma*); and by words with desiderative meanings, like *want* and related verbs (*wish, hope* etc.), or other parts of speech (*my heart's desire* is something I want very much; *a desirable residence* is one that people are likely to want, etc.) Each of these linguistic items occurs in particular grammatical constructions, often involving complex syntactic structures such as clause subordination and complementation (for example, the verb *want* is followed by various complement clauses in sentences given above).

While some of these types of desiderative expressions will be more interesting linguistically than others, starting from a deliberately broad characterisation of situations involving wanting or desire provides a perspective from which to observe the range of words and constructions by which each language encodes desiderative concepts. Such an approach offers an important advantage in a crosslinguistic study of the kind attempted here: it reduces the risk of linguistic or ethnocentric bias that could result from starting with particular words and constructions from one language and examining the presence or absence of equivalents for them in other languages.

Even with such a broad scope of inquiry, there remains a theoretical possibility that some languages might simply not encode meanings of this type at all. It is at least theoretically possible that in some cultures people might never find occasion to speak of people wanting anything, perhaps viewing events as happening or not happening as part of a natural pattern
regardless of what individual human beings might feel about it. Desiderative concepts of the kind sketched above might never be expressed in the language of such a culture.

However, no such language was encountered in the course of this study. In addition to the apparently universal existence of imperatives in human languages, each language that was examined was found to have a range of words and constructions referring to people’s desires, hopes, intentions, purposes and so on. Nevertheless it seems that, indeed, more attention is paid to such matters in some cultural contexts than in others, and that this fact may be reflected in language structure as well as in discourse; a point that will be taken up in subsequent chapters.

It was also found that certain languages or groups of languages raise particular issues about the range and nature of desiderative constructions. For example, some languages associate desire with a particular part of the body, such as the eyes, throat, heart or digestive tract; and such body part terms may be the basis for some of the desiderative expressions in these languages. Some languages seem to associate wanting with motion toward something, and to use direction terms (like Maori ki, and perhaps even English to) to introduce complements in desiderative expressions. Many languages associate wanting with the future, or with unrealised events, using similar constructions to express desired and projected or imagined events. Many languages have ways of expressing notions of desire or wanting without necessarily attributing a desire to a particular individual person; and some languages distinguish between expressing one’s own directly experienced desires and observing or inferring what other people want.

A crosslinguistic survey of types of words and constructions used to express desiderative notions can hope to produce at least two potentially useful outcomes. First, to sketch out the range of variation among languages in the ways they deal with these kinds of meanings; what, if any, are the limits on such variation; and what patterns and tendencies may be common to a number of languages. And second, to explore whether any common core of elements, semantic or structural or both, may be found in the desiderative constructions of all languages; that is, whether any linguistic universals may be discerned in the area under investigation.

The following sections of this chapter offer an overview of the types of desiderative expressions that were found, in terms of their lexical,
2. Toward a typology of desideratives

morphological and syntactic characteristics. The aim here is primarily
descriptive, to lay the groundwork for a more detailed discussion of
problems and issues surrounding the search for language universals in
this area.

2.1 Desiderative words and constructions

The apparent universality of imperatives in the world’s languages is
accompanied by the curious fact that, in a very large number of languages,
there is no lexical or morphological material that signals or encodes the
imperative meaning. Imperatives are frequently the most bare,
morphologically unmarked form of the verb, as in English: imperatives
like Stop! or Run! consist of the base form of the verb, with no other
lexical or morphological elements to convey the meaning that the speaker
wants the addressee to do the action denoted by the verb (though it may be
argued that his meaning is at least partially expressed by intonation).

This widespread characteristic of imperatives raises an interesting
question. If all languages do have an identifiable imperative, used to
express a situation where one person (the speaker) wants someone else
(the addressee) to do something, then do all languages also have a way of
expressing this meaning in another form? That is, do all languages have
the means of defining, explaining or rephrasing their own imperatives, as
in the case of the English example, by saying something like ‘I said “Stop!”
because I wanted you to stop’?

The extent to which language-internal definition of this kind is
possible is both a theoretical and an empirical question, and will be
considered further in Chapter 6. For the present, it can be noted that every
one of the languages examined has some construction by which it is
possible to define or rephrase an imperative. Indeed, for linguistic
fieldworkers this may prove a useful technique for eliciting one or more of
the main desiderative expressions in a language. Since imperatives are
heard every day in most languages, it can be relatively easy for the
fieldworker to ask something like ‘What did you mean when you said
“Stop!”’, and the reply is likely to be a desiderative construction (unless it
is a synonym, like Halt!). Often, though by no means always, this
rephrasing will involve the main or most common desiderative
construction in the language.
This is not to suggest that imperatives can be simply equated with the meaning 'I want you to do this', since the meanings of some imperative forms may be more complex, as discussed in 6.5, but they do include a desiderative element. Whatever the form of the construction thus elicited, it is likely to contain some word or morpheme that is identifiable as carrying a desiderative meaning (at least in this construction). This element may be a main verb, like English *want*, or some other type of word or morpheme.

Most languages have not just one desiderative word or morpheme, but a whole set of terms expressing different shades of meaning, and used in different construction types. English, for example, has three important desiderative verbs, *want*, *wish* and *desire*; but there are many other words expressing these and closely related concepts, for example the verbs *yearn*, *long*, *crave*, *covet*, *lust*; like, feel like; need, require; hope, intend, expect; and modal auxiliaries *will*, *shall*, *would*, *should*. Moreover, English has a large number of speech act verbs relating to the expression of what people want: *request*, *order*, *command*, *beg*, *implore* and dozens more. Philosophical discussions in English about what people want tend to use the nouns *will*, *desire*, *volition* and *intention* rather than the more everyday verb *want*, and so do linguistic discussion of modals, desideratives, requests, directives and so on. The lexical relations among sets of desiderative terms like these are discussed in section 2.3 below.

The commonly used desiderative words and morphemes in most languages are verbal in character. Some are main verbs, as in English *I want to go*, where *want* is a main verb with a complement *to go*; while others are verbal modifiers that add a desiderative meaning to a main verb, as in examples (1a) and (9)-(14) below. There are also languages in which the main desiderative terms are nominal, like the Arrernte *ahentye* discussed in section 2.3, or adjectival, like the Japanese *hoshii* discussed in 3.1. The wordclass properties of desideratives are considered further in the next chapter, but from a typological point of view it is noteworthy that in fewer than five percent of the languages surveyed are the main desiderative terms anything other than verbs or verbal modifiers. Even in these cases they often have special verb-like syntactic or morphological properties not shared with other members of their wordclass, as shown in several of the detailed studies that follow.

Many languages use a different word or construction for one or more of the types of desiderative situation outlined earlier. For example,
2.1 Desiderative words and constructions

Samoan (like several other Austronesian languages) distinguishes lexically between situations where a person wants to do something (as in (1a), where wanting is expressed by the verbal modifier fia), and situations where a person wants someone else to do something (as in (1b), where the verb mana'o is used). Fia cannot occur in the latter context at all; this distinction is discussed in more detail in 3.3 below:

(1) a. *'Ou te fia alu.*
   1s TAM want go
   'I want to go.'

   b. *'Ou te mana'o e alu le uso.*
   1s TAM want TAM go the brother
   'I want my brother to go.'

Spanish (like several other Indo-European languages) uses the same word, the verb querer, for these two situations, but in two different construction types. When a person wants to do something, this action is denoted by a verb in the infinitive form (like ir 'to go' in (2a)), while a wanted action by another person is in the subjunctive form (like vayas in (2b)), and is introduced by the complementiser que 'that':

(2) a. *Quiero ir.*
   want-1s go-INF
   'I want to go.'

   b. *Quiero que tu vayas.*
   want-1s that 2s go-2sSJv
   'I want you to go.'

The Central Australian Aboriginal language Arrernte, on the other hand, uses the same verb (ahentye(neme) 'want', see also 3.2 below) followed by a purposive-marked verb for the desired action, regardless of whether this action is by oneself or another person:

(3) a. *Ayenge ahentyeneme lhetyeke.*
   1s want go-PURP
   'I want to go.'
b. *Avenge ahentyeneme unte lhetyke.*

\begin{tabular}{l}
1s & want \\
2s & go-PURP \\
\end{tabular}

'I want you to go.'

When speaking of someone's wanting a thing, Spanish and English treat this thing as the direct object of the desiderative verb:

(4) *Quiero un vaso de leche.*

\begin{tabular}{l}
want-1s & a & glass & of & milk \\
\end{tabular}

'I want a glass of milk.'

But in Arrernte, a thing that is wanted is marked with the dative suffix -ke:

(5) *Ampe yanhe merne-ke ahentyeneme.*

\begin{tabular}{l}
child & that & food-DAT & want \\
\end{tabular}

'That child wants food.'

In Samoan, a thing that is wanted appears in a prepositional phrase, with the locative-directional marker *i*:

(6) *'Ou te mana'o i le tusi.*

\begin{tabular}{l}
1s & TAM & want & LD & the & book \\
\end{tabular}

'I want the book.'

A single desiderative term may take different complement structures according to the type of situation, as already seen in example (2). In Finnish, the same desiderative term takes an infinitive complement where a person wants to do something, and a nominalised complement where one person wants someone else to do something:

(7) a. *Haluan mennä.*

\begin{tabular}{l}
want-1s & go-INF \\
\end{tabular}

'I want to go.'

b. *Haluan hän en menevän.*

\begin{tabular}{l}
want-1s & 3sPOSS & go-PrPART-ACC \\
\end{tabular}

'I want her to go.'
2.1 Desiderative words and constructions

Still another type of complement with ettā ‘that’ has a softening effect, as indicated by the English gloss:

(8) Haluan, ettā hän menee.
want-1s that 3s go-3s
‘I wish that she would go.’

This should not be taken as an indication that the lexical content of haluan ‘I want’ has changed to ‘I wish’, but rather that the ettā complement introduces an element of uncertainty (I want her to go, but I don’t know if she will). In English this uncertainty is part of the meaning of the verb wish, discussed further in the next chapter, while in Finnish it is expressed by the complement type alone.

On the other hand, many languages have desideratives that take the same type of complement clause in all situations. In Arrernte, complement verbs of ahentynene ‘want’ are always purposive; in Kpelle, complement verbs of ḫwēlıii ‘want’ are a’ways hortative; and in Jarawara, complement verbs of nofa ‘want’ are nominalised. In many other languages there is no special marking on the complement verb, as in example (1b) above where the clause e alu le uso ‘my brother goes’ carries no special marking when it appears as a complement of mana’o ‘want’.

Many of the desiderative words and constructions mentioned here are examined in greater depth in the following chapters, which will explore several of the grammatical structures involved in these constructions, and the similarities and differences in meanings of various construction types. From this initial overview, two pertinent observations can be made.

The first is that, in view of the diversity of constructions that can be used to convey desiderative meanings, one would not expect a great deal of similarity in the ways different languages encode notions of desire. It could be expected that the most common, everyday ways of referring to wanting or desire would be in some languages nouns, in other languages verbs, adjectives, verbal auxiliaries, or particles; and that perhaps in some languages wanting might be associated with a particular grammatical construction rather than with an individual word or morpheme. While many languages have more than one of these devices, and details of several such constructions are discussed below, an overall finding of this study is that an unexpectedly high proportion of languages do have verbs
or verbal constructions as their most commonly occurring desiderative expressions.

The second general observation to be made at this point is that, while languages divide up the range of desiderative situations in different ways, there is again more similarity across languages than might be expected. There is no prima facie reason to suppose that any language would use similar words or constructions for different types of desiderative situations. Yet in all of the languages examined in this study, the same desiderative expression is used for more than one type of situation. Languages as unrelated as French and Arrernte, for example, use the same word to refer to wanting to do something oneself, and wanting someone else to do something. Samoan and Japanese, which use different words for these two types of situation, nonetheless use the same word for wanting another person to do something, and for wanting a thing. No language was found that has entirely different constructions for each type of desiderative situation, treating them as if they were completely unrelated concepts.

2.2 Morphological desideratives

Some languages have a desiderative particle or affix, that adds the meaning of wanting or desire to a predicate. For example, Japanese has a desiderative suffix -tai, which is added to a verb:

(9) \textit{Watashi wa eiga ga mitai.}
\hspace{1cm}1s \hspace{1cm}TOP \hspace{1cm}movies \hspace{1cm}OBJ \hspace{1cm}see-DES
\hspace{1cm}'I want to see movies.'

Japanese has another important desiderative, the adjective \textit{hoshii}, which is used somewhat more freely than the bound morpheme -\textit{tai}; the relationship of these two terms and the constraints on their use are explored in Chapters 3 and 6 below. However, some languages have a bound morpheme that is clearly their main desiderative form.

In the Maricopa language of California, a desiderative verbal suffix -\textit{lya} (\textit{\textasciitilde{ly}}) indicates that the action or event denoted by the verb to which it is attached is wanted:
2.2 Morphological desideratives

(10) *Nyaa ny-yuu-ly 'i-m.
1s 1/3-see-DES say-REAL
‘I want to see her.’

This morpheme refers only to the wishes of the person who is speaking, so the following example cannot mean ‘you want to help me’:

(11) *Nym-wik-lya.
2/1-help-DES
‘I wish you would/want you to help me.’

To talk about someone else’s wants in Maricopa one uses a desiderative­marked verb as a complement of a main verb ‘ii-m ‘say’ or aly’ii-m ‘think’:

(12) *Kwsede-sh m-do-ly m-aly’ii-m?
doctor-S 2-be-DES 2-think-QREAL
‘Do you want to be a doctor?’

This construction can also be used to speak of wanting in the first person, as seen in (10) above, but when the desiderative affix appears by itself as in (11), it is interpreted as referring to the speaker. It seems, then, that this desiderative morpheme is inseparable from the first person. Hence it is tempting to interpret its use with ‘say’ or ‘think’ as a kind of quotation. On this view, example (10) could be interpreted literally as: ‘I say, "I want to see her".’ But one would then expect the desiderative-marked verb in (12) to carry a first-person rather than a second-person pronominal prefix, to be interpreted in a quotative sense: ‘Do you think, "I want to be a doctor"?’ The fact that both verbs have the second-person prefix in this construction suggests that, while the construction may have developed historically out of a quotative construction, it is synchronically a separate construction type. The importance of distinguishing synchronic meaning from etymology is a recurring theme in the following chapters, and criteria for drawing such distinctions are examined in Chapter 6.

A somewhat similar pattern is seen in a language from the other side of the world, the Papuan language Yagaria. The Hua dialect of this language has a set of morphological desideratives as part of the verbal paradigm, but these forms are limited to first-person use, as in
2.2 Morphological desideratives

Desumii(’)hui ‘I want to eat’. However, in this language wanting is not linked exclusively with the person expressing it, since in these expressions the speaker can include another person or persons via the first-person dual and plural forms, thus attributing the desire to these other persons as well as the speaker: visumii(’)hu’e ‘we two want to go’, kesupihune ‘we want to see it’.

However, desiderative forms cannot be used in Hua to talk about the desires of second or third persons. To ask what an addressee wants, one uses a subjunctive verb form, not the desiderative. To talk about a third person’s wants one has to use a construction with the future marker -gu and the main verb ‘say’:

(13) Do-gu-e hi-e.
    eat-FUT-DECL say-DECL
‘He wants to eat.’

The desiderative forms can be used in the third person, but this conveys not wanting but near future; the third-person desiderative form of ‘eat’ is desumii(’)hie, meaning ‘he is about to eat’, not ‘he wants to eat’. Neither the desiderative nor the subjunctive forms can be used to denote wanting in the past; and the only construction by which this can be done is again a construction with ‘say’. Thus not only the desiderative forms but the future tense marker and the verb ‘say’ play a part in expressing desiderative meanings. The issues raised by constructions of this kind are explored in later chapters.

Morphological desiderative markers in some languages have fewer constraints on their use. The Yup’ik verbal postbase -sqe- ‘want’ is most frequently used in relation to the speaker’s desire to čo something, but can also be used in constructions like angutem neresqa tan’gurraq akutamek ‘the man wants the boy to eat some akutaq’. In Korean, the verbal auxiliary sip- ‘want’ is rarely used in constructions where someone wants another person to do something, because in this context it is generally considered more polite to use the verb parae- ‘hope’. However, sip-constructions like magči motage hago sibla ‘I want him not to eat’ are grammatically acceptable.

While many Australian Aboriginal languages have desiderative verbs or other lexemes referring to wanting, like the Arrernte examples given above, some have morphological desideratives. The Kayardild
language of northern Queensland has two verbal suffixes often used in referring to wanting, as in the following examples:

(14) Ngada warra-da ngarn-kiring-inj.
     lsNOM go-DES beach-ALL-EMOT
     'I would like to go to the beach.'

(15) Ngada wirrka-ju.
     lsNOM dance-POT
     'I want to/can/will dance.'

This language does not seem to have morphologically independent desiderative words that are used in similar contexts, and the multi­functional nature of these verbal inflections raises interesting issues that are explored in detail in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. They are not limited to first-person use; in both of the above examples niya 'he' could be substituted for ngada 'I'.

Although the number of languages with morphological desideratives of the kind described here is too small to provide a basis for much in the way of crosslinguistic generalisation, some tentative observations may be made. Desiderative morphemes seem to be a good deal more restricted in their use than independent desiderative words are. For example, the Japanese desiderative suffix -tai is subject to more constraints on its use than the desiderative adjective hoshii is. Syntactically, -tai is limited to use on verbs whose agent is coreferential with the person who wants the action; while hoshii can be used with either a verb or a nominal as the object of wanting, and is not subject to a coreferentiality constraint. Moreover, while both hoshii and -tai are usually used only in first-person contexts because it is regarded as impolite to refer to other people's internal states such as wanting, the use of -tai with reference to another person is even more constrained than the use of hoshii, as discussed in 6.4 below.

The Kayardild desiderative morphemes mentioned above are both subject to a number of syntactic constraints, which affect the ways in which they are interpreted in particular constructions. For example, although the 'potential' inflection in (15) above is ambiguous in this particular construction, and can be interpreted as meaning 'want to', 'can' or 'will', in other construction types it can mean 'want' unambiguously, as detailed in
Chapter 5. The Maricopa and Hua desiderative morphemes are each subject to various syntactic and other constraints, as outlined above.

If it is generally true that morphological desideratives are subject to more constraints on their use than independent lexemes are, this would not be unexpected. In general, bound morphemes are more tightly constrained, both syntactically and semantically, than free morphemes. Crosslinguistic typological studies of causative constructions, for example, have found that the more morphologically bonded a causative morpheme is to the verb, the tighter are the semantic constraints on the construction. Bound morphemes are the most tightly constrained, verbal auxiliaries less so, and serial verb constructions have the fewest constraints. A similar pattern may be found in the case of desiderative constructions.

The operation of constraints like these probably originates from at least two sources. The first is syntactic. Where a desiderative morpheme is tightly bound to the verb denoting the desired action or outcome, the argument structure of that verb dominates the construction, and determines to some extent the interpretation of the desiderative. For example, in examples like the ones above from Hua and Kayardild, the agent of the desiderative-marked verb is also person to whom the desire is attributed. The argument structure of the main verbs 'eat', 'dance' in these constructions has a strong influence in determining to whom the desiderative refers.

However, in the Maricopa example (11), the agent of the main verb 'help' is not the same as the person who wants this action. The 'wanter' in this case is the speaker. This provides an illustration of the interaction between syntactic structure and a second factor, pragmatics. A desiderative morpheme bound to a verb cannot have a separate syntactic argument structure of its own; but the extralinguistic reality is that human beings have more direct access to their own desires than to those of other people. Therefore, from the standpoint of pragmatics, the speaker is in many cases just as likely, if not more so, to be the one who wants the action named by the desiderative-marked verb to be performed.

Even on the basis of such a small number of morphological desideratives, a possible hierarchy of grammaticalisation may be observable. Desideratives that are bound morphemes may be viewed as more grammaticalised than those that are free morphemes. In languages where morphological desideratives are used in some but not all types of desiderative situation, then some types of desiderative may be considered
2.2 Morphological desideratives

'privileged' in the sense of being more grammaticalised than others. If any type of desiderative is morphologically privileged over others, the bases of such privilege are likely to be (a) directness of experience (speaking of one's own desires vs. those of other people), and (b) directness of relationship between desire and outcome (desiring actions by oneself vs. actions by others). Such a hierarchy could explain the restrictions on the Hua desiderative verbal forms, and the need for a different construction type (e.g. the quotation-like constructions mentioned above) to speak of wanting by other persons in Hua and Maricopa; this question is pursued in 6.5 below.

A discussion of morphological desideratives should take into account other morphemes that are involved in the expression of desiderative meanings. For example, verbal complements of the Arrernte verb *ahentyeneme* 'want' are marked with the purposive inflection *-tyeke*. Sometimes this morpheme is used on its own with a desiderative meaning. Indeed, the purposive-marked verb form in (16a) effectively means the same as the longer version (16b), and is probably more common in everyday speech:

(16) a. *Ayenge lhtyeke.*
    1s          go-PURP

    b. *Ayenge ahentyeneme lhtyeke.*
    1s        want           go-PURP

    'I want to go.'

The dative case inflection *-ke* marks a noun in the construction with *ahentyeneme*, as in (5) above, but even in the absence of the desiderative verb, *-ke* can still indicate that someone wants the thing it marks:

(17) *Ampe yanhe merneke artneme.*
    child    that food-DAT cry

    'That child is crying for food.' [i.e. because she wants food]

To give a rather different example, the Spanish verb *querer* 'want' can be followed by an infinitive or a subjunctive verb form, as in (2) above. However, subjunctive forms occasionally occur by themselves, conveying a desiderative meaning. In the following example there is no desiderative
verb, but it is still clear that the speaker is expressing a desire for the event to take place:

(18) ¡Mueran los traidores!
    die-3pSNV the traitors
    'Death to the traitors!'

If the corresponding indicative form (mueren 'die-3p') were substituted for the subjunctive in this example, the meaning would be 'the traitors die/are dying', with no reference to whether anyone wants them to. Therefore the desiderative element in the meaning of (18) is contributed by the subjunctive form itself. Infinitive forms can also be used by themselves with desiderative implications: in sentences like To open the door, pull the handle the English infinitive form to open implies 'if you want to open ...'. The Spanish equivalent para abrir la puerta 'to open the door' also has the infinitive form of abrir 'to open', preceded by the preposition para 'for'.

A number of other morphological devices found in various languages have meanings related to wanting. For example, many Australian languages have an aversive suffix, like the Arrernte -ketye, marking things that are not wanted or that someone wants to avoid:

    steady-RDP-INCH-PURP fall-AVER / hole-AVER
    'Go carefully so as not to fall/to avoid the potholes.'

Optatives, hortatives and jussives are also used in situations that involve wanting, in combination with other elements of meaning such as saying something to someone.

From this brief survey of morphological desideratives, two general observations may be made. One is that, while most languages have independent lexical desideratives, some languages have morphological desideratives in addition to these, and a few languages may have morphological markers rather than independent words as their principal means of expressing desiderative meanings. The second is that, even in languages that do not have desiderative morphemes as such, an examination of desiderative expressions may need to include some consideration of other morphological markers that are involved in
expressing desiderative meanings. Clearly, desiderative notions are grammaticalised to different degrees and in different ways by individual languages; the extent and nature of such grammaticalisation is considered further in subsequent chapters.

2.3 Desideratives and lexical relations

Every language investigated in the course of this study was found to have more than one desiderative term. Even in cases like those mentioned above, where a desiderative morphological marker is strictly limited in its range of use, there are other terms that can also be used in referring to wanting, as for example a construction involving the verb 'say' in Hua can be used to refer to wanting by a third person or in the past, where the morphological desideratives are not used.

In examining the sets of desiderative terms in different languages, it quickly becomes apparent that each language has its own way of dividing up the semantic field of desiderative notions. Even between very closely related languages, the correspondences among desiderative terms are not one-to-one equivalents. The contrast in English between the everyday verb want and the somewhat more formal-sounding verb desire seems to have parallels in several languages, for example Spanish querer and desear, or French vouloir and désirer. But language learners soon discover that these are not exact equivalents, and that to be a competent speaker of Spanish or French one must master the subtle distinctions of each language; that for example, the distinction in Spanish between Quiero ir al centro 'I want to go downtown' and the less specific Deseo viajar mucho 'I want to travel a lot' does not have exact parallels in English or French (I desire to travel a lot and Je désire voyager beaucoup both sound awkward).

A closer look at the relationships between the meanings of desiderative terms in languages reveals a variety of patterns. These patterns are interesting for the light they can shed on the nature of lexical relations and the division of semantic space, and on the different patterns of usage found in different languages. They also have implications for the understanding of sources and directions of semantic change, and the search for common, possibly universal, patterns of meaning among
languages. The rest of this chapter outlines some of the patterns of lexical relations that were found in this study.

In this discussion, morphological desiderative markers as well as independent words are treated as having specifiable semantic content; both the semantic content and the grammatical properties of such morphemes are examined in some depth. If languages can have desiderative expressions based on independent words (like Spanish *querer*), on morphological markers (like Maricopa *-lya*), or on both (like Japanese *hoshii* and *-tai*), then the morphological markers can be viewed as having meanings similar in many ways to the meanings of the lexical items. In the English expression *I want to go*, the desiderative meaning is contributed by the lexeme *want*, while in the Japanese translation *watashi wa iki-tai* a very similar meaning is contributed by the suffix *-tai*. For this reason, bound morphemes like *-tai* are treated here as meaning-bearing units of language, while of course their grammatical status must be considered as well. Each desiderative element, whether morphologically independent or not, has particular grammatical properties and participates in construction types according to the grammar of the language in which it occurs.

2.4 Body part desideratives: metaphor or polysemy?

Desiderative expressions in Arrernte, involving *ahentye(neme)* 'want' and purposive constructions, were shown in (16)-(17) above. Arrernte is one of several languages whose desiderative terms are closely linked, etymologically at least, with a body part term: in Arrernte, *ahentye* also means 'throat'. Cases like this raise an important question about the lexical relations of these words: does a word like *ahentye* really have two meanings, 'throat' and 'want', or is one a metaphorical extension of the other? In other words, does Arrernte really have a word for 'want', or just a metaphorical expression based on 'throat'? There are plausible associations between wanting and various parts of the body, that seem to support the view that metaphor is operating here. Arrernte speakers have traditionally viewed the throat as to some extent the seat of desire, associating the experience of wanting with a physical sensation in the throat (perhaps a little like the 'lump in the throat' associated in English with longing for home and loved ones). Some
languages have desiderative words that can also mean 'eye', suggesting desire based on visual attraction, or words that can also mean 'insides' or 'guts', suggesting links with hunger or 'gut feelings' of desire.

However, there is other evidence suggesting that these cases may involve more than metaphor, and that separate meanings may be distinguishable on formal criteria. This is an issue of theoretical importance, bearing both upon whether it is possible to draw a formal distinction between metaphor and polysemy, and whether in such a case the concept of wanting is represented lexically, or only metaphorically. A close examination of the Arrernte case will demonstrate principles and methods that can be applied to similar questions in other languages.

*Ahentye* is a nominal. Depending on the context in which it occurs, it is usually translated into English as either (a) 'throat' or (b) 'want' or 'desire'. In the first instance it is used like other body part nominals:

(20) *Ampe kweke ahentye-ke-arle merne mwerne-lhe-ke.*
    chiiJ small throat-FOC food stick-REFL-PC
    'The child has some food stuck in her throat.'

When referring to wanting, *ahentye* can occur with or without the verbal elements *-irre* 'inchoative' or *ne* 'be/sit' (existential-positional verb). The complement, the object of desire, is marked dative if a noun, and purposive if a verb, for example:

(21) a. *Re kere-ke ahentye-ne-me.*
    3sNOM meat-DAT want-be-NPP
    'She wants meat.'

    b. *Re lhe-tyeke ahentye-ne-ke.*
    3sNOM go-PURP want-be-PC
    'She wanted to go.'

    c. *Re ahentye-ne-ke Kwementyaye lhe-tyeke.*
    3sNOM want-be-PC K(NOM) go-PURP
    'She wanted Kwementyaye to go.'

The complement can occur before or after *ahentye*; the alternative orderings are equivalent to the above examples: *Re ahentyeneme kereke*
2.4 Body part desideratives

is equivalent to (21a), and so on. The only real ordering constraint is that a dependent subject must occur after the main clause subject, as in (21c). Since both re and Kwementyaye are grammatically in intransitive subject (or nominative) form, ordering is the only way of distinguishing the main from the dependent subject.

There are several ways in which the body part and the desiderative senses of ahentye display different syntactic behaviour. Ahentye ‘want’ must have a dative or purposive complement, as in the above examples, while ahentye ‘throat’ cannot occur in such a construction. In the following example, ahentye can only mean ‘want’ and not ‘throat’:

(22) Re ahentye-kwenye arikwe-tyeke.
    3sNOM want-NomNEG eat-PURP
    ‘She doesn’t want to eat.’ (*‘She doesn’t have a throat to eat with.’)

Where no complement is present, ahentye must mean ‘throat’.

(23) Re ahentye-kwenye.
    3sNOM throat-NomNEG
    ‘She doesn’t have a throat.’ (*‘She doesn’t have a want/desire.’)

If the object of desire is unknown, a grammatical complement must still be present:

(24) a. Amp e iwenhe-ke-peke ahentye-ne-me.
    child what-DAT-maybe want-be-NPP
    ‘The child wants something.’

    b. *Ampe (Ø) ahentye-ne-me.
       child want-be-NPP
       ‘The child wants (something).’

The only exception to this would be in rare cases where a dative or purposive complement could be understood from the context. For example, if a child refuses a proffered morsel of food, one could say the following, with or without the complement NP:
2.4 Body part desideratives

(25) Re (nhenhe ikwere) ahentye-kwenye.
   3sNOM (this 3sDAT) want-NomNEG
   ‘She doesn’t want it.’

Ahentye ‘throat’, like other body part terms, can occur in the part-whole (inalienable possession) construction as in (26a), or with a possessive (genitive) marked owner, as in (26b):

(26) a. Ampe ahentye kwarne-me.
    child throat ache-NPP

   b. Ampe-kenhe ahentye kwarne-me.
    child-POSS throat ache-NPP
   ‘The child’s throat is aching.’

Ahentye cannot mean ‘want’ here because there is no dative or purposive complement. Ahentye ‘want’ seems also to require a preceding NP, while ahentye ‘throat’ does not. Where there is no mention of a ‘wanter’, the interpretation can only be ‘throat’.

(27) Ahentye re kngerre nthurre.
    throat 3sNOM big very
    ‘The throat/*desire is very big.’

Ahentye ‘throat’ behaves like other body part nominals, but ahentye ‘want’ behaves more like a predicate nominal. In part-whole constructions like (26a), the whole and the part can be separated by modifiers, as in the following example where ‘child’ and ‘throat’ are separately modified, by ‘small’ and by a definitising resumptive pronoun respectively:

(28) Arelhe-le ampe kweke ahentye renhe are-ke.
    woman-ERG child small throat 3sACC see-PC
    ‘The woman looked at the small child’s throat.’

The whole and part can be separated by other constituents, but they cannot be separated by a verb of which they are the subject:
2.4 Body part desideratives

(29) *Ampe kweke arelhe-le are-ke ahentye renhe.
child small woman-ERG see-PC throat 3sACC
'The woman looked at the small child's throat.'

(30) *Ampe ahentye kwarne-me. / *Ampe kwarne-me ahentye.
child throat ache-NPP / child ache-NPP throat
'The child's throat is aching.'

The same applies to other body part nominals, such as kapere 'head' or ingke 'foot'.
On the other hand, ahentye 'want' can be quite freely separated from the 'wanter' NP, as in several of the above examples as well as the following:

(31) Ampe unte ikwere merne nthe-tyeke ahentye.
child 2sNOM 3sDAT food give-\$URP want
'The child wants you to give her some food.'

In this respect ahentye 'want' behaves like other predicate nominals, such as 'thirsty' or 'afraid', which can be freely separated from their subject NP:

(32) Ampe kwatye-ke ngkethekwe.
child water-DAT thirsty
'The child is thirsty for water.'

(33) Ampe kngwelye-le (renhe) uthne-ketye ater-irre-me.
child dog-EF G 3sACC bite-AVER afraid-INCH-NPP
'The child is afraid the dog will bite her.'

Like other predicate nominals, ahentye 'want' can take the inchoative derivational affix -irre-, while ahentye 'throat' cannot. The following example, with -irre-, is very similar in meaning to (21a) above:

(34) Re kere-ke ahentye-irre-me.
3sNOM meat-DAT want-INCH-NPP
'She wants meat.'
2.4 Body part desideratives

The -irre- affix often occurs with nominals that denote some quality or characteristic, like akngerre 'big', akngerre-irre-me 'getting big, growing'; ankwe 'sleep', ankwe-irre-me 'getting sleepy'. It can sometimes occur with other nominal types; for example the process of becoming a man (artwe) through initiation is termed artwe-irre-me 'becoming a man'. However, ahentye 'throat' is not used in this way: though perhaps marginally possible grammatically, it is hard to imagine a context in which people would speak of something 'becoming a throat' (ahentye-irre-me); and even then, such a construction would probably be blocked by the existence of the desiderative ahentyiireme. Thus, only ahentye 'want' occurs with -irre-, and then only with a dative or purposive complement, as in (34) above.

The affix -irre- is seen in other emotion terms, for example ahelhe-irre- 'angry' and ingkerte-irre- 'jealous'. Although 'inchoative' is the accepted grammatical label for this affix and its equivalents in many other Australian Aboriginal languages, its meaning is not always equivalent to 'become', and this is particularly evident in emotion contexts. In the case of ahelhe 'angry', the verbal element -irre- is obligatory in the predicative construction, but a 'become' reading is not obligatory. Thus, the following example is ambiguous:

(35) Artwe ahelhe-irre-ke.
     man angry-INCH-PC
     a. 'The man got angry.'
     b. 'The man was angry.'

In the case of ahentye 'want', then, it should not be assumed that -irre- contributes an inchoative meaning, and that example (34) above really means something like 'she is becoming desirous for meat'. The usual interpretation of (34) is simply 'she wants meat', and the optional -irre- provides a verbal stem to which tense marking can be attached.

The other verbal element often found with ahentye is ne-, as seen in examples (21) and (24). As a free verb, ne- usually means 'sit', but it can also serve as a copula, meaning 'be somewhere', for example:

(36) Amp e ulpaye-le ne-ke.
     child creekbed-LOC sit-PC
     'The child sat in the creekbed.'
(37) \[ Yaye \ Alkwa\text{-}te\text{-}le \ ne\text{-}ke. \]
    e.sister \ Alcoota\text{-}LOC \ be\text{-}PC
    ‘My elder sister was at Alcoota.’

As a copula, \textit{ne-} can also occur without a locative marker, though in Arrernte a copula is not obligatory; for example:

(38) a. \[ Arne \ utyeye \ nhenhe. \]
    tree corkwood this
b. \[ Arne \ nhenhe \ utyeye \ ne\text{-}me. \]
    tree this corkwood be-NPP
    ‘This is a corkwood tree.’

\textit{Ne-} can occur with either \textit{ahentye} ‘throat’ or \textit{ahentye} ‘want’. But in such constructions, ‘throat’ can still be distinguished from ‘want’ by the presence of a complement with the latter, as in the following examples (according to Arrernte writing conventions \textit{ne-} is shown as separate from \textit{ahentye} in the former case and connected to it in the latter):

(39) \[ Arle \ akweke \ nhenhe \ ahentye \ ne\text{-}me. \]
    hole small this throat be-NPP
    ‘This little hole is the throat (*desire).’

(40) \[ Amp \ akweke \ nhenhe \ ahentye \ -ne\text{-}me \ kere\text{-}ke. \]
    child small this want be-NPP meat-DAT
    ‘This little child wants (*is throat for) meat.’

Like \textit{\text{-}irre-}, \textit{ne-} takes a tense marker. A sentence like (38a), without a copula, contains no reference to time. Tenseless clauses like this are usually interpreted as referring to the present for pragmatic reasons, but there is no linguistic indicator of present tense; in narratives, the time reference of tenseless clauses is dictated by the discourse context. Thus (38a) and (38b) are not fully synonymous, as (38b) contains a reference to present time that is absent from (38a). Similarly, \textit{ahentye-\text{-}ne} ‘want’ contains a reference to some time, which is absent from unsuffixed \textit{ahentye}. As \textit{ahentye} ‘want’ is a nominal, the only way it can be specifically located in time is by adding one or the other of these verbal elements.
It is possible, then, to distinguish between *ahentye* 'throat' and *ahentye* 'want' on the basis of the differences in syntactic behaviour outlined above. No contexts were found in which it would be ambiguous, or difficult to tell whether *ahentye* referred to the body part or to wanting. To maintain that *ahentye* 'want' is still a metaphorical extension of 'throat', one would have to say that *ahentye* in a dative or purposive construction means something like 'X's throat is for Y'; that is, that examples (21a) and (21b) mean 'Her throat is for meat', and 'Her throat was to go'. Such an interpretation may appear plausible, and somewhat analogous to English sentences like those below, where the body part term 'eye' is used metaphorically in referring to something that someone wants or would like:

(41) a. *The Devil already controls Chicago, and ... has his eye on New York.*

   b. *I only have eyes for you.*

Definitions of the English expressions *have eyes for* and *have an eye on* would probably include some reference to wanting. This poses no problem in English, where the verb *want* is available along with other elements that can be used in defining more complex words and expressions. But the Arrernte desiderative constructions with *ahentye* could not be similarly defined (in Arrernte) unless there were some other more basic, non-metaphorical desiderative expression to use in defining the supposedly metaphorical use of *ahentye*.

One possibility would be to try to define *ahentye* in terms of the purposive marker *-tyeke* since the constructions *X ahentye V-tyeke* and *X V-tyeke* can mean the same, as in example (16) above. However, *-tyeke* has a wider range of meaning, and does not refer as unambiguously to wanting as *ahentye* does. A definition of *-tyeke* would be incomplete without some reference to wanting (*ahentye*), but the reverse is not the case: *-tyeke* is not a part of the meaning of *ahentye*.

Another view would be that one should recognise both the formal distinction and the metaphorical or conceptual link between *ahentye* 'throat' and *ahentye* 'want'. On this view, a definition of *ahentye* 'throat' should include some mention of the fact that the throat can be seen as the seat of desire (*ahentye*: a part of a person's body ... when a person wants
something, this person feels something in this part of the body). This may be correct, although it would have to be confirmed that this concept is still associated with ahentye 'throat' for present-day Arrernte speakers. However, the reverse would not work: a definition of ahentye 'want' that included a reference to feeling something in the throat would be far too restricted, since the great majority of desiderative uses of ahentye do not imply feelings in the throat.

The Arrernte case discussed here raises wider issues about polysemy, definitions, linguistic and cultural associations like those between desire and parts of the body, and their synchronic and diachronic status; these questions are further explored in the light of data from other languages. The important observations to be made from this particular case are two: the usefulness of syntactic evidence in establishing formal criteria for distinguishing between lexical meanings; and the need to be specific in formulating hypotheses about lexical relations. To establish whether or not a metaphorical relation obtains between two meanings, it is necessary to state the form of the hypothesised relation: whether one sense can be defined in terms of the other, or both can be defined in terms of something else.

Another situation that raises similar questions is found in the Austronesian language Mangap-Mbula, where one of the most common desiderative expressions involves the body part term lele- 'insides'. Lele- is an inalienable body part noun referring to a person's or an animal's insides in general, rather than to specific body parts such as stomach, intestines and so on, for which there are more specific terms. It is frequently used in referring to emotions:

(42) Nio lele-ng ambai.
    1s insides-1sPOSS good
    'I am happy/contented.'

Some other inalienable body part nouns are also found in emotion expressions, for instance kete-malmal 'angry', literally 'liver-fight', but lele- is more productive than the others. Although used for emotional feelings, lele- is not used with reference to physical feelings like hunger or tiredness.

When lele- is used in reference to wanting, it must obligatorily be followed by either be or pa. Be is the nonfactual complementiser, and
must be used where lele- is followed by a sentential complement, as in (45) below. In cases where the object of wanting is a thing rather than a state of affairs, lele- must be followed by the 'referent' preposition pa:

(43) *Nio lele-ng pa korong tana.*

1s insides-1sPOSS REF thing that

'I want that (thing).'</n

*Pa* is one of only two prepositions in Mbula (the other being *ki*), and it is used with almost all peripheral arguments.

There is thus a clear syntactic difference between *lele-* meaning 'insides' and *lele-* meaning 'want'. The 'want' use is limited to constructions with *be* or *pa* with the appropriate complement. This leads to two possible interpretations of the meaning of the word *lele-*: Either it has two distinct meanings, 'insides' and 'want' (and perhaps a third one in 'emotion' constructions), or the meaning 'insides' must be seen as somehow extended to cover wanting. It should be noted that *lele-* does not mean simply 'feel', as the verb *yamaana* does:

(44) a. *Nio ang-yamaana itu-ng kembei lele-ng*

1s 1s-feel REFL-1sPOSS like insides-1sPOSS

*ambai som.*
good NEG

'I feel that I am unhappy.'

b. *Nio ang-yamaana itu-ng kembei mete i-kam yo.*

1s 1s-feel REFL-1sPOSS like illness 3s-do/get 1sACC

'I feel that I am sick.'

Many uses of *lele-* 'insides' have nothing to do with wanting; even the emotion expressions with *lele-* mentioned above do not necessarily involve desire as part of the emotional state. Only the *lele-...be/pa* constructions denote wanting.

If 'insides' do not necessarily involve 'wanting', does 'wanting' in Mbula necessarily involve one's insides? Could wanting be viewed as a special feeling in or condition of one's insides, reflected in the special *be/pa* constructions, interpreted as something like 'insides for'?
The situation in Mbula is a little more complex than in Arrernte, because there is another important desiderative construction involving the polysemous verb -so, which can mean 'say', 'want', or 'if'. (These meanings can also be distinguished on formal criteria, as shown in 6.5 below.) In its desiderative use, -so is followed by a sentential complement; the nonfactual complementiser be (-mbe) is optional. The two desiderative constructions can be used interchangeably in contexts like the following example, where the (a) and (b) versions mean the same:

(45)  a. Nio lele-ng be ang-la ang-re Atai kar ki-ni.
    1s want-1sPOSS NF 1s-go 1s-see Atai village POSS-3s

    1s 1s-want(-NF) 1s-go 1s-see Atai village POSS-3s

'I want to go see Atai's village.'

If these two are fully synonymous, then the state of one's insides is no more a part of the meaning of lele- 'want' than of -so 'want'. There may still be a cultural perception that when one experiences desire, and certain other emotions, one feels something in one's insides, and this could then be one element in the definition of lele-1 'insides', but it has no part in the meaning of lele-2 'want'.

There can be little doubt that in Arrernte and Mbula, the desideratives ahentye and lele- are etymologically related to ahentye 'throat' and lele- 'insides'. Etymology can provide some clues to meaning relationships, but to identify a word's history with its synchronic lexical meaning is to ignore the constant and living process of language change. There can also be little doubt that metaphor plays an important role in the processes of historical semantic shift that produce etymological relations like these. The human cognitive capacity for metaphor allows people to associate desire with parts of the body, and to lexicalise these associations.

However, in order to have an orderly account of lexical relations within semantic theory, it is necessary to distinguish between metaphor and polysemy; or at least to see if it is possible to develop sound criteria on which such a distinction can be based. The cases discussed in this section provide an illustration of the kinds of empirical evidence that can be used to determine whether it is valid to assign a separate desiderative meaning (synchronously) to a lexeme that also functions as a body part term, rather
than simply assuming that it is being used metaphorically. Some more
examples of lexical relations that may be based fully or partially on
metaphor are observed in the following section, and the role of metaphor
in language change is considered in the final chapter.

2.5 Wanting, feeling, saying and thinking

There is great variety in the semantic scope, the range of meanings
encompassed by desiderative terms in different languages. Not only are
there lexical relationships linking desideratives with body parts, but also
with positive emotions or good feelings; with negative states such as lack
and need; with other human activities such as saying and thinking; and
with temporal and modal concepts such as futurity and possibility.
Examples of these kinds of desiderative expressions illustrate common
patterns of lexical relations, and highlight the need for a principled
approach to the analysis of meaning in such cases.

A close association between concepts of wanting and liking is seen
in many Austronesian languages, as well as in other languages such as
Albanian. In Bahasa Indonesia, the verb mau ‘want’ can be followed
either by predicatives (46a,b) or nominals (46c):

    Ali want work
    ‘Ali wants to work.’

b. *Ali mau tinggi.*
    Ali want tall
    ‘Ali wants to be tall.’

c. *Ali mau kopi.*
    Ali want coffee
    ‘Ali wants coffee.’

However, verbal complements (as in 46a) are far more usual with mau
than nominal or adjectival complements. Many speakers view nominal
complements like (46c) as infelicitous with mau, and avoid this
construction by replacing *mau* with *suka*, a verb whose primary meaning is 'like':

(47) *Ali suka kopi.*

Ali like coffee

'Ali likes/wants coffee.'

A sentence like this can be used in contexts that involve liking but exclude wanting (as in 'Ali likes coffee but doesn’t want anything to drink right now'); but it can also be used in contexts that clearly refer to wanting rather than liking. For example, (47) would be a normal response to a host asking what the guests want to drink. In this context it clearly indicates what Ali wants on this occasion, not just his general attitude to coffee.

This is a case of lexical association, but it does not mean that in Bahasa Indonesia the concepts 'want' and 'like' are somehow merged. When *suka* is used in its desiderative sense, *mau* 'want' can be substituted for it; and when *suka* refers to liking, *mau* cannot be substituted for it. This is reflected in dictionary definitions that recognise *mau* as a second meaning of *suka*, while defining the principal meaning of *suka* in terms of *perasaan senang hati*, essentially 'good feelings'. *Perasaan* is a noun derived from *rasa* 'feel', and *senang hati* is a pleasant state that involves feeling good (baik) because of the absence of anything unpleasant. The meaning of *suka*, then, shares with the English verb *like* a core element of meaning referring to feeling, and specifically to feeling something good.

In addition to being a good feeling, *suka* is a feeling about something specific; it is a verb that takes either a nominal object (as in example 47), or a verbal complement (e.g. *Ali suka minum kopi* 'Ali likes to drink coffee'). So its meaning must include, along with feeling something good, some reference to the focus of the good feeling. As with English *like*, one can *suka* coffee whether or not one has any right now, but the feeling of liking must be based either on some past experience of or knowledge about coffee, that when called to mind evokes this positive feeling. Hence the representation of meaning for *suka* is very similar to that proposed in the previous chapter for *like*:

\[
X \textit{suka} \ Y
\]

when X thinks about Y, X feels something good

sometimes X wants to do something because of this
This definition provides a basis for understanding the nature of the lexical relationship between *suka* and *mau*: one is needed to define the other, but not vice versa. The explication of *suka* above suggests that wanting is ‘sometimes’ but not always involved. The relationship of liking to wanting in human experience is such that, when we like something, we often want it; and when we get what we want, we often feel something good. But these experiential associations do not constitute a basis for suggesting that the meanings of liking and wanting are merged; the two are still quite distinguishable. We may like coffee but not want any just now; or we may find that when we get something we want, we don’t like it after all. Such distinctions can be maintained if it is recognised that *mau* plays a part in the definition of *suka*, but not the reverse.

However, it has been argued above that *suka* has another, desiderative sense, apparently synonymous with *mau* and distinguishable from the primary meaning of *suka* both on this basis and on the basis of usage. This use of *suka* may well have arisen partly through its compositional relationship with wanting, as some though not all instances of *suka* include wanting. However, the evidence suggests that the desiderative sense should be recognised as a second meaning, *suka*₂, related to but distinguishable from *suka*₁ defined above:

\[ X \text{suka}_2 Y = X \text{mau} Y \]

Additional linguistic evidence supporting such a distinction between *suka*₁ and *suka*₂ includes the fact that the derived form *menyukai* is substitutable for *suka*₁ but not *suka*₂, and the prepositions *(ke)pada* and *akan* can be used with *suka*₁ but are less acceptable with *suka*₂.

The English verb *like* cannot be used as a synonym of *want*; it is equivalent only to *suka*₁. But it is interesting that the phrase *would like* is often used as a polite or softened way of expressing what one wants in English:

(48)  
  a. Do you want tea or coffee?  -I want coffee, please.
  b. Would you like tea or coffee?  -I’d like coffee, please.

In this case it would be quite incorrect to posit a second meaning for *like*, equivalent to *want*; the *would like* construction is considerably more
complex than *suka*, as the modal *would* introduces a hypothetical or conditional element. The politeness effect relies precisely upon this element of meaning. In I'd like coffee, the modal implies that the evocation of a good feeling (i.e. liking) is dependent upon some other conditions. *Like* retains its primary reference to feeling something good, while the modal *would* makes reference to the conditions evoking this good feeling: in this case a hypothetical event (e.g. 'if you give me some coffee') rather than a thought ('when X thinks of Y'). The effect of this is to shift the emphasis of this utterance away from what the speaker wants, conveying in effect, 'if you give me some coffee, I'll feel something good'. The polite effect of an implied conditional ('if') is also seen in the use of *please*, derived historically from *if you please / if it please you*.

The English *would like* construction is an example of how norms of politeness, and the cultural values underlying them, operate to modify the ways in which people express what they want; this process is explored more thoroughly in Chapter 6. What is important to note at this point is that this is a different type of lexical relation from that of *suka* and *mau*. The desiderative use of *suka* in Bahasa Indonesia is a case of polysemy: in addition to its primary meaning, *suka* has a second meaning, synonymous with *mau*. But the English verb *like* does not have a second meaning in which it is synonymous with *want*. In the *would like* construction, the verb *like* is modified by the modal *would*, but does not become equivalent to *want*. There are desiderative uses of *suka* that exclude reference to liking, as explained above, but there is no use of *would like* that would exclude reference to good feelings arising from a hypothetical event.

Another kind of lexical relation is seen in the desiderative use of *maith* (~*mhaith*) 'good' in contemporary Irish. The usual way of expressing wanting in Irish uses *maith* with the conditional form of the copula (the complementiser *a* occurs where the wanted action is by someone other than the wanter):

(49)  

a. *Ba mhaith liom theacht.*  
be(COND) good with-me come(NZN)  
'I want to come.'

b. *Ba mhaith liom i a theacht.*  
be(COND) good with-me her CZR come(NZN)  
'I want her to come.'
2.5 Wanting, feeling, saying, thinking

The evaluative use of *maith* can be distinguished from the desiderative use on syntactic grounds, in two ways. These are illustrated in the following example, where the copula verb is in the indicative rather than the conditional form, and *maith* is followed by the preposition *do* ‘to’ instead of *le* ‘with’:

(50) *Is maith dhó i a theacht.*

be good to-him her CZR come(NZN)

*‘It’s good for him that she came.’*

The connection between the two concepts is of course intuitively clear, but here again it is important to consider the nature of the lexical relation. Is the desiderative use of *maith* some kind of figurative use of ‘good’; or are concepts of goodness and desire somehow merged in the meaning of *maith*; or does *maith* have two distinct meanings? Questions like these are by no means easy to resolve, as some of the detailed case studies in this work illustrate. In this Irish example, the syntactic evidence weighs heavily in favour of distinguishing two separate meanings. The desiderative use of *maith* is characterised syntactically by the conditional copula (*ba*) and the preposition *le* ‘with’ introducing the pronoun or NP indicating the person who wants something. This can be expressed in terms of a syntactic formula that specifically identifies the desiderative construction: *ba mhaith le X Z ‘X wants Z’.*

The English verb *desire* is often used as a near synonym of *want*, and ‘want’ must certainly be a major element in its definition, but its meaning is more complex than just ‘want’, and probably includes a component having to do with ‘good’. There is more to desiring something than just wanting it; there must also be some basis for considering it desirable. That is, when we desire something, we think something good about it, and feel something because of this. We can desire something that we think of as bad, and something we don’t even want, as someone who has given up smoking still feels the occasional desire for a cigarette. But even in such a case, for the verb *desire* to be used, there must be some positive thought, such as how good it would taste or feel to have just one puff. This thought can cause one to experience at least a momentary wanting, though at the same time one may have other, stronger reasons for not wanting a cigarette.
These basic components of the meaning of *desire* can be represented more formally in a definition as follows:

\[ X \text{ desires } Y \]
- X thinks something good about Y
- X feels something towards Y because of this
- because of this X wants to do something to Y

The verb *desire* usually takes a direct object (Y) rather than a verbal complement: *I desire to have a cigarette* sounds awkward or affected if not completely ungrammatical. *Desire* is more commonly used as a noun than as a verb, and in this construction it can take either a nominal complement with the preposition *for*, or a verbal complement: *I had a sudden desire for a cigarette/to have a cigarette.*

Whether in the verb or noun form, *desire* involves thinking as well as wanting; thinking of an evaluative kind. This suggestion is compatible with the register difference between *desire* and *want*. *Desire* is suitable for more formal use because it sounds less emotive, more elevated and cerebral than *want* or *wanting*. These connotations arise not just because of the word’s Latinate origin, but because *desire* really is more thoughtful, less immediate than wanting, and it is based on a kind of reasoning process: wanting something because of thinking something good about it. This is another case of a lexical relation that is compositional in nature. *Desire* can be defined in terms of *want* plus some other elements; but *want* cannot be defined in terms of *desire*.

A circumstantial association of wanting with positive feelings or value judgements may be reflected in a variety of other lexical relations. For example, the Samoan emotion term *fiafia* ‘happy’ obviously has some etymological relation to the desiderative verbal modifier *fia* ‘want’. However, *fiafia* is an independent lexeme that does not have any specifically desiderative use or connotations, and wanting is not a necessary element in its definition. It can be defined in terms of ‘feeling something good’, without reference to *fia* ‘want’; in this case the lexical relation of *fiafia* ‘happy’ and *fia* ‘want’ is not a compositional one. In examining lexical relations it is important to determine whether an apparent association of concepts is purely circumstantial or historical, or whether it plays a part in the synchronic meaning of a lexeme, and if so, how.
Similar patterns of lexical relations can be observed in the links between some desiderative expressions and concepts of need or lack. Notions like these are included in the scope of use of desiderative terms in many languages. To give just one example, the Samoan desiderative *fia* 'want' can also be used in contexts where it is probably best translated as 'need':

(51)  
\[E \quad fia \quad fa'savili \quad lāvalava \quad nei.\]  
TAM want air clothes these  
'These clothes need airing.'

In some varieties of English, it is possible to use the verb *want* in a similar way, particularly with an inanimate subject, as in *His coat wants mending*, or *It wants ten minutes to nine*. These uses of *want* in English (*want*₁, unlike *want*₂, as argued below) can be paraphrased in terms of the verb *need*: 'His coat needs to be mended', or 'Ten more minutes need to go by before it will be nine o'clock'. But in many other languages it is not possible to use desiderative terms at all in this way, and one could only use a term referring specifically to need. In French, for example, it would be nonsensical to use *vouloir* 'want' in contexts like these; instead the *il faut* construction is used with reference to something that needs to be done (e.g. *Il faut aérer le lit* 'The bed needs airing').

If in some languages one word (like *want* or *fia*) can encompass both want and need, does this mean that these languages don't differentiate between the two ideas in the same way as other languages (for example French) do? Are the concepts of wanting and needing somehow merged in the Samoan word *fia* and the English word *want*, so that when one says in English *I want to go*, or the Samoan equivalent *'Ou te fia alu*, there is some overtone or implication of a need to go, that isn't present in the French equivalent *je veux aller*?

To give this question the attention it deserves, let us take a closer look at the English verb *want*, before returning to the Samoan *fia*. The noun *want* is sometimes used in relation to need or poverty, as in the annual fundraising *Walk Against Want*. The verb *want* is less often used in relation to need or lack, but is still occasionally used in this sense, as in the well-known King James version of Psalm 23: 'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not *want*'. The more recent NEB retains this use of *want* but uses the noun *nothing* as its direct object: 'The Lord is my shepherd; I
shall want nothing’. Other modern translations and commentaries use the word need instead: the GNB says ‘The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need’, and the Lion handbook explains the phrase as meaning that God ‘provides all that his people need’.

Earlier in the history of English, want could refer simply to not having something, as in an example from 1787 cited in OED: ‘We wanted the plague in Scotland, when they had it in England’. In modern English want could not be used in this way; or if this sentence were said today, it would be interpreted as referring to some twisted or masochistic desire for the plague. In the now rare instances where want refers to need or lack, there is usually some syntactic feature distinguishing it from the desiderative use: an inanimate subject (e.g. His coat wants mending; What you said wanted saying; I never saw a place that wanted so much improvement), a dummy subject (It wants ten minutes to nine), the preposition for (He did not want for abilities), no direct object (I shall not want), or a predicative construction (He is wanting in discretion).

If none of these syntactic clues is present, there may be some ambiguity. Consider the following:

\[(52) \quad I \text{ want ten cents for the phone.}\]

The desiderative interpretation is the most likely one, i.e. ‘I want to get ten cents’ or ‘I want someone to give me ten cents’. However, a non-desiderative interpretation is also possible: that I’m ten cents short of what is necessary to make a forty-cent phone call. For this sense, but not for the desiderative one, the be wanting construction could be substituted: I’m wanting ten cents for the phone. (Cf. also Jespersen’s ambiguous examples I wanted a woman to save me; She wants someone to love.)

Does this rather marginal kind of non-desiderative use of want arise simply because of the circumstantial association between needing and wanting? When we need something we often, though not always, experience a desire for it; and when we want something, we sometimes feel that we need it. This can lead to much personal difficulty, and a major focus in psychological counselling is to help people to distinguish between needing and wanting. Semantically, ‘need’ is a fairly complex, conditional concept: a state of affairs in which, if some condition (the need) is not satisfied, something else cannot happen, often with further undesirable consequences. For example, humans need water; if we don’t get it we
cannot stay alive for very long. This kind of conditional structure is thus quite different in nature from the characterisation of desiderative situations developed above.

All of the non-desiderative examples of want mentioned above can be explained in terms of this analysis of the necessitative sense: if I don’t get ten cents, then I can’t make my phone call; if his coat doesn’t get mended, then he can’t keep warm (or look nice); if ten minutes haven’t gone by, then it can’t be six o’clock yet. The first two imply some further bad consequences, but the last does not, so the semantic formula proposed below does not include a component such as ‘this is bad for X’; in this respect it may not be perfectly synonymous with need. This sense of want can be termed want₂ to distinguish it from the desiderative sense, want₁.

The meaning of want₂ can be represented more formally as follows, with CPLT standing for a complement, discussed further in the next chapter:

\[
X \text{ wants}_2 \text{ CPLT} \\
\text{if this [i.e. the CPLT] doesn't happen} \\
\text{something else can't happen}
\]

Want₁, the desiderative sense, can be distinguished from this necessitative sense, though there is a strong circumstantial association between the two. If I say I want coffee, or I want you to make make me a cup of coffee, it may or may not be that I actually ‘need’ this. It may be that without a cup of coffee I can’t stay awake, or that I need you to make it because I can’t do it myself; but it is equally possible that I simply feel a desire for coffee, without any need whatsoever. In the latter case, it wouldn’t be true to say that ‘if this doesn’t happen, something else can’t happen’.

Thus, it seems possible to identify two distinct senses of want on semantic grounds. This tentative distinction is supported by syntactic evidence: the non-desiderative want₂ is either characterised by or substitutable with the distinctive syntactic patterns described above, while the desiderative want₁ occurs always and only in the syntactic frame X wants₁ CPLT, where X is usually animate, and CPLT is either a noun phrase or a to complement.

We are now in a position to observe some similarities and some differences between the English want₂ and the use of the Samoan desiderative fia in examples like (51). In this example, the NP lāvalava nei
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'these clothes' is inanimate; and it seems that a conditional notion might be involved (e.g. if these clothes don't get aired they can't dry properly, smell nice or some such). But there is a crucial grammatical difference between the English *want* constructions and this *fia* construction in Samoan.

The Samoan construction can be interpreted as having not an inanimate subject, but rather an absent or unspecified one. The NP *lāvalava nei* 'these clothes', in absolutive case, is the object of *fa’asavili* 'air'. If an agent NP is inserted, there is no change in the status of *lāvalava nei* with respect to the verb phrase. Inserting an agent, *le teine* 'the girl', into the original example (53a) produces (53b), in which *fia* cannot be interpreted in any necessitative sense, but only as a desiderative:

(53) a. *E fia fa’asavili lāvalava nei.*

   TAM want air clothes these

   'These clothes need airing.'

b. *E fia fa’asavili e le teine lāvalava nei.*

   TAM want air ERG the girl clothes these

   'The girl wants/*needs to air these clothes.'

In neither (53a) nor (53b) does *fia* refer to the clothes as wanting or needing airing. In both examples it functions as a desiderative, referring to the wishes of the girl in (53b), and to the wishes of an unspecified person in (53a). This fact of Samoan grammar and its implications for the analysis of the meaning of *fia* are explored in detail in the next chapter, on the grammar of desiderative constructions. The point to be noted here is that lexical relations must be analysed on the basis of the structure of each language.

The English *want* and the Samoan *fia* both seem to include a necessititative sense as well as a desiderative sense within their scope of use. However, this similarity in semantic scope is not a basis for assuming that the lexical relations are the same in English and Samoan. An analysis of *want* within the structure of English reveals evidence for two distinct meanings, but when *fia* is analysed within the structure of Samoan, this yields a different result. Similarities in patterns of lexical relations may be observed across languages, but the exact nature of these relations must be analysed on a language-specific basis.
Two other types of lexical association found in a very wide variety of languages are those that link desiderative expressions with the speech act of saying what one wants, and with the concept of future time. Both of these patterns of association can be seen in the semantic scope of the Mandarin Chinese verb "yào ‘want’. The primary use of yào is in desiderative expressions like the following:

(54) Wǒ yào hé nǐ yìqǐ qù.
1s want with 2s together go
'I want to go with you.'

However, yào can be interpreted as a speech act verb, leading to an apparent ambiguity in some contexts:

(55) Nǐ yào wǒmen bāng nǐ?
2s want 1p help 2s
a. ‘Do you want us to help you?’
b. ‘Are you asking us to help you?’

This speech act interpretation of yào is limited to interpersonal contexts, that is where someone wants (or requests) someone else to do something. This kind of semantic association is by no means limited to Mandarin; indeed, the OED gives it as a secondary meaning of the English verb desire, citing an example from Sir Walter Scott, ‘He alighted at the ... Convent, and desired to see the Duke’, meaning not that he wanted to see the Duke, but that he said he wanted to see the Duke. In English, too, the speech act use of desire (unfamiliar to many contemporary speakers) is limited to interpersonal contexts. It is not difficult to see how these ideas are associated. If I want to do something myself, usually I just do it; but if I want another person to do something, usually I have to say something to let the other person know what I want. Moreover, it is difficult to know what someone wants someone else to do, unless the desire is expressed in some outward way.

In both the Mandarin and the English examples, some ambiguity is present. Although the speech act interpretation applies only to interpersonal uses of the desiderative, the reverse is not true: an interpersonal use of yào or desire (i.e. X yào Y V or X desires Y to V) may convey either ‘X wants Y to do V’ or ‘X says X wants Y to do V’ (basically,
though *desire* is more complex than just ‘want’, as discussed above). In both languages, the ambiguity could be resolved by introducing an overt speech act verb. Thus, if the meaning is ‘X says X wants Y to do V’, this could be expressed specifically in Mandarin by including the verb *shuo* ‘say’: *X shuo X yao Y V*, or in the case of English *desire*, *X says X desires Y to V*. The desiderative use of *yao* and *desire* can thus be regarded as basic, and the speech act use as a case of semantic extension.

A different situation is seen in languages where the verb ‘say’ seems to be an obligatory part of one or more kinds of desiderative construction. This is the situation in Hua, mentioned in 2.1 above, where a third person desiderative (e.g. ‘he wants to eat’) is usually expressed via a construction with ‘say’ (‘I will eat, he says’). A somewhat similar pattern applies in Maricopa, where either ‘say’ or ‘think’ is used when wanting is attributed to someone other than the speaker (example 12 above). Especially in languages with morphological desideratives, ‘say’ or ‘think’ may be required as a main verb in some constructions, in order to specify who is the person who wants the desired event to happen. In these cases, the association of ideas may be similar to that underlying the extension of the Mandarin and English desideratives, but the grammatical and semantic consequences are different. The nature of the lexical relation between the desiderative and the speech act expression is not one of optional semantic extension, but in some cases, an obligatory grammatical requirement.

Yet another kind of link between wanting and saying is exemplified by the verb *-so* in Mangap-Mbula. The desiderative use of this verb was shown in example (45b) above, but there are other contexts in which it means ‘say’, and still others in which it means ‘if’. Here again the lexical relation is not one of semantic extension, because each of these three senses is associated with a distinctive set of syntactic characteristics explained in section 6.4 below. In this case, and in the case of the morphological desideratives, the nature of the lexical relations cannot be determined without a detailed examination of language-specific grammatical constraints. The important issues raised by these constructions, including to what extent they may be regarded as truly desiderative in meaning, are discussed in Chapter 6.

The Mandarin verb *yao* can also be used in a modal sense, referring to the immediate future, in contexts like the following:
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(56) Tāmen shuō, "Găpiao yào zhăng jià".
    they say share want inflate value
    'They said, "The price of shares is about to go up".'

This is one of the most widespread types of lexical association found in this study: in a great many languages, desiderative terms can be used in some contexts to refer to future time; and the future tense markers of many languages have developed historically from desiderative expressions. In some instances, the temporal or modal interpretation of a desiderative term is limited to inanimate subject contexts, as appears to be the case in Mandarin: if yào has a human subject, it refers to what this person wants. But since an inanimate thing is not capable of the human experience of wanting, the way is open for yào to undergo a semantic shift from desiderative to future.

If this temporal use of yào is limited to the inanimate-subject construction, there is no possibility of ambiguity, and yào can be considered to have a second meaning limited to this particular construction type. But many cases are more complex and ambiguous. For example, the English auxiliary will is usually used nowadays with reference to future time, but it has some clearly desiderative uses (e.g. *Come with me, if you will*; or Jespersen’s *You will smoke all day long - and then complain of a sore throat*), and some examples are ambiguous between the two (e.g. *Will you do me a favour*?). Pragmatics plays a part in this; a second-person question like this seeks an answer based on the addressee’s own intentions, while a similar question about a third person (*Will she do me a favour*) carries no expectation that the addressee has any inside knowledge of the third person’s desires. Intonation can play a major role in distinguishing the desiderative from the temporal use: when will is stressed it is usually desiderative, unless used in a contrastive temporal sense (e.g. *She isn’t here yet, but I think she will come*).

The lexical association between desiderative expressions and markers of future or immediate future time is often a circumstantial one. When someone wants to do something, they quite often do it shortly thereafter; and if we know or see that someone is about to do something, it is often reasonable to assume that they want to do it. Of course this is not always the case, since sometimes we can’t do what we want, and sometimes we do things we don’t want to do. In the case of an inanimate subject it seems reasonable to assume that future time rather than wanting
is relevant (as with yào in example 56). But it may be necessary to distinguish between a temporal or other secondary meaning and a personification.

While an inanimate subject is characteristic of want₂ in English (as in His coat wants mending), it is also true that want₁ can be used with an inanimate subject, for example This drawer doesn't want to open. This is not the necessitative meaning but a genuinely metaphorical use of want₁, personifying the sticking drawer as wilfully reluctant to open. Will in the same context (This drawer won't open) is open to a purely temporal interpretation (...until you fix the handle), though it can also be a personification of the drawer as stubbornly refusing to open (...no matter what I do). While syntactic information is important in analysing lexical relations, it may not be conclusive in itself.

Desiderative expressions may be associated not only with future time, but also with modal meanings such as irreals, possibility or potential. The 'potential' inflection in Kayardild can be used to refer to ability or possibility, as well as to wanting or future time (as in example 15 above); it can also be used in a modal sense akin to 'should'. The particle la in Buru marks irreals mood, an event that hasn't happened but has the potential to happen, as well as being used in desiderative expressions. In these cases, too, the lexical associations are plausible but not obligatory. Events that people want are often possible, or as yet unrealised; but these conditions are not a necessary part of every desiderative situation. The examples of Kayardild and Buru are explored in the following chapters as case studies of the complex relationships of desideratives with these other temporal and modal concepts.

Finally, mention should be made of the lexical associations found in some languages between desiderative expressions and thinking. Example (12) above showed the use of the verb ‘think’ in Maricopa to attribute wanting to another person; and the role of thinking in addition to wanting as a component of the meaning of desire was discussed above.

In quite a few languages, verbs of thinking can themselves be used in a desiderative sense. For example, the Mandarin verb xiăng ‘think’ can be used to refer to wanting, or perhaps more accurately, intention:

(57) Wǒ xiăng qù kàn wǒ nǎinai.
    1s  think  go  see  1s  grandma
    ‘I want to go and see my grandma.’
Somewhat similar usages can be observed in many other, unrelated languages. In the following example, the Arrernte verb *itirre-* ‘think’, like the English *think of* construction used in the gloss, may refer to anything from idle contemplation to a firm intention to act:

(58) *Re akwele itirre-me impe-rlalhe-tyeke.*

  3s INDIR think-NPP leave-GO&DO-PURP

‘He’s thinking of leaving.’

Because thinking of doing something often leads to wanting to do it, the interpretation of ‘think’ in these contexts may be extended almost to the point of wanting, as the Mandarin *xiāng* in (57) seems almost synonymous with *yào* ‘want’ in (54). However, any true synonymy between words for wanting and thinking is highly improbable. It would be a complete nonsense to suggest that, in Mandarin, *xiāng* always implies *yào*. Rather, this should probably be analysed as a special construction consisting of *xiāng* plus an action complement, meaning something similar to the English *intend*.

*Intend* is a word that specifically combines elements of thinking and wanting. The definition sketched below reflects the fact that *intend* usually applies to one’s own actions (*X intends to* V); the construction *X intends for Y to* V should be defined separately, though along similar lines. Intending implies some degree of belief in the achievability of the intention, that is, thinking that one can do it. It also implies having thought about it for some time, having some basis for wanting to do it, and having some expectation of carrying out the intention. ‘Will’ is shown in brackets to emphasise that its only function here is as an obligatory signal of tense agreement of ‘do’ with ‘after now’:

**X intends to** V

X thinks: I can do V
X has thought about doing it for some time before now
X thinks something good about doing it
because of this X wants: I [will] do it after now
because of this X thinks: I [will] do it after now

Here, thinking and wanting are both a part of the meaning of *intend*, but there is no overlap in meaning between *think* and *want* themselves, nor
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is there any reason to suppose that *want* is a component of the meaning of *think*, or vice versa.

These sketches of different patterns of lexical relations found across languages are by no means exhaustive, but they cover the most common patterns observed in the course of this study, and they serve to illustrate several points that are crucial to the discussion in the following chapters. Perhaps foremost among these is the fact that variations in semantic scope, from minor semantic extensions up to and including multiple polysemy, are not at all unusual in desiderative expressions across languages. Desiderative expressions may be associated with a variety of other lexical categories, from body parts to temporal/modal markers, and very similar patterns of association may be found in completely unrelated languages.

Most of these patterns of association make sense in terms of circumstantial associations in human experience, from the bodily sensations associated with wanting food, to the association of wanting something with the possibility of its future attainment. But the questions they raise for linguistics and cognitive science have to do with how much and in what ways these extralinguistic associations find expression in the structure of languages, and what this can tell us about how such links may be represented in people’s minds.

To address these questions requires a thorough and principled approach to the analysis of linguistic data, in which the observation of patterns like the ones described in this chapter is only the first step. There are no quick and easy solutions here. It is not enough to assign the variations in semantic scope of desiderative words and constructions to extralinguistic factors, because this would not say anything about their expression in linguistic structure. It would say nothing about how, for example, a word like *ahentye* or *lele-* in one grammatical environment denotes a body part, and in another denotes wanting; or about how an inflection like the Kayardild ‘potential’ and an auxiliary like English *will* can refer in some contexts to wanting and in other contexts to future time; or what is the status of these associations in the lexical and grammatical structures of these completely unrelated languages.

It is also not enough to suggest, on the basis of the high degree of semantic overlap between desiderative expressions and a range of other notions, and the variety of grammatical structures and constraints associated with desiderative expressions in different languages, that desideratives are too amorphous and should be abandoned as a category
for crosslinguistic investigation. This would be to ignore the similarities in lexical and grammatical patterns that can be observed across languages. It would say nothing about why, although different languages divide up the range of desiderative situations in different ways, there are many cases of unrelated languages each using one desiderative expression to cover two or more types of situation; or about why morphological desideratives in unrelated languages display similar semantic and grammatical constraints; or why similar patterns of polysemy and other lexical relations are observable in unrelated languages.

This preliminary typological sketch has outlined a number of patterns and tendencies that can be observed among desiderative constructions in a wide range of languages, in both grammatical and lexical structures. It has provided several illustrations of the complex interplay of semantic and grammatical factors that must be taken into account in the analysis of these constructions. And it has yielded some tentative crosslinguistic generalisations for further exploration in subsequent chapters, with a view to assessing whether any central, universal elements of desiderative meaning or structure can be identified across languages.
Chapter 3

Grammar of desiderative constructions

While a very high proportion of the world's languages encode wanting and related notions by means of constructions based on verbs, there is considerable variation in the structure of these verbal desiderative constructions in different languages. Moreover, as already noted, some languages use words and morphemes other than verbs to denote wanting. The great diversity of grammatical constructions involved in desiderative expressions has been a major obstacle to crosslinguistic study and comparison of these expressions, and to the recognition of semantic correspondences between them. Very few grammars of languages discuss desiderative constructions as a category, unless the language being described has some corresponding morphosyntactic category such as a desiderative affix or particle.

However, a noticeable tendency across languages is that desiderative expressions usually involve some of the most elaborate grammatical apparatus in a language: complex verbal or other constructions, complementation devices, interclausal dependency relations, and so on. Because of this, desiderative constructions can usually be found in descriptive grammars even though they are not grouped together as such; and the effort of locating and examining them is usually rewarding because of their interesting syntactic properties.

A study of desiderative expressions yields many examples of the interplay of semantics and syntax. The focus of analysis in the NSM approach is not the individual lexeme but rather the utterance, because lexemes always occur in a context. While each word or morpheme has a discrete meaning, it does not appear in isolation but in one or more constructions: configurations in which the meanings of the individual lexical items interact both with each other and with the meaning of the construction as a whole. And the meaning of a construction is linked with the meanings of other, related constructions in the same language: neither the individual lexeme nor the individual construction can be understood properly in isolation.

This principle is crucial to the assessment of semantic correspondences across languages, and hence to the question of linguistic universals. It is necessary to be able to say, for example, to what extent a
noun like Kiwai *ubi* or an adjective like Japanese *hoshii* can be considered equivalent to a verb like English *want* or Spanish *querer*; or to what extent a reflexive construction like the Russian *Mne xočetsja X* 'I want X' (where *mne* is dative and the verb is reflexive) can be equated with constructions that cannot be reflexive (like Spanish *Quiero X, *A mí se quiere X* 'I want X', '*'X wants itself to me'); or how *querer* with a subjunctive complement or *hoshii* with a 'gerundive' (-te) complement corresponds to *want* with an infinitive complement. To be able to talk about these questions we need to be able to identify and describe the meanings of these various construction types in each language, as well as the individual words that denote something like wanting.

This chapter examines some of the grammatical patterns found in desiderative constructions across languages, showing how the semantics and grammar of different construction types interact with the meanings of individual lexemes to encode various desiderative meanings, and how the similarities and differences between these meanings across languages can be specified.

### 3.1 Parts of speech and grammatical roles

Parts of speech such as verbs, nouns, adjectives and so on have some distinctive semantic properties in addition to the syntactic properties on which their wordclass identification is based. The English nouns *desire, wish* and *hope*, for example, have a somewhat different flavour from the corresponding verbs in the following examples:

(1) a. *Our desire is to please the customer.*
   b. *We desire to please the customer.*

(2) a. *The wish of the majority will prevail.*
   b. *What the majority wish (/want) will prevail.*

(3) a. *My hope is that we can resolve these problems.*
   b. *I hope that we can resolve these problems.*
English *want* is rarely used as a noun, but the fact that it can be so used in psychological jargon illustrates the same kind of contrast between noun and verb:

(4)  
   a. *Try to understand your partner's wants and needs.*  
   b. *Try to understand what your partner wants and needs.*

The nominal constructions, the (a) versions of (1-4), convey a sense of being slightly more abstract and less direct than the verbal (b) constructions. One can talk about *wants, hopes* and *wishes* in general and abstract terms, and about these nouns as if they ‘belong’ to a person (*X’s wants*, etc.), without mentioning any specific instance where *X wants to do Z*, or *X wants Y to do Z*.

These differences in ‘feel’ between nouns and verbs arise from the semantic structure of nouns as a class, discussed in detail by Wierzbicka in her work on the semantic basis of wordclasses. The most prototypical nouns are names of concrete objects, but there are other important classes of nouns such as the ones mentioned above. The English nouns *wish, want* and so on are de-verbal nouns, a class of nouns referring to actions, processes, events and sometimes states; but as nouns they also have a more ‘thing-like’, reified flavour than verbs referring to the same actions, processes, events or states. This quality of nouns may be what underlies an observable preference in English for nouns rather than verbs when referring to emotions, for example (as well as a general preference for nominalisations in formal styles). Using *resentment* or *fear* as nouns, one can speak of doing something with or about these emotions: expressing or overcoming one’s resentment, ignoring or mastering one’s fear. Being able to speak of emotions as if they are ‘things’ allows people to feel as if they have some power over these emotional states, a power not suggested by the verbal constructions *I resent this, I fear this.*

The syntactic properties of nouns contribute to this effect. Noun constructions can relegate the human experiencer of wanting to a background role by allowing the formal subject of the sentence to be inanimate or abstract. The semantic effect of such a syntactic grounding device can be seen by comparing the following:

(5)  
   a. *Her hope for a better life was sadly disappointed.*  
   b. *She hoped for a better life, but was sadly disappointed.*
3.1 Parts of speech and grammatical roles

Not only does (5a) have a non-human subject noun, but the link between the emotion words and the experiencer is attenuated. The possessive (her hopes) of course implies that 'she hoped', but this is not indicated directly; the nature of the connection between the emotion and the experiencer in (5a) is more vague than in (5b). Pluralising the noun (Her hopes for a better life) makes the effect even vaguer, by removing any suggestion of a single identifiable act of hoping. And of course the second emotion mentioned, disappointment, is formally attributed in (5a) to the abstract 'hope' rather than to the human experiencer as in (5b) (her hope was disappointed cf. she was disappointed).

These semantic and syntactic effects explain why it does not seem fully accurate to equate a nominal 'want' construction in one language with a verbal 'want' construction in another. This is particularly so when comparing a language that contrasts nominal and verbal desiderative constructions, as English does in the examples above, with a language that has only a nominal construction. In the Papuan language Kiwai, for example, the normal way of saying 'X wants Z' is by means of a construction with the desiderative noun ubi:

(6) Mo ubi airere a uwo gido.
   1s want 3s-be sleep(INF) for
   'I want to sleep.'

(7) Ro ubi ebeta?
   2s want what
   'What do you want?'

The verb erea seen in (6) is optional in this construction; it is a positional verb that can function as a copula. This ubi construction is the main desiderative construction in Kiwai; it does not contrast with any verbal 'want' construction. But because English does have a contrast between nominal and verbal desiderative constructions, it seems intuitively more accurate to reflect this somehow in the English gloss, for example by saying that the Kiwai mo ubi airere 'literally' means 'My wish (it) remains'.

But is this really more accurate? The English sentence My wish is to/for sleep sounds unusual, archaic; while the Kiwai nominal construction is the ordinary, everyday way of saying 'I want to sleep'. There is no other, more usual construction with which it contrasts, in the
way that English *My wish is to sleep* contrasts with *I want to sleep*. Of course one can argue the pros and cons of particular glosses on many grounds, but I am suggesting that it is misleading to assume that two grammatically parallel constructions, such as the Kiwai and the English nominal desiderative constructions, are any more equivalent than the Kiwai nominal and the English verbal construction are.

English has a basic desiderative construction, *X wants CPLT* (where CPLT stands for a complement; complements of desideratives are discussed in the next section). Other English constructions that contrast with this construction do so because they contain elements of meaning other than or additional to those contained in the basic construction. So the English nominal construction *X's wish is CPLT* would have to be defined in terms of the basic *X wants CPLT* plus some other elements involved in the lexical meaning of *wish*.

Kiwai, on the other hand, has as its basic desiderative construction *X ubi CPLT*, and this construction does not contrast with any more basic Kiwai construction. There is no evidence that *X ubi CPLT* involves any elements of meaning additional to or other than ‘*X wants CPLT*’. In this sense, therefore, the Kiwai nominal construction *X ubi CPLT* should be regarded as semantically equivalent to the English verbal construction *X wants CPLT*: semantically equivalent in the sense that it contains exactly the same elements of meaning, no more elements and no fewer elements.

The English nominal construction *X's wish is CPLT* is not fully equivalent to *X wants CPLT* or *X ubi CPLT* because it contains more elements of meaning. Even apart from the lexical difference between English *wish* and *want*, English nominal desiderative constructions have a special, marked quality because they contrast with the more ordinary, unmarked verbal desideratives; and the nature of this contrast can also be identified by comparing the semantics of the two construction types.

Consider for a moment a rather marginal English construction, *X's want is CPLT*, for the purpose of comparing it with the verbal construction *X wants CPLT*. Although the nominal construction is unusual in English, it is possible to think of a context in which it could be said. For example, after reading one of those books that urge one to be aware of one's partner's wants and needs, I might conceivably initiate a late-night discussion aimed at finding out more about those of my partner; and my partner might well protest, saying something like: 'I'll tell you about my
wants and needs! Right now I’ve only got one want and one need: *my want is to go to sleep, and my need is to do it now!*'

Fanciful though this example may seem, it allows us to observe the central semantic difference between *my want is to sleep* and *I want to sleep*. The difference is one of presupposition. The nominal, possessive *my want is* contrasts with *I want* in that the former presupposes the latter: if I refer to *my want* or *my wish* it is presupposed that I want or wish for something. This presupposition effect can be spelt out in a statement of the meaning of the construction, as follows:

\[
X's\ want\ is\ CPLT\ (e.g.\ My\ want\ is\ to\ sleep)\\ 
\text{people\ can\ know: } X\ \text{wants something}\\ 
\text{this\ something\ is\ CPLT}
\]

That is, it is assumed (people can know) that I want something; what I say about this something is that it is ‘CPLT’, in this case ‘to sleep’. In English this construction contrasts with the verbal construction that has no such presupposition:

\[
X\ wants\ CPLT\ (e.g.\ I\ want\ to\ sleep)\\ 
X\ wants\ CPLT
\]

That is, the verbal construction is indefinable in that it cannot be reduced to any more or any smaller elements of meaning; whereas the nominal construction has more elements of meaning.

In Kiwai, however, *X ubi CPLT* is apparently the unmarked way of referring to wanting, and it does not seem to make reference to any additional presupposition. The English nominal construction is able to encode the additional presuppositional meaning because of the availability of two constructions in English; when two alternative constructions are available in a language, one of them often acquires additional semantic content. The meanings of construction types in each language must be identified by investigation and comparison of the range of constructions available in the language in question, and it cannot be assumed that grammatically similar construction types in two languages are semantically equivalent.

So, although *ubi* is a noun, the meaning of the Kiwai construction is still identifiable as follows:
3.1 Parts of speech and grammatical roles

\[ X \text{ ubi (erea) CPLT} (\text{e.g. 6, 7}) = \]
\[ X \text{ wants CPLT} \]

Of course these definitions are framed in the English version of NSM, but exactly the same equivalence would apply if the definitions were framed in a Kiwai metalanguage:

\[ X \text{ wants CPLT} = \]
\[ X \text{ ubi CPLT} \]

\[ X \text{ ubi (erea) CPLT} = \]
\[ X \text{ ubi CPLT} \]

While some languages do have nouns as their primary desiderative lexemes, nominal desiderative constructions are not nearly as common as verbal ones, and there is an observable trend across languages for desiderative nouns to show verbal tendencies of one kind or another. They may be accompanied by optional verbal elements like *erea* in Kiwai, or *-irre-* and *-ne-* which often accompany the nominal *ahentye* 'want' in Arrernte as described in the previous chapter. In Buru, *suka* 'like, want' has some nominal and some verbal properties, and is termed a 'nominal verb' (see 4.4 below). This accords with the theory that as a semantic prime, WANT is of the nature of a predicate, rather than, say, a substantive, and may thus be expected to display some verb-like characteristics in most languages; but it is not the case that all equivalents of WANT must be verbs.

The proposal that a nominal construction like Kiwai *X ubi CPLT*, Arrernte *X ahentye CPLT* or Mangap-Mbula *X lele-ng CPLT* can be deemed semantically equivalent to English *X wants CPLT* or Spanish *X quiere CPLT* does not necessarily conflict with the idea that nouns as a class have different semantic properties from verbs. The semantic properties of different wordclasses can contribute to the semantic associations or the semantic 'resonance' of a word or a construction, without necessarily affecting the elements contained in its lexical meaning. The term 'resonance' has been introduced very recently in NSM semantic theory, to describe non-compositional, non-paraphrasable effects resulting from the association between separate meanings of a single lexical form, or from
other formal associations such as morphological or wordclass relationships. Several types of resonance are examined in the present study, and the nature of this theoretical construct and some constraints upon it are discussed in section 6.3 below. The case of nominal desideratives is a useful first example of how this kind of resonance effect works.

The most prototypical, concrete-object nouns in all languages probably share the same kind of semantic structure: they may be defined in terms of, first of all, 'a kind of thing', followed by details of what kind of thing and the nature of the specific thing being defined, as demonstrated in Wierzbicka's work on concrete objects. Internal-experience nouns certainly do not have the same semantic structure as concrete-object nouns, but they acquire their 'thing-like' quality by association with more prototypical nouns: a want or a wish, an ubi or an ahentye would not actually be definable as 'a kind of thing that people feel' (cf. the previous chapter), but they can readily be thought of and spoken of in such terms.

The effect is more pronounced when there is a contrast between a nominal and a verbal expression (as in the case of English wish, want etc.), but the 'thing-like' resonance of nouns is an effect of the semantics of the wordclass itself. However, the semantic character of a wordclass derives from its most prototypical members, and does not dictate nor form a part of the lexical meaning of all members of the set: not all nouns are defined via 'thing' nor as 'a kind of thing'. In particular, desiderative nouns are not 'a kind of thing', though some of their resonance is derived from their wordclass association with other nouns that are words for 'a kind of thing'.

Another wordclass in which desiderative words are sometimes found is the adjective class. In Japanese, for example, the most frequently used desiderative term is the adjective hoshii, as in the following:

(8) (Watashi wa) okane ga hoshii.
1s TOP money NOM want
'I want money.'

(9) (Watashi wa) kare ni hayaku ki-te hoshii.
1s TOP 3s DAT soon come-SER want
'I want him to come soon.'
Japanese also has a desiderative verbal suffix, *-tai*, which marks a verb as ‘wanted’:

(10) *(Watashi wa)* *(mizu o)* *nomi-tai.*  
1s TOP water ACC drink-DES  
‘I want (some water) to drink.’

The derived form (e.g. *nomi-tai*) is treated grammatically as an adjective, taking the same suffixes to derive negative, conditional and other forms as *hoshii* and other ‘true adjectives’ do. In the above examples the reference to the ‘wanter’ is in brackets because in Japanese any reference to internal states (physical or emotional, e.g. *samui* ‘(feel) cold’, *ureshii* ‘(feel) happy’), is assumed to be in the first person, except in special circumstances (see 6.4 below); and because of this the reference to ‘I’ seems to Japanese speakers somewhat redundant.

The relationships between *hoshii*, *-tai* and their complements will be explored further, but for the present let us note that like the desiderative nouns considered above, desiderative adjectives have a somewhat different flavour from desiderative verbs. In translating from Japanese to English, people often feel it is more accurate or more literal to translate a sentence like (8) as ‘Money is desirable to me’ rather than the verbal construction ‘I want money’.

The contrast between the English adjective *desirable* and the verb *desire* allows us to observe some of the semantic and syntactic properties of desiderative adjectives, though English has no adjective corresponding to the verb *want*, as Japanese has no verb corresponding to the adjective *hoshii* in current use (the archaic verb *hossuru* is discussed in 6.4 below). An English sentence like *Money is desirable to me* sounds much milder than the verbal construction *I desire money*. Both sentences are a little unusual in English, but the ‘mildness’ of the adjectival construction is due not to its peculiarity but to its syntax and its semantics.

The English *desirable* is of course morphologically complex, and it is also semantically complex. *Z is desirable (to X)* means not just ‘X desires Z’ but ‘X can/could desire Z’: Z is ‘able’ to be desired, but is not necessarily the object of anyone’s desire. *Hoshii* has no such ‘potential’ (can/could) component in its meaning: *(X wa) Z hoshii* means ‘X wants Z’, not ‘X can/could want Z’. In addition to this semantic difference, the syntactic
properties of the adjectival construction contribute to the 'milder' effect in important ways.

The English adjectival construction *Money is desirable to me* syntactically 'backgrounds' the human participant, by having the object of desire, *money*, in the subject slot and relegating the desirer (*me*) to a prepositional phrase. And because of the weakness of the syntactic link between the desire and the desirer, this construction opens up the possibility of removing reference to a desirer altogether, as in *Money is desirable*. Of course this still implies that someone can/could desire money, but the omission of any specific reference to a desirer leaves this construction vague as to whether the 'someone' who can/could desire money is the speaker, someone else, or just people in general.

Does this mean that two adjectival constructions would have to be recognised, one with and one without reference to a 'desirer'? These could be represented as *Z is desirable to X* (implying 'X can/could desire Z') and *Z is desirable* (implying 'someone can/could desire Z'). But this formulation is not fully explanatory, because the contrast between the verbal construction *X desires Z* and the adjectival *Z is desirable (to X)* is based on more than just a semantic difference between the lexemes *desire* and *desirable (= 'desire' + 'can/could')*. The two English construction types differ primarily in that *X desires Z* is an assertion about X, while *Z is desirable (to X)* is an assertion about Z, and the role of X is peripheral to this assertion about Z.

As shown in the preceding chapter, *X desires Z* predicates (about X) that X wants Z because of thinking something good about it. But *Z is desirable (to X)* is a construction that predicates something about Z (not about X). And what is predicated about Z is not that some specific person wants it, but that it can or could be desired. Mention of a specific desirer (X) is optional, appearing if at all in a prepositional phrase. The meaning of the construction could be sketched more formally as follows:

\[
Z \text{ is desirable} \\
\text{people can think something good about } Z \\
\text{people could feel something toward } Z \text{ because of this} \\
\text{because of this people could want to do something with } Z
\]

If the prepositional phrase *to X* is added, this could be represented in a formula for *Z is desirable to X* by an additional component along the lines
of ‘X feels something like this toward Z’. Compare this with the somewhat more straightforward verbal construction sketched in the previous chapter:

\[ X \text{ desires } Z \]

X thinks something good about Z
X feels something towards Z because of this because of this X wants to do something with Z

Comparing the two construction types in this way allows us to identify the specific semantic content of each, and to observe clearly the nature of the differences between them. The two formulae above show how the English adjectival and verbal constructions differ in meaning, and how the semantic components of the adjectival construction operate to produce the ‘milder’ effect.

But does the Japanese adjectival construction with hoshii have the same semantic content as the English construction with desirable? Almost certainly not: there is much evidence to the contrary. First, as noted above, there is no evidence for any ‘potential’ component in the meaning of hoshii, so ‘can’/‘could’ should be excluded. Second, hoshii is not derived from a synchronic verb in quite the same way that desirable is, so it does not imply that ‘Z is such that someone does V (where V=‘desire’)’. Third, the hoshii construction does not contrast with any verbal desiderative construction in the way that the English desirable and desire constructions contrast. There is no simpler or more basic desiderative in Japanese than the adjectival hoshii and -tai ones, so the meaning of (X wa) Z hoshii cannot be assumed to contain any additional components in contrast with some semantically simpler construction that means just ‘X wants Z’. X wa Z hoshii can therefore be deemed semantically equivalent to X wants Z, in that there is no evidence that the hoshii construction has either any more or any fewer components in its meaning.

Perhaps the strongest evidence comes from the ways in which hoshii and V-tai differ from more typical Japanese adjectives. They are so strongly linked with a specific experiencer that they are hardly ever used attributively, unlike other adjectives that are often found in attributive use (e.g. warui hito ‘bad person’). In instances where hoshii can be used attributively, it presupposes the existence of someone in particular who wants the noun, for example:
This sentence does not convey that sashimi is desirable in general, but that someone in particular desires it. In this construction the wanter is not limited to first person, as in the predicative constructions (8-10) above: anata 'you' or ano hito 'that person' could be substituted here for watashi 'I'; but if no wanter is specified it is assumed to be the speaker, not just people in general. No such presupposition applies to other adjectives: warui tabemono 'bad food' carries no implication that the food is bad to or for anyone in particular; it is simply bad.

Just as in the predicative constructions (8-10) above, hoshii carries an inbuilt assumption that there is some particular 'wanter', namely the speaker unless otherwise indicated. Okane ga hoshii doesn’t mean just that money is generally desirable; it means the speaker wants money, hence the redundant effect of watashi 'I' in (8). In this feature, hoshii is different from other adjectives such as daiji 'important': Okane ga daiji means 'money is important', but carries no implication that it is important to anyone in particular, only that it is important in general.

This evidence suggests that the meaning of hoshii constructions is different from the meaning of ordinary Japanese adjectival constructions. The nature of adjectival constructions in general deserves a fuller discussion than is possible here, but on the basis of what is known about adjectives as a class it is reasonable to suppose that typical adjectives in most languages have a basic semantic structure involving something that is asserted 'about Z' (as suggested for desirable above). So, for Japanese, the meaning of an ordinary adjectival construction could be represented along the following lines:

Okane ga daiji ('money is important')
people think this about money:
   it is like something big
   it is good if a person thinks about it

If a similar adjectival semantic structure were assigned to a hoshii construction, the resulting explication would be phrased in terms of something knowable 'about money', namely that it is wanted:
Okane ga hoshii ('money is wanted/desirable')
people can know this about money:
people want it

But this explication is not adequate for the hoshii construction, because it does not take into account the evidence that okane ga hoshii presupposes that someone in particular wants money, that this someone is the speaker, and this presupposition is so clear that the actual reference to this 'wanter' (watashi 'I') can be omitted without altering the meaning that the speaker is the wanter. Therefore an adequate representation of the hoshii construction would have to be more specific than the general adjectival construction:

Okane ga hoshii
someone wants money
people can know: I am this someone

While different from the general adjectival construction, this implied first-person construction is also different from hoshii constructions in which the wanter is overtly mentioned:

Watashi wa okane ga hoshii
I want money

Such an analysis of hoshii constructions has the power to explain not only how hoshii can function as a semantic equivalent of WANT, but also how its adjectival properties affect both its semantic resonance and its syntactic behaviour. The most prototypical members of the adjective class, in Japanese as in other languages, are words that describe things or people: words that tell what someone or something is like, and so the semantic structure of many adjectives involves a component that something is known or thought 'about' the thing or person. But not all adjectives have this kind of semantic structure; it is associated with, but not dictated by membership of this particular wordclass. So, while hoshii constructions can be understood as having their own semantic structure as analysed above, the wordclass membership of hoshii contributes a resonance effect whereby, while a sentence like (8) actually means 'I want money', it has a
flavour similar to other adjectival constructions that tell us 'people think/can know this about money:....'

Moreover, the syntactic properties of hoshii as an adjective allow the human participant, the wanter, to be backgrounded or even omitted grammatically from a hoshii construction (e.g. Okane ga hoshii), while as seen above, a wanter is still present both in the semantic structure ('someone wants money') and the pragmatic implicature ('people can know: I am this someone') of this construction.

The (X wa) V-tai constructions (e.g. 10 above) are slightly different both from the typical adjectival constructions and from the hoshii constructions. V-tai is even less likely to be used attributively than hoshii is. Because it is derived from a verb, it is both syntactically and semantically linked with a performer of that particular verb. With V-tai the wanter must be coreferential with the performer of the verb, unlike hoshii where a verbal complement has a performer other than the wanter (e.g. 9 above).

Although the wanter can be omitted grammatically from a V-tai construction, it remains part of the semantic structure. The sentence (Mizu o) nomi-tai cannot be interpreted as meaning that drinking (water) is desirable in a general sense, but only that someone in particular, namely the speaker, wants to drink (water). The strength of the semantic link of -tai with a wanter is also reflected in comments by Japanese informants that -tai constructions seem to imply more about the experiencer’s emotional state than hoshii constructions do; for example, that (Watashi wa) iki-tai conveys something more like 'I am anxious to go', in comparison with (Watashi wa) kimii ni iki-te hoshii ‘I want you to go’. This comparison will be discussed further in the next section.

The V-tai constructions with and without overt wanter may be represented as follows:

\[ X \text{ wa (Yo)} V\text{-tai} \text{ (e.g. 10)} \]
\[ X \text{ wants to do } V \text{ (to } Y) \]

\[ (Yo) V\text{-tai} \text{ (e.g. 10)} \]
\[ \text{someone wants to do } V \text{ (to } Y) \]
\[ \text{people can know: I am this someone} \]

In the fairly rare cases where V-tai can be used attributively, wanter and performer are clearly coreferential, for example shin-i-tai hito ‘person who
wants to die’. In this attributive use, V-tai conforms more to the typical
adjectival meaning of something knowable about the modified noun:

\[
V\text{-}tai \ N \ (\text{e.g. } shini\text{-}tai \ hito) \\
\text{people can know this about } N: \\
\text{this person wants to do } V
\]

The same is probably true of the attributive use of hoshii mentioned
above:

\[
hoshii \ N \ (\text{e.g. } hoshii \ \text{tabemono}) \\
\text{people can know this about } N: \\
\text{someone wants this}
\]

The Japanese adjectival desideratives, then, can be seen to have a
semantic resonance arising from their wordclass association with other
adjectives that tell what something is like; but the predicative hoshii and
V-tai constructions are different from these more typical adjectival
constructions in that their semantic content is not ‘people think this about
Z’ but rather ‘someone (X) wants Z’. The adjectival syntactic properties of
hoshii and V-tai contribute to the resonance effect by permitting the
wanter to be omitted grammatically from \((X \ wa) \ Z \text{ hoshii and } (X \ wa) \ V\text{-}tai\)
constructions; but a wanter (‘someone’) is still present in the semantics of
these constructions. Thus the Japanese adjectival desiderative construc-
tions can be deemed semantically equivalent to the verbal desiderative
constructions of other languages (e.g. English \(X \text{ wants } Z\)) rather than to
adjectival constructions derived from them but containing additional
elements of meaning (e.g. English \(Z \text{ is desirable (to } X)\)). The wordclass
does not dictate the semantic content.

Another example of the relationship of wordclass properties and
semantic content comes from languages that have various classes of verbs,
where the resonance of desiderative verbs may be influenced by the
semantics of their verbclass. This is the case in Acehnese, an Austronesian
language that distinguishes actor-oriented from undergoer-oriented verbs.
Acehnese has a variety of verbs with desiderative meanings, some
belonging to the actor-taking (A) class and some to the undergoer-taking
(U) class. The grammar distinguishes between these two classes of
predicates in that A predicates have proclitics controlled by the actor
argument, while U predicates have none. These proclitics are seen in (12) and (13) below, where both tém ‘want’ and jak ‘go’ are A verbs:

(12) Ka i-tém jak.
    already 3-want go
    ‘Now he wants to go.’

(13) Meunyö gata h’an ta-tém jak di lôn pih h’an.
    if 2s NEG 2-want go FOC 1s too NEG
    ‘If you don’t want to go, then I too don’t [want to go].’

While tém is a satisfactory equivalent of ‘want’ in examples like these, there are two grammatical constraints on its use: the complement verb (e.g. jak ‘go’) must be an A verb, and its actor must be coreferential with the A of tém.

Another desiderative verb, meuh’eut ‘want’, belongs to the U class, so it takes no proclitic. The complement verb can be either an A or a U verb:

(14) Lôn meuh’eut lôn-jak u Makah.
    1s want 1s-go to Mecca
    ‘I want to go to Mecca.’

(15) Di jih meuh’eut-jih that keu maté.
    FOC 3s want-3 very to death
    ‘She wants to die (but cannot).’

Meuh’eut, unlike tém, also allows a clausal complement with a non-coreferential actor or undergoer:

(16) Di gopnyan meuh’eut-geuh that aneuk-geuh ji-jak sikula.
    FOC 3s want-3 very child-3 3-go school
    ‘They very much want(ed) their children to go to school.’

Meuh’eut also allows an NP complement; complements of this kind are discussed in the following section.
Another common desiderative construction in Acehnese uses the verb *galak* 'be happy' with a complement sometimes but not always introduced by the desiderative particle *beu*:

(17) \[ \text{Lon galak beu-neu-woe laju.} \]

1s happy DES-2-return immediately
'I want you to return immediately.'

(18) \[ \text{Lon galak droeneuh neu-pubuet lageè nyoe.} \]

1s happy you 2-do way this
'I want/am happy for you to do this.'

The particle *beu* (like its negative counterpart *bèk*) is frequently used to introduce what the speaker wants:

(19) \[ \text{Beu-that neu-peh tambô.} \]

DES-very 2-hit drum
'Hit the drum hard.'

(20) \[ \text{Bu-mudah raseuki.} \]

DES-easy fortune
'May fortune smile upon (you).'

(21) \[ \text{Beu-geu-riwang lom Teungku Jôhan u Acêh.} \]

DES-3-return again title Johan to Aceh
'I want Johan to come back to Aceh again.'

In addition to *tém, meuh'eut, galak* and *beu*, there are several other Acehnese verbs with desiderative meanings. *Keumeung, meu* and *(keu)neuk*, all glossed as 'will, want', are A verbs like *tém*. *Teugiyan* 'desire', *ék* 'like' and *seugan* 'not want to' are U verbs; while *galak* '(be) happy' is one of a very few verbs that can take either an A or a U argument. As noted in the previous chapter, these verbs are all more semantically complex than *meuh'eut* or *tém*. A more detailed look at the desiderative construction types involving *beu, galak, tém* and *meuh'eut* can serve to illustrate how the semantics of the word and the construction type interact.
3.1 Parts of speech and grammatical roles

A beu construction (e.g. 19-21 above) is often the closest translation equivalent for 'I want', but it is limited to first-person use. In addition it seems to carry an illocutionary message, signalling not just 'I want' but 'I say: I want'. So, the meaning of a beu construction would have to be defined via a desiderative verb (probably meuh'eu in Acehnese because of its freedom from coreferentiality constraints), for example:

\[ \text{Beu } Y \, V \]  
(e.g. 21)

I say: I want: Y [will] do V

In all the explications that follow, 'will' is used in the same way as an obligatory agreement marker; the bracketing device is usually omitted for ease of reading.

The galak constructions (17-18 above) are often used in desiderative contexts, but authorities on the language regard galak as conveying something like 'be happy/pleased (that...)' rather than indicating actual wanting. Example (17) is a direct statement of what the speaker wants, but here galak is accompanied by beu, which contributes the specifically desiderative meaning; compare this with (18) where galak by itself does not convey wanting unambiguously. This is consistent with the meaning of galak when it occurs without a clausal complement. The meaning of X galak is probably as simple as 'X feels something good'. The complement construction involves some relationship between galak and the complement, along the following lines:

\[ \text{X galak } Y \, V \]  
(e.g. 18)

if Y does V, X will feel something good because of this

The inclusion of beu introducing the complement may then involve a combination of the two meanings. Because beu can refer only to the speaker's wishes, not anyone else's, X in this case is 'I'. Here 'I say' is bracketed because beu as a complementiser may not have quite the same illocutionary force as when it is used as an illocutionary particle:

\[ \text{Lon galak beu } Y \, V \]  
(e.g. 17)

[I say:] I want: Y will do V

if Y does it, I will feel something good because of this
3.1 Parts of speech and grammatical roles

Galak itself, then, probably doesn’t include ‘want’ as part of its meaning, though the explications above show how it so readily lends itself to desiderative use with a non-coreferential clausal complement; all the more so when accompanied by beu which does involve ‘want’ in its meaning. Although a beu construction may be the best translation for many ‘I want’ constructions, beu cannot be used to define other desiderative constructions with tém, meuh’eut etc., which are not limited to first-person and present-tense use; but beu Y V can be defined via lôn meuh’eut Y V ‘I want Y to do V’.

Returning now to tém, we have observed that it is limited to coreferential complements with an A verb. This construction type may be shown as follows, where X[PC] is the pronominal proclitic coreferential with X, and V[A] indicates that the verb is an A verb:

\[ X \ X[PC]-tém \ V[A] \]  (e.g. 12-13)
\[ X \text{ wants: } X \text{ will do } V \]

Meuh’eut too can occur with an A verb, but it does not have to do so; and its complement can be non-coreferential. This construction can be represented without any stipulation for the verb (A or U), and without any reference to the presence or absence of proclitics on the complement verb, because this is entirely determined by the particular verb, not by the meuh’eut construction itself:

\[ X \text{ meuh'eat } X/Y \text{ V} \]  (e.g. 14-16)
\[ X \text{ wants: } X/Y \text{ will do } V \]

If the V in this construction is an A verb, it will have its own proclitic, as seen in (14) above.

Comparing the tém and meuh’eut constructions, it should now be clear that the meuh’eut construction could be substituted for all instances of the tém construction, but not vice versa. The tém construction could only be substituted for the meuh’eut one in cases where the complement verb is both A-taking and coreferential. Thus tém could be defined in terms of meuh’eut but not vice versa:

\[ X \ X[PC]-tém \ V[A] = \]
\[ X \text{ meuh'eat } X \text{ V} \]
3.1 Parts of speech and grammatical roles

\[ X \text{ meuh'eat } X/Y/V \]
\[ \neq X \ X[PC]-tém \ V[A] \]

Only one subtype of \textit{meuh'eat} construction could be defined in terms of \textit{tém}:

\[ X \text{ meuh'eat } X \ V[A] = \]
\[ X \ X[PC]-tém \ V[A] \]

What, then, is the nature of the semantic relation of \textit{tém} to \textit{meuh'eat}? Are they to be regarded as fully synonymous although subject to different syntactic constraints, or is there a semantic difference underlying the difference in grammatical properties? This question is particularly important in understanding the nature of allolexy within NSM theory.

A semantic prime, such as WANT, may have more than one equivalent in a particular language, associated with different syntactic environments. If two lexemes, each in its own syntactic environment, are fully equivalent to this semantic prime, having no more and no fewer components of meaning than WANT, then they are allolexes of this prime and they are in an allolexical relationship to each other. The clearest cases of allolexy are those where the allolexes (like allophones in phonology) are in complementary distribution. This is arguably the case for Japanese \textit{hoshii} and \textit{-tai}, where \textit{-tai} takes only a coreferential verb complement, while \textit{hoshii} takes NP and non-coreferential \textit{V-te} complements; the choice or \textit{hoshii} or \textit{-tai} is usually predictable from the syntactic environment. But not all languages present clear cases of complementary distribution. In Acehnese, the distribution of \textit{tém} and \textit{meuh'eat} is not fully complementary because either can occur with a coreferential A verb complement, as shown above.

Can this still be considered a case of allolexy? To answer this question we would have to establish either that (a) one of the two is more semantically complex than the other, and they are not allolexes; or that (b) their distinctive syntactic properties are sufficient to distinguish them as allolexes despite one environment in which they may be in free variation; or that (c) in their mutually exclusive contexts they are fully allolexical, but in the overlapping construction type one conveys more elements of
3.1 Parts of speech and grammatical roles

meaning than the other. Each of these possibilities will be examined in
detail, but first it is necessary to consider some evidence about the
semantics of these two verbs.

From the available data, including examples like (12-16) above, both
tém and meuh'eat appear to be good equivalents of WANT, conveying no
more and no fewer elements of meaning. But the possibility of additional
semantic complexity should be considered, particularly in view of
suggestions by Durie and colleagues that tém has implications of 'control
over the thing wanted' and/or of 'active readiness to do something'; and
that with meuh'eat there may be 'a suggestion that there is some obstacle
and the desire may or may not be fulfilled'. These implications are
associated with the fact that tém takes an A argument and meuh'eat takes
a U; the suggestion is that in those cases where tém can take a non-A
complement verb, tém has a different meaning, namely 'have the ability
to' (cf. 5.4 below on the relationship of ability and potentiality to wanting).

Durie, whose work shows an extraordinarily deep insight into the
semantics of Austronesian grammatical relations, has suggested that A
verbs may be inherently volitional and may therefore be semantically
complex, including, in addition to the action meaning itself, something
like 'something happens because the Actor wants it'. Causatives, formed
with the prefix peu-, always take Actors. Some A verbs have non-
volitional, non-A counterparts, formed with the prefix teu- (e.g. peugah
'say', teupeugah 'say by accident, happen to mention').

The idea that the division of predicates into two classes is not
arbitrary, but has some basis in meaning, is supported by the fact that most
of the A predicates seem to involve volition or intention in a way that
non-A predicates do not (e.g. 'hit' takes an A, 'fall' does not). Further
supporting evidence comes from verb derivation: the fact that causatives
take Actors, and the fact that the teu- prefix produces a clear set of contrasts
between verbs with and without a volitional element.

However, it is important to distinguish between lexical material,
such as the prefixes teu- and peu-, and grammatical classes whose
members have grammatical behaviour but no actual lexical material in
common. The A predicates all take the cross-referencing pronominal
proclitics, but there are no common lexical elements shared by all A
predicates. Not all the A verbs have a meaning component such as 'this
happens because A wants it'. Therefore, while wanting may be an element
in the definitions of many (though not all) of the members of the A class, a
meaning 'want' cannot be tied directly to the grammatical class through any lexical material.

The prefix teu-, on the other hand, deriving non-volitional, non-A predicates from members of the A class, seems to have a clearly identifiable lexical meaning, along the lines of 'not because someone wants this'. That is, comparing an A verb and its derived counterpart:

\[
\begin{align*}
X & \text{peughah "Z"} \quad \text{cf.} \quad X \text{teupeughah "Z"} \\
X \text{ says "Z"} & \quad X \text{ says "Z"} \\
& \quad \text{not because X wants this}
\end{align*}
\]

This has the added advantage of being able to explain why some A predicates can have derived forms with teu-, while others cannot. For example, tém 'want' and thèe 'know' have no counterparts with teu-. In the case of tém, the use of the teu- prefix would be blocked by a clear semantic clash, along the following lines:

\[
\begin{align*}
X & \text{tém Z} \quad \text{cf.} \quad *X \text{teu-tém Z} \\
X \text{ wants Z} & \quad X \text{ wants Z} \\
& \quad *\text{not because X wants this}
\end{align*}
\]

The incompatibility of teu- with thèe 'know' may arise because one either knows or doesn't know something, regardless of whether one wants this or not.

Acehnese predicate classes, then, are rather like other wordclasses in that they have some prototypical members that contribute a semantic resonance to the wordclass as a whole, but this resonance does not dictate the meanings of all members of the class. The A class includes many members, like 'hit' and the peu- causatives, that share a meaning component 'someone (X) wants this'. It also has other members like thèe which means 'know (by personal experience)', but which acquires a mildly volitional resonance by association with the other more prototypical members of this class. The U class includes many members, like seugan 'not want' and the teu- verbs, that share a meaning component like 'not because X wants this'; but it also includes members like rasa which means just 'feel' but acquires a passive or avolitional resonance by association with other members of its class.
Since the predicate classes do not dictate the semantic content of their members, it cannot be assumed that tém has any more components of meaning than meuh'eut, or vice versa, arising from their A or U class membership. The suggested connotations of control or willingness with tém and possible hindrance with meuh'eut, may be explainable as wordclass resonance effects. The nature of this resonance can be spelt out but does not actually form part of the meaning of all A or U predicates (these classes include many more than their most prototypical members). When an A argument is present, the chances are that 'this is something that can happen if someone wants it', and when a U argument is present, the chances are that 'this can happen not because someone wants it'; but these semantic associations are not part of the meaning of every A and every U lexeme or construction.

This largely rules out the possibility that either tém or meuh'eut is inherently more semantically complex than the other (possibility (a) above). Next, it should be considered whether there is any evidence for possibility (c), that the meaning of the particular construction $X$ meuh'eut $X V[A]$ is any more or less complex than the meaning of $X X_{[PC]}-tém V[A]$. Even in this coreferential A-verb context ('$X$ wants to do $V[A]$'), meuh'eut and tém appear to be synonymous, as in examples (12-14) above. But synonymy often motivates semantic change: when two words or constructions are synonymous, often one of them will acquire additional components of meaning. So, although the A or U class membership does not dictate meaning, it would not be unexpected either for the tém construction to take on an additional 'active readiness' meaning component such as 'X thinks: I will do something because of this', or for the meuh'eut construction to acquire an additional 'uncertainty' component such as 'X thinks: I don't know if this can happen'.

As yet no clear evidence has been seen that either the tém or the meuh'eut construction has such an additional meaning component, but this can be established empirically by the paraphrase substitution method: by taking a dozen or so (preferably more) attested examples of each construction, and testing whether both the (a) and (b) components apply to every case, or whether in some cases the (b) component must be discarded as incompatible with the meaning of the example. Of course the (b) components might need to be reworded somewhat in the process, but only if a single formulation is substitutable in all cases would the component stand as a valid part of the meaning:
3.1 Parts of speech and grammatical roles

\[ X \text{ X[PC]-tém } V[A] \]

a. X wants: X will do V

b. X thinks: I will do something after now because of this

\[ X \text{ meuh'eut } X \ V[A] \]

a. X wants: X will do V

b. X thinks: I don’t know if this can happen

Note that in either case Durie’s insight into the connotations of these verbs is valid; but it is important to establish whether these associations are actually part of the lexical meaning, or merely a product of wordclass resonance. This particular question can be resolved by a little more investigation in Acehnese, as no doubt it will be as research on lexical universals in Acehnese continues; the important points here are to do with the broader nature of allolexical relations and methods of identifying them.

When there are two potential allolexes, both of which seem to be good equivalents of a semantic prime in at least some contexts, the first step in analysis is to determine whether they are in complementary distribution syntactically (like Japanese hoshii and -tai). If so, there is a sound empirical basis for regarding them as allolexes of that semantic prime. This type of allolexical relation could be represented formally as follows:

\[ \text{WANT } \rightarrow \text{-tai } \]
\[ / (X \text{ wa}) (Z \text{ o}) V \_
\]

\[ \rightarrow \text{ hoshii } / (X \text{ wa}) (Y \text{ ni}) (Z \text{ o}) V\text{-te } \_
\]
\[ / (X \text{ wa}) \text{ NP ga } \_
\]

If the distribution is not fully complementary, the next step is to see if there is any evidence for one being more semantically complex than the other. Both lexical and grammatical evidence should be considered, as illustrated above. Lexical content can be established by constructing explicatory paraphrases and testing them against empirical data. Grammatical evidence such as wordclass membership and syntactic behaviour must be assessed in relation to the meanings of particular constructions. The application of these principles above has provided
empirically based accounts of the relationship of beu and galak to wanting; of construction types associated with the potential allolexes tém and meuh’eut; of the relationship of their verbclass membership to their meaning and semantic resonance; and a way of determining empirically whether one of two apparently synonymous constructions is more complex semantically than the other.

The next stage of analysis will depend on the outcome of this empirical test. The possible outcomes and their implications are worth spelling out here, because the empirical findings in similar cases will differ from language to language. The possibilities are given in order of decreasing likelihood in the Acehnese case.

[1] Neither construction has a valid meaning component additional to 'X wants: X will do V'. In this case tém and meuh’eut must be regarded as allolexes of WANT despite their overlap in one context of use; they would have to be regarded as being in free variation in the coreferential A-verb context. This situation could be represented formally as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{WANT} & \rightarrow tém / X X[PC] - \_ \_ V[A] \\
& \rightarrow meuh’eut / X \_ \_ X/Y V \\
& \_ \_ \_ keu NP
\end{align*}
\]

Note that there are still two important syntactic differences between them. These are that no constituents separate tém from its complement verb; and that a coreferential A (or U) is possible but not obligatory with meuh’eut, while a coreferential A is obligatory with tém. These differences are sufficient to justify a distinction between these two allolexes on syntactic grounds, as illustrated in the representation above.

[2] The tém construction is found to have a second meaning component and the meuh’eut one is not. In this case they are not allolexes, meuh’eut is the only Acehnese equivalent of WANT, and tém can be defined in terms of it, as shown earlier in the discussion:

\[
\begin{align*}
X X[PC] - tém V[A] \\
X \text{wants: } X \text{ will do } V[A] (= X \text{ meuh’eut } X V[A]) \\
X \text{thinks: } X \text{ will do something after now because of this}
\end{align*}
\]
The meuh'eat construction is found to have a second meaning component and the tém one is not. This situation is more complex than either of the two cases above, but it is definitely a possibility. In this case it is important to distinguish between word meaning and construction type meaning, because the additional meaning component would apply to meuh'eat only in this particular construction type, by virtue of its contrast with tém in this context only. In non-coreferential contexts meuh'eat would still equate with no more and no less than WANT, because there is no semantically simpler desiderative in non-coreferential contexts. This situation could be represented as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{WANT} & \rightarrow \ tém & \rightarrow \ meuh'eat \\
& & X \ X_{\text{PC}} \rightarrow V_{A} \\
& & X \ Y \ V \\
& & X \ NP
\end{align*}
\]

The coreferential meuh'eat construction type would then be definable in terms of tém as mentioned above:

\[
X \ meuh'eat \ X \ V_{A} = \\
X \text{ wants: } X \text{ will do } V_{A} (=X \ X_{\text{PC}} \rightarrow \text{tém } V_{A}) \\
X \text{ thinks: } I \text{ don't know if this can happen}
\]

Observe that the syntactic environments shown in the formula are still different enough to justify the identification of the two allolexes on syntactic grounds.

It is interesting to recall the fact that, if tém and meuh'eat were fully synonymous, then all instances of tém could be rephrased in terms of meuh'eat but not vice versa. It is now apparent that this fact in itself is not sufficient evidence for regarding meuh'eat as a better equivalent of WANT than tém, for two reasons. First, if they are synonymous, as in case [1] above, their syntactic environments are still significantly different for both to stand as allolexes as shown in the formula for that case. Second, if they are not synonymous, then the more complex one must be definable in terms of the simpler one, as shown for cases [2] and [3].
Both the *tém* and the *rneuh'eut* constructions are found to be semantically complex, that is, each of them has a valid second meaning component. Such a situation is unlikely because of the improbability of 'X wants to do V' desiderative constructions always encoding an additional 'willingness' or 'uncertainty' component. More specifically, it would suggest that *rneuh'eut* should be incompatible with A verbs, if *rneuh'eut* always implies some lack of volition; whereas it occurs freely with A verbs, as in (14) above. Moreover, it is improbable that both *tém* and *rneuh'eut* should be 'marked' with regard to volition. Particularly in view of the freedom of *rneuh'eut* to take A or U complements and the requirement that *tém* take only A complements, one would expect only *tém* to have an additional meaning component related to this constraint. The A class in general is grammatically marked in a way that the U class is not, by the presence of the proclitics. Notice too how much vaguer the idea of 'volition' or its absence is, than the specific meaning components considered above; if we say that 'volition' is present, we need to state just how and in what form this relates to the meaning.

So, there is some evidence against the idea that both the *tém* and the *rneuh'eut* constructions are more complex semantically than 'X wants: X will do V'. If this were nonetheless found to be true, it would pose a major problem for NSM, unless some other Acehnese expression is found that encodes no more and no less than 'X wants: X will do V'. The core of the A/U distinction clearly has to do with wanting (or 'volition'); this and the wealth of desiderative expressions in Acehnese leave no doubt that the concept of wanting is encoded in many ways in this language.

But in the unlikely case that Acehnese really has no semantically simple way of saying 'X wants: X will do V' without obligatorily including some additional meaning, then we would have to consider the possibility that a language may be able to grammaticalise a basic concept like WANT at such a deep level that this distinction pervades the semantic structure of the language, overriding the principle that certain combinations of basic meanings like 'X wants: X will do V' should be expressible in a pure form with no additional obligatory components of meaning. This theoretical issue will be taken up again in Chapter 6.

This section has illustrated some procedures for analysing various types of desiderative grammatical constructions and their meanings, with a view to assessing the equivalence or otherwise of desiderative constructions across languages, and identifying precisely the nature of the
semantic differences and correspondences between such constructions in different languages. We have seen how the range of construction types, their meanings, and the grammatical roles associated with them, interact with the meanings of desiderative lexemes. The nature and syntactic properties of the complements of desideratives are of particular importance in such analysis, and these complement types are the focus of the rest of this chapter.

3.2 Desideratives and their complements

The analysis of desiderative constructions in any language requires thorough consideration not only of the desiderative words or morphemes themselves, but also the ways in which the object of desire is handled in the grammar: which kinds of complements can occur with which desideratives, and what are the requirements and constraints that the grammar imposes on these complement constructions.

Desideratives rarely occur without some kind of complement. In English, this is one of the grammatical features that distinguishes between two meanings of the polysemous verb want: only want₂ can occur without a complement, as in The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. With want₂ a complement is possible, but not obligatory (e.g. I shall not want for anything); whereas with the desiderative want₁ a complement is obligatory (e.g. I want something). Want₁ and want₂ take different complement types, one with for and one without, and semantic and grammatical differences like those between these complement types have parallels in many languages.

Complement structures in general are one of the most intriguing areas of interaction between semantics and grammar, and the challenge of trying to explain and predict complement structures has engaged many of the world's most outstanding linguists. In focussing here on a very small group of complement-taking predicates, the desideratives, we can observe in detail many of the factors that are involved in complementation. The purpose of this section is not to attempt to find the semantic parameters underlying various complement structures, nor to offer a basis for classification of complement-taking predicates; but rather to explore the ways in which a range of complement structures are exploited by particular languages to express specific desiderative meanings. This can in turn lead
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to a clearer understanding of the range of combinatorial possibilities of desiderative meanings across languages, and how these semantic combinations are realised in different grammars.

With desiderative predicates, the type of complement that seems simplest grammatically is not necessarily the simplest semantically; nor is it found in all languages. This is the nominal complement, as in the English *I want (a drink of) water*, Japanese *Oka ne ga hoshii* 'I want money', Acehnese *Lon meuh’eut that keu inong nyan* 'I really want that woman', Kiwai *Mo ubi uwo kodio gido* 'I want water for drinking', and so on.

The syntax of this kind of construction varies somewhat from language to language. In some languages, the main desiderative word is a transitive verb that can take a direct object noun, as in English *X wants NP*. In other languages nominal complements are accompanied by adpositions, such as *keu ‘to’* in Acehnese *X meuh’eut keu NP*. In languages with desideratives that are not verbs, a nominal complement can appear in an appropriate syntactic role. In the Japanese *NP ga hoshii* construction, the adjectival desiderative *hoshii* can take an *NP* like *okane ‘money’* as a core argument marked with *ga* (nominative). In Kiwai the desiderative *NP X ubi ‘X wants’* has an optional copula *erea ‘be’* before an *NP* complement like *uwo ‘water’*: *X ubi (erea) NP*. In Arrernte the nominal desiderative *ahentye ‘want’* takes an *NP* with the dative case marker -ke, as in *Ayenge ahentye kere-ke ‘I want meat’: X ahentye NP-DAT.*

In a surprising number of languages as unrelated as English, Acehnese and Dyirbal, the combination of a desiderative with a human *NP* complement has added connotations of sexual desire, as in the Acehnese example above. This may not be an obligatory interpretation; compare English *Darling, I want you* with the U.S. military recruiting slogan *Uncle Sam wants you*, where the interpretation of *want* as sexual or otherwise depends on social background knowledge about the likelihood of such a relationship between the ‘wanter’ and the other person.

In some languages, however, the main desiderative does not allow a nominal complement at all. In Bahasa Indonesia, *mau ‘want’* usually has some appropriate verb between it and an *NP*: *Dia mau nasi ‘She wants rice’* is less felicitous for many speakers than *Dia mau makan nasi ‘She wants (to eat) rice’*. An alternative way of expressing something like this is with the verb *suka ‘like’*, which can take a nominal or verbal complement: *Dia suka (makan) nasi ‘She likes (eating) rice’*. As noted in the previous
3.2 Desideratives and their complements

chapter, *suka* has two meanings, one of them apparently synonymous with *mau* 'want'.

*Mau* is a good example of how a word can be equivalent to the NSM prime WANT without being fully equivalent to the English word *want*. The potential to take a nominal complement is not essential to WANT as a semantic prime, because wanting a thing or a person is a semantically complex notion that can be further decomposed in terms of WANT plus a verbal or clausal complement. Wanting a thing, as in 'She wants rice', usually implies wanting to obtain or to do something with this thing, such as to eat it. What X wants is not just the thing as such, but to be able to do something with it:

\[
X \text{ wants NP} \Rightarrow \\
X \text{ wants: } X \text{ can do something with NP}
\]

The English *X wants NP* construction allows the desired action, what X wants to do to NP, to be left unspecified, unlike the Indonesian *X mau V NP* construction where it is usually specified (e.g. *makan* 'eat' or *mempunyai* 'have'). In English, *She wants rice* may imply that she wants to get rice, buy it, eat it, or store it for some unspecified future use. The formula above should be adjusted to reflect this fact:

\[
X \text{ wants NP} \text{ (e.g. She wants rice)} \\
X \text{ wants this:}
\]

if I want to do something with this thing, I can do it

It is necessary for 'want' to appear twice in this statement of meaning, to reflect the fact that what X wants is a situation where the NP (e.g. 'rice') is available to X if X should want to do something with it. Often, wanting to be able to do something with NP entails wanting this thing to be in a particular place, with or near the wanter (wanting to 'get' this thing), but this does not apply to all uses of this construction, and is therefore not a necessary component of its meaning.

The comparative infelicity of *mau* with a nominal complement only means that it is not equivalent to English *want* in this particular construction type; it does not mean that *mau* isn't fully equivalent to *want* in other construction types, such as *X mau makan nasi*, which is fully equivalent to the English *X wants to eat rice*. 
The grammatical constraint that *want* often takes a nominal complement while *mau* usually doesn't is, moreover, associated with the semantic complexity of the NP complement construction. The English construction *X wants NP* is more complex in its meaning than just 'X wants to do V' (=X *mau* V), as shown above: it involves complex notions of conditionality (IF X wants to do something) and ability/possibility (X CAN do it). It is not surprising, therefore, that one language should have a construction encoding this complex meaning while another language may not have a precisely equivalent construction. It would be far more surprising if one language lacked an equivalent of the semantically simpler constructions *X wants to do V* or *X mau V*.

On the other hand, it is not unusual in human affairs for someone to want to get or to have a thing (or a person); and so it is not surprising that many languages from different language families and different cultures do have desiderative constructions with nominal complements. The meanings of such constructions are language-specific and require investigation in each language. It cannot be assumed that they all have the same semantic content as the English *X wants NP* construction has, although many of them encode very similar elements of meaning. For example, the Japanese construction *X wa NP ga hoshii* (e.g. 8 above) seems to encode a very similar meaning to *X wants NP*, that is:

\[
\text{X wa NP ga hoshii}
\]

X wants this:
if I want to do something with this thing, I can do it

But Japanese also has the language-specific variant where X, the wanter, is not specified but is assumed to be the speaker:

\[
\text{NP ga hoshii}
\]

someone wants this:
if I want to do something with this thing, I can do it
people can know: I am this person

Another semantic component that was considered in relation to the Japanese (*X wa) NP ga hoshii* construction was the possibility that the NP is something that X has a good opinion of, i.e. that 'X thinks something good about NP'; however, this was not a necessary condition for the use of
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this construction in all cases. It is mentioned here to illustrate the fact that
the meanings of constructions have to be investigated language-
specifically. A similar example arose with the Mangap-Mbula construction
X lele-\text{ng} \text{ pa} NP, where the desiderative term lele- also refers to a body part
(‘insides’). Because of this an additional component seemed to be possible,
along the lines of ‘X feels something because of this’; but again, this
component was not a necessary part of the meaning of this construction in
all cases. The investigation of language-specific variations in the
meanings of similar constructions also illustrates how formulae of
meaning such as those offered here can serve as ongoing research tools:
they can be tested against further data as it comes to hand, and they can be
modified in the light of new findings.

Another aspect of desiderative constructions with nominal
complements is their tendency to have connotations of sexual desire, even
in quite unrelated languages and cultures. This may in some cases be
regarded as a specialised subtype of NP complement construction, where
t\text{e} wanted NP is a person, and this might be represented along the
following lines, for the English version:

\begin{align*}
X &\text{ wants } NP_{[\text{Human}]} \\
X &\text{ wants this:} \\
&\text{ if I want to do something with this person, I can do it } \\
&\text{ if a man and a woman do something like this together, } \\
&\text{ they can feel something good because of this }
\end{align*}

The third and fourth lines refer to the fact that in this case what is wanted
is something sexual, but just what is unspecified; it is ‘like’ what a man
and a woman can do together, but the construction places no specific
constraints on the nature of the act or the gender or age of X and the NP.

However, such a specific formulation is probably unnecessary,
indeed superfluous, for English, or for Acehnese or many other languages
where similar constructions can have similar connotations. It is
superfluous for two reasons. First, it is included within the more general
formula given above for \textit{X wants NP}. In the case of sexual connotations, it
is still true that X wants to be able to do something unspecified with NP, if
X wants to do it; and the idea that this unspecified something could be
sexual in nature is an inference from extralinguistic knowledge, not a
specific part of the semantic content of this construction.
Second, it is too specific. Only if a sexual interpretation were obligatory for all cases of \( X \) wants \( NP_{[\text{Human}]} \) would it be justified to treat this as a separate construction with a specifically sexual meaning. This is clearly not so for English, since many examples of this construction have no sexual connotations (e.g. Uncle Sam wants you, or someone wants you on the phone). Nor does Acehnese \( X \) meuh'eut keu \( NP_{[\text{Human}]} \) always have a sexual connotation; when the NP is \( \text{inöng nyan} \) 'that woman' the implication is obvious, but it is not an obligatory part of the meaning of this construction.

Some languages employ a nominal form for what in other languages would be a verbal complement. In Maori, for example, the complement 'go' in 'I want to go' is presented as a nominal preceded by an article and by the directional \( ki \) 'to' as a complementiser, so the resulting complement structure is very similar in form to a directional prepositional phrase:

\[
\begin{align*}
(22) & \quad a. \ E \ hiahia \ ana \ au \ ki \ te \ haere. \\
& \quad \text{TAM} \quad \text{want} \quad \text{PROG} \ 1s \ \text{to} \ \text{the} \ \text{go} \\
& \quad 'I \ want \ to \ go.'
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
& \quad b. \ E \ haere \ ana \ au \ ki \ te \ paa. \\
& \quad \text{TAM} \quad \text{go} \quad \text{PROG} \ 1s \ \text{to} \ \text{the} \ \text{village} \\
& \quad 'I'm \ going \ to \ the \ village.'
\end{align*}
\]

The construction in (22a) obviously does not mean 'X wants to be able to do something with NP'. In Maori (22a) is the ordinary way of saying 'I want to go', and on the basis of the discussion earlier in this chapter, the wordclass properties of the complement should not of themselves constitute an obstacle to recognising \( E \ haere \ ana \ X \ ki \ te \ V \) as equivalent to 'X wants to do V'. Nominalised complements of desideratives are also seen in the Finnish and Irish examples (7b) and (49) in Chapter 2, and are found in many other languages.

### 3.3 Verbal and clausal complements

It has been suggested above that desiderative constructions with nominal complements are fairly complex semantically, and can be defined
3.3 Verbal and clausal complements

in terms of another type of desiderative construction: one with a verbal or clausal complement, for example 'X wants to be able to do something with NP' or 'X wants: X can do something with NP'. It must be asked, then, what is the nature of this kind of complement construction, and can it legitimately be regarded as more basic semantically than the NP complement constructions? Several different types of desiderative constructions with verbal or clausal complements can be observed in different languages. Some shared patterns can be identified across languages, and each language has its own set of constructions that realise these patterns of meaning in language-specific ways.

The Acehnese desiderative verbs discussed above provide a starting point for observing patterns of verbal and clausal complement constructions. The verb tém 'want', as seen in examples (12) and (13) above, takes a verbal complement that is obligatorily coreferential with tém. In this construction (X X[PC]-tém V[AJ 'X wants to do V') tém is not freely separable from its complement verb. Its relationship to that verb is somewhat like an auxiliary or modifier, although tém imposes the requirement that its complement can only be an A verb. Tém cannot take a full clause as its complement.

The verb meu'h'eut can take either a verb or a full clause as its complement. The verbal complement type is seen in example (14) above (X meu'h'eut V 'X wants to do V'). In this construction the performer of the complement action is coreferential with the wanter. If the complement verb is an A verb its pronominal proclitic is attached directly to it (X meu'h'eut X[PC]-V[AJ), unlike the tém construction where the proclitic precedes tém and does not come between tém and the complement verb. If the complement verb is not an A verb, no pronominal element comes between it and meu'h'eut.

A full clause can be the complement of meu'h'eut when the actor or undergoer of the complement verb is a different person from the 'wanter', as in example (16) above (X meu'h'eut Y V 'X wants Y to do V'). Of course when the verb in the complement clause is an A verb it has its proclitic; but whatever the class of the complement clause verb, the clause (Y V 'Y does V') could stand on its own as an independent clause.

A somewhat different pattern of complement types is seen in Samoan, where the two main desideratives are fia 'want' and mana'o 'want'. Fia is a verbal modifier, occurring only in preverbal position, while mana'o is a main verb. Samoan has two classes of predicates,
formally distinguished by whether they can take an ergative-marked agent; one class consists mainly of transitive actions, and the other of predicates that can refer to actions, qualities or states. With the latter class, fia indicates that someone wants to do or to be what is predicated:

(23) $E$ fia 'ai le teine.  
TAM want eat the girl  
'The girl wants to eat.'

(24) $E$ fia poto le teine.  
TAM want clever the girl  
'The girl wants to be clever.'

When fia occurs with an ergative-marked argument, it indicates that this person wants to do what is predicated:

(25) $E$ fia si'i e le teine le pepe.  
TAM want carry ERG the girl the baby  
'The girl wants to carry the baby.'

But if no ergative argument is present, then fia can refer to the absolutive argument, indicating that this person wants the action to be done to her:

(26) $E$ fia si'i le pepe.  
TAM want carry the baby  
'The baby wants to be carried.'

This construction type, where the 'wanter' is the patient, can include an agent as an oblique argument, with a locative-directional (LD) marker:

(27) $E$ fia si'i le pepe ia le teine.  
TAM want carry the baby LD the girl  
'The baby wants to be carried by the girl.'

If the agent is marked ergative, as in transitive clauses like (25) above, then fia refers to the agent, not the patient.
The other desiderative, *mana'o* 'want', cannot take an ergative-marked agent, so the 'wanter' is in absolutive case, and the complement can be either a noun phrase marked with the LD marker, or a clause:

(28) \[ E ~ mana'o ~ le ~ teine ~ i ~ le ~ mea ~ lea. \]
TAM want the girl LD the thing that
'The girl wants that thing.'

(29) \[ 'Ou ~ te ~ mana'o ~ e ~ si'i ~ e ~ le ~ teine ~ le ~ pepe. \]
Is TAM want TAM carry ERG the girl the baby
'I want the girl to carry the baby.'

(30) \[ 'Ou ~ te ~ mana'o ~ e ~ si'i ~ le ~ pepe. \]
Is TAM want TAM carry the baby
'I want the baby to be carried.'

A clausal complement can also be introduced with the subjunctive particle 'ia or the optative particle se'i:

(31) \[ 'Ou ~ te ~ mana'o ~ ia ~ mālosi ~ le ~ pepe. \]
Is TAM want SJV healthy the baby
'I want the baby to get well.'

(32) \[ 'E ~ te ~ mana'o ~ so'u ~ [se'i+ou] ~ si'i ~ le ~ pepe? \]
2s TAM want OPT+1s carry the baby
'Can/should I carry the baby?'

These particles add modal meanings to the complement clause. The subjunctive marker occurs in (31) where the desired outcome is beyond anyone's control; it is not something that anyone can do. In (32) the optative marker adds a sense of permission or obligation; without this particle the example would mean simply 'Do you want me to carry the baby?'

With fia the 'wanter' is coreferential with the main argument of the predicate, whether that argument is an agent or a patient. With *mana'o* the agent or patient of a desired action can be someone other than the 'wanter', as in (29)-(32) above, but coreferential complements are also possible:
(33) 'Ou te mana'o 'ia 'ou foi mai.
1s TAM want SJV 1s return hither
'I want to return here.'

In this construction the coreferential argument of the complement clause cannot be omitted. Compare this with (30) above, where no agent argument is present in the complement clause, but the sentence does not mean 'I want to carry the baby'. *Fia* is far more commonly used than *mana'o* in coreferential contexts, so (33) would be more likely to be expressed as 'Ou fia foi mai 'I want to return here' unless the speaker were doubtful about the possibility of doing the desired action, in which case *mana'o* would be used with a subjunctive-marked complement clause. However, a subjunctive complement is not obligatory with *mana'o*, and the following sentence is equally grammatical:

(34) 'Ou te mana'o 'ou te foi m:i.
1s TAM want 1s TAM return hither
'I want to return here.'

*Fia* and *mana'o* can also occur together in a context of uncertainty:

(35) 'Ou te fia mana'o 'ou te alu ae ailoga
1s TAM want want 1s TAM go but doubt
mana'o ai le uso.
want it the brother
'I would like to go but I don't think my brother wants me to.'

The Samoan case is similar to the Acehnese case in that there are two main desideratives, each associated with a different range of construction types; and the predicate class membership of the complement plays an important role in the grammar and the semantics of these construction types. Like the Acehnese desideratives, Samoan *fia* and *mana'o* must be regarded as being in an allolexical relationship unless one is demonstrably more complex in meaning than the other.

However, it cannot be assumed that the Samoan construction types are equivalent to the Acehnese ones. In fact they are different, and should be analysed language-specifically. Only the verbal and clausal complement
types will be treated in detail; the NP complement construction \( e \ mana'o \ X \ LD \ NP \ 'X \ wants \ NP' \) (e.g. 28) would be defined via a verbal complement construction as discussed above.

For \( fia \) 'want', three construction types have to be recognised, on the basis of their grammatical properties: two with ergative and two with non-ergative complements. The first construction type is formally marked by the presence of an ergative-marked argument. This argument is obligatorily interpreted as being both the 'wanter' and the agent of the wanted action:

\[
\begin{align*}
e fia & \; V \text{ERG} \; X \; (Y) \; (\text{e.g. 25}) \\
X \; \text{wants:} & \; X \; \text{will do} \; V \; (\text{to} \; Y)
\end{align*}
\]

The second type has as its complement a verb that can take an ergative argument, but no such argument is present. In this construction the non-ergative argument \((Y)\) is the 'wanter' but not the agent; \(Y\) wants to be acted upon by someone else. The agent can be identified in an optional prepositional phrase \((LD \; X \; 'by' \; X', \; i.e. \; 'this \; other \; person \; is \; X')\):

\[
\begin{align*}
e fia & \; V[\text{Erg}] \; Y \; (LD \; X) \; (\text{e.g. 26-27}) \\
\text{someone} \; (Y) \; \text{wants:} & \; \text{someone \; else \; will \; do} \; V \; \text{to} \; Y \\
\text{(this \; other \; person \; is \; X)}
\end{align*}
\]

There is a variation of this construction type in which \(Y\) is inanimate, for example:

\[
(36) \quad E \; fia \; tata \; lāvalava \; nei. \quad \text{TAM \; want \; wash \; clot'ies \; these} \\
'\text{These clothes need washing}.'
\]

The free translation of this example does not indicate that \(fia\) is polysemous between 'want' and 'need', but only that in this case the \(Y\) argument is not capable of being the wanter: this sentence does not suggest (even metaphorically) that the clothes want someone to wash them. If the \(Y\) argument is not capable of being the 'wanter', then the interpretation is that the wanter is an unspecified 'someone'. This is reflected in the formula given above: the bracketed \((Y)\) applies only if \(Y\) is capable of being the 'wanter'.
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One could propose an interpretation rule for this construction type in the case of an inanimate Y argument, but this is not really necessary. The most economical solution would be to recognise that WANT as a semantic prime can only be predicated of a SOMEONE. In a construction like (36), fia ‘want’ can be understood as presupposing the existence of someone who wants the complement action, but if the Y argument is not a ‘someone’, then the ‘wanter’ remains formally unspecified. The hearer of an utterance like (36) may or may not be able to infer any more about who wants the clothes to be washed (see Chapter 6 for more discussion of the role of pragmatics in such cases).

This proposed constraint on the predicability of WANT would explain how an inanimate argument produces a similar semantic effect in many languages. In some varieties of English, people say things like These clothes want washing or His coat wants mending (cf. 2.5 above), and like the Samoan example (36) these utterances do not suggest that clothes or a coat experience wanting. However, these effects must be understood within the lexical and grammatical system of the language in which they occur. The English construction These clothes want washing does not refer to an unspecified wanter in the way that the Samoan construction does, because the English word want really is polysemous (as discussed in Chapter 2). In English, an inanimate subject triggers the interpretation that this is want₂. The English construction X[Inanimate] wants V-ing thus means something like ‘if V-ing doesn’t happen to X, something else can’t happen’, not ‘someone wants someone to do V to X’.

The third type of fia construction has a complement of the type that cannot ever take an ergative-marked argument, and this formally distinguishes it from the first two types:

\[ e \text{fia } V X \] (e.g. 23)

X wants: X will do V

The fia construction with a stative predicate (e.g. 24) can be regarded as belonging to this same construction type, because Samoan predicates denoting a state or quality (such as poto ‘(be) clever’) have the same grammatical properties as other intransitive predicates. Hence example (24) would be represented by means of the same formula as the one given above:
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*e fia V[=poto] X* (e.g. 24)
X wants: X will do V[=be clever]

The use of ‘do V’ in the English version of these NSM formulations reflects a language-specific feature of English and does not imply a correspondence between English and Samoan grammatical categories. The fact that *poto* ‘(be) clever’ can correspond to ‘do V’ in the formula reflects the fact that ‘being clever’ and ‘doing something (intransitive)’ are treated identically in Samoan grammar (though not in English grammar). The Samoan version of the NSM would represent these facts in a form consistent with the rules of Samoan grammar, for example *E fia fai X le mea lea ‘TAM want do X the thing this’, i.e. ‘X wants: X does this’, or E mana’o X e tupu le mea lea ‘TAM want X TAM happen the thing this’, i.e. ‘X wants: this happens’. The distinction between the two classes of predicates in Samoan may have something to do with the difference between *fai* ‘do’ and *tupu* ‘happen’; this matter would require investigation beyond the scope of the present project. In any case, the seeming inconsistency between ‘be clever’ and ‘do V’ is a feature of English, not Samoan.

*Mana’o* ‘want’ cannot take a verbal complement, but only a full clausal one. The agent or undergoer of the complement clause must be present whether or not it is coreferential with the wanter (cf. examples 29, 33-34 above). As with *fia*, the construction types for *mana’o* vary according to the properties of the complement clause predicate, and can be represented as follows:

*e mana’o X e V ERG X/Y (Z)* (e.g. 29)
X wants: X/Y will do V (to Z)

*e mana’o X e V[Eng] X/Y* (e.g. 30)
X wants: someone else will do V to X/Y

*e mana’o X e V* (e.g. 34)
X wants: X/Y will do V

If the subjunctive marker ‘ia is used in a construction like (33), it contributes an additional meaning. Accounts of its use suggest that this particle is essentially a disclaimer of certainty, along the lines of ‘I don’t say: this will happen (after now)’. Hence the subjunctive version of this
construction type can be represented including this additional component of meaning:

\[ e \text{ mana}'o \ X 'ia \ V \ X/Y \] (e.g. 31, 33)
\[ X \text{ wants: } X/Y \text{ will do } V \]
\[ \text{I don’t say: this will happen after now} \]

This would account for the use of the subjunctive in contexts like (31) where the outcome is normally beyond anyone’s control, and also for the fact that it is likely to be used to express uncertainty about one’s own future actions, in constrast to the more certain \( E \text{ fia} \ V \ X \ ‘X \text{ wants to do } V’ \).

The optative marker \( se'i \), seen in (32), also contributes additional meaning to the \( \text{mana}'o \) construction. Space precludes a detailed analysis of this marker, but the construction probably conveys something along the following lines:

\[ e \text{ mana}'o \ X \ se'i \ V \ X/Y \] (e.g. 32)
\[ X \text{ thinks this about } X/Y: \text{ maybe this person will do } V \]
\[ X \text{ thinks: I want this} \]

These modal markers are optional, and \( \text{mana}'o \ ‘want’ \) can be used with ordinary coreferential clausal complements, as in (34). These constructions appear to be synonymous or nearly synonymous with the corresponding \( \text{fia} \) constructions, viz.:

\[ e \text{ fia} \ V \ \text{ERG} \ X (Y) \]
\[ ?= e \text{ mana}'o \ X \ e \ V \ \text{ERG} \ X (Y) \]
\[ X \text{ wants: } X \text{ will do } V \text{ (to } Y) \]

\[ e \text{ fia} \ V \ X \]
\[ ?= e \text{ mana}'o \ X \ e \ V \ X \]
\[ X \text{ wants: } X \text{ will do } V \]

Comparing these constructions with the case of Acehnese \( \text{tém} \) and \( \text{meuh’eut} \), it can be seen that although the grammatical specifications for each construction type are language-specific (for example, Samoan \( \text{fia} \) can occur with intransitive complements, while Acehnese \( \text{tém} \) requires an A-class complement), the question of allolexical status is similar. Either the
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*fiia* and *mana'o* constructions paired above have some specifiable difference in their meanings, or they must be regarded as semantically equivalent.

It has been suggested that the *mana'o* version (e.g. 'Ou te mana'o 'ou te foi mai 'I want to return here') feels to some Samoan speakers emphatic or marked because the *fiia* version ('Ou te *fiia* foi mai) is more commonly used in coreferential contexts. But this difference does not seem to correspond to any specifiable component of meaning. Unless it can be shown that there is a specifiable difference in meaning between the two constructions, they must be regarded as semantically equivalent, and the feeling that they are somehow different may be regarded as another type of resonance effect, rather than as part of their compositional meaning.

In this case the resonance appears to be due to the different grammatical properties of the two construction types. The fact that the complement of *mana'o* is a full clause may give it a quality of greater prominence or emphasis than the verbal complement of *fiia*. Further, the fact that *mana'o* allows the possibility of a non-coreferential complement may make it seem as if the coreferential *mana'o* construction presents the wanter as someone somehow distinct from the person in the complement clause. This question of 'split-personality' effects is further explored later in this chapter, but for the present these differences can be explained as arising from the grammatical properties of the *fiia* and *mana'o* construction types without necessarily corresponding to any semantic difference between the lexemes *fiia* and *mana'o*.

There is a less exact match between the third type of construction, where a 'wanter' wants 'someone' to do something to the patient:

\[ e \text{*fiia* } V[\text{Erg}] Y (LD X) \]
\[ \overset{?}{=} e \text{*mana'o* } Y V[\text{Erg}] Y (LD X) \]

someone (Y) wants: someone else will do V to Y

(this other person is X)

The difference here is that the *mana'o* construction cannot take an inanimate Y argument. The argument of *mana'o* has to be someone who is capable of wanting, whereas the *fiia* construction can have an inanimate Y and thus leave the identity of the wanter unspecified. Hence the *fiia* and the *mana'o* versions in this case are not fully equivalent in meaning. The *mana'o* version can only mean 'Y wants: someone else will do V to Y',

...
while the *fia* version means 'someone [=Y iff Y is someone] wants: someone else will do V to Y'.

There are also constructions in which *fia* and *mana'o* occur together, as in (35) and the following:

(37) 'Ou te mana'o 'ou te fia alu.
    1s TAM want 1s TAM want go
    'I want to go.'

If these were like the other *fia* and *mana'o* construction types, (35) and (37) would both mean 'I want to want to go', but this is not the case. The present evidence suggests that these should be recognised as distinct construction types:

\[
e fia \text{ mana}'o X V X \\
e mana'o X fia V X
\]

both meaning probably 'X wants to do V'; whether these are limited to coreferential contexts, and whether there are any additional components of meaning, would have to be determined on the basis of more information about the use of these constructions in natural texts.

From this survey of constructions involving *fia* and *mana'o*, it can be seen that each construction has its own grammatical properties and constraints. These characteristics are specific to the grammar of the Samoan language, and while they regulate the use of *fia* and *mana'o* in Samoan sentences, they do not pose any obstacles to the identification of *fia* and *mana'o* as equivalents of WANT, or to the recognition of constructions such as *e mana'o* X V Y as semantically equivalent to English *X wants Y to do V*, Acehnese *X meuh'eut Y V*, or equivalent constructions in other languages.

### 3.4 Coreferential and non-coreferential complements

Returning now to the question of the apparent equivalence of the coreferential *mana'o* construction (e.g. 'Ou te mana'o 'ou te foi mai 'I want to return here') and the *fia* construction (e.g. 'Ou te fia foi mai 'I want to return here'), one possible difference between them can be identified. The
difference may lie, not in the semantics of the lexemes mana'o and fia, but in the structural relationship of the complement clause to the main clause. In the mana'o construction, the coreferential argument of the complement clause cannot be omitted, and is thus treated just the same as if it were a non-coreferential argument. Notice that the complement clause has its own TAM marker, another feature of full clauses in Samoan. These characteristics of the mana'o construction are reflected in the formula proposed above for this construction:

\[ e \text{ mana}'o \ X e \ V X/Y \]
\[ X \text{ wants: } X/Y \text{ will do } V \]

But in the fia construction the 'wanted' predicate can only be coreferential; fia cannot function as a full verb, and the 'wanted' predicate cannot appear as a full clause with the coreferential argument repeated (‘Ou te fia *'ou te foi mai). This might be viewed in terms of a structural explanation that fia requires a coreferential argument to be deleted (via an Equi-NP deletion rule), while no such rule applies to mana'o.

An alternative explanation would be that in the fia construction, the desired complement is not just an action by someone ('X will do V') but more specifically that the wanter wants her own action, that is, 'I will do V'. This would mean that the fia construction should be represented as follows:

\[ e \text{ fia } X \ V \]
\[ X \text{ wants: } I \text{ will do } V \]

This formulation appears potentially confusing, however, since there are contexts where the wanter wants someone else to do something, and this other person is the speaker of the utterance, as in (32) above ('you want: I carry the baby'). Here, of course, 'I' refers to the speaker, not to the wanter.

The matter of 'direct/indirect quotation' structures within NSM explications is a question currently being investigated, but it does not pose an insurmountable problem here. What is needed is a formal representation of the distinction between an 'indirect I' as in (32), and the 'direct I' that is required for the formula proposed above. While further research may produce a better way of representing this (see 6.4 below), the
device of quotation marks for the 'direct I' complement is sufficient here to make the distinction clear:

\[
e \ mana' o \, X \ e \, V \, X/Y
\]
X wants: X/Y will do V

\[
e \ fia \, X \, V
\]
X wants: ‘I will do V’

What is proposed here is that there may be a semantic basis for the grammatical distinctions found in many languages between desiderative constructions with verbal complements and desiderative constructions with full clausal complements. Further, it is proposed that the nature of the difference may be that full clausal complements, whether coreferential or not, convey the meaning of ‘wanting someone to do something’, while coreferential verbal complements express ‘wanting in the first person’ or ‘wanting one’s own action’.

This is not intended to suggest, however, that there are two different kinds of wanting (first-person versus other-oriented). Rather, when what one wants is an action by oneself, it is possible to think of the desired action in the first person in a way that is obviously not possible in relation to actions by other people. It would not be unexpected, then, to find that many languages would grammaticalise this ‘special relationship’ between one’s own actions and wanting; but also that this relationship might be expressed in different ways by different languages.

This proposal offers a way of explaining the apparently equivalent Acehnese constructions discussed in 3.1 above, along lines similar to, but not identical to the proposal for Samoan:

\[
X \ meuh' eut \, X/Y \, V
\]
X wants: X/Y will do V

\[
X \ X[PC]-tém \, V[A]
\]
X wants: ‘I will do V’

This proposal is compatible not only with the fact that the meuh’ eut construction can take a coreferential or non-coreferential complement (like Samoan mana’o), but also with the requirement (specific to
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Acehnese) that the *tém* construction requires an A verb, while the *rneuh'eut* construction can take either an A or a non-A complement.

Moreover, Acehnese *rneuh'eut* (unlike Samoan *mana'o*) can have a coreferential complement that is not a full clause, if it has a non-A predicate (e.g. 15 above). In this construction the complement clause is introduced by the preposition *keu* ‘to’, and this construction type would be represented as follows:

\[ X \textit{rneuh'eut} \; \textit{keu} \; V[^{\text{\,$^{\text{\text{*A}}}$}}] \]

\[ X \text{ wants: 'I will do } V' \]

In Acehnese, then, the distinction between ‘first-person’ wanting (X wants: ‘I will do V’) versus ‘X wants: X/Y will do V’ does not correspond to the lexemes *tém* versus *rneuh'eut* alone, but to the construction types in which they appear, subject to the grammatical rules of the language.

Both Acehnese and Samoan have one desiderative that is restricted to coreferential complements (*tém* and *fia*), and another desiderative that allows either coreferential or non-coreferential complements (*rneuh'eut* and *mana'o*). Apart from this similarity, these constructions have specific grammatical properties in each language, and an attempt to describe each of the various constructions in terms of whether or not a coreferential subject is deleted would leave a great deal unexplained. This can be seen even more clearly in another Austronesian language where coreferential complement subjects appear to be completely optional.

In Buru constructions with the grammatical morpheme *la* (whose relationship to WANT is discussed in the next chapter), a subordinate subject is obligatory if it is non-coreferential, but is optional in coreferential contexts like the following:

\[(38) \quad \textit{Ringe la} \; (da) \; \textit{kaa}. \]
\[ \text{3s want (3s) eat} \]
\[ \text{‘He wants to eat.’} \]

\[(39) \quad \textit{Ringe oli la} \; (da) \; \textit{kaa}. \]
\[ \text{3s return want (3s) eat} \]
\[ \text{‘He went home to eat/so that he could eat.’} \]
However, omission of the coreferential complement subject is only permissible with predicates that belong to the grammatical class of active verbs. With non-active predicates, whether verbal or stative, a coreferential subject cannot be omitted, for example:

(40) *Ringe la haa.  
3s want big  
‘He wants to grow.’

The difference between active and non-active predicates in Buru is basically that active verbs denote things that a person can do voluntarily or intentionally, while non-active verbs denote involuntary actions, states or processes. Only active verbs can be used in the imperative. In other words, only in the case of active verbs is it possible for the wanter to want her own voluntary action. The fact that only these verbs allow omission of the coreferential subject seems to be another instance of grammaticalisation of the special relationship between wanting and one’s own actions. Hence the full clausal complement construction, whether or not the subject is coreferential, would be represented as follows:

\[
X \text{ la } X/Y \text{ V}  
\]

X wants: X/Y will do V

The verbal complement construction, without the coreferential second subject, and limited to active verbs, would be represented as:

\[
X \text{ la } V_{[Active]}  
\]

X wants: ‘I will do V’

In Samoan and in Acehnese, the presence or absence of coreferential arguments in complement clauses is associated with other features of the construction type, and could be thought of as structurally determined, perhaps by a rule deleting a coreferential argument under certain syntactic conditions. But in Buru such a rule would have to be completely optional in the case of active verbs; the presence or absence of the coreferential argument is not dictated by any other part of the syntactic environment. To describe this situation by proposing an optional Equi-NP deletion rule
would not explain why it is optional, and would give no account of why only active verbs allow the coreferential argument to be omitted.

The proposal that the two constructions differ semantically as described above has more power to explain both the semantic and the syntactic facts of this case. It is consistent with the fact that both constructions exist; it offers an account of what could be the difference between them; and it is also consistent with the fact that the coreferential complement subject can only be omitted with an active verb, where the subject has more control over the action.

This discussion of patterns of desideratives and their complements in three Austronesian languages provides a perspective from which we can proceed to look at the grammatical patterns of constructions like these in other languages. Desideratives in many languages display special constructions or grammatical constraints associated with coreferentiality of the complement, and an examination of some of these can enhance understanding of the relationships of desideratives to their complements.

Spanish, like French and a number of other languages having a category of subjunctive mood, distinguishes fairly consistently between coreferential and non-coreferential complements of desiderative verbs. A coreferential complement of querer 'want' (like complements of desear 'desire' and esperar 'hope') normally takes an infinitive form of the verb, while a non-coreferential complement takes the subjunctive form, introduced by the complementiser que 'that':

(41) \textit{Quiero ir.}  
\begin{verbatim}
want-1s go-INF
'I want to go.'
\end{verbatim}

(42) \textit{Quiero que (ella) vaya.}  
\begin{verbatim}
want-1s that (she) go-3sSJV
'I want her to go.'
\end{verbatim}

The reverse is not grammatical:

(43) *\textit{Quiero que (yo) vaya.}  
\begin{verbatim}
want-1s that I go-1sSJV
\end{verbatim}
3.4 Coreferential and non-coreferential

(44) *La/le quiero ir.
    her/to-her want-1s go-INF

This is notwithstanding the fact that non-coreferential infinitive complements are quite possible with some other verbs, as in \textit{La veo ir} 'I see her go' and \textit{Le mando ir} 'I order her to go'; and that \textit{querer} can take a pronoun as a direct object, as in \textit{Le quiero} 'I want/love her'.

To further complicate the picture, a coreferential subjunctive complement is possible in special contexts, where the desired event is beyond the wanter's control:

(45) \textit{Quiero que sea yo y no Pepe, el que le de}
    want-1s that be-SIV I and not Pepe the that to-her give-SIV
    la bienvenida a la princesa.
    the welcome to the princess
    'I want it to be me and not Pepe who welcomes the princess.'

The same applies in French:

(46) \textit{Je veux que je sois en mesure d'attaquer a l'aube.}
    I want that I be-SIV capable of-attack at the-dawn
    'I want to be able to attack at dawn.'

Here again, then, the complement type cannot be determined from structural criteria alone; and an account based on the semantics of the construction types may provide a better explanation of the facts.

In considering the differences between infinitive and subjunctive complements, it is important to take note of their clausal properties as well as of the verb forms. The infinitive complement (e.g. \textit{ir} 'to go' in (41) above), is not an independent clause. The infinitive form of the verb does not carry any information about the person or number of the subject, as other Spanish verb forms do (e.g. \textit{quiero} 'want-1sPRES' or \textit{vayas} 'go-2sSJV'). Because the subject is marked on the verb, independent pronominal subjects are optional, and an independent clause can consist of the verb alone, or with a subject (e.g. \textit{(ella) va} 'she goes'); but an infinitive verb (e.g. \textit{ir} 'to go') cannot serve as an independent clause.

Subjunctive complements, however, do have the form of an independent clause, with subject and verb (e.g. \textit{(ella) vaya} 'she go-SJV' in
(42). It is unusual, but not grammatically impossible, to have a main clause with subjunctive verb. From this perspective, then, we can say that Spanish *querer* 'want' has two complement types: one consisting of a full clause with subjunctive verb, and the other a verbal complement in the infinitive, restricted to coreferential contexts. Following the analysis proposed above, the coreferential verbal complement construction can express only wanting one's own action:

\[
X \text{ quiere } V-\text{INF}
\]

\[
X \text{ wants: } 'I \text{ will do } V'
\]

The full clausal complement expresses wanting someone to do something; the someone is usually someone else, but can be oneself:

\[
X \text{ quiere que } X/Y \text{ V-SJV}
\]

\[
X \text{ wants: } X/Y \text{ will do } V
\]

The subjunctive, however, has a meaning of its own, that constrasts with the indicative form of the verb in other contexts, for example:

(47) a. *Papá dijo que ella va.*

\[
\text{dad said that she go-PRES}
\]

'爸 said that she is going.'

b. *Papá dijo que ella vaya.*

\[
\text{dad said that she go-SJV}
\]

'爸 said that she should/could go.'

The meaning of the subjunctive is a complex issue that has been much discussed elsewhere, and the present discussion aims not to analyse the subjunctive as such, but to explain its use in complements of desideratives. In non-desiderative contexts like (47b), the subjunctive conveys uncertainty about the action; in (47a) her going is understood as a fact, but in (47b) it is understood as a possibility, not a certainty. The subjunctive here is in effect a disclaimer of certainty, making it clear that the speaker is refraining from expressing an expectation. In contrast with the indicative, then, the subjunctive adds a meaning of the kind suggested
in Wierzbicka's work on subjunctive complements: 'I don't say: this will happen (after now)'.

Does this mean that the subjunctive also contributes this meaning in the construction with querer? That is:

\[
X \text{ quiere que } X/Y \text{ V-SJ}\]

\[
X \text{ wants: } X/Y \text{ will do V}
\]

'I don't want to say: this will happen after now'

This would seem compatible with the feeling that Spanish and French speakers have, that the subjunctive complement is more distant and indirect than the infinitive (X quiere ir). This is particularly so in those unusual cases (like 45-46 above) where a subjunctive coreferential complement clause seems to present the performer of the wanted event as someone distinct from or external to the wanter, despite the fact that they have the same referent. Does this mean that it is not possible to say in Spanish 'X wants someone to do something' without also encoding this disclaimer of certainty, 'I don't say: this will happen after now'?

Not necessarily; because to accept this view would be to overlook one crucial fact. In some contexts, like example (47), the subjunctive and the indicative can occur in contrast, in a construction that is otherwise the same. But this is not so with desideratives. In the construction \(X \text{ quiere que } X/Y \text{ V-SJ}\) the subjunctive is obligatory; it does not contrast with any indicative construction. In coreferential cases, \(X \text{ quiere que } X \text{ V-SJ}\) contrasts not with an indicative but with the infinitive complement construction, \(X \text{ quiere V-INF}\). This construction is not otherwise the same as the subjunctive version. The structures of the two complements are quite different: a full clausal complement versus a verbal complement, as discussed above.

In the approach proposed here, each grammatical construction that can be distinguished in a language is regarded as a meaningful unit, having distinctive semantic properties along with the grammatical properties that make it a distinct construction type. Because querer 'want' takes a different range of grammatical complements from decir 'say', a subjunctive complement with querer would not be expected to have exactly the same meaning as a subjunctive complement with decir. In the \(X \text{ quiere que } X/Y \text{ V-SJ}\) construction no alternative to the subjunctive is grammatically possible with a full clausal complement. In this case the
use of the subjunctive is determined by the grammar of the construction
type; the subjunctive is not and cannot be used for the purpose of
semantic contrast with an indicative form (as it can be with decir).

Where the subjunctive is used for grammatical reasons and not for
semantic reasons, it loses its semantic force as a disclaimer of certainty.
The construction X quiere que X/Y V-SJV does not provide any means of
contrasting a ‘certain’ version with an ‘uncertain’ version of the meaning
‘X wants: X/Y will do V’. This is different from the situation in Samoan,
where the subjunctive marker ‘ia can optionally introduce a complement
of mana’o ‘want’ to produce just such a semantic contrast (e.g. 33-34
above).

Because the Spanish subjunctive isn’t optional in a full clausal
complement of querer ‘want’, there is no obstacle to regarding X quiere que
X/Y V as fully equivalent to ‘X wants: X/Y will do V’, and hence to
equivalent constructions in other languages.

At the same time, the subjunctive form carries with it a semantic
resonance that arises from its use in other, contralutive contexts (like
example 47). This resonance effect contributes to the less direct ‘feel’ of this
construction compared to the infinitive complement construction X
quiere V-INF; but the structural difference between the two complement
types (full clause versus verb) probably contributes more strongly to this
effect than the subjunctive form by itself does.

In any case, a semantic resonance effect can be distinguished from a
specific component of meaning by the properties of the construction type.
If, as in Spanish, the subjunctive in the construction type X quiere que X/Y
V-SJV is obligatory and non-contrative, then an ‘uncertainty’ component
is neither necessary nor justifiable as part of a full description of the
meaning of this construction. But if, as in Samoan, the subjunctive in the
construction type e mana’o X ‘ia X/Y V is optional and contrastive, then an
appropriate meaning component is both justified and necessary for a full
description of the meaning.

For Spanish, then, the proposed analysis succeeds in identifying two
construction types with querer ‘want’, specifying the semantic difference
between them, and explaining the facts of their use, including the special
case of coreferential subjunctive complements. It also makes a correct
prediction that the infinitive complement construction X quiere V-INF (X
wants: ‘I will do V’) is limited to coreferential use. This analysis is
therefore more successful than the traditional approach based on
coreferentiality alone, which does not deal adequately with coreferential subjunctive complements.

A similar kind of resonance effect could explain the difference in ‘feeling’ of the two Japanese constructions discussed earlier in this chapter. The coreferential V-tai construction (e.g. (Watashi wa) iki-tai ‘I want to go’) seems to many speakers somehow more direct than the non-coreferential V-te hoshii construction (e.g. (Watashi wa) kimi ni iki-te hoshii ‘I want you to go’). The -te suffix, often regarded as forming a gerundive complement, also occurs with several other verbs that in English take to complements (e.g. tanomu ‘ask’, kitai suru ‘expect’) as well as with others such as negai ‘hope’. It has a wide range of use in other types of serial verb constructions, and while it is not clearly associated with a particular meaning (in the way that subjunctive is associated with uncertainty), it acquires from these other uses a resonance very different from -tai.

Because -tai is limited to corerefential desiderative uses, it can seem more direct, while -te seems more diffuse because of its wider range of other uses. But the construction (X wa) (Y ni) V-te hoshii does not contrast with any more direct construction that expresses the meaning ‘someone (X) wants someone else (Y) to do V’. It is the only construction that expresses this meaning, and should therefore be regarded as semantically equivalent to ‘X wants Y to do V’.

For a final example of complement clause patterns in desiderative expressions, we return to English, where the distinction between the two constructions X wants to V and X wants Y to V seems to be based entirely upon whether or not the complement verb is coreferential with want. There is no construction *X wants X to V. There is, however, a reflexive construction, only marginally acceptable to many speakers, for example:

(48) (?)She wanted herself to disappear completely.

This can be regarded as parallel to X wants Y to V, in that the reflexive pronoun is a device for conveying specifically that ‘X’ and ‘Y’ are in this instance ‘the same person’. Compare this with the sentence She wanted her to disappear completely, in which she and her can only be interpreted as referring to different entities (that is, her is a pronominal rather than an anaphor, in Chomsky’s terms).

A particularly interesting feature of these English constructions is that there is no full clausal complement construction with want. Compare
3.4 Coreferential and non-coreferential

this, for example, with *hope*, which can take either *to V* or a full clausal complement (with optional complementiser *that*):

(49)  *I hope/want to go to France.*

(50)  *I hope/*want (that) I go to France.*

Of course *hope* differs in meaning from *want* as discussed earlier, but the contrast between (49) and (50) is similar to the kind of contrasts seen earlier between coreferential verbal complements and full clausal complements. The verbal complement in (49) suggests a more direct, first-person orientation (*X hopes: 'I will do V') as compared with the full clause in (50), which presents the event as less directly related to the hoper (*X hopes: 'X will do V*). Full clausal complements can also be modified with modals, and *I hope I can go to France* sounds a little more natural than *I hope I go to France* because the interpretation of this construction is that the outcome is beyond the hoper's control.

However, this kind of contrast is not available with *want*. Neither a full clausal complement (*X wants (that) X V*) nor a verbal (infinitive or *to*) complement with overt coreferential argument (*X wants X to V*) is possible with *want*. The idea of a syntactic rule that would delete a coreferential noun phrase from the complement is of course compatible with these facts. But, if the distinction made above between verbal and clausal complements is correct, does this mean that English lacks what several other languages apparently have, a means of distinguishing between wanting 'I will do V' and wanting 'X will do V' in coreferential contexts?

Moreover, what about the unavailability of a full clausal complement even in non-coreferential cases (*X wants (that) Y will do V*)? Even in these cases, only a verbal *to* complement is grammatical (*X wants Y to V*). Can this be considered equivalent to the non-coreferential full clausal complements of other languages, expressing 'X wants: Y will do V', or is the English verbal complement somehow less independent semantically than a full clausal complement?

A partial comparison can be made with *wish*. In certain contexts, *wish* can be used with *to* complements, both coreferential and non-coreferential, for example:
These constructions, X wishes to V and X wishes Y to V, are usually limited to written use; many English speakers find them unfamiliar or regard this use of wish as a kind of over-refined euphemism for want. Nonetheless, such constructions are attested, and they provide an interesting contrast to wish constructions with full clausal complements, for example:

(52)  a. I wish (that) I could go to France.

b. I wish (that) you would come with me.

In clausal complements of wish, modal or aspectual modifiers are obligatory; *I wish I go to France and *I wish you come with me (or *I wish you act on my behalf) are ungrammatical. The semantic effect of the modals could, would in the above example is somewhat similar to subjunctives in other languages, involving a disclaimer of certainty (‘I don’t say: it will happen after now’). Wish can also take a for...to complement, but this is limited to non-coreferential cases, and is most often found in past tense contexts (e.g. He wished for her to kiss him). The for...to complement is also shown by Wierzbicka to convey the sense ‘I don’t say: it will happen’.

Without going into a full analysis of all the wish constructions, one can see that with wish, unlike want, it is possible to contrast a verbal complement with a full clausal complement. The semantic effect of sentences like (51a,b) arises not just because these constructions are parallel to X wants to V and X wants Y to V, but because they are in contrast to the more usual wish constructions with full clausal complements, like (52a,b). The construction X wishes to V suggests the first-person orientation (X wishes: ‘I will do V’), while the full clausal complement with modal could suggests not only ‘X wishes: X can do V’ but also ‘I don’t say: it will happen after now’.

In constructions with want, there is no possibility of contrasts like these, because only the verbal complement type is available. Unlike
several other languages discussed here, English does not have a construction that encompasses both coreferential and non-coreferential use ('X wants: X/Y will do V'). The two main English want constructions would thus be represented as follows:

\[
X \textit{ wants to } V \\
X \text{ wants: 'I will do V'}
\]

\[
X \textit{ wants Y to } V \\
X \text{ wants: Y will do V}
\]

There is, however, a way to express 'X wants: X will do V' in English, and that is via the reflexive construction \(X \) \textit{ wants herself/himself to V}. This construction is quite unusual; indeed, in each of the languages discussed earlier, the 'I-oriented' coreferential construction (X wants: 'I will do V') is more commonly used than the alternative (X wants: X will do V). Reflexive pronouns refer to 'the same person', but in this English construction there is no contrast between a reflexive and a non-reflexive (but still coreferential) version. If a non-reflexive pronoun is used (X wants her/him to do V) the meaning is not 'X wants: X will do V' but 'X wants: Y will do V' (as discussed under (48) above). Because the reflexive pronoun is obligatory and there is no contrasting coreferential construction, it may be that X \textit{ wants herself/himself to V} can be considered equivalent to 'X wants: X will do V'. But there is little need to use such a construction in English, except in those very rare instances when one wants to suggest that the wanter has less influence on the outcome than is normally the case in coreferential situations.

The non-coreferential complement (Y to V in X \textit{ wants Y to V}) is not, as noted above, a full clause; and this necessitates some investigation of the correctness of equating the English X \textit{ wants Y to V} with 'X wants: Y will do V' and equivalent constructions in other languages. The principal justification is based on the unique correspondence between this construction (form) and its meaning. That is, this is the only construction used in (standard) English to express this meaning; it does not contrast with any alternative full clausal complement construction (*X \textit{ wants (that) Y V}). Moreover, it expresses this meaning and no other. Unlike coreferential constructions, non-coreferential constructions offer no possibility of contrast between 'I-oriented' and other-oriented complements, because a
situation where one person (X) wants another (Y) to do something is inherently other-oriented.

It is also worth noting that the complement in X wants Y to V is closer to a full English clause than the complement in X wants to V; the non-coreferential complement has a subject, while the coreferential complement has only the phrase to V. While it is important to distinguish between complements that are full clauses and those that are not, full clausal status is not a prerequisite for non-coreferential complements.

The English construction X wants Y to V has a certain resonance, however, that is not part of its compositional meaning but arises from similarities to other constructions. In X wants Y to V, Y is in the same position as it would be if it were a direct object in the construction X wants Y (e.g. Uncle Sam wants you). Of course the subject of a complement is not an argument of want (hence the ungrammaticality of *He is wanted by me to go), but the superficial similarity of these constructions may produce a feeling of directness about the relationship between want and its complement. This effect is particularly felt when English is compared with languages where non-coreferential complements are introduced by a different complementiser. In addition, the verb forms are the same in coreferential and non-coreferential complements (to V and Y to V), and this makes the two complement types seem more similar in English than in those languages where non-coreferential complements take a different form of the verb.

Here, as in other cases discussed above, it is important to distinguish between the resonance of a construction and its meaning. The construction X wants Y to V is the only English construction that can express the meaning ‘X wants: Y will do V’, and there is no reason to suggest that any other components are a necessary part of the meaning of this construction. The fact that to a bilingual, English X wants Y to V seems somehow more direct than Spanish X quiere que Y V-SJV is a product of the language-specific resonance of each construction. This resonance can be explained in terms of the semantics of the relevant constructions in each language. It can be distinguished in a formal and rigorous way from the necessary and sufficient components of the meaning of a construction.

Some speakers of English, but not others, accept for to complements with want, as in (?)I want very much for my children to be happy. This
happy. This construction (whose acceptability is partly a dialectal matter) is only possible where the complement is non-coreferential, and it is more felicitous when adverbial modifiers (like very much) come between want and the complement ('I want for my children to be happy sounds worse). This is not because of the adverbs themselves, which can also occur with to (I very much want my children to be happy is fine). As in the case of wish, the for...to complement adds an element of uncertainty ('I don't say: it will happen after now').

Several analyses of complementation have treated to and for...to complements as the same construction type, but a detailed account of the differences between them has been given by Wierzbicka. It is interesting to note that there seems to be more variation in acceptability judgements of for...to complements than there is with other English complement types; some speakers even accept sentences like I regret for you to be in this fix as grammatical.

The potential contrast between X wants Y to V and X wants for Y to V might cause some people to wonder if the latter is a better equivalent for the Spanish subjunctive construction X quiere que Y V-SJV. But on the criteria proposed here, this would not be valid. X wants for Y to V is a somewhat marginal construction in English; even in varieties where it is not considered odd, the most normal way of expressing someone's wanting someone else to do something is still X wants Y to V; whereas X quiere que Y V-SJV is the normal way of expressing this in Spanish. The English for...to construction adds a specifiable element of meaning, in contrast with the more usual to construction; whereas the Spanish subjunctive in X quiere que Y V-SJV does not add any element of meaning in contrast with another construction that is otherwise the same.

Identifying what components do and do not belong to the meanings of particular desiderative constructions will be the focus of several case studies in the following two chapters. Each language is a unique system. Neither individual lexemes (such as fia, mana'o, querer or want) nor constructions (such as e mana'o X e V Y, X quiere que Y V-SJV or X wants Y to V) can be equated (or differentiated) across languages without an analysis of the meaning of each expression within the system of the language in which it is meaningful. Such an analysis needs to take into account not just the single word or construction, but the range of expressions available in this particular language for encoding similar meanings, in order to arrive at an accurate statement of meaning.
Before proceeding to further case studies, a final observation on the relations of desiderative expressions to their complements is in order. The semantic formulae proposed thus far have contained elements that correspond only partly to the natural language structures whose meaning they are intended to represent. For example, a structure like 'X wants: Y [will] do V' is not natural in English; as argued above, the English way of expressing this is \textit{X wants Y to V}.

For most purposes, the most natural way of expressing the meaning would be the best one to use in the English version of NSM, as it would be in any other language's version of NSM. But the less natural formulation is used here, when necessary, for two purposes. The first is to avoid circularity by stating the meanings of the constructions under consideration in a form that does not rely on the English \textit{to} complement constructions, until it has been established whether the \textit{to} constructions are in fact equivalent to these meanings. The second purpose is to represent more clearly than English does, the distinction between the desiderative itself and its complement; for example, between 'X wants' and 'Y will do V'.

The two are of course bound together in desiderative constructions, and each language has its own grammatical rules that determine which of these elements can function as an independent clause. But, quite apart from language-specific clausal syntax, it is useful to recognise that the two parts of a formulation like 'X wants: Y will do V' each have a certain propositional status. 'X wants', though not a full clause in English (because \textit{want} in this sense must have a complement of some kind), is a proposition about X, while 'Y will do V' is a separate proposition, embodying the event that X wants to happen. The term 'proposition' here does not refer only to things that can be known (as 'facts'), but to things that can be thought and spoken of, regardless of whether or not they are realised in the world.

Even in English, where \textit{X wants} and \textit{Y to V} are grammatically bound together so that neither can function as a separate clause, the full expression \textit{X wants Y to V} conveys two discrete pieces of information. One is a proposition about X (that X wants something to happen), and the other is a proposition embodying this wanted event (that Y will do V). It is interesting to note that the ambiguity of English negated \textit{want} sentences arises from the fact that these two propositions can be independently negated. For example, \textit{I don't want to go} can be ambiguous between
meaning that I don’t particularly want to go (I don’t want: ‘I go’) and that I want specifically not to go (also expressible as \textit{I want not to go}) (I want: ‘I don’t go’). The relations between these proposition-like elements in desiderative constructions are further explored in subsequent chapters.
Chapter 4

Polysemy and ambiguity in desiderative grammemes

The quest to determine whether certain basic concepts find lexical expression in all languages throws a renewed focus upon the old question of polysemy: whether it is possible to determine how many meanings a lexical item has. For example, some languages have a word or morpheme that seems to be the most common way of referring to wanting, yet in other contexts this lexeme refers to possibility or futurity. Languages like this may therefore seem to have no lexeme that refers unambiguously to wanting, but to encode instead some more abstract notion of potentiality or unrealised event status.

Such a situation, in even one language, could be interpreted as casting serious doubt on the status of WANT as a lexical and/or semantic universal. In fact, such lexemes are found in not just one but several languages, from different language families. Moreover, this state of affairs does not apply only to desiderative lexemes. Investigations of other proposed NSM universals such as CAUSE, PLACE, and PART show that a number of languages seem to lack unambiguous ways of expressing these.

In the face of this kind of empirical evidence from a variety of languages, it might seem reasonable to abandon the search for semantic universals of this sort, and to direct one’s efforts in some more fruitful direction. However, such a decision should not be made hastily, without a thorough examination of the evidence itself and of possible alternative ways of interpreting it; and this is what brings us back to the question of polysemy.

In considering the evidence of a lexeme that can refer either to wanting or to potentiality, say, the analytical task is to determine whether this lexeme has a single, abstract meaning that unites these two elements, or whether it has two (or more) separate meanings. If it can be shown to have two discrete meanings, then it may after all be identifiable as a lexicalisation of a semantic universal such as WANT, in one of its uses.

This chapter presents detailed case studies of two grammatical morphemes that have important desiderative functions: one from the Australian Aboriginal language Kayardild, and one from the Austronesian language Buru. Another grammeme from Kayardild is investigated in the following chapter. I argue that, with multifunctional forms like these,
each case must be assessed on its own merits, and analysed in considerable depth. It cannot be decided that a proposed universal such as WANT is, or is not, represented in these languages on the basis of a superficial assessment. Even when the available grammatical description is of unusually high quality, as it is for these two languages, a careful and fine-grained semantic analysis is necessary to determine the relationship of functions to meanings, before conclusions can be drawn about the presence or absence of lexical universals in a language.

The case studies considered here illustrate the fact that semantic analysis needs to provide, if at all possible, a coherent account of the meanings associated with the various functions of a lexical form. This is needed not only to shed light on the question of language universals, but also to assist in practical linguistic description. From an exploration of how the principles of NSM analysis can be applied to these complex cases of multifunctionality, we can begin to derive a set of practical analytical tools and procedures that may be useful to descriptive linguists.

4.1 Functions and senses of grammatical morphemes

Determining the semantic content of a grammatical morpheme, or grammeme, can be a complex and controversial task. While some grammemes may be restricted to a small range of functions, the major grammemes of a language tend to occur with great frequency and to cover a wide range of functions. Inflectional grammemes, particularly case markers and markers of tense, aspect and/or mood, are often highly multifunctional. The 'ablative' case inflection -nge in Arrernte, to give just one example, has not only a variety of spatial and temporal functions ('from', 'after' and others), but serves also to express reasons ('because', e.g. ...rilkert akngerr-re-nge re '[you should visit her] because she's very sick'). Derivational markers can also have quite a variety of functions. Another example from Arrernte, the 'inchoative' derivational affix -irre-, covers not only 'become' (as in akngerr-irre- 'become big, grow') but also 'happen' or even 'do' (as in iwenh-irre-me 'what's going on', 'what are you doing').

This widespread multifunctionality in grammemes poses many challenges to descriptive linguists. Even when the core uses of a grammeme correspond to some well-established crosslinguistic category such as dative or ablative, it can by no means be assumed that all, or even
many, functions of the dative or ablative in one language correspond to functions of the dative or ablative in another. The language-specific applications of these inflections vary widely.

Even in closely related languages, the functions of similar grammemes can vary considerably. The Polish and Russian instrumental inflectional grammemes are both historically cognate and synchronically equivalent in many of their uses, but Wierzbicka's study of these inflections shows that in Polish the instrumental can be used in contexts like *Jan wyskoczył oknem* 'John jumped out the window-INST', while in Russian this would be ungrammatical; and the Russian instrumental can be used for comparison (*On vyl volkom* 'He howled like a wolf-INST'), while Polish has lost this construction. Or to give an example from Australian languages, the Arrernte ablative *-nge* can be used (like the Japanese locative *de*) to mark the area containing a dispersed activity, while the cognate Yankunytjtjara ablative *-nguru* cannot be used in this way. The language-specific applications of verbal inflections are at least as varied as those of case inflections; for example, the Russian irrealis *-by-* is used in counterfactual conditionals (if X had done V [V-by-*PAST*], Y would have happened), while in Greek the realis inflection is used in exactly the same function.

It is still somewhat controversial to try to assign semantic content to grammemes. Traditional analyses of European languages took it for granted that grammemes have meanings, usually quite a few related meanings. In dealing with a case or mood marker they tended to give it a general name (such as 'instrumental' or 'optative'), and then to list a number of meanings with examples, but without specifying how the various meanings were related or how they could be separated from one another. It was generally assumed that there are no clear boundaries between meanings of a grammeme, that attempts to classify these meanings are somewhat artificial, and that the differences in classifications given by various grammars and dictionaries don’t matter very much.

The results of this approach were notoriously unhelpful to language learners and teachers; they did not fully predict when it would and would not be correct to use a particular grammeme, and they did not explain how the various meanings could be related to one another. They left the polysemy question wide open, or allowed for a bet each way, by suggesting that a grammeme was a single entity with some kind of overall meaning denoted by its label, but also that it was polysemous with several meanings
related to each other and to the general label in unspecified (possibly
unspecifiable) ways.

Several structural and post-structural linguists have tried to
introduce more orderly approaches to dealing with the meanings of
grammemes, particularly case markers, an area that seems at least
potentially more tractable than the more modal-like grammemes
discussed below. The outstanding example of this is Jakobson’s analysis of
Russian cases. He analysed each case into a manageable number of discrete
meanings, and posited a semantic invariant to which they could all be
reduced, and which, furthermore, could explain the relationships of
different cases to one another within the case system. For all its strengths,
however, Jakobson’s componential analysis does not fully predict the
correct and incorrect uses of Russian case inflections for learners of
Russian. Both the overall formula and the semantically complex labels
used for the meaning components (e.g. ‘+peripheral, -affected’) are too
general to capture the complex relationships between the arguments in a
clause. Because of this, as Wierzbicka has pointed out, they cannot predict
why the Russian ‘instrumental’ inflection used in Ivan ubil Petra toporom
‘Ivan killed Peter with an axe-INST’ cannot be used in *David ubil Goliafa
praščej ‘David killed Goliath with a sling-INST’.

Because of the difficulty of giving a fully predictive account of the
meanings of case inflections, many linguists have come to think that these
grammemes do not, after all, have meanings of their own, but are only
surface-level markers of covert categories in the underlying grammar.
The generative tradition views these surface grammatical markers as
semantically arbitrary, and not fully predictable from the underlying
grammatical structures.

Descriptive linguists, faced with these competing theories, have
generally tried to steer a prudent course between them. Whether
describing a case marker or another type of grammeme, most descriptive
grammars try to recognise the integrity of a particular form by assigning it
an overall label, and also to distinguish and describe the various functions
of this form as found in a body of data. While it is comforting to feel that
one can at least determine on an empirical basis how many such functions
a form has, even the most careful and theoretically-informed analysis of
this kind can still leave the linguist unsure as to how these functions
 correspond to meanings, or in D.P. Wilkins’ words, ‘how many senses (as
opposed to functions) this form has’.
It seems likely, then, that some degree of polysemy might have to be accepted for grammemes, even by linguists who strongly prefer monosemous explanations of independent words. Kempson has suggested that each distinguishable meaning of a word should be treated as a discrete lexical item, which seems a reasonable proposal for getting round the difficulty of distinguishing polysemy from homophony (of which more will be said below). However, in the case of grammemes it would seem far less reasonable to distinguish a dozen or more discrete 'instrumental' suffixes for Russian, or -nge (ablative) suffixes for Arrernte. The challenge remains to determine just how many meanings a grammeme has (as opposed to, or in relation to, its functions).

The first example to be examined in detail is a fairly straightforward one in many respects: a modal-like verbal inflection with a comparatively small range of functions. This analysis aims to show how its functions can be correlated with two discrete and specifiable meanings.

### 4.2 How many meanings does a 'desiderative' inflection have?

The Kayardild language does not seem to have a desiderative verb, but it has an inflectional suffix -da (--d) that can be attached to verbs. This morpheme has been labelled 'desiderative' in Evans' grammatical description, because its main function seems to be to indicate that the action denoted by the host verb is desirable, or is wanted by the speaker, as in the following examples:

1. \textit{Dan-inja ngal-da jalji-nja wirdi-d.}\n   \begin{itemize}
   \item here-EMOT 1p NOM shade-EMOT stay-DES
   \end{itemize}
   ‘We should stay here in the shade.’

2. \textit{Dathin-a dangka-a dali-d, dunbu-wa marral-d, dali-jarra-th!}\n   \begin{itemize}
   \item that-NOM man-NOM come-DES deaf-NOM ear-NOM come-CAUS-IMP
   \end{itemize}
   ‘That man should come, he’s deaf, bring him over!’

3. \textit{Kada-ntha wirrka-da balmbi-nj.}\n   \begin{itemize}
   \item again-EMOT dance-DES morrow-EMOT
   \end{itemize}
   ‘I hope (they’ll) dance again tomorrow.’
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The inflection -da can also be used when the speaker wants to do something, that is when the ‘wanter’ is the same as the ‘doer’ of the wanted action:

(4) *Ngada warra-da ngarn-kiring-inj.*
    1sNOM go-DES beach-ALL-EMOT
    ‘I would like to go to the beach.’

The object of a ‘desiderative’-marked verb takes the emotive modal case marker -inja, as seen in the above examples. This suffix is one of a set of modal case suffixes that mark most NPs in a sentence, other than the subject. These suffixes show tense and mood in agreement with the verb, and -inja occurs only in verb phrases where the verb carries a desiderative, hortative or apprehensive inflection. It is because these inflections seem to share some emotive content that Evans has named -inja ‘emotive’. Etymologically it comes from the oblique case marker. The subject of a -da-marked verb, that is the ‘doer’ of the wanted action, is in nominative case.

In subordinate clauses, -da can denote an ‘indirect jussive’, where a request is transmitted via a third person:

(5) *Dathin-a maku wara-th, buru-da ngurrumanji-nj.*
    that-NOM woman(NOM) send-IMP get-DES bag-EMOT
    ‘Send word to that woman, that she should bring the bags.’

(6) *Nyingka kamburi-ja thaa-th, ngijin-inja kajakaja-ntha mirrayala-da thungaluruuru.*
    2sNOM speak-IMP return-IMP my-EMOT daddy-EMOT heal-DES whiteman(NOM)
    ‘You go and tell (them) that the white man should heal my daddy.’

In these cases the requester, and therefore presumably the ‘wanter’ of the subordinate clause action, is identifiable from the main clause. In imperatives like (5) and (6) the ‘wanter’ is the speaker, and in reported requests the ‘wanter’ is the subject of the main clause verb.

So far, it looks as if -da is clearly associated with wanting or desirability. However, -da has another function, to mark hypothetical events in an ‘if...then’ context. In this use -da does not necessarily have anything to do with wanting and is used whether the event is desirable or
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not. This can be seen in the following examples, where the first is clearly undesirable and the second is neutral:

(7) *Ngakulu-wan-inja jungarra-ntha ngimi-nja dali-*,
lin.p-POSS-EMOT big-EMOT night-EMOT come-DES
*ngakulu-wan-inja bakiin-inja raa-*.  
lin.p-POSS-EMOT all-EMOT spear-DES
'If he comes upon us in the dead of night he will spear us all.'

(8) *Ngijuwa ngudi-da wangalk, dathin-a ri-in-da thaa-*.  
1sCOBL throw-DES b’rang(NOM) there-NOM east-from-NOM return-DES
'If I throw the boomerang, it will return there from the east.'

Both of the hypothetical clauses, the ‘if’ clause and the ‘then’ clause, are marked with -da, and neither clause is necessarily associated with wanting. In (8) the ‘complementising oblique’ case marker on the subject of the first clause indicates that this clause is subordinated to the second clause; while in (7) there is no overt marker indicating that one clause is subordinated to the other (though such a relationship can still be inferred).

This non-desiderative use of -da raises the question of polysemy. Can these two uses of -da be related to a single meaning? If the desiderative meaning is considered to be primary, then it is conceivable that a hypothetical meaning could have developed as an extension, related to the desiderative sense in some way. For example, in posing a hypothetical proposition, the speaker may be conveying something like ‘I want you to think of this’.

Perhaps a more serious obstacle to identifying -da with wanting is that, although it can mark a verb as desirable or wanted, it cannot unambiguously indicate who wants it, that is, who is the ‘wanter’. In examples (1-3) the wanter is presumed to be the speaker, but this is not necessarily so: the wanter could be someone else or someone unspecified, as the ‘should’ gloss indicates. Even when what is wanted is the speaker’s own action, as in (4), the interpretation may be that the wanter is someone other than the speaker, and thus (4) could also be glossed ‘I should go to the beach’.

Sentences like (9) and (10) below are entirely vague as to whether the wanter is the speaker, some other person, or people in general. Furthermore, according to Evans, the use of -da need not even refer to
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someone wanting the action, but can simply mean 'it would be good if X does this', as in (10c):

(9) *Ngada wirrka-da.*
    IsnOM dance-DES
    a. 'I want to dance.'
    b. 'Someone wants me to dance.'
    c. 'I should dance.'

(10) *Dathin-a dangka-a dali-d.*
    that-NOM man-NOM come-DES
    a. 'I want that man to come.'
    b. 'That man should come.'
    c. 'It would be good if that man comes.'

These facts raise the possibility that all these uses of *-da* may really have more to do with hypotheticality than with wanting. Apparently, all of the cases where *X V-da* seems to mean 'someone wants X to V' can also be interpreted as meaning 'if X does V, this would be good', without necessarily specifying who thinks it would be good, or for whom it would be good.

Of course, an action or event that 'would be good' is often wanted by someone, or thought of as desirable, but wanting or desirability is not an essential component of such a meaning. Note also that the inference works only in one direction: if something would be good, then someone might want it to happen; but if someone wants something to happen, it cannot be inferred from this that the happening would be good. This interpretation of *-da* has several explanatory advantages over linking *-da* directly with the meaning of wanting. First, it would fit better with the fact that *-da* does not point, syntactically or semantically, to any particular 'wanter'. Second, it links the hypothetical use of *-da* (examples 7-8) with its other uses. Perhaps, indeed, *-da* can always be linked with a hypothetical or conditional meaning. When two events are involved, as in (7) and (8), the two events are linked in a conditional, 'if...then' relationship. When only one event is mentioned, as in the other examples, it seems always to be implied that if this event were to happen, (then) it would be good.

The meanings of the two construction types in which *-da* occurs could then be spelt out in the following manner. For the two-clause
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construction, where both clauses are marked with -da, the meaning appears to be:

\[ X \text{ } V_1\text{-}da, \text{ } Y \text{ } V_2\text{-}da \]
if X does V₁, Y will do V₂

This explication might also need to allow for the possibility of one or both clauses referring to something that happens, rather than something that an agent (X or Y) does. This could be shown as follows:

\[ (X) \text{ } V_1\text{-}da, \text{ } (Y) \text{ } V_2\text{-}da \]
if X does V₁ / if V₁ happens
Y will do V₂ / V₂ will happen

The one-clause construction, in which the -da clause entails not a second clause but an assumption that ‘this would be good’, would be shown as follows:

\[ (X) \text{ } V\text{-}da \]
if X does V / if V happens
this would be good

These explications display the exact nature of the relationship being proposed between the meaning of -da in the one-clause construction type, where its meaning has been described as desiderative, and the two-clause construction type, where its meaning has been described as hypothetical. Both construction types have the same first component, a hypothetical proposition (‘if X does V / if V happens’). They both have a second component which is conditional upon the first. The only difference is that in the two-clause construction this component is specified by the second clause, while in the one-clause construction it is always ‘this would be good’.

It can be noted in passing that there is an interesting parallel between this view of Kayardild -da, and the English word if. In English, if usually occurs in two-clause constructions, as in the glosses for examples (7) and (8) above. But if can also occur in the if only construction, where a second clause may be implied but need not be present. For example, a sentence like If only they’d answer the phone! can occur with or without a
second clause (such as ...I could tell them the good news). The *if only* clause may refer to a specific outcome, but if no second clause is present, the one-clause construction may imply only 'if they'd answer the phone, this would be good'. It cannot be interpreted as implying that something bad would happen.

There is some additional supporting evidence for the idea that the meaning of *-da* is more to do with 'if' than with wanting. First, there is its behaviour in questions like the following:

(11) *Ngada wirrka-da?*

    IsNOM  dance-DES

    'Should I dance?'

If *-da* refers to wanting, then a question like this should be able to be interpreted as an inquiry about what the addressee wants ('do you want me to dance?'), or at the very least, about what someone wants ('does somebody/anybody want me to dance?'). But only the ‘potential’ inflection is interpreted this way in a question (*Ngada wirrka-ju? 'Shall I dance?*), and *-da* is interpreted as being much more vague, as if the speaker were wondering aloud to herself ('I wonder if I should dance?' or 'would it be good if I dance?').

The second piece of evidence concerns the use of *-da* in subordinate clauses. It is used in indirect jussives, as shown in (5) and (6) above, where it seems to refer to someone’s wanting someone else to do something. But it does not occur in other types of subordinate clauses that express wanting, for example in purposive clauses, where the ‘potential’ inflection is used (see next chapter). In the indirect jussives, the main clause always contains either an imperative, or a speech act verb denoting a request. In other words, the meaning of wanting is always present in the main clause, whether encoded in an imperative ('I want you to do something') or a request verb, whose meaning involves someone’s wanting someone to do something. So, the subordinate clause, with *-da*, need not necessarily be interpreted as referring to wanting, since this meaning is already present in the main clause.

More evidence is needed about the subordinate clause use of *-da*, but it looks as if it can only take a desiderative reading (as opposed to a hypothetical one) in an environment where the main clause refers to wanting. This contrasts with the ‘potential’ inflection, discussed in the
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next chapter, which seems to mark a subordinate clause as wanted regardless of the content of the main clause.

A possible argument against viewing the meaning of -da as hypothetical or conditional, is its association with emotive modal case, as mentioned above. The emotive marker -inja seems to make some reference to feeling; an analysis of its meaning is beyond the scope of the present discussion, but it may mean something like 'someone could feel something about this'. It occurs only with desideratives, apprehensives (where someone wants to avoid something, and may very likely feel something about that), and hortatives (where someone wants someone else to do something, and again probably feels something about this). Hypotheticals and conditionals, on the other hand, can be entirely neutral with regard to feeling. However, -inja does not have to occur with -da, and it is interesting to note that it does not occur in the neutral conditional context of example (8) above. Many uses of -da are compatible with a reference to feeling, but this does not mean that feeling or wanting are necessarily part of the meaning of -da.

The discussion so far has proposed explications of the meanings of two construction types in which -da occurs, and has argued that the two seemingly different functions of -da, desiderative and hypothetical, can be understood as related according to the analysis proposed. It might well be asked at this point, how many meanings are there? Are there two separate but related meanings belonging to the two different construction types, or can they be reduced to a single meaning for the single form -da?

At first, it looked as if -da presented a fairly clear case of polysemy justified on purely syntactic grounds: the one-clause construction with a desiderative meaning, probably related to the concept of wanting; and the two-clause construction with a hypothetical or conditional meaning. The two-clause construction seems unambiguous, but the one-clause construction at first appeared to be ambiguous between wanting and some more vague or general desirability.

A considerable depth of analysis was needed in order to come up with a plausible solution to the ambiguity problem, in the form of an analysis of the seemingly ambiguous one-clause construction in terms of possible good ('if this happens, it would be good') rather than in terms of wanting. Only then was it possible to see the link between this construction type and the two-clause 'if...then' construction.
This analysis led to the proposal of two explications, one for each construction type, and these explications made it possible to compare the meanings, component by component, seeing exactly where and how they differ.

The NSM method takes the utterance, not the individual lexeme, as the basic unit of meaning to be analysed. This principle is especially appropriate in the case of grammemes, since there are almost no conceivable circumstances in which a Kayardild speaker would say just -da. This grammeme must always occur in some construction or other. And each construction type has a meaning of its own, that interacts with but is not wholly determined by the meaning of the grammeme.

If the two construction types had completely different meanings, with no or very few shared components, then one could certainly say that -da had two separate meanings. But the two construction types examined here have a very high proportion of their meaning in common. The only difference between them seems to be that the absence of a second clause denoting a dependent event triggers a kind of default meaning, 'this would be good'. This meaning difference seems to be entirely due to the construction itself, that is to the presence or absence of a second clause, rather than to anything about -da.

It still has to be recognised that -da occurs in two different construction types and that these do have two different meanings. Reducing them to one would give a formula that would be too general to be fully predictive. The two-clause construction definitely cannot be analysed in terms of two one-clause constructions. However, the meanings of construction types are complex, while the meaning of an individual lexeme or grammeme may be simple, and in some cases, irreducible.

In this sense it may be possible to reduce the two functions of -da to a single meaning: the proposed primitive IF. Like words and morphemes in natural languages, the NSM primitives also occur in particular combinations. Although the combinatorial properties and 'primitive syntax' of IF require a great deal of further research, it seems that IF signals both the presence of two propositions and the nature of the relationship between them. This could explain why, if a second proposition is not present in an IF utterance (as in the one-clause -da construction or the English if only construction), some kind of default proposition is read into
the meaning. The details of how this works would be a fruitful subject for investigation.

A tentative conclusion can be drawn at this point, that -da has a single meaning, identifiable with NSM IF, and that it functions in two different construction types, each with its own specific meaning, but sharing the core meaning of IF.

There needs to be some further investigation in Kayardild of the translatability of the explications proposed above. There are several possible 'if...then' constructions involving sequences of tense and mood in the two clauses. But none of these sequences seems to involve any lexical equivalent of IF, and it is possible that these other constructions could be explicated in terms of -da in the two-clause construction. If -da is the Kayardild equivalent of IF, then it should be indefinable, and hence the explication 'if X does V1, Y does V2' would only be translatable via -da itself: X V1-da, Y V2-da. The one-clause construction should be translatable via a -da clause plus a second clause with mirraa 'good', though this should be tested with speakers of the language.

It will be seen from the above analysis that the -da inflection is certainly not semantically empty; that it has a meaning or meanings that can be discovered and stated by means of a thorough semantic investigation. A considerable depth of analysis is required to arrive at a plausible solution, which is open to further testing and verification or falsification. The result of this kind of analysis is far from the untidy proliferation of possible meanings and potential ambiguities that would appear if unconstrained polysemy were allowed. The NSM method offers an orderly way of investigating cases of possible or likely polysemy, specifying the relationships of meanings with syntactic functions, stating explicitly the meanings of a grammeme in different construction types, and showing the relationships between those meanings.

The next case study involves more ambiguity. It examines a grammatical particle whose meaning seems to overlap partially with the meaning of a verb, but both the particle and the verb show some ambiguity. Procedures similar to those demonstrated above are used to provide a coherent analysis of how many meanings are involved.
4.3 Wanting, liking and irrealis in Buru

The Buru language of Indonesia does not have a main verb meaning 'want'. The two words most often associated with wanting are the irrealis marker la and the nominal verb suka 'like'. Both of these words are quite frequently translated as 'want', but both appear to be ambiguous between this and other meanings.

La is one of a set of preverbal tense, aspect and mood (TAM) markers, though it differs from other members of the set in ways that will be discussed below. It marks a clause as desired, intended, hypothetical or simply future. The following example is ambiguous between a future or intentional reading (a) and a desiderative reading (b):

(12) Yako la iko.
1s IRR go
a. 'I’m going to go.'
b. 'I want to go.'

Suka, which may be a loan from the Malay verb suka 'like', is also ambiguous, between a 'like' reading (a) and a desiderative reading (b):

(13) Ringe nak suka la (da) kaa.
3s 3sPOSS like IRR (3s) eat
a. 'He likes to eat.'
b. 'He wants to eat.'

Suka often takes an irrealis clausal complement, as in the above example, but can also take an object NP. In this construction (e.g. Kam.rua nam suka saro 'The two of us liked each other') the interpretation is unambiguously 'like', not 'want'.

Suka is syntactically anomalous. It functions as a main verb in a clause, as in the two examples above, but unlike any other verb it must be preceded by a possessive pronoun. Because of this it has been termed a nominal verb. The primary meaning of suka seems to be 'like'; it only indicates wanting in conjunction with an irrealis complement marked by la, as in (13) above. Even in this construction it is ambiguous between 'like' and 'want'.
Sentences like (13) can also occur without *suka*. The following example cannot be interpreted as 'He likes to eat', but is still ambiguous between desire/intention and futurity, like (12) above:

(14) \textit{Ringe la (da) kaa.}  
\text{3s IRR (3s) eat}  
\text{a. 'He wants to eat.'}  
\text{b. 'He's going to eat.'}

The irrealis marker *la* also has several interesting syntactic properties. It can serve either as a preverbal TAM marker, as in (12) above, or as a complementiser introducing an irrealis subordinate clause, for example:

(15) \textit{Ringe oli la (da) kaa.}  
\text{3s return IRR (3s) eat}  
'He went home to eat/so that he could eat.'

(16) \textit{Ringe iko la (da) tou-k fen.lale.}  
\text{3s go IRR (3s) see-APP village.inside}  
'He went to take a look around the village.'

If the subject of the subordinate clause is coreferential with the main clause subject, the subordinate clause subject is optional, as indicated by the brackets in the two examples above, and example (13).

*La* functions like the other TAM markers, but differs from them in two ways. First, all TAM markers precede the verb, but only *la* can be separated from the verb by a subject. Compare (14-16), where a subject pronoun can come between *la* and the verb, with the following, where nothing can come between the verb and the abilitative aspect marker *te*:

(17) \textit{Beto-beto kami te (*ma) bage moo.}  
\text{night-RDP lex.p ABIL (*1p) sleep NEG}  
'Night after night we couldn't sleep.'

Second, only one TAM marker can occur in a clause, with the exception of *la* which can co-occur with any other TAM marker provided
the subject comes between them. In the following example la co-occurs with te:

(18) *Kami la ma te iko.
    lex.p IRR lp ABIL go
    'We want to be able to go.'

If te were absent, the coreferential subordinate subject (ma) would be optional, but here it is obligatory to separate la and te.

La is also unique among the complementisers. Besides being the only complementiser that is also a TAM marker, it is the only complementiser that can occur without a preceding main verb. Other complementisers, like the realis complementiser pa below, can take the place of la in sentences like (15) or (16) above:

(19) Ringe oli pa da kaa.
    3s return REAL 3s eat
    'He went home and ate.'

But no other complementiser can function like la in (14), without a main verb:

(20) *Ringe pa da kaa.
    3s REAL 3s eat

Thus, the grammatical status of la is somewhat anomalous. Grimes' analysis of this language shows how other TAM markers have apparently developed from main verbs, for example abilitative te from tewa 'know'. He suggests that la may have developed similarly from the verb laha 'request', which may have had an earlier meaning 'desire', and that this could account for the synchronic absence of a desiderative main verb.

The evidence indicates that wanting is involved when la is used in a subordinate clause. When the irrealis marker la introduces purpose clauses as in (15) and (16) above, the translation does not usually refer to wanting, but that is because wanting is encoded in the English purpose construction used in the gloss, as it is in the Buru purpose clause. In other subordinate clauses la can refer to someone's wanting someone else to do something, for example:
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(21) Da puna ringe la da oli.
3s do 3s IRR 3s return.
‘He made him go home.’

(22) Sira mamhisik ringe la da wada iye-ro.
3p force 3s IRR 3s carry thing-PL
‘They forced him to carry the stuff.’

The verb mamhisik ‘force’ in (22) includes in its meaning that the agent wants the outcome. It might be inferred that in this example la does not necessarily mark the subordinate clause as wanted, since this meaning is already indicated by the semantics of the verb; so here la might be seen as a fairly empty grammatical marker introducing the clause that expresses the aim of the verb ‘force’. However puna ‘do’ in (21) does not of itself encode wanting, and so in this example it can be seen that la does carry the meaning that the subordinate clause action is wanted by the subject of the main clause (i.e. that the main clause subject wants the other person to go home).

The only case where la does not imply some specific person’s wanting something is in a rather unusual construction where a la clause is used as the subject of a non-active verbal predicate:

(23) La da iko gam pa masi di gosa.
IRR 3s go ALL down sea DISTR good
‘For her to go down to the coast is good.’

The distinction between active and non-active verbs is an important one in Buru grammar. Active verbs denote things that someone can intentionally do, while non-active verbs denote things that happen; non-active verbs cannot be used in the imperative. When a non-active verb occurs in an irrealis construction with la, a subject must come between la and the verb. In the following example with the non-active predicate haa ‘big’, la can occur with or without suka ‘like’, but the subordinate subject da is obligatory:

3s IRR big
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b. *Ringe* la *da haa.*
   3s    IRR 3s    big

c. *Ringe* nak *suka la da haa.*
   3s 3sPOSS like IRR 3s    big

'He wants to grow.'

With active verbs, on the other hand, a coreferential subject is optional, as seen in (13-16) above.

From this it can be seen that preverbal *la* can be applied only to voluntary actions, that is to things that the subject can want to do. When *la* introduces a full clausal complement, on the other hand, the complement verb may be active or non-active. In non-active contexts like the following example, *la* can be interpreted as referring to future possibility rather than to the subject's wanting an involuntary action to happen:

(25) *Ringe* la.d.ba.moho.
   3s    IRR.3s.DUR.fall

'He was having a tendency to fall.'

However, a desiderative reading cannot be excluded even in the case of non-active verbs like 'fall'. In most contexts people don't want to fall, but the *la* clause could refer to wanting to fall in a game, for example.

Following the analytical procedure suggested above, the different construction types for *la*, and the range of meanings associated with them can be identified. There are two main-clause uses of *la*. The first is where *la* immediately precedes the verb (*X la V*), and the verb must be an active verb. This construction can refer either to wanting or to a possible future action, and could be represented as follows:

\[
X \text{ la } V_{[\text{Active}]} \quad (\text{e.g. } 13)
\]

a. X wants: 'I will do V'

b. X can do V after now

where (a) and (b) are the two possible readings. In (b), 'can' represents epistemic possibility, and 'now' refers to the time of the utterance.

The second main-clause *la* construction has a second subject between *la* and the verb. Here the verb can be active or non-active, and its
subject must be coreferential with the main clause subject. This construction can also refer either to wanting or to a possible future event. The difference from the preverbal $la$ construction seems to be that in this construction $la$ introduces not a voluntary action (X does something that X wants to do) but a voluntary or involuntary event of which X is the subject.

$X la X V$ (e.g. 24b, 25)

a. X wants: X will do V
b. this can happen after now: X will do V

It should be asked whether the reference to future time ('after now') is needed in addition to the reference to epistemic possibility ('can') in all cases where these constructions are used. The evidence for this as a necessary component of the meaning is not overwhelming, but it appears that while sentences like (24b) can take an alternative reading 'He will/may go', they cannot refer to possibility in the present time, *'He may be big (now)'.

Before exploring the relationship between the (a) and (b) meanings, we turn to the uses of $la$ in subordinate clauses, where it seems to refer more unambiguously to wanting. There are two common subordinate clause $la$ constructions, one where $la$ immediately precedes the subordinate verb, and one where the subordinate clause subject comes between $la$ and the verb. Each of these constructions seems to have only one possible meaning. The first is the purpose construction, where the second verb expresses the purpose of the main verb action, and the same entity (X) must be the subject of both verbs:

$X V_1 la V_2$ (e.g. 15, 16)

X wants: 'I will do $V_2$'

because of this X does $V_1$

In the second subordinate clause construction, the subordinate clause subject may or may not be the same entity as the main subject. Here, as in the $X la X V$ construction, $la$ is not directly introducing an action, but introduces an event:
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\[
X V_1 la X/Y V_2 \text{ (e.g. 21, 22)} \\
X \text{ wants: } X/Y \text{ will do } V_2 \\
\text{ because of this } X \text{ does } V_1
\]

This appears to be the only construction in which the subject of the event that \( X \) wants can be someone other than the 'wanter'.

Recall now the construction where \textit{suka} 'like' takes a \textit{la} complement, as in (13) above. This construction is similar in form to the two subordinate clauses explicated above, with one important exception: the subordinate clause event cannot be the purpose of the main clause event, liking. These two \textit{suka la} constructions, one with \textit{la} introducing a verb, and one with \textit{la} introducing a clause, can be explicated along the same lines as the two constructions shown above, but without the second, 'because' component:

\[
X \text{ POSS } \textit{suka la } V \text{ (e.g. 13)} \\
X \text{ wants: 'I will do } V' \\
(* \text{because of this } X \text{ POSS } \textit{suka})
\]

\[
X \text{ POSS } \textit{suka la } X V \text{ (e.g. 13)} \\
X \text{ wants: X will do } V \\
(* \text{because of this } X \text{ POSS } \textit{suka})
\]

The effect of this is that the \textit{suka la} constructions seem to mean much the same as the (a) readings of the \( X \text{ la } V \) and \( X \text{ la } X \text{ V} \) constructions discussed above.

However, \textit{suka} is certainly not semantically empty, and the \textit{suka la} constructions also seem to be ambiguous, as seen in (13) above, between wanting and liking. A closer examination of the meaning of \textit{suka} is needed in order to discover the nature of its relationship with the desiderative meaning in the \textit{suka la} constructions. First let us examine the unambiguous \textit{suka} construction mentioned above, where \( X \text{ POSS } \textit{suka} \ Y \) cannot be interpreted as 'X wants Y' but only as 'X likes Y'. This 'liking' involves the experiencer's feeling something good in relation to the entity or event that is the object of liking. If the object of liking is an entity, Buru uses the \( X \text{ POSS } \textit{suka} \ Y \) construction, while if what is liked is an event or action, a \textit{suka la } V \) construction is used.
When an entity is the object of *suka*, the relationship of that entity (Y) to the ‘good feelings’ of the experiencer (X) implies that these feelings arise from X’s conscious awareness of Y. That is, when X thinks of Y, then X feels something good. These two proposed components are linked in a causal relationship, because the good feelings arise not just along with thinking of Y, but because of it. While a fuller investigation of the meaning of *suka* in Buru might reveal one or more additional elements, the meaning of this construction is something like this:

\[
X \text{POSS} \text{suka } Y
\]

when X thinks about Y, X feels something good because of this

The ‘like’ sense of the *suka la* constructions could then be explicated along similar lines:

\[
X \text{POSS} \text{suka la } V
\]

when X thinks about this: ‘I will do V’,
X feels something good because of this

\[
X \text{POSS} \text{suka la } X \text{V}
\]

when X thinks about this: X will do V,
X feels something good because of this

At this point a possible link between the two readings of the *suka la* constructions begins to emerge. In the *X POSS suka Y* construction, where *la* is not present, *suka* refers unambiguously to liking. Therefore it is possible that the reference to wanting in the *suka la* constructions comes not from the meaning of *suka* but from the meaning of *la*.

Recall now the subordinate clause constructions in which *la* indicates that the subordinate clause event (*la V₂ or la X V₂*) is wanted by the main clause subject, and consider the possibility that the *la* clause in the *suka la* construction means the same: that the subordinate clause event is wanted by the subject of the main, *suka* clause. Such a meaning (X wants: X will do V) is fully compatible with the ‘liking’ scenario where if X does V then X has good feelings because of it. Indeed, this scenario may arise because of X’s wanting. This would mean that the *suka la* constructions could be explicated identically with the other subordinate
clause la constructions shown above, with the meaning of the main clause X POSS suka corresponding to the ‘X does V1’ component:

\[ X \text{ POSS suka} \text{ la } V_2 \]

X wants: ‘I will do V2’
because of this X does V1[=feels something good]

\[ X \text{ POSS suka} \text{ la } X \text{ V2} \]

X wants: X will do V2
because of this X does V1[=feels something good]

Because of the many steps required to arrive at this analysis, it may at first seem a trifle far-fetched and speculative. However, it must be evaluated on the same criteria that are applied to any other aspect of linguistic description: consistency, economy, explanatory and predictive power.

On these criteria the proposed analysis shapes up quite promisingly. It is internally consistent and accounts for all the observed data. It is optimally economical: not only does it allow the suka la constructions to be explicated in exactly the same way as the other subordinate clause la constructions, but in doing so it resolves the apparent ambiguity of the suka la constructions. The explications proposed above contain both a desiderative component contributed by the subordinate la clause and a ‘liking’ component contributed by suka in the main clause. This proposal has the power to explain why examples like (13) above seem to be ambiguous: if a suka la construction encompasses both liking and wanting in its meaning, then (13) is not ambiguous but includes both the (a) and (b) glosses. English has no similar construction that combines the two concepts, so the English gloss for the Buru sentence would have to remain something like ‘He wants/likes to eat’.

The proposed analysis also predicts that the X POSS suka Y construction, without a la clause to contribute wanting to the meaning, would refer unambiguously to liking; and it predicts that la constructions without suka would not refer to liking. A further prediction was that the suka la X V2 construction should be able to take a non-coreferential subordinate subject just as the X V1 la X/Y V2 construction can, and this was later found to be true in examples like the following:
4.3 Wanting, liking and irrealis

(26) Nin suka la nin anα-t oλi.

3pPOSS like IRR 3pPOSS child-NOM return
'They wanted their daughter to return.'

Hence the second suka la construction shown above should really be headed: $X V_1[=\text{POSS suka}] la X/Y V_2$.

Having found a possible resolution for the seeming ambiguity of suka, we return now to the other case of apparent ambiguity, the main-clause la that seems to refer to either wanted or possible future events. The question is whether the Buru main-clause la is really polysemous, with two discrete and specifiable meanings, or whether the apparently different readings can be resolved into a single meaning. Recall that in examples like (12) above the possible readings of $X la V$ are:

a. $X$ can do $V$ after now
b. $X$ wants: $X$ will do $V$

The (a) sense is sometimes translated as a future tense expression, 'X will do $V$' or 'X is going to do $V$', but it is a true irrealis rather than a future tense, in that it always marks the event status as uncertain; it does not convey any certainty that the event will happen after now.

Evidence has already been seen that in some syntactic contexts, namely the subordinate clause constructions, the only reading of la (X) V is that the event (X will do V) is wanted. The purpose clause 'to eat' in (15) does not carry an implication that the event is possible (cf. realis pa in 19). Example (15) is fully compatible with a context where the subject went home to eat but couldn't because there was no food there. This evidence indicates that a desiderative meaning of la can be established as separate from the sense of epistemic possibility.

Example (18) above shows that la in a main clause can also appear in a context that strongly favours the desiderative reading. From the ambiguity described for (12) and (14), one might expect (18) to be ambiguous between 'We want to go' and 'We'll be able to go' or 'We might be able to go', but this is not so. The interaction between the semantics of la and the other TAM markers is worthy of more study, but for the present this can be noted as another context that seems to distinguish 'want' from 'can' as a meaning of la.
One syntactic context in which \textit{la} cannot be interpreted as 'want' was seen in (23) above. While little information is available on this construction type, a preliminary representation can be sketched as follows. It is more than an 'if...then' construction in that it does seem to carry the implication that the \textit{la} clause is possible, and the first component is intended to reflect this.

\textit{la X V gosa} (e.g. 23)
\begin{enumerate}
\item this can happen: X will do V
\item if it happens, it will be good
\end{enumerate}

A feature of this construction type that sets it apart from all other \textit{la} constructions is that there is no main-clause subject other than the \textit{la} clause itself. That is, there is no possible 'wanter' in this construction; whereas in all the constructions where \textit{la} can mean 'want', the wanter is the main-clause subject. This is also quite different from the Kayardild 'if...good' construction (X) \textit{V-da} discussed in 4.2 above, where a main-clause subject (X) can be present without necessarily being the wanter.

In this construction, the 'can' component appears to be contributed directly by \textit{la}, marking the event \textit{X V} as something that can happen, in the same way as it does in the (b) reading of the \textit{X la X V} construction (this can happen after now: X will do V). The 'if' component, on the other hand, seems to arise from the construction itself, as a 'relational proposition' of the kind identified by Mann and Thompson, linking the possible event with 'good'. Therefore the presence of an 'if' component in this construction type should not necessarily be taken as indicating that 'if' is a possible meaning of \textit{la}. Buru has other, much more productive, 'if...then' constructions, as well as a propositional marker \textit{mambole} 'good if'.

4.4 Polysemy and disambiguation

The evidence examined above shows that there are syntactic contexts in which \textit{la} refers to wanting but not possibility, and other syntactic contexts where it refers to possibility but not wanting. This provides a sound empirical basis for saying that \textit{la} in main clauses may really be polysemous between 'want' and 'can'.

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However, the syntactic evidence does not allow us to establish two separate meanings entirely distinguishable by their syntactic behaviour, as was possible with the Kayardild -da in its one-clause and the two-clause constructions. For Buru la, only some syntactic constructions provide a basis for distinguishing between the two meanings under consideration: the subordinate clause la constructions are associated with wanting, and the la X V gosa construction with possibility, but the main-clause X la V and X la X V constructions can be associated with either wanting or possibility.

The interaction of la with the verb type is relevant here. Recall that X la V requires an active verb, while in X la X V the verb may be active or non-active. These two verb types are formally distinguished on the basis of their syntactic behaviour, and according to Grimes' thorough description of them, the semantic basis of this distinction is something like this:

**Active verb**
- someone does this
- because this person wants it

**Non-active verb**
- this happens / someone does this
- (not because someone wants it)

The second component for the non-active class is shown in brackets because the semantic contrast between the two classes is probably not fully symmetrical. The fact that volition (wanting) seems to be involved in one class does not imply that the exact opposite necessarily characterises the other class. Like many Austronesian languages, Buru has a special verbal prefix that can add the specifically avolitional meaning 'not because someone wants it' to a verb.

These class meanings indicate how the verbs in each group are thought of, but they do not affect the meanings of individual member verbs. Active verbs do not all have a component of their meaning 'someone does this because this person wants it', and non-active verbs do not all have a component 'not because someone wants it'.

Verb class meanings do not dictate the meanings of construction types either. Although it seems tempting to interpret the requirement for an active verb in the X la V construction as evidence that wanting is more...
central to the meaning of this construction than to the meaning of \(X \, la \, X \, V\), the fact remains that both constructions are ambiguous, as shown by examples like (14). So, an attempt to distinguish the two meanings entirely on syntactic grounds by identifying \(X \, la \, V\) only with 'want' and \(X \, la \, X \, V\) only with 'can' is not sustainable in the light of the facts.

That said, however, the interaction of verb type with construction type can have the effect of making one of the two readings more likely, and in a sense less marked, than the other. The most common reading of \(X \, la \, V_{[\text{Active}]}\) is 'X wants: I will do \(V\)'. The construction is still ambiguous, and can refer to possibility, but the effect of the verb type is to make the desiderative reading the preferred one.

In the \(X \, la \, X \, V\) construction, on the other hand, the full clausal complement of \(la\) presents the event (\(X\) will do \(V\)) as happening (this can/will happen), whether the verb is active or non-active. The effect of this is to make the 'can' reading slightly more likely than the 'want' reading, as seen with example (25). Again the construction remains ambiguous, allowing of either reading, but the 'can' reading is slightly more favoured by the construction type.

An active verb can neutralise this effect, so that the 'want' reading is more likely in (12) than in (25), but it would probably be accurate to represent the order of preference of meanings in the two constructions as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
X \, la \, V_{[\text{Active}]} & \quad a. \, X \, \text{wants: 'I will do } V \text{' } \\
& \quad b. \, X \, \text{can do } V \text{ after now }
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
X \, la \, X \, V & \quad a. \, \text{this can happen after now: } X \, \text{will do } V \\
& \quad b. \, X \, \text{wants: } X \, \text{will do } V
\end{align*}
\]

But the relationship between the (a) and (b) meanings seems intuitively close, close enough that one can imagine them as being somehow involved in a single meaning associated with the single form \(la\). After all, we know that when someone (\(X\)) wants to do something (\(V\)), it is usually something that can happen after this time. Of course this need not always be so; one can want something that may or may not turn out to be possible, and example (18) seems to provide such an instance. Or one can
want something without reference to future possibilities. For example, *I'm here because I want to be here (now)* could be said in English in circumstances where either it won't be possible to be here ever again, or when the speaker wants to go somewhere else immediately after being here now.

Could it be that the separability of wanting from future possibility might apply to English speakers' concepts of wanting and possibility but not to Buru? Could the Buru language be reflecting a worldview in which people cannot conceive of wanting something that is completely impossible, or of wanting something other than in the future, and therefore do not distinguish between concepts of wanting and future possibility? Buru has words glossed as 'hope' and 'feeling contented', that could be used in relation to desired events with uncertain outcomes or desired events in the present, so would there really be any need to distinguish between a la₁ 'want' and a la₂ 'can'? The possibility of a combined meaning must always be considered, as seen in the case of the suka la constructions in the preceding section. Since the (a) and (b) meanings of main-clause la are not fully distinguishable on syntactic grounds alone, semantic evidence must be examined within the language to see whether or not its speakers distinguish between the two hypothesised meanings.

The Buru language has many other time expressions and constructions referring to future and possible events without any reference to anyone's wanting them; it is less rich in alternative ways of talking about wanting. An ambiguous utterance like *Yako la iko* (example 12) can readily be disambiguated by means of other words referring to possibility, such as the post-verbal auxiliary salak 'perhaps', and/or by time expressions like sepo fi dii 'after that', or supan 'tomorrow'. Greater certainty about a future event can be conveyed using expressions like resek 'really, truly', or iak (or musti) 'must' rather than la:

(27) *Ringe iak oli.*

3s must return

'He must go home.'

Reference to immediate future time can be expressed unambiguously by means of specific temporal markers like the preverbal *lamba*, or *anga* 'immediately':
4.4 Polysemy and disambiguation

(28) Lea lamba sogo.
    sun ImmFUT set
    'The sun is about to set.'

(29) Da iko anga.
    3s go immediately
    'She’s going right away.'

The desiderative meaning can also be conveyed unambiguously, by adding suka to form a suka la construction as described above. The word zale ‘inside’ can also refer to desire:

(30) Da tewa sir nun lale-t.
    3s know 3p 3pPOSS inside-NOM
    He knows their desires/intentions.

Lale, which derives from the proto-Austronesian root *Dalem ‘inside’, covers a very wide range of meanings, including the inside of a thing or place (see example 16), a period of time, or the inner nature of a person, their feelings or character. Lale, like suka, is syntactically anomalous, taking either nominal or verbal affixes, and it combines with other roots to form over a dozen emotion terms and terms denoting interpersonal relations. It appears likely that lale refers to feeling in general, but that in some contexts this can be interpreted as a feeling of desire.

Another area of semantic evidence is that the ambiguous la constructions can be used in contexts that exclude one or the other of the two readings. For example, the utterance in (12) above ('I want to go') can be said by a prisoner, where there is no possibility of doing so. Example (14) ('He wants to eat') could be said of someone in a famine-stricken area where there is nothing that can possibly be eaten.

It is not as easy to find contexts that exclude reference to wanting. In particular, it is difficult to find a construction that clearly expresses a contrast like 'I'm going to go but I don't want to'. The reverse situation, 'I want to go but I can't', is easily expressed by contrasting Yako la iko 'I want to go' with Yako te iko moo 'I can't go'. While the means of contrasting 'going to V' with 'not wanting to V' is worth investigating further in Buru, the language offers several possible ways of achieving this contrast. For
example, preverbal *bara* 'don’t' might be used to contrast *la.d.bara iko* 'not want to go' with one of the future or immediate future expressions mentioned above.

The important points here are two: the Buru language clearly has available the lexical and grammatical resources to enable its speakers to distinguish between concepts of wanting and future possibility; and Buru speakers do make such distinctions in contexts where they feel a need to do so. If one still wishes to pursue the possibility that *la* in the two main-clause constructions either combines the two concepts or is somehow vague between them, the next step is to construct a trial definition that would either combine the two meanings, or be general enough to cover all possibilities.

If it is assumed that the concepts of wanting and future possibility may be inextricably linked, at least in the main-clause *la* construction, a single explication could be constructed including both, such as the following for *X la V*:

\[
\begin{align*}
X & \text{ can do } V \text{ after now} \\
X & \text{ wants to do it}
\end{align*}
\]

But this explication would not work, because it could not be used in all the contexts where *X la V* can be used, for example in the various cases mentioned above of people wanting to do things that are not possible.

The only alternative is to try to find a definition vague enough to cover all the possibilities, rather like the label 'irrealis'. The basis of such a definition would have to be the unrealised status of both wanted and possible future events:

\[
\begin{align*}
X & \text{ didn’t do } V \text{ before now} \\
\text{or:}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{this didn’t happen before now: } X & \text{ did } V
\end{align*}
\]

The problem with a definition along these lines is that it is far too general either to explain or to predict much about the uses of *la* in main clauses. It offers no explanation of why this *la* would be used in reference to wanting, or even future possibility, because there is no necessary connection
between an event's not having occurred before now, and anyone's wanting it or thinking that it may possibly happen after now. It also fails to show any connection between the meaning of main-clause *la* and the meaning of *la* in other construction types, so it comes no closer to identifying a single meaning with a single form than the two-meaning hypothesis does.

It can therefore be concluded at this stage of the analysis of Buru *la*, that *la* in the two main-clause constructions is ambiguous between the (a) and the (b) meanings as proposed above. The nature of the relationship between the (a) and the (b) meanings proposed above is not a compositional relationship: there is no overlap between the elements of meaning, other than the meanings associated with the parts of the construction itself, namely the subject (X), the verb (V), and in the case of the X *la* X V construction, the meaning ‘X does V’ associated with the full clausal complement. The remaining meaning elements, ‘want’ and ‘can after now’, are the two meanings proposed here for *la* itself in main clauses.

Thus it is posited that *la* has two senses, with no semantic content in common. The relationship between these two meanings, although intuitively connected, is formally non-compositional in nature, since they share no components, nor can one be defined in terms of the other. This type of polysemy is less common than the kind of polysemy where there are two or more discrete and specifiable meanings but these meanings have one or more components in common, as was the case with the two meanings of Kayardild -*da* discussed above.

It appears that *la* is the principal way of expressing wanting in Buru, but that it is not the principal way of expressing possibility (‘can’), or of expressing future time. The best exponent of epistemic possibility in Buru is probably the TAM marker *te*, although this marker appears to be ambiguous between epistemic and habilitative senses (as is the English *can*). Other Buru expressions for possibility and futurity have been mentioned above. It is probable that the ‘can after now’ meaning proposed for *la* would be explicated in Buru using *sepo* ‘after’ and *te*.

If the desiderative meaning of *la* is not readily expressible in terms other than *la* itself (as in a *suka la* construction), this would be compatible with the NSM hypothesis that WANT is an undefinable, semantically primitive element. This would also account for the greater difficulty in finding alternative means of expressing ‘want’ as opposed to ‘can’ in contrasts between wanting and possibility, as mentioned above.
4.5 Linguistic description of multifunctional grammemes

The detailed case studies presented in this chapter have important implications for descriptive linguistics. While most descriptive grammars would not have the space for such a detailed analysis of every grammeme, the procedures followed here provide a set of tools that can be applied in an orderly way to the descriptive challenge of relating the functions of grammatical morphemes to their meanings.

The procedure used consisted of several different stages of analysis. First was an examination of the syntactic possibilities of the grammeme under consideration, that is, an analysis of the different construction types in which it can function, and what meaning or meanings are associated with each construction type. The second stage was the identification of unambiguous construction types, that is, of syntactic contexts in which only one possible reading of the grammeme can be applied. The meanings of these constructions were spelt out in full explications.

The third stage was to examine whether there were any remaining construction types that appeared to be genuinely ambiguous, to state the possible meanings of the ambiguous constructions, and to see how these meanings are related to the meanings established for the unambiguous constructions. The fourth stage involved an examination of language­ internal semantic evidence, to see whether there are any semantic contexts in which only one possible meaning of an otherwise ambiguous construction is applicable, and to see whether the language has other means of distinguishing between the meanings hypothesised for the ambiguous constructions.

The final stage was the construction of explications, that is, explicit statements of the components of the meanings of the ambiguous constructions, to see whether they could be resolved into a single definition that would account for all instances of the grammeme’s use, or whether this could only be done by an account involving more than one separate definition. This stage of the analysis also involved a consideration of how the meanings were related to one another, and how the nature of these relationships relate to the analysis as a whole.

These stages and their application in this chapter are an indication of the depth and complexity of analysis required to arrive at a consistent and sustainable explanation of all the facts about the functions and
4.5 *Description of multifunctional grammemes*

meanings of a grammeme. This complexity will seem alien and cumbersome to many descriptive linguists, who are more used to the traditional descriptive practice of seeking a general label, such as ‘desiderative’ or ‘irrealis’, for each distinct form, and under this label providing an enumeration of the various functions and possible interpretations of the form.

That is a necessary and valuable stage of linguistic description, and only when it is done carefully and thoroughly is one in a position to proceed to the next stages of analysis as demonstrated here. But if linguistic description stops at this point, it falls well short both of explaining why the grammeme has the functions it does, and of predicting what meanings are associated with what functions.

Some descriptive linguists feel that to proceed beyond this point is too risky for a non-native speaker, since it requires a level of interpretation of the data that goes well beyond the surface level of observation and recording. The same may of course be said of the grammatical descriptions produced by descriptive linguists, but in constructing a grammatical description one is guided by principles of consistency, economy, and the use of syntactic and other linguistic evidence to justify the proposed account.

While native speakers are far better equipped to investigate the semantics, and indeed the grammars, of their own languages than non-native speakers are, I have tried to show here that in semantic analysis one can apply the same principles of linguistic description that are used in grammatical description to ensure that the account offered is coherent and plausible. I have also sought to suggest a set of analytical procedures that can minimise the risk of unconstrained interpretation and non-native speaker bias. The application of these tools and procedures has produced a coherent and plausible description of two multifunctional grammemes that correlates functions with meanings, giving an account of how many senses, as well as how many functions, each form has.

More analyses of this kind are needed as a basis for establishing conventions for the representation of polysemous grammemes, but on the basis of the case studies explored here I would propose that the two compositionally related meanings of Kayardild *-da* should be presented as two meanings of one form *-da* ‘if’ (as a grammatical label, ‘conditional’ might be more appropriate than ‘desiderative’), and that under this heading the two construction types and their meanings should be given.
For the non-compositionally related meanings of Buru la, on the other hand, I would propose that they should be represented as $la_1$ 'want' and $la_2$ 'can after this time', again showing the construction types and their meanings under each heading.

Whatever representational conventions are eventually adopted, it will be noted that an analysis as finely detailed as this would have the power to explain the functions and predict the interpretations of la in complex constructions like the following:

(31) *Kami la ha la$1$ du sili-h$1$ barisuk $la_2$ ringe kaweng*  

lex.p ask want 3p pay-it want let can 3s marry  

*tu ana-fina dii.*  

with child-female that  

'We asked that they pay it to allow him to marry that woman.'

I hope to have shown here that it is both necessary and possible in the linguistic description of grammatical morphemes to offer more than grammatical labels or generalisations about the possible relatedness of different functions of a single form. Using the analytical tools offered by the NSM approach, it is possible to specify both how many functions and how many meanings there are, to state exactly what they are, and to be much more specific about the nature of the semantic and grammatical relationships that have been so identified.

I hope also to have demonstrated the falsity of any notion that the only alternative to a 'one form, one meaning' model is unconstrained polysemy. The only polysemy allowed in this account is subject to rigorous criteria involving both syntactic and semantic evidence for any and all proposed meanings.
Chapter 5

Desiderative grammemes and interclausal relations

Languages that mark an event as ‘wanted’ by means of a desiderative grammeme raise important questions about how many semantic roles are necessarily involved in desiderative constructions, and how these semantic roles are handled by the syntax of particular languages. For example, in the previous chapter it was argued that the Buru construction X la V conveys either (a) ‘X wants: X [will] do V’ or (b) ‘X can do V after now’ and that la in main clauses can thus be identified with either of two meanings, (a) ‘want’ or (b) ‘can after now’. But there is an important difference in the ways the two concepts ‘want’ and ‘can’ are related to X and V of the target event, that is, to the event ‘X do V’ that is marked as ‘wanted’ or ‘possible’.

The nature of this difference is that ‘can’ here is more closely linked with the predicate (V), that is, with the possibility or otherwise of this predicate’s occurring or being done. ‘Want’, in contrast, is more closely linked with the entity (X) who experiences the wanting, in addition to X’s role as subject of the wanted event. Thus, ‘can’ may be thought of as a property of propositions (the possibility of their occurrence), while ‘want’ may be thought of as a propensity of persons. That is why the subject (X) is mentioned only once in the (b) formula above, while X appears twice in the (a) formula, in the semantic role of ‘wanter’ as well as ‘doer’ of the wanted event.

But is this really true of desiderative concepts in all languages and cultures? Could not some groups of people have a concept of ‘desirability’ as a property of predicates or propositions, instead of a concept of ‘wanting’ as a propensity of individual persons? That is, could some languages treat ‘desirability’ more like ‘possibility’, as a property attached to a single predicate with a single subject, making in effect a parallel between ‘X can do V’ and ‘X want do V’? In exploring the patterning of meanings across cultures one must strive to minimise the possibility of ethnocentric bias in interpreting linguistic data. A possible source of such bias could be to assume that desire must necessarily be attached more to persons and their individual experience than to the conceptualisation of events or propositions.
Caution is needed not only in semantic interpretation, but also in relation to grammar. In particular, one should be very careful about positing two underlying subject-like roles for a construction that has only one grammatical subject. Of course, Buru also has a two-subject construction, *X la X V*, where the first subject slot is more clearly associated with the role of 'wanter', and the second with the role of 'doer'. A widely held view of such constructions is that *X la V* is simply derived from *X la X V* by the operation of a grammatical rule ('Equi') that deletes the coreferential subject (*X*). Having argued in Chapter 3 that such a model does not provide an adequate account of desiderative constructions, I am not going to appeal to it here.

Moreover, there are languages that do not have a two-subject desiderative construction of the kind that Buru has. This chapter presents a detailed case study of one such language, Kayardild, whose main means of expressing the concept of wanting is via the 'potential' verbal inflection *-THu(ru)*, which also expresses a concept of possibility. In the first part of the chapter, the functions and senses of this and related constructions are explored, and the meanings of these constructions are identified according to the procedures developed in the previous chapter.

The final part of this chapter addresses in crosslinguistic perspective the questions of interclausal relations raised by languages like Kayardild, where the 'desirability' of an event expressed by a clause is marked by a grammeme whose scope appears to be purely clause-internal. Whether such grammemes are verbal inflections, verbal auxiliaries, or complementisers, their grammatical scope is limited to a single clause, placing them in striking contrast with independent 'want' lexemes, which not only allow but in many cases demand a second, complement clause. This contrast has major implications both for an understanding of the concept of wanting across languages and cultures, and for the syntax of the proposed natural semantic metalanguage in the light of language-specific syntactic constraints applying within particular languages. In particular, constraints pertaining to coreferentiality between desideratives and their complements are explored in this light.
5.1 Wanting and potentiality in Kayardild

The Kayardild language, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, does not have a main verb expressing 'want'. The 'desiderative' grammeme discussed in that chapter does not seem to refer specifically to wanting either. The Kayardild constructions most often glossed (in English) as referring to wanting are those with the verbal inflection -THu ("-THuru") 'potential'. This grammeme, along with its negative counterpart -nangku ("-nangkuru") 'negative potential', has at least five major functions.

One of these functions is to mark a future or expected event:

(1) \textit{Niya buka-thu mungkiji-wu dulk-u.}\hfill 169
\textit{3sNOM die-POT own-PROP country-FUT}\hfill 169
'He will die in his own country.'

(2) \textit{Ngada ngudi-nangku wangalk-u.}\hfill 169
\textit{lsNOM throw-NegPOT boomerang-FUT}\hfill 169
'I won't throw the boomerang.'

The object of a -THu-marked verb takes a modal case marker, 'future' if the event is projected, as in the examples above, and 'actual' if it is instantiated as in (4) below.

Another function of -THu and -nangku is to denote ability or possibility:

(3) \textit{Dali-j! Ngada kantharrkuru ngudi-nangku bangal-walath-u.}\hfill 169
\textit{come-IMP lsNOM alone(NOM) throw-NegPOT turtle-lot-FUT}\hfill 169
'Come! I can't turn all these turtles over on my own.'

(4) \textit{Ngada kurri-nangku mala-y (barrunth-y).}\hfill 169
\textit{lsNOM see-NegPOT sea-ACT (yesterday-LOC)}
'I could not see the sea (yesterday).'\hfill 169

In present-tense contexts like (3) the distinction between futurity and possibility is neutralised, since if someone is unable to do something then it can also be expected or predicted that they will not do it. Thus (3) is
ambiguous in that it can be interpreted as either 'I can't' or 'I won't'. However (4) is not ambiguous, as it refers to a past impossibility.

-THu and -nangku can express prescription and prohibition:

(5) Nyingka ngij-uru-ya barrki-juru-ya.
2sNOM wood-FUT-CLOC chop-POT-CLOC
'You should chop some wood.'

(6) Ngurruwarra-wan-da yakuri wungi-i-nangku.
fishtrap-ORIG-NOM fish(NOM) steal-DETR-NegPOT
'Fish from fishtraps must not be stolen.'

Example (5) is an indirect command in the form of what has been termed an 'insubordinated' clause, one that is marked like a subordinate clause with a 'complementising locative' case marker, but there is no main clause to which it is subordinated.

-THu and -nangku can also refer to wanting:

(7) Kunya-wunya ngad, ngada jungarra-wu yakuri-wu.
small-rdp(NOM) 1sNOM 1sNOM big-FUT fish-FUT
diya-ju dathin-ku.
eat-POT that-FUT
'I've got a lousy small one, I want to eat that big fish.'

(8) Dathin-a dangka-a maku-ya tharda-ya buru-th,
that-NOM man-NOM woman-ACT shoulder-ACT grasp-ACT
dathin-a maku-wa warra-nangku.
that-NOM woman-NOM go-NegPOT
'That man is grasping the woman by the shoulder, but the woman doesn't want to go.'

(9) Waydbala kurri-ju...; raba-tha dathin-ki dulk-i.
whiteman(NOM) see-POT defile-ACT that-ACT place-ACT
'Some white men wanted to see (that place); they defiled that place.'

In a subordinate clause, -THu and -nangku can express the purpose or goal of the main clause action:
5.1 Wanting and potentiality

(10) Kil-da karna-ja minal-i, karn-marri-wi rjurri-ju.
3p-NOM burn-ACT scrub-ACT grass-without-FUT walk-POT
‘They are burning off the scrub, so (they) can walk around unimpeded by grass.’

(11) Niya kamburi-j, ngada barrki-ju ngij-u.
3sNOM say-ACT 1sNOM chop-POT wood-FUT
‘He said for me to chop the wood.’

1sNOM eye-LOC poke-ACT him-ACT here-FUT come-NegPOT
‘I warned (lit. eye-poked) him not to come here.’

Having such a wide range of functions, -THu often seems to be ambiguous, particularly in the absence of contextual clues that could indicate in what sense it is used. For example, the following sentence is completely ambiguous between futurity, possibility, and wanting:

(13) Ngada wirrka-ju.
1sNOM dance-POT
a. ‘I will dance.’
b. ‘I can dance.’
c. ‘I want to dance.’

Examples (1-12) above are glossed according to their interpretation in the situation in which they were recorded, but some of them could also be ambiguous. (1) could also mean ‘He wants to die in his own country’. (2) could mean ‘not want’ (like 8), or it could mean ‘can’t’ (like 3). In the context of a projected event, the distinction between prediction, possibility and wanting is often neutralised, particularly in negative contexts: if someone cannot do or doesn’t want to do something, then it can reasonably be predicted that they will not do it. The question of disambiguation will be addressed later.

Of the five functions of -THu described above, three have to do with wanting, while two apparently do not. The uses of -THu with expected or future events (examples 1-2) and in relation to ability or possibility (3-4), do not seem necessarily to imply that anyone wants the action to be done. The prescriptive use (5-6) does seem to imply wanting. In (5) the speaker
wants the addressee to chop some wood, while (6) implies that someone wants fish not to be stolen. In examples (7-9) the 'wanter' is clearly identifiable as the subject of the verb that carries the 'potential' inflection, while in (5-6) the 'wanter' is not the same as the subject of the action verb (stealing or chopping), but is rather the originator of the indirect imperative (5) or the prohibition (6).

In the subordinate clause use, too, -THu evidently implies wanting. The subjects of (10) are burning the scrub (because of) wanting to walk unhindered. The subject of (11) said something, wanting the speaker to chop the wood. The speaker of (12) warned the other person, wanting him not to come. This subordinate clause use may be seen as providing some indication that wanting is as much involved in the meaning of -THu as futurity or possibility are. The subordinate clause examples unambiguously convey wanting rather than futurity or possibility: for example, (11) cannot be interpreted as 'He said I will chop the wood' or 'He said I can chop the wood'.

Some further evidence comes from 'insubordinated' clause constructions. These clauses are identical in form to subordinate clauses, in that each word in the clause carries a complementising case suffix, but the insubordinated clauses function independently of any main clause, as seen in example (5). When a 'potential' inflection occurs in an insubordinated clause, it refers to wanting, not to futurity or possibility:

   3sCOBL leave-NegPOT-COBL my-FUT-COBL spear-FUT-COBL
   'He'd better not lose my spear/(I say that) he mustn't lose my spear.'

This example does not mean 'he will not' or 'he cannot' lose the spear. Example (15) shows a contrast between a predictive use of -nangku (15a) and the desiderative use in the corresponding insubordinated construction (15b) where the speaker wants the addressee not to do something:

   2sNOM see-NegPOT her-FUT morrow-FUT
   'You will not see her tomorrow.'
   2sNOM see-NegPOT-CLOC her-FUT-CLOC morrow-FUT-CLOC
   ‘You’d better not see her tomorrow.’

(15b) can also appear with ‘COBL’ (complementising oblique) case marking instead of ‘CLOC’ (complementising locative), with no apparent difference in meaning. In neither case does (15b) convey ‘you will not’ or ‘you cannot’.

Example (16) is another indirect-command insubordinated clause. Constructions like (5) and (16) convey that someone wants the addressee to do something, but unlike direct imperatives, they apparently do not unambiguously identify the speaker as the ‘wanter’. Nevertheless, the meaning of -THu here is again clearly associated with wanting rather than with futurity or possibility:

(16) Bilarri-juru-ya nguku-uru-ya jatha-maru-thuru-ya
    tip-POT-CLOC water-FUT-CLOC other-VDAT-POT-CLOC
    muri-maru-thuru-ya.
    b.shell-VDAT-POT-CLOC
    ‘(One might say) (you) should tip the water into another baler shell.’

-THu is also used in hints phrased as insubordinated clauses. These clauses have the same form as the subordinate purpose clauses in (10-12) above, but they appear without any main clause:

(17) Niya karna-juru-ya.
    3sNOM burn-POT-CLOC
    ‘[Bring the green spear shaft], so [we] can temper it.’

(18) Dathin-a yarbud thaari-juru-ya.
    that-NOM bird(NOM) bring.back-POT-CLOC
    ‘[Eat that bird in such a way that] you can bring him back
    [i.e. don’t eat it all].’

The syntactic form of these sentences, namely the form of a subordinate purpose clause, invites the hearer to think of an action that would contribute to the stated purpose, and it is this that constitutes the hint.
Thus (17) literally means only ‘someone wants to temper it’ and implies ‘because of this, someone [we] want someone [you] to do something [bring the green shaft]’. Similarly (18) means ‘someone wants someone to bring that bird back’ and implies ‘because of this someone [I/we] want someone [you] to do something [eat only part of it]’.

The use of ‘can’ in the informal English glosses of (17) and (18) may provide a clue to a connection between wanting and possibility. That is, in a construction like (X wants Y to do V₁) so that X can do V₂, it may be that ‘can’ really refers to an underlying ‘want’: ‘X wants to do V₂; because of this X wants Y to do V₁’.

5.2 Purpose constructions and wanting

Kayardild has several different ways of expressing purpose, and these constructions often express someone’s wanting to do something. A description of different types of purpose construction will be followed by a closer look at how these constructions are linked with the expression of wanting.

The first type of purpose construction is a subordinate clause expressing the purpose of the main clause action. Examples of this are (10) above and the following:

    come-CAUS-IMP 1in.d-NOM cook-POT-CLOC fish-NOM
    ‘Bring the fish, so we can cook it.’

In (10) and (19) the subordinate clause verb is marked with -THu, but purpose subordinate clauses can also take the ‘desiderative’ inflection -da, discussed in the previous chapter:

(20) Ngijin-maru-tha rawalan-d, ngijuwa kala-d.
    me-VDAT-IMP  b.shell-NOM 1sCOBL cut-DES
    ‘Give me the baler shell, so I can cut (something) (with it).’

Purpose subordinate clauses with -THu can be either adjoined to the main clause, as in (10), or embedded within it, as in (19), but similar clauses with -da are always postposed, as in (20). Insubordinated purpose clauses
functioning as hints were also discussed above (17-18). Jussive subordinate clauses, which express the purpose or goal of a main clause speech-act verb, can also take either -THu or -da. Examples of these are (11) and (12) above, with -THu, and (5) and (6) in Chapter 4, with -da.

In purpose clauses like (19) and (20) -THu and -da seem almost interchangeable. But in the jussive subordinate clauses a clear difference in meaning is apparent: -THu identifies the ‘wanter’ as the main clause subject, while -da does not necessarily presuppose a ‘wanter’. This may be seen by comparing example (5) from Chapter 4 with example (11) above. In the former, the subordinate clause action marked with -da may be wanted by the speaker, by the addressee, or by someone else altogether. But in (11) it is unambiguously the main clause subject who wants the action marked with -THu to be carried out.

This difference could explain two apparent differences in the distribution of -THu and -da. It seems that only -da is used in imperative jussives like (5) and (6) in Chapter 4. If -THu were used in the latter it would probably be interpreted as predictive (‘Tell them the white man will heal my daddy’), but it might also be interpreted as ‘Tell them you want the white man to heal my daddy’, that is, with the ‘wanter’ identified as the subject of the imperative main clause. Only -da yields an unambiguous ‘should’ reading. The second difference can be seen in example (11) above, where -THu rather than -da marks the clause subordinated to a non-imperative jussive main clause. There are no examples of this type with -da, possibly because this would not clearly indicate that the subordinate clause action is wanted by the main clause subject and is therefore the purpose of the main clause action. That is, -da would not necessarily imply any purposive relationship between the two clauses.

It is unlikely that -da could be substituted for -THu in (10). If it were substituted for -THu in (11), the meaning would be changed, to ‘He said I should chop the wood’ and thus with -da it would no longer be clear that the main clause subject is the one who wants the subordinate clause action to be done. If it is true that a purpose clause with -THu is more tightly linked to the main clause subject than a purpose clause with -da, then this could even account for why subordinate clauses with -THu can be embedded within the main clause, while subordinate clauses with -da are only postposed.
The next type of purpose construction to be discussed is the movement purpose clause. This type of clause appears only with the verbs 'come' and 'go' (dalija and warraja), or with a NP with the verbal purposive case marker -janiija which implies 'go looking for'. In the following example the movement purpose clause 'spear dugong' indicates the purpose of the main verb 'go'. The movement purpose clause verb and object both take the allative inflection -iring- and a modal case ending controlled by the main verb inflection:

(21) *Balmb-u ngada warra-ju bijarrba-ting-ku raa-iring-ku.*
    morrow-FUT ISNOM go-POT dugong-ALL-FUT spear-THEMAT.ALL-FUT
    'Tomorrow I will go to spear dugong.'

In the next example, the main clause does not have a verb, but the verbal purposive marker implies 'I came (looking) for you', and the verb 'talk' is marked with -iring- and the modal case ending dictated by the past tense inflection of the main clause:

(22) *Ngada ngumbai-jani-jarr kamburi-iring-kina.*
    ISNOM you-VPURP-PST talk-THEMAT.ALL-PRI
    'I came to talk to you.'

Movement purpose clauses, unlike the other purpose clauses discussed above, cannot have an overt subject; their subject must be coreferential with the main clause subject.

Another type of purpose construction employs the verbal case markers -janiija 'verbal purposive' and -mariija 'verbal translative'. These are probably derived from free verbs 'look for' and 'put' respectively, but function synchronically as case markers on NPs. They can convey that the subject of a sentence wants something:

(23) *Ngada yakuri-janii-j.*
    ISNOM fish-VPURP-ACT
    'I want a fish (and am seeking one).'</n
(24) *Ngada mani-marii-ja.*
    ISNOM money-VTRL-ACT
    'I want money (and am waiting for it).'
5.2 Purpose constructions

As indicated by the glosses, -janiija implies some active effort, while -mariija is more passive, and both of these markers appear to convey more than just wanting. These verbal case markers can also mark a NP as the purpose of a main verb action:

(25) Ngambura-th, nguku-janjii-j.
    dig.well-ACT  water-VPURP-ACT
    'They] dug a well, trying to get water.'

(26) Dii-ja ngakul-da mani-marii-j.
    sit-ACT  lin.p-NOM  money-VTRL-ACT
    'We are sitting waiting for our pension cheques.'

Again, -janiija is associated with active effort, and -mariija with passive waiting. Older speakers occasionally use the oblique case for purpose NPs, but this has been replaced by the verbal purposive among younger speakers:

(27) Nyingka wanjii-ja kuru-nth!
    2sNOM  go.up-IMP  egg-OBL
    'You climb up for eggs!'

To what extent do these various purpose constructions involve wanting? It might be better first to examine whether any of the purpose constructions can be explained without reference to wanting. It would be possible for example (19), for instance, to be said by someone who hates cooking, does not want to do it, and only does so because of obligation or necessity. But the form of the purpose clause (regardless of the sincerity or otherwise of the speaker) nonetheless presents the reason for or purpose of the main clause action (‘bring fish’) as someone’s wanting to do something (cook it). The relationship between these two clauses can be represented as follows:

$$V_1\text{-IMP } X\text{-NOM } V_2\text{-THu-CLOC } (Y\text{-NOM})$$
(e.g. 19)

I want: X will do $V_2$ [cook]

because of this I want: you will do $V_1$ (to Y)[bring fish]
Both clauses here are finite clauses: the subordinate clause as well as the main clause could stand as a sentence on its own, except for the subordinating 'complementising locative' marker on the subordinate clause verb 'cook'. Without this subordinating marker, ngakurra karnajuru means simply 'we want to cook'; the 'wanter' and the 'doer' are coreferential. The main clause, dalijarrma-tha yakuriy 'bring-IMP fish' means 'I want: you bring fish'. The subordinating marker links the two clauses so that 'we want to cook' is identified as the purpose or reason for the imperative 'bring fish'.

The only alternative way to explain the meaning of the subordinate clause, without reference to wanting, is to try to explain it via prediction, that is, via the idea that if the addressee brings the fish, then the speaker can cook it. But this would require a considerably more complex explication, because in order to explain the connection between the cooking (V2) and the bringing of fish (V1), a conditional element must also be posited. This would change the representation to something like:

I think: if you do V1 [bring fish] we can do V2 [cook it] because of this I want: you will do V1 [bring fish]

For the purposes of this discussion, no attempt is made to remove the reference to wanting from the explication of the imperative clause (the third line). Such an explication of the purpose clause is not absolutely ruled out, but two features weigh against it. It is overly complex, requiring a sort of foreshadowing of the imperative in the conditional segment, and it does not adequately capture the nature of the purpose relationship. Thinking that something can happen if someone does something does not necessarily lead to wanting them to do it.

In the next example, (20), the purpose clause 'I cut' is marked with -da, not -THu. There are two possible explanations of the meaning of this purpose clause. Either one assumes that in this grammatical environment at least, -da may refer to wanting, or one follows the explanation proposed for X V-da in Chapter 4, namely 'if X does V, this would be good'. The first possibility yields an explication virtually identical to that proposed for (19):

V1-IMP (Y-NOM), X-COBL V2-da (e.g. 20) someone (X) wants: X will do V2 [cut] because of this I want: you will do V1 (to Y) [give me shell]
The second possibility could be represented as follows:

\[
V_1-\text{IMP} \ (Y-\text{NOM}), \ X-\text{COBL} \ V_2-\text{da} \ (\text{e.g. } 20)
\]

if someone (X) does \( V_2 \) [cut], this would be good
because of this I want: you will do \( V_1 \) (to Y) [give me shell]

There are several reasons for preferring this second explication over the first. It is entirely consistent with the explanation of \(-da\) developed in Chapter 4, and does not require that a new meaning be posited for \(-da\) in this syntactic context. It does not result in an inordinately complex formula, in the way that the attempt to represent \(-THu\) via ‘if’ and ‘can’ did. And an explication that is consistent with the meanings of the other \(-da\) constructions is preferable to positing complete synonymy between \(-da\) and \(-THu\) purpose clauses, particularly in view of their different syntactic behaviour, whereby a \(-da\) clause cannot be embedded like a \(-THu\) clause.

Purpose clauses with ‘\(janiija\) verbal purposive’ also appear to involve wanting, but here the wanting relates to a thing rather than an action. Wanting a thing, for example ‘water’ in (25), implies wanting to get, find or have that thing, but ‘get’, ‘find’, ‘have’ do not appear in the construction (whereas they could appear in a subordinate clause construction: ‘They dug, so that they could get water’). Hence the explication proposed below refers only to someone ‘doing something with’ the object, rather than specifically to its being found or obtained.

\( (X) \ V-\text{ACT}, \ Y-\text{janiij-ACT} \ (\text{e.g. } 25) \)

someone (X) thought this about Y [water]:
maybe I can do something with this thing
I want this
because of this, this person (X) did \( V \) [dug well]

When a purposive-marked NP appears without a main verb, it still implies (unspecified) action to this purpose; (23) could be represented as:

\( X \ Y-\text{janiij-ACT} \ (\text{e.g. } 23) \)

X thinks this about Y [fish]:
maybe I can do something with this thing
I want this
because of this X does something
5.2 Purpose constructions

The 'verbal transitive', -mariija, seems to have a more complex meaning involving location, and may be explainable without reference to wanting. A possible explication of (26) could be:

\[ \text{V-ACT X-NOM Y-marrij-ACT} \text{ (e.g. 26)} \]

X thinks this about Y [money]:
maybe someone will do something here with this thing
this could be good for me
because of this X does V [sitting] in this place

More investigation would be needed to verify the meaning of this construction, but wanting may not be a necessary component.

From this analysis of purpose constructions, it appears that while purpose constructions with -mariija and probably those with -da can be explained without reference to wanting, it is difficult to see how purpose clauses with -THu or NPs with -janiija could be explained without involving wanting.

5.3 Modality, -THu and wanting

The system of modal case marking is a notable feature of Kayardild grammar, and this system interacts in important ways with the functions and senses of -THu. The modal case markers, already seen in several examples above, appear on most of the NPs in a clause, apart from the subject. They indicate tense and mood in agreement with the verb inflection. The verb inflections dictate modal case marking as follows:

'Actual' (ACT): etymologically derived from locative case marker; can occur on NPs where the verbal inflection is 'actual', and sometimes 'potential' (-THu);
'Prior' (PRI): derived from ablative case marker; can occur on NPs where the verbal inflection is 'past';
'Future' (FUT): derived from proprietive case marker; can occur on NPs where the verbal inflection is 'potential';
'Emotive' (EMOT): derived from oblique case marker; can occur on NPs where the verbal inflection is 'desiderative' (-da), 'apprehensive', or 'hortative'.
Thus, the modal case system distinguishes between -THu and -da, and groups the latter together with hortative and apprehensive propositions.

The apprehensive inflection -NHarra functions as a virtual antonym of -da, and can appear in main or subordinate clauses. It is often translated as 'might', but conveys in addition that what might happen is undesirable:

(28) Nyingka ba-yii-nyarra kulkiij-iwa-nharr.
2sNOM bite-DETR-APPR shark-ViALL-APPR
'You might get bitten by a shark.' (Implied: 'watch out'.)

This effect of marking the event as undesirable could be seen as expressing someone's not wanting the event to happen. But -NHarra, like -da, does not point to any particular person as the one who does not want the event. A better explanation could be in terms of 'if this happens, it would be bad'. -NHarra can be contrasted with the verb warnaja 'not want', which clearly identifies its subject as the 'not-wanter'.

The hortative inflection -THinja (negative form -nanginja), on the other hand, seems clearly to express the speaker's own wanting. It always occurs in situations where the speaker wants someone else to do something to cause something to happen:

(29) Wakatha nguku-ntha yalawu-jinj.
sister(NOM) water-EMOT fetch-HORT
'Sister should fetch some water.'

(30) Murruku wuu-j, dathin-inja dangka-ntha raa-jinj!
woomera(NOM) give-IMP that-EMOT man-EMOT spear-HORT
'Give me the woomera, let me (/so I can) spear that man!'

In (29) it substitutes for an imperative, where kinship rules prevent the speaker from addressing his sister directly. The second clause in (30) can be interpreted either as a hortative ('let me') or as another type of subordinate purpose clause, but one that can only appear in an imperative context, where the speaker wants someone else to do something to cause or enable the intended action. The meaning of -THinja cannot be fully explained via good and bad without reference to wanting, as -da and -NHarra can.
The following explication could account for both main and subordinate clause uses, as seen in (29) and (30):

\[(X) \text{(Y-EMOT)} V-\text{THinja(e.g. 29, 30)}\]
I want: X will do V (to Y) / V will happen (to Y)
because of this I want: someone will do something

While the emotive modal case marker often appears in contexts where someone wants or doesn’t want something to happen, its meaning cannot be tied exclusively to wanting. It may convey instead a more general reference to feeling or emotion, such as ‘someone could feel something about this’. Alternatively, it could have more of a highlighting or attention-getting function, such as ‘I want someone to know this’.

The ‘emotive’ marker is not used with -\text{THu} in any of its functions, and the modal case usually associated with -\text{THu} is ‘future’. But -\text{THu}, unlike other verbal inflections, can take NPs with either future or actual modal case marking. \text{V.hen} -\text{THu} refers to wanted or future events, it combines with the future modal case. But when it refers to possibility in the past, it can combine with the actual modal case, as seen in example (4) above, ‘I couldn’t see the sea yesterday’. This example cannot be interpreted as ‘I didn’t want to see the sea yesterday’, which would be expressed instead via the verb \text{warnaja} ‘not want’. Similarly, the following example referring to possibility in the past takes -\text{THu} plus ‘actual’:

\[(31) \text{Maraka yuuma-thu barruntha-y.} \]
\text{CTRFCT drown-POT yesterday-ACT}
‘He could have drowned yesterday (but didn’t).’

The meaning ‘He didn’t want to drown yesterday’ would again be expressed using \text{warnaja} ‘not want’. -\text{THu} can refer to wanting in past time contexts, as seen in (9) above, but when it refers to wanting it combines with future modal case, not with actual. That is, the ‘future’ modal case marker can appear even in past contexts, where the ‘potential’ refers to desirability /undesirability rather than to possibility/impossibility:

\[(32) \text{Maraka bil-da kinaa-ju ngumban-ju.} \]
\text{CTRFCT 3p-NOM tell-POT you-FUT}
‘They should have told you.’
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(33) *Nyingka maraka raba-nangku dathin-ku dulk-u.*

2sNOM CTRFCT tread-NegPOT that-FUT place-FUT

'You shouldn't have set foot in that (secret) place.'

The modal case system is not directly linked with wanting, but two of the modal cases, future and emotive, can occur in contexts involving wanting, while the other two, actual and prior, cannot. This seems to arise from the fact that the future and emotive modal cases are somewhat like irrealis mood: they appear in relation to events that have not actually occurred, but are expected, imagined or desired. The actual and prior modal cases are associated with events that have occurred in the past or are occurring in the present, that is, with realised events.

The interaction between verb inflection and modal case thus permits a distinction to be made between two senses of -THu, at least with reference to past events. Possibility or impossibility is, in the case of past events, realised at the time referred to. Hence it can be indicated by 'actual' modal case marking with a -THu-marked verb. But a wanted event is not realised at the time referred to, and it is indicated by 'future' modal case marking with a -THu-marked verb, even when referring to a past time, as in (32) and (33). Of course, not all clauses have NPs that can carry modal case marking, and in such clauses there is no syntactic basis for determining whether -THu refers to possibility or to wanting.

5.4 Meanings of -THu (~THuru)

From the foregoing examination of functions of -THu, it is possible to proceed to identify the meanings associated with these functions, along the lines proposed in the previous chapter. There are contexts in which -THu is ambiguous and can be interpreted as referring to the future, to possibility, or to wanting (as in example 13). But there are other contexts where -THu refers unambiguously to wanting (examples 5, 7, 9-11, 16-19, 32-33) and some in which it refers unambiguously to possibility (example 31). This is different from the situation with -da, examined in the previous chapter, in that there were no contexts in which -da referred unambiguously to wanting.
A close examination of the facts shows that -THu is not nearly as ambiguous as it first seems to be. Of the 22 examples of 'potential' inflections in the discussion above (14 with -THu and 8 with -nangku), only 7 are ambiguous, and of these, 5 are three ways ambiguous between future, wanting, and possibility. (The 7 ambiguous ones are examples 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 13, 15a.) The other 16 examples are unambiguous, and in most of them -THu and -nangku occur in particular syntactic constructions in which they can have only one meaning. In combination with 'actual' modal case they can only refer to possibility, not to wanting or the future (examples 4, 31). In insubordinated constructions they can only refer to wanting, not to possibility or the future (examples 5, 14, 15b, 16-18). In subordinate clauses they can only refer to wanting (examples 10-12, 19). Each of these unambiguous construction types can be given its own semantic representation.

The 'actual' construction, where the object of the verb takes 'actual' modal case marking, and -THu refers only to possibility, can be represented as follows:

\[(X) \text{ } V-\text{THu } Y-\text{ACT} \text{ (e.g. 31)}\]
\[X \text{ can do } V \text{ / } V \text{ can happen to } Y\]

If a subject (X) is present, the meaning is 'X can do V', while if no subject is present, the meaning is 'V can happen'.

In the insubordinated construction, -THu refers only to wanting; the 'potential'-marked action (V) is wanted by someone. If this clause were subordinated to another clause, this someone, the 'wanter', would be the main clause subject. But with an insubordinated clause there is no main clause, and therefore the 'wanter' remains unspecified:

\[(X) \text{ } V-\text{THu-CLO/Cobl} \text{ e.g. 5, 16-18)}\]
\[\text{someone wants: } X \text{ will do } V \text{ / } V \text{ will happen}\]

Often, but not always, the wanter can be assumed to be the speaker. Note the difference between -THu, which indicates the existence of a wanter even when that entity is not syntactically present in the sentence, and -da, which does not necessarily imply the existence of a wanter.

In the purpose construction, -THu refers only to wanting. The 'potential'-marked subordinate clause action (V2) is wanted by the main
5.4 Meanings of -THu

clause subject (X) and is presented as the reason for X’s performing the main clause action (V_1):

\[ X \overset{V_1}{\rightarrow} (X)/Y \overset{V_2-THu}{\rightarrow} \text{ (e.g. 10, 11) } \]

X wants: X/Y will do V_2
because of this X will do V_1

If the performer of the wanted action is coreferential with the main clause subject (X), a subordinate clause subject is not obligatory.

In the imperative purpose construction, the identity of the wanter of the -THu-marked action (V_2) is less clear, because the wanter is not the syntactic subject of the imperative main clause. In example (19), the main clause is \((nyingka)\) dalijarrmatha yakuriy ‘(you) bring-IMP fish’. While the syntactic subject of ‘bring-IMP’ is ‘you’, the meaning of the imperative construction introduces a different semantic subject: the speaker who utters the imperative. Thus, the meaning of the main clause is:

\[(nyingka)\] dali-jarrma-tha yakuri-y
[‘(you) come-CAUS-IMP fish-NOM’]
I want: you will bring fish

The subordinate clause, ngakurra karna-juru-y ‘we cook-POT-CLOC’, carries the same meaning as any other -THu subordinate clause: ‘someone (=the main clause subject) wants: X will do V_2’. But in the case of an imperative main clause, the wanter pointed to by -THu is the semantic subject rather than the syntactic subject of the imperative clause. Thus ngakurra karnajuruy means not ‘someone(=you) wants: we cook’, but rather ‘someone(=I) wants: we cook’. This construction can be represented as follows:

\[ V_1-IMP X-NOM V_2-THu-CLOC \text{ (e.g. 19) } \]
I want: X will do V_2 / V_2 will happen
because of this I want: you will do V_1

Similarly, the unambiguous examples of -nangku, in the actual, insubordinated, and subordinate clause constructions:
5.4 Meanings of -THu

\((X) V-nangku Y-ACT\) (e.g. 4)
X can’t do V / V can’t happen to Y

\((X) V-nangku-CLOC/COBL\) (e.g. 14, 15b)
someone wants: X will not do V / V will not happen

\(X V_{1}, (X)/Y V_{2}-nangku\) (e.g. 12)
someone wants: X/Y will not do V₂
because of this X does V₁

These unambiguous construction types provide a basis for establishing two separate meanings of -THu: ‘can’, in the ‘actual’ construction; and ‘want’, in the subordinate and insubordinated clause constructions. This leaves only one construction type that can be ambiguous: the main clause construction \(X V-THu\). Its negative counterpart \(X V-nangku\) (examples 2, 3, 6, 8, 15a) will be discussed below. For \(X V-T.du\), three possible senses need to be considered:

a. X can do V
b. X wants: X [will] do V
c. X [will] do V after now

Two of these senses, (a) and (b), have already been established as meanings of -THu in unambiguous construction types, shown above, while the future sense (c) does not occur in any unambiguous constructions.

There are some examples of \(X V-THu\) where the semantic context produces an unambiguous interpretation. In example (7) the clause ‘I eat-POT that big fish’ is interpreted as referring to wanting because it is known from the preceding clause that the speaker is complaining of having a small fish, and therefore is not saying ‘I can’ or ‘I will eat that big fish’. In example (32) the counterfactual particle maraka conveys that the projected event did not in fact occur, and this rules out a reading of -THu as referring to the future. The presence of the ‘future’ modal case marker rules out the ‘can’ reading, which would require ‘actual’ modal case marking; compare (32) with (31). The three maraka constructions can be represented as follows:
5.4 Meanings of -THu

maraka (X) V-THu Y-ACT (e.g. 31)
X can do V to Y / V can happen (/at time Y)
this didn’t happen (before now)

maraka X V-THu Y-FUT (e.g. 32)
someone wants: X will do V to Y
this didn’t happen (before now)

maraka (X) V-nangku Y-FUT (e.g. 33)
someone wants: X will not do V to Y
this didn’t happen (before now)

In the third explication, ‘this didn’t happen’ must be taken as referring to a wanted ‘non-event’: ‘X will not do V’. This double negation effect results in the explication being less clear than the others, and this difficulty may require more investigation.

While there are semantic and syntactic contexts that produce unambiguous readings of -THu as meaning either ‘can’ or ‘want’, there are no examples where -THu refers unambiguously to the future. This lack of supporting evidence for an independent meaning (c) of -THu may indicate that the future sense is associated with one of the other meanings of this grammeme, rather than being an independent meaning of -THu. The component ‘after now’, or ‘after this time’ where ‘this time’ is either a time specifically referred to (such as ‘yesterday’ in example 31) or the time of speaking, would be compatible with all instances of sense (a), resulting in a reduction of the number of proposed meanings to two:

X V-THu
a. X wants: X will do V
b. X can do V after this time

The evidence supporting a combination of the ‘can’ and ‘after this time’ senses into a single definition (b) is suggestive but not conclusive. First, the lack of evidence for an independent future sense suggests that the component ‘after this time’ may be an element of one of the other meanings rather than constituting in itself a meaning of -THu. Second, this future sense would not be compatible with all instances of the ‘want’
5.4 Meanings of -THu

sense, particularly in subordinate and insubordinated clauses, but it would be compatible with all instances of the ‘can’ sense, with the single exception of the ‘actual’ construction, X V-THu Y-ACT ‘X can do V to Y / at time Y’. In this construction it would seem that the ‘actual’ marker excludes an ‘after this time’ component from the meaning, leaving the interpretation of -THu as simply ‘X can do V’.

The next question that must be addressed is whether (a) and (b) are separate meanings, or whether they can be combined or encompassed in a unitary concept associated with all uses of -THu. It has been shown that -THu is not as ambiguous as it seemed to be, and that in fact there is only one construction in which it is at all ambiguous, namely the main clause construction X V-THu. The existence of this particular ambiguous construction certainly does not mean that Kayardild is incapable of distinguishing possibility from wanting in main clauses. On the contrary, disambiguation strategies are readily available in the language. For example, the desiderative sense of (1) (‘he wants to die in his own country’) could be conveyed unambiguously by marking the NP ‘country’ with the verbal purposive suffix -janija. The sense of possibility (‘he could [possibly] die in his own country’) can be conveyed unambiguously by adding the particle marrbi ‘maybe’ or the proprietive suffix -nkuru; this disambiguating strategy could also be applied to examples like 13 and 31, as shown below. For the ‘negative potential’ examples, the verb warnaja ‘not want’ can be used to disambiguate sentences like (2, 3, 6, 8, 15a), where -nangku is ambiguous between ‘can not’ and ‘not want’. In these contexts, the ‘can not’ sense can also be conveyed unambiguously, via the suffix -nginja ‘unable, in vain’.

An asymmetry is observable here between -THu and -nangku. -THu is slightly more likely to be interpreted as ‘want’ than ‘can’; while -nangku is slightly more likely to be interpreted as ‘can not’ than as ‘not want’. Moreover, this asymmetry is reflected in the means of disambiguation. ‘Not want’ can be conveyed unambiguously by using warnaja, while there does not seem to be a similarly unambiguous term for ‘can not’ as an alternative to -nangku. Conversely, ‘can’ is conveyed unambiguously by the proprietive suffix -nkuru, while there seems to be no similarly unambiguous term for ‘want’ as an alternative to -THu. In this respect, ‘want’ could be regarded as the more basic or unmarked reading of -THu, and ‘can not’ of -nangku.
For example, in the case of an ambiguous main clause like (13), *Ngada wirrka-ju* 'I dance-POT', the non-desiderative sense of epistemic possibility can be conveyed by replacing the ambiguous -THu with the unambiguous suffix -nkuru. Thus, (34a) and (b) can express the same meaning:

(34) a. *Ngada wirrka-ju.*
   1sNOM dance-POT
b. *Ngada wirrka-nkuru.*
   1sNOM dance-PROP
   'I can dance.'

The particle *marrbi* 'maybe' can also be used with reference to possibility:

(35) *Marrbi ngada wirrka-ju.*
maybelsNOM dance-POT
'I might dance.'

An important difference between a proprietive construction (34b) and a *marrbi* construction (35) is that the -nkuru suffix is oriented toward the subject of the verb, while *marrbi* applies to the whole proposition that follows it. Another important difference is that -nkuru carries no connotation that the possibility relates to future time. Hence (34b) is completely neutral with regard to time, while both (34a) and (35) would normally be interpreted as referring to some future time. The suffix -nkuru is used to express 'can' in contexts where wanting and possibility are contrasted, for example:

(36) *Niya biya-n-kuru, biya-nangku.*
   3sNOM swim-NZR-PROP swim-NegPOT
   'He could/is able to swim, (but) doesn't want to swim.'

Here, *biyankuru* unambiguously means 'can swim', and this triggers the reading of -nangku as 'doesn’t want', because its other sense, 'can not', would not make sense in this context.

To summarise, then, the evidence indicates that most construction types distinguish between two meanings of -THu:
5.4 Meanings of -THu

-THu₁ 'want'
-THu₂ 'can after this time'

Possibly for -nangku the order of meanings should be reversed, to reflect the asymmetry noted above:

-nangku₁ 'can't after this time'
-nangku₂ 'doesn't want'

The one construction type that can take either -THu₁ or -THu₂, the main clause construction X V-THu, can readily be disambiguated, indicating that even here the suffix must be recognised as either -THu₁ or -THu₂, not some undifferentiated -THu₁₂. The same applies to -nangku; example (36) shows a context that distinguishes clearly between -nangku₁ and -nangku₂ even in the ambiguous main clause construction.

An attempt to assign a meaning to -THu that would either combine or encompass the two meanings identified here would fail through being either too specific or too general. For example, one could attempt to construct a definition of X V-THu that combined the two meanings:

X can do V after this time
X wants: X will do V

But this definition would be too specific to account for the cases where this construction refers to possibility but not wanting, or wanting but not possibility. On the other hand, a definition general enough to cover all cases of X V-THu would be too general to explain anything more about its different functions.

Here, as in the previous chapter, a detailed examination of the functions and senses of a grammeme has found support for an analysis of that grammeme as polysemous, but in this case the polysemy applies in only one type of construction. The analysis proposed here is based on both syntactic and semantic evidence about the range of functions of this grammeme, and offers a consistent account relating these functions to meaning.

However, although the proposed analysis of -THu is consistent with the facts, it raises some important issues about the use of this grammeme in constructing language-internal definitions, particularly where there
seem to be two semantic elements ('X wants' and 'X will do V') that would normally be expressed in Kayardild by only one clause, $X V \cdot THu_t$. These issues are the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

5.5 Wanting within and across clauses

The Kayardild $-THu$ constructions are examples of a type of desiderative construction where the grammeme that expresses the meaning 'want' occurs inside the clause that represents the wanted event. Although quite a few languages have this type of construction among a range of other desiderative constructions, it is comparatively rare for a language to have a clause-internal desiderative as the primary means of expressing the idea of wanting, as seen in the overview in Chapter 2.

These clause-internal desiderative constructions are worthy of detailed examination, because their grammatical properties raise questions about the extent to which they can be considered comparable to other desiderative constructions across languages, and about their role in language-internal definitions. As a first step toward understanding this type of construction, it is useful to examine the relationship of the 'want' word or morpheme to the clause or clauses over which it operates.

Semantically, the concept of wanting seems always to imply some projected event that is the 'target' of wanting. This wanted event most often consists of someone (either the 'wanter' or someone else) doing something; for example in the English sentence I want to dance, or in its Kayardild equivalent Ngada wirrka-ju, the wanted event is 'I dance'. In many, but not all, languages the target can also be a non-voluntary event (as in I want it to rain), or a nominal object (as in I want water) which still implies a target event ('I get/drink water').

Grammatically, the relationship of the word or morpheme that conveys the meaning of wanting (e.g. want in English, $-THu$ in Kayardild) to the target event is different. In the English sentence, want is a main verb, and the target event appears as its complement. The language-specific rules of English grammar dictate that when the performer of the target action is coreferential with the main verb subject, the complement clause (to dance) is obligatorily subjectless. In the Kayardild sentence, 'dance' is the main verb, and the 'want' grammeme is affixed to it; in
Kayardild grammar, the target event appears as the main clause rather than as a complement of ‘want’.

Semantically, wanting also implies the existence of someone who experiences wanting. The ‘wanter’ is usually a person, and never an inanimate thing (unless personified); its range of reference corresponds exactly to the scope of the proposed NSM universal SOMEONE.

Grammatically, the relationship of the ‘wanter’ to English want and Kayardild -THu is markedly different. In English, the ‘wanter’ is the grammatical subject of the verb want, but the Kayardild -THu cannot take a grammatical subject in the way that a verb does. In the sentence Ngada wirrka-ju ‘I want to dance’, ngada ‘I’ is the grammatical subject of the wanted event ‘dance’. The suffix -THu ‘want’ tells us that someone wants the event ‘I dance’, and in this construction (X V-THu) the someone is the subject of the main verb ‘dance’. The earlier part of this chapter showed how -THu in a subordinate clause always points to a ‘wanter’ identified by the main clause.

The grammeme -THu can therefore be seen as operating across clauses. When located within a subordinate clause, it marks that clause as the target of wanting, but it also points outside its own clause, to a ‘wanter’ identifiable from a higher clause. In the insubordinated construction, no higher clause is present and therefore the wanter is not identifiable from it, but -THu still conveys the information that someone wants the target event.

In the analysis proposed above, when -THu ‘want’ occurs in a main clause, -THu retains its function of pointing to the main clause subject as the ‘wanter’, but in this case the main clause is the same clause as the one containing -THu: hence in Ngada wirrka-ju the ‘wanter’ is identified as the main clause subject ngada ‘I’. Notice that this clause-internal reference is not possible in insubordinated clauses, where the subordination marker (CLOC/COBL) indicates that -THu must refer to a higher clause, even though that clause is not syntactically present.

In the monoclausal X V-THu construction, then, -THu can perform both of its functions within the same clause: marking the event ‘X V’ as ‘wanted’, and identifying the main clause subject ‘X’ as the ‘wanter’. But X V-THu has only one grammatical subject, unlike the other -THu constructions where there is another subject in a higher clause. This may be a clue to why -THu can be polysemous in this and only this construction.
There are certain contexts that are unfavourable to the interpretation of $X \text{ } V$-THu as 'X wants: X will do V'. For example, for pragmatic reasons it is highly unusual for a speaker to tell an addressee what the addressee wants. Therefore, while *Nginda wirrka-ju '2sNOM dance-POT'* can mean 'You want to dance', the pragmatic dissonance of such an utterance might well motivate an alternative meaning being assigned to this construction. There is no subordination marker to indicate that -THu refers to a 'wanter' outside the clause, as there is in examples like (5) above, 'You should chop the wood', i.e. 'Someone (unspecified) wants you to chop the wood'. Without such a subordination marker *Nginda wirrka-ju* would not be interpreted as 'Someone wants you to dance'. But it is of course open to the interpretation that this is -THu₂ 'can after this time', and in this case the utterance could be interpreted as 'You can dance'.

What I am suggesting here is that -THu in a main clause of the $X \text{ } V$-THu type may become open to an alternative interpretation, thus becoming polysemous, in a way that -THu in subordinate clauses is not, precisely because of the fact that in this monoclausal construction there is no higher clause subject for -THu to point to as the 'wanter'. With no clause-external 'wanter', and perhaps assisted by the operation of unfavourable contexts like the one mentioned above, -THu becomes open to reinterpretation as a purely clause-internal operator, stripped of its reference to a second entity outside the clause.

What could its meaning then be? What is the closest thing to a 'wanted event' without a wanter? There are a few different possibilities for the interpretation of such a meaning, including the possibility that it could mean 'this event would be good' (like the monoclausal -da construction). Another possibility arises from the fact that wanted events are usually events that are as yet unrealised, and are usually (though perhaps not always) thought of as possible. So the concept of future possibility ('can after this time') is quite a likely candidate for the meaning of a construction similar to 'X wants: X will do V' but involving only one subject-like argument: hence, perhaps, the meaning 'X can do V after this time'.

This is quite a hypothetical suggestion, but it could help to explain why desiderative grammemes in several unrelated languages display a pattern of polysemy involving a non-compositional relationship between wanting (WANT) and possibility (CAN), and irrealis mode or futurity.
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(involving concepts such as CAN and/or AFTER THIS TIME and/or NOT BEFORE THIS TIME). The previous chapter discussed a similar polysemy for la in Buru. In Maricopa, too, the desiderative verbal affix -lya marks the verb as ‘wanted’ in statements, and irrealis in questions.

A view has been proposed above of -THu₁ ‘want’ as essentially an interclausal operator, whose semantic and syntactic effect is to link the clause that it marks as ‘wanted’ with a higher clause. Monoclausal -THu constructions are then seen as special cases: the insubordinated construction implying a link with some unspecified higher clause (‘someone wants:...’), and the X V-THu construction involving a clause-internal operation identifying X as the ‘wanter’. This view also offers a possible basis for explaining the polysemy of -THu in the X V-THu construction. While this analysis of -THu is of course a theoretical proposal, it seems a promising one in terms of its consistency with the data, its economy in providing a unified account of all -THu constructions, and its power to predict the interpretations that can be applied to the various -THu constructions and to explain the relationships between them.

If a desiderative grammeme within the wanted-event clause can be seen as an interclausal operator linking its own clause to a higher clause, then other types of desideratives can also be seen as operating interclausally, but in the opposite direction, linking their own clause with a lower one. The English verb want, like its equivalents in many other languages, usually calls for a complement clause: either a full clause, as in I want you to dance, or a subjectless one if coreferential (I want to dance). The monoclausal constructions where want takes a nominal object (I want water) have also been explained in terms of an interclausal analysis of want, as discussed in 3.1 above, where what is wanted is a situation in which the wanter has the object at her disposal:

I want NP

I want this: if I want to do something with this thing, I can do it

The Buru la discussed in Chapter 4 can operate in either direction, depending on the construction type. As a preverbal TAM marker it occurs within the wanted-event clause, linking its own clause with a higher clause in the X V₁ la V₂ and X POSS suka la V constructions. In the monoclausal X la V construction la seems to operate clause-internally,
identifying X as the 'wanter', very like the Kayardild X V-THu — and with the same kind of polysemy. But as a complementiser la operates in the other direction, linking its own main clause with a complement wanted-event clause in the X la X V, X V₁ la X/Y V₂, and X POSS suka la X/Y V constructions.

If the analysis proposed here is correct, then the major desiderative construction types found in languages of the world would all be understood as involving an interclausal operation of the kind discussed here, linking two clausal propositions in one direction or the other depending on the location of the 'want' word or morpheme: whether it is located within the clause expressing the wanted event, or in the clause containing the entity to whom the desire for this event is attributed. This would suggest that the essential nature of the universal WANT across languages is that of an interclausal or interpropositional operator.

The idea that the combinatorial properties, or 'primitive syntax', of semantic universals could involve complex structures of more than one clause is a very recent one in NSM theory, but WANT is not the only NSM universal that apparently operates across clauses. The function of linking two clausal propositions seems to be an essential property of the relational operators BECAUSE and IF (cf. the discussion of Kayardild -da in Chapter 4). In addition, KNOW seems always to require some proposition as its complement; and SAY and THINK apparently must be able to take such complements as well, though they may alternatively combine with object-like arguments.

In view of the suggestions made above about a non-compositional relationship between WANT and CAN, or wanting and possibility, it is worth noting here that CAN does not operate across clauses. As a marker of possibility or ability, it operates solely upon the proposition to which it belongs; and as suggested above, this property may be the key to the fairly common pattern of polysemy whereby a form identified with WANT in interclausal contexts may be identified with CAN in monoclausal ones.

However, the relationship of the 'can' of possibility and ability may also have something to do with the relationships of propositions to their arguments in clausal structures. The 'can' of possibility applies to a proposition as a whole, marking it as 'possible' (if 'I can dance' then the event 'I dance' is possible). But the 'can' of ability can also be understood as applying to a particular entity within a proposition: 'I can (am able to) dance' conveys that an ability to dance is a property of the subject, 'I', not a
property of the proposition 'I dance'. This orientation of habituative 'can' toward the subject-like argument in a proposition produces an effect that could also be expressed by two linked propositions: one relating to the subject ('I have an ability') and one denoting the nature of that ability ('to dance'). Notice that in English, this situation can be expressed either via the monoclausal construction *I can dance*, or via *be able* with a *to* complement: *I am able to dance*.

A full treatment of *CAN* would require a work of similar scope to the present study of WANT, but these observations may shed some light on the nature of the relationship of these two semantic elements, and why some associations between them can be observed in different languages even if they are compositionally unrelated. In the way described above, *CAN* sometimes functions almost like a link between two propositions, but its scope is always limited to a single clause, while WANT operates inter-clausally. Thus it is maintained here that possibility (*CAN*) may indeed be seen as a property of propositions, while WANT is perhaps not so much a propensity of individual persons, as an interclausal and interpropositional operator.

As well as shedding some light on the 'primitive syntax' of WANT across languages, the syntactic properties of clause-internal desiderative constructions may yield some insights into how language-specific grammatical rules in natural languages affect the structure of the natural semantic metalanguage that is, in NSM theory, derivable from each natural language. In recent work on Kayardild, for example, Evans has pointed out that the grammatical status of *-THu*, as well as its polysemy, places certain constraints on its ability to combine with other elements in Kayardild definitions.

This raises questions about whether the language-specific combinatorial limitations of *-THu* would make it difficult or impossible to represent in Kayardild certain meanings or combinations of meanings involving wanting. The evidence examined thus far indicates that Kayardild is not short of means for expressing desiderative concepts, and that *-THu* appears to be the main Kayardild exponent of WANT; but the grammatical properties of *-THu* make it behave rather differently from equivalents of WANT in many other languages.

Constructions like the Kayardild imperatives, hortatives and verbal purposives, for example, need to be explicated in terms like 'I want: you will do *V*', 'someone wants: *X* will do *V*', or 'I want: someone will do
something’, as suggested above. But the grammatical constraints on the inflection -THu do not permit it to be used in these same syntactic frames. One can say ‘I want to do V’ by marking the verb with -THu (ngada V-THu), but to say ‘I want you to do V’ is not nearly as straightforward. Moreover, the fact that -THu can express two important basic meanings, ‘want’ and ‘can’, presents problems when these senses need to be contrasted, for example in propositions like ‘this person could do V but doesn’t want to’, or ‘I wanted to do V but I couldn’t do it’.

Does this mean that, although the presence of the concept WANT can be established in Kayardild, the language does not have an adequate lexical equivalent for this semantic universal?

Not necessarily. The principle of language-internal definitional paraphrase allows for each language to combine its basic elements of meaning (its indefinable semantic primes) in a language-specific definitional metalanguage, according to the rules of the natural language itself (Kayardild, English or whatever natural language is being studied). This means that, while the basic elements (semantic primes) should have precise lexical equivalents in each language, the grammatical devices by which each language realises combinations of these elements are to some extent language-specific.

Therefore, while a meaningful combination of basic elements in one language (such as ‘I want someone to do something’ in the English natural semantic metalanguage) should be translatable into other languages, we should not expect it to be translatable as a calque, morpheme by morpheme or lexeme by lexeme. Each language imposes its own natural structures upon any combination of primes, as English imposes a language-specific complement structure (to VP) on the complement of WNT. Even if a version of the English metalanguage is used that does not contain this to complement structure (saying instead ‘I want: someone [will] do something’), English still imposes language-specific constraints. It has no completely neutral verb forms, so whatever form is used (for example do, will do, want) carries language-specific grammatical information in addition to its meaning as a prime. This is not a problem in constructing definitions, it is simply a characteristic that is specific to the NSM derived from English.

On the other hand, the syntax that each language imposes on its definitional metalanguage requires careful attention. The ‘mini-syntax’ of the metalanguage should be reduced to the minimum necessary to
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construct intelligible definitions in the language, and any obligatory but non-prime semantic information (such as the tense, person and number information that is obligatorily part of English verb forms like *does, do, want, wants*) must itself be definable in the metalanguage.

Thus, the language-specific constraints on combinability of semantic primes need close and careful attention, but the existence of such constraints does not invalidate the primes.

In Kayardild, the constraints on combinability of -THu require several language-specific structures to be employed in constructing definitions of complex desiderative constructions. Each of these structures needs to be examined and evaluated to verify its status as a necessary and valid part of a Kayardild natural semantic metalanguage. Some possible structures of this kind will be examined here; others may emerge from further research with Kayardild speakers, and as more language-internal definitions are constructed using a Kayardild semantic metalanguage to explicate more Kayardild words and constructions.

First, consider how -THu would work in many Kayardild definitions where wanting is involved. For example, many speech act terms involve as one component of their meaning something like ‘I want to say something’. In a Kayardild definition, WANT here would be expressed by -THu: *ngada kamburi-ju ‘I want to say something’. As noted above, the X V-THu construction is ambiguous: in ordinary Kayardild this sentence could also mean ‘I can/will say something’. The Kayardild semantic metalanguage must not permit such ambiguity, and would therefore have to rely upon one of the disambiguation strategies available within the language to distinguish -THu₁ ‘want’ from -THu₂ ‘can after this time’. This would probably be achieved by specifying that in this metalanguage, CAN is to be expressed only by the -nkuru construction discussed above, and -THu can thus be associated uniquely with WANT.

This type of semantic constraint is in no way specific to Kayardild, but applies to the NSM of any language: the metalanguage must rule out ambiguity in a principled way. This is equally true of the English word *want* in English metalanguage definitions. In the English version of NSM, English *want* is used only for the semantic prime WANT, not for the other meanings that *want* can have in everyday English: *I want* is equivalent only to ‘*I WANT*’, not to any other sense of *want*; other meanings would have to be spelt out in terms of the relevant semantic primes. Similarly, in the Kayardild metalanguage, *ngada V-THu* must be
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equivalent only to ‘I WANT: I [will] do V’, not ‘I can do V’ or ‘I [will] do V after this time’. The other meaning (-THu2) would have to be spelt out in terms of the relevant primes, probably including -nkuru (CAN) and -ngarrba (AFTER), along the following lines:

\[ X \text{ } V-\text{THu}_1 = X \text{ WANT}[s]: X \text{ } V \]

\[ X \text{ } V-\text{THu}_2 = X \text{ CAN } V \text{ AFTER THIS TIME} \]

A major grammatical constraint that Kayardild imposes on -THu ‘want’ is that it cannot combine with a subordinate subject in the way that English want can, in constructions like ‘I want someone to do something’ or ‘I want something to happen’. This syntactic fact of Kayardild does not necessarily mean that -THu is not available to express WANT in such contexts. Rather, it may mean that the Kayardild metalanguage must use a different -THu construction for this purpose, namely an interclausal construction where -THu means that the event i.e. marks is wanted by an entity represented in a higher clause.

For example, Kayardild has an imperative suffix attached to verbs:

(37) Ngij-uru barrki-j!
    wood-PROP chop-IMP
   ‘Chop the wood!’

The meaning of this suffix is that the speaker wants the addressee to do something, the action named by the verb. That is, \( V-\text{TH} \) ‘V-IMP’ conveys the meaning ‘I want: you will do V’. This meaning can be stated in Kayardild, but in a construction quite different from the English representation. In example (5) above, reproduced here as (38), -THu ‘POT’ indicates that someone wants the action to be performed by the addressee:

(38) Nyingka ngij-uru-ya barrki-juru-y.
    2sNOM wood-FUT-CLOC chop-POT-CLOC
   ‘You should (i.e. someone wants you to) chop some wood.’

This is close to a statement of the meaning of (37), but the insubordinated clause by itself, as explained earlier, does not specifically identify the
speaker of the imperative as the one who wants the addressee to chop the wood.

By the rules of Kayardild grammar, if the person who wants an action or event to occur is not the one who performs the action, then the wanted event is presented as a subordinate clause with ‘potential’-marked verb, and the ‘wanter’ is the subject of the main clause to which the wanted-event clause is subordinated. But to add to (38) the information that the ‘wanter’ is the speaker, in Kayardild it is necessary to add not only ngada ‘I’ but a full higher clause, and this clause must have a verb. There is no way of adding only ngada. In stating the meaning of an imperative such as (37), this grammatical requirement can be met by using kamburij ‘say’ as the higher clause verb, since an imperative is an act of ‘saying’. Hence, the following can be regarded as an adequate Kayardild statement of the meaning of (37):

(39) *Ngada kamburi-j: nyingka ngij-uru-ya barrki-juru-y.*

\[\text{1sNOM say-ACT 2sNOM wood-FUT-CLOC chop-POT-CLOC}\]

'I say: I want you to chop some wood.'

If this is so, then the general semantic formula for the meaning of an imperative in Kayardild would be:

\[\text{V-TH! (‘V-IMP’) =}\]

\[\text{ngada kamburij: nyingka V-THu-CLOC/COBL}\]

Contrasts like ‘I wanted to go but mother wanted me to stay’ are also discussed in Evans’ work on Kayardild. In such a case the mother would of course be likely to say something expressing her wish, and this would be expressed as follows:

(40) *[Ngada warra-ju.] Ngama-thu kamburi-jarr, nyingka ngaka-th.*

\[\text{1sNOM go-POT] mother-NOM say-PAST 2sNOM stay-IMP}\]

'[I wanted to go.] Mother said: you stay!'

However, if the mother didn’t actually say anything, but showed her wish by a facial expression, Kayardild speakers would say something like ‘I looked at my mother’s face; I would not go, since she looked at me angrily’. This situation could also be expressed in terms of the
construction $X V_1 X/Y V_2$-$THu$-CLOC/COBL. The wanted-event clause ($Y V_2$-$THu$) in this case would be *ngada warra-nangku* 'I go-NegPOT' plus the complementising suffix (CLOC/COBL). The higher clause ($X V_1$) would be 'Mother looked at me', and since in this construction -$THu$ identifies the higher clause subject ('Mother') as the wanter, this provides an entirely adequate contrast with the proposition *Ngada warra-ju* 'I want(ed) to go'.

Another way to express 'X wants Y to do V' in Kayardild without attributing to X any other action, or act of saying, would be to use the higher clause verb *marrulmaratha* 'think': $X$ marrulmar-a-th $Y$ V-$THu$-CLOC/COBL (e.g. *Datini-a dangka-a marrulmar-a-th nyingka ngij-uru-ya barrki-juru-y* 'that-NOM person-NOM think-ACT 2sNOM wood-FUT-CLOC chop-POT-CLOC'). This is not strictly speaking a purpose construction, since the higher clause action is not performed with the purpose of producing the subordinate clause event (you chop wood); but the subordinate clause event is wanted by the higher clause subject. At the present stage of understanding of Kayardild, this seems to be the simplest means the language has for expressing 'X wants: Y will do V' (cf. 'X wants: X w.11 do V' = $X$ V-$THu$).

The sketches offered here are only a preliminary to the process of language-internal explication required in Kayardild, as in any other language, to discover the language-specific details of how the semantic primes are combined in a definitional metalanguage. For each natural language, the definitional metalanguage should include only the minimal set of language-specific rules sufficient to produce all the combinations of semantic primes that are necessary to define more complex meanings in the language. The main conclusion to be drawn at this early stage is that the differences in syntactic properties between desideratives internal to the wanted-event clause (like -$THu$) and desideratives external to it (like *want*) should not of themselves constitute a barrier to regarding the constructions containing them as semantically equivalent in NSM definitions.
Chapter 6

Universal and language-specific in desideratives

The preceding chapters have focussed on some of the details of various desiderative expressions in languages. The emphasis has been on examining what kinds of constructions are used to express desiderative meanings, and on seeking to understand the functions of the lexical material and the grammatical structures in the expression of these meanings. In doing this, an attempt has been made to assess how these constructions perform their function of conveying desiderative meanings, to identify some of the components of these meanings, and to take note of both the similarities and differences that can be observed across languages.

This chapter aims to draw together these observations and to address specifically the question of language universals. In view of the diversity of kinds of desiderative expressions surveyed in this work, can any common elements or common structures be discerned? If so, how do these elements or structures interact with the many language-specific features of desiderative expressions that have been observed? What can be said about those properties of desiderative expressions that are specific to particular languages, and what are the possible influences at work in the origins and development of such language-specific properties? Finally what, if anything, might all this indicate about the nature of the mental lexicon; what could be the kinds of connections between meanings as they may be stored in the mind, and how they are represented in natural languages?

It is appropriate at this point to sound a note of caution. In any discussion of possible universals among languages, it is desirable to take specific steps to avoid proceeding on unquestioned assumptions based upon either universalism or cultural relativism. In particular, any assertions about underlying similarities between languages must be based on specific linguistic evidence; and assertions about fundamental differences between languages must be based on more than the observation of superficial differences between particular forms. The following discussion tries to demonstrate the usefulness of these principles in seeking a balanced assessment of what may be universal and what is language-specific in the area of desiderative expressions.
6.1 WANT as a language universal?

Like many other areas of language, desiderative constructions present some tantalising similarities in the patterns of expression that are found across languages. What is tantalising is a sense of some kind of underlying unity among these constructions, but a unity that appears highly intangible, perhaps even illusory. On the one hand, unexpected similarities are found between quite unrelated languages, for example the behaviour of morphological desideratives in Kayardild and Maricopa, the desiderative use of body part terms in Mangap-Mbula and Arrernte, or the links between 'want' and 'look for' in Ulwa and Ewe. On the other hand, even closely related languages display remarkable differences, for example the morphological desiderative construction in Maricopa versus the verbal one in Mojave; the borrowed want in Miskitu versus the polysemous walnaka in Ulwa (see 6.5 below); or the to complement in English versus the subjunctive complements of many other European languages.

Perhaps the major challenge in searching for a possible universal element or elements of meaning among the desiderative expressions of various languages is to specify what it is that seems to be shared. What things do desiderative expressions have in common? And are these shared elements really evidence of something universal, or can they be explained away in terms of chance similarity, or as an artefact of the descriptive framework?

If what is shared is a very basic element of meaning, a semantic prime, then it will be all the more difficult to specify, in that it will not be definable in any terms other than itself. An element so basic as to be indefinable could well account for a sense of underlying, though intangible, unity among desiderative expressions; but this is certainly not sufficient evidence for asserting that such a semantic prime is present.

Fortunately for the purpose of semantic analysis, indefinable is not the same as indescribable. What cannot be divided up any further internally can still be described from the outside. Even if what desiderative expressions have in common cannot be analysed in terms of smaller elements, it should be possible to observe its outward shape. It should be possible to specify this element of meaning both in terms of the
semantic space it occupies, that is what areas of meaning it covers; and in terms of its interactions with other elements of meaning.

These are the kinds of things that have been touched upon many times in the preceding chapters, particularly in the detailed case studies that have looked at what areas of meaning are covered by a particular desiderative word or morpheme, and at how this lexicogrammatical element combines with other elements to form various types of desiderative construction. This provides a basis for proceeding now to identify what these constructions do have in common, and to assess whether such shared features can be considered to embody something universal across languages.

Recall that the introduction to Chapter 2 set out a range of desiderative situations, that could be identified independently of any linguistic parameters. Situations like these arise often enough in the course of human experience for each language to have a substantial range of linguistic structures that are used in association with them, from the imperatives, directives and request constructions used in situations where one person wants someone else to do something, through a variety of desiderative, purposive, volitive, optative and other constructions used in situations where someone wants to do something or wants something to happen.

Because the present discussion is in English, the English words want, desire and desiderative are used many times with reference to these situations, but these English words neither define nor fully coincide with the semantic domain under investigation. It has been shown that the word desire can be defined in English in terms of want and some other elements; desiderative is of course also complex in meaning. Want in English has also been shown to have more than one meaning, though in what has been called its desiderative sense it may be indefinable; and this is the sense in which it has been used to characterise desiderative situations in terms of someone wanting something. Does this mean that the whole discussion is circular, depending ultimately on the meaning of ‘wanting’ in English?

No, for two reasons. First, even if this sense of want in English is indefinable, as it should be if it corresponds to the crosslinguistic semantic prime that is the focus of this search, it is not indescribable. Second, once the semantic prime has been described, it can be seen that the English word want corresponds to it only in part; far from defining the proposed
semantic prime, *want* in English is no better nor worse a representative of this basic meaning than are the desiderative forms in any other language, from *ahentye* in Arrernte or *-THu* in Kayardild to *-sge*- in Yup'ik Eskimo. The illustration of these two points provides a focus for assessing the status of this semantic prime as a possible semantic universal.

It may seem confusing to proceed to call this still hypothetical semantic prime *WANT*, even though the NSM term *WANT* is here distinguished typographically from the English word *want*. However, the point of a natural semantic metalanguage is that it uses a subset of terms from the natural language, in this case English, and the following discussion sets out quite explicitly the differences between the NSM *WANT* and the English *want*, as well as desiderative terms in several other languages.

The nature of the element *WANT*, although formally indefinable, can be described informally as an internal experience of a particular kind. In this it is somewhat like certain other internal experiences that have sometimes been called 'mental predicates' in NSM theory, particularly *THINK*, *KNOW* and *FEEL*. However, *WANT* does not share any elements of meaning with these other mental predicates. What distinguishes *WANT* from other internal experiences is the particular kind of experience it is. This is rather harder to describe, but it can be thought of as an experience that has a specific focus. This focus is essentially a projected outcome; the *WANT* experience is oriented toward some action, event, state of affairs, or in some cases, a concrete object.

Perhaps the essence of *WANT* as a semantic prime is the unique relationship that it denotes between the experiencer of this internal phenomenon, and the projected outcome upon which the experience is focussed. In effect, *WANT* is the name of this relationship between an entity and a projected occurrence. To *WANT* something is entirely distinct in character from any other internal experience; it is not the same as to *THINK* about something, to *KNOW* that something can or will happen, or to *FEEL* something about it. Nonetheless, there are some intuitively valid but semantically noncompositional relations linking *WANT* with these and certain other concepts, and these links too can help to explain some of the linguistic phenomena discussed here.

Thus a picture begins to emerge of the semantic space occupied by this *WANT* element. The range of meaning it covers is limited to a particular kind of relationship between an entity and an occurrence or
outcome. In this relationship, the entity is usually human, but not always; the real criterion is that, for WANT to be predicated of an entity, this entity must be thought of as 'someone' who does or is capable of doing at least some of the things that humans do, such as wanting, thinking, feeling and so on. Thus, WANT is related, though not in any compositional way, to another prime in the NSM system, SOMEONE. Who and what can be thought of as SOMEONE is partly determined by culture; for example, in the languages of most cultures there are some animals that are more likely than others to be spoken of as 'someone' who could WANT something. In some cultures people readily speak of spirits, natural forces like wind, spiritually significant places or objects as 'someone'; in some cultures, speakers are fairly free to personify inanimate things, speaking of them as if they were 'someone' who could WANT something, while in other cultures this way of speaking is rare, perhaps even unthinkable.

In addition to the SOMEONE to whom WANT applies, there is also a projected outcome that is the focus or target of WANT. This is usually, but not always, something that might occur in the future; the temporal/modal status of the projected outcome is represented according to the tense and mood systems of the language in which it is spoken of, and culture as well as language influences how speakers view the temporal/modal status of occurrences. The nature of the projected outcome may encompass quite a broad range of kinds of occurrence. The wanter may WANT to do something, or for someone else to do something, or some event or state of affairs such that something happens or the wanter gets or has something. This range of types of outcome is represented via a range of different grammatical structures, according to the grammar, and in particular the complementation system of the language in which the outcome is spoken of. Again, culture and grammatical systems both play a role in determining how speakers view and speak of different kinds of outcomes.

Although this description is informal and not compositional, it gives a fairly detailed outline or silhouette of the kind of meaning that is represented by the NSM element WANT, and some of the ways in which it interacts with other elements of meaning. To summarise, WANT is an internal experience that is predicated of someone and focusses on some projected outcome. For convenience in the following discussion, the 'someone' or wanter will be called the Principal, and the projected outcome will be called the Objective. The element WANT itself encodes an
experience that is internal to the Principal, yet at the same time constitutes a particular kind of link or relation between Principal and Objective.

Having specified as far as possible the nature of this hypothesised basic element WANT, the next step is to review the evidence in order to assess the extent to which this element may be considered to be shared among the desiderative expressions of different languages, including English. It should already be clear from this characterisation of WANT that it is not semantically coextensive with the English word want, and we proceed now to examine more closely the ways in which this word and other desiderative terms do or do not reflect this basic WANT meaning.

6.2 Patterns of equivalence across languages

Looking through the desiderative constructions examined in this study, one is struck by their heterogeneity. Not only is the English word want different in scop.:e and use from the proposed basic desiderative element, but no language appears to have a desiderative expression that is fully coextensive in meaning with the proposed WANT. (Similar issues arise in relation to several of the other proposed NSM primes, and the present investigation of WANT may shed light on these problems.) This could signal one of two things. Either the characterisation of the hypothesised semantic prime is faulty, or its expression is modified in every language by factors specific to the structure of that language.

An important corollary to this observation is that it is unusual to find in any natural language a desiderative expression that is precisely coextensive in meaning and use with any other desiderative expression. If there are no perfect matches of desiderative expressions across languages, no immediately observable isomorphism, then how is it possible to identify any shared element of desiderative meaning?

There are a couple of possible approaches to this problem, approaches that are not wholly incompatible with each other. One is to identify the contexts in which the use of desiderative expressions in different languages does match up, and to assume that these contexts represent the shared part of the meaning, and that the uses that do not match are idioms or language-specific constructions. This approach is quite common in comparing words and constructions in closely related languages. For example, it is generally assumed that in French and Italian,
the verbs *vouloir* ‘want’ and *volere* ‘want’ are not only cognate but essentially synonymous, and that the very minor variations in the scope of their use are idioms particular to each language. These words are a perfect match in most contexts (e.g. *je veux aller* = *lo voglio andare* ‘I want to go’), and the only cases where they do not exactly match are thought of as idiomatic (e.g. the use of *volere* in *ti voglio bene* ‘I love you’ does not match any use of *vouloir* in French, cf. *je t’aime*).

This kind of approach is, quite rightly, treated very cautiously by many linguists when examining the meanings of expressions in unrelated languages and cultures. Many crosscultural studies have pointed out the error of assuming that words in different languages are synonymous when they overlap only partially in use. For example, words like *arofa* in Tahitian, *sayang* in Malay or *mukuringanyi* in Yankunytjatjara are used in some of the same contexts as *love* is in English, and hence are often translated as ‘love’, but both anthropologists and linguists have pointed out significant differences between the concepts encoded in these words.

To assume that they actually mean the same as *love*, and that their use in contexts where *love* is not used were simply idiomatic, would be to ignore some of the most important aspects of the meanings of these emotion terms and their social and psychological ramifications in each culture.

Words like these are complex in meaning, and semantic analyses of words for ‘love’ in several languages by Wierzbicka and Goddard have shown how a full account of their meanings can pinpoint both the shared elements and the differences in meaning between words like these. They all involve ‘feeling something good’ in relation to another person, but the protective, caring flavour of *sayang*, the compassionate flavour of *arofa*, the nurturing flavour of *mukuringanyi* and the romantic flavour of *love* can all be captured in specific components of these complex meanings (e.g. the component ‘I want Y to feel good’ is unique to *sayang*, ‘something bad happened to Y’ is unique to *arofa*, ‘I want to be with Y’ is shared by *mukuringanyi* and *love* but not *sayang* or *arofa*).

This is all very well for words that have complex meanings, but what of the indivisible WANT element that is the focus of the present investigation? This seems to present something of a dilemma for semantic analysis. In developing an empirically based account of subtle differences in meaning that can explain the differing uses of these ‘words for love’, these meanings have been spelt out in terms of more basic terms like ‘want’, ‘feel, ‘good’ and ‘bad’ as seen in the components mentioned
6.2 Patterns of equivalence

above. But if the words for 'want', 'feel' and so on in each language also display subtle and not so subtle differences in use, how can they be regarded as basic?

On the one hand, if it is possible to pinpoint the differences between sayang, arofa, mukuringanyi and love in explicitly stated components of meaning, shouldn't it be possible, and perhaps quite illuminating, to identify and state the subtle differences of meaning between vouloir and volere? Perhaps this would reveal something important about Italian cultural attitudes to love and desire, that allows volere to be used in a context where vouloir is not used in French. Moreover, while mukuringanyi is sometimes used in contexts where it can be translated as love in English, in other contexts it is better translated as want. If one were to equate mukuringanyi with either of these English words, wouldn't this obscure an important conceptual link between these two aspects of mukuringanyi in Yankunytjatjara culture? Shouldn't these facts be reflected in components in the definitions of volere, vouloir, mukuringanyi and want, just as the differences between sayang, a.ofa, mukuringanyi and love are reflected in appropriate components of their definitions?

But on the other hand, 'want' is apparently needed as a basic element to be included within the components of meaning of sayang, mukuringanyi and love mentioned above, as well as in the definitions of words and constructions in many other languages. This 'want' as used in definitions is meant, in the subset of NSM terms drawn from English, to signify the indivisible semantic prime WANT. But if most or even some of the 'words for want' in natural languages have different patterns of use, and if these differences in use reflect identifiable differences in meaning, then aren't we always using semantically complex words, whether drawn from English or any other natural language, to represent this supposedly basic WANT? And doesn't this preclude any equivalence of definitions across languages, and vitiate the idea of a universal, basic meaning element like the hypothesised WANT?

The solution to this apparent conundrum may lie in the second of the abovementioned approaches to the problem of identifying elements of meaning that may be shared among the non-coextensive desiderative expressions of various languages. This approach, developed from Bogusławski's proposals for distinguishing the semantic content of a full expression from 'matrices of distinctive features of meaning' of the individual morphs contained in it, involves an examination of more than
just individual elements of meaning, broadening the scope of inquiry to encompass the possibility of matching patterns or combinations of meanings across languages. This means looking not for desiderative expressions that are coextensive in meaning with each other or with the element WANT as described here, but instead for expressions that involve the interaction of a desiderative element with certain other elements, in the same way as WANT has been described as interacting with other elements referred to above as the Principal and the Objective.

This approach would equate vouloir with volere and with want, in a set of specifically identified combinations, such as je veux aller, lo voglio andare, and I want to go. Each of these is a language-specific realisation of a combination of three elements that can be represented by NSM primes: a Principal, in this case I, the predication WANT, and the Objective, in this case 'go', which is further decomposable into a set of semantic primes including DO and PLACE (to 'go' is essentially to do something, because of which one can be in another place after this time). Each of these equivalent propositions contains elements corresponding to I (je, io, I), to WANT (veux, voglio, and want), and to 'go' (aller, andare, and go). The assertion is, then, that these three statements are semantically equivalent, that is, that they express exactly the same thing. The fact that the distribution of vouloir, volere and want in other contexts varies somewhat is not relevant to their semantic equivalence in this specific combination of meanings.

Most people would have little difficulty with the idea that these three statements in closely related European languages mean exactly the same thing. But it is worth pointing out some of the differences between them, and their implications for the question of semantic equivalence. First, the matter of differences in distribution of vouloir, volere and want in other contexts cannot be dismissed as trivial. It is important to consider, for example, the fact that the English want is sometimes used in contexts where vouloir would not be used in French, but rather il faut 'it is necessary'. As discussed in 2.5 above, it can be established on formal criteria that want in English has more than one meaning; it corresponds to WANT in the context I want to go, but in certain other grammatical environments it corresponds not to the semantically indivisible WANT, but to a different, specifiable meaning.

When semantic equivalence is posited across languages, any variations in scope of the proposed equivalents needs to be investigated in
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similar detail, on a case-by-case basis. Such variations, however minor, cannot be dismissed, nor is there any blanket solution to the analysis of semantic content of individual lexemes. Other variations in use of these three words should be examined in like manner, for example the use of *volere* in *ti voglio bene*, which does not correspond to *vouloir* or *want*; and the use of *want* with sexual connotations, as discussed in 3.2 above. But variations in the range of use of lexemes is not in itself an obstacle to their functioning as semantic equivalents in specific contexts like the one under consideration here: the context 'I want to go', or more broadly, 'I want to do something'.

There are three other ways in which *Je veux aller, Io voglio andare* and *I want to go* may be regarded as less than perfect equivalents. These are the differing verbal inflections for person/number and tense, the grammatical possibility of omitting the first person pronoun (pro-drop) in Italian but not English or French, and the question to what extent *to go* in English can really be considered equivalent to the infinitive forms *andare* and *aller*. Each of these matters is related to important issues in assessing semantic equivalence across languages.

While each of the proposed equivalents has an overt first person pronoun corresponding to *I*, this and other information is also present in the inflection on the verb that corresponds to WANT. Does this pose any obstacle to regarding *veux, voglio* and *want*[+zero inflection] as equivalent to each other and to the semantic prime WANT, which carries no such extra information?

No, this is not an obstacle, because the additional information carried by the verb form can be shown to be semantically redundant, while grammatically obligatory. That is, the person and number information included in the verb form (first person singular) simply follows from and agrees with the meaning of the semantic prime *I*, represented by *je, io,* and *I* respectively. This person/number agreement is required by the grammar of some languages, while in many others it is not required (as in Arrernte *Ayenge ahentyeneme lhetyeke* 'I want to go', where the verb *ahentyeneme* 'want' is inflected for tense but not for person or number, while in Thai *Chân yàak pay* 'I want to go' the verb *yàak* 'want' is completely uninflected, carrying no content additional to 'want'. Like Malay *mau* discussed below, *yàak* may be interpreted as referring to times other than the present, depending on context, but the verb itself carries no temporal marking.)

This is a very simple illustration of the way the form in which a semantic
prime is expressed may be modified by language-specific grammatical requirements.

In Italian it is normal to omit the pronoun in this grammatical context, since the same information is clear from the verb form. It is more usual to say *Voglio andare* than *Io voglio andare*; indeed, the latter could be considered more complex semantically, in instances where the non-obligatory pronoun is used to add some emphatic or contrastive meaning. However, in formal NSM representation each element of meaning should be represented explicitly, I by *io* and WANT by *voglio*. The person/number information carried by the form *voglio* is obligatory but redundant as explained above, and therefore no additional semantic or pragmatic inference should be attached to the presence of *io* in the Italian equivalent of *I WANT* and corresponding propositions in other languages (*je veux, I want*, etc.)

In the NSM drawn from Italian, then, the pronoun is no longer non-obligatory, as it is in everyday Italian. This is not an arbitrary discarding of the pro-drop characteristic of Italian grammar, but a recognition of the fact that the NSM representation *io voglio* (= *I WANT*) is a semantic representation, and as such it should reflect the fact that the first person is semantically present in the everyday utterance *voglio andare*. The form *voglio*, and each of the other forms in the conjugation of *volere*, should be regarded as contextually conditioned variants of the same semantic element, WANT; these variants are governed by language-specific grammatical rules. The rules that allow pro-drop in everyday Italian but disallow it in French and English are semantically efficacious, in that they operate to preserve meaning. The English verb paradigm distinguishes only the third person singular *wants* from the form *want*, so there is not enough information available on the verb to allow *I* to be dropped; and in French, although *veux* is distinguishably first person singular in the written form, in contemporary spoken French it is homophonous with other forms, rendering the pronoun indispensable to convey this meaning.

Each of these verb forms, *voglio*, *veux* and *want*, is a present tense verb form, and this too poses an issue in assessing the semantic equivalence of such expressions across languages with different systems of tense marking. For example, Thai and Malay, along with many other languages, do not require any overt morphosyntactic or lexical marker of tense in a clause. Hence *Chan yàak pay* in Thai and *Aku mau pergi* in
Malay are equivalent in meaning to *I want to go* or *Je veux aller*, but *want* and *veux* are more complex in meaning than *yàak* or *mau* by virtue of the tense information as well as the person/number information they contain.

As we have seen, the person/number information contained in a form like *veux* can be deemed redundant because of the presence of the meaning element *I* in combination with WANT, but the tense information cannot be handled in quite the same way. The reference to present time contained in the form *veux* can of course be made explicit in the NSM representation via the basic elements *at this time* or *now*: *Je veux aller* means *I want to go at this (present) time*. But where the element *I* is represented by *je* in addition to the verb form, the elements *at this time* or *now* are not represented anywhere else than in the verb. Does this mean that *yàak* and *mau* can be deemed equivalent to each other and to the semantic prime WANT, but not to *veux*? In languages where there are no verb forms that are unmarked for tense, are there no *‘pure’ equivalents of yàak, mau* or WANT, which carry no such tense information?

In languages without obligatory tense marking, information about time can be made explicit when necessary; for example in Malay one can say *Aku mau pergi sekaran*g *I want to go now* or *Sekaran, aku mau pergi* *‘Now, I want to go’*. In the former, *sekarang* *‘now’* may be taken as applying only to *pergi* *‘go’* (e.g. as in *‘I want to go now rather than later’*), but when *sekarang* introduces the clause, it has scope over the entire clause, and thus locates *mau* *‘want’* in the present time. Of course, present time can also be made explicit in this way in French: *Maintenant, je veux aller* *‘Now, I want to go’*. The difference is that in Malay the use of a temporal term like *sekarang* *‘now’* is the only way of introducing explicit reference to present time in the clause. In the absence of any specific time term it would normally be assumed that *aku mau pergi* refers to present time, but this is an inference that is not based on any information specifically mentioned in the clause. In French, on the other hand, *je veux aller* is specifically marked for present tense even without *maintenant* *‘now’*.

A parallel can now be seen between this situation and the one discussed above, where *voglio andare* *‘I want to go’* in Italian contains a reference to first person even without the pronoun *io* *‘I’*. In everyday speech, the information obligatorily included in the verb form need not be duplicated by adding *io* to *voglio*, or *maintenant* to *veux*. But in a
semantic representation every element of meaning must be specified. Therefore in a verb form like veux, the meaning 'now' (or any other temporal element) should be seen as separate and separable from the meaning 'want'. In a semantic representation, that is in the NSM drawn from French, the correct verb form is governed by language-specific grammatical rules, while the semantic content must be made explicit. Hence the meaning 'I + want + present time' should formally be represented (in NSM semantic formulae) as maintenant, je veux, not just je veux; and conversely je veux by itself contains the elements 'I' and 'want', but the tense of the verb should be regarded as a contextually conditioned variant.

Semantically complex verb forms, then, are determined by language-specific grammatical rules, but these in turn are conditioned by the semantic environment. If elements of meaning like 'I' or 'now' or 'before now' are present in the semantic context, then the grammatical rules provide the appropriate variant of the verb: first person, present or past tense. This process is independent of the semantic content of the verb itself -- whether we are talking about 'want' or any other verb. Therefore, the semantic content of veux, voglio, and want in Je veux aller, Io voglio andare, and I want to go can indeed be seen as equivalent to the semantic content of the uninflected ýàak and mau in Chân ýàak pay and Aku mau pergi. The language-specific rules that govern verbal inflections do not prevent us from identifying a shared and possibly universal element of meaning, namely WANT.

The last of the questions raised above about the equivalence of Je veux aller, Io voglio andare and I want to go was the matter of the complement type. In traditional approaches to English grammar, to go has often been viewed as an infinitive verb form precisely equivalent to aller or andare. But if these were fully equivalent, then can should also take the to infinitive: compare Je veux aller, I want to go with Je peux aller, I can (*to) go. So, do veux aller and want to go correspond exactly in meaning, or does the to in English convey something that is more complex semantically than just aller or go?

The meanings of various types of complement structures associated with desiderative expressions have been explored at some length in earlier chapters, as well as in the extensive literature on the semantics and grammar of complementation. Our present focus is on only one combination of meanings, the 'I want to go' frame, so it is not strictly
relevant here that the infinitive complement of *veux* is replaced by the subjunctive in another context (e.g. *Je veux qu'elle y aille* 'I want that she there go-SJV') where the English verb form *to go* is unchanged (*I want her to go there*).

Although the English *to* is indeed semantically complex, both in its role as a complementiser and in its directional use, the principle of equivalent combinations of meaning applies in this case just as in the case of the semantically complex verb forms discussed above. In the context *I want to go*, *to* is just as obligatory and just as semantically redundant as the person/number and tense inflections of *veux* and *voglio*. This is so because the *to* complement is the only possible complement type for *want* in this context: there is no semantic contrast in English between *want to go* and some other complement of *want* (such as *I want go* or *I want that I go*).

The reason why the complementiser *to* is obligatory with *want* is certainly to do with the complex semantics of *to* and its interaction with the meaning of *want*. It has been demonstrated by Wierzbicka that wanting is a key element in the meaning of *to*, and her analysis is compatible with many other linguists' observations on the behaviour of *to* complements. In the context *I want to go*, the presence of *to* is in effect dictated by the presence of the desiderative element WANT. *To* adds nothing to the meaning of *want*, but is needed as a formal means of connection between *want* and *go* because of the language-specific syntactic properties of *want*. *Want* in English is formally a transitive verb in the sense of taking an NP object, though it is not as prototypically transitive (in the sense of denoting an effect produced intentionally by an agent upon the object) as *kick* or *break*. To replace the syntactically favoured NP object with a verbal complement requires a complementiser whose meaning does not clash with the meaning of the verb itself. The appropriate complementiser in English is *to* because its meaning is fully consistent with the meaning of the verb *want*.

Indeed, the meaning of *want to V* in English is so basic a combination that there is no way of expressing this meaning in any simpler terms, except to divide this proposition into two semantic segments: WANT (with its Principal and Objective), and the proposition that constitutes the content of the Objective. This means that *I want to go* can be expressed as two simple propositions linked in a particular relationship, which can be represented as 'I want this: I will go'. The
implications of this semantic structure, and issues surrounding the combinations 'want this' and 'will go', are discussed in 6.4 below.

It is important to recognise that the proposals advanced here about the semantic redundancy of obligatory grammatical elements are in no way intended to suggest that such elements are semantically empty or arbitrary, or even that they are semantically 'bleached' in a particular syntactic context. In the cases discussed above, the contextually conditioned person/number variations of vouloir and volere are redundant in that they duplicate the semantic information contained in the pronoun (je, io, I); hence each of these verb forms is semantically equivalent to WANT in the context under consideration. But this is not the same as saying that the person/number inflections of veux or voglio are meaningless, or that their semantic content is neutralised in the environment of the first person pronoun. Each inflection still carries its own meaning, but is semantically non-contributory when this meaning is already present in the semantic content of the full construction.

It is precisely because the form voglio is fully consistent with the meaning of io voglio, that this combination of meanings can be equated exactly with I WANT and its equivalents in other languages, regardless of differences between language-specific inflectional systems. There is nothing in the meaning of the form voglio that either adds anything to or clashes with the meaning of the combination io voglio, or interferes semantically with its equivalence to the same combination of meanings in other languages: je veux, I want, aku mau and so on. Moreover, it is this same consistency of meaning that underlies and semantically licenses the language-specific grammatical option in Italian of dropping the first person pronoun.

The same applies to systems of verbal tense marking. The present tense verb form in I want to go, or the past tense form in I wanted to go, must be grammatically consistent with the temporal information in the semantic context. This can be demonstrated by making the temporal information explicit: Now, I want (*wanted) to go; At some time before now I wanted (*want) to go. The tense inflection is not semantically reduced or neutralised in these environments, it is just consistent with its environment, and if it were not, it would violate the grammatical rules specific to this language.

So it is with the complementiser to: its meaning is not neutralised or subsumed by the presence of want in want to go, but fully consistent
with it. To neither adds anything more, nor does it introduce any element of meaning that contrasts with the meaning of want or with any other complement construction that can occur with want. In the context of want, the complementiser to is thus semantically non-contributory.

An interesting piece of evidence in support of this view is the way in which many English speakers can imagine how the meaning of a construction like *I want that I go (if it were acceptable in English) would differ from the meaning of I want to go. The effect of the complementiser that would be to introduce an element of uncertainty, thus adding something that contrasts with the meaning of want: *I want that I go sounds as if I want to go but I don’t know if it will happen. No such contrast is introduced by the complementiser to in I want to go. Of course, the idea of such a contrast in meaning may arise by analogy with verbs like hope, which can take either to or that complements. I hope to go sounds more confident than I hope that I (can) go; indeed the latter sounds better with can, because of the uncertainty of outcome conveyed by the that complement.

This effect arises because the central meaning of that has to do with knowing (or with what has been called factivity); the combination hope that conveys that one can’t know if the projected outcome will occur. The meaning of hope includes both wanting, and not knowing if the outcome will happen, and this is why either that or to can be consistent with the meaning of hope. Hope to (e.g. I hope to go) focusses more on the wanting aspect, while hope that (e.g. I hope that I can go, I hope that she goes) focusses more on the unknowability of the outcome. When I want to do something myself, I can be fairly confident about the outcome, that I will do it if I can; this explains why I hope to go and I hope that I can go both sound better than I hope that I go. The degree of uncertainty about what I myself will do implied by hope that would arise only if there is some doubt about whether I can do it. On the other hand, other people’s actions are more unpredictable, so that but not to is consistent with the unknowability of the outcome in I hope that she goes; *I hope her to go is ungrammatical (in contrast to I expect her to go or I want her to go).

These properties of English complementisers illustrate one more important point to be noted when assessing the equivalence across languages of combinations of meaning like Je veux aller, I want to go and so on. This is the fact that, while we may be able to find equivalent combinations of meaning across languages, the grammatical systems that
determine the structural details of these combinations are language-specific. In considering whether complement structures like \textit{want to go} and \textit{veux aller} are equivalent in meaning, we have to take into account not just the individual items \textit{to go} and \textit{aller}, but also how they fit into the grammatical systems of complementation in English and French respectively.

Before we can say whether \textit{to go} means the same as \textit{aller}, we have to know what \textit{to go} means; and an adequate analysis of the meaning of \textit{to go} can only be arrived at through a detailed investigation of the system of complementation specific to English, including the meanings of other complementisers like \textit{that}, and what is the place of the \textit{to go} complement within this system as a whole. The same applies to \textit{aller}: to understand its meaning, it is necessary to investigate how it fits into the language-specific grammatical system of complementation in French, including the meaning of other complement types such as the subjunctive (as in \textit{Je veux qu'elle y aille 'I want her to go-SJV there'}).

This is a very tall order, and it may make the task of assessing the equivalence of combinations of meaning across languages seem impossibly huge, or far too complex to be achievable. Similar objections could be raised in most areas of linguistic research, and indeed this may be seen as one of the occupational hazards of linguistics; for languages are systems in which everything is connected to everything else. Linguists have to define the scope of their current analytical enterprise, but try at the same time not to exclude any relevant data on aspects of language that may lie outside the immediate focus.

A mitigating factor in the present instance is that what we have been considering here is how the structure of desiderative expressions is influenced by the major grammatical systems of each language: systems of verbal inflection, tense marking, and complementation. Each of these systems involves a set of grammatical morphemes and grammatical rules that is language-specific, and must of course be analysed as part of the grammatical description of each language, but there are not very many major grammatical systems of this kind in each language, and good linguistic descriptions of many of the world's languages are already available.

As a final illustration of the language-specific effects of grammatical systems on the structure of desiderative expressions, let us return to the matter of tense marking in expressions involving the same combination
of meanings as I want to go or Je veux aller. The verb ahentyeneme in Arrernte Ayenge ahentyeneme lhetyeke ‘I want to go’ was mentioned earlier in this section as an example where the verb is inflected for tense but not person/number. Systems of tense marking are not isomorphic across languages, and the tense suffix -me in Arrernte does not correspond precisely to the present tense of English want or French veux. In the tense system of Arrernte, -me is best categorised as ‘non-past progressive’, and as such it corresponds just as often to present progressive forms with -ing as it does to plain present tense forms in English.

Proceeding on the same principles as the foregoing discussion, this is no obstacle to regarding Ayenge ahentyeneme lhetyeke as expressing the same meaning as I want to go; the English present tense of want and the Arrernte non-past progressive of ahentyeneme are both fully consistent with the same semantic context of present time (‘at this time’/‘now’) and contribute no new or contrasting elements of meaning.

However, if the English present continuous form were substituted (I am wanting to go) this would not only be odd grammatically (though acceptable in some dialects, such as Indian English), but it would not mean the same thing as I want to go, because the -ing form in this context introduces an additional element of aspectual meaning: it conveys not only that what is denoted by the verb happens in the present time, but also that it continues for some time. Thus, in English, there is at least a potential contrast in meaning between the present tense want and the present continuous wanting; and it is the -ing form that adds an element of meaning not present in the simpler want form.

But in Arrernte there is no such contrast between the tense marker -me and any semantically simpler tense form consistent with a present time context. Ahentyeneme is the only available tense-marked form of ‘want’ in Arrernte that would be compatible with present time. Therefore, in the combination of meanings under consideration here, ahentyeneme should be regarded as equivalent to want, not wanting; that is, Ayenge ahentyeneme lhetyeke should be regarded as fully equivalent in meaning to I want to go, Je veux aller and so on.

Note, too, that by the language-specific rules of complementation in Arrernte, the complement lhetyeke ‘to go’ takes an obligatory purposive inflection, -tyeke. The meaning of this inflection in Arrernte is to do with purpose or intention, essentially ‘I want this; I think: I will do something because of this’. Because wanting is central to the meaning of -tyeke, this
affix is fully consistent with the meaning of ahentyeneme 'want'. The other elements involved in -tyeke (I think: I will do something because of this) do not clash in any way with the meaning of ahentyeneme; and because -tyeke is obligatory in this construction, it does not contribute any contrastive meaning. Hence this language-specific complement type poses no barrier to assigning semantic equivalence to Ayenge ahentyeneme lhetyeke, I want to go and the same combinations of meaning in other languages.

The tense marking system of Arrernte poses one more issue, however. As pointed out in 2.4 above, the Arrernte desiderative term ahentye 'want' can be inflected for tense by the addition of the verbal elements -ne- or -ire- plus a tense marker, as in ahentye-ne-me 'want', but this is not obligatory. Without these verbal elements, ahentye 'want' functions grammatically as a nominal, but still takes a purposive complement. Arrernte nominals are not inflected for tense, so the meaning combination 'I want to go' can be expressed without any tense marking by the construction Ayenge ahentye lhetyeke. Does this mean that the best equivalent for I want to go or Je veux aller is not the tensed clause Ayenge ahentyeneme lhetyeke but the tenseless Ayenge ahentye lhetyeke? Like the tenseless vàak and mau in Thai and Malay, this tenseless ahentye 'want' is fully consistent with the temporal information in its semantic context, which can be made explicit (e.g. Lyete, ayenge ahentye lhetyeke 'Now, I want to go').

It would seem obvious that Ayenge ahentye lhetyeke is the best equivalent for I want to go, and that the verbal elements and tense inflection must add elements of meaning that would create a semantic contrast between this construction and the more morphologically complex Ayenge ahentyeneme / ahentyirreme lhetyeke. But taking at face value what seems obvious is no substitute for language-specific semantic analysis. No semantic contrast has yet been found between these three variants of 'I want to go' in Arrernte. Moreover, no way has yet been found to predict which of the three forms ahentye, ahentyeneme or ahentyirreme will be used, other than the need for tense marking if the temporal information is not otherwise clear from the context.

Of course, differences in linguistic form usually signal differences in meaning. Yet, as illustrated throughout the present discussion, this principle does not operate in a fully transparent way so as to bind each form to each meaning in a set of biunique relationships. There is some
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Evidence in Arrernte to support the view that, unusual though such a situation is, these three constructions could indeed be fully synonymous.

First, as described in 2.4, the semantic content of -ne- as an optional copula, meaning 'be somewhere', and -irre- meaning ‘happen’, can be fully consistent with the meaning of ahentye ‘want’. Every instance of ahentye ‘want’ refers to some Principal, and this entity exists somewhere, so -ne- does not necessarily add anything that is not already inherent in the meaning of ahentye. Neither does -irre-, because every instance of wanting involves something (namely, the experience of wanting) happening in or to the Principal. This is not to say that the elements ‘be somewhere’ or ‘happen’ are components of the meaning of ahentye, but just that they are fully consistent with its meaning, and hence they may be regarded as semantically transparent in this particular context; this and other kinds of noncompositional relationships are discussed in 6.4 below.

Second, the only discernible motivation for Arrernte speakers' using a tense marked form (ahentyeneme/ahentyirreme) instead of just ahentye is in contexts where this is needed to clarify what time is meant; for example, in reference to past rather than present wanting: Ayenge ahentyeneke lyetyeke 'I wanted (-ke 'PAST') to go'. This would suggest that the Arrernte tense marked forms could be viewed as contextually conditioned variants, much like the tense marked forms of vouloir, volere or want. As in the other cases of tense marked verb forms, the Arrernte tense markers are applied by grammatical rules and must agree with the time frame of the semantic context; the elements -ne/-irre- serve the derivational function that allows the originally nominal ahentye ‘want’ to take verbal tense marking, and the semantic content contributed by these derivational elements adds nothing new or contrasting to the meaning of ahentye ‘want’. It may even be that ahentye ‘want’ is undergoing a process of change from being more nominal to being more verbal in character in Arrernte; we return to this question in 6.5.

Throughout the present section, the focus has been on only one combination of meanings, namely 'I want to go'. The length and scope of this discussion gives a fair idea of the number and complexity of issues involved in assessing the semantic equivalence of language-specific versions of even a single fairly simple proposition. Nevertheless, certain principles have proved to be useful in finding a reasonable solution to each of the semantic puzzles addressed here. On the basis of these principles, it is possible to propose a set of criteria for assessing the
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equivalence of desiderative expressions across languages, as an essential preliminary to identifying shared elements of meaning that may correspond to language universals.

As illustrated above, it is unrealistic to expect that expressions of similar or even identical meaning will match exactly, lexeme by lexeme and morpheme by morpheme, even in closely related languages. Therefore the first criterion must be that of expressive equivalence: looking not for perfectly isomorphic, calque-like structures, but for constructions that have the power to express the same combination of meanings (for example, the combination 'I want to go').

Next, each lexical and grammatical element within these constructions is examined not only as to its function in the particular construction, but also with regard to its language-specific lexical and grammatical properties. This must be done with reference to a second criterion, that of contextual equivalence: to be deemed equivalent, words or morphemes in different languages do not have to have the same range of functions and meanings, but they must express the same thing in the particular context under consideration.

Language-specific variations in semantic scope and range of use are to be expected, and each case needs to be examined to determine whether or not it produces any identifiable semantic difference in the specified context. This requires the application of a third criterion, that any meaning differences must be specifiable: if two items seem to be similar but not identical in meaning, the difference must be stated explicitly. This of course follows from the principle, fundamental to NSM theory, that semantic content consists of discrete and determinate elements of meaning. Its application as demonstrated here means that any way in which a word or morpheme differs in function or use from its near equivalent in another language is investigated to see if a semantic explanation for the difference can be found; an explanation that can be stated clearly, and justified on the basis of empirical evidence from the language.

A fourth criterion is that only specifiable differences in elements of meaning constitute a barrier to semantic equivalence; other kinds of difference are formally irrelevant in this regard. Thus if two words are equivalent in a particular combination of meanings like 'I want to go', but one or both of these words has other meanings leading to differences in
use in other contexts, they are still regarded as equivalent in the context under consideration.

A fifth criterion is that of semantic consistency or contrastiveness: elements of meaning that are obligatory, redundant or non-contrastive have no effect on semantic equivalence. Language-specific grammatical rules may attach elements such as tense or aspectual markers, complementisers or derivational affixes to an expression in one language that have no corresponding elements in an otherwise equivalent expression in another language. These elements do have meanings of their own and are not semantically neutral, but so long as these meanings are consistent with the meaning of the expression as a whole, their effect on crosslinguistic semantic equivalence is nil.

The final criterion is that the semantic content of each element in a construction, and hence whether it is consistent or contrastive with the other elements, has to be established on a language-specific basis. An element that is contrastive in one language may not be contrastive in another, as the element of continuous aspect in English wanting contrasts with plain want, but a similar aspectual element in Arrernte ahentyeneme does not contrast in the same way with plain ahentye. The semantic content of grammatical elements like these, and the sets of contrasts in which they participate, can only be identified by studying them in relation to other members of the same grammatical system (in this case, the tense/aspectual system) in the language of which they are a part.

6.3 Problems with WANT as a crosslinguistic universal

The previous sections of this chapter have sought to lay a foundation for addressing the question of the existence of a universal element of desiderative meaning across languages, by sketching out what would be the nature of such a universal if it exists, and by establishing a set of criteria for the crosslinguistic comparison of desiderative expressions to see what elements of meaning they may have in common. The criteria proposed above for assessing the semantic equivalence of combinations of meanings in different languages should be applicable to many more semantic combinations than just the desiderative expressions, but these remain the focus of the present study; and they provide many
opportunities for testing and refining the procedures for semantic analysis that are proposed here.

These principles and procedures have already proved useful in indicating some plausible solutions to a series of fairly minor problems in assessing the semantic equivalence of various language-specific versions of the combination of meanings 'I want to go'. However, this combination of meanings represents only one of the many kinds of desiderative construction found across languages, and it corresponds to only one type among the range of desiderative situations that this study seeks to encompass.

This is quite a simple type of desiderative situation, in that the Principal, who wants the Objective, is also the performer of the projected action that constitutes the Objective (that is, going). The action of going is one that a person can usually carry out, if this person wants to; there are very few potential complicating factors that may intervene between the Principal's desire for and actual performance of the Objective. That is by no means the case in other types of desiderative situation, where the prospects for realisation of the Objective may depend on someone or something quite outside the Principal's control (as, to give just one example, in the case of an infant wanting to be fed).

This section and the next deal with a number of these other types of desiderative constructions, several of which pose difficulties for the identification of any universal element of desiderative meaning, because the language-specific structures by which they are represented seem to have little or nothing in common. In these cases, too, a careful assessment is necessary of the extent of semantic correspondence, and the exact nature of the crosslinguistic differences. The methods demonstrated above prove useful again in helping to distinguish between what is clearly language-specific and what may be universal.

A wide range of kinds of desiderative expressions found in different languages has been examined in this study. It has explored a variety of syntactic structures used to express meanings similar or equivalent to the concept of WANT outlined above, and has tried to take into consideration any other types of construction associated with desiderative situations, including imperatives, optatives, hortatives and so on. The purpose of this was to cast the net widely enough to cover desiderative expressions in all languages, and to avoid distortion that would result from limiting the discussion to equivalents of the desiderative expressions of a particular
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language. It is now desirable to narrow the focus somewhat, but to do so on a basis that has the potential to hold true for all languages, whatever their individual characteristics.

Consider for a moment, by way of comparison, the two widely recognised crosslinguistic categories of imperatives and causatives. Both categories are represented by morphological devices in some languages, and in some languages by distinctive syntactic constructions. Some treatments of causative expressions aim to encompass all lexemes with any element of causation in their meaning, and to explain or predict from this aspects of their syntactic behaviour. Although the grammatical properties of causatives and imperatives are highly salient for linguists, the categories themselves are recognised on primarily semantic grounds, and both are linked in some way with desiderative elements of meaning.

Imperatives, which seem to exist in all languages, are constructions which express that the speaker wants the addressee to do something. Causatives are rather more complex, expressing a relation between two element such that something happens because of something else; many but not all of them express that someone does something because this person wants something to happen. While these generalised sketches of meaning are formulated in terms that reflect NSM theory, the same general ideas of what constitutes an imperative or a causative are found throughout the literature; for these semantic notions are the basis on which linguists classify a particular construction in a particular language as an imperative or a causative.

The point of these not particularly novel observations is this: there is nothing else, no single morphological, syntactic or lexical property that can be taken as definitive of all imperatives or all causatives in all languages. To establish the presence of a semantic universal, it is necessary to be able to test empirically whether this semantic element is represented by some specifiable linguistic form in each language. Imperative forms exist in most, perhaps all, languages; however, these forms represent not a single universal meaning, but language-specific combinations of meanings. They include the combination ‘I say: I want you to do this’ by which they are classified as imperatives, but they may include other language-specific elements, as shown in the following section. Causatives in most languages consist of a range of lexical and grammatical forms representing a variety of combinations of meanings. It may be possible to identify a single universal element (such as NSM
BECAUSE) underlying most or all of them, but this involves a more
detailed analytical enterprise than just assigning them to the general
category of causatives.

To test empirically for the presence of a semantic universal of
desiderative meaning, then, requires a more fine-grained analysis of the
various constructions that have been recognised as generally desiderative
in character. This analysis should be aimed at identifying a specific
element that is both shared by all desiderative expressions, and
represented in each language by some specifiable linguistic form. This
may seem contradictory, if desiderative expressions take a variety of
linguistic forms; but if for each language there is one specifiable form in
terms of which the others can be defined, then it can be concluded that this
form represents the semantic universal. If it proves impossible to identify
such a form, this is of course strong evidence against the existence of a
semantic universal.

Theoretically, a linguistic form representing a semantic universal
could be a lexical form or a grammatical structure. For example, the
proposed semantic universal PART (something being composed of parts) is
perhaps most precisely represented in Arrernte not by any word or
morpheme, but by a part-whole construction which places the part and the
whole in a unique grammatical relationship. This construction is marked
only by its distinctive syntax, not by any lexical form. But this raises the
question of language-internal definition: is it possible to express, in
Arrernte, what this construction means? If this construction represents a
true semantic prime, an indivisible and indefinable element of meaning,
then perhaps it would not be possible to say what it means other than via
its semantic equivalent in some other language.

Nonetheless, while there is no nominal in Arrernte equivalent to
the English noun part (as in P is a part of W), the same relationship (WP
in the part-whole construction) can be expressed via the possessive and
proprietary markers (WP kerte, PW kenhe); so, the semantic prime PART
can be considered to be represented in Arrernte by the morphemes -kerte
and -kenhe as well as by the grammatical part-whole construction. The
matter remains a focus of ongoing research in NSM semantics, but
empirical investigation has not yet revealed any case in which a
grammatical structure expresses a meaning that is otherwise indefinable in
the same language. The currently available evidence thus favours
Wierzbicka's 'strong lexicalisation hypothesis', that every semantic prime
is represented by some lexical material (word or morpheme) in each language.

The same question arose in the present study, particularly in relation to imperatives, which are much more readily identifiable across languages than desiderative constructions are. Many languages have 'bare' imperative forms with no specific morphological marker, but couldn't the construction itself be regarded as representing a universal meaning? This is a plausible hypothesis on both semantic and structural grounds. Telling another person to do something may be a universal function of human speech; it makes sense that this function would find expression in a corresponding linguistic structure in each language. It could be argued that other desiderative expressions may be analysable in terms of an internal imperative, as in an earlier proposal by Goddard that 'I want to go' might be defined via 'something in me says: "Go!".'

There are, however, two important pieces of evidence against this proposal. One is that when the use of imperatives is investigated in individual languages, it becomes apparent that some imperative forms have complex meanings, including not just the general imperative meaning (saying one wants the addressee to do something) but in many cases, other language-specific illocutionary meanings (e.g. 'I think you will do it because I say this'). These meaning components are related to and to some extent regulated by cultural values, as discussed in 6.5 below. Telling someone to do something is a complex speech act, one of a set of speech acts within each language and culture. Although grammaticalisation of this general speech function may indeed be universal, imperative forms vary from language to language, and their language-specific content can only be determined by studying them in relation to the system of speech acts and illocutionary meanings in each language.

The other piece of evidence is that the empirical investigation undertaken in this study has not found any language in which the meaning of an imperative is indefinable, as it should be if it represented a semantic prime. In all languages examined here, an imperative form can be defined in terms of more basic elements, as a combination of meanings involving not only 'saying' in addition to 'wanting', but also, crucially, 'I' and 'you'. That is, no language was found in which it is impossible to express a combination of meanings equivalent to, for example, '(I say:) I want you to go', where each of these elements of meaning (I, you, say,
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want, go) is represented by a specifiable linguistic form, a word or a grammatical morpheme.

This is an important finding, providing further support for the strong lexicalisation hypothesis in NSM theory. Its main implication for the present study is that, if there is a universal of desiderative meaning to be found across languages, this universal should be represented in each language by some lexical material, in the form of words or morphological markers.

A further implication is that here is another specific combination of meanings likely to be found in most or all languages: the combination 'I want you to do something (e.g. go)'. In this combination, the Principal (I) and the predication (WANT) are the same as in the combination 'I want to go', but the Objective differs: it involves not only a projected outcome ('go') but a nominated performer of that outcome, in this case YOU. This element will be referred to as the Performer. In 'I want to go' there is no Performer element because the Objective is to be performed by the Principal.

Both of these implications are of major methodological significance in a program of research aimed at finding and evaluating empirical evidence for semantic universals. Together, they point to a way of meeting the abovementioned need for a crosslinguistically valid delineation of the range of desiderative expression types to be compared, in attempting to identify shared or universal elements of desiderative meaning.

Evidence in favour of the strong lexicalisation hypothesis and the occurrence of certain combinations of desiderative meaning across languages suggests a process for investigation of desiderative expressions across languages in four phases. First, identifying a limited set of desiderative meaning combinations that may be found across languages (including the combinations 'I want to do something', 'I want you to do something', and a very few others). Second, determining empirically how these combinations are represented in a wide variety of languages. Third, comparing the relevant constructions across languages, on a defined set of criteria like those proposed above, to establish whether they are semantically equivalent. Fourth, comparing specifically the desiderative elements in semantically equivalent constructions, to determine whether these elements can be held to represent the same meaning across languages, that is, a semantic universal WANT.
Returning now to the combination 'I want you to go', the matter of how this type of combination is represented in each language has been investigated empirically in several of the case studies in this work. Such constructions are identified first on the grounds of their power to express this meaning, without reference to any particular linguistic structure. The next step is to assess the degree of equivalence of the relevant constructions in different languages, on the same criteria that were used in assessing the equivalence of language-specific versions of the combination 'I want to go'.

It is this stage of analysis that raises further problems for identifying a universal WANT element. As well as issues similar to those discussed for the combination 'I want to go', the addition of a Performer to the scenario of Principal and Objective (in combinations like 'I want you to go') brings added complications, both semantic and grammatical. Pragmatically, the general effect of this is to shift the locus of control over the Objective away from the Principal, since the realisation of the Objective now depends on its enactment by the Performer.

But this is a gross overgeneralisation. There are situations where the realisation of the Objective may involve only the Principal but still not be under that person's control, as in wanting to sneeze or to fall asleep. And where a Performer is involved, the Principal may have a greater or lesser degree of control depending on the nature of the Objective (compare 'I want you to hear me' and 'I want you to believe me'), the animacy of the Performer, and the like. The semantic and grammatical systems of languages are complex enough to respond with great flexibility and sensitivity to finer distinctions of this kind, and they do so by a variety of language-specific means.

This is why, for example, explanations of infinitive versus subjunctive complements in French in terms of coreferentiality are not powerful enough to be fully predictive. The French complementation system is capable of representing subtler distinctions than simply whether the Objective is enacted by the Principal or by a separate Performer, as seen in example (46) in Chapter 3 ('Je veux que je sois en mesure d'attaquer à l'aube 'I want to be able to attack at dawn'). Although the Objective is to be carried out by the Principal, not anyone else, the subjunctive construction type normally associated with a separate Performer provides an effective means of expressing a greater than usual degree of uncertainty about whether or not the Principal will be able to realise the Objective.
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However, the capacity of the French complementation system to express fine gradations of meaning does not affect the semantic content of the simpler combination 'I want you to go', or stated in a more general form, 'X wants Y to do V'. This follows from the principles explained above. The meaning combination 'X wants Y to do V' is expressed in French by the construction X veut que Y V-SJV (e.g. Je veux qu'elle y aille 'I want her to go there'). An assessment of the equivalence of this construction with expressions of the same combination in other languages (e.g. English X wants Y to V, as in I want her to go there) recognises that in this particular construction type, the subjunctive complement is obligatory in French (as the to complement is in English). There is no choice between this and some other complement type here, in either French or English. Hence the complement type is non-contrastive; although French subjunctives and English to complements are distributed differently in other contexts by language-specific rules, in this context they are semantically equivalent.

So what about the availability of a contrastive choice in French between the infinitive and subjunctive complement types in contexts like that mentioned earlier (je veux V-INF vs. je veux que je V-SJV)? Analysis of the language-specific rules of French complementation shows that the subjunctive can be used here to express a contrast between the normal combination je veux V-INF 'I want to do V', and the greater uncertainty of je veux que je V-SJV meaning 'I want to do V' plus the additional element 'I don't say it will happen'.

This uncertainty element is always present in the subjunctive form, but it is only contrastive in some contexts. In the context X veut que Y V-SJV, the subjunctive does not lose its meaning 'I don't say it will happen'; rather, this meaning is fully consistent with a situation where one person wants someone else to do something, because one can't really be sure that Y, the Performer, will do what X, the Principal, wants. Thus, the meaning of the subjunctive isn't neutralised in this context, but its contrastive value or potential is inoperative, by virtue of the fact that only the subjunctive is grammatically possible in this construction.

The presence of a subjunctive complement in the French equivalent of the combination 'X wants Y to do V' is just one example of the way language-specific systems like complementation respond to each combination of meanings. This study has found a variety of other ways in which languages reflect the presence or absence of a Performer element in
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desiderative constructions. In some languages it makes little or no
difference, as in the Arrernte X ahentye V-tyeke / X ahentye Y V-tyeke,
Malay X mau V / X mau Y V, or English X wants to V / X wants Y to V.
In other languages it is reflected by a difference in the complementiser or
complement type, as in French X veut V-INF / X veut que Y V-sjv, or Thai
X yàak V / X yàak háy Y V.

Still other languages reflect the presence or absence of a Performer
by differences in the lexical expression of the desiderative meaning, as in
Japanese -tai and hoshii, or Samoan fia and mana’o. This kind of
situation, which has been termed allolexy, can be understood in terms of
the same principles of semantic equivalence as have been applied to the
other desiderative constructions discussed here. The expressive
equivalents of X wants to V and X wants Y to V in Japanese are X wa V-tai
and X wa Y o V-te hoshii, and -tai and hoshii in these constructions satisfy
the criteria for contextual equivalents of WANT (though subject to some
person constraints discussed below). The language-specific properties of
these desiderative expressions are of course different from those of WANT
terms in other languages, but close examination of these properties reveals
that they pose no obstacles to semantic equivalence with other basic
desiderative elements across languages.

In the case of Samoan fia and mana’o, the pattern of allolexical
distribution is again governed by language-specific rules. On the same
criteria for semantic equivalence, it can be established that mana’o is
equivalent to WANT in the context e mana’o X e V Y ‘X wants Y to do V’,
while the combination ‘X wants to do V’ is expressed by either e fia V X or
e mana’o X e V Y. This distribution of allolexes is more complex than a
simple pattern of complementary distribution, in that both fia and mana’o
are found in the semantic environment ‘X wants Y to do V’. Thus the
association of mana’o and fia with the presence or absence of a Performer
is not a biunique relationship. But the allolexical alternation between fia
and mana’o is governed by syntactic rules whereby each occurs in a distinct
construction type: fia with a verbal complement and mana’o with a full
clausal complement.

The notion of allolexy as a theoretical construct is so recent and so
powerful in its potential that it is best approached with some caution. Like
other kinds of contextual variation in language (such as allophony,
allomorphy), allolexical variation cannot be posited in an unconstrained
way. It will usually be accompanied by some evidence as to the contextual
conditioning, though some degree of free variation is also a feature of natural languages. The only way to avoid recognising something akin to allolexy in semantic theory would seem to be the unpalatable, or at least unrealistic, alternative of allowing only biunique relationships between forms and meanings; or the equally unpalatable admission that some aspects of lexical and grammatical relations are genuinely indeterminate but that there is no means of predicting which variations in form do and do not correspond to different meanings.

The present discussion has included examples of each of the types of allolexy thus far identified in NSM theory, and of the constraints that govern them. Lexical conditioning determines the selection of variants of Italian volere 'want', governed by language-specific rules of person/number agreement with the nominal denoting the Principal. Positional allolexy is seen in Samoan, where fia 'want' occurs preverbally and mana'o 'want' elsewhere (and, as Goddard and Wierzbicka argue, in English where the grammatically conditioned pronominal form I rather than me occurs preverbally as in I want). Combinatorial allolexy governs the alternation of hoshii and -tai 'want' in Japanese, where hoshii occurs in combination with a Principal and a Performer, while -tai is restricted to Principal-only contexts.

Thus allolexy, like other kinds of largely contextually conditioned variation, is quite common and apparently natural in languages, and operates in a principled and rule-governed manner. Since allolexical variation is governed by the lexical and grammatical rules of each language, it is a major source of language-specific variations in the expression of desiderative meanings across languages. The rules predicting the occurrence of allolexical variants in each language can be identified and located within the grammatical system. This permits the assessment of semantic equivalents of the proposed universal WANT across languages with different patterns of allolexical distribution, in the same way as has been illustrated for languages with different patterns of distribution of complement types.

These differing patterns of allolexical distribution themselves provide some further support for the idea that there is some underlying universal of desiderative meaning. If many languages had one desiderative lexeme in the context 'X wants to do V', and a different one in the context 'X wants Y to do V', in perfectly complementary distribution, these might not be allolexes representing the same element of meaning,
but two different meanings. That is, one might be able to distinguish ‘personal volition’ (wanting to do something) and ‘interpersonal desire’ (wanting someone else to do something) as two entirely different concepts having nothing necessarily to do with each other.

But the empirical evidence shows that languages do not distinguish between these meaning combinations in any such mutually exclusive, watertight way. Natural languages display a great variety of patterns of distribution of different allolexes, and of different construction types, associated with combinations of desiderative meanings. Although this situation requires a great deal of language-specific analysis of these patterns, it is at least an indication of a single underlying theme with language-specific variations, instead of two or more mutually exclusive themes.

The observable diversity of allolexical distribution across languages also forestalls a serious analytical difficulty that would arise if personal and interpersonal wanting were found to be separable semantic elements: the many desiderative terms that encompass both of these (from English want to Mandarin Chinese yào to Yankunytjaŋa mukuringanyi) would all have to be explained via polysemy, positing for each of these words at least two meanings, one referring to personal volition and the other to interpersonal desire. Polysemy on such a grand scale would be fairly hard to see as plausible. It is not unusual for one language or a group of languages to display a particular association of meanings, like the lexical associations surveyed in Chapter 2; but it would be very difficult to sustain a hypothesis that so many languages from different geographical and cultural regions should combine the same two meanings.

This point may provide a useful perspective on the matter of polysemy, which is the other major source of problems with the idea of a semantic universal WANT. Many of the desiderative terms examined in this study have proved to be highly polysemous. Although some general tendencies in association of meanings can be observed across languages, as discussed in 2.3 - 2.5 above, the semantic content of individual lexemes (like the distribution of lexical variants) cannot be determined without language-specific analysis. Such analysis may yield a number of different results, as illustrated in earlier chapters of this work. One possibility is that the apparently desiderative use of a lexeme may result from an element of meaning not directly related to wanting, as in the case of the Kayardild -da described in 4.2 above.
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A more common situation illustrated in several examples here is that a language has several different lexemes and several different constructions used to express desiderative meanings, but that there is one of these (with or without rule-governed allolexes) in terms of which all the others can be defined. Such a lexeme would be a very plausible candidate for the equivalent in this language of the proposed universal WANT, particularly if it occurs in basic combinations such as ‘I want to do this’ and/or ‘I want you to do this’.

However, in almost every such case, the lexeme in question occurs in at least one context where it obviously serves to express something other than the proposed universal desiderative meaning. This means one of two things: either this lexeme encodes something other than WANT; or it is polysemous, with more than one meaning, one of which may or may not encode WANT. Polysemy, like allolexy, cannot be posited without hard evidence supporting the proposed meaning distinctions. Considerable analytical effort is required to establish how many meanings there are, what is their composition, and what is the nature of their association with one another, before one is in a position to assess whether one of them can be identified as the equivalent to the proposed universal WANT and its exponents in other languages.

The widespread occurrence of this kind of polysemy among the desiderative expressions described above is enough to raise serious questions about whether a universal desiderative meaning can be found across languages. Much of the analysis in previous chapters is devoted to exploring this question in particular languages, and to developing reliable criteria for assessing polysemy in desiderative expressions. Polysemy among desideratives would indeed be a serious problem for identifying a universal WANT were it not for certain constraints on it that become apparent from the empirical evidence.

Polysemy is common and evidently natural in languages, and like other aspects of language systems, it too can be seen to operate in a principled and rule-governed way. It has been observed that the commonest elements in languages are those most likely to be polysemous; nowhere is this more apparent than among those basic elements that represent the proposed semantic primes. It is not only desiderative terms that are highly polysemous, but also words in many languages for ‘know’, ‘think’, ‘say’, ‘do’, ‘can’, ‘because’, and most of the other NSM primes. The result of this would be complete communicative chaos, if these polysemies
operated in an unconstrained way; any form could convey just about any meaning.

Fortunately for all humans, not just semanticists, the evidence is that the real situation is far from this. NSM research has demonstrated that, for every language, meanings can be identified and stated explicitly in a way that can be verified or falsified on the basis of empirical linguistic data. The studies of desiderative expressions offered above illustrate that, while it is unrealistic to seek unique form-meaning correspondences, meaning differences are usually, perhaps always, accompanied by some identifiable differences in linguistic form. Thus it is realistic to require that polysemy never be posited without some formal supporting evidence: if two different meanings are posited, then they must be associated with specifiable differences in syntactic or semantic contexts of occurrence.

Although the same set of principles and procedures can be applied to the problem of polysemy in each language, the results are highly language-specific, because the evidence for or against a particular desiderative other lexeme's having more than one meaning is drawn from the distinctive grammatical and lexical structures of the language in which it occurs. For example, the use of a desiderative expression in reference to an inanimate object in one language may be evidence for a second meaning, while in the grammatical system of another language it may have quite different implications, as shown in sections 2.5 and 3.4 above.

Polysemy too, then, contributes in important ways to language-specific variations in the expression of desiderative meanings in different languages. Because the number and content of meanings of a desiderative lexeme can be determined on the basis of specific evidence in each language, polysemy is not in itself an obstacle to the identification of semantic equivalents of a universal WANT.

Another language-specific factor affecting the perception of desideratives as equivalents of a universal WANT is the operation of semantic resonance effects. In the course of this study at least four different sources of semantic resonance have been observed; in each case a desiderative lexeme may acquire a certain 'feel' that is not reflected in any specific element of its semantic content, by virtue of its association with other elements in the linguistic system.

Wordclass resonance is a product of the association of a desiderative term with other members of its grammatical class, whether as a part of
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speech (like the nominal and adjectival desideratives discussed in 3.1 above), or as a member of a subclass (like the Acehnese verbs discussed in the same section). While there appears to be a greater than chance tendency for the main desiderative terms in languages to be verbal in character, their wordclass membership is somewhat arbitrary. It may be influenced by historical, cultural, and other variable factors in the course of language change, as outlined later in this chapter.

This kind of resonance can arise not only by association with the more prototypical members of the particular wordclass, but also by the syntactic properties of the class, for example the 'indirect' feeling contributed to the Japanese *hoshii* 'want' by the fact that it can occur in a predicative construction where overt mention of the Principal is not obligatory (e.g. *Kare ni hayaku ki-te hoshii* ‘[I] want him to come soon’); or the 'direct' feeling of the English transitive *I want her to go*, where the Performer (*her*) is in the same position as a direct object of *want* would be in *I want a banana*.

Wordclass properties can thus contribute to what might be termed syntactic resonance, which can also arise from other language-specific construction types in which a desiderative lexeme can occur. For example, the Samoan *fia* 'want' may have a slightly more passive resonance than some other desideratives by virtue of its occurrence in a construction where the Principal wants to undergo an action by someone else (e.g. *E fia si'i le pepe* 'The baby wants to be carried').

Another kind of resonance could be termed distributional resonance, arising from the range of contexts in which a desiderative term can occur. An example of this is the anxious or urgent feeling associated by some Japanese speakers with *-tai* 'want', which may be because this form is typically used in contexts where someone wants to do something. Such effects can also apply to a whole construction type; for example, desiderative constructions where subjunctive forms are obligatory may acquire some resonance from the use of the subjunctive in other contexts to convey uncertainty. Distributional resonance can also be a product of polysemy, as for example *lele-* 'want' in Mangap-Mbula may acquire some connotation of a 'gut feeling' by association with the body part use of *lele-* 'insides'.

Some caution should be observed in attributing a particular resonance to an expression in any language, because native speakers are often unconscious of associations that seem obvious to an outsider.
Individual Arrernte speakers may or may not consciously associate *ahentye* ‘throat’ with *ahentye(neme)* ‘want’, just as English speakers may or may not consciously associate the physical *body* with *somebody*. Linguists for whom grammatical structures are highly salient may tend to overestimate syntactic and wordclass resonance, perceiving a different ‘feel’ to expressions like *Ayenge ahentye lhetyeke* and *I want to go*, whose expressive equivalence may seem more obvious to Arrernte-English bilinguals. Linguists also tend to have more awareness of morphological complexity than ordinary speakers, for whom historically complex words may be synchronically indivisible (e.g. *because* from *by+cause*, or Yankunytjatjara *mukuri-* ‘want’ from inchoative *-ri-* plus *muku* which does not occur elsewhere in the language).

Similar caution is needed in approaching the task of definition. It cannot be assumed on the basis of visible etymology that a definition of Arrernte *ahentye* ‘throat’ should include any reference to wanting or vice versa. Even if the idea of the throat as the seat of desire is familiar to most present-day Arrernte speakers, this could be merely a part of general cultural knowledge rather than an essential component of the meaning or a necessary condition for the use of the word *ahentye* ‘throat’. This is the kind of issue that can only be resolved by very thorough language-specific lexicographic research. Likewise, it cannot be assumed that the definition of Yankunytjatjara *mukuringanyi* ‘want’ must contain some inchoative element corresponding to *-ri-*. The synchronic indivisibility of *muku* from *-ri-* supports the idea that *-ri-* (like its Arrernte cognate *-irre-* in *ahentyirreme* ‘want’ mentioned above) may be consistent with but compositionally non-contributory to the meaning of *mukuringanyi*.

It is worthy of note that resonance effects can usually be explained in terms that are broadly semantic, but not compositional. That is, explaining links like ‘when someone wants something, this person feels something in the throat’ (for *ahentye*), or the resonance of nominal desideratives arising from association with more prototypical nouns that are words for ‘a kind of thing’, are explanations based on associations of meaning. Providing semantically informed accounts of these associations is a separate matter from constructing definitions, which should contain only the minimum set of necessary and sufficient elements of meaning to explain and predict the use of a word or construction. In constructing definitions, associations like those discussed here should always be
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considered, but it is necessary to investigate carefully whether or not they correspond to essential components of meaning.

Therefore, resonance effects do not in themselves pose any obstacle to the assessment of semantic equivalence on the criteria proposed above. If two desiderative expressions seem to have different connotations or a different 'feel' to them, they are still deemed equivalent if there is no specifiable difference in their compositional semantic content. Differences in resonance can be based on associations of meaning that are not essential components of definitions; thus they can be semantically real (and able to be represented in NSM terms) without being compositional in nature.

Non-compositional relationships (NCRs) are an area worthy of further investigation in NSM semantics. Those observed in the course of this study seem to arise in at least two ways. One type arises from the combinatorial properties of a semantic element. For example, a combinatorial NCR between WANT and SOMEONE arises because WANT seems inherently to require a Principal, who may be I, YOU or someone else, but can always be thought of as SOMEONE.

Another type could be called circumstantial NCRs; for example, a link between WANT and HAPPEN arises circumstantially because the experience of wanting is like something happening in or to a person. When people want something, often at the same time they feel something, and/or think about the Objective, and/or express what they want in some way; hence circumstantial NCRs may be found between WANT and FEEL, THINK, or SAY. Such circumstantial links are often reflected in lexical relations like those observed in 2.5 above, and they almost certainly play a significant role in lexical change, discussed later in this chapter.

The role of circumstantial NCRs in polysemy has been illustrated in several of the case studies explored above. This could lead to the identification of two types of polysemy, compositional and non-compositional. Traditional lexicographic views of polysemy suggest that if a single lexeme has two meanings, these should be related in some way; if not, they are assigned to unrelated homophones. But there can be a practical difficulty in knowing where to draw the line between related and unrelated meanings.

The easiest cases are those where the meanings are compositionally related, in one of two ways. A common situation is that two meanings may share some elements but not others, as the two meanings of the
English word *love* do. *Love* has an interpersonal sense (e.g. *My mother loves me*) and a somewhat different, non-interpersonal sense (*My mother loves chocolate*), which share a component of 'feeling something good' toward the object, but differ in other elements of their meaning (e.g. the former involves knowing the other person and wanting to be with them). Sometimes one meaning can be defined in terms of the other; this is the case with Yankunytjatjara *mukuringanyi*, where one meaning is demonstrably equivalent to WANT and the other is often glossed as 'love' of a benevolent and nurturing kind. A key element in this latter sense of *mukuringanyi* is wanting to do good things for the other person: thus, the semantically simpler meaning WANT is included in the definition of the other.

This does not seem to be the case with the two meanings of the Kayardild inflection -THu(ru) discussed in the preceding chapter: one of these is equivalent to WANT, while the other sense is definable in terms that do not include wanting, but involve a different semantic prime, CAN. Yet these are not as unrelated semantically as homophones like *k.1ow* and *no*, or a coastal *bay* and a *bay* tree, because of the circumstantial NCR between wanting and future possibility: the things that people want are usually thought of as things that may possibly come about in the future.

All of these examples of polysemy, whether compositional or non-compositional, are cases where one or both of the meanings in question is complex, composed of more than one element. This is an essential condition for compositional polysemy: if both meanings were indivisible (like WANT) then there would of course be no possibility of a compositional relationship between them. The next section addresses the possibility of non-compositional polysemy between indivisible elements like WANT and IF, CAN and SAY.

In dealing with a variety of problems with finding any constant element of desiderative meaning across languages, and with the idea of a semantic universal WANT, this discussion has tried to identify principles and methods for identifying semantic content and semantic equivalence that are applicable to and that hold true for any language. All of the issues discussed here have to do with language-specific variations in the expression of desiderative notions, and the need to develop analytical tools powerful enough to distinguish between language-specific phenomena and potentially universal features. The remainder of this chapter looks at more ways in which factors specific to individual
languages and cultures operate to modify the expression of desiderative meanings.

6.4 A 'universal syntax' of desiderative meanings?

The discussion thus far has examined in depth two specific combinations of desiderative meaning. One of these consists of three elements: a Principal, WANT and an Objective ('X wants to do V'); the other consists of four elements: Principal, WANT, Performer and Objective ('X wants Y to do V'). This section looks at other possible desiderative combinations, and at the limitations on particular combinations in different languages. The purpose of this is to see if there may be certain combinations that are always allowable, within the set of syntactic constraints imposed by each language.

Consider first the combination of a desiderative term with a Principal. This study has found that in some languages this is a syntactic requirement (as in English where a subject NP is obligatory in X wants to do V), but other languages allow the Principal to be omitted, subject to language-specific rules; for example a subject NP is optional in Spanish (Yo) quieror ir 'I want to go', the speaker is understood to be the Principal in Japanese Mizu o nomi-tai '[I] want to drink water', or the identity of the Principal can be left vague in Samoan E fia tata lavalava nei 'These clothes "need" washing' (an unspecified someone wants or would want them washed). But no language was found whose syntax prohibits the combination of Principal with desiderative to form expressions equivalent to 'I want to go'. Of course each language has syntactic rules that determine how this combination is effected, so that things like the wordclass of the desiderative and the case marking of the Principal may vary, but in no language is the combination impossible.

Languages also place different constraints on who or what can function as the Principal in a desiderative expression, particularly with respect to animacy. Only in some languages can inanimates be cast in the role of Principal: it is grammatical in English to say things like That car doesn't want to go, but in Arrernte this would be simply ungrammatical (*Mutekaye yanhe lhetyeke ahentye kwenye); while in many languages an inanimate is associated with a shift of interpretation from desiderative to
future. But no language was found that prohibits the combination of a human Principal with a desiderative term.

Some languages have further semantic and syntactic constraints related to the person of the Principal. In languages whose syntax allows a desiderative construction without an overt Principal, there is often a presumption that the Principal is the speaker, i.e. first person. Such effects may be very strong, as in Japanese (Watashi wa) kare ni ki-te hoshii ‘(I) want him to go’ where the presumption that the speaker is the Principal is so strong that the first person pronoun watashi ‘I’ sounds infelicitously redundant in ordinary speech. In other languages the presumption is weaker, as in Thai Yàak pay kàp thoee ‘[Someone] wants to go with you’, where the person of the Principal is deduced from context; in a conversation it would usually be first person (the speaker), but in the context of a discourse about someone else it would be assumed that the Principal was the third person.

These effects are best understood as pragmatic in origin, though grammaticalised to varying degrees in different languages. The nature of the proposed universal WANT is such that it can be directly accessed only by the Principal; hence in desiderative constructions without specific mention of a person, the speaker is likely to be referring to her own experience, and this results in the first person being privileged in such a context.

The view that this is basically a pragmatic effect is strongly supported by the interpretation of questions and imperatives. In most, perhaps all languages, desideratives in questions carry a very strong presumption that the Principal is the addressee, who is the only person with direct access to the information the speaker requires. Even in English, where a subject NP is usually obligatory, the second person pronoun can be omitted in informal usage in questions like Want a drink?, yet the Principal is unmistakably the addressee. And imperatives in all languages grammaticalise the ‘I-you’ relationship (‘I want you to do something’), though only a few languages have overt person marking in imperative constructions.

This pragmatic principle can explain why some languages have desideratives that are limited to first person use, for example the desiderative morphological paradigm in Hua. As mentioned in 2.2 above, the Hua desiderative forms only refer to wanting in the first person; third person forms in the same paradigm refer not to wanting but near future.
This is very similar to the way an inanimate subject of yào in Chinese triggers a change in interpretation of yào from ‘want’ to ‘be about to’. And this suggests that what is operating here is not only the first person privilege effect, but a hierarchy of what has elsewhere been termed ‘animacy’. An alternative interpretation that does not rely on a complex notion like ‘animate’ is suggested below.

Such a hierarchy seems to operate along the same lines as animacy phenomena observed in other areas of linguistic typology, such as case marking, noun and verb agreement. In the case of desiderative expressions, both grammatical rules and interpretation rules appear sensitive to the same basic hierarchy:

human > nonhuman animate > inanimate

It should be noted that these categories are subject to some cultural variation; for example in languages where wanting can be attributed to higher animals, the division between higher and lower animals is culture-specific. What is invariable is that if a particular desiderative construction can be used to attribute wanting to a nonhuman Principal, it can also be used of a human Principal. But the reverse does not hold: a construction used to attribute wanting to a human Principal may be ungrammatical with a nonhuman referent, or it may have a different meaning (e.g. near future).

Within the category ‘human’ there appears to be a further hierarchy of persons, and this sub-hierarchy exhibits one interesting difference from those observed in other typological categories such as verb agreement. In desiderative expressions, second person seems to rank above third person in some contexts, but not in others. What seems invariable is that if a desiderative expression can be used with third person reference it can be used with first person, but not vice versa. For example, Maricopa desiderative constructions with ‘iim or aly’ii-m can be used of either first or third persons, but the desiderative suffix -lya alone can only refer to first person (see 2.2 above); first person privilege effects in Japanese and Hua were mentioned above.

Second person is privileged over third in imperatives and questions, as mentioned above, but there are cases where its rank is questionable. One such example is want in English, whose reference presents no problems with first or third person (I want /she wants to go),
or with second person in questions, but becomes ambiguous in statements with a second person Principal, for example *You want to watch where you're going*. Utterances like this are usually interpreted as referring not to what the addressee wants, but what the speaker thinks the addressee should do. It could be argued that this should be recognised as a construction type different from *X wants to V*, since it is usually the contracted form *You wanna V* that is open to this alternative interpretation, while a statement that is genuinely about what the addressee wants would more likely be expressed in the full form *You want to V* (e.g. *You want to do what??* in response to some outrageous proposal). Note also that the ambiguity arises mainly in the present tense (*You wanna get your hair cut* cf. *You wanted to get your hair cut*).

Nonetheless, the possibility of ambiguity in a second person desiderative may be connected with the same pragmatic principle that underlies first person privilege: people have direct access only to their own desires. Because of this, it is very unlikely for a speaker to be telling an addressee what the addressee wants. This may have led to a shift in interpretation of *You want to V* whereby it became ambiguous between the literal meaning ‘you want to V’ and the more contextually plausible ‘someone (possibly the speaker) wants you to V’. Since in at least some instances first and third person Principals are more alike than first and second, perhaps the proposed person hierarchy should be represented as follows:

1st person > 2nd/3rd person

Notwithstanding all this diversity of language-specific constraints, there are some things that seem to hold true for all languages about the combination of WANT and a Principal. First, that every language has some construction that expresses the combination I + WANT. Second, that every language has means of expressing combinations of YOU and SOMEONE (she/he) with WANT. Some languages use the same construction for all of these, while others divide them up according to language-specific rules. What is possibly universal is that all languages have semantic equivalents of these combinations: ‘I want’, ‘you want’, ‘someone wants’.

There are at least as many, probably more, language-specific constraints applying to the combination of WANT with an Objective as those applying to the Principal. While many of the constraints on the
combination of Principal and WANT are sensitive to animacy, constraints on the WANT plus Objective combination seem to be sensitive to three often interwoven factors, which could broadly be termed event structure, probability, and control.

In the area of event structure, two major categories of have been discussed already, those where the Objective involves only the Principal (WANT to do something), and those involving a Performer (WANT Y to do something). These need to be considered along with two others: those involving a thing of some kind (WANT something, e.g. water), and those involving an event or state of affairs (WANT something to happen, e.g. rain). Languages display different sets of constraints on each of these types of Objective, and draw different kinds of distinctions among them, but it is possible to discern some things that may hold true for all languages.

In constructions that involve a Performer, there are generally fewer constraints on its nature than on that of the Principal. For example, while an inanimate Principal is ungrammatical in Arrernte (as in ‘that car doesn’t want to go’, mentioned above), an inanimate Performer is fine (Re ahentye mutekaye yanhe lhetyeke ‘She wants that car to go’). The internal structure of the Objective follows the same rules that apply elsewhere in the language, as seen in 3.1 above where an inanimate cannot be an agent of an Acehnese A class verb, whether in the Objective of meuh’eut ‘want’ or anywhere else.

Individual languages may reflect the presence of a Performer as described earlier in this chapter, through allolexes of WANT or grammatical properties of the complement or both. But this is not the only factor affecting the grammatical structure by which the Objective is represented. In some languages this structure is sensitive to the degree of control of the Principal over the Objective whether or not a Performer is present. For example the Buru construction X la V ‘X wants to V’ can be used if the Objective is an active predicate, but if it is non-active the construction X la X V must be used (as in example 40 in Chapter 3, where da ‘3s’ cannot be omitted from Ringe la da haa ‘He wants to grow’).

This does not mean that a Performer is involved in the structure of the Objective in Buru X la X V (Ringe la da haa), any more than in English X wants to V (He wants to grow). What it does mean is that the language-specific rules of Buru and English draw different distinctions within the range of Objective events. English groups all Principal-oriented Objectives together in the X wants (*X) to V construction; while Buru distinguishes
between Objectives that are under the Principal’s control and those that are not, assigning to the latter a full clausal complement structure similar to that used when a Performer is involved.

Any Buru predicate, active or non-active, can occur in the X la X V construction, but only active predicates can occur in the X la V construction. Thus active predicates can be seen as privileged in the sense that they can occur where others cannot. This kind of privilege appears to be pragmatically based, in that if a person wants to do something that is largely under the person’s own control, the probability that the Objective will be realised is higher than for involuntary actions or events.

The factor of probability also influences the representation of the relation between wanting and the Objective. Languages often display a degree of iconicity in the relationship of the probability of the Objective’s realisation, and the distance between it and the Principal. But these effects, like the animacy and first person privilege effects described above, operate in ways that are entirely language-specific. It is not possible to predict whether a language will represent a particular kind of Objective by means of a particular grammatical structure (such as a verbal or full clausal complement). It is only predictable that, for Objectives that consist of an action or an event, if two complement types are available, the shorter one is likely to be associated with Objectives that have a higher probability of realisation.

This generalisation excludes those cases where the Objective is a thing that the Principal wants to get or to have, which in many languages can be expressed as NP complements of the kind discussed in 3.2 above. Moreover, it does not predict much about the distinctions different languages draw among various types of Objective over which the Principal exercises little or no control. The factor of control also has an important influence on the structure of desiderative constructions in many languages. Objectives over which the Principal has little control include involuntary actions by and events that happen to the Principal, and actions by a Performer, but may also include other events in which neither the Principal nor anyone else is directly involved, such as rain, or the sun rising.

The linguistic evidence discussed above illustrates how much crosslinguistic variation there is just among those desideratives whose Objective is an action by the Principal or by a Performer, and how difficult it is to identify what is common to all languages. There is even more
variation in how languages express Objectives that are not actions, that is, ones that do not consist of someone (Principal or Performer) doing something. Even the categorisation of what ‘doing something’ includes is language-specific. In English, for example, involuntary actions can be thought of and spoken of as doing something (So what did he do -- he fell asleep!) But in Arrernte, ankwe atnyele-iweme ‘falling asleep’ is categorised not as doing something but as something happening to a person, and the appropriate question is not Kele iwenhe-ileke? ‘So what did he do?’ but Kele iwenhe-irreke? ‘So what happened to him?’

This distinction, which in Arrernte corresponds to the transitive-intransitive distinction, does not affect the structure of desiderative expressions: the Objective of ahentye ‘want’ can be either transitive or intransitive, with either the Principal or the Performer doing or undergoing something. But Arrernte ahentye ‘want’ is less free than English want to take Objectives involving anything other than persons. Even in English I want it to rain sounds a little odd out of context, but better than the Arrernte equivalent? Ayenge ahentye kwatyte atnyetyeke (‘I want rain fall-PURP”).

Objectives that are entirely outside the control of either a Principal or a Performer are the type least likely to be permissible in desiderative constructions; they sound odder in some languages than others, and in some are completely ungrammatical for most speakers (e.g. Indonesian *Saya mau hujan datang ‘I want rain come’). This could be predicted from the pragmatic principle of relevance: if the Principal is powerless to influence the realisation of the Objective in any way, then the Principal’s desire is irrelevant to the Objective. Although the reverse may still hold (realisation of the Objective may satisfy the Principal’s desire for rain), the relationship is too tenuous for such a construction to be functional in many languages.

Here again, however, the pragmatic principle is applied in different ways in different languages. Whether or not the desiderative constructions of a language will encompass this type of Objective cannot be predicted. What can be predicted across languages is that this is the type of Objective most likely to be ungrammatical or infelicitous and thus excluded from the range of desiderative constructions in a language.

There is a very large middle ground between events over which the Principal has no influence at all, and actions over which the Principal has a high degree of control, and there are no fixed reference points according
to which such events can be categorised. What is regarded as ‘doing’ and what is regarded as ‘happening’ varies between languages, as mentioned above. Constructions that express wanting something to happen to oneself or someone else may involve very different grammatical structures in different languages. This is illustrated in the examples mentioned above: something happening to a person is expressed in Buru by a full clausal complement; in Samoan the Principal if in absolutive case is the undergoer of the desired action; in English the complementiser to is used in this as in all other complements of want (e.g. want to grow, to be carried).

One thing that holds true for all languages investigated here is that at least one of the desiderative expressions can have the equivalent of ‘happen’ as its Objective, in combinations like ‘I want something (good/bad) to happen (to this person)’. The identification of equivalents of ‘happen’ (another proposed semantic prime, HAPPEN) in different languages is at least as complex a matter as identifying equivalents of WANT, and would probably merit an investigation of similar scope to the present work, but the language-specific variations among these expressions of HAPPEN do not appear to interfere with their ability to serve as the Objective in a desiderative construction.

It is probably not possible to predict which of the desiderative constructions of a language will be used to effect this combination of meanings, or what will be the structure of the complement expressing this Objective. Compare, for example, the complement structure in English I want something bad to happen to her with Arrernte Ayenge ahentye ikwere akurne-irre-tyeke ‘I want 3sDAT bad-happen-PURP’, where ‘3sDAT’ is in the role of subject of the purposive complement of ahentye. Although ‘happen’ is expressed in different forms in these languages, this combination of meanings is effected by the same basic desiderative constructions already seen.

In English the construction type is X wants Y to V; in this case the role of the complement subject Y is filled by something bad, the verb V is happen, and the undergoer is represented in a prepositional phrase to her. In Arrernte, on the other hand, ikwere ‘3sDAT’ appears in the role of subject of the intransitive verb complex akurne-irre- ‘bad-happen’, in the basic construction type X ahentye Y V-tyeke ‘X wants Y to do V’. So these two construction types are semantically equivalent, as established above (X wants Y to V = X ahentye Y V-tyeke), but the arrangement of elements
6.4 A 'universal syntax'?

within the complement (the grammatical roles of 'something bad', 'happen' and the undergoer 'her') is determined by rules specific to each language.

The final type of Objective to be considered here is the 'thing' type, as in the combinations 'X wants something' or 'X wants this'. In 3.2 above it is shown that combinations of a desiderative with a NP complement are often complex in meaning: that they may encode a combination of WANT with not just the thing itself, but an event or state of affairs in which the Principal receives or possesses this thing. That is to say, the combination of semantic elements 'X wants this thing' may have to be defined via a more complex series of propositions:

\[
X \text{ wants NP } (= X \text{ ahentye NP-ke etc.}) \Rightarrow \\
X \text{ wants: X [will] have NP}
\]

But 'having' in the sense of (alienable) possession (as distinct from 'having parts', incorporation or inalienable possession) is demonstrably a complex conditional meaning, definable along these lines:

\[
X \text{ has NP } \Rightarrow \\
\text{ if X wants to do something with this thing} \\
\text{ X can do it}
\]

Hence the full construction would be explicated as follows:

\[
X \text{ wants NP (e.g. I want a banana) } \Rightarrow \\
X \text{ wants this:} \\
\text{ if I want to do something with this thing, I can do it}
\]

But there is one major problem with this explication: the presence of an element 'this' in 'X wants this'. This seems to make the explication circular, if the combination 'X wants this' has itself to be defined as an instance of 'X wants NP'.

The answer to this puzzle has more to do with the semantics of 'this' (or NSM THIS) than with the semantics of 'want' (or WANT). Investigation of the proposed universal determiner THIS across a wide range of languages has indicated that THIS is not restricted to referring to (concrete) things, but can also refer both to an element in the discourse,
and to an extralinguistic situation. That is, in a great many languages, the
equivalent of THIS can refer to a state of affairs like the one that constitutes
the Objective in the above explication, 'if I want to do something with this
thing, I can do it'.

Some languages have a grammatically conditioned allolexy, with
one form of 'this' as a nominal modifier/determiner and another form
for situations, for example kono and kore in Japanese, nhenhe and alakenhe
in Arrernte, or ini and begini in Indonesian. As mentioned in section 3.2,
NP complements in desiderative constructions are more restricted in their
occurrence than verbal and clausal complements, as in Indonesian where
the combination X mau NP is not as felicitous as English X wants NP. So
it is particularly interesting that, while in Indonesian mau 'want' does not
combine well with the nominal determiner ini 'this', it combines much
better with the 'situational' determiner begini 'this/like this', as in Dia
tidak mau begini/begitu 'She doesn't want this/that', where begini/begitu
refers to an event or state of affairs, not to a thing.

This points to a prediction that Objectives of the 'situation' type are
more likely to occur in languages than Objectives of the 'thing' type, and
that if the desiderative constructions of a language include the
combination 'X wants this (thing)' they will also include the combination
'X wants this (situation)', but the reverse is not necessarily true. Moreover,
the former can be defined in terms of the latter as suggested above, where
'X wants NP' is defined as meaning 'X wants this: if X wants to do
something with this thing X can do it'. It should be emphasised that this
does not constitute evidence that the proposed universal THIS is
polysemous between 'this thing' and 'this situation'. As a universal
determiner, the functions of THIS could be expected to encompass both
nominal and propositional deixis (and person, place and temporal deixis
as well), and the preliminary crosslinguistic evidence supports this
expectation.

However, in the specific context of desiderative constructions it
seems necessary to recognise a distinction between 'X wants this (thing)'
and 'X wants this (situation)', not on the basis of any polysemy of 'this' but
on the basis of what follows it. The evidence discussed here suggests that
in desiderative constructions what follows 'this' must always be a
proposition of some kind. That is, the basic semantic combination is 'X
wants this: P' where P is a proposition representing the Objective. From
this it is predicted that in any language whose grammar permits
constructions like X wants NP, where the Objective is a thing, this is always definable in terms of 'X wants this: P' where P is a proposition such as 'if X wants to do something with this thing X can do it'.

In fact, any of the meaning combinations considered in this chapter can be reduced to 'X wants this: P', since both the combinations 'X wants to do this' and 'X wants Y to do this' can be expressed in the same form, where P equals the propositions 'I [will] do this' and 'Y [will] do this' respectively:

\[
X \text{ wants to do } V => \\
X \text{ wants this: I will do this } [=V]
\]

\[
X \text{ wants } Y \text{ to do } V => \\
X \text{ wants this: Y will do this } [=V]
\]

This may be identifiable as the most basic universal combination of desiderative meaning, whose expression in each language is modified in language-specific, rule-governed ways as demonstrated above.

Both the structure and the content of the proposition P are governed by the rules of the language in which it occurs. Its grammatical form is determined by language-specific rules, so that if the semantic elements contained in a particular proposition are 'Y' and 'do V', the word order, case marking of Y, tense of the verb and so on are all rule-governed. Thus the verbal inflection -s in the English version X wants this is applied by the rules of English grammar, in agreement with the semantic context of this proposition. In some contexts the appropriate form of the proposition may include future tense marking (Y will do V), since in most instances of wanting, the Objective is to occur in the future.

Futurity (or its semantic basis 'after now' or 'after this time') is not an obligatory semantic element in Objectives; compare, for example, I'm doing what I want, or We stayed there because we wanted to, where the time frame of the Objective is at least partly simultaneous with the Principal's wanting. Yet even these Objectives are not semantically incompatible with some extension into future time; for example, I'm doing what I want is quite compatible with the interpretation that I want to go on doing it for some time after now. As shown above, rule-governed elements such as tense markers are semantically non-contributory so long as they are fully consistent with the meaning of the semantic combination.
Therefore, provided they are fully consistent with the semantic context of the Objective, the future-marked form \( Y \text{ will do } V \) and the present tense form \( Y \text{ does } V \) are allolexical variants of the combination \( 'Y + \text{ do } V' \).

The same principles apply to language-specific modal categories. The Objective in a desiderative construction is usually an event or state of affairs that is as yet unrealised; hence in some languages an irrealis or similar type of modal marking may be consistent with the meaning of the construction. The proposition \( P \) should therefore appear in whatever grammatical form is natural and felicitous in the semantic context, according to language-specific grammatical rules. In some languages this may be a tenseless clause, while in others the appropriate tense or modal marking is applied by obligatory rule. The essential nature of any proposition is that it is something 'proposed', that is, it is something that is 'sayable'. A proposition at the level of semantic structure should therefore be represented in the form of a fully grammatical utterance in the relevant language.

If it is true that the Objective of WANT is universally propositional in nature, this opens the way to explaining two of the most intriguing phenomena observed in this study. One is a fairly widespread pattern of polysemy linking WANT with SAY, to which we return in a moment. The other is the 'quotative' nature of the proposition representing the Objective in the first formulation above, where 'I' is the Principal 'speaking' as it were (or perhaps thinking) in the first person; there is no Performer element in this combination. Compare this with a situation where the speaker is to be the Performer, for example \( X \text{ wants me to do } V \). This is of course an instance of the combination \( 'X \text{ wants } Y \text{ to do } V' \) where \( Y \) is the speaker of the utterance, and as such speaks in the first person, but is not the Principal. Thus, this too could be represented as \( 'X \text{ wants: I will do } V' \) but in this case 'I' is the Performer, not the Principal.

But this is clearly wrong: \( X \text{ wants to do } V \) and \( X \text{ wants me to do } V \) do not mean the same thing at all, and should not be represented by the same combination of elements (\( X \text{ wants this: I will do } V \)). One way out of the dilemma would be to represent the meaning of \( X \text{ wants to do } V \) as \( 'X \text{ wants: } X \text{ will do } V' \), but section 3.4 argued against this on the grounds that many languages have separate constructions representing this meaning as distinct from the meaning \( 'X \text{ wants: I will do } V' \) where 'I' is the Principal. The only other way out is to represent a qualitative difference between Principal-oriented and Performer-oriented Objectives specifically in the
semantic structure. The iconic device of quotation marks used as a stopgap measure in 3.4 was one way to represent this difference, but such a mechanical device fails to make explicit its semantic basis.

This can only be achieved by recognising that the combination of semantic elements ‘X wants: I will do V’ is a predication about X and only X, while the combination ‘X wants: Y will do V’ is a predication about each of two entities. This latter combination predicates about X that this person wants something, and about Y that this person does V (or such is X’s Objective). Now, a person can formulate a first-person Objective by thinking: ‘I want this: I will do V’, but an Objective involving a Performer has to be formulated in terms of a thought (a predication) about this other person. This difference can be represented in the semantic structure as follows:

\[
X \text{ wants to do } V \Rightarrow \\
X \text{ thinks: I want this: I will do } V
\]

\[
X \text{ wants } Y \text{ to do } V \Rightarrow \\
X \text{ thinks about } Y: \text{ I want this: this person will do } V
\]

These formulations can capture without difficulty the difference between \( X \text{ wants to do } V \) and \( X \text{ wants me to do } V \), as follows:

\[
X \text{ wants to do } V \Rightarrow \\
X \text{ thinks: I want this: I will do } V
\]

\[
X \text{ wants me to do } V \Rightarrow \\
X \text{ thinks about me: I want this: this person will do } V
\]

But they raise another issue: should the semantic structure of desiderative constructions always involve a component ‘X thinks’? It could be argued that if all desiderative constructions involve an Objective in the form of a specific proposition, this proposition must be formulated in the mind as a cognitive structure, and hence as something that ‘X thinks’. Moreover, empirical evidence gathered thus far suggests that equivalents of THINK across languages may be somewhat less subject to person restrictions than equivalents of WANT, so a structure ‘X thinks: I want this’ may provide a
more accurate representation of the special relationship of WANT and I than a structure 'X wants this' can.

The evidence in favour of 'X thinks' in the second, Performer-oriented structure is stronger, because this provides the only way of representing that the Objective in this case is a predication 'about Y'. Furthermore, it provides the only currently available solution to the problem discussed in 5.5 above: how to include both Principal and Performer in semantic representations in languages where the desiderative marker is internal to the clause representing the Objective. The structures proposed above work just as well for Kayardild structures involving -THu (~THuru) as for English structures involving want:

\[ X \text{ V-THu} ('X \text{ wants to do V}') => X \text{ thinks: I want this: I will do V} \]
\[ (X \text{ marrulmarath: ngada V-THu}) \]

\[ Y \text{ V-THu} ('[X, \text{ wants Y to do V}') => Y \text{ thinks about Y: I want this: this person will do V} \]
\[ (X \text{ marrulmarath Y-ACt: danda dangkaa V-THu}) \]

The clause-internal desideratives also provide some support for the first person orientation of the structure 'X thinks: I want this: P'. This is supported by the fact that the equivalent of 'I want this: P' in such languages is simply 'P + DES' where DES is the clause-internal desiderative marker; for example the Kayardild equivalent of 'I want this: P' in the above structures is simply P-THu. But the equivalent of 'X wants this: P' must include a separate clause making a predication about X. In Kayardild this works as follows:

\[ I \text{ want this: P} = \]
\[ P-\text{THu} \]

\[ X \text{ wants this: P} = \]
\[ X \text{ marrulmarath: P-THu} \]
\[ (\text{i.e. X thinks: I want this: P}) \]

These patterns of equivalence suggest that the combinations P-THu in Kayardild and I want this: P in English may both be regarded as indivisible
and undefinable semantic 'atoms' whose core is a universal element WANT (= -THu = want) with a universal ability to bond with a first person Principal I (= I in English, and the inherent Principal of -THu in Kayardild) and with a proposition P. Note that although P-THu looks like a single propositional form, the evidence from negation indicates the presence of two separate propositions: ‘I don’t want this: P’ and ‘I want this: not-P’ are expressed via warnaja ‘not want’ and the negative potential suffix -nangku(ru) respectively.

This suggests at least the possibility of a radical reduction in the combinatorial possibilities required for equivalents of WANT across languages. If every desiderative construction can be reduced to ‘I want this: P’ (with or without an ‘X thinks’ element as needed), and only this combination of meanings is indefinable, then each language-specific equivalent of WANT need only be capable of combination with the elements I and THIS and a proposition in the relevant language, to serve as a semantic prime in terms of which all other more complex desiderative expressions can be defined.

If an Objective of WANT has to be in the form of a proposition, and a proposition is inherently something that must be sayable, this goes a long way toward explaining the special relationships between wanting and saying that are observable in quite a few languages. Of course there is a circumstantial link in that people often express their desires in words, and we cannot know about what is experienced internally by another person unless this is expressed in some outward way, but a semantic relationship based on the inherent ‘sayability’ of the Objective of WANT goes much deeper than circumstantial association. Yet it is still non-compositional in that saying is not an element in the meaning of WANT or in the meaning of an Objective of WANT.

Similarly, in order to be sayable, a proposition must first be thinkable, that is, represented in the mind as a cognitive structure that can then be given expression in speech. This association between wanting and thinking again seems to operate at a much deeper level than the circumstantial fact that people often think about what they want. Although thinking may be an element in the semantic structure of many desiderative constructions, as suggested above, it is not an element in the meaning of WANT itself or of the basic combination ‘I want this: P’.

The non-compositional relationship linking saying and thinking with the nature of propositions could help to explain the involvement of
equivalents of SAY and THINK in desiderative constructions of completely unrelated languages. A particularly interesting example is the way either 'ii-m 'say' or aly'ii-m 'think' is used in Maricopa desiderative constructions with other than a first person Principal, illustrated in 2.2 above. Similar constructions can be observed in several Papuan languages; while in the Austronesian language Mangap-Mbula a single phonological form, -so, can refer to thinking, saying, wanting, or to hypothetical propositions ('if P...'). The desiderative and hypothetical uses could perhaps be viewed as deriving from speech acts expressing desire and supposition (compare the hypothetical use of English say in *Say you had a million dollars, what would you do with it*?), and perhaps even the cognitive sense could be seen as internal speech (saying something to oneself). However, each of these four meanings is distinguishable on formal grounds, as each occurs in a different syntactic environment.

The syntactic difference in each case lies in the form of the following proposition. The 'say' sense is the only one that can be accompanied by an addressee phrase (pa NP) and the complementise *ta kembei* 'thus'; this applies to both direct and indirect speech:

(1)  
   a. *Ni i-so (ta kembei): "Nio kο ang-mar".*
      3s 3s-say (SPEC like)  1s  UNC 1s-come
      'He said (this): "I will come".'

   b. *Ni i-so (ta kembei): (ni) kο ang-mar.*
      3s 3s-say (SPEC like)  (3s) UNC 3s-come
      'He said (that) he would come.'

The hypothetical sense is the only one that must be followed by a dependent proposition (apodosis), introduced by the conditional markers *na, inako* or *so*. It is also the only case where -so can occur without its verbal subject prefix (*i-'3s* in the following example). The phonologically bound nonfactual complementiser *be* (-mbe) is optional:

(2)  
   *Woonggo (i-)so(-mbe) i-mar, ina-ko ang-la.*
   canoe  (3s-)if-NF  3s-come GIV-UNC 1s-go
   'If the boat comes, (then) I will go.'
The desiderative sense is the only one that can occur with the nonfactual complementiser but with obligatory subject prefix (referring to the Principal) and without a second proposition conditional upon the first. If there is a dependent clause (like the purpose clause 'to see Atai’s village' below) it has no conditional marker:

(3)  

\[ \text{Nio } \text{ang-so(-mbe) } \text{ang-la } \text{ang-re Atai kar ki-ni}. \]
1s 1s-want(NF) 1s-go 1s-see Atai village POSS-3s

'I want to go (to) see Atai’s village.'

Only in this context could the allolex lele- ‘want’, discussed in 2.4 above, be substituted for -so. The ‘think’ sense is distinguished by its inability to occur with the complementisers ta kembei or be and the fact that it is usually followed by the modal adverb of uncertainty, ko:

(4)  

\[ \text{Nio } \text{ang-so (ko) ni i-meete kek}. \]
1s 1s-think (UNC) 3s 3s-die PERF

'I thought (that) he had died.'

Because the distinguishing complementisers ta kembei and be and the adverb ko are optional in each of the above contexts, a construction like Nio ang-so ang-la '1s 1s-so 1s-go' could be ambiguous: 'I want/think /say I'll go' (-so couldn't mean 'if' here because there is no apodosis). However, any ambiguity could be dispelled immediately by insertion of the appropriate complementiser, or a nominal like sua 'talk':

(5)  

\[ \text{Ni } \text{i-so sua som}. \]
3p 3p-say talk NEG

'He said (*thought/*wanted) nothing.'

The multifunctionality of -so is highly instructive as a case study of maximal polysemy. It demonstrates that a natural language can tolerate a very high degree of polysemy without confusion, vagueness, or loss of expressive power. It also illustrates something of how this can be, in that when the phonological material (the form -so) is held constant, the crucial role of combinatorial properties in semantics becomes much clearer. The distinction between the four meanings 'want', 'think', 'say' and 'if' hinges essentially upon four different types of relationship between propositions.
These relationships are reflected in the various lexical and syntactic devices of different languages.

In the IF relation two propositions are related in a way such that one is conditional upon the other; hence -so can only be interpreted as 'if' in the environment of a corresponding 'then' clause. In the case of WANT, THINK and SAY, each of these is a predication about a Principal, who wants, thinks or says something that can be expressed as a proposition. These three elements are like IF in that they encode a relation between two propositions, but unlike IF they are central to the content of the first proposition because each of them is predicated of some Principal (X), who wants, thinks or says the second proposition. The essential difference between WANT, THINK and SAY resides in the predication itself, whose nature can to some extent be described but not defined, as each of these is an irreducible prime element of meaning.

Wanting, thinking and saying each place the Principal in a different relation to the second proposition. When all three are represented by the same phonological form -so, the function of representing these three different orientations of the Principal to the secondary proposition is performed by other elements in the linguistic structure, principally the complementisers ta kembei and be. That the integrity of WANT as a unique relation between a Principal and a propositional Objective is thus retained even under conditions of maximal polysemy is further evidence for its status as a universal element across languages.

Thus, despite the diversity of language-specific rules, structures and constraints examined here, it is possible to identify a constant set of semantic combinations that can be viewed as a 'universal syntax' of desiderative meaning. This universal syntax consists of a core desiderative element corresponding in each language to WANT, plus a Principal (I, YOU, or SOMEONE, with I in a privileged position), and a proposition that is the Objective (formulated in each language according to the language-specific rules for such a propositional structure). The appearance of such combinations in children's earliest utterances across languages, noted in 1.2 above, corroborates this proposal.

The relationships of the senses of -so ('want', 'if', 'think' and 'say') appear to be entirely non-compositional in nature, as none of these elements is a component of any of the others. Yet they are not as unrelated as the two senses of the phonological form /noo/ in English ('know' and 'no'). This too may have to do with the combinatorial
properties or universal syntax of these semantic primes. The basic
semantic combinations in which KNOW and NO occur are largely, perhaps
entirely mutually exclusive, while those of WANT, THINK and SAY are very
similar, and IF is similar to them in one aspect and different in another as
explained above.

While much remains to be discovered about the operation of non-
compositional relationships in semantic systems, the present study points
to two tentative generalisations. One is that, if a single form expresses two
or more semantic primes, the meanings should be entirely distinguishable
by their combinatorial properties, as the meanings of -so are. This is not to
say that ambiguous constructions should be impossible, but rather that
disambiguation must always be possible. Unrelated homophones like
know and no are unlikely ever to occur in contexts similar enough for
ambiguity to arise between them, but -so ‘want’ and -so ‘say’ can do so, and
to function effectively in a semantic system they must be distinguishable
on some independent, formal basis, such as the complementisers in this
case (be versus ta kembei).

The other tentative generalisation is that certain semantic primes
may be blocked from co-occurrence as meanings of a single polysemous
form. A constraint of this kind may apply to WANT and KNOW, and to
WANT and DO. The homophony of know and no is essentially trivial
because the semantic functions of the primes KNOW and NO are so
different that they could not be confused with one another. The same
could apply to WANT and NO, or UNDER or ALL; but not to WANT and
KNOW because their combinatorial functions are much more similar.
KNOW, like WANT (and SAY and THINK) encodes a particular relation
between a Principal and a proposition, which in this case represents not an
Objective but the content of the Principal's knowledge.

A block to polysemy between WANT and KNOW might arise from the
status of the proposition. The Objective of WANT, as a projected outcome,
may be inherently un-KNOW-able. One can both THINK and SAY whatever
one can WANT or KNOW, but it may not be possible simultaneously to
WANT and KNOW the one proposition; or to WANT and DO the same thing.
IF, too, may be incompatible with KNOW, while CAN is more compatible
with both WANT and KNOW, in that both the Objective of WANT and the
proposition that one KNOWs can be something that CAN be. Relationships
like these are reflected in some language-specific grammatical systems like
realis/irrealis marking, but further research into NCRs is needed in order
6.4 A 'universal syntax'?

to clarify whether this is basically an extralinguistic matter or whether it is specific to the semantic systems of certain languages.

For indivisible semantic elements to be able to be combined together to build up complex meanings, there would have to be some non-compositional, externally operating principles governing these combinations. Such principles may be essentially pragmatic in nature, but they must involve relations between elements of the semantic system. Thus, aspects of semantic relations that appear to be influenced by pragmatic factors like animacy or control may be better explainable in terms of NCRs between semantic primes. For example, the animacy hierarchy discussed above is not as accurately predictive as the generalisation that WANT must be combinable with a Principal who is SOMEONE; and the first person privilege effects are best described in terms of a relation between WANT and I.

While the issues of the temporal/modal status and the Principal's control over the Objective are apparently governed by language-specific constraints, the most accurate way of describing these constraints may be in terms of their sensitivity to whether the Objective CAN occur, whether one can KNOW that it can happen, and so on. And a non-compositional incompatibility of WANT with KNOW and DO provides a basis for explaining the crosslinguistic tendency to association of wanting with future and potential meanings, without suggesting any universal link of WANT with language-specific temporal or modal categories based on elements such as 'after now' (future), 'not happened' (irrealis), or 'can happen' (potential).

Finally, the proposed universal syntax of WANT can also be described in terms of prime elements. WANT must be able to occur in the context:

\[ I + WANT + THIS \]

THIS must be able to occur in the context:

\[ SOMEONE + THINK/SAY + THIS \]

and the combination SOMEONE + WANT + THIS may be at some level a product of the first two:

\[ SOMEONE + THINK/SAY + THIS: I + WANT + THIS \]
All of the observations made in the foregoing account of desiderative constructions and their properties are consistent with these relationships between semantic primes.

6.5 Cultural values and language change

In attempting to identify elements of desiderative meaning that may be universal, much attention has been devoted to aspects of desiderative constructions that are specific to the structure of individual languages. Many of these language-specific characteristics are produced by grammatical rules that operate throughout the language in question, but others seem to be at least partially influenced by cultural norms and preferences. This section takes a brief look at some examples of possible cultural influences on the structure of desiderative expressions, and how such language- and culture-specific factors may affect the origins and development of particular desiderative expressions. Analysis of how these influences work can contribute substantially to the understanding of processes of language change, both lexical and syntactic.

Although this study of desiderative expressions was not directly concerned with language change, it uncovered a surprising amount of evidence of recent and ongoing changes in these expressions. These changes include semantic shifts whereby lexemes from a variety of sources have acquired desiderative meanings, and desiderative terms have acquired temporal and other meanings. There are examples of borrowing of desiderative terms from other languages, changes in the syntactic behaviour of desideratives, and evidence of grammaticalisation affecting desiderative constructions in a number of ways.

Indeed, desiderative expressions may be a particularly rich source for observing language change in progress. From a functional perspective this would make sense. Expressing what a person wants is a language function that has a high degree of impact on other people; hence this functional domain could be expected to be subject to strong interpersonal, social and cultural pressures and sanctions. Mediating and regulating the expression of what people want is a necessary function of culture and social structure, to prevent continuous open conflict that would arise if individual desires were unconstrained.
6.5 Cultural values and language change

But this is somewhat more problematic for a theory of semantic primes expressed as lexical universals. If a lexeme like *querer* or *want* expresses a basic, indefinable element of meaning in a particular language, this would seem to be a highly stable situation, with no reason ever to change. Moreover, how could such a change take place? If a semantic universal such as *WANT* is expressed in a particular language by a particular lexeme, how could this be one lexeme at one time and another lexeme at another time? Yet just such a change must have happened in the case of Spanish *querer* ‘want’, while French and Italian preserved their particular forms of the earlier Latin *volere* ‘want’. The observations made in this study of how universal and language-specific elements interact in desiderative expressions provide some prospects for addressing the question of language change in NSM theory.

The proposals advanced in the previous section for a semantic universal with specific combinatorial properties suggest a view of *WANT* as inherently relational. This *WANT* relation can be likened to the script of a play, with a central plot, certain characters in particular relationships to each other and to the plot, and a cast of lexical ‘players’ that is subject to considerable variation. The central plot consists of the relationship *WANT* between the Principal and the Objective. The Principal is of course the main character, and the Objective proposition may introduce other characters, notably a Performer. The lexemes that fill each of these roles, including the exponent of the central *WANT* relation, are of course subject to variation from language to language, and within each language according to specific lexical and grammatical rules; and they are also subject to change over time.

As each language has certain structural constraints that modify the form of desiderative expressions, so too each society has certain social constraints that modify how its members express what they want. It is an observable fact that both language structures and social structures change over time. Each of these structures is built up of elements that can be identified and described in terms of meaning; and as a systematic method of analysing meanings, the NSM approach offers a way to develop a coherent account of the interactions between linguistic meanings and structures, and social meanings and structures.

Interactions between semantic universals with their combinatorial properties or universal syntax, non-compositional relationships, and cultural values are deserving of a great deal of further investigation.
There is room here only to mention some of the relevant observations from this study, but even this brief sampling illustrates the extremely fruitful potential of this approach in analysing influences on language change and the interaction of language and culture within a broader perspective of human communication.

Consider first the case of subjunctive complements in desiderative expressions. Although it has been shown that these may be semantically non-contributory for the purpose of assessing expressive equivalence of constructions like ‘X wants Y to do V’ across languages, this does not explain why subjunctive marking should occur in such a context at all. If the semantic content of subjunctives in most languages is along the lines of ‘I don’t say: this will happen’, it can be seen that cultural beliefs would influence the assignment of this meaning to different situations. Cultures vary in the importance they attach to distinguishing between propositions based on knowledge and those based on hearsay or projection. Languages have a variety of means, both lexical and grammatical, to signal such distinctions, and the cultural importance of doing so influences both the frequency with which people use these linguistic devices, and the extent to which they are grammaticalised as optional or even obligatory elements of the structure of any proposition expressed in the language.

The operation of influences like these offers a way of explaining why expressions that are fully semantically equivalent on the criteria established in this chapter should nonetheless display different language-specific patterns of modal marking, for example:

(6)  a. Me-dí bé má-yi kplí wò (Ewe)
     1s-want that 1sSJV-go with 2s

     b. Je veux aller avec toi. (French)
     I want go-INF with you

     c. I want to go with you. (English)

In Ewe all complements of dí ‘want’ carry subjunctive marking; while semantically consistent with the meaning of the construction, this marking represents a distinction between the unrealised status of a wanted event, and the indicative complements of verbs like nyá ‘know’ and bé ‘say’. French, on the other hand, uses subjunctive marking to represent a
similar kind of distinction within the set of possible complements of *vouloir* 'want', assigning subjunctive forms to Performer-oriented complements and other less certain outcomes, and infinitive forms to more confident contexts like (6b). No such distinction is represented in English complements of *want*, though it can be expressed in other construction types.

Cultural values and norms of expression that may influence linguistic structures like these can also be analysed in terms of combinations of elements of meaning. For example, a cultural principle of recognising individual autonomy may be the basis for assigning subjunctive marking to Performer-oriented Objectives in many European languages. In terms of basic elements of meaning, such a principle can be stated along the following lines:

> it is not good if I say something like this about someone:  
> this person has to do this

From this principle it follows that it is usually inappropriate to imply that one person (the Performer) has to do what someone else (the Principal) wants:

> it is not good if I say something like this about someone:  
> this person has to do this because someone wants this

In French, subjunctive marking is available as a device to forestall any such unwanted inference:

> if I say: I want this: this person will do this  
> it is good if I say at the same time something like this:  
> I don't say it will happen

In Ewe, on the other hand, a different unwanted inference may be at issue, arising from a cultural concern with the status of events, possibly along these lines:

> it is not good if I say: this will happen  
> if at the same time I don't know it
In such a cultural context, subjunctive marking can be used as a device to allow reference to a projected proposition without implying any claim to knowledge of the outcome:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{if I say: I want this: } & P \\
\text{it is good if I say at the same time something like this:} & \\
& \text{I don’t say it will happen}
\end{align*}
\]

While the structure and operation of cultural influences like these are a very promising field for further exploration, it should be noted that the specific linguistic devices in which they are reflected may not be predictable. For example, many English speaking groups share a general European tendency to value individual autonomy, but English does not use subjunctive forms in the way French does. On the other hand, English expresses similar cultural norms through other linguistic devices. Notable among these are the ‘whimperatives’, or the use of the grammatical form of a question to convey directives. From a similar basic principle:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{it is not good if I say something like this about someone:} & \\
& \text{this person has to do this}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{it follows that giving orders is usually inappropriate, except in certain} & \\
& \text{specialised arrangements of power based on rank or other sources of status:}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{it is not good if I say something like this to someone:} & \\
& \text{you have to do this because I want this}
\end{align*}
\]

Imperatives in English are often regarded as a violation of this principle, and hence may arouse resentment in the addressee, while the unwanted inference can be forestalled by phrasing the directive as a question. The meaning of the interrogative form includes the elements ‘I don’t know’ which avoids any implication that the person has to do anything, and ‘I want to know’ which implies at least a mildly desiderative sense:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{if I want to say to someone: I want this: you do this} & \\
\text{it is good if I say to this person something like this:} & \\
& \text{I don’t know if you will do this}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{I want to know if you will do it}
\end{align*}
\]
The use of these forms as the normal way of indicating that one wants someone to do something may over time have produced a shift in the meaning of the English imperative, whereby there is evidence that it now conveys not only wanting the addressee to do something, but also a belief that the person will do as ordered:

*Do V!* (e.g. *Go away!*)

I want you to do this
I think: you will do it because I say this

Accordingly, imperatives are comparatively rarely used in mainstream English, and are limited to contexts where it is appropriate to convey such a strong message to the addressee.

These observations must be regarded as highly speculative, pending further study of the structure of cultural values in general, and in the cultures referred to here. Nevertheless, the nature of the mechanisms proposed as a basis for understanding cultural influences in language change should be clear. Cultural values motivate the use of linguistic forms that convey meanings compatible with these values. Attitudes based on cultural values affect speakers' behaviour, causing them to use certain favoured constructions with increasing frequency over time; while negative attitudes to other constructions (such as imperatives in English) are reflected in decreasing usage.

Studies of language change processes indicate that increasing use of a particular linguistic form in a certain context is often associated with increasing grammaticalisation of that form. This process can be observed at work among desiderative constructions in many languages, from the grammaticalisation of the originally desiderative English *will* as a future tense marker, to the development of complementisers like Ewe *bé* (from 'say') or French *que* (from 'what'). Decreasing use of a form, on the other hand, is often associated with greater specialisation of meaning, such as that proposed for the English imperative construction.

Influences like these may have operated in the development of the present form of desiderative expressions in Japanese, for example. The adjectival desiderative *hoshii* 'want' was originally a derived form of a verb *hossuru*, which is not used in modern Japanese, but in earlier sources refers to requesting or desiring. There is also some evidence that the linker *-te* may have developed from the desiderative suffix *-tai*. These
changes may be understood in relation to social and cultural pressures mediating how speakers express what they want.

Descriptions of Japanese culture and psychology by both Japanese and non-Japanese scholars recognise the powerful influence of certain cultural principles on the social and linguistic behaviour of individual Japanese people. Among the most important of these is the principle of *enryo*, sometimes translated as 'self-restraint', which encourages people to refrain from acting solely on the basis of their own feelings and motivations, and to take note of other aspects of their situation, especially the feelings of other people. Thus *enryo* is linked with another key principle, *omoiyari*, sometimes translated as 'empathy', which emphasises awareness of and consideration for the feelings of others. The effects of these principles on social interaction have been observed in many contexts, from business negotiations to customs of hospitality. In terms of basic elements of meaning, they may be represented along the following lines:

- it is not good if I say something like this:
  - 'I want this', 'I feel this', 'I think this'
- if I say something like this
  someone might feel something bad because of this

These principles are directly reflected in people's speech behaviour in several ways. In most social settings it is seen as inappropriate to express personal desires directly, so the constructions *Watashi wa V-tai* 'I want to do V' and *Watashi wa CPLT hoshii* 'I want CPLT' are not very frequently used. People try instead to be aware of what others might want and provide it without anyone having to say anything. Asking someone else what they want is also disfavoured because this would put the addressee in the embarrassing position of having to violate the cultural norm by answering. The favoured way of phrasing invitations is in terms not of desire but of possibility: 'I don't suppose you would be able to come to dinner' rather than 'Do you want to/would you like to come?'

The syntactic properties of the adjective *hoshii*, described in 3.1 above, allow it to be used without overt mention of the Principal. The same cultural attitudes that discourage saying 'I want this' promote the omission of *watashi T* from *CPLT hoshii*, to such an extent that speakers perceive it as redundant. This same motivation may have led speakers to
prefer the adjectival form *hoshii* over the verb *hossuru*, causing the latter to fall out of contemporary usage.

Japanese speakers are also circumspect about attributing wanting directly to a third person, so the constructions *X wa V-tai* and *X wa CPLT hoshii* are even less frequently used than the first person constructions. However, the construction *X wa V-te garu* 'X appears/seems to want to do V' is more acceptable, and this appears to have developed from *X wa V-tai* 'X wants to do V' with the addition of *garu* 'appear'. Cultural attitudes favour this expression because it puts the speaker in the position of commenting on observable signs rather than directly attributing wanting to another person. Through frequent use, this has become a standard construction for referring to a third person's wanting, accompanied by phonological reduction of *-tai* to *-te* as it became grammaticalised as a linker between the Objective verb and *garu*. The direction of semantic and grammatical change is such that *-tai* may become restricted exclusively to first person use, and a corresponding semantic shift could result in *X wa V-te garu* becoming semantically equivalent to 'X wants to do V'. At present, this meaning is still expressed by *X wa V-tai*, but this construction appears to be falling out of use due to cultural preference for the *-te garu* construction.

A different set of cultural influences operates in Samoan, where a very high value is placed on elegance and refinement in speaking, with high status accorded to those who are skilled in using elevated speech styles. One feature of refined speech is the avoidance of direct personal references, especially to persons of higher status than the speaker, and direct reference to oneself in the presence of persons of higher status. This is facilitated by the grammar of Samoan, which freely allows ellipsis of arguments of a verb. Thus one can say *E si'i le pepe e le teine* 'The girl carries the baby', or *E si'i le pepe* 'The baby is carried' (someone carries the baby), or just *E si'i* 'There is carrying' (someone carries something). This grammatical characteristic allows speakers to avoid any direct reference to persons in desiderative expressions: *E fia si'i le pepe e le teine* 'The girl wants to carry the baby', or *E fia si'i le pepe* 'The baby wants to be carried' (by someone), or just *E fia si'i* 'Carrying is wanted' (someone wants to carry something, or someone wants to be carried, or someone wants someone to carry something); *E mana'o le teine i le tusi* 'The girl wants the book', or *E mana'o i le tusi* 'The book is wanted (by someone)'.

In social contexts where it is desirable to be as vague as possible with respect to persons, the adverb-like nature of \textit{fia} 'want' is especially valuable. Arguments of the verb \textit{mana’o} 'want' can be omitted \((E \textit{mana’o} X e V X/Y ‘X wants X/Y to do V’, \textit{E mana’o} e V ‘V is wanted (by someone)\)), but as a main verb, \textit{mana’o} 'want' is a predication about some specific person, even if the identity of that person is not mentioned. \textit{Fia}, on the other hand, modifies a main verb, which is predicated of someone who may or may not be the wanter: \(E \textit{fia} V ‘V-ing is wanted’\) could refer to situations where someone wants to do something (e.g. the girl wants to carry the baby), or someone wants someone else to do something to them (the baby wants to be carried), or someone wants someone else to do something (the mother wants the girl to carry the baby).

Thus a desiderative construction with \textit{fia} can be maximally vague as to the identity of the Principal and the Performer. The usefulness of this in a particular social and cultural context could contribute to a functional explanation of the allolexy of \textit{fia} and \textit{mana’o} as exponents of WANT in Samoan. Allolexes in NSM theory are held to be fully equivalent in meaning, but each must have its own distinctive functions, or there would be no motivation for its existence. If two forms are completely synonymous in a language, one or both are likely to acquire additional semantic content. If each allolex did not have its own functional load, they would probably cease to be allolexes of a single semantic element through this process of semantic differentiation.

On the analysis proposed here, any \textit{fia} construction could also be expressed in terms of \textit{mana’o}, but not vice versa. In 2.5 above it is suggested that even with inanimates, \textit{fia} implies the existence of a wanter; that \(E \textit{fia} \textit{tata lavalava nei} ‘These clothes "need" washing’\) means ‘someone (unspecified) wants someone else (unspecified) to wash these clothes’. Thus, although \textit{mana’o} differs grammatically from \textit{fia} in that it cannot be associated with an inanimate argument, this same semantic combination could nonetheless be expressed in terms such as \(E \textit{mana’o} \textit{se tasi} e \textit{tata lavalava nei e se isi} ‘someone wants another to wash these clothes’\).

Although it is argued here that these constructions are semantically equivalent, they are neither grammatically nor pragmatically equivalent. \textit{Fia} is often preferred over \textit{mana’o} on both of these grounds. With transitive verbs, \textit{fia} indicates that the Principal is either the Performer or an undergoer of the Objective. It performs this grammatical function
more efficiently than the semantically equivalent *mana'o* construction where the Principal NP would have to be repeated in the complement clause either as Performer or as undergoer of an action by someone else (A) \( (e \ fia \ V \ X = e \ mana'o \ X \ e \ V \ ERG \ X/e \ V \ ERG \ A) \). Because of its grammatical properties, *fia* can also function more effectively than *mana'o* in social contexts where vagueness is desirable. Thus, the origins and maintenance of allolexical relationships may be explained at least partly in terms of grammatical and sociocultural functions, often operating in combination.

Some cultural influences on language structure may be due to aspects of the social environment other than cultural values. An example of this is seen in the verbal semantics of Papuan languages. While it makes general pragmatic sense in terms of the internal accessibility of wanting, the use of a 'say' element in third-person and Performer-oriented desiderative constructions seems to reflect a distinctive Papuan tendency to explicitness and literalness. Such a tendency is by no means limited to desideratives, but can be seen in other verbal constructions in numerous Papuan languages where, for example, 'bring' is rendered by 'take come', 'tumble' by 'come descend hit', 'cut with a knife' by 'knife take cut', 'have a headache' by 'head hits me' and so on.

Although this tendency is associated with a particular cultural area, it is not necessarily the product of a specific cultural value of explicitness or literal-mindedness. It is probably better explained in relation to the sociolinguistic situation in Papua, which is characterised by extensive and rapid linguistic diffusion, language shift and change. These conditions have resulted in many languages having a very small stock of verb stems, which are nonetheless deployed in logical combinations to express a full range of verbal meanings; and in this context, the combinations of verbal elements in desiderative constructions appear to be just one example of such a linguistic mechanism at work.

Particularly in cases of recent language change, etymologies may be highly transparent, so that semantically indivisible elements may be expressed by morphologically complex forms. This is not at all uncommon in languages, for example Yankunytjatjara *mukuringanyi* 'want' mentioned earlier, and *ngayulu* 'I' which comes historically from *ngayu* plus an ergative suffix -lu but is synchronically indivisible, the present ergative form being *ngayulu-lu*; French *beaucoup* 'many' (from *beau-coup*); or English *someone* (from *some+one*), *because*(by+cause)
and before (by+fore). As demonstrated earlier, the semantic content of such forms and their equivalence or non-equivalence to indivisible primes must be assessed according to criteria other than morphological transparency.

Another aspect of the linguistic environment that may influence the direction of change among basic semantic elements is the availability of complex constructions to express common combinations of these meanings. Many examples of this can be seen among Australian Aboriginal languages, where imperative forms and purposive inflections serve to express wanting in many contexts.

Imperatives, marked in most Australian languages by a verbal inflection traceable to a proto-Australian suffix *-ka, are used very freely in everyday social interaction. These imperative forms (e.g. kuli-la 'listen-IMP' in Yankuntjatjarra) do not convey any compulsion or obligation upon the addressee, a fact in keeping with the non-hierarchical nature of Australian Aboriginal society. Even small children disregard imperatives with impunity, in contrast to the Anglo-Australian attitude that the social fabric requires children and other subordinates to do as they are told or face specific consequences. Thus imperatives in Australian languages appear to encode the meaning 'I want you to do this', without any additional elements of the kind suggested above for English imperatives.

Purposive constructions are also very frequently used in Australian languages. Many languages have both nominal and verbal purposive affixes, as in the Arrernte examples below, where the suffix -tyeke marks purposive on verbs, and on nominals the dative inflection -ke functions to indicate purpose. Most of these purposive affixes are traceable to a proto-Australian purposive suffix *-ku. Like the Kayardild purpose constructions described in 5.2 above, they encode the meaning combination 'X wants this: P; because of this X does V', where P is the Objective and V the antecedent. This combination of meanings can be expressed in Arrernte by means of purposive constructions like these:

(7) Anwerne iheke kere-ke / kere ine-tyeke.
we went meat-DAT / meat get-PURP
'We went for meat / to get meat.'
i.e. 'We wanted meat; because of that we went.'
The same combination of meanings can also be expressed via *ahentye* ‘want’:

(8) *Anwerne kere-ke ahentyeneke; ikwere-ngē anwerne lheke.*  
we meat-DAT wanted that-because we went  
‘We wanted meat; because of that we went.’

However, because the purposive construction is an efficient means of expressing precisely this combination of meanings, there is far less motivation for speakers to use *ahentye* ‘want’ in these contexts. Similarly, the meaning of *kuli-la* ‘listen-IMP’ can also be expressed in terms of *mukuringanyi* ‘want’ in Yankunytjatjara: *Ngayulu mukuringanyi nyuntu kulintjaku* ‘I want you listen-PURP’ or *Ngayulu mukuringanyi nyanga alatji: nyuntu kulini* ‘I want this: you listen’. But for everyday communicative functions the imperative construction is a far more efficient way to express this meaning.

The communicative efficacy of these two semantically complex constructions leads speakers to use them frequently, and this produces a corresponding reduction in the frequency of use of the basic WANT equivalents *ahentye* and *mukuringanyi* in these languages. This is not because the notion of wanting is nonexistent or unimportant in these cultures: the very high frequency of imperatives and purposives suggests quite the opposite. But the availability of these functionally useful semantic combinations in pre-packaged form is a feature of the linguistic environment that influences speakers’ use of the basic desiderative constructions. In the development of some languages the less frequently used desiderative forms may eventually fall out of use altogether, and their functions may be taken over by the purposive morpheme. This process of language change may be what brought about the Kayardild situation described in Chapter 5, where WANT is expressed by the grammatical morpheme *-THu(ru)* and not by any other independent lexeme.

It may prove possible to identify across languages certain recurring ‘semantic molecules’, pre-packaged combinations of primes such as ‘I want you to do this’ (*I WANT THIS: YOU DO THIS*) and ‘X wants this: P; because of this X does something’. This would make sense from a functional perspective, since combinations of meaning like these are associated with two of the most common language functions, the regulatory and
6.5 Cultural values and language change

explanatory functions. But such generalisations should be approached with caution because of the language-specific nature of all complex meaning combinations. Imperative constructions are extremely widespread across languages, but by virtue of their semantic complexity they are open to language-specific variation. It is predictable that imperatives in all languages will include the combination ‘I want you to do this’, but the presence or absence of other illocutionary elements cannot be predicted, and can only be established on the basis of language-specific evidence.

Language contact is another feature of the external social environment that clearly influences language change. It is at first difficult to imagine why a language would need to borrow an exponent for a semantic prime, but the motivation and processes involved in such a change become clear from closer examination of examples. Miskitu has borrowed the English word want, while its closely related neighbour Ulwa has the polysemous verb walnaka ‘seek, want’:

(9) Yang dusa pihni di-aia want sna. (Miskitu)
Yang panka pihka buih-naka walt-ayang. (Ulwa)
Is stick white smoke-INF want(-)-PRES1
‘I want to smoke a cigarette.’

The Miskitu verb plikaia ‘seek’ is sometimes used in a desiderative sense, just as walnaka is; thus it may well be that plikaia was used as the main Miskitu desiderative prior to the borrowing of want, though want is now the most frequently used desiderative.

In describing this situation, Hale has proposed that the borrowing of want suggests that it may represent a conceptual universal, and that the motivation for borrowing was to name a concept known to Miskitu speakers, but for which they had no fully satisfactory word. Hale does not view walnaka and plikaia as precisely equivalent to WANT because of the distributional resonance arising from the other meaning, ‘seek’. However, on the criteria proposed here, Ulwa walnaka would qualify as an equivalent of WANT; the ‘seek’ sense is a more complex meaning, presumably definable in terms of wanting, in that to ‘seek’ an object is to do something because one wants to find or have that object. As desiderative uses of Miskitu plikaia are still found, the present situation is
probably that it too is polysemous, but that its desiderative sense is falling out of use due to the availability of the borrowed *want*.

This is a common process of semantic change in a language contact situation: polysemy of a word like *plikaia* 'want, seek' can motivate borrowing of a term (*want*) that corresponds to one of the meanings. The availability of this unambiguous term leads to a decrease in use of *plikaia* in the desiderative sense, and semantic specialisation may result in the eventual loss of this meaning of *plikaia*. The fact that one of the meanings here is a semantic prime is no obstacle to this natural process of language change. For a time, *want* and *plikaia* in its desiderative sense are allolexes of *WANT*. This allolexical relationship may remain stable if each allolex has a significant functional load, as Samoan *fia* and *mana'o* have; but if *plikaia* 'want' performs no grammatical or pragmatic function that cannot be fulfilled by *want*, then *plikaia* is vulnerable to semantic reduction and may soon come to be used only in the sense of 'seek'.

Borrowing is a notoriously unpredictable kind of historical change in languages, and there may be no explanation why *want* should have been borrowed into Miskitu but not Ulwa. Polysemy of words like *plikaia* or *walnaka* is not in itself a sufficient motivation for lexical change; there are many examples of languages tolerating a much greater degree of polysemy than this. Although language change processes deserve more attention than they have hitherto received in NSM semantic research, the preliminary indications are that exponents of semantic primes themselves may not be any more or less susceptible than other linguistic elements to natural processes of language change.

A more fruitful application of the NSM approach to language change may be in providing an analysis of the interaction of lexical, grammatical, social and cultural influences in the historical development of languages, along some of the lines suggested above. None of these influences operates in isolation, and only an analysis based on meaning can provide a coherent account of their interaction. Moreover, while many aspects of language change remain unpredictable, a meaning-based approach can predict some things about the direction of change, both semantic and grammatical change.

There are several examples of apparently unidirectional change among desiderative expressions, that could be thought of in terms of two questions about language change: where do desiderative terms come from, and where do they go? While the patterns of lexical relations
6.5 Cultural values and language change

discussed in Chapter 2 are suggestive, the direction of lexical change is not always clear, particularly for languages without historical documentation. In Ulwa, for example, it may not be possible to determine whether the 'seek' sense of walnaka predated the desiderative sense or vice versa. In Arrernte, the body part sense of ahentye may predate the desiderative sense, since it has the form of ahe-, possibly a root having to do with breathing, plus nominaliser -ntyere. In Australian languages there is a general tendency to semantic extension of body part terms; but there are also several examples of lexical association between wanting and breath, so whether the meaning 'throat' predated the meaning 'want' is unclear.

In various languages with written documentation, desiderative words have developed from terms with more externally accessible reference. In English the decline in use of want with reference to material lack is suggestive, though whether the WANT meaning arose more recently than the other is not fully clear; the modals should and ought have developed from words for 'owe'. Meanwhile will has developed from a primarily desiderative term in the direction of a future tense marker. A similar direction of change has been noted in many unrelated languages; for example the purposive -ku has in some Australian languages developed into a future tense marker.

It would be premature to draw any conclusions here, but it can be noted that changes along these lines would be consistent with some general patterns of historical change. Grammatically, some desideratives show signs of transition from less to more verbal in character, for example the basically nominal Arrernte ahentye 'want' acquiring the verbal elements ne/-irre-, the verb kaia 'be' accompanying want in Miskitu, or the anomalous verbal properties of the desiderative morpheme la in Buru, mentioned in 4.3 above. In those cases where desideratives have developed into future tense markers, this has been accompanied by other signs of grammaticalisation such as affixation or loss of independent lexical status.

Semantically, changes along these lines may be associated with a general direction of historical change described as 'subjectification', whereby meanings tend to be extended from reference to an external situation to encompass reference based purely on the speaker's opinion. This kind of development has been traced by Traugott in different classes of words. For example, among the English modals, should has developed from referring to an externally observable situation where someone is
obliged to pay money to a creditor, to an internally referenced sense of obligation. The same trend can even be seen in the extensions of speech act verbs such as promise from an externally referenced situation where someone makes a verbal undertaking, to an expression of the speaker’s opinion as in It promises to rain. This is a kind of metaphorical extension, but one that takes a specific, predictable direction.

In the case of desideratives, something like subjectification may be operating in cases where terms with external reference to a body part or a speech act are also used with reference to the internal experience of wanting. And a further operation of the same principle could accompany the development of a desiderative into a future tense marker. Although desideratives refer to an internal experience rather than to anything external, this experience is directly accessible at least to its experiencer, the Principal; while an utterance about a future event relies entirely on the opinion of the speaker, since what will happen in the future is not directly accessible to anyone.

If this is so, then the process of subjectification may hinge upon non-compositional relationships between semantic elements similar to those suggested earlier; in particular, the contrast between what one can KNOW and what one can THINK and SAY. For example, one can KNOW that ‘this person says this: P’, whether it be a promise or an expression of desire, while one cannot KNOW directly that another person WANTS something. One can THINK and SAY ‘this person wants this: P’, but one cannot KNOW it; it is the speaker’s subjective opinion formed on the basis of observation or conjecture. Only the Principal can KNOW ‘I want this: P’. Moreover, a person who WANTS the Objective P can THINK and SAY ‘this will happen after now’, but no-one can KNOW ‘this will happen after now’; this is again the speaker’s subjective opinion. Perhaps, then, the subjectification process has its basis in the human ability to think and say things that are beyond the bounds of the speaker’s knowledge; and to talk about things like future events as if one knows they will happen. The linguistic mechanism may reflect a cognitive one.

The principle of subjectification may interact with the principle of relevance, proposed earlier as a way of understanding the use of desideratives with inanimates. If WANT is a universal of the kind proposed here, listeners faced with the task of assigning a meaning to an utterance like the Ewe Tsi dé bé ye-a dza ‘Rain WANTS to fall’ are aware at some level that WANT can only be predicated of I, YOU, or SOMEONE, not of
a **SOMETHING** like rain. Assuming that the speaker has said something relevant, listeners may access two possible sources of information external to the utterance, in order to construct a plausible inference. One source is the universal syntax of **WANT** whereby there must be a Principal, and this Principal is more likely to be the first person than any other. If applied directly, this would yield the interpretation ‘someone (possibly the speaker) wants this: rain will fall’.

The other source is the subjectification principle, that the utterance may be interpretable in terms of opinion rather than knowledge. This could yield an interpretation along the following lines. If someone says ‘this person wants to do V’, one can think ‘some time after now this person will do V’; one can’t know this will happen, but one can form the opinion that it will. If someone says something like this about rain: ‘rain wants to fall’, then one can think ‘some time after now rain will fall’. Both of these possible interpretations of a desiderative in combination with an inanimate are attested in languages (compare Samoan and Chinese, as discussed earlier in this chapter).

Note that this view of subjectification does not rely on direct metaphorical interpretation (‘rain is like a person’). Metaphors like this can be ephemeral creative or poetic associations made by an individual, or regular patterns of association in the literary or philosophical tradition of a particular culture. But they do not provide an adequate basis for explaining much about processes of pragmatic inference or semantic shift, or the influence of these processes on language structure.

If the combinatorial properties of semantic primes, and the non-compositional relationships between them, contribute in the ways suggested here to the construction of pragmatic inferences, then they may offer some insight into the operation of some other processes of cognitive association less directly related to language. For example, a pattern of association along the following lines is sometimes described by people experiencing compulsive behaviour: ‘if I want to do something (e.g. have a smoke), I think: when I do it I will feel something good’; this may then lead to an association ‘if I don’t do it I will feel something bad’, and a further association ‘if I don’t do it something bad will happen to me’, leading to a compulsive thought ‘because of this I have to do it’.

People who have been treated abusively by others often think something like this: ‘if someone is a bad person, other people want to do bad things to this person’; ‘people did bad things to me’; ‘because of this I
think: I am a bad person'; and so on down the path of associations to low self-esteem. In such a situation people often experience the emotion of shame, a key cognitive component of which is 'people can know something bad about me'; and this emotion is often reflected in both linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour, such as not wanting to talk, and wanting to avoid contact with other people. Thought patterns of this kind can also lead towards a motivation for self-abusive behaviour ('I think: I am a bad person'; 'because of this I want to do bad things to me'); and to the adoption of a victim role in interactions with others ('I think: I am a bad person'; 'because of this people can do bad things to me').

Obviously, paths of association like these are an individual matter. Whether or not a person in a given situation will think along these lines at all, or repeat such patterns of association until they become habitual and influence the person's behaviour, is not predictable. Moreover, they do not follow predictable logical sequences. It does not necessarily follow that I have to do something just because I'll feel something bad if I don't; or that if people did something bad to me it was because I am a bad person. Some approaches to counselling focus on helping people to recognise such logical inconsistencies in their belief systems, underlying emotional distress and dysfunctional behaviour.

Illogical though they may be, such patterns of association are remarkably frequent and tenacious in human thought. They are similar to the overgeneralisations made by children in the normal course of cognitive development. It is normal for small children, when they don't get what they want, to feel that something very bad is happening to them, and to express great distress; and to take a very egocentric view of other people's actions and feelings, assuming things like 'dad is angry because I am bad' when dad's anger may really be due to a bad day at work. The potential for adults and children to formulate these combinations of meaning and associative relationships may to some extent be predictable from the combinatorial properties and non-compositional relationships among basic semantic elements. Analysis of these semantic relationships may thus contribute to an understanding of more general patterns of cognitive function and dysfunction.

The impact on language structure and interpretation of influences from culture, pragmatics, sociolinguistic and environmental factors poses immense challenges to linguistic description. Theoretical constructs such as metaphor, subjectification and relevance have great explanatory power,
but none of them alone provides a full account of linguistic mechanisms in the representation of meaning, or of how these undergo change. This section has tried to suggest how a theory based on universal elements of meaning, each with its distinctive combinatorial properties and relationships to other universal elements, may provide a key to the interactions of these influences on language structure and language change.

But while a theory based on meaning, and on combinations and interactions of meanings, may have great explanatory power, and should be able to predict all meaning-bearing aspects of language structure from semantic structure, it may never be fully predictive with respect to language change. The great variety of language-specific properties and their influences on the expression of universal elements of meaning are never static. Language change is a constantly unfolding process, and any theory of language universals has to come to grips with this fact in some way.

The NSM approach has a good deal to offer in explaining these processes, and in predicting some of the directions of change, but it cannot predict which changes will occur in a language, or when. Human creativity and ingenuity in manipulating semantic elements and combinations thereof appears limitless. Hence there is plenty of room in such a theory for almost infinite language-specific and culture-specific variation in how those universals are expressed and combined, and how these expressions and combinations develop and change. Given the immense power, flexibility and individuality of human languages, it could not be expected that semantic primes would appear in pure, unique or unmistakeable forms that match up isomorphically across languages; but rather that each language represents these basic semantic elements according to some universal principles, and that careful attention to these principles will yield valid crosslinguistic generalisations.
Notes to Chapter 1
The Ewe word *dl* is discussed in Ameka (1994:67-68); Buru and Japanese are treated in more detail in sections 4.3 and 3.1 below.

1.1
The Arrernre example is from ECAED (1994:83). The involvement of wanting in emotion terms, speech acts, and transitivity can be seen from analyses like those of Wierzbicka (1992a:119-179) and Goddard (1995a); Wierzbicka (1987a); Dixon (1984; 1991a:268-297), Hopper and Thompson (1980), and Wierzbicka (1975; 1988:237-255). My concept of linguistic description was formed by reading Sapir (1921) and Bloomfield (1933) before undertaking any formal study of linguistics, and later through studying Chomsky (1965, 1972) and Comrie (1981), along with many other theoretical works and descriptive grammars of languages.

1.2
These religious and philosophical ideas are seen in Lao Tzu (1963:96), Bhagavadgītā (Radhakrishnan 1948:175), Harvey (1990:47-72). While such teachings clearly refer to all types of desire, there is a widespread tendency among religious practitioners, from many different cultural backgrounds, to interpret them with reference to specifically sexual desire. The special salience of this particular type of desire finds linguistic reflection in the fact that words for 'wanting' in many different languages can be used with sexual connotations (see section 3.3). There is of course considerable discussion and controversy surrounding the translation of terms from other languages into English as desire, wish, want and so on.


1.3


The semiotic perspective adopted here is more in sympathy with Peirce (1932, v.2:230ff) and Eco (1984), than with approaches that locate meaning outside language, for example in truth conditions or logical

1.4

Similar explications of LOVE are found in Wierzbicka (1992a:145-146), see also Goddard (1995a:342-348), cf. the complex phrases in, for example, SOED (1993:1636). Wierzbicka (1992a:146) discusses other linguistic evidence for treating the non-interpersonal use of LOVE as a separate meaning. The concepts of allolexy and semantic valency are discussed in Goddard & Wierzbicka (1994:31-34) and Wierzbicka (1995b); the Aboriginal English study is Harkins (1994).

Hill (1987), has investigated the proposed primes GOOD and BAD. The studies in Goddard & Wierzbicka (1994) include brief discussions of WANT in the combination ‘I want to do V’ in fourteen different languages.

Notes to Chapter 2

The sample of languages considered here is an informally constructed one, influenced by the availability and quality of sources, but care was taken to include languages from as many different language families and higher-level groupings as possible (and isolated and creole languages) in an effort to make the sample genuinely representative of the world’s languages (see Bell 1978, Bybee 1985:24-26, Comrie 1981:10-12, Perkins 1989). The languages examined in more detail in the following chapters are ones that illustrate particular problems and issues in identifying and analysing their desiderative constructions, and for which speakers and/or linguists thoroughly familiar with them could be consulted in addition to documentary sources. Throughout this work the examples cited are, wherever possible, ones that are attested in other written sources, or collected for other purposes, so as to minimise the possibility of interference that could result from direct crosslinguistic elicitation of particular desiderative constructions. Sources of examples are given in the notes to each section, and adjustments to the original glosses for the sake of consistency have been kept to a minimum; but the interpretations of examples and linguistic evidence, on the basis of the principles and methods explored in this work, are my own.


2.1

Examples in this section are from AHLSD (1986:549), Anderson (1978:430), Mosel (1994:338), Mosel & Hovdhaugen (1992:461), Sulkala & Karjalainen (1992:36), and Arandic Dictonary Project (p.c.) Bybee (1985:147) found that nearly a third of languages in her sample had zero morphological marking on imperatives. Fijian (Dixon 1988:91), and Longgu (Hill 1994:318) also distinguish lexically between wanting to do something and wanting someone else to do something. Albanian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Pashto and Hausa (Noonan 1985:52-95, Robinson 1959) all have subjunctives in
both coreferential and non-coreferential complements of ‘want’, while Moru, like English, has infinitives in both (Tucker 1967). Turkana (Dimmendaal 1983:372-373) has infinitive in the former and a fully conjugated verb in the latter, while in Maasai (Tucker & Mpayi 1955:61-63) the same ‘N-tense’ verb form is used in both construction types.

The desiderative sense of Iatmul wo- ‘say, want’ has purposive complements (Staalsen 1972), like Arrernte (see section 2.2, Wilkins 1989:451-452, ECAED 1994:49); the desiderative sense of Kalam ag- ‘say, want’ has hortative complements (Pawley 1994:400), like Kpelle (Welmers 1973:359); nominalised complements like those in Jarawara (Dixon 1993) are mentioned in section 3.2. Desideratives with no special marking on the complement verb include Vietnamese muôn ‘want’ (Nguyen 1966), Mandarin yào ‘want’ (Chappell 1994:115-121), Haitian vle ‘want’ (Spears 1990:131-132); with Saramaccan ke ‘want’ the complement verb has no special marking but is introduced by the complementiser fu for both coreferential and non-coreferential complements (Byrne 1987:124, 141-142). Wolof (Munro & Gaye 1991) and Haitian ,Spears 1990:130-132, like Samoan (section 3.3), have subjunctive markers that are optional, and add connotations of uncertainty to basic desiderative constructions.

2.2

Desiderative constructions in Yimas have the irrealis/future /pur-}

posing marker -η (~-k) where someone wants to do something, and ‘say’ plus infinitive complement where someone wants someone else to do something (Foley 1986:156-157, 1991); while Selepet desiderative construc-
tions have ‘say’ and ‘do’ with a future-marked complement verb, and switch-reference marking to indicate whether the subordinate actor is coreferential or not (e.g. Ari-ue s-m o-an [go-1sfut say-SA do-1sImmPAST] ‘I want to go’) (McElhanon 1975:527-568); cf. also the desiderative construction with ‘do’ plus future-marked complement in Kaluli (section 1.2). Semantic constraints on bound morphemes are discussed in Shibatani (1976a:1-40), cf. also Haiman (1983:782, 1985). On accessibility to grammaticalisation, see Bybee & Dahl (1989); Heine, Claudi & Hünnefemeyer (1991).


For languages with multiple desiderative lexemes, it is necessary to investigate them individually in order to determine whether or not they are compositionally related, and whether they can be defined in terms of one basic desiderative element, as demonstrated in this section. Such sets of desiderative terms include the English words mentioned in section 2.1 (want, wish, desire, hope, intend, yearn etc.); the Acehnese ones seen in 3.1 (tém, meuh’eut, keumeung, meu, (keu)neuk, teugiyan, ék etc.); the Hungarian kell, akar, kíván, óhajt, szeret, vágy, etc. (Orságh 1969); and similar sets in other languages.

Notes to Chapter 3
This approach to meaning correspondences is suggested by Bogusławski (1994a); cf. also his remarks on Polish chcieć, mieć chęć, ‘want’ (1994a:90); the mne xočet’sja example is from Wheeler (1972:874).
3.1

In the explication of *Z is desirable*, ‘can’ and ‘could’ are treated as contextually conditioned allolexes of the kind described in section 1.4, but the prime CAN and conditional constructions require further investigation (cf. also Wierzbicka 1987b, In press). The semantics of adjectives is discussed by Dixon (1982:1-62), Wierzbicka (1988:463-497). On the semantic relations of *tém* and *meuh'eut*, cf. Goddard & Wierzbicka (1994:31-34) on allolexy; Durie, Daud & Hasan (1994:179), Durie (1985b) on control and volition; Durie (1985a:48ff, 1985b) on Acehnese predicate classes.

3.2

Nominalised complements are also found with *muna* - ‘want’ in Imbabura Quechua (Cole & Hermon 1981). Georgian *nda* ‘want’ can have a nominalised (‘masdar’) form or a fully conjugated finite verb form as its complement (Harris 1981:157, 294). Basque (Saltarelli 1988:141-142) and Uzbek (Sjoberg 1963), like Yankunytjatjara (Goddard 1991b:49), have nominalisers on complement verbs whose subject is someone other than the wanter. Indo-European infinitive forms have been shown to have developed historically from nominalisations (Jeffers 1975); and the Arrernte purposive suffix *-tyeke* could possibly have developed from nominaliser *-tye* plus dative *-ke* (cf. examples 21a,b in Chapter 2).
Accusative and possessive marking on complement verbs with Luiseño ma'ma- 'want' could be considered similar to nominalisation (e.g. Felisita čaami ma'maq poy [čam-ma'ma-x-i] 'Felica wants us [to like her] [1pPOSS-like-ACC-her]', Langacker 1977:171). In Moru, -le 'want' takes complement verbs in infinitive form, but possessive marking on non-coreferential complement subjects produces a nominalisation-like effect (e.g. Ma-le ku Ayangwa ri wa omvu-ni [I-want not Ayangwa POSS beer drink-INF] 'I don't want Ayangwa to drink beer', Tucker 1967). In the Diegueño construction puy uwa·xapxu swa'rp-x uma·w [there go.in-1s-UNR.SPEC want-3p/3sUNR not(3p)] 'They won't want me to go there', there is no overt marker of subordination and the two clauses are in a paratactic relationship, but the pronominal crossreferencing on swa'rp- 'want' indicates 3p subject and 3s object (swa'rp-x 'they want it') (Langdon 1970). Here again the effect is somewhat similar to a nominalisation. A similar paratactic construction is found in Nunggubuyu (Heath 1984:583).

3.3
Examples in this section are from Mosel (1994:338), Mosel & Hovdhaugen (1992:354-362, 605, 709-716), and Asafou So'o (p.c.), cf. also the Fijian constructions with via 'want' (Dixon 1988:205-208). The term 'ergative' applied to verbs whose argument structure includes an ergative-marked agent follows Mosel & Hovdhaugen's description of Samoan, but cf. also Dixon's (1987:5-6, 13) caveats on the use of this term.

3.4
Non-coreferential complements of Thai ยัง ‘want’ and Khmer ចាច ‘want’ are full clauses introduced by switch-reference markers หาย and ジャー respectively; both of these forms also occur as main verbs meaning ‘give’ (Diller 1994:153, Ehrman 1972:102-103, Poo-israkij 1993). In Turkana, the coreferential แอซักต้าย ตุก ‘I want to eat’ has the verb in infinitive form, while แอซักต้าย ยู ‘I want you to kill it’ has the fully conjugated verb form ยู ‘you-kill-A’, as does the reflexive แอซักต้าย ตัวฉัน ‘I want to hide (I) self’ (Dimmendal 1983:373-381). See also Van Valin (1985:392-393) on the tight syntactic linkage between Lakhota ชู้ ‘want’ and both coreferential complements like แมรี่ เห็นมาร์ ‘I want to see Mary’ and non-coreferential ones like วิชาสำร ดี ‘The man wants Mary to buy food’. To and for...to complements are differentiated by Wierzbicka (1988:109-132) but not by Bresnan (1979:79), Lakoff (1968) or Noonan (1985:43), cf. also Dixon (1991a: 225-229); I regret for you to be in this fix is acceptable to Kiparsky & Kiparsky (1971:363). On propositions and facts, cf. Dirven (1989), Kiparsky & Kiparsky (1971), Karttunen (1971); on independent negation of ‘want’ and ‘wanted’ propositions cf. Cornulier (1973), Horn (1975), Jackendoff (1971), Shopen (1972).

Notes to Chapter 4

4.1
4.2
Examples in this section are from Evans (1985:67, 236; 1988:241; 1994:208-210; and p.c.) On ‘if...then’ constructions see Evans (1994:217). The English should, as found in some of the glosses, can also be construed in terms like ‘it is good if X does this’ and/or ‘it is bad if X doesn’t do this’, cf. Harkins (1994:97).

4.3

4.4
Examples in this section are from Grimes (1991:137, 213-223); he also gives a thorough description of Buru verb classes (1991, chap.7), and discusses late (1991:137-138).

4.5
The example in this section is from Grimes (1991:216).

Notes to Chapter 5

5.1

5.2
5.3 Examples in this section are from Evans (1985:209, 314; 1994:219); the modal case marking system is described briefly in Evans (1994:203-204) and more fully in Evans (1985).

5.4 Examples in this section are from Evans (1994:225 and p.c.)


Notes to Chapter 6

6.2 Arofa and love are explicated by Wierzbicka (1992a:155, 145); mukuringanyi and sayang by Goddard (1990, 1991b, 1995a:344). See Bogustawski (1994a:51) on matrices of distinctive features versus semantic content. On Thai yàak see Diller (1994:153); on contextually conditioned variation see Goddard & Wierzbicka (1994:34); on French time expressions see Peeters (1994:435). Constructions like I want that I should go are found in Indian English, where the modal and that complement are associated with some degree of uncertainty.

The same principle of language-specific contextually conditioned grammatical marking applies to the assignment of case marking in desiderative constructions. For example, the Principal is marked dative in Tamil enakkum kaapi veenum ‘I-DAT want coffee’ (Asher 1985:169), but nominative in Spanish (Yo) quiero café ‘(1sNOM) want-1s coffee’, cf. also Davidson (1990:359-360), Hook (1990:322) on Hindi; Klaiman (1980) on Bengali. The Performer is marked accusative in English I don’t want him(ACC) to drink beer, but possessive in Moru Ma-le ku Ayangwa ri wa omu-ni ‘I don’t want Ayangwa POSS drink beer’ (Tucker 1967). On the meaning of to in English complements see Duffley (1992:19, 136-137),
Notes to Chapter 6


6.3

6.4

Semantic properties of THIS are discussed by Goddard and Wierzbicka (1994:40); on Japanese kono/kore see Onishi (1994:371-372); on similar distinctions in Arrente and Indonesian see Harkins & Wilkins (1994:291) and Poerwindarminta (1976:105, 382). An obvious problem with 'X thinks: I want this' is that wanting may not necessarily be accompanied by thought; this is reflected in the fact that (in English at least) many people attribute both thinking and wanting to higher animals, like dogs, but more readily attribute wanting than thinking to, for example, insects.

6.5

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