

THE GOAL-INTENTION CLUSTER IN ENGLISH MOTIVATIONAL DISCOURSE: SPEECH-ACT ARCHITECTURES AND PRAGMATIC STRATEGIES

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Annotatsiya: Maqolada zamonaviy ingliz motivatsion diskursida goal - intention konseptual klasterining qanday qurilishi nazariy-lingvistik tarzda muhokama qilinadi. Nutqiy aktlar nazariyasi, freym semantikasi va leksik-tipologik tahlilga tayanib, maqsad qo'yish, majburiyat olish va unga intilishning diskursiv strategiyalari, hamda goal-diskursini tashkil etuvchi nutqiy akt arxitekturasini (deklarativ - maqsad shakllantirish, komissiv - majburiyat, direktiv - rejalashtirish, assertiv - taraqqiyot nazorati) tavsiflanadi. SMART modeli lingvistik-pragmatik shablon sifatida va uning cheklavlari tahlil qilinadi.

Kalit so'zlar: goal konsepti; intention; nutqiy aktlar; SMART modeli; motivatsion diskurs; pragmatik strategiyalar

THE GOAL-INTENTION CLUSTER IN ENGLISH MOTIVATION DISCOURSE: SPEECH-ACT ARCHITECTURES AND PRAGMATIC STRATEGIES

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Abstract: This article offers a theoretical-linguistic discussion of how the goal-intention conceptual cluster is constructed in contemporary English motivational discourse. Drawing on speech-act theory, frame semantics, and lexical-typological analysis, the article describes the discursive strategies for goal-setting, commitment, and pursuit, as well as the speech-act architecture organizing goal-related discourse (declaratives for formulation, commissives for commitment, directives for action-planning, assertives for progress-monitoring). The SMART model is analysed as a linguistic-pragmatic template and its constraints discussed.

Keywords: goal concept; intention; speech acts; SMART model; motivational discourse; pragmatic strategies

1. Introduction. The discursive construction of goals occupies a central position in contemporary English motivational discourse. Goal-setting is not merely a cognitive activity but a discursive performance, in which the speaker uses language to bring a future state into existence as an object of commitment and pursuit. The linguistic mechanisms through which this performance is realized are the subject of the present article.

The English lexical field of goal-related vocabulary is rich. It includes goal, objective, target, aim, intention, commitment, milestone, and vision. Each lexeme carries its own discursive profile: goal is the most generic and frequent, intention emphasizes the agent's inner stance, commitment emphasizes the agent's binding to the goal, and vision emphasizes the long-range scope. Motivational discourse exploits this differentiation to construct multi-layered scenarios of life-planning.

The present article offers a theoretical-linguistic discussion of the GOAL-INTENTION cluster in English motivational discourse. Three questions guide the discussion. First, what is the speech-act architecture of goal-related discourse? Second, how does the popular SMART model function as a linguistic-pragmatic template? Third, what theoretical implications follow for the pragmatics of life-planning rhetoric?

The contribution of the article lies in offering a speech-act-based theoretical model for the analysis of goal-related discourse and in clarifying the linguistic constraints of the SMART template. The model is positioned as a conceptual scaffold for subsequent empirical, comparative, and translation-theoretic research.

2. Theoretical Framework and Analytical Approach

The discussion combines three theoretical frameworks. From speech-act theory, the article uses Searle's taxonomy for classifying the illocutionary force of goal-related utterances [Searle, 1969]. From frame semantics, the article uses Fillmore's inventory of slots to analyze the structural composition of goal-events [Fillmore, 1982]. From pragmatics more broadly, the article draws on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to characterize the interpersonal dimensions of motivational rhetoric [Brown & Levinson, 1987].

The analytical approach is qualitative. Illustrative examples are drawn from canonical motivational works and discussed in light of the three frameworks. Statistical generalization is reserved for separate empirical work. The aim is to articulate a coherent conceptual model that can scaffold subsequent investigation.

3. Linguistic Analysis

3.1. *The speech-act architecture of goal-related discourse*

Goal-related discourse in motivational English is organized around four illocutionary types operating in sequence. The first is the declarative: the speaker

formulates the goal through a performative utterance ("I declare my goal to be X"). Declarative force is typically reinforced through writing, dating, and witnessing - practices that motivational authors recommend to externalize the intention.

The second is the commissive: the speaker binds herself to the goal through an explicit commitment ("I will pursue this goal until completion"). Commissive force is typically reinforced through public announcement, accountability partners, and progress-tracking systems [Cialdini, 2007].

The third is the directive: the speaker - or the motivational author addressing the reader - issues commands to advance toward the goal ("Take the first step today"). Directive force is typically reinforced through specificity ("Take the first step today by sending this email") and through temporal anchoring.

The fourth is the assertive: the speaker reports on progress toward the goal ("I have completed the second milestone"). Assertive force participates in self-monitoring and supports the motivational psychology of incremental progress.

3.2. The SMART model as a linguistic-pragmatic template

The SMART model - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound - has become a near-canonical template for goal-formulation in English motivational discourse. Linguistically, the model can be analyzed as a constraint set on the declarative speech act of goal-formulation.

The Specific constraint requires lexical precision: vague goal-formulations ("I want to be healthier") are rejected in favor of precise ones ("I will walk 10,000 steps daily"). The Measurable constraint requires the inclusion of quantitative or observational criteria. The Achievable constraint requires modal calibration - the goal must be expressed in modal language that signals realistic confidence rather than wishful thinking.

The Relevant constraint requires explicit connection to broader values and identities, often achieved through subordinate clauses ("... because it supports my long-term wellbeing"). The Time-bound constraint requires temporal anchoring through deadlines and milestones. Together, the five constraints impose a tight linguistic template on the declarative goal-act.

The model is pragmatically powerful precisely because it offers a replicable template that converts diffuse aspirations into specific declaratives. It is also pragmatically constrained: not all volitional life-states submit easily to SMART formulation, and excessive reliance on the template can produce a discourse that is operationally precise but existentially impoverished.

3.3. Intention versus goal: a linguistic-pragmatic distinction

The lexical pair intention versus goal carries a subtle but consequential linguistic-pragmatic distinction. Intention emphasizes the agent's inner orientation; it is typically used with stative verbs (have an intention, hold an intention, set an

intention). Goal emphasizes the external target; it is typically used with dynamic verbs (set a goal, pursue a goal, achieve a goal).

Motivational authors exploit this distinction to structure their texts. The earlier sections of a typical motivational text often invite the reader to clarify intentions (the inner orientation); the later sections translate those intentions into goals (the external targets). The translation move is the genre's signature: it converts diffuse volitional states into actionable plans.

Linguistically, the translation is supported by specific constructions. Setting an intention typically uses present-tense first-person constructions ("I am the kind of person who..."); setting a goal typically uses future-tense or modal constructions ("I will complete X by Y"). The temporal shift carries a pragmatic shift from being to doing.

3.4. The interaction of speech acts and metaphors

Goal-related discourse is also organized through conceptual metaphors. The most common are GOAL IS A DESTINATION, GOAL IS A PEAK, and GOAL IS A FINISH LINE. Each metaphor activates a different aspectual profile: destination emphasizes arrival, peak emphasizes upward effort, finish line emphasizes competition and closure.

The metaphors interact with the speech-act architecture in coordinated ways. Declarative goal-formulation typically activates the DESTINATION metaphor ("My destination is X"). Commissive commitment typically activates the JOURNEY metaphor ("I will walk this path until completion"). Directive action-planning activates the FINISH LINE or PEAK metaphors ("Push toward the summit"). The interaction produces a multi-layered discourse in which the same goal is encountered through different metaphors at different stages of its pursuit.

3.5. Illustrative examples

Consider the construction "By December 31, I will have read 24 books - that is my commitment, and I will track it weekly" [Clear, 2018]. The construction enacts three speech acts in succession: a declarative (formulation), a commissive (commitment), and a directive (tracking practice). Linguistically, the declarative is anchored by the temporal phrase (By December 31), the commissive by the explicit performative (that is my commitment), and the directive by the future progressive with weekly frequency.

A second example: "Set the intention before you set the goal - first decide who you want to become, then decide what you will do" [Clear, 2018]. The construction articulates the intention-to-goal translation move, using lexical contrast (intention versus goal) and grammatical parallelism (decide who you want to become versus decide what you will do).

A third example illustrates the SMART template: "I will exercise at a moderate intensity for 30 minutes, four times per week, for the next three months, in order to improve my cardiovascular health". The construction satisfies all five SMART constraints - specificity (moderate intensity, 30 minutes), measurability (four times, three months), achievability (moderate not high intensity), relevance (cardiovascular health), and time-boundedness (next three months).

A further example demonstrates how the four-stage architecture operates in extended discourse: "This year, I have set five goals. I have committed to them in writing. I am taking daily actions toward each. I review my progress every Sunday" [Clear, 2018]. The construction enacts the full speech-act sequence - declarative (set), commissive (committed in writing), directive (taking daily actions), and assertive (review progress). The temporal markers (this year, daily, every Sunday) anchor each illocutionary type in a distinct temporal frame.

Linguistically, these examples illustrate that goal-discourse is not a sequence of independent utterances but a coordinated speech-act architecture in which each illocutionary type prepares the ground for the next. The model proposed in this article articulates this coordination as a theoretical principle, supporting subsequent investigation of goal-discourse across genres and languages [Searle, 1969].

4. Discussion

The speech-act-based model proposed above contributes to the theoretical typology of motivational discourse by clarifying how a single conceptual cluster (GOAL-INTENTION) participates in a coordinated illocutionary architecture. The architecture is not optional: it is what distinguishes motivational goal-discourse from related discourses such as project-management instruction or clinical goal-setting [Searle, 1969].

The model also illuminates the pragmatic constraints of the SMART template. The template's strength is its ability to convert diffuse aspirations into specific declaratives; its weakness is its tendency to constrain the kinds of life-states that can be expressed. A complete pragmatic theory of goal-discourse should therefore distinguish between SMART-compatible and SMART-resistant goals.

Two translation-theoretic implications follow. First, languages with different illocutionary inventories will realize goal-discourse differently. Languages where the commissive force is grammatically encoded (through dedicated verb forms or particles) will manage commitment differently than languages where commissive force is realized through periphrastic constructions.

A further theoretical observation concerns the temporal architecture of goal-related discourse. The declarative-commissive-directive-assertive sequence is not arbitrary but reflects a coherent temporal trajectory: the goal is first formulated, then committed to, then pursued, then monitored. The speech-act architecture thus encodes

a temporal projection of the agent's commitment, with each illocutionary type carrying a distinct temporal load.

The model also illuminates the relationship between linguistic and cognitive aspects of goal-pursuit. The discursive performance of goal-setting is not merely a verbal accompaniment to mental planning; it is the locus where the goal becomes an object of public commitment and accountability [Cialdini, 2007]. Without the speech-act architecture, the goal would remain a private mental state with limited motivational force.

Second, the SMART template, though originally English, has been exported to many languages and modified in each. A systematic translation-theoretic study would clarify how the five constraints are realized in different linguistic systems and where they encounter resistance.

The discussion has methodological limitations. It is interpretative rather than empirical, and the examples have been chosen for theoretical clarity rather than statistical representativeness. Subsequent empirical work will test the model against larger and more varied samples.

A further theoretical observation concerns the relationship between goal-discourse and the broader rhetorical tradition. The discursive performance of goal-setting shares certain features with classical performative speech acts (declarations of war, marriage, oaths), but the motivational genre adds a specific component: the self-addressed nature of the performative. The speaker is also the addressee, and the discourse organizes a kind of self-pact. This self-addressed structure has implications for accountability, for the interaction with social audiences, and for the linguistic devices used to reinforce commitment.

An additional point concerns the cognitive consequences of the speech-act architecture. Recent psychological research suggests that the public formulation of goals - through writing or speaking - has measurable effects on goal-attainment. The model articulated in this article clarifies the linguistic basis of this effect: the public performative act transforms an internal mental state into an object of social commitment, with corresponding implications for self-regulation and accountability [Cialdini, 2007].

5. Conclusion

This article articulated a speech-act-based theoretical model for the analysis of the GOAL-INTENTION cluster in contemporary English motivational discourse. The model identifies four illocutionary types operating in sequence - declarative, commissive, directive, assertive - and characterizes the SMART template as a linguistic-pragmatic constraint set on the declarative goal-act [Clear, 2018].

The model contributes to the typology of intention-related discourse and to the pragmatics of life-planning rhetoric. Future theoretical work will refine the model by

considering closely related concepts (commitment, milestone, vision); future empirical work will test it against larger samples of motivational discourse.

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