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Indirect speech acts, focus of insisting, and conventionality

The literature on indirect speech acts discusses two different kinds of sources of indirectness, though they are often not distinguished systematically. In cases like "It's getting cold" for a request to close the door not only the directive illocution is communicated indirectly, but also the proposition representing the particular action that the listener is requested to carry out (i.e., to close the door). In Searle's (1979) discussion requests like "Can you pass the salt?" and "Can you reach the salt?" are grouped into the same class of what can be called "sentence type indirectness" where a request has the form of a question, but in the latter case the speaker has to infer the proposition in addition to the illocution, whereas in the former case this does not hold. We show with results from an experiment (BA thesis of Laura Sommer) that insisting with finite verb focus (similar to so-called verum focus) distuinguishes between these two cases. We will use these insights to discuss more generally the issue of the conventionality of polite requests and the conception of "(in)directness".