A methodological comparison of directive speech acts in American and British English: DCT versus conversational data

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INTRODUCTION

- Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) are widely used as a tool for data collection in cross-cultural speech act research (cf. Kasper 2000, Geluykens 2007, Barron 2008, Jucker 2009)
- DCT data have been found to differ from authentic speech acts in that they
  → are more direct and less complex (Beebe & Cummings 1996, Golato 2003)
  → elicit fewer semantic formulae (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig 1992)
- No quantification of differences between methodological conditions

(1) Do DCT and naturally occurring data show the same cross-cultural similarities/differences in speech act realisations?
(2) How do the realisation patterns of directive speech acts elicited by DCTs and found authentic conversations differ?

METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire data
- Discourse completion tasks (results published in Breuer & Geluykens 2007)
- Reanalysis of the directives given in four everyday situations between (close) friends

Conversational data
- Transcripts of casual, naturally occurring conversations between relatives and friends
- Retrieved from two corpora in a bottom up approach (cf. Kohnen 2008)

RESULTS

(1) Predictions for cross-cultural differences
- Neither methodological data set shows statistically significant differences between the national varieties
  → For directive speech acts, DCTs can serve as a measure of whether cross-cultural differences can occur

(2) Differences in head act realisations across method
- Significant differences in directness levels ($\chi^2 p < 0.001$) in both national varieties
  → Preference for convent. indirect strategies in DCT data
  → Preferences for direct strategies in conversational data