
Ilka Flöck
University of Oldenburg

SUGGESTIONS IN BRITISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH: A CORPUS-
LINGUISTIC STUDY

In his programmatic publication *How to Do Things with Words* John Austin (1962) estimates that there are between 1,000 and 9,999 speech acts. Of these illocutions, only a handful has been analyzed. While suggestions have been used as a diagnostic means to measure pragmatic competence, they have not been described systematically. The talk provides an overview of how suggestions are realized in naturally occurring conversations of two varieties of English. The study is based on corpus data retrieved in automated searches from two corpora of English. Electronic corpus searches were only possible since realization forms of the speech act had been established in earlier research (e.g. Adolphs 2008, cf. Jucker et al. 2008). The analysis reveals that despite general similarities, the two data sets differ in frequency distribution of head acts and their modification devices. Furthermore, the results show that the surface realizations used to encode suggestions are functionally ambiguous in that they can also be used to realize other illocutions, such as requests or orders. The study therefore shows the need for including the hearer perspective in pragmatics research to fathom out how hearers are able to infer speaker meaning.

Adolphs, Svenja (2008): *Corpus and Context. Investigating Pragmatic Functions in Spoken Discourse*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Austin, John (1962): *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jucker, Andreas et al. (2008): Fishing for compliments. Precision and recall in corpus-linguistic compliment research. In: Jucker, Andreas & Taavitsainen, Irma (eds.): *Speech Acts in the History of English*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 273-294.