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"Send me a pen": Sociopragmatic variation in teenage request formulations in the classroom

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Abstract

This study examines variation in request realisations among teenage students in an urban secondary school classroom environment as a function of gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status. The quantitative, speech act theoretic analysis is complemented by consideration of politeness and rapport-management issues and based on data elicited by a discourse completion task (DCT) alongside a smaller sample of naturally occurring speech. The possible influence of students' differential attitudes to the school as an institution is also considered. Clear gender differences are found, as well as some evidence of variation by ethnicity and socio-economic status. The relative strengths of the two data collection instruments are assessed. It is suggested that DCT-elicited data offer advantages for control of sociolinguistic variables, and that although it does not precisely reflect natural speech it can yield valuable insight into speakers' perceptions of what is appropriate to a given hearer. The field-note and audio-recording instrument, whilst providing more authentic data, is weakened by the difficulty of obtaining an adequate corpus of request realisations from an unbiased sample of speakers.

Introduction

Research aims

The primary aim of this study is to investigate pragmatic variation in the formulation of the request speech act by teenage speakers of varying ethnicity, socio-economic status and gender in a classroom context. In particular, it is hypothesized that the white, middle-class group of students will exhibit greater variation as a function of request recipient. In the service of this aim, the opportunity will be taken to appraise the usefulness of a commonly used data collection instrument, the discourse completion task, compared to recordings of naturally occurring talk.

Background

Talk in a school classroom in modern, urban London is interesting because it represents what one might term a "semi-institutional setting". It is institutional insofar as it is "structured through institution-specific tasks and goals, which make certain institutional roles, topics, and actions available and impose constraints on others" (Kasper, 2008, p. 282).

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Nevertheless, at different times during a lesson, and for the different participants, the nature of the interactions will vary between the fairly formal, structured and explicitly rule-governed and the relatively unstructured and conversational.

Further, as Eckert (2003, p. 112) observes, "The long-term confinement of large numbers of people of diverging backgrounds and interests to a surprisingly small space with considerable constraints on general behavior gives adolescent life a special intensity."

The subjects of this study attend a large, mixed comprehensive school of about 1,300 pupils, located in an area of London with a highly diverse population, which is reflected in the school's social and ethnic makeup. This makes it well suited for the study of sociolinguistic variation in relation to young peoples' speech.

In this setting, children of middle or higher socio-economic status and white English ethnicity comprise an interesting group. Whilst they represent the dominant social group in wider British society, their position in this mixed, urban school community is less clear. They are likely to have been encouraged to see education as an important contributor to their future success (see Eckert's studies below.) But the resulting imperative to conformity with institutional expectations may often come into conflict with their socialisation needs and the demands of an urban culture saturated peer group. It may be expected that this tension will find some degree of linguistic expression.

There has been, for example, anecdotal evidence from teachers' and the researcher's own experience that these white, middle-class students generally exhibit a greater tendency to vary their speech style with the hearer, than do their peers in other groups. This is exemplified by the contrasting requests (drawn from the data elicited as part of this study):

To teacher "I don't have a ruler. Can I use one, please?"

To peer "Send me a pen."

Such variation is the main concern of this research.

Literature review

Over forty years of research has repeatedly found language variation to be associated with sociological variables. Empirically grounded research such as Labov's study of the distribution of a feature of pronunciation across social strata in New York (Labov, 1966) or Trudgill's work on *The Social Differentiation of English in Norwich* (Trudgill, 1974) has rightly been influential. Social class, despite the changing conceptualisations of the term, has consistently been found to correlate with certain linguistic features, including phonological, as in Labov's work, grammatical (Cheshire, 1982), and lexical features (Horvath, 1985).

Until quite recently, sociolinguistics has tended to concentrate on

adult language. Stenström, Andersen and Hasund note that "So far, teenage language has not been given the attention in linguistic circles that it merits" (Stenström et al., 2002, p. x). Child language is much studied, often for the insights it gives into language development. Adult language may be regarded as sufficiently "finished" to be the natural territory for comparative linguistics, variationist sociolinguistics and the study of "typical" discourse. But as Stenström et al. point out "[t]eenage talk is fascinating" (Stenström et al., 2002, p. x). It influences adult speech both synchronically, as a conduit for linguistic innovation, and diachronically, as a means of establishing and practising the identity that is then carried into adulthood. For these reasons teenage talk is fertile ground for sociolinguistic study.

Issues in teenage language use

Language and social class

In a trenchant critique of the US high school system, Eckert (1988) identified variation in language use between broadly middle-class ("Jock") and working-class ("Burnout") groups of students having its roots in the normative pressures brought to bear on them by the school system and wider society. These pressures result from the historically unique tendency of industrial societies to "remove adolescents from a heterogeneous society and isolate them into age-segregated institutions that by and large focus on the training of the future middle class and marginalize those headed for the blue collar work force" (Eckert, 1988, p. 189). For Eckert, variation along socio-economic axes is primarily a response to differing expectations of students, both from the institution and indeed from students themselves, in particular with regard to their plans for adult life.

Eckert observes that "while the cohort perceives the opposition between the Jock and Burnout categories in terms of differences in interests, attitude toward authority and schoolwork, and a variety of symbolic behavior such as dress, demeanor, and substance use, there are deeper differences in social network structure and norms that reflect the spheres in which the two categories function" (Eckert, 1988, p. 189).

So, how does the nature of the school institution produce the quite dramatic effects, including variable distribution of phonological patterns, that she reports? Eckert sees the process as one of negotiation. School provides a "comprehensive social sphere away from home" but requires in return that students endorse the "norms of the school, and the overriding authority of those who run it" (Eckert, 1988, p. 190). Some students accept this bargain because they see the practices and structures of the school environment as reflective of the adult institutions in which they later see themselves. On the other hand, those same skills and practices are "maladaptive in the blue-collar workplace" (Eckert, 1988, p. 190). As a result, students adopt patterns of speech that reflect their desire to associate themselves with, or disassociate themselves from, the norms

of the school micro-society and by extension the middle-class community it feeds.

Importantly, for the present study,

> Adolescents' anxiety over the loss of ascriptive family status leads them to cleave particularly tightly to their social groups and to monitor each other's behaviour closely for signs of disaffection. The rigid group conformity that arises in adolescence as a function of identity development makes adolescent norms tighter than adult norms, and can be expected to exert greater linguistic pressure on their members. (Eckert, 1988, p. 198)

For Gee, Allen, and Clinton, also, measurable differences in the speech of teens from differing backgrounds reflect "the material realities of the contexts of their lives and the different ways they construe their worlds" (Gee et al., 2001, p. 176). Their US-based study applied discourse analytic methods to speech data recorded in interviews with teenagers from working-class and from upper-middle-class backgrounds. They closely examined the kinds of statements their informants were making about themselves as well as the motifs and broader narrative features of their discourse. Despite the small scale of the study (seven informants in total), they are able to offer some interesting observations, which broadly corroborate Eckert's analysis. Whilst "the working class teens seem to orient more directly to dialogue and interaction in and with the physical and social world", the upper-middle-class teens seem "to speak with a sidelong glance at how their current and future 'biography' relates to 'trajectories of achievement,' 'worth' and 'distinction'" (Gee et al., 2001, p. 191).

Variation in pragmatic particles

It is not only on the scale of dialogue and narrative that sociologically driven variation in teen language is found. Irwin has found differences in the frequency and functions of the discourse markers "you know" and "I know" between working and middle-class teenagers in London (Irwin, 2006). These pragmatic particles are used to mark delivery and receipt of salient information whilst claiming that the speaker and the hearer share comparable knowledge. This is significant in that it indicates a familiarity with group norms, which is arguably of particular importance to young people (Irwin, 2006, p. 524). Irwin argues that middle-class teen speakers' identity construction is driven, as for Eckert (1988) and Gee et al. (2001), by the knowledge of their likely socio-economic trajectory. They prefer to react to others' claims to the dominant discourse rather than "jeopardize their potential social positioning". Working-class speakers, on the other hand, "actively construct dominant positions for themselves locally within the group" (Irwin, 2006, p. 526).

Prestige in urban English

The relative prestige associated with particular linguistic forms represents another important influence on the choices speakers make. It is somewhat beyond the scope of this study to chart in detail changing attitudes towards what may broadly still be called "Black British English", but might more usefully be described as "British urban English". A précis of some of the research in this area will help to place the situation of today's young people in its historical context, however.

At around the same time as Eckert's study above, Edwards (1989) was describing, in a survey of recent research, the problems facing young speakers of Afro-Caribbean English Creole or Jamaican Patois in Britain. These speakers were of interest in that they had a choice between using Patois and standard English and indeed they exhibited code-switching behaviour of the kind "reminiscent of the speech of stable bilingual communities in many parts of the world" (Edwards, 1989, p. 360). Edwards finds, like Eckert, teenagers using language to mark affiliation, and notes "[s]ignificantly, the use of Patois in the classroom begins in most cases only with the onset of adolescence, and prior to this point Black children tend to adhere very closely to local White speech norms" (Edwards, 1989, p. 362). Edwards insists that this is language use as protest and, though there may be an element of truth in that, it should be recognised that adolescence is in any case a time at which speakers begin to define their own identities and differential use of a particular code may simply represent association with a group rather than outright political statement.

Whilst describing Patois use as "a positive assertion of [...] Black identity and a rejection of the negative connotations placed on Black language and culture by the dominant White society", Edwards does note the beginnings of Patois use by some White pupils to show affiliation to "Black or mainly Black friendship groups" (Edwards, 1989, p. 363).

In the late 1990s in the United States, researchers such as Cutler were reporting "the adoption of African American speech markers" by white middle-class teenagers as "an attempt to [...] take part in the complex prestige of African American youth culture" (Cutler, 1999, p. 429). Cutler takes issue with some previous research that described this phenomenon as simply an "adolescent phase" or "stylistic flirtation" (Cutler, 1999, p. 430). In support of this, she reports her longitudinal study of a white teenager of affluent middle-class parentage whom she refers to as Mike.

Mike's trajectory between the ages of 14 and 19 is traced both in terms of his use of African American Vernacular English phonology and hip-hop vocabulary, and his involvement in "activities he [...] associated with urban Black and Latino youth" (Cutler, 1999, p. 430). In particular, he supported his "claim to authenticity" through stereotypical behaviours such as tagging, experimenting with drugs and joining a gang, as a result of which he on occasion suffered physical injury and was frequently in trouble with the police. This does indeed reflect a more substantial

commitment than the terms “phase” or “flirtation” would suggest.

At the same time, in this example of “crossing” there is evidence of what Cutler terms “a reductive oversimplification of the sources that it targets” (Cutler, 1999, p. 439). She rejects the tempting but naive interpretation “that young whites embracing hip-hop represents a cultural rapprochement between blacks and whites” (Cutler, 1999, p. 439) citing a complex of influences. In her example, Mike “wanted very much to define and participate in an essentialized version of urban black male youth culture, but [...] was uncomprehending about the restrictions, angered about rejection, and worried about being labelled a ‘wannabe’ by his peers” (Cutler, 1999, p. 439).

This echoes the situation of Black’s informant, Tony, a 17-year-old white male in a primarily black friendship group (Black, 1996). Although Tony’s language use is “legitimized by his ... black peers” (Black, 1996, p. 242), his cultural involvement is not without limitation. At one point Tony claims “sometimes I wish I was black”, but is firmly checked by his black friend. Black’s interpretation of this incident is worth quoting in full.

> By adopting and articulating black forms of style and speech Tony was encoding his identification with blackness. However, the contradictory nature of this identification becomes impossible to sustain when it is made explicit. Tony identifies with “black” symbols but knows he can never feel the consequences of racism and the experiential foundations of blackness. (Black, 1996, p. 243)

Yet at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it was true to say that “[i]n no small measure, black culture simply is youth culture in London today” (Gates, 2000, p. 174). Gates adds that “[b]izarre as it first seems, speaking with a Jamaican inflection has become hip among working-class white kids”, but for anyone working with young people in London today, this fact is entirely commonplace. Indeed it is an interesting question to what extent the characteristic features of young urban speech are still “owned” by any particular ethnic group. It may be that a student like Cutler’s subject would now be more at risk of being rejected on account of his socio-economic status than his ethnicity. Such a shift is hinted at by Bryan, for example, who suggests that the significance of Jamaican Creole features in London speech represents not “a reaffirmation of cultural roots”, but “a badge of identity in a tough, urban, street-wise culture” (Bryan, 2004, p. 655).

Alongside other aesthetic tastes, teenage speakers use stylistic variation to construct their identities. As Eckert has it, “language [...] serves a crucial stylistic function, as a visible yet inexplicit means for constructing social meaning” (Eckert, 2003, p. 113). The choice for the students in the present study is between standard English and urban London vernacular, each with its particular connotations:

> Standard language is associated with education, institutional affiliation, homogeneity, and conservatism; vernaculars, by contrast, are associated with an anti-institutional stance, local orientation, diversity of contact, and local innovation. (Eckert, 2003, p. 113)

Although the present study does not consider slang or vernacular in their own right, it is predicated on the idea of a speaker's choice of speech act realisation formula as, at least in part, a stylistic one. From this perspective, teenagers in a school classroom are making strategic, stylistic decisions whenever they choose between, say, the conventionally indirect "Do you have a pen I could borrow?" and "You got a pen, cous'?" (examples from recorded data.) The choice reflects the identity claims the speaker is making. This study conjectures that white, middle-class students experience conflict between the identity claims they wish to make to teachers and those they wish to make to their peers. The strategies from which they have to choose, and the interpersonal values attributed to them are the subject of the next section.

The request speech act

The present study considers the distribution of various forms of the request speech act. Requests have some features that make them particularly suitable for this study. It is expected that they will occur with relatively higher frequency in a classroom setting than, for example, compliments or apologies. The wide variety of request forms has been shown to submit quite readily to a suitable analysis (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Of all speech acts, requests have been the most extensively studied (Barron, 2008, p. 41). No doubt this stems partly from their frequency in everyday usage, but also from the wide variety of forms and strategies available for making requests in most languages. As a result, we might expect that the choices people make among these possibilities will reflect aspects of their social identity.

Typology of requests

In developing a framework for the analysis of request and apology patterns in a variety of languages and cultures, Blum-Kulka & Olshtain's (1984) and Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper's (1989) Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realisation Patterns (CCSARP) offers a complete typology of request forms. Blum-Kulka (1987) successfully used this typology to demonstrate the complex relationship between request form and perceived politeness for speakers of differing cultures, and it is the framework employed by the present study, albeit with some minor adaptations as described in the discussion of data coding below.

Politeness

The face-oriented account of politeness put forward by Brown and Levinson (1987), though pivotal, has been criticised for its cultural specificity in two important ways. Firstly, the theory of Gricean implicature on which it is founded has been shown to be less than universally applicable, by Wierzbicka (1991) among others. Secondly, the assumption that negative face is necessarily oriented toward respect for personal autonomy has been called into question, by Yabuuchi (2006) for example. It could further be argued that their reliance on the rationality of a "Model Person" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, 58) to mediate between the desire for an outcome and attention to face is difficult to justify.

Spencer-Oatey (2000) has been particularly successful in developing a theory of politeness which avoids these obstacles. Her theory of rapport management, with its tripartite basis in face, management of sociality rights and interactional goals, allows a richer understanding of the relational aspects of the request as speech act. Contrary to Brown and Levinson (1987), although requests may be face-threatening acts, they are not inherently so. It may only impinge on the hearer's sociality rights through inconvenience without impacting on their self-worth. Indeed, a request can contribute to face by making the hearer feel trusted or respected. "In other words, [...] requests are rapport sensitive speech acts" (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, p. 19), without inevitably being face threatening.

This is important in the present context. Although some forms of, particularly indirect, request strategies have traditionally been considered more polite, this is identified as culturally contingent by researchers in cross-cultural pragmatics (Spencer-Oatey, 2000; Wierzbicka, 1991, *inter alia*). Whilst indirectness can communicate respect for the hearer's autonomy, for example, it can also communicate social distance. By contrast, a direct request, rather than necessarily expressing impoliteness, may actually attend to the speaker's and the hearer's desire for social closeness or sense of group identity.

Methodology

A number of possible data collection methods have been used in discourse and pragmatics research. These may be divided into three broad groups (Kasper, 2008, p. 281):

- Interaction-type instruments include authentic, "live" discourse (based on field notes, or audio/video recordings), elicited conversation and role-play;
- Questionnaires may be of the scaled-response, multiple-choice or discourse completion variety.
- Non-questionnaire based self-reports may come from verbal interviews, diaries or recollection.

Questionnaires and other self-report methods

Questionnaires have long been a standard tool in pragmatics research, with discourse completion tasks predominating (Kasper, 2008, p. 280). Certainly, there are advantages to using this kind of "off-line" data. Questionnaires are generally easy to administer, with no transcription necessary, making it possible to acquire large amounts of data quickly. Most importantly for empirical research, they allow for greater control over input variables (Golato, 2003, p. 92) than do "on-line" methods.

Comparative studies have shown, however, that these formats tend to elicit intuitional data rather than data on language use and behaviour (Kasper, 2008, p. 295). Indeed, as Kasper notes, questionnaires and forms of self-report "provide information about what respondents believe, think, feel, or know, but not about what they do in their social life" (Kasper, 2008, p. 291).

Discourse completion tasks

Nevertheless discourse completion tasks (DCTs) have been widely used since they were first systematically employed in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Patterns (CCSARP) project in 1989 (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989).

Noting their widespread use, Golato compared authentic data to data elicited through a DCT, in the context of compliments and compliment responses in German (Golato, 2003). Despite basing her DCT scenarios on situations arising in the natural data, Golato found pervasive and substantial differences in the responses obtained. Importantly, some participants had difficulty matching the static DCT questions to nuanced, real-life situations. For example, asked to respond to a compliment about the quality of a cake, one participant wanted to know "Is the cake really good?" (Golato, 2003, p. 110).

The format in which the DCT is administered does appear to have an effect on the authenticity of the data obtained. Yuan has found that oral DCTs may elicit more realistic data than written DCTs (Yuan, 2001, p. 279), for example. What distinguishes an oral DCT from a closed-format role-play is not entirely clear, though.

In general, research has found that DCT responses are often shorter, simpler, less attentive to face and less emotionally involved than natural data (Yuan, 2001, p. 272). Often then, studies which use DCTs to support claims about language use, actually describe respondents' intuitions about language use. Golato suggests that many of these claims "may need to be attenuated" (Golato, 2003, p. 91).

Summarizing, Golato finds that

> DCTs are in a crucial sense metapragmatic in that they explicitly require participants not to interact, but to articulate what they believe would be situationally appropriate responses within possible, yet imaginary, interactional settings. (Golato, 2003, p. 92)

Nevertheless, researchers who have borne the foregoing caveats in mind have been able to use DCTs successfully to examine both inter- and intra-language variation. Beebe and Cummings (1996) describe DCTs as "highly effective", providing the concern of the research is commensurate with the strengths of the instrument. Importantly for the present study, DCTs can yield insight into the "social and psychological factors that are likely to affect speech and performance" (Beebe & Cummings, 1996, p. 80). A good example of cautious and effective intra-language analysis of speech data elicited by DCTs is provided by Barron (2008), who compared request patterns in Irish English and English English. Barron demonstrated that whilst there were differences in internal and external modifications chosen by speakers from the two groups, "the choice of realisation strategies employed [...] was similar" (Barron, 2008, p. 59).

Interactional methods

Clearly there is a balance to be struck between the imperative to work with authentic language-in-use and the practical need to acquire sufficient data for statistical analysis and to control for the sociolinguistic variables under scrutiny.

This is reflected, too, in the more "on-line", interactional instruments that have been used. Live recordings offer the most authentic data, though this method is not without its drawbacks. Golato observes that it can be "rather painstaking" to collect sufficient examples of the linguistic phenomenon being studied, and that as a result research is often based on "a corpus that is too small for statistical analysis" (Golato, 2003, p. 97). Further, this makes controlling for (possibly confounding) extraneous variables difficult.

Role-plays and elicited conversation represent an alternative if it is not possible to obtain sufficient quantities of authentic data (Kasper, 2008, p. 286). It has been suggested though, that these techniques can "ignore sociolinguistic variables" to some extent because the participants actions "have no consequences" (Golato, 2003, p. 94).

Natural discourse data may be obtained from audio or video recordings, or from field notes. Modern conversational analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and ethnographic microanalysis would not be possible without audio-recording technology (Kasper, 2008, p. 285). It has enabled, *inter alia*, conversation analysts to examine the significance of pause and other temporal phenomena, and sociolinguists to better understand the importance of prosody. Video recording offers further possibilities, for the analysis of non-verbal cues, for instance, but brings obvious impracticalities. In the present study, it was felt that video recording would be overly disruptive to the classroom setting.

Field notes have been a staple of linguistic research but suffer from limitations imposed by "human cognitive capacities" (Kasper, 2008, p. 285). Yuan finds that field notes "enjoy the unarguable advantage of being realistic, although the actual wording may not be one hundred

percent accurate" (Yuan, 2001, p. 271). Selective attention on the part of the researcher, the inherent decay associated with short-term memory and the inability to capture sequential structure or non-verbal cues mean that field notes are only suited for "single-turn, short, high frequency semantic formulae" (Kasper, 2008, p. 285).

What is most important, however, is that the data collection instrument(s) should be well-suited to the aims of the research (Yuan, 2001, p. 271).

The present study

In light of the foregoing discussion, it will be seen that the primary aim of this study will be well served by using a DCT method. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, we are particularly concerned with the most commonly used strategies and modifications by participants in the various subgroups, for which DCTs have been found to be effective (e.g. Félix-Brasdefer, 2003; Barron, 2008). Secondly, for valid comparisons to be drawn, a sufficient quantity of data must be obtained from a representatively diverse sample of students in multiple comparable settings.

That said, the limitations of DCT data are not to be ignored, so a small corpus of naturally occurring request realisations was also obtained. This corpus was analysed in its own right, but also compared with the elicited data either to reinforce or to temper any conclusions that could be drawn from it. Given that the speech act of requesting does indeed meet Kasper's criterion of being (generally) short and single-turn, it was decided that field notes backed up by audio recordings presented the optimum balance for obtaining the authentic discourse data whilst minimizing disruption to the participants involved, their teachers and the school as a whole. Since the research is not predominately conversation analytic in its approach, and hence not concerned with multiple-turn interactions, overlapping speech or pause phenomena, it was felt that the audio recording would serve simply to verify the researcher's field notes. Whilst prosodic analysis could well have been valuable, this would have broadened the scope of the study, which instead remained focused on the semantic and pragmatic features of request realisation.

Participants

Consent for involvement was sought from students in four tutor-groups in Years 7 (11-12 years old) and Year 9 (13-14) and their parents, and 76 agreed. Since these groupings are explicitly intended to be balanced by gender and ethnicity it was expected that this method would yield a sufficiently diverse sample. As Table 1 shows, it was quite successful in this regard. The relevant groups of students have been abbreviated as follows: +WENG – of white English ethnicity; -WENG – of other than white English ethnicity; +FSM – eligible for free school meals; -FSM –

not eligible for free school meals. Eligibility for free school meals has been used as a measure of socio-economic status. Thus the subgroups of white-middle class participants (WMC) and non-white-middle-class (NWMC) are defined as "+WENG & -FSM" and "-WENG or +FSM" respectively.

	All	Female	Male
All	76	40	36
+WENG	38	21	17
-WENG	38	19	19
+FSM	17	12	5
-FSM	59	28	31
+WENG & -FSM	36	21	15
-WENG or +FSM	40	19	25

Table 1: Breakdown of the sample by subgroup

Instruments

A series of unstructured initial observations was carried out in order to find out what kinds of request situations were likely to arise. Based on the findings from this period, a pilot discourse completion task was given to a group of 12 Year 7 participants to test the general DCT format and ensure that it was appropriately worded and understandable, and to guide the design of the final DCT. This is included as Figure 11 in Appendix A.

Field notes were then taken during approximately 8 hours of lesson observations. Instances of requests were recorded along with the speaker, whether the addressee was the teacher or a peer, the attention-getting method of the speaker and the time of the request. The notes were subsequently checked against audio recordings, which had been using two small recording devices, one at the front of the room, and one carried by the researcher. A total of 81 request items were obtained.

Finally, a revised DCT, based on situations that had occurred in the natural data (per Golato (2003)) was administered to the remaining 66 participants. This is included as Figure 12 in Appendix A. It was noted during the observation period that many of the requests recorded were direct requests for information, which were frequently realised without recourse to any of the strategies in Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) categorisation. In addition, one particular situation, a student needing a new exercise book, seemed to elicit disproportionately many hints. To mirror as well as possible a range of realistic situations, the five scenarios on the final DCT were:

1. Request for object (new book) to teacher
2. Request for object (pen) to peer
3. Request for information to teacher
4. Request for information to peer
5. Request for object (ruler) to teacher

Coding

The requests obtained from both the live data and the DCTs were coded according to a schema based on that used by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989, p. 202). but with some adaptations.

Several request strategy types were not found in the data and are not considered further, namely hedged performative, locution derivable, scope stating, language specific suggestory formula or mild hints (Strategies 3 to 6, and 9 in Blum-Kulka et al.'s numbering.) An additional strategy of direct request for information was included as Strategy 0. The list of strategy types coded for, with examples of each from the data, are as follows:

0. Direct request for information For example, "What do I have to do?"

1. Mood derivable "Send me a pen."

2. Explicit performative "I beg you let me out on time."

7. Reference to preparatory conditions "Can you help me, please?"

8. Strong hints "I need a new book."

These strategies constitute the head act of their requests. Aside from the choice of head act strategy, speakers have available to them several ways of mitigating the face-threatening nature of the request, or otherwise managing rapport. Adjuncts to the head act which were found in the data were categorised as:

Apology for imposition As in "*Sorry to disturb you* but I came a bit late. Can you go through what I need to do?"

Cost minimizer "I don't have a ruler. Can I borrow one *for this lesson*?"

Grounder "Can I have a new book, please. *I've finished my old one.*"

Other Infrequent adjuncts, such as checks on availability ("… *if you have one*".)

Further, a range of modifications internal to the head act may be used. In this study syntactic downgraders were coded wherever they were not intrinsic to the head act strategy. So "Can I have a ruler?" was not coded as using a syntactic downgrader. In "What do you have to do?" (in the context that it is the speaker who does not know what she herself has to do, so with the same sense as "What does one have to do?") the choice of 2nd person pronoun was recorded. Similarly for the request "What do we have to do?" as addressed to a peer.

Other downgraders encountered and recorded were:

Hedges As in "Can I borrow a pen or a *pencil*?"

Other "What are we *meant to be* doing?"

Also noted was the orientation of the head act:

Speaker oriented Such as "I've finished."

Hearer oriented "Can you borrow me a pen."

Speaker/hearer "What are we meant to be doing" (when addressed to a peer, speaker oriented otherwise.)

Impersonal "Is there anything else to do?"

Finally the presence of the "please" particle and any address terms was noted.

Results

All statistic analysis and graph generation was carried out using the R software environment (url: http://www.r-project.org/). The elicited data are considered first, and analysed by length of utterance, proportional usage of the different request strategies and by the frequency with which adjuncts and downgraders appear. The analysis of the naturally occurring data follows. Statistical comparisons are then made between the two sets of data.

Discourse completion task

General observations

It will first be useful to consider some of the elicited responses individually, particularly those that posed problems in coding, that represent exemplars or are otherwise of interest.

1. To Sc. 3: "What do we do next after we do this (points at work)." It is interesting that this student includes a sort of "stage-direction" (which was not counted towards utterance length) to provide a reference for the deixis which is otherwise lacking.

2. To Sc. 4 "Sorry to destribe but I came a bit let can you go throw what I need to do." In examples like this a judgment must be made as to the intention of the respondent. It was felt in this case that "Sorry to disturb you . . . " was intended and the missing word counted.

3. To Sc. 5 “Miss, I don’t have a ruler. Can I borrow one for this lesson” contains an address term, a grounder, a query preparatory head act and a cost minimizer, and is fairly representative for this scenario.

4. To Sc. 3 “I’ve finished. Is there anything else to do?” This response was unique in combining a grounder with an impersonal request for information.

5. To Sc. 4 “Please can you tell me what the work is. I missed the explanation.” This is a rare occurrence of a reference to the preparatory condition for a request for information.

6. The following responses from the same WMC student exemplify the kind of style-shifting, anecdotal evidence of which motivated this study:

   (a) To Sc. 5 “I don’t have a ruler. Can I use one, please?”

   (b) To Sc. 2 “Send me a pen.”

7. To Sc. 4 “What are we supposed to be doing?” Here supposed to be is acting as a downgrader as it seems to diminish slightly the importance of the topic. A similar effect is observed in “What are you meant to do?” as contrasted with bald “What do you have to do?”

Length of utterance

To guarantee the highest possible validity for a quantitative analysis, statistical tests appropriate to the data must be chosen. This choice depends largely on the underlying distribution of the data. Although mean length of utterance is often encountered in the literature (Félix-Brasdefer, 2003, for example), this is not necessarily the most appropriate measure of central tendency, particularly for data that is not (at least approximately) normally distributed. A quantile-quantile plot suggests that the DCT word count data is not normally distributed (Figure 1.)

This is confirmed by a very small p-value from the Shapiro-Wilk test ($W = 0.89$, $p < 0.001$). Hence, the analysis will be based around non-parametric tests and the choice of the median (m) and inter-quartile range as measures of central tendency and variation respectively. The Mann-Whitney test (one-tailed unless otherwise stated) will be used to assess significance when comparing apparently differing scores, with the resulting p-value given in brackets to three decimal places. It is worth noting that this is a test of the null hypothesis that the distribution of *scores* does not differ, and hence can highlight cases where the distributions differ even though the medians are equal. A relatively conservative confidence level of 0.95 was chosen, so comparisons for

which the Mann-Whitney p-value is less than 0.05 will be considered statistically significant.

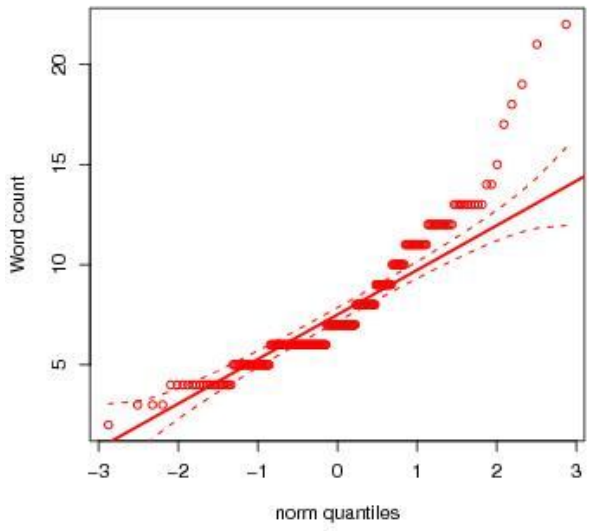


Figure 1: Q-Q plot showing non-normality of utterance length distribution

Table 2 shows the summary statistics for number of words per request, as addressed to a teacher or a peer and by scenario. (Scenarios are numbered for reasons of space, but a description of each is included as Table 3.)

	All		T		P		1		2		3		4		5	
All students	7	3	7	4	6	2	8	4	6	2	7	3	6	5	6	2
Female	7	4	8	5	6	3	10	4	7	4	8	2	6	5	6	4
Male	6.5	2	7	3	6	2.25	7	5	6	2	7	3.25	6	3.5	6	1
+WENG and -FSM	7	3.5	7	4.5	6	3	10	4	6	2	7.5	2.5	6	4	6	2.25
-WENG or +FSM	7	3	7	3	6	3	7	4.25	7	7.25	7	4	6	4.5	6	1.75

Table 2: Summary statistics (median , IQR) for request lengths overall, by teacher (T) or peer(P), and by scenario for sample subgroups

Scenario	Hearer	Request Type
1	Teacher	Object (book)
2	Peer	Object (Pen)
3	Teacher	Info (next task)
4	Peer	Info (current task)
5	Teacher	Object (Ruler)

Table 3: Scenario descriptions

It will be seen that overall, requests to teachers were longer than requests to peers (m_T = 7; m_P = 6; $p < 0.05$). This difference was more pronounced among female students, though, with a difference in medians of two words (m_{FT} = 8; m_{FP}= 6; $p < 0.05$). The difference was much less

convincing amongst males (ns, p = 0.169). Furthermore, females used slightly more words per request than males overall (m_F = 7; m_M = 6.5; p < 0.01). Interestingly, the difference is clearest in requests to teachers (m_{FT} = 8; m_{MT} = 7; p < 0.05). There was no evidence to suggest such a difference in peer requests (ns, p = 0.38, two-sided). Scenario 1 generated the greatest variation, and this is probably due to females' more frequent employment of grounders in their responses to this situation (see below.)

There was slightly more variation in WMC request lengths than in NWMC, as shown by Figure 2.

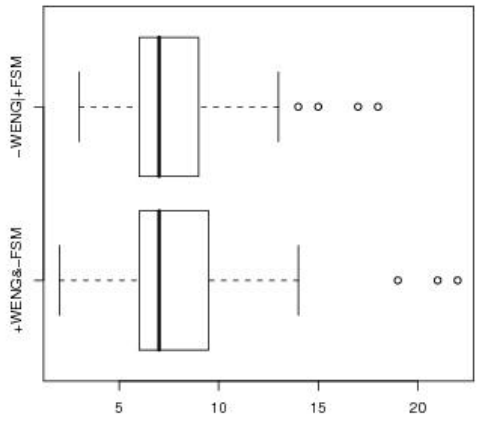


Figure 2: Comparison of word length distributions by WMC and NWMC respondents

Note that the large number of outliers apparent in these box plots adds further motivation to the choice of non-parametric measures. These outliers would have had a greater effect on the mean word length than they do on the median. Whilst this would have notionally supported the hypothesis of this study, it would also have drastically undermined its external validity.

It was found that median utterance length among WMC in requests to teachers was higher than to peers (m_{WMCT} = 7; m_{WMCP} = 6; p < 0.01). Although a difference in medians was recorded for NWMC, it was found not to be significant (p = 0.285) and is thus uninterpretable.

Strategies used

Table 4 shows the breakdown of high-level request strategy use. Strategies are numbered as they appear in Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) with the addition of Strategy 0 to code for direct requests for information. A summary with examples of the different strategy types is included as Table 5.

	Str.	All		T		P		1		2		3		4		5	
Overall	0	69	0.28	32	0.22	35	0.35	3	0.06	0	0	31	0.63	35	0.69	0	0
	1	7	0.03	4	0.03	5	0.05	1	0.02	4	0.08	0	0	1	0.02	1	0.02
	7	146	0.59	86	0.59	60	0.59	31	0.66	46	0.92	10	0.20	14	0.27	45	0.9
	8	25	0.10	24	0.16	1	0.01	12	0.26	0	0	8	0.16	1	0.02	4	0.08
		247		146		101		47		50		49		51		50	
Female	0	42	0.34	23	0.31	19	0.39	3	0.12	0	0	20	0.8	19	0.76	0	0
	1	3	0.02	1	0.01	2	0.04	1	0.04	1	0.04	0	0	1	0.04	0	0
	7	70	0.57	42	0.57	28	0.57	15	0.62	23	0.96	4	0.16	5	0.2	23	0.92
	8	8	0.07	8	0.11	0	0	5	0.21	0	0	1	0.04	0	0	2	0.08
		123		74		49		24		24		25		25		25	
Male	0	27	0.22	11	0.15	16	0.31	0	0	0	0	11	0.46	16	0.62	0	0
	1	4	0.03	1	0.01	3	0.06	0	0	3	0.12	0	0	0	0	1	0.04
	7	76	0.61	44	0.61	32	0.62	16	0.70	23	0.88	6	0.25	9	0.35	22	0.88
	8	17	0.14	16	0.22	1	0.02	7	0.30	0	0	7	0.29	1	0.04	2	0.08
		124		72		52		23		26		24		26		25	
WMC	0	37	0.31	19	0.27	18	0.38	1	0.04	0	0	18	0.75	18	0.75	0	0
	1	4	0.03	1	0.01	3	0.06	0	0	2	0.08	0	0	1	0.04	1	0.04
	7	71	0.60	44	0.62	27	0.56	16	0.70	22	0.92	6	0.25	5	0.21	22	0.92
	8	7	0.06	7	0.10	0	0	6	0.26	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.04
		119		71		48		23		24		24		24		24	
NWMC	0	32	0.25	15	0.2	17	0.32	2	0.08	0	0	13	0.52	17	0.63	0	0
	1	3	0.02	1	0.01	2	0.04	1	0.04	2	0.08	0	0	0	0	0	0
	7	75	0.59	42	0.56	33	0.62	15	0.62	24	0.92	4	0.16	9	0.33	23	0.88
	8	18	0.14	17	0.23	1	0.02	6	0.25	0	0	8	0.32	1	0.04	3	0.12
		128		75		53		24		26		25		27		26	

Table 4: Breakdown of strategies by hearer and scenario for female, male, WMC and NWMC groups (raw and per utterance)

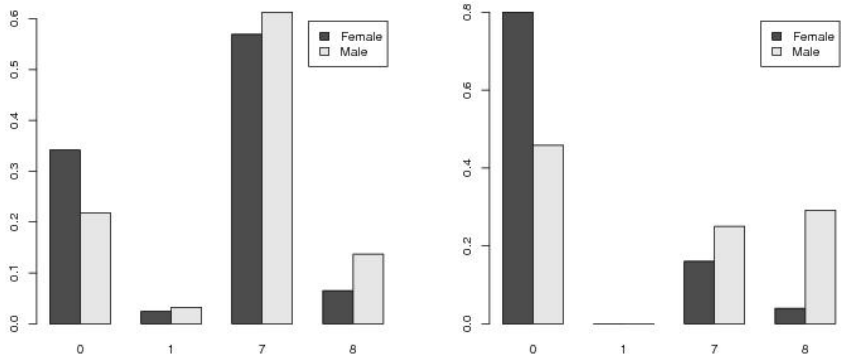
Strategy number	Strategy	Example
0	Direct request for information	"What do I have to do?"
1	Mood derivative	"Lend me a pen."
7	Reference to preparatory conditions	"Can I have a ruler?"
8	Strong hint	"I need a new book."

Table 5: Abbreviated taxonomy of request strategies

The majority of responses, 59%, employed reference to the preparatory condition (Strategy 7) to formulate the request. Although over a quarter of responses in total used a direct request for information, these were unsurprisingly restricted to the information-orientated Scenarios 3 and 4, where they made up around two-thirds of responses in each. Interestingly, strategy profiles were very similar between these two scenarios, except for a near-total absence of hints in the peer requests compared to 16% in requests to teachers.

In Scenarios 2 and 5, which concern requests for objects, over 90% of respondents chose to use reference to the preparatory condition. As anticipated, Scenario 1, whilst object-focused, also elicited a fair number of hints, justifying its inclusion as an additional question.

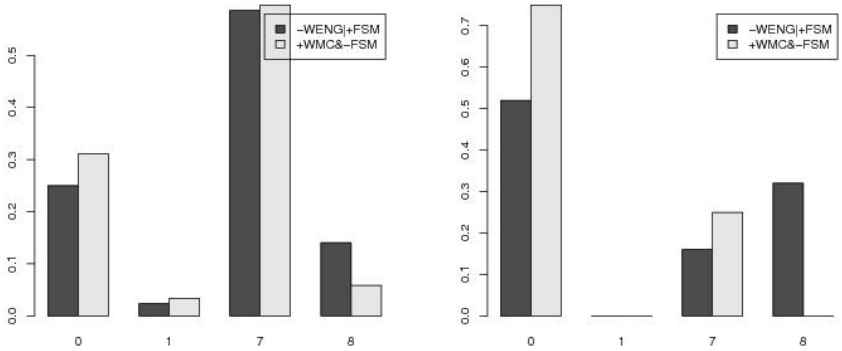
Some gender differences in strategy choice were evident. Although both female and male subgroups showed a preference for the canonical Strategy 7, females used direct requests for information (Strategy 0) more frequently than males. This was particularly clear in Scenario 3 (request for information from teacher), where more males than females opted for a strong hint. (See Figures 3a and 3b.)



(a) All scenarios (b) Scenario 3

Figure 3: Bar charts comparing female to male request strategies

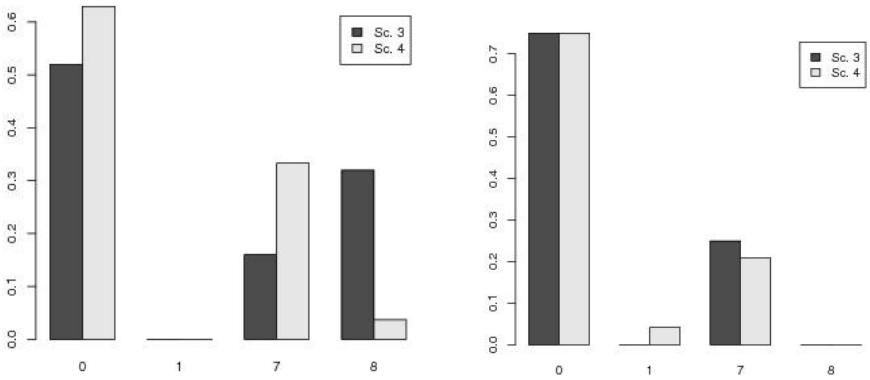
There was little difference in overall strategy use between the WMC and NWMC subgroups, with NWMC respondents using slightly more hints (Figure 4a.) Scenario 3 elicited the greatest variation. No WMC respondent used a hint strategy in this scenario compared to almost a third of NWMC students (Figure 4b.).



(a) All scenarios (b) Scenario 3

Figure 4: Bar charts comparing NWMC to WMC request strategies

Interestingly, comparing Scenarios 3 and 4 for each subgroup shows NWMC respondents varied in their strategies for requesting information according to hearer to a greater extent than did the WMC group (Figures 5a and 5b.) However, this pattern was not reflected in Scenarios 2 and 5 concerning requests for equipment



(a) NWMC subgroup (b) WMC subgroup

Figure 5: Bar charts comparing NWMC and WMC variation in strategies between hearers

Downgraders and adjuncts

By far the most common adjuncts to the head act of requesting were grounders, which were found in over a third of all requests. In addition, over 41% of requests involved a "please" particle.

Adjuncts generally, along with address terms and "please" particles were found in greater frequencies in teacher than in peer requests. Downgraders, on the other hand, were more common in peer requests, particularly in the form of hedges and the use of "we" rather than "'I".

On the whole, similar patterns were found in each of the subgroups under consideration, but with some variation. The greatest variation was found between female and male use of adjuncts, which were almost twice as common in females. Indeed, females used more adjuncts than males in all scenarios (Figure 6.)

Both the WMC and NWMC subgroups followed the general pattern of adjunct and downgrader use observed so far. That is, much more use of syntact and other downgraders, fewer adjuncts and please particles and far fewer address terms, in peer than in teacher requests. In confirmation of this study's hypothesis this pattern was more pronounced in the WMC than in the NWMC data (Figures 7a and 7b.)

It is worth noting that this is to be seen most clearly in the requests for information elicited in Scenarios 3 and 4, where syntactic downgraders, rare in the teacher requests, occur in over a half of NWMC and three-quarters of WMC requests to peers. This is accompanied by a substantial fall in adjunct use and in the number of address terms employed, an effect slightly more pronounced in the WMC data.

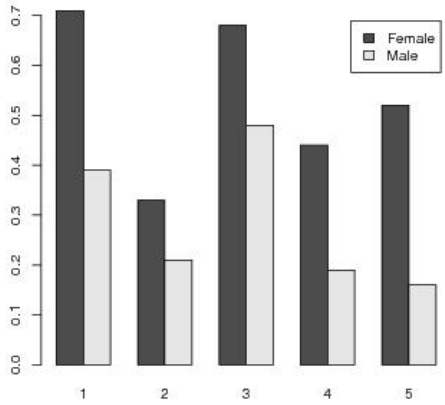
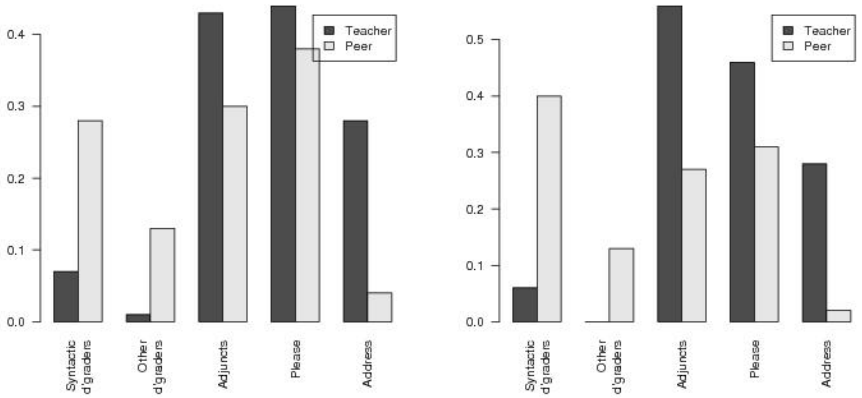


Figure 6: Comparison of female and male adjunct use by scenario



(a) NWMC subgroup (b) WMC subgroup

Figure 7: Bar charts comparing NWMC to WMC use of modifications

Live recorded data

General remarks

As before, a few examples from the live data are considered before the statistical analysis.

1. “Please, shut up” is an unusual combination of please particle with mood derivable head act. Prosodic analysis would have been valuable in this in stance as the request was delivered in an exaggeratedly polite tone.

2. “Allow it.” Poses problems for analysis. It was uttered in the context of the speaker holding out her hand to receive an item held by the hearer. Allow it is a slang formula which has multiple uses and along with its derivative allow that would form the basis for an interesting future research project. It was encoded as mood derivable.

3. “You got a pencil? Pencil?” The only instance of repetition in either set of data. It was unclear whether the repetition itself was directed at the original hearer or his neighbour, in which case it could feasibly have constituted a distinct, one-word request.

4. “I beg you let me out on time. I need to get my lunch.” I beg you is an urban vernacular formula which does not carry quite the same tone of submission as its standard reading. It is interesting that this was the only explicit performative found in either set of data. It is also somewhat revealing that although this slang-influenced request was directed towards a teacher by a white, middle-class student, he did not have the teacher’s attention at the time.

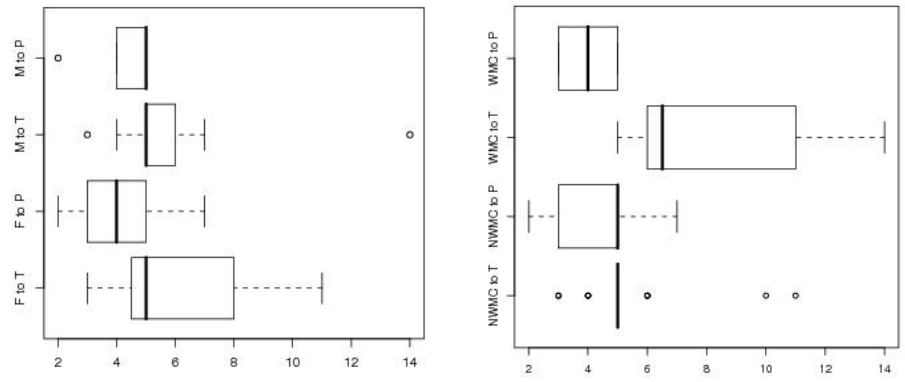
By contrast with the DCT instrument, live data collection does not permit control for the types of request. If one particular type of request dominates, or is present in a higher proportion in one of the subgroups under consideration, then this is likely to generate erroneous results. This was indeed the case in the present study, as will be seen in Table 6.

	Action	Information	Object	Permission
All	12	38	26	5
Female	5	7	12	3
Male	7	31	14	2
WMC	2	15	5	1
NWMC	10	23	21	4

Table 6: Frequency of request types overall and by subgroup

Not only do requests for information predominate, they are present in highly variable proportions in the research subgroups. It is necessary, then, to consider requests for action, objects and permission (AOP) separately from requests for information to avoid reaching conclusions that are merely artefacts of this disparity.

An unfortunate consequence of the requirement to filter out requests for information is that the number of requests from a given subgroup to a given hearer may, in some cases, be too small to permit confident analysis. In particular, the Mann-Whitney U-test becomes considerably less robust as the size of sample decreases. This is particularly true of data such as word counts, which are quite narrowly distributed, resulting in a high proportion of tied ranks.



(a) Female, male subgroups (b) WMC, NWMC subgroups

Figure 8: Live AOP request length distributions

Some differences were found in lengths of utterance for AOP requests between the various subgroups, as the box plots in Figures 8a and 8b show. Although these differences parallel those found in the DCT data, it should be noted that the small samples under consideration render these findings merely suggestive.

Comparison of the live and elicited data

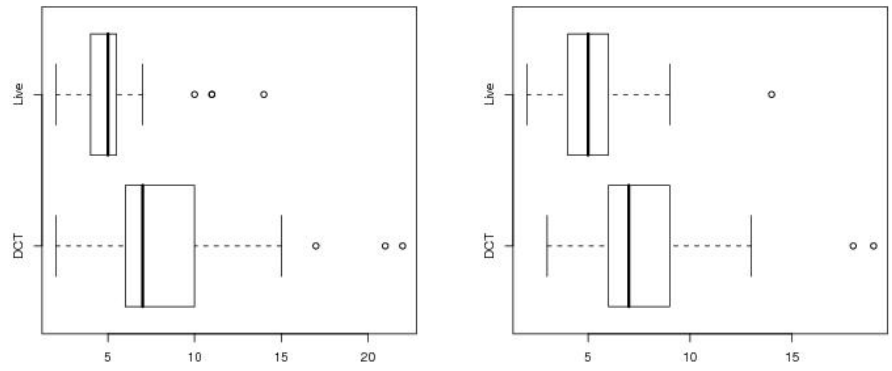
Further analyses such as the breakdown by strategy or modification for the various subgroups are contraindicated by the small sample sizes, and we proceed instead to a comparison of the live with the DCT data. DCT responses to Scenarios 1, 2 and 5 (request for a new book, a pen and a ruler respectively) may reasonably be compared to AOP requests in the live data. Similarly, Scenarios 3 and 4 are comparable to the naturally occurring information requests.

Length of utterance

Summary statistics for utterance length may be found in Table 7. The DCT clearly elicited longer responses than were found in the live data by a considerable margin, with a high degree of significance. This was true both for requests for information ($p < 0.001$) and for AOP requests ($p < 0.001$). In addition there was more variation in word count within the DCT data, as shown by the substantially higher IQRs. This can be seen more clearly in Figures 9a and 9b.

	AOP		Info	
Live	5	1.5	5	2
DCT	7	4	7	3

Table 7: Summary statistics (median, IQR) for utterance length in the live and elicited data



(a) AOP requests quests for information

Figure 9: Comparison of live and elicited request lengths

Strategy use

The proportions of the different strategies for AOP requests in the two sets of data were broadly similar, with DCT respondents using more query preparatory forms (7) at the expense of strong hints (8). In addition, the only explicit performative (2) in either dataset ("I beg you let me out on time. I need to get my lunch.") was found in the live data (Figure 10.)

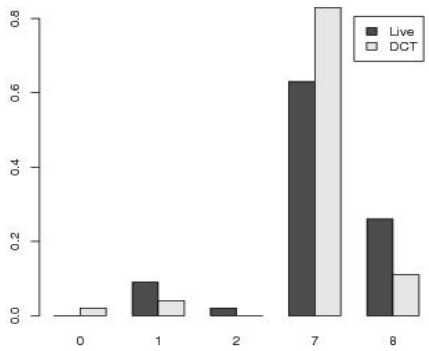


Figure 10: Strategy use in the live versus the elicited data

Downgraders and adjuncts

Very few adjuncts were found in the live data, even when all types of request were taken together. There were a few grounders, and some please particles and address terms. All of the adjuncts appeared in requests to teachers, as did all but one of the syntactic downgraders and all of the other downgraders. Please particles were rare but equally so in both peer and teacher requests. Address terms were also uncommon but more frequent in peer requests, although this is understandable as in the live data an attention getting turn had often already concluded before the

teacher request was initiated.

Overall these features were present in too low frequencies (Table 8) in the live data for useful comparison with the elicited responses, except to say that they were uniformly and substantially more common in the latter.

	All		T		P	
Syntactic downgraders	11	0.14	10	0.17	1	0.05
1st person pl. 2nd person Other	5 6 0	0.06 0.07 0	5 5 0	0.08 0.08 0	0 1 0	0 0.05 0
Other downgraders	3	0.04	3	0.05	0	0
Hedge Other	0 3	0 0.04	0 3	0 0.05	0 0	0 0
Adjuncts	7	0.09	7	0.12	0	0
Apology Cost minimizer Grounder Other	1 1 4 1	0.01 0.01 0.05 0.01	1 1 4 1	0.02 0.02 0.07 0.02	0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0
Please Address term	6 10	0.07 0.12	4 5	0.07 0.08	2 5	0.10 0.24
Requests	81		60		21	

Table 8: Request components for all live data

Discussion

The preceding analysis admits of some more or less clear-cut conclusions but also some substantial interpretative challenges. Certainly, the participants in this study, consciously or not, anticipate investing more words in requests to teachers than to peers. They also see hints as a normal way of communicating requests to teachers. All the hints employed were strong hints, which communicate clearly what the need of the student is, and perhaps their frequency demonstrates the belief that teachers do and should provide for the needs of their students in the classroom.

Of the possible syntactic downgraders, changing the personal pronoun from "I" to "we" or sometimes "you", while retaining the underlying speaker orientation of the request was common. Forms such as "What are we doing?" and "What do you have to do?" were much more frequent realisations of peer requests than "What should I do?" for example. This may represent a solidarity-centred rapport management technique. This feature was much less common in teacher requests. It has been argued elsewhere that women are generally more polite than men (cf. Holmes, 1995, for an overview) and the female teenagers in this study provide some confirmation of that. As well as using more words in total to formulate their requests, they also offered far more adjuncts, particularly grounders, and downgraders than their male peers. Females' greater willingness to ask for information directly compared to males' reliance on hints is harder to interpret. The hint request strategy, while the most

indirect (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 202), is not necessarily the most polite, and may indeed be interpreted as somewhat demanding. This is partly a matter of prosody, though, and thus beyond the scope of this study.

With respect to its main hypothesis – that the requests of white, middle-class students would exhibit more variation as a function of recipient than others' – the evidence is less convincing. WMC requests to teachers were longer than to peers, whilst there was no evidence to suggest that this was true for NWMC (that is to say, there was a difference in medians, but not a statistically significant one.) Contrary to the hypothesis, NWMC respondents varied their underlying request strategy to a greater extent than did WMC, at least in requests for information. On the other hand, there was a larger increase in frequency of adjuncts from peer to teacher requests in the WMC data than that of NWMC students. This too was more evident in the information requesting scenarios. Syntactic downgraders were slightly more common in WMC requests to peers although they were also frequent among NWMC responses. The picture here, then, is suggestive, but not conclusive.

It is interesting to note that the request for information scenarios elicited the most variation between peer and teacher requests. Perhaps requests for information are more inherently face-threatening as they relate to an internal mental state (of knowledge) rather than an external possession (a pen or ruler) particularly in an institution which routinely quantifies the knowledge of its members in exam scores and SATs levels.

The recording of naturally occurring requests was intended to enable assessment of the validity of the elicited data. Confirmation was indeed found for Beebe and Cummings's concern that DCT responses do not accurately reflect "[t]he range of formulas and strategies used" or "[t]he length of response" in authentic speech data (Beebe & Cummings, 1996, p. 80). However, the contrasts were actually the reverse of what some prior research, such as Beebe and Cummings's study of refusals mediated by telephone, has found. In the present study, the naturally occurring requests were shorter than those elicited by the DCT, contained less variation in strategies overall and far fewer modifications like hedges and grounders.

Further comparison of live and elicited data for the different subgroups was hampered by limitations of the recorded data. The difficulty, discussed earlier, of controlling for dependent variables, such as type of request, and indeed the key sociolinguistic variables of sex, socio-economic status and ethnicity, was much in evidence in this study. The field-note method only captured requests that were uttered sufficiently loudly for the researcher to hear and were hence dominated by requests to teachers and not the *sotte voce* peer requests that may have taken place out of earshot, or simultaneously. Furthermore, this instrument only captured data from students who had a request to make. Those who had all their equipment with them or who did not need any

help, for example, were *de facto* excluded from the data. As a result, it is impossible to say how representative the live data really are of authentic discourse and hence whether the discrepancies found between it and the DCT data are due to inadequacies in one instrument or the other.

Conclusions

This study set out to examine variation in request strategies amongst teenagers in an urban classroom environment. In so doing, it contributes to the emerging discipline of variational pragmatics, which "aims at determining the impact of such factors as region, social class, gender, age and ethnicity on communicative language use" (Schneider & Barron, 2008, p. 1).

The study also adds to the body of research into gender and politeness, showing broad differences between female and male norms for request realisation. However, it remains an open question to what extent the differences encountered in this study can be attributed to differential attitudes to the school institution, or to external enculturation.

The DCT instrument, despite its limitations, has yielded some suggestive evidence of variation in request strategies between white, middle-class students and others. Indeed, although the comparison with naturally occurring speech confirmed that "DCTs are better suited to the study of 'what people think they should say' than to the study of 'what people actually do say"' (Golato, 2003, p. 111), it can still be a useful feature for a study of this nature, as it yields an emic perspective on speakers' solutions to the face and rapport management problems that confront them. This calls into question the claim of Beebe and Cummings (1996, p. 77) that DCTs do not "bring out the 'psycho-social' dynamics of an interaction." Variation in the perceived importance of differential politeness to teachers and peers should tell us something about how the participants see themselves in relation to the school institution and the school community; whether, like the "Jocks" in Eckert's study (Eckert, 1988), they have accepted the institution's offer to equip them for their future trajectory in return for the temporary recognition of its authority, or whether their relationship to school is more ambivalent.

The findings of the study in this respect are preliminary, and further research is necessary to ascertain how and to what extent teenagers' attitudes to the school institution are reflected in their communicative practices, and what rapport-management techniques they use to negotiate their position within the school community. Variation in teacher- and peer-oriented discourse certainly appears to be a potentially fruitful area of study in this regard.

Any such future research will require a carefully considered methodology. This study has shown that whilst it is important that researchers "examine speech act behaviour by means of participant observation in natural settings in order to add validity to pragmatic typologies and descriptions" (Félix-Brasdefer, 2003, p. 15), such an

approach has its difficulties. Useful analysis of the natural discourse data in this research was impeded by the lack of control over sociolinguistic variables offered by the instrumentation. It may be that a methodology like that employed by Stenström et al. (2002), in which selected participants carry a recording device with them, would be more effective, if more time-consuming. Moreover, interviews with the participants themselves could yield valuable insight into the complex factors that govern discourse in the modern classroom.

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Appendix A

Introduction

In each section you are asked to imagine a situation and write down what you would say to someone. Don't think too hard about it. This is not a test and it won't be marked. Just write down your natural response.

Scenario 1

Imagine you are in a lesson, about to start the work. You realise that you don't have a pen with you. You put your hand up. When the teacher comes over you say …

Scenario 2

Imagine you are in the queue for lunch with your friend. You are about to pay for your food but you've lost your money. You turn to your friend and say …

Scenario 3

Imagine you are walking down a corridor at school. There are some other children in your year who you don't know standing around chatting, and it's hard for you to get past. You say to them …

Figure 11: The pilot DCT

Introduction

In each section you are asked to imagine a situation and write down what you would say to someone. Don't think too hard about it. This is not a test and it won't be marked. Just write down your natural response.

Scenario 1

Imagine you are in a lesson. You look in your exercise book and notice that you finished it. You put up your hand and when the teacher comes over you say …

Scenario 2

You are about to start the work, when you realise that you don't have a pen with you. You turn to the person next to you and say …

Scenario 3

You have finished a part of the work. You don't know what to do next. You put your hand up and when the teacher comes over you say …

Scenario 4

Imagine you have arrived late to the lesson. You're not sure what the work is. The teacher is busy, so you turn to the person next to you and say …

Scenario 5

You need to draw a table but you don't have a ruler. You put up your hand and when the teacher comes over you say …

Figure 12: The final DCT

Appendix B

Large tables

Table 9: Overall frequency of request components per utterance

	All		T		P		1		2		3		4		5	
Syntactic downgraders	43	0.17	9	0.06	34	0.34	2	0.04	1	0.02	4	0.08	33	0.65	3	0.06
1st person pl.	28	0.11	2	0.01	26	0.26	0	0	0	0	2	0.04	26	0.51	0	0
2nd person	6	0.02	2	0.01	4	0.04	0	0	0	0	2	0.04	4	0.08	0	0
Other	9	0.04	5	0.03	4	0.04	2	0.04	1	0.02	0	0	3	0.06	3	0.06
Other downgraders	14	0.06	1	0.01	13	0.13	1	0.02	11	0.22	0	0	2	0.04	0	0
Hedge	11	0.04	0	0	11	0.11	0	0	10	0.2	0	0	1	0.02	0	0
Other	3	0.01	1	0.01	2	0.02	1	0.02	1	0.02	0	0	1	0.02	0	0
Adjuncts	101	0.41	72	0.49	29	0.29	26	0.55	13	0.26	29	0.59	16	0.31	17	0.34
Apology	4	0.02	2	0.01	2	0.02	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.04	2	0.04
Cost minimizer	9	0.04	4	0.03	5	0.05	0	0	5	0.1	0	0	0	0	4	0.08
Grounder	83	0.34	64	0.44	19	0.19	25	0.53	5	0.1	29	0.59	14	0.27	10	0.2
Other	5	0.02	2	0.01	3	0.03	1	0.02	3	0.06	0	0	0	0	1	0.02
Please	101	0.41	66	0.45	35	0.35	26	0.55	29	0.58	5	0.10	6	0.12	35	0.7
Address term	44	0.18	41	0.28	3	0.03	16	0.34	3	0.06	15	0.31	0	0	10	0.2
Requests	247		146		101		47		50		49		51		50	

Table 10: Component use by female and male subgroups

	All		T		P		1		2		3		4		5	
Syntactic downgraders	23	0.19	7	0.09	16	0.33	1	0.04	1	0.04	4	0.16	15	0.6	2	0.08
1st person pl.	13	0.11	2	0.03	11	0.22	0	0	0	0	2	0.08	11	0.44	0	0
2nd person	5	0.04	2	0.03	3	0.06	0	0	0	0	2	0.08	3	0.12	0	0
Other	5	0.04	3	0.04	2	0.04	1	0.04	1	0.04	0	0	1	0.04	2	0.08
Other downgraders	7	0.06	1	0.01	6	0.12	1	0.04	5	0.21	0	0	1	0.04	0	0
Hedge	5	0.04	0	0	5	0.10	0	0	5	0.21	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	2	0.02	1	0.01	1	0.02	1	0.04	0	0	0	0	1	0.04	0	0
Adjuncts	66	0.54	47	0.64	19	0.39	17	0.71	8	0.33	17	0.68	11	0.44	13	0.52
Apology	4	0.03	2	0.03	2	0.04	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.08	2	0.08
Cost minimizer	6	0.05	3	0.04	3	0.06	0	0	3	0.12	0	0	0	0	3	0.12
Grounder	51	0.41	40	0.54	11	0.22	16	0.67	2	0.08	17	0.68	9	0.36	7	0.28
Other	5	0.04	2	0.03	3	0.06	1	0.04	3	0.12	0	0	0	0	1	0.04
Please	45	0.37	32	0.43	13	0.27	13	0.54	11	0.46	2	0.08	2	0.08	17	0.68
Address term	17	0.14	16	0.22	3	0.02	7	0.29	3	0.04	6	0.24	0	0	3	0.12
Requests	123		74		49		24		24		25		25		25	

(a) Female

	All		T		P		1		2		3		4		5	
Syntactic downgraders	20	0.16	2	0.03	18	0.33	1	0.04	0	0	0	0	18	0.69	1	0.04
1st person pl.	15	0.12	0	0	15	0.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	0.58	0	0
2nd person	1	0.01	2	0	1	0.02	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.04	0	0
Other	4	0.03	0	0.03	2	0.04	1	0.04	0	0	0	0	2	0.08	1	0.04
Other downgraders	7	0.06	2	0	7	0.14	0	0	6	0.25	0	0	1	0.04	0	0
Hedge	6	0.05	0	0	6	0.12	0	0	5	0.21	0	0	1	0.04	0	0
Other	1	0.01	0	0	1	0.02	0	0	1	0.04	0	0	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts	35	0.28	25	0.34	10	0.2	9	0.39	58	0.21	12	0.4	5	0.19	4	0.16
Apology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cost minimizer	3	0.02	1	0.01	2	0.04	0	0	2	0.08	0	0	0	0	1	0.04
Grounder	32	0.26	24	0.33	8	0.16	9	0.39	3	0.12	12	0.4	5	0.19	3	0.12
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Please	56	0.46	34	0.47	22	0.44	13	0.57	18	0.75	3	0.12	4	0.15	18	0.72
Address term	27	0.22	25	0.34	2	0.04	9	0.39	2	0.08	9	0.36	0	0	7	0.28
Requests	123		73		50		23		24		25		26		25	

(b) Male

Table 11: Component use by WMC and NWMC subgroups

	All		T		P		1		2		3		4		5	
Syntactic downgraders	23	0.19	4	0.06	19	0.40	1	0.04	1	0.04	3	0.12	18	0.75	0	0
1st person pl.	17	0.14	2	0.03	15	0.31	0	0	0	0	2	0.08	15	0.62	0	0
2nd person	3	0.03	1	0.01	2	0.04	0	0	0	0	1	0.04	2	0.8	0	0
Other	3	0.03	1	0.01	2	0.04	1	0.04	1	0.04	0	0	1	0.08	0	0
Other downgraders	6	0.05	1	0	6	0.12	0	0	.5	0.21	0	0	1	0.04	0	0
Hedge	5	0.04	0	0	5	0.10	0	0	5	0.21	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	1	0.01	0	0	1	0.02	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.04	0	0
Adjuncts	53	0.45	40	0.56	13	0.27	15	0.65	5	0.21	16	0.67	8	0.33	9	0.38
Apology	2	0.02	1	0.01	1	0.02	0	0	0	0	0	0			1	0.04
Cost minimizer	3	0.03	2	0.03	1	0.02	0	0	1	0.04	0	0	0	0	2	0.08
Grounder	45	0.38	36	0.51	9	0.19	14	0.61	2	0.08	16	0.67	7	0.29	6	0.25
Other	3	0.03	1	0.01	2	004	1	0.04	2	0.08	0	0	0	0	0	0
Please	48	0.40	33	0.46	15	0.31	13	0.57	14	0.58	1	0.04	1	0.04	19	0.79
Address term	21	0.18	20	0.28	1	0.02	7	0.30	1	0.04	9	0.38	0	0	4	0.17
Requests	119		71		48		24		24		24		24		24	

(a) WMC

	All		T		P		1		2		3		4		5	
Syntactic downgraders	20	0.16	7	0.07	15	0.28	1	0.04	0	0	1	0.04	15	0.56	3	0.012
1st person pl.	11	0.09	0	0	11	0.21	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	0.41	0	0
2nd person	3	0.02	1	0.01	2	0.04	0	0	0	0	1	0.04	2	0.07	0	0
Other	6	0.05	4	0.05	2	0.04	1	0.04	0	0	0	0	2	0.07	3	0.12
Other downgraders	8	0.06	1	0.01	7	0.13	1	0.04	6	0.23	0	0	1	0.04	0	0
Hedge	6	0.05	0	0	6	0.11	0	0	5	0.19	0	0	1	0.04	0	0
Other	2	0.02	1	0.01	1	0.02	1	0.04	1	0.04	0	0	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts	48	0.38	32	0.43	16	0.30	11	0.46	8	0.31	13	0.52	8	0.30	8	0.31
Apology	2	0.02	1	0.01	1	0.02	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.04	1	0.04
Cost minimizer	6	0.05	2	0.03	4	0.08	0	0	4	0.15	0	0	0	0	2	0.08
Grounder	38	0.30	28	0.37	10	0.19	11	0.46	3	0.12	13	0.52	7	0.26	4	0.15
Other	2	0.02	1	0.01	1	0.02	0	0	1	0.04	0	0	0	0	1	0.04
Please	53	0.41	33	0.44	20	0.38	13	0.54	15	0.58	4	0.16	5	0.19	16	0.62
Address term	23	0.18	21	0.28	2	0.04	9	0.38	2	0.08	6	0.24	0	0	6	0.23
Requests	128		75		53		24		26		25		27		26	

(b) NWMC

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