

## **AN APPRAISAL OF PRAGMATIC ELICITATION TECHNIQUES FOR THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF TALK: THE CASE OF REQUEST REFUSALS<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

The focus of the paper is the appropriateness of pragmatic elicitation techniques for generating talk to be used in analyses of talk and social structure. In the best pragmatic elicitation techniques (i) data are generated in situations in which researchers can manipulate variables in the testing of hypotheses, and (ii) speakers can talk freely and spontaneously without awareness that their talk is the object of study. This claim was tested in an examination of the hypothesis that more facework will occur in refusals to a High versus Low status requester. Requester status was manipulated in Oral and Written Discourse Completion, Role Play, and an Experimental elicitation technique. Support for the hypothesis was found only in the Role Play and Experimental conditions. Next, refusals generated in the above four elicitation conditions were compared to Naturally-occurring refusals. At the levels of the acts by which refusals are accomplished and the internal structure of the head act, Oral and Written DC produced anomalous and non-representative refusals. Role Play and the Experimental technique produced refusals that were very similar to Natural refusals, though Role Play refusals tended to be somewhat repetitive and long-winded. It is concluded that an Experimental technique is the preferred pragmatic elicitation technique.

**Keywords:** Request refusal, Elicitation, Discourse Completion, Role Play, Experimental conditions.

### **1. Introduction**

Talking with others is a common human activity. In order to examine the role of talk in social life, both an adequate model of talk and a research paradigm are required. The present paper begins with a very brief evaluation of two contrasting models of talk and of certain requirements for a research paradigm for the study of talk. The discussion then focuses on one specific aspect of a research paradigm for studying talk and social structure; namely, the appropriateness of the means by which the researcher generates the data, the talk, on which analysis is based. In other words, the concern is with the appropriateness of pragmatic elicitation techniques. The pragmatic elicitation techniques of discourse completion and natural, in situ recordings are briefly described and evaluated, and an ideal

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<sup>1</sup> The support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Grant 410-91-1126, is gratefully acknowledged. Thanks to Stephanie Chu and Sarah Wareing for help in collecting the data, to Blair Palmer and Karen Saxton for carrying out the arduous task of coding the data, and to two anonymous reviewers for helpful comments.

paradigm is proposed. The bulk of the paper assesses five pragmatic elicitation techniques through an empirical comparison of the structure of request refusals obtained from written discourse completion, oral discourse completion, role play, an experimental technique, and naturally-occurring refusals.

Because talk is so pervasive in interaction, it could be expected that talk would be of particular concern to social psychologists (and also to clinical, cognitive, and developmental psychologists). Generally, however, this is not the case. The main reason for the lack of interest in talk stems from a conception of talk as a performance based on linguistic competence, what Turnbull and Carpendale (1999) refer to as a conception of talk-as-spoken-language. The central assumptions of talk-as-spoken-language are that talk is spoken language, the oral and imperfect expression of linguistic competence; that spoken language is the overt form into which and from which covert thoughts are encoded, transmitted, and decoded; and that the major purpose of spoken language is the transmission of the contents of thought from one person to another.

For psychologists who study talk and adopt the talk-as-spoken-language view, the object of interest is linguistic competence, conceptualized as mental structures and the mental processes that act on those structures. Competence cannot be directly observed, but by observing linguistic performances of speech or writing, theorists attempt to infer the assumed linguistic competence that must underlie such performances. For these psychologists, then, talk is epiphenomenal and of interest only as an observable manifestation of a non-directly observable cognitive competence. The talk-as-spoken-language view is also implicitly adopted by many research psychologists who have no direct interest in language. This is evident in their use of language both to instruct and to obtain information from research participants; that is, it is common for oral/written instructions to be used to manipulate independent variables and for written questions or scales to be used to measure dependent variables. The justification for these uses of language derives from the assumption that thoughts are encoded into and out of oral and written language. Thus, oral/written instructions are used to induce specific thoughts in research participants, and participants' thoughts are observed in their oral/written responses to measurement devices.

An alternative and more appropriate conception of talk is that of talk-as-interaction (Turnbull & Carpendale 1999). In all cultures, the most frequent form of social interaction is conversation, the activity of two or more copresent persons talking to one another as they go about their everyday lives. [In the present paper the term 'talk' (and its variants) is used to refer both to the activities by which people together construct this universal form of social interaction and to social interaction so constructed]. Thus, the essential nature of talk is that it is a form of social interaction (for recent views on talk-as-interaction, see van Dijk 1997). Social relations are created, maintained, challenged, and changed in talk (Garfinkel 1967; Goffman 1983, 1967; Ochs 1992; Potter & Wetherell 1987; Sacks 1992; Schegloff 1972), and talk is reflexively related to the social, cultural, and contextual milieu in which it occurs (Duranti & Goodwin 1992; Ochs 1988; Ochs & Schieffelin 1979; Potter 1996). Because social structure is both revealed in and created by talk, a psychological analysis of talk is relevant to an analysis of social structure, and vice-versa (R. Brown & Gilman 1960; Resnick, Levine, & Teasley 1991; Robinson 1985; Slugoski & Turnbull 1988; Turnbull 1986, 1992; Turnbull & Saxton 1997; Turnbull & Slugoski 1988; Wood & Kroger 1991).

In order to study the reflexive relationship between talk and social structure, an adequate model of and research paradigm for the study of talk-as-interaction is required.

A social pragmatic model of talk-as-interaction has been developed by Turnbull and his colleagues (Muntigl & Turnbull 1998; Turnbull 1992; Turnbull & Carpendale 1999; Turnbull & Saxton 1997). The social pragmatic model of talk is based on the sociologically-oriented approaches of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967; Heritage 1984) and Conversation Analysis (Atkinson & Heritage 1984; Goodwin & Heritage 1990; Heritage 1984; Levinson 1983, Ch. 6; Psathas 1995; Sacks 1992; Sudnow 1972). The central tenets of the social pragmatic model are that talk is constitutive of interaction and that it is in talk that speakers *together* construct their personal and social identities; that in talk speakers primarily accomplish and interpret coordinated sequences of actions; and that speakers accomplish and interpret actions through the manifest, on-line and structural details of turns and sequences of turns.

The research paradigm of the social pragmatic model borrows from the research paradigms of Conversation Analysis (CA) and experimental psychology. Following the tenets of CA, adherents of the social pragmatic paradigm insist that researchers must audio and/or video tape instances of talk. Analysis is based on the detailed transcriptions of the tapes. This methodological imperative is a consequence of the speed at which talk occurs, of the tremendous amount of detail in the structure of talk, and of the importance of this detail for what speakers produce and interpret in their talk. It is not possible for researchers to remember and analyze talk as it occurs. Somehow talk must be slowed down without destroying its detailed structural organization, and it must be rendered in a form that can be carefully and repeatedly analyzed. Taping and transcription are, therefore, necessary research tools.

In most other respects, the research paradigm of social pragmatics is the same as that of experimental psychology and, therefore, differs sharply from the paradigm of CA. Proponents of CA typically reject experimental designs, coding, and quantitative analyses as appropriate tools for research on conversation (Garfinkel 1967; Garfinkel & Sacks 1970; Garfinkel & Wieder 1992; Sacks 1992; Schegloff 1993; for a different CA view on the value of quantification, see Heritage 1999). The social pragmatist, by contrast, argues that these attributes may be very useful in social pragmatic research (on the value of quantification in studies of talk, see Bavelas 1995; Drummond & Hopper 1993; Tracy 1993). Social pragmatic research encompasses both experimental (Turnbull 1992) and correlational designs (Drummond & Hopper 1993; Muntigl & Turnbull 1998; Turnbull & Carpendale 1999, in press; Turnbull & Saxton 1997). Once obtained from experimental or correlational studies, the data are transcribed and the transcripts are examined for orderly structural features relevant to the issue under investigation. The social pragmatist then attempts to categorize and/or quantify these orderly structures. As in experimental psychology generally, issues of (interrater) reliability and generalizability will need to be addressed. Computation of both descriptive and inferential statistics may also be relevant.

The final methodological feature of the social pragmatic paradigm, and the main focus of the present paper, concerns how the researcher generates or obtains the talk that is to be tape-recorded and, subsequently, analyzed. In other words, the concern is with the appropriateness of pragmatic elicitation techniques. Briefly, a good pragmatic elicitation technique should meet the following criteria: It must generate data that are *representative* of structures of natural talk, whatever the fineness in level of analysis; it should allow *researcher control* and the possibility of manipulating variables of theoretical interest; it should be *efficient* in that many instances of the phenomena at issue can be generated easily; and it must be *ethical*.

It is instructive to apply the criteria for a good pragmatic elicitation technique to the techniques used most frequently in studies of adult talk; namely, in-situ recordings of naturally-occurring conversation, an approach typical of CA, and discourse completion methodologies (DC). To do this, a brief description of these paradigms and a summary of the main theoretical assumptions underlying each is presented. The positive and negative aspects of the two paradigms are identified. From these considerations, an outline of an ideal paradigm is presented.

## **2. Description and evaluation of conversation analytic and discourse completion methodologies**

Conversation Analysis. Conversation Analysts argue that naturally-occurring talk displays a richness and diversity that is not present in conversational data based on recollection or intuition. Experimentally-generated talk is also rejected on the grounds that “the experimenter is unlikely to anticipate the range, scope, and variety of behavioral variation that might be responsive to experimental manipulation, nor will he or she be in a position to extrapolate from experimental findings to real situations of conduct” (Atkinson & Heritage 1984: 3). Further, it is argued that some attributes of experimentally-generated data may be artifacts of the experimental situation. The Conversation Analyst therefore concludes that the study of talk must be based on “the use of materials collected from **naturally occurring** occasions of everyday interaction by means of audio- and video-recording” (Atkinson & Heritage 1984: 2, emphasis in original).

Conversational Analysts also insist that the empirical facts provided in support of theoretical claims must consist of descriptions of the sequential relationships within and across utterances and turns. The specific utterances and turns presented in support of this type of analysis consist of one or several well chosen, interesting, or informative examples. Typically, none of frequencies, proportions, means, or correlations is provided: The emphasis is on the specific case, and whatever regularities or generalizations are proposed are based on specific cases rather than the distributional properties of samples of talk randomly chosen from populations of talk. [The approach of discursive psychology (Edwards & Potter 1992; Potter 1996; Potter & Wetherell 1987) is similar but not identical to Conversation Analysis, in its theoretical and methodological foundations].

The positive aspects of the use of natural in-situ recordings are that representative data are obtained and, if the appropriate environment is chosen, the researcher can efficiently collect many examples of the phenomena of interest. The main drawback of the in-situ CA approach is that whereas selecting one or two good examples may be a reasonable procedure for describing potential regularities, a rigorous sampling procedure must be applied to assess the existence and generality of the proposed regularity. Sample to population inferences are also an issue at that point. These constraints necessitate that descriptions of talk make reference to relative frequencies, means, and deviations, and that explanations of specific aspects of talk are based on data generated in situations in which the researcher controls variables in a systematic and theoretically-based manner.

Discourse completion (DC). Typically in this class of methodologies, a situation is described to respondents who are then asked to say what they would say if they were actually in such a situation. Often, respondents do not say what they would say but, rather,

write down what they would say. In either case, what respondents write or say they would say is taken to be equivalent to what they *would say* were they actually in the situation described. This method can be used in a hypothesis testing manner by varying the description of the situation presented to respondents in order to manipulate one or more variables. The researcher can then measure or code responses in terms of the predicted dependent variables, average these responses, and test them against predictions.

DC methodologies have the advantages of all experimental research. The researcher exercises control over variables of interest, thereby making it easier to identify the mechanisms underlying that behavior; data are based on sampling from populations rather than from selected and selective individual examples; descriptive statistics can be used to present and compare results within and across studies and cultures; and inferences can be drawn about the population parameters of the phenomena under study. The methodology has proven most fertile, especially when used to compare pragmatic phenomena across cultures as, for example, in the well-known research of the Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989).

There are, however, three factors that may limit the usefulness of DC methodologies. Often research participants are required to write out what they would say rather than to say what they would say. But writing differs in important ways from speaking (Ong 1982). Thus, it would seem more appropriate methodology to obtain recordings of respondents saying what they would say, not writing what they would say. Empirical research comparing written and oral discourse completion is inconclusive. Rintall and Mitchell (1989) found that responses in an oral role play DC situation were only slightly longer than written DC, but Beebe and Cummings (1985) found that spontaneous refusals were considerably longer and more variable in form than refusals generated from a written DC technique. Since these studies did not focus on the micro-structure of the acts generated by each technique, the representativeness at that level of analysis of talk generated from written and oral DC remains an empirical issue.

A second potential limit to the applicability of the DC methodology is that respondents typically give their own contribution to talk without the input of the (hypothetical) other with whom they are talking. Rose (1992) used a written DC technique which included or did not include the response of the addressee to the act the research participant was asked to produce. No differences were found between these two conditions. It should be noted, however, that Rose's manipulation of the addressee's response does not constitute what, in talk, is the "input of the (hypothetical) other". The essential feature of talk is that of sequential, coconstructed turn-taking. Many social acts are typically accomplished over a sequence of turns, rather than in one turn, and both participants are involved in the construction of such acts (Goodwin 1979, 1981; Ochs, Schieffelin, & Platt 1979; Sacks & Schegloff 1979). DC methodologies necessarily obscure the sequential and coconstructed nature of talk.

The third and most serious limiting factor in the use of the DC methodology is the extent to which people's intuitions about talk map accurately onto their actual talk. Social psychologists have documented large differences between intuitions about behavior and actual behavior (Bem & McConnell 1970; Gilovich 1990; Nisbett & Wilson 1977; Storms & Nisbett 1970). People are often unaware of the what and why of their behavior, basing their intuitions on naive theories of social behavior rather than on recalled instances of actual behavior (Nisbett & Wilson 1977; Wilson & Brekke 1994). In general, naive theories of behavior often underestimate the impact of situational forces, overestimate the

impact of individual differences, and account differentially for own and others' behavior.

A discrepancy between intuition and behavior is especially likely when the behavior at issue has strong implications for ego's sense of self or for ego's sense of the impression others will have of ego; that is, for situations in which there is a great deal of face-threat (Brown & Levinson 1987). One reason for the intuition-behavior discrepancy is that the powerful situational forces present in conditions of face-threat tend to be seriously underestimated in simulations of (i.e., intuitions about) behavior. For example, most people would acknowledge that being embarrassed seriously threatens the self-image (i.e., is highly threatening to own face). Thus, people should expect that they act in ways to avoid fear of embarrassment. Yet in spite of these beliefs, research demonstrates the strong tendency for persons to seriously underestimate just how powerful the effect of fear of embarrassment is on their own behavior (Latane & Darley 1970; Miller & McFarland 1987).

Another reason for an intuition-behavior discrepancy is that people may actually believe they would do one thing but, when asked, they say they would do something else. This type of situation can arise due to the person's desire to create a particular impression of self. Imagine, for example, that person P (a research participant) is asked by R (a researcher) how he/she would respond to an invitation from someone P disliked to do something P did not want to do. P might actually believe that, even under these circumstances, he/she would give a polite rejection that included excuses, apologies and a commitment to getting together on some other occasion. However, P may want to project an assertive image to R, and thus P would claim that he/she would respond with a bald 'No'.

In sum, both lack of awareness of the force of situational pressures and impression management may result in a discrepancy between intuition and actual behavior. Whereas the social psychological literature focuses on behavior other than talk, concerns about the use of intuitions to study face-implicating and stigmatized talk have been expressed for some time (Gumperz 1972; Labov 1966; Owen 1983). Ohlstein (1989) suggests that the general lack of cultural differences in apologies generated from DC may reveal the inadequacy of that methodology. And Brouwer, Gerritsen, and de Haan (1979) found that linguists' intuitions about attributes that distinguish male and female Dutch speakers were at odds with differences observed in spontaneous talk. These concerns are important, yet the relevant data are limited. Thus, it is important to assess empirically the issue of the comparability of intuitions about talk and actual talk in face-threatening situations.

### **3. An ideal paradigm**

The ideal pragmatic elicitation technique incorporates the best of the approaches of in-situ recordings of natural talk and DC. Data should be generated in situations in which researchers can control and manipulate variables in the systematic testing of hypotheses. At the same time, the data-generation situation should be one in which speakers can talk freely and spontaneously without awareness that their talk is the object of study. In other words, there should be a high level of researcher control over the situation in which speakers say what they say but there should be no control over what speakers say and how they say it. Table 1 presents a comparison of pragmatic elicitation methods as a function of the researcher's degree of control over the eliciting situation and the elicited response.

**Table 1**

Comparison of Pragmatic Elicitation Techniques as a Function of the Researcher's Degree of Control over the Eliciting Situation and Degree of Control over the Elicited Response

Degree to which Elicited Response Controlled	Degree to which Eliciting Situation Controlled	
	High	Low
High	Discourse Completion	?
Low	Ideal Method	Natural in-situ

There are a whole class of methodologies that meet the criteria for the ideal pragmatic elicitation technique. In the following section, one particular example is presented in detail. Following that, I present an empirical comparison of the specific act of refusing a request derived from this experimental technique, from discourse completion methodologies, from role play, and from naturally-occurring refusals.

#### **4. An experimental technique for eliciting request refusals**

Refusing a request appears to be a universally face-threatening act (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz 1990; Clancy 1986; Liao & Lii-Shih 1993; Rubin 1983; Ueda 1974) and, therefore, an act people try to avoid performing. There are environments, however, in which this act may occur naturally and with some frequency. One such situation, typical of research in psychology, is that of telephoning people and requesting their participation as research participants. By varying how much time and effort is required of potential participants, the percentage of those who refuse the request can be manipulated. Variations in how requesters identify themselves can be used to manipulate the basic interpersonal dimensions of perceived status (e.g. Judy versus Dr. J. Mackenzie), social distance (a student from one's own country versus a foreign student), and affect (a member of one's own hockey team or a member of an opposing team). The talk between caller and addressee can be tape-recorded and, subsequently, transcribed.

The Experimental technique meets the demand for natural talk. The refusers' talk should be natural since the students will not be surprised by the call and they will be unaware that talk is the object of study and that it is being recorded. The callers' talk is likely also to be natural since, as research assistants, they will have had considerable experience in recruiting by telephone. Thus, actual talk is recorded and made available for examination. In addition, the method is a hypothesis testing procedure in which certain variables are manipulated while others are held constant. Manipulation checks provide empirical support that particular variables were, indeed, manipulated. The procedure has both experimental and mundane realism: The manipulation is powerful and occurs in an experimentally controlled setting yet it is a common part of daily life and the study occurs in the "real world" rather than in the laboratory. For these reasons, the data generated under

these conditions should be highly representative or generalizable. Most experimental paradigms sacrifice one type of validity for the other: Typically external validity (generalizability) is sacrificed for internal validity (experimental control over variables). Such a tradeoff is not necessary with this paradigm. There are two additional positive aspects of the Experimental technique. Respondents' anonymity can be guaranteed by removing all personally identifying information from transcripts, and coders can be kept blind to the experimental condition of the respondent by providing them with transcriptions of talk that begin after the requester has identified him/herself.

## **5. Empirical comparison of pragmatic elicitation techniques**

Rather than argue from theoretical grounds about the pros and cons of various pragmatic elicitation techniques, data derived from various techniques can be compared directly. In the present paper this comparison is made between data derived from the Experimental technique, Written Discourse Completion, Oral Discourse Completion, Role Play, and data based on Naturally-occurring talk.

Two issues motivated the way in which this comparison was accomplished. First, the research was designed to test the prediction that low status refusers will display more facework oriented to the protection of the requester's face than will high status refusers, and to compare the obtained patterns of facework across elicitation conditions. To accomplish this, in all conditions excepting the Natural condition the requester's status was manipulated to be higher or lower than that of the research participant, while both the social distance between requester and refuser and the imposition of the request were held constant. The rationale for this prediction, derived from Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of facework, is that refusing the request would be more face-threatening for low as compared to high relative status refusers. Accordingly, low status refusers should do more facework oriented to reducing the threat to the requester's face occasioned by their refusal than would high status refusers. The second major focus of the research was to describe the structure of request refusals in terms of the acts that comprised these refusals and the internal structure of the head act, and then to compare these structures across elicitation conditions.

Experimental Technique: A specific instance of the telephone experimental technique was employed to generate data in a test of the hypothesis that the higher the perceived relative status of the person making the request, the greater the degree of politeness of the refusal (details of a similar experiment may be found in Turnbull 1992). At the beginning of each semester, psychology research assistants at Simon Fraser University visit large classes throughout the university and ask that those students who are interested in participating in an experiment during the semester to please fill out their name and telephone number on an index card. The research assistants indicate that volunteers will be contacted by telephone to make arrangements for their participation in an experiment. There are no pressures or inducements on students to get them to volunteer, and those who volunteer presumably do so out of interest.

Later in that semester the names of 137 students were drawn at random from this volunteer pool, and a research assistant telephoned each student. On contacting the student, the research assistant identified herself and then made the following request: "I'm phoning to see if you'd like to participate in a psychology experiment. The experiment will take



place up at the university on Saturday morning from 7:00 o'clock to about 10:30". After making this request, the research assistant did not speak again until the student made a response. Apart from this restriction, the conversation was carried on naturally. If asked about the study, the research assistant said it involved completing tests of logical and mathematical ability. Students who attempted to defer their answer were told that the assistant needed an answer now, and students were told that there were no other times that the study was being run. The conversations were tape recorded. Students were informed of this at the conclusion of the conversation, they were guaranteed anonymity, and their permission to use the tape was requested.

In order to assure that transcribers and coders were blind to the experimental condition of the student, a copy of each interaction was made beginning at the point at which the caller said "... until about 10:30." and ending just before the debriefing began. This talk was subsequently transcribed using the notation of CA (c.f. Atkinson & Heritage 1984, pp. ix - xiv). All identifying information about individual students was deleted from the transcripts. Of the original 137 students called, 36 conversations were excluded from further analyses. These included 31 students who accepted, two who put down the telephone before being informed of the true purpose of the call, one student who refused permission, and two whose conversations were inadvertently erased from the tape.

The manipulation of relative status was accomplished by the way the research assistant identified herself. In the High Requester Status condition (i.e., low refuser status condition), the research assistant said "Hi. My name's Susan Robinson. I'm a graduate student who is the senior research assistant in the Social Psychology Lab at SFU". In the Low Requester Status condition (i.e., high refuser status condition), the research assistant said "Hi. My name's Susie. I'm a high school student who's helping out in the Social Psychology Lab at SFU". To check that this manipulation resulted in the expected differences in perceptions of relative status without differentially affecting subjects' perceptions of degree of social distance, 40 students from the same volunteer pool (20 for each status condition) listened to a recording of the research assistant making the request in the High Requester Status or Low Requester Status conditions. Students then rated the requester on a 7-point scale from 1 – I have less status than the requester, to 4 – we are equal in status, to 7 – I have more status than the requester. Results confirmed the effectiveness of the manipulation of relative status: Means of 2.9 and 4.6 for the High and Low Requester Status conditions, respectively;  $t(38) = 1.72$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Students also completed a 7-point scale assessing their perceptions of the degree of social distance between them and the requester. There was no significant effect of the status manipulation on ratings of social distance (higher the number, greater the intimacy): Means = 3.6 and 4.1 for the High and Low Requester Status conditions, respectively;  $t(38) < 1$ , ns).

**Written Discourse Completion:** In a between-subjects design, 80 students from the same volunteer pool as the Experimental technique group read a request that was identical to the request in the Experimental condition. Written instructions informed participants that the focus of the research was "what people say, their exact words, when they talk to others". To study this they were to imagine receiving a telephone call in which the caller made a specific request, and they were then to "write out exactly what you would say; that is, the exact words you would use" in responding to the request. Relative status was manipulated by the way in which the ostensive requester identified herself. In the High Requester Status condition, the written description of the requester was "Hi, this is Sandra Robinson.

I'm a graduate student working as the senior research assistant in the social psychology lab at Simon Fraser University"; and in the Low Requester Status condition the written description of the requester was "Hi, this is Sandi. I'm a highschool student helping out in the social psychology lab at Simon Fraser University".

Oral Discourse Completion: In a between-subjects design, 80 volunteers listened to a tape-recording of a request identical to the request in the Experimental condition, and then responded to it orally. The description of what participants were to do and the manipulation of status were identical to the Written DC condition, except that all instruction and descriptions were presented on audio-tape. Participants' responses were tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Role Play: Each of 116 students from the same volunteer pool was individually run through a role play situation. Each student was told that the study involved the ability of a person to imagine him/her self in a specific situation and to respond exactly as if actually in that situation. To study this, the researcher would pretend to telephone the student and make a request. The student was to respond to the request as if it were really being made. Students were informed that what they said would be tape-recorded. It was stressed to students that they imagine that the research assistant was serious about what she asked and that, whatever decision they made about the request, that it would be a decision they really would be willing to carry through on.

At this point in the procedure, the research assistant placed a screen between herself and the student and gave the participant a disconnected telephone. The research assistant then made a request identical to that in the other elicitation conditions. Status was manipulated by how the research assistant described herself, in the identical way as in the Oral DC condition. After making the request, the research assistant carried on the interaction naturally with the student. The talk was tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Naturally occurring talk. Each of 113 telephone conversations was recorded in which an experienced research assistant requested students to volunteer as a research participant. Students called were from the same type of volunteer pool, though in a different academic year, than students in the other elicitation conditions. Since the task is an ongoing one for research assistants in my lab, no instructions were given to the assistant as to how to go about the task. Rather, the research assistant was given only the vague information that the calls were being recorded for studies on conversation. At the conclusion of each telephone call, this latter information was given to the students in the process of getting their permission to use the tapes. In order to allow the research assistant to adjust to the unusual procedure of taping the calls, the first 30 calls were not transcribed nor used in the analyses.

There are two main differences between the Natural condition and the other conditions in the study. First, there were no manipulations of any sort, importantly including no manipulation of status. The research assistant, a senior-level undergraduate who was one of the female research assistants who would later collect the data in the Written and Oral DC conditions of the study, typically introduced herself as a research assistant for the social psychology lab at Simon Fraser University. Second, the request was not very demanding. Students were requested to participate for about half an hour in a study on "impression formation" in which they would read a story about a social situation

and then give their impressions of the characters in the story. Students were free to defer making a decision. Many time slots for participation were available, so considerable negotiation might occur to find a time that fit the student's time-table. One consequence of this is that there is a greater chance of Natural refusals containing more acts than in the other conditions.

## 6. Results

It should be noted that each research participant took part in only one condition of the study. Thus, all of the following analyses are based on between-subjects comparisons. Further, transcribers and coders were blind to both the subject's sex and status condition.

A first analysis focussed on a comparison of the number of refusals across conditions. To accomplish this, two research assistants independently identified every refusal in the corpus, with complete agreement. The percentage of requests that were refused varied widely across conditions: Written DC = 77%, Oral DC = 60%, Role Play = 53%, Experimental = 74%, and Natural = 28% (significant by  $\chi^2(4) = 68.63, p < .001$ ). The considerably lower rate of refusals in the Natural condition most likely reflects both the low degree of imposition of the request compared to the other conditions and the availability of many different times at which the student could participate in the research.

The main focus of the second set of analyses was to test the prediction that low status refusers (those in the High Requester Status condition) would do more facework oriented to repairing the threat to the requester's face than would high status refusers (those in the Low Requester Status condition). Following Turnbull & Saxton (1997), a 'refusal' is defined as a **requestee's** overall contribution to talk in which a request is made and refused. A representative example of a refusal to participate in a requested activity, usually occurring across a number of turns at talk, is "Can you tell me more about the study? Sorry. I'd love to but I'm working then so I don't think I can make it. Thanks anyway. Bye". As can be seen in the example, refusals usually contain many different acts including requests for information (e.g., Can you tell me more about the study?), apologies (e.g., Sorry), endorsement of the requested activity (e.g., I'd love to), excuses or justifications (e.g., I'm working then), thanks (e.g., Thanks anyway), and a preclosing (e.g., Bye). Of course, within each refusal there is also the head act, the act by which the refuser conveys his/her refusal to comply with the request (e.g., I don't think I can make it), which is referred to as an act of **refusal of compliance, RCp**. The set of acts necessary to code refusals and a description of each act is presented in Appendix A.

Using this coding scheme, two persons independently coded acts present in refusals in all conditions. There was considerable agreement between coders across conditions: **kappa** = 0.89. After discussion, the coders ultimately agreed completely on the description of acts for every refusal in the corpus. All further analyses were based on this listing of acts. Given the acts present in each refusal, the same two coders independently identified those acts that could function to protect the face of the requester and those acts that could function to threaten the face of the requester (the head act of refusal of compliance was not included in this analysis). Examples may help clarify the nature of acts oriented to protecting/enhancing face, to damaging face, and acts which have no implications for face. Utterances such as "sounds interesting" and "I'd love to help you" display a positive evaluation of the requester and her request, and thereby benefit the requester's face.

Utterances such as “that’s too difficult” (i.e., completing tests of mathematical and logical ability) or “it takes too much time” place the responsibility for refusing the request on the unreasonableness of the request and, thus, damage the requester’s face. And utterances such as “what day is it on?” and “does it take the whole time” have no relevance for face. The total amount of facework for each refuser, the dependent variable Face, was defined as the total number of face-protecting acts minus the total number of face-threatening acts. Thus, the higher the rating of Face, the more a refusal was face-protecting.

Degree of coder agreement was high, 90%. Coders resolved their disagreements and a measure of Face was assigned to each refusal. Finally, for each refusal in each condition, the coders also computed the total number of acts (dependent variable of TotalActs) and the number of different acts (dependent variable of DiffActs). Interrater reliability was high, 98%, for both dependent variables. Coders again resolved any disagreements, and measures of TotalActs and DiffActs were assigned to each refusal.

An analysis of variance was performed on the above three dependent measures of Face, TotalActs, and DiffActs. In doing this analysis, it is unclear whether or not the Natural condition should be included in the factorial design. One problem with including the Natural condition in an overall analysis is that there was no manipulation of status. However, only the best students are hired as research assistants at Simon Fraser University, a fact generally known in the undergraduate population. Thus, it is likely that the undergraduate students to whom the request was made perceived the requester was perceived to be of somewhat greater status. Accordingly, when data were compared across conditions, refusals in the Natural condition were placed in the High Requester Status group.

A second problematic issue, noted previously, is that what was required of volunteers was much less of an imposition than the imposition requested in the other four conditions. Given Brown and Levinson’s (1984) model of facework, it can therefore be expected that refusals in the Natural condition will display less facework than refusals in the other conditions. Such a difference, if it occurred, would not constitute a general difference in the structure of refusals produced by the various conditions, but rather a difference that just happens to be part of this natural condition but would not be of most/many other natural conditions.

Because of the above concerns, tests of the facework prediction were based on a 4 (Condition: Written DC, Oral DC, Role Play, Experimental) x 2 (Sex of subject: Male, Female) x 2 (Status: Low, High) analysis of variance. For all other tests, a 5 (Condition: Written DC, Oral DC, Role Play, Experimental, Natural) x 2 (Sex of subject: Male, Female) x 2 (Status: Low, High) analysis of variance was performed. For both factorial designs, all effects involving the factor Sex of subject were extremely small and did not approach significance. Accordingly, the data were collapsed across Sex of subject and the reported results for the dependent variable Face are based on a 4 (Condition: Written DC, Oral DC, Role Play, Experimental) x 2 (Status: Low, High) and for the dependent variables TotalActs and DiffActs on a 5 (Condition: Written DC, Oral DC, Role Play, Experimental, Natural) x 2 (Status: Low, High) analysis of variance.

For the dependent variable Face, analysis revealed a significant main effect of Status ( $F(1, 265) = 3.89, p < .05$ ), which offers support for predictions. In particular, refusals to a high status requester contained slightly more acts of facework than refusals to a low status requester (means = 4.10 and 3.64, respectively). Although the Condition x Status interaction was not significant,  $F(3, 265) = 1.90, p < .13$ , given that the focus of this paper

is a comparison of elicitation techniques, it is interesting to examine the impact of Status with each condition. The means of Face for the Low versus High Requester Status levels within each of elicitation conditions, respectively, were as follows: Written DC – 1.94 versus 1.97; Oral DC - 1.70 versus 1.64; Role Play - 4.03 versus 5.48; and Experimental - 5.16 versus 5.62. In terms of absolute mean differences, there is virtually no difference between Status conditions in Written DC, and in Oral DC the difference is in the opposite direction to predictions. In the other two conditions, the absolute mean differences are in the predicted direction but, except for the Role Play condition, the differences are small.

There was also a strong and significant effect of Condition on Face ( $F(3, 265) = 59.00, p < .001$ ). For the Oral DC, Written DC, Role Play and Experimental conditions, the means for Face were 2.10, 1.85, 4.71, and 5.38, respectively. It is of interest to know which of these means differ significantly. [Given the large number of possible post-hoc contrasts plus the lack of independence among the dependent variables, an adjustment needs to be made to alpha. Thus, in performing these and all other internal analyses, some adjustment to alpha is warranted. A very conservative adjustment was made; namely, the traditional significance level of  $p < .05$  was divided by the number of possible contrasts (approximately 100), to create a required level of significance for all contrasts of  $p < .0005$ ]. Internal analyses of the dependent variable Face revealed that Oral and Written DC did not differ significantly from one another ( $t(265) < 1, ns$ ), and Role Play and Experimental did not differ significantly from one another ( $t(265) = 1.85, ns$ ). When Oral and Written DC were combined and compared to the combination of the other two conditions, analysis revealed a significant effect (means = 1.99 and 4.88, respectively;  $F(1, 265) = 132.64, p < .0005$ ). In sum, for the variable of number of acts of facework (Face), Oral and Written DC were equal to each other and differed significantly from the Role Play and Experimental conditions, which did not differ significantly from one another.

There were two unexpected effects of Status on the dependent variable of total number of acts (TotalActs); namely, a main effect of Status ( $F(1, 265) = 5.64, p < .05$ ) that was qualified by the Condition x Status interaction ( $F(3, 265) = 2.90, p < .05$ ). Internal analyses of the interaction revealed no significant effect of Status in the Oral DC, Written DC, or Experimental conditions (all  $t$ 's  $< 1, ns$ ), but a marginally significant effect of Status for the Role Play (means of 8.79 and 11.14, for the High and Low Status conditions, respectively;  $t(265) = 2.78, p < .005$ ). Though highly speculative, it may be that talking more and thereby producing more acts is a way of displaying involvement with the other person. If so, then facework may have been accomplished by acts that do not appear to be oriented to face directly (e.g., asking for information; confirming information given).

In addition to an interest in facework, another goal of the present research is to describe and compare across conditions the total number of acts (TotalActs) and the number of different acts (DiffActs) by which refusers accomplished their refusals. Table 2 presents a comparison of the percentage of refusals containing each type of act.

**Table 2**

Percentage of Refusals Containing Each Type of Act for Written and Oral Discourse Completion, Role Play, Experimental, and Natural Pragmatic Elicitation Techniques

Pragmatic Elicitation Technique	Type of Act												
	ACp	Ap	Ath	Cf	DfA	En	Ex	PC	PR	RCf	Rln	Th	Ho
Written	0	69	0	0	0	37	40	0	0	0	5	11	0
Oral	0	36	0	0	0	18	54	0	0	0	0	7	0
RolePlay	32	27	80	82	13	29	76	90	6	35	89	27	1
Exper	1	60	0	71	7	36	75	64	1	37	67	34	6
Natural	3	41	37	65	3	31	62	31	3	37	81	15	25

As can be seen in Table 2 there is considerable variability in the number and distribution of acts across conditions. Analysis (based on the 5 x 2 factorial) confirmed this variability in revealing strong and significant effects of Condition on both TotalActs ( $F(4, 296) = 67.25, p < .001$ ) and DiffActs ( $F(4, 296) = 105.2, p < .001$ ). As previously discussed, there was also a significant main effect of Status and a significant Condition x Status interaction on TotalActs. However, the only significant effect for DiffActs was the main effect of Condition.

The average of TotalActs by condition was Written DC = 3.32, Oral DC = 3.00, Role Play = 9.88, Experimental = 8.32, and Natural = 7.50. Internal analyses revealed that Oral and Written DC did not differ significantly ( $t(300) < 1, ns$ ), but each did differ significantly from the other three conditions (all  $t$ 's(300) > 6.45,  $p < .0005$ ). The combination of Oral and Written DC differed significantly from the combination of the other three conditions ( $F(1, 301) = 224.67, p < .0005$ ). Finally, Role Play did not differ significantly from Experimental ( $t(300) = 2.56, p < .001, ns$ ), Experimental did not differ significantly from Natural ( $t(300) = 1.18, ns$ ), and Role Play did not differ significantly from Natural ( $t(300) = 2.94, ns$ ).

The average number of different types of acts, DiffActs, by condition was Written DC = 3.00, Oral DC = 2.40, Role Play = 6.29, Experimental = 6.06, and Natural = 4.78. . Internal analyses revealed that Oral and Written DC did not differ significantly ( $t(300) < 2.28, ns$ ), but each did differ significantly from the other three conditions (all  $t$ 's(300) > 6,  $p < .0005$ ). The combination of Oral and Written DC differed significantly from the combination of the other three conditions ( $F(1, 301) = 224.67, p < .0005$ ). Further, Role Play did not differ significantly from Experimental ( $t(300) < 1, ns$ ), Experimental did not differ significantly from Natural ( $t(300) = 3.41, p < .001, ns$ ), but Role Play did differ significantly from Natural ( $t(300) = 3.73, p < .0005$ ).

To this point, the pragmatic elicitation techniques have been compared at the level

of the acts by which refusals are accomplished. There is, however, an internal structure to acts. A comparison of pragmatic elicitation conditions at the level of act-internal structure is, therefore, of relevance for the main purpose of this paper. Some acts, such as apologies, preclosings, and thanks are highly formulaic, have little act-internal variability and, most importantly, may not occur in all refusals. Such acts do not, therefore, provide a useful comparison of act-internal structure across conditions. However, the head act of refusal of compliance, **RCp**, must occur in all refusals and it has a highly variable internal structure. Thus, the final set of analyses focus on a comparison of **RCp**'s across conditions.

For each pragmatic elicitation technique, each **RCp** was identified and then categorized according to the scheme of Turnbull & Saxton (1995). A listing of **RCp**'s by condition is presented in Appendix B. In examining **RCps**, Turnbull and Saxton identified five types of **RCps**. Four types were defined by the presence of specific negative semantic elements, as follows: **Negate request** (e.g., "No"; "I don't think so") -- the speaker uses a performative particle the semantic meaning of which is 'no' ; **Indicate unwillingness** (e.g., "I'm not interested in that") -- the speaker's desire or interest to engage in the requested activity is negated; **Performative refusal** (e.g., "I better say no to this then"; "I think I'll pass") -- the speaker uses a verb the semantics of which encodes negation; and **Negated ability** (e.g., "I can't go"; "I won't be able to make it") -- the speaker negates his/her ability to grant the request. The fifth type of **RCp**, **Identify impeding event/state** (e.g., "I've got an exam"; "I have to work") consists of descriptions of circumstances that, by inference, are understood as preventing or hindering compliance; that is, the circumstances cited constitute excuses or justifications that in context pragmatically convey **RCp**. Table 3 presents the percentage of each of these types of **RCps**, plus the percentage in the additional category **Other**, for each of the pragmatic elicitation techniques.

**Table 3**

Percentage of Refusals Containing Each Type of Act for Written and Oral Discourse Completion, Role Play, Experimental, and Natural Pragmatic Elicitation Techniques

Pragmatic Elicitation Technique	Type of RCp					
	Negate request	Indicate unwillingness	Perform . refusal	Negated ability	Impeding event/state	Other
Written DC	6	6	0	31	48	9
Oral DC	7	2	4	32	46	7
Role Play	11	8	10	23	45	3
Experimental	8	1	11	43	37	0
Natural	12	9	9	37	31	0

Both because of the wide variability and low number of particular types of **RCps** in certain of the pragmatic elicitation conditions, only descriptive analyses of the internal structure of **RCp**'s are presented. Consider, first, the major differences in the distribution of types of **RCp** across conditions. In Written DC 9% of **RCps** are of the type **Other** (specifically, "No thanks"), there are no **Performative RCps**, and there are more **Negated ability** than **Identify impeding event/state RCps**. For Oral DC, 7% of **RCps** are of the type **Other**, and there are more **Negated ability** than **Identify impeding event/state RCps**. Thus, just as was the case in comparisons of the acts constituting refusals, the types of **RCps** occurring in Written and Oral DC are highly similar.

It can also be seen that the distribution of types of **RCps** occurring in Written and Oral DC differs from that of the Role Play, Experimental, and Natural conditions. In particular, neither the Experimental nor Natural conditions contain any **RCps** in the category **Other**, and only 3% of Role Play **RCps** are of that type. Further, compared to Written or Oral DC, **Performative RCps** are more frequent in the Role Play, Experimental, and the Natural conditions. One difference between these latter conditions is that there is a higher percentage of **Negated ability** than **Identify impeding event/state RCps** for Role Play, whereas the reverse is true for both the Experimental and Natural conditions. The observed patterns in types of **RCps** in the present Experimental and Natural data closely replicate data generated from a similar Experimental elicitation technique (Turnbull & Saxton 1997, Study 1).

Another comparison at the act-internal level focuses on the frequency and types of modal expressions present in **RCps** across elicitation conditions. The percentage of **RCps** containing at least one modal expression was Written DC = 56%, Oral DC = 66%, Role Play = 69%, Experimental = 73%, and Natural = 65%. In both Written and Oral DC there are a number of very abrupt, non-modalized, face-threatening **RCps** of **Indicate unwillingness** and **Negate request**. For example, in Written DC, all four **Indicate unwillingness RCps** are "I'm not interested" (or a slight variant); and in Oral DC, 3 of 4 **Negate request RCps** are very abrupt and face-damaging (i.e., "Forget it", "(laughs) No way", "No"). This type of **RCp** is rare in the Role Play and nonexistent in the Experimental and Natural conditions. Within the **Negated ability RCps**, the combination of an epistemic and root modal expression (e.g., "I don't think I can"; "I'm not sure if I'll be able to participate actually") occurs less frequently in both the Written DC (15%) and Oral DC (17%) than in the Role Play (79%), Experimental (48%), and Natural (50%) conditions. The combination of two different types of modal expressions is a more complex structure than the exclusive use of one type of modal expression.

Overall, examination of the internal structure of **RCps** shows that Written and Oral DC are quite similar and differ from **RCps** in the Role Play, Experimental, and Natural conditions, which are themselves highly similar.

## 7. Discussion

Predictions about face derived from the model of Brown & Levinson were supported, though the absolute differences between conditions tended to be small. Further, the predicted pattern of facework may depend on the way in which data were elicited. In particular, in terms of absolute mean differences, there were no differences in facework between Status conditions in the Written DC condition, the differences were opposite to



predictions in the Oral DC condition, and the results were in the predicted direction in the Role Play and Experimental elicitation conditions. By far the largest absolute mean difference between conditions occurred in the Role Play condition. In sum, the results on facework weakly support predictions derived from the Brown & Levinson model, and there is some evidence to suggest that the type of elicitation condition influences patterns of facework.

The structure of the acts that constitute a refusal also varied across elicitation conditions. Compared to refusals in the Role Play, Experimental, and Natural conditions, the Written and Oral DC techniques elicited shorter refusals that contained a smaller variety of acts. This brevity and lack of act variability is most likely accounted for by the fact that respondents in these conditions were not involved in a conversation. Acts such as **Cf** (Confirmation), **RCf** (Request for Confirmation), and **RIn** (Request for Information) could only occur if refusers pretended that they had asked for or received some information from the requester. In the other elicitation conditions, there was a real requester who could, and did, answer the refuser's queries and, as can be seen in Table 2, **Cf**, **RCf** and **RIn** occurred frequently under these conditions. Thus, much of the similarity in average number of acts for the two discourse completion conditions and their dissimilarity to the Role Play and Experimental conditions is virtually guaranteed by the structure of the elicitation techniques.

There were differences also in the distribution of types of acts. The ratio of the average number of acts divided by the average number of types of act is, for each condition, Written DC = 1.06, Oral DC = 1.18, Role Play = 1.54, Experimental = 1.31, and Natural = 1.40. Again, in general Written and Oral DC are similar but differ greatly from the Role Play, Experimental, and Natural conditions, which are themselves similar. In sum, examination of both the total number and type of acts used to carry out refusals and the number of different acts occurring in a refusal lead to the same conclusion: Written and Oral DC produce refusals that are **not** similar to naturally-occurring refusals, whereas the Role Play and the Experimental technique produced refusals that bear considerable similarity to naturally-occurring refusals.

A similar conclusion is reached when one focuses on the internal structure of the defining act of a refusal, **RCp**. The analyses of **RCps** are consistent with the overall pattern that emerges from a comparison of these elicitation techniques; namely, compared to the Natural technique, the Written and Oral DC elicitation techniques produce some anomalous types of **RCps** and a non-representative distribution of types of **RCps**. By contrast, both the types and distribution of types of **RCps** generated by the Role Play and Experimental techniques are highly similar to naturally-occurring **RCps**.

In spite of the considerable similarity of Role Play, Experimental and Natural refusals, Role Play refusals differ in some important ways from Experimental and Natural refusals. Role Play refusals contain more repetitions of acts than do the other conditions. In particular, Role Play refusals have more acts of Acceptance of Compliance (ACp), Confirmation (Cf), Deferral of Acceptance (DfA) PreClosing (PC), and Request for Information (RIn), and fewer acts of Apology (Ap) and Hold (Ho). Further, 32% of Role Play refusers first granted the request, then asked more about what was required, tried next to defer making a commitment one way or the other, and then finally refused to comply. Similar sequences never occurred in Written and Oral DC, and were extremely rare in the Experimental (1%) and Natural (3%) conditions. It was also found that Role Play refusers often interrupted the requester with an Acceptance of Compliance before the requester was

finished making her request. By contrast, refusers in the Experimental and Natural conditions almost never interrupted the requester while she was making her request, and those refusers who asked more about what was required typically did so immediately in their initial turn at speaking. The overall impression given is that refusers in the Role Play condition were long-winded; they were overly eager to respond, and, therefore, broke in and agreed to comply with the request before the requester had finished making it; and they sought to extend the conversation with more requests for information and confirmations.

## **8. Conclusions**

At various levels of analysis, Written and Oral Discourse Completion elicitation techniques generated non representative and overly simplified data. By contrast, data generated by the Role Play and Experimental techniques were highly similar to those from a Natural condition. There was, however, a tendency for Role Play data to be more rambling, repetitive, and somewhat forced relative to refusals from the Experimental and Natural conditions. Given that the Role Play technique is more time-consuming than the Experimental technique, and given that the Experimental technique allows for researcher control whereas using naturally-occurring refusals does not, the Experimental technique (and related experimental approaches) would appear to be the pragmatic elicitation technique of choice.

A couple of words of caution about the limits of these findings are in order. First, the Experimental technique used to generate refusals does not completely satisfy the requirement for an ideal technique: The requester knew that he/she was not really interested having the request accepted, and the requester had a great deal of practice at making the identical request and at responding to (mainly) refusals. A better experimental technique is one in which both parties to the talk are unaware that talk is the object of study and that different dyads be involved in each instance of the relevant action sequence.

Consider an example that illustrates such a technique. In a study of expertise and arguing, the author had research dyads play a computer game that involved finding a lost treasure. Dyads were composed of two persons with equal experience on a similar game (Hi-Hi Expertise), with no experience on a similar game (Lo-Lo Expertise), or with unequal experience (Hi-Lo Expertise). Dyads were instructed that they were in competition with all other dyads in the study, that the winning dyad would be the one that found the treasure with the least number of moves, and that a move could be made in the game only when both members agreed. This latter condition produced a great number of arguing episodes. Further, dyads were told that the session was being tape-recorded so that the nature and number of moves each dyad made could be analyzed. This technique provides considerable researcher control, and it is unobtrusive, spontaneously produces many acts of research interest, and is ethical. With some ingenuity, similar techniques can be created to study virtually any action of talk.

A second caution concerns the relationship between the goals of research on talk and the appropriate pragmatic elicitation technique. The present research stems from an interest in studying the ways in which talk and social structure are reflexively related. That research interest leads to a focus on the means by which participants do facework in the on-line resources of talk in situations that centrally implicate face. Research on the strongly face-implicating acts of refusing a request (Turnbull 1992; Turnbull & Saxton 1997) and

of arguing (Muntigl & Turnbull 1998) has documented the relevance of the detailed structure of talk for the doing of facework. Facework is accomplished by the type of acts that jointly constitute refusing and arguing, by the specific structure of these component acts (Muntigl & Turnbull 1998), and by the modal structures of the head act (Turnbull & Saxton 1997). In other words, these micro-structural aspects of refusing and of arguing are means by which participants do facework in the creation, maintenance and dissolution of social relationships. Refusing and arguing are also highly variable acts and persons do not seem to be consciously aware of exactly how they accomplish them. Given all these attributes, those interested in refusing and arguing (or other acts possessing similar attributes), social structure, and social process need to base analysis on talk that is representative at that micro-level.

There are, however, socially consequential acts that are more stereotyped, ritualized, and more available to consciousness than are refusing and arguing. Consider, in this regard, terms of address. I can still recall the awkwardness I felt when my advisor, whom I had been calling Dr. Kroger, told me to call him Rolf, or the irritation I feel when my physician's young secretary calls me William. These are not uncommon experiences: Terms of address are important in social life, but people are very conscious of the use and misuse of a term, and any one term has a relatively stereotypical form. As a consequence, Oral and Written DC may well be appropriate pragmatic elicitation techniques for the study of forms of address. It is also the case that many researchers of talk have no particular interest in the on-line, in talk, accomplishment of social life. Again, DC may be totally appropriate in such cases. In sum, the choice of pragmatic elicitation technique depends on the nature of the phenomenon of interest and the level of analysis. For social pragmatics, either spontaneous talk or experimental techniques are required.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Listing and definition of acts that occur in refusals**

<b>Ap</b>	Apology
<b>AAp</b>	Acceptance of Apology
<b>ACp</b>	Acceptance of Compliance (with Request)
<b>AEn</b>	Acceptance of Endorsement
<b>ARf</b>	Acceptance of Refusal
<b>ATh</b>	Acceptance of Thanks
<b>Cf</b>	Confirmation
<b>DfA</b>	Deferral Attempt
<b>En</b>	Endorsement
<b>Ex</b>	Excuse
<b>Ho</b>	Hold
<b>PC</b>	Pre-Closing
<b>PR</b>	Positive Regard
<b>RCf</b>	Request for Confirmation
<b>RCp</b>	Refusal of Compliance (with Request)
<b>RIn</b>	Request for Information
<b>SIn</b>	Supplying of Information
<b>Th</b>	Thanks

**Detailed description of the above acts**

**ACp** an Acceptance of Compliance can occur at any time after a Request has been done. **ACp** is the Act by which the speaker agrees to perform the Action requested of him/her, often accomplished by uttering expressions of acceptance like *okay, sure, etc.*

**Ap** an Apology indicates that the speaker accepts responsibility for (and possibly regrets) not coming through with the desired response, i.e. Acceptance. An **Ap** is typically done through an utterance containing the word *sorry*.

**ATh** Acceptance of Thanks can occur after a Thanks has been done to indicate that the speaker accepts the prior Thanks. This Act is often accomplished by *you're welcome* or simply *okay*.

**Cf** Confirmation is an Act by which speakers indicate that they understand some previous Act. **Cf**s occur in at least three environments. First, a Confirmation may be given after a Request for Confirmation, e.g. *Okay?[RCf]--(Okay.[Cf]), Do you?[RCf]--(Yeah.[Cf]), or You can't?[RCf]--(No.[Cf])*. Second, a Confirmation may be given by a participant to show that he/she has understood what another participant has just said, often accomplished through the use of expressions like *oh, yeah, I see, uh huh, and mm hm*. We also consider some repetitions as **Cf**s, for example, if the requester responds to *uh, I don't think I'd be able to make that one, sorry with you won't, oh, okay, the you won't* is considered a **Cf**. As well, Requests for Confirmation may be followed by repetition-type Confirmations, e.g. *7:30 in the morning?[RCf]—(7:00 in the morning.[Cf])*. And, third, a Confirmation may be given after another Confirmation, in which case it 're-confirms' what had been confirmed in the first place, e.g. *Oh, I'm working on Saturday.[Ex]—(Oh I see.[Cf])—Yeah.[Cf]*.

**DfA** Deferral Attempt can occur at any point after a Request has been done, and is an attempt to put off to some later time the decision to grant the request (**ACp**) or to refuse to comply with the request (see below). It is often done by offering to contact the requester at some later time, e.g. *Can I get back to you?*

**En** Endorsement can occur either before or after a Refusal of Compliance (see below). An Endorsement is an Act by which the requestee may take some account of the Request itself by showing interest in or willingness to comply with the Request were the circumstances of the world different than they actually are at present. For example, some Endorsements indicate past or conditional willingness, e.g. *if it was a different day, sure* or *I would (love to)*, some show interest (the circumstances as to why it is this interest will not be realized with compliance to follow) e.g. *I'm really interested*, and others show a future willingness by offering to comply with a similar Request at some other time, e.g. *next time*.

**Ex** Excuse can occur anytime after a Request has been done, and is an Act by which the requestee describes circumstances that prevent compliance with the Request, e.g. *I have swim practice that day*.

**Ho** Hold is an unanalyzed chunk describing any Act in which a speaker takes longer than usual to contribute to the conversation for some reason. Examples are utterances like *Hold on a second, I'll just look, or What do I have next week?*

**PC** Before speakers take leave of each other, there is a kind of ritual performed to ascertain that there is nothing left unmentioned and that the conversation can be terminated without disapproval from either party. For present purposes, this is a final chunk consisting mainly of *okay (then), alright (then), bye bye*, and the like. Be aware that instances of other categories, especially Thanks, sometimes occur within PC's, and are to be so coded

**PR** Positive Regard can occur anytime after the Request is done. It is an Act through which a requestee encourages the requester in some way. Expressions such as *good luck* and *keep going down the list, that's too bad*, and *oh no* can count as Positive Regard.

**RCf** Request for Confirmation can occur at any time. It is any Act by which the speaker asks for confirmation of his/her understanding of the prior Act, and consists of questions showing partial echoes, e.g.

*Saturday morning?, 7:00 in the morning?, is it?, etc.*, and other interpretations of the gist of the prior Act, e.g. *It's only on Thursday then?, yeah?, okay?, etc.*

**RCp** Refusal of Compliance is an Act that can occur at any time after a Request has been done, and by which a speaker refuses to comply with the request. There are a variety of forms such as, *I don't think I can* and *I guess I will have to say no*.

**RIn** Request for Information can occur at any time. Basically, it refers to any question asked by the requestee, apart from requests for Confirmation.

**Th** Thanks can occur at any time; it is an Act by which one speaker expresses gratitude to another, usually accomplished through an utterance containing the word *thanks*.

## APPENDIX B

Listing of Types of Refusal of Compliance (**RCps**) for Written and Oral Discourse Completion, Role Play, Experimental, and Natural Pragmatic Elicitation Techniques (Modal expressions in italics)

### WRITTEN DISCOURSE COMPLETION

#### Negate request

- 006: No, *perhaps* not
- 013: Um, I *don't think* so
- 022: I *don't think* so
- 067: I *don't think* so

#### Indicate unwillingness

- 003: I'm not really interested in experiments
- 051: I'm not interested
- 059: I'm not interested
- 070: I'm not interested

#### Negated ability

- 002: I *can't* participate
- 017: I *can't* make it
- 023: *won't be able to* make it back in time
- 024: I *can't* make it
- 028: I *can't* help you
- 030: I *wouldn't be able to* make it
- 031: I *can't*
- 032: I'm afraid I *can't* afford spend it that freely
- 034: I *can't* help you
- 036: I *can't*
- 037: I *can't* make it
- 041: I *can't* assist you
- 043: I *don't think* I'll *be able to*
- 045: I *won't be able to* make it
- 046: I *wouldn't be able to* make it that early on a Saturday
- 049: I *can't* make it
- 052: I *don't think* I *can*
- 054: I *can't*
- 064: I *don't think* I *can* help you out
- 072: I *can't* come

**Identify impeding event/state**

- 001: that's a bit too early for me
- 004: I'm busy at 7:00 am on Sat morning
- 008: I *don't think* I'll be available to participate in the study
- 010: that's too much time
- 015: Actually I work on Saturday mornings
- 016: that's a little early for me
- 018: I *have to* work on Saturday
- 019: I'm *going to be* out of town for the entire weekend
- 021: I've got too much homework to afford that much time out of my day
- 025: Saturday is my only day to sleep in
- 026: that time is really inconvenient for me
- 027: I'm not available at that time
- 029: I already have something planned for Saturday
- 033: I *think* I'm busy Saturday
- 035: Saturday is much too early and inconvenient
- 039: I *don't think* I have the time
- 040: I'm busy Saturday morning because of a water polo practice
- 042: I *have to* work at 8:00 Saturday morning
- 047: I work every Saturday
- 056: Actually, this Saturday is inconvenient for me
- 057: I *have to* work on Saturdays
- 060: This weekend I'm extremely busy
- 061: I *have to* work Saturdays
- 068: I *will be* working this Saturday
- 069: I'm working from 7am - 7pm this Saturday
- 071: I *don't think* I have time
- 073: on Saturdays I have got my flying lessons
- 074: I'm afraid I'll be busy on Saturday
- 077: I work Saturday mornings
- 078: I am busy on Saturday mornings
- 080: I've made other arrangements for this weekend

**Other**

- 007: No thanks
- 038: No thanks
- 050: No thanks
- 062: No thanks
- 075: No thanks
- 076: No thank you

**ORAL DISCOURSE COMPLETION**

**Negate request**

- 002: (laughs) No way!
- 012: Forget it!
- 017: No
- 064: I *don't think* so

**Indicate unwillingness**

- 061: I *wouldn't* want to get up and participate

**Performative refusal**

- 045: I *have to* decline
- 077: I'm *going to have to...* let it go at that

**Negated ability**

- 004: I *don't think* I'd be able to commit myself to a full day  
005: unfortunately I *can't*, uh, make it at that time of the morning  
011: so that's why I *wouldn't be able to* go  
015: I *couldn't*  
016: I *can't* make that  
018: I *can't* do that  
019: I'm afraid it's practically *impossible* for me to be anywhere by seven o'clock in the morning  
031: I *can't*  
035: I *can't*  
038: I *can't*  
043: I *can't*  
048: I *can't* make it  
050: I *can't* do that right now  
056: I *don't think* I'll be able to make it  
058: I *don't think* that I really *could* make it  
066: I *won't be able to* make it  
076: I *don't think* I'm *going to be able to* help you out  
079: I *don't think* I *can* make it

**Identify impeding event/state**

- 001: I'm a little bit too busy right now  
003: but I, I simply don't have the time right now  
006: I don't have time right now  
020: I've *got to* work  
022: I don't have time  
025: Umm, I'm really busy uh, that morning  
030: I *have to* go to the gym  
032: I *have to* work on Saturday  
040: I *don't know* if I'd really have time  
041: I'm busy for the weekend  
042: I *don't think* that's a great time for me  
044: realistically I don't have the time  
046: I'm busy  
052: I *won't be available* to participate in the study this weekend  
053: I'm kind of busy that day  
054: I *don't think* I'll have time for that  
060: I don't have time right now to, ah, participate  
062: have a previous engagement for that time  
063: I *have to* work  
065: I really just don't have the time  
069: I'm *going to be* busy, um, on Saturday  
070: there's no way I'll be up by seven  
073: I'm busy that night  
074: Saturday I'm not available  
075: but uh this moment I'm too busy  
078: I'm far too busy at this point to be participating in something that takes that much time

**Other**

- 013: Actually, no thanks  
024: I'm sorry  
039: no thanks  
059: No thank you

**ROLE PLAY****Negate request**

028: nope  
 050: not this time  
 060: No I *don't think* so  
 062: I *guess* no  
 069: I *don't think* this will work  
 074: Ohh I *don't (think?)* so  
 095: Saturday no  
 097: I no, no I *don't think* so  
 116: Oh gee I *don't know* then

**Indicate unwillingness**

033: Ahmmmm not really  
 034: actually I *don't know* if I'm too interested to tell you the truth  
 051: Really I *don't think* I want to participate in it  
 103: Then I *guess* I *would* prefer not to do it  
 115: I *don't think* I'd be interested in that

**Performative refusal**

011: Then I *had better* say no  
 020: Ahmm I *would have to* say no on that  
 021: Ahhh I *would have to* say no on that  
 025: So I'd *probably* say no  
 026: Then I'll *have to* say no  
 111: Well, I'll *probably have to* decline

**Negated ability**

006: I *don't think* I'm *going to be* available to come up to the university for 3 and a half hours on Saturday morning  
 007: I *don't think* I *can* make it  
 035: So I *don't think* I *can* participate in this research  
 037: I'm afraid I *won't be able to* attend  
 038: so I *don't know* if I'll *be able to* get up that early  
 043: I actually *doon't think* I *would be able to*  
 070: I *don't think* I *would be able to* make it  
 071: I *don't think* I'll *be able to* do that for you  
 082: I'm *not too sure* if I'll *be able to* participate actually  
 083: I'm *not too sure* if I'll *be able to* participate actually  
 091: I *don't think* I *can* make it  
 094: so I *couldn't* stay for the whole time  
 104: I *don't think* I *can* make it  
 110: I just *couldn't* make it that early

**Identify impeding event/state**

005: Ahm I'm working actually at that time  
 009: I *gotta* work  
 013: Actually I usually work on the weekends  
 017: I *don't think* I have the time  
 018: No it's *not gonna be* very practical for me to do this  
 022: I *don't know* about seven in the morning  
 023: I *think* I *could* find more exciting things to do  
 024: Saturday's I work in a mall  
 030: Oh but I *have to* work on that day



- 036: Uhh that's pretty early um on Saturday. It's kinda outta my way  
040: Actually I *have to* work really early that morning  
041: So I'm afraid that *would* cut into my schedule  
065: but I I *don't think* I'm available  
067: that's kind of early  
068: but I *have to* work at ten o'clock on Saturday mornings  
077: but I've unfortunately I've already got plans for that morning  
078: It's not very good (cause I work)  
080: I *think* it's a little too rushed  
081: Hmm Saturday is busy for me  
085: I have a field hockey game  
086: seven o'clock in the morning this chick right here she's asleep  
088: so that's a bit of a problem for me  
092: that's a little early  
096: Ahh I work on Saturday  
101: Actually, I'm kind of busy  
102: But I *don't think* I *can* afford three-and-a-half hours

#### **Other**

- 002: Oh that in that case, ahm well *maybe* next time  
093: No thanks

### **EXPERIMENTAL TECHNIQUE**

#### **Negate request**

- 021: I don't *think* so.  
036: I don't *think* so, no.  
044: I don't *think* so.  
047: I don't *think* so.  
055: No, *probably* not, no.  
106: I don't *think* so.  
108: No, I'm afraid not.  
110: don't *think* so.

#### **Indicate unwillingness**

- 101: but, not on Saturday, and not that early [laughs].

#### **Performative refusal**

- 039: I *guess* I'll *have to* say no then.  
040: I *think* I'll pass this time.  
042: Okay, then I am (declining).  
081: I *guess* I *will have to* say no.  
084: Then I'd *have to* say no.  
087: I *think* I *should* say no right now.  
088: I *think* I'd *better* decline.  
117: *think* I'll pass on this one.  
124: I'd *have to* decline on that.  
146: I *think* I'm *going to have to* pass on this one.  
153: I'm *probably going to have to* pass on this one.

#### **Negated ability**

- 017: I don't *think* I *can*.  
019: I *can't*.  
022: I don't *think* I'll *be able to* make it this time.  
027: I'm *not gonna be able to* get up there.

- 030: I *can't*.  
 031: I *can't* do that Saturday.  
 034: I *wouldn't be able to* make it.  
 038: I *don't think I'd be able to* make that one  
 045: I *can't* make it this Saturday.  
 050: I *can't* on Saturday.  
 051: I *don't think I can* make that.  
 052: I *can't* then.  
 059: Mmm, I *don't think* that's going to be possible.  
 060: I *don't really think I can* make it.  
 061: I *won't be able to* make it this Saturday.  
 063: I *don't think I can* make it that early in the morning  
 064: except for I *can't*.  
 070: I *can't* do that.  
 074: I *can't* do it that early.  
 078: I *don't think I can*.  
 082: I *don't know if I can* this weekend.  
 083: but I *can't* at that time.  
 089: It's not *possible* this week.  
 091: I *don't think I can*.  
 099: I *can't*.  
 100: I *don't know*, um, I *don't think I can* make it.  
 102: I *wouldn't be able to*, not this Saturday.  
 103: I *can't*.  
 104: I *dn't think I'd be able to* do that.  
 116: I *don't think I can* make it.  
 116: I *don't think I can* make it.  
 118: I *don't think I'll be able to*.  
 121: I *don't think I'll be able to* make it actually.  
 125: I *don't think I'll be able to* make it.  
 128: I *don't think I can* make it.  
 129: I *don't think I can* make it then.  
 132: I *can't* on Saturday.  
 135: I *can't*.  
 138: I *think I won't be able to* make it.  
 141: I *won't be able to* make it.  
 144: I *can't*.  
 145: I *won't be able to* make it.  
 148: I *wouldn't be able to*.  
 149: I *don't think I can* make it.  
 152: I *don't think I can* get up on Saturday.

**Identify impeding event/state**

- 020: That *wouldn't be* the best time.  
 024: I *think I'll be* pretty tied up around that time.  
 026: I'm working on Saturday mornings fro0 6:00 'til 10:00.  
 032: This Saturday, sort of I *have to* work.  
 035: but my friend is coming to visit me this weekend  
 041: Saturday's no good  
 046: I *have to* work on Saturday.  
 048: I'm afraid those ti0es aren't convenient for me.  
 056: I have a soccer tournament this weekend.  
 057: I'm working on Saturday.  
 058: I *won't be* here this weekend.  
 062: I *believe I'm busy* on that day.  
 065: but I'm working.

- 066: No, I'm busy on Saturday mornings.  
067: but it's really a bad time.  
068: I really don't have time for that [laughs] right now.  
069: I'm going home this weekend.  
071: *I'm not sure*, because I *might* be doin a lab of my own at that time.  
072: that's totally bad for me.  
073: I work on Saturdays.  
077: This weekend's a bad time.  
080: but unfortunately I work on the weekends.  
090: I have a swim practice. I'm on the swim team and we practice from 7:00 until 9:00.  
096: *Idon't know if that'd actuallybe advisable, I guess.*  
111: *I think* um I like I *have to* go pick up my parents from the airport.  
112: but I work past midnight on the Friday.  
113: You got me at a bad time.  
114: I'm working downtown Saturday.  
115: *I have to* work at 8:00.  
119: I'm working on Saturday [laughs].  
126: but I'm moving on Saturday.  
133: See, my parents are just coming into town, so . . .  
134: Sunday we're having a surprise party for mom n dad and we're *gonna* be doin everything all day Saturday for it.  
136: *I probably* wouldn't be available, no.  
140: This is kind of a bad time.  
142: The thing is that I work on Saturday fro0 9:00 'til 1:00.  
151: I've got a track meet in Seattle on Saturday.

## NATURALLY-OCCURRING

### Negate request

- 060: I'm afraid not  
078: *Probably* pretty tough  
080: *I don't think* so  
083: *I don't think* so

### Indicate unwillingness

- 046: *I don't know* if I'd want to go up  
054: I am not interested in dat  
090: I'm not interested

### Performative refusal

- 038: that's *probably* not *gonna* happen  
065: I'm *gonna have to* say no  
067: I'm *gonna* say no

### Negated ability

- 007: *I guess* I *won't be able to* do it  
036: *can't* this week  
037: I *can't* make it tomorrow though  
040: *I don't think* I *can'* this week  
076: *I don't think* I'll *be able to* fit it in  
086: I really *can't* this week  
088: but this week I *can't*  
089: *I don't think* I'll *be able to*  
105: I *doubt* I *can*

108: I *wouldn't be able to do it*

109: I *think I can't*

113: I *probably won't be able to do it*

**Identify impeding event/state**

011: Ahh, I got classes at 12:30 on Tuesday

032: I'm not there either days unfortunately

034: I've got classes all day on those two days

039: I don't have the time

040: I'll be busy this week

049: I *won't* go be up at school this week

055: I'm just too busy

062: I'm really busy

091: This week's pretty bad for me

093: Those times I'm busy

106: I don't really have that much time this week

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