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ABSTRACT

A study compared (1) data on rejections of advice by native and non-native speakers collected from natural conversation with (2) data collected from a discourse completion task (DCT). Subjects were students in an academic advising session (13 native speakers, 11 non-native speakers of English) who responded to a DCT and students (18 native speakers, 21 non-native speakers) whose advising sessions were taped. The study demonstrates that although the use of DCTs has benefits such as availability of large samples and experimental controls, the technique also biases the data in certain ways. It particular, participants in this study used a narrower range of semantic formulas on the DCT, used fewer status-preserving strategies, and lacked extended negotiations found in the natural data. However, the DCT was found to facilitate testing of hypotheses derived from instances in the natural conversations where there was insufficient data. It is concluded that while there should be an increase in observational data in interlanguage pragmatics research, the DCT may also be used as an important tool to complement such data. (MSE)

Experimental and Observational Data in the Study of Interlanguage Pragmatics

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This paper compares data on rejections by native and nonnative speakers collected from natural conversation with data collected from a discourse completion task (DCT). It demonstrates that although the use of DCTs has benefits such as availability of large samples and experimental controls, the technique also biases the data in certain ways. In particular, we show that participants used a narrower range of semantic formulas on the DCT, that they used fewer status preserving strategies, and that they lacked extended negotiations found in the natural data. On the other hand, the DCT facilitates the testing of hypotheses derived from instances in the natural conversations where there is insufficient data. We conclude that while there should be an increase in observational data in interlanguage pragmatics research, the DCT may also be utilized as an important tool to complement such data.

This paper compares natural data on rejections collected from natural conversation with data collected from a discourse completion task (DCT). The DCT has been a popular data-gathering instrument in much current work on the speech act, especially the work on interlanguage pragmatics carried out in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984), and by Beebe et al. in a series of studies on Japanese ESL pragmatics (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Beebe & Takahashi, 1989; Takahashi & Beebe, 1987). (For a comprehensive review of research methodology in interlanguage pragmatics, see Kasper & Dahl, 1991.)

Although some studies acknowledge the possible skewedness of results as a product of such a method, they also note that the use of DCTs has many benefits, such as availability of large samples and experimental controls. Few of the studies, however, actually compare DCT data with equivalent data from other methodologies to test such suppositions. One important exception to this is an unpublished paper by Beebe and Cummings (1985). They compare data gathered through a DCT and naturally occurring speech, and find that the DCT does not reflect natural speech with respect to actual wording, range of formulas and strategies, length of response or number of turns, depth of emotion, number of repetitions and elaborations, or rate of occurrence of a speech act (p. 14). However, while their study provides evidence for the assumptions regarding the differences in the two kinds of data sets, it only examines native speaker responses. Furthermore, the natural data is from telephone conversations, which may have their own particular constraints. Thus, it does not provide evidence on the extent to which similar nonnative speaker data might be effected by task. Additionally, the status relations of the subjects in

Beebe and Cummings were those of equals, so that it also offers no evidence of how data of status unequals might be affected.[1] Finally, the subjects performing the DCT were in a role-playing task which did not directly reflect a real-life situation for such subjects.

In the present study we show that a collection technique such as the DCT may indeed bias the data, not only for native speakers, but also for nonnative speakers. However, we also show that the DCT is helpful in testing hypotheses which arise from the analysis of natural data, particularly when those hypotheses address the *absence* of features or content, as in the notable lack of rejections in the native speaker advising sessions.

REJECTIONS

In the present study we compare the data available from elicited and natural conditions by examining rejections of advice. Our interest in rejections comes from our previous work (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1990, 1991) using natural data from academic advising sessions. We have found that students have two ways of controlling their course schedules: through the use of suggestions which build the schedule and through the use of rejections which block courses from being added. Rejections become obligatory for students who do not make positive suggestions because they have no other way to shape their schedules if they do not agree with their advisors' proposals. If students want to eliminate a suggestion made by the advisor, they must reject the advice.

We have further shown that nonnative speakers make proportionately more rejections than the native speakers (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990, 1991). Native speakers make suggestions more than twice as often as they reject advice (they make 2.36 suggestions for each rejection), whereas nonnative speakers make suggestions and rejections in almost equal numbers (1.20 suggestions for each rejection). Thus, native speakers control the content of their schedules positively, by making suggestions, while nonnative speakers more frequently control their schedules by rejecting their advisor's advice. Native and non-native speakers also differ in the semantic formulas which make up their rejections. Semantic formulas represent the means by which a particular speech act is accomplished in terms of the primary content of an utterance, such as a reason, an explanation, or an alternative. Even in cases of apparent similarity, such as in the use of explanations, the content encoded by the formulas of each group differs.

All of the advising sessions which we have studied to date have a single goal: the students and their advisors determine the student's academic schedule for the coming semester. The sessions generally end when the advisor gives the student a signed registration ticket containing the negotiated schedule. The problem with the natural data, of course, is that while the advising sessions were as similar to each other in terms of goal, content, and length as natural conversations can be, they were not identical.[2] More importantly, since the native English-speaking graduate students actively built their schedules through their own suggestions, they did not reject advice as frequently as the nonnative speakers; thus, we had relatively few

examples of native-speaker rejections. We were interested in discovering how native speakers would reject advice if they were in the same situations as the nonnative speakers. Because native speakers did not frequently reject advice, since they used other strategies, they avoided many of the difficult situations in which nonnative speakers found themselves. We thus constructed a DCT to test the generalizations we had made about rejections on the basis of the advising sessions. The DCT provided valuable evidence unavailable in the natural data, but also showed strong task bias. Following the method section which briefly describes the participants and the DCT, the next two sections present the results and compare the natural data with the data from the DCT.

METHOD

Participants

There were two groups of participants whose use of language was analyzed: students who responded to the DCT and students whose advising sessions were taped. A third group of participants was the faculty in the advising sessions. Their use of language is not discussed in this paper.

The students who responded to the DCT were graduate students in linguistics (13 native speakers and 11 nonnative speakers) who had completed advising sessions as required of all graduate students. They were enrolled in two graduate level linguistics courses. The nonnative speakers represented seven languages: there were four speakers of Chinese, and one speaker each of Bambara, Bengali, Chichewa, Japanese, Spanish, Thai, and Yoruba. All nonnative speakers had TOEFL scores of 577 and above. It is important to note that in response to the DCT the student participants always took the role of students -- a role which they know well. We will therefore refer to the student participants as "students" throughout the paper.

The natural data is taken from thirty-nine advising sessions which were audiotaped and analyzed in their entirety (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1991). Seven native English speaking faculty members (four males and three females) and thirty-nine graduate students participated in this portion of the study. The student group consists of 18 native speakers and 21 nonnative speakers. Six languages were represented: Arabic (1), Chinese (5), Japanese (5), Korean (4), Malay (1), and Spanish (5). All nonnative students had TOEFL scores of 577 and above. The faculty participants were all experienced advisors who met with approximately the same number of students during the normal departmental advising periods. Since all faculty are required by the department to advise students, each has had several years of experience.

Instrument Design

We constructed a written DCT to test eight situations which commonly occurred in the nonnative speaker conversations, but which were rare in the native speaker conversations. The eight scenarios were designed to test three specific hypotheses regarding semantic formulas and specific content.

I. Native speaker rejections will be shorter than nonnative speaker rejections, containing fewer semantic formulas per rejection.

II. Native speakers will prefer a smaller number of rejection strategies (i.e., Explanation and Alternative) than nonnative speakers.

III. Native speakers will not use "illegal" content in their rejections, but nonnative speakers will.[3]

Two items tested "illegal" explanations -- "too difficult" and "too easy" -- which were frequently offered unsuccessfully by nonnative speakers in the actual advising sessions. Two others tested problematic and possibly "illegal" explanations -- "you don't like the instructor" and "you aren't interested the topic of your advisor's elective course." These explanations were hinted at, but were not common, in the advising sessions. The "illegal" reasons for rejecting a course suggested by the advisor were included to determine whether native speakers ever used such explanations. These types of explanations were absent in the natural data and we attempted to determine whether this was systematic or accidental. Three items tested "legal" and highly acceptable explanations -- "you prefer not to take summer courses," "you have a schedule conflict," and "you have already taken a course." These explanations had also been used successfully by both native and nonnative speakers. Another item tested the rejection of the timing of a course where the student's own action brought about the difficulty. This situation is common when a student drops a course which the advisor previously recommended that the student take at a particular time.

The DCT was introduced by the general direction: "In the following situations, imagine that you are a graduate student who has gone to see an advisor to register for courses for next semester." In each item, the suggestion by the advisor and the reason for the rejection is described as in Example (1).

(1) Your advisor suggests that you take a course during the summer.
You prefer not to take classes during the summer.
You say:

Students were given 50 minutes to complete the DCT. All responses were anonymous.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An obvious advantage of the DCT is that it permits the testing of large sample sizes in equivalent situations. The DCT also allowed us to specifically test the three hypotheses which were based on observation of the natural corpus. We will present the results and discuss each hypothesis in turn.

Hypothesis I. Native speaker rejections will be shorter than nonnative speaker rejections, containing fewer semantic formulas per rejection.

In the DCT, the nonnative speakers wrote more overall than did the native speakers, supporting Hypothesis I. The nonnative speakers employed a total of 206 semantic formulas, while the native speakers produced 162, 44 fewer that the nonnative speakers (Table 1). The mean number of semantic formulas per individual student was 18.7 for nonnative speakers and for native speakers, 12.5. For each Item on the DCT, the nonnative speakers used an average of 2.3 formulas, while the native speakers used only an average of 1.5. Although the DCT data lacks the features of negotiation and turn taking, the relative number of semantic formulas reflects the trends found in the natural data where nonnative speakers tended to take more turns for a rejection than did native speakers.

Hypothesis II. Native speakers will prefer a smaller number of rejection strategies (i.e., Explanation and Alternative) than nonnative speakers.

Table 1. Number of Semantic Formulas Used in Rejections by NS and NNS on DCT

	NS (N=13)	NNS (N=11)
Total Rejections	162	206
Individual Mean	12.5	18.7
Item Mean	1.5	2.3

Hypothesis II was also supported. On the DCT the native speakers used three major strategies, Explanation, Alternative, and Direct Rejection, in 88% of the cases, while the nonnative speakers used these same three in 74% (Table 2).[4]

On the DCT the semantic formula favored by both groups was Explanation, followed by Alternative, with Direct Rejection third.[5] The relative rankings of these three semantic formulas with respect to one another are the same for both groups on both data sets.

On the DCT the nonnative speakers used a variety of semantic formulas which are seldom or never used by the native speakers, and 26% of their DCT answers are constituted by these other formulas. Also, nonnative speakers have a much lower preference for Alternatives than do native speakers, which fits the natural data. Since Alternatives could be interpreted as a kind of suggestion, which are used less often by the nonnative speakers, it is not surprising to find that the nonnative speakers use fewer of them on the DCT, employing other strategies instead, such as Requesting Advice. Apologizing, and even, in two extreme cases, Accusing the advisor of being responsible for a problem.

Table 2. Relative Frequency of Semantic Formulas in Rejections for DCT and Conversational Data[a]

	DCT		Natural Data	
Most Common Semantic Formulas				
	NS	NNS	NS	NNS
Explanations	41	45	32	49
Alternatives	33	19	18	7
Rejections	13	10	5	1
Subtotal	87	74	55	57
Less Common Semantic Formulas				
Accept as Reject	---	---	13	3
Condition	---	---	8	2
But/Yeah But	---	---	8	14
Avoidance	1	2	8	15
Empathy	4	4	5	2
Request Adv/Help	---	4	---	---
Indefinite	---	---	3	2
Dissuade	---	---	---	5
Criticize/Accuse	1	1	---	---
Agreement	3	5	---	---
Other	4	10	---	---
Total	100	100	100	100

[a]All values are expressed in percentages

Although the overall use of the three most common semantic formulas was similar for both groups on the DCT, the actual distribution of these responses across the DCT items differed between the native speakers and nonnative speakers. In addition, the content of these responses differed, such that the profiles of the native speakers and nonnative speakers are not as similar as the summary figures might indicate. Hypothesis III addresses the question of content.

Hypothesis III. Native speakers will not use "illegal" content in their rejections, but nonnative speakers will.

To address this hypothesis we selected reasons from the natural data that clearly received a negative response from the advisors during the advising session. We included "too difficult" and "too easy" as reasons for rejections which did not meet with approval in the advising sessions, and two potentially problematic reasons "you don't like the instructor" and "lack of interest in the advisor's course" (Items 2, 6, 10, and 7, respectively). (See Appendix.)

Native speakers do not use these reasons in the natural data, and they do not tend to use these reasons in the DCT, although they were included as the reasons in the prompts. Instead they choose other "legal" content. In response to item 7, "Your advisor suggests that you take an elective class that she's teaching, but you are not interested in the topic." 9 out of 13 native speaker responses (69%) were Alternatives as in Example (2).

(2) Well, I'd kind of thought of taking [L541]. (NS)

Two other students even agreed to take the courses, replying "Sure!" and "OK," and two others requested permission to postpone their decisions. This shows that although a difficult situation may obtain, native speakers do not use illegal content as an explanation. Thus we conclude that the absence of such content in the natural data is purposeful and not accidental.

In contrast, no nonnative speaker used an Alternative in response to Item 7. Many used vague explanations in their rejections such as "I cannot" which we suspect would not satisfy an advisor in an actual session. Only one native speaker expressed a lack of interest in the topic (8%) whereas five (46%) of the nonnative speakers did. An additional two nonnative students rejected the course as "not relevant" and "not necessary." Thus a total of seven nonnative speakers (64%) rejected the course with a negative evaluation. The form of these particular rejections is also quite striking. The native speaker rejection in Example (3) exhibits the downgraders *I'm not sure* and *really* whereas the nonnative speaker rejection in (4) exhibits an upgrader, *at all*, and a statement of preference.

(3) I'm not sure that I'm really interested in the topic. (NS)

(4) I would rather not take this course because the topic doesn't interest me at all. (NNS)

In Item 2, "Your advisor suggests that you take a course which you would rather not take because you think that it will be too difficult for you," the student has to reject a course because of its difficulty. For graduate students to reject explicitly on those grounds may be problematic since this may cast doubt on their academic ability. In the natural data native speakers never used this reason for rejecting a course, but the nonnative speakers sometimes did. We had specifically hypothesized that the absence of native speaker rejections which were based on the difficulty of the course, such as "this course is too difficult for me," were not accidental, but reflected cultural-academic values held by the native speaker graduate students and their advisors. Item 2, then, was included in order to test the generalization that the two groups differ in their responses to this situation.

Figure 1 shows that both groups used Explanation frequently in response to Item 2, native speakers 43% and nonnative speakers 46%. However, the native speakers actually used Alternatives even more frequently, at 57%. Nonnative speakers only used them in 21% of their responses, using Direct Rejections in 11%.

Moreover, although many of the nonnative speakers used explanations similar to those of native speakers, some of them did reject on the grounds that the course was too difficult, as illustrated in Example (5).

(5) This course may be too difficult for me now. Can I take it later on? (NNS)

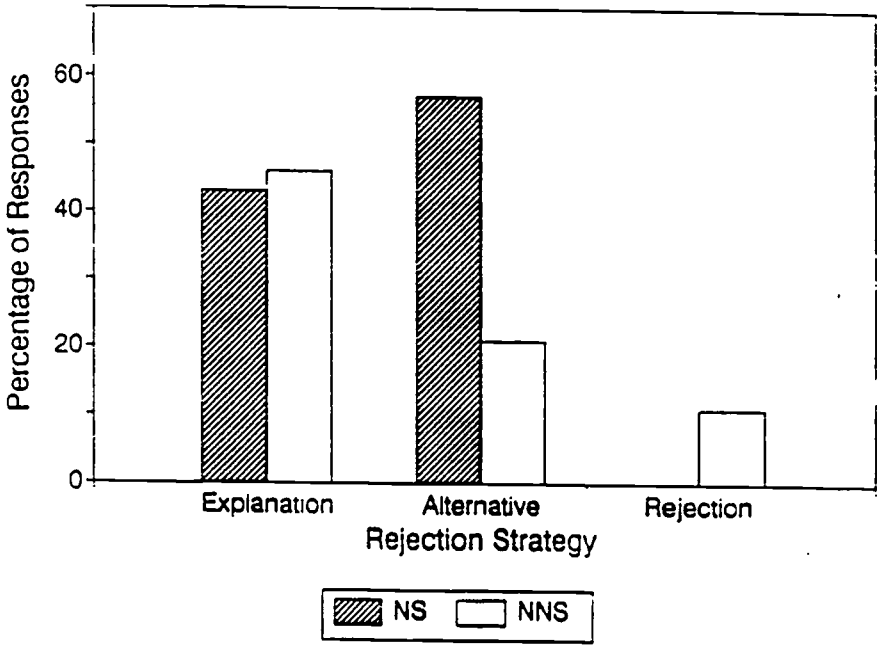
In addition, some nonnative speakers further directly rejected the course by stating that they did not want to take it, as in Example (6).

(6) Actually, I don't want to take this course because I think it will be too difficult for me and it will effect [sic] my grade point average. Would it be possible that I study other courses instead of this one? (NNS)

Native speakers, on the other hand, did not refer directly to the course difficulty, nor did any of the native speakers directly reject. The example most similar to a Direct Rejection is Example (7), in which the student mentions the risky outcome of enrolling in such a course, but even this student does not actually mention "difficulty."

(7) I'm really not sure I could handle that. I don't want to get in over my head here. (NS)

Figure 1. Distribution of Responses for Item 2 ("too difficult")



Most native and nonnative speaker students referred to their lack of background or preparation for the course, rather than to its difficulty. This was supplemented in the Alternatives by asking about another course or by asking about the possibility of postponing the course in question until a later date, thus showing responsibility for taking the course at some time.

Our first goal in this study was satisfied since the DCT provided valuable information regarding features and content which were absent in the natural data. However, there are certain important differences in the rejections in the natural and elicited conditions. We examine the influence of the task in the next section.

Task Influence

Comparison of Semantic Formulas Used

The top three strategies on the DCT differ from those most frequent in the natural data (Table 3). First, while both groups also favor Explanation in the natural data, they differ in their frequency and relative rankings of use of the other semantic formulas. For both groups the number of Direct Rejections is elevated on the DCT to third place, but is lower and differently ranked for each group in the natural data. The native speaker natural data shows that Alternative, as in their DCT data, is the second most used semantic formula, but the Accept as Reject formula[6] which never shows up at all on the DCT, is third. In fact, several other semantic formulas rank higher than Direct Rejection in the native speaker natural data, and it would tie for second from last place. For the nonnative speakers, in the natural data the semantic formula which ranks second is *But/Yeah But*[7] and the third ranked formula is Avoidance, which does not occur in the DCT. Alternatives would be ranked fourth in the nonnative speaker natural data, and Direct Rejections would be at the bottom.

Second, in the two data sets there are some fairly frequent semantic formulas found in the advising sessions which were not used at all on the DCT: Accept as Reject, Condition, and *But/Yeah But*, as well as some less frequent formulas, with the result that overall, the DCT elicited a smaller range of semantic formulas than did the natural data.

Third, in the natural data the range of semantic formulas is about the same for both groups. On the DCT, however, there was a greater difference between native speakers and nonnative speaker responses. (See Table 2.)

Fourth, there are strategies which appear in one data set and not in the other. On the DCT, for example, both groups use, albeit infrequently, Criticize/Accuse, Guilt Trip, and Indefinite, which never appear in the natural data. Opting Out also appears on the DCT where it does not appear in the natural data. Opting Out occurs when there is no response at all (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1991). On the DCT this would be represented by leaving the response line blank. The natural data strategies of Accept as Reject, Condition, and *But/Yeah But* do not appear on the DCT.

Last, and less obvious from Table 2, is the status of Avoidance strategies. Although they appear in both data sets, responses in this category are very infrequent in the DCT data, while for the nonnative speakers, at least, it is a frequently used category in the natural data. If we break this category down into its subcatego-

ries, different profiles for the two data sets appear. These subcategories are Requesting a Postponement, Responding with Questions, and Delaying the Rejection. The major Avoidance strategy found on the DCT explicitly requested putting off a decision, as in Example (8).

Table 3. Relative Rank of Semantic Formulas in Rejections for DCT and Conversational Data

	DCT		Natural Data	
Most Common Semantic Formulas				
	NS	NNS	NS	NNS
Explanations	1	1	1	1
Alternatives	2	2	2	4
Rejections	3	3	5	8
Less Common Semantic Formulas				
Accept as Reject	---	---	3	6
Condition	---	---	4	7
But/Yeah but	---	---	4	3
Avoidance	6	7	4	2
Empathy	4	6	5	7
Request Adv/Help	---	5	---	---
Indefinite	---	---	6	7
Dissuade	---	---	---	5
Criticize/Accuse	6	8	---	---
Agreement	5	4	---	---
Other	4	3	---	---

(8) Um -- can I decide if next week? (NNS)

Responding with Questions and Delaying the Rejections were Avoidance strategies which the nonnative speakers used frequently in the natural data but did not appear on the DCT. We find students requesting information and requesting repetition in response to a suggestion which they do not want to accept. When students Request Information, they ask a question whose form is a simple information question, but which pragmatically allows the student to avoid committing to the advisor's suggestion. Example (9) is an example of this type of Avoidance.

(9) Do you know anything about 560, uh, um, who teaches (NNS)

The second, Question Requesting Repetition, occurs sometimes immediately following an advisor's suggestion, sometimes later in the interview. It also allows the student to avoid immediate commitment to the suggestion. Example (10) illustrates the Repetition request.

(10) Which one was that one? (NNS)

Both of the preceding strategies are used frequently by the nonnative speakers in the natural data and contribute significantly to the high percentage of Avoidance in those data. They differ from the Delays discussed below in that no actual rejection appears in the data.

Finally, we find that in the natural data nonnative speakers frequently delayed their rejections. In these cases rejections occurred several turns later. No such delays were found in the DCT. Such delays may be accomplished by using a series of questioning strategies as illustrated in Examples (9) and (10). They may also be accomplished in a number of other ways, often by apparently agreeing to the suggestion, only to return to it later in the interview and initiate a rejection. In the natural data the high percentage for nonnatives under Avoidance may be accounted for, at least in part, by this strategy. Although nonnative speakers used other Avoidance strategies on the DCT they did not employ postponement, even though they could have written `no response' or something similar to represent such a strategy. All of these avoidance strategies allow speakers to avoid immediately rejecting the advisor's suggestion, but not necessarily to avoid rejecting entirely.

We suggest that the primary reason that the Avoidance subcategories differ across the data sets lies in the nature of the tasks themselves. Avoidance strategies are primarily interactive and promote negotiation over a number of turns. Their absence on the DCT reflects the nonnegotiative nature of the situation: unless respondents write out a long dialogue they are constrained from employing such strategies. Yet, as we have noted, these constitute a large part of the preferred strategies in the actual interviews where such negotiations are a primary aspect of the advising sessions.

Comparison of Content

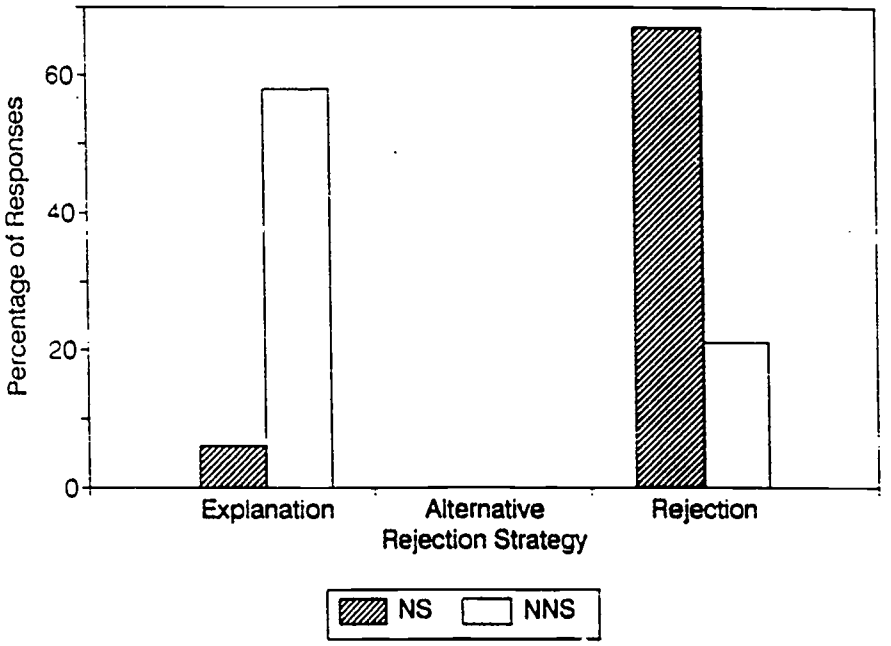
Two of the items, Item 9 and Item 3, elicited very different responses on the DCT compared to the natural data. Item 9 "Your advisor suggests that you take a course that you have already taken" was based on an actual advising session with a native speaker in which she responded as in Example (11).

(11) I've already taken that. (NS)

Item 9 more or less forces the student to reject the advisor's advice, although in the natural situation the student has the option of avoiding a response. Even in this forced situation, however, we found that the native speakers and nonnative speakers used different strategies. Of the native speaker responses, 67% were Direct Rejections of the advice, and only 6% included an Explanation. No Alternatives were offered, and the native speakers had an average of 1.4 semantic formulas in their responses. In other words, the native speakers responded directly to this situation and saw no need to embellish their responses with explanations or other discussion. This is illustrated in Figure 2.

The nonnative speakers, on the other hand, only used Direct Rejections 21% of the time, and offered Explanations 58% of the time, with an average of 2.2 semantic formulas for each response. The remainder of the responses included an Apology, a Request for advice, a Directive to the advisor, and even an Accusation or Challenge. As in natural data, it would appear that, overall, nonnative speakers tended to avoid out-of-status moves such as Direct Rejections. However, in spite of the similarity across data sets of their choices of semantic formulas, in the nonnative speaker DCT the content was much more assertive ("illegal"), expressing out-of-status negative opinions and criticisms not found in the natural data. One very extreme response, a direct Challenge to the advisor, is a type which is never used in any of the natural data, whether native speaker or nonnative speaker.

Figure 2. Distribution of Responses for Item 9 (course taken)



In Example (11) from the natural data the student resolves the matter quickly and directly thus minimizing the number of turns (and consequently the amount of time) for which the session is out of status. Whereas many native speakers replied to Item 9 on the DCT with a brief Direct Rejection as in Example (12), some nonnative speakers used replies with questionable content and unnecessary elaboration as in Examples (13) and (14).

(12) I've taken that already. (NS)

(13) I have already taken this course so I don't want to take it. I think it would be a waste of time. (NNS)

(14) I suppose I have gained sufficient knowledge from the course, and I've passed the exam to prove it. I don't think I have to take it a second time. (NNS)

In Example (15) the advisor is challenged.

(15) I don't want to repeat a course that I have already taken. Why do you want me to take it again? (NNS)

We hypothesize that the unusual content of these responses is a direct result of the DCT, where anonymity is maintained, and students feel the freedom to voice feelings that they do not care to risk in the real situation. Thus, although nonnative speakers utilize similar semantic formulas in both types of data, the content differs. It is interesting to note that the native speakers did not show the same discrepancies in content.

The more difficult the situation is to negotiate in real-life the greater the difference between natural and elicited data. Item 3, "During your advising session you find out that a required course which you had dropped from your schedule the previous semester will not be offered until the semester after you had planned to graduate. This is a real financial burden for you," presents a very serious situation, caused by the student's own action which contradicted an agreement from a previous advising session, placing the student in a precarious situation. This item produced some of the most extreme responses in the DCT, and quite different profiles for the two groups.

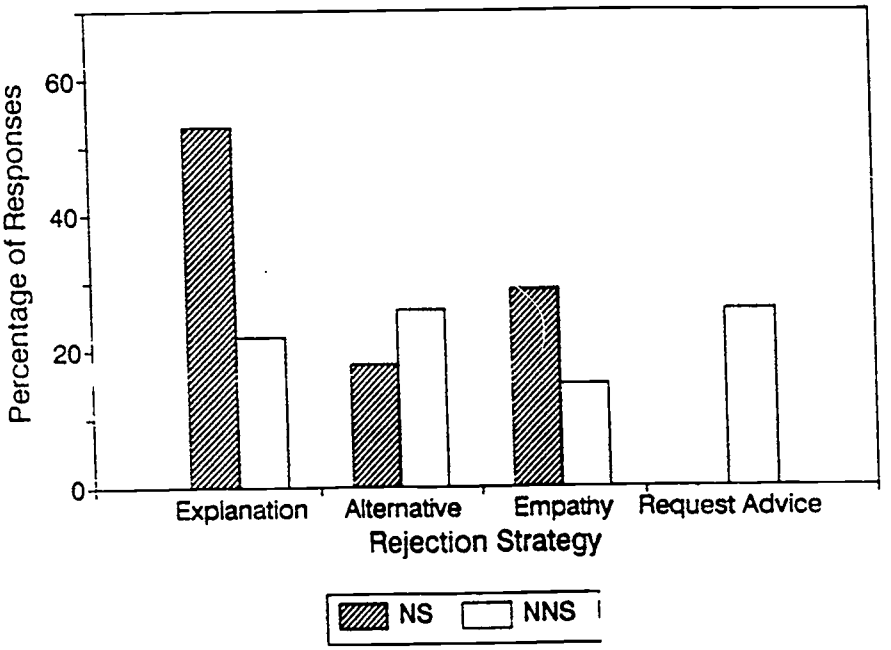
Figure 3 shows that the most common semantic formula in responses to Item 3 for native speakers was Explanation, making up 53% of their responses, while attempt to gain Empathy was second most common at 29%. Alternatives were third, at 18%. Nonnative speakers, however, used Explanations less often at 22%, using Alternatives and Requests for Advice somewhat more frequently: each constituted about 26% of the responses. Nonnative speakers also employed Empathy, but only at 15%. There were two extreme responses, one from each group in which the advisor and/or the system was accused of causing the situation.

Most of the Explanations offered by both native speakers and nonnative speakers employ an "excuse" and sometimes an indirect criticism of the system such as in Examples (16) and (17).

(16) I wasn't aware that this class is taught so infrequently, especially since it is required. (NS)

(17) I was planning to graduate next semester and I just found out that L532 is not offered until next summer. (NNS)

Figure 3. Distribution of Responses for Item 3 (course dropped)



The Empathy moves were also similar in content for the two groups, as in Example (18).

(18) ...there is simply no way I can afford to stay an extra semester. I don't know how I could do it. (NS)

The Alternatives were usually requests for a substitute course or a waiver, as in Example (19), while the Requests for Advice, used only by nonnative speakers, were more general appeals as in Example (20).

(19) Is there a way that the department can arrange for me to take this course or to waive it? (NNS)

(20) What can I do for this situation? Can you give me some suggestions? (NNS)

These examples were similar to those in the natural data. The responses which did not appear in the natural data are, as in Item 2, Bald-on-Record statements which accuse or blame the institution and its representatives, as in Examples (21) and (22).

(21) This really gets me! It seems to me that if these courses are required, they ought to be offered every semester, or we should at least be warned that they're not going to be offered! (NS)

(22) You should have told me that this course will not be offered until after the semester I planned to graduate. (NNS)

These responses are totally out of status, and, if used in an actual advising session would surely produce strong negative moves from the advisor. The fact that they do not so occur reflects an important difference in the effect of the methods used in obtaining data.[8]

In addition to the difference in content between the two methods, there was a difference in the use of status preserving strategies. Generally there were fewer uses of these in the DCT. In the natural data, native speakers used more such strategies than did nonnative speakers, and that still holds in the DCT. However, the nonnative speakers use even fewer such strategies on the DCT than they do in the advising sessions. Moreover, nonnative speakers employed upgraders on the DCT which were absent in the natural data. Upgraders enhance the illocutionary force of the utterance, and their appearance here may be related to the nature of the content of the DCT responses. A response without downgraders is seen in Example (20) above, and in the Direct Rejections in (13) and (14). In Example (23) the student employs an upgrader by granting the advisor permission to look in the file, a power the student does not actually have.

(23) Do you remember that I have already taken that course? I took it last summer. If you like you can check my file. (NNS)

As with the difference in content, we suggest that the differences in status preserving strategies are reflexes of the data-gathering techniques employed, where the face-to-face session requires the students to utilize face and status saving strategies because of the on-going relationship with advisors, whereas they are not at such a risk in the anonymous DCT.

CONCLUSION

Generally we found that our three hypotheses were supported, and that there were differences in the data elicited by the DCT and the natural data.[9] As Beebe and Cummings (1985) found for their native speakers, the DCT elicits a narrower range of semantic formulas, and we found this true for both the native speakers and nonnative speakers, although the nonnative speakers still use more than do the native speakers. Some frequently used formulas, such as Accept as Reject and delays, do not show up at all on the DCT. The reason, we claim, is because the DCT does not promote the turn-taking and negotiation strategies found in natural conversations. On the DCT, students have no way of knowing the success of a response, and are forced to choose the one which seems most likely to work. This, of course, is useful

in that it does tell us what they probably judge to be the best strategy in such a situation. At the same time, the DCT elevates the number of Direct Rejections for both groups to third most frequent, even though in the natural data Direct Rejections are among the most infrequently used formulas.

We also found that the DCT allows us to test hypotheses deriving from natural data. By putting the native speakers in circumstances which forced rejections, we were able to test our generalizations about the type, number, and content of semantic formulas that they would use, compared to the nonnative speakers.

We also discovered, however, that the DCT allows the students to be less polite (i.e., to use fewer status preserving strategies), and to employ more Bald-on-Record statements than does the natural situation. Although Beebe & Cummings (1985) found less politeness for their native speakers on the DCT, it was not clear that this would be the case for the present study, since, in contrast to Beebe & Cummings's study, our participants were status unequals. Because of the anonymity of the DCT, students can say what they really think, and vent feelings that would result in a tremendous loss of face in the actual advising sessions. These differences demonstrate that both native speakers and nonnative speakers have outer boundaries on the form and content of the rejections which they use in natural situations. These boundaries differ, since the nonnative speakers do use "illegal" content more often and fewer status preserving strategies than do native speakers in the natural data; yet, even the nonnative speakers do not cross over to direct accusation or criticism when they are face-to-face with their advisors.

In addition to supporting our three hypotheses, the results of this study also support our 1991 speculations in comparing our natural data to the findings of Beebe et al. (1987, 1990). In that work, we claimed that the data collecting techniques could account for many of the differences between our data and theirs. Moreover, we assumed that the differences in the contexts of the refusals of our studies would further help explain the differences found. For example, we noted that Beebe et al. had found Opting Out as a strategy whereas no such option existed for our students. The fact that we did find Opting Out in our DCT supports our claim that the presence of such a strategy is constrained by the context: students cannot easily walk out of an advising session, but they can leave a blank on a DCT. This may be generalized to the overall infrequency of Avoidance strategies on our DCT, which matches their infrequency in the Beebe et al. study: they are less likely to occur in a task where turn-taking and negotiation are not promoted. The same may also be the reason that for both Beebe et al. and the DCT data in the present study, there is a noticeable lack of Accept as Reject responses.

However, the fact that for both our DCT and natural data, Explanation was the most preferred response, whereas for Beebe et al. Alternatives were preferred, probably reflects the difference in the types of suggestions in the two studies rather than the difference in data collection. As we claimed in 1991, the setting and status of participants, and the resultant types of suggestions, differ for the two studies, and are likely to produce different rejection preferences. Since on our DCT these parameters were the same as for our natural data, we believe the consistently high preference for Explanation is evidence that such factors make a difference in findings.

The DCT, then allows us to not only test our hypotheses, but also can provide data which help explain and interpret the natural data. It cannot, however, show us the whole picture: it disallows certain common negotiation strategies, it eliminates certain semantic formulas, and it influences the politeness and status balancing profiles of the students.

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NOTES

[1]Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford (1990) and Wolfson (1989) have shown that status relations affect the codings of speech acts in important ways. Wolfson's Bulge Theory claims that such correlations are not linear, and that politeness formulas are used more often among status equals than among nonequals.

[2]In the present study the advising session data is referred to as "the natural data."

[3]The success, or the legal or illegal status of particular content, was determined in the analysis of the spontaneous conversations by the advisor's response (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1991). If the advisor accepts the rejection and withdraws the suggestion, the rejection has been successful. If the advisor overrides or dismisses the rejection out of hand, it has been unsuccessful.

[4]All values which are given in percentages have been rounded off.

[5]Direct Rejections include examples such as *Hm. Not actually, I'm avoiding it.* (NS) and *Well, I've decided not to [laughs] take the, um...[course]* (NS) (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1991). These and other types of rejections are discussed more fully in the following section.

[6]Accept as Reject is a case where a student seems to respond positively to a suggestion, but in fact does so with an obvious lack of enthusiasm. Often this is accompanied by a more explicit rejection strategy either offering an alternative, or a "But..." explanation. Thus the advisor will take the response as a rejection in this case rather than an acceptance of advice. An example of Accept as Reject is *That might be a solution* (NS) (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1991).

[7]An example of But/Yeah But is *Yeah, but in Spain they don't offer courses...* (NNS) (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1991).

[8]It is possible that these strong responses are a result of a reading of the prompt whereby the student assumed that the advisor had somehow agreed to the

dropping of the course from the schedule. It was not intended that way: students sometimes change their schedules after advising sessions without consulting or informing the advisor and this was the intended reading of the prompt. However, even if such a misreading occurred, it does not change the fact that to accuse the advisor so directly is entirely out-of-status, and does not occur in any of the natural data, even though such situations arose.

[9]One possible reason for this difference is that, although the DCT items represent actual situations that occur in the natural data, not all students get themselves into such situations. Thus, there is a "forcing" effect by the DCT, that does not necessarily occur in the advising sessions.

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APPENDIX

Discourse Completion Task (DCT)

[Please note that the lines for the student responses have been removed from all but the first example.]

In the following situations, imagine that you are a graduate student who has gone to see an advisor to register for courses for next semester.

1. Your advisor suggests that you take a required course. You want to try to have the course waived because you don't think it's relevant to your career goals.

You say: _____

_____

_____

2. Your advisor suggests that you take a course which you would rather not take because you think that it will be too difficult for you.

3. During your advising session you find out that a required course which you had dropped from your schedule the previous semester will not be offered until the semester after you had planned to graduate. This is a real financial burden for you.

4. Your advisor suggests that you take a required course. You want to try to have this course waived because you have already taken a course that you think is similar to the one that's being suggested.

5. Your advisor suggests that you take a course during the summer. You prefer not to take classes during the summer.

6. Your advisor suggests that you take a course which you would rather not take because you think that it will be a waste of your time since it will be too easy for you.

7. Your advisor suggests that you take an elective class that she's teaching, but you are not interested in the topic.

8. Your advisor suggests that you to take a required course (which is offered every semester) which conflicts with a course in another department which you have been wanting to take ever since you started your program.

9. Your advisor suggests that you to take a course that you have already taken.

10. Your advisor suggests that you take a particular required course next semester. You know that the timing is good, but you would prefer not to take the course from the professor who is teaching it. If you wait one more semester you can take it from someone else.

11. Your advisor offers you the choice between two electives that he thinks that you should take. You do not want to commit yourself to either course at this time.