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An overview of research methods in speech acts and politeness
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An overview of research methods in speech acts and politeness

The case for triangulation

Abstract

The aim of this methodological paper is to present an overview of research methods in speech act and politeness research, providing evidence in support of the triangulation approach (Jucker 2009; 2018). By taking research on politeness and speech acts as an example, I show that the respective advantages of different qualitative and quantitative methods such as corpus methods, roleplays, and interviews, are in fact complementary. Different research methods should be combined in the research design in order for the reliability and validity of the research tool to be increased and a fuller understanding of various pragmatic phenomena to be obtained.
Keywords: triangulation, questionnaires, roleplays, corpora, rating-scales, pragmatics

1 Introduction

The rapid development of the field of pragmatics is matched by an equally rapid development in the range of data collection methods. As Bednarek (2011: 537) notes, pragmatics is an interdisciplinary field that shares with linguistic sub-disciplines, such as sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and psycholinguistics, the aim of examining language use or linguistic interaction. This has resulted in "bridge-building" of methodologies among linguistic sub-disciplines, which has helped refine and expand the scope of inquiry in the respective fields (Sharma & Podesva 2013). The range of research methods in pragmatics well reflects how it draws on the methodologies of other disciplines and sub-disciplines of linguistics. For example, as it has roots in the philosophy of language, classical pragmatics research, especially speech acts, relies heavily on introspection (Bednarek 2011). However, more recent developments in speech act research saw the incorporation of experimental methods, namely, the written questionnaire (see CCSARP Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984), which was once the most dominant research tool in cross-cultural pragmatics (Kasper 2008).

Leech (2014) explains that, in the broadest sense, research methods in pragmatics can be represented on a scale, depending on the type of data obtained. At the two extremes of the scale, there are elicited data and observational data. For each type of data, different tools are used. For example, multiple-choice questions and rating tasks typically render elicited data that target the participants' comprehension of a given pragmatic phenomenon. On the other hand, the most naturally-occurring data types are obtained via observations of authentic discourse.

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In a similar vein, in his assessment of research methods in the speech act of compliments, Jucker (2009) borrows Clark and Bangerter's (2004) trichotomy of research methods and explains that data collection in pragmatics is divided into three categories: armchair methods, laboratory methods, and field methods. These labels refer to the practices followed by researchers in source linguistics sub-disciplines from which such methods are borrowed. Armchair methods originate from descriptive and corpus linguistics. While they refer to the researcher's reliance on intuitions to make grammaticality judgments in formal linguistics, armchair methods in corpus linguistics refer to consulting corpora in a computer-meditated setting (Fillmore 1992). Laboratory methods draw on methods from psycholinguistics and experimental linguistics and are used to collect data in controlled environments using different elicitation methods such as roleplay situations. Finally, field methods, borrowed from sociolinguistic research, incorporate such procedures as observing language use in natural and everyday contexts, and resort to a wide array of resources for these data including emails and text messages. Jucker (2009: 1615) maintains that no single method has merits that others lack, but each of the different methods constitutes a sound research method that "can be used to increase our knowledge of language and language use as long as they are used judiciously with a clear understanding of their respective strengths and limitations."

Given the interdisciplinary nature of pragmatics and the wide range of research questions and objectives it subsumes, including philosophical, empirical, cultural, etc., O'Keeffe et al. (2011: 34) argue, similarly to Jucker (2009), that no single research method is better than other methods. This poses challenges in the process of choosing the optimal methodologies in the research design. These challenges are well embodied in two major areas of pragmatics research: speech acts and politeness for the following reasons. First, in the case of speech acts, as they are essentially interactional and spoken phenomena investigating them in naturally-occurring data is optimal. However, they are also influenced not only by the context but also by various social factors such as gender, social distance, status, etc. (Blum-Kulak & Olshtain 1984). What this means is that even if a speech act can be observed and recorded in sufficient volume, locating speech acts in naturally-occurring data is time-consuming, and the researcher will not be able to find exhaustive contexts in which the influence of all social variables can be tested. On the other hand, a researcher might use questionnaires, which resolve the problem of frequency and representative contexts, but would yield artificial data that are only representative of speakers' prototypical knowledge (Barros García & Terkourafi 2014; Leech 2014). Second, as far as politeness is concerned, recent developments in politeness theory have shown that politeness subsumes not only what the speaker says, or linguistic production, but also the hearer's evaluations of what the speaker says, or evaluative politeness (Mills 2011). Moreover, politeness also has metapragmatic manifestations involving the way lay people talk about it in everyday contexts and the range of descriptors they use to describe it (Kádár & Haugh 2013). The methodological consequences of the complexity of politeness are that it necessarily demands a multi-method approach to tackle all three aspects, which again poses challenges for naturally-occurring data similar to the case of speech acts. Another difficulty in understanding and examining politeness that also raises methodological concerns is the fact that evaluations of politeness are difficult to capture in online interactions, not least because such evaluations may not be verbally presented. Similarly, for metapragmatic politeness, naturally-occurring data are not the best choice but rather questionnaires or interviews; as Kádár and Haugh (2013) remark, investigating metapragmatic politeness involves teasing out the various descriptors and the semantic fields making up such descriptors in order to fully understand the

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mental conceptualization of politeness for native speakers. Consequently, such data are better obtained by means of direct elicitation methods such as interviews or questionnaires in which participants are explicitly invited to reflect on the metapragmatics of politeness.

Based on this brief introduction of different types of data and the challenges of collecting data for speech act and politeness research as part of the overall challenges of data collection in pragmatics, the aim of this methodological paper is to present an overview of research methods in intercultural pragmatics by focusing on two key areas of research: politeness and speech acts. By drawing on the respective advantages and disadvantages of different research methods applied in politeness and speech act research, the paper provides evidence in support of the triangulation approach to research design. More particularly, I argue that a full picture of complex interactional phenomena such as politeness and speech acts can only be obtained by resorting to multiple research methods. In addition to this, the paper also contributes to the literature on evaluating research methods in pragmatics, which has been noted to be rather limited (Yuan 2001: 273). I address the following questions:

1) What aspects of speech act and politeness research can the different methods be used in investigating?
2) What are the advantages and disadvantages of each research method?
3) In what way is adopting a triangulation research design beneficial for examining speech acts and politeness?

The paper is organized as follows: in the next section, I briefly outline the method adopted in this study. In section 3, I go through a detailed presentation of naturally-occurring data collection methods such as participant observation. In section 4, I move onto elicitation methods, and I devote each sub-section to an exploration of one such method, with reference to the different implementations found in previous works on speech acts and politeness. After that, in section 5, I discuss the implications that the advantages and disadvantages of the different research methods have on research design in terms of triangulation. The paper then concludes with a summary of the main conclusions that can be drawn from the discussion.

2 Methodology

In reviewing different research methods, I conduct a meta-analysis of representative studies that can be categorized into three types. The first category contains studies, which deal with research methods and data collection in pragmatics generally and reflect on the applications, advantages, and disadvantages of the reviewed methods. In the second category, we find research devoted to the comparison of different data collection methods, as applied in speech act and politeness research. The third category consists of studies on different aspects of politeness; production, evaluation/perception, and metapragmatic politeness.

3 Naturally-occuring data collection methods

Since pragmatics deals with language use in context, there is an intuitive appeal to using naturally-occurring discourse, which is any discourse type, written or oral, that exists independently of the intention of the researcher (Leech 2014; Jucker 2009). Traditionally, as

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Kasper (1999) explains, two methods are most frequently used in archiving naturally-occurring and authentic data; note-taking and recordings.

If the aim of the research, for example, is to examine speech act production in single utterances, taking notes may be a more advantageous method. Taking notes is a field method that requires the researcher to write down every instance of the targeted speech act or pragmatic phenomenon after it happens (Leech 2014). Even though this method is less intrusive than recordings (Márquez Reiter and Placencia 2005) and is beneficial in obtaining data that reveal social information about the speakers and the occasion/context in which the discourse arises (Jucker 2009), taking notes has its own disadvantages. Leech (2014) points out that the data can only be "sketchily" noted down as the researcher cannot predict when the exact sought-after information would figure. This leaves the process of note-taking to the memory of the researcher, which jeopardizes the accuracy of the data obtained (*ibid*: 256). Kasper (1999) also speaks of another downside for note-taking, even in the case of recording instances of isolated speech acts. She argues that note-taking is not effective in capturing the full complexity of some speech act responses such as compliment responses. Kasper (1999: 74) notes that such responses are typically multi-turn utterances that embody the speaker's struggle to balance accepting the compliment and avoiding self-praise. She concludes that note-taking generally fails in capturing the nuanced details of everyday speech and the influence of more subtle speech components including pauses, interruptions, and silences.

In this regard, audio and/or video-recordings of authentic discourse are more beneficial if the researcher is examining speech features that frequently appear in longer chunks of discourse such as turn-taking, overlaps, self-corrections, etc. (Kasper 2008). However, obtaining authentic data via recordings is fraught with trouble as "the observer's paradox" is most likely to occur in such settings (Labov 1972). To go around the observer's paradox, researchers may use surreptitious recordings and only tell the participants of the recordings after obtaining the data.[1] This raises ethical issues, however, and does not guarantee the informants' consent, so the researcher runs the risk of ending up with no data (Márquez-Reiter & Placencia 2005; Jucker 2018). Moreover, using recordings may be especially ineffective for studies on speech act realization patterns. More specifically, in the case of apologies, Cohen (2006: 24) maintains that ethnographic observations are "extremely time-consuming and not very productive." Additionally, ethnographic observations do not yield data on the full range of the speech act categories and they are impossible to control for social factors such as the severity of the offense, social distance, age, gender, and the relative social power dynamics between the interlocutors (Cohen 2006).

In addition to the classical methods discussed above, with the development of technology, corpus methods have become especially popular in pragmatics research. According to Flöck and Geluykens (2015), corpora provide large bodies of spoken and written data, which makes quantitative data analysis in speech act studies possible. Corpus methods can be used to eliminate bias in data collection and to provide balanced data that are fairly representative of the targeted population, if sampling procedures are careful to include due proportions of the population (Leech 2014). In this way, the language use of sub-populations within a corpus can be compared, in addition to the researcher being able to conduct comparative research using the data of more than one corpus. However, corpus methods also have certain shortcomings. For

[1] As noted by the reviewer of this manuscript, surreptitious recordings are a serious breach of ethics and data protection and so are not allowed.

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example, Jucker (2009) mentions that a researcher can only use a corpus to some extent in researching speech act realization patterns. Corpora can be searched in terms of specific combinations of syntactic form and lexical items such as IFIDs. This is problematic for speech act research for the following reasons, as presented in Jucker (2009); first, there is the problem of precision. Based on defined search strings, the corpus can yield results that may contain the form of the targeted speech act but not the function. Second, there is the problem of recall, which is extremely common in searching for speech acts that have an unpredictable form. If the researcher only feeds the corpus certain pre-defined search strings, this may result in many non-canonical speech act realization forms being overlooked (ibid: 1617).

From the discussion above, it becomes clear that methods of collecting authentic discourse have certain inadequacies that can only be overcome by resorting to elicitation methods, which I address in the next sub-section, starting with a review of one of the most widely used elicitation methods, the questionnaire.

4 Data elicitation methods

4.1 Questionniares

One of the most widely used data collection methods in pragmatics research is the questionnaire. The most frequent questionnaire formats that are used are the production questionnaire, multiple-choice questionnaires, and rating scales (Kasper 1999; Kasper 2008). For the purposes of this discussion, which is centered on speech acts and politeness, I will be dealing only with production questionnaires and rating scales, starting with production questionnaires; multiple-choice questionnaires lie at the far end of controlled data collection methods (Leech 2014: 249) and limit the participants' choices of speech act and politeness production patterns. Despite the fact that they can be used in eliciting comprehension and perception data (ibid: 248), I would still argue that they are the least effective tools as there is always a chance that they bias the participants' responses, resulting in skewed results.

4.1.1 production questionniares

The most basic form of the production questionnaire consists of a description of a situation followed by an empty slot for the participants to fill in the targeted communicative act. This is called the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) format. As Kasper (1999) explains, the open slot may be followed by a rejoinder, which further constrains the participant's written response. One of the most desirable aspects of the questionnaire is that it is easy to administer and can be used to reach a large number of participants in a short amount of time. Furthermore, questionnaires can make available comparable data sets in which various social factors such as age, gender, social distance, and status are controlled for (Leech 2014).

Despite the practicality of the questionnaire, Kasper (2008) notes that it fairly limits the range of data that the researcher can obtain. For instance, the questionnaire yields data that are poor in interactional discourse features such as turn-taking, negotiation of speech acts, overlaps, multi-turn communicative actions, and prosodic features such as pitch and intonation. In addition to this, the participants are required to read the description of the situation, and reading activities are open to different interpretations by different readers. This could result in a variety of answers, which may not necessarily be related to the targeted phenomenon (ibid: 292).

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However, in spite of validity and reliability concerns, researchers, who have been interested in comparing questionnaires with other research tools, maintain that questionnaires are still an effective tool in answering specific research questions. For example, Beebe and Cummings (2006) examine whether DCTs can elicit data that resemble spoken discourse by comparing DCT data and naturally-occurring speech in the production of the refusal speech act. Beebe and Cummings (2006) concede that DCT data are not an accurate reflection of naturally-occurring speech; among other things, DCT data are shorter, less versatile in the choice of refusal strategies, do not reflect actual wording choices nor accurate rate of speech occurrence. However, Beebe and Cummings (2006: 80–81) still support the use of DCTs in collecting data. DCT data, they argue, seem to be effective in eliciting stereotypical speech act formats and the canonical shapes of different speech acts for language speakers. Moreover, DCT data provide researchers with important insights into the social and psychological factors that influence speech act performance.

Similar to Beebe and Cummings (2006), Golato (2003) analyzes DCTs and naturally-occurring speech in the context of the speech act of compliment responses. The basic claim of this article is that no one research tool is completely sound in analyzing speech acts and naturally-occurring discourse. Based on two data sets of German compliment responses, Golato (2003) comes to the conclusion that for the study of actual language use and the analysis of how rules of speech organization and sequencing are tacitly deployed, DCTs are clearly not the best choice. However, DCTs are quite effective if the aim of the research is identifying what the speakers think they would say as opposed to what they actually say. Overall, DCTs are a good first-stage research tool that taps into the participants' metapragmatic awareness, belief systems, and cultural values (Golato 2003: 111).

More recently, Barros García and Terkourafi (2015) report on the use of self-report questionnaires and roleplay data for studying first-order politeness. A self-report questionnaire is a sub-type of the written questionnaire, very similar to a DCT. However, the main use of this questionnaire type is not to elicit production data, but to tap into speakers' past experiences, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors in relation to a specific phenomenon (Barros García & Terkourafi 2015). The researchers call for a synthesis of self-report questionnaires and roleplay data for a better and more comprehensive view of politeness. More specifically, according to Barros García and Terkourafi (2015: 234), if self-report questionnaires are designed with care and attention, they constitute a good tool for validating observational data "by providing us with targeted access into the participants' internalized standards and understandings of politeness."

Barros García and Terkourafi (2015) base the above-mentioned recommendations on the results of two studies they conducted in order to study first-order politeness in Peninsular Spanish and American English. In the first study, Barros García and Terkourafi (2014) used a self-report questionnaire, and in the second, they used roleplay situations (Barros García and Terkourafi 2015). The aim of the two studies was to compare the politeness production of NS of American English, NS of Peninsular Spanish, and Non-native speakers of Spanish whose L1 is American English. The comparison was to identify how much L1 speakers of American English exhibit Spanish norms of politeness when they use Spanish and how much transfer from L1 can be found in their performance. Another objective of the study was to test the claim that Americans tend to value autonomy whereas the Spanish can be characterized as more leaning towards rapprochement and solidarity. The results of the two studies and the comparison of self-report and roleplay situation data show that the two methods not only

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complement each other and support the findings in each study, but the findings offer insights that would otherwise be impossible to obtain had it not been for the combination of the two methods. These insights relate to the participants' expectations of politeness in certain contexts, in addition to their definitions of politeness. For instance, the comparison revealed an inconsistency between the way the Spanish define politeness (as reported in the questionnaire) and the way they act out politeness (as analyzed in the roleplay data). This sheds light on the fact that self-reports yield prototypical views that have basis in the moral/cultural norm system. However, the views do not necessarily correspond to people's actual behavior.

As can be seen so far, the methodological studies of DCTs compared to other methods and other studies (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford 1992; Yuan 2001) report a marked difference between the types of data given by DCTs and naturally-occurring data, and even data obtained via some other elicitation methods such as roleplays, to be discussed below. DCT data are shorter, less versatile, and do not show the interactional aspects of speech acts and other communicative acts in general. However, the studies also show that production questionnaire methods are valid in as far as they are effective in eliciting prototypical, stereotypical, and metapragmatic data about different pragmatic phenomena including speech acts and politeness.

4.1.2 Rating scales

Kasper (1999) considers rating scales a sub-type of the questionnaire. Elsewhere, Leech (2014) maintains that they are a variation of multiple-choice tasks. In any case, rating scales require speakers to indicate their evaluation/perception of a specific pragmatic phenomenon by choosing a specific value/label among a range of other values. Participants may also be asked to reorder a set of linguistic utterances, relative to a specific measure of evaluation, such as grammaticality, appropriateness, politeness, etc. Rating scales are popular not only in pragmatics research but also in sociolinguist research and research in theoretical linguistics, especially experimental syntax, in which they are used to elicit grammaticality judgements. For example, Squires (2021) maintains that ratings scales can be used to obtain native speakers' evaluations of the sociolinguistic status of some syntactic structures by asking the participants to rate the speakers of those structures in terms of intelligence, education, and class background.

As Collins, Guitard, and Wood (2009) explain, the major advantage of rating scales is that they can be used to elicit the judgements of a large number of participants in a short amount of time. Furthermore, Endresen and Janda (2016: 221) argue, following Dubois (2013), that rating scales are useful in giving quantitative values to essentially qualitative data in order to make them "amenable to statistical analysis." However, in choosing the most appropriate rating scale type, the researcher needs to take into consideration the number of values on the scales and how such values are to be labelled. As far as the length of the rating scale is concerned, Schütze (2016) argues that too many value points might elicit "spurious distinctions" among participants, whereas too few value points may cloud over true distinctions and thus inhibit meaningful results. Morgado et al. (2017) argue in favor of short scales in that they have the advantage of being less demanding on the participants. At the same time, since rating scales are useful for statistical analyses, from the point of view of statistics, the more values there are, the more reliable the scale will be, specifically in terms of obtaining higher alpha values (ibid: 16). Concerning the labelling of the values on the scale, original Likert-scale formats contain only numerical values, but Likert-type scales may include verbal descriptions for the values on the scale. In this case, Ellis (1991) does not recommend labelling the middle value "not sure,"

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because it implies the participants' inability to make a judgement concerning the targeted structure. Thus, if this is not taken into consideration, the researcher might miss out on cases in which the participants genuinely are not sure about the grammaticality of a sentence (cited in Schütze 2016).

As far as research in pragmatics is concerned, Kasper and Dahl (1991) explain that rating scales are used in eliciting perception and comprehension data. In a way, then, rating scales are metapragmatic judgments that elicit participants' offline comprehension, since the rating is concerned with decontextualized utterances. Thus, the ratings represent participants' permanent pragmatic knowledge (ibid: 219). Finally, Kasper and Dahl (1991) conclude that rating scales, when combined with other data collection methods such as roleplays, DCTs, and interviews, provide an empirical basis for explaining patterns of speech act and politeness realization patterns in relation to participants' evaluations of the values of contextual factors such as distance, status, the degree of imposition, and a host of other factors. Moreover, such ratings are an indication of native speakers' intuitions about the values of different social factors, which help the researcher in refining and improving the research design. For example, devising apology roleplay situations can benefit from native speakers' intuitions about the severity of different offense, so more situations can be introduced in line with different degrees of perceived severity.

Rating scales have been especially popular in interlanguage pragmatics research also. Different researchers were interested in examining speech act and politeness perceptions by non-native speakers in comparison with native speaker judgements. The variety of studies aimed to examine perceptions of politeness in speech acts such as requests (Carrell & Konneker 1981; Tanaka & Kawade 1982), apologies (Olshtain & Cohen 1983; Bergman & Kasper 1993), and request and apologies (Olshtain & Blum-Kulka 1985) by native and non-native speakers.

With the developments of politeness and speech act research, rating scales have continued to be a popular tool in more recent studies of politeness and speech acts. The focus of these studies has been more on native speakers' perceptions and evaluations of various phenomena such as the politeness of speech acts (Chang & Haugh 2011; Haugh & Chang 2019 on perceptions of politeness in apologies), the sincerity of speech acts (Pinto 2013 on requests), and evaluations of attentiveness (Fukushima 2009). Having discussed questionnaire sub-types, pointing out their advantages and disadvantages, as shown in the literature, I now move on to discuss another popular elicitation method, roleplays.

4.2 Roleplays

Although not as frequently used as questionnaire-type tools, roleplays have been fairly popular in speech act studies for the examination of both native and non-native speaker production (Kasper 1999). Kasper (1999) defines roleplays as a type of oral data elicitation method in which participants are presented with a description of a situation and are asked to act out a role. She explains that roleplays can be distinguished in terms of the degree of interaction. On the one hand, in closed roleplays, the participants' responses are limited by the outcome of the speech act, which is indicated in the description of the situation. On the other hand, in open role plays, the way the participants interact is in no way predefined (Kasper 1999). As Leech (2014: 253) argues, the distinguishing characteristic of open roleplays is that the interlocutors have the chance to interact realistically, which can yield rich sources of data.

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It has been pointed out that roleplays approximate authentic discourse on many levels (Kasper & Dahl 1991; Sasaki 1998). For example, roleplays can show how the participants negotiate different speech acts that span multiple turns (Leech 2014). In addition to this, Kasper (1999) adds that roleplays exhibit many of the features that are characteristic of naturally-occurring discourse such as interruptions, backchannels, overlaps, turn-taking, and conversational management. Most importantly, roleplays facilitate the analysis of multiple turns, with special reference to the role of the interlocutor's uptake. Finally, in roleplays, the researcher has full control over the social variables that may be incorporated in the description of the situations, which not only allows the researcher to examine the influence of such factors over speech act production strategies but may also show how the values of such factors may be negotiated and reassessed by the participants.

However, as Rintell and Mitchell (1989) maintain, a possible disadvantage for roleplays is that the researcher cannot know the extent to which the data obtained really represent what the participants would actually say in natural speech situations. Moreover, roleplay situations may appear like a test, which would lead participants to accommodate their responses (Ritnell & Mitchell 1989: 251). Similarly, Kasper (1999) points out that the question of the validity of the data obtained by elicitation is always present.

In line with the above-observations, several studies have examined the type of data obtained by roleplays, often in comparison with other data collection methods. One of the early studies to compare roleplay data with DCT data is Ritnell and Mitchell (1989). The aim of the study was to investigate whether the data obtained from oral roleplay situations differ from those obtained by written DCTs. Moreover, if any differences did arise, the researchers aimed to examine the implications of such differences on the study of interlanguage pragmatics. Rintell and Mitchell (1989) compared written and oral responses to the speech act of request, obtained from non-native and native speakers of English. The results of the study indicated that the two data sets, from the written and the oral elicitation methods, exhibited many more similarities than differences. According to Rintell and Mitchell (1989), this is indicative of the possibility that the difference between the written and the oral modes of elicitation does not correspond to the difference between written and spoken language. However, the researchers identified some key differences. The oral production of the non-native speaker groups was longer than the written data. Another difference related to the frequency of direct request strategies, from both native and non-native speakers, in two situations. Rintell and Mitchell (1989: 271) concluded that the differences, despite being found, are "not readily apparent." Rather, the differences could be ascribed to interactions between the method and the learners themselves, in some situations, and to interactions between method and situational variables, in other situations.

Another study that examined the data obtained by roleplays is Sasaki (1998), who examined the production of the speech act of refusal by Japanese EFL learners, and compared the type of data obtained by closed roleplays and production questionnaires. Data were analyzed in terms of response length, content, and native speaker evaluations of the responses. Sasaki (1998) concludes that the two methods yield somewhat different data types. More specifically, roleplay data were longer and displayed a wider range of refusal strategies. Overall, she explains that roleplays are good in analyzing frequencies of speech act strategy occurrence and in eliciting a more "dynamic" interaction between the participants and the context (ibid: 479).

Turnbull (2001), in a study of request refusal strategies, compared naturally-occurring data with the data obtained from the following elicitation techniques: experimental techniques, roleplays, oral discourse completion, and written discourse completion. The aim of this study

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was to test the hypothesis that more facework is invested in refusals of requests by higher status addressees than by lower status addressees. Manipulation of the request situations, in terms of the status of the addressee, was introduced with all the methods except for the naturally-occurring data. The results of Turnbull's (2001: 48) study show that, at various levels, the data obtained by the roleplays and the experimental techniques closely resembled those yielded by naturally-occurring discourse. At the same time, oral and written discourse completion techniques generated "non representative and overly simplified data." However, roleplay data were somehow forced in comparison with experimental and naturally-occurring data. Turnbull (2001) concludes that because roleplays are time consuming, and natural discourse does not allow for the control of variables, experimental techniques are the most preferred pragmatic data elicitation method.

Finally, Félix-Brasdefer's (2007) study is an investigation into the reliability and validity of pragmatics research. Félix-Brasdefer (2007) compared open roleplay data to naturally-occurring data in the production of the speech act of request. The results of the study show that naturally-occurring data requests are longer, more varied, contained more instances of idiomatic expressions, and displayed a wider range of prosodic features. Some of the features that were found very frequently in the naturally-occurring data were either absent from roleplay data or infrequently occurring. Such features included elliptical requests, among others. However, the results also proved that roleplay data are both reliable and valid. They are reliable because the data contained the same forms and frequencies of strategies of requesting that were identified in previous studies on Mexican Spanish. As far as validity is concerned, Félix-Brasdefer (2007) maintains that the roleplay data approximated naturally-occurring discourse to some degree. For instance, roleplays yielded such data types as conversation openings and closings, attempts at negotiating requests, and frequent instances of conventional indirectness, which are all characteristic of natural discourse. Finally, the overall conclusion that Félix-Brasdefer (2007) draws is that, despite the superiority of naturally-occurring data, roleplays have some advantages over naturally-occurring data; in addition to being controlled for various social factors, roleplays can be replicated to generate comparable interactional data sets. In the next section, I discuss interviews, which are one of the most popular research tools in qualitative research.

4.3 Interviews

Interviews are omnipresent across different aspects of social life, and because the interview format is such a well-known source of knowledge, it is the most popular tool for qualitative data collection (Dörnyei 2007; Rolland, Dewaele & Costa 2020). Interviews are especially popular in applied linguistics and pragmatics research, and they are used to collect a wide range of data including the participants' beliefs about a particular phenomenon and their self-reports about language-related behaviors (Rolland, Dewaele & Costa 2020). Kasper (2008) adds that interviews can be used as a method of triangulation or as the main source of collecting data. Kasper (2008), however, warns that interviews should not be taken as accurate externalizations of stable states of knowledge; given the interactional pattern of the question-answer format, the answer is always going to be contingent on the question, and in a way co-constructed by it.

According to Dörnyei (2007: 135–136), there are three types of interviews, the choice of which depends on the researcher's objectives. Structured interviews are designed based on a specific number of fixed questions, which are asked by the researcher to elicit focused

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information on a specified domain of interest. This interview format is preferred when the researcher is aware of what s/he does not know and can use questions to arrive at important answers. Structured interviews, thus, yield comparable sets of data, but they are limited in as far as they are inflexible and do not accommodate the interviewee's drifting in a different direction from that of the research questions. The structured interview constitutes one extreme, and at the other end of the extreme is the unstructured interview. In this format, the direction of the talk is totally left to the interviewees' control, with minimal interference from the interviewer. This type of interview is beneficial when the aim is to elicit personal narratives that require a high amount of relaxation from the interviewee, and thus, their success is related to the degree of rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee. Finally, the most popular format of interviews is the semi-structured interview, in which the interviewer has a scheme of specific questions, but at the same time, the interviewee is allowed to go into different directions that may yield insightful data in unexpected areas/ways.

As Kasper (2008) explains, the interview is especially appropriate for research models that aim to explore various research questions by taking the perspective of the users/speakers. In addition to this, Dörnyei (2007: 143) argues that one of the advantages of interviews is that they can be used to gather in-depth data about a range of different topics. Moreover, interviews are "socially acceptable" methods of data collection, and so people feel relaxed about them. However, interviews have several disadvantages. If the interview questions are not worded with enough neutrality, there is always the chance of responses being influenced by the social desirability bias. Furthermore, the participants may either be too shy to give any sufficient commentaries or too talkative, which would also lead to long but non-useful data (ibid: 144).

That interviews have always been popular in pragmatics research is attested in the body of research in which interviews are used, mostly in combination with other data collection methods, to shed more light on the phenomenon under investigation. For example, in an early study on politeness-related attitudes and beliefs, Blum-Kulka (2005) used a variety of structured, semi-structured, and open interviews to elicit information from Israeli informants related to politeness in Israel, attitudes towards (in)directness, and the various request strategies used in different social settings.

More recently, Fukushima (2011), in a cross-cultural and cross-generational study, examines the demonstration of attentiveness by Japanese and American participants. The aim of the research was to examine whether there were differences in the demonstration of attentiveness in the two groups and for what reasons. The data were collected using questionnaire items and interviews. The interviews were important in confirming the results obtained from the questionnaire and in giving a more in-depth account of the participants' choices in the questionnaire. Similarly, Fukushima (2013) investigated the evaluation of (im)politeness through an examination of attentiveness by Japanese and American participants, in a cross-cultural and cross-generational research design. Fukushima (2013) points out that complex factors influence the evaluation of attentiveness, but that the combination of questionnaire and interview data serves to untangle such complexity.

Finally, Chang and Haugh (2011) and Haugh and Chang (2019) used interviews in combination with rating scales to investigate the (im)politeness perceptions of a naturally-occurring apology. In these two studies, the researchers examined the perceptions of native speakers of Australian English and native speakers of Taiwanese Mandarin. The follow-up interviews served to clarify the participants' ratings of (im)politeness and to shed more light on

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the moral norms/cultural schemata that motivated the intercultural and intracultural variability in perceptions, as displayed by the participants' rating choices.

5 Discussion

The advantages and disadvantages of different data collection methods show that these methods can be used in examining not only the production of a wide range of linguistic phenomena but also speakers' comprehension and perceptions of such phenomena. Moreover, most of the reviewed methods can be used in both quantitative and qualitative studies. However, this plethora of research tools makes it all the more imperative for the researcher to carefully weigh the respective advantages of each tool in the design process. In fact, the review presented in this paper shows clearly that, following Jucker (2009), no single method provides one satisfactory set of results. For example, in examining the production of speech acts and various politeness-related phenomena, naturally-occurring data are beneficial in as far as presenting authentic, fully-developed, and contextualized discourse is concerned. Naturally-occurring data, however, are limiting in many respects; they cannot be controlled for social variables, they may not be available in large enough volume and frequency to allow the researcher to draw generalizable conclusions, they are time-consuming, and they may not be readily available for a large number of speech acts such as criticism and apologies. Furthermore, other tools such as corpora are not necessarily available in all languages, and they suffer from the inherent tagging problem. On the other hand, elicitation methods such as roleplays and questionnaires provide a viable alternative that could go beyond limitations of time and practicality. More specifically, roleplays are capable of eliciting data that can be controlled for social variables, which are important in studying a variety of speech acts such as requests, apologies, and compliments. In addition to this, as has been proved by multiple studies, roleplay data approximate authentic speech on so many levels including negotiability, versatility of speech act strategies and frequencies of occurrence, as well as discourse features such as interruptions and self-corrections. Therefore, in order for production to be fully examined, it seems best if both naturally-occurring data collection methods and elicitation methods are combined; questionnaires, for instance, are good in generating a first approximation of prototypical data as a first step in the research. A next step might include using roleplays for obtaining comparable data sets that can be examined in terms of the influence of social factors. Finally, the results of the first two stages might be validated and enriched by the use of corpora, for example, which can yield large amounts of data that are amenable to quantitative analyses and can be used in making generalization, based on sample size.

Speech act and politeness perceptions can also be examined using the methods reviewed throughout this paper. Similar to the discussion on the triangulation of methods in production studies, triangulation can also be used for obtaining a more in-depth understanding of native and non-native speaker perceptions. For example, a researcher can use self-report questionnaires for tapping into speakers' prototypical evaluations, beliefs, and attitudes about speech act and politeness production and perception. Then, the researcher can benefit from interviews in eliciting the speakers' opinions and explanations for their attitudes and perceptions. In a similar vein, rating scales can be used in generating statistical data about speaker perceptions, and such data can be then complemented by follow-up interviews that afford the researcher explanations about observable trends that cannot otherwise be obtained.

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However, the importance of incorporating multiple research tools, triangulation, can be most appreciated in researching multi-faceted phenomena, such as politeness, with its expressive/ linguistic production, evaluative, and metapragmatic dimensions (Eelen 2001; Watts 2003). Therefore, given the multi-layered nature of such phenomena as politeness, using a multi-method research design is essential in examining each aspect of politeness and in arriving at a proper and holistic analysis of the metapragmatics of politeness and its production and evaluation. Needless to say, the need for triangulation extends to any complex linguistic phenomenon and should be incorporated in any research design.

Based on this discussion, in line with Jucker (2009), I argue that the research design must be based on the research objectives and that triangulation should be adopted in order for the researcher to obtain a deeper understanding of the research object. Moreover, as Márquez Reiter and Placencia (2005) maintain, triangulation boosts the validity and the reliability of the research design and the obtained results; each method complements the other and the shortcomings of each can be avoided if the researcher employs a multi-method scheme of data collection. This applies especially in the case of quantitative and qualitative data in that the former are used in avoiding the biases of qualitative data analysis. At the same time, qualitative methods can be used in explaining observable trends obtained by quantitative methods.

6 Conclusion

This paper provides a brief overview of data collection methods in speech act and politeness research and aims to present support for a research design based on triangulation of methods. Throughout the paper, I showed the application of different research methods in researching speech acts and politeness and highlighted their respective advantages and disadvantages, as reported in previous studies. Based on this discussion, the results of the cited studies, and the different aspects that can be examined in relation to speech acts and politeness research, it becomes clear that using one data collection method is not enough and falls short of presenting a comprehensive view of the phenomenon under study. Above all, the research objectives should guide the choice of the most appropriate research tool(s), and the role of the researcher is to choose the optimal research design, incorporating different data collection methods, by a close inspection of how each tool can be used to analyze a different aspect of the object of study. The overall outcome of integrating multiple research tools is a more valid research design, more reliable results, and a deeper understanding of the investigated phenomenon. Finally, investing in technological advances might be a venue worth pursuing in addressing the challenges of data collection not only in pragmatics but in linguistics more generally. For example, modern, personal recording devices might be used in reducing the intrusiveness of traditional recording methods and the observer’s paradox by having the participants record themselves.

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