

Studies in  
Comparative  
Pragmatics



# Studies in Comparative Pragmatics

Edited by

Hartmut E. H. Lenk,  
Juhani Härmä,  
Begoña Sanromán  
and Elina Suomela-Härmä

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## PREFACE

# CURRENT ISSUES IN COMPARATIVE PRAGMATICS: INSIGHTS INTO LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

JUHANI HÄRMÄ, HARTMUT E. H. LENK,  
BEGOÑA SANROMÁN VILAS  
& ELINA SUOMELA-HÄRMÄ

As a fairly recent<sup>1</sup> branch of study, pragmatics has rapidly established its position as one of the most fertile and dynamic fields of linguistics, along with another burgeoning field, discourse analysis (also sometimes referred to as text linguistics). Both domains examine communication and interaction, one of the differences being the expanding interest of pragmatics for communication between speakers with different linguistic backgrounds and representing different cultures. This does not necessarily involve the use of two or more languages, since communication can take place through one lingua franca, which emphasizes the social aspects of human interaction by pointing out the preference for a certain language as the basis of a vehicular language. The two mentioned disciplines, pragmatics and discourse analysis, complete each other and their interplay can lead to excellent results, as seen in the contributions of the present volume.

Not only linguistic but also social aspects are present in the situations described in the contributions of the present volume, which is centred on

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<sup>1</sup> The first linguistic handbooks or introductions containing the word “pragmatics” seem to have been published in the 1970s, which is also the case for discourse studies.

the comparison of different types of language usage in two or more languages. The term “comparative pragmatics” is to be understood broadly, “comparative” referring to linguistic as well as to cultural contexts or situations and, thus, being more extensive than e.g. the term “contrastive” would suggest. In current pragmatic discourse, multi-perspective/multimodal methods can be seen as one of the best ways to understand language use in context. This is also reflected in this volume, which adopts an interdisciplinary approach to pragmatics and focuses on the comparison of a wide selection of languages, including English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Japanese, Persian, Polish and Swedish. Indeed, the fact that these articles have been written in more than one language properly reveals the spirit of present-day communication, that is, that language knowledge cannot be confined to just one major language that should be adopted everywhere.

This volume is one of the very rare publications in this area, in which every topic is analysed by comparing its use in at least two different languages, or by contrasting the use made by native and/or non-native speakers—for instance, learners of foreign languages or speakers of a lingua franca. The two or three languages may be genetically related, but may also belong to totally different language families. This ensures entirely new points of view and approaches. Pragmatics will be the main connecting factor, but not the only one. Other central keywords or concepts linking the articles are culture, discourse, interaction, language use in the media and sociolinguistics. Both oral and written materials are objects of study, which properly reflects again the multifaceted approaches which tie the contributions together.

The articles deal with, among others, grammatical expressions, prosody, text types, conversation strategies, politeness and speech acts, which occur in different social interactions as well as in multicultural environments, including e. g. foreign language acquisition. Foreign language teaching and acquisition are of course, as could be expected, one of the major recurrent themes in this volume.

Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen’s contribution, “Comparing language use in social interaction”, brings to the fore the scope and validity of the results obtained by comparing language use within an interactional linguistic framework, as well as methodological questions. The chapter presents two studies comparing English and Finnish. The former analyses a form-oriented investigation of division-of-labour structures. The latter is an action-oriented research comparing the practices for implementing a directive action and its repetition. The outcomes show that, even if in both languages similar formats are used for the same action of division-of-



labour and an analogous directive action is materialized with similar expressions, the two languages do not completely overlap. As a consequence, language-specific collateral effects are generated that raise further questions which deserve attention.

Patricia von Münchow investigates how German and French school-history textbooks deal with National Socialism and World War II. In the first part of her paper, she presents the basic concepts of her cross-cultural discourse analysis—a model that is located at the crossroads of French discourse analysis, text linguistics and cross-cultural studies. A special focus lies on the detection and interpretation of the unsaid. In her analysis, she shows that textbook authors are more or less caught up in a network of discursive rules on what to say, what not to say and how to say or not to say it. But this network is developing, and the rules and “memory regimes” in both countries and discourse communities are changing. Some facts and presentations, which used to be dominant in the official historical discourse, have become less prominent, but might still appear in the textbooks. Statements that were almost banned from the mainstream public discourse are now accepted, but still need to be presented with caution. Others are still very sensitive but may be expressed by other means, like photos or maps.

Jean Bazantay and Chantal Claudel compare manifestations of empathy in formulaic expressions of consolation and encouragement in Japanese and French. In discussing the concepts of routine and ritual, the authors conclude that French expressions could be considered as routines, whereas in Japanese politeness is expressed by ritual *aisatsus*. The authors then examine the expression of empathy in emails. Even if formulaic expressions appear in both languages, where they tend to lose their initial semantic value, Japanese emails show a greater concern for the addressee and a stronger valorisation of empathy than the corresponding French messages.

Mari Wiklund’s and Martti Vainio’s paper presents and analyses different subjectively salient, prosodically characteristic speech types occurring in mildly autistic preadolescents’ speech. Autistic people often have deviant prosodic features in their speech, and the paper focuses on the following types: 1) flat (monotonous) pitch; 2) large pitch excursions; and 3) bouncing pitch. In addition to the phonetic descriptions of the phenomena, the paper discusses the other participants’ possible reactions to these prosodic features, and occurrences of the features are studied in a larger context from an interactional point of view. The data come from authentic group therapy sessions during which 11- to 13-year-old Finnish-

speaking boys (n = 7) and French-speaking boys (n = 4) talked to each other and their two therapists.

So-called “Gesprächswörter” as German words with the function of discourse markers and/or particles are the subject of Jörg Kilian’s paper written in German. His contribution includes the perspective of historical lexicography and grammar as well as aspects of didactics of language acquisition, especially of foreign or second language learning. Kilian shows that these words were part of dictionaries and grammars already from the 17th century, which offers possibilities for ambitious and thus motivating tasks in language courses for both native speakers and second-language learners of German. The analysis of historical texts in the classroom puts school students with different backgrounds on a similar level. However, existing German textbooks unfortunately fail to present useful exercises in this regard, as the analysis of some examples shows.

Marge Käsper examines the means that French has at its disposal to express the effects of discursive complicity, which is created in Estonian by the particle *ju*. The analysis of this particle brings together evidentiality and epistemic modality, orality and argumentative rhetorics, as well as German and Swedish equivalents. The study of academic texts (human and social sciences) belonging to the parallel French-Estonian corpus CoPEF reveals that in order to render the nuances pertaining to *ju*, French resorts to various connectors (*car, en effet*). As to translations from French to Estonian, *ju* is used when the French text contains modalisations and rhetorical questions.

When looking for minor pragmatic differences, in several cases the utterance in French tends to give instructions for interpretation to the reader, while in the Estonian text the interpretation sources (indirect reported speech, for instance) and results (agreement with the utterance) tend to be presumed.

Magdalena Adamczyk’s paper, “Polish non-nominal *coś* in a cross-linguistic perspective: Insights from translation material”, examines the different meanings of the Polish expression *coś* when employed as a particle. The research uses qualitative methods based on translation material. Accordingly, the author compiles a collection of the uses of the particle and asks a group of qualified professionals for their translation into English. Adamczyk analyses the results identifying all the English equivalents and classifying them according to their different meanings and the function they express. The outcomes of the study show that *coś* is a context-dependent expression, by means of which the speaker can communicate notions of uncertainty, imprecise knowledge or even small quantities of abstract entities, among others.

Maryam Mohammadi exploits the pragmatic potential of speech act conditionals (SACs) used as responses to polar questions. The author shows that an answer such as *If you want to take the train, the next one leaves in 20 minutes* to the question *Has the train to Berlin left yet?* provides more detailed information than a simple *yes*. Based on the fact that English and Persian behave similarly in this respect, Mohammadi designs an experiment separately involving American and Persian informants with a set of pre-elaborated dialogues to validate the acceptability of SACs as adequate responses in a conversation. Results indicate that informants in both languages accept SACs as indirect answers without significant differences, although Persian informants display more varied opinions than Americans.

Otti Toropainen and Sinikka Lahtinen examine language learners' pragmatic competence by focusing on explicit apologies in a text-based communicative writing task written in Finnish and in Finland Swedish. The produced texts were assessed according to the Common European Frame of Reference (CEFR) scale and compared with native speakers' productions. Although language proficiency has a certain effect on the forms of apologies and the results show a lack of contextualised teaching, variants of *sorry* appear on all levels, including native speakers. This can be explained by the generalisation of colloquial youth language influenced by English.

Vicent Beltrán-Palanques's contribution to the volume, "Multimodal pragmatics in FL interactions: The case of complaints and responses to complaints", uses a multimodal conversation analysis approach to study the interlanguage pragmatics of Spanish learners of English. In particular, the study examines audio-visual recordings of one complaint-response to complaint sequence elicited by two Spanish learners of English. The object of the study is to explore how learners construct talk in a role-play task, which involves a complaint situation, using different linguistic and extra-linguistics resources such as head movement, gaze, gestures, etc. Among the outcomes, the study shows the pragmalinguistic resources that learners are able to display at a particular proficiency level. Moreover, the task helps learners to be more aware of the interaction between different semiotic resources to convey meaning in face-to-face interaction.

Katharina Beuter's article deals with repair in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in different types of interaction between Tanzanian and German school students. Even if ELF interactions are considered quite unproblematic in spite of high linguacultural diversity, Beuter's study demonstrates a variety of repair mechanisms at work in adolescent ELF interactions used for negotiating meaning and including some relational

implications. These exchanges constitute a formally diverse and functionally versatile cooperative achievement and they are open to other-involvement in repair, often avoided by adults for reasons of politeness.

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<sup>2</sup> CoCoLaC stands for *Contrasting and Comparing Languages and Cultures*, see <https://www.helsinki.fi/en/researchgroups/comparing-and-contrasting-languages-and-cultures>.

**PART I:**

**DISCOURSE PROCEDURES,  
SOCIAL PRACTICES, AND PATTERNS  
OF INTERACTION**



# CHAPTER ONE

## COMPARING LANGUAGE USE IN SOCIAL INTERACTION

### ELIZABETH COUPER-KUHLEN

#### 1. The comparative program of Interactional Linguistics

The framework for this chapter is **Interactional Linguistics**, the conversation-analysis or CA-informed study of language as used in social interaction (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2018). There have been two prior edited collections of CA papers dealing with comparative approaches to talk in interaction: Haakana et al (eds) 2009 and Sidnell (ed) 2009. As Haakana et al (2009) point out, CA is “a comparative approach at heart” (p. 16): interactional phenomena are identified and analyzed through comparing and contrasting instances in a data set of relevant data. But above and beyond the comparison of practices *within* a data set, we also find comparison *across* data sets in CA. The data sets being compared can be composed of talk from different types of interaction and in different settings (e.g., ordinary vs. institutional talk; telephone vs. face-to-face interaction; or dyadic vs. multi-party conversation). Or the data sets being compared can be based on different types of participants (women vs. men, adults vs. children, native vs. non-native speakers, ‘normal’ speakers vs. those with communication disorders). Finally, talk in interaction can be compared across languages and cultures in CA (Haakana et al 2009). It is this latter type of comparison that I will be dealing with here.

Conversation Analysis provides a framework for the comparison of languages and cultures because it assumes that there are **generic** interactional problems that participants must deal with when they interact with one another, regardless of what language they are speaking or which culture their interaction is embedded in. Different languages and social systems provide **local** resources which are mobilized for solving these problems (Sidnell 2009). What are the generic problems needing resolution in social interaction? Schegloff (2006) enumerates these as follows:

1. How to determine who talks next and when
2. How to shape turns at talk for the implementation of actions
3. How to sequence actions so as to form coherent courses of action
4. How to deal with trouble in speaking, hearing, and understanding
5. How to formulate talk in a way designed for a particular recipient
6. How to structure an interactional encounter overall

As Schegloff explains, for each of these concerns there are systems of organizational practice designed to handle them—i.e., turn taking and turn construction, action formation, sequence organization, repair, conversational opening and closing routines—and generic principles such as *recipient design*<sup>1</sup> to guide them. What differs across languages and cultures are the specific resources and practices for implementing these organizational systems, their “local inflections” (Sidnell 2007; Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2018, 549).

In this chapter the focus will lie primarily on the second and third problems listed above: How to shape turns at talk for the implementation of actions, and how to sequence actions so as to form coherent courses of action. That is, I will explore different ways of using language to carry out specific actions in turns and sequences of turns at talk. I will refer to the recurrent use of particular linguistic forms for the implementation of specific actions as *practices*. At issue will be the relation between resources, practices, and actions in different languages and cultures, specifically here in English and Finnish.

In exploring the relation between resources, practices, and actions, there are two approaches that can be taken:

- a) We can start with a particular linguistic resource and ask what actions that resource serves as a practice for implementing (*form-driven approach*); or
- b) We can start with a particular action and ask which resources different languages mobilize as practices for the implementation of that action (*action-driven approach*).

In what follows I will use two examples from my own research, one taking the first, the other taking the second of these approaches. The discussion

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Recipient design’ refers to the fact that the actions a speaker undertakes and the linguistic resources a speaker mobilizes to implement these actions are “selected and configured for who that other is...and shaped by reference to who the recipient relevantly is at that moment, for this speaker, at this juncture of this interaction” (Schegloff 2006: 89).



will deal with the insights that can be gained from comparing the way English and Finnish speakers manage the interactional tasks involved. But first I address some of the methodological problems involved in a research agenda such as the one outlined above.

## 2. Methodological problems in comparing language use in interaction

Each approach to cross-linguistic comparison of language use in interaction brings with it specific methodological problems.

### 2.1 *Form-driven approaches to comparing language use in interaction*

If we take a form-driven approach to a comparative study of language use in interaction, one of the first problems we encounter is determining which forms in different languages should be considered equivalent (on the assumption that these categories are relevant for interactants in the first place: see Ford et al 2013). What counts as the ‘same’ or equivalent grammatical or phonological category in two different languages? The grammatical category of *clause*, for instance, might be thought to exist in most, if not all languages. But a clause in English is not the same as a clause in Finnish: *lause* in Finnish is always finite, but *clause* in English can be finite or non-finite. Things become even more complicated when we look further afield, e.g., at Japanese. In this language, clauses (verb phrases together with the elements that accompany them, i.e., their complements or arguments) do not appear to play a prominent role in conversation at all; instead, ‘complete’ utterances tend to be simple predicates: arguments are not necessary (Laury et al, *frthc*).

As for phonology, languages have different phoneme inventories and they make different use of tonal distinctions. Is it at all meaningful to make cross-linguistic phonetic and prosodic comparisons if the phonological units of the languages concerned are not commensurate? This is a significant challenge. Yet Dingemanse et al (2013) have shown that it can be done at an appropriate level of granularity. They have identified the sound sequence *huh?* as a universal practice for the other-initiation of repair across a range of widely diverse languages. In the ten unrelated languages investigated, the initiation of repair by other was always done monosyllabically with an unrounded vowel sound located in the low front region of the vowel space; if there was a consonantal onset, it always approximated one of the glottal phonemes in the language’s inventory; and

the intonation was invariably calibrated to the local norms for interrogative prosody. That is, at an appropriate level of generalization, the authors were able to identify a common phonetic-prosodic substance for what they claim is a universal ‘word’.

A second problem with the form-driven comparison of language use in interaction is how to deal with divergent frequencies. Even if we can identify roughly equivalent linguistic structures across languages, their frequency of use may differ radically in different cultures. For instance, most, if not all languages have a grammatical structure equivalent to what we call ‘imperative’ in English (Aikhenvald 2010). This structure serves in a wide variety of languages as a resource for the action of requesting, or recruiting, another to do something which will benefit oneself. Yet if we look at how often imperatives are used to make requests in everyday interaction, we find surprising differences. According to Zinken & Ogiermann (2013), imperatives are vanishingly rare in British English requests, but they are the standard form for mundane requests in Polish. As the authors point out, the frequency with which requests are made in ordinary conversation in the two cultures can hardly be expected to differ significantly; instead what seems to differ is how speakers perceive, or conceptualize, the situations in question. The authors argue that by choosing polar question formats when making a request, British English speakers are displaying a respect for the other person’s autonomy, while in choosing imperative formats Polish speakers are orienting to a perceived sharing of concerns, commitments, and motivations with the other. They argue that such values are “part of the fabric of social life across communities” (p. 275).

There are thus methodological problems involved in trying to compare the way linguistic forms are used for interactional purposes across languages and cultures. However, the difficulties are not insurmountable if caution and care are exercised: categories must be chosen advisedly and the level of granularity adjusted accordingly. The possibility of divergent frequencies must be reckoned with and accounted for.

## *2.2 Action-driven approaches to comparing language use in interaction*

A different set of problems arises if we take an action-driven approach to comparing language use in interaction. Although there is good reason to assume that the infrastructure of conversation is universal across widely divergent languages and cultures (Levinson 2006), the devil lies in the detail. Can we really assume that social actions are equivalent across cultures? Our action terminology is highly Anglocentric: for instance, as

Wierzbicka (2012) points out, what we call ‘advice’ in English corresponds only imperfectly to its equivalent in Russian. Moreover, the associated ‘cultural scripts’, ways of thinking about particular actions including the norms and values associated with them, can differ significantly from culture to culture. While ‘advice’ in English, in particular when it is unsolicited, is commonly perceived as indirect criticism, in Russian thinking it is perceived as an affiliative display of care and concern for the other (p. 318).

A further problem arises through so-called ‘collateral effects’ associated with the means particular languages use to carry out a given action. A good example of this has been identified by Sidnell & Enfield (2012) with respect to the action of agreeing with a prior assessment from a position of greater epistemic authority (that is, laying a claim to knowing more, or knowing better, about an object or state of affairs that the other has just evaluated, although basically agreeing with their evaluation). Sidnell & Enfield compare the means used to do this in Caribbean English Creole, where speakers rely on ‘if’-prefaced repetition; in Finnish, where verb repetition with an overt pronominal subject is used; and in Lao, where a factive perfective particle is common. The authors argue that the different resources mobilized influence the way the action is carried out in each language. Each of these devices has its own affordances and is used in the respective language for other purposes as well; these other affordances and uses ‘seep’ into and color the action’s implementation in language-specific ways. They bring ‘collateral effects’ into the way the same action is accomplished in different linguistic communities and have potentially differing implications for what happens next in the interaction (see also Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2018, 550f).

In sum, we cannot always be sure we are talking about the ‘same’ action across languages and cultures, and second, different forms implementing the ‘same’ action cross-linguistically will invariably bring in their own colorings based on what else these forms are used to do. Yet this does not necessarily mean that we should throw up our hands in despair and not make any attempt at cross-linguistic comparison at all. Instead we should proceed with caution, being aware of the pitfalls we may encounter in doing so.

I turn now to two concrete cases of cross-linguistic comparison in my own research, one of which could be said to be form-oriented in approach, the other action-oriented. In both cases the two languages being compared are English and Finnish. These studies were carried out jointly with Marja Etelämäki, who analyzed the Finnish data and contributed significantly to the findings. What follows is heavily indebted to her input.

### 3. Case study 1: Division-of-labor formats in English and Finnish

It was an observation made on the following data extract that led to the discovery of a partially sedimented form called the ‘division of labor’ format (Couper-Kuhlen & Etelämäki 2014, 2017):

(1) “Barbara” (nb025-3)

(Emma’s husband Bud has left her after a quarrel. Now Emma is trying to enlist her grown daughter Barbara’s help in persuading Bud to come down to their beach condo for Thanksgiving dinner.)

```

1 Emm: nYeah, .t.h W[ILL YOU HELP M]E OU:T OF [THI:S:,]
2→Bar:      [O k a y .    ]      [Yeah ↑I]’ll call
3→  him to|ni:ght,hh
4      (0.2)
5⇒Bar: [And you can] call] [me]
6 Emm: [A:LRIGHT ] DEA:]R[.h][h.hh]
7⇒Bar:      [↑You] call me at n:nine tomorrow
8⇒  ↓mo[rning.
9 Emm: [.t Alright darling I APPRECIATE *I[T.
10 Bar: :      [Oka:y,
```

The division-of-labor format found here involves two clauses, the first of which makes a commitment on the part of the speaker to carry out a particular action (*I’ll call him tonight*, lines 2–3) and the second of which directs the interlocutor to carry out a coordinated action (*you can call me* (line 5) revised to *you call me at nine tomorrow morning*, lines 7–8). The two clauses are conjoined with the additive conjunction *and* (beginning of line 5).

As it turns out, this is a robust pattern in English: *I’ll do X and you do Y*—or with the reverse order: *You do X and I’ll do Y*. The interlocutor is instructed to do one thing, and the speaker commits to doing something related; together the two actions divide the labor involved in what is construed as a joint venture.

Interestingly, a similar division-of-labor format is also found in Finnish conversation. Here is an example:

(2) “Kahvi” (Sg94\_B01)

(Sepe has called his friend Simppa’s house in order to check whether Sepe and his partner can come over for coffee. It turns out that Simppa is not at home.)

- 1 Sepe: =me 'l<sup>t</sup>iin tulos kahville  
1PL be-PST-PAS-4 coming-INE coffee-ALL  
we were coming for coffee
- 2 sinnepäin mut tota noin ni (.)  
DEM3.LOC.about PRT PRT PRT PRT  
there but
- 3 täytyy nyt oottaa ku se Simp:pa  
Ø have.to-3 PRT wait-INF when DEM3 Simppa  
Ø needs to wait now until Simppa
- 4 tulee sieltä takasi.  
come-3 DEM3.LOC back  
comes back from there
- 5 Vera: nii tulkaa e illemmalla.  
PRT come-IMP.2PL evening-COMP-ADE  
yes come later in the evening
- 6 (0.6)
- 7→Sepe: mno [<sup>↑</sup>soit:]tele< t (.) tännepäin sitte\_ku<  
PRT call-FRE-IMP DEM1.LOC.about then when  
well give us a call here when
- 8 Vera: [(vai)]  
(or )
- 9 (.)
- 10 Vera: joo:.  
PRT  
yeah
- 11→Sepe: =ku se on ö paikalla ni m: (.) [me tul]laan.  
when DEM3 be place-ADE PRT 1PL come-PAS-4  
when he's back and w- (.) we'll come
- 12 Vera: [joo:.  
PRT  
yeah ]
- 13 Sepe: [<sup>↑</sup>.jeh ]  
yeah
- 14 Vera: [>selvä<,  
okay ]
- 15 Sepe: <sup>↑</sup>tehään näin.  
let's do it that way.

In this case the action that the interlocutor is to carry out is mentioned first (*↑soit:jtele< t (.) tännepäin sitte\_ku =ku se on ö paikalla* ‘give us a call here when- when he’s back’, lines 7+11), while the related action that the speaker commits to is mentioned second (*me tullaan* ‘we’ll come’, line 11). That is, the order here is first a ‘you’ clause and then a ‘me’ clause. However, this structure can be said to be equivalent to the one shown in (1): in both cases, the actions are mentioned in their ‘natural’ chronological order.

Marja Etelämäki and I have found numerous examples of the division-of-labor format in English and Finnish, and in both languages it appears to be used in similar sequential environments for the same purpose: to distribute the work involved in making a request or offer, or in complying with one. In Extract (1) Emma has requested Barbara to call Bud; Barbara uses the format in complying with her request. In Extract (2) Vera has offered to host Sepe and his partner later that evening; Sepe uses the format in accepting her offer.

Moreover, the two languages make use of similar forms for dividing the labor, in that one of the clauses refers to second person and the other to first person. However, there is more morpho-syntactic variation in the way the clauses are built in Finnish compared to English. In English we find, for instance, for the ‘you-me’ order:

‘You’ clause	Connective	‘Me’ clause
<i>You</i> IMP X	<i>and</i>	<i>I’ll</i> Y
IMP X		
<i>Why don’t you</i> X		

But in Finnish we find (in somewhat simplified form):

‘You’ clause	Connective	‘Me’ clause	
IMP X ‘do X’	<i>ni</i> ‘then’	1 PASS Y ‘we’ll Y’	
DECL-2 X ‘you do X’		DECL-1 Y ‘I’ll Y’	
DECL-3 X ‘∅ does X’		1 DECL-1 Y ‘I’ll Y’	
<i>jos</i> DECL-2 X ‘if you do X’		1 DECL- COND-1	‘I’d Y’
<i>jos</i> DECL- COND-2 X ‘if you’d do X’			

Compared to English, there are more morpho-syntactic choices in Finnish. This is partly due to the fact that a zero-person form (Laitinen 2006) can

be used in the first clause and a passive form with first-person plural meaning (Shore 1988) in the second clause.

However, there are also forms that represent morpho-syntactic possibilities in both languages, yet are used in only one of the languages. This is the case for the negative interrogative + *why* in English (*Why don't you X*) and for the conditional clause combination *jos...ni* ('if...then') in Finnish. Like English, Finnish has negative interrogatives with the equivalent of 'why', but they are not used in division-of-labor constructions. Like Finnish, English has conditional clauses linked with the equivalent of *jos ... ni*, but they are not used for divisions of labor in our materials. This study thus shows that two languages can have the same resources but deploy them differently as practices.

Moreover, the study raises the possibility of there being collateral effects associated with the different means for realizing a division-of-labor proposal. The collateral effects come about because other uses to which the same forms are put color their use. For instance, with conditional clause constructions (and conditional verb inflections) in Finnish, divisions of labor may come across as more tentative and negotiable by comparison with English, given that these forms are also used in other contexts to bring contingency to the fore. In the latter language, divisions of labor can appear in contrast to be achieved by *fiat*.

To sum up: This was initially a *form-oriented* investigation of division-of-labor formats in English and Finnish. These formats are used for the same action in the two languages: distributing or sharing deontic rights and responsibilities in request and offer sequences. In the course of the investigation it emerged that the formal means for implementing this action in the two languages do not fully overlap. Each language has its own peculiarities. For instance, there are resources that are present in one language but are absent in the other: this is the case with zero-person declaratives, passive forms for first-person plural reference, and conditional verb inflections, all of which are present in Finnish but absent in English. However, even when the resources are the same or equivalent in the two languages (negative interrogatives with a question word asking for a reason and bi-clausal conditional constructions), these resources can be deployed differently as practices. Finally, there are collateral effects detectable with the use of conditional clauses and conditional markings on the verb in Finnish which are absent in English.

#### 4. Case study 2: Insisting on imperatively formatted directives in Finnish and English

I turn now to an *action-oriented* study comparing the practices in two different languages for implementing the ‘same’ action (Etelämäki & Couper-Kuhlen 2017). This study began with an observation from the following directive sequence in Finnish conversation:

(3) ”Sää tulet tänne näin” [SG 355]

((Jaana and Jaska have invited Mirja and Mikko over to their house to celebrate *pikkujoulu* ‘little Christmas’. As Mirja comes into the living room to join Jaana and Jaska, Jaska sits down in one of the two armchairs.))

- 1 Jaana: käykää istumaa ny,  
step-IMP.2FL sit-INF-ILL PRT  
sit down now ((to everyone))
- 2 -> älä sää siihe parhaasee tuali[i (mene),  
NEG.IMP[2SG] 2SG DEM3.SG-ILL best-ILL chair-ILL (go)  
don’t you [sit] on the best chair ((to Jaska))
- 3 Jaska: [ >totta kai<,  
sure I will
- 4 [mä<sup>o</sup> oon isäntä °tä<sup>s</sup>°,  
1SG be-1SG host here  
I am the host here
- 5 Jaana: => [e:i ku et, ]  
NEG PRT NEG-2SG  
no but don’t [you]
- 6 => sää tulet tänne näi,  
2SG come[IND]-2SG DEM1.LOC.ALL  
you come right here
- 7 (0.2)
- 8 Jaana: [tänne sohvalle,  
DEM1.LOC.ALL couch-ALL  
here on the couch
- 9 Mirja: [kyä mä<sup>o</sup> mee tänne sohvalle,  
PRT 1SG go.1SG DEM1.LOC.ALL couch-ALL  
indeed I will go here on the couch
- 10 Jaana: ei [ku Mikko ja Mirja is-  
no but Mikko and Mirja si-
- 11 Jaska: [em mä<sup>o</sup> tu, EM mä<sup>o</sup> me siihe,=  
NEG-1SG 1SG come NEG-1SG 1SG go DEM3.SG-ILL  
I won’t come I won’t go there



In line 2 Jaana directs her husband Jaska not to sit in the best armchair, which she would like to reserve for her guests (actually Jaska is already sitting there). When he resists this directive on the grounds that he is the host, Jaana now insists that he move over to the couch (lines 5–6 + 8). Noteworthy is that while Jaana's first directive is done with an imperative form (*älä...mene* 'don't go', line 2), she shifts for the second version of her directive to declarative present-tense forms inflected for second person: *et* 'you don't' (line 5) and *tulet* 'you go' (line 6). In line 6 she also uses an explicit subject pronoun, which is stressed: *sää* 'you'.

What we find happening in (3) is a robust pattern in Finnish directive sequences: when imperatively formatted directives encounter resistance, they get re-done as second-person present-tense declaratives. The shift to a declarative form incorporates an explicit reference to the addressee, who is thus targeted as the intended agent of the action being forwarded. (With an imperative form the intended agent remains implicit.)

Interestingly, the same type of action—an insistent second version of an imperatively formatted directive—is found in English directive sequences as well. Here is a case in point:

(4) “One couple too many” (SBL 028: 2)

((Claire is hosting a bridge party to which Sara and her husband have been invited. But when Sara learns that a neighboring couple has backed out, she declares that she and her husband will stay home, since a table of four is required for bridge and there would be one couple too many if they were to come. Claire now insists that they should come anyway.))

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1 Sar: Well listen then=
2-> Cla: =*u[h: but] plea:se come=
3 Sar: [Dwayne]'n
4 Cla: =becuz I had planned on[you] a : ] nd uh]
5 Sar: [ I ]~know] I kno]w hon but no^: now
6   becuz it'll mean one couple too many. hh
7   °Listen my (.) boss° man is just coming back=
8 Cla: =Ah hgh[ah WE:LL]just uh ^that's a:[l^right, ]
9 Sar: [I've got] [NO LISTEN]NOW e-please
10  if we don't show you'll know that we ~under~stand.
11  Cl[aire it's] nothing that you ~have to ^d*o w*ith i*t.°
12 Cla: [O h : : ]
13   (0.2)
14 Cla: Oh: (.) ^da:RN i[t I]: no I w:ant you to come:
15 Sar: [Yah]
16 Cla: with A:nn an:d ^Sa[~: A]:*AM.]
17 Sar: [Well]I kno][w b u t]
18 Cla: [ 'n IT was] already pla~*:nned
      n*ow.~=
19 Sar: =[I kno-]

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20=> Cla: =[GOODBY]E 'N YOU ~C:OME.
21 Sar: NO well listen no: cuz there'd be one too cuh ( ) many
22      coup`les.

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Here too, a directive initially formatted with an imperative form (*come*, line 2) gets re-done at a later stage in the sequence with an explicit reference to the intended agent who is to implement the action in question (*you come*, line 20). Intriguingly, however, *you come* is not a declarative form here: instead, this is the imperative *come* with an overt subject pronoun *you*. The present-tense declarative in second person and the imperative with overt ‘you’ are isomorphous in the case of *come*. But *you come* as a declarative has habitual meaning: e.g., *you usually come* or *you always come*. This interpretation is inappropriate in the given context. Thus, although the second-person present-tense declarative form and the imperative form of *come* are identical, native speakers of English hear *you come* in line 20 as an imperative. Further evidence for this interpretation will be seen if we substitute the verb *be* for the verb *come*. Now the appropriate form is *you be*, e.g., *you be our guest*. This is further evidence that *you come* in line 20 is an imperative with overt expression of the subject ‘you’.

What do we learn from comparing English and Finnish imperatively formatted directive sequences that meet with resistance? For one, they have a similar trajectory in the two languages and cultures: the initial directive meets with resistance, whereupon the directive speaker produces a second version, insisting on the directive by making the intended agent explicit. But the means of achieving such an insistent action are different. While Finnish uses a form of the *declarative* in present tense with second-person reference, English uses a form of the *imperative* with an overt second-person subject. Here too we could speak of ‘collateral effects’: the Finnish present-tense declarative, because it is also used to describe ongoing situations, has the added effect of construing the future action as already underway, thus treating it as a *fait accompli*. There is no such effect with the imperative + overt subject in English, where the action being forwarded is understood to be located wholly in the future.

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

A comparison of language use in Finnish and English conversation is meaningful because there is a common infrastructure for interaction across languages and cultures. In both languages, linguistic resources are mobilized as practices for the implementation of social actions, and in both languages social actions are sequenced into meaningful courses of action.

I have discussed two comparative studies, one taking a form-based approach, the other taking an action-based approach. In the form-based study, I argued that there is a bi-clausal construction that can be used in negotiating requests and offers: the speaker instructs the interlocutor to execute a future action in one clause and with the other clause, commits to undertaking a related future action him/herself. This construction serves to divide the labor in what is construed as a joint venture. The practices for implementing such a division-of-labor proposal are partially equivalent in the two languages. In the instruction clause we find imperatives and occasionally overt second-person references; in the commitment clause we find dynamic verbs referring to future time and first-person references. However, there are also language-specific aspects. Finnish allows for conditional forms in both clauses; as a coordinator, it uses the word (*ni*), which also marks a consequent clause in bi-clausal conditional constructions (*jos...ni* 'if... then'). Finnish also permits zero-person reference in the instruction clause. English allows for the semi-fixed expression *why don't you* in the instruction clause. Thus, there are distinct practices for the 'same' action, which bring in language-specific collateral effects.

In the action-based study I have discussed, the focus has been on Finnish and English directive sequences in which an initial directive is formatted with the imperative and encounters resistance in subsequent talk. I have argued that in both languages there is a practice for insisting on the directive by introducing an explicit reference to the intended agent (i.e., to the interlocutor). But whereas the English practice involves a repetition of the imperative, now with an overt second-person subject, the Finnish practice makes use of present-tense declarative forms inflected for second person. This introduces as a collateral effect in Finnish that the future action is now implied to be a *fait accompli*.

The two studies I have reported on also raise a number of questions:

1. The first study took English as its point of departure and looked for comparable structures in Finnish. The second study took Finnish as its point of departure and searched for comparable actions in English. Does it matter which language we start from? Starting from a language with more overt lexical and/or morpho-syntactic distinctions can draw our attention to aspects that are only covert in another language, but it can also make it more difficult to arrive at generalizations that hold across widely divergent languages.

2. In both studies we encountered collateral effects: Are they simply the product of the way the language works, or do they reflect more fundamental cultural scripts? Do Finnish speakers think of divisions of labor as

basically negotiable? Answers to such questions may go beyond what can be discovered with interactional linguistic methods.

Nevertheless, without wishing to deny the challenges of comparative research, I hope that this chapter has shown that insights **can** be gained by looking at language use within an interactional linguistic framework.

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