

A Corpus-based Study of Lexicogrammatical and Discourse Strategies of the English Speech Act “Invitation”, Employed by U.S. University Students

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1. Short abstract of this presentation

This presentation demonstrates (1) the effectiveness of English speech act corpora for creating ELT materials, (2) lexicogrammatical strategies and semantic formulae of U.S. university undergraduates to perform the speech act of ‘invitation’, through an examination of the data collected from over 150 American students with the use of DCTs and role-plays in Missouri U.S.A. in 2007. This database also enables a researcher to compare theoretical descriptions (e.g. Searle, 1969; Leech, 1983) with the actual language use of ‘lay’ people. This study has been supported by the **Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research** awarded by **JSPS** [Subject num.: 18820028] and **Waseda University Grant for Special Research Projects** [Subject num.: 2008A-840].

2. Pragmatics & Corpus Linguistics

Currently, Corpus-linguistic technique has been incorporated more and more into pragmatic and discourse analysis studies (e.g. Aijmer, 1996; Adolphs, 2008). However, as existing corpora (e.g. BNC, BOE, LLC) have not been designed for studies of speech acts in particular, they are often inconvenient for a pragmatic researcher to extract sufficient amount of evidence for a holistic approach to the target speech acts. For this reason the presenter has been compiling his SAC with the use of conventional DCTs (cf. Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) and role-plays to elicit diverse English speech acts en masse. The data obtained through the DCTs are supposed to be “condensed” rather than “dispersed” as Beebe & Cummings (1996) state: the responses in the DCTs model the “canonical shape” of the target speech act.

3. Significance of developing “pragmatic competence” (cf. Bachman, 1990)

- The most compelling evidence that instruction in pragmatics is necessary comes from learners whose L2 proficiency is advanced ...
- Turning to production, candidates for pedagogic intervention can be sorted in four groups: (1) choice of communicative acts, (2) the strategies by which an act is realized, (3) its content, and (4) its linguistic form.

Kasper, G. (1997)

4. Pragmatics & SLA / TEFL

- Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993) “a second-generation hybrid of SLA & pragmatics”
- Pragmatics in Language Teaching (Rose & Kasper, 2001):
(I)n many second and foreign language teaching contexts, curricula and materials developed in recent years include strong pragmatic components or even adopt a pragmatic approach as their organizing principle.

5. Pragmatics & CLT

Nunan (1991) defines the principles or features of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) or “Communicative Approach” as follows:

- (1) An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
- (2) The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
- (3) The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but also on the Learning Management process.
- (4) An enhancement of the learner’s own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
- (5) An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.

6. Speech act of INVITATION

- Invitation is an illocutionary speech act, which is supposed to be basically an FEA (face-enhancing act) for the hearer (H) (cf. Kerbat-Orecchioni, 1997: 14), because the speaker (S) undertakes in this speech act to offer an opportunity to enjoy, get something or (even) study for the benefit of H.
- In this sense, ‘invitation’ is assumed to belong chiefly to Searle’s EXPRESSIVE (cf. 1975:15) and Leech’s CONVIVIAL (cf. 1983:104) because of its FEA nature.
- However, if S needs to request H to join an opportunity for S’s sake, invitation can get into Searle’s (ibid.) category of DIRECTIVE or Leech’s (ibid.) COMPETITIVE.

7. Research background

This research has been carried out with the support of the Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research awarded by JSPS (Japan Society for the Promotion of Scientific Research) [Subject num.: 18820028]] and Waseda University Grant for Special Research Projects [Subject num.: 2008A-840].

Specification of Date and Informants:

- This research was carried out in (1) February-March & (2) September 2007 in Missouri, U.S.A. with 168 undergraduate students of the Southeast Missouri State University.

Procedure of data collection:

- Two types of DCTs (discourse completion tests) and the role-play
- DCT 1 requested one group of informants to write what they really said in the past or would say to perform the target English speech acts.
- DCT 2 requested the other group to write up real or imaginary conversations between S and H.
- Both types asked them to record situations that they remembered or could think of when they perform(ed) the speech acts.
- Besides these studies with questionnaires, some informants volunteered for a role-play for the collection of audio-visual data.

8. Situation

N	Type	Classification	Num	Per
1	K	Party	57	41%
2	I	Meal	21	15%
3	E	Event	11	8%
4	H	House	10	7%
5	J	Movie	10	7%
6	G	Going out	9	7%
7	N	Sport	6	4%
8	B	Dance	3	2%
9	O	Study	3	2%
10	F	Game	2	1%
11	M	Sit together	2	1%
12	A	Church	1	1%
13	C	Date	1	1%
14	D	Dorm	1	1%
15	L	Shopping	1	1%
		Total	138	

9. Lexical strategies - Wordlist

N	Word	Freq.	%	N	Word	Freq.	%
1	TO	206	7.913946	32	DOING	17	0.653093
2	YOU	201	7.721859	33	WANNA	16	0.614675
3	COME	106	4.072224	34	WEEKEND	15	0.576258
4	A	74	2.842874	35	WHAT	15	0.576258
5	HEY	73	2.804456	36	CAN	14	0.537841
6	I	69	2.650788	37	IT	14	0.537841
7	WOULD	66	2.535536	38	AM	13	0.499424
8	LIKE	64	2.458702	39	BIRTHDAY	13	0.499424
9	PARTY	56	2.151364	40	IS	12	0.461007
10	WANT	55	2.112947	41	MOVIE	12	0.461007
11	AND	48	1.844026	42	OUT	12	0.461007
12	GO	45	1.728775	43	SATURDAY	12	0.461007
13	MY	45	1.728775	44	SEE	12	0.461007
14	WITH	45	1.728775	45	DINNER	11	0.422589
15	ARE	40	1.536688	46	FS	11	0.422589
16	TONIGHT	40	1.536688	47	OF	11	0.422589
17	ME	39	1.498271	48	SOME	11	0.422589
18	THE	39	1.498271	49	WE	11	0.422589
19	DO	37	1.421437	50	WILL	11	0.422589
20	AT	36	1.38302	51	SHOULD	10	0.384172
21	HAVING	35	1.344602	52	WATCH	10	0.384172
22	IF	31	1.190934	53	ALL	9	0.345755
24	GOING	24	0.922013	54	FRIDAY	9	0.345755
25	OVER	24	0.922013	55	GET	9	0.345755
26	FM	23	0.883596	56	BE	8	0.307338
27	HOUSE	21	0.806761	57	FRIENDS	8	0.307338
28	ON	21	0.806761	58	GUYS	8	0.307338
29	FOR	19	0.729927	59	HAVE	8	0.307338
30	US	19	0.729927	60	LATER	8	0.307338
31	THIS	18	0.69151	61	WAS	8	0.307338

10. [Selected] Lexical & grammatical strategies (collocations/chunks/structure)

COME

- 1) Do you want to **come** to the Panda Chinese restaurant with me?
- 2) Do you wanna **come**?
- 3) You should **come** with me to the party tonight!

WOULD (+ LIKE)

- 1) **Would** you **like** to come to dinner with us?
- 2) Hey **would** you **like** to go to the dance tonight?
- 3) Suzi, how **would** you **like** to come to Caroline's party?
- 4) I was wondering if you **would like** to go play some golf.
- 5) I **would** love it if you all could come to my birthday party!

WANT

- 1) Do you **want** to come with us?
- 2) Do you **want** to go eat at Cracker Barrel with me?
- 3) You **want** to come?
- 4) You can come if you **want**.
- 5) Hey Amber, a bunch of us are getting together at my house if you **want** to come.

ARE

- 1) John what **are** you doing tonight?
- 2) Hey Jan, what **are** you doing on Saturday?
- 3) Hey, we **are** all going to the football game Saturday.
- 4) Hey, Alicia and I **are** going out to lunch today.
- 5) Greg, my family and I **are** having a BBQ at my house on Saturday.

OVER

- 1) Would you like to come **over** on Saturday?
- 2) Tristan, this party is wild, come on **over**!
- 3) Tommy, I was wondering if you would like to come **over** to my house on Friday for a party.
- 4) Hey girl, I'm having a few people **over** tonight, do you want to come?
- 5) I'm having people **over** this weekend if all of you want to come.

11. Discourse strategies – strategy classification

No	Type	Classification	Freq	Perc 1	Perc 2
1	A	Address (voc/intj/etc)	126	28.6%	
2	N	Supportive move (description of event)	82	18.6%	26.1%
3	F	Head act (interrogative)	64	14.5%	20.4%
4	D	Head act (hypothetical + interrogative)	52	11.8%	16.6%
5	H	Preparatory act (query on h's availability)	21	4.8%	6.7%
6	C	Head act (hypothetical + declarative)	18	4.1%	5.7%
7	O	Supportive move (directions)	16	3.6%	5.1%
8	B	Head act (declarative)	14	3.2%	4.5%
9	P	Supportive move (encouragement)	10	2.3%	3.2%
10	G	Head act (present option)	8	1.8%	2.5%
11	E	Head act (imperative)	6	1.4%	1.9%
12	Q	Supportive move (present option)	5	1.1%	1.6%
13	K	Preparatory act (specification of reason)	4	0.9%	1.3%
14	T	Supportive move (s's want to have h)	4	0.9%	1.3%
15	M	Preparatory act (s's want)	3	0.7%	1.0%
16	S	Supportive move (s's want to have h)	3	0.7%	1.0%
17	I	Preparatory act (query on h's situation)	1	0.2%	0.3%
18	J	Preparatory act (query on h's will)	1	0.2%	0.3%
19	L	Preparatory act (s's readiness)	1	0.2%	0.3%
20	R	Supportive move (specify what h can do)	1	0.2%	0.3%
		<i>Total 1</i>	440		
		<i>Total 2</i>	314		

12. Semantic formulas (Combination of discourse strategies)

N	Combination	Freq.		N	Combination	Freq.
1	AFN	18		13	AGN	3
2	AF	17		14	AN	3
3	AD	15		15	C	3
4	D	14		16	ABN	2
5	ADN	8		17	ABNO	2
6	F	8		18	ACN	2
7	ADH	5		19	ADNO	2
8	DN	4		20	AFHN	2
9	AB	3		21	AGHN	2
10	AC	3		22	AHN	2
11	AFNO	3		23	CNO	2
12	AFO	3		24	FH	2

13. Selected samples of strategy combinations

My friends and I are going out to eat.	Hey, Kenny,	Address (voc/intj/etc)	A	AFN
	me, Kevin, and Ciara are going to go eat.	Supportive move (description of event)	N	
	Do you wanna come?	Head act (interrogative)	F	
I am inviting a friend out for the night.	Hey girl!	Address (voc/intj/etc)	A	AF
	You wanna meet me for dinner and a movie later?	Head act (interrogative)	F	
Inviting girlfriend out for dinner.	Rikki,	Address (voc/intj/etc)	A	AD
	would you like to go to dinner with me?	Head act (hypothetical + interrogative)	D	
My birthday party	Would all like to come to my birthday party?	Head act (hypothetical + interrogative)	D	D

14. Conclusion & future directions

- The results of the analysis of the speech act corpus above are showing some distinctive features and patterns of language use of American university students in their performance of the target speech act INVITATION at lexical, grammatical and discourse levels.
- Such information is certainly to contribute to the production of ELT materials pursuing CLT.
- Both instructors and learners can study lexical, grammatical and discourse strategies of the target speech acts with a functional/situational syllabus.
- The analysis of 'responses' (positive, negative and others) and that of prosody and kinesics will provide more information on the actual use of this speech act. (in progress)

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