

TAAVITSAINEN, Irma and Andreas H. JUCKER 2008: *Speech Acts in the History of English*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Since the publication of Jucker's 1995 edited volume on historical pragmatics, in which the field was well defined and thoroughly organized, the discipline has been growing and expanding its views. Historical pragmatics is divided into pragmaphilology and diachronic pragmatics, the latter including function-to-form and form-to-function approaches. In particular, studies of the function-to-form type have proliferated over the last few years. Nevertheless, the book under review is the first volume devoted to diachronic aspects of speech acts in English. The volume is divided into three main groups. The first two groups of articles follow Searle's classification of speech acts. Thus, the first block deals with directives and commissives, whereas the second one focuses on expressives and assertives. Finally, in order to cover research problems as well, the three articles included in the closing set explore methodological issues.

The volume starts with an introduction by the editors Irma Taavitsainen and Andreas Jucker, "Speech acts now and then: Towards a pragmatic history of English," in which they present this book as a contribution to the discipline of historical pragmatics. Whereas studies of the form-to-function mapping have received most of the attention in historical pragmatics, the intrinsic difficulties in speech act research have limited the production of this field of study. Taavitsainen and Jucker offer a survey of methodological issues and deal with the applicability of available research methods, such as those used in cross-linguistic studies, to the diachronic study of speech acts.

Thomas Kohlen opens the first section with "Directives in Old English: Beyond politeness?" in which he focuses on four different types of directives, namely directive performatives —the most common strategy—, constructions with second person pronouns + *scealt/sculon* ('you shall'), constructions with *uton* followed by infinitive ('let's') and constructions with *neodþearf* ('it is necessary'). He explains that the former are more direct strategies and they are usually found in a secular or Germanic context, whereas religious prose makes use of the latter, common-ground strategies, probably due to Christian concepts of humility and obedience. Kohlen concludes that Old English was not

affected by negative politeness, corroborating other studies that place the shift towards negative politeness in early Modern English.

Following with directives, Jonathan Culpeper and Dawn Archer include a detailed theoretical and methodological approach in their "Requests and directness in Early Modern English trial proceedings and play-texts, 1640–1760." They show that it is not possible to apply cross-linguistic research methods to historical periods. Completion tests and questionnaires, as used by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) are not valid for historical analysis. Culpeper and Archer propose an annotation of requests, including type of request, to their corpus of plays and trial proceedings from the *Corpus of English Dialogues*, which incorporates sociopragmatic information. Among their most interesting findings they show that request strategies in early Modern English differ from those used in present-day cultures (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989), in particular in a non-correlation between politeness and indirectness, since in most cases the imperative realizes the request.

Directives are also the focus of Ulrich Busse's contribution "An inventory of directives in Shakespeare's *King Lear*." He analyses how Lear's directive speech acts evolve throughout the play. At the beginning, Lear wants everybody to comply with his wishes and there is no need for him to be polite, even though he does receive polite answers. Then, he starts to show empathy and ends up pleading and begging, and this is reflected by a progressive decrease in the number of directives.

Gabriella Del Lungo Camiciotti investigates requests and commissives in "Two polite speech acts from a diachronic perspective: Aspects of the realisation of requesting and undertaking commitments in the nineteenth-century commercial community." Her study is based on the epistolary language of nineteenth century international traders, taking into account both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. Request strategies in this context favour the use of performatives, whereas the use of indirect strategies, the preferred strategy in Present-day English, is neglected. Instead, commitments, the other speech act analysed, avoid performatives and use *shall* and *will* as the most common strategies. The modulation approach, already proposed by Sbisà (2001), is useful to describe illocutionary force degrees in the realization of speech acts. Instead of indirectness, modulation is used as a mitigation strategy: downgrading for

directives and upgrading for commissives. Both requests and commitments keep the same functions nowadays as they did in the nineteenth century, although realized through different strategies. The author relates the use of straightforward strategies to the non-institutional context of business relations, in which participants negotiate both commercial activities and acquaintance.

Mari Pakkala-Weckström ends the first block of articles with a contribution devoted to the speech act of promising ““No botmeles bihestes”: Various ways of making binding promises in Middle English.” She takes into account several works by Chaucer and others from later periods with similar topics in order to compare promises from a diachronic perspective, especially the binding promise, “an oral commitment given by way of a speech act which usually takes a certain formula” (2008: 133). As a starting point she focuses on the noun *throuthe*, the verb *sweren* and lexical items related to verbs denoting promise. Thus, she arrives at a group of strategies realized by seven illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs). Pakkala-Weckström reaches interesting conclusions: firstly, she shows that even false promises are binding, contradicting Searle’s sincerity conditions; secondly, she finds that the illocutionary force of binding promises decreases and, consequently, some supporting acts are needed.

The second part of the book focuses on expressives and assertives, starting with an article on the history of greetings by Joachim Grzega, “Häl, Hail, Hello, Hi: Greetings in English language history.” Grzega provides a complete catalogue of the chronological development of greetings in the history of English, from Anglo-Saxon times to Present-day English, paying attention to different phrases, their etymology and changes over time. He identifies a group of recurring patterns or iconemes, that is, “the image behind the coinage of a term” (2008: 182). As regards function, Grzega observes how explicit questions with implicit salutations become pure salutations, a phenomenon already observed by Arnovick in connection with blessings transformed into leave-taking formulae (Arnovick 1999: 95–118). Thus, greeting formulae acquire pragmatic content at the expense of illocutionary and semantic losses. As regards form, his research shows that Old English had a limited set of greeting expressions, among them attention-getters or wishes for well-being were the most common. Wishes for a good time and well-being inquiries

started to be used in Middle English, a period in which the range of formulae became larger.

The editors of the volume, Irma Taavitsainen and Andreas H. Jucker offer a study of compliments from early Modern English to the early twentieth century, “‘Methinks you seem more beautiful than ever’: Compliments and gender in the history of English.” Since a compliment is both a face-threatening and a face-saving act, this study offers valuable cultural information. This study shows that women usually react to compliments downplaying them to flattery, whereas men usually accept them —this is also the case in Present-day English. The authors show that topics are also gender-specific, since looks are the most frequent target, especially when addressed to women, while men’s topics include others such as language or nationality. As regards methodological issues, Jucker and Taavitsainen follow their own previous approaches to speech act verbs (Taavitsainen and Jucker 2007). They make use of lexical searches and apply an ethnographic method since descriptive speech acts are more common than performatives, they can provide interesting information.

Andreas H. Jucker and Irma Taavitsainen also examine the speech act of apologies in “Apologies in the history of English: Routinized and lexicalized expressions of responsibility and regret.” The authors analyse apologies in fifteenth and sixteenth century fiction and drama and compare them to present-day English data. There is a shift in the formulation of apologies, since in earlier periods they were less routinized, and not fully detached, while present-day apologies are realized through a limited set of IFIDs. The change of formulae reveals a development of focus from the addressee towards the speaker. Thus, whereas in the Renaissance period apologizers asked generosity or forgiveness (*pardon, excuse*), in Present-day English data offenders just show remorse (*I’m sorry*).

Although most of the papers devote a great deal of space to methodology, the last section includes three articles focused mainly on retrieval methods. Petteri Valkonen includes a step-by-step description of the methodology used to catch promises in “Showing a little promise: Identifying and retrieving explicit illocutionary acts from a corpus of written prose.” He discusses problems related to data retrieval in function-to-form studies, such as time-consuming manual searches, and proposes a pattern-based retrieval programme in order to carry them out. Valkonen identifies four

prototypical promise patterns with five performative verbs. Thus, he tags the patterns found in ARCHER and checks them against a larger corpus. He deals with the two main problems concerning methodology, namely precision and recall, whereas the former proves to be high in retrieval software, the latter is less acceptable.

Andreas H. Jucker, Gerold Schneider, Irma Taavitsainen and Barb Breustedt, "Fishing for compliments: Precision and recall in corpus-linguistic compliment research." This is the only article in the volume in which just present-day data are analysed. The authors take a set of compliment patterns established by Manes and Wolfson (1981) and check them against the BNC. Jucker et al. try to apply the methodology used in present-day speech act studies to historical periods. Thus, they deal with errors of precision and recall using query language, and make use of random sampling when data are too large for handling. Additionally, since qualitative assessment is still essential in pragmatics, two annotators analyse manually all the data, taking into account only inter-annotator agreement.

In "Tracing directives through text and time: Towards a methodology of corpus-based diachronic speech-act analysis," Thomas Kohnen addresses methodological problems in diachronic speech acts analysis. He analyses manually four types of directives in sermons, private letters and prayers and checks the results against a multi-genre corpus using data from the tenth to the twentieth centuries. Following what he labels "genre-based bottom-up methodology," Kohnen finds out genre-specific distributions of performatives and diachronically consistent similarities, such as letters and prayers, which show a higher frequency of second-person imperatives.

In spite of minor mistakes in the alphabetical order of references in the introduction —Arnovick (1994) appears twice whereas Jucker (2006) and Blommaert (2005) are missing— this volume provides an excellent contribution to the literature on historical pragmatics since the different case studies offer interesting insights into the sociolinguistic history of English. In addition, the contributions open up the path to further research in this discipline and propose solutions to methodological issues difficult to tackle when dealing with pragmatic functions. Although this

work focuses exclusively on English, similar studies could be carried out in other languages in which function-to-form is still an unexplored area.

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