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# A Usage-Based Analysis of Indirect Directives in English (3): *I wonder if you*

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**Abstract:** The present paper deals with the *I wonder if you VP* construction in English, with a special focus on its use for conveying a request as opposed to genuine information question. The paper has three aims: (i) to define the nature of request made with this construction from the viewpoint of the types of verbs that frequently appear; (ii) to characterize this directive construction within the framework of the 6-parameter analysis of FORCE EXERTION (Takahashi 2012), a theory originally designed to capture the difference in illocutionary force among different imperative utterances; and (iii) to describe the ways in which this construction functions, and interacts with other directive constructions, in actual discourse.

It is argued that *I wonder if you* is prototypically an information-seeking device when it is used as directive. Furthermore, quite unlike the expression *I'd appreciate it if you* (Takahashi 2014b), its appearance is not restricted to the core or conclusive segment of directive discourse but rather the construction may occur in an introductory part of the entire directive discourse to communicate to the addressee that the speaker is about to make a request.

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## 1 Introduction

The present paper continues to report on my long-term research project, CLAUD (or A Cognitive Linguistic Analysis of Indirect Directives in English).<sup>1</sup> It focuses on the *I wonder if you* construction, which is formally a declarative but functionally a question or request. In this paper, we are primarily concerned with this sentence used for conveying a request as opposed to genuine information question. To the extent that there is a gap between sentence structure and its meaning, the construction *I wonder if you* in directive use can be appropriately classified as an “indirect” directive construction (Searle 1975).

Despite the wealth of literature, the treatment of “indirectness” in (directive) speech acts still

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generates disagreement and the distributional patterns of indirect request forms and their motivations remain largely unexplained within and across languages (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987, Watt 2003, Kádár and Haugh 2013, among others), though we do not address the problems involved in the notion of “indirectness”. This paper has the following three aims. The first aim is to define the nature of request made with the *I wonder if you* from the viewpoint of the types of verbs that frequently appear. The second aim is to characterize this directive construction within the framework of the 6-parameter analysis of FORCE EXERTION (Takahashi 2012), a theory originally designed to capture the difference in the nature and degree of illocutionary force among different imperative utterances. The third is to describe the ways in which this construction functions, and interacts with other directive constructions, in actual discourse. It is argued that *I wonder if you* is not simply a more casual, more tentative directive construction than other lengthy directive constructions such as *I’d appreciate it if you* as is commonly assumed; rather, this construction is prototypically an information-seeking device. Furthermore, unlike the expression *I’d appreciate it if you* (Takahashi 2014b), its appearance is not restricted to the core or conclusive segment of directive discourse but is more ubiquitous, in that the construction may occur in an introductory part of the entire directive discourse to communicate to the addressee that the speaker is about to make a request.

Section 2 provides an analysis of *I wonder if you* in quantitative terms, by observing tokens from fictional stories as well as those from COCA. Section 3 offers a qualitative analysis to explain the ways in which *I wonder if you* is similar to and different from other directive constructions, followed by a conversation analysis of this construction. Section 4 is the conclusion.

## 2 A quantitative analysis of *I wonder if you*

This section looks at the tokens of this construction taken from COCA. There were 433 tokens of *I wonder if you* in this corpus, and 134 were judged as transparently directive as illustrated in (1) below, while the remaining 299 tokens were either non-directive as illustrated in (2), or indeterminate in this regard:

- (1) <directive> *I wonder if you*
- a. I asked at the reception, speaking softly. “I wonder if you can help me? My mother’s got what we think might be early-onset ...” (2012, FIC, NewStatesman)
  - b. Thank you, nice to be here. Thanks. — I wonder if you could tell us about one of the people I interviewed, Crystal(ph), ... (2011, SPOK, NPR\_TalkNat)
- (2) <non-directive> *I wonder if you*
- a. ... I wonder if you are interested to know that both my husband and I back you and ... (2008, SPOK, NBC\_MeetPress)
  - b. When I look at your eyes, I wonder if you have the problem, I’m a retired reading specialist, and ... (2008, SPOK, MAG SatEvenPost)

As expected, there is good reason to assume that just like other indirect directives, the

expression *I wonder if you* has a strong tendency to convey a request when a non-stative verb appears.

Table 1 lists all the verb types and their token numbers that appeared with *I wonder if you* in directive use in COCA, and Table 2 lists top 16 frequent verbs that occurred with this construction.

**Table 1. All the verb types that appeared with *I wonder if you* for directive use in COCA: 64 types**

address 3, allow (me), amplify, answer 3, ask, assure, be so kind (to stop by), be kind enough to step into/go to, be willing to go and fetch, bring 3, care to (join me), change, come, comment 4, describe 4, discuss 2, do (me a favor) 3, do us the favor/a conjure/ me the honor of, dwell, elaborate, excuse, expand, explain 9, extract, fax, fetch, fill 2, focus 2, get 2, give me 6/us 5, go 2, grace, have, help 12, interpret, join, leave, (would) like to comment, loan, look, make (a pledge) 1, manage to see me, play, provide, put, read 12, reflect, respond 4, say, sell, send 2, share 2, show, sketch, sign, sit, spare, speak 3, stay 3, step (into), stop (by), take 5, talk 8, tell 23, try, update, use 2, visit, wash

**Table 2. A list of most frequent verbs with *I wonder if you* in COCA: 134 tokens (2014.6.28)**

(1) *tell 23 (me 10, us 12, 1)	(8) take 5
(2) give 12 (me 6, us 5, 1)	(10) be 4
(2) help 12 (me 8, us 3, 1)	(10) *describe 4
(4) *read 12	(10) *respond 4
(5) *explain 9	(13) *address 3
(6) *talk 8	(13) *answer 3
(7) do 6	(13) *speak 3
(8) *comment 5	(* = verbs of communication)

(=Table 4 in Takahashi 2014b)

The main findings can be summarized as follows. First, according to this table, *tell* is the most frequent verb with *I wonder if you*, accounting for 17.2% or 23 out of 134 tokens. In fact, *I wonder if* distinguishes itself among all directive constructions in the highest frequency with which *tell* occurs, followed by the form *can you* with which the verb occurs 14.5% of the data (29 out of 197 tokens) (Takahashi 2014b). Some examples are given below:

- (3) a. And I wonder if you could tell me, on each day we shopped, whether it's ... (2002, SPOK, NBC\_Dateline)  
 b. I wonder if you can tell us how advanced the administration's plans are, ... (2002, SPOK, Fox\_Sunday)  
 c. And I wonder if you could tell me about the moment of buying these slaves. (1996, SPOK, NPR\_Weekly)

Next, another related finding merits attention. It is not only the verb *tell* but verbs of communication as a whole that *I wonder if you* strongly favor. Thus, in addition to *tell*, the verbs *read*, *explain*, *talk* and *comment* as well as *describe*, *respond* occur frequently with this construction. Verbs of communication account for nearly 60% of all the tokens of the request with the form *I wonder if you* (used as directive), as the examples below illustrate:

- (4) a. I wonder if you would read for us the section where Sam's mother find ... (2007, SPOK,

NPR\_ATC)

- b. I wonder if you can explain for us what that model is, and why it appears ... (2005, SPOK, NPR\_ATC)
- c. And, as a result of this, I wonder if you could comment about attributing our modern society and culture to Jewish ... (1998, SPOK, NPR\_TalkNation)
- d. I wonder if you might discuss each one of those areas of ... (2003, SPOK, ACAD, Roeper\_Review)
- e. I wonder if you can talk about that, and thank you again. (2007, SPOK, NPR, Talk\_Nation)

This is not necessarily the case with other directive constructions. With *I'd (would) appreciate it if you*, for example, it is only the verbs *tell* and *address* that appear so-so frequently; other verbs of communication are relatively rare (Takahashi 2014b).

Third, *help* is the second-most frequent verb that occurs with *I wonder if you*; with other directive constructions, this verb is far less frequent:

- (5) a. It's just a simple safety inspection, partner. Nothing invasive. Now I wonder if you could help us out. I have a few questions I'd like ... (2007, FIC, Analog)
- b. I wonder if you can help me make sense of one thing, Dr. Tindall. (2004, SPOK, NPR\_DayBreak)

According to my recent work, there was no token of *help* with *I'd (would) appreciate it if you*, although the verb was relatively frequent with the directive form *can you* (Takahashi 2014b).

Finally, the verbs *tell*, *give* and *help* predominantly occur with a first person pronoun. In fact, 22 out of 23 tokens of *tell* with *I wonder if* took the form *I wonder if you can tell me/us*, 11 out of 12 tokens of *give* appeared in the form *I wonder if you can give me/us*, and 11 out of 12 tokens of *help* occurred as *I wonder if you can help me/us*. In a way, *I wonder if you* can be said to behave quite analogously to the imperative in that *tell* and *give* are not only among the most frequent verbs but also strongly prefer to combine with a first person pronoun. In another way, however, this indirect directive behaves very differently from the imperative in that the verb *let* is among the most frequent with the imperative but far less frequent with *I wonder if*, on the one hand, and the verb *help* is not very frequent with the imperative but quite frequent with *I wonder if*, on the other.

It was observed in Takahashi 2012 that the more strongly the whole clause evokes the conception of speaker-benefit/desirability, the more frequently the *V+me/us* structure occurs with the imperative. It can be said that the indirect directive construction *I wonder if you* also overtly manifests this tendency, though the specific set of verbs that actually combine with a first person object subtly differ across different directive constructions.

### 3 A qualitative analysis: A six-parameter analysis of Force Exertion

This section attempts to clarify the commonalities as well as differences between *I wonder if*

*you* and other directive constructions.

### 3-1 How *I wonder if you* is similar to other indirect directive constructions

One obvious feature that *I wonder if you* shares with other indirect directive constructions resides in the fact that all the uses are *genuinely directive* in one way or another. All this means is that the speaker construes the realization of the propositional content as more or less desirable and beneficial (primarily for S and secondarily for A, for both S and A, or for some third party) and he or she also either believes or does not believe the addressee is capable of carrying out what is said.

With indirect directive constructions, there is no such thing as a “nondirective use,” which is readily available with the imperative as (6) below illustrates. Thus, concessions or reluctant permission or wishes are simply unavailable with indirect directive constructions including *I wonder if*, as the examples of (6) and (7) below demonstrate:

#### (6) <imperative>

a. You were really worried about me! **Yell all you want**, you can't bluff me (Example from Ohashi 2014).

<indirect directive constructions>

b. You were really worried about me! **\*I wonder if you can yell all you want**, you can't bluff me.

c. You were really worried about me! **\*I'd appreciate it if you can yell all you want**, you can't bluff me.

d. You were really worried about me! **\*Can you yell all you want**, you can't bluff me.

e. You were really worried about me! **\*Will you yell all you want**, you can't bluff me.

f. You were really worried about me! **\*Why don't you yell all you want**, you can't bluff me.

#### (7) <imperative>

a. Have a nice day.

<indirect directive constructions>

b. **\*I wonder if you can/could have a nice day.**

c. **\*I'd appreciate it if you can/could have a nice day.**

d. **\*Can/could you have a nice day?**

e. **\*Will/Would you have a nice day.**

f. **\*Why don't you have a nice day?**

Example (8) below illustrates one standard use of *I wonder if you* used as a directive:

(8) [S: Gregory Halston, jewelry store manger (of Parker & Parker) in London, who is trying desperately to obtain a ten-carat emerald for his American client.

A: Contessa Marissa, an Italian woman who calls Parker & Parker to inform that she possesses a ten-carat emerald inherited from her grandmother and wants to sell it.]

'I have an emerald that has been in my family for many years. It is a peccato — a pity —

but I am in a situation now where I am forced to sell it.' ...  
 'Signore? You are looking for a ten-carat emerald, si?'  
 'Yes.'  
 'I have a ten-carat verde — green — Colombian.' ...  
 'Si. I have a ten-carat grass-green Colombian. Would you be interested in that?'  
 'I might be,' he said carefully. **'I wonder if you could drop by and let me have a look at it.'**  
 'No, scusi, I am afraid I am very busy right now. We are preparing a party at the embassy for my husband. Perhaps next week I could --'  
 No! Next week would be too late. 'May I come to see you?' He tried to keep the eagerness out of his voice. 'I could come up now.'  
 (*If Tomorrow Comes*, p.348, No.4558)

In the social situation of this directive discourse, there is obviously some distance between the two interlocutors as well as some tentativeness in speech while not much formality is involved. Next, let us examine the force exertion of the utterance *I wonder if you* in the discourse (8) from the perspective of the theory of 6 parameters for Force Exertion, Table 3 below illustrates this formula.

**Table 3. Six Parameters for Force Exertion**

FORCE EXERTION:	HIGH	LOW	ZERO	MINUS LOW	M. HIGH
i. DESIRE	[+2]	[+1]	[0]	[-1]	[-2]
ii. CAPABILITY	/	[+1]	[0]	/	/
iii. POWER	/	[+1]	[0]	[-1]	/
iv. COST	[+2]	[+1]	[0]	/	/
v. BENEFIT	[+2]	[+1]	[0]	[-1]	[-2]
vi. OBLIGATION	[+2]	[+1]	[0]	[-1]	[-2]
Total Score:	[+10]	~~~~~	~~~~~	~~~~~	[-7]

(Based on Table 3-1 in Takahashi 2012: 77)

By applying this formula to the directive utterance *I wonder if you could drop by and let me have a look at it* in (8), we obtain the following calculation:

**Table 4. The Force Exertion of *I wonder if you* in example (8)**

DESIRE:	[+2]
CAPABILITY:	[0]
POWER:	[0]
COST:	[+2]
BENEFIT:	[+2]
OBLIGATION:	[0]
TOTAL:	[+6]

The context of (8) above makes it apparent that the speaker wants the addressee to actually visit him so that he can examine first-hand the authenticity of the “ten-carat emerald” the addressee claims she possesses (a high degree of DESIRE). Next, the speaker has no way of knowing whether the addressee is currently capable of visiting his store (CAPABILITY not

readily assumed). There is no apparent POWER gap between speaker and addressee, while the COST of the request is evidently quite high, since a considerable amount of physical action and time is required. It is also clear from this context that the addressee's action will be extremely beneficial for the speaker while in contrast the addressee is hardly OBLIGED to comply; in fact, the addressee rejected the speaker's suggestion as later interactions reveal.

Example (9) below represents another typical usage of *I wonder if you*:

(9) [S: Thomas Henry (the principal of a middle school); A: Dana Evans (the mother of the pupil who attends this middle school), Telephone conversation]

“Good afternoon, Miss Evans. **I wonder if you could stop by and see me.**”

“Certainly. In an hour or two, I'm—”

“I would suggest now, if that's possible.”

“I'll be there.” (*The Sky is Falling*, p.34)

**Table 5. The Force Exertion of  
*I wonder if you* in example (9)**

DESIRE:	[+2]
CAPABILITY:	[0]or[+1]
POWER:	[+1]
COST:	[+2]
BENEFIT:	[+2]
OBLIGATION:	[+1]
TOTAL:	[+8]~[+9]

Here again there is some social distance between the two communicators and some formality is involved, though the speaker sounds more insistent here than in (8).

Finally, as far as the present data are concerned, the choice between *I wonder if you can/could* and *can/could you* is based primarily on the consideration of social distance. Thus, in the majority of the cases the former construction is chosen when there is some social distance between speaker and addressee, as examples (8) and (9) above illustrate. Only in one instance (out of 12 tokens) was the *I wonder if you* form uttered between family members, as (10) below illustrates. In this discourse, the speaker alternates between two directive forms, depending on the specific nature of the request made:

(10) [S: Dana's mother; A: Dana Evans, a 27-year-old professional anchorwoman (Telephone conversation)]

“Hello.”

“Dana, darling.”

It was her mother. ... “My friends and I listened to your broadcast last night. You were very good.”

“Thank you.”

“Although we thought you could have brightened up the news a bit.”

“Yes, All the things you talk about are so depressing. Can't you find something cheerful to discuss?”

“I’ll certainly see what I can do, Mother.”

“That would be nice. By the way, I’m running just a little short of cash this month. **I wonder if you could help me out again?**”

... It seemed that she was always short of cash. The monthly allowance Dana gave her mother never seemed to be enough.

“Do you gamble, Mother?” (*The Sky is Falling*, p.31)

(=Example 14b in Takahashi 2012: 105)

While chatting with her daughter, this speaker chooses the *can’t you* construction in her first directive utterance (i.e. *Can’t you find something cheerful to discuss?*) but switches to *I wonder if you* when she utters her second directive (i.e. *I wonder if you could help me out again?*). This shift in directive strategy seems to reflect the high COST imposed in the second directive, together with the absence of OBLIGATION for her addressee to comply (cf. Takahashi 2012: chapter 5). One may say that in the speaker’s estimate the huge gap between COST and OBLIGATION involved in this request does not license the use of a shorter and simpler form such as *can/could you help me out again?*<sup>2</sup>

### 3-2 How *I wonder if you* differs from other indirect directive constructions

Next, we discuss how *I wonder if you* differs from other indirect directive constructions. One important feature of *I wonder if you*, as seen from the perspective of the six-parameter analysis of Force Exertion, that sets this directive construction apart from others (especially, *I’d appreciate it if you*) resides in its “polysemous feature.” The construction comes in a somewhat wider variety of degrees and natures of Force Exertion. It was found in Takahashi 2014b that the average value of Force Exertion of *I’d appreciate it if you* was [+7.8], which can be said to be quite high. The type of directive act was strictly restricted to a genuine serious request in considerably formal situations as far as *I’d appreciate it if you* was concerned.

In stark contrast, *I wonder if you* is more versatile, being used not only (typically) for a genuine request but (less typically) for an offer or suggestion, a speech act associated more with the addressee’s benefit. As a result, the average score of Force Exertion of *I wonder if you* in my data is somewhat lower (i.e. [+6.3]) than *I’d appreciate it if you*. The next example illustrates a less typical use of *I wonder if you* that is used to convey an offer or mild suggestion:

(11) [S: Dr. Joel Hirschberg with the Children’s Foundation

A: Dana Evans, who is raising an adopted son.]

“... This foundation has been set up to help children from war-torn country. ... From what Mr. Cromwell told me, your son certainly comes under that heading. **I wonder if you would like to bring him in to see me?**” (*The Sky is Falling*, p.142) (=Example 8 in Takahashi 2014b)

2 In Takahashi (2012: 110), the following general principle was proposed to account for the choice of directive strategy: “The higher the degree of COST and the lower the degree of OBLIGATION to comply, the longer and/or more tentative a directive construction becomes.”

**Table 6. The Force Exertion of  
*I wonder if you* in example (11)**

DESIRE:	[+1]
CAPABILITY:	[+1]
POWER:	[0]
COST:	[+2]
BENEFIT:	[-1] or [-2]
OBLIGATION:	[0]
TOTAL:	[+2] ~ [+3]

What merits attention here is that the parameter of BENEFIT obtains a minus value, which is reflective of the fact that quite unlike the great majority of directives, the whole utterance seems “altruistic,” since it is the addressee’s benefit not the speaker’s that the addressee’s act is expected to bring about. This feature contributes greatly to the low numerical score of the utterance of *I wonder if you* in the discourse (11).

Furthermore, in one token, *I wonder if you* combines with another indirect directive *would you mind Ving* to constitute what might be termed a *blended* directive construction, as (12) below illustrates:

(12) [S: Betty Lou Taft (nicknamed Honey), a high school student

A: Mr. Janson (her math teacher); Attempting to get a good grade in mathematics, Honey seduces her math teacher]

Honey had always had poor grades in mathematics, and she knew she had failed badly on her final test. Her mathematics teacher, Mr. Janson, was a bachelor and lived near the school. Honey paid him a visit one evening. He opened the door and looked at her in surprise.

“Honey! What are you doing here?”

“I need your help,” Honey said. “My father will kill me if I fail your course. I brought some math problems, and **I wonder if you would mind going over them with me.**”

He hesitated a moment. “This is unusual, but ... very well.”

Mr. Janson liked Honey. She was not like the other girls in his class. They were raucous and indifferent, while Honey was sensitive and caring, always eager to please. He wished that she had more of an aptitude for mathematics. (*Nothing Lasts Forever*, p.112, No.1259) (=Example 7 in Takahashi 2014b)

**Table 7. The Force Exertion of  
*I wonder if you* in example (12)**

DESIRE:	[+2]
CAPABILITY:	[+1]
POWER:	[-1]
COST:	[+2]
BENEFIT:	[+2]
OBLIGATION:	[0]
TOTAL:	[+6]

One may say that in this context, the choice of this mixed directive construction is partly motivated by the total absence of OBLIGATION on the part of the addressee to comply with this

sudden, costly request. In addition, the addressee's being a more powerful social position seems to be another motivating factor for the choice of this directive strategy.

The finding obtained above is congruent with the observation of Curl and Drew (2008: section 4), who investigated the syntactic forms speakers use when making requests in telephone calls between family and friends as well as out-of-hours calls to the doctor and calls from private homes to service organizations. They find that speakers quite often formatted requests as *I wonder if* in these settings and that they do so to avoid displays of entitlement to the requested objects or action. That is, this distributional pattern is not straightforwardly linked with the sociolinguistic speech setting but rather with the speakers' understanding of "anticipated contingencies" associated with their request such as the recipient's ability to grant the request.

#### 4 The discourse functions of *I wonder if you*

This section recapitulates some of the analyses made in Takahashi 2014b: section 4.2), although new data are added. There it was argued that the difference between *I'd appreciate it if you* and *I wonder if you* cannot be reduced to a simple formality vs. informality as well as distance/non-distance contrast. Rather, there is a subtle but notable difference in specific locations in discourse as well as pragmatic functions. Simply put, while *I'd appreciate it if you* is strictly restricted to communicating the core and/or conclusive message in a stretch of directive discourse, *I wonder if you* is not. Thus, *I wonder if* may not only be used to convey the core, specific request but also to communicate the introductory message of the entire directive that immediately follows.

Observe:

(13) [S: Dr. Judd Stevens, a psychonanlyst; A: the secretary of Harrison Burke (Harrison Burke is one of Dr. Stevens' patients)]

[Context: Two people closely involved with Dr. Stevens have been killed. He wonders whether one of his patients is responsible, so as a way of examining the alibis of his patients, he calls the office of Harrison Burke, who he believes is a hopeless paranoiac being convinced that everyone is out to kill him.]

"International Steel." The voice had the remote, impersonal timbre of an automation.

"Mr. Harrison Burke, please."

"Mr. Harrison Burke...Thank you...One moment, please..."

Judd was gambling on Burke's secretary answering the phone. If she had stepped out for a moment and Burke answered it himself... "Mr. Burke's office." It was a girl's voice.

"This is Dr. Judd Stevens. **I wonder if you could give me some information?**"

"Oh, yes, Dr. Stevens!" There was a note of relief in her voice, mixed with apprehension. She must have known that Judd was Burke's analyst. Was she counting on him for help? What had Burke been doing to upset her?

"It's about Mr. Burke's bill..." Judd began.

"His bill?" She made no effort to conceal her disappointment.

Judd went on quickly. "My receptionist is—is no longer with me, and I'm trying to

straighten out the books. I see that she charged Mr. Burke for a nine-thirty appointment this past Monday, and **I wonder if you'd mind checking his calendar for that morning?**"

"Just a moment," she said. There was disapproval in her voice now. He could read her mind. ... "I'm afraid your receptionist made a mistake, Dr. Stevens," she said tartly. "Mr. Burke couldn't have been at your office Monday morning."

"Are you sure?" persisted Judd. ...(*Naked Face*, p.92, No.1076/1082)

In this discourse, the construction *I wonder if you* occurs twice. The first utterance *I wonder if you could give me some information?* announces to the addressee that the speaker is about to make a request and the nature of request pertains to providing a piece of information he needs. At this point, what specific information he needs is left unspecified. In such a case, this directive utterance can be said to serve as a prelude to the core directive speech act that follows, which might correspond to "pre-sequences" in the sense used in Schegloff 1988. In contrast, the second utterance *I wonder if you'd mind checking his calendar for that morning?* conveys the specific information the speaker wants to obtain. In this regard, these two tokens of *I wonder if* play two different functional roles in this directive discourse.

In (14) below, *I wonder if you* takes care of the introductory part while *I'd appreciate it if you* expresses the core part of directive discourse; there is a division of labor here:

(14) [S: Jeff Stevens, a master con man; A: purser]

'No, don't bother. The cash will be fine,' Jeff assured him. '**I wonder if you could do me a favor?** The mail boat comes out to meet the ship before it docks, doesn't it?'

'Yes, sir. We're expecting it at six A.M.'

'I'd appreciate it if you could arrange for me to leave on the mail boat. My mother is seriously ill, and I'd like to get to her before it's' — his voice dropped — 'before it's too late.'

'Oh, I'm dreadfully sorry, Mr Stevens. Of course I can handle that for you. I'll make the arrangements with customs.' (*If Tomorrow Comes*, p.326, No.4259)

In my data, a few tokens exhibited the pattern of "*I wonder if you* (PRELUDE) followed by *I'd appreciate it you* (CORE)," but in not a single token was this order reversed.

## 5 Conclusions

This paper has investigated the form *I wonder if you* used as a directive from the perspectives of frequent verb types, the 6-parameter for Force Exertion and discourse function, by examining tokens from two different corpora. The main points made in this paper can be summarized as follows.

First, *I wonder if you* strongly prefers to combine with a verb of communication, a feature that sets this construction apart from most other indirect directive constructions. The combination between *I wonder if you* and this verb type accounts for approximately 60% of the data (134 tokens). Included are *tell*, *read*, *explain*, *talk*, *comment*, *describe*, *respond*, *addressee*, *answer*, and others.

Second, *I wonder if you* behaves closely like the imperative and other directive constructions, in that some monotransitive as well as ditransitive verbs strongly favor a first person pronoun object. The verbs *tell*, *give* and *help*, which are among the most frequent with *I wonder if you*, strongly prefer to occur with *me* or *us*. *Help* also exhibited this tendency, though the structure *let me* as well as the verb *let* itself was far less frequent, quite unlike the imperative.

Third, *I wonder if you* is somewhat more versatile in the kinds of speech acts the construction is capable of performing, since it can convey not only a genuine request but also (though rarely) an offer or suggestion. As a consequence, its average strength of directive force is somewhat weaker than another lengthy but formal variant *I'd appreciate it if you*.

Finally, *I wonder if you* is not simply a more informal alternative to *I'd appreciate it you*, as is sometimes assumed. Quite unlike *I'd appreciate it you*, *I wonder if you* is not only used for conveying the core or specific request speakers make but also for serving as a prelude to the specific request that follows.

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## Appendix

Tokens of *I wonder if you* in full contexts that did not appear in the main text:

S: Dr. Page Taylor; A: state pharmaceutical board

[Being convinced that Ben Mallory (Kate's boyfriend) used a sedative and murdered Kate (one of her roommates and colleagues), she is desperately trying to find evidence of that. She suspects that Ben had a prescription filled

at a pharmacy in San Francisco on Sunday when he has much free time for that.]

Paige picked up the telephone and called the state pharmaceutical board.

“This is Dr. Taylor,” Paige said. “Last Sunday, a friend of mine left a prescription at a pharmacy. She asked me to pick it up for her, but I can’t remember the name of the pharmacy. I wonder if you could help me.”

“Well, I don’t see how, doctor. If you don’t know ...”

“Most drugstores are closed on Sunday, aren’t they?”

“Yes, but ...”

“I’d appreciate it if you could give me a list of those that were open.”

There was a pause. “Well, if it’s important ...”

“It’s very important,” Paige assured her.

“Hold on, please.” (*Nothing Lasts Forever*, p.354, No.3875)

DESIRE:	[+2]
CAPABILITY:	[+1]
POWER:	[+1]
COST:	[+2]
BENEFIT:	[+2]
OBLIGATION:	[0]or[+1]
TOTAL:	[+8]~[+9]

S: Dana Evans, an anchorwoman who is investigating the death of Mr Winthrop; A: Joan Sinisi (former secretary of Mr Winthrop.)

‘Oh! I watch your broadcast every night. I’m a tremendous fan of yours.’

‘Thank you,’ Dana said. ‘That’s very flattering. **I wonder if you could spare a few minutes of your time.** Miss Sinisi. I’d like to talk to you.’

‘You would?’ There was a happily surprised note in her voice.

‘Well, certainly. Would you like to come here?’ (*The Sky is Falling*, No.973)

DESIRE:	[+2]
CAPABILITY:	[0]or[+1]
POWER:	[0]or[+1]
COST:	[+1]or[+2]
BENEFIT:	[+2]
OBLIGATION:	[0]
TOTAL:	[+5]~[+8]

S: Dana Evans

A: Mary Daley (housekeeper who is going to be hired by Dana Evans)  
(Telephone conversation)

“Mrs. Daley?”

“Yes. This is herself.” ... “Mrs. Hudson said you might be needing someone to take care of your son.”

“That’s right,” Dana said. **I wonder if you could drop by early tomorrow morning—say, seven o’clock—so we can talk?**  
(*The Sky is Falling*, p.167)

DESIRE:	[+2]
CAPABILITY:	[0]or[+1]
POWER:	[0]
COST:	[+2]
BENEFIT:	[+1]or[+2]
OBLIGATION:	[0]or[+1]
TOTAL:	[+5]~[+8]

S: A man, who says he is a big fan of Dana Evans (anchor woman);

A: Dana Evans[When Dana reaches the baggage carousel, a man standing nearby was watching her. The man approaches her]

‘Dana Evans?’ He had a thick Slovak accent.

‘Yes ...’

He broke into a broad smile and said excitedly, ‘You are my biggest fan! You watch me on television all the time.’ ...

‘I wonder if you would be so pleasant to give me your autograph?’

‘Of course.’ (*The Sky is Falling*, No.289)

DESIRE:	[+2]
CAPABILITY:	[+1]
POWER:	[-1]
COST:	[+2]
BENEFIT:	[+2]
OBLIGATION:	[0]
TOTAL:	[+6]