



International Teaching Assistants

- High number of international graduate students in the U.S. -- 50% of grads in Engineering and Sciences, 41% in math and sciences
- American undergraduate complaints about ITAs' English
- Since 1990, over 20 US state legislatures have mandated that post-secondary institutions develop certifications of oral language proficiency for ITAs
- Post-secondary institutional response: ITA language and teaching development courses
- An ITA's success as current graduate and future faculty depends on successful participation in written and **spoken academic discourse genres**:

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| •Small lecture presentation | •Interviewing |
| •Large lecture presentation | •Meeting participation |
| •Discussion leading | •Colloquia participation |
| •Lab section leading | •Service encounters |
| •Seminar leading | •Tutorial leading |
| •Advising | •Socializing |
| •Conference presentation | •Office hours conducting |

Literature

- **ITA discourse research** has focused on undergraduate attitudes, TA discourse, questioning styles (e.g. Bailey, 1982); field trending towards genre-specific discourse (Briggs et al., 1997)
- **Research on directives in L2 educational discourse** has looked at:
 - pragmatic speech acts in NS-NNS writing center and advising interactions (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990; 1993; Thonus, 1999; Williams, 2005)
 - functional modality in T-S classroom interactions, e.g. deontic-epistemic (He, 1993); regulative-instructional (Iedema, 1996)
- Using a **variety of methods**: discourse analysis of speech acts (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990; 1993), frequency analysis (Williams, 2005; Yates, 2005), ethnographic approaches (Jenkins, 2000), experimental approaches (Garcia, 2004), corpus analysis (Hyland, 2002; McEnery & Kifle, 2002; Biber, 2006)

Object of Analysis: Directive Language

- Directive Language (DL) is language with **directive illocutionary force** (Searle, 1979) used functionally for making suggestions or giving advice.
- In traditional frameworks (e.g. Palmer, 2001), DL has primarily **deontic** qualities of **obligative** modality
- In a systemic-functional framework (Halliday & Mattheissen, 2004) DL would be considered part of the MODULATION system, a continuum between obligation (what I want you to do) and inclination (what you want to do)
- In many ESL textbooks, directives are traditionally presented as **series of modals & semi-modals** (must, mustn't, have to, should, ought to, need to, needn't) taught as 'giving advice' or 'making suggestions', with little or no discussion of politeness or power

Project Overview

- Context: **Office hours spoken discourse**
- Object of analysis: **Directive language usage by learners (ITAs) and experts**
- Data: ITAcorp and MICASE corpora
- Mixed methods: grounded, corpus, genre, profiles, experimental
- Purpose of the project: to inform ITA preparation and advanced ESL pedagogy, and to improve current and future professional lives of ITAs
- Research Question: *What is the nature of directive language usage in office hours contexts in relation to the exercise of academic authority? How can directive language use be effectively taught to L2 English learners (ITAs) preparing to be academic professionals?*

Data

- Transcribed spoken office hours interactions
- Expert corpus: **MICASE**, Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (Simpson, Briggs, Ovens, & Swales, 2002)
 - Office Hours sub-corpus
 - approx. 40 interactions
 - 8 T participants, all expert speakers (1 NNS), balance of ages, gender, status, & fields
 - 120629 tokens (T and S roles together)
- Learner corpus: **ITAcorp**, a corpus of classroom-based discourse, produced by ITAs in preparation courses
 - 3 office hours role play activities: computer-mediated chat, face-to-face in class, final assessment
 - 2 semester cohorts, 7 classes, approx. 80 interactions
 - 72 T participants, all TOEFL 550+ but didn't pass T audition, mostly E. Asian, male, variety of fields
 - 102806 tokens
 - transcribed using MICASE standards to maximize comparability

Mixed Methods Approach

1. **Semi-grounded analysis** of data portions to identify object (directive language) and unit (directive construction) of analysis
2. **Contrastive corpus register analysis** of directive construction usage in office hours
3. **Genre analysis** of the context and moves of office hours
4. Corpus-informed **individual analyses** of directive usage by 8 experts and 8 learners; detailed usage profiles of 3 learners supplemented by ethnographic & interview data
5. A **pedagogical intervention** of corpus-informed language awareness instruction, with experimental and control groups

Grounded Analysis: ITAcorp (learner)

uh one is the lecture notes I have given you in the class, **you can review** it and see how **you can begin** the opening. there are some opening phrases **you can try to** write them try to practice with them [S: hm] how **you can open with**, **you don't need** uh **you don't need** a long opening, but **you need to have** something that is an opening, okay? [S: okay] and, also for th- for the same as closing and **you'd better have** the conclusion, [S: hm] yes and, I think **you need to know** what is in your mind, but **you need to express** it, and that is what **you are going to do** in the conclusion okay? okay [S: uh- huh] **you can summarize** and say it in the conclusion and, I think uh **it's better if you** write everything uh, **if you summarize** in each paragraph of the body begin- in the beginning of the body of each paragraph okay? **it will make** the make the organization clear oh [S: uh-huh] yes? okay (Jiu C; Office Hours Role Play presentation; S063A213)

Grounded Analysis: MICASE (expert)

so first thing you do **draw** a picture... and you don't know the prices so just **make some**, downward sloping budget line. [S: mokay. this is what i want] and the only thing is on **we have to be** a little careful cuz we know that, this is quasi-linear so the indifference curves actually, curve but hit the axes. <P :12> so **if you wanna** here let's a... this is one thing that it sounds like i'm being picky [S: mhm] but **you really have to be** careful about this cuz this is subtle things that are gonna matter later. [S: okay] so **you wanna get** more, like that. (Economics Office Hours; OFC280SU109)

Results: What is directive language?

- focuses on a **main action** (verb) with the **addressee** (*you*) as the **agent** (*you should go*), sometimes implicitly (*Have a seat; I would take that one*)
- is often **intensified or hedged** (*you really do need to; you might want to*)
- often includes an **obligative modal or periphrastic modal** or modal-like verb phrase (*must, have to, got to, should, had better, need to, have got to, want to*)
- a **command** (*don't get caught up; please spend a day in weekend to study*)
- **conditional**, involving irrealis (*what I would probably do; if you go over the lectures, you can do the homework*)
- a **let's, how about** or **why don't** construction (*let's first go through; how about trying to find; why don't we write the X*)
- a **verb, noun, or adjective** that semantically indexes obligation
 - first person as subject with verb (*I strongly advise that you*)
 - *it* as subject with adjective/participle (*it's not necessary for you*)
 - noun as subject or object (*my suggestion is that*)

Unit of Analysis: Directive Construction

- How can a pragmatic phenomenon be quantifiable for corpus analysis purposes?
- Directive construction: *a social-functional device comprised of one or more separate, lexico-grammatical units that index directive illocutionary force. It contains at the minimum a **core lexical device**, which may be a modal or p-modal, directive vocabulary, or imperative. Peripherally, a directive construction may include the **subject**, usually a pronoun, and often an adverbial **adjunct**, which may influence the illocutionary force or politeness of the directive.*
- Similar to systemic-functional '**Mood Element**' (Halliday), which contains the subject, finite, and mood adjunct of a given clause, and as such "carries the burden of the clause as an interactive element"
- Comparable to formulaic sequences or lexical bundles, but **functionally based**; concordant with usage-based perspective on language cognition and development (Langacker, 2000; Tomasello, 2003; Hopper, 1998)

Method: Contrastive Corpus Register Analysis

- Corpus register analysis (Biber, 2006)
- Contrastive interlanguage analysis (Granger, 2002) involves the quantitative comparison of usage data in a learner corpus with baseline data in a genre-comparable expert corpus
- Used with a variety of theoretical frameworks: genre theory (Upton & Connor, 2001), cognitive linguistics (Waara, 2004), Relevance Theory (Hasselgreen, 2002), developmental sequence theory (Housen, 2002), systemic-functional APPRAISAL theory (Flowerdew, 2003), and sociocultural theory (Belz, 2004)

Method:

1. Determined frequency of all DL constructions in the two corpora (LOH: learner office hours in ITAcop; EOH: expert office hours in MICASE)
2. Eliminated combined frequencies of less than 1 per 10K
3. Used log-likelihood statistical analysis to determine significant difference

Results: Modal & P-modal Constructions

| modal or p-modal construction | all LOH | | all EOH | | log-I LOHvEOH* |
|-------------------------------|---------|----------|---------|----------|----------------|
| | total | freq/10K | total | freq/10K | |
| you can (undiff.) | 536 | 52.137 | 340 | 27.126 | +91.67* |
| you had better | 29 | 2.918 | 0 | 0.000 | +46.24* |
| you should | 103 | 10.019 | 46 | 3.670 | +35.13* |
| I want you to | 9 | 0.875 | 6 | 0.479 | +1.35 |
| you don't need to | 17 | 1.654 | 16 | 1.276 | +0.14 |
| you have to | 55 | 5.350 | 87 | 6.941 | -2.32 |
| you need to | 41 | 3.988 | 76 | 6.063 | -4.84* |
| you could | 9 | 0.875 | 59 | 4.707 | -31.87* |
| I would | 1 | 0.095 | 38 | 3.032 | -45.52* |
| you want to (wanna) | 12 | 1.167 | 173 | 13.802 | -137.51* |
| TOTAL w/can | 828 | 80.540 | 863 | 68.851 | +10.37* |
| TOTAL w/o can | 292 | 28.403 | 523 | 41.726 | -28.58* |

Corpus Analysis: Results

- In office hours, ITAs use 'you can', 'you had better', and 'you should' much more frequently than experts
- In office hours, experts use 'you could', 'I would', and 'you want to' much more frequently than learners
- Adjunct analysis: compared adjunct usage of directive constructions in EOH & LOH. Results showed that learners use adjuncts, but they use both mitigators and intensifiers less frequently and from a smaller repertoire.
- Learner use can be typified by the construction 'I think you should', while expert use by 'you might want to'.
- Problem: each of these constructions carries different illocutionary force and levels of politeness

Politeness and Directives

- Politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1980;): every speech act conveys a politeness appeal from the speaker towards the listener
- Involvement appeals: rapport or positive politeness
 - in English: informality, use of inclusive pronouns, swearing; other Ls: T-pronouns, verb forms (Scollon and Scollon, 1995)
- Independence appeals: respect or negative politeness
 - in English: formality, hedging, wordiness; other Ls: V-pronouns
- A director may appeal to or restrict the directed's:
 - independence with some modals (e.g. **you must** vs. **you need to**)
 - independence with adjuncts (e.g. **you might want to** vs. **you really want to**)
 - involvement with pronouns (e.g. inclusive vs. exclusive **we**)
 - involvement with some constructions (e.g. **I would** or **you want to**)

Problem: Politeness model

Problem: involvement or positive politeness is not the opposite of independence or negative politeness

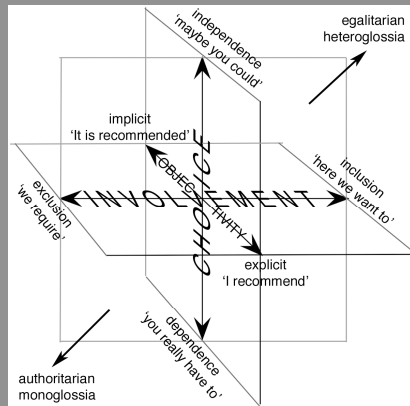
- 'I really think you might want to'; 'Here we had better'

negative <-----> **positive**
independence <-----> **involvement**
respect <-----> **rapport**

but, independence ≠ exclusion
 involvement ≠ dependence

Also, source of directive may be implicit or explicit:
 'I recommend' vs. 'It is recommended'; 'you must' vs. 'you have to'

A Social-Functional Model of Directives Usage



Results Revisited

- In comparison to experts, learners (ITAs) do not as frequently invoke inclusion, whether intentionally or unintentionally, on the part of the directed/listener through their choice of directive, when playing the T role in office hours contexts.
- Regarding adjuncts, learners did not evoke independence and choice through mitigator use as frequently as experts did. In addition, they also made less use of intensifying adjuncts, which could be interpreted as detachment (less involvement).
- The use of directives in educational discourse is a matter of the negotiation of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991)

Genre Analysis

- Purpose: to balance corpus analysis of lexico-grammar (register), to examine social aspects of office hours as context and text (genre), and thus to relate directives use to social function and the exercise of academic authority
- Contextual analysis (Tribble, 2001) of 'office hours': examined name of the genre, its social context, its communicative purposes, participant roles, cultural values, and text context.
- Moves analysis (Swales, 1990) of MICASE (expert) texts (transcripts): identified openings, closings, topic ID, diagnosis, and directive moves. Results showed the use of a variety of techniques for **framing** a directive:
 - with politeness appeals
 - with divergent or convergent actions
 - through elaboration
 - by indirect implication
 - use of inclusive and exclusive pronouns

Genre Moves Analysis: Data Example

Data excerpt 6.13. Framing used with directive (T 115)

T: great (praise). now, um, you m- you might (begin directive) though i don't know i mean (MIT) and this is not so important for the paper (MIT) but, i think this introduction sounds really good. um, you_ it's written really clearly and stuff (convergence, praise). um, now i worry (involve), whether you are capturing by interviewing your grandmother, um, that you're capturing what people do in Howell (convergence), or whether you're capturing an older, form of socializing, that still remains in Howell especially among older people (divergence, critique). um, so you might (MIT) i- it doesn't change your argument necessarily (MIT), but you might (MIT) wanna qualify (directive) it in that kinda way [S: okay] you see what i mean? (involve)

Individual Usage

- Variation analysis: compared profiles of directive usage by 8 experts and 8 of the learners. Results showed greater variability in frequency among learners, but greater variety of form among experts, as well as preferred forms in both groups.
- Individual learner profiles:
 - **Bing C:** used wider variety of forms and more politeness strategies than other learners
 - **Yong W:** made fewer uses of directive constructions than other learners, instead evoking departmental authority and taking the role of mediator

Data excerpt 7.1. Bing C's use of 'I hope', 'I guess', and 'you can' (A2)

T: I have assigned the page numbers for you I **guess**

S: ok that's good

T: and you are... I **hope you can** be more careful on class so **if you** take my notes and under- understand what I (taught) in the classroom [S: yeah] I **guess you'll be** you'll be, prepared to work this uh **homeworks** quickly

Data excerpt 7.2. Youngkyu C's use of 'you can'

T: oh okay, you can email me, and then, you just, if you, want to know something [E: **mlhm**]

mlhm] if you, you **can** email me [E: **mlhm**] yeah I can, reply your email so, you don't need to hesitate email me, also you can, stop by my office, at office hour [E: **mlhm**] so I can help you [E: okay] yeah

Conclusions & Implications

- Compared to expert speakers, learners use fewer inclusion *and* independence appeals towards students, and use preferred constructions more frequently and from a smaller repertoire, often relying on multi-functional constructions like 'you can'.
- Analysis of individual usage show a disconnect among how ITAs have been socialized by their schooling, what they are taught in ITA preparation courses, what they do and experience in their departments, classrooms, and offices, and the kinds of academic teaching professionals they say they want to become.

Implications

- Pragmatics & politeness theory
 - Correction to model
- Corpus-based examination of pragmatic usage
 - Quantifies the unquantifiable by using grounded approach and balancing register and genre analyses, group and individual analyses
- Challenges for ITA instruction:
 - influence of factors like length of sojourn and classroom experience
 - disconnect regarding stance to academic authority: school socialization, ITA/ESL instruction, experience as students/TAs, and future teaching identity
- Pedagogical Intervention

Pedagogical Intervention

- Most ESL pragmatic instruction on speech acts like directives is non-empirical, uncritical, sometimes prescriptive
- Unit of instruction on directives usage, using a corpus-informed language awareness approach, the primary goal of which is to develop learner awareness of language as discourse, and language use as a matter of choice.
- Method:
 - present students with transcripts of interactions
 - identify genre features (context, relationships)
 - Identify linguistic features and relate social function: pronouns, directives, adjuncts
 - discuss politeness and language choice
 - analyze contrastive corpus data
- Experimental implementation: 3 sections (2 experimental, 1 control)
- Results showed evidence of positive influence of instruction in more frequent use of targeted constructions and mitigating adjuncts

Thank you

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Dissertation with references available at:
<http://www.u.arizona.edu/~jonrein/pubs/reinhardt2007.pdf>