
Pragmatic of speech acts: An experimental approach to the production of criticisms and their replies in a work environment

Baptiste Bersier^{*†1}, Sandrine Zufferey¹, Diana Mazzarella², and Sandra Schwab¹

¹University of Bern – Switzerland

²University of Neuchâtel – Switzerland

Abstract

We ran an experiment in French involving the speech act of criticism and responses to criticism in a work environment. Participants had to complete a written Discourse Completion Test in which 20 scenarios were presented to them. We manipulated power relations (equal vs. hierarchical) and horizontal distance (close or distant), and also assessed the roles of age and gender. Results indicate that the two manipulated variables impact significantly on the formulation of criticisms, whereas no significant effects were observed for responses to criticisms. The role of age plays a significant role for the formulation of criticisms by women.

Keywords: speech acts, power relation, social distance, individual variations

*Speaker

†Corresponding author: baptiste.bersier@unibe.ch