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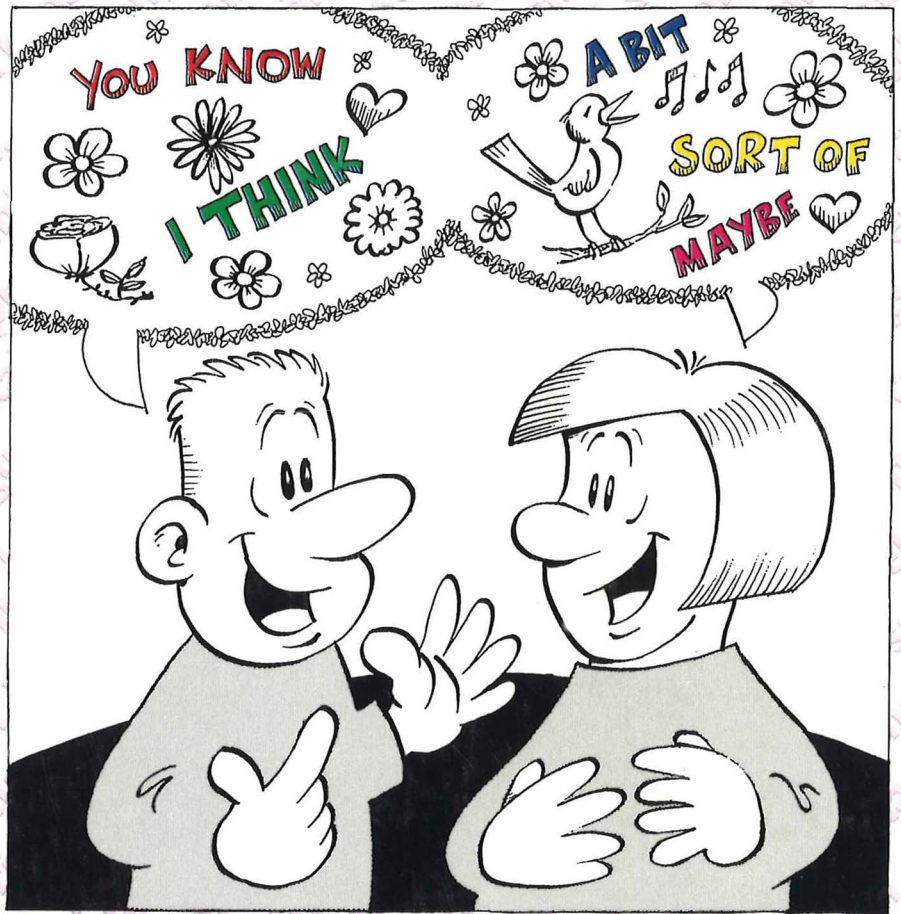
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates a pragmatic aspect of language: speakers' way of using pragmatic force modifiers, i.e. expressions such as *I suppose*, *sort of*, or *certainly* to modify (either to soften or to strengthen) the impact of their messages. Earlier research has shown that modifiers can have important interpersonal functions, especially in terms of linguistic politeness. This study explores how advanced Finnish speakers of English use pragmatic force modifiers in a conversational setting. The learners' interlanguage performance is compared with that of native speakers of both English and Finnish. The main empirical data consist of conversations between Finnish and British speakers. The data also contain similar conversations by native speakers of Finnish and native speakers of English.

The study has both theoretical and empirical aims. The theoretical aim is to provide a descriptive model of pragmatic force modifiers that would account for their specific nature, especially their potential multifunctionality. Thus, a model is suggested that conceptualizes modifiers as a continuum from more explicit to more implicit choices. The empirical aim is to study how and for what kinds of pragmatic functions speakers use modifiers and to describe how contextual factors affect their use. The study also investigates how speakers' changing roles during the encounters influence their use of modifiers. The focus is on non-native speakers and on how they master the use of modifiers in relation to native speakers of both English and Finnish.

Modifiers were used frequently throughout the data; they were especially common in face-threatening contexts, which points to their interpersonal significance. Even though also the learners used modifiers, they used them less clearly in interpersonally motivated ways than the native speakers. The learners were also less skilful in adapting their use of modifiers to changing role relationships. The distinction between explicit and implicit modifiers seemed worthwhile in that where the native speakers used implicit modifiers the most, the learners favoured explicit modifiers. This can have interpersonal implications as the native speakers used implicitness to create an atmosphere of shared assumptions; the learners' inability to do so can thus lead to problems inasmuch as it is seen as intentional on their part. Overall, the findings indicate that the use and interpretation of pragmatic force modifiers is affected by a complex combination of linguistic, conversational, and social factors.

Keywords: pragmatics, politeness, involvement, interlanguage, explicit/implicit strategies, roles, pragmatic proficiency

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Omistan tämän työn isälleni ja äidilleni

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CONTENTS

Orientation

1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Pragmatics and interlanguage pragmatics

Rather than considering language as an abstract system in a social vacuum, the present study focuses on one aspect of language in use: the way speakers modify, i.e. soften or emphasize, the impact of their messages in a conversational setting. The study belongs to the linguistic tradition of pragmatics in that attention will be paid to language as it relates to its users, and to functions of language in real-life contexts. There is as yet no unanimous definition of pragmatics as a field of study.[1] Mey (1993:45-46), however, points out that it is possible to talk about two approaches to pragmatics. On the one hand, pragmatics can be regarded as a component of linguistics, alongside other components with their own areas of interests and points of focus, such as phonology, syntax or semantics. On the other hand, pragmatics can be conceptualized as a perspective on language (e.g. Verschueren 1991, 1995). The present study adopts a perspective view of pragmatics in believing that it is possible to consider different levels of language and communication – from morphemes to conversational organization – from a pragmatic perspective, that is, bearing in mind the kinds of functions and purposes for which speakers use them.

Research on pragmatics has brought into attention many aspects of language which were earlier considered uninteresting or outside the domain of linguistics proper. Pragmatics has also often succeeded in showing the importance of features in language which traditional linguistics might have seen as futile and best avoided. The present study focuses on one such feature: the use of words and expressions which, on the face of it, seem to add little in terms of content value to speakers' utterances but which, nevertheless, are often important in that they help signal speakers' feelings and attitudes to their messages, their coparticipants and

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[1]   For various definitions of pragmatics, see Leech 1983, Levinson 1983, Green 1989, Grundy 1995 and Thomas 1995.

the situation as a whole. Previous research has indicated strong links between the use of modifying devices and such underlying interpersonal motivations as politeness and involvement (e.g. Brown and Levinson 1987, Holmes 1984a, 1990, James 1983). That is, modifying expressions such as *I suppose, maybe, you know* and *kind of*, which abound in language use, are usually there for a purpose. Therefore, it is useful to investigate their interactional motivations and functions because such investigations can yield valuable information about the characteristics of everyday language use.

Modifying expressions of the type mentioned above will be called *pragmatic force modifiers* in the present study. It is useful to consider them from the viewpoint of pragmatic proficiency which, broadly speaking, refers to speakers' ability to use language not only correctly but also appropriately, so that it matches the social situation in which it is being used. For native speakers of a language, being pragmatically proficient does not, usually, pose problems: having internalized their language and culture they know more or less automatically how to use language in different situations. Even though native speakers can also encounter situations that they are not familiar with, the fact remains that they are, on the whole, better equipped than non-native speakers to adapt their language use in ways that makes it pragmatically appropriate for different situations. For non-native speakers, however, pragmatic appropriateness can pose big problems. Previous research has indicated that mastering pragmatic aspects of a foreign language is not an easy task and that non-native speakers' insufficient pragmatic skills can lead to pragmatic failure (e.g. Holmes 1982, Thomas 1983). At their worst, pragmatic problems reflect badly on the speaker as a person because, unlike in the case of overt grammatical errors, speakers can easily be judged as intentionally rude or offensive if they fail to abide by the pragmatic conventions of the given society.

Interlanguage pragmatics is a subfield of pragmatics which studies how non-native speakers produce and understand linguistic action (see e.g. Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993a).[2] There is much demand for research in interlanguage pragmatics as it provides valuable information about the types of problems non-native speakers most typically encounter with pragmatic aspects of language, about the way in which pragmatic skills develop, about the ways in which pragmatic conventions of the native language influence learners' interlanguage, and about the communicative effects that pragmatic mishaps may have (see e.g. Kasper 1989, Blum-Kulka 1991, Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993b).

The present study resides within the scope of interlanguage pragmatics in that its focus lies on how non-native speakers - Finnish speakers of English - master the use of pragmatic force modifiers. Even though the growing interest in

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[2]   Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993b:3), however, suggest that considering interlanguage only in relation to non-native speakers may narrow its scope unnecessarily. Especially in situations of language contact, speakers fully competent in two languages may adopt an intercultural style that both bears resemblance to and differs from the two languages involved.

pragmatic aspects of language in general has resulted in a great number of studies dealing with aspects of interlanguage pragmatics, there are a number of reasons why the present study is of importance. Firstly, whereas much interlanguage research has been based on elicited or role-played data, the present study draws on authentic conversational data. Even though non-native speakers' pragmatic abilities and problems with using modifying expressions while performing certain face-threatening acts have been well documented (e.g. House and Kasper 1981, Olshtain and Weinbach 1987, Koike 1989, Takahashi and Beebe 1993), relatively little is known about non-native speakers' overall conversational success in this respect. Secondly, rather than seeing pragmatic force modifiers in terms of a narrowly defined set of expressions, the present study seeks to describe the pragmatic modification phenomenon in broader terms. That is, attention will be paid to various different types of expressions provided that they share similar pragmatic functions: those of either softening or emphasizing the pragmatic force of speakers' messages. Thirdly, even though the use of pragmatic force modifiers has often been associated with interpersonal motivations such as politeness, further research is needed to highlight more specifically the ways in which modifying expressions contribute to interpersonal aspects of communication in general, and how non-native and native speakers compare with each other in this respect in particular. The present study thus seeks to contribute to knowledge about interlanguage pragmatics by focusing on one aspect of pragmatic proficiency: the use and interpretation of pragmatic force modifiers during a conversational encounter. The more detailed aims and research questions will be introduced below.

1.2   Theoretical and empirical aims

The present study has both a theoretical and an empirical aim. The theoretical aim is to come up with an account of pragmatic force modifiers that would be useful in describing the phenomenon, and that would capture the essence of various different, sometimes conflicting, approaches to the modification phenomenon that can be found in earlier research. The model would also have to be one into which choices at different levels – verbal and non-verbal – could be incorporated if they share similar pragmatic functions, even if during the analysis attention is narrowed down to specific realizations only. With these objectives in mind, an attempt will be made in the present study to formulate a descriptive model of pragmatic force modifiers that could be used as the analytic framework in the empirical part of the study, and that would also be relevant for other areas of pragmatic research.

In terms of the empirical aim, the present study seeks to employ the descriptive model developed in the theoretical section of the study and to answer the following general research question: How do advanced Finnish speakers of English master the use of pragmatic force modifiers in a conversational setting, and how does their performance relate to that of native speakers of both English and Finnish? More specifically, the use of pragmatic force modifiers will be

14

approached from three different, though related, angles, the focus moving in each case from the more linguistic to the more social aspects of communication as the notion of context is broadened. The analysis seeks to address the following research questions:

(1) How frequently do native and non-native speakers use pragmatic force modifiers and what type of expressions do they favour? This level of analysis seeks to investigate (a) how common a phenomenon the use of modifiers is in the conversations studied, and the differences and similarities between non-native and native speakers in this respect, and (b) to compare the use of different types of pragmatic force modifiers in each set of data.

(2) What kind of interpersonal purposes are pragmatic force modifiers used for? As was pointed out above, earlier research has indicated a strong link between the use of pragmatic force modifiers and interpersonal motivations such as politeness and involvement. Therefore, the functions of modifiers will be approached from the broad perspectives of politeness and involvement. The purpose is (a) to explore the ways in which speakers make strategic use of pragmatic force modifiers for interpersonal purposes, (b) to explore the contexts where modifiers most commonly seem to fulfil politeness and involvement functions, and (c) to investigate the relative importance of different types of modifiers for these interpersonal functions.

(3) How do speakers' roles during the conversations affect the way they use pragmatic force modifiers? This research question seeks to highlight the notion that the type of pragmatic act performed is not the only contextual factor that can affect how speakers use pragmatic force modifiers. The roles speakers occupy at a given point of time can also constrain their use of modifiers.

Each of the research questions introduced above will be approached from an interlanguage perspective. That is, the main focus will be on non-native speakers' performance, and the ways in which it resembles or differs from the performance of native speakers of both English and Finnish.

1.3   Data and methods

As was briefly mentioned above, studies of interlanguage pragmatics have often investigated data obtained from discourse completion tasks or elicited role-plays (see Kasper and Dahl 1991 for an overview). These studies have provided a great deal of valuable information about various pragmatic aspects of communication. Nevertheless, there is also a need for analyses carried out on more authentic encounters in order to determine whether the findings based on elicited methods are applicable to other contexts as well. For this reason, the present study is based on conversational data, with as little predefined constraints on speakers' behaviour as possible.

The conversations between advanced Finnish speakers of English and native speakers of English (henceforth NS-NNS conversations) form the most important data for the present study. There are four conversations altogether, with

four participants in each (two native speakers and two non-native speakers). In addition to the NS-NNS material, the data contain four similar conversations by native speakers of English (NSE conversations), and four conversations by native speakers of Finnish (NSF conversations). This set-up makes it possible to compare the non-native speakers' interlanguage performance with material by native speakers of both the target language (English) and the speakers' native language (Finnish). The subjects in all conversations are university students of roughly the same age, and in each conversation there are both male and female speakers. All the conversations can be described as unstructured and informal chats in that the participants are not asked to follow any prescribed procedure. Instead, they are free to conduct the conversations in the way that they want and in the direction they want. The data collection and the conversations studied will be discussed in more detail in chapter four.

It is clear that to answer the kinds of research questions introduced above, qualitative research methods are called for. However, simple techniques of quantification will also be used for illustrative purposes when dealing with the frequency of pragmatic force modifiers and the relative distribution of different types of modifiers in the data. In order to investigate the interpersonal functions and pragmatic significance modifiers, however, it is necessary to adopt a qualitative, descriptive approach which seeks to take into account the linguistic, the conversational and the social context in which the speakers use pragmatic force modifiers. Only by investigating the subtle interplay of these different but simultaneous factors is it possible to assess the pragmatic functions of modifying expressions and their interpersonal significance. The preference for qualitative-descriptive methods implies a recognition of the contextualized nature of the phenomenon studied. That is, it is important to try and make sense of pragmatic force modifiers and their functions in their contexts of occurrence. To illustrate in detail the principles according to which qualitative analysis will be conducted in the present study, a sample analysis will be carried out on an extract from the data in chapter four.

1.4   The structure of the study

After the present introductory section, the overall structure of the present study is divided into three main parts with different points of focus. The first part of the study seeks to illuminate the theoretical underpinnings of the study. Chapter 2 will be dedicated to considerations involving the interpersonal nature of language in general, and the interpersonal significance of modifying devices in particular. The interdependency of pragmatic appropriateness and context will also be discussed, because it is important also from the viewpoint of the appropriate use of modifiers. As the use of modifying devices is an important aspect of pragmatic skills, the notions of pragmatic proficiency and pragmatic failure will be introduced, with special attention to non-native speakers. Chapter 3 has two aims. Firstly, the views of modifying devices most prevalent in earlier research will be reviewed and

evaluated. Secondly, the descriptive model of pragmatic force modifiers adopted in the present study will be introduced and discussed in detail, with special attention to how it resembles and differs from the ones suggested in the earlier research.

The second part of the study focuses on the empirical analysis of the data. In chapter 4, the aims, the data, and the methodology will be introduced, and a sample analysis will be carried out on an extract from the data to illustrate the three angles from which the conversational data will be approached. The main focus of chapter 5 will be on the frequency of pragmatic force modifiers in different sets of data. The types of modifiers favoured by each group will also be described. This information about frequencies and types of modifiers will provide the background for the ensuing qualitative analysis. Chapter 6 will concentrate on the qualitative analysis of politeness and involvement functions of pragmatic force modifiers in the three sets of data, and chapter 7 investigates the interplay between speakers' roles and pragmatic force modifiers.

The purpose of the third part of the study is to integrate and evaluate the findings. Chapter 8 will assess the findings of the study in terms of what they reveal about the non-native speakers' pragmatic proficiency. The discussion will also be extended to those factors that are most likely to influence the non-native speakers' use of modifiers, and to the importance of awareness-raising for pragmatic appropriateness. Finally, in chapter 9, limitations of the approach chosen in the present study will be discussed and suggestions made for possible points of departure for future research.

The theoretical framework

2 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MODIFYING DEVICES IN INTERACTION

For the purposes of the discussion in the present chapter, the general term *modifying devices*[1] will be used as a cover term for both softening and strengthening devices. A more detailed and thorough discussion of terminology and the way in which modifiers are defined in the present study will follow in chapter three. This chapter seeks to provide the background for the present study by discussing, in general terms, what it means to adopt a pragmatic approach to modifying devices as well as the significance of the phenomenon of modification in interaction as a crucial part of pragmatic proficiency. The discussion will draw on relevant earlier research, and the focus will move from the strategic significance of modifying devices in interaction in general to considerations about their use in second language interaction.

2.1 Modifying devices: preliminaries

2.1.1 A pragmatic perspective to modifying devices

Grice's (1975) well-known theory about the maxims of the cooperative principle, according to which cooperative speakers seek to be sufficiently informative (maxim of quantity), truthful (maxim of quality), relevant (maxim of relation), and to avoid obscurities (maxim of manner) has been widely influential in pragmatic

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[1] The term *modification* may evoke criticism on the grounds that it seems to imply a view of language use where speakers first have in mind some core proposition which they, then, garnish with modifiers. Such a view would fail to acknowledge that modifiers are as much part of the message 'proper' as other aspects of it. However, as it has been common to apply the terms *modifier* and *modification* in earlier research, the same terms, for want of better ones, will be used in this study as well.

research, not least because of the necessity it opens up for explaining the underlying reasons why, in fact, speakers often choose not to act according to such maxims. The use of modifying devices such as the ones in the example below is one way in which speakers seem to break the Gricean maxims:

Example 1

S3   *well I mean*, it has **quite** *a good* **sort of** *comedy value, the house of lords*
(NSE 2)

Firstly, when speakers use modifying devices they, in principle, say more than is necessary for mere information transfer (a breach of quantity maxim). Secondly, Brown and Levinson (1987:164) also point out that many softening devices break the quality maxim because they signal that speakers are not taking full responsibility for what they are saying (e.g. *I suppose*), i.e., these devices allow speakers to say more than what they know is true. Thirdly, it may be possible to argue that modifying devices are irrelevant to the point of the message and therefore break the maxim of relation. And fourthly, abundant use of modifying devices also adds to the indirectness of messages, and can thus be regarded as a breach of the maxim of manner, according to which speakers should attempt to express themselves in a brief and orderly way. Yet modified utterances such as the one in example 1 abound in most everyday encounters, and it is a task for pragmatics to explain why this is the case.

It was pointed out above that pragmatics is interested in language function and use. Moreover, the view of pragmatics as a perspective means that any linguistic phenomenon can be approached from a pragmatic, i.e. functional, perspective. Verschueren (1995:13-14, emphasis original) defines pragmatics as "a general *functional perspective* on (any aspect of) language. . . which takes into account the full complexity of its *cognitive, social, and cultural (i.e. 'meaningful') functioning* in the lives of human beings". This definition places emphasis on language choices being meaningful, and it is important to recognize that pragmatic meaningfulness often extends "over and beyond the propositional information" (Östman 1995:4). That is, pragmatic explanations often need to go beyond the language system itself when the objective is to explain why speakers use language the way they do, often in ways that seem to run counter to such principles as suggested by Grice.

The present study seeks to approach modifying devices from a pragmatic perspective. The basic assumption is that even though modifying devices often seem to make speakers' messages unnecessarily vague and wordy, their prevalence in interaction alone suggests that they must have some communicative significance for language users, i.e. their use is probably *motivated* (see Thomas 1995:111). It will be argued in chapter three that attention to semantic properties of modifying devices alone does not provide satisfactory explanations for why speakers use them: there seems to be more to modifying devices than what they strictly speaking 'mean' in semantic terms. Therefore, a pragmatic approach that

pays attention to language functions is called for. Such an approach means that social and situational constraints on language use are recognized and that explanations for linguistic phenomena can also be sought from outside the language system itself.

2.1.2   Motivations for modification

A common practice when explaining the reasons for maxim-flouting has been to start from the assumption as, for example, Grice (1975), Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) and Sperber and Wilson (1986) do, that language use is governed by basically similar rational and goal-oriented principles as other forms of human interaction and that, consequently, there must be some reasons why speakers choose to express themselves in ways which run counter to the Gricean maxims of efficient communication.[2] The same applies to the use of modifying devices as well. As suggested above, their prevalence in interaction suggests – given that speakers are rational agents – that there are some underlying purposes for their use. Usually, such underlying motivations arise from outside the language system, the basic assumption being that language as a social system is constrained by factors similar to those operating in other forms of social behaviour. The most commonly suggested reason for the use of modifying devices is that they help language users express interpersonal meanings, or interpersonal functions, in interaction.

The 'interpersonal function' of language means, in essence, that in addition to conveying referential information (what Halliday (1973) calls the *ideational function* of language), language is also used to express feelings and attitudes to the topic, the coparticipants, and the situation as a whole. According to Halliday (1973:66), this *interpersonal function* has to do with "language as the mediator of our own personalities and personal feelings on the one hand, and forms of interaction and social interplay with other participants in the communication situation on the other hand". Ochs and Schieffelin (1989:9), similarly, draw attention to the affective functions of language by pointing out that

> beyond the function of communicating referential information, languages are responsive to the fundamental need of speakers to convey and assess feelings, moods, dispositions and attitudes. This need is as critical and as human as that of describing events.

Halliday (1973) also takes into consideration the *textual function* of language, which refers to language as a means of constructing a text (see also

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2   Kopytko (1995) criticizes 'rationalistic pragmatics' and its claims of pure rationality where language strategies are seen as means for satisfying specific ends when linguistic actions are, instead, often characterised by indeterminacies. However, even if specific goals and pure rationality are excessively tall orders, it is probably safe to argue that people usually behave the way they do for some purposes, however vague and complex those purposes may be.

Leech 1983:56). It is important to notice that language use always fulfils these three functions simultaneously even though certain features of language use may be closely connected to a particular function. Hence, even though all linguistic choices that speakers make convey interpersonal functions alongside with ideational and textual ones, modifying devices often 'specialize' in serving interpersonal functions, one indication of which is that they, typically, contribute relatively little to the ideational content of speakers' utterances.

The most common interpersonal function which has been associated with the use of modifying devices is linguistic politeness. Politeness will be dealt with in more detail in chapter six, but for the purposes of the present discussion, politeness can be preliminarily defined as strategic conflict avoidance (Brown and Levinson 1987). That is, it refers to speakers' wishes to use language in ways that will not threaten the face wants of either themselves or of their coparticipants. It is, furthermore, usual to make a distinction between two types of politeness on the grounds of whether speakers wish to signal deference by respecting the addressee's freedom from imposition, or whether they wish to signal their approval and liking of others. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1978/1987) research on politeness, these two types are called negative and positive politeness, respectively.

There are various ways in which linguistic politeness can be expressed. Brown and Levinson (1987) list numerous strategies which can fulfil politeness purposes, ranging from those more specifically linguistic in nature (e.g. the use of passive forms) to more general ones which can also be applied to other forms of social behaviour (e.g. the giving of options). As regards modifying devices, they have usually been considered from the viewpoint of negative politeness. This is because politeness research in general has tended to concentrate on negative politeness, or what Leech (1980, 1983) calls tact, both of which have to do with the speaker's motivation to protect the addressee's face and to respect his/her privacy and freedom of action. As regards research on modifying devices, this interest in negative politeness has meant that scholarly attention has predominantly been directed to modifying devices with a weakening function. This means that expressions such as *I suppose, probably*, or *sort of*, for example, have been regarded as means of mitigating and reducing the force of utterances, thus making them more acceptable to addressees and less likely to be threatening to their negative face wants (see e.g. Fraser 1980, House and Kasper 1981, Coates 1987, Skelton 1988). However, it also seems worthwhile to consider modifying devices from the viewpoint of positive politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987) and Holmes (1984a), for example, draw attention to emphatic expressions such as *certainly* or *really* and their role in enhancing positive politeness, that is, feelings of solidarity and same-mindedness (see e.g. Brown and Levinson 1987, Holmes 1984a). All in all, then, earlier research has indicated that speakers often regulate the pragmatic impact of their messages by resorting to modifying devices, and that the underlying reasons for this have often to do with the expression of linguistic politeness.

In addition to politeness, some writers have also considered modifying devices as signals of involvement (e.g. Chafe 1985, Arndt and Janney 1985, Östman

1982). The same applies to involvement as to politeness: it is a broad concept that has been defined in various ways. It is usually associated with speakers showing emotional commitment to either the message that they are conveying or to their interlocutors (for overviews, see Besnier 1994a, 1994b), even though it is also usual to see involvement as a continuum from emotional detachment to emotional attachment (e.g. Hübler 1987). According to this view, modifying devices such as *maybe* or *I suppose* can act as signals of speakers' detachment from the message and/or the coparticipants and devices such as *I'm sure* and *really* as signals of attachment, both of which represent modes of involvement. The relationship between politeness and involvement is not a straightforward one either, so that drawing a clearly defined borderline between politeness and involvement is often a difficult task. This, obviously, carries over to the interpretation of modifying devices with the effect that it may not always be easy to be very precise about their interpersonal functions. This issue will be taken up in more detail in chapter six when dealing with the interpersonal functions of modifiers.

It is also worth pointing out that modifying devices can serve as indicators of the level of formality in interaction. Certain types of modifiers, for example *sort of*, *or whatever*, and *you know*, seem to be associated with informal style in particular (see e.g. Crystal and Davy 1975, James 1983, Channell 1994). As James (1983:201) puts it, such modifying devices "contribute to a certain informality of style and intimacy of relationship". That is, speakers can use modifying devices to signal that they regard the situation as informal; the absence of modifying material in casual situations may, therefore, be interpreted as overt matter-of-factness. Conversely, there are also modifying devices which are more likely to be used in formal rather than informal situations, such as *as it were* or *I presume*. That there seems to be a connection between modifiers used and the level of formality in the situation suggests that context in general has a powerful effect on the use and interpretation of modifying devices. This is why contextual constraints should always be taken into account when assessing the interpersonal functions of modifiers. The next section will give an overview of the contextual factors that are likely to be of significance when pragmatic analyses are carried out. Suffice it to say in this connection that factors pertaining to the type of situation and topic at hand, and the type of relationship between the speakers, are all worth taking into consideration when interpreting the functions of modifying devices.

There are two important points concerning the interpersonal functions of modifying devices which earlier pragmatic research has brought up and which are worth mentioning in this connection. Firstly, as was already mentioned in passing above, even though it is possible to discuss different functions separately at a theoretical level, it is not always possible to assign modifying devices to specific well-defined functions when investigating their use in real contexts (see e.g. Östman 1981a, Coates 1987). On the contrary, modifying devices are often capable of serving many functions simultaneously. Ochs and Schieffelin (1989:15) suggest the same thing when pointing out that "it appears that linguistic structures more often specify a range of affective meanings than pinpoint a precise affective meaning". Secondly, arguing that speakers make strategic use of modifying

devices for interpersonal purposes may create an impression that speakers always employ such strategies in a conscious manner, with full awareness of their interpersonal impact. However, it is often the case that people use modifying devices without much conscious attention, as a matter of course rather than consciously calculating their interpersonal effectiveness (see e.g. Thomas 1986:255, Schmidt 1993:22). That is, even though modification strategies *can* be brought onto the level of awareness, they are not always under conscious deliberation. Rather, as least as far as native speakers are concerned, they have internalized the culturally-appropriate ways of using their language and know more or less automatically what kind of modifications are called for in different situations. Therefore, what Brown and Levinson (1987:85) say about politeness strategies applies to the way in which the strategic use of modifying devices is seen in the present study as well:

> We continue to use the word 'strategy', despite its connotations of conscious deliberation, because we can think of no other word that will imply a rational element while covering both (a) innovative plans of action, which may still be (but need not be) unconscious, and (b) routines - that is, previously constructed plans.

2.1.3 Universality of modifying devices

Given that the use of modifying devices is a strategy which speakers can employ to signal interpersonal meanings, it is of course reasonable to ask whether their use is a universal phenomenon, applying in the same way to all languages. As regards politeness research in general, Janney and Arndt (1993) argue that, during the past decade, there has often been a tacit assumption of universality concerning matters of linguistic politeness. This seems to apply to research on modifying devices as well: it is a widely held assumption that linguistically polite speakers tend to modify – mainly mitigate and tone down – the force of their utterances. Brown and Levinson (1987) are explicit about the assumed universality of the politeness strategies that they cover in their research. They consider the use of modifying devices as an important politeness strategy that pertains especially to negative but also to positive politeness. Moreover, pragmatic research conducted on different languages (mainly western) suggests that modifying devices do play a role in politeness across languages. As with other areas of pragmatics, English is the language which has attracted most attention (e.g. Holmes 1982, 1984a, James 1983, Coates 1987), but there are also studies dealing with other languages which indicate that modifying devices are often used for interpersonal purposes including, for example, German (House and Kasper 1981, Kasper 1981), Hebrew (Blum-Kulka 1982), Danish (Trosborg 1987), Spanish (Koike 1989), and Finnish (Hakulinen 1989, Lampinen 1990).

It is probably safe to assume that the use of modifying devices is a phenomenon that can be found in most, maybe all, languages. This does not, however, guarantee that modifying devices have similar interpersonal functions in all languages. Thus, what Janney and Arndt (1993:20) point out about speech act

categories probably applies to the use of modifying devices as well: "the fact that such activities are found in different languages . . . in no way proves that their functions in politeness are universal". Kasper (1994:3209) is along the same lines in arguing the following:

> The strategies composing specific speech act sets, and global modificatory dimensions such as indirectness, minimization, and maximization of pragmatic force . . . have been demonstrated to be valid across languages and communities studied so far. Yet, the selections participants make from such repertoires vary between speech communities, and these variations systematically reflect different cultural orientations.

It is, thus, worthwhile to investigate the extent to which there are differences and similarities in the ways in which speakers of different languages employ modifying devices for interpersonal purposes. Possible differences across languages are also interesting form the viewpoint of second language research as non-native speakers may transfer modification strategies inappropriately from their native language over to their L2. This, in turn, can cause problems for successful communication in foreign language situations. Moreover, in the light of the arguments by Janney and Arndt (1993) and Kasper (1994) above, it is possible that even if two languages have similar modifying devices, the interpersonal functions of those modifiers need not be the same across those languages. This is a factor that can easily remain unnoticed by non-native speakers, who may use L2 modifiers in L1-influenced ways, thereby failing to fulfil the intended pragmatic functions in the target language.

Another factor worth bearing in mind is that different languages may realize similar modification strategies in different surface forms. For convenience, the term *modifying device* has been used in this chapter as an overall term for different modifying strategies, chiefly because research has largely concentrated on the use of phrasal and lexical modifying devices, which are common in many languages. However, the term should be understood more broadly than simply as a reference to lexical-phrasal means. This is because the same interpersonal functions may also be achieved by different strategies altogether. For example, Hakulinen (1976) and Markkanen (1991) show that in Finnish, morphological endings, known as clitic particles, often have modification functions similar to those of lexical devices in English. Similarly, Matsumoto (1988, 1989) and Tanaka (1993) point to the interpersonal significance of particles in the form of bound morphemes in Japanese. Findings such as these suggest that it is not enough merely to compare corresponding surface forms across languages as the languages in question, especially if they are typologically different, can make use of different linguistic means to realize the same modifying functions. Wierzbicka (1993:37-41), for example, draws attention to the finding that tag questions are much more frequently used in English than in Polish, and that Polish tag questions lack the appealing functions that tags in English have. She, therefore, concludes that tag questions have been given too much emphasis in pragmatic literature. However, in concentrating only on the surface forms of tag questions in English and Polish,

she appears to pay no attention to the possibility that Polish speakers probably express similar appealing functions using different surface forms.

2.2   The importance of context

2.2.1   The notion of context

The discussion above has suggested that the use of modifying devices for interpersonal purposes is a common, probably universal, phenomenon of language use. This does not, however, mean that the same 'rules' would apply to their use in all situations. On the contrary, as with other pragmatic phenomena, the influence of context is crucial for their use and interpretation.

The term *context* is probably one of the most used and least defined terms in linguistics, and the concept itself, as Quasthoff (1994:731) puts it, "is widely context-dependent: it varies with the context of each particular linguistic approach, terminological system, or analytic unit". Typically, the term has been used to refer to both the linguistic and the social situation in which speech occurs. It is obvious that there are numerous contextual constraints which can have an effect on speakers' behaviour, and it is therefore a very difficult task to try and take all possible factors into account. As Dascal (1981) rightly points out, too strong demands about the necessity to explain the effect of contextual factors, what he calls 'contextualism', would mean that pragmatics would indeed have to be the science of everything. While this seems true, it is equally true that context is a crucial notion for pragmatic research because the pragmatic functions of language cannot be revealed by focusing on linguistic elements in isolation. Hence, the important question is, in Kopytko's (1995:486) words, "How much information about context is required in pragmatic analysis?".

Quite often, context is conceptualized as a collection of language-external situational factors pertaining to the setting, the relationship between the participants, and to the task at hand. These factors may or may not have an influence on language use. Such a view of context can, however, also become quite problematic. For this reason, it is nowadays quite common to emphasize that rather than considering context as an accumulation of material or social 'facts' which constrain language use, it is equally important to realize that language use not only reflects context, it also creates context, and that the interactants mutually negotiate which aspects of context become relevant for and shape a given situation (see e.g. Auer 1992:22, Goodwin and Duranti 1992:5). Auer (1992:21) sums this up when discussing contextualization as follows:

> Contrary to the monolithic and unidirectional notion of context which was often used in the early (post-)structuralist approaches to context, the notion of contextualization suggests a flexible notion, a context that is continually reshaped in time. But the relationship between context and text must also be a reflexive one — i.e. one in which

language is not determined by context, but contributes itself in essential ways to the construction of context.

Goodwin and Duranti (1992:2) point out that lack of a single formal definition of context is not necessarily a problem, as long as investigators recognize the importance of context and try to reveal how it works. For the present study, the term context means, in Goodwin and Duranti's words (1992:3), that to understand the pragmatic significance of modifying devices, it is necessary to look "beyond the event itself to other phenomena (for example cultural setting, speech situation, shared background assumptions) within which the event is embedded". As suggested above, it is also important to recognize the two-way relationship between context and language instead of seeing the relationship between them as a deterministic one.

2.2.2   Context and modifying devices

Even though it is difficult to be very precise about the meaning of context, there seems to be an agreement that context, at least certain aspects of it, are likely to influence speakers' language use. Kopytko (1995:486) puts this as follows: "the claim that some elements of the context in a particular speech encounter may be more relevant than others does not appear to be totally unfounded". As regards the use of modifying devices, earlier research has given indications of those aspects of context which can influence the use of language in general and also the use of modifying devices and which, therefore, need to be borne in mind when doing pragmatic analysis.

It was pointed out above that modifying devices are important carriers of interpersonal meanings, which have to do with speakers' feelings and attitudes towards one another. It is, therefore, clear that the kind of relationship that pertains between participants is a factor that can affect the use and interpretation of modifiers. Two contextual parameters which are often taken up in pragmatic research and which have to do with the relationship between speakers are those of power and distance. Brown and Levinson (1987:77) define power as an asymmetric social dimension which depicts the degree to which one speaker can impose himself or herself on the other. Power can most easily be conceptualized when thinking of it in institutional and hierarchical settings: bosses have more power than employees, for example. As far as the use of modifying devices is concerned, those who have more power in the situations can, generally speaking, more easily express themselves without recourse to modifiers as they can choose to ignore others' face wants on the grounds of their powerful status. Conversely, those with less power are expected to show respect, and that can often be accomplished by using modifying devices.

The concept of power is also important when thinking about the kinds of roles speakers occupy in a given situation and their effect on the use of modifying devices. Brown and Levinson (1987:78) point out that power is often attached to

roles and role sets so that in role sets such as manager/employee asymmetrical power is built in. As this example indicates, the notion of roles brings easily to mind institutional settings where one of the participants is more powerful due to his/her official status (e.g. doctor-patient interaction). It is, however, also useful to think about more 'everyday' encounters in terms of speakers' roles. Roles will be discussed in more detail in chapter seven, but it is worth pointing out at this stage that issues such as one speaker having more knowledge of the matter discussed can make him/her more powerful in the role of a 'knower' (see e.g. Woken and Swales 1989, Zuengler 1991, Tyler 1995), or the fact that someone is a native speaker in NS-NNS situation can accord him/her a more powerful role (e.g. Beebe and Giles 1984). This ties in with Spencer-Oatey's (1992:107 drawing on French and Raven 1959) discussion that institutional power is not the only type of social power: a speaker may also have power because s/he is perceived as having a special expertise or because s/he is respected and liked by others. Put differently, speakers can have more and less powerful roles throughout interaction and those with more powerful roles have usually more leeway to choose whether to use modifying devices or not.

Brown and Levinson (1987:76) define distance as a symmetric social dimension of similarity or difference. This, for example, would put strangers at one end of the distance scale and close friends at the other. Distance seems to be a more evasive concept than power; at least the findings about its effect on politeness have been conflicting. The assumption in Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory was that increased distance would increase the need to signal negative politeness so that a threat to face might be perceived as bigger among people who are distant. Negative politeness is often realized through speakers using modifying devices. Modifiers would thus be more likely to occur in encounters between strangers, their use increasing in a linear fashion as the distance increases. However, Wolfson's (1988) 'bulge-theory' suggests a different picture; she maintains that both increasing distance and increasing intimacy reduce the need to make use of politeness strategies,[3] whereas the need to use politeness markers such as modifying devices is greatest among acquaintances, where actions usually have bigger social consequences than those between complete strangers. Baxter (1984), on the other hand, suggests that speakers tend to use more politeness strategies in close relationships. These conflicting findings are most probably due to different conceptualizations of distance. Holtgraves (1992:45) maintains that confusion mainly arises because distance is often seen in terms of familiarity only, whereas in some approaches the liking aspect comes in as well. He, therefore, suggests that familiarity and liking and their effect on politeness should be taken into account separately.

A third contextual parameter which Brown and Levinson (1987:77) suggest has importance for language choices is the ranking of imposition, that is, "a culturally and situationally defined ranking of imposition by the degree to which

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[3]   Or, it is probably more accurate to say that rather than there being no need for politeness between intimates, politeness is realized in those situations in different, more subtle ways.

they [acts] are considered to interfere with interactants' wants of self-determination or of approval". Power and distance come into play here as well, so that an act which is likely to be non-risky among friends and can thus be performed directly (e.g. request for a cigarette) may be much more risky among strangers and require use of modifying devices and other politeness strategies to be successfully accomplished. It is also important to bear in mind the cultural dimension involved in the ranking of impositions. One area, very relevant for the present study, where cultural preferences may vary concerns the perceptions as to which topics are suitable for conversation. Richards and Sukwiwat (1983:122) point out that cultures differ in what is considered to be open for discussion: which topics are part of the 'private self ', which part of the 'public self'. Topics that are not generally considered open for discussion would, therefore, require more attention to face and politeness than 'safer topics'. The influence of topic on the use of modifying devices is crucial also within a culture because some topics are more sensitive than others. This point is brought out convincingly by Coates's (1987) discussion about an often-encountered claim that women, in general, tend to use more mitigating, softening expressions than men. Coates maintains that this finding is often due to the topics discussed, giving examples of data where women discussed topics like child abuse and wives' loyalty to husbands, whereas men's topics dealt with home beer making and modern hi-fi systems. It is obvious that the former topics are more sensitive and personal than the latter, and that speakers need to be more careful as to how to put their view across without causing offence. That modifying devices occurred frequently in the women's conversations seems thus hardly surprising.

Type of interaction is another, although related, contextual factor which can be reflected in the way speakers use modifying devices. Brown and Yule (1983) make a distinction between what they call the transactional and the interactional discourse type. The former refers to situations where the focus is on the optimally efficient transmission of information. An extreme example of language use in a transactional situation would be the direct, unmodified orders a surgeon gives a nurse during an operation. Interaction in such a situation is completely task-related and the participants' language use does not reflect interpersonal concerns because those can be pushed aside while completing the task. Similarly, curt and unmodified messages, which might be seen as highly inappropriate for other contexts, would be fully acceptable in emergencies where speakers are focusing on the effective transmission of information. In interactional discourse, however, language also has the function of making and maintaining relationships, a casual chat among friends being a typical example. In such situations, the use of modifiers usually serves important interpersonal purposes. It is true that it is not possible to draw a clear distinction between transactional and interactional situations; most everyday encounters have characteristics of both. However, it is often possible to say whether a situation is predominantly transactional or interactional and to assess speakers' use of modifying devices from that perspective.

Lastly, but not least importantly for the present study, the type of speech act or pragmatic act (Mey 1993) is a contextual factor which has a bearing for the

use of modifying devices and especially on how modifiers are interpreted. A widely held assumption, based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, has been that some acts (e.g. requests) are inherently face-threatening and that the more threat to face is involved, the more speakers need to use politeness strategies such as modifying devices. Even though it is probably the case that no acts are *inherently* face-threatening or face-enhancing, the fact remains that in the same situation, all acts do not require the same amount of, or similar kind of, modification. Holmes (1984a, 1990) points out that it is important to take account of the type of act in question before discussing the interpersonal impact that modifying devices have. This is because, depending on the type of act modified, the same devices may have different functions so that (Holmes 1990:191) "attenuating a directive will have a different effect from mitigating praise; and boosting an offensive comment will never be perceived as in any way polite". Ng and Bradac (1993:114), also, emphasize that the use of modifying devices as such does not result in favourable outcomes in pointing out that "mitigation has both a polite and an impolite face".

The discussion above has been based on the assumption that the use of modifying devices is, in general, an aspect of language use that has favourable consequences for interaction even though the need to use modifiers may vary across contexts. It is, however, also crucial to bear in mind that context can also have bearing on the way in which modifying devices are *interpreted*. Ng and Bradac (1993:18-22), for example, show that the frequent use of modifying devices, which they regard as a characteristic of low-power style, usually tends to get negatively evaluated in a courtroom context. This is why the use of modifiers may not be the best choice for speakers if they want to convey a reliable and trustworthy impression in a courtroom context (see also Hosman and Wright 1987). Ng and Bradac (1993:22), however, acknowledge the importance of context for such pejorative interpretations; they point out that the same features which in courtrooms easily lead to negative impression formation are customarily used in more casual encounters "to maximize conversational participation and foster the joint production of text".

There are thus many features of context which can have an influence on how modifying devices are used and interpreted. It is important, however, to recall the point made in the section above that contextual parameters do not just constrain language use; speakers can also use language in ways that have an effect on the context. This means, in essence, that the parameters discussed above are not constant. On the contrary, throughout interaction, speakers negotiate factors relating to power, distance, roles, sensitivity of topics, etc. The way speakers use modifying devices may, in fact, be a good indicator of just such a negotiation process.

2.3 Modifying devices and non-native speakers

2.3.1 An aspect of pragmatic proficiency

The discussion above gave a general overview of the kinds of interpersonal functions that modifying devices can have and of the importance of context for their use and interpretation. The focus, however, was on native speakers who rarely have to pay conscious attention to their use of modifying devices. Native speakers also usually know how to adapt the use of modifying devices so as to make it contextually appropriate. This skill constitutes an important area of what can be called *pragmatic proficiency*[4] which means, in simplified terms, the ability to use language not only correctly as far as grammar and vocabulary are concerned but also appropriately so that language use fits the social context in which it is used. While native speakers are usually pragmatically proficient, things are often more complicated for non-native speakers. Even advanced foreign language speakers, who are able to produce correct utterances as far as the surface grammatical level is concerned, may have difficulties in using language so that it suits the social occasion.

It is nowadays a common practice to stress the need for non-native speakers to acquire communicative skills if they want to be successful in encounters in the foreign language. This has its origins in Hymes's (1972) formulation of *communicative competence*, which he put forward as an antidote to Chomsky's view on competence. According to Hymes (1972:281, emphasis original), communicative competence consists of four different factors:

1. Whether (and to what degree) something is formally *possible*.
2. Whether (and to what degree) something is *feasible* in virtue of the means of implementation available.
3. Whether (and to what degree) something is *appropriate* (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to context in which it is used and evaluated.
4. Whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually *performed*, and what its doing entails.

There are many views as to what exactly constitutes communicative competence (see e.g. Canale and Swain 1980, Canale 1983, Widdowson 1989, Davies 1989, Bachman 1990). In general, however, different writers seem to share the view that communicative competence entails at least knowledge and ability pertaining to the structural and organizational aspects of language, on the one

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[4]   The term proficiency rather than competence is used because, as Taylor (1988) argues, the term competence can be confusing. While some writers use it in Chomsky's sense to refer to a state of knowledge, others see it in a much broader sense that incorporates the notion of ability as well. Taylor (1988:166) maintains that if competence in its narrower sense is still regarded as a useful concept, a distinction should be drawn between competence and proficiency, the latter designating "the ability to make use of competence".

hand, and knowledge and ability to match language appropriately to different social situations, so that specific functions of language get successfully accomplished, on the other hand. Hence, dichotomies such as grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence (Canale and Swain 1980), or organizational competence and pragmatic competence (Bachman 1990), have been distinguished as aspects of communicative competence. Moreover, the importance of a third aspect, that of strategic competence, is also often recognized (e.g. Canale 1983, Faerch and Kasper 1984, Bachman 1990). Strategic competence has to do with speakers' ability to use communication strategies to facilitate processes of comprehension and production. In other words, as Bachman (1990:106) points out, rather than being solely an aspect of language competence, strategic competence is best seen "as a general ability, which enables an individual to make the most effective use of available abilities in carrying out a given task".

From the viewpoint of the present study, the relationship between communicative competence and pragmatic proficiency is of importance. The two terms are often used more or less synonymously and there seems to be no clear view as to the relationship between them, no doubt largely due to the fact that there are differences of opinion concerning the domain of pragmatics. Most commonly, however, communicative competence is seen as a wider concept than pragmatic competence (see e.g. Stalker 1989, Widdowson 1989) and this is the view held in this study as well on the grounds that there are abilities involved in communicative competence, such as those pertaining to the correct organization of linguistic signals (e.g. in pronunciation), which can be seen as falling outside the pragmatic domain proper. Pragmatic proficiency seems to be related to Hymes's (1972) third category in particular: the ability to use language *appropriately* in particular contexts.[5] Bachman (1990:90) points out that there are two aspects involved in pragmatic appropriacy: both "knowledge of the pragmatic conventions for performing acceptable language functions and . . . knowledge of the sociolinguistic conventions for performing language functions appropriately in a given context". In other words, both the ability to use language effectively to express specific functions and the skill to relate this ability to contextual constraints are seen as aspects of pragmatic proficiency in this study, which is why pragmatic proficiency as understood in this study encompasses also what has been called sociocultural (Cohen and Olshtain 1981), or sociolinguistic (Canale 1983), competence.

The ability to use modifying devices appropriately is one aspect of pragmatic proficiency because speakers need both knowledge of the means which they can use to weaken or strengthen the force of their message and knowledge of which particular means are likely to be the most successful for a given context. Appropriate use of modifying devices is only one aspect of pragmatic proficiency, but it is an important one because, as discussed above, it is closely linked to the interpersonal function of language. Moreover, the scope of modifying devices in

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[5]   See also van Dijk (1977:191), who equates pragmatic successfulness with appropriateness.

interaction is very wide in that rather than being confined just to certain kinds of situations or speech acts, modifying devices can be used in a variety of contexts and with various types of speech acts or pragmatic acts, whenever speakers (or writers) have a wish either to attenuate or strengthen the force of their messages. Given that modifying devices are important carriers of interpersonal meanings, it is obvious that the ability to use them appropriately is an important skill for non-native speakers to learn as well.

2.3.2 Pragmatic failure

If foreign language speakers fail to be pragmatically proficient in the sense discussed above, there is a chance that this will pose problems for successful communication. Thomas (1983) introduces the term *cross-cultural pragmatic failure* to refer to speakers' inability to conform to the pragmatic conventions of a given community. Pragmatic failure does not mean that speakers have in any way failed to speak the language correctly as in the case of, for example, blatant grammatical errors. Rather, they have failed to achieve or maintain some interactional goals, for example the goal of achieving smooth, polite interaction. Thomas (p. 91) stresses that pragmatic failure should not be restricted to encounters between non-native and native speakers as it can apply to any speakers who do not share a common linguistic or cultural background. Thus, speakers with regional and class differences may also have pragmatic problems in encounters with each other. However, the fact probably remains that non-native speakers are, in general, more inclined towards pragmatic inappropriateness simply because they have to cope with potential differences both in terms of language and culture.

The reason why pragmatic failures can be serious is that unlike grammatical errors, pragmatic shortcomings are not necessarily easily recognized as language problems. Where native speakers usually adopt an understanding attitude to grammatical errors, being often willing to go a long way in adapting and simplifying their own speech to ease communication (Long 1983), pragmatic failures are more likely to reflect badly on the speaker as a person. That is, speakers may be regarded as intentionally rude, insensitive and uncooperative if they fail to be pragmatically appropriate (see e.g. Holmes 1982, Loveday 1982, Thomas 1983). Such disparaging judgements are more likely when non-native speakers are fluent as far as the surface grammatical correctness and vocabulary are concerned because people easily expect that someone who speaks their language well at the surface level also automatically masters the underlying social norms and conventions of the culture. Moreover, as Kreuz and Roberts (1993) point out, even if only one speaker commits pragmatic failure, it easily results in disparaging judgements of all the participants and the interaction as a whole.

Thomas (1983) makes a distinction between two types of pragmatic failure. *Pragmalinguistic failure* occurs "when the pragmatic force mapped by S onto a given utterance is systematically different from the force most frequently assigned to it by native speakers of that language, or when speech act strategies are

inappropriately transferred from L1 to L2" (Thomas 1983:99). Pragmatically inappropriate transfer of semantically/syntactically equivalent structures from L1 is thus a typical reason for pragmalinguistic failure. That is, the same linguistic structures may be possible in both the native and the target language but they do not fulfil similar pragmatic functions. *Sociopragmatic failure* has less to do with inappropriate form-force mappings. Instead, it refers to cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour and has to do, for example, with speakers' views as to what is costly in interaction and what are the relative rights and obligations of speakers in a given social situation. For example, there may be considerable cultural differences in what topics are regarded as suitable for given contexts. Riley (1989:217) gives the following example of sociopragmatic failure: if a Japanese professor, when meeting his or her western colleague for the first time, asks 'How old are you?' after only a brief introduction, s/he breaks the social conventions of most western cultures as to what are considered appropriate topics of talk between strangers (see also Richards and Sukwiwat 1983:122). As the example suggests, there may be differences in how speakers from different cultures 'see the world'. The two types of pragmatic failure should best be seen as a continuum rather than as discrete categories, as pointed out by both Thomas (1983) and Riley (1989). Moreover, it is often the case that both sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic concerns are at issue simultaneously. However, it is important to distinguish between sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic aspects at the conceptual level because such a distinction can help unravel the possible sources of pragmatic inappropriateness.

As pointed out above, non-native speakers easily run the risk of using modifying devices inappropriately. As with other types of pragmatic failure, this can have both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic causes. If speakers transfer modifying devices inappropriately from their L1, the failure can be regarded as pragmalinguistic. However, an inappropriate use of modifying devices may also result from cultural differences: non-native and native speakers may have different assessments of a given situation and of the need to use modifying devices in that situation.

There are quite a few studies which show that non-native speakers often sound too direct or too indirect because they fail to use modifying devices in ways that would be appropriate in the target culture. For example, House and Kasper (1981) report how German speakers of English often appear too direct when performing face threatening acts such as requests. Similar observations have been made by Trosborg (1987) about apologies by Danish speakers of English, by Koike (1989) about requests by American speakers of Spanish, and by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990, 1993) about speakers of English with different mother tongues (mainly Chinese, Japanese and Spanish) when making and rejecting suggestions in academic advising sessions. Kotthoff (1991), similarly, shows that American speakers of German easily opt for too direct strategies, and Harlow (1990) argues the same about American speakers of French. Blum-Kulka's (1982) findings suggest that non-native speakers may also opt for too indirect strategies: she

argues that native speakers of Hebrew often consider non-native speakers as too indirect and too tentative.

The studies above strongly suggest that appropriate use of modifying devices is often difficult for foreign language speakers. As pointed out above, the reasons for such difficulties can be either pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic. This distinction is worth bearing in mind when thinking about the ways in which foreign language teaching might help non-native speakers achieve an appropriate level of modification when they are using a foreign language. If non-native speakers seem to transfer inappropriate ways of modification from their L1, it may be relatively easy to change this with the help of foreign language teaching, by pointing out the kinds of devices the learners ought to use in L2 instead of the inappropriate form-force mappings. As Thomas (1983:103) argues, foreign language learners are probably no more sensitive about having pragmalinguistic failures pointed out to them than they are about having grammatical errors corrected. The situation may be more problematic, however, when inappropriate use of modifying devices is due to sociopragmatic reasons, that is, the non-native speakers perceiving the need to use modifiers differently from native speakers. Thomas (1983:104) points out that correcting sociopragmatic failures is a much more delicate matter than correcting pragmalinguistic failures because sociopragmatic assessments are very much a part of persons' acquired values and beliefs, and the speakers may feel threatened if they are asked to change these perceptions. Therefore, as Thomas (1983) suggests, the best strategy for dealing with sociopragmatic failure would probably be to heighten learners' metapragmatic awareness of sociopragmatic factors rather than trying to enforce new standards of social behaviour on them by explicit teaching. The question of pragmatic awareness-raising will be focused on in more detail in chapter eight below.

To summarize, the discussion above has indicated that there is often a close link between the use of modifying devices and some interpersonal motivations. The interpersonal reasons why speakers often choose to express their messages in a modified form have often to with willingness to signal politeness and involvement, for example. It was argued above that native speakers are usually pragmatically proficient, that is, they master the use of modifying devices without much conscious effort. Non-native speakers, for their part, more easily run into difficulties with the appropriate use of modifying devices. This can lead to pragmatic failures which, at their worst, impede successful communication.

3   PRAGMATIC FORCE MODIFIERS: TOWARDS A DESCRIPTIVE MODEL

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, it will give an overview of various approaches to modifying devices which are relevant for the present study. That is, where chapter two considered the interpersonal motivations for pragmatic modification in interaction, this chapter focuses on the concept of modification itself. It will be argued that a division into semantic and pragmatic approaches is helpful for understanding the various views on modifiers that can be found in the linguistic literature. Secondly, the chapter will describe the approach to modifying devices adopted in the present study. The concept of *pragmatic force modifier* will be introduced and defined, and it will be argued that from a pragmatic point of view, it is reasonable to distinguish between two main types: explicit and implicit pragmatic force modifiers. This chapter thus seeks to fulfil the theoretical aim set out for the study in the beginning, which is to come up with a model of modifying devices which could be applied to the use of language in different contexts and which would have explanatory value when possible differences between the use of modifiers by non-native and by native speakers are discussed.

3.1   An overview of approaches to modifying devices

Modifying devices have attracted a great deal of attention in linguistics. However, the theoretical premises from which they have been approached have often been very different, which accounts in part for the profusion of terms used of basically the same area of language use. For example, terms such as *hedges, emphatics, downgraders, upgraders, mitigators,* and *compromisers* are among the many terms used of modifying expressions (see e.g. Brown and Levinson 1987, Fraser 1980, House and Kasper 1981, James 1983, Holmes 1984a, 1984b, Biber and Finegan 1989). It is possible to make a conceptual distinction between two main

perspectives on modifying devices and to talk about semantic and pragmatic approaches. It will be argued in the review below that much of the terminological and conceptual confusion can be accounted for by the fact that exactly the same expressions have been dealt with both in semantic and pragmatic terms, without the writers always being very specific about their points of departure.

In simplified terms, the difference between semantic and pragmatic approaches is that when modifying devices are considered from a semantic viewpoint, the main interest lies in their meaning in an abstract sense, and on how they affect the overall truth-conditions of the sentences in which they occur. In a pragmatic approach, more attention is paid to the meanings and functions for which *speakers* use modifying devices in interaction. Leech (1983:6) formulates a similar distinction by saying that while semantics deals with meaning as a dyadic relation, as 'What does X mean?', pragmatics deals with meaning as a triadic relation, as 'What did you mean by X?'. Even though the relationship between semantics and pragmatics is more complex than suggested by the formulations above, they, nevertheless, are helpful in bringing out the important point that the language user is always an intrinsic part of a pragmatic approach to language. This means, as far as studying modifying devices is concerned, that it is important for a pragmatic interpretation to have information about the speakers who use modifiers, and about the contexts in which they are used.

In the following, semantic and pragmatic approaches will be introduced in more detail. The purpose is not to claim that keeping the two approaches apart is always an easy task, especially as many writers start with semantic properties of modifying devices and end up considering their pragmatic functions in interaction, thus drawing on both perspectives. It will be argued, however, that distinguishing between semantic and pragmatic approaches is useful at a theoretical level, because it makes it easier to understand why different studies dealing with similar modifying devices are sometimes confusingly varied.

3.1.1 Semantic approach

3.1.1.1 Hedges

Of the various terms used to refer to modifying devices, *hedge* is one of the most widely used. It is a confusing term, however, because it is used both as a semantic and as a pragmatic concept in the linguistic literature. Both of these views will be discussed in the present chapter: this section will consider hedge as a semantic notion, whereas its pragmatic uses will be taken up in section 3.1.2.

The term *hedge* was introduced in linguistics by George Lakoff in his 1972 article, where he sets out to describe what is called fuzzy logic (Zadeh 1975) as it relates to use of language. Lakoff points out when explaining fuzzy logic that instead of being either true or false, natural language concepts often have "vague boundaries and fuzzy edges and that, consequently, natural language sentences will very often be neither true, nor false, nor nonsensical, but rather true to a

certain extent and false to a certain extent" (Lakoff 1972:183). He uses the term hedge to refer to expressions which have the capacity to "make things fuzzier or less fuzzy" (p. 195). Consequently, hedges include words and expressions such as *sort of*, *roughly*, *somewhat*, *very*, and *real*.

Lakoff's approach is semantic-logical in that he is interested in how hedges affect the category membership of nouns and predicates, and how, for example, *sort of* in a clause like *A penguin is a **sort of** bird* signals 'degrees of birdiness', the penguin being seen as a peripheral member of the semantic category of birds. Hedges are thus related to prototypes, signalling non-prototypicality in relation to a semantic category. In other words, Lakoff makes no attempt to look at hedges as part of ongoing communication nor to investigate the kind of functions that hedges might serve in authentic interaction. He points out in passing (1972:213), however, that hedges may interact with rules of conversation and have a role to play in communication, and he mentions the possible similarities between hedges and parenthetical forms such as *I think* and *I guess* (which he calls hedged performatives, cf. Fraser 1975). He does not develop these ideas further, however.

An article by Prince et al. (1982) also deals with hedges. Unlike Lakoff, who considers hedges with the help of constructed examples, they look at hedges in authentic doctor-doctor interaction. Nevertheless, their approach resembles that of Lakoff in being more concerned with the semantic properties of hedges than with their interactional functions. It was pointed out above that Lakoff (1972) drew a link between what he called hedges and parenthetical expressions such as *I think* or *I suppose*. Prince et al. (1982) also make a similar connection. In fact, they include parenthetical verbs in their concept of hedge, a practice which is quite commonplace nowadays. They take Lakoff's approach as their starting point, but differ from him in only taking account of hedges that make things fuzzier, excluding devices whose job is to make things less fuzzy (e.g. *very*, *real*).

In the paper by Prince et al. (1982), the chief argument is that there are basically two different types of hedges. They illustrate the difference between these two types by the following examples:

> (a) His feet were blue
> (b) His feet were *sort of* blue
> (c) *I think* his feet were blue

Prince et al. (1982:85-86) argue that sentence (a) is a case of unmarked speaker commitment, where the speaker implicates full personal commitment to the truth of the proposition simply by asserting the proposition. They go on to argue that the speaker in sentence (b) is as fully committed to the truth of the proposition as is the speaker of sentence (a), but the sentence conveys a different proposition, one that could be paraphrased as 'His feet were non-prototypically blue'. In other words, the hedge *sort of* affects the propositional content, "showing fuzziness within the propositional content proper" (p. 85) (the problematic nature of the notion of 'propositional content proper' will be discussed in more detail in section 3.2.1). Prince et al. (1982) call hedges of this type *approximators*, and the

category contains such expressions as *almost, somewhat,* and *a bit,* for example. Even though sentence (c) differs from (a) by including the phrase *I think,* Prince et al. (1982) argue that it conveys the same proposition as (a); this means that *I think* does not affect the propositional content. Instead, the hedge signals that the speaker is less than fully committed to the truth of the proposition. As Prince et al. (1982:85) put it, *I think* introduces "fuzziness in the relationship between the propositional content and the speaker". They call hedges of this type *shields,* and the category contains expressions such as *probably, I suppose, might,* and *it seems.*

Prince et al. (1982) thus differentiate between approximators and shields on the basis of whether the hedge introduces fuzziness within the proposition or between the speaker and the proposition. Skelton (1988:38) criticizes this strict division between approximators and shields, pointing out that shields can have a very large potential domain that can extend over sentences, so that for example in the utterance *I suspect the moon is not made of green cheese after all, it's made of some sort of rock,* the approximator *sort of* can be considered to be a shield as well. This is because the force of the phrase *I suspect* is carried over from the previous sentence so that the approximator *sort of* can also be interpreted as a sign of uncertainty and lack of commitment. Skelton's (1988) criticism can be considered to represent a more pragmatic approach in that he is concerned with the functional and interactional similarity between approximators and shields rather than focusing on their logical properties only. He discusses what speakers can convey by using these expressions whereas the major concern of Price et al. (1982) is on the relationship between these expressions and the propositions speakers are conveying.

Even though Skelton's (1988) point that different types of hedges can be used to convey similar functions is valid, the division into approximators and shields as suggested by Prince et al. (1982) is useful from a semantic perspective in that the two types of hedges seem, intuitively, quite different. It seems possible to maintain a conceptual division between the two even if this difference is formulated somewhat differently, by saying that approximators differ from shields in that they typically focus on one word or expression and make the meaning of that expression denotationally vague (e.g. *sort of* → funny), whereas shields signal the speaker's evaluation of the truth value of the proposition as a whole (e.g. *I suppose* + proposition X). Thus, approximators seem to convey imprecision whereas shields signal uncertainty.

To summarize, when the term hedge is used as a semantic notion, the interest lies in the capacity of hedges to indicate degrees of fuzziness in the proposition, thus affecting the category membership of the words they modify (e.g. Taylor 1989:76). As pointed out above, the term hedge will be taken into consideration again in section 3.2.1 where its use as a pragmatic concept will be discussed.

3.1.1.2 Epistemic modality

There are many writers who, when accounting for modifying elements in language, choose epistemic modality as their point of departure. This is here dealt with under the semantic approach because modality has traditionally been treated as a semantic notion (see e.g. Palmer 1986) even though, as will be seen below, the broadest definitions of epistemic modality also take pragmatic considerations into account.

Modality is an elusive concept and difficult to define. In broad terms, it has to do with speakers in some way qualifying the assertions they make rather than delivering them in a categorical yes-or-no fashion. As Halliday (1985:335) puts it, modality can be seen as "the area of meaning that lies between yes and no - the intermediate ground between positive and negative polarity". Perkins (1983:18) expresses a similar view by saying that "modality is essentially the qualification of the categorical and the absolute as realized within the code of language".

Palmer (1986:16) points out that modality is concerned with subjective characteristics of language, and it is usual to make a distinction between different types of modality on the basis of what kinds of subjective evaluations modal expressions convey. A common way of classifying modal expressions is to make a distinction between deontic and epistemic modality. Deontic modality relates to the duties of the speaker or hearer in relation to a particular action; Simpson (1990:67) refers to it as the modal system of 'obligation'. Epistemic modality relates to speakers' degree of commitment to the truth of propositions (e.g. Palmer 1986, Coates 1987). Thus the modal *must* has a deontic meaning in the sentence *You must go now if you want to catch the train*, for example, but epistemic in sentence *The trees look all frosty; it must be cold outside*. (For a more detailed discussion on different types of modality, see Perkins 1983:9 and Lyons 1977:787-822.)[1]

As pointed out above, modifying expressions have often been regarded as markers of epistemic modality, epistemic modality referring to the speaker's commitment to the truth of the proposition. Speakers can either stress their commitment or indicate their lack of commitment. Although discussions about modality have often concentrated on modal auxiliaries, they are by no means the only forms with which epistemic modality can be expressed. This becomes clear from Lyons's (1977:797) often quoted definition, which states that:

> any utterance in which the speaker explicitly qualifies his commitment to the truth of the proposition expressed by the sentence he utters, whether this qualification is made explicit in the verbal component or in the prosodic or paralinguistic component is an epistemically modal or modalized utterance.

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[1] See Stubbs (1986) for a very broad and more pragmatically-oriented view of modality. Stubbs (1986:1) considers modality in terms of speakers encoding their points of view towards their messages in general: "whether they think it is a reasonable thing to say, or might be found to be obvious, questionable, tentative, provisional, controversial, contradictory, irrelevant, impolite, or whatever". He further argues (p. 4) that modality in all its senses can be regarded as a central organizing principle in language.

Thus, the various linguistic forms with which speakers can signal epistemic modality include, for example, modal verbs (*can*, *may*, *might*), parenthetical verbs (*I suppose, I (don't) think, I'm sure*), modal adverbs (*probably, certainly*), modal adjectives (*apparent, real*), and modal nouns (*assumption, certainty*) (see e.g. Holmes 1988a, He 1993).[2] As can be seen, markers of modality differ from hedges as defined by Lakoff (1972) (e.g. *kind of, somewhat*) in being concerned with the degree of certainty a speaker feels about the proposition rather than signalling degrees of fuzziness. They thus resemble shields as defined by Prince et al. (1982). Lyons's definition above shows, furthermore, that the expression of epistemic modality need not be restricted to the verbal level alone; speakers can signal epistemic modality with non-verbal means as well. As Holmes (1983: 101) argues, "it is possible to convey doubt by means of gestures or by facial expression, by shaking the head slowly from side to side, for instance, or by narrowing one's eyes". Research on epistemic modality has, however, mainly focused on the verbal means of expressing modality (but see Ward and Hirschberg 1985 for intonation as a carrier of modal meanings).

The distinction between the concepts of hedge and epistemic modality is not, however, as straightforward as the discussion above might suggest. This is because some writers use the term hedge of linguistic means which others choose to call epistemic modals. Hübler (1983), for example, makes a close connection between what he calls hedges and epistemic modality. He points out explicitly (p. 127) that only those meanings that are modal can be considered in the formation of hedges. Hübler's hedges contain modal adverbs like *seemingly, perhaps, maybe*, parenthetical clauses like *I think, I suppose*, modal verbs with their epistemic modal readings, and tag questions rather than hedges in Lakoff's (1972) sense. In other words, hedges as understood by Hübler (1983) are expressions which others refer to as markers of epistemic modality (e.g. Coates 1987). Hübler's study is also a typical example of an approach where both semantic and pragmatic aspects are considered. Even though most of his book focuses on the linguistic aim which requires close attention to the semantic properties of hedges and which Hübler (1983:25, emphasis added) words as follows: "to find the *linguistic* conditions necessary for the formation of understatements and hedges", he also discusses the functions of hedges beyond their capacity to signal that the speaker is not fully committed to the truth of the proposition, thereby moving towards more pragmatic concerns. He starts from the assumption that uttering any sentence entails a decision against all other possible sentences, which are retained as alternatives. However, the hearer always has a right to refute a sentence; Hübler (1983:12) calls this the inherent negatability of sentences. In order to reduce the risk of negation, speakers can use both hedges and understatements, whose "aim is to make sentences more acceptable and thus to increase their chance of ratification by the hearer" (p. 23). In the final chapter of his

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[2]   Note that also the term *evidentiality* is often used to refer to any linguistic expression of attitudes toward knowledge (e.g. Chafe 1986, Biber and Finegan 1989). That is, linguistic means that are here called markers of epistemic modality can also be called evidentials.

book, Hübler briefly pays attention also to interpersonal concerns such as the emotional and subjective grounds for the use of hedges dealing, for example, with their role as face-saving strategies. Writers thus often combine semantic and pragmatic approaches, which shows that it is difficult to distinguish between 'purely' semantic and 'purely' pragmatic studies.

3.1.2 Pragmatic approach

It already became apparent in the section above that the dividing line between semantic and pragmatic approaches is not a clear-cut one as writers who start with the semantic properties of modifying devices often end up with pragmatic considerations. That is, by bringing up the essentially pragmatic question of *why* speakers choose to remain fuzzy or signal their uncertainty towards propositions, many writers move from characterising modifying devices in the abstract – often with the help of constructed examples in a social vacuum – to investigating the ways in which these devices function in actual language use (e.g. Holmes 1982, 1983, Coates 1987, Kärkkäinen 1989, Simpson 1990). Thus, to put it crudely, while the semantic approach is interested in what modifying devices do to the utterances in which they occur, the pragmatic approach is mainly concerned with the motivations for the use of modifying devices and their functions in interaction.

A pragmatic approach to language thus advocates a view that it is important to recognize the communicative content of language, its force as opposed to form. It is, for example, an issue of interest in pragmatics that the same pragmatic force, or intent (e.g. advice, request), can be achieved by different surface forms. When the role of modifying devices is approached from a pragmatic perspective, then, the interest lies in how modifying devices affect the pragmatic force of utterances in which they occur. There seem to be two types of functions at issue when considering modifying devices from a pragmatic viewpoint. Firstly, as suggested above, it is of interest what modifying devices do to the force of speakers' utterances. The most common answer is that the use of modifying devices helps speakers either to soften or strengthen the pragmatic force of their messages. Many of the terms introduced in the beginning of this chapter reflect this orientation to the softening and strengthening aspects of modifying devices (e.g. 'downtoners' and 'boosters' by Holmes 1984a,b, 'downgraders' and 'upgraders' by House and Kasper 1981, 'hedges' and 'emphatics' by Biber and Finegan 1989 and Nikula 1992). Once modifying devices have been labelled as softeners and strengtheners of pragmatic force, the question that inevitably arises is why speakers choose to soften and strengthen the force of their messages in the first place. This question leads to the interpersonal functions of modifying devices, or, rather, the interpersonal functions of mitigation and emphasis. Broadly speaking, modifying devices have often been connected with functions such as 'addressee-orientation' (Coates 1987) or 'affective meaning' (Holmes 1983). More specifically, as was pointed out in the chapter above, they are frequently seen as markers of politeness. As Simpson (1990:73) puts it, "modalized utterances are

motivated pragmatically by tentativeness, tact and distance – in short, considerations of politeness".

When modifying devices are considered from a pragmatic perspective, it is useful to make a theoretical distinction between linguistic surface forms and underlying pragmatic strategies. As Holmes (1984a:351) puts it, "the distinction between strategies on the one hand, and forms or devices for realizing or expressing them on the other, is one which is pragmatically and sociolinguistically important". If the use of modifying devices as a communication strategy is taken as the starting point in a pragmatic approach, hedges and epistemic modals as introduced above in semantic terms are similar in that they share similar pragmatic functions: speakers can either tone down or aggravate whatever the pragmatic impact their messages have, and the motivations for such modification are usually interpersonal.

The term hedge has often been used in a pragmatic sense as well, and the reason why it tends to be a broader concept than when understood semantically relates to the point above about the distinction between strategies and their realizations. It has been usual in pragmatically oriented approaches to talk about *hedging* as a pragmatic strategy and *hedges* as the realizations of that strategy. Markkanen (1989:142), for example, defines hedging as a strategy "which is used by speakers who do not want to commit themselves totally to the truth value of what they are saying or want to add a reservation in order to make what they are saying more acceptable to the hearer". Given such a definition, it is clear that speakers can use many different linguistic and non-linguistic choices to fulfil such functions. Thus, when hedges are understood pragmatically as the linguistic realizations of the strategy of hedging, they acquire a much broader meaning than is usual for the semantic notion of hedge. This explains why many writers who approach modifying devices from a pragmatic perspective take into account both epistemic modals and hedges in Lakoff's (1972) sense (e.g. Holmes 1984a,b). Note that for many (e.g. Skelton 1988, Markkanen 1989), hedging is a downtoning strategy only, whereas others see hedging both as a downtoning and emphasizing strategy. For example, Brown and Levinson (1987), who adopt this broader view of hedging, regard hedging as one example of 'face-saving strategies' which help to minimize threats to either the speaker's own face or the hearer's face which communication inherently entails, and they maintain that "the semantic operation of hedging can be achieved in indefinite numbers of surface forms" (Brown and Levinson 1987:146).

The discussion above thus suggests that when looked at from the viewpoint of pragmatic strategy, be it called hedging or something else, the group of modifying devices relevant for study expands rapidly with the inclusion of other means besides epistemic modals and hedges (as defined in the semantic approach) which speakers can use to soften or strengthen the force of their messages. There are, for example, devices which can only be accounted for by adopting a pragmatic perspective, because they do not lend themselves to semantic analysis due to their semantic 'emptiness'. This group includes, for example, expressions which Östman (1981a) calls pragmatic particles and Schiffrin (1987) discourse markers, such as *you know, I mean, like,* and *well,* which can be used for softening and emphatic purposes in

interaction in a similar manner to devices which were labelled as hedges and epistemic modals above.

Furthermore, the pragmatic, i.e. functional, approach can easily be extended beyond the lexical-phrasal level to other linguistic choices that can be used for modification purposes. There are, for example, indications that syntactic choices such as passive forms, impersonal forms, and interrogative forms can be used to mitigate the force of messages (see e.g. Fraser 1980, Markkanen and Schröder 1987, Hakulinen 1987, Faerch and Kasper 1989). Such strategies need not always have anything to do with modifying the pragmatic force of the message that the speaker is conveying, but they *can* do that; their specific function always depends on the context. Furthermore, Faerch and Kasper (1989:22) point out that speakers can also modify the impact of their messages at a more global level than within an utterance, distinguishing between external and internal modification. What they mean by external modification is that face-threatening speech acts can also be modified by means of supportive moves that are placed either prior or subsequent to the performance of the act itself. For example, a speaker may choose to soften the force of a request by offering the addressee reasons and justifications for the request, either before or after the request itself.

Modification strategies can extend also beyond the verbal level. Brown and Levinson (1987:172), for example, point out that it is quite probable that most verbal-level modifiers "can be replaced by (or emphasised by) prosodic and kinesic means of indicating tentativeness or emphasis". Prosody is, indeed, an important way in which speakers can modify their messages (see e.g. Allerton and Cruttenden 1978, Cruttenden 1986, Arndt and Janney 1987). It is, however, difficult to be very specific about the modifying role of prosodic means; as Cruttenden (1986:58) puts it, intonational meanings are often intangible and nebulous. Knowles (1984:227) raises a related point in arguing that "we must not confuse the role of intonation with the total strategy of which it is a part. For instance, intonation is important in strategies for conveying illocutionary force, but it is unlikely that intonation has illocutionary force in itself". Coulthard and Brazil (1981:97), similarly, point out that often the claimed attitudinal meanings of prosodic choices are, in fact, derived from the lexico-grammatical and contextual features of the text. That is, it is very difficult to be precise about the relationship between prosodic means and their modifying functions.

A fully-fledged pragmatic approach to modification phenomena, if taken to its extreme, would thus mean that all linguistic and non-linguistic means which speakers can use to soften or strengthen the impact of their utterances would have to be taken into account. This would, obviously, be a daunting task and, therefore, researchers usually restrict the scope of their analyses in one way or another. The approach to modifying devices taken in the present study will be discussed in detail in the following two sections by way of introducing and defining the concept of pragmatic force modifiers as a tool for analysis.

3.2   The approach in the present study: pragmatic force modifiers

3.2.1   Defining the concept

It was argued above that when considering earlier research on modifying devices, it is possible to make a rough distinction between semantic and pragmatic approaches. In the present study, the approach adopted will be pragmatic, that is, attention will be paid to the interpersonal functions for which speakers use modifying devices in interaction, rather than dealing with the linguistic properties of modifiers alone. The focus is on modifying devices which speakers can use either to soften or to strengthen the force of their messages. It was pointed out above (see p. 34) that there is a profusion of terms which have been used to refer to such devices in interaction. It may not seem wise to add to this terminological proliferation, but the term *pragmatic force modifier* will, nevertheless, be used in this study rather than redefining the existing ones. It is an overall term, meant to capture modifiers with both softening and strengthening functions. The term hedging, in its widest pragmatic sense as discussed above, comes rather close to this concept. Hedging, however, will not be used as the overall term in the present study because it is confusing in two ways. Firstly, as was pointed out above, it has been used both as a semantic and as a pragmatic notion. Secondly, it has been used either to refer to both softening and strengthening devices (e.g. Brown and Levinson 1978) or to softening devices only (e.g. Prince et al. 1982, Skelton 1988). The latter is a more common practice nowadays, possibly because it reflects the everyday meaning of the verb 'to hedge'. In the present study as well, hedges are seen as a subtype of pragmatic modifiers, and hedging will be used synonymically with mitigating and softening, as opposed to strengthening or emphasizing.

Pragmatic force will be used in this study as a concept that refers to those context-dependent functions that an utterance can have apart from its semantic meaning. For example, possible pragmatic forces of *You are mistaken* include a blame, a disagreement, or an accusation. The term pragmatic force rather than illocutionary force is used because in the speech act literature, the assumption seems to be that assigning a particular illocutionary force (or in ambiguous cases, particular illocutionary forces) to an utterance is a relatively straightforward matter (e.g. Searle 1969). Levinson (1981, 1983), however, criticizes this view and points out that the opposite is often the case, and that "on occasions speakers seem to have great chains of motives or perlocutionary intents that issue forth a single utterance" (Levinson 1981:477). In the same vein, Thomas (1986) discusses the potential multi- and plurivalence of utterances. In authentic encounters especially, assigning a particular illocutionary force to utterances can be very difficult and their force often remains indeterminate, open to negotiations. The term pragmatic force will, therefore, be used to avoid the implication that communication is a matter of expressing and making sense of clear, easily interpretable illocutionary forces. As Thomas (1985:779) puts it, pragmatic force "is at best ambivalent and potentially n-ways multivalent".

Speakers can use various linguistic and non-linguistic means to modify the pragmatic force of their messages, either softening or emphasizing them. For example, *I suppose you are a bit mistaken* conveys a milder sense of blame than the one above, and *certainly* in *You are certainly mistaken* intensifies its force. Such expressions, along with other means with which speakers can tone down or emphasize the pragmatic force of their messages will be called *pragmatic force modifiers* in the present study. All speakers' linguistic choices, obviously, influence the ultimate pragmatic force of their messages. For example, speakers can influence the pragmatic force of their utterances by their choice of adjectives so that *That's* **fantastic** would probably be perceived as a more emphatic compliment than *That's nice*. The reason why certain devices deserve the label pragmatic force modifier, however, is that they in a way 'specialize' in matters of pragmatic force. They have much less to do with the referential content, i.e. *what* speakers say, than with pragmatic force, i.e. *how* speakers want to put their messages across.

The term pragmatic force modifier is thus a metaphor reflecting how certain expressions, whenever they occur, seem to have an impact on the overall pragmatic force of the utterance. The term should not be understood as a metaphor of the actual process whereby speakers come to use modifiers. That is, it is not meant to imply that speakers, first, select a certain pragmatic force which they then choose to modify by adding expression from the repertoire of modifiers. Rather, utterances with and without modifiers have different pragmatic forces to begin with. The term pragmatic force modifier, however, helps illustrate the fact than no matter with what kinds of speech acts modifiers occur (e.g. opinion, request, blame), they always have an impact on the pragmatic force of those acts. For example, *That was **kind of** foolish **you know*** has a different pragmatic force than *That was foolish*, and tells a different story about the type of relationship between the speaker and the addressee.

In order to illustrate the nature of pragmatic force modifiers it is possible to argue that, in principle, they are elements in language that could be 'extracted' without changing the propositional content of the message. It is true that 'propositional content proper' is a very problematic notion because it suggest a view of language in which speakers' only concern is the information content of their messages, ignoring concerns pertaining to the social and interpersonal levels. This is why many writers criticize views which regard modifying as somehow separate from propositional content (e.g. Luukka 1992). Mauranen (1993), however, argues that critics often confuse the concepts of meaning and content. As she puts it: "Obviously the total *meaning* of a text is dependent on all its component parts, so that none of them can be removed without changing something of the meaning". Yet, she continues that "the propositional *content* of a text can be said in principle to exist independently of the particular text it is expressed in, analogously to sentences which share their propositional content despite different realisations". (Mauranen 1993:147; emphasis added.) It is thus possible to argue that even though pragmatic force modifiers are far from meaningless from a pragmatic viewpoint, a modified message has an abstract propositional content that could be expressed without the modifiers that convey speakers' feelings and attitudes. For example, *I guess it's **sort of** useless, isn't it*? and *It's useless* have the same propositional content even though they differ

considerably in their pragmatic impact and interpersonal meaning. Propositional content thus ought to be seen as an abstraction and as a concept which can only be applied *post factum*; it is not meant to be a concept that would explain how communication actually takes place in interaction.

It was pointed out above that taking a pragmatic approach to its extreme would mean accounting for all means with which speakers can either soften or strengthen the pragmatic force of their messages from linguistic minutiae to such extralinguistic factors as, for example, facial expressions. Paying attention to all the possible choices would be an enormous task for one study, which is why the present study will focus on the verbal level, on devices that will be introduced in more detail in the section below. However, the fact that the focus is only on certain realizations of the modification strategy does not mean that the potential of other choices for fulfilling similar pragmatic functions is completely ignored. Therefore, when the descriptive model of pragmatic force modifiers is formulated in 3.3.2, an important principle will be to find a way of describing modifiers that can be applied also to choices at other levels besides the verbal one focused on in the present study.

3.2.2 Focus on the verbal level

The focus in the present study will be on pragmatic force modifiers that are realized at the lexical-phrasal level, including devices such as *kind of*, *I think*, *probably*, or *and things like that*. The main reason for this relates to the overall purpose of the present study. As will be spelled out in greater detail below (see chapter four), the present study seeks to compare the use of pragmatic force modifiers across three different sets of data, involving two languages, English and Finnish. This requires a notion of pragmatic force modifiers that will make it possible to carry out comparisons across different sets of data. Paying attention to a rather clearly-defined set of verbal expressions allows this more easily than attempting also to account for modification strategies that are more integrated into the language structure. These include, for example, passivization, impersonalization, or external modification (see e.g. Fraser 1980, Faerch and Kasper 1989). Therefore, even though these strategies will also be commented on where relevant during the analysis, they will not be foregrounded. Drawing such a line is, admittedly, artificial as both types of strategies can have similar pragmatic functions, but such crude measures facilitate comparisons across different sets of data. Similar decisions have been made, for example, when comparing the use of modifying devices by male and female speakers (e.g. Holmes 1990, Stubbe and Holmes 1994).

As regards the types of modifiers focused on in the present study, earlier research has given indications of the importance of several different types of lexical-phrasal devices. An attempt will be made to take these into account in the present

study.[3] Firstly, when the semantic approach towards modifying devices was discussed above, a distinction was made between hedges in Lakoff's (1972) sense and markers of epistemic modality. Both of these are regarded as pragmatic force modifiers in the present study. That is, hedges such as *kind of*, *somewhat*, *a bit*, and *very*, for example, and markers of epistemic modality such as modal adverbs (e.g. *probably*, *certainly*), modal auxiliaries (e.g. *may*, *might*), and parenthetical verbs (e.g. *I think*, *I'm sure*) will be taken into account when analysing the data.

Secondly, pragmatic force modifiers will also include expressions which have been called *vague category indicators* (Alexander 1988), or simply vague language (Channell 1994). This group includes expressions such as *or something like that*, *and/or whatever*, *and things*. In other words, they introduce fuzziness into speakers' messages, thereby reducing the assertiveness of the message. Although the use of such pragmatic force modifiers may not be appreciated in all contexts, Crystal and Davy (1975:111) point out that expressions which add to the vagueness of utterances are very common in informal contexts. In fact, they often seem to be play a part in creating a sense of informality. Thus, as Channell (1994:3) points out, "vagueness in language is neither all 'bad' or all 'good'. What matters is that vague language is used appropriately".

Fourthly, pragmatic force modifiers will also include expressions, mentioned above in 3.1.2, which Östman (1981a) calls pragmatic particles and Schiffrin (1987) discourse markers, such as *you know*, *I mean*, *like*, and *well*. If one adopts a purely semantic viewpoint these expressions can, basically, be regarded as meaningless since they do not contribute to the referential information content of the message. This is why they have often been regarded as mere fumbles or hesitation phenomena. However, they are far from meaningless from a pragmatic viewpoint. In fact, these modifiers really only lend themselves to pragmatic analysis in that rather than having some clear, context-independent meaning they acquire their meaning in their context of occurrence. Many researchers now acknowledge their interpersonal significance. For example, Brown and Levinson (1978) include them in their concept of hedge, and Coates (1987), in adopting a pragmatically-oriented view of modality, sees them as markers of epistemic modality (see also James 1983).

The present study will also contain material in Finnish, and the corresponding types of expressions to the ones listed above will be taken into account when analysing the Finnish data. That is, Finnish also has hedges in Lakoff's sense (e.g. *vähän* 'a bit', *tosi* 'very'), expressions of epistemic modality (e.g. *luultavasti* 'probably', *varmasti* 'certainly'), and expressions adding to denotational vagueness (e.g. *tai jotain sellaista* 'or something like that', *ja mitä kaikkea* 'and whatever'). There are also several expressions used as pragmatic particles (e.g. *niinku*, *sillee(n)*). In addition to these corresponding types of modifiers in English and Finnish, the analysis will also take into account the use of morphological particles, called clitics, as earlier research has indicated that speakers of Finnish often modify the impact of their messages with

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[3]   This chapter provides examples of the overall *types* of modifiers that earlier research has shown to be relevant for pragmatic modification. A more detailed account of the pragmatic force modifiers that the speakers in the data use will follow in chapter five.

these devices (e.g. Hakulinen 1976, Välimaa-Blum 1987, Markkanen 1991, Nikula 1992). Finnish clitics include *-han/-hän*, *-pa/-pä*, *-kin*, *-kaan/-kään* and *-s* (see e.g. Hakulinen and Karlsson 1979, Välimaa-Blum 1987). They have no meaning in themselves, but when attached to words they affect the pragmatic meaning of the whole utterance. For example, in the utterance *Mitä**hän** kello on?* (what+clitic is the time?), the clitic *-hän* can be interpreted as mitigating the force of the question; questions with *-han/-hän* are thus usually perceived as more tentative than one without the clitic (see also Hakulinen 1976:8-12). The meaning of clitics is not constant, however, and there are contexts in which the same clitic can have an emphasizing function (see Markkanen 1991:192). It thus makes sense to include clitics in the group of pragmatic force modifiers. It has to be emphasized, however, that clitics can also have other pragmatic functions besides modification; for example, they often signal coherence relations (e.g. Hakulinen 1976; Markkanen et al. 1993). Such multifunctionality is typical of many pragmatic phenomena. Therefore, even though the interest in the present study lies in the capacity of clitics to modify the pragmatic force of utterances, the intention is not to suggest that this would be their only role in interaction.

The group of pragmatic force modifiers that will be investigated in the present study thus contains different types of lexical-phrasal and morphological means of modification. In other words, in spite of narrowing down the focus to the verbal level, the variety of devices investigated will be broader than in most earlier studies. It has been a common practice in earlier research to focus either on mitigating devices (e.g. Prince et al. 1982), emphasizing devices (Held 1989), or pragmatic particles (Östman 1982). It has also been quite commonplace to select a certain modifying device only, and carry out detailed pragmatic analyses of its functional properties (see e.g. Östman (1981a) and Holmes (1986) on *you know*, Aijmer (1984) and Holmes (1988b) on *sort of*, Stenström (1986) on *really*, Tsui (1991) on *I don't know*, Jucker (1993) on *well*). While these studies have provided a lot of valuable information about the functions and interpersonal significance of modifying devices, a broader scope is fruitful for gaining a more comprehensive understanding of how speakers use pragmatic force modifiers in conversational settings.

3.3   Categories of pragmatic force modifiers

3.3.1   Problems with functional categorizations

The discussion above indicates that the group of pragmatic force modifiers taken into account in the present study is very heterogenous. There is thus a possibility that treating modifiers as a single category might fail to account for their diversity. Therefore, it would be useful to find a way of describing pragmatic force modifiers that would capture the pragmatically relevant differences and similarities between them. A common approach in earlier research has been to propose different types of subclassifications for modifying devices.

There have been several suggestions of the ways of dividing pragmatic force modifiers. One solution is to rely on grammatical criteria and make a distinction between nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. (see e.g. Holmes 1988a). While such a division is fairly straightforward, it does not seem to capture what are pragmatically the most interesting differences between different types of modifiers. That is, from a pragmatic point of view, there does not seem to be a big difference whether a speaker uses the epistemic verb phrase *I suppose* or the adverb *supposedly*, yet they would have to be categorized into different subtypes if one takes grammar as the criterion. Furthermore, a division according to grammatical criteria really applies to verbal modifications only; it would not be very useful if one also wanted to account for other types of modification strategies.

Stubbs (1986) proposes a different type of division by suggesting that it is possible to make a distinction between modifying devices which show degree of commitment to three kinds of linguistic entities: propositions, illocutionary forces, and lexical items. Although such a distinction may seem viable in the abstract, it tends to get blurred when one attempts to apply it to real contexts. The three types seem to be so closely entangled that it is possible to argue that by modifying a lexical item, a speaker simultaneously modifies the whole proposition and, eventually, the illocutionary force of the modified utterance.

The most common way of dividing modifying devices is to make a distinction between modifiers on the grounds of whether they have mitigating or emphasizing functions. As has been pointed out above, House and Kasper (1981) make a division between downtoners and upgraders, Holmes (1984a) between downtoners and boosters, and Biber and Finegan (1989) between hedges and emphatics. The division into hedges and emphatics was also used as the basis for division in the previous stage of this research (see Nikula 1992). Furthermore, a distinction was made between two types of hedges and emphatics on the basis of the division suggested by Prince et al. (1982). Those hedges and emphatics that signal degrees of fuzziness were called approximators and intensifiers (e.g. *sort of*, *very*), and those that signal degrees of commitment to the proposition were called shields and certainty markers. There are, however, several problems with the hedge-emphatic division. These problems will be discussed in detail below as they provide the starting point for an attempt to find a more practicable way of describing pragmatic force modifiers in the present study.

The first problem, also acknowledged in Nikula (1992), is that there are many modifying devices which seem to resist division into hedges and emphatics altogether. This applies especially to pragmatic particles the function of which, typically, remains ambivalent and indeterminate even in context. Nevertheless, they play a role in modifying the pragmatic impact of speakers' messages as becomes obvious, for example, in the extract below, where the use of *I mean* and *you know* by speaker S2 serves to tone down the force of a critical remark, together with the modal expression *I don't think*. However, it is difficult to categorize these pragmatic particles as hedges, i.e. as signalling either vagueness of a particular expression or lack of commitment to the truth of the message:

Example 1

(topic: community charge)
S3   it's not as if it's going into some national pool, you are paying to get the road
     mended outside your home
S2   yeah
S1   I was [I was
S2   *I mean*] I don't think it's worked well *you know*
     (Nikula 1992:128)

Because it was not possible to force pragmatic particles into the hedge-emphatic division, a third subcategory was formed in Nikula (1992) for pragmatic particles and morphological clitics. This category, due to the implicit nature of pragmatic particles referred to by Östman (1981a), was called implicit modifiers. The resulting division in Nikula (1992) was, thus, essentially a hierarchical one as depicted in figure 1:
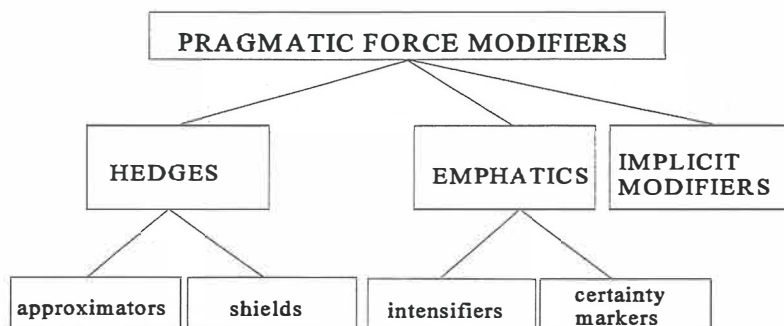
Figure 1   A hierarchical model of pragmatic force modifiers

Even though the division illustrated above was used as the basis for the analysis in Nikula (1992), it was admitted that there are problems with such clear-cut categories when dealing with modifying devices in actual language use as modifiers are often characterised by multifunctionality. That is, the same surface form can have different functions depending on the context, which makes it necessary to interpret each occurrence of pragmatic force modifiers in its context. However, there may be cases when not even close attention to context helps determine whether a modifier has a hedging or an emphasizing function. For example, Hübler (1983) makes the point that adverbs such as *certainly* and *surely* can, in fact, be used to express doubt rather than certainty, which means that they function as hedges even though they are usually classified as emphatics due to their semantic meaning. Hübler (1983:122) discusses examples such as *their attack must **surely** come straight across the river*, pointing out that "the possibility of the propositional content being false is not ruled out. Because an element of doubt creeps in here, the adverbs used in this way move closer to adverbs of doubt". Consequently, placing them either in the hedging or emphasizing category becomes complicated, or at least close attention has to be paid

to the kind of context in which they occur. Blum-Kulka (1985), similarly, argues that the role of expressions such as *perhaps*, even though usually assigned to the category of hedges, is sometimes to intensify the force of speech acts such as requests rather than to tone them down. In Nikula (1992), there are also other examples of modifying devices where the same surface form can belong to either hedges or emphatics depending on the context (e.g. *just, I think,* or *quite*).

The problem with the tripartition of modifiers into hedges, emphatics, and implicit modifiers is thus the same that was mentioned above in connection with the hedge-emphatic divisions: as a strict hierarchical division, the tripartition imposes clear-cut categories on an area of language which is characterised by indeterminacies and lack of clear boundaries. That is, assigning modifying devices into these categories is fraught with difficulties when, in fact, their function is often indeterminate and open to negotiation. There are two ways to get around this problem. The first, applied in Nikula (1992), is to recognize the artificial nature of such divisions and to be aware of the fluctuating nature of many modifying devices while, nevertheless, assigning modifying devices to different categories for analytical purposes. The second way is to accept the indeterminacy and negotiability of modifiers as their essential characteristics rather than as a problem. That is, if it is difficult to force modifiers into discrete categories because of their indeterminacy, the problem lies in the descriptive system applied rather than in the phenomenon studied. Thomas (1986:87) points out that indeterminacy is often a resource which speakers deliberately exploit to achieve particular communicative goals. Therefore, rather than trying to force pragmatic force modifiers into clear-cut categories, it would be useful to find a way of describing them that would be able to account for indeterminacies and fuzzy boundaries. This applies also to other pragmatic phenomena. As Thomas (1986:18) puts it:

> It is crucial within pragmatics to recognize the existence of gradience and to accord it proper theoretical status. The absence of hard-and-fast categories should not be seen as a weakness of a descriptive system for pragmatics, but a reflection of the indeterminacy which exists, not just for the analyst, but also for the participants in interaction.

3.3.2   Explicit and implicit pragmatic force modifiers: a continuum

As was shown above, modifying devices were classified in Nikula (1992) into hedges, emphatics, and implicit modifiers. Implicitness, however, seems to be a phenomenon which represents a different level of analysis than hedges and emphatics. This is why it might be more fruitful to make the basic distinction between explicit and implicit pragmatic force modifiers. It was argued above, furthermore, that pragmatic force modifiers are characterised by there being fluctuating boundaries between different types of modifiers. Therefore, rather than seeing explicit and implicit modifiers as another set of clear-cut categories imposed on modifiers, an attempt will be made in the present study to conceptualize pragmatic force modifiers in terms of a continuum from the more explicit to the more implicit choices.

The decision to consider pragmatic force modifiers from the viewpoint of explicit versus implicit choices follows Östman's (1986, 1987) notion that a distinction between the explicit and the implicit in language is of primary importance in pragmatics. The main difference between the two is, according to Östman (1987:156-157), that if a speaker can be held responsible for what s/he has said – ultimately in a court of law – then s/he has said it explicitly, whereas an implicit linguistic choice is one that the speaker in principle can deny that s/he has made. A speaker may, for example, offend somebody explicitly by using abusive words, or implicitly by a tone of voice which is interpreted as offensive in that particular context. Östman (1986:25-26) also argues that "an utterance can be given a truth-conditional meaning only with respect to the explicit choices it manifests. Implicitness goes beyond literal meaning, and accounts for non-truth conditional aspects in language". Thus, even though the offending tone of voice can most probably be interpreted by the addressee as such in the context, this cannot be resolved by truth-conditional semantics. Therefore, Östman (1986) suggests that an optimal line between semantics and pragmatics – if there is a wish to make such a distinction – could be drawn between the explicit and the implicit in language because the only way to account for implicit choices is to adopt a pragmatic approach.

The way in which the notion of explicit and implicit choices relates to the use of pragmatic force modifiers is best illustrated by an extract from conversational data, in which the speakers make abundant use of pragmatic force modifiers:

Example 2

(topic: rates)
S3   *I mean* it's a lot less [than the full rate three] hundred four hundred five hundred pounds *you know*
S1   [it's manageable yes erm] yeah a rebate of that kind is at least *kind of* manageable
S3   mm and if we think *I mean* the students take advantage of the community as much if no more like anybody else *you know* we're not *like* exempt [from the rest we just pay for it]
S2   [yeah *I suppose* so but *I still think* you could] once you finish studying *and whatever* you're still gonna *you know* you're gonna have to pay the full whack then and *I think* you're gonna make up for then I *just I think* they shouldn't make students pay *I mean I kind of* agree- I can see the point of a poll tax in general *and everything* even though I don't agree with it cos *I think* the better off you are you should pay more *and everything*
      (Nikula 1992:70)

When the passage is considered from the viewpoint of the hedge-emphatic division, it seems clear at first that all the modifiers are geared towards hedging the force of speakers' messages. However, many modifiers are, in fact, capable of serving different functions simultaneously. It can be argued, for example, that S2 uses *I still think*, on the one hand, to emphasize her opinion (see also Holmes 1985:33) and, on the other hand, to signal with this choice that she recognizes that others might have different views of the matter, thereby leaving room for negotiation and diminishing the assertiveness of her own view. Assigning modifiers to either hedges or emphatics is, thus, often problematic. Apart from these difficulties, it can be argued that the

passage above contains two types of pragmatic force modifiers. On the one hand, there are modifiers such as *kind of, I think, I suppose, and whatever*, or *and everything*, which are relatively transparent in signalling speakers' attitudes to their messages. These particular expressions signal quite explicitly either speakers' certainty/uncertainty towards their messages or their willingness to leave their messages vague. On the other hand, there are modifiers such as *I mean* and *you know*, the function of which seems to be more ambivalent because it is not as closely tied to the literal meaning of these expressions as is the case of the modifiers above. Therefore, these modifiers leave room for different interpretations. Moreover, it is more difficult to relate them to the level of message and to say that they signal either uncertainty or vagueness of the message. That is, when S3 in the example above says *I mean the students take advantage of the community as much if no more like anybody else you know*, it is difficult to explain the role of these modifiers by arguing that they reflect the speaker's relationship to the message. They, rather, seem to be means by which the speaker relates directly to the addressee, but this is accomplished implicitly rather than explicitly. As these two types of modifiers discussed above seem to correspond to Östman's (1986) distinction between the explicit and implicit in language, they will be called explicit and implicit pragmatic force modifiers, respectively.

It is thus possible for speakers to modify the pragmatic force of their utterances either explicitly or implicitly. Explicit modifiers include, for example, attitudinal adverbs (e.g. *presumably, perhaps, certainly*), parenthetical constructions (e.g. *I think, I suppose, I'm sure*), or adverbs of degree (e.g. *a bit, somewhat, sort of*). They show quite explicitly the degree to which speakers are committed to the truth or preciseness of their messages. Corresponding explicit modifiers exist also in Finnish (see discussion on page 46). As was pointed out above, it is possible to deal with explicit devices in semantic terms. This does not mean, however, that explicit modifiers cannot be approached from a pragmatic angle as well. This corresponds to Verschueren's (1991, 1995) notion of seeing pragmatics as a perspective on language that can be applied to phenomena at different linguistic levels.

Pragmatic particles like *I mean, you know*[4], *like* and *well* in English (see e.g. Östman 1981a, Watts 1989) and *niinku* and *sillee(n)* in Finnish (see Hakulinen 1989:120-123) are typical examples of the more implicit verbal means of modifying pragmatic force. There are also other expressions in Finnish which have acquired particle-like meanings, including *kyllä, muka* (Markkanen 1991) or *kato* (Hakulinen and Seppänen 1992). Clitics in Finnish, which were discussed above in 3.2.2, would also belong to the category of implicit modification strategies. What pragmatic particles and clitics have in common is their tendency to remain ambiguous or fuzzy even in the context, often making various interpretations possible. As pointed out above, they also differ from explicit pragmatic modifiers in their relationship to the utterances in which they occur. Where explicit choices indicate speakers' attitudes to

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[4] Note that speakers can use *I mean* and *you know* also in their literal sense as referring to processes of meaning and thinking. They are not, however, functioning as pragmatic force modifiers in such cases.

the messages they are conveying, even though this additionally enables them to
signal interpersonal meanings, it is more difficult to relate implicit modifiers to the
utterance level. They, rather, seem to be indicators of the type of relationship
between the speakers. Östman (1986:199), in discussing the functions of the pragmatic
particle *you know*, notes the following:

> The basic point here is that *you know* does not primarily relate to any utterance, or
> utterance sequence. It relates to the relationship between the speaker and the hearer. It
> functions as an implicit indicator of the relationship among speaker and addressee,
> rather than as an indicator of the speaker's relationship to his utterance.

Hence, while both explicit and implicit modifiers are means which speakers
can use for interpersonal purposes – to convey their feelings and attitudes, to signal
politeness and involvement – they seem to accomplish this somewhat differently.
This can be illustrated in a simplified way with the help of figure 2 below:
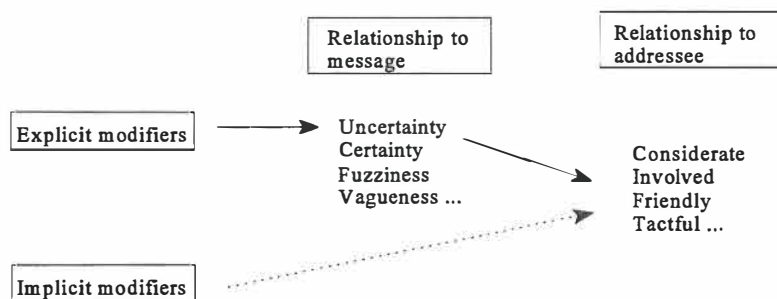
Figure 2   Explicit and implicit modifiers: a difference in focus

As the figure suggests, explicit modifiers are transparent in that they convey
quite clearly the speaker's attitude to the message, that s/he, for example, wants to
make reservations concerning its validity or preciseness. This, in turn, usually has
interpersonal functions such as the speaker's willingness to appear tactful or
involved. Implicit modifiers, on the other hand, are more directly related to speakers'
attitudes and relationship to the addressee: This relationship is often more opaque
than with explicit modifiers, hence the dotted line in the figure between implicit
modifiers and their interpersonal functions.

The discussion above may give an impression of explicit and implicit
modifiers as clearly demarcated categories. This, however, is not the case as was
already pointed out in the beginning of this section. As Östman (1987:156) puts it,
"this dichotomy is necessarily gradient". The distinction should rather be seen as a
continuum along which certain choices are usually explicit (e.g. attitudinal adverbs),
whereas others tend towards the more implicit end of the continuum (e.g. pragmatic
particles). In addition, modifiers often seem to occupy a position somewhere between
the explicit and the implicit end of the continuum. Moreover, it is possible that

pragmatic force modifiers can move along the explicit-implicit continuum so that in some contexts the function of *I think* is clearly either softening or emphatic, whereas in other contexts its function can allow for different interpretations.

It was argued above that the functional division into hedges and emphatics poses many problems. This does not mean, however, that this distinction has to be discarded altogether. In fact, the hedge-emphatic division seems to relate to the explicit-implicit continuum in the following way: when modifiers at the explicit end of the continuum are considered in their context, it is often possible to distinguish between hedges and emphatics. However, the 'domains' of hedges and emphatics merge and overlap because, as has been pointed out above, the same expressions can be used to convey both functions, and there are cases, as in example 2 above, when an expression can be interpreted from both perspectives. The more implicit a modifier is, however, the more difficult it is to attempt such a division into hedges and emphatics. In terms of their modifying functions, implicit pragmatic force modifiers are thus characterised by ambivalence. Figure 3 below illustrates this in the light of the devices discussed so far.[5] The purpose is not to suggest any strict order on the continuum for different pragmatic force modifiers, or to ask whether *sort of*, for example, is more explicit than *very*. The figure, rather, attempts to show that these types of expressions are, in general, more explicit than pragmatic particles and clitics.

PRAGMATIC FORCE MODIFIERS
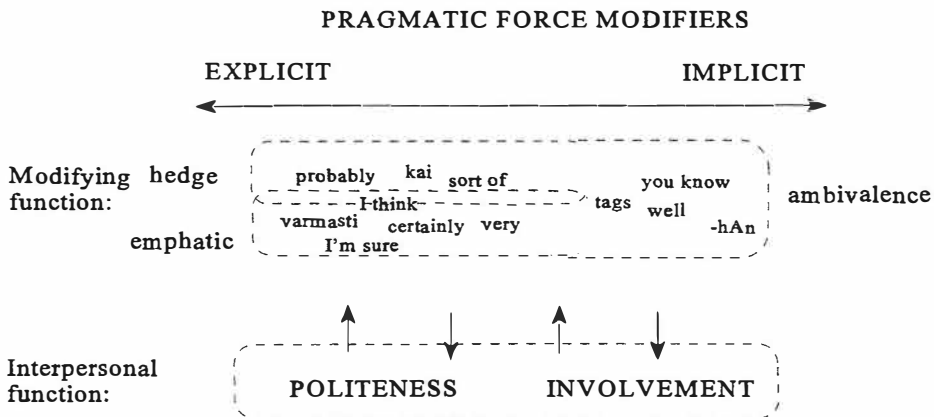
Figure 3   A descriptive model of pragmatic force modifiers

Figure 3 illustrates, furthermore, that the functions of pragmatic force modifiers can be approached from two angles; this point was also discussed on page

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[5]   Given that language use in general can be characterized as involving both implicit and explicit choices, pragmatic force modifiers, as a whole, would probably tend more towards the implicit end. It is, however, also possible to distinguish different degrees of explicitness in that group.

40 above. Firstly, there is the question of whether pragmatic force modifiers have a softening or emphasizing function, that is, whether they function as hedges or as emphatics. This is referred to as the *modifying function* in the figure. As noted above, the distinction between hedges and emphatics tends to get the more blurred the more implicit a modifier becomes, so that the function of modifiers at the implicit end of the continuum is often ambivalent. Secondly, it has been pointed out above (see chapter two) that the significance of pragmatic force modifiers in interaction lies in their capacity to serve important interpersonal functions such as politeness and involvement. In other words, speakers can achieve interpersonal ends by modifying the pragmatic force of their utterances. The *interpersonal function* thus has to do with the kind of relationship and the kind of attitudes that prevail between the speakers, and it is a dimension that cuts across the implicit-explicit continuum in a way that is difficult to illustrate in a concrete manner. Figure 3 suggests that all types of pragmatic force modifiers can have interpersonal functions, and the arrows pointing in two directions indicate that there is a complex interrelationship between pragmatic force modifiers and the interpersonal level. That is, it can be argued that the use of modifiers can create an impression of politeness and/or involvement no matter what the 'genuine' attitudes of the speakers, but it is also possible to say that it is the speakers' intention and wish to be polite and appear involved that leads them to use pragmatic force modifiers in the first place.

All in all, figure 3 suggests that the descriptive model of pragmatic force modifiers adopted in the present study is not as neat and simple as the one in Nikula (1992). On the contrary, its purpose is to highlight that the phenomenon studied is a complex one, and that there are several factors that need to be taken into account simultaneously. The purpose of adopting a more complex view of modifiers can be described in Sajavaara's (1987:252) words: "If what takes place in the world is not simple, we should not deceive ourselves by trying to make the issues simpler than they actually are".

Although the present study concentrates on the verbal pragmatic force modifiers discussed above, one advantage of the explicit-implicit distinction is that it can easily extend beyond the verbal level and be applied to other types of strategies as well. Prosody, for example, is an implicit modification strategy: it is possible for speakers, if challenged, to deny the implications of their prosodic choices. Östman (1991:205) regards prosody as one of the major devices for expressing implicit meanings, but with the focus on verbal level in the present study, it will only be dealt with cursorily. As far as the explicit end of the continuum is concerned, an example would be external modification, i.e. giving reasons and justifications for an act in order to modify its force (Faerch and Kasper 1989). The decision to concentrate on the verbal level thus does not mean that the explicit-implicit continuum could not be applied also to other levels.

3.4   Implications for research on pragmatic force modifiers

The discussion above suggests that rather than dividing pragmatic force modifiers into those with hedging and emphasizing functions, a more fruitful approach is to conceptualize them as forming a continuum from more explicit to more implicit choices. This is because hierarchical divisions have problems in accounting for the fluid boundaries that exist between different types of modifiers, whereas the continuum model illustrates better their flexible nature. Seeing modifiers as forming a continuum from explicit to implicit choices raises several interesting points for research. Firstly, it is worthwhile to explore the kinds of devices speakers use to modify their messages explicitly and implicitly. It is even more important to investigate whether there are differences in the interpersonal functions for which explicit and implicit modifiers are used. Östman (1987:177, emphasis original), when discussing implicitness in language, argues that it is important "to see *what* attitudes are implicitly expressed". There is also a possibility that speakers will favour different types of modifiers in different situations. Thus, formal encounters might show a different distribution between explicit and implicit choices than casual encounters.

Previous research has indicated that pragmatic force modifiers are characteristic of spoken language in particular. Moreover, it was pointed out in chapter two above that native speakers are, usually, pragmatically proficient and know more or less automatically how to use modifying devices appropriately. They, therefore, probably have to pay no conscious attention to their choice of explicit and implicit modifiers either. For non-native speakers, however, selecting appropriate strategies might prove more problematic. It is, therefore, worthwhile to investigate whether there are differences in the way native and non-native speakers make use of explicit and implicit modifiers.

It was pointed out in the introductory chapter that the focus of the present study is on non-native speakers' interlanguage performance and the way in which their use of pragmatic force modifiers relates to native speakers of both the target and the source language. Hence, a further point of interest in the present study is to pay attention to the ways in which different speakers use explicit and implicit modifiers. The continuum model of modifiers suggests that no clear division can be made between explicit and implicit modifiers; it is thus difficult to compare the exact number of explicit and implicit modifiers used by native and non-native speakers. However, it is possible to conceptualize the continuum as a kind of seesaw, and to investigate whether it gets 'balanced' differently, either towards the explicit or the implicit end, in the performance by native and non-native speakers respectively. That is, there may be indications that some speakers favour either implicit or explicit modifiers more than others.

The empirical analysis

4 DATA, AIMS AND METHODS

This chapter will describe the data that will be used to investigate the research questions introduced above. Attention will be drawn to the method of data collection and to the question of comparability across the sets of data. Secondly, the research questions that the study seeks to address will be discussed in more detail than was done in 3.4 above, as the type of data puts constraints on the kinds of questions that can be asked. Thirdly, the methodological approach used in the present study will be explicated, with special attention to the three angles from which the data will be approached during the analytic process.

4.1 Data

4.1.1 Evaluation of data collection methods

It is obvious that naturally-occurring face-to-face conversations would constitute the ideal data for investigating pragmatic phenomena such as the use of pragmatic force modifiers. This view is supported by Mey (1993:48), who maintains that "linguistic functions of use are best studied in situations where people interact normally using language face to face", and that as regards data for pragmatic analysis, "everyday conversations among people takes a front-row seat". However, it is a generally acknowledged fact that obtaining authentic conversational data is always problematic, not least because of what Labov (1972) calls the observer's paradox: a researcher's wish to observe authentic situations is impeded by the fact that observation always has an effect on the situation observed. Moreover, even though observation of naturally-occurring interaction may be quite useful when focusing on how speakers produce certain well-defined acts (see e.g. Wolfson's (1989a) study of compliments), collecting naturalistic data may not be the best solution when some specific types of speakers are compared.

In the present study, for example, it would be difficult to come up with naturally-occurring conversations between Finnish and native speakers of English, on the one hand, and conversations by native speakers of English and by native speakers of Finnish, on the other hand, that would be sufficiently similar to warrant comparisons. For these kinds of reasons, it is often necessary when conducting pragmatic research to use material that has been controlled in some way.

Elicitation methods such as discourse completion tasks or role plays have been commonly used for data collection in pragmatic research (e.g. Cohen and Olshtain 1981, Scarcella and Brunak 1981, Blum-Kulka 1985, Takahashi and Beebe 1993)[1]. These methods have the advantage that it is relatively easy to control such contextual variables as the degree of social distance and authority among the speakers as well as the type of speech acts performed (cf. discussion on the effects of contextual factors in 2.2.2 above). These methods also have their problems, however. An obvious drawback with discourse completion tasks, for example, is that they are usually conducted in written form, which may not correspond to the way speakers would behave in spoken interaction. For example, Edmondson and House (1991:281) suggest that the often reported 'waffle-phenomenon' (see e.g. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1986, Olshtain and Weinbach 1993), i.e. that language learners produce much longer turns when performing speech acts than native speakers, might be caused by the data collection method. Another related problem is that subjects may easily omit from their responses phenomena which are more typical of spoken than of written language, the use of pragmatic force modifiers being a case in point. It is thus probable that written discourse completion tasks would not adequately capture the way speakers use pragmatic force modifiers in spoken interaction.

The problem that role-plays share with discourse completion tasks is their predetermined nature: participants are asked to perform specific face threats and act specific roles, which may have very little to do with their actual relationship, with the result that subjects may be able to 'hide' behind their roles and act differently than they would in real-life encounters (for criticism, see e.g. Bonikowska (1988) and Aston (1993)). Another problem is that in requiring the performance of certain face-threatening acts, role-plays usually show little regard for the fact that speakers might, in actual encounters, choose not to perform the required act at all. Bonikowska (1988), consequently, argues that to improve role-plays and discourse completion tasks, subjects should always be given also a chance to 'opt out' of performing the act.

Studies using discourse completion tasks and role plays have provided valuable insights into the production of speech acts both in terms of cross-cultural differences and differences between native and non-native speakers (e.g. House and Kasper 1981, Blum-Kulka 1982, Olshtain and Weinbach 1987, Olshtain and Cohen 1989, Beebe and Takahashi 1989, Beebe et al. 1990). These studies have also often paid attention to the use of modifying devices, with considerable agreement

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[1]   Discourse completion tasks were, for example, used for the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project, CCSARP; see Blum-Kulka et al. (1989b) for an overview.

on the interpersonal motivations for their use: usually, their function is to play down the impact of face-threats. However, the focus on elicited data has meant that even though the interplay between severe face threats and modifying expressions is well established, there is much less knowledge of the use of pragmatic force modifiers in authentic conversational settings which are usually characterised by avoidance rather than performance of face threats (Bublitz 1988). Elicited data also often consists of quite short stretches of talk which, as Leech and Thomas (1990:199) point out, has often prevented the study of the cumulative effect of pragmatic phenomena over longer stretches of talk. There is thus a need to complement the findings based on elicited data with research on other types of data. The present study will make a contribution towards this by focusing on conversational settings where there are no prescribed requirements for the participants and where the interaction lasts longer than in average role plays.

4.1.2 Three types of data: NS-NNS, NSE and NSF conversations

As has been pointed out in previous chapters, the present study will approach the use of pragmatic force modifiers from an interlanguage perspective, focusing attention on non-native speakers' skills in using modifiers. More specifically, the study deals with advanced Finnish speakers of English and how their use of pragmatic force modifiers in a conversational setting relates to that by native speakers of both English and Finnish. Three types of data were collected for these purposes: conversations between non-native and native speakers of English, conversations between native speakers of English, and conversations between native speakers of Finnish. Appendix 1 provides a short description of each conversation in the data.

The main body of the data for the present study consists of four thirty-minute conversations between Finnish speakers of English and native speakers of English, henceforth NS-NNS conversations.[2] There were two Finns and two native speakers in each conversation; most of the native speakers were British but two of them were Americans. In each conversation, the Finns were acquaintances and the same applied to the native speakers in two of the conversations. The pairs of Finns and native speakers, however, were meeting each other for the first time, which explains why the conversations were characterised by the pairs of native speakers speaking to the pairs of non-native speakers and vice versa rather than Finns and natives discussing among themselves; the conversations were thus, essentially, between strangers. All the participants were university students, studying either at the University of Kent in Canterbury or at Lancaster University. The subjects were of roughly the same age so there were no big status differences between them. The conversations were recorded in a situation which involved only the

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[2] Due to problems with the recording equipment, one of the conversations is audible only for 20 minutes (NS-NNS 3). However, as the duration of the recordings is not a decisive factor, it has been included in the analysis.

participants and the recording equipment, with no outside observers. The participants were aware of their conversations being recorded for research purposes, but they were not aware of the specific focus of research. There were both male and female speakers in each conversation; table 1 provides information about the gender division among the participants in each conversation:

Table 1   Male-female distribution in the NS-NNS conversations

	NS-NNS 1	NS-NNS 2	NS-NNS 3	NS-NNS 4
native speakers	N1 male N2 male	N1 male N2 female	N1 male N2 female	N1 male N2 female
non-native speakers	F1 female F2 female	F1 female F2 male	F1 female F2 male	F1 female F2 female

It was pointed out above that role-played data have been criticised for the fact that being essentially plays, speakers may 'hide' behind their roles and behave differently than they would do in real-life contexts. Aston (1993:229) also points out that role-plays are often unnatural because they are without effective social consequences as the relationships between participants are fictional and temporary. In the NS-NNS conversations, the participants all acted as themselves rather than according to some predefined roles. Moreover, the participants in each conversation were enrolled in the same university, which means that even though they met for the first time in the recording session, they were likely to run into each other again after the recordings. The conversations could thus have what Aston (1993) calls "social consequences", which is probably one reason for the general feeling of naturalness that could be perceived in the encounters.

The recordings were made in autumn 1993 in Britain, where the Finns were staying for a year to study. At the time of the recording, they had spent one month in England,[3] so their experience of using English on a daily basis was not very great. This is seen as an advantage as the purpose of the study is not to investigate Finns with a considerable experience of living in an English-speaking environment. The English language skills of the Finns were not tested for the purposes of the present study. Individual differences between the learners are thus likely in that some are more proficient and practised speakers of English than others, even though only two of them had spent more than six months in an English-speaking country previously. However, the fact that the Finns were all carrying out university studies in Britain was taken as a sufficient indication of the relatively advanced level of their English. Moreover, despite slight individual differences between the speakers, it is likely that certain features will emerge in the non-native speaker' performance as a group as opposed to native speakers as a

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[3]   Two months in NS-NNS 4.

group so that, in Verschueren's (1991:195) words, "specific pragmatic features gain their significance by their recurrence". It is these recurrent features both in the non-native speakers' and the native speakers' use of pragmatic force modifiers that the present study aims to focus on rather than on each individual speaker's idiosyncratic styles.

When the data were collected, the aim was to obtain conversations as natural as was possible in the, admittedly, rather artificial recording situation. This is why, although the speakers in each group were given a topic with which to get their conversation going, they were told that they were free to change the topic and talk of anything that interested them. The topic given was 'Growing internationalization makes people more tolerant towards other cultures' but the participants in each conversation only touched upon the given topic, introducing their own topics instead. This, of course, sacrifices the strict comparability of topics across the conversations. However, the definite advantage of leaving the participants relatively free as to how to conduct the conversations was that it resulted in very natural conversations, in which the participants were involved in what Pirsig (1973:150) aptly calls "get-acquainted talk", learning something about each other and their respective countries. It is easy to imagine very similar conversations also occurring in more spontaneous encounters. Furthermore, the fact that the native and the non-native speakers did not know each other beforehand and thus had no previous shared experiences can be seen as an advantage for the analysis. As Hartley (1993:13) puts it:

> Interpersonal communication is cumulative over time. . . . If you are trying to understand communication between people who have communicated before, then you need to take into account the history of their relationship as this might well affect how they interpret each other.

Because the native and the non-native participants were meeting for the first time for the purpose of the recording, knowledge of their shared background is not required by the analyst to understand the interaction taking place in these conversations.

In addition to the four NS-NNS conversations, the data contain similar conversations by native speakers of English and by native speakers of Finnish, henceforth NSE and NSF conversations.[4] These conversations serve as comparative background data. The present study can thus be seen as having what Kasper and Dahl (1991:225) call "the canonical design for interlanguage studies" in that it contains both interlanguage, target language, and native language material. That is, the non-native speakers' interlanguage performance can be compared with that of native speakers of both their target language (i.e. the speakers of English in both the NS-NNS and NSE conversations), and with native speakers of their mother tongue (i.e. the Finnish speakers in the NSF conversations). There are four 30-minute conversations in both the NSE and the NSF material, and the external

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[4]   NSE conversations were recorded in the University of Edinburgh by Maija MacKinnon, and the NSF conversations in the University of Jyväskylä by the author.

conditions of the conversations were similar to those in the NS-NNS conversations. That is, the groups were given a general topic to discuss, but they were free to change the topics, and there were no predetermined constraints on their behaviour, either. The participants in the NSE and NSF material were also university students, of roughly the same age as the subjects in the NS-NNS conversations. The NSE and NSF conversations were also used as data in Nikula (1992), where they were compared with NNS conversations in which Finnish speakers entered into discussion in English among themselves, with no native-speaker participants.

The biggest difference between the NS-NNS conversations and the NSE and the NSF conversations, apart from the fact that the latter two involve only native speakers, is that the participants in the latter are acquaintances rather than strangers. However, it is possible to retain the NSE and NSF conversations as comparative background material as long as the difference in the degree of distance between speakers is borne in mind whenever drawing parallels between different sets of data. Hence, the material used in the present study looks as illustrated in figure 4.
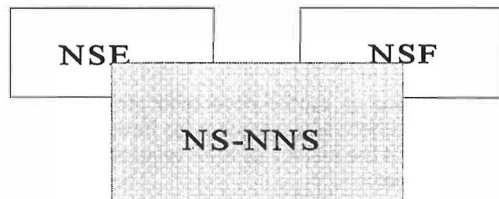
Figure 4   Types of conversations in the data

After the recordings were made, all conversations in the data were transcribed using conventions described in appendix 2. Transcripts can never be but a partial representation of speech, and the degree of precision depends on the transcriber's choices which are usually connected to the overall aim of the study. The transcripts in the present study do not, for example, attempt to give a detailed phonetic account of each individual speaker's pronounciation by using phonetic alphabet. Instead, standard orthography is used because it facilitates reading of the transcripts even though it, simultaneously, fails to describe individual variation (see Kalin 1995:43). The transcripts in the present study account for overlaps, minimal feedbacks, hesitations, laughter, and pauses within and between turns (even though their exact duration has not been measured). Transcribing prosodic features is a highly problematic and complex task; as prosodic modification strategies will not be focused on in the present study, prosody has not been described in great detail in the transcripts. However, brief pauses indicating boundaries between intonation units within speakers' turns have been marked as

well as falling and rising intonation where they were readily perceived (i.e. obvious falling and rising intonation). Such crude prosodic distinctions are sufficient for the purposes of the present study which, as indicated in section 3.2.2, focuses on the use of lexical-phrasal and morphological pragmatic force modifiers. A more fully-fledged functional approach to strategies of modification would, obviously, have required an entirely different and more detailed system of transcription.

4.1.3 Comparability across contexts

As indicated above, the present study involves making comparisons between three types of conversations. This, obviously, raises the question of comparability across contexts. The term *tertium comparationis* has been used in contrastive analysis to refer to the criteria for comparison (James 1980:169-178). Contrastive analysis (CA) was for a long time an unfashionable field of linguistics, but with the growing interest in pragmatic aspects of language during the recent decades, the question of how best to compare two languages has arisen again. Contrastive linguistics thus seems to be regaining its status (see James 1994), albeit in the form of 'cross-language', 'cross-linguistic' or 'cross-cultural' analyses (see e.g. Markkanen 1985, 1990, Sajavaara 1987, Blum-Kulka et al. 1989a, Tyler and Davis 1990, Spencer-Oatey 1992). With these approaches, the focus is not on comparing and contrasting the structural properties of languages as in traditional CA but, rather, on how different languages realize similar pragmatic and discoursal functions. The question of comparability is, however, still one that has to be addressed because, as Krzeszowski (1989:60) points out, "it is obvious that no comparison is possible without establishing a common platform of reference. In other words, all comparisons involve the basic assumption that the objects to be compared share something in common against which difference can be stated".

When conducting pragmatic research, the ideal situation would be to compare pragmatically equivalent forms and structures across languages. The issue of pragmatic equivalence is far from simple, however. Janicki (1990:49) points to a certain definitional circularity in that "pragmatic equivalence cannot serve as an independent criterion or reason (i.e. tertium comparationis) for comparison if one seeks to establish whether or not two linguistic expressions are pragmatically equivalent". Janicki goes on to argue that instead, pragmatic equivalence would have to be the *result* of pragmatic analyses rather than their motivation. Pragmatic equivalence would mean that linguistic expressions have similar functions in comparable contexts, and "it is exactly for the defining of comparable contexts that we need a pragmalinguistic theory" (Janicki 1990:53). In other words, it seems that the notion of *comparable context* would best serve as a tertium comparationis for pragmatic analyses.

Janicki's (1990) contention is that there exists, as yet, no clear definition of comparable contexts. Nevertheless, researchers have intuitively tried to achieve comparable situations when conducting pragmatic research. For example, it is

typical of elicitation methods that contextual features are spelled out in great detail for the subjects in order to guarantee comparability. The situation becomes more problematic, however, when studying more uncontrolled situations such as the conversations in the present study. Yet even in such cases, some notion of comparability across contexts is needed.

As Markkanen (1990:115) says, similarity across situations can best be achieved by the identity of communicative situations in terms of the topic, the setting, the channel, and the relationship between the participants. As was pointed out above, an attempt has been made in the present study to guarantee this kind of comparability by choosing discussants of the same age and status (i.e. university students), and involving them in conversations under similar external conditions. However, the fact remains that as the conversationalists can develop the conversations the way they choose, the range of topics will be different in each conversation. For this reason, there are some differences between the conversations in the present data in terms of the types of topics chosen. There may, for example, be differences in how personal the participants are in their choice of topics, and, as suggested above in section 2.2.2, the type of topic can well have its effect on the use of pragmatic force modifiers.

Another factor which can influence the use of pragmatic force modifiers is the degree of distance between the speakers (Brown and Levinson 1987). As pointed out above, this is relevant to the present data in that while the native and non-native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations are strangers, the participants in the NSE and the NSF conversations are acquaintances. Furthermore, at a more local level, the use of pragmatic force modifiers is also greatly dependent on the types of speech acts that the speakers perform at any given point in time so that, for example, expressing criticism may require a different level of modification than the delivery of factual information. It is, therefore, obvious that the use of pragmatic force modifiers in different conversations cannot be justly compared unless attention is paid also to the types of acts performed.

One further comment about comparable contexts is worth making. Spencer-Oatey (1992) points out that cross-cultural comparisons have often been made on the basis of situations that are kept identical across cultures. In such comparisons, the underlying assumption seems to be that people from different cultures also perceive the same situations in a similar manner; this view may be misleading, however. For example, Spencer-Oatey (1992) shows in her study that the way in which Chinese and British university students and teachers see the relationship between supervisors and students differs considerably and is, therefore, likely to have its influence also on their use of language. For the Chinese, the relationship is much closer and more personal than for the British, extending beyond the academic context to other spheres of life. Such differences are probably particularly common in the way people from different cultures perceive institutional settings. However, it is important to realize that there may also be differences in the way people see more 'ordinary' everyday situations such as conversations. Therefore, even though the external conditions for the conversations in the present data have been kept the same, it is not a guarantee

that the Finnish and the British participants perceive the situations in exactly the same way. For this reason, it is worth bearing in mind that recurrent differences between the non-native and native performance may be indications of different perceptions of the situation rather than signs of non-native speakers' problems with the language.

As the discussion above shows, there are numerous contextual matters that can influence the use of pragmatic force modifiers and result in differences between conversations even after detailed attempts have been made to achieve comparable sets of data. The notion of 'comparable contexts' is thus necessarily a compromise when dealing with relatively uncontrolled data. In such a situation, the best the analyst can do is to be conscious of the contextual differences that emerge in the data and to try to take them into account during the analysis.

4.2   Research questions

Chapter three outlined the way in which pragmatic force modifiers are defined in the present study, as a continuum from the more explicit to the more implicit modifiers, with the focus on lexical-phrasal and morphological devices. This model will be utilized when the use of modifiers in the three types of conversations, involving Finnish speakers of English and native speakers of English and Finnish, is investigated. More specifically, the present study seeks to address the following overall research question: *How do advanced Finnish speakers of English master the use of pragmatic force modifiers in a conversational setting, and how does their performance relate to that of native speakers of English and Finnish?* This questions can be broken down into the following three subquestions:

I *How frequently do speakers use pragmatic force modifiers?*

(i) How often do non-native and native speakers of English, on the one hand, and native speakers of English and Finnish, on the other hand, use pragmatic force modifiers?

(ii) How often do speakers in the different sets of data use explicit and implicit pragmatic force modifiers? In other words, are there differences in the explicit-implicit distribution of modifiers across the sets of data?

II *What are the interpersonal functions of pragmatic force modifiers?*

(i) What are the types of conversational contexts in which the use of pragmatic force modifiers seems to be particularly salient interpersonally?
(ii) Are there differences between non-native and native speakers in the ways in which they make strategic use of pragmatic force modifiers?

(iii) For what kinds of interpersonal functions do speakers use explicit and implicit pragmatic force modifiers, and are there differences between non-native and native speakers in this respect?

III *Is there interplay between speakers' roles and pragmatic force modifiers?*

(i) What kinds of roles become activated in the conversations?
(ii) Do speakers make different use of pragmatic force modifiers when they occupy different roles in interaction?
(ii) Are there differences between non-native and native speakers in how the changing role relationships affect their use of pragmatic force modifiers?

4.3   Methodological approach

4.3.1   An overview

It is obvious that to be able to provide answers to the kinds of research questions listed above, a qualitative approach to research is called for. This is because the nature of the questions demands that attention be paid to the interpersonal functions of pragmatic force modifiers, to the contexts in which speakers most commonly choose to use them, and to the interplay between speakers' roles and modifiers. This requires close scrutiny not only of pragmatic force modifiers themselves but also of the surrounding conversational context. Mey (1993:277-278) points out that pragmatic phenomena cannot be captured by 'exact' methods because "[t]he world of pragmatics is not predictable in the same way that morphological or syntactic worlds are"; this has the consequence that pragmatic phenomena cannot be explained by strict rules and conditions nor by recourse to stringent hypothesis-formulation which, in Mey's (p. 278) words, "would create the illusion of a well-formed world". The same applies to the present study because the use of pragmatic force modifiers is an area of language use that cannot be explained by strict rules. On the contrary, as was pointed out in chapter three, previous research has shown that the functions of pragmatic force modifiers often remain indeterminate and ambivalent, which is why their use often has to be explained by reference to their meaning potential rather than to clearly defined meanings/functions. Consequently, the analytic procedure has to be such that it can make sense of the various ways in which speakers in the three different sets of data make use of the interpersonal potential of pragmatic force modifiers.

Perhaps the best way to describe the methodological approach in the present study is to call it 'a modified qualitative approach' in Fraser's (1994:3257) words. Hence, rather than approaching the data with no predetermined area of focus in mind, certain basic assumptions and decisions have been made before embarking upon the analysis. That is, pragmatic force modifiers have been chosen as the focus of attention, and the decision has been made to concentrate on modifiers realized at the verbal level. Having established that, however,

qualitative-descriptive methods are required to investigate how the use and interpersonal functions of modifiers are affected by contextual factors such as speakers' nativeness or non-nativeness, the type of act performed, or the kinds of roles activated by the speakers.

Opting for qualitative approach does not necessarily mean that there is no room for techniques of quantification. Lazaraton (1995:463) points out that few researchers choose to employ both qualitative and quantitative techniques despite the more tolerant attitudes to "bimethodologicalism" in these days. Silverman (1993), however, advocates the use of simple counting procedures to validate qualitative research. Counting is, of course, not always possible when dealing with matters such as the meaning and significance of the issues under study, or with participants' own perceptions of these issues. This is why Silverman emphasizes that counting should only be used when it makes sense to count − it should not be an end in itself. However, Silverman argues that counting can often be used to combat the anecdotal nature of much qualitative research where readers often have to rely completely on researchers' accounts and judgements. In this connection, Silverman (1993:204) points out that

> we are all familiar with the case-study report that advances its arguments on the basis of 'a good example of this is X' or 'X's comment is typical'. Of course, these are 'good' and 'typical' examples because the researcher has selected them to underlie the argument.

Such tendencies towards 'anecdotal' argumentation may be the reason why, as Davis (1995:432) points out, qualitative studies are often seen as lacking in rigour. Therefore, in order to diminish any anecdotal feel about the findings, the present study will make use of simple techniques of quantification for the purposes of describing the frequency of pragmatic force modifiers in the data. It is crucial to note at the outset, however, that such numerical information means different things for qualitative research than it would for quantitative research. Whereas for the latter, quantitative information usually provides the main information on which statistical analyses are carried out and conclusions about the significance of results are drawn, measurement in the numerical sense is not the intended final outcome for a qualitative researcher. This ties in with the kinds of questions quantitative and qualitative techniques are used to provide answers for. In simplified terms, it can be said that where quantitative techniques provide answers to 'what?' and 'under what conditions?' questions, qualitative methods seek to answer 'why?' and 'how?' questions (Deem 1994). In Alasuutari's (1994) view, qualitative research can be compared with finding solutions for a puzzle. It is thus obvious that the questions that qualitative research is interested in cannot be answered with numerical information only. Therefore, when quantitative techniques are used in qualitative research, they are meant to provide some base-line information about the phenomenon under scrutiny. This information can serve as a background and as a useful reference point but needs nevertheless to be complemented by a qualitative analysis of the phenomenon in question.

4.3.2   Analysis at three stages

It is possible to describe the analytical procedure of the present study as one of adopting three different angles in relation to the data, each of these constituting a stage of analysis relating to the research questions outlined in section 4.2 above. Even though during the actual process of analysis the different stages tend to blend and to be concurrent rather than sequential, it is useful, for clarity, to present them separately. As pointed out above, the present study is qualitative, but employs techniques of quantification for purposes of investigating the frequency of pragmatic force modifiers. The latter can be described as the first stage of the analysis, which seeks to find answers to the research question concerning the frequency of pragmatic force modifiers in the conversations.

When attention is paid to the frequency of modifiers at the first stage of the analysis, only restricted attention will be paid to the context in which they occur. Context is important at this stage only in the extent to which it helps clarify whether a linguistic expression is a pragmatic force modifier or not, i.e. whether it either softens or emphasizes the impact of the speaker's message. After this decision is reached, however, there will be no attention to questions pertaining to the interpersonal functions for which the speakers use modifiers, or to considerations about where speakers are most likely to use modifiers, both of which are crucial questions from a pragmatic point of view. Therefore, the first angle on the data cannot yet be regarded as pragmatic per se. As pointed out above, it rather serves a background function, providing information on the one hand about the frequency of pragmatic force modifiers in the three sets of data, and on the other hand about the relative distribution of explicit and implicit modifiers.

The second stage of the analysis is more pragmatically oriented, and it is closely linked to the question about the interpersonal functions of pragmatic force modifiers. In other words, attention will focus on issues such as the types of speech acts or pragmatic acts with which the speakers tend to use pragmatic force modifiers in the conversations. The interpersonal functions for which the speakers seem to use modifiers in these instances is also an important issue. It was argued in chapter three above that the same modifiers can have different interpersonal functions depending on the context in which they are used. This stage of the analysis focuses on these issues, by exploring the types of politeness and involvement functions for which speakers use pragmatic force modifiers, and by investigating how the kind of act performed affects these functions. It follows from this that the notion of context is considerably broader than at the first stage of analysis.

When the conversations are approached from the third angle, the notion of context gets extended even further. Whereas at the second stage context is mainly dealt with on the conversational level, with attention to the kinds of speech acts performed by the speakers and the interpersonal relevance of pragmatic force modifiers for the successful performance of those acts, now at the third stage the speakers' roles in conversation are taken into consideration. This is because the

type of act performed is not the only factor affecting the use and interpretation of pragmatic force modifiers. The kind of role the speaker has at any given moment may also have its effect on the use of modifiers. This is why particular attention will be paid to instances of conversation where speakers seem to have asymmetrical roles, in order to investigate whether different roles suggest different use of modifiers. The notion of context thus acquires a more social nature during this stage of the analysis.

With the three angles on the data, then, the attention moves from purely linguistic matters, such as the expressions used as pragmatic force modifiers, to more social aspects of communication such as the significance of speakers' roles for the use of pragmatic force modifiers. At the same time, the notion of context gets broadened. Figure 5 illustrates the three stages of analysis:

CONTEXT   FOCUS

STAGE 1:
FREQUENCY OF MODIFIERS   LINGUISTIC

STAGE 2:
INTERPERSONAL FUNCTIONS OF
MODIFIERS

STAGE 3:
INTERPLAY BETWEEN SPEAKERS'
ROLES AND MODIFIERS   SOCIAL
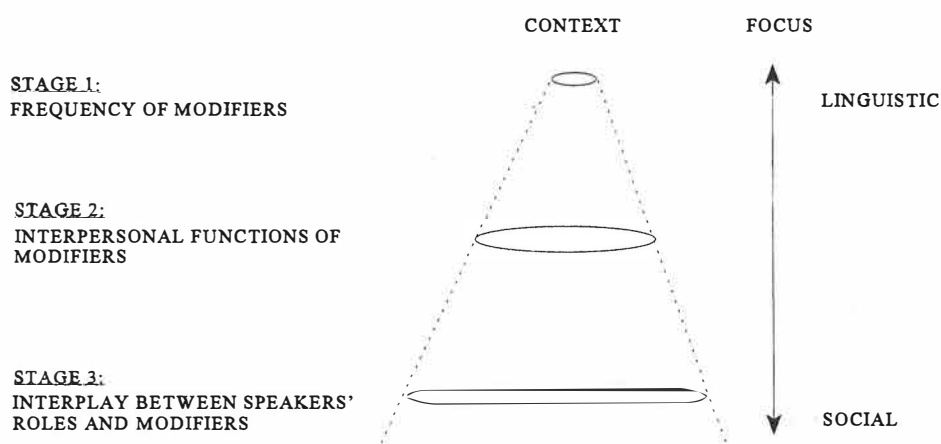
Figure 5   The analytic procedure in the present study

It is important to recognize that the figure is not meant to exhaust all the stages of analysis possible. Rather, it serves as an indication of the analytical steps followed in the present study. It would, however, also be possible to choose alternative approaches. As the figure suggests, the notion of context could easily be extended further. It would, for example, be possible to include phenomena such as the speakers' gender, ethnicity, and personality as factors which might affect their use of pragmatic force modifiers. Thus, even though the three stages of analysis should capture certain important features of the speakers' ways of using pragmatic force modifiers, they will probably not be able to bring out the whole complexity of the phenomenon.

4.3.3 Sample analysis

When discussing the validity of qualitative research, Mauranen (1993:50) points out that

> [i]t is important for a text-based analysis to be explicit about the criteria used, and about the interpretations of text by the analyst. ... By showing how the analysis is carried out, and by indicating limitations and restrictions of the research angle, the qualitative analyst can offer the outcome and the procedure of the analysis for critical assessment to the academic community, and thereby achieve intersubjective validation.

Similarly, Nunan (1992:59), when discussing ethnography, points out that its external reliability can be enhanced by the researcher being explicit about the analytic constructs and premises and the methods of data collection and analysis. In the present study as well, explicitness about the ways in which analysis is carried out and interpretations arrived at is important. This will be an objective throughout the empirical analysis. It is, however, also worthwhile at this stage to provide a 'condensed' illustration of the ways in which the data in the present study will be analysed. This will be done by referring to a short extract from the data and showing how pragmatic force modifiers can be approached from the three angles and how, ultimately, it is important to consider the findings from all of these together in order to understand the role of modifiers in interaction. In other words, the sample analysis will make explicit the analytical steps to be taken when investigating the conversations and will, therefore, serve as a way of validating the ensuing qualitative analysis. Example 1 provides the extract for the sample analysis:[5]

Example 1

```
      ((topic: Finnish culture))
1     N2   but d'you HAVE many other cultures LIVING in Finland like you know like Britain
           we're fairly multi-cultural, in some places, [not not ev]erywhere because where I grew
      F2   [yeah yeah]
           up it wasn't particu[larly multi-cultural][[but-,]] a LOT of areas ARE now d'you have
5     N1   [no probably]
      F2   [[yeah]]
           similar situations that-, I mean I suppose if you're from the city it would be more
           multi-cultural any[way]
      F2   [that's right but-]
10    F1   [not in THAT] scale no, [[(-)]] that extent at all
      N2   [[no]]
      N2   d'you have like, OTHER cultures living in, you know what what, (people) go and live
           there like, [well]
      F1   [we] don't really have big, foreign communities, we have refugees and some immigrants
15         [[but]]
      N2   [[mmm]] WHERE from/, which countries
      F1   Africa
      F2   yeah [we have some also], from the Far [[East yeah]]
```

	F1	[and Asia]
20	N1	[[mmm]]=
	N2	=mhm V
	F2	and *I suppose* in- in recent times also people from Estonia *and that sort of places*
	F1	mm [yeah]
	N1	[I see]=
25	F2	=people related to Finns
		(NS-NNS 4/31)[6]

The first step of the analysis is to identify the pragmatic force modifiers. In the example above, the words and phrases considered to be pragmatic force modifiers are in italics. The number of modifiers in non-native and native performance can, then, be counted and compared. As regards the first research question, the frequency of pragmatic force modifiers, the extract above yields the following figures: there are 3 pragmatic force modifiers in the non-native speakers' performance and 14 in the native speakers' performance. It is, however, also necessary to relate these numbers to the total number of words spoken before drawing final conclusions about their frequency; this will be discussed in detail in chapter five. In this extract, when modifiers are related to the total number of words, the modifying function accounts for 19.8 % of the words in the native speakers' speech and 12.5 % in the non-native speakers' speech. Even though the non-native speakers thus use modifiers less often than the native speakers in this extract, the difference is not as big as seems on the basis of the raw figures of frequency alone. The sample also shows that the native speakers often resort to implicit modifiers (*I mean, you know, like, well*) whereas these modifiers do not occur in the non-native speakers' turns at all. Apart from using modifiers less frequently, then, the learners also seem to favour different types of modifiers in this extract.

At the second stage of the analysis, the interpersonal functions of pragmatic force modifiers are at issue. This necessitates close attention to the context in which modifiers are used. It seems obvious in the above extract, for example, that when speaker N2 uses modifiers on lines 1-8, she does so to play down the impact of the question, to make it less face-threatening to her Finnish counterparts. Similarly on line 22, the non-native speaker signals that she does not want to assert her opinion too strongly: this can help protect both her own face as well as that of the addressee. The extract also shows the cumulative effect of the context. Where the native speaker (N2) takes great care to modify the first question with which she introduces the topic, she asks the follow-up question on line 16 without modifiers. As the topic has become established and the addressees have ratified it, asking question relating to that topic is less face-threatening than at the outset. Attention to context can also explain why the non-native speakers use modifiers less in this extract: while the native speakers ask questions, which is a face-threatening act, the non-native speakers' task is to provide answers. This is less of a threat to face in this situation because providing answers to questions is something that is expected

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[6]   The number after the slash refers to pages of a separate monograph containing the full transcripts of all conversations in the data. Available from the Department of English, University of Jyväskylä, P.O. Box 35, 40351 Jyväskylä, Finland.

of the non-native speakers as cooperative conversationalists. The finding that the non-native and the native speakers use pragmatic force modifiers differently can, thus, be partly explained by the fact that they are performing speech acts which are not equally face-threatening.

The third stage of the analysis relates to the research question about the interplay between speakers' roles and pragmatic force modifiers. In the two previous stages, the participants' performance has been assessed on the basis of non-native and native speaker difference. This, however, is not the only possible perspective from which to consider the participants' behaviour. In the extract above, for example, the non-native speakers can be said to have the role of 'experts' as they know, by definition, more of matters pertaining to Finland and Finnish culture than their British counterparts. It is therefore also fruitful to consider how the role-set 'expert - non-expert' might affect the way speakers use pragmatic force modifiers. Hence, it is possible to argue that the native speaker's abundant use of modifiers in the questions is not only due to the face-threatening nature of questions in general, but also to her asking questions about the Finns' area of 'expertise' in particular. That is, by putting the questions forward in a very tentative manner, N2 may wish to signal that she respects the non-native speakers' role as experts during this topic of discussion. The less frequent use of modifiers in the non-native speakers' speech, for its part, can be seen in a new light when thinking of it in terms of the roles they occupy. Given that they act as experts in the situation, there may be less need for them to modify their messages than would be the case if they had a less powerful role. Another, related, matter is that the non-native speakers (e.g. lines 14-19) deliver mainly factual information rather than their personal views of the matters discussed; it is probable that expressing opinions would require more attention to face-work than supplying the factual information that the coparticipants have asked for. Attention to roles thus shows that the non-native speakers' less frequent use of pragmatic force modifiers, which at the first stage of the analysis might have seemed an indication of their insufficient pragmatic skills, can be considered quite appropriate in the light of their having the role as experts in this situation.

The sample analysis has, hopefully, shed light on the complexity involved in interpreting pragmatic force modifiers: knowledge of their frequency of occurrence, or of the types of modifiers used, is not enough to reveal the intricate interplay between pragmatic force modifiers and contextual factors such as the kinds of speech acts performed and the types of roles occupied, which influence both the use and interpretation of pragmatic force modifiers. What is more, it is important to bear in mind that the type of analysis exemplified above is not always enough to capture the whole meaning potential of pragmatic force modifiers. However, as the example suggests, this type of analysis can bring out many important factors about the use of these devices. Analysis of all the conversations in the data in these three stages will, hopefully, be detailed enough to bring out recurrent features in both the native and non-native speakers' use of pragmatic force modifiers.

5   FREQUENCIES AND TYPES OF PRAGMATIC FORCE MODIFIERS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide information about how often the speakers in the three sets of data resort to pragmatic force modifiers, and about the types of modifiers used. This information serves as background against which any later comments about the relative frequency of modifiers can be checked. This chapter, then, represents the first stage in the funnel-shaped analytical procedure introduced above by focusing on the frequency of pragmatic force modifiers in the three sets of data (section 5.1) and on the distribution of explicit and implicit modifiers (section 5.2).

5.1   Frequency of pragmatic force modifiers

5.1.1   Pragmatic force modifiers in the data: lists of frequency

Chapter three outlined the reasons why the focus in the present study is on pragmatic force modifiers realized at the verbal level as lexical-phrasal and morphological devices. The decision to concentrate on this level is particularly useful for this stage of analysis as it is possible to calculate the frequency of lexical-phrasal modifiers relatively easily. It is, however, also useful to bear in mind that calculating the number of lexical-phrasal and morphological modifiers only is an abstraction imposed on the data and is not intended to capture the whole modification phenomenon as speakers can also make use of other modification strategies (cf. discussion in section 3.1.2 above). However, investigating how often speakers in the conversations studied use modifying expressions provides rather concrete information on the basis of which comparisons can be drawn between the three sets of data. Simple techniques of quantification can therefore be useful, as long as their limitations are borne in mind.

This section provides two tables (tables 2 and 3) which list in order of frequency all the pragmatic force modifiers used at least twice in the data in English and Finnish. In other words, rather than providing different tables for the three different types of speakers of English (i.e. the non-native speakers, and the native speakers in both the NS-NNS and NSE data), the modifiers from the data in English are given in one table. This means that the order of frequency is based on the performance of all the speakers of English taken together. However, the number of occurrences by each set of speakers will also be given separately so that comparisons can be made regarding frequencies in each set of data.

As table 2 shows, even after having restricted the analysis to the lexical-phrasal and morphological modifiers, there is a wealth of such devices which the speakers use to modify the impact of their messages. As total frequencies in the different sets of data will be discussed in detail below, suffice it to say at this point that the number of modifiers in the non-native speakers' performance (393 altogether) is clearly smaller than in the native speakers' performance in the same conversations (655 altogether). However, the table also shows that despite the more narrow range of pragmatic force modifiers produced by the non-native speakers, they nevertheless make use of all those modifiers that are among the most frequently occurring ones in the native speakers' performance. A more considerable difference between the native and the non-native speakers involves the frequency of these modifiers, as there are sometimes quite noticeable differences in how much the non-native and the native speakers use a particular modifier. One of the most striking examples is *you know,* which ranks among the most frequently occurring modifiers in the native speaker performance, but which the non-native speakers only use twice. There are, however, also examples of the opposite type as in the case of *of course* which the non-native speakers seem to favour more than the native speakers.

It is important to note that there is a lot of multifunctionality that remains hidden when only the frequency of individual modifiers is given in a tabular form as in table 2. It was argued in chapter three that earlier research has indicated that pragmatic force modifiers are often capable of serving different functions depending on the context. The same applies in the present study as well, which means that even though all the occurrences of a particular modifier are combined, this does not imply that the same form would always have the same function. For example, *just* is a modifier which speakers very often seem to use to play down the force of their messages as in *I just hope for the best.* In other contexts, however, it seems to yield an utterance more of an emphatic tone (e.g. *it's just hopeless*).[1] Moreover, there are often occasions where it is difficult to be precise about its exact function. Similar multifunctionality applies also to many other pragmatic force modifiers. For example, *really* is an expression which is sometimes connected to speakers' assessment of the truth of their messages, as in *it really is below what*

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[1]   Unless otherwise indicated, all examples are taken from the data used in the present study.

Table 2   Pragmatic force modifiers in the data in English

MODIFIER	NNS	NS	NSE	MODIFIER	NNS	NS	NSE
I mean	26	57	277	should	-	2	5
you know	2	52	174	I guess	1	4	1
like	26	99	69	I find	-	-	6
well	55	51	91	I'm not sure	-	2	4
I think	40	33	99	sure	1	-	4
really	30	31	59	tend	-	-	5
just	7	33	77	could	1	1	3
very	27	41	25	supposedly	-	-	5
sort of	12	11	49	and things (like that)	2	-	3
tag question	6	18	46	almost	-	-	5
actually	9	11	38	not exactly	-	1	3
quite	19	14	21	more or less	1	-	3
I don't know	11	13	29	fairly	2	1	1
I suppose	21	10	20	I feel	-	-	4
or something (like that)	7	9	35	may	-	3	1
kind of	2	9	31	totally	1	1	2
probably	4	9	25	perhaps	2	2	-
not really	12	11	11	possibly	-	-	3
maybe	9	7	17	absolutely	-	-	3
so	7	15	8	extremely	-	-	3
and/or whatever	2	3	21	virtually	-	-	3
a bit	4	9	12	a lot	2	-	1
I don't think	4	8	10	nearly	1	-	2
must	3	2	16	or anything	-	2	1
some	3	2	16	I'm sure	-	1	2
(it) seems	-	6	13	surely	-	-	3
and everything	1	4	13	you see	-	1	1
and stuff (like that)	-	7	11	obvious	-	-	2
definitely	4	1	12	I believe	-	-	2
about	6	7	4	I figure	-	-	2
though	-	2	14	apparently	-	1	1
obviously	-	3	12	presumably	-	2	-
might	-	6	7	I expect	-	2	-
not very	-	5	7	far	-	2	-
would	3	6	2	terribly	-	1	1
of course	8	1	2	hell of a	-	1	1
pretty	2	2	6	something like	-	-	2
I('ve) heard	3	5	2	not always	1	-	1
and that sort of thing	1	-	8	not necessarily	-	1	1
basically	-	-	9	others	-	5	8
a little	1	4	3				
certainly	1	2	4	TOTAL	393	655	1503

people need to survive, whereas in other contexts speakers intensify parts of their message with it as in *it's really depressing*. Moreover, the same applies to *really* as, for example, to *very*, *particularly* or *exactly*: when it is coupled with negation, it has a different function compared to when it occurs alone (cf. the invented pair *he was really nice* and *he wasn't really nice*). It is, thus, crucial to bear in mind that the individual modifiers listed in table 2 can have different shades of meaning depending on the context. This is why no attempt has been made in the present study to pin down modifiers to particular functions. What is common to all the modifiers listed above, however, is that no matter what their precise function, they all convey information about the pragmatic force of speakers' messages: whether they want to express themselves vaguely or precisely, or be doubtful or certain. Auer (1992:3), in discussing contextualization cues, says that the cues help steer the interpretation of language. In the same vein, it can be argued that pragmatic force modifiers steer the interpretation of pragmatic force by signalling speakers' attitudes to their message and their coparticipants.

Table 3 provides similar information about the pragmatic force modifiers used in the NSF conversations, with rough English equivalents. As can be seen, the variety of different modifiers is somewhat narrower in the Finnish material, most likely due to the fact that whereas table 2 synthesizes the use of modifiers by 21 speakers who are conversing in English, the total number of Finnish conversationalists is smaller, thirteen speakers altogether. The total number of modifiers in the NSF data is, however, quite considerable: 1507 modifiers altogether.

The table shows that also in Finnish, pragmatic force modifiers include expressions which signal epistemic modality (e.g *ehkä* 'maybe', *varmaan* 'probably') and those that either add or reduce the degree of fuzziness (e.g. *vähän* 'a bit', *tosi* 'very'). Moreover, the same applies to many modifiers in Finnish as in English: the same surface form can have different functions depending on the context. For example, *ihan*, which is one of the most frequent modifiers in the NSF data, can have both mitigating and emphatic functions (e.g. *ihan hyvä varmaan* 'quite good probably' and *se on ihan uskomatonta* 'it's just unbelievable').

Pragmatic particles and morphological clitics are very frequent in the NSF conversations. A clear indication of this is that among the ten most frequently used modifiers, seven are pragmatic particles or clitics. It is worth pointing out at this stage that some of the surface forms listed as pragmatic particles in table 3 can also be used to convey referential information. For example, *kyllä*, *siis* and *nyt* have literal meanings 'yes', 'so' and 'now', respectively. It is obvious that when these expressions are used in their literal meanings, they are not considered pragmatic force modifiers (e.g. *nyt tai ei koskaan* 'now or never', *minä olin siis oikeassa* 'so I was right'). However, it is clear when investigating the Finnish conversations that even though these expressions have rarely been considered as particles, the speakers very often resort to these expressions in ways which have obvious particle-like qualities. As particles they have no direct relationship to the semantic meanings

Table 3   Pragmatic force modifiers in the data in Finnish

MODIFIER	NSF	MODIFIER	NSF
niinku pragmatic particle	374	-pa clitic	7
-hAn clitic	91	todella 'really'	6
kyllä pragmatic particle	88	tavallaan 'in a way'	6
siis pragmatic particle	88	musta tuntuu ' I feel'	6
ihan 'quite'	80	varmasti 'certainly'	5
semmonen 'such a'	71	voi 'can'	5
nyt pragmatic particle	56	kuulemma 'I've heard'	5
no pragmatic particle	55	kauheen 'terribly'	4
vähän 'a little'	49	mä luulen ' I guess'	4
silleen pragmatic particle	40	ilmeisesti 'apparently'	4
ehkä 'maybe'	37	ei kovin 'not very'	4
mun mielestä ' I think'	30	ja muuta 'and stuff'	4
-s clitic	27	ja jotain tämmöstä 'and things like that'	4
varmaan 'probably'	30	ja mitä kaikkee 'and whatever'	4
joku 'some'	25	ja (tälleen) näin 'and so'	4
jotenkin 'somehow'	23	melkein 'almost'	3
tämmönen ' such a'	23	tai jotain 'or something'	3
aika 'fairly'	21	saattaa 'may'	3
tietysti 'of course/obviously'	21	erittän 'extremely'	3
en mä tiedä 'I don't know'	18	hyvin 'very'	3
m(in)usta 'I feel'	16	tosiaan 'really'	3
vaan 'just'	16	kato pragmatic particle	2
aivan 'quite'	15	muka pragmatic particle	2
-kin clitic	11	täysin 'completely'	2
kai 'perhaps'	10	oikeen 'really'	2
ja näin edespäin 'and so forth'	9	suurinpiirtein 'roughly'	2
hirveen 'awfully'	9	tai muuta vastaavaa 'or things like that'	2
tosi 'very'	9	vissiin 'probably'	2
ja tämmöstä (näin) 'and things'	9	tahtoo 'will'	2
just 'exactly'	9	totta kai 'of course'	2
ei kauheen 'not terribly'	8	others	12
tuntuu 'it seems'	8		
ei oikeen 'not very'	7	TOTAL	1507

mentioned above, and their pragmatic impact often seems to be connected to emphasis or involvement. In the following example, for instance, *kyllä* is used in a particle-like fashion by speaker S1, and it seems to function as an emphatic which, simultaneously, implies a certain sense of shared assumptions in that the speaker expects others to share her view. This example, furthermore, illustrates the point that was also made when discussing modifiers in English above: it is often difficult to be very precise about their functions, and this seems to apply to pragmatic particles in particular:

Example 1

S1   no SE on- ne on kans *kyllä* ihan uskomatonta
     (well that is- those also are (+particle) quite incredible)
     (NSF 2/99)

Morphological clitics resemble pragmatic particles in that it is not easy to describe their functions in simple terms, either. Yet it is obvious that their presence in an utterance has an effect on its pragmatic force. For example, the 'as we all know' character of the following utterance would be lost if the clitic *-han* was extracted: *sillaihan se kieli muuttuu* 'that's how language changes you know'. Therefore, clitic particles have been taken into consideration when quantifying pragmatic force modifiers in the Finnish conversations.

The tables above have thus provided information about the frequency of modifiers by speakers of English and Finnish as a group. It is, however, also worthwhile to consider how often each individual speaker uses pragmatic force modifiers during the conversations. Table 4 shows, in simple numerical form, how many times each speaker uses pragmatic force modifiers and the proportion these represent of the total number of pragmatic force modifiers produced by each subset of speakers. Thus, for example, non-native speaker S1 uses pragmatic force modifiers 40 times, which stands for 10.2 % of modifiers used by all the non-native speakers in the data. The dotted lines indicate which speakers form one conversational group. In the table, the shaded area provides information about the NS-NNS conversations (eight native speakers and eight non-native speakers), and the other two columns about the NSE and NSF conversations (thirteen speakers in each).

These raw figures, if nothing else, at least serve as an illustration that pragmatic force modifiers are used quite frequently in all sets of data. It is also quite interesting that within roughly the same period of time, i.e. during four thirty-minute conversations, the number of pragmatic force modifiers used in the two sets of native speaker data is very similar (1503 and 1507 occurrences) whereas in the NS-NNS conversations the number is clearly smaller with 1048 occurrences by the NS and NNS taken together (393+655).

It is also noteworthy that pragmatic force modifiers are used by all the participants in the conversations even though there are a couple of speakers who use them only a few times. In both cases, this reflects the fact that they are acting as listeners rather than as active participants during most of the 30-minute conversation. Thus, S5 in the NNS data uses pragmatic force modifiers 10 times, and S10 in the NSF data only 8 times. All the other participants occupy a more active role as speakers even though, obviously, differences in the number of modifiers is also indicative of how much they talk. Therefore, the raw figures in table 4 are not, nor are they meant to be, comparable in an absolute sense. It is a rather striking finding, however, that where pragmatic force modifiers in the other sets of data are distributed relatively evenly across all eight or thirteen speakers, 33.1 % of all modifiers in the non-native speakers' performance are used by one speaker (S8). In the other sets of data, the biggest proportions one speaker is

responsible for range between 14-18 %. Because the number of non-native speakers is rather small, the fact that one speaker uses over one-third of all modifiers is worth bearing in mind also in the later sections when the use of modifiers by the native and the non-native speakers will be compared.

Table 4   The number of modifiers used by individual speakers

	NNS		NS		NSE		NSF	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
S1	40	10.2	111	17	132	8.8	61	4.0
S2	31	7.9	116	17.6	132	8.8	131	8.7
S3	52	13.2	51	7.8	154	10.2	80	5.3
S4	53	13.5	64	9.8	162	10.8	205	13.6
S5	10	2.5	23	3.5	71	4.7	151	10.1
S6	21	5.3	120	18.3	86	5.7	216	14.3
S7	56	14.2	82	12.5	68	4.5	120	8.0
S8	130	33.1	88	13.5	100	6.7	127	8.4
S9					82	5.5	199	13.2
S10					62	4.1	8	0.5
S11					104	10.9	67	4.4
S12					227	15.1	58	3.8
S13					63	4.2	84	5.6
tot	393	100	654	100	1503	100	1507	100

5.1.2   The relative frequency of pragmatic force modifiers

A more problematic matter than just presenting the number of pragmatic force modifiers in the three sets of data is to find a good way of comparing these numbers with each other in a meaningful way. That is, the use of modifiers ought to be related to the conversations as a whole before anything can be said about their relative frequency or about the differences or similarities between conversations in this respect. This is further complicated by the fact that the data involves two different languages, which happen to be structurally very different. This has implications for using a type/token analysis, i.e. relating the number of pragmatic force modifiers to the total number of words spoken, as a tool for

comparison. Thus, while it is possible to assess the frequency of pragmatic force modifiers with a type/token analysis when comparing conversations in English, this is no longer a revealing method when comparing conversations in English and Finnish. Due to typological differences, there is a discrepancy between these two languages in terms of word-formation and the amount of information that words convey. That is, where English, for example, uses a system of articles and prepositions to signal grammatical relationships between words, Finnish uses a system in which grammatical information is usually encoded in suffixes. For this reason, words in Finnish tend to be longer and to carry more information than words in English. Therefore, type/token comparisons do not yield comparable results across the two languages. This becomes evident when the two sentences in example 2 below are compared, each of which conveys the same information and contains basically the same pragmatic force modifier (i.e. *probably* and *luultavasti*); the ratio between the modifier and the total number of words is, however, very different in these (constructed) sentences:

> Example 2
>
> I will *probably* meet her too at the university (modifier-word ratio 1: 9)
> Tapaan *luultavasti* hänet**kin** yliopistolla (modifier-word ratio 1: 4)
> (meet-I probably her-also university-at)

From these difficulties it follows that the relative frequency of pragmatic force modifiers will be discussed in two stages below. Firstly, the data in English, that is, NS-NNS and NSE conversations will be dealt with separately. After all, the non-native speakers' performance in English and how it relates to that of native speakers of English is a central concern for the present study. The fact that the speakers in the NS-NNS and NSE conversations use the same language makes it possible to compare the relative frequency of pragmatic force modifiers by relating the number of modifiers (and the number of words in them) to the total number. A similar type/token analysis, as shown above, is not feasible when the relative frequency of pragmatic force modifiers is compared in the conversations in English and Finnish. Therefore, the second stage consists of carrying out comparisons with the help of T-unit analysis, which will be introduced in section 5.1.2.2 below as a method that facilitates the comparison of the relative frequency of pragmatic force modifiers across languages.

5.1.2.1 Comparison of interlanguage and target language: ratio of modifiers to words

This section deals with the proportion of modifiers in all the words spoken. Three types of speakers of English will be compared in this respect: non-native speakers of English (NNS), native speakers of English conversing with Finns (NS), and native speakers of English conversing among themselves (NSE). In calculating this proportion, it is important to bear in mind that a number of modifying expressions

contain two or more words (e.g. *I think, or something like that*). Consequently, the number of pragmatic force modifiers is not the same as the number of words involved in the formation of those modifiers. For this reason table 5 below gives information about four aspects of the data: how many pragmatic force modifiers there are in the data, the number of words these contain, the total number of words in the different sets of data, and the proportion of words which are used as pragmatic force modifiers:

Table 5   Proportion of modifiers in the data in English

	NNS n=8	NS n=8	NSE n=13
Pragmatic force modifiers (n)	393	655	1503
Number of words in modifiers	599	993	2484
Total number of words	6190	8250	20480
Proportion of words with a modifying function (%)	9.7	12.0	12.1

The number of modifiers used by the non-native speakers is clearly smaller than that used by the native speakers in the same conversations (393 vs. 655), but as the non-native speakers also talk less – i.e. the total number of words spoken is smaller – the difference in this proportion is not as big as the raw figures might suggest. Interestingly, table 5 suggests that native speakers of English seem to use pragmatic force modifiers as much when talking to non-native speakers (NS) as when talking to other native speakers (NSE). There thus seems to be no accommodation (see Beebe and Giles 1984) for the benefit of non-native speakers at least as far as the frequency of modifiers is concerned. A likely reason for this is that the non-native speakers are such advanced speakers of English that the native speakers probably find it unnecessary to monitor their own use of language as much as would be the case if the non-native speakers had only very restricted skills in English.

It was pointed out in the section above that the NNS data differ from all the others in that one speaker uses more than a third of all the pragmatic force modifiers. Given that the NNS material consists of only eight speakers, this is bound to skew the findings above to some extent. Therefore, for comparison, it is worth pointing out that if this speaker's contribution was left out of consideration, the proportion of modifiers in the total number of words would be clearly smaller for the rest of the non-native speakers than suggested by the figures in table 5

above. In fact, the proportion of modifiers will be reduced to 7.5 % among the remaining seven non-native speakers. This shows an even clearer contrast with the corresponding figure for the native speakers (12%) than the one suggested in table 5 above.

It might have been useful to carry out statistical tests, for example the z-test, to determine whether the difference between the figures illustrating the proportion of modifiers in the native and non-native speech (i.e. 9.7 % and 12 %) is statistically significant. There are, however, two reasons why statistical tests have not been used in this connection. Firstly, the number of subjects in each set of data is too small (either eight or thirteen) to warrant statistically meaningful analyses. That is, due to the small number of speakers in each group, the differences and tendencies observed above could, in principle, be caused by chance rather than the speakers' status as native or non-native speakers.

The second, and more important, reason for not carrying out statistical measures of significance arises from the qualitative underpinnings of the present study. That is, the present study seeks to describe and evaluate the use of pragmatic force modifiers in the conversations studied. The purpose is not to strive for generalizations that would be applicable to population at large, and that would illustrate how Finnish speakers of English, native speakers of English, and native speakers of Finnish, in general, use pragmatic force modifiers. Given the context-dependent nature of pragmatic force modifiers described in section 3.3.1 above, it is doubtful whether it would even be possible to arrive at such generalizations. The use of statistical methods, however, would imply that the findings of the present study are as such generalizable to the population at large.

It was pointed out in chapter four above that techniques of quantification can be used in connection with qualitative research. However, as both Silverman (1993) and Alasuutari (1994) point out, it is crucial to bear in mind that the questions to which answers will be sought with the help of numerical information are different in qualitative and quantitative research. Therefore, for the purposes of the present study, the figures above are illustrative enough to show that there is a tendency, however slight, for the non-native speakers in the data to use pragmatic force modifiers less than the native speakers. Whether this applies also to other types of NS-NNS interaction is beyond the scope of the present study.

5.1.2.2 Comparison of interlanguage, target language and native language: T-unit analysis

It is possible, in principle, to carry out a similar type/token analysis to that reported above also in the Finnish conversations, and the result is that the 1462 pragmatic force modifiers in the NSF conversations and the words involved in their formation stand for 11 % of all the words in the NSF data. In other words, the figure looks rather similar to those obtained from the performances of the native speakers of English. However, as was discussed above, the findings will hardly be directly comparable due to the difference in the structure of the two languages.

Therefore, a T-unit analysis will be used as an attempt to solve the problems involved in comparing languages that are 'non-matching' due to their typological differences.

The concept of T-unit, or minimal terminable unit, was introduced by Hunt (1965) as a way of assessing syntactic development in schoolchildren's writing. Each T-unit contains one independent clause and its dependent clauses. In other words, conjoined independent clauses make up two T-units, whereas embedding a clause to an independent clause results in a single T-unit as the sentences in example 3 below show (from Bardovi-Harlig 1992:390):

Example 3

There was a woman next door, and she was a singer (S + S) = 2 T-units
There was a woman next door who was a singer [S (S)] = 1 T-unit

T-unit analysis has been widely used in second language research (see Gaies 1980, Bardovi-Harlig 1992). Usually its purpose has been to measure syntactic complexity in speech and writing, longer T-units with more clauses being interpreted as more complex than single-clause units. Bardovi-Harlig (1992) expresses some critical comments as to the applicability of T-unit analysis for evaluating the syntactic complexity of compositions written by advanced adult second language learners. However, syntactic complexity is not the issue in the present study. Instead, the main concern is to find a way of dividing the data into units that can be compared across different languages, and for that purpose T-unit analysis can be fruitful.

T-unit analysis was developed, in the first place, for written language, where it is usually possible to divide discourse into neat units with no residue. The problem in applying T-unit analysis to spoken discourse is that it does not consist of full, well-formed sentences. It is, therefore, obvious that T-unit division in its strictest sense has to be compromised when it is applied to spoken language. For example, spoken discourse is fragmentary, because speakers often leave clauses unfinished and interrupt their turns after a few words instead of producing full clauses. Another problem is that clauses are rarely 'complete' in the sense of always having subjects and finite verbs. Instead, speakers often resort to elliptical[2] constructions which are sufficient for conveying their intentions. In the present study, such incomplete clauses are, nevertheless, counted as T-units. Thus, there are three units in the following example: the question by S2, the interrupted answer by S3 and the 'elliptical' answer without either subject or finite verb, which follows the truncated one (# marks the beginning of a new T-unit):

Example 4

S2   [#did you get it?]
S3   [#you have to wait] t- #well actually no\
        (NSE 3/70)

---

[2]   That is, elliptical from the viewpoint of written language norms.

Another problem in carrying out T-unit analysis on spoken discourse is that it contains plenty of material that cannot be treated in terms of clauses at all. This applies especially to minimal feedback signals such as *mhm, mm, yeah* or *right*, which abound in any conversational data. In the present study, such minimal feedback signals are not counted as T-units because they do not have any content value in the propositional sense that speakers could modify. It is, of course, difficult to make any hard-and-fast division between minimal feedback and turns proper, but for practical purposes, all the occasions where these markers occur alone as support-like signals have been excluded, as in example 5 below, in which the uses of *yeah* and *mm* by S1 and S3 have been interpreted as feedback signals rather than as turns 'proper':

Example 5

S2   #I mean it wasn't, the sort of thing I was talking about [#you know] the
S1   [mm]
      snobbery [and,] that WE have #I mean it's so- so ingrained in this
S3   [yeah]
      [society] isn't it/ it's just (-)
S1   [yeah]
      (NSF 4/83)

Counting these feedback signals as T-units would have added considerably to their number. Moreover, as these feedback signals are always used without pragmatic force modifiers, their inclusion in an analysis which aims to find the ratio of pragmatic force modifiers per T-unit would have skewed the findings, especially as there can be considerable differences in how much individual speakers use feedback signals. Young (1995), similarly, leaves minimal feedback signals out of consideration when he divides interview data into T-units.

By way of concluding this introduction to T-units, examples 6 and 7 below give longer stretches from conversations both in English and Finnish to illustrate how counting T-units has been carried out in the present study (as with the examples above, # marks the beginning of a new T-unit):

Example 6

S1   #I CAN'T vote in this country
S2   #[can't you/]
S3   [yeah]
S1   #oh no I can't, #I'm not a British citizen, #I- I'm American #I can't vote in Britain, #but YET I still have to pay the poll tax #and I [thought that's (--)]
S3   #[god that IS unfair]
      that's horrible [#I have to pay the poll tax] #on the OTHER hand, I've had five
S2   #[that's really weird yeah]
      or six medical emergencies since I was-, [I've been here for a-]
S2   #[yeah so you've actually] used the=
S1   #=and and they they always give me FREE medical care free everything #it's never a question, erm
S2   #and that's totally- I mean that doesn't happen in the States does it/ [at all]
S1   #[oh] god no\
      (NSE 4/80)

Example 7

S2 #se on kyllä jännä tuo niinku tuo kielen vaihtaminen sillai #että, er, JONKUN
    aikaa se onnistuu sillai että niinku tavallaan puhuu kahta kieltä, [kahta
    VIERASTA kieltä,] silleen, vaikka melkeen joka toisen lauseen, #mut
S3 [#siis kahta VIERASTA kieltä joo]
    sitte, jonkun ajan kuluttua rupee tuntumaan että nyt nyt menee vähän, vähän
    liikaa #ja sit jos siihen tulee vielä kolomas kieli ni sitte kyllä [((laughs))], #mut
S3 [mm]
    on jännä niinku joitaki ihmisiä LIISAN muistatko
S1 mhm
S2 #ni tuota, että ku sille sano YHEN sanan jollakin kielellä, ni se vaihto
    välittömästi, #mutta se on er, KOTONANSA kakskielinen, #et se [voi tietysti]
S3 [ai jaa]
    vaikuttaa se et sil on, ruotsi ja suomi molemmat äidinkieliä
    (#it's really funny that language switching you know #for a while it's all right
    that you kind of speak two languages, [two foreign languages] like almost
    [#you mean two foreign languages yeah]
    every other sentence #but then after a while you start feeling that this is a bit too
    much #and then if a third language comes in then ((laughs)) #but it's funny with
    some people like with Liisa remember?
    mhm
    #like when you said one word to her in some language she switched to it
    immediately #but she's bilingual at home #so it can obviously play a role that
    both Swedish and Finnish are her mother tongues)
    (NSF 3/112)

It is always difficult to put two different languages on a par for
comparative purposes, and T-unit analysis is certainly not an ideal solution.
However, applying it makes it possible to overcome some of the problems
involved in comparing two structurally very different languages, and it is
therefore quite useful for the present purpose. At the very least, it offers an
alternative way in which to approach the frequency of pragmatic force modifiers.

Table 6 below shows the results obtained from the T-unit analysis. The
table first provides information about the number of pragmatic force modifiers and
about the total number of words in the four types of data. The number of T-units
is then provided, as well as the average length of T-units (for reasons discussed
below), and finally, and most importantly, the relationship between pragmatic
force modifiers and T-units, showing how many pragmatic force modifiers, on
average, there are per T-unit.

The T-unit analysis seems to provide a way of comparing two
typologically different languages that avoids some of the problems associated with
type-token comparisons. This is indicated by the finding that even though the
difference in the raw number of words in the NSE and NSF conversations is fairly
big, the number of T-units in the two sets of conversations is rather similar. This
makes sense given that the conversations have the same duration: it would be
unlikely that, during the same amount of time, speakers of either English or
Finnish would deliver notably more T-units.

Table 6   Results of T-unit analysis

	NNS	NS	NSE	NSF
Number of modifiers	393	655	1503	1507
Number of words	6190	8250	20480	13580
T-units	739	976	1815	1453
Words/T-unit	8.4	8.4	11.3	9.4
Modifiers/T-unit	0.5	0.7	0.8	1.0

It was pointed out above that T-unit analysis has often been used to measure the syntactic complexity of language, longer T-units being regarded as more complex than shorter, single clause T-units (see e.g. Bardovi-Harlig 1992). The syntactic complexity of T-units is not a concern in this study. However, it is interesting that the number of words per T-unit is bigger in both sets of native speaker data than in either the non-native or the native speakers' performance in the NS-NNS data. One way to interpret this finding is that the native speakers in the NS-NNS material adapt their language when talking to non-native speakers, simplifying it at least as far as the length of T-units is concerned. As far as the use of pragmatic force modifiers is concerned, however, there seems to be little difference in how much the native speakers in the NS-NNS and NSE material use them, as suggested both by the type/token analysis above (see page 81) and the T-unit analysis, as the ratio of modifiers per T-unit is almost the same (0.7 and 0.8) for each group.

As for the proportion of modifiers per T-unit, the findings in the NS-NNS material support the findings in the section above in that the non-native speakers use fewer modifiers per T-unit than the native speakers: 0.5 versus 0.7. It was pointed out above that one speaker in the NNS material accounts for more than a third of all the pragmatic force modifiers used by the non-native speakers. Therefore, as in section 5.1.2.1 above, it is also worthwhile considering the ratio of modifiers per T-unit when this speaker's performance is excluded. In that case, the difference between the non-native and native speakers would be even bigger: the non-native speakers' figure would drop to 0.4 modifiers per T-unit among the seven remaining speakers.

The most interesting finding, however, is that the ratio of pragmatic force modifiers per T-unit is clearly the biggest in the conversations in Finnish, in which there is, on average, one pragmatic force modifier per T-unit. This difference might be partly due to the decision to quantify each morphological clitic as a modifier in its own right. That is, when a word contains a modifying clitic as, for example in *mikähän tuo on?* 'what+clitic is that', it is counted as one modifier because it would be difficult to quantify it otherwise. Therefore, it is quite common in the NSF data

to find that a T-unit contains a morphological modifier as well as a lexical one (e.g. *sehän on **hirveän** hyvä* 'that+*clitic* is *really* good'). This does not entirely explain the difference, however, because even if morphological clitics (136 altogether) were to be left out of consideration, the figure for the native speakers of Finnish would still be the biggest in the data as a whole: 0.9 modifiers per T-unit.

As was pointed out in the section above, the groups of speakers are too small to warrant tests of statistical significance. The figures describing the ratio between modifiers and T-units are, however, illustrative enough for showing certain tendencies. Firstly, it is hardly surprising that the modifier/T-unit ratio is the smallest for the non-native speakers. Secondly, and more interestingly, there seems to be a clear difference in Finnish speakers' performance in their foreign and native languages: the performance in Finnish results in one modifier per T-unit whereas the corresponding figure for the performance in English is 0.5. This finding is worth bearing in mind when, at later stages, the question of pragmatic transfer will be dealt with. At least on the basis of the T-unit analysis it seems unreasonable to propose that the learners' relatively infrequent use of modifiers would result from native language influence. In fact, the learners' performance not only differs from that of the native speakers of English but also, and even more so, from that of the native speakers of Finnish.

5.2   The explicit-implicit distribution of pragmatic force modifiers

When the descriptive model of pragmatic force modifiers was introduced in chapter three above, it was emphasized that the best way to conceptualize explicit and implicit modifiers is to think of them as forming a continuum with a grey shade-in area between the two extremes, rather than attempting a clear-cut division. For the purposes of assessing the relative frequency of explicit and implicit modifiers, however, some kind of division will be necessary even though it is, at the same time, important to bear in mind that such a strict division will only be an abstraction.

As was already made clear in chapter three above, when modifiers are characterized as either explicit or implicit in the present study, a criterion used is to include in the implicit category those modifiers that are semantically empty in the sense that it is difficult to say anything about their pragmatic functions outside their contexts of occurrence. The most typical candidates for the implicit category are thus pragmatic particles and morphological particles (see also the discussion in section 3.3.2 above), the function of which can only be considered in their context of occurrence. Pragmatic force modifiers whose pragmatic function is more transparent, even outside context, in that it is relatively easy to decide on the kind of effect they have on messages (e.g. *probably, kind of*) have been included in the explicit category. However, many modifiers belong to the grey area between the two extremes and they have been counted as either implicit or as explicit depending on their context of occurrence. A typical example of such a modifier is *actually*. In some contexts, its use seems to be connected to the speakers' assessments of the truth of what they are saying as in *they've **actually** made money out of it* where it seems to

function as an emphatic. Such uses have been included in the explicit category. In many contexts, however, *actually* is used in a particle-like fashion, and speakers often add it to their utterances almost as an afterthought, which affects the pragmatic impact of the utterance as a whole, as in example 8:

Example 8

F2   if some of your relatives speak, Welsh
N1   noo they never did *actually*
      (NS-NNS 1/7)

In such uses, it is difficult to be very precise about the exact function of *actually*. It seems that the expression is, in fact, often functioning as a pragmatic particle. It is, therefore, included in the implicit category whenever its function remains ambivalent and hard to define. It is possible that there is a process going on whereby *actually* is becoming a pragmatic particle. In much the same way, Hakulinen and Seppänen (1992) report on a process whereby Finnish *kato* (literally the imperative form of the verb 'to look') has lost its literal sense and has, instead, become a pragmatic particle which speakers use to signal their attitudes to the other participants and to the message, or to indicate coherence relations.

It is thus important to bear in mind that the division between explicit and implicit pragmatic force modifiers is not meant to be taken in too absolute terms. Rather, it has been introduced in this section for the purposes of allowing comparisons across different sets of data and it ought to be seen as something that, in actual fact, gets blurred as the same expression can be differently located along the explicit-implicit continuum depending on the context. Table 7 provides the results of the explicit and implicit division in the four different types of data:

Table 7   The explicit-implicit distribution of pragmatic force modifiers

	NNS		NS		NSE		NSF	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
explicit	275	70	369	56.3	814	54.2	666	44.2
implicit	118	30	286	43.7	689	45.8	841	55.8
total	393	100	655	100	1503	100	1507	100

As can be seen, the non-native speakers resort in the majority of cases to explicit pragmatic force modifiers. The native speakers of English, both in the NS-NNS and the NSE conversations, use both types frequently but they favour implicit modifiers slightly more. The native speakers of Finnish, however, make proportionally the most frequent use of implicit modifiers. Thus, in addition to using more pragmatic force modifiers per T-unit than the other speakers in the data,

the Finnish speakers also more often than the other speakers opt for implicit modification strategies, as was also suggested in table 3 above, in which the most frequently used modifiers in the NSF conversations were pragmatic particles and clitic particles. It is also interesting to note that in terms of the explicit-implicit division, the Finnish speakers' performance in English and Finnish is quite different in that they favour explicitness in the former case and implicitness in the latter. Figure 6 illustrates this difference between the explicit-implicit distribution in the different sets of data in a more concrete manner:
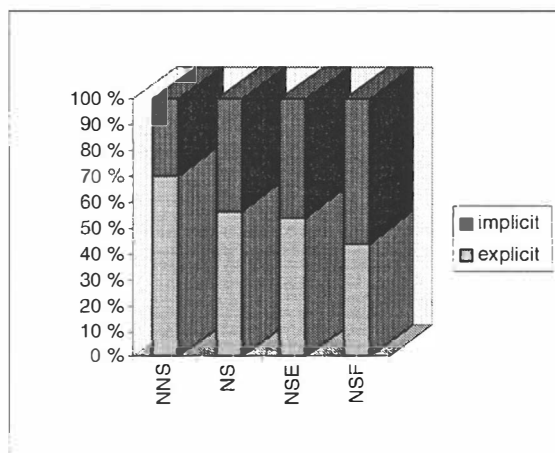
Figure 6   Illustration of the explicit-implicit distribution

It is hardly surprising that the non-native speakers find it easier to resort to explicit pragmatic force modifiers, the meaning of which is relatively transparent. Implicit modifiers, as was discussed in chapter three above, are characterised by ambivalence, and mastering such ambivalence apparently causes problems to learners. Kärkkäinen (1990:73), for example, suggests that language learners use devices such as modal verbs less than native speakers because they cannot exploit their potential to convey attitudes implicitly. However, the finding that there seems to be a difference in the extent to which the native speakers of English and Finnish resort to explicit and implicit pragmatic force modifiers is even more interesting than the difference between native and non-native speakers. As figure 6 suggests, the native speakers of Finnish seem to be the most inclined towards implicitness. The implicit choices by the Finnish speakers are drawn from a rich system of pragmatic particles and morphological clitics with modifying functions, as will be discussed in more detail in the chapters to follow when the interpersonal functions of pragmatic force modifiers are analyzed. However, the frequency of pragmatic modifiers in general and implicit modifiers in particular in the NSF conversations begs the question as to whether some of the claims that have been made about Finnish speakers' tendency towards directness (e.g. Laine-Sveiby 1987) might be

explained by insufficient attention paid to the implicit strategies with which Finnish speakers can modify their messages.

The analysis of the frequency of modifiers and the distribution of explicit and implicit modifiers in different sets of data has thus provided some useful information worth bearing in mind later when conducting the qualitative analysis of modifiers and their functions. Comparison of the frequency of modifiers using both type/token analysis and T-unit analysis suggested that the non-native speakers used modifiers less often, proportionally, than the native speakers of English, even though the number of speakers was too small to explore the statistical significance of the difference. The T-unit analysis showed, moreover, that also the difference between the learners and the native speakers of Finnish was quite considerable. In fact, the relative number of pragmatic force modifiers per T-unit was found to be the biggest in the NSF conversations. As far as the types of expressions used are concerned, the non-native speakers had a narrower range at their disposal even though they used most of the modifiers that ranked highest in the native speakers' performance. This suggests that they are familiar with the modifying expressions as such, even though their ability to make strategic use of them is not fully developed. Another finding concerns the explicit-implicit distribution. In the performance of the native speakers of both English and Finnish, the proportion of implicit modifiers was greater than that of explicit modifiers. The native speakers of Finnish, in particular, made abundant use of implicit modifiers throughout the conversations. In other words, the non-native speakers' performance differs in this respect from both types of native speakers in that they clearly favoured the more explicit choices. The findings, thus, suggest that the 'modification profile' looks slightly different for each set of speakers both in relation to the frequency of modifiers and to the types of modifiers used. Analysis of frequencies and types of pragmatic force modifiers used has, however, provided no information about the types of situations in which speakers are most likely to use modifiers, or about the interpersonal purposes for which the speakers use pragmatic force modifiers during the conversations. The following chapters, in adopting a qualitative approach to the data, seek to provide answers to these pragmatic considerations. For, as Mey (1993:38) points out, rather than looking at certain linguistic elements in isolation, it is important when doing pragmatic research that "we pose ourselves the all-important question, how are these linguistic elements used in a concrete setting, i.e., a context?"

6 INTERPERSONAL FUNCTIONS OF PRAGMATIC FORCE MODIFIERS

As was pointed out in chapter two, earlier research has indicated that politeness and involvement are among the main motivating forces behind speakers' tendency to use pragmatic force modifiers. The purpose of this chapter is, firstly, to discuss the concepts of politeness and involvement in more detail than was done in chapter two. Secondly, the way speakers in the three sets of data use pragmatic force modifiers for these interpersonal purposes will be explored. In order to do this, it is important to pay close attention to conversational situations in which the use of modifiers is particularly commonplace, because recurrent occurrence of modifiers in certain situations, or with certain types of acts, is a good indicator of their interpersonal relevance for such acts. Moreover, the analysis also seeks to shed some light on the relative importance of explicit and implicit modifiers for expressing politeness and involvement in the three sets of data. Throughout the analysis, the Finnish speakers' interlanguage performance will be of central concern, and their way of using pragmatic force modifiers for politeness and involvement purposes will be compared with the native speakers of both English and Finnish.

6.1 The concepts of politeness and involvement

This section will provide background for the ensuing analysis by introducing the concepts of politeness and involvement, and the way these concepts are understood in the present study. Attention will also be paid to the relationship between these two concepts, as well as to the importance which earlier research has accorded pragmatic force modifiers for conveying politeness and involvement in interaction.

6.1.1 Politeness

Research on politeness has expanded rapidly during the last fifteen years.[1] Despite the growing interest, there is no unanimity as to how exactly politeness should be defined. This is understandable because politeness is a complex social phenomenon which can be differently realized in different social situations. Politeness as it is understood in linguistics involves more than the common-sense notion of politeness as the conventionalized observance of certain social norms which spell out the appropriate ways of, for example, thanking or greeting. Usually, politeness is understood as interactional success in general. Due to this general nature of politeness it is not easy to give an all-encompassing account of those linguistic choices that can be used for politeness functions; the interplay between forms and functions is always context-specific. Because of this, definitions of politeness tend to be quite general. For example, Janney and Arndt's (1993:23) definition states that politeness, or tact, as they call it, "involves empathising with others, and not doing or saying things that threaten them, offend them, or injure their feelings" or, even more generally, it is usual to characterise politeness as conflict-avoidance. Despite the dependency of politeness on situational factors, there is a widely held assumption that politeness is an aspect of social life that is universal (see e.g. Brown and Levinson 1987, Janney and Arndt 1993). Therefore, there seems to be a double-edged challenge for research in politeness: both to clarify the notion of politeness in general so as to make it widely — maybe universally — applicable, and also to account for its contextual variability.

There are different conceptualizations of politeness, ranging from those which see politeness as a system which helps explain deviations from "maximally efficient" communication in Grice's sense (e.g. Lakoff 1973, Leech 1983) to those for which politeness is the expected norm in interaction rather than such unadorned use of language as described by Grice's cooperative principle (e.g. Fraser and Nolen 1981). However, there is no doubt that the most influential endeavour to explain politeness in language use has been Brown and Levinson's (1978/1987) theory of politeness. Much of consequent research on politeness has been based on their framework, and even suggestions for different points of departure usually start from a critical evaluation of their theory.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory can be characterized as the face-saving view of politeness because they start from the assumption, adopted from Goffman (1967), that every rational member of society has *face*, a public self-image that every person is entitled to. Normally, each person's face depends on everyone else's face being maintained, so there is a mutual need for interactants to preserve each other's face. Brown and Levinson develop Goffman's notion of face further, introducing negative and positive aspects of it. Negative face involves "the want of every 'competent adult member' of society that his actions be unimpeded by

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[1]   See Du Fon et al. (1994) for a comprehensive bibliography, and Fraser (1990), Kasper (1990, 1994) and Janney and Arndt (1993) for reviews of politeness research.

others" (i.e. desire for autonomy). Positive face is a person's need to be appreciated and liked, to have his or her wants "desirable to at least some others" (i.e. desire for approval). (Brown and Levinson 1987:62.) There is thus tension between two opposite kinds of face wants, and depending on the situation, different aspects of face will be attended to.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of politeness is tied to the notion of face in that when it is necessary for speakers to perform face-threatening acts (FTAs), they can diminish the threat by resorting to redressive action which seeks to satisfy participants' face wants. According to whether the purpose of the redress is to protect participants' positive or negative face, these strategies are called positive and negative politeness, respectively. Brown and Levinson (1987) discuss various ways in which speakers can be positively or negatively polite. Positive politeness strategies aim at satisfying participants' need for approval, and hence include things like exaggerating agreement with the interlocutors, showing interest, and noticing the hearers' wants and needs. Negative politeness strategies help satisfy participants' need for autonomy by indicating the speaker's reluctance to impose on others' territory and to restrain their freedom of action. Being indirect, using hedges, and veiling responsibility by the use of impersonal forms are examples of negative politeness strategies. Positive politeness thus emphasizes closeness between the speakers, which is why Scollon and Scollon (1981) use the term *solidarity politeness*, whereas negative politeness involves showing distance and it has therefore also been called *deference politeness* (Scollon and Scollon 1981).

Brown and Levinson argue that both negative and positive politeness strategies are universal but that cultures can differ in respect to which strategy is considered the most important. Moreover, which politeness strategies a speaker chooses in any given situation is dependent on three variables, which were also discussed when dealing with contextual factors in section 2.2.2 above: the degree of distance between speakers (D), the amount or power that the speaker has over the hearer (P), and the degree to which an act is seen as face-threatening in a given situation, the absolute ranking of the imposition (R). Brown and Levinson suggest that the weightiness of a face threat and the consequent need for politeness can be calculated by reference to these variables. It seems, however, that important though these variables are, the relationship between them is so complex that a simple summative basis of calculation (i.e. that the size of the imposition is D + P + R) is not enough to determine either the size of imposition or the politeness investment required in each situation. In particular the findings concerning the effect of the distance factor on politeness have been conflicting, as suggested, for example by Lim and Bowers (1991:422-423) and Holtgraves (1992:145).

Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness has also attracted a great deal of criticism. A point often encountered is that, despite claims to universality, their view of politeness is western-biased. In particular, the universality of the kind of face they propose and its major role in motivating polite behaviour has come under attack. It has been argued that the important role they assign to negative face is ethnocentric, and that this western concept of face is too individual-oriented when in many eastern cultures group membership constitutes the basis for

interaction (see e.g. Matsumoto 1988, 1989, Ide 1989, Mao 1994). For example in Japanese culture, speakers are always obliged to acknowledge their hierarchical position relative to others in a given situation. This is grammatically coded in language rather than being negotiable, which means that speakers always, even when expressing such simple propositions as 'Today is Saturday', have to use appropriate honorific forms for a given situation to be grammatically correct (see Matsumoto 1988). In such circumstances, the notion that politeness entails a voluntary choice of strategies with which speakers protect their faces from imposition ceases to be tenable, and other views of politeness are called for. Thus Brown and Levinson's claims about the universality of the relationship between face and politeness are probably too strong. Yet the concept of face itself, as Mao (1994:484) acknowledges, "has an interactional force shaping the things that we do with words", albeit differently in different cultures.[2] In addition, Brown and Levinson's distinction between positive and negative face seems to capture an essential feature of the human condition. As O'Driscoll (1996) points out, even though the surface manifestations of face may vary culturally, the basic *wants* for both merging and individuation – which can be called positive and negative wants – are most probably shared by all humans.

Kopytko (1995:881, emphasis original) voices a strong criticism against the assumption of rationality underlying Brown and Levinson's theory whereby they "view linguistic strategies as *means* satisfying communicative and face-oriented *ends*, in a strictly formal system of rational 'practical reasoning'". Kopytko (1995) is also critical of Brown and Levinson's assumption about the predictive nature of their model, arguing that a rationalistic approach fails to take account of the non-predictive character of human behaviour, which may be governed by various other factors than purely rational reasoning as to the means with which to accomplish certain goals. However, the fact that language users constantly resort to the strategies described by Brown and Levinson (1987) suggests that they have some significance in interaction even though it can be questioned to what extent speakers actually employ these strategies as means to specific ends; it is also possible that the use of politeness strategies is so deeply ingrained in speakers' language that they have no need to resort to any means-ends reasoning in a strict sense. Brown and Levinson (1987:85) touch upon this issue themselves in pointing out that the use of strategies described in their theory need not always be conscious.

Another criticism that has been advanced against Brown and Levinson's theory is that the emphasis lies on the linguistic level despite other levels being mentioned. Werkhofer (1993:156), for example, criticises this tendency, prevalent also in other approaches to politeness, of placing the main focus on the linguistic medium and treating it as if it were the only one. A notable exception to this tendency is Arndt and Janney's (e.g. 1985, 1987, 1991) theory of emotive communication, in which they advocate a cross-modal view of politeness that

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[2]   See Strecker (1993) for cross-culturally varying conceptualizations of face.

takes into account verbal, prosodic, and kinesic cues. Such broader understanding of politeness is fruitful, and Arndt and Janney (1987) show convincingly the interplay between the verbal, kinesic, and prosodic choices by giving examples of utterances which are modified by the three types of cues simultaneously. The problem remains, however, that even though taking account of the three levels may be relatively easy when dealing with short invented examples, it becomes less so with authentic data, where numerous contextual constraints influence the interpretation of each of the levels. That is, the application of the cross-modal approach to naturally-occurring data would require a great deal of effort, and analysing large amounts of data would be more problematic than when the verbal level alone is dealt with.

Despite the criticisms, Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness still is, as Fraser (1990:219) points out, "the most clearly articulated and most thoroughly worked out, therefore providing the best framework within which to raise the crucial questions about politeness that must now be addressed". Moreover, as Jenny Thomas (personal communication) points out, most of the criticism of the theory has been made long after it first came out, backed with a much broader understanding of politeness phenomena; it is understandable that the fifteen years of extensive further research have indicated where the theory needs refinement. In addition, it is an advantage of Brown and Levinson's theory that it operationalizes politeness as the enactment of certain strategies. This makes it easier to use the model as a research tool than applying the models that deal with politeness at a more abstract level (e.g. Fraser and Nolen's (1981) and Fraser's (1990) view of politeness as a conversational contract). Moreover, the distinction between negative and positive politeness is useful when investigating pragmatic force modifiers involving both softening and emphasizing devices. Therefore, the present study will also draw upon Brown and Levinson's theory, bearing in mind the criticisms that the theory has attracted and the refinements suggested.

6.1.2   Involvement

It was pointed out in chapter two above that modifying devices have also been characterized as markers of *involvement* (e.g. Chafe 1982, see also Östman 1986:208, Caffi and Janney 1994:356-357). Therefore, it is useful to consider what is meant by the concept and how it relates to that of politeness. The increasing interest in involvement ties in with the more general interest in language as a mediator of affect, or emotive use of language. Emotive communication means that speakers, in addition to conveying factual information, also express attitudes and feelings through language. It is worth stressing, as Caffi and Janney (1994:328-329) do, that emotive communication is not automatically or even necessarily a reflection of speakers' 'real' inner affective states. Instead, it is inherently strategic behaviour in that people usually wish to attain some interactional ends by signals of

96

emotion.[3] In Caffi and Janney's (1994:329) words: "emotional communication, thus viewed, is hence less a personal psychological phenomenon than an interpersonal social one" (see also Selting 1994:376). Involvement is a term often used in pragmatics in connection with emotive communication.

Besnier (1994a, 1994b) discusses the use of the term involvement, and says that it was first used systematically in linguistics in the early 1980's in Gumperz's (1982) work on discourse strategies to refer to the willingness and ability of speakers to initiate and sustain conversations, and in Chafe's (1982) research to describe how spoken language differs from written language in terms of its tendency to reflect speakers' attention to the act of communication, to their interlocutors and to the "experiential richness" (Chafe 1982:45) of their messages.[4] Since then, the term involvement has often occurred in the linguistic literature (e.g. Hübler 1987, Katriel and Dascal 1989, Tannen 1984, 1989), but the problem remains that it has been used in widely different ways. Caffi and Janney (1994:345, emphasis original) say that it has been used variously "to refer to *preconditions* (inner states), *techniques* (rhetorical-stylistic strategies), *messages* (messages of rapport, shared feelings), and *effects* (the result of 'happy' or 'cohesive' interaction) of communication". Moreover, views of involvement are often so broad as to encompass all or many of these aspects. For example, Tannen's (1989:12) definition states that involvement is "an internal, even emotional connection individuals feel, which binds them to other people as well as to places, things, activities, ideas, memories, and words".

Involvement is thus typically used to refer to emotional connection and engagement that the speakers feel in the situation towards the subject matter and/or the other participants in interaction. In this vein, Tompson (1991:167) describes involvement as emotional commitment, and Besnier (1994b:281) points out how involvement is commonly thought of as synonymous with 'engrossed', 'concerned', and 'emotionally committed'. The focus of such involvement is typically either the topic or the interaction (e.g. Katriel and Dascal 1989) even though Chafe (1982) also introduces speaker's involvement with himself/herself. Understood in this way as emotional commitment, involvement will contrast with detachment (e.g. Chafe 1982). There are, however, also views according to which involvement should best be understood as a scale from detachment to attachment, both poles representing modes of involvement (e.g. Hübler 1987, Daneš 1994). In the present study, however, the term involvement will be used in the meaning discussed above, i.e. as a sign of emotional connection and engagement rather than detachment.

Studies concerned with involvement make rarely explicit the relationship between involvement and politeness even though the conception of involvement

[3] This is why Caffi and Janney (1994), as also Arndt and Janney (1987), wish to make a distinction between *emotional communication*, i.e. unintentional leakage of emotion in speech, and *emotive communication*, i.e. intentional, strategic signalling of affect in speech.

[4] See also Chafe and Danielewicz (1987) on the properties of spoken and written language.

as emotive communication seems to come close to politeness due to its "inherently strategic, persuasive, interactional, and other-directed" nature (Caffi and Janney 1994:329). Östman (1986), however, deals with both concepts when he sees involvement as an important pragmatic parameter together with politeness and coherence, arguing that utterances are always anchored to these three parameters either explicitly or implicitly. Östman (1986:182) notes that "these three areas of human behavior are also the primary parameters according to which pragmatic phenomena should be classified, and through which they can be explained". Coherence and politeness have their focus on culture and interaction, respectively. That is, speakers try both to be coherent with what is expected of them in the culture and society in which they live (coherence) and to act so that they take into account other people and avoid confrontations with them (politeness). Involvement, on its part, has the individual and his/her attitudes and feelings in focus. Thus, Östman (1986) distinguishes between the interactional nature of politeness and individual-oriented nature of involvement, while Besnier (1994b:281) and Caffi and Janney (1994:342) see involvement as a dimension which is interpersonal and relational in nature. However, given that Östman's (1986:200) notion of involvement also includes speaker's feelings and attitudes to the addressee in addition to topic and the situation, it seems to entail interactional features as well.

Politeness and involvement should, probably, best be seen as connected and interrelated. As Östman (1986:181) puts it, "a certain type of involvement can show up as politeness, or vice versa". Especially when involvement is conceptualized as "the display of positive affect towards interlocutors" (Besnier 1994b:281) it comes close to positive politeness. However, the two concepts should not be seen as fully identical. The difference between them seems to be that where politeness, by definition, is geared towards favourable outcomes and smooth communication and the diminishing of face threats, this need not be the case with involvement. Instead, involvement is a somewhat broader concept in referring to speakers signalling their feelings and attitudes to topics, situations and addressees in general, "for whatever purpose" (Östman 1986:201). For example, speakers engaged in a heated argument are certainly involved with each other and the situation at hand, and they most probably use language in a way that can be described as an example of "high involvement style" (Tannen 1984) even though they can hardly be described as polite. Different aspects of the same pragmatic phenomena might thus be revealed by switching the perspective from politeness to involvement. Therefore, it will be useful also in the present study to consider the functions of pragmatic force modifiers from the viewpoint of both politeness and involvement because that can shed some light on the ways in which modifiers, as other pragmatic phenomena, tend to be "highly polysemic and frequently ambiguous" (Besnier 1994b:286). The purpose, however, will not be to pin down pragmatic force modifiers to either politeness or involvement functions. Rather, an attempt will be made to explore the extent to which modifiers can signal both of these functions. That is, it is probably the case that pragmatic force modifiers are capable of signalling both politeness and involvement simultaneously.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that involvement, as politeness, can be expressed through various means, ranging from, for example, emphatic expressions (Biber and Finegan 1989) and interactional features such as repetition and cooperative overlaps between turns (Tannen 1984) to nonverbal cues such as gaze and posture (Cappella 1983). Moreover, as Caffi and Janney (1994:348) emphasize, impressions of involvement typically result from clusters of different linguistic, prosodic, and other features, the interpretation of which as involvement markers is, moreover, largely context-dependent. Thus, as Besnier (1994b:297) points out, involvement is a very broad notion. It is therefore important to see that the present study is only concerned with the potential involvement functions of pragmatic force modifiers rather than aiming at an overall explanation of the phenomenon.

6.1.3 Pragmatic force modifiers as markers of politeness and involvement: implications of earlier research

Previous research on the interpersonal functions of pragmatic force modifiers gives mostly evidence of their role in politeness, not least because the research on politeness has been pervasive, as was pointed out above. More specifically, the interest has predominantly focused on negative politeness, or tact, as Leech (1983) calls it. Held (1989:168) argues that this avoidance-based (i.e. avoiding threat/cost to hearer) view of politeness has meant that politeness has mainly been associated with notions such as weakening, minimizing, and softening. Consequently, the softening function of pragmatic force modifiers has been widely acknowledged as it contributes to negative politeness (e.g. House and Kasper 1981, James 1983, Holmes 1984b, Coates 1987, Koike 1989, Takahashi and Beebe 1993).

Due to the impetus in politeness research being on negative politeness, interest in emphatic strategies has remained much smaller even though Brown and Levinson (1987) mention the connection between emphasis and positive politeness. Held (1989), however, stresses the importance of accounting also for emphasizing, or maximizing, as she calls it. She also makes the important point that the relationship between emphasizing and politeness is less straightforward than simply drawing a parallel between emphasis and positive politeness: emphasizing strategies can serve negative politeness functions as well. Holmes (1984a) shares the same view and draws attention to the fact that the politeness functions of emphatic and softening are dependent on the kinds of acts they are used to modify so that the interplay between pragmatic force modifiers and their functions is more complicated than simply linking softening with negative politeness and emphasizing with positive politeness. This also suggests that both types of modifiers merit attention in pragmatic research, not least because the cumulative effect that is created when speakers use both types of modifiers together is, as yet, largely unaccounted for.

As regards the interplay between pragmatic force modifiers and involvement, earlier research has often made a connection between emphatic

modifiers and involvement.[5] Biber and Finegan (1989), for example, maintain that emphatics such as *I'm sure* play a role in creating a sense of involved interaction. Chafe (1985), similarly, maintains that speakers signal involvement with the subject matter by, for example, exaggeration and "vivid particles" such as *just*, and *really*, which are, as was shown in section 3.2.2 above, included among the group of pragmatic force modifiers in the present study. Emphasis has thus often been associated with speakers' involvement with the topic.

Apart from topics, speakers can also signal involvement in ways which have the addressees and the interaction with them in focus. Chafe (1985) calls this 'involvement with the hearer' and Katriel and Dascal (1989) 'interactional involvement'. As second person reference is the most obvious way of signalling involvement with the hearer (Chafe 1985), it has been argued that involvement functions are among the many functions that pragmatic force modifiers such as *you know* and *you see* can serve (e.g. Östman 1981a, Holmes 1986). In the same vein, other pragmatic force modifiers which can be used for appealing functions can be considered from the viewpoint of involvement with the addressee, among them devices such as tag questions and invariant tags such as *eh* in English and the clitic *-han/-hän* in Finnish (e.g. Östman 1981b, Nikula 1992, Meyerhoff 1994, Norrick 1995, Stubbe and Holmes 1995). Chafe (1985) also introduces the notion of ego-involvement, i.e. the speaker's involvement with him/herself; he maintains that the use of first person pronouns in such phrases as *I think, I suppose,* and *I don't know* indicate ego-involvement.

The discussion above thus indicates that various studies have connected pragmatic force modifiers either to politeness or involvement functions. However, as was pointed our in section 3.2.2 above, many studies on modifying devices have concentrated on certain expressions and their functions only. There is thus much room for research exploring the cumulative effect of different modifying devices in authentic interaction and their connection to politeness and involvement functions. Moreover, as earlier studies have usually focused on either politeness or involvement functions of modifying devices there is, as yet, little knowledge if some modifiers are more important for politeness and others for involvement functions. It was pointed out in chapter three that pragmatic force modifiers are conceptualized as forming a continuum from the more explicit to the more implicit choices. It is, therefore, also worth investigating whether there are differences between explicit and implicit modifiers in terms of their interpersonal functions on the one hand and in the ways native and non-native speakers use explicit and implicit modifiers for interpersonal functions on the other.

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[5]   Emphasis has, indeed, often been equated with involvement but Caffi and Janney (1994:247) criticise this view as a simplification.

6.2 Pragmatic force modifiers as markers of negative politeness

As was suggested above, there is a close link between modifiers with a softening function and negative politeness, i.e. the wish not to impose. The following analysis will examine the extent to which the speakers in the three sets of conversations studied use pragmatic force modifiers for negative politeness purposes, with special attention to the non-native speakers' interlanguage performance. It was shown in chapter four that unlike studies based on elicitation methods, the present study does not focus on how the learners perform particular face-threatening acts. Rather, the study seeks to gain a more global picture of the politeness requirements in the conversations. This, however, does not mean rejecting the notion of face-threatening acts. On the contrary, evidence of the politeness functions of pragmatic force modifiers can only be obtained by paying close attention to the kinds of acts in which their use is recurrent, and by evaluating the sensitivity/non-sensitivity of these acts in terms of the threats to face that they entail. The acts, however, are embedded in conversations rather than performed in isolation, which makes it necessary to take account of the overall conversational context when assessing the functions of modifiers.

Bublitz (1988) points out that a typical characteristic of most conversations is a tendency to seek agreement and establish cooperation. This applies to the present data as well: in all twelve conversations investigated for the study, there is an apparent attempt on the part of the participants to avoid confrontation and conflict. It is possible that the subjects' knowledge of their conversations being recorded simply adds to this overall tendency. This conflict-avoidance is evidenced by the fact that it is difficult to find the kind of severe face-threatening acts in the data that have been under investigation in much of elicitation-based research. There are, for example, no requests, refusals, or orders in the data. The lack of such acts does not, however, mean that there are no threats to negative face in the conversations and, hence, no need for negative politeness strategies. On the contrary, the avoidance of severe threats to face is itself a strong indication that the speakers wish to take each other's face wants into account in order to maintain the atmosphere of cooperation mentioned above. It was pointed out above, however, that according to Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, most linguistic acts are potentially face-threatening. This means that politeness strategies are frequently called for even in the absence of the kinds of serious threats mentioned above.

6.2.1 Comparison of interlanguage and target language

It is crucial to point out at the outset that even though the use of pragmatic force modifiers is a powerful means of conveying linguistic politeness, not every instance of speech requires the same amount of modification. This comes up very clearly in the NS-NNS conversations in terms of topics that the participants choose to discuss: all of the topics are not equally sensitive. Thus it is usual for both the native and the non-native speakers to be quite direct when discussing, for

example, what courses at the university they are taking, how many years they have studied, their place of residence, or other factual information. Given the context of university students talking with each other, these topics are probably considered 'free goods' in Goffman's (1967) sense, i.e. as topics which are open to discussion and not perceived as sensitive or face-threatening (see also Coates 1987). Moreover, when the speakers provide some factual background information about their respective countries, there seems to be little need for modification. This is illustrated by the following example, in which the Finnish speakers provide factual information about language teaching in Finnish schools without resorting to many pragmatic force modifiers. The lack of modifiers is, however, in no way disturbing in this context:[6]

> Example 1
>
> (topic: language teaching)
> F1   yea in Finland we have to, er everybody have to take two languages, Swedish and then another one, and, yeah\, for many many years\
> N2   [yeah *well*-]
> F1   [and that's like-]
> F2   [and man- *I've*] *HEARD*, er usually, er students have er three, [languages]
> F1   [languages] yeah, *I think* it's [[true]]
> F2   [[yeah]]
> N1   when did you, begin to learn, a language
> F1   English [at er third y]ear so when we were nine
> F2   [at third grade]
> F2   and YEAH yeah you could choose if you want to start with Swedish or English, or something else=
> F1   =something else but usually er=
> F2   =USUALLY it's [Swedish] or English, *well* I come from thee, Swedish
> F1   [English]
>   coast- coast of Finland so I took Swedish as my first language
>   (NS-NNS 1/6)[7]

This exchange shows that it would be a simplification to say that speakers should always avoid directness and opt for more indirect ways of expressing themselves. Rather, there are situations that require no extensive modification because of the nature of the topic. The effect of the topics discussed on the use of pragmatic force modifiers seems evident when comparing the four NS-NNS conversations in this respect. More than half of the pragmatic force modifiers (n 654, 62 % of all modifiers) occur in the two NS-NNS conversations (NS-NNS 1 and 4), in which the speakers discuss topics that range from those about 'safe' topics such as their studies to more personal matters such as speakers' opinions about different aspects of each others' countries and cultures. In conversations NS-NNS

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6   Throughout the analysis, the letters N and F are used in extracts from the NS-NNS material to distinguish between native and Finnish speakers, respectively (e.g. N1, F2). In the examples from the NSE and NSF data, the letter S (e.g. S1, S2) is used to refer to all speakers.

7   As was pointed out on page 71 (footnote 6), the numbers after the examples refer to pages of a separate monograph that contains the full transcripts of the data.

2 and NS-NNS 3, on the other hand, the speakers mainly keep to topics dealing with their studies, which may partly explain the fact that there are, on average, fewer pragmatic force modifiers in these two conversations (n 394, 38 % of all modifiers) than in the other two conversations. It is obvious, however, that no casual conversations can proceed only by recourse to undisputed facts and completely uncontroversial topics. Therefore, in all four NS-NNS conversations – also in those with less personal topics – the speakers exchange views and opinions, give accounts of personal experiences, ask questions, and tell anecdotes or stories. These activities pertain more to the personal sphere than conveying factual information, and there is thus more danger of the participants' faces being vulnerable to threats. Negative politeness strategies are called forth whenever there is a possibility that speakers might feel imposed upon by any of these activities.

6.2.1.1 Opinions

Expressing opinions is one of the basic functions speakers can accomplish through language and one of the most often occurring activities in the NS-NNS conversations. In fact, the conversations mainly proceed by the speakers offering their views and opinions and personal evaluations of the topics under discussion. How they do this is not without interpersonal consequences. As Givón (1989:166) puts it:

> In many cultures, perhaps in most, claiming direct personal responsibility for conveyed information may be a serious social error, to be strictly avoided in any but the most intimate - thus well protected - social contexts. Strong claims to direct authorship of transferred information, with the attendant marking of high subjective certainty and strong evidential support, are all to be avoided.

In order to act according to the requirements of negative politeness, speakers thus have to take constant care in bringing forth their views so that there is no risk of the addressees feeling offended or imposed. Consequently, speakers often choose to play down the pragmatic force of their opinions. They have various means at their disposal for doing this, the use of pragmatic force modifiers being a strategy which speakers employ quite often because it adds to indirectness and vagueness, which in turn helps to take the sharpest edge off the opinions.

Contextual factors obviously play a part in how much face-work is needed when opinions are expressed. The quote from Givón (1989) above suggests that, apart from the most intimate contexts, speakers are likely to attenuate the force of their opinions. Wolfson's (1988) bulge-theory, as has been pointed out earlier, posits that situations both among intimates and complete strangers usually require less politeness efforts than encounters with friends and acquaintances. In terms of such an intimate-stranger continuum, the NS-NNS conversations belong somewhere between the two extremes. The pairs of native and non-native speakers are strangers, but the Finns are acquaintances in each conversation as also the

native speakers in two of the conversations. The situations are thus not without potential further social consequences for the participants, which suggests at least a certain need to modify opinions so as not to be perceived as imposing on others.

The data seem to confirm the assumption of the need for modification: both the native and the non-native speakers make quite frequent use of pragmatic force modifiers when presenting their opinions, as the extracts below indicate. In example 2, native speaker N2 gives her opinion about a course she and F2 are taking, and in example 3, Finnish speaker F2 expresses his views about how study fees affect his motivation to study. As the examples indicate, both speakers make use of pragmatic force modifiers to soften the force of their opinions:

Example 2

(topic: a course N2 and F1 are taking)
N2 OOH god\, *I think* those guys are, they-, they ARE *sort of* intimidating *just* because *I think* they are more in depth, [*I think* that's (-)]
F1 [yeah they have read] all the books and [(-)]
N2 [yeah]
(NS-NNS 3/23)

Example 3

(topic: study fees)
F2 I wouldn- I wouldn't spend five thousand pounds, JUST to be able to study here if I can do it for FREE [so that (--)]
N1 [that's RIGHT yeah,yeah\]
I mean it's erm, I'm SATISFIED with the- the level of the of the teaching here but STILL, comparing five thousand to nothing it's, *pretty* different
(NS-NNS 2/14)

Although both the native and the non-native speakers resort to pragmatic force modifiers throughout the conversations, there are also differences in their performance. The examples above show one typical difference between them: where the native speakers very often resort to multiple use of different pragmatic force modifiers within an utterance (e.g. speaker N2 uses five modifiers in her turn in example 2 above), the non-native speakers, as a rule, are more likely to use only a few modifiers. This, in turn, is partly the reason why the total number of modifiers, as pointed out in the chapter above, is clearly smaller in the learners' speech. A similar finding about the rare occurrence of multiple modification in non-native speakers' performance was also reported in Nikula (1992), when Finnish speakers' conversations among themselves in English were compared with conversations by native speakers of English. Interestingly, then, the presence of native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations does not seem to affect the non-native speakers' performance very much, at least not as far as the mere frequency of pragmatic force modifiers is concerned. In Beebe and Giles's (1984) terms, then, the non-native speakers are not accommodating to the way the native speakers use pragmatic force modifiers as much as might be expected. Part of the explanation may lie in the factor, suggested both by Preisler (1986) and Faerch and Kasper (1989), that speakers are, as a rule, unaware of the use of pragmatic force modifiers

by themselves and by others.[8] Thus, if non-native speakers are unaware of the interpersonal significance of pragmatic force modifiers, they are likely to make no conscious attempt to accommodate to native speakers' way of using them.

The multiple use of pragmatic force modifiers by the native speakers is also interesting in the sense that they very often use expressions which have usually been associated with softening and strengthening functions side by side, i.e. hedges and emphatics. For example, speaker S3 in the extract below uses *kind of*, *I think* and *and everything*, which usually tone down pragmatic force, together with *very* and *obviously*, which are usually regarded as emphatics. In addition, he also makes use of the pragmatic particles *like* and *you know*:

> Example 4
>
> (topic: government's views on poll tax)
> S3   there's still this reluctancy to do anything about it *you know* there's still this *kind of* face saving, [ethic], which is *like you know* kept over from the,
> S2   [yeah]
>   [[from the the]] pre-Major days and [that's that's gotta go, and *obviously* it's]
> S1   [[yeah yeah]]
> S2   [yeah but, *I think* it will yeah]
>   *very* embarrassing for a government in a situation to step back *and everything*
>   (NSE 1/49)

Speakers' tendency to combine hedges and emphatics in the same utterance indicates quite clearly that regarding these two types of pragmatic force modifiers as completely separate phenomena would not give full credit for their role in interaction. A strict separation into hedges and emphatics has probably often been due to connecting them too categorically to notions of uncertainty and certainty, respectively. It is, however, more likely, as Biber and Finegan (1989:110) point out, that when speakers use such expressions, the focus is more on their role in interaction than on their precise semantic meaning. Thus, in the example above, speaker S3 cannot be said to be uncertain about the message one moment and certain the next. Rather, all the pragmatic force modifiers that he uses make the opinion sound less categorical and more involved. The view of S3 would impose on the addressee's negative face more if the modifiers were extracted from it because it would then convey a metamessage that the speaker regards what he is saying as factual information that others ought to accept at face value rather than as his personal view that might differ from those of others. It is also easier for speakers, if need be, to retreat from something that was expressed in a modified form in the first place. Thus, it is an important negative politeness role of pragmatic force modifiers that they, as Coates (1987:122) puts it, "allow room for further discussion and modifications of points of view". In other words, they give both speakers and addressees leeway to adopt an alternative approach if the situation starts to pose threats towards their negative face wants.

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[8]   The question of awareness and pragmatic phenomena will be discussed in more detail in chapter eight.

As was indicated above, the Finnish speakers of English also quite often make use of pragmatic force modifiers when expressing their opinions. Therefore, any claims about the non-native speakers being totally unable to resort to pragmatic force modifiers would be unwarranted. Especially in the conversation NS-NNS 4, where the Finnish speakers' general proficiency in English is the best (they are the only non-native speakers who are majoring in English), they often use pragmatic force modifiers quite skilfully as indicated by the following extract, in which the speakers, contrary to the other non-native speakers in the data, also combine different types of pragmatic force modifiers to mitigate the force of their views:

Example 5

(topic: the Nordic countries)
N2   but is Finland very DIFFERENT then
F1   ehm, *well/, I- I think* the way of LIVING is, is, *quite* [similar]
F2   [and the LAN]GUAGE is *certainly very* diffe[[rent]]
N1   [[yes]]
F2   [(--) we're from a different language group], so so *maybe- maybe* in
N1   [it is yeah, yes]
F1   [yeah language is (--)]
       THAT sense [(--)]
F1   [the way] of living and the standard of living is is *more or less* the same *I think,*
       [in all the nordic countries]
F2   [yeah *I suppose* so, yeah, yeah]
       (NS-NNS 4/27)

An overall lack of pragmatic force modifiers is thus not as typical of the non-native speakers as might be expected on the basis of previous research, where learners' performance has often been associated with excessive directness (e.g. House and Kasper 1981, Koike 1989). The non-native speakers *do* use pragmatic force modifiers in the NS-NNS conversations. This, however, is not enough to guarantee pragmatic success, because the frequency of modifiers does not yet reveal whether they are used in interpersonally salient contexts or not. It is, therefore, important to consider the strategic use of pragmatic force modifiers by the non-native speakers more closely. The discussion below suggests that an impression of overall directness in the non-native speakers' performance can be due to the fact that they often use pragmatic force modifiers differently from the native speakers.

A considerable difference between the non-native and the native speakers in the NS-NNS data is the apparent inconsistency with which the non-native speakers use pragmatic force modifiers: they, including even those with the best language skills, seem to be less able than the native speakers to regulate the use of pragmatic force modifiers according to situational demands. That is, non-native speakers who are one moment using pragmatic force modifiers quite skilfully to mitigate the force of their opinions can be very direct the next, even if some level of indirectness would be beneficial for face-saving purposes. As became apparent above, directness in itself does not necessarily lead to problems in communication;

it always has to be related to the kind of topic discussed. It seems, however, that when speakers express views that are very strong, and especially when these are somehow disparaging in tone, pragmatic force modifiers are called for. This is because strong claims can be perceived as a threat to others' face wants, as predicted by Brown and Levinson. The tendency to soften strong opinions is evident in the native speakers' performance both in the NNS-NS and the NSE conversations and is illustrated in the extracts below. In example 6, speaker N1 criticises his own country to the Finnish visitors; in example 7, speaker S3 puts forward his unfavourable judgement of the British political system:

Example 6

(topic: describing his views of Britain)
N1   *I don't think* this country is, *well* ANYWAY it's politics, but *you know I think* that
     er, Britain does*n't really* look after its RESIDENTS *particularly* well, but erm, it's
     nice in many other ways y- you [w- what you] make of it if you've
F2   [mhm]
     got the MONEY, you can enjoy it (--) in lot pla- places
     (NS-NNS 1/8)

Example 7

(topic: British politics)
S3   yeah *I think* the the her- yeah the hereditary business is er, that, *I think* that's *a
     bit* out of date
S1   yeah
S3   *I don't* [*think* anyone] should be- should have the power to decide, certain
S4   [definitely]
     issues just because their father had also had that power and the father before
     that
     (NSE 2/62)

In the examples above, the speakers choose to soften their strong views even where they are directed towards society at large rather than towards any of the addressees in the conversation personally. This seems to corroborate Holmes's (1986:10) point that "negative comments, even if not directed at anyone present, can always be perceived as a threat, however oblique, to the fabric of social relationships". As regards the type of pragmatic force modifiers that the native speakers use, it is usual for them, as in the examples above, to choose explicit modifiers of the epistemic type, that is, expressions that quite clearly signal that the speakers are not fully committed to what they are saying. In the above examples, both speakers N1 and S3 use modifiers *I don't think* and *I think*. In addition, the modifiers *I suppose, I don't know* and *probably* are often used by the native speakers to play down negative comments and to emphasize their status as personal opinions rather than pieces of factual information. The native speakers also often use explicit modifiers which add to the vagueness of their opinions, such as *not really, not particularly,* or *a bit* in the examples above, for apparent negative politeness purposes: to reduce the forcefulness of their unfavourable opinions. It

thus seems that explicit modifiers are often resorted to when speakers want to tone down the impact of their opinions.

The non-native speakers, in comparison, express their unfavourable judgements on many occasions in a quite direct manner, with no or only a few pragmatic force modifiers. In examples 8 and 9 below, moreover, the Finnish speakers' less than favourable opinions deal with their experiences in Britain, which have direct relevance for their British conversational partners who may find such comments a threat to their - if not personal then collective - face. In example 8, speaker F2 voices a strong criticism against a course he is taking and its teacher, but he fails to add any pragmatic force modifiers that would relativize his claims in the same way as in the excerpts from native speakers' performance above. His views, consequently, sound quite negative and very categorical (e.g. *it's not interesting, he shouldn't be here, he can't teach you*). The speaker uses *I don't know* once, but its influence does not seem to be enough to diminish the abruptness of the opinion as a whole:

Example 8

(topic: a course F2 is taking)
F2   *basically* it SHOULD be interesting but because of this lecturer it's-, it is not\,
      and the seminar leader is, he's something else\, [he shouldn't] be here
N2   [((laughs))]
N2   really/, [d- does] he not know what he's talking about or is he [just-]
F2   [yea/] it- it's his style and, [*I don't know, very* boring,] you don't LEARN
N2   [very boring ((laughs))]
      anything there because, he can't teach you
N2   right\
      (NS-NNS 3/21)

The fact that speaker F2 in the example above is male gives rise to considerations about male-female differences. Ever since Lakoff's (1975) study, it has often been suggested that the level of directness is an important gender difference, women, on the whole, displaying less confidence by opting for more indirect strategies.[9] The present study is not concerned with male-female differences in the use of pragmatic force modifiers. It seems, however, that the choice of direct strategies in connection with negative opinions is not confined to male non-native speakers only, as the female speakers are as likely to resort to directness. In example 9, for instance, a female speaker (F1) expresses her dislike about small talk in Britain in a very direct manner (e.g. *I hate it)* and she also expresses her perceptions about the nature of small talk in Britain and Finland as if they were pieces of factual information rather than her personal opinions. Just as in the example above, there is a difference from the native speakers who, typically, put forward their unfavourable views by using explicit modifiers that

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[9]   Holmes (1990), however, rejects the view that indirectness equals lack of confidence. Instead, she shows how both men and women use hedges and other signs of indirectness to take account of participants' face needs. See also Cameron (1994), who discusses the simplified misconception of drawing parallels between directness and interactional success.

reduce their assertiveness. Explicit modifiers, as the term suggests, indicate quite clearly that the speakers are putting forward a personal opinion which leaves room for further negotiation (cf. examples 6 and 7 above). In comparison, the non-native speakers' unmodified matter-of-fact opinions often create the impression that they do not welcome negotiations (e.g. *English uses small talk a lot, in Finland people mean what they say*); adding pragmatic force modifiers might have rendered the speaker's views less categorical (e.g. *I find/it seems to me that English uses small talk a lot*) and more like an observation to which comments from the other speakers would be welcome:

Example 9

(topic: living in a foreign country)
N2   ... and I'd find it very HARD [and]
F1   [it's] also this, still about languages that the English\ us-use small talk a lot- lot, which we do- which we DON'T use in Finland, [so I- so I HATE it] *I mean*
N1   [it's straight to the point *isn't it*]
       in Finland, they MEAN what they me-, in Finland the people mean what they say but HERE you can just
N1   SARCASM, [yeah]
F1   [yeah]
       (NS-NNS 1/9)

Interestingly enough, strong favourable opinions that are put across without any pragmatic force modifiers can also sound quite abrupt. In example 10 below, Finnish speaker F2 (incidentally the speaker who otherwise uses 33% of all modifiers in the NNS data) expresses her positive views of a director very directly. That such directness leaves little room for negotiation is shown by the way the native speakers in the situation react: it seems that by saying *alright* with a falling intonation, speaker N2 chooses to close the topic rather than expressing a wish to continue the discussion about it. Speaker N1 seems to pick up this cue as he immediately switches over to a new topic:

Example 10

(topic: a British film)
N1   and that- that's the Kenneth Branagh one [*isn't it* oooh/ I'd like to SEE that]
F2   [yeah, yeah, yeah, it's]WONdeful, [[I've seen it before]]
N2   [[it's *very* good,]] he's got no LIPS *though* (-[-- ((laughs))]
→   F2   [oh that's the BEST] thing about him=
N2   =oh IS it
       ((laughter))
→   F2   he's lovely I ADORE him\
N2   alright \ ((laughs))
N1   mm\, I went to see a PLAY there recently s- Charles Dickens one, great expectations that was EXCELLENT
       (NS-NNS 4/33)

In the three examples above the prosody is also worth considering. The Finns' contributions in all three examples are characterised by pitch contours that are either level or tend towards a fall; they do not use rising intonation in these

extracts at all. As was pointed out in chapter three, it is not easy to assign particular prosodic features to particular meanings, but a general assumption seems to be, as Arndt and Janney (1987:339) put it, that "the fall, with its sense of finality, is the most direct or assertive of the three intonational contours" (see also Allerton and Cruttenden 1978:180), whereas rise, and particularly fall-rise, often lends utterances a sense of tentativeness. Thus, when the non-native speakers express opinions with a combination of falling pitch and a lack of pragmatic force modifiers, they can easily sound assertive and final, as if sending a metamessage that they do not expect others' responses or reactions to their views. As far as negative politeness goes, such opinions can be perceived as threatening the addressee's face because they lack any indications of the speakers' wish to play down such implications.

A further point about speakers modifying the impact of their opinions is that when Brown and Levinson (1987) introduce negative politeness strategies, they mention that they relate to both the addressee's and the speaker's own face wants. In practice, however, they mainly deal with negative politeness strategies in terms of their capacity to protect the addressee's face. In the same vein, the discussion of the examples above has focussed on the addressees' face wants. It is, however, also possible to look at opinions from the perspective of the speakers' own face wants because expressing an opinion tentatively may be motivated by the wish to protect one's own face from the reactions of others as much as by the wish to be considerate towards them. In example 11 below, for instance, the pragmatic force modifiers that speaker S2 uses can be regarded both as a means to protect the face of others, but also as a means to protect her own face. Moreover, given the situation in which the views of S1 and S2 differ from each other, it is probable that S2 uses softening modifiers in order to protect her own face:

Example 11

(topic: the British class system)
S1   there's one in Germany, [*I'm sure* there is]
S2   [no she- *I think* that] *must* be economic *or something I mean* it wasn't, the sort of thing I was talking about [*you know*] the snobbery [[and,]] that WE have
S1   [mm]
S3   [[yeah]]
        I mean it's so- so ingrained in this society *isn't it* it's *just* [(-)]
S3   [and I find] the...
        (NSE 4/83)

In most cases it is difficult, even impossible, to be very precise about the extent to which pragmatic force modifiers are directed towards the hearer's or towards the speaker's own face. As Goffman (1967:6) puts it, the face of others and one's own face are indeed "constructs of the same order". Hübler (1983:158) also acknowledges the related nature of hearers' and speakers' face wants in arguing that understatements and hedges are "beneficial to the hearer even when the speaker makes himself the subject of qualificatory predication". Aston (1988:102) puts the same idea conversely by pointing out that "politeness to hearers can

clearly be a means of guaranteeing one's own face". Although it may be difficult to determine towards whose face pragmatic force modifiers are oriented, the capacity of modifiers to take into account both the speaker's and the hearer's face simultaneously ought to be recognized rather than seeing them only as a means used for the benefit of the addressees' face wants.

6.2.1.2 Questions

The discussion above has shown that the NS-NNS conversations are characterised by the speakers delivering their opinions of the matters discussed, and that this often requires recourse to negative politeness strategies as opinions, especially unfavourable ones, can pose a threat to both the hearer's and the speaker's face. Questions form another group of acts that occur very frequently in the conversations studied. They also deserve attention in terms of negative politeness because questions, by presupposing answers, violate addressee's freedom of action in the same way as requests do (see Brown and Levinson 1987:64). It is, therefore, worth investigating to what extent speakers use pragmatic force modifiers to redress this threat to addressee's negative face.

The reason why questions are relatively frequent in the NS-NNS conversations lies in the fact that the native and the non-native speakers are meeting for the first time. They, therefore, start the getting-acquainted process by asking plenty of questions. The questions are, however, distributed unevenly between the speakers. During the four NS-NNS conversations, the non-native speakers ask 48 questions and the native speakers ask 115. This is indicative of the power relationships in the conversations and the types of roles the speakers occupy (the effect of roles will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter). The fact that the native speakers ask the majority of the questions can be interpreted as an indication that they have more power than the non-native speakers in the conversations. As Beebe and Giles (1984:22) argue, "there is a built-in status differential inherent to all native speaker-non-native speaker interactions, which gives an automatic edge of control to the native speaker". This seems to be the case also in the NS-NNS conversations, where the greater number of questions suggests that the native speakers exert more control over the flow of the conversations.

Taking the power difference at face value would mean that when formulating questions, those in power, that is, the native speakers, could afford to put their questions across more directly than the less powerful ones, who would have to be more concerned about protecting the addressees' negative face wants. However, the contrary seems to be true in the NS-NNS conversations in that it is the native speakers who modify their questions more often. Of all their questions, 41 (36%) have one or more pragmatic force modifiers, whereas with the non-native speakers' questions the corresponding figure is 11 (23%). The matter is, however, more complicated than simply concluding that the non-native speakers do not

modify their questions enough: attention also has to be paid to the kind of questions asked.

The proportions above suggest that both the non-native and the native speakers ask many unmodified questions during the conversations. This is often the case when the speakers are dealing with topics that were labelled as 'free goods' above, such as participants' studies at the university or uncontroversial information about each other's countries. Thus, direct questions like the following abound both in the native speakers' and the non-native speakers' performance, especially during the introductory sequences of the conversations:

Example 12

(context: speakers are introducing themselves to others)
→   N2   what are you both doing
      F2   well we're doing MEDIEval studies really [and (--)]
      F1   [well I'm I'm] doing linguistics and medieval [[studies]]
      N1   [[yes,]] well that's a combin[ation]
      F1   [yeah]=
→   N2   =what courses in linguistics are you doing/
      F1   ehm pragmatics, and language in society\
           (NS-NNS 4/26)

Example 13

(topic: comparing the weather conditions of Finland and Britain)
→   F2   do you get any SNOW in Britain, [in the north?]
      N2   [NOT really-] YEAH the NORTH/, in the north yeah it's=
      N1   =well every FIVE years it's like, probably a=
      F2   =mhm=
      N1   =a good SNOWstorm that lasts
→   F1   every five years so the LAST time was/ ((laughs)), how many years ago
      N1   probably get it THIS year
      F1   aha ((laughs))
           (NS-NNS 1/3)

Another point worth mentioning about questions is that even if an unmodified question may seem abrupt if looked at separately, it may be rendered appropriate when the larger context in which it occurs is taken into account. Very often, participants discuss some issue at length so that it becomes an established topic; posing questions about such topics is much less face-threatening than opening a new topic with a question, for example. Thus it is important, as Leech and Thomas (1990:199) argue, "to take account of the preceding utterances and of the cumulative effect of pragmatic force in assessing, say, the appropriateness of a given utterance".[10] For instance, in example 14 below, the non-native speaker's questions could be regarded as quite abrupt and awkward if taken as such in isolation. These, however, occur after a lengthy discussion during which the participants one after another have given their reasons for studying at the

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[10]   Thomas (1985:780) considers this as an important principle of what she calls 'dynamic pragmatics'.

particular university. Given this context, the questions below are not as intrusive as might otherwise seem. Note, moreover, the use of *so* in the question. The particle helps reduce the force of the question but it can also, simultaneously, be interpreted as a cohesive device with which the speaker indicates that the question has relevance to something that has occurred prior to his question:

Example 14

(topic: reasons for being in Canterbury)
F2   *so* why did YOU came here
N1   Canterbury/=
F2   =yeah Canterbury, [what was the reason]
N1   [well, I wanted] to do actuarial science there's FIVE universities that DO it, one was in Scotland two were in London, one was here
    (NS-NNS 3/23)

One probable reason why there are fewer pragmatic force modifiers in the non-native speakers' questions is that, on the whole, they avoid producing questions about matters that are outside the established, safe topics under discussion. It is the native speakers who more often change the course of the conversation and introduce new topics by asking questions, which is in itself an indication of their relative power in the conversations. The native speakers do not, however, exert their power by formulating questions directly, with no apparent concern for the addressees' face. On the contrary, their questions are often extensively modified as indicated by the example below. It is worth noting how the speaker simultaneously uses explicit and implicit modifiers which mitigate the force of his question (*I mean, I heard, I suppose*) and modifiers which strengthen such aspects of the question that are favourable from the addressee's point of view (*very nice, far nicer, a lot easier*):

Example 15

(context: NNSs have just said the NSs that they like staying in Britain)
N2   how about in Finland is it better/, I- *I mean I heard* it was a *very* nice place to be, *far far- far* nicer than here
F2   hmm\
N2   *I mean* the er, what is it the SOCIAL system, the er the social security benefit is better than in most [other places]
F1   [yeah]
F2   [yeah it's] GREAT *really,* its cover er re- ehm *really* big eh area\, in the social care\
N1   and to be a student is *a lot* easier there/, CHEaper *I suppose*\
F2   mm, mm WELL it depends
    (NS-NNS 1/1-2)

The example also indicates another feature which is typical of the native speakers' questions: in addition to using lexical and phrasal modifiers, they also frequently give detailed grounds and reasons for asking the questions, thereby playing down their force; Faerch and Kasper (1989) call this external modification.

The extract below is another example of external modification where speaker N2 backs up her question with extensive reasons for it:

Example 16

(context: discussion about Finnish culture has preceded this)

N2   but d'you HAVE many other cultures LIVING in Finland *like you know like* Britain we're *FAIRLY* multi-cultural, in *some* places, [not not ev]erywhere

F2   [yeah yeah]

because, where I grew up it was*n't particu*[*larly* multi-cultural] [but-,] a lot

N1   [no *probably*]

F2   [yeah]

of areas ARE now d'you have similar situations that-, *I mean I suppose* if you're from the city it *would* be more multi-cultural any[way]

F2   [that's right but-]

F1   [not in THAT] scale no

(NS-NNS 4/30-31)

There are no instances of such external modification in the non-native speakers' performance even though sometimes it would help make their questions sound less machine-gun like. It was pointed out above that the non-native speakers less often ask questions pertaining to the native speakers' personal sphere, favouring, instead, questions about Britain and the British way of life that are more general (e.g. *what's winter like in Lancaster anyway?*). When they ask more personal questions, however, they favour similarly direct strategies that they also use when asking questions about more impersonal matters. The context in the following example is that N1 has told others about his relative who, after having lived in France for years, now also thinks in French, which is commented on by N1. Speaker N2 has mentioned at the beginning of the conversation having lived in Germany as a child, which is probably the reason why the non-native speaker (F1) asks her question. She could, however, have referred to this background information explicitly, giving justification for her question, which would have served as external modification, thereby softening its force (e.g *I remember you mentioning that you've lived in Germany. . .*). As it is now, the question sounds quite abrupt, especially as speaker F1 chooses to pronounce *speak* very emphatically and continues immediately with another, equally direct, question:

Example 17

N1   ...because I think [in English, and dream\]

N2   [*well* you CAN'T] be sure

N1   ooh I THINK I can

→ F1   do you SPEAK German/

N1   no I don't and that's=

→ F1   =do you speak any languages at all

F2   [((laughs)) any languages]=

N1   [no, SHOWS you how]

F1   =*I MEAN-*

N1   irrigant ehm

N2   irrigant [((laughs))]

N1   [((laughs))] ARROGANT ((laughs))

N2   ARrogant the English are, yeah oh yes I agree\
      (NS-NNS 1/5)

The finding that the non-native speakers do not resort to external modification in the way that the native speakers do is in conflict with studies which have found that non-native speakers tend to produce more talk and more external modification than native speakers when performing face-threatening speech acts such as requests and complaints (e.g. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1986, Faerch and Kasper 1989, Olshtain and Weinbach 1993). These studies have used elicitation methods for data collection, and it is possible that the research instrument causes non-native speakers' verbosity and their tendency to use external modification. As mentioned also in chapter four, Edmondson and House (1991) point out that such verbosity is typical only in learners' written responses in discourse completion questionnaires. When producing written answers, learners have more time to think of their contributions, and they apparently try to compensate for lacking routines by excessive verbosity. In the present data, there are real-time constraints upon the non-native speakers' behaviour, which probably makes it more difficult for them to plan and elaborate their performance.

All in all, then, there is plenty of evidence in the present NS-NNS data that the speakers use pragmatic force modifiers for negative politeness functions. One use of negative politeness strategies is to enable speakers to maintain distance between them and their interlocutors, and pragmatic force modifiers are useful for this purpose because speakers can use them to add to the indirectness and vagueness of their messages. This, in turn, helps them sound less imposing on their addressees. As the discussion above shows, both the native and the non-native speakers use pragmatic force modifiers for politeness purposes at some point in the conversations. The difference between them is that the native speakers are more consistent in using modifiers throughout the conversations, whereas the learners' performance suffers from undue directness at times. This difference should not, however, be interpreted as an indication that the native speakers have a desire to be more polite than the native speakers. Both speakers, probably, have equally good intentions, but the native speakers are more skilful in adhering to social norms that require a certain amount of indirectness. That is, the learners are less able to use pragmatic force modifiers *strategically* for their contributions to be in accordance with the social requirements of negative politeness.

6.2.2   Comparison of interlanguage and native language

As suggested above, there are occasions in the NS-NNS conversations where the non-native speakers fail to use pragmatic force modifiers even where they would be beneficial for face-saving purposes, judging from the way the native speakers use them. This, obviously, raises a question about the extent to which the features in the learners' performance might me due to native language influence. The reason for having parallel sets of IL, L1 and L2 data in the study is to allow a two-

way comparison of Finnish speakers of English with native speakers of both the target language and their own native language, and in this section, the non-native speakers' performance is assessed against the data in Finnish.

6.2.2.1 Opinions

As was pointed out above, the speakers in the NS-NNS data typically conduct the conversations by expressing their views and opinions of the matters discussed. The same applies to the NSF conversations as well: they are characterised by the speakers exchanging opinions. It is, moreover, very usual for the Finnish speakers to use pragmatic force modifiers when expressing these opinions. A further factor which makes the Finnish speakers resemble the native speakers of English is that they often use more than one modifier in an utterance, and they are also skilful in combining different types of modifiers. The overall impression reflected by their performance is thus hardly that of directness (see also Nikula 1992). The extract below is a typical example of multiple modification where speaker S3 combines within one utterance explicit modifiers of both the epistemic type (*mun mielestä* 'in my opinion', *ehkä* 'maybe') and the fuzziness indicating type (*joku* 'some') and also uses a strengthening device (*aivan* 'really') and implicit modifiers (*niinku, siis*):[11]

> Example 18
>
> (topic: studying languages)
> S2   ...sitä puhumista ei oo koskaan liikaa\
> S1   [ei kyllä]
> S3   [*siis-*] *siis* täällä *niinku* aktiivinen kielitaito *siis* he- *siis* heikkenee *mun mielestä*,
>   *aivan* mielettömästi
> S2   [niin]
> S1   [mm, mm]
> S3   *niinku ehkä joku* passiivinen sanavarasto karttuu *niinku*
>   (you can never have too much spoken language
>   no that's true
>   *I mean* here *like* your active language skills *you know* get worse *I think, really*
>   enormously
>   yeah
>   *like maybe* the passive vocabulary becomes *sort of* bigger *you know*)
>   (NSF 2/95)

Speaker S3 expresses quite a strong opinion here, which can in itself be regarded as a threat to the others' negative face in the sense that they might think differently and they might, therefore, feel offended by the view expressed by S3. The pragmatic force modifiers, however, help mitigate the impact of the opinion by implying that the speaker is ready to acknowledge that the others might have different views. The same applies to the NSF conversations in general: speakers

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[11]   It is difficult to translate pragmatic particles from one language to another (see also Kempas 1991).When possible, however, the Finnish pragmatic particles will be translated using English pragmatic particles, even though their interpersonal functions are not always exactly the same.

customarily use pragmatic force modifiers to play down the impact of their opinions. The extract below is a further example of this. The strategic role of modifiers is clear in this context in which F1, a male speaker, expresses his view of feminism to his two female coparticipants who have, earlier in the discussion, clearly indicated their favourable position towards it. Consequently, F1 seems to take great care in formulating his view so as not to pose a threat to his interlocutors' face:

Example 19

(topic: feminism)
S1 *mä oon niinku sitä mieltä* että, *mun mielestä* se on, pitäs olla hyvä IHMISILLE siis
KAIKILLE, sekä miehille että naisille, ei se riitä jos aatellaan et se on hy- hyvä
naisille *totta kai* se *voi* auttaa *niinku* KOHOTTAAN naista *niinku* sieltä *jostakin*
suosta missä naiset nyt ON, mut et tota, mut ei se *niinku* auta että-, sit ku
monesti feminismissä ON *semmone ehkä* siinä tulee se na- naisen näkökulma
liikaa
S3 mut *mä luulen* [että-]
S1 [et SEN] takia, saanks sanoa vielä *vähän* [sen] takia ois just hyvä että ois
S3 [juu]
miehiä mukana miehet osaa kattoa asiaa *ehkä* eri tavalla, *siis ihan niinku siis*,
POSITIIVISESSA mielessä eri tavalla, ja AJATTELEE eri tavalla, tuo *ehkä* uusia
ajatuksia
(*you know in my view I think* it is ought to mean being good to people all people
both men and women it's not enough if you think that it's good for women *of
course* it *may* help *like* make women rise out of the *sort of* depths *you know* where
women are now but that but it doesn't help *you know* and feminism has often *sort
of*, *perhaps* the women's viewpoint is too much in focus there
but *I suppose* that
so that's why- can I still go on *a bit* that's why it would be good to have men along
as well men can *perhaps* look at things differently *I mean like* differently in a positive
sense and they think differently *maybe* bring up new ideas)
(NSF 2/103)

The way the speakers in the NSF conversations use pragmatic force modifiers does not, then, support the view of Finnish directness that has often been offered as a reason for Finnish speakers' lack of pragmatic success when speaking foreign languages. Kärkkäinen (1990:74), for example, suggests that even though Finnish has ways similar to those of English in which to indicate the degree of doubt and certainty that speakers have towards what they are saying, it is possible "that there is a difference in the degree to which these devices are put to use" and that in the case of Finnish speakers, "it might be argued that as Finns they are more likely to go about their business in a straightforward and 'honest' way". The findings in the present study, however, suggest that the undue directness that can often been found in Finns' performance when they are speaking English cannot be attributed to native language influence as such since the strategic use of pragmatic force modifiers is equally commonplace, if not more so, in the Finnish conversations as it is in the speech of the native speakers of English.

It seems that suggestions about Finnish speakers' directness are often based on their performance in a foreign language. Kärkkäinen and Raudaskoski (1988:107), for example, analyse simulated encounters between Finnish speakers

of English and native speakers of English, after which the participants' reactions to the situation were recorded. They point out that the native speakers of English often found that the Finns talked in these situations in a very direct and decided manner. Their claim that "these comments, then, point toward the existence of some kind of cultural differences between the two parties, and not so much to deficiencies in the linguistic competence of Finns" suggests that they regard the Finnish speakers' performance in English as a reflection of their native culture. This is put explicitly in a section where Kärkkäinen and Raudaskoski (1988:112, emphasis added) discuss the small number of positive politeness strategies in the non-native speakers' performance: "It appears, then, that the results support our hypothesis of *Finnish culture* as one that does not stress closeness and intimateness in interaction through overt linguistic means". Similar conclusions could be drawn in the present study on the basis of the NS-NNS conversations, in which the Finnish speakers opt for more direct strategies than their native counterparts when performing potentially face-threatening acts. Interpreting this directness in the learners' speech as a cultural phenomenon becomes problematic, however, when considering the abundance of modifiers in the NSF conversations.

It is understandable that when people from different cultures interact in international encounters, the way they speak a foreign language is thought to be a reflection of the way in which they behave when using their native language. There are, for example, many studies which suggest that Finns are often perceived as abrupt and too direct by representatives of other cultures (e.g. Yli-Renko 1989, Hiukka 1991, Törnroos et al. 1991). It is only natural that Finns' counterparts in international encounters tend to interpret such abruptness in cultural terms. However, it would be a simplification for a linguist to do so. The findings in the present study suggest that the non-native speakers' performance in a foreign language is not necessarily a good indicator of how they behave when speaking their native language. Although it is undoubtedly true that speakers' native language can play an important role, both pragmalinguistically and sociopragmatically (Thomas 1983), in how they behave in a foreign language, it should not be seen as the only explanation. There are also other factors whose significance should not be overlooked. As Tiittula (1994:104) argues, culture has too often been regarded as the sole explanation for Finns' problems in cross-cultural situations, neglecting such factors as status differences between speakers, the pressure from using a foreign language, and the participants' possible unfamiliarity with the situation at hand (see also Blommaert 1991). Tiittula goes on to argue that these are the reasons why it is often difficult to draw parallels between speakers' conversational behaviour in a foreign language and in their native language. This conclusion is supported by the present study as the findings suggest that the way in which the Finnish speakers use pragmatic force modifiers when speaking English differs considerably from the performance of both the native speakers of English and the native speakers of Finnish.

Even though resorting to pragmatic force modifiers is as usual for the native speakers of Finnish as it is for the native speakers of English as far as the frequency of modifiers is concerned, there seems to be a slight difference in the

types of modifiers they favour. It is worthwhile to investigate these preferences as it is possible that they are transferred to Finnish speakers' foreign language performance and influence their choice of modifiers in English. It was pointed out that especially when expressing strong opinions, the native speakers of English seem to favour explicit modifiers with first person reference (e.g. *I suppose*), which are quite transparent ways of toning down the impact of messages. The native speakers of Finnish, on their part, seem to opt more readily for explicit modifiers that indicate fuzziness (e.g. *tai jotain* 'or something', *ihan* 'quite'), using fewer those expressions that convey their personal assessment of the truth of the messages. In the following example, for instance, the speakers mainly use such fuzziness-indicating modifiers:

Example 20

(topic: the use of English in Finland)
S1   kyllä kieltämättä *VÄHÄN* liikaa *ehkä* on noissa, liikkeiden nimissä käytetään, [anglisismeja *ja semmosia mutta-*]
S2   [ni ja se- ja s-] sitten ku se menee *semmoseen* sot-sotkemiseks *niinku joku* viherLANDIA, [ni] kahta- kahta eri kieltä sotkettu samaan nimeen ni
S1   [nii]
S1   joskus kyllä on *semmosia ihan* iskeviä *niinku,* tulis suomen kielessä kamalan pitkä sana ja kömpelöltä tuntuva ni, jos on *semmonen* hyvä jonka kaikki kuitenki tajuaa ni MIKÄS siinä jos on englanninkielinen
(undeniably there's *maybe a bit* too much of it in companies' names, they use anglicisms *and things like that*
yeah and it- then when it becomes *sort of* a mixture *you know* like viherlandia two different languages mixed in the same name so
sometimes there are *sort of quite* good ones *you know* [that] would result in an awfully long Finnish word and clumsy, if it is *sort of* a good one that everyone can understand it doesn't matter if it is in English)
(NSF 4/122)

Note that speakers S1 and S2 both express their personal opinions of whether English is used too much in Finnish contexts. They, however, make no explicit reference to themselves in the form of devices such as *mun mielestä* 'I think', *musta tuntuu* 'I feel', and *ehkä* 'maybe' is the only epistemic type modifier in the extract. Instead, they make abundant use of modifiers which could be characterised as 'vague language' in Channell's (1994) words. In other words, the expressions signal that what follows is to be taken approximately rather than at face value (e.g. *vähän* 'a bit', *semmonen* 'sort of', *tai semmosia* 'and things like that'). In this context, it is also worth drawing attention to the most frequently used pragmatic particles by the native speakers of English and Finnish. In the NSE conversations, pragmatic particles with both first and second person reference abound (*you know, I mean*), whereas the most often used pragmatic particle in the Finnish conversations is *niinku*. The Finnish particle is content-oriented rather than addressee-oriented, signalling speakers' reluctance to be overly precise about their messages. The following example can be contrasted with example 20 above

because it is a typical instance of the way in which the native speakers of English make frequent use of pragmatic force modifiers with a personal reference:

Example 21

(topic: poll tax)
S3   that's what they're saying that you shouldn't have to pay, if it is the same number of people, *I think*
S2   eh/ ((laughs))
S3   and this labour tax *I don't know* it's just it's just *I think* (–) revising and changing it you know cos [(--)] each other a chance to provide a more attractive [[option]]
S2   [yeah I know]
S2   [[*I don't know*]] why why did why can't we go back rates though
S1   *I don't know*, they've never given a very satisfactory answer
S2   yeah *I mean* [they- they had] it for so many YEARS and, [[it obviously]] must
S1   [what *I've heard*-]
      have worked s- okay
S1   [[yeah yeah]] more or less yeah
S2   yeah
S1   *I think* erm, probably that is not been considered as an option, anymore
      (NSE 1/47)

It is important to bear in mind that the differences between the native speakers of Finnish and English discussed here have to do with *tendencies* rather than either-or matters. That is, even though it was argued above that the Finnish speakers less readily than the native speakers of English resort to modifiers with first person reference, this does not mean that they avoid modifiers with personal reference altogether. On the contrary, the Finnish speakers also make use of pragmatic force modifiers with first person reference, albeit less frequently than the native speakers of English. In other words, opinions such as *kyllä **mä luulen** että se yleensä ärsyttää ihmisiä* 'I think it usually irritates people' (NSF 1/88) occur in the NSF conversations as well.

The Finnish speakers' tendency to favour pragmatic force modifiers that add to vagueness rather than signal their personal attitudes is, however, interesting in that it seems to reflect Finnish speakers' preference for impersonal ways of expression in general. One reason why explicit first person reference is more rare in Finnish than in English is due to the structure of the language whereby verb inflections express the person so that an explicit mention of a pronoun is often redundant (e.g. in *(minä) olen taas myöhässä* (I) be+(1st person singular marker) again late, 'I'm late again', the pronoun can be left out). Speakers of Finnish also often use impersonal forms such as passives or the generic third person with a zero subject even when the context suggests that they are talking about themselves. Hakulinen (1987) argues that such preference for avoiding personal reference is an important negative politeness strategy in Finnish. The passive in Finnish, as Hakulinen (1987:141) points out, implies that the suppressed agent is human and plural. It is, therefore, a choice which makes it possible for speakers to imply that what they are saying applies to people in general rather than just to the speaker himself/herself.

The use of impersonal choices is commonplace in the present NSF conversations as well. In particular, the speakers often resort to generic third person with a zero subject even when they are clearly talking about themselves; it seems that the motivations for such impersonalization are often connected to negative politeness, i.e. speakers' wish to create distance by avoiding specific personal reference. Consider the following example in which the speakers talk about their own experiences of speaking foreign languages without explicit reference to themselves, thereby avoiding "too clear an individualisation" (Hakulinen 1987:149) (impersonal verb forms are bold-faced and pragmatic force modifiers italicized):

Example 22

(topic: speaking English)
S1   *tietysti niinku,* nyt ku **on** jonku aikaa **opiskellu** ni **tulee** *niinku* sellasia, miten joku asia sanotaan *niinku* helpommin englanniks [ku suomeks] ni sen sitte
S3   [mm]
      mielellään **sanookin** sillai että ku **tietää** että toinenki ymmärtää [[sen, mut se]] ME just puhutaan just kans tolleen märärärärää [ärrillä *ja tolleen*]
S2   [[joo mut sitä-]] [mut tot- niin] tuota mitä sä sanoit ni sitä joskus **tulee** **VAROTTUA** *ihan silleen* ku **ajattelee** että, nyt ruvetaan SNOBBAILEMAAN
      (*obviously you know* now that ⌀ has studied for some time ⌀ gets *like* such things where some matter is *you know* easier to say in English than in Finnish then ⌀ is happy to say so because ⌀ knows that also the other person understands it but it we talk exactly like that as well märärärärää [using r's]
      [yeah but it-] but about what you just said sometimes ⌀ is cautious about it *in a way* because ⌀ thinks that now we're being snobbish)[12]
      (NSF 3/108)

It often seems to be the case that the negative politeness functions of impersonal forms are geared towards protecting the speaker's own face in the first place even though, as indicated above, both the speaker's and the hearer's face wants are usually affected. In the example above speaker S1 is giving a favourable assessment of her skills in English when she points out that she finds it easier to say some things in English than in Finnish. She, however, chooses to tone down a possible sense of boasting, which might make her own face vulnerable, by resorting to both pragmatic particles and generic forms. These forms make the claim sound more general, as something that applies to the other speakers present as well rather than only to the speaker personally. The related nature of participants' face wants means that impersonalization also simultaneously helps protect the addressee's face in that they are less likely to feel offended by an opinion that is put across in a very general form.

When the negative politeness functions of modifiers were discussed above, it was pointed out that the non-native speakers in the NS-NNS data often express

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[12]   All the zero subjects here could be translated into English using the pronoun *one* as the subject. The symbol ⌀ is used, however, because it highlights that in Finnish, overt subject is not obligatory.

even quite strongly unfavourable comments without using modifiers that would mark them explicitly as personal opinions. It is likely that part of the explanation for such directness lies in the difficulty of mastering foreign language modification strategies in general. It is, however, also possible that the learners' less frequent use of modifiers with a personal reference is partly due to native language influence. As was pointed out above, the speakers in the NSF data often choose to express their personal opinions using generic forms, and it is possible that some of this tendency is carried over in their foreign language performance. Thus, the fact that the non-native speakers more rarely use modifiers with a personal reference is a likely example of native language influence.

6.2.2.2 Questions

As was pointed out above, the non-native speakers sometimes ask questions in quite an abrupt manner, while the native speakers more often use pragmatic force modifiers and external modification to modify their questions, especially those pertaining to the personal level. It is, therefore, worthwhile to investigate whether the learners' behaviour is due to native language influence, or whether the more direct way of questioning is merely an interlanguage phenomenon.

There are far fewer questions in the NSF conversations than in the NS-NNS conversations, most probably due to the fact that as the speakers are not strangers, they do not need to keep up the conversation with the help of questions. There are only 38 questions in the whole NSF data, and those questions are typically clarificatory in nature rather than, for example, opening up new topics. That is, the speakers usually ask questions because they want to clarify something that their interlocutors have just said. Such questions do not pose a big threat to addressee's negative face because they relate to topics that the addressee has chosen to discuss in the first place. Example 23 is a typical instance of such a question:

Example 23

(topic: a letter written by S1's boyfriend)
S1 ...se kirjotti- oli kirjottanu mulle laulunsanat ENGLANNIKS, ja nii- (-) laulun sanassa haukku- laulun sanoissa haukku mut lyttyyn ((laughs)), englanniks ((laughs))
S3 voi ei
S1 että ei ois suomeks varmaan kehannu, tai se ois suomeks kuulostanu ihan hölmöltä [(--)]
→ S3 [se oli] *niinku* ITE tehny ne sanat/
S1 joo

(he wrote had written me song lyrics in English and in those lyrics showered abuse upon me ((laughs)) in English

oh no

he would probably have been too ashamed to do it in Finnish or it would have sounded really stupid in Finnish

he had *like* written the lyrics himself?

yeah)
(NSF 4/124)

When the speakers in the NSF conversations ask questions, they often use the clitic -s in them. This implicit way of modification seems to have an important role in the conversations judging from its frequency: it occurs in 12 question (32% of all questions). The clitic -s is a typical implicit modifier in that its functions vary depending on the context so that even though it tends to signal a friendly relationship between the speakers when they are equal, it can also acquire a sightly condescending tone if used in an asymmetrical situation by the more powerful speaker. However, this small clitic seems to be quite a powerful device interpersonally because leaving it out of the questions in which it occurs would without exception render them more abrupt. The clitic, thus, softens the impact of questions by, firstly, making them sound more informal and, secondly, implying that there exists a relationship of solidarity between the speakers.[13] In example 24 the exchange would sound much more confrontational if the speakers did not use the clitics to reduce the impact of their questions:

Example 24

(context: S1 changes the topic with his question)
→   S1   mitäs mieltä ootte muuten tasa-arvosta
       S3   ((laughs))
       S2   [kenenkä tasa-arvosta]
       S1   [asiasta toiseen] miesten ja naisten
       S2   miesten [ja-]
       S1   [TAI] yleensä tasa-arvosta,
→   S2   no mitä, tää oli kyllä semmonen kysymys mitäs luulet että luullaan ((laughs))
              (what+clitic do you think of equality by the way
              [equality between who?]
              [from one thing to another] men and women
              men [and]
              [or] equality in general
              well this was some question what+clitic do you think we think ((laughs))
              (NSF 2/101)

Also in example 25 below, speaker S2 modifies his question with the clitic -s together with the pragmatic particle no, both of which represent implicit strategies. It is worth noting that the question below opens up a conversation. In such a situation, an unmodified question could easily imply that the speaker wishes to assume the role as someone who is entitled to steer the conversation by asking questions. However, speaker S2 renders the question more tentative and casual by using implicit modifiers and thus it poses less of a threat to the addressees' negative face:

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[13]   The clitic -s thus often adds to solidarity. Therefore, it would be inappropriate if used by a less powerful to a more powerful person as it would imply that the former wished to determine the nature of the relationship. However, as Thomas (1989:144) puts it, "it is the dominant party in an interaction who has, to a very great extent, the power to define the context".

Example 25

(context: the participants have just finished their discussion in English):
S2   *no* miltä*s* tuntu?
S3   kivaa oli
      (well how+*clitic* did you find it?
      it was fun)
      (NSF 4/119)

Questions by no means form the only context where the Finnish speakers use clitics but, interestingly, the clitic *-s* seems to be restricted to questions in the NSF data.[14] However, the most commonly occurring clitic in the NSF conversations is *-han/-hän*. As implicit modifiers in general, it is a polyfunctional modifier, and it can occur in different kinds of contexts; in opinions, questions, and narratives, for example. There are occasions when this clitic can be considered as a marker of negative politeness because it adds to indirectness and tentativeness. This applies, for example, to suggestions such as the one in the example below. According to Brown and Levinson (1987:66), suggestions pose a threat to the hearer's negative face because the speaker indicates that s/he wants the hearer to do something. It can thus be predicted that a polite speaker will choose to redress the threat somehow. In the example below, speaker F3 chooses to play down the force of her suggestion by using the clitic *-han*. Note that she also adds to the impreciseness of the suggestion with *joku* and *johonkin* ('some'), uses the verb in conditional rather than in indicative mood (marked by suffix *-s* in *pitäs*), and laughs after the performance of the act, all of which help tone down the potentially face-threatening impact of the suggestion:

Example 26

(topic: the band where S3 plays)
S3   joo mä laulan siinä, SE on totta *kyllä* että sitte se on se ääntäminen
      [ongelmallista]
S1   [sun*han*] *pitäs* järjestää *joku* bändi-ilta yliopistolla ((laughs)) (--) eng-english
      clubin, *johonkin* iltaan
      (yes I sing in it, it is true *though* that pronunciation is a problem
      you+*clitic should* organize *some* band night at the university ((laughs)) with *some*
      English club happening)
      (NSF 4/124)

Although the clitic *-han/-hän* can thus serve negative politeness functions, it typically seems to imply that speakers share certain background assumptions, lending to messages an 'as-we-all-know' character (see also Hakulinen 1976). The clitic *-han/-hän* is thus usually a signal of approach-based rather than avoidance-based behaviour; this is why its more detailed analysis will follow in sections 6.3

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[14]   The clitic *-s* can occur with other acts as well. The force of directives, for example, can be softened with it. It, moreover, occurs often with the clitic *-pa* which usually renders a familiar tone to messages (e.g. *Vastaapas puhelimeen* 'Answer the phone, will you?'). In the NSF conversations, however, the clitic *-s* only occurs in questions.

and 6.4 below where the positive politeness and involvement functions of pragmatic force modifiers are under scrutiny. The examples above about the use of clitics serve to indicate, however, that speakers of Finnish can employ different means than speakers of English to signal their unwillingness to impose on their interlocutors. Thus, in order to do justice to the NSF conversations, implicit modifiers such as pragmatic particles and clitics have to be taken into account as their role as politeness signals is often a very important one.

In terms of negative politeness, then, the speakers in the NSF conversations, like the native speakers of English, make abundant use of various pragmatic force modifiers to tone down the face-threatening potential of their contributions. It is thus difficult to regard the non-native speakers' directness as a reflection of their native language. The native speakers of Finnish, however, seem to differ from the native speakers of English in that they favour fuzziness-indicating pragmatic force modifiers rather than those with a personal reference, and they also in general more readily opt for impersonalization to signal negative politeness. The non-native speakers' tendency, for example, to express strong unfavourable evaluations without reference to themselves (e.g. of the type *I suppose*) might therefore be a reflection of their native language. The speakers in the NSF data often use impersonalization and vagueness-indicating modifiers to show that they wish to be considerate and refrain from imposition. The non-native speakers seem to be unable to find functional equivalents for these strategies when they speak English, so they often end up expressing themselves in a very matter-of-fact manner. As far as negative politeness is concerned, there is thus a clear discrepancy between the native speakers of Finnish and the non-native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations: where the former observe negative politeness requirements by using avoidance-based strategies the latter can at times sound very categorical and even blunt by comparison.

6.3   Pragmatic force modifiers as markers of positive politeness

Positive politeness is based on the speakers' need to be accepted and approved of by others; it is approach-based rather than avoidance-based. Arndt and Janney (1985:293) suggest that supporting each other's claim to a positive self-image is highly important for the maintenance of human relationships even in random encounters. Lim and Bowers (1991) maintain that it is necessary to distinguish between two aspects of positive face: (a) the want to be included or *fellowship face*, and (b) the want to have one's abilities respected[15] or *competence face*, which relate to the needs for belonging and esteem, respectively. In the casual conversations investigated in the present study, fellowship face seems to be more at issue even

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[15]   Note that respect can be signalled by avoidance-based techniques, in which case it belongs to negative politeness. Lim and Bowers (1991:420), however, view the concept of respect in positive politeness terms as "the need for appreciation by others of one's abilities".

though in other contexts (e.g. in encounters at a workplace) the role of competence face might become more important.

Negative politeness functions of pragmatic force modifiers were approached by concentrating on acts which pose a threat to negative face (e.g. opinions and questions) and investigating the role of modifiers in those acts. Close interplay between pragmatic force modifiers and negative politeness was indicated in such acts. A similar approach is more difficult with positive politeness as it is not as directly tied to the performance of specific acts (see Brown and Levinson 1987:101). Instead, the purpose of positive politeness is often to show interest and approval in a more general sense, to signal that speakers' and hearers' wants are similar. Therefore, the discussion of the positive politeness functions of modifiers will not be as closely tied to the performance of particular acts. Disagreements form an exception as they pose a threat to the addressee's positive face and call for redressive action. Other than that, the interplay between positive politeness and pragmatic force modifiers will be investigated by comparing modifiers which speakers most often seem to use to enhance feelings of solidarity and liking in general, not just in connection with threats to face.

6.3.1   Comparison of interlanguage and target language

6.3.1.1 Disagreements

According to Brown and Levinson (1987:66), disagreements pose a threat to the addressee's positive face by implying that the speaker thinks the addressee "is wrong or misguided or unreasonable about some issue, such wrongness being associated with disapproval". One indication that the speakers in the NS-NNS conversation respect each other's positive face is that disagreements are avoided almost altogether and the speakers try to maintain an atmosphere of agreement. Or, rather, as Aston (1988) argues, it is probably better to talk about speakers negotiating shared attitudes in what Aston calls *matching assessments* because agreement is not necessarily always the expected reaction in interaction. Holtgraves (1992:148) takes a similar line in pointing out that self-depreciation, for example, is an assessment with which addressees are expected to disagree rather than agree. Speakers' tendency to perform matching assessments is also evident in the NS-NNS conversations, in which one speaker's opinion or evaluation usually evokes a similar one from other participants. Disagreements are not totally avoided, however, even though they are very rare. An interesting finding is that all the disagreements that occur in the NS-NNS conversations are directed either by a native speaker to another native speaker or by a non-native speaker to another non-native speaker even though, in general, the flow of talk is from the native speakers to the non-native speakers and vice versa. The fact that the non-native and the native speakers never explicitly disagree with each other indicates how disruptive disagreements are for mutual rapport, and that speakers who meet for the first time are not likely to start challenging each other's views.

When the native and the non-native speakers perform disagreements, a similar tendency applies as in the case of strong opinions discussed in 6.2.1.1. That is, the native speakers use an abundance of pragmatic force modifiers to tone down the force of disagreements whereas the non-native speakers are more likely to express their differing views directly. Moreover, when a disagreement occurs, the native speakers usually negotiate it over a number of turns, both parties making concessions, so that eventually a certain degree of consensus is reached. This can be seen in the example below, for instance, where the two native speakers' views about the status of the Welsh language differ. They both use pragmatic force modifiers to soften the force of their views, often signalling that they do not want to take full personal responsibility of the validity of their views (e.g. *I've heard, from what I know*); there is thus room for negotiation. Speaker N1 also takes great care to give reasons for his views, which can be seen as external modification:

Example 27

(topic: Welsh language)
F2   in in Wales do they TEACH the Welsh language at schools [or/]
N2   [yeah\]
F1   mhm
N2   erm in certain areas, not ALL areas=
F2   =aha
N2   *I suppose* it's up to, SCHOOL or the local council, *whatever* or HOWever strong Welsh NATIONALISM is
N1   *well* the point is you can't get a JOB in Wales unless you speak Welsh,
N2   [eh *I don't think-*]
N1   [*I'VE heard some*] jobs are *LARGELY* speaking Welsh in (--)
N2   but it-, *I mean-* em, a lot of MOST people in Wales can't speak Welsh
N1   I *just-* there's a lot=
N2   =*I mean* a lot CAN
N1   (it is in-) what they're trying to DO, *I mean from what I know* if there's is (--) in Welsh so you you can- you go to your GRANNY *or something*, and you say GRANNY wha-what's this job, [and *you know-*,]or may in the pub go to
N2   [oh]
      you know there's a CLEVER *very* clever way of of making sure that erm, the Welsh stay Welsh
      (NS-NNS 1/7)

This can be contrasted with example 28 below where speaker F1 disagrees with the other Finn about an amount of money they have received for their studies abroad and chooses to express it point-blank with no redressive action. Moreover, it turns out that it is in fact speaker F2 who was right in the first place. Given this, it would have protected both the speaker's own and the hearer's face if F1 had chosen to modify her disagreement (e.g. *I don't think it's that much*) rather than present it as if it was a fact:

Example 28

(topic: funding studies abroad)
F2   ...and we can get (from) government we get er, three thou- three hundred pounds a month [*about*] [[it should cover]]

> N2 [aha]
→ F1 [[no it's not-]] it's not that much
  F2 almost, we get two thousand five hundred Finnmarks it's *about,* two hundred and eigh[ty (--)]
  F1 [OH yeah, *well actually*] it IS yeah\
  F2 *I mean* direct (support) (--)
      (NS-NNS 2/14)

Example 29 is another indication that when disagreements occur in the non-native discourse, the speakers seem to be less able than the native speakers to negotiate their views and to make concessions to establish a common ground. Instead, the non-native speakers easily express their differing views of the matter very directly, which does not leave much room for reinterpretations or negotiations. This applies to both speaker F1 and F2 below: first, F1 expresses her dislike of Swedish very strongly, after which F2 brings out his view that it is an easy language to learn. However, as he does this with no explicit markings that it is a question of his personal view, he sounds quite categorical and even slightly condescending. The sense of finality and non-negotiability is further enhanced by the speakers' tendency to use level or falling intonations throughout the exchange:

Example 29

(topic: learning Swedish)
F1 I HATE Swedish=
N1 =you hate the Swedish yeah/
F2 I don't\, I LIKE the Swedish [*I think* they (---)]
N1 [what about if there's-] *I mean* does [[the Swedish]]
F2 [[how can you]] tell SOCIETY is *I mean,* [how] could you
F1 [hm]
    tell the Swedes, [in total]
F1 [no but the] LANGUAGE is so awful I've never I've NEVER liked it, never\, and we HAVE to take [it]
→ F2 [and it's] it's the one of the easiest languages in Europe I know
  N2 WHY is it
  F2 the GRAMMAR is very simple, [it's,] (-) simple ((pause)) they only have one
  N2 [oh]
      case, or TWO cases
  N2 oh
→ F1 and one REAL (--) no it's very simple
      (NS-NNS 2/16)

Even though disagreements occur rarely in the NS-NNS conversations it is noteworthy that where the native speakers take great care in alleviating their force by using pragmatic force modifiers, the non-native speakers are more likely to use direct strategies. Because disagreements pose a threat to addressee's face wants non-native speakers' tendency to deliver them with no redressive action, especially if it is recurrent, can easily give rise to unfortunate generalizations about their traits of character.

6.3.1.2 Emphasis as a signal of positive politeness

It was mentioned above that one purpose of positive politeness strategies is to enhance feelings of liking and approval in general, not only in association with face-threatening acts. Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest that exaggeration is one indication of positive politeness: speakers may exaggerate approval, interest and liking, that is, acts that are favourable to the addressee. As far as pragmatic force modifiers are concerned, modifiers with a strengthening function can be used for such emphatic purposes. How overtly speakers use exaggeration depends, obviously, on the kind of relationship between them. As Brown and Levinson (1987:116) point out, exaggeration can be risky unless the speaker is certain about the hearer's opinion on the subject. The native and non-native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations are meeting for the first time, so they have no certainty about each others' views. This may be one reason why the speakers are quite rarely very emphatic either about their own opinions or when commenting on others' views.

The next example shows, however, that the native speakers sometimes use emphatics for positive politeness functions. The native speakers are making recommendations to the Finns about places worth seeing, and during this brief exchange they use *really* and *very* several times both to exaggerate their own interest and to attract the addressee's interest. In a context where the non-native speakers are visitors to England, suggestions about interesting things to see and do can be regarded as beneficial for them (cf. Leech's (1983:104) *convivial* illocutionary function), which means that the native speakers can emphasize such acts to signal their goodwill towards their interlocutors:

> Example 30
>
> (topic: places worth visiting)
> N2   it's a nice place the Ashton, *really* [nice], *really* beautiful you can see
> N1   [yes]
>   for MILES like if you go up to the-, you know the tower bit [(-) tower] is it
> F2   [yeah]
>   I don't know what they call that but er, you can walk up and you can see for
>   miles you can [see BLACKpool/, and you can see] the the lakes and,
> N1   [all the way to Morecambe]
> F1   [REALLY/]
>   [[it's *really* beautiful yeah]]
> N1   [[yes especially in daylight]]
> F2   [[oh it's (-)]] we *really* have to go
> N2   (--) it's (-) [at night (-)]
> F1   [(--)] somebody told me that you have to go twice once during the daytime [and
>   once during the night]
> N1   [yes that's *very* nice]
> N2   [right cos-] [[you see all- all the]] lights it's *really* good, *really* nice, yeah
> N1   [[it's *very* different Lancaster's-]]
>   (NS-NNS 4/35)

The non-native speakers use pragmatic force modifiers more rarely for exaggerating functions. Emphatic modifiers are few and far between in the learners' speech, and they tend to be used in content-oriented rather than in

addressee-oriented ways. That is, when the non-native speakers use emphatic modifiers, the emphatics usually specify or emphasize some aspect of the message instead of being geared towards enhancing feelings of solidarity or goodwill. In the example below, speaker F2 uses *very* in such a content-oriented manner:

Example 31

(topic: comparing British and Finnish universities)
N2   is the university in Finland a lot like, here/, or, different
F2   na- I would say that the basic structure is *very* similar, [and], but the
N2   [mhm]
        TEACHING is rather different we don't have seminars so much
        (NS-NNS 3/22)

Holmes (1990:193) makes the important point that the roles that speakers have in conversation can be reflected in their use of pragmatic devices. She discusses facilitative tag-questions, that is, tag questions whose function is to draw others into the conversation, and argues that they tend to occur more often in the speech of the more powerful interactants who have the responsibility for the success of the interaction. The interplay between roles and pragmatic force modifiers will be dealt with in more detail in chapter seven, but it is worthwhile to point out in this connection that one reason why exaggeration as a positive politeness strategy seems to be restricted to the native speaker performance in the NS-NNS data might be that the native speakers more readily assume the role of facilitator in relation to their non-native counterparts. It is thus worth considering if it would even be possible for the non-native speakers, in this situation, to give the native speakers recommendations and pieces of advice in a similar manner and boost their force with strengthening modifiers to signal positive politeness.

6.3.1.3 Implicit modifiers as signals of positive politeness

As pointed out above, positive politeness is approach-based. Emphasis, however, is not the only possibility by which speakers can signal positive politeness and, as suggested above, it might not even be the best choice for speakers who are interacting with strangers. Earlier research has shown that many devices which are considered implicit modifiers in the present study can be used to appeal to addressees and signal interest in them; tag questions and the pragmatic particle *you know*, especially, have often been assigned positive politeness functions (e.g. Östman 1981a, Holmes 1990, Stubbe and Holmes 1995). These modifiers are thus worth investigating in the NS-NNS conversations as well.

Tag-questions are used quite frequently by the native speakers of English both in the NSE and the NS-NNS situations (18 and 46 occurrences, respectively). As with pragmatic force modifiers in general, it is not possible to pin them down to a particular politeness function only. Thus they can be considered from the perspective of negative politeness because when speakers add tag questions to their messages, it often helps to diminish the force of those messages. It is,

however, often possible to see them as markers of positive politeness because they are so obviously addressee-oriented. They may indicate not only that the speaker wishes to tone down the message but also that the speaker is interested in the addressee and in his/her reactions. It is true that tags do not necessarily always have such a function. Algeo (1988) draws attention to the peremptory use of tags to signal irritation and to close off rather than open up discussion. In the same vein, Thomas (1989) shows how the context greatly affects the interpretation of tag questions: in unequal encounters tags used by the more powerful person can be confrontational rather than facilitative because they are used to force rather than to invite a response. In the casual conversations looked at in the present study, however, tag questions usually function as politeness markers rather than as markers of aggression. The following two examples indicate a typical way in which the native speakers use tag questions to signal solidarity. In both instances the native speaker uses the tag when commenting on the non-native speaker's turn. It is worth noting that the tag question is not being used in an information-seeking function in either of the examples. Instead, its function seems to be to imply something like 'I know what you mean', thus suggesting implicitly that the speaker shares the same view or at least supports the previous speaker's view:

Example 32

(topic: living on campus)
F1   I used to live in so big apartment, [at home and now, now Park Wood is]
F2   [and the university's so far from] from the town, it's horrible
N2   it IS a bit *isn't it* [(--)]
F2   [in Finland] they are always so central very central
    (NS-NNS 2/15)

Example 33

(topic: university courses)
F1   I think I'll, AUDIT the language ideology and power, [I] think I'll just audit
N2   [mm]
    because [I've been] TOLD it's such a demanding [[course]]
N2   [yeah] [[it's very]] HARD *isn't it/*, that's one Jack did last year
    (NS-NNS 4/26)

Tag-questions are used only a few times (six times) by the non-native speakers, and in all cases but one, by the speaker who uses modifiers by far the most often (see discussion on page 78). In contrast to the native speaker performance, however, the tag questions used by her seem to be genuine requests for information or attempts to seek confirmation rather than signals of common ground and support as in the examples by the native speakers above. The non-native speaker in question thus seems to draw upon the transparent questioning function of tag questions rather than using them as implicit support signals. As the following two examples illustrate, speaker F2 seems to use tag questions as negative politeness markers, to make her questions sound more tentative rather than as markers of positive politeness:

Example 34

(topic: Christmas traditions)
F2   you have a *sort of* traditional pantomimes *don't you*=
N1   =[yes]
N2   [yes] they're always very SILLY
        (NS-NNS 4/34)

Example 35

(context: F2 has talked about Finland as a young culture)
F2   mm but then (-) *I suppose* Ireland Ireland hasn't been, er independent that much
        longer, *has it* \
N1   yeah that's true nineteen twenty two *or something*
        (NS-NNS 4/30)

Prosody is also worth taking up here as the speaker uses falling rather than rising intonation with her tag questions; the fall is especially obvious in the latter example. Cruttenden (1986:97) argues that even though tags with rising and falling intonation both expect a confirmation, the expectation is much stronger with the falling intonation. This further suggests that speaker F2 uses the tag as a confirmatory tag (Algeo 1988:181) which seeks and expects to receive confirmation for the statement preceding it. It adds to politeness as well, but to negative rather than positive politeness.

The pragmatic particle *you know* is another implicit modifier frequently used by the native speakers. As with implicit modifiers in general, the meaning potential of this particle is very broad as it can fulfil a variety of functions. The functions can, moreover, be considered at different levels. Thus, Schiffrin (1987) describes the functions of *you know* from the viewpoint of discourse structure, viewing it, for example, as a boundary marker, as a marker of lexical search, or as a repair marker. However, *you know* can also, simultaneously, be considered from a pragmatic viewpoint. In other words, there are often interpersonal motivations for speakers choosing this particular modifier instead of others. Previous research has often made a connection between *you know* and positive politeness (e.g. Östman 1981a, Holmes 1986), which is why the use of this modifier also deserves attention in the present study.

As table 2 in chapter five indicated, *you know* is among the most frequently used modifiers in the conversations studied. It is particularly common in the NSE conversations, which may reflect the fact that the speakers in these conversations are acquaintances rather than strangers and can therefore more readily appeal to each other and interact in a more relaxed manner than the speakers in the NS-NNS conversations. As Holmes (1990:192) points out, *you know* and other pragmatic devices tend to be particularly frequent in casual and relaxed interaction. However, the native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations resort to *you know* quite often, too. The particle seems to express their wish to reduce social distance in the situation, hence its importance as a positive politeness marker also in these conversations.

Holmes (1986, 1990) distinguishes between different functions of *you know*, arguing that sometimes it signals speaker's confidence and certainty and sometimes it shows various kinds of uncertainty, in which case it can be seen as a negative politeness strategy. It seems, however, that whenever the speakers use *you know*, it always involves an implicit appeal to the addressees that signals the speaker's wish to approach others, and in this sense, a positive politeness reading of *you know* seems always possible. In the example below, for instance, the native speaker succeeds in creating a sense of common ground by using *you know* even though he is, strictly speaking, only talking about his own experiences:

Example 36

(topic: a course in chemistry)
N1   but I'm finding actually this course EASIER, well NOT easier as far as content
        but easier time [(-),] *you know* I just have a practical on Tuesday, and nine
F1   [yeah]
        lectures, and I have a [(--)] it-it's great *you know* ((laughs))
F1   [yeah]
        (NS-NNS 2/14)

The same applies to *you know* as to tag questions in that the non-native speakers do not seem to be able to exploit its interpersonal potential. Its absence in the learners' speech is quite striking: as was shown in table 2 in section 5.1.1, it is used only twice by the non-native speakers. The findings reported in Nikula (1992) are similar in that when Finnish speakers conversed in English among themselves, *you know* was also used infrequently. Moreover, its use was mainly restricted to narratives, and the learners hardly ever used it in discussion sections to appeal to addressees the way the native speakers did. The use of *you know* is even rarer in the present NS-NNS conversations, in which Finnish speakers talk with native speakers. This is interesting given that the native speakers in the same encounters use this modifier quite often in positive politeness functions. The non-native speakers thus do not converge to that usage. There is the possibility, of course, that the Finns see the situation differently from the native speakers, as something that requires less positive politeness, which might partly explain the small number of *you know* and other appealing strategies in their speech. Spencer-Oatey (1992:4) argues that in cross-cultural pragmatics, it has too often been assumed that people from different cultures see the same situations in exactly the same way, forgetting that "it is people's subjective representation of the situations, rather than the actual objective situational features, that ultimately influence language behaviour". It is not possible to pursue the question of whether the non-native and the native speakers perceive the situation similarly in the present study because the participants' own perceptions have not been recorded. It is, however, an interesting question that deserves attention in future research.

It was pointed out above that impersonalization is usual in the NSF data, and that this tendency might be the reason why the non-native speakers do not resort to pragmatic modifiers with a personal reference as often as their native counterparts. Avoiding personal reference might be a reason for the non-native

speakers' reluctance to use *you know* as well. Moreover, it was argued in Nikula (1992) that non-native speakers, when using pragmatic particles such as *I mean* and *you know*, had a tendency to use them in ways where the literal meanings 'to mean' and 'to know' were discernible. The same seems to apply to the non-native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations. In the example below, for instance, speaker F1 uses *you know* in a way that could be replaced with 'as you know':

Example 37

(topic: the influence of American culture in Finland)
N1   ...is there like a count- a counter culture, to that like there is here, people NOT wanting to- perhaps not wanting to take on American culture
F1   I don't think-=
F2   =I think it depends on the GROUP, because some some people (-) very, very sort of eagerly [I (---) yeah, yeah, yeah]
F1   [*you know* young young people]
      (NS-NNS 4/32)

Although this way of using *you know* can be found in the native speakers' performance as well, it is more typical for them to use the particle in ways that go beyond its literal meaning. Instead, the native speakers usually use *you know* to reflect their attitudes towards their interlocutors; in James's (1983:202) words, it often functions as an overt appeal "to social *like*-ness between participants", therefore increasing positive politeness. In example 38 below, for instance, *you know* seems to function as an appeal to addressees, as an invitation by N2 for others to comment on her view. The tone of the utterance would be different without *you know*, because the speaker would then imply less willingness to cooperate and negotiate her views with her interlocutors:

Example 38

(context: N2 (an American) has just told that she enjoys staying in Britain)
N1   I want to get OUT of here
      [((laughter))]
N2   [really/, I've] met so many people who have like that attitude towards it and I can't, under[stand it *you know*]
N1   [that's cos you] haven't BEEN here long enough
      (NS-NNS 3/22)

All in all, then, the non-native speakers hardly ever resort to the implicit markers of positive politeness such as tag questions and *you know*. For the native speakers, on the other hand, these implicit modifiers seem to be an important means of expressing positive politeness, probably due to the type of situation where the speakers do not know each other beforehand and where, consequently, it is safer to avoid overly explicit ways of signalling common ground and appreciation of others. That is, it would hardly be possible for the speakers in the NS-NNS conversations to indicate positive politeness with utterances such as *Really you are amazingly pretty* (Holmes 1984a:347) whereas in encounters between close friends, for example, they would be perfectly possible.

Mastering implicit modification strategies thus seems to be an especially difficult task for non-native speakers. This is probably partly teaching-induced (Kasper 1979, 1981) in that implicit modifiers such as pragmatic particles are very much part of informal, casual face-to-face encounters, which is an area of language use that formal language teaching can rarely capture. It is also possible, as Thomas (1983:110) suggests, that there might be a point beyond which it is very difficult for foreign language speakers to acquire pragmatic norms in the target language; the mastery of implicit modification strategies may lie beyond this point.

Looking at positive politeness through the 'lense' of pragmatic force modifiers and concentrating on the verbal level may not, however, give full credit for the non-native speakers' performance. For example, it is possible on many occasions during the NS-NNS conversations to interpret laughter as a positive politeness strategy by which speakers indicate their favourable attitudes towards the situation and their addressees. Laughter can be seen as an implicit modification strategy, and it is therefore capable of serving different kinds of functions. Jefferson (1984:351), for example, shows how laughter in 'troubles talk' usually functions as a signal that the speaker is capable of taking the trouble lightly; its purpose is not to elicit joint laughter from the participants. Laughter can, obviously, also be a sign of embarrassment or anxiety, and any instance of laughter may indicate a combination of functions (see Vincent Marrelli 1988:246). However, it seems possible to argue that non-native speakers express with laughter attitudes and nuances that they are unable to express through verbal means of modification. In the examples below, for instance, laughter can be interpreted as approach-based, and it seems to fulfil somewhat similar functions to those of tag questions or *you know* in native speakers' speech by appealing implicitly to the addressees' cooperation:

Example 39

(topic: living abroad)
N1   *I mean actually* how MUCH d'you get annoyed (--), being so far away from home/, or don't you find that's a problem
F2   eeh/, NOO\, no\, ehm, I don't em I don't LONG to-to my country and erm
F1   we're *just* too BUSY here to, to er to MISS anything ((laughs))
F2   yeah yeah and *I suppose* because er, I can be there er OH ((laughs)), *I SUPPOSE* I can be there who- my whole LIFE so er, it-it's any problem to spend a, SOME years somewhere else
(NS-NNS 1/4)

Example 40

(topic: reasons for coming to Britain)
F1   *well,* we have- ((laughs shortly)) we have come here because we WANT to get some experience [and] meet meet other people and learn English and [[‚so]]
N2   [aha] [[mhm]]
F2   so we've just got (-) basic idea to come here, to learn other cultures and langua[ge and] people
F1   [mhm]
N2   mhm=
F2   =the studying is ((laughs shortly)) the priority number TWO, and=

N2   =meeting people priority number ONE ((laughs))
      (NS-NNS 3/20)

Brown and Levinson (1987:103) argue that "positive politeness utterances are used as a kind of metaphorical extension of intimacy, to imply common ground or sharing of wants to a limited extent even between strangers who perceive themselves, for the purposes of interaction, as somehow similar". It seems that the native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations accomplish this sense of shared wants mainly through implicit modification strategies, the more explicit strategies of exaggerating interest or approval being rather rare in the data. In comparison, the non-native speakers' performance is characterised even less by approach-based behaviour, even though at a global level, the fact that they avoid disagreements and seek agreements can be interpreted as an indication of positive politeness. At a more local level, however, they are not very skilful in using pragmatic force modifiers for purposes of addressee-orientation and support, which can give rise to unfortunate implications at least in casual encounters where a certain degree of solidarity is usually expected.

6.3.2   Comparison of interlanguage and native language

6.3.2.1 Disagreements

In the previous section, the ways in which the non-native and the native speakers manage disagreements in the NS-NNS conversations were compared. The non-native speakers were found to express their differing views often quite directly, with little redressive action. The same applies to such directness as to the small number of pragmatic modifiers in the non-native speakers' performance: it is difficult to regard it as transfer from their native language. This is because it is quite obvious when investigating the NSF conversations that the Finnish speakers tend to express their disagreements in a modified form as well. Disagreements as such are also very rare in the NSF conversations, but when they do occur, the speakers usually soften their force by resorting to pragmatic force modifiers as the example below indicates. Speaker S1, moreover, uses many epistemic modifiers with a first person reference, which is otherwise not the most common way for the Finnish speakers to modify their views (see discussion on page 119). But here such expressions are useful strategically in that they help mitigate the force of the disagreement by implying the speaker's awareness that the views of others might be different from his:

        Example 41

        (topic: speaking English with other Finns)
        S2   ...vaikka tuolla kadulla keskenämme [yhtäkkiä] ruvettas englantia puhumaan
        S1   [mm]
              niin ((laughing)), tuntus *vähän* ouvolle

S1 *mä taas oon sitä mieltä* että *mun mielestä ihan,* MÄ tykkään puhuu *niinku*
    suomalaisten kans *niinku,* vaikka- VAIKKA tämmösissä tilanteissa ni tykkään
    puhuu englantii, [tai ruotsii] et *must* on kiva *jotenki* keskustella tälleen
S3 [mm]
    (if we started to speak English with each other on the streets, for example, it
    would *seem a bit* strange
    in my opinion I think I quite enjoy speaking *you know* with other Finns *like* in these
    kinds of situations I enjoy speaking English or Swedish *I find* it nice *somehow* to
    talk like this)
    (NSF 2/94)

Also in the following example, speaker S3 chooses to play down the force
of his disagreement with pragmatic force modifiers. In addition to increasing the
tentativeness of his view by expressions such as *varmaan* ('probably), *ei ihan* ('not
quite'), the speaker also uses the clitic *-han* in a way that seems to imply that he
expects others to share the view that he expresses:

Example 42

(topic: use of English expressions in Finnish)
S2 niit *vaan* käytetään *aika* (paljon) *niinku* Jyväskylässä oli *oikeen* hyvä esimerkki oli
    jossain citylehessä *vai missä* ni, se on TÄYNNÄ englanninkielisiä noita
    valomainoksia, joka paikka on englanninkielinen
S1 mhm
((pause))
S3 tää (--) *niinku, ei* se *varmaan ihan* suomen kielen PUHTAUTTA uhkaa koska
    on*han*, mikä tää kielitoimisto nyt on joka koko ajan *niinku,* pitää sitä standardia
    yllä mitkä sanat on oikeita sanoja mitkä ei (--)
    (they are *just* used *quite* (often) *like* in Jyväskylä there was this *really* good
    example in *some* city-magazine *or something* it was full of English neon signs
    everything was in English
    this (–) *you know* it *probably* doesn't *quite* threaten the purity of Finnish because
    there is+*clitic* (~'you know there is') this, what is this language bureau that all
    the time *like* keeps up the standard which words are correct and whoch not)
    (NSF 4/122)

Pragmatic force modifiers thus have an important role in toning down the
force of disagreements in both the NSE and NSF conversations. It seems, therefore,
that the occasional bluntness in the non-native speakers' way of expressing their
differing views is a sign of their insufficient mastery of modification strategies in
the target language rather than a sign of native language influence.

6.3.2.2 Emphatics and implicit modifiers as signals of positive politeness

It was pointed out above that rather than just attempting to soften threats to
addressees' positive face, speakers can also express positive politeness by showing
mutual rapport in general. In the NS-NNS conversations, the native speakers
mainly accomplished this with implicit means, and it was argued that more
explicit strategies might be found in situations where speakers know each other
better. In the NSF data the speakers are acquaintances, and although agreement

is the norm throughout the conversations, exaggerating it or exaggerating interest or approval is not particularly frequent in these conversations, either. An exception is conversation NSF 2, where the speakers apparently know each other best; an indication of this is that they switch topics more readily than the participants in the other conversations, and that they also deal with quite personal matters. The smaller distance between the speakers also implies that it is safer for them than for more distant speakers to assume reciprocity of each other's views. The examples below show that the speakers quite often use pragmatic force modifiers such as *aivan* or *ihan* ('quite, really') to emphasize their points of view when they are discussing matters on which all participants are likely to agree. Note that the speakers also use words that are quite emotional (*hirveetä* 'awful', *järkyttävää* 'shocking'), which is another indication of emphasis and exaggeration, the function of which seems to be to create a sense of solidarity:

Example 43

(topic: sexism)
S2   joo, koko ajan sen huomaa *niinku* vaatekaupas[sa os-osta-ostavat]
S3   [se on *AIVAN* hirveetä]
       vauvanvaatteita tytölle oltava punanen ja pojalle sinin[en ja- mut] *ihan*
S3   [tosta se lähtee]
       TOTTA *siis* se on *ihan* järkyttävää
       (yeah you notice it all the time like in clothing shops [people buy]
       [it's *really* awful]
       baby's clothes it has to be red for a girl and blue for a boy [and but] that's
       [that's how it starts]
       absolutely true *I mean* it's *really* shocking)
       (NSF 2/102)

Example 44

(topic: a party where women take men's role and vice versa)
S2   mutta ku just ne miehet jotka on *ehkä* eni- eniten, *tämmösiä,* traditionaaleja ni ne
       ei *kyllä* tommosiin suostu ne EI lähe tonne
S1   ((laug[hs))]
S3   [niitä] PELOTTAA se
S2   niitä niin niit- *ihan varmasti* [*kuule,* että valta horjuu]
S3   [*varmasti* pelottaa se minkälainen] minä oon naisen silmissä
       (but it's exactly those men who are *maybe* most- most *sort of* traditional they
       certainly won't do that they won't go there
       they're frightened
       they yeah they- *quite certainly* [*you know* that their power will be weakened]
       [*certainly* they're frightened of how] they will look in the eyes of women)
       (NSF 2/104)

As was pointed out above, however, the use of emphatics is not the most typical way in which positive politeness is signalled in the NSF conversations. In fact, the same applies to the native speakers of Finnish as to the native speakers of English: they very often signal positive politeness with implicit pragmatic force modifiers, particularly with the clitic -*han/-hän* and pragmatic particles. In many of its uses the clitic -*han/-hän* can be compared with *you know* in English: an

important function of both is to create an impression of shared knowledge and shared background assumptions between the speakers. Both also appeal to the addressee, even though the clitic does this without an overt pronominal reference, and can perhaps therefore be regarded as even more implicit than *you know*.

The clitic *-han/-hän* is the most frequently occurring clitic in the NSF conversations. As was pointed out above, its functions can vary depending on the context. It can both soften and strengthen the force of utterances, and it can also serve textual functions, especially those of coherence (see Hakulinen 1976). Moreover, it can often fulfil several functions simultaneously. In the example below, for instance, the two occurrences of *-hän* help the speakers play down the force of their opinions. At the same time, however, *-hän* creates an 'as-we-all-know' atmosphere, which helps reduce the social distance between the speakers.[16] It is thus difficult to draw a sharp dividing line between the negative and positive politeness functions of the clitic:

Example 45

(topic: status of English in Europe)
S1   ... kuitenki ne käyttää aika paljon englantia
S3   mut ei*hän* s- Englannilla siis sillä MAALLA Isolla-Britannialla oo paljo
        Euroopassa nykyään millään alalla oikeen [mitään sanomista että]
S1   [se*hän* on semmonen] periferia ((laughs))
        (but people use English quite a lot after all
        but *you know* England does not I mean the country Great-Britain does not have
        much say in Europe nowadays in any field
        it's such a periphery *you know* ((laughs))
        (NSF 1/90)

Apart from *-han/-hän*, the Finnish speakers also make abundant use of pragmatic particles, many of which appear to play a role in positive politeness as they implicitly signal that the speakers are interested in both the topic at hand and their addressees. The pragmatic particles *kyllä*, *siis* and *nyt*, especially, can be regarded as markers of positive politeness; their role in involvement will also be taken up later in the study. Markkanen (1991), in a study of written language, discusses the multifunctionality of *kyllä* and points out that in some contexts writers use it to expresses concession whereas in others it is an emphasizer. The same applies also to the NSF conversation. The speakers, interestingly, often use a combination of *kyllä* and the clitic *-hän* to mark concession as in the example below:

---

[16]   Karhila (1994) analyses asymmetrical institutional conversations between students and teachers in which the teachers mainly use *-hAn* to imply that the students ought to be familiar with the things said. The use and interpretation of *-hAn* thus depends on the relationship between the speakers and it is likely that in asymmetrical situations, the less powerful speakers cannot as easily imply shared background with the more powerful speakers by using the clitic.

Example 46

(topic: foreign languages as code languages between siblings)
S3   ei eng- englanti ei ainakaan käy nyt sitte tai sitte-, täytyy hirvittävän
        MONIMUTKASIA rakenteita [käyttää että]
S2   [nii ((laughs))] joo, mutta että *kyllähän* sitä sitte aina, saattaa siirtyä johonki
        muuhunki kieleen
        (English won't do now or at least you have to use terribly complex
        constructions
        yeah but kyllä+clitic (~'naturally') we can always switch to some other
        language)
        (NSF 3/108)

It was pointed out on page 76 that the way speakers of Finnish use *siis* and
nyt as pragmatic particles rather than in their literal meaning has not received very
much scholarly attention. However, a look at the NSF conversations indicates that
the speakers very often seem to use these words as pragmatic particles, in which
capacity they serve interpersonal rather than referential functions. In the context
of the informal and casual NSF conversations at least, the speakers very often use
these particles as if to imply that they expect their messages to be common
knowledge for others as well. That is, they can be considered as markers of
positive politeness inasmuch as they contribute to an atmosphere of shared
assumptions. In examples 47 and 48, both *siis* and *nyt* help convey that the
speakers expect others to share their attitudes (example 47) or information
(example 48) about what they are saying even though *siis* seems the more emphatic
of the two:

Example 47

(topic: language courses)
S3   sehän pitäs ennen [kaikkea olla puhumista]
S1   [joo\, joo\, just] just mm
S3   *siis* täysin naurettavaa tämmönen, pelkkä teoriapuoli
        (you know it should mean [speaking above all]
        [yeah yeah exactly] exactly
        particle (~ emphatic 'I mean') dealing with theory only is totally ridiculous)
        (NSF 2/96)

Example 48

(topic: a Canadian aunt)
S2   ...se asuu Thunder Bayssa jossa *nyt* on, kymmenen prosenttia asukkaista on
        suomalaisia
        (she lives in Thunder Bay where *particle* (~ 'as we know') ten per cent of
        inhabitants are Finns)
        (NSF 3/118)

The present findings thus show that the native speakers of Finnish, in a
manner similar to the native speakers of English, quite often express positive
politeness by resorting to implicit pragmatic force modifiers. The non-native
speakers' performance with its small proportion of implicit modifiers and the
resulting impression of detachment thus contrasts with both types of native

speakers. These findings support those of Kärkkäinen and Raudaskoski (1988), who discuss the scarcity of positive politeness strategies in the talk of Finnish speakers of English. As pointed out earlier, however, Kärkkäinen and Raudaskoski (1988:112) interpret the finding in cultural terms as a sign that the Finnish culture is one in which positive politeness is not expressed through overt linguistic means. Such a view of Finnish culture is difficult to sustain in the present study, however, as there is clear evidence throughout the NSF conversations that the speakers often use pragmatic force modifiers for positive politeness purposes. It is probable that insufficient attention to the implicit level of language use is the reason why it has often been suggested that Finnish speakers do not signal positive politeness through linguistic means. The Finnish conversations in the present study are rich with implicit pragmatic force modifiers, especially clitics and pragmatic particles, which speakers constantly seem to use to convey interpersonal rather than referential meanings. Thus, although it may be true that Finnish speakers do not favour very explicit and overt means of expressing positive politeness, this does not mean that they would only opt for negative politeness and distancing strategies.

6.4   Pragmatic force modifiers as involvement markers

When the concepts of politeness and involvement were introduced in section 6.1, it was argued that it can be fruitful to consider the same pragmatic phenomena from different perspectives as this might help explain better their multifunctionality. It is worth reiterating, then, that when approaching pragmatic force modifiers from the perspectives of both politeness and involvement, the purpose is not to try and categorize modifiers into those with either politeness functions or involvement functions. As has become evident on many occasions already, it is often difficult to be very precise about the functions of modifiers. Rather, the purpose is to investigate whether directing attention to involvement helps clarify the meaning potential of pragmatic force modifiers.

6.4.1   Comparison of interlanguage and target language

As was pointed out in section 6.1.2, it has been usual to maintain a distinction between topical involvement and involvement with addressees. These will be discussed seperately below for resons of clarity even though they probably overlap to an extent, given the multifunctional nature of pragmatic force modifiers.

6.4.1.1 Topical involvement

Topical involvement, in Katriel and Dascal's (1989:286) terms, refers to that which occupies a central position in what they call the speaker's 'field of consciousness'.

It is a more-or-less concept so that topics can move between the centre and the periphery of interest in a gradient manner. As to how speakers can signal topical involvement, Chafe (1985) suggest the following possibilities: speakers may exaggerate, exclaim, use expressive vocabulary, use direct quotations and use vivid particles to signal their involvement with the topic at hand. As far as pragmatic force modifiers are concerned, those that speakers use in an emphatic function will come first to mind as possible signals of engagement with the topic.

It was pointed out above that neither the native nor the non-native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations use pragmatic force modifiers in an emphatic function very often. It was argued that this might be explained by the fact that the speakers do not know each other beforehand and, therefore, refrain from expressing their views in a strong manner. Such an influence of distance is difficult to attest, however, because the native speakers in the NSE conversations, who are acquaintances, do not use emphatic modifiers any more frequently. The difference in the degree of distance may, however, explain why the speakers in the NSE conversations use emphatics more readily in connection with views that are somehow disparaging in tone, thereby conveying that they feel quite strongly about what they are saying. The examples below illustrate this:

> Example 49
>
> (topic: paying rates)
> S1   ...and it makes me *really* MAD that people, are suddenly *so, so* radical and *so* into [direct] action if it happens to save them four hundred quid a year
> S2   [yeah]
>   (NSE 3/66)

> Example 50
>
> (topic: the black community)
> S1   ... *I mean* I lived in New York for three years and it's *just* EVERY homeless person in the street is black it's *really* depressing, and er, you know nobody really helps these people it's *really* bad
>   (NSE 4/86)

In comparison, the native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations usually use emphatics with 'safer' topics, and often in connection with messages that are somehow favourable to the addressees. In the following extract, for example, speaker N1 seems to emphasize his recommendations by using the modifier *very* several times. It can be argued that this kind of usage reflects the speaker's involvement with the addressee more than with the topic, which suggests, firstly, that the role of emphatic modifiers is not restricted to topical involvement and, secondly, that it is not easy to keep different varieties of involvement apart.

> Example 51
>
> (topic: travelling in England)
> N2   it is a *VERY* interesting place *very*=
> N1   =and it's the BEST system I've bu-

N2   ((lau[ghs))]
N1   [I mean] I don't think it's the best but I think if you wanna see you know like, diverse country you wanna see planes and (heather) and you wanna see VALLEYS find [HILLS and FORESTS and] everything, [[HERE]] is the place\
F1   [yeah]
F2   [mm yeah] [[yeah]]
F2   [yeah]
N2   [and and] *VERY* different people, and *VERY* different accents
      (NS-NNS 1/8)

The non-native speakers use emphatic pragmatic force modifiers even more rarely than the native speakers. But given the infrequency of emphatics in the native speech as well, this is hardly a big problem in terms of their pragmatic success. Because of the small number of emphatic modifiers in the NNS speech, it is difficult to make generalizations as to the interpersonal role in which the speakers use them. However, there seems to be a slight difference in the kinds of words with which the non-native and the native speakers combine emphatics. Where the emphatics used by the native speakers more often boost the force of words which already convey something about the speaker's feelings and attitudes (e.g. *really depressing*, *very interesting*), the non-native speakers tend to combine emphatics with more 'neutral' words; their modifiers tend to add emphasis to factual information rather than to their feelings and attitudes. In other words, the non-native speakers more rarely than the native speakers use emphatics strategically to convey involvement, to signal, for example, that they find the topic annoying, depressing, or interesting. Examples 52 and 53 below illustrate this:

Example 52

(topic: American culture)
N1   is- is Finland influenced by American culture
F1   oh yes *very* much yeah
      (NS-NNS 4/32)

Example 53

(topic: universities in Finland and Britain)
N2   is the university in Finland a lot like, here/, or, different
F2   na- I would say that the basic structure is *very* similar
      (NS-NNS 3/22)

It is, obviously, a simplification to draw conclusions about the extent of topical involvement only on the basis of emphatic modifiers, because involvement can also be expressed in other ways. Chafe's (1985) discussion of the use of expressive vocabulary is probably particularly relevant in the context of casual, informal conversations, because it seems only natural that speakers who feel involved with their topics should like to make their contributions more 'colourful'. Thus, even though it means a brief detour from pragmatic force modifiers, it is interesting to note that in the NS-NNS conversations the native speakers more often than the non-native speakers make use of attitudinal adjectives such as *great, excellent, wonderful* or *weird, awful, ridiculous* (25 versus 38 occurrences). Moreover,

the learners' repertoire of such adjectives is smaller so that where they tend to use the same adjectives (e.g *wonderful*) in different contexts, the variation is greater for the native speaker. It could thus be argued, both in the light of emphatic modifiers and expressive adjectives, that as far as signalling topical involvement is concerned, the non-native speakers seem to occupy an emotive middle ground, rarely going either to the positive or negative extremes. Even though this is certainly partly due to the fact that it is harder for non-native speakers to be as creative with their language as native speakers, the speakers' role as foreign speakers is also worth considering as a reason for their less 'colourful' language. The interplay between speakers' roles and pragmatic force modifiers will be dealt with more closely in chapter seven, but Thomas's (1983:96) suggestion that foreign language speakers often seem to be confined to a 'reduced personality' (cf. Harder 1980) when interacting with native speakers is worth considering in this connection as well. What reduced personality means is that foreign language speakers are often expected to use a rather conventional type of language. The non-native speakers' infrequent use of emphatic modifiers and attitudinal adjectives could thus be an indication of such conventional style.

It was pointed out in section 6.1.3 above that in addition to speaker's involvement with the hearer and the topic, Chafe (1985) also introduces the notion of ego-involvement, i.e. speaker's involvement with himself or herself, which, most clearly, gets realized in the use of first person pronouns. Rather than treating ego-involvement as a separate category, however, speakers' use of pragmatic force modifiers such as *I suppose, I mean,* or *I think* will here be dealt with in connection with topical involvement. This is because it seems that instead of using emphatics, the native speakers both in the NSE and the NS-NNS conversations often signal their involvement with topics by personalizing them, by talking about them from their own personal perspectives. In other words, the speakers signal involvement with the topic by way of ego-involvement. As suggested above, the most obvious realization of ego-involvement is the use of first person pronouns. The pervasiveness of the *I* pronoun is evident in the native speakers' performance, both in the NSE and the NS-NNS conversations alike: the speakers in a sense 'filter' most of the topics through their own feelings and experiences, which makes them sound personally involved with what they are saying. In section 6.3.1.1, the native speakers' greater tendency to personalize their messages was treated as a sign of positive politeness, but it also possible to argue that personalization, simultaneously, creates a sense of speakers being involved with what they are saying. Extract 54 below is a typical example of this ego-orientation:

Example 54

(context: N2, an American, has just explained her reasons for coming to Britain)
N2 so eh, YEAH so that's why *I* came here *I-*, to be honest with you *I* never really thought of coming to England before\, yeah it was just sort [of-] *I* GOT here
F1 [mm]
 and *I* was like, most- *I mean I- I* just like fell in love with it [it's like being here]
F2 [((laughs))]
 is (-) yeah *I* really DID *I* really DID the first=

N1 =*I* want to get OUT of here
     [((laughter))]
N2 [really/, *I've*] met so many people who have like that attitude towards it and *I*
     can't, under[stand it you know]
N1 [(that's) cos you] haven't BEEN here long enough
N2 oh maybe\, maybe if *I* like stayed here for, a very very long time but *I*-
     EVERYthing that *I've* seen of it so far *I* like
     (NS-NNS 3/22)

The use of the pronoun *I* as such obviously extends beyond pragmatic force modifiers, even though it occurs frequently in parenthetical constructions of the type *I suppose, I think,* or *I guess.* Comparison of the speakers in the NS-NNS conversations shows that the pronoun *I* occurs much more frequently in the native than in the non-native speakers' performance (460 vs. 277 occurrences), both in pragmatic force modifiers and otherwise. Caffi and Janney (1994:366, following Bühler 1934) discuss the importance of the 'I-here-now' principle in interaction, that is, speakers' tendency to orient to interaction from their own personal perspective and to look at matters from their current situation. The pervasiveness of this principle can be seen in the native speakers' tendency to cluster their utterances around this deictic triad; this typically intensifies an atmosphere of involvement. Conversely, Caffi and Janney point out that non-ego choices are systematically interpreted as signals of distance and non-immediacy. In this respect, it is possible that the non-native speakers' greater tendency to discuss matters with no explicit first person reference can be interpreted as a strategic choice, as intentional detachment, the purpose of which is to signal that the speakers do not feel personally involved with what they are saying.

One reason why the pronoun *I* occurs more rarely in the learners' performance is that they very often use the pronoun *we* rather than *I* when talking about their experiences. That is, the learners choose the 'collective' we-perspective even when they could discuss the topic from their own point of view. Example 54 above, where native speaker N2 discusses her reasons for coming to Britain, can be compared with example 55 below, which is from the same conversation and in which the non-native speakers discuss basically the same thing: their reasons for coming to Britain. Quite typically for the non-native speakers, however, both speakers choose to discuss the topic using the pronoun *we* rather than *I*:

Example 55

(topic: reasons for coming to Britain)
F1 well, *we* have- ((laughs shortly)) *we* have come here because *we* WANT to get
     some experience [and] meet meet other people and learn English and [[, so]]
N2 [aha] [[mhm]]
F2 so *we've* just got (-) basic idea to come here, to learn other cultures and
     langua[ge and] people
F1 [mhm]
N2 mhm=
F2 =the studying is ((laughs shortly)) the priority number TWO, and=
N2 =meeting people priority number ONE ((laughs))
F2 yeah learn English, and just be abroad
     (NS-NNS 3/20)

Caffi and Janney (1994:366) argue that the pronoun *we* is one of the non-ego strategies, and Haverkate (1992), similarly, discusses the use of *we* as a defocalizing strategy with a distancing effect. In terms of topical involvement, the use of *we* seems to signal less personal involvement with the subject matter than the use of *I*. That is, if the non-native speakers in the example above had used the first person pronoun (e.g. *I've come here because I want to get some experiences and meet other people* ...), it would have made a difference in terms of how personally involved they seem with the topics they are discussing. It could thus be beneficial for non-native speakers to use pragmatic force modifiers with a personal reference (e.g. *I suppose, I find*) more often, not only because they can be used to mitigate the force of face threats, as discussed in 6.3.1 above, but also because they often help maintain an atmosphere that suggests that speakers feel personally involved with what they are saying. The following extract from a NSE conversation illustrates this kind of personal involvement: instead of expressing her message in a this-is-so manner, the speaker brings herself and her attitudes into play:

Example 56

(topic: students and poll tax)
S2   ... I just *I think* they shouldn't make students pay, *I mean I* kind of ag- *I* can see the point of a whol- of a poll [tax] in general and everything even
S3   [mm]
       though *I* don't agree with it cos *I think* the- the better off you are you should pay MORE and everything
       (NSE 1/39)

The non-native speakers' tendency to discuss matters using the pronoun *we* rather than *I* can also be considered as a signal of group membership, as 'we' Finns against 'you' British. Shea's (1993) study focuses on a conversation between Japanese and American speakers of English, and he points out (p. 37) that the Japanese speaker constantly refers to the Japanese as 'we' and her American counterparts as 'you', thus locating herself in a different group membership. Shea goes on to argue that this "mediates the social distance constructed in the discourse". In a similar manner, the non-native speakers' preference for the pronoun *we* can be interpreted as an intention to create distance between the native and the non-native speakers, on the one hand, and to signal involvement among the non-native speakers, on the other.

The means of indicating topical involvement discussed so far - emphatic modifiers and parenthetical expressions - belong to the more explicit end of the continuum of pragmatic force modifiers. Speakers can, however, also signal their involvement with the topic more implicitly. It seems that many implicit modifiers are particularly important in signalling involvement with the addressee, which is why they will be discussed in more detail in section 6.4.1.2 below. An exception is the pragmatic particle *I mean*, which often seems important from the viewpoint of topical involvement because it has the capacity of signalling that the speaker is engaged with what s/he is saying. Erman (1987:202), similarly, suggests that *I mean* tends to be used in discourse "where the speaker is involved in the subject-

matter". *I mean* can, as is characteristic of implicit modifiers in general, also have other functions,[17] but it is often one of the devices with which speakers can signal topical involvement cum ego involvement. The particle occurs very frequently in the NSE conversations in particular. Consider the role of *I mean* in the following extract, for example, where the speakers would sound more detached from their messages if they did not use the modifiers because those help add vividness or 'experiential richness' (Chafe 1985) to their contributions:

Example 57

(topic: rates)
S1   yeah *I mean*- yeah, from purely, you know ME point of way [the rates are fine]
S4   [*I mean* it's just that people] who were quite well off beforehand they're even better off now because of it
(NSE 2/52)

I mean is used very rarely by the non-native speakers: of the eight speakers four do not use it at all, and most of the occurrences can be found in the performance of one speaker, the same speaker who uses the highest number of modifiers among the non-native speakers. As was mentioned on page 132 above, when the non-native speakers use *I mean*, they tend to use it in such a way that its literal reading 'to mean' gets foregrounded rather than its interpersonal functions.[18] The exception is the non-native speaker referred to above, who seems to be able to exploit the interpersonal potential of *I mean* better than the other non-native speakers; she also uses other pragmatic force modifiers quite skilfully:

Example 58

(context: NNS have been asked about their hobbies)
F2   I was at- *I mean* I- I WANTED to join the hiking society but then I didn't- I don't know, *I mean* I- I had big plans about that then I sort of found out that they're more more like mountain climbers really
((laughter))
(NS-NNS 4/28)

Various pragmatic force modifiers, both explicit and implicit ones, can thus function as markers of topical involvement. There are, however, also modifiers which do not seem particularly important in terms of involvement and which have not, therefore, been considered in this section. This group of pragmatic force modifiers contains expressions such as *maybe, perhaps, sort of, a bit, or something like*

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[17]   The same applies to *I mean* as to *you know*: it has often been regarded as a mere fumble (Edmondson 1981:153) or a pause filler, which gives speakers time to plan what they are saying. Previous research has, however, indicated that even though *I mean* can be a reflection of planning, its use is often interpersonally motivated (e.g. Östman 1982, Schiffrin 1987, Erman 1987).

[18]   It is characteristic of such uses of *I mean* that speakers use them with reformulations and self-corrections, where it can be paraphrased as 'what I mean is' as in *so how much have you actually been travelling **I mean** how much experience do you have abroad* (NS-NNS 1/1).

that, for example. Modifiers of this type seem to be associated with detachment rather than with involvement. That is, the use of these modifiers makes it possible for speakers to create a sense of distance because they leave messages vague and fuzzy. This stands in opposition to involvement, which has been characterized as a mode of engagement and commitment in the present study. Note, however, that it is possible to argue, as Biber and Finegan (1989) do, that the use of hedges like those listed above adds to the general sense of involved interaction in that fuzziness implies speakers' want to focus on the flow of interaction rather than on the precise semantic meaning of their utterances. Such interpretation, however, requires a broader view of involvement than is the case in the present study.

In conclusion, prosodic strategies are worth mentioning here even though they are not systematically investigated in the present study. It was pointed out on page 108 that the non-native speakers rarely use rising or fall-rise intonation to soften the impact of their opinions. The same seems to apply also more generally, so that there is less pitch movement in the non-native speakers' speech. Instead, the learners typically opt for level intonation contours throughout the conversations. It seems, however, that they often employ intensity as an emotive signal, and increased intensity can quite often be interpreted as a signal of topical involvement. It is thus possible that learners seek to compensate for lacking verbal involvement strategies by expressing engagement with the topic by heightened intensity. In the extract below, for example, speaker F1 pronounces parts of her message with great intensity. It can be argued that she thereby succeeds in conveying topical involvement and showing her attitudes towards what she is saying:

Example 59

(topic: a compulsory test in Swedish)
F1   we- we can not go (or) like, get our degree out in university, without taking a test in Swedi[sh], and I'm *NEVER* gonna pass it
N1   [ah]
((laug[hter))]
F1   [I'll spend] my ne- my whole *LIFE* in university because I can't get out of that (NS-NNS 2/16)

All in all, then, it seems that even though the non-native speakers do not use pragmatic force modifiers that much more rarely than the native speakers, they often have problems in using them in strategically important ways. This is also reflected in the finding that they use modifiers more rarely to signal their interest in and involvement with the topic. It is true that the focus on pragmatic force modifiers does not reveal everything about topical involvement. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that the interpersonal functions of pragmatic force modifiers extend beyond smoothing the impact of face threats to conveying the degree to which speakers feel involved with the topic at hand.

6.4.1.2 Involvement with the addressee

Apart from showing that they feel involved with the topic at hand, speakers can also signal involvement with their addressees and the interaction with them (e.g. Katriel and Dascal 1989, Ellis 1992). As Chafe (1985:116) puts it, involvement of the speaker with the hearer refers to the speaker's "concern for the dynamics of interaction with another person". Involvement with the hearer thus overlaps with positive politeness at least as far as it has to do with signalling the speaker's favourable feelings and attitudes towards the addressee. It is, however, important to remember that speakers can signal involvement with the hearer also in confrontational situations. In other words, even though there is a certain amount of overlap between positive politeness and involvement, they are not identical concepts.

The use of second person pronouns can be regarded, according to Chafe (1985), as the most obvious realization of other-involvement in interaction. In the NS-NNS conversations, the native speakers resort to the pronoun *you* much more often than the non-native speakers (323 versus 125 occurrences). It is an even more interesting finding that, proportionally, the non-native speakers use *you* more often as a generic pronoun referring to people in general rather than referring to the participants in the situation at hand. In fact, in 60 % of its occurrences in the NNS speech, the non-native speakers use *you* in generic reference and in 40 % to actually refer to their conversational partners. The reverse is true of the native speakers: 66 % of the *you* pronouns used by them refer to their addressees while 34 % have a generic reference.

It can be argued that when *you* is used in generic reference, it tends to signal distance rather than involvement. Accordingly, Caffi and Janney (1994:366) suggest that generic reference is one of the *non-ego* choices that serve distancing functions (see also Fraser 1980). Even though generic reference thus stands in opposition to involvement, the purpose is not to argue that speakers should avoid using pronouns in their generic meanings. On the contrary, there are many occasions where the speakers talk about topics at a general level and where the use of generic *you* is an appropriate choice. Alternatively, distancing may serve negative politeness functions if the topic is sensitive or potentially face-threatening. It seems, however, that the non-native speakers quite often resort to the generic *you* even when they are talking about their own experiences and could easily adopt a more personalized and involved approach. In the section above, the non-native speakers' frequent use of the 'collective' *we* rather than *I* was discussed. The non-native speakers' tendency to use both *I* and *you* rather infrequently thus seems to suggest that they avoid referring explicitly either to themselves or to their addressees. It is probably the cumulative effect of these two tendencies that creates an overall impression that the non-native speakers appear more detached and less involved than their native counterparts. Example 60 is a demonstration of the non-native speakers' way of resorting to generic *you*; note that speaker F1 first uses *I* but switches to generic *you* and talks of Finns in general, even though it seems

more likely in the context that N1 directs her question to F2 personally, who has just referred to her difficulties with the English language while attending courses:

Example 60

(topic: studying)
F1   ...so this is my fourth year, I'm doing (theatre) and drama courses
N2   oh really, d'you like it/
F1   oh yeah, well, it's difficult of course with the language [it's] different from
N2   [aha]
       what you [[do]]
N1   [[HOW]] long have you been speaking English now
F1   well, *you* have to take it in school since *you're,* what NINE years old, but SCHOOL English is so different
N2   yeah ((laughs shortly))
       (NS-NNS 2/10)

To see the extent to which *you* used in its generic and in its more personal meaning differ in terms of involvement, it is useful to compare the extract above with example 61 below, where the native speakers use the pronoun *you* to actually refer to their coparticipants. The non-native speakers more rarely choose to refer to their addressees in this way. This may be partly due to native language influence judging from the finding, discussed in section 6.2.2.1 above, that the speakers in the NSF conversations more often tend towards impersonalization. It may also be the case that the native speakers, assuming that they have a more powerful role in the conversations, can more freely adopt a familiar attitude towards their interlocutors (cf. the discussion of roles in chapter seven):

Example 61

(context: the participants have just introduced themselves to each other)
N1   yeah I heard I heard (twangs) of LIVERpool in *your* voice and- i- is that right/, could I have heard that/ *you-you* don't know [Liverpool people, (it) must be]
F2   [no no not at all]
       the Finn ac[cent]
F1   [yeah] ((laughs))
       ((laughter))
N1   where- where did *you* both learn to SPEAK English
F1   at school
F2   yeah origi[nally]
N1   [but that's] inCREDIBLE tha- that *you* speak English to that LEVEL from just school I me- have *you* done anything since
       (NS-NNS 4/25)

The pragmatic particles *you know* and *you see* are the only pragmatic force modifiers with an overt second person reference. It was pointed out above that the former is one of the most frequently occurring modifiers in the native speakers' performance, whereas the latter is used only a couple of times. The positive politeness functions of *you know* were discussed in section 6.3.1.3 above, and it was shown that the particle is practically nonexistent in the non-native speakers' speech, being used only twice. This ties in with the smaller number of second

person reference in the NNS speech in general. It is possible that the non-native speakers fail to grasp the implicit nature of *you know*, being too much tied to its literal meaning. The role of *you know* is especially salient in the NSE conversations, where the distance between the speakers is smaller than in the NS-NNS conversations, but it is quite commonplace in the latter as well. The interpersonal importance of *you know* lies in its capacity to create an impression of reduced distance between the speakers as in the following exchange between a native and a non-native speaker:

Example 62

(topic: Welsh language)
N1   ...some of my family know how [(-)]
F2   [CAN]you understand it, if you hear it er
N1   well no I only know, about couple of phrases *you know* ((laughs)) the
       usual things
       (NS-NNS 1/7)

The example above indicates that speakers can appeal to their addressees with *you know* even when they are talking about things which have little direct relevance for the addressees. In other words, the speaker may speak of his/her own experiences but use *you know* to draw the addressee into the situation. This function is particularly salient in narrative sections; the native speakers both in the NS-NNS conversations and the NSE conversations use *you know* very often in narratives (see also Östman 1981a:16), where, as Coates (1987) suggests, pragmatic force modifiers are otherwise less frequent than in the discussion sections. The function of *you know* in narratives seems to be addressee-oriented in that the particle helps speakers to signal their concern for the addressees and their cooperation even while concentrating on their narratives. The example below demonstrates this: without *you know* the narrative would sound more 'matter-of-fact' and speaker N2 would not sound as addressee-oriented as she does now. Note also how, in addition to using *you know*, the speaker uses other appealing strategies, notably *right* and the combination *y'know what I mean,* both with a rising intonation. It is, in fact, the appealing character of these modifiers which make it obvious that the example below is from a situation where speaker N2 is involved in interaction *with* somebody:

Example 63

(topic: living abroad)
N2   ...for example ehm, I live in America\, so I come here *right*/ I have like NO idea
       of what to expect or anything I come here and it's like, you meet like all these
       other PEOPLE and for- I know when I go BACK, it'll it'll be like, I'm taking
       something back WITH ME, [from] *you know* from everyone that I've
F1   [mhm]
       MET\, *you know*/, whereas if I had stayed like in America I probably would not
       have been the same *y' know what I mean*/
       (NS-NNS 3/19)

When positive politeness was discussed in section 6.3 above, it was argued that tag questions can be seen as devices which function as an appeal to addressees. This is why they can also be regarded as devices which signal involvement with the hearer (see also Östman 1981b, Holmes 1990). It was also pointed out that tag-questions occur very rarely in the non-native speakers' performance. This further adds to the general impression, at least as far as pragmatic force modifiers are concerned, that the non-native speakers seem less prepared to make overt reference to their addressees or to appeal to them by using tag questions even though this might add to the involved atmosphere.

It may seem artificial to single out certain pragmatic force modifiers as those with which speakers can signal involvement with the hearer. This is because it is possible to argue that the whole modification phenomenon is to a large extent addressee-oriented: the wish to pay respect to the hearers and to show that they are accepted and liked is often the reason that motivates modified output in the first place. This is certainly the case and, as has been argued throughout the study, the importance of pragmatic force modifiers in interaction lies in their interpersonal nature. It seems, however, that some modifiers more than others have the specific function of inviting the addressee to participate and cooperate, whereas an important role of others is to leave the participants freedom of action. In this respect, it makes sense to talk about involvement with the hearer as a specific aspect of the interpersonal function of pragmatic force modifiers.

The discussion above has indicated that when the non-native and native speakers' way of using particular modifiers that can function as signals of other-involvement is compared, there are rarely very drastic differences. The cumulative effect of various recurrent features, however, makes it possible to talk about certain tendencies which differentiate between the two groups of speakers. The less frequent use of the pronoun *you* in general, and the greater tendency to use it in the generic sense in particular, as well as the almost complete absence of *you know* and tag questions in appealing functions, are all features that contribute to the impression that the non-native speakers sound less involved with their addressees than the native speakers in the same conversations. Relevant to these findings, however, is Besnier's (1994:285) criticism that associating involvement with particular linguistic features easily leads to circularity, so that "involvement is the result of the frequent use of involvement strategies, and the frequent use of involvement strategies is the result of involvement". This means, consequently, that the rare use of pragmatic force modifiers with an involvement function by non-native speakers does not necessarily reveal how involved they actually *feel* in the situation. Yet, in answer to Besnier's criticism, given that native speakers' involvement with others often gets its expression in particular pragmatic force modifiers, their infrequent occurrence in non-native speakers' performance can give rise to judgements of detachment despite the learners' genuine inner feelings towards the situation and their coparticipants.

6.4.2   Comparison of interlanguage and native language

6.4.2.1 Topical involvement

The discussion above has suggested that the non-native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations are less skilful than the native speakers in using pragmatic force modifiers for involvement functions. The extent to which this can be attributed to their native language will be assessed in this section by looking at the relationship between topical involvement and pragmatic force modifiers in the conversations by the native speakers of Finnish.

It was shown above that one way of signalling involvement with the topic is to be emphatic. As in the other sets of data, however, the number of emphatic modifiers is relatively small also in the NSF conversations. When the speakers use emphatics to signal involvement, it usually happens in connection with matters which the speakers see in an unfavourable light, which was also the case in the NSE data. The non-native speakers' performance thus differs in this respect from both groups of native speakers in that they rarely go to any 'emotional extremes'. As the following example suggests, the Finnish speakers also easily combine emphatics with expressive vocabulary (here *kauheeta* 'awful' and *hirveetä* 'terrible') to create an involved atmosphere by conveying their attitudes towards the topic:

> Example 64
>
> (topic: foreign languages getting mixed up)
> S3   ...jo-joku semmonen juttu mulle on pari kertaa tullu että multon niinku kysytty että, et miten se on niinku SAKSAKS, ku ne tietää et mä oo luk- luen [saksaa] sit mä niinku sanon mikä
> S1   [mm]
> se on saksaks sit yhtäkkiä mä en pystykään enää puhumaan sitä espanjaa, se on *KAUHEETA* \, siis se on *TOSI hirveetä*
> (such a thing has happened to me a couple of times like I've been asked how is something in German as they know that I study German then I say it in German and then suddenly I can no longer speak Spanish it's *awful* I mean its *really terrible*)
> (NSF 3/111)

As emphatics are relatively rare in the NSF data a more common way in which the native speakers of Finnish signal topical involvement is through the use of implicit modifiers, especially pragmatic particles. The particles *kyllä*, *siis*, and *nyt*, in particular, often seem to signal speakers' heightened emotional involvement with what they are saying.[19] A particle-like use of all three expressions is very common in the NSF data; all speakers use at least one of them during the conversations, and nine speakers out of thirteen resort to all three of them. These pragmatic particles were also discussed above in terms of their positive politeness

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[19]   The pragmatic functions of these particles have not been studied much. Karhila (1994:92-96), however, draws attention to the particle *kyllä* and the way speakers use it to emphasize their views (see also Hakulinen 1989, Markkanen 1991).

functions. It is fruitful, however, to consider them also from the viewpoint of topical involvement, which is a broader concept in that speakers can also signal involvement with topics that are not favourable to the addressee (i.e. positively polite). The speakers may, for example, emphasize their irritation by using these particles and thereby signal their emotional involvement with the topic. In example 65 below, for instance, the use of the particles *kyllä* and *siis* by speaker S1 helps show that he feels involved with the topic at hand; the particles also succeed in conveying his apparent irritation towards the matter discussed:

Example 65

(topic: sending an obscene postcard)
S1   =mut *kyllä* se teki se Reini *siis* teki EMÄmunauksen siinä [voi j-], sitä ei usko
S3   [joo-o]
      monikaan *siis* se on, se ei [siitä *kyllä*, nouse]
S3   [*siis* ja aatelkaa *siis* et se*hän*] kertoo vaan sen, ei*hän* se- se *oha*- voi*han* se olla tsoukki siis pilaki mut niinku et se*hän* kertoo vaan niinku, sen- ASENTEISTA
      (but Reini *really* did *you know* a major blunder there oh- it's hard to believe *I mean* it's, he *certainly* [won't survive that]
      [and just think it just] tells of his, *you know* it- it can be a joke but like it just tells of his attitudes *you know*)
      (NSF 2/106)

It is quite usual for the speakers in the NSF conversations to use more than one of these pragmatic particles together. In the following example, speaker S1 uses all three of them (i.e. *kyllä, siis,* and *nyt*) and also the emphatic *tosi* 'really'. The cumulative effect created by this is an impression that the speaker is involved with the topic at hand and prepared to convey his attitudes towards it. In addition to pragmatic particles, the speaker also uses other pragmatic force modifiers, which are more geared towards adding a mitigating effect to the opinion (e.g. *ehkä* 'maybe' and pragmatic particle *niinku*) than signalling involvement. There is thus an interplay between markers that emphasize interest and markers that soften the force of the opinion. This observation resembles the one by Biber and Finegan (1989) who argue that casual conversations tend to be heavily marked by both certainty and doubt simultaneously.

Example 66

(topic: tests on animals)
S1   ...jos niitä ei, *ehkä* voi *niinku* kokonaan POISTAA, mikä *nyt* on *aika* epätod-tode-todennäköstä että ne poistettas, jos niitä ei kokonaan voi poistaa, niin *kyllä* niitä pitäs *jotenki niinku* MINIMOIDA niitten eläinten kärsimyksiä yleensä minimoida ne kokeet *niinku* niitten määrä et mahdollisimman
      [vähän ja, KAIKKI pitäs olla NIIN tarpeellisia] jostain, *tosi* ylhä-ylhäseltä
S2   [nii just ja ku samoja testataan monneen kertaan]
      instanssilta hakee se lupa *siis tosissaan*
      (if they *maybe* cannot be *like* completely got rid of which *part.* would be *quite* unlikely if they cannot be completely got rid of they *part.* should *you know* be minimized *somehow* the suffering of those animals ought to be minimized *you know* their number like [as few tests as possible and all those ought to be necessary] the

[yeah and they test the same things many times]
permission ought to be applied from some *really* important official *part. really)*
(NSF 2/100)

Prosody is also worth taking up here as it seems rather obvious that speaker S1 in the example above also signals his involvement through heightened intensity (cf. words in capital letters). The pragmatic particles themselves are not stressed in this example, which supports Östman's (1982:149) suggestion that pragmatic particles tend to be prosodically subordinated to other words. The sense of involvement that speaker S1 communicates is thus probably due to the cumulative effect of heightened intensity, pragmatic particles, and emphatics.

As was shown above, the native speakers of English quite often signal topical involvement by personalizing the topic, of which the frequent use of pragmatic force modifiers such as *I think* and *I mean* is an indication. In the NSF conversations, the speakers resort to pragmatic force modifiers with the *I* pronoun less often, and it is thus possible to consider the non-native speakers' tendency to use fewer references to themselves as a result of native language influence.

It was also suggested that a probable reason why Finnish speakers less often use forms with the first person pronoun lies in the fact that Finnish is structurally very different from English so that an explicit pronominal reference if often redundant. It is thus commonplace, for example, that the speakers in the NSF conversations use verbs denoting emotional or psychological states without a personal reference, even though it is obvious that the speaker speaks about him/herself. The following example illustrates this: it would be possible for the speaker to add an overt first person reference in an oblique form *minusta* ('I-from': *minusta tuntus* 'it would seem to me') but it is not necessary and, in fact, such use of the first person pronoun could, in some contexts, be interpreted unfavourably as the speaker's attempt to boast or to draw the attention to him/herself:

Example 67

(topic: learning the language of the country in which you live)
S2   ...mutta *TUNTUS* että se on sen verran tärkee asia kuiten[kin], ihmisten, er
S3   [nii]
        väliset kontaktit, ja tämmöset näin
        (but it *would seem* that it's an important matter after all the contacts between
        people and things like that)
        (NSF 3/116)

It was argued above that the non-native speakers' less personalized approach in the NS-NNS conversations can lead to interpretations that they are not particularly interested in the topics at hand. Despite their frequent use of impersonal strategies, a similar impression of non-involvement does not hold for the speakers in the NSF conversations, however. Even though the Finnish speakers do not resort to pragmatic force modifiers with the first person reference as often as the speakers of English, there are other ways in which they can signal that they feel involved with the topics at hand. The particle *siis*, for example, often seems to

play a crucial role in the data by signalling speakers' heightened interest in what they are saying (cf. the discussion above). Even though *siis* does not have explicit personal reference, it is often functionally very similar to the pragmatic particle *I mean* in English as comparison of examples 68 and 69 from NSF and NSE data, respectively, demonstrates. In the extracts, both *siis* and *I mean* seem to have a function of emphasizing speakers' emotional engagement with what they are saying. Leaving the pragmatic particle out would in both cases render the tone of the message less involved:

Example 68

(topic: song lyrics)
S3   joskus yritin tehä suomenkielisiä sanoja (-) biisejä ei *siis*, *siis* mä en ois ikinä kehannu niitä kellekään näyttää *siis* ne näytti niin omituisilta
(sometimes I tried to write lyrics in Finnish *I mean*, *I mean* I would never have had the courage to show those to anybody *I mean* they seemed so odd)
(NSF 4/124)

Example 69

(topic: community charge)
S2   he's been charged nearly two hundred pounds for that [or something]
S1   [oh wow]
S3   [oh gee]
       I mean NO, a hundred and odd- hundred and [forty] hundred and fifty
S1   [yeah]
       I mean that's, REALLY heartbreaking *I mean* that's awful
(NSE 4/78)

The analysis thus suggests that even though native speakers of both English and Finnish can signal involvement with the topic by using pragmatic force modifiers, they favour different kinds of modifiers. Where the speakers of English often signal interest in the topics by personalizing them and using an abundance of modifiers with the first person reference, the speakers of Finnish more often resort to pragmatic particles, which also convey that speakers feel engaged with the topic but do this more implicitly than modifiers with an overt personal reference. This may be one reason why the non-native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations appear to have difficulties in employing pragmatic force modifiers for involvement functions: it is difficult to transfer implicit strategies from one language to another because it would involve finding functional rather than semantic equivalents. This would require, firstly, awareness of the functions of implicit modifiers in speakers' native language and, secondly, an ability to look for strategies that would convey similar functions in the foreign language. This would demand a great deal of conscious effort on the part of non-native speakers, and it is likely that such conscious effort would hinder rather than facilitate communication. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that the non-native speakers in the present data seem to remain largely unaware of the ways in which they could signal topical involvement with pragmatic force modifiers. It is, however, crucial to recognize this as an interlanguage phenomenon rather than as a reflection of the

way the speakers behave when using their native language. As the findings indicate, the Finnish conversations are also rich with signals of topical involvement, and as with the data in English, pragmatic force modifiers have their role to play in this.

6.4.2.2 Involvement with the addressee

The discussion above suggested that the native speakers of Finnish in the NSF conversations do not use pragmatic force modifiers with first person reference to signal topical involvement as often as the native speakers of English. Exactly the same applies also to modifiers with second person reference. There are, in fact, no pragmatic force modifiers in the NSF conversations that contain the second person pronoun. One reason for this is the structural feature of Finnish that was already discussed in connection with the first person avoidance, i.e. the fact that in Finnish, persons can be denoted within the verb phrase, which makes the use of pronouns often redundant.

The absence of pragmatic force modifiers with second person reference in the NSF conversations should not, however, be parallelled with absence of other-involvement. There are other modifiers which can be regarded as signals of involvement with the addressees. The most obvious one is the morphological clitic *-han/-hän*, which was introduced in section 6.3.2.2 above in terms of its positive politeness functions. As was pointed out then, it is a typical implicit pragmatic force modifier in that it can acquire various interpersonally salient functions in its contexts of occurrence. It can also function as a signal of involvement with the hearer. In the following example, for instance, the speakers would sound more assertive and formal without the clitics, which create a sense that the participants share their views of the topic. It has been mentioned earlier that implicit modifiers are often ambivalent. This is apparent in example 70 as well. On the one hand, it is possible to argue that the clitics soften the impact of the speakers' opinions and thus function as mitigators. On the other hand, the clitics also seem to convey simultaneously a sense of shared assumptions, which makes them important devices in terms of involvement with the addressee. The function of *-han* comes very close to that of *you know* in both speakers' utterances:

> Example 70
>
> (topic: animal testing)
> S2   raha- raha*han* se on mikä [ratkasee]
> S3   [mm]
> S1   [joo, joo,] joo, ja sit on*han* se tosissaan se et ei varmaan aina niin noi eläinkokeet
>   oo niinku verrannollisia, niinku ihmiseen
>   (money+*clitic* is the decisive thing
>   yes and it really is+*clitic* the case that those animal tests aren't probably always
>   comparable like with humans)
>   (NSF 2/100)

It was argued above that the pragmatic particle *nyt* can often be interpreted as a marker of topical involvement. There are contexts, however, where it also can be considered as a means of signalling involvement with the hearer. The particle is used quite often with the clitic *-han/-hän* and in such contexts the modifiers seem to reinforce each other. Example 71 below is an example of one such occurrence. Speaker S3 seems to signal, both with the clitic *-hän* and the particle *nyt*, that instead of conveying some new information, she is appealing to information she expects others to share:

Example 71

(topic: an exam in Finnish grammar)
S3   ...ja siitä*hän nyt* on, VIIDELLÄ kurssilla jauhettu samat, et jos en mä ny VIIMENKI osaa tätä ni on jo kumma juttu
(that+*clitic particle* (~as you know) has been gone over on five courses so if I don't finally understand that it would be really strange)
(NSF 3/114)

The particle *nyt* can thus be considered from the viewpoint of both topical involvement and involvement with the addressee. The same applies to many other modifiers, which suggests that keeping these two aspects of involvement apart is easier theoretically than in practice (cf. Chafe 1985, Katriel and Dascal 1989). That is, topical involvement and other-involvement are often intertwined. In fact, it is difficult to imagine a situation with 'pure' instances of involvement where speakers signal their involvement with just the topic or with just their addressees. The addressee's role seems significant even in topical involvement: in many cases the presence of addressees is certainly the factor that motivates the speaker to show involvement with his or her topic in the first place.

When discussing interactional involvement, Katriel and Dascal (1989:289) argue that "the communicative repertoire of every speech community . . . defines a range of behaviors that can be drawn upon by members to display and generate the degree of involvement they deem appropriate in given situations". For the native speakers of Finnish in the present study, implicit pragmatic force modifiers seem an important part of the repertoire with which they signal involvement with their addressees. That is, pragmatic particles and morphological clitics, which may seem rather meaningless at the outset, have often important involvement functions in interaction. Insufficient attention to implicit modifiers might thus obscure the fact that, rather than showing other-involvement less than speakers of English, Finnish speakers tend to favour different means of expressing it.

6.5   Explicit and implicit modifiers in politeness and involvement functions

As suggested by the research questions introduced in section 4.2 above, one reason for conceptualizing pragmatic force modifiers as a continuum from the more

explicit to the more implicit modifiers has been to find out whether the two types of modifiers have different interpersonal functions, and to investigate whether there are differences between native and non-native speakers in how they use these different types of modifiers. These questions have been dealt with in the sections above, but the main points will be summarized in this section. It is important to point out at the outset that the differences found show tendencies rather than a clear-cut division of labour between explicit and implicit modifiers. Leech (1980:5) points out that pragmatic regularities tend to be weaker than regularities in grammar, but "what is systematic, even if weakly so, needs to be studied and described". That is, even if differences are slight, it is of importance to investigate whether the explicit-implicit seesaw seems to get 'weighted' differently in different sets of data and in relation to different interpersonal purposes.

The discussion in sections 6.2 and 6.3 has indicated that as far as expressing politeness is concerned, both explicit and implicit pragmatic force modifiers are important. It is useful, firstly, to consider the use of explicit and implicit modifiers by the native speakers of English and Finnish in the data as it provides a certain baseline against which the non-native speakers' performance can be assessed. The analysis suggests that as far as negative politeness is concerned, use of explicit modifiers seems to be especially important for native speakers of both English and Finnish. They also use implicit modifiers for negative politeness purposes, but it seems that the native speakers tend to opt for more explicit, and thus more transparent, modifiers when the situation involves an apparent threat to negative face as, for example, in the performance of questions or disparaging opinions. The importance of explicit modifiers in negative politeness is especially obvious when they are serving softening functions.

There is a slight difference, however, between the native speakers of English and Finnish as regards the kinds of explicit modifiers that they most readily use as markers of negative politeness. Where the Finnish speakers favour devices without explicit personal reference as well as modifiers that add to vagueness and impreciseness, the native speakers of English are more likely to use explicit modifiers with a personal reference. It was pointed out above that the Finnish speakers' tendency towards greater impersonalization in the choice of modifiers is in accordance with the notion of Finnish as a language where personal reference is often avoided for reasons of negative politeness (Hakulinen 1987). In the present study, the use of impersonal strategies for modification purposes has not been a central issue, the focus being on choices at the lexical-phrasal level. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that impersonalization would belong to the implicit rather than the explicit end of the continuum of modifiers. Hence, the Finnish speakers' choice of 'non-personal' explicit modifiers can be seen as geared towards impersonalization and implicitness. It could even be argued that it is possible to 'order' different explicit modifiers on the continuum so that explicit modifiers with a personal reference , which the speakers of English favour, are even more explicit in bringing forth speakers' attitudes than explicit modifiers without personal reference, which the speakers of Finnish favour.

The same applies to positive as to negative politeness: the native speakers in the data use both explicit and implicit modifiers for positive politeness purposes. In many contexts, however, implicit modifiers seem particularly important. The native speakers of both English and Finnish at times use explicit modifiers such as emphatics to signal their approval of their interlocutors, but this is relatively rare. It was argued above that one explanation for this might be that expressing positive politeness in overt ways may be risky when the speakers are not close to each other. The native speakers of both English and Finnish thus seem to favour more implicit ways of creating common ground and atmosphere of shared assumptions. It was argued above that pragmatic particles and morphological clitics are often used as implicit appeals to addressees and their cooperation. Resorting to such implicit ways of reducing the distance between speakers thus seems to be a typical characteristic of casual, relaxed, face-to-face encounters both in English and in Finnish. One indication of this is that in the performance of both the native speakers of English and Finnish, the majority of pragmatic force modifiers are implicit modifiers. The two groups of native speakers thus resemble each other surprisingly much in terms of their preference for implicit modifiers.

As far as involvement is concerned, implicit means of modification seem particularly important for the native speakers of both English and Finnish. The native speakers of English, however, more often than the native speakers of Finnish, signal their emotional engagement to the situation also with explicit modifiers such as emphatics or modifiers with the first person reference. The small number of such modifiers in the Finnish speakers' performance might easily be interpreted as a greater degree of detachment. However, the Finnish speakers have a tendency to signal involvement implicitly rather than explicitly. As was shown in the analysis above, for example, they often use different implicit modifiers in complex combinations, the cumulative effect of which is usually that of heightened involvement. Even though also the native speakers make use of implicit modifiers to convey involvement, the native speakers of Finnish seem even more inclined towards signalling involvement implicitly. In this connection, it is interesting to point out that Mauranen (1993), in a study of academic writing, suggests that Finnish speakers tend to differ from their Anglo-Saxon counterparts in employing more implicit rhetorical strategies. It is thus possible that the tendency towards implicitness is a cultural characteristic of native speakers of Finnish that cuts across different areas of language use even though further studies are needed to investigate this issue in more detail.

When the non-native speakers' performance is related to the two sets of native speakers, it becomes obvious that the way they use pragmatic force modifiers differs greatly from both. The non-native speakers are, not surprisingly, less skilful in using modifiers strategically to modify the impact of their messages. As far as the explicit-implicit continuum is concerned, the non-native speakers mainly use explicit modifiers, which were shown to be especially important in terms of negative politeness in the native speakers' performance. The problem, however, is the inconsistency in the way the non-native speakers use explicit

modifiers. Even though they often use them in successful ways to mitigate the impact of their messages, they also often fail to use them in situations which involve a potential threat to face (e.g. question, disparaging judgements) and which would require some face-work. It, thus, seems that the non-native speakers' pragmatic skills in the area of negative politeness are not fully developed, in spite of the fact that they use explicit modifiers clearly more frequently than implicit modifiers.

The greatest difference between the non-native and the native speakers (of English and Finnish alike) lies in the way they use implicit pragmatic force modifiers. While the native speakers of both English and Finnish make an abundant use of implicit modifiers, the non-native speakers use them very rarely; they are thus often unable to make use of the interpersonal potential of implicit modifiers. This has direct implications for non-native speakers' interpersonal success because implicit modifiers, as was shown above, are important means of expressing positive politeness and involvement in the performance of native speakers of both English and Finnish. Therefore, the non-native speakers' inability to make strategic use of implicit modifiers can, at its worst, make them sound detached and matter-of-fact and lead to assessments that they are not particularly interested in the topic or their in participants. Such interpretations, obviously, depend on context but it seems on the basis of the present data that at least in interaction-oriented, casual, face-to-face encounters, implicit modifiers are an important resource for expressing interpersonal meanings.

The discussion above shows that the distinction between explicit and implicit pragmatic force modifiers seems worthwhile. Earlier research on modifying strategies has mainly concentrated on explicit modifiers. The findings above suggest, however, that overlooking implicit modifiers can easily lead to a distorted picture of pragmatic force modification. In the present study this applies especially to the conversations in Finnish where the speakers make constant use of implicit modifiers that can have very intricate interpersonal functions.

The explicit-implicit distinction also seems tenable in that even though both types of modifiers can fulfil both politeness and involvement functions, their importance for these functions seems to be slightly different. To put it crudely, while explicit modifiers often have politeness functions, especially those of negative politeness, implicit modifiers are often geared towards signalling speakers' involvement with the situation and the addressees at hand. This suggests that a conceptual difference between politeness and involvement is worth maintaining even though there are also overlaps, especially between positive politeness and involvement. As was pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, politeness in Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework is considered as a means to an end, i.e. as a strategy with which speakers can diminish threats to face. It is probably in the best interest of the participants to express their want to avoid hurting each other's face relatively clearly. As explicit modifiers are transparent, i.e. their function is usually quite obvious in the context, it is understandable why they are readily used for negative politeness functions to alleviate threats to face. As has been argued above, expressions of positive politeness and involvement are

not as closely tied to performance of specific face threats. They, rather, have to do with speakers signalling their feelings and attitudes to the situation in general. Positive politeness overlaps with involvement in the extent to which the latter is viewed in terms of expressions of positive feelings and attitudes. Involvement, however, also pertains to situations where speakers, for example, signal irritation, anger, or frustration either towards the topic or their coparticipants. The native speakers in the data seem to opt for implicit means of involvement in particular. It may be that it is 'safer' for speakers to express such emotive signals implicitly because due to their inherent ambivalence, implicit modifiers leave plenty of room for negotiating meaning.

Caffi and Janney (1994:348), when discussing involvement signals in speech, point out that "it is important to clarify the relation between involvement and interaction-types and text-types, since these latter put constraints on the kind of and amount of involvement allowed". The same, obviously, holds for politeness. It is, therefore, important to bear in mind that the discussion above about the relationship between pragmatic force modifiers, politeness and involvement concerns casual, informal conversations. The findings cannot thus be generalized across contexts. Instead, there is plenty of room for further research before the interplay between pragmatic force modifiers, politeness, and involvement can be accounted for in a way that has explanatory power across contexts. However, the distinction between explicit and implicit modification strategies seems a fruitful starting point on the basis of which the use of pragmatic modifiers by different speakers in different contexts can be compared. The findings above suggest that implicit means are important carriers of interpersonal meanings in casual encounters. It remains a task for further research to clarify whether this also applies to other types of contexts.

7   THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN SPEAKERS' ROLES AND PRAGMATIC FORCE MODIFIERS

It has been emphasized throughout the present study that when pragmatic force modifiers are investigated, it is important to take into account the context in which they are used. It was shown in chapter six that close attention to types of acts performed is necessary because modifiers can have different functions with different acts. This, however, does not mean that once the type of act is established, the way speakers use pragmatic force modifiers and their functions are fully predictable; speakers' use of modifiers is rarely determined by a single factor such as the type of act performed. Other contextual variables affecting the need to signal politeness and involvement may also be reflected in the use of modifiers. This chapter will focus on speakers' roles as a factor that can influence the way pragmatic force modifiers are used and interpreted.

When introducing the analytic procedure of the study in chapter four, it was pointed out that the interest in the interplay between speakers' roles and pragmatic force modifiers means moving towards a broader, more socially-oriented notion of context. While the chapter above described the politeness and involvement functions of pragmatic force modifiers mainly in relation to the acts performed during the conversations, this chapter seeks to describe how asymmetries in speakers' roles can influence their relative rights and obligations and lead to differences in the use of modifiers that cannot be explained by paying attention to the type of act performed alone. Even though roles have often been recognized as an influential factor in communication, previous research on modifying devices has rarely addressed the effect of roles in detail.

7.1 Roles

7.1.1 Definition of the concept

The same applies to the concept of *role* as to other central concepts in the present study: the term has, if defined at all, been defined in various ways and used in widely different connections. The term role itself brings a theatrical image to mind, and theatrical metaphors such as actors, stages, and roles have often been used of social situations (e.g. Goffman 1967). Billig (1987:13) points out that the theatre metaphor presupposes that of scripts to the effect that "the performance of everyday actions depends on learning and following the unwritten scripts of social behaviour". Billig goes on to argue that such metaphors create an overly harmonious and cooperative picture of social life in ignoring the fact that people can also challenge the prescribed scripts. The notion that speakers occupy different roles in interaction can, however, help make sense of the interplay between the social aspects and the linguistic aspects of communication. It can, therefore, be a useful concept as long as its nature as a metaphor is borne in mind.

It is crucial to point out at the outset that, in the present study, role will be used as a social concept. This means that the focus will be on roles that speakers have in relation to each other and the situation at hand rather than in relation to the language they produce and interpret. In the conversation analytic framework, for example, the notion of role is often used to describe the way in which speakers participate in the organization of talk: how much they talk (e.g. active versus passive speakers); what kinds of contributions they favour (e.g. questions versus answers); and how they participate in the overall organization of discourse (e.g. Holmen 1985, Ciliberti 1988). For example, Bublitz's (1988) notion of participant roles includes speakers' roles such as 'primary speaker', 'secondary speaker' and 'hearer'. That is, for conversation analysts, the focus is on the roles participants have in the organization and construction of the conversational event.

Thomas (1986) makes a distinction between *discourse roles* and *social roles* (see also Ciliberti 1988). Discourse role refers to the relationship between the speaker and the message, which contains more subtle distinctions than the most usual one between role as speaker and role as hearer. Thomas (1986) points out that speakers' discourse roles can vary according to the level of responsibility they have over the message, ranging from the speaker's full authorship of his/her message to situations where the speaker has to convey someone else's message, with no right of personal interference with it. Similarly, the hearer's roles can vary to the extent to which they are regarded as active participants in the encounter, ranging from intended addressees to accidental overhearers. Even though it is likely that different discourse roles also have an effect on the way speakers use pragmatic force modifiers, discourse roles will not be focused on in the present study. This is mainly due to the fact that the participants in the conversations have more or less similar discourse roles; it is therefore difficult to assess the effect of those roles on the use of modifiers.

164

Thomas's (1986) notion of social role refers to the relationship between the speakers, and it is this notion of role and its influence on the use of pragmatic force modifiers that will be at issue in this chapter. That is, speakers may need to use pragmatic force modifiers differently on the basis of the type of social roles they occupy vis-à-vis each other. For example, a social role as a friend may presuppose a different use of modifiers than a social role as a stranger.

Social role is a broad concept as there are various types of social constraints on speakers' behaviour which determine the nature of their mutual relationship[1]. The easiest way to conceptualize different social roles is to think of interaction in institutional settings where the built-in role differences are great and where the situations put obvious constraints on what is deemed appropriate use of language. Interactions between doctors and patients, teachers and pupils, and interviewees and job applicants are examples of settings where speakers have clear institutional roles. Institutional discourse is usually highly structured (see Agar 1985), and roles are often realized in systematic ways that reflect the power differences in the institutional situations. Therefore, research on the linguistic aspects of institutional encounters has often concentrated on the organization of discourse and how the power differences between participants are reflected in it (e.g. Labov and Fanshel 1977, Erickson and Schultz 1982, Gumperz 1982, Drew and Heritage 1992).

Speakers' social roles are not, however, confined to institutional settings only. On the contrary, roles can also have an impact on speakers' linguistic behaviour in other, non-institutional everyday encounters. This has often been acknowledged in the linguistic literature (e.g. Brown and Fraser 1979, Di Pietro 1981, Gremmo et al. 1981, Brown and Yule 1983). The problem is that roles in non-institutional settings are much less clearly defined than in institutional encounters.[2] As Hartley (1993:90) puts it, "sometimes the roles will be rather vague or ambiguous and you have to 'negotiate' with the other participants what role to adopt". It is maybe due to this negotiable and fluctuating nature of speakers' social roles in many everyday encounters that they have not received as much attention as roles in institutional settings

It was pointed out above that social role is a broad concept. Tanaka (1993), therefore, emphasizes that rather than seeing social role as one category, it is useful to distinguish between three different types of social roles. The first, *societal role*, is most readily associated with institutional settings. It corresponds to what Brown and Fraser (1979) call 'occupational role' and Vincent Marrelli (1988) 'positional role', that is, it is the role the speaker has in society regardless of the particular situation at hand (e.g. a teacher, a priest). Tanaka emphasizes that even though this role is usually activated within institutions, cultures may differ in the extent to

[1] Sex roles form a subset of social roles, and there is an abundance of research on sex roles and language (see Preisler (1986:14-22) for an overview). As the present study does not focus on male-female differences, sex roles will be left out of consideration.

[2] Ciliberti (1988:54), however, emphasizes that also in institutional settings there is a more complex interplay between different role dimensions than is usually assumed on the grounds of 'ideal' types of institutional encounters.

which societal roles become highlighted and influence the way people behave even outside institutional settings. The second type of social role, *personal relationship role*, refers, as the name suggests, to the type of personal relationship between the participants. It is possible for speakers to have more than one overlapping personal relationship roles (e.g. a friend, a neighbour); which of these becomes activated depends on the situation at hand. The third type, *activity role*, is based on Levinson's (1979) notion of activity type. Activity type, according to Levinson (1979:368), is a category "whose focal members are goal-defined, socially constituted, bounded events with constraints on participants, setting and so on, but above all on the kinds of allowable contributions". This means, to put it crudely, that talk tends to be different in different activities so that what is appropriate language use in one activity may not be that in the next.[3] A typical activity type would be, for example, an interview, in which the participants have the activity roles of an interviewer and an interviewee. Even though it is easier to conceptualize activity types in terms of situations that involve a rather clear set of expectations of the participants (e.g. a job interview, teaching, jural interrogation), it is also possible to regard other, more loosely defined situations, as activity types. For example, 'casual conversation' can be regarded as an activity type with constraints on allowable contributions, albeit less strict than, for example, in a medical interview. That is, the activity type of casual conversation presupposes certain types of roles for the participants. Brown and Fraser (1979:54), similarly, recognize the interplay between speakers' roles and activity types in pointing out that "activity types and social roles are inextricably linked: one cannot imagine an activity type without imagining an associated set of roles to be activated".

It is crucial to bear in mind that speakers can occupy different roles simultaneously (see also Brown and Yule 1986:55). Firstly, they have both discourse roles and social roles, i.e. they have roles in relation to their messages and in relation to the coparticipants. These two roles seem to differ, however, in that even though speakers can easily pass over from one discourse role to another (e.g. from a speaker to a hearer), they usually only occupy one discourse role at a time, whereas it is possible for them to have several social roles simultaneously. Thus, drawing on terminology introduced by Thomas (1986) and Tanaka (1993), speakers' roles in interaction can be illustrated with figure 7 below.

The purpose of the figure is to illustrate the multi-faceted nature of roles and the fact that a person can have different roles at the same time. For example, if a person who is a teacher by occupation is interviewed by a person who is also his or her friend, that person may occupy the discourse role 'speaker', societal role 'teacher', activity role 'interviewee' and personal relationship role 'friend' at the same time. Even though Scollon (1995) uses the term 'discourse identity' rather

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[3]   The notion of genre captures similar properties. Fairclough (1992:125-126) sees genre and activity type as related concepts, arguing that genre is the broader one as it specifies the set of conventions associated with a particular activity, while activity type sets up subject positions and the structured sequence of actions for that activity.
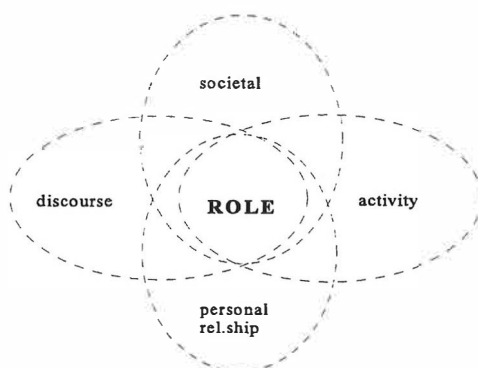
Figure 7   Roles in interaction

than role, he is along the same lines in pointing out that rather than having a single clearly defined discourse identity, a given speaker has several overlapping multiple identities such as generational, professional, gender and corporate identities. Even though speakers can have various roles it is, however, unlikely that all possible roles are equally salient at all times. As suggested above, the activity type in question usually has an effect on which roles get activated rather than speakers fluctuating between different roles randomly and haphazardly.

The existence of multiple, overlapping, and interdependent roles explains why it is often difficult to describe speakers' roles in simple terms.[4] It is important to acknowledge the pragmatic significance of roles, however, because different roles can imply different discoursal rights and obligations for speakers. In this respect, the notion of role is connected with that of power. Preisler (1986:14) in fact equates the two by talking about the 'role' or 'power' variable in interaction. The notion of power is most readily associated with institutional settings where the more powerful participant is capable of controlling the flow of interaction. Even though power is typically associated with this kind of coercive power, it is not the only type of power, which is why Kiesling (1994) suggests that using power as a monolithic category may be misleading. Spencer-Oatey (1992:109, following French and Raven 1959), for example, points out that some speakers may also be regarded as more powerful than others because they have some special knowledge or expertise (reward power), or because they have prestige which makes others want to identify with them (referent power). As the term power tends to be associated with coercive power, however, it is probably more fruitful to talk about

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[4]   It is also important to bear in mind the complexity of social situations and the fact that roles are not the only contextual constraints affecting interaction. Brown and Fraser (1979:35), for example, introduce numerous other factors, ranging from speakers' moods and personality to the type of topic and setting.

different roles bringing about various kinds of *asymmetries* in discourse (see Marková and Foppa 1991).

The discussion above shows that speakers having different roles with different rights and obligations can easily become an issue in all types of interactions. It is, indeed, difficult to imagine a situation where the speakers would be fully equal, with equal conversational roles. It is this kind of implicitly held assumption about speakers' equal rights and obligations that Fairclough (1992:19) criticizes in many approaches to discourse, claiming that they tend to give an overly harmonious and cooperative picture of the interaction between speakers. Therefore, it is also of interest in the present study to investigate the conversations with attention to speakers' potentially asymmetrical roles, and to the effect these roles have on their use of language in general and pragmatic force modifiers in particular.

It is important to bear in mind that even though this chapter focuses on speakers' roles and their effect on the use of pragmatic force modifiers, there are also other factors that may be at play and influence participants' language use. Personality factors and psychological factors such as, for example, anxiety caused by the conversation being recorded, can also have their significance. These factors will, however, be left out of consideration in this connection. This is mainly because due to the type of data collected, and especially due to the lack of material recording speakers' own perceptions of the situations, it is very difficult to assess the interplay between personality factors, psychological factors and the use of pragmatic force modifiers.

7.1.2   Roles in the present data

It was pointed out in chapter four that when the data for the present study was collected, the intention was to guarantee comparability across conversations by making the situations resemble each other as much as possible. Despite the efforts to achieve a *tertium comparationis,* however, there is a built-in incongruity between the desire to control the situations so as to make them comparable and the desire to gain natural conversational data. Whenever people interact in conversation, they bring into the situation their personalities and their experiences, and they negotiate their positions vis-à-vis each other and their role relationships will vary in the course of the interaction to the effect that two conversations can never be of exactly the same kind. Therefore, it is worth investigating what kinds of roles emerge in the present conversations, and whether speakers' way of using pragmatic force modifiers can be explained by the social roles they occupy.

The effort to keep the situations as similar as possible means that the subjects in the data, in fact, have many roles in common. For example, they are all participants in a group conversation, subjects in an observed and recorded conversation, and university students. These roles, just as any others, may become activated and influence the way speakers behave and use pragmatic force modifiers, but it is very difficult to assess the influence of roles that all the

participants share. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on role sets which will bring out differences and oppositions between speakers, because only then will it be possible to assess whether there is any interplay between roles and the use of pragmatic force modifiers. This means, then, that the ensuing analysis of roles is exploratory in that it focuses only on role sets which result in some asymmetries among speakers rather than attempting to account for all roles in the data.

When the present data are investigated from the perspective of roles that the speakers occupy, three areas emerge which bring out differences between speakers and which can be described in terms of asymmetrical role-sets. As a more detailed discussion of these role sets will follow in the sections below, a brief introduction will suffice at this stage. The first area of interest concerns the NS-NNS conversations which, by definition, involve native speakers and non-native speakers. When the non-native speakers' way of using modifiers for interpersonal functions was compared with the native speakers' performance in chapter six, the implicit assumption was that to be pragmatically successful, non-native speakers ought to converge to native speakers' 'norms'. However, regarding speakers' status as native speakers and non-native speakers as a set of asymmetrical *roles* means recognizing that these roles might involve different rights and obligations and, consequently, lead to a different need to use pragmatic force modifiers. This role set may become especially salient in the present NS-NNS conversations because the speakers, due to the arranged situation, are aware of the other speakers' linguistic 'status' before the conversations rather than having to work it out during the interaction. It has been argued (e.g. Scarcella 1983, Beebe and Giles 1984) that participants' roles as native or non-native speakers result in an inherent power difference in favour of the native speakers. It is therefore worthwhile to explore whether this seems to be the case in the present NS-NNS conversations, and whether it has any implications for the use of pragmatic force modifiers.

It was mentioned in passing when discussing the relationship between roles and power that some speakers can have a more powerful role than others on the grounds of having some knowledge that others do not have. In the NS-NNS conversations, the native and the non-native speakers very often tell others about their country and culture, about which they, obviously, know more than their interlocutors, and they can therefore be said to have, for want of a better term, an 'expert' role. The expert and non-expert roles are interesting in that they cut across the divide between native and non-native roles in that both the native and the non-native speakers can occupy roles as experts and non-experts. The relationship between these two role sets is thus worth investigating. Earlier research has shown (e.g. Woken and Swales 1989, Zuengler and Bent 1991, Tyler 1995) that non-native speakers may have a more powerful role in interaction due to their expert knowledge. There is, however, little knowledge of the effect of expert versus non-expert roles on the use of pragmatic force modifiers. This role-set is relevant to the two sets of native speaker conversations (i.e. NSE and NSF data) as well, because it is also quite usual for the speakers in these situations to display that they know the topic under discussion better than the others, i.e. assume the role of experts.

When the present data was described in chapter four above, it was pointed out that the dimension that differentiates the NS-NNS conversations from the two sets of native speaker conversations is that the participants are strangers in the former and acquaintances in the latter. Moreover, the situation in the NS-NNS conversations is more complicated in that while the pairs of native and non-native speakers are meeting for the first time, the Finns know each other beforehand, as also do the native speakers in two of the NS-NNS conversations. That is, the personal relationship roles are different in different sets of data. This difference and its potential effect on speakers' use of pragmatic force modifiers were also commented on where relevant in the chapter above. It is, however, worthwhile to investigate in more detail the effects that this difference in speakers' different personal relationship roles has on their use of pragmatic force modifiers.

The problem in investigating the interplay between speakers' roles and pragmatic force modifiers is that it is difficult to draw direct parallels between speakers' roles and their verbal behaviour. That is, it is not easy to argue that a specific way of using language is proof that speakers have activated a certain role. Of the three role sets discussed above, the roles as experts and non-experts can most easily be traced back to specific points in conversations, as it is usually clear from the context when speakers are delivering information about which they have more knowledge than their interlocutors. On such occasions, it is also possible to compare whether there are differences in the way that the speaker and the interlocutors use pragmatic force modifiers. The situation is more difficult with the role sets native versus non-native speaker and acquaintance versus stranger: it is not easy to point to specific points in conversations where the speakers activate these roles. Rather, the speakers' behaviour might be affected by these roles throughout the conversations. Schegloff (1992:196-197) argues that it is important to establish which aspects of context are relevant for *the participants* in the interaction, and that this can only be accomplished by analysing the talk by the participants because "[t]hat talk . . . may be understood as displaying which out of that potential infinity of contexts or identities should be treated as relevant and consequential" (p. 197). According to this view, signs of the relevance of native and non-native roles as well as those of acquaintances and strangers for the participants would have to be found in their speech; this would be the only way to determine the potential relevance of these roles for the speakers. Drew (1991:26) is on the same lines in arguing that asymmetries between speakers have to be "demonstrably relevant" for the participants and thus evident in the details of talk before they warrant investigation. The problem with such views is that identifying roles by what is 'demonstrably there' in the language seems to lead to a circularity in that it then becomes inevitable that language use reflects the roles identified on the basis of language.

It is, however, also possible to consider the role sets native-non-native speaker and acquaintance-stranger by adopting a different approach from that suggested by Schegloff and Drew above, according to which the activation of these roles ought to be seen in details of talk. As Linell and Luckmann (1991:17) point out, researchers can also be interested in less transparent phenomena and their

effect on language.[5] Therefore, an alternative approach involves reconsidering the findings reported in the chapters above in the light of these role sets, i.e. a systematic comparison of the use of modifiers by native and non-native speakers on the one hand, and by acquaintances and strangers, on the other hand. If there are recurring differences between speakers' ways of using modifiers across these particular role sets, it may serve as an indication of different rights and obligations brought about by different roles. This approach to roles is, obviously, exploratory and preliminary. It does, however, serve as an attempt to make a contribution towards advancing understanding about possible interplay between speakers' roles and pragmatic force modifiers, which is an area that has not received very much attention in pragmatic research so far.

7.2   Roles as native and non-native speakers

Anderson (1988) points out that, as opposed to many experimental set-ups, in naturally-occurring NS-NNS encounters where the speakers do not know each others' linguistic status beforehand, the roles of native and non-native speakers emerge and are negotiated rather than given. As was pointed out above, however, the participants in the present NS-NNS conversations were aware of each other's nativeness and non-nativeness prior to the encounter, due to the arranged nature of the situations. This means that their roles as native and non-native speakers can, in this case, be regarded as given. It is also possible that, since the participants in the NS-NNS conversations are aware of their conversations being recorded for research purposes, they are even more conscious of their status as native and non-native speakers than they would be in other situations. The interesting question is the extent to which they activate these roles and what, if any, is their effect on the use of pragmatic force modifiers.

It was pointed out earlier that it is not always easy to show an undisputable connection between an activated role and a speaker's way of using pragmatic force modifiers. However, as suggested above, it is possible to reconsider the overall findings from the NS-NNS material and to assess whether the speakers' *roles* as native and non-native speakers might explain some of the differences in their use of modifiers. It was shown in chapter six that the way the non-native speakers use modifiers for interpersonal purposes differs from the native speaker performance in various ways. It is usual to see such differences as a sign of deviation in the learners' language use as opposed to the 'norm' provided by native speakers. Considering speakers' behaviour from the perspective of native and non-native roles, however, means recognizing that these roles might imply different rights and obligations for the speakers. Hence the situation is likely to be more complicated than that implied by simply saying that, in an ideal case, non-native

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[5]   Linell and Luckmann (1991:17) also point out that we may not always agree on what is 'demonstrably there'.

speakers ought to use modifiers in exactly the same way as native speakers if they want to be pragmatically successful.

It has often been argued that there is a built-in power differential in NS-NNS encounters. As Beebe and Giles (1984:22) put it, native speakers are more powerful because "the nativeness of the language used provides linguistic status". Similarly, Janicki (1986:170) regards it as a fact "that the social role 'foreigner' (as opposed to native) superimposed on all other roles, generates a unique set of linguistic and non-linguistic rights and obligations". The effect of contextual variables and pragmatic force modifiers was discussed in chapter two and it was argued that, generally speaking, when there are asymmetries between speakers, those with more power can afford to pay less attention to their interlocutors' face wants, which would also suggest less need for modification. The less powerful ones, on the other hand, would be expected to modify their messages more in order to show respect for those with a more powerful role. This would mean, given that the native speakers have the greater power in the NS-NNS conversations, that they could be expected to use modifiers less than in encounters with other native speakers.

Beebe and Giles (1984:22) go on to suggest that native speakers' power can be seen in their tendency to control the flow of conversations by, for example, asking more questions than non-native speakers. It was mentioned in passing in section 6.2.1.2 that this applies also to the present NS-NNS conversations, in which the native speakers ask the majority of the questions. Similar findings have been reported by, for example, Holmen (1985) and Kärkkäinen and Raudaskoski (1988). Gremmo et al. (1989:45) argue that "nothing could be a clearer example of roles as the right to perform acts", and in the NS-NNS conversations, the native speakers' apparent right to ask questions can be seen as a reflection of their more powerful role in the situation.

Questions are acts that have the potential of threatening the addressee's face and they are therefore often likely to be mitigated. As was shown above (in section 6.2.1.2), the native speakers vary in the extent to which they modify their questions; many questions are completely unmitigated whereas others contain intricate modification. It was shown that this often depends on the type of topic; questions about less personal topics such as studying do not require as much face-work as more personal questions. It is, however, also possible to adopt a different view and to argue that the kind of unmitigated questions that the native speakers ask, as in example 1 below, especially if they keep occurring throughout the conversation in an interview-like fashion, reflect the control that the native speakers have over the situation:

Example 1

N2   what are YOU doing/
F2   I'm er studying in management, I'm doing this diploma in European management, [so that] I have, four courses there, different, [((-))]]
N2   [okay] [[are-]] are you here for one year/ or
F2   yeah only one=
N2   =exchange, kind of right, YOU'RE in my [(--) class] how do you LIKE that

F1   [yeah yeah]
       class/
F1   I think it's difficult ((laughs))
N2   really/
F1   yeah\=
N2   =is it hard to follow you think/
F1   oh well\, I think I should READ more than I do
((laug[hter))]
N2   [EVERYONE would agree (--)] I I don't read very much in it either but, you
       know there's those like THREE guys in the class[room] totally dominate the
F1   [YES]
       conversation I'm like, EXcuse me
F1   yeah ((laughs))
N2   come back after (-) but do you- do you like your courses here/
F2   yeah, they are interesting except this one course, which is management science
       it's quite boring
       (NS-NNS 3/21)

In a similar manner, the non-native speakers' apparent reluctance to ask questions in general and also their tendency to mainly stick to questions about impersonal matters can be interpreted as a sign of their less powerful role in the NS-NNS conversations. The more powerful role of the native speakers thus seems apparent at the level of discourse organization in that they, more often than the non-native speakers, control the topic by asking more questions, thereby steering the conversations into directions of their own choice. However, even though the native speakers mainly control the situations at the level of discourse organization, their more powerful role is not reflected in the same way in their use of pragmatic force modifiers. It was argued above that, all things being equal, the more powerful speakers can be expected to modify their messages less than the less powerful. The opposite, however, is true of the present NS-NNS conversations in that the native speakers use pragmatic force modifiers clearly more than the non-native speakers. In other words, it seems that in the NS-NNS conversations studied, the speakers' status as native speakers is not alone sufficient to make them so powerful that interpersonal concerns could be deemed unimportant.

In many studies on NS-NNS conversations, the English proficiency of non-native speakers is relatively low: they have obvious difficulties with production and they need help from native speakers to get their messages across (e.g. Varonis and Gass 1985a, 1985b). The situation is very different in the present NS-NNS conversations where the non-native speakers are advanced speakers of English, who are able to conduct their conversations without any severe linguistic difficulties. Consequently, the native speakers never offer the non-native speakers linguistic help in the present data, nor do the non-native speakers solicit help themselves. There are no apparent instances of miscommunication or misunderstandings, either, which often occur when foreign language speakers are less proficient (e.g. Varonis and Gass 1985b). Thus, the non-native speakers' high proficiency is one probable reason why the native speakers do not choose to exert power over them by opting for directness and infrequent use of modifiers. What Zuengler (1989:229) points out about the relationship between native speakers' power and learners' linguistic skills seems to hold for the present NS-NNS data as

well in that the learners' high proficiency seems to prevent the native speakers from taking an overtly dominant role:

> ...if the NNS's proficiency is adequate for interacting within a given domain of discourse, it is shared knowledge of that domain which will enable both interlocutors to participate in the conversation. Dominance by the NS will only occur if weaknesses in the NNS's proficiency obstruct his/her ability to actively participate.

Anderson (1988) is of the opinion that non-nativeness may or may not emerge as a relevant factor in interaction. She, furthermore, maintains, in much the same way as Zuengler (1989), that "the way the NS perceives his interlocutor is of central importance: as more or less able to follow and participate relevantly in conversation" (Anderson 1988:275). She goes on to argue that native and non-native roles are, eventually, a mutual product to a large extent. In other words, an important point to be drawn from these observations is that a speaker being a native speaker does not *automatically* mean that the speaker exerts power over non-native speakers and assumes a role where s/he will steer and support the learners linguistically by, for example, offering help and advice. This kind of linguistic dominance seems to be suppressed in the present NS-NNS conversations, in which the non-native speakers are advanced speakers of English. As a consequence, the native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations seem to take heed of interpersonal considerations in much the same way as they would in any other interaction. As Woken and Swales (1989:224) suggest, "there are real-world circumstances in which NS-NNS conversations assume the expected characteristics of NS-NS conversations". One indication that the native speakers in the NS-NNS situations behave in a similar way as they would in encounters with native speakers is that, despite slightly different orientations, they use pragmatic force modifiers in much the same way as the native speakers in the NSE conversations.

Even if the native speakers use pragmatic force modifiers more or less similarly in both the NS-NNS and the NSE conversations, the fact remains that their non-native counterparts use modifiers differently. There are two ways in which to approach this finding in the light of native and non-native speaker roles. Firstly, it was shown that the native speakers' linguistic status does not seem to result in a great power difference. It can, consequently, be argued that in the absence of such a power difference, the non-native speakers can be put on a par with their native counterparts and their different way of using modifiers can, accordingly, be regarded as a deviation from the native speaker 'norm'. Secondly, it is also possible to argue that despite the lack of apparent dominance on the part of the native speakers, different rights and obligations might apply for native and non-native speakers, leading to a different need to use pragmatic force modifiers.

The question thus is: should the contribution of non-native speakers be assessed against that of native speakers? It is difficult to give a straightforward answer to this question. It is probable, however, that aspects of both the viewpoints mentioned above have to be taken into account. In support of the latter viewpoint, Janicki (1986) and Faerch and Kasper (1989), for example, suggest that it may not be adequate to use the same criteria in assessing native and non-native

communicative behaviour. As far as the use of pragmatic force modifiers is concerned, this would mean that non-native speakers can opt for less modified output and use different types of modifiers because they are not likely to be judged as harshly as native speakers in a similar situation. It is thus possible that the non-native speakers' greater tendency to, for example, express their disparaging opinions without modifiers (see the discussion in section 6.2.1.1) is tolerated by the native speakers as long as the speaker's status as non-native speakers is apparent. The question remains, however, as to the borderline beyond which fluent foreign language speakers begin to get sanctioned if they do not use language in the same way as the native speakers. It would be useful to know the point beyond which a participant's role as a non-native speaker becomes less significant than that of a conversational partner with rights and obligations similar to those of the native speaker. As long as there is no certainty about such a cut-off point, it is safe to argue that at least advanced non-native speakers would benefit from the skill of making strategic use of pragmatic force modifiers in contexts where they are interpersonally most salient. It is, however, at the same time quite likely that all the ways in which the non-native speaker's use of modifiers 'deviates' from the native speaker 'norm' do not necessarily have unfavourable consequences.

The view that native and non-native speakers are not necessarily to be judged according to the same criteria thus suggests that, due to their non-native role, the non-native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations *need not* use pragmatic modifiers exactly in the same way as the native speakers. It is, however, also possible to take another perspective on the matter and argue that, given their role as non-native speakers, foreign language speakers may not even be *allowed* to use modifiers in a manner identical to that of the native speakers. That is, their role as non-native speakers can impose certain constraints on their allowable contributions. Janicki (1986:171) discusses this from the viewpoint of accommodation theory, arguing that even though on some dimensions foreigners' maximal convergence to native speakers is positively valued (e.g. as regards grammar and vocabulary), on others it is not. He suggests, for example, that maximal convergence in pronunciation might sometimes be negatively rather than positively valued, and that non-native speakers' use of slang expressions, obscenities, and some idiomatic expressions can be disfavoured. This brings to mind Harder's (1980) and Thomas's (1983) contention, mentioned in passing in section 6.4.1.1 above, that foreign language speakers are easily confined to a 'reduced personality', that is, they are expected to occupy an emotional middle ground rather than going to any extremes. As Harder (1980:268) puts it, "a foreigner is not permitted to go beyond a certain limited repertoire; if he starts swearing fluently, for instance, he is unlikely to achieve the conventional communicative effect" (see also Anderson 1988:270).

It is interesting to approach some of the differences in the way in which the native and the non-native speakers in the present data use pragmatic force modifiers from the viewpoint of reduced personality. It was shown in the chapter above that an important aspect in which the non-native speakers differ from the native speakers of both English and Finnish is that, where the latter use an

abundance of implicit modifiers to signal positive politeness and involvement, the former make use of implicit modifiers much more rarely. One part of the explanation is probably, as was argued in section 6.3.1.3 above, the difficulty of mastering implicit modification strategies in a foreign language. It is, however, also possible that the non-native speakers' convergence to native speakers on these lines might not be altogether welcomed. It is a central characteristic of implicit pragmatic force modifiers that speakers can, by using them, evoke common ground and shared assumptions; non-native speakers may not be expected to appeal to shared assumptions with their native interlocutors to the same extent as native speakers are. Kasper (1989:53) is along the same lines when discussing the reasons for non-native speakers' excessive verbosity; she argues that (emphasis added) "as a consequence of their foreigner role, learners may feel stronger need than NSs to establish, *rather than presuppose*, common ground". It is interesting, however, that the same does not seem to apply to native speakers: the native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations seem to have a greater right to assume common ground with their non-native interlocutors, judging from the way they use implicit modifiers for purposes of positive politeness and involvement. In the following example, for instance, speaker N2 uses both emphatics and the implicit modifier *you know* to appeal to shared assumptions with F1, who is attending the same course as N2. The notion of reduced personality would mean that the non-native speakers might not even be expected to use modifiers in similar, appealing functions as speaker N2:

Example 2

(topic: a teacher)
F1   he's like a GRANDfather [or something ((laughs))]
N2   [YEAH he's *really-*]he's *so* SWEET and *you know very* encouraging *and stuff* and
      I was like wow this guy is great
      (NS-NNS 3/24)

Another feature of non-native speech which was taken up in connection with involvement strategies is that the non-native speakers use emphatic pragmatic force modifiers even less than the native speakers, and that they also very rarely resort to 'expressive' adjectives. This can also be regarded as an indication of reduced personality where the foreigners are, maybe, expected to suppress their emotive communication and resort to a rather conventional type of language. The roles as native and non-native speakers thus seem to imply different rights and obligations for the speakers as regards the expression of involvement and emotion. It is, therefore, possible that those non-native speakers who attempt to appeal to shared assumptions by abundant use of implicit modifiers, or resort to emotively expressive language might, in fact, run the risk of not being taken seriously. Alternatively, they might be perceived as adopting too 'familiar' a note towards their native speaker interlocutors.

Faerch and Kasper (1989:246) seek to problematize the idea that the flouting of pragmatic principles by non-native speakers is always a sign of

pragmatic failure. Instead, they argue the following on the relationship between native and non-native speech: "Very likely, for nonnative communication to be efficient, it has to be organized according to quite different principles". There is as yet no specific knowledge as to what these different principles might be like, but this suggestion is worth bearing in mind when dealing with native and non-native comparisons. As far as pragmatic force modifiers are concerned, speakers' roles as native and non-native speakers seem to result in somewhat different rights and obligations. A one-to-one comparison between native and non-native speakers thus does not guarantee a just representation of non-native speakers' pragmatic success and failure. It is even possible to argue that in some respects learners' close convergence to the way native speakers use pragmatic force modifiers might be unwelcomed. Difference from the native norm does not, then, always need to be interpreted as a sign of deviance.

7.3 Roles as acquaintances and strangers

As was shown in section 4.1.2, the biggest difference between the three sets of data in terms of their external conditions is that the speakers in the NSE and the NSF conversations are acquaintances whereas the non-native and the native speakers are meeting for the first time in the NS-NNS conversations. The NS-NNS data is, moreover, further complicated by the fact that the Finns know each other beforehand, as do the British speakers in two conversations. Even though this state of affairs was taken into account when the conversations were compared in terms of the interpersonal functions of modifiers, it is worthwhile to focus on the effect that the role relationship acquaintance-stranger can have on the use of pragmatic force modifiers. This is because ever since Brown and Levinson (1987) introduced distance between participants as a central variable that influences the way speakers carry out their speech acts, it has been considered an important contextual constraint. Researchers in pragmatic research projects have been careful in devising elicitation methods with which to control the distance variable, and the findings, overall, support the assumption that face threatening acts are conducted differently between strangers and acquaintances (see e.g. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989a).

The interplay between face-work and distance is a complicated issue, however, and the early suggestion that the more distant the speakers are the greater the need for face-work has proved to be over-simplified (see e.g. Baxter 1984, Blum-Kulka 1987, Boxer 1993). Holtgraves (1992:145) argues that divergent findings about the effect of distance often result from ignoring other intervening factors such as liking. As was pointed out in section 2.2.2, Wolfson's (1988) suggestion offers a different view on the effect of distance. Instead of maintaining that the need for politeness and face-work increases steadily with increased distance, she suggests that this development follows a bell-shaped curve (hence bulge-theory) so that not as much face work is required in encounters between close friends and complete strangers as between friends and acquaintances. Even though the findings about the effects of distance between speakers are conflicting,

previous research suggests that distance has its effect on how speakers behave. Therefore, it is also of interest to investigate whether there are systematic differences in the use of pragmatic force modifiers among acquaintances and strangers in the present conversations.

The same applies to speakers' roles as acquaintances and strangers as to those as native and non-native speakers: it is difficult to pinpoint specific features in speakers' language as signs of speakers activating their roles as strangers or acquaintances and as signs that these roles are 'demonstrably there' for the participants. Therefore, the analysis will follow the same lines as in section 7.2 above in that the overall findings about the use of pragmatic force modifiers will be reconsidered in the light of this particular role set. The purpose is to investigate whether there are recurrent features in the speakers' use of pragmatic force modifiers that seem to be brought about by the speakers having different personal relationship roles vis-à-vis each other.

As was shown in chapter four, the finding that most obviously differentiates the two sets of native speaker conversations from the NS-NNS data is the extent to which the speakers resort to implicit pragmatic force modifiers. It was argued that the interpersonal function of implicit modifiers can often be associated with speakers signalling shared assumptions and shared background knowledge, and implicitness can therefore often be seen as an indication of both positive politeness and involvement. The non-native speakers use implicit pragmatic force modifiers much more rarely than the native speakers. It was argued that this can be regarded as a piece of evidence which suggests that mastering the implicit level of language is more difficult for foreign language speakers than opting for more explicit choices. It is possible, however, that part of the explanation for the learners and the native speakers using implicit modifiers differently lies in the different role relationships in the data. In the NSE and NSF conversations the speakers know each other, and it can be argued that assuming shared knowledge and appealing to common background is more likely among acquaintances than among strangers.

It was suggested above that the Finns' role as non-native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations might partly explain their infrequent use of implicit modifiers. It was argued that as non-native speakers they are probably not allowed as much leeway as native speakers in terms of presupposing shared assumptions with their interlocutors. In addition to their status as non-native speakers, the fact that speakers in the NS-NNS conversations are strangers emerges as another possible factor so that the non-native speakers' relatively infrequent use of implicit modifiers reflects the fact that they are interacting with strangers. The native speakers, however, use plenty of implicit modifiers in the same NS-NNS conversations, which is why it seems plausible that the difference between the speakers' use of implicit modifiers is either due to the Finns' being non-native speakers, and hence less proficient pragmatically, or due to a cultural difference. That is, there is the possibility that Finnish and British speakers perceive encounters with strangers differently, the former, therefore, refraining from expressing common ground by the use of implicit modifiers. Unfortunately it is not

possible to pursue this question further as it would necessitate comparisons with material where the non-native speakers interact with native speakers whom they have met before. It is, however, worth bearing in mind that there may be a multitude of factors in operation simultaneously so that it is virtually impossible to assign speakers' use of pragmatic force modifiers to one role set only.

The assumption that acquaintances are more likely to resort to implicitness would imply that the native speakers in the NS-NNS data who are meeting their interlocutors for the first time might be expected to use implicit modifiers less than the native speakers in the NSE conversations who already know each other. This assumption is not corroborated, however, as the native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations also make abundant use of implicit modifiers. In fact, as was shown by figure 7 in chapter four, there is hardly any difference between the linguistic behaviour of the native speakers of English in the two types of data in this respect. The effect of distance on the use of pragmatic force modifiers is thus quite difficult to assess in any simple terms.

It seems that the significance of the speakers' role as acquaintances in the way they use implicit modifiers should not be altogether dismissed, however. This is because the fact remains that in one subset of the data — the NSF conversations — the proportion of implicit modifiers is clearly larger than in the others, and it seems that the speakers' role as acquaintances is an influencing factor. It is important to bear in mind that speakers being acquaintances does not mean that they automatically choose to highlight this specific role in their conversations. Therefore, even though the speakers in the NSE conversations are acquaintances, they mainly discuss the given topic (i.e. poll tax) and their respective views on it without drawing upon their shared experiences. In contrast, the speakers in the NSF conversations more often seem to highlight their roles as acquaintances. What this basically means is that they, much more often than the speakers in the NSE conversations, talk about shared experiences, about people they all know, or about courses they all have taken, thus creating an in-group identity for all the participants. In example 3 below, for instance, speaker S1 talks about a person all the participants know, and she uses implicit modifiers — the pragmatic particle *nyt* and the clitic *-han* — in a way that seems to emphasize that she expects the others to share the information she is conveying. In a similar situation, the closest pragmatic equivalents in English would probably be *you know* or tag questions, as is suggested by the English translation:

Example 3

(topic: foreigners learning Finnish)
S1   niinku tää Marco *nyt* on erittäin virikkeikäs se oli [viis vuotta] ku se oli
S2   [nii]
       asunu Suomessa ni se*hän* puhu, erittäin hyvin jo sillon, o*han* se nyt [ollu jo kauemminki,] ja sitte hän on mielenkiinnosta halunnut oppia saamen kieltä
S2   [joo, joo]
S3   o[HO/]
S2   [nii] se on opiskellu sitä

(like this Marco *you know* is very active when he had lived in Finland for five
years he already spoke very well then *didn't he as you know* he's been here longer
now and then he wanted to learn Sami because he's interested in it
w[ow
yeah] he's studied that)
(NSF 3/117)

Speakers' roles as acquaintances or strangers and the effect of these roles
on the use of implicit modifiers is thus not an all-or-nothing matter as implicitness
occurs both between strangers and between acquaintances. However, it seems
significant that in the NSF conversations, where the speakers most obviously draw
upon their mutual roles as acquaintances, the proportion of implicit pragmatic
force modifiers is also the largest in the data.

As was mentioned at the beginning of this section, the findings about the
effect of distance are conflicting in earlier research, even though the most common
assumption is that there is less need for face-work, and thus less need for
modifications, when speakers are acquaintances rather than strangers. This
assumption, however, is not confirmed in the present study because, as explained
above, the biggest proportion of pragmatic force modifiers can be found in the
conversations where the speakers are acquaintances. The explanation lies probably
in the fact that in the present study, the focus is on speakers' use of modifiers in
conversations as a whole rather than in connection with some severe face-
threatening act. As became evident in the chapter above, when the use of modifiers
is investigated in a larger conversational context, it soon becomes obvious that
speakers not only use them for face-protecting purposes but also in more face-
enhancing ways to signal solidarity and involvement. Therefore, even though
there may be less need in conversations between acquaintances to protect
addressees' face from impositions, there is probably more need to signal approval
and sense of involvement than in encounters between strangers, and pragmatic
force modifiers can also be used for such purposes. It is thus possible to argue that
rather than there being necessarily a difference between acquaintances and
strangers as to how frequently they use pragmatic force modifiers, there may well
be differences in the functions for which modifying devices are put to use among
strangers and acquaintances.

It was pointed out in section 6.2.1 above that a distinction can be made
between the two NS-NNS conversations where the speakers keep to 'safer' topics
and use fewer modifiers and the two conversations where the speakers also
discuss more personal topics and use proportionally more modifiers. This
difference can, however, also be approached from the viewpoint of speakers' roles
as acquaintances and strangers because the conversations in which the speakers
keep to safer topics (NS-NNS 2 and 3) are those in which the British speakers are
strangers to each other as well. In the two other conversations (NS-NNS 1 and 4),
both the pairs of Finnish speakers and British speakers are acquaintances. It is thus
probable that the fact that there are more unacquainted speakers in the two former
conversations makes them stick to safer, less face-threatening topics, which, in
turn, has its effect on the use of pragmatic force modifiers.

The NS-NNS conversations offer the interesting possibility of considering further the effect of the roles of acquaintance and stranger on speakers' use of modifiers since, as was just pointed out, most of the participants have both roles: the Finns are strangers in relation to their British coparticipants and acquaintances with each other, and the same applies to the native speakers in conversations NS-NNS 1 and 4. Even though the NS-NNS conversations typically proceed by the native speakers addressing the non-native speakers and vice versa, there are also occasions where the native speakers, who are acquaintances, address each other and the Finns each other, and this offers the possibility to consider whether their use of modifiers changes or remains the same when they address acquaintances and strangers in the same conversation.

As far as the native speakers are concerned, there seems to be no apparent difference in the way they use pragmatic force modifiers when talking to the non-native speakers and to each other. The assumption that there is less need for modification between acquaintances thus does not seem to hold for the NS-NNS data, either, just as in the case of the NSF conversations, in which the acquaintances resort to abundant use of modifiers. Examples 4 and 5 below illustrate the use of modifiers between the native speakers in the NS-NNS data. In both examples, the function of pragmatic force modifiers seems to be to guarantee a certain sense of "informality of style and intimacy of relationship" between the speakers in the way suggested by James (1983:201), so that without the modifiers, the pragmatic force of the messages would shift into a more formal direction:

Example 4

(context: N2 has just told he would like to travel to America)
N2   America's *quite-* , *I don't KNOW* IS it a good place/
N1   *I shouldn't think* so- [*well*]
N2   [I don't know] if it's a good place
F2   ((laug[hs))]
N1   [*y'know*] it's, I wouldn't like to LIVE there
        (NS-NNS 1/4)

Example 5

(topic: Christmas vacation)
N2   you're no- you're staying up for *quite* a LOT of it/=
N1   =I am yeah I only go (--) for three days,
N2   *I think* you're CRAZY Jim
N1   do you, I've got loads of work to do I (-) it done here [and can]
N2   [d- *don't you*] *think* it'll be *a bit* dismal with not many people around
N1   *well* noo cos- I LIVE with somebody who permanently is is here anyway
        (NS-NNS 4/37)

The non-native speakers also mainly direct their utterances to the native speakers or to the group as a whole rather than address the other Finn in the situation. There are, however, a few such occasions, mainly in situations where the speaker corrects the information the other has delivered, or expresses disagreement with the view the other has put forward (cf. examples 28 and 29 in

section 6.3.1.1 above). Those are, in other words, situations where the potential for face threat is relatively great but where the non-native speakers, nonetheless, often opt for quite direct strategies. In comparison, the native speakers typically resort to the abundant use of modifiers in similar contexts, as was shown in section 6.3.1.1. In example 6 below it is interesting to compare F2 and F1 as they manage the disagreement differently: where F1 tones down the force of her differing views with pragmatic force modifiers, the unmitigated assertion by F2 gives a rather unyielding impression in comparison:

Example 6

(topic: studying Russian in Finnish schools)
F2   ... then you have to go to a special school or something I [don't know
F1   NO it's not] THAT rare *I don't think*
F2   really\
F1   my- my school [was-]
→   F2   [I don't] know ANYBODY who knows who knows Russian\
F1   I- I know *quite* a FEW people *actually*, it- it's not THAT rare no
(NS-NNS 4/32)

Similarly in example 7, speaker F1 rectifies the other non-native speaker's message, adding *I think* as an afterthought. Even though this modifier helps to take the sharpest edge off the correction, it would have been more considerate from the addressee's point of view if speaker F1 had chosen to express her tentativeness earlier on:

Example 7

(topic: funding the studies)
F2   for example OUR university is em paying about THREE hundred POUNDS, erm a ONE student here, and in Finland we er we just have to pay some er
F1   it's more than three hundred, it's more like three thousand *I think*
F2   three THOUSAND yeah YEAH
(NS-NNS 1/2)

The non-native speakers' way of using pragmatic force modifiers thus seems to be somewhat different when they address the native speakers and their Finnish counterparts. The directness in the latter case might be an indication that the speakers perceive less need for face-protection when talking to an acquaintance. Lack of modifiers, however, also means that the non-native speakers fail to use them for face-enhancing and face-supporting purposes, to reinforce the shared assumptions between acquaintances in the way the native speakers of English and Finnish do.

    It might be tempting, especially if the NS-NNS data were more comprehensive, to interpret the non-native speakers' greater directness with acquaintances in cultural terms and to draw the conclusion that, whereas British speakers use an abundance of modifying devices both when talking to acquaintances and strangers, Finns are more likely to employ direct strategies when they talk to acquaintances. Regarding differences between native and non-

native speakers in this way as a consequence of underlying cultural differences is quite commonplace, as both Blommaert (1991) and Sarangi (1994a, 1994b) point out. In the present study, however, such conclusions are untenable because the speakers in the NSF conversations, who are acquaintances, are the most frequent users of pragmatic force modifiers in the data as a whole. In other words, there seems to be an obvious discrepancy between the way Finnish speakers use pragmatic force modifiers with acquaintances when interacting in Finnish and in English. Therefore, the non-native speakers' tendency to use direct strategies when addressing their acquaintances in the NS-NNS conversations should not be interpreted in cultural terms as a signal of cultural difference between the Finns and the British. The tendency to directness is, more probably, an interlanguage phenomenon applying to learners' performance in general.

All in all, the discussion above indicates that assessing what kind of effect the role set acquaintance versus stranger has on the use of pragmatic force modifiers is quite problematic. One reason for this is the lack of polarized sets of data which would include complete strangers, on the one hand, and close acquaintances, on the other. Instead, the NS-NNS conversations form a hybrid in that the speakers are acquainted with some but not all of the participants. Another problem lies in the fact that even though the speakers are, as far as the real state of affairs is concerned, either acquaintances or strangers, this does not mean that they necessarily activate these roles in the actual encounters. Speakers always have the possibility of negotiating their roles and it seems that, in the present data, only the participants in the NSF conversations choose to put their roles as acquaintances in the foreground, drawing from their shared experiences and shared knowledge. It is thus possible that the clearly more frequent use of implicit modifiers in the NSF conversations is brought about by the speakers' activating this role. It is also easy to understand on the basis of this section why findings about the influence of distance are so conflicting. Probably the same applies also to other pragmatic phenomena: there are other, intervening contextual constraints and role-relationships which affect speakers' behaviour alongside that of their status as acquaintances or strangers, and therefore the latter is not necessarily the most influential contextual variable.

7.4   Roles as experts and non-experts

The speakers' roles as native and non-native speakers as well as their personal relationship roles as strangers or acquaintances to each other are, obviously, permanent throughout the conversations studied even if not highlighted at all times. It is possible, however, that also other, more temporary, roles become activated during the conversations and affect the way the participants behave. Leech (1983:126) mentions this when discussing the factors which determine the appropriate level of politeness by saying that "the overall respectfulness, for a given speech situation, depends largely on relatively permanent factors of status, age, degree of intimacy, etc., but also, to some extent, on the temporary role of one

person relative to another". One such temporary role relationship is based on how much speakers know about the topic under discussion, that is, the participants' relative expertise in the situation. There are studies dealing with NS-NNS conversations in terms of how speakers' expertise and authority interact which indicate that when non-native speakers have the content expertise, they can take the dominating role. For example, Woken and Swales's (1989) study of NS-NNS dyads where the non-native speakers are computer specialists teaching their native partners how to use software shows that non-native speakers can exert power when they have the expert role (for similar findings see also Zuengler 1989, 1993 and Zuengler and Bent 1991).

It is easier to perceive speakers' roles as experts and non-experts in task-related situations where some specific content knowledge is required (e.g Woken and Swales 1989, Tyler 1995). Expert and non-expert roles can, however, also become activated in casual conversations, in relation to topics discussed and how much speakers know about them. The most typical instances where it is possible to see the expert and non-expert roles activated in the NS-NNS conversations is when the speakers talk about their respective countries and cultures. It was shown above that the native speakers ask most of the questions, which can be seen as an indication of their dominating role. The role relationship between the speakers is more complicated than that, however, because the questions often deal with Finland and Finnish culture, which means that the non-native speakers have the role as experts, or as 'relative knowers', as Zuengler (1989:239) puts it.

Somebody knowing more of the topic under discussion than the others can cause asymmetry in the situation, and that particular speaker can be said to have a certain amount of power over the others. However, as Drew (1991:30) points out, asymmetrical roles are not simply caused by virtue of one speaker 'having' a different amount of knowledge unless s/he also acts upon this knowledge. Linell and Luckmann (1991:5), similarly, posit that "asymmetries of knowledge are important only when they are made communicatively salient". It can therefore be argued that the speakers in the present data activate their roles as experts when they choose to display their expert knowledge of the matters discussed. Such a display of knowledge leads to a situation where the speaker has, relatively, more power than the 'non-experts'. Consequently, a speaker in the expert role does not necessarily need to use pragmatic force modifiers for face-saving purposes as much as those in a less powerful role.

The discussion above thus suggests that the non-native speakers' overall tendency to use pragmatic force modifiers less often than the native speakers can be seen in a new light: when they discuss matters that they are experts on, there is not as much need for face-work as in instances where the participants exchange opinions over matters on which no participant has more knowledge than the others. That is, the non-native speakers' way of using modifiers rather infrequently is probably quite appropriate for those asymmetrical situations in which they have the more powerful role by virtue of displaying that they have more knowledge about the topic discussed than the native speakers. The same applies, obviously, to the native speakers: when they have an expert role in relation to the non-native

speakers, it can be assumed that there is less need for them to modify their contributions than in contexts where the expert role is not activated. The two examples below illustrate that it is possible to find support for this assumption in the present NS-NNS conversations. In example 8, the non-native speakers relay information that the native speakers are unaware of, and the reverse is true in example 9. Being the relative 'knowers' in the situation gives the speakers an edge of control which seems to reduce the need to use modifiers:[6]

Example 8

(context: a discussion about Finns' prejudices towards Swedes has preceded)
F1   and there's also there's also lots of prejudices against Swedish SPEAKING people, because Swedish is the other official language in- in Finland
N2   [oooh]
N1   [is it-] it's the official LANGUAGE/
F1   ye[s]
F2   [the] OTHER\
N1   obviously the other[, sorry yes]
F2   [yeah, yeah] so er, and er there's there's still quite a lot of people whose mother tongue is, is Swedish, [so that-] that creates [[(a stupid) prejudice I *suppose*]]
N2   [ooh]
F1   [[and the s-, yeah,]] and the stereotype is that the Swedish speaking people are, [very] CONCEITED and they are usually better off
F2   [BETter]
       (NS-NNS 4/31)

Example 9

(topic: Christmas pantomimes)
N1   and there's normally a song which the whole audience has- has to learn and sing it, [(-) so you] have you have a real sort of sen- sense of community
N2   [yeah]
N2   [[yeah]] and the main LEAD male lead is played by a woman normally as
F1   [[mm]]
       well, [(it's) normally] a PRINCE
F2   [allright\/]
F1   yeah
N1   and the main female lead is played by a man
((laughter))
N2   [normally that's, what is it a DAME/ there's always this] tradition about pan-
N1   [sounds peculiar, yes that's right]
       pantomime dame, who's like a BIG woman she's always HUGE and FAT and [(--),] yeah it's very good fun you should go and see it
       [((laughter))]
       (NS-NNS 4/34)

Even though the native speakers in the NSE and NSF conversations share the same cultural background and nobody can thus assume the status of 'knower' in the sense of having more cultural knowledge than the others, the non-expert

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[6]   Apart from the use of modifiers, the expert and non-expert roles are also highlighted in example 8 in the direct way the question by N1 about the status of the Swedish language gets corrected by F2 and how N1, due to his non-expert role, is very apologetic about his misinterpretation.

and expert roles become activated also in these conversations because there are individual differences in how much the speakers know about the topics at hand. This difference need not be an all-or-nothing matter. As pointed out by Zuengler (1993:192), "it is not strictly the speaker's *absolute* knowledge of the topic that will determine how active a conversational role she will take; it is the speaker's knowledge compared to the interlocutor's knowledge". In general, however, it seems that the native speakers of both English or Finnish, even though making their role as relative 'knowers' communicatively salient at times, are less likely to express themselves wholly without pragmatic force modifiers than the speakers who have an expert role in the NS-NNS conversations. This may be due to the fact that in the conversations between native speakers, nobody is an 'expert' in an absolute sense as the others are also familiar with the topic. Given such a situation, the use of modifying devices helps take also the others' views into account, as has been explained earlier. Because expertise is thus a matter of degree in the native speaker data even more than in the NS-NNS data, it is not always easy to perceive its effect on the use of pragmatic force modifiers. It is, however, illuminating to consider instances where some speakers in the NSE and NSF conversations appear to know more about the matter at hand than the others and compare their performance to contexts where the same speakers are not acting as experts.

When the same native speakers' performance in different phases of conversation is compared, it becomes evident that the same speaker can use pragmatic force modifiers very differently in expert and non-expert roles. For instance, examples 10 and 11 are by the same speaker. In 10, the topic is poll tax, of which N1 knows a great deal, often displaying his knowledge by explaining aspects of it to his interlocutors. He has, therefore, relative power in his role as an expert, one sign of which is that he uses very few pragmatic force modifiers when discussing taxation in example 10. Also the fact that the modifiers he uses are emphatic rather than softening in function seem to reflect his role; the speaker can be quite assertive in his role as an expert. In example 11, on the other hand, the same speaker is engaged in a discursive context where none of the speakers assumes a more knowledgeable role than the others; in this context, S1 chooses to use pragmatic force modifiers much more than when discussing the poll tax. It can also be argued that the different roles are reflected in the length of turns so that when the speaker is in the expert role, he keeps the floor for longer periods of time than in the other example:

Example 10

(topic: poll tax)
S3   ...we had (-) a fair (-) of cash so
S1   yeah that's true but er, the basic fact is it's not fair at the moment because the, the transition has been *extremely*, er abrupt, going from paying nothing erm and paying it in the form of rates, to your landlord, and then paying, eighty pounds a year, and not having any reduction in rent and *probably* only having an increase in rent, (--) it's *extremely* unfair
S3   so you basically agree with that, that you don't like [transition]

S1 [NO\,] NO\, no no no no no, no I disagree with the er, I disagree with the idea of the poll tax but I disagree even MORE with the way it's been implanted (NSE 2/51)

Example 11

(topic: Prince Charles's views on language)
S2 ...people's grammatical standards are dropping and
S4 [yeah]
S1 [oh yeah]
S2 using all this terrible jargon and, slang
S1 *well I mean* the, that's *probably* a view a lot of people have
S2 oh yes/\
S1 but then lots of people aren't, [haven't] looked to the for- yeah, do*n't really*
S2 [linguists]
know what they're talking about
S2 [mm]
S3 [((laughs))] yeah
S1 just like he *probably* d- doesn*'t really* know what he's talking about, (–) the architecture
S3 yeah
S2 (---)
((laughter))
S3 yeah that would be a no-no, *I think*
S1 off of your head
((laughter))
S1 *probably, I don't know* he *just I mean* he *seems very* different to previous, previous monarchs yeah
S3 mm
S1 *I think*
S4 he's got *some* green ideas *hasn't he/*
S1 yeah, *I mean* he is *sort of* he is concerned about, er architec- *I mean I think* his views are good
(NSE 2/63-64)

These examples show that it is quite natural for speakers to fluctuate from one role to another during the conversations; it is not a matter of one speaker taking the expert role all the time while others assume non-expert roles. Rather, depending on the topic at hand, different speakers will occupy different roles. In general, expert and non-expert roles are reflected in the way speakers use pragmatic force modifiers: non-experts seem to be likely to use a greater number of modifiers.

Example 12 below is from a Finnish conversation and suggests in the same way as examples 10 and 11 from the NSE conversations that a speaker can emphasize his/her expert role by delivering a message in a relatively direct manner, with fewer modifiers than those who do not have that role. The speakers in example 12 discuss animal testing, and S2 has earlier said that she is actively involved in animal protection, being, for example, a member of an association dedicated to the movement. In this respect, she has more knowledge of the content area than S1, and it is possible that her expert role is the reason why she uses rather few pragmatic force modifiers in the extract below. In comparison, speaker S1 resorts to a multiple use of modifiers, and it can be argued that by adopting this

strategy he wants to emphasize his own role as a relative non-expert in relation to S2's role as an expert:

Example 12

(topic: animal testing)
S2 ja ku-, monesti *niinku* se on että ku-, samaa asiaa testataan eri puolilla maapalloa mutta sitte ku ei voija toisilleen luovuttaa tietoja [ja hirveetä]
S1 [joo]
    kilpailua ja ra[ha-, raha]*han* se onmikä [[ratkasee]]
S3 [(--)] [[mm]]
S1 [[joo, joo,]] joo, ja sit on*han* se *tosissaan* se et ei *varmaan* aina niin noi eläinkokeet oo *niinku* verrannollisia, *niinku* ihmiseen sillä tavalla [että]
S2 [*no*] nimenomaan ku ne on monesti testannu lääkkeet ja sitte ku, et aha tää onki turvallinen ihmiset syöny sitä KAUHEITA vai- sivuvaikutuksia, niinku se talidomidilapsi
    (and often it's *like* that, the same thing is being tested in different parts of the world but they can't give information to each other and terrible competition *you know* it's money that decides
    yeah yeah and then *you know* it's *really* so that *probably* those tests on animals aren't always *like* comparable, *you know* with people so [that]
    [*well*] exactly they have often tested medicines and okay this is safe and people have eaten those with awful side effects like that thalidomide child)
    (NSF 2/100)

The above discussion has mainly been concerned with how the role of an expert affects the use of pragmatic force modifiers. However, the role of expert is relational, or reciprocating, as Di Pietro (1981) puts it. That is, for someone to be an expert implies that at least some others are non-experts. This does not mean that when someone highlights his/her role as an expert, others become non-experts automatically and use language accordingly. Instead of such a deterministic relationship between context and language, adopting conversational roles is a matter of negotiation, and it is possible for more than one speaker to assume the role as a relative knower. It often seems to be the case in the conversations studied, however, that when one speaker displays greater knowledge about the topic, other speakers do not challenge this by opting for a similar role themselves. Possibly conflict avoidance is the motivation for other speakers easily assuming a non-expert role when some of their interlocutors have activated the expert role. This often also has its effect on the speakers' use of pragmatic force modifiers; when the participants speak of a topic which belongs to somebody else's field of expertise, they tend to express their views in a modified form. The two examples below are from the conversations by native speakers of English and Finnish, respectively, and they both show how speakers seem to adapt their use of pragmatic force modifiers according to the role they occupy. Example 13 is from a conversation where S1 has throughout the discussion displayed his knowledge of the system of rates. Speakers S2 and S3 (female and male) seem to acknowledge his expert role by directing their questions to him and being very tentative about them whereas S1, in answering their questions, resorts to modifiers much less:

Example 13

(topic: paying rates)
S2   and BEFORE when you paid rates to thee, the rates didn't *kind of I mean* they
      changed according to the size of a house and [land *and everything*]
S1   [mhm, mm]
      but they didn't change according to area *did they*/
S3   erm, *I THINK* it was still a local government *sort of* thing *wasn't it*/
S1   [(((coughs))]) yeah must have been because the standard of services varies
S2   [(-)]
      all over the country
S3   yeah\
S1   *I mean* like (--) or some of the (-) isles you you can't be expected to pay as
      MUCH as somebody who is living in a city\
S2   yeah
S1   and purely because there aren't that many services AVAILABLE to you\
      (NSE 1/38)

The situation in example 14 below is very similar to the one above. The
extract is from the Finnish conversation referred to above, in which one of the
speakers has more knowledge of animal testing than the others. Even though it
would be possible for the other speakers to challenge her expert role or claim one
for themselves, they seem to acknowledge S2 as expert by formulating their own
contributions to the topic in a tentative way, as does speaker S1 in the following
example in expressing his view about tests on animals in a more hesitant manner
than speaker S2:

Example 14

(topic: animal testing)
S2   kokeet valvot- KYLLÄ/ \, niitä*hän* saa niitä lupia eiku hakkee vaan [ja ilmo]ttaa
      että nämä [[on vähempi-]] vähempi tota, mitenkä se on,
S3   [niin]
S1   [[mm mm]]
      kivu- kivuliaita
S3   [nii]
S1   [joo] ((pause)) ja kyllä*hän* se *niinku silleen* että jos niitä ei, *ehkä* voi *niinku*
      kokonaan POISTAA, mikä *nyt* on *aika* epätod-tode- todennäköstä että ne
      poistettas, jos niitä ei kokonaan voi poistaa, niin *kyllä* niitä pitäs *jotenki niinku*
      MINIMOIDA
      (tests superv- yeah right *you know* they can get permission just by applying and
      saying that these are less less, how is it, pain- painful
      yeah and *you know* it's *like* if they *maybe* cannot be *like* completely got rid of
      which *really* would be *quite* unlikely if they cannot be completely got rid of they
      should *you know* be minimized *somehow*)
      (NSF 2/99)

Coming back to the NS-NNS conversations, it was shown above that the
speakers' expert role is obvious when they are informing others about their
respective countries and cultures. That is, both the native and the non-native

speakers alternate in the expert role, and it was argued that the non-native speakers' rather infrequent use of pragmatic force modifiers can be regarded as appropriate for those asymmetrical situations where they have more knowledge of the topic under discussion and act as experts.

When attention is turned to speakers' roles as non-experts in the NS-NNS conversations, the first thing that becomes obvious is that the native speakers seem to adapt their use of pragmatic force modifiers when they switch over from the role of expert to that of non-expert. For example, it is usual for the native speakers to modify their contributions abundantly when they either make comments about Finland or ask the non-native speakers questions about their country and culture, i.e. about the learners' field of 'expertise'. There is, for example, a clear difference between questions which deal with studying, and which activate the mutual societal role of 'a university student', and questions which imply an asymmetrical role between experts and non-experts: questions of the former type are typically formulated rather directly (e.g. *what courses in linguistics are you doing?*), whereas the latter type tend to be expressed more tentatively even in cases where the questions do not pertain to the personal level, as in the example below:

Example 15

(topic: Finland)
F1   ...it's just the, probably the best country for me because that's, what I've got USED to ((laughs))
N1   er *well* is it-/, is- d'you have those things where *like* s- A DAY lasts for WEEKS *or something, like* em it's LIGHT for weeks there\, it's so far up north *you know* that when you'[re a-]
F1   [yeah]
F2   [what d'you] mean/
F1   yeah that's in SUMMER\, it's in summer it's light
    (NS-NNS 1/3)

In a similar manner, example 16 shows how the abundance of modifiers in the native speaker's contribution can be regarded as a signal that he is adopting the role of a non-expert in relation to his Finnish conversational partners:

Example 16

(topic: Finland)
N1   (-) *I think* this sounds *REALLY* rude but, *you know* you *may kind of-* ,*I don't KNOW perhaps* I'm not typical but I get Switzerland and [SWEden], Sweden
N2   [(-)]
    NORway and Finland ALL muddled up
F1   yeah
N1   so it's hard to [dif- (-) differences between] them
F2   [yeah but it doesn't matter *really*]
N2   ((laug[hs))]
N1   [but p-] *presumably* YOU think that there was a *very* separate and, [*you know* different]
F2   [yeah we DO]
    (NS-NNS 4/27)

As was pointed out earlier (section 6.2.1.1), the non-native speakers ask much fewer questions and the questions that they ask tend to deal with university studies, which do not highlight any asymmetries between the speakers. They do, however, occasionally express their opinions about life in Britain and British culture, in this sense stepping on the native speakers' field of expertise. It was shown above that, whenever the native speakers of English talk about Finland and things Finnish, they make abundant use of modifiers to show that they do not want to challenge the non-native speakers' role as experts. It seems, in comparison, that the non-native speakers are less sensitive to changes in role relationships. That is, the changes in the way they use modifiers seem less clearly motivated by role changes, and the learners often use pragmatic force modifiers more or less similarly through long stretches of talk. It is possible, however, that the same level of directness which is appropriate when the learners have an expert role is not sufficient when other roles are at stake. Especially when the non-native speakers offer unfavourable judgements about British culture or aspects of it, more modifiers would seem to be called for. This ties in with what Janicki (1986:75) argues about foreigner's rights and obligations: where the native speaker, being an 'insider', has the right to offer social criticism, this right is smaller for foreigners as 'outsiders'. To this it might be added that if foreigners choose to express social criticism, they should at least do it in a tentative manner. In this light, the non-native speakers' way of putting their critical comments across rather directly might not be welcomed. The following three examples are from different conversations, all displaying instances where the non-native speakers are talking about their experiences in Britain and, more importantly, about things they either dislike or are critical of:

Example 17

	F1	I used to live in so big apartment, [at home and now, now Park Wood is]
→	F2	[and the university's so far from] from the town, it's horrible
	N2	it IS *a bit isn't it* [(--)]
	F2	[in Finland] they are always so central very central
	F1	yeah, *well* I don't care about like, you have to go to supermarkets, ever so often
	N2	you have to go ((laughs))
	F1	so you HAVE to go there=
	N1	=I used to [be able-]
→	F2	[also there is] nothing in the restaurants here

(NS-NNS 2/15)

Example 18

	F1	it's also this, still about languages that the English\ us-use small talk a lot- lot,
→		which we do- which we DON'T use in Finland, [so I- so I HATE it] *I mean*
	N1	[it's straight to the point *isn't it*]
		in Finland, they MEAN what they me-, in Finland the people mean what they
→		say but HERE you can just
	N1	SARCASM, yeah

(NS-NNS 1/9)

Example 19

(topic: a course F2 is taking)
F2   it SHOULD be interesting but because of this lecturer it's-, it is not\, and the
      seminar leader is, he's something else\, he shouldn't be here
N2   really/
      (NS-NNS 3/21)

The non-native speakers thus seem less skilful than the native speakers in adapting their use of pragmatic force modifiers to the changing role relationships. However, example 14 on page 189 above showed that also the Finnish speakers in the NSF conversations seem to be sensitive about the roles they occupy and use pragmatic force modifiers accordingly. The same thus applies to the native speakers of Finnish as to the native speakers of English: when they express unfavourable evaluations or social criticism, they usually make use of pragmatic force modifiers to tone down the impact of their messages as in example 20 below, in which speaker S1 expresses his critical views of the Lutheran religion, or in example 21, in which speaker S1 criticises the use of English in advertising:[7]

Example 20

(topic: male and female roles)
S1   se on kasvatuksesta ja *aika* monesti esimerkiks uskonto tuo *semmosen, minun
      mielestä niinku* evank- kelisluterilainen uskonto tuo *semmosen,* kannan, jossa on
      hyvin voimakas siis kotona ollu se tausta että tota, ollaan *niinku semmosen,*
      perinteisen rooliajon- jaon kannalla
      (it depends on upbringing and *quite* often for example religion brings *such a- I
      find* that the Evangelical-Lutheran religion *you know* brings with itself *sort of* an
      idea, where the views held at home are very strong that, *you know like* people
      support the traditional role division)
      (NSF 2/101)

Example 21

(topic: use of English in Finland)
S3   jossain mainoskielssä *kyllä* on, hillittömästi englantia=
S1   =*mun mielestä* SE on *vähän* tyhmää toi, veeärrän ne mainokset too fast for you,
      fast for you too
      (*you know* there is so much English in advertising language
      I think those are *a bit* stupid those railway ads too fast for you, fast for you too)
      (NSF 4/123)

When we think about the possible consequences that the learners' insufficient skills in adapting their use of modifiers to changing role relationships might have, it is useful to bear in mind Kiesling's (1994) contention about the

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7   In an ideal case, obviously, speakers' personality traits would also have to be accounted for as there
     are bound to be individual differences in how directly speakers choose to put their views across. The
     present study, however, deals with recurrent features in the data rather than with speakers' individual
     styles.

relationship between power and language, according to which power may affect speech but speech may also affect power. That is, language use not only reflects existing power relationships, but language can also be used to gain power. A similar relationship exists between roles and pragmatic force modifiers: speakers' ways of using modifiers not only reflect existing role relationships, but the use of modifiers can also function as a signal of the type of role that speakers want to assume in the situation. In other words, the fact that the non-native speakers use pragmatic force modifiers less often than the native speakers in interpersonally salient positions may be interpreted as significant by their interlocutors. This is because, as Brown and Fraser (1979:35) point out, the *absence* of a linguistic item may also be regarded as a social marker; the absence of pragmatic force modifiers can thus be as meaningful as their use.

The above reasoning lies behind the argument that the non-native speakers' tendency to use fewer modifiers and their resulting directness may be interpreted, especially since they are advanced speakers of English, as intentional bluntness on their part, perhaps as a signal that they wish to adopt a more dominant role in the conversations and assert their knowledge or their views. As Arndt and Janney (1987:194) put it, if interpreters find the speaker's behaviour intentional, they "will tend to find interpersonal explanations for it". The non-native speakers' tendency to curtness does not, necessarily, cause friction but it *may* do so if their interlocutors, when activating their roles, regard this as a challenge to their role as experts. Particularly when the topic area is clearly more familiar to a certain speaker, s/he may feel threatened if others who have less knowledge about it assume a very assertive tone. It is thus possible that the non-native speakers in the examples above may inadvertently give the impression that they wish to challenge the native speakers' roles as experts, thereby running the risk of causing offence.

The assumption that non-native speakers' use of language can easily run counter to expected role-relationships is supported, for example, by Tyler (1995). She describes a tutoring session in which the tutor is a non-native speaker and the student a native speaker. During the interaction, the non-native speaker fails to assume a sufficiently assertive tone for his more powerful role, opting for indirect and hesitant strategies, which the native speaker interprets as a signal that their roles remain open for negotiation. As this is not what the non-native speaker intends, the participants fail to reach "a mutual understanding of who ha[s] higher status vis-à-vis the participant role of cultural knower" (Tyler 1995:144). After the session, moreover, both parties complained about the other's uncooperative attitude. Conversely, the non-native speakers' directness in the present NS-NNS conversations may be interpreted as a signal that they are reluctant to negotiate role relationships which, in the context of a casual conversation, may be unfavourably judged and lead to misunderstandings. After all, the present data show that the native speakers (of both English and Finnish) are constantly negotiating their roles during the interaction, which is also reflected in changes in their use of pragmatic force modifiers.

It is useful to compare examples 17, 18 and 19 above, where the non-native speakers fail to adapt their use of pragmatic force modifiers to their role as relative 'non-experts' in the situation, with examples 22 and 23 below, which are from the NSE conversation where one of the speakers, S1, is an American who, consequently, can be said to be less of an expert when discussing matters pertaining to British culture than her two British interlocutors. Consequently, speaker S1 often uses pragmatic force modifiers in a way which can be interpreted as a signal to her conversational partners that she does not want to assume the role of an expert. In example 22, for instance, she offers her view about the taxation system in Britain in a very tentative way:

Example 22

(topic: rates)
S1   *I think* we- *you know* we can, *I don't know I think I think* the old rates were okay *like* the idea behind it
((pause))
S3   banging your table are you Sue
((laughter))
S2   ooh dear/
S1   back to the topic
S3   [yeah back to the topic]
( )   [((laughter))]
S1   *well I think* the idea of the old rates *you know* the idea of, actual property tax, was okay because *generally speaking* the people who own property *tend* to be the richest ones anyway\/
      (NSE 4/74)

Example 23, similarly, is an illustrating example of how S1 makes her role as an 'outsider' (cf. Janicki 1986) salient. Previous to her turn, speaker S2 has commented on how she used to find the life of Pakistani refugees in Britain miserable. S1 disagrees with this and, basically, conveys that in her view, Pakistanis in Britain are doing fine. She, however, takes great care in formulating her view in a way which seems to recognize her British interlocutors' roles as experts and signals her reluctance to challenge the existing role relationship. She does this in three, simultaneous, ways. Firstly, she explicitly mentions her role as an American, i.e. as an outsider. Secondly, she gives detailed reasons and justifications for her view, which can be seen as examples of external modification (see Faerch and Kasper 1989), and, thirdly, she uses an abundance of pragmatic force modifiers throughout her turn to tone down its impact:

Example 23

(topic: refugees)
S1   *just I mean* just from *as an an American I mean* we have a black a huge black underclass, *I mean* I lived in New York for three years and it's *just* EVERY homeless person in the street is black it's *really* depressing, and er, *you know* nobody *really* helps these people it's *really* bad, and *just* from going from that I- *I think* that Indians and the Pakistanis who've come to Britain *really* do *seem* to be doing fine
      (NSE 4/86)

This section has investigated the interplay between speakers' roles as experts and non-experts and their use of pragmatic force modifiers. Even though the approach has been exploratory due both to the multifaceted nature of roles and the multifunctionality of modifiers, there are indications that when these roles become activated, it is also reflected in the use of modifiers or, conversely, that the speakers use modifiers in a different way when they want to assume the role of an expert and the role of a non-expert. In general, if speakers want to activate their role as experts and highlight the asymmetry between them and others, one way of showing this is to adopt an assertive tone by resorting to relative directness. Conversely, speakers often make an abundant use of modifiers when they are conveying their views of matters that belong to other speakers' 'fields of expertise' and when they want to indicate that they do not intend to challenge this role relationship. The same speakers will thus use pragmatic force modifiers in very different ways when they switch from one role to another. This flexibility seems to be more typical of native speakers, however. The non-native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations seem to be less skilful in adapting their use of modifiers so that it would be contextually appropriate even when switching roles.

7.5   Summary

This chapter has focused on speakers' roles as a factor which can influence the way native and non-native speakers use pragmatic force modifiers. By moving away from the types of pragmatic acts performed towards the more social aspects of context, it has been possible to reveal something of the complexity of the modification phenomenon. That is, the discussion above has highlighted various factors which can have an effect on how pragmatic force modifiers are used an interpreted.

The approach in this chapter has been exploratory; only three role-sets (native vs. non-native speakers, acquaintances vs. strangers, and experts vs. non-experts) were chosen for the analysis because of the fact that they brought out differences among speakers, thus making contrasts possible. The purpose, therefore, is not to claim that these three role sets are the only ones that become activated in the data and have relevance for the use of pragmatic force modifiers. Speakers can easily activate also other roles which may have a bearing upon their use of modifiers. However, focusing only on these three role sets has already given a powerful indication of the fact that speakers' roles can be an important source of variation in language in general, and in the way pragmatic force modifiers are used and interpreted in particular. The interplay between speakers' roles and the use of pragmatic force modifiers seems, hence, worthy of study. There is plenty of room for further research, however, because understanding of the interrelationship between roles and pragmatic phenomena in language is still very incomplete and fragmentary.

The findings in this chapter, even though tentative, indicate that other role-sets can, and often do, cut across the native – non-native divide. Thus the

emerging picture is more complex than is suggested by simply saying that nativeness and non-nativeness are the only significant factors affecting the way speakers use pragmatic force modifiers in an NS-NNS encounter. Thus, it was shown that the non-native speakers' tendency to use more direct strategies throughout the conversations need not necessarily be a sign of pragmatic failure. It may, for example, reflect the fact that they occupy an expert role in relation to their native interlocutors, in which case directness will probably be regarded as quite appropriate.

Even though different roles explain 'away' some of the differences between native and non-native speakers, an important difference seems to remain. This concerns the way speakers adapt their use of modifiers to evolving role relationships; the findings indicate that the native speakers in the present data have greater flexibility in this respect. Different roles for different speakers often bring about asymmetries in the situation, and it seems that the native speakers of both English and Finnish are more skilful than the non-native speakers in balancing their use of language accordingly. As a rule, they tend to resort to pragmatic modifiers more when they are in less powerful roles, and reduce the amount of modifiers when they switch to more powerful ones.

It is important to recognize that there is a two-way relationship between roles and language. Pragmatic success is not only a matter of speakers either succeeding or not in adapting their use of modifiers to the pre-existing roles in the encounter. Instead, speakers can also signal by their use of modifiers what kind of a role they wish to occupy in the situation. Thus, the non-native speakers' tendency to use fewer pragmatic force modifiers than the native speakers need not only be interpreted as a failure to conform to native speaker 'norms', which would seem to require more modification. The infrequent use of modifiers by the non-native speakers may also be perceived as their intent to assume a more powerful and assertive role in the interaction. If this is their intention, directness is not a problem. If, on the other hand, there is a mismatch between their intentions and their use of language, the possibility of pragmatic failure arises. Therefore, there seems to be room for pragmatic awareness-raising about the importance of pragmatic force modifiers and other pragmatic phenomena. The question of the possibilities of awareness-raising will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, where the findings of the present study are integrated.

Integrating the findings

8 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRAGMATIC FORCE MODIFIERS AND L2 PRAGMATIC PROFICIENCY

The purpose of this chapter is threefold. Firstly, the findings reported in the previous chapters will be drawn together and assessed, with the focus on what they reveal about the non-native speakers' pragmatic proficiency after their performance has been compared with native speakers of both English and Finnish. Secondly, the discussion will be extended to the possible reasons for the differences that emerge between the NS and the NNS performance in the present data. Language teaching and pragmatic transfer will be considered in this connection as possible explanations for pragmatic mismatches that easily occur in non-native speakers' language use. Thirdly, the ways in which non-native speakers' pragmatic success could best be enhanced will be taken into consideration. The question of awareness-raising, especially, will be dealt with.

8.1 The non-native speakers' pragmatic proficiency

As the chapters above have shown, the non-native speakers are by no means totally unaware of the need to use pragmatic force modifiers while conversing with their native interlocutors. This is in line with Piirainen-Marsh's (1995) study, in which she reports how non-native speakers' strategy choice, even if unidiomatic at times, reflects an awareness of face needs in encounters where they have to perform actions which have a great face-threatening potential. It is only natural that the non-native speakers in the present study should also show at least some concern for face: they have already mastered one language system and are therefore familiar with the interpersonal intricacies which can affect the way people communicate. Thus they are by no means linguistic 'innocents' but can be said to have what Blum-Kulka (1991) terms *a general pragmatic knowledge-base* at their disposal, which means that they have "a general sensitivity to contextual constraints in the choice of modes of performance" (Blum-Kulka 1991:255).

Nevertheless, it has been shown above that there are certain recurrent features in the non-native speakers' use of pragmatic force modifiers which differentiate them from the native speakers of both English and Finnish in the data.

Before discussing the differences between native and non-native performance, however, it is important to emphasize that these differences do not – necessarily and automatically – imply problems for successful communication. Kasper (1992:21) emphasizes this when discussing the communicative effects of transfer by pointing out that "'Negative transfer' equals 'difference from L2', but 'difference from L2 equals miscommunication' is a non sequitur". It is even possible to argue that some kind of 'deviance' from the way native speakers use pragmatic force modifiers might, in fact, be an advantage rather than a disadvantage to non-native speakers. This is because, as Davies (1989:159) points out, some sort of deficiency in non-native speakers' performance can serve as a good badge with which to display the message 'Don't expect me to share all your cultural assumptions'. Similarly, Blum-Kulka (1991:269-270) maintains that for many non-native speakers, a desirable goal might be to diverge from native speakers because being different from them functions as an assertion of their own cultural identity. That is, difference serves as an intentional disidentifier which is expected to be interpreted as a sign of non-nativeness. There are also studies which show that sometimes participants' different and 'exotic' conversational styles result in favourable rather than unfavourable attributions on the part of their interlocutors in cross-cultural encounters (Tannen 1985, Byrnes 1986).

A further complication in assessing pragmatic failure is that whether or not something is considered pragmatically inappropriate depends on the context and the participants in the interaction. Anderson (1988:271), when discussing speakers' roles as native and non-native speakers, argues that "non-nativeness, as a relevant aspect of discourse, seemed to be very much in the eye - and, above all, the ear - of the perceiver". The same is undoubtedly true of the relationship between the use of modifying devices and pragmatic failure as well: it is ultimately for the participants in the conversations to decide and negotiate whether their interlocutors' way of using pragmatic force modifiers is regarded as appropriate or not. In the present study, the participants' reactions in this respect remain inaccessible as no playback interviews of their impressions were conducted after the conversations.

However, the other side of the coin is that differences *can* matter, and where non-native speakers' divergence from native speakers might be accepted or even welcomed in some respects, it can equally well be unfavourably judged in other respects, as Janicki (1986:170-171) shows. It is not easy to say offhand which divergencies will be more easily accepted than others. It is, however, useful to bear in mind Thomas's (1983) suggestion that native speakers are likely to be more tolerant towards overt grammatical errors than pragmatic failures, which tend to be more covert in nature. Moreover, it is generally assumed that the more advanced the speakers are, the more they run the risk of being unfavourably judged if they commit pragmatic failure. For example, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990:497) point out about their subjects that "because the nonnative

speakers are linguistically competent, they may also be expected to have pragmatic abilities near those of their native-speaking counterparts". In the present study as well, the non-native speakers are at an advanced level in their interlanguage development and it can be assumed that their native counterparts, consciously or unconsciously, expect their non-native conversational partners to abide by the same pragmatic conventions as they do. Therefore, it is important to assess which characteristics in the non-native speakers' use of modifiers are most likely to cause pragmatic failure and which, accordingly, deserve attention both in terms of future research and in terms of language teaching.

Earlier research has indicated that non-native speakers have a tendency to use modifiers less than native speakers. Therefore, a similar tendency in the present findings is hardly surprising. The difference in the frequency of modifiers between the native and the non-native speaker is, however, not as great as might have been expected. Rather, the impressions of directness and abruptness in the learners' performance seem to result from the fact that they are, on the whole, more inconsistent than the native speakers in the way they use modifiers. Where the native speakers of both English and Finnish adapt their use of modifiers to the type of act performed and the roles they occupy, the variation in the learners' use of modifiers seems more haphazard and arbitrary, and less closely tied to interpersonal concerns. That is, the non-native speakers are less skilful in using pragmatic force modifiers where they would be strategically beneficial because of their face-protecting and face-enhancing potential. As the analysis above suggested, such contexts include, for example, disagreements, questions, and the expression of strong and unfavourable opinions. With such acts, opting for directness is not always the best choice strategically. In other words, the use of modifiers per se does not guarantee pragmatic success; what matters is that they are used in strategic, motivated ways. This ties in with what Held (1993:135) argues about the politeness functions of language, saying that "linguistic indicators are not in themselves polite, but the interplay of all the linguistic and situational factors generates a polite effect in the hearer". In the same way, pragmatic force modifiers are not in themselves face-protecting or face-enhancing, but speakers can use them for such purposes, and in this respect, the native speakers in the present data seem more adept than the non-native speakers.

Another considerable difference between the way the non-native and the native speakers use pragmatic force modifiers, which may have interpersonal implications, concerns the type of modifiers that the speakers favour. The analysis above indicated that the preference for implicit modifiers is, above all, a feature of native speaker performance in the present data, whereas the non-native speakers mainly resort to explicit modifiers. For both the native speakers of English and Finnish, implicit modifiers seem to be important in that they are often used as subtle means by which speakers establish common ground and appeal to shared assumptions; hence their importance as markers of positive politeness and interactional involvement.

It was argued that one possible reason why the proportion of implicit modifiers is great in the NSE and especially in the NSF conversations is that the

participants in these conversations are acquaintances: assumptions of shared knowledge and in-group membership are more likely among acquaintances than strangers. From this it follows, as far as the non-native speakers are concerned, that their tendency to use implicit modifiers relatively infrequently when interacting with strangers does not necessarily give rise to any serious pragmatic consequences. The fact remains, however, that even though implicitness, overall, was more characteristic of encounters between acquaintances, the native speakers' performance in the NS-NNS conversations shows that implicit modifiers can also be used to *create* a sense of familiarity and in-group even among strangers. It can, therefore, be argued that at least when non-native speakers are in interaction with native speakers in casual contexts, it would be to their benefit if they could make use of implicit modifiers to signal their intention to maintain an atmosphere of solidarity, as in such contexts, the insufficient use of implicit modifiers may easily render a speaker's style rather uninvolved and formal.

It was already pointed out in passing above that it is often possible to connect the changes in the native speakers' way of using pragmatic force modifiers to the changing and evolving role relationships among the speakers. The non-native speakers, on the other hand, are less skilful in adapting their use of modifiers to different roles and role relationships. Whereas their less modified style accords well with, for example, the role of expert, it can be interpreted quite differently in other situations. For example, when a native speaker activates the role of an expert, s/he is probably acting on the assumption that the others respect this role, thereby acting according to the principle of conflict-avoidance. In such a context, unmodified and categorical messages on the part of a non-expert can be interpreted, in the worst case, as the speaker's wish to challenge the other's expert role and to assume the more powerful role for him/herself. In Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford's (1992, 1993) terms, speakers usually wish to preserve *status congruence*, using different strategies for this purpose. It can be argued, consequently, that as the non-native speakers appear to be less sensitive to the constraints that changing roles impose on their use of pragmatic force modifiers, they do not always succeed in preserving status congruence.

The present study has thus shed some light on what seem to be the most potential stumbling blocks for non-native speakers as far as their use of pragmatic force modifiers is concerned. This was done by a careful comparison of the ways in which the native and the non-native speakers in the data use pragmatic force modifiers in interpersonally salient contexts, and the ways in which they adapt the use of modifiers to contextual constraints. Although the differences discussed above need not lead to more serious consequences than indicating speakers' non-nativeness, it is also possible that they can become interactionally relevant and give rise to pragmatic problems. Therefore, it is worthwhile to consider the possible reasons for the learners using the modifiers the way they do, as well as to assess the possibilities of enhancing their pragmatic sensitivity.

8.2   Reasons for pragmatic difficulties

8.2.1   Language teaching

Among the reasons why the non-native speakers, even at this advanced level, quite often resort to unequivocal constructions which show little concern for either the interlocutors' or the speaker's own face, the effect of formal language teaching at school[1] is the first that deserves attention. It is widely acknowledged that the language used in classrooms tends to be greatly different from the language in natural situations, and that the direct, categorial utterances so typical of foreign language speakers can often be traced back to the type of language they have learnt at school (e.g. Kasper 1979, 1981, Holmes 1982). Kasper (1979), for example, argues that what she calls 'modality reduction', that is, the tendency for modality to be fully left out of the surface realization of learners' utterances, despite its possible presence in the early planning stages, is often teaching-induced for the simple reason that modality and other relational aspects of language have hardly been taken into account in language teaching up till now. As a consequence, as Kasper (1979:277) puts it, "we mustn't be surprised that learners tend to reduce a function in communication which was never given any systematic attention to in their learning process".

Kramsch (1986) talks about interactional skills at a more general level instead of focusing on the use of modifying devices. She argues that foreign language teaching in which the stated aim is to increase learners' overall 'language proficiency' also contains problems from an interactional point of view. Kramsch (1986:367) maintains that proficiency-oriented goals differ from interactional goals in that they concentrate on developing accuracy rather than discourse aptitude, and presuppose a static rather than a dynamic view of communication. What she says about classroom teaching provides a good explanation of why language learners often seem to be unaware of the significance of pragmatic aspects of communication such as the use of modifying expressions (Kramsch 1986:369):

> Classroom discourse is institutionally asymmetric, non-negotiable, norm-referenced, and teacher-controlled, thus hardly conducive to developing the interpersonal social skills that require interpretation and negotiation of intended meanings.

The present study also exhibits some features in the non-native speakers' performance which can be regarded as reflections of formal language teaching. For example, the unmodified way in which the non-native speakers often answer the questions by the native speakers, as if delivering given truths rather than personal points of view, is reminiscent of classroom language where in Holmes's (1982:9) words "most of the utterances produced by second language learners . . . tend to be declarative in form and informative in function".

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[1]   As opposed to language learning which happens in the target language culture on a day-to-day basis as, for example, in the case of immigrants.

Another point about the non-native speakers' answers to the native speakers' questions is worth making as it has consequences for the use of pragmatic force modifiers and seems to reflect classroom-type interaction. This is the learners' greater tendency to deliver just the information sought instead of choosing to regard answers as an opportunity to develop the flow of conversation in the direction of their own choice. Hence, question-answer sequences like the one in example 1 below, which are extremely rare in the two sets of native speaker data, can easily be found in the NS-NNS conversations:

Example 1

```
N1    so you stu- you're studying here/
F1    [yeah\]
F2    [yeah\]
N1    and how long are you here FOR
F1    for a year
N1    for a year
F2    exchange
N1    from, Finland\
F2    yeah
N2    what's it like then, d'you like it/
((pause))
F2    how d- how do [I LIKE/,] eerm, WELL ehm mostly I I LIKE\
N2    [yeah yeah]
F1    yeah=
F2    =to be here
F1    me too
      (NS-NNS 1/1)
```

As the example shows, the non-native speakers resort to short, often one-word, answers without expanding them, and the native speakers have to 'fish out' more information by means of more questions. Young (1995) mentions a similar non-native speaker tendency in language proficiency interviews. He relates this to the level of non-native speakers' proficiency, regarding it as more typical of intermediate than of advanced speakers. However, he also mentions (p. 35) that a cultural difference may be at issue so that for some non-native speakers, short answers indicate culturally appropriate behaviour with a more powerful native speaker. In the present study, as has been stressed throughout, all the non-native speakers are at an advanced level, so it is difficult to interpret their tendency towards such extreme curtness in terms of proficiency. Cultural explanations are not easy to formulate, either, as this tendency does not cut across all the non-native speakers in the data. Rather, this classroom-like behaviour seems to be related to speakers' roles so that some non-native speakers appear to activate a less powerful role in relation to their native counterparts, ceding them the power to control the situation.

It is obvious that the short, unmodified answers, like the ones in example 1 above, leave little room for negotiation, which is why sequences of this kind give an interview-like impression. This is in accordance with the findings by Loppela and Paaso (1990), who studied Finnish engineers' telephone conversations with

native speakers of English. They found, among other things, that the native speakers had to be the initiators and ask questions all the time. The non-native speakers were ready to respond, but they rarely fulfilled their turns with information beyond what was required; they were thus willing to react but not counterreact. As a consequence, their native counterparts often had the impression that the Finnish engineers were unwilling to cooperate. As the example above shows, a similar tendency can be found in the present NS-NNS data as well, and when considering the reasons for it, the influence of language teaching is worth taking into consideration.

It has to be borne in mind, of course, that the NS-NNS conversations take place among strangers and that question-answer sequences may be more likely to appear in such 'get-acquainted' talk. However, when the native speakers respond to the non-native speakers' questions, similar short and unmodified answers are rare. For instance, example 2, in which the native speakers answer a non-native speaker's question, is from the same conversation and the same context as example 1. Instead of delivering just a minimal agreeing response, speaker N2 elaborates his agreement by an explanation, after which N1 chooses to continue with a description of his own experiences. As can be seen, the native speakers also resort to the multiple use of pragmatic force modifiers in their responses, and it can be argued that the modifying expressions, for their part, help define the situation as informal and casual:

Example 2

(context: N2 has mentioned having lived in Germany as a child)
F1   was it like you parents were working=
N2   =yeah, *I mean* since I have travelled *a bit*, NOT extensively, but er, I've- I've been in in Europe\ ((pause)) by TRAIN interrailing\
F1   oh/
F2   yeah\
N2   I have been (--), independent trips as well, just as a (--)
N1   I HAVEN'T *really*, I went to FRANCE this summer but *I think* that's (-) EXTENDED my travelling experience for a long time, *I mean* I HAVE travelled, I've been to lots of places but that was when I was a LOT younger so
N2   *well I suppose* that COUNTS
N1   does it/
      (NS-NNS 1/1)

The effect of language teaching may also be a factor which explains why the non-native speakers, on the whole, seem to have problems signalling positive politeness and involvement by way of showing interest or approval, or by exaggerating agreement in the way the native speakers of both English and Finnish do. In other words, they appear less concerned with the interpersonal aspects of communication and stick more to the level of factual information. As far as pragmatic force modifiers are concerned, this is reflected, for example, in the almost complete lack of devices with an appealing function (e.g. *you know* and tag-questions) as well as in the small number of emphatics and vivid adjectives which the native speakers use to signal interest towards their coparticipants and their contributions. A tendency to ignore interpersonal aspects of communication may

be typical of foreign language speakers in general. As Sarangi (1994b:191) points out, "[i]t is perhaps peculiar to non-native speakers of a language to become language-oriented as compared to their native speaker interactants, who mostly remain interaction-oriented".

The reason why the non-native speakers' tendency to make sparse use of modifiers as involvement signals might be teaching-induced is the nature of classroom interaction. In formal classrooms at least, there are rarely opportunities to practise genuine interaction in the sense of participants' focusing their interest and attention on other speakers and their messages and signalling agreement, sympathy, or interest towards them. Instead, classroom situations are typically asymmetrical, with the teacher in control, who has the full right to assess students' contributions from the viewpoint of their linguistic accuracy. This means, as Ringbom (1987:29) points out, that "most social and affective factors lose at least some of their importance in a foreign language learning context". In other words, social and interpersonal concerns rarely take pride of place in classroom contexts. Such lack of attention to social aspects of communication is probably part of the explanation also for the finding that the non-native speakers are less skilful in regulating their use of modifiers in relation to the social role that they occupy at any given time.

On the whole, then, the effect of formal language teaching on the non-native speakers' use of modifiers can best be described as lack of attention to the interpersonal effects of their contributions. Therefore, the way the non-native and native speakers put across their messages can be greatly different in terms of the concern signalled for the other participants. Typical situations where this difference surfaces are the narrative sections of conversations, in which the native speakers more often use involvement-signalling devices. In the examples below, both the native and the non-native speakers relate a story about their own experiences. However, only the native speaker, by resorting to *you know* and a tag-question, seems to anticipate the reactions of the other participants and to seek confirmation or agreement from them during her narrative (example 3). In comparison, the non-native speaker in example 4 seems to be less concerned about the reactions of others when telling her story: she uses no modifying devices with an appealing function nor, for that matter, any other types of modifiers:

Example 3

(topic: Morecambe beach)
N2   I was looking at some really old phot[os at] Lancaster in a museum and, and
F1   [yeah]
        Morecambe and they had all these PICTURES of it=
N1   =a major [(--)]
N2   [*you know*] NOBODY- you didn't have room on the beach and everybody had on
        their *you know* all their clothes [that you (wore) on the beach and]
F1   [yeah yeah ((laughs))]
        everything and children (-) and it was just chock-a-block all along, but it's not
        like that now *is it/*
        (NS-NNS 4/36)

Example 4

(topic: trip to Mexico)
F1   FIRST day was great I lik-liked it, second day was SO awful you have the MAIN street, and if you go just round the corner, there's (–) houseless, (people) who are so poor, you don't know if you have to be ANNOYED with those people or, feel pity for them
N2   yeah
    (NS-NNS 2/18)

It is obviously difficult to draw a direct parallel between the learners' way of using pragmatic force modifiers and formal language teaching, because of the many other factors which intervene and influence speakers' behaviour. It can be argued, however, that the smaller amount of responsiveness and involvement with their hearers that the non-native speakers often display is at least partly due to formal language teaching, where the learners have had little access to genuine reciprocal, communicative situations. It can therefore be argued that as long as classroom language teaching is mainly concerned with the delivery of factual information in a linguistically accurate form in a social vacuum, it can hardly enhance the development of learners' interpersonal skills, of which appropriate use of modifying devices is an example. This, of course, raises the important question of the extent to which pragmatic aspects of language are teachable; this question will be dealt with in more detail in section 8.3 below.

8.2.2   Pragmatic transfer

Apart from the effects of language teaching, non-native speakers' ways of using pragmatic force modifiers can also be approached from the viewpoint of native language influence. The terms *transfer* and *cross-linguistic influence* have been used to describe native language influence, and there has been plenty of research on transfer in the second language acquisition framework (see e.g. Gass and Selinker 1983, Kellerman and Sharwood Smith 1986, Faerch and Kasper 1987, Odlin 1989, Dechert and Raupach 1989). As the name of the field suggests, the predominant concern has been on how learners acquire second language knowledge and the role of the native language therein. Transfer has been called either positive or negative, depending on whether the native language has a facilitating or an interfering effect. However, it is important to bear in mind the point made by Sajavaara and Lehtonen (1989:35) that the process of transfer itself cannot be divided into 'negative' and 'positive' aspects; what is positive or negative is only the *outcome* of cross-linguistic influence and the nature of this outcome is largely dependent on how similar or different the native and target languages are.

Much of the research referred to above has focused on transfer at the levels of morphology, phonology, or syntax. With the growing interest in interlanguage pragmatics, researchers have also extended the focus of transfer research and studied the existence and effects of pragmatic transfer. Kasper (1992:3) points out that definitions of pragmatic transfer often vary as a result of researchers' different

views about how to define the scope of pragmatics, but in general terms, attention is paid to how learners' native language affects the way they interpret and produce target language in contextualized language use, and to the communicative effects that this influence can have. Beebe et al. (1990:56) define pragmatic transfer as "transfer of L1 sociocultural communicative competence in performing L2 speech acts or any other aspects of L2 conversation where the speaker is trying to achieve a particular function of language".

As was discussed in chapter two above, Thomas (1983) differentiates between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failure. Such a distinction is useful at a conceptual level even though the two types are interrelated, i.e. the borderline between these two pragmatic domains is fuzzy rather than discrete (see also Riley 1989:235). Pragmatic transfer can also be described with reference to these two points of focus. Thus, *pragmalinguistic transfer* refers to speakers transferring language forms from their native language to the target language; these forms may or may not have similar functions across the two languages. In Kasper's (1992:7) words, pragmalinguistic transfer has to do with "the process whereby the illocutionary force or politeness value assigned to particular linguistic material in L1 influences learners' perception and production of form-function mappings in L2". *Sociopragmatic transfer* means that speakers transfer to L2 their culturally-defined perceptions about what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour and affects, for example, speakers' social perceptions about the distance between the interlocutors, their relative rights and obligations, and the degree of imposition in performing a particular linguistic action, which, again, may or may not correlate across languages and cultures.

The picture that emerges about pragmatic transfer is thus quite complex as it involves positive and negative aspects, on the one hand, and sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic aspects, on the other. The following figure illustrates how these dimensions interact, resulting in a four-way division. That is, transfer as a process may have positive outcomes on both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic levels, and also negative outcomes on these two levels. It is obvious that in reality, the borderlines between different aspects of transfer merge into each other rather than being as clear-cut as the figure suggests:

	PRAGMALINGUISTIC TRANSFER	SOCIOPRAGMATIC TRANSFER
POSITIVE OUTCOME	+	+
NEGATIVE OUTCOME	–	–

Figure 8 Types of pragmatic transfer

As with other types of transfer research, studies of pragmatic transfer have tended to focus on its negative aspects. There is abundant evidence of both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic transfer, suggesting, for example, that non-

native speakers may transfer features of speech act realization (see e.g. Blum-Kulka 1982 on requests, Beebe et al. 1990 on refusals, Olshtain and Cohen 1989 on apologies), the choice of politeness style (Garcia 1989, 1992), topic preferences (Richards and Sukwiwat 1983), or the perception of status relationships (Takahashi and Beebe 1993) from their native language to their interlanguage.[2]

Patterns of pragmatic force modification can also be transferred from the native to the target language, and transfer effects may operate at both the pragmalinguistic and the sociopragmatic levels at the same time: the learner's decision whether there is or is not a need to modify is a sociopragmatic one and the choice of forms with which to do so a pragmalinguistic one. As far as the frequency of modifying strategies is concerned, previous research gives evidence both of learners' tendency to transfer the more direct strategies from their native language to their target language, as in the case of German speakers of English (House and Kasper 1981), and of learners' tendency to be more indirect than native speakers due to native language influence, as in the case of Anglo-American learners of Hebrew (Blum-Kulka 1982). However, there is also evidence that learners do not necessarily transfer their L1 ways of modification. For example, in Trosborg's (1987) study on apologies, Danish speakers of English used modality markers considerably less than native speakers of English even though they modified their apologies abundantly when speaking Danish. While there are thus findings suggesting that learners transfer the degree of directness, there is less evidence about speakers transferring forms of modifiers from their native language that would be inappropriate in their target language. Such findings have, however, been reported on learners' speech act production. For example, Olshtain and Cohen (1989) report Hebrew learners of English transferring forms of apology from their native language, and Beebe et al. (1990) discuss the tendency of Japanese learners of English to transfer incorrectly the semantic formulae with which to express refusal. These findings suggest that transfer of inappropriate forms from L1 is also possible as far as the choice of modifying expressions is concerned.

The findings concerning the transfer of modification strategies are thus varied. A probable reason for this is that, even though what is meant by transfer can easily be understood at a conceptual level, it is far more difficult to specify with any certainty which characteristics in learner language are and are not caused by transfer. Nevertheless, as there is widespread agreement among linguists that the native language can put constraints on foreign language performance, it is of interest to consider the findings about the similarities and differences in the Finnish speakers' performance in Finnish and English in the present study as this may help assess the extent to which the non-native speakers' use of pragmatic force modifiers is influenced by their native language.

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2   For an overview, see Kasper (1992:11-15) and Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993:10-11).

8.2.2.1 Positive transfer

It was mentioned above that negative transfer has been studied more than positive transfer; this is largely because identifying positive effects of transfer is more complicated as it is difficult to say whether a successful interlanguage performance results from positive transfer or foreign language speakers applying their L2 knowledge. As Kasper (1992:11) puts it, there is "the methodological difficulty . . . of distinguishing positive transfer from learners applying their general pragmatic knowledge base on the one hand, or from generalizing from their IL pragmatic knowledge, on the other hand". This applies in the present study as well, and makes the assessment of positive transfer rather speculative. Nevertheless, a few points where positive transfer can be an explanatory factor are worth making.

Given the assumption that in their formal language teaching, the learners have hardly been made aware of pragmatic aspects of communication in general or about the use of pragmatic force modifiers in particular, the fact that they *do* make use of modifying devices during the NS-NNS encounters can, in itself, be interpreted as a sign of positive transfer. That is, the non-native speakers are probably applying their general pragmatic knowledge base (discussed in section 8.1 above), which is based on their experiences about using their native language. Recognizing the need to modify can thus be regarded as positive sociopragmatic transfer even though, as has been shown throughout the study, this fails to be operational at all times.

As far as the pragmalinguistic level is concerned, it can be argued, (see also Nikula 1992) that the learners' tendency to favour those pragmatic force modifiers that have a close translational equivalent in Finnish is a sign of positive transfer. These include *I think, I suppose (mä luulen), I don't know (emmä tiedä), maybe (ehkä), quite (ihan), really (tosi),* to mention the most obvious examples. In the extracts below, it is shown how the Finnish speakers use the pair *ehkä* and *maybe* in a very similar manner. In both examples, the speakers react to the previous speaker's turns, suggesting reasons why they think things are as the other has said; both *ehkä* and *maybe* help tone down the force of these suggestions:

> Example 5
>
> (topic: foreign teachers)
> S2   ...emmä tiiä eikö ne jaksa enää sitte vaivata suomalaisia ku ne- niiltä ei taho saaha suusta mi[tään ma-]
> S1   [nii nii]=
> S3   =ne ei- niillä ei *ehkä* oo sellasta oikeaa tatsia niinku suomalaisiin nuo- opiskelijoihin
> (I don't know maybe they don't feel like bothering the Finns anymore as it is difficult to get out of their mouths [anything
> yeah yeah]
> it's- they *maybe* don't have the right kind of touch with Finnish young- students)
> (NSF 2/95)

Example 6

(topic: the lack of interest shown by the English in foreign languages)
N2   yeah and I I think that's, well, it seems to be the attitude of the English people
      [that they just-]
F2   [*maybe* you're] not so motivated to learn the foreign language because you can
      MANAGE with English almost everywhere
      (NS-NNS 1/6)

This inclination of the speakers to use modifiers with equivalents in Finnish suggests, as Selinker (1992:259) points out, that the use of translation equivalents is an important strategy for second language learners. It is important to point out that labelling these translation equivalents as signs of positive pragmatic transfer means that the *functional* properties of the pairs across the two languages are also roughly the same, that is, the corresponding forms can be used for similar pragmatic functions both in Finnish and in English. It is obviously also possible to say that a more or less 'correct' use of these modifiers simply means that the non-native speakers have acquired this aspect of English, rather than seeing it as transfer. However, when the frequencies of pragmatic force modifiers are considered, the finding that those modifiers that the non-native speakers favour have close Finnish equivalents suggests that this similarity in form-force mapping is facilitative for learners and gives rise to positive transfer.

An important point about the translation equivalents mentioned above is that the pairs are similar at both the semantic and pragmatic levels, that is, the form-force mapping is the same across the languages. Odlin (1989:142-143) discusses studies by Kellerman (1977, 1978) which indicate that learners are more likely to transfer semantic meanings that are transparent, close to the "core meaning" of linguistic expressions. This relates to the expressions above in that they all belong to the explicit category, that is, their pragmatic functions are relatively transparent and probably easier to come to grips with than those of implicit modifiers. That is, it is easy to understand why the explicit modifiers for which the semantic level and the pragmatic level correspond across languages are the modifiers most frequently used by the non-native speakers in the present data. Similarity between the semantic and pragmatic level mappings is thus a factor that can give rise to positive outcomes even in cases where the two languages are very distant from each other, as is the case with Finnish and English. Ringbom (1987), in more general terms, stresses the importance of similarity between two languages, advocating a view of transfer where learners' perception of similarities between their L1 and L2 – both item similarity and system similarity – deserves more attention than has usually been the case in transfer studies, which have tended to have a one-sided focus on differences between languages.

Even though the evidence for positive pragmatic transfer is difficult to pin down, it does not mean that the facilitating effect of the native language should be ignored. Foreign language speakers are bound to draw from the knowledge base that they have about their native language, and at the most general level, the recognition that the way people say things matters as much as, sometimes more than, what they say counts as positive transfer. As far as pragmatic force modifiers

are concerned, the evidence that the non-native speakers at least at times show sensitivity for the need of modification can be regarded as positive sociopragmatic transfer. However, the most obvious way in which the native language seems to influence the learners' use of pragmatic force modifiers in the present data is in their choice of modifiers in English, where the similarity of these particular modifiers to Finnish formal equivalents seems to mean that there is greater probability for the learners to acquire them.

8.2.2.2 Negative transfer

An obvious example of negative pragmalinguistic transfer would be an inappropriate form-force mapping due to native language influence. Typically this kind of transfer involves cases where learners transfer formally and semantically similar devices which do not share the same pragmatic functions in the two languages. It is, however, quite difficult to find such instances of inappropriate form-force mappings in the non-native speakers' performance in the present data. This is probably due to the relatively high level of linguistic proficiency of the non-native speakers, which allows them to draw only on those semantically and formally similar modifying devices in Finnish and English which also share functional properties. In the same way, Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993b:11) argue that a possible reason why there is less evidence than might be expected of negative form-force transfer is that in many pragmatic studies, the learners are rather advanced L2 speakers. Even though Kasper (1992:19, drawing on Takahashi and Beebe 1987) points out that pragmatic transfer often correlates positively with L2 proficiency, it is possible that this tends to apply at a more 'global' level (e.g. choice of directness level) than in inappropriate transfer of L1 forms to L2. That is, advanced foreign language speakers are probably quite conscious of differences between their native and foreign languages at the formal level, which makes them avoid transfer. At the same time, however, they may inadvertently transfer features from their native language that have more to do with strategic choices such as whether to prefer directness or indirectness in a given situation.

As suggested above, then, it is difficult to find any clear evidence of the non-native speakers mapping the form and force of modifiers inappropriately because of Finnish influence, a possible reason being that the learners are advanced enough not to transfer inappropriate forms from Finnish into English. There are only a few isolated phenomena that suggest that the non-native speakers might be drawing on their native language forms of modification, but these are too rare to warrant any generalizations. For example, in Nikula (1992) Finnish speakers, who were conversing in English among themselves, made quite frequent use of modal verbs in past tense forms. It was argued that this tendency might be due to native language influenc, as speakers of Finnish often use the conditional mood as a downtoning strategy (see Hakulinen 1989:83). The conditional mood is expressed by adding the affix *-isi-* to the verb stem, and its closest formal equivalents in English are modal verbs in the past tense form. Modal verbs such

as *would*, *could* or *might* occur much less often in the non-native speakers' performance in the present study. However, it appears at times that the non-native speakers use them rather unidiomatically, in contexts where the native speakers typically resort to other types of modifiers to signal tentativeness (e.g. of the type *I suppose* or *probably*). In example 7, for instance, speaker F1 using *I would say* in the context of a casual chat lends his utterance a shade of formality that the speaker probably does not intend to convey. This is augmented by the fact that after only a few turns, he resorts to the same formulation again (example 8):

Example 7

(topic: university studies)
N2   wha-what's the most interesting class that you've-
F1   *I would say* that it's e- European international relations
        (NS-NNS 3/21

Example 8

N2   is the university in Finland a lot like, here/ or, different
F2   na- *I would say* that the basic structure is very similar
        (NS-NNS 3/22)

The reason why such use of modals might result from the non-native speakers drawing on their native language forms of modification is that it is quite usual for the speakers in the NSF conversations to use conditional forms to tone down the force of their utterances. In example 9 below speaker S2, for example, uses conditional forms, which helps soften the impact of her opinion, which is slightly different from the views that have preceded it:

Example 9

(topic: foreigners who do not learn Finnish)
S1   mut se on just siitä kiinni jos ei oo kertakaikkiaan kiinnostunu (...)
S2   luul*is* et ku, mutta tuntu*is* että se on sen verran tärkeä asia kuitenkin, hmisten
        väliset kontaktit, ja tämmöset näin
        (but the point is that people may not be interested in it at all
        one *should* think that, but it *would* seem that it is an important matter after all
        contacts between people and things like that)
        (NSF 3/116)

A possible starting point in looking for signs of negative transfer from native language is to consider those pragmatic force modifiers that the non-native speakers seem to favour more than the native speakers. There are not many such modifiers as the non-native speakers, on the whole, use modifiers less than the native speakers. They, however, use *I think* and *I suppose* more often than the native speakers (cf. table 2 in chapter four). As suggested above, this may suggest that they use these modifiers as semantic and functional counterparts to *musta tuntuu* and *mun mielestä*, which are very commonly used as downtoning modifiers in the NSF conversations. As the native speakers also often use *I think* and *I suppose* to soften the pragmatic impact of their messages, there is no reason to argue that

the favouring of these modifiers by the non-native speakers is, as such, pragmatically inappropriate. However, it is worth bearing in mind that these modifiers can also acquire an assertive tone, especially if pronounced with a stress and used at the beginning of speakers' turns (see Holmes 1985:33, who calls this 'the deliberative function' of *I think*). It is, therefore, possible that the non-native speakers' tendency to prefer these modifiers might not always be the best choice strategically if their intention is to tone down the force of their messages. However, the problem with linking the overuse of these modifiers to native language transfer is that it is also possible to argue that such overgeneralization is an interlanguage phenomenon as such rather than the result of learners mapping native and target language forms inappropriately. As Blum-Kulka et al. (1989b:26) argue, the only possibility of ascertaining whether a feature in learners' speech is a typical interlanguage phenomenon or a result of pragmatic transfer is to compare non-native speakers with different source languages. Therefore, without the possibility of comparing Finnish speakers' performance in English with speakers of English with different mother tongues, the assessments of pragmatic transfer remain rather speculative.

The pragmatic force modifier *of course* is another example of a modifier that the non-native speakers use more often than the native speakers. It is the most common emphatic modifier in the learners' performance, whereas the native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations use it only once, and in the NSE conversations twice. In the NSF conversations, *tietysti* 'of course/obviously' and *varmasti* 'certainly' are the most commonly used emphatics. The former tends to occur in speakers' turns as a marker of shared knowledge, signalling something like 'as we all know'. In the example below, for instance, leaving out *tietysti* would change the message to one by which speaker S1 would only be referring to her own experiences, whereas the function of *tietysti* seems to be to appeal to an experience that speaker S1 also expects the others to share:

Example 10

(topic: speaking English among Finns)
S1   *tietysti* niinku, nyt ku on jonku aikaa opiskellu ni TULEE niinku sellasia, miten
    joku asia sanotaan niinku helpommin englanniks ku suomeks
    (*obviously* now that ø has studied for some time there are occasions when it is
    easier to say something in English than in Finnish)
    (NSF 3/108)

The speakers in the NSF data often use *varmasti* to emphasize agreement with their interlocutors. In example 11 below, both speakers use *varmasti* to signal support for each other's views. The native speakers of English, for their part, usually favour *sure* or *definitely* in contexts where they are signalling support for the views of others, as in example 12 (this extract was also dealt with on page 137):

Example 11

(topic: a party where women are dressed as men and vice versa)
S3   ...ne EI lähe tonne niitä PELOTTAA se
S2   niitä niin niit- ihan *varmasti* [kuule, että valta horjuu]

S3   [*varmasti* pelottaa se minkälainen]minä oon naisen silmissä
(they [men] won't go there they are scared
they- quite *certainly* you know that their power will be weakened
certainly they are frightened to find out how they seem in the eyes of women)
(NSF 2/104)

Example 12

(topic: paying rates)
S4   if you're gonna win money out of something you'd just keep quiet and DO it
wouldn't you/
S1   yeah, oh yeah *sure* if you're if you're losing out then you're gonna make more
fuss
(NSE 2/53)

It appears that the non-native speakers use *of course* as an overall emphatic modifier, which they use as a counterpart for both *tietysti* and *varmasti* in Finnish. In particular, the non-native speakers often use it as an answer to a question, to signal emphatic agreement. However, *of course* is not always the best choice for such a purpose as it easily lends an irritated rather than supportive tone to answers. Thomas (1983:102) reports on a similar tendency by Russian speakers of English, and she suggests that when *of course* is used in answer to a question its gloss for native speakers of English may be something like 'What a stupid question'. In examples 13 and 14 below, the use of *of course* by F2 can give rise to similar overtones, as if the speaker wanted to imply 'you should know better than to ask that'. What further adds to this rather irritated and impatient impression is the speaker's prosodic choice: in both examples, she pronounces *of course* with a falling intonation, thus adding a sense of finality to it (cf. notes on the pragmatic meanings of falling intonation on page 109).

Example 13

(topic: Finns' attitudes to neighbouring countries)
N1   are there any PREJUDICES towards [the Swedes and towards the Russians]
F2   [YEAH *of course*\,] yeah *of course*\
F1   [oh yes]
(NS-NNS 4/31)

Example 14

(topic: Finnish culture)
N1   is- is Finland influenced by American culture
F1   oh yes [very much yeah]
F2   [*of- of course*] yeah\
(NS-NNS 4/32)

The frequency of *tietysti* as a supportive signal in the NSF conversations suggests that the non-native speakers may be drawing parallels between it and *of course* in English, ending up using *of course* in contexts where the native speakers opt for other choices. It is, however, important to bear in mind the point made by Kasper (1992:21) that negative transfer does not necessarily equal

miscommunication. That is, even though negative transfer results in formulations which differ from the ways in which native speakers would express themselves, such divergence need not have any unfavourable effects for successful communication. As the non-native speakers' use of pragmatic force modifiers shows only little evidence of pragmalinguistic transfer in the form of non-native-like form-force mappings, it is quite likely that they either go unnoticed by their native counterparts or merely serve as indicators of the speakers' status as foreign speakers.

Negative sociopragmatic transfer would mean that Finnish speakers conceptualize conversations and the need for the use modifiers in them differently than speakers of English, transferring this into their performance in English. Such transfer may have more serious consequences than pragmalinguistic transfer as it pertains to how speakers perceive the relationship between themselves and others and how they assess the need to use pragmatic force modifiers in given situations. If non-native speakers' assessments in these areas differ greatly from those of native speakers, it may be more difficult for native speakers to see it as a sign of native language influence than in the case of inappropriate choices of forms. It is of interest, therefore, to investigate whether sociopragmatic transfer might explain some of the ways in which the non-native speakers use pragmatic force modifiers.

There is one aspect of the non-native speakers' use of pragmatic force modifiers which might be affected by sociopragmatic transfer, and that concerns the personal perspective of modifiers. It was argued in chapter six above that the native speakers of Finnish often choose impersonal strategies for modification and face-saving purposes. This becomes apparent, for example, in their tendency to use impersonal pronouns, zero subjects, and passive constructions even when it is obvious in the context that they are talking about themselves. These choices have often negative politeness functions, impersonal strategies signalling both the speakers' reluctance to restrict their hearers' freedom of action and their wish to protect their own faces from imposition.

It seems that some of this tendency towards impersonalization can also be found in the non-native speakers' performance in the NS-NNS conversations. As far as pronominal choice is concerned, it was argued in section 6.4 that the non-native speakers quite often use generic *you* even in cases where they could talk about things more explicitly from their own personal perspective. Similarly, more often than the native speakers, they choose to tell about things from a *we* perspective, which tends to efface their personal involvement. This does not relate directly to the use of pragmatic force modifiers but is, nevertheless, relevant from the viewpoint of the kind of relationship which the speakers assume exists between themselves and others. As argued in chapter six, it would often create a greater sense of involvement in the situations if the non-native speakers chose to talk about things from the viewpoint of *I* and *you* instead of generic *you* and defocalizing *we*. It can only be speculated to what extent the favouring of this generic perspective by the non-native speakers is L1-influenced, but it is possible that it reflects the apparent tendency towards impersonalization in the NSF

214

conversations. That is, the learners appear to transfer some of the discourse functions of impersonalization to their English performance, in the same way as Watabe et al. (1991) report Japanese speakers transferring inappropriate passive constructions from Japanese to English. As example 15 below suggest, the Finnish speakers quite often express their views or tell about their experiences in a general and impersonal manner. In the example, speaker S3 tells about his experiences when speaking foreign languages by using zero subjects rather than referring to himself more explicitly:

Example 15

(topic: experiences when speaking a foreign language)
S3   ...yhtäkkiä *ei osaa sanoa* YHTÄÄN mitään että niinku mitä *yrittää* ajaa takaa, ei millään- millään kautta *saa sanottua* sitä
       (suddenly ⌀ can't say anything at all like what ⌀ is trying to get at there's no way ⌀ can put it into words)
       (NSF 4/120)

This example can be compared with example 16 below, which seems to reflect a similar tendency towards impersonalization, which is probably due to the learners' native language. Speaker F1 starts by discussing her feelings about having to use a foreign language. Speaker F2 adds a comment and uses the pronoun *you* while making it. In the context, it seems unlikely that F2 would wish to comment on how she thinks the other speaker, i.e. F1, feels about using foreign languages. It seems, rather, that she refers to her own views of the matter, yet she chooses the generic *you* rather than the first person pronoun. This resembles the way the Finnish speakers in the NSF conversations resort to impersonal forms when expressing their opinions:

Example 16

(topic: speaking a foreign language)
F1   still I think I wouldn't like to live in another country for a, really long time, just because of the language, cos I think I would never learn to speak another language just like I- like I speak English [(-) AS LONG AS I (--) YEAH yeah]
F2   [yeah *you* couldn't express ALL of *your* thoughts] and feelings
       (NS-NNS 1/5)

As far as pragmatic force modifiers are concerned, it can similarly be argued that the finding that the non-native speakers less often resort to pragmatic force modifiers with first or second person reference (e.g. *I suppose, I guess, you know, you see*) is another possible sign of transfer from the speakers' native language sociopragmatic practices of modification where greater impersonalization is favoured. On many occasions, the learners' performance could have been rendered more successful interpersonally if they had chosen modifiers that would have revealed more about their personal feelings and attitudes. This applies, at least, to expressions of disagreement, differing opinions, and delivery of critical views, where adopting a personal perspective leaves more room for addressees to advocate different views. It is crucial to bear in mind,

however, that the non-native speakers' tendency to less readily signal their personal feelings and attitudes by way of pragmatic force modifiers that explicitly refer to themselves and their interlocutors may also result from the influence of language teaching, or *transfer of training*, as Odlin (1989:18) calls it. This is because in classroom situations, learners rarely have a chance to participate in genuinely interactional talk in which they would feel genuine personal interest towards each other and each other's feelings and attitudes. This shows that it is usually very difficult to single out pragmatic transfer from the native language as the *sole* reason why learners behave the way they do; there are always other, concurrent and intervening factors.

To summarize, even though the native language certainly plays a role in how learners behave in a foreign language, it is far from easy to show indisputably that certain features in the non-native speakers' use of pragmatic force modifiers are due to pragmatic transfer, either positive or negative, from their native language. Assessment of transfer is especially difficult when the subjects are advanced speakers who interact freely in a conversational setting rather than in more controlled situations in which their L1 and L2 performance on certain clearly defined situations could be placed under comparison. This is why the suggestions concerning pragmatic transfer made here ought to be taken as tentative, to be more thoroughly studied in more controlled situations. It thus remains a task for future research to ascertain whether features such as learners favouring modifiers that are semantically similar in Finnish and English, and their greater tendency to avoid modifiers with a personal reference result from pragmatic transfer.

8.2.2.3 Non-transfer

In addition to investigating which characteristics in the Finnish speakers' native language and target language are similar and, therefore, probably transferred, it is also equally interesting to see where they differ, that is, which features seem to be more resistant to transfer.

It was argued above that the fact that the non-native speakers use pragmatic force modifiers can be regarded as positive sociopragmatic transfer. This does not mean, however, that they tend to transfer all the aspects of the modification of their messages to their L2. On the contrary, when the frequency of modifiers in the NSF conversations is considered, it can be argued that the non-native speakers' performance is characterised by non-transfer rather than transfer because there is an obvious contrast between the learners' greater tendency to directness in the NS-NNS conversations and the abundance of pragmatic force modifiers in the Finnish conversations. The non-native speakers' performance thus differs greatly from that of native speakers of both English and Finnish, which is in accordance with the findings in Trosborg's (1987) study, according to which learners' interlanguage use of modal markers differed from both native and target language norms.

The discrepancy between the Finnish speakers' way of using pragmatic force modifiers in Finnish and in English indicates that the non-native speakers' relative directness cannot be regarded as sociopragmatic transfer. An important conclusion to be drawn from this is that learners' interlanguage is not necessarily a good indicator of their native language performance, not even when the speakers are at a relatively advanced stage in their interlanguage development. Even though there may be evidence of transfer, this does not necessarily cut across all levels. Therefore, learners' interlanguage is rarely a direct mirror-image of their native language. From this it follows, as pointed out also in section 6.2.2.1, that we should be careful before drawing any far-reaching conclusions about non-native speakers' native language on the basis of their interlanguage performance, and even more so before drawing conclusions about the learners' native *culture* and cultural preferences. This is usually readily acknowledged in principle, yet quite commonly learners' foreign language performance gives rise to conclusions about their native language and culture. This relates to Sarangi's (1994a, 1994b) important point about intercultural communication; he maintains that conversational mismatches in intercultural settings and the way in which non-native speakers communicate tend to be too readily interpreted as resulting from underlying cultural differences, ignoring other intervening factors such as, for example, the speakers' familiarity with the situation, the role relationship between the interlocutors, or individual differences between participants. Blommaert (1991:20) similarly criticizes what he calls the "cultures collide" perspective on intercultural communication for the assumption that people will always behave like typical members of their cultures. On the basis of the speakers' use of pragmatic force modifiers in the present data, it seems that when the speakers use a foreign language, much of what is there in their native language behaviour does not get filtered through to their interlanguage even though the linguistic skills of the speakers are relatively advanced. It is easy to imagine that the discrepancy between the native language and interlanguage ways of behaving would be even greater with less proficient speakers.

Another area of pragmatic force modification where non-transfer rather than transfer seems to be in operation concerns the use of implicit modifiers. As has been shown in the chapters above, there is a rich system of implicit modification strategies in the Finnish conversations. Pragmatic particles and morphological clitic particles abound, and the speakers modify the impact of their messages with these devices in various subtle ways. Implicit modifiers are also frequently used by the native speakers of English, in both the NS-NNS and the NSE conversations. Yet, as has been shown earlier, it seems to be especially difficult for the non-native speakers to resort to implicit modification strategies. They thus seem unable to transfer the implicit ways of modification from their L1 to their L2.

To understand the reasons why implicit modification strategies seem to resist transfer, it is useful to recall to mind that implicit modifiers are characterised by their ambivalence, and their function is always dependent on the context in which they occur. They allow for more meaning negotiation than explicit

modifiers, and it is thus easier for speakers, if challenged, to deny the implications of their implicit choices. When these properties of implicit modifiers are compared with the more transparent nature of explicit modifiers, it is hardly surprising that it is easier for learners to transfer the latter. Another important reason why transfer of implicit modifiers does not occur is probably the fact that functional equivalents get expressed in different surface forms in Finnish and in English. For example, as has been shown above, implicit modifiers in Finnish are often morphological clitics such as -han or -s and the non-native speakers are advanced enough to know that they cannot transfer such structural properties of Finnish to their English.[3]

It is probably quite safe to argue on the basis of the discussion above that it is far easier for non-native speakers to transfer modifiers which share formal and semantic properties (typically explicit modifiers) than modifiers which are similar in function but not in form (typically implicit modifiers). This is because to transfer implicit modification strategies successfully, the learners would have to have at least two skills. Firstly, they would have to be aware of the pragmatic functions of implicit modifiers in their native language. As Preisler (1986:33) and Faerch and Kasper (1989:243) point out, however, native speakers are usually unaware of their own use of modifying devices, and the study by Watts (1989) suggests that this is particularly true of implicit modifiers.[4] Secondly, the learners would have to be able to recognize which means are *functionally* equivalent, or closely similar, in their native and target languages. This would mean realizing, for example, that a functional equivalent for the clitic -han/-hän in Finnish can be a tag question or a pragmatic particle such as *you know* in English. Speakers who acquire a foreign language in natural settings may be better in drawing such pragmatic parallels between their L1 and L2, but learners who learn their foreign language primarily in formal settings certainly need guidance and help.

All in all, it seems that when attention is focused on the pragmatic rather than the formal and structural properties of interlanguage, the role of non-transfer becomes as important as that of transfer in explaining non-native speaker performance. Aspects of language which carry interpersonal meanings tend to operate so automatically and without conscious awareness in speakers' native language that their transfer to the target language does not even become an issue unless speakers are first made aware of them.

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3 Cf. Odlin's (1989:82) point that transfer of bound grammatical morphemes is rare or nonexistent; the same probably applies to bound morphemes with pragmatic functions.

4 As Schmidt (1993:22) points out, it is probably true of pragmatic skills in general that fluent speakers produce them "with little conscious reflection and deliberation".

8.3 Towards pragmatic success: the importance of awareness-raising

The overall findings of the present study strongly suggest that an appropriate use of pragmatic force modifiers is an ability that does not develop automatically along with foreign language proficiency in general. The discussion above has, furthermore, shown that the intricate skills with which speakers use modifying devices in their native language are not readily transferred into their interlanguage. This sets an obvious challenge for language teaching because, as has been emphasized throughout the study, pragmatic appropriateness is also important for foreign language speakers. This raises the question of how best to teach pragmatic aspects of language. This question will be dealt with briefly in this section even though detailed considerations of language teaching are beyond the scope of the present study.

There are several reasons why the teaching of pragmatic aspects of language can be very problematic. Firstly, due to the context-dependent nature of pragmatic phenomena, it is not possible to come up with hard-and-fast rules of pragmatically appropriate language use that could be taught to learners in the same straightforward manner as, for example, grammatical rules. In other words, what is an appropriate use of pragmatic force modifiers one moment may not be so the next, as the discussion of the interplay between pragmatic force modifiers and contextual factors, such as the type of act performed or the types of roles that participants occupy, has indicated.

Secondly, as Littlewood (1983:184) argues, there is a possibility that providing foreign language learners with abundant information about pragmatic aspects of the foreign language may increase their communicative anxiety rather than facilitate communication. That is, learners may be afraid to open their mouths if they become aware of the multitude of pragmatic aspects that operate in language and affect the successful outcome of communication. It is therefore often useful to bear in mind Alexander's (1988:71) contention that "just because something may be analyzed and made potentially teachable does not make it automatically desirable to be taught", which suggests a need for a careful selection of the matters to be taught. This relates to the level of acquisition, for it is far from clear whether pragmatic matters ought to be there right from the start, or whether learners need certain 'basic skills' about rules of grammar and vocabulary before they can be made aware of pragmatic principles.

Thirdly, Thomas (1983:99) makes the important point that pragmatic preferences are closely connected to speakers' values and beliefs, in short, to how they see the world. This is why foreign language speakers may resist being taught patterns of behaviour that they feel are not in accordance with these values, seeing, in fact, such attempts as a threat to their personality. Blum-Kulka (1991:269), in a similar manner, points out that non-native speakers may wish to preserve their native language ways of behaving and diverge from native speaker norms because it can serve as an assertion of cultural identity. It is, however, crucial to make a distinction here between unintentional and intentional behaviour. It is perfectly

acceptable to diverge from native speaker norms as long as speakers can do so intentionally, and with full knowledge of potential consequences. It is important, however, to prevent non-native speakers from diverging from native speaker norms unintentionally and, especially, to prevent them from being "*unintentionally* rude or subservient*", as Thomas (1983:96 emphasis original) points out.

While recognizing the problems in teaching pragmatic matters, many writers have advocated the view that it would be important to make learners at least *aware* of them (e.g. Thomas 1983, Riley 1989, Tomlinson 1994).[5] Schmidt (1993) also argues for the need to make learners aware of pragmatic aspects of language for the reason that simple exposure to pragmatically appropriate input does not seem to be sufficient for developing learners' pragmatic skills. He gives a detailed account of how learners' noticing the forms used in foreign language interaction and appreciating their functional meanings seems to be a prerequisite for pragmatic success. Tomlinson (1994:122) is on the same lines in pointing out that even though pragmatic strategies are often realized by linguistic forms and structures which are familiar to the learners as such, they often remain unaware of the pragmatic functions of these forms and functions, unless they are directed towards noticing the interaction between the forms and the significant features of their context.

It is not easy to give an exhaustive account of what pragmatic awareness-raising means. Usually, however, the term is used to refer to activities whereby learners are directed towards noticing how language use and specific features of context interact in a meaningful way so that what is appropriate language use in one context may not be so in the next. Tomlinson (1994:123) describes pragmatic awareness as follows:

> Pragmatic awareness is initially vague, variable and at best only semi-conscious. It should eventually gain greater clarity, consistency and predictive power but the learners (like most native speakers) might never be able to articulate exactly what it is that they have become aware of.

It is important to note that quite often when awareness-raising is being discussed, it refers to making learners aware of the pragmatic aspects of the target language. It would seem, however, that it is also equally important to make learners aware of pragmatic aspects in their native language. This ties in with what was mentioned above (see p. 217) about native speakers' tendency to master the pragmatic aspects of their native language automatically and without much conscious effort. What Kasper (1979:275) points out about the use of modifying expressions applies certainly to other pragmatic aspects as well: when speakers are unaware of the significance of modifying devices even in their mother tongue, they are not in a position to look for their functional equivalents in a foreign language. In other words, the first step would be to make learners aware of how,

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5   Sharwood Smith (1981) uses the term 'consciousness-raising' when discussing the role of explicit knowledge in second language learning process, whereas Riley (1985) talks of 'sensitization'.

in their own language, many linguistic choices and formulations are often motivated by interpersonal concerns. As Bardovi-Harlig et al. (1990:10) argue, it is possible, through guided discussion, to make learners "aware of the pragmatic rules governing their native language and the ramifications of enacting such rules appropriately and inappropriately" (see also Riley 1985:165). This knowledge can, consequently, be made use of in target language instruction.

A focus on learners' own language is needed to raise their awareness of language as a social and cultural phenomenon in general. Therefore, a useful starting point for pragmatic awareness-raising would be to direct learners' attention towards comparing pragmatic aspects of their L1 and L2. In such comparisons, focus on pragmatic differences between L1 and L2 might be beneficial because awareness of differences is the first step in teaching learners to avoid pragmatic failure.[6] However, it would be equally important to highlight the underlying *similarities* in the ways social constraints operate behind speakers' linguistic choices in both their L1 and L2. Different cultures and languages can highlight different things as important, but it is certainly beneficial for learners to realize how what is social affects what is linguistic in both their own language and the foreign language. In other words, it is important to make learners aware of pragmatic intricacies that operate in their own native language and the underlying motivations for them because it can make it easier for them to appreciate the motivations behind pragmatic conventions in the target language. Such awareness-raising that starts from both L1 and L2 might, moreover, induce a more favourable attitude in learners towards the teaching of L2 pragmatic principles instead of their seeing it as a threat to their identity, or as an attempt to impose 'culturally superior' ways of interacting on them. Byram (1991), similarly, advocates the view that learners' mother tongue should be used more in foreign language teaching to increase their consciousness of the interplay between language and culture. Byram (1991:25) argues:

> Although foreign language teachers may resist the emphasis on the learners' own culture and selves, it should not be dismissed without further ado. For an intercultural competence and a deeper self-understanding are far from being mutually exclusive.

As far as Finnish speakers of English are concerned, awareness-raising that starts from learners' L1 seems to be called for, given the prevalence of a negative autostereotype among Finns (see Lehtonen 1993), who tend to see themselves, among other things, as inferior communicators. The present study has focused only on the use of pragmatic force modifiers, but as the findings have shown, there is nothing 'inferior' in the Finnish speakers' performance in the NSF data in terms of how they use pragmatic force modifiers when compared to the native speakers of English in the data. The speakers in the NSF conversations use pragmatic modifiers abundantly, showing concern for interpersonal matters. Moreover, they use both explicit and implicit modifiers, and are sensitive to changing role

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6   See, however, Aston (1988:36-37) who criticizes much of pragmatic awareness-raising for focusing on failure avoidance rather than achievement strategies.

relationships and to the influence of topics and types of acts performed, adapting their use of modifiers accordingly. The linguistic realizations of pragmatic force modifiers in Finnish often differ from those found in the English data. This difference, however, does not mean that speakers of Finnish were unable to express similar pragmatic functions as the speakers of English. On the contrary, it is crucial to bear in mind that very similar pragmatic effects can be arrived at by using different means.

It is easy to understand that such knowledge of the modification strategies of their native language might benefit the process whereby learners try to acquire foreign language forms of modification. This is because directing learners' attention to their own pragmatic skills in L1 has an important role in terms of securing a positive self-image. This is important for two, related, reasons. Firstly, it can help learners realize that even though interpersonal aspects such as appropriate use of modifiers are difficult to master in a foreign language, this difficulty is not due to a lack of resources in their L1 to express similar functions. Secondly, even though pragmatic problems are likely to be inevitable, awareness of L1 and L2 pragmatic phenomena may help learners realize that, even if communication at times fails, there need not be anything wrong with them or their coparticipants as persons. Rather, problems are often due to the fact that in different cultures and languages similar situations are managed differently. In other words, the purpose of pragmatic awareness-raising would be to bring into the open aspects of cross-cultural communication that might otherwise remain hidden from learners. In the words of Tyler and Davies (1990:385): "some kind of intervention making the sources of miscommunication explicit is necessary in order to allow demystification of the communicative missteps".

It can, obviously, sound like a tall order for foreign language teachers to be asked to pay attention to both their learners' linguistic and pragmatic abilities. The fact remains, however, as Schmidt (1993:36) points out, that

> [s]imple exposure to sociolinguistically appropriate input is unlikely to be sufficient for second language acquisition of pragmatic and discoursal knowledge because the linguistic realizations of pragmatic functions are sometimes opaque to language learners and because the relevant contextual factors to be noticed are likely to be defined differently or may be nonsalient for the learner.

It is, however, crucial to maintain a conceptual distinction between teaching and awareness-raising. As the discussion above has indicated, it is unlikely that pragmatic aspects of language can be taught in the normal sense of 'teaching'. This is because pragmatic appropriateness always depends on context, and as there are innumerable contexts for language use, it makes no sense for teachers to spend plenty of time and effort on trying to teach learners pragmatically appropriate, context-sensitive uses of language for all occasions. However, second language learners certainly need some guidance which will help them notice and become aware of pragmatically important aspects of both their native and target languages. It may often be sufficient for learners simply to identify pragmalinguistic forms because this kind of *noticing* may be sufficient to

trigger acquisition (Schmidt 1993:24).[7] Probably the most simple way to trigger learners' awareness is for the teacher to single out pragmatically important aspects of language from the teaching materials used.

How best to take account of pragmatic aspects of language use in teaching materials is a tricky question. It is also closely tied to the level of the language learners. It is obvious that the beginning learners need materials that familiarize them with the basic structures of the foreign language. This should not mean, however, that the language material provided for them ought to be completely devoid of aspects that have pragmatic significance, even though Holmes (1988a) points out that textbooks for more advanced levels also often pay insufficient attention to pragmatic intricacies. It would probably be best to incorporate pragmatic aspects of language into teaching materials at all levels because, as Thomas (1983:109-110) points out, it is hardly the case that pragmatic considerations should be regarded as "the icing on the ginger-bread – something best left until complete grammatical competence has been attained".

It may be the case that with their necessary focus on structural matters, language textbooks are best seen as guidelines for learners on how to achieve the structural mastery of foreign languages. It is, however, also possible to use more authentic materials in language teaching alongside textbooks to trigger learners' awareness of pragmatic aspects of language. To make learners aware of the existence and use of pragmatic force modifiers, for example, materials such as videos, films, or literature could well be used as material (see e.g. Stempleski and Tomlin 1990). It has to be borne in mind, however, that formal language teaching at schools typically means working within the constraints of time. Therefore, it is easier to voice the need to incorporate pragmatic considerations into language teaching than to do so in practice.

There may be cases when there is a wish to activate learners' pragmatic skills beyond the stage of noticing. Then it would probably be necessary to use task-based language teaching and provide learners with tasks which focus their attention on pragmatic forms, functions, and contextual constraints, as is suggested by Schmidt (1993:36). It is likely, however, that the ultimate way for foreign language speakers to learn pragmatically appropriate ways of speaking is to interact in authentic foreign-language situations. As Davis (1991:112) puts it, non-native speakers need experience and practice of real-life situations in order to reach the level of communicative competence whereby they are able to link proficiency to situational demands. Nevertheless, sensitizing them to pragmatic aspects of language in language teaching can certainly be of help in that process.

Finally, even though the focus in the present study is on non-native speakers and the necessity of raising their awareness of pragmatic aspects of language, it is also useful to consider the matter from the viewpoint of native speakers. It can be argued that it is also necessary to make at least those native speakers who come into contact with non-native speakers aware of pragmatic aspects of language. That is, it would be useful for all speakers participating in

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7   Tomlin and Villa (1994) prefer the term *attention*.

intercultural encounters to be aware that pragmatic difficulties are part of interaction between native and non-native speakers, and that problems and differences "need to be tolerated rather than stigmatized" (Alexander 1988:73). This means that in an ideal cross-cultural encounter, both non-native and native speakers should be aware, firstly, of pragmatic aspects in language in general, and secondly, that speakers of different native languages may have learnt to use completely different strategies for similar pragmatic ends. As Wolfson (1990:4) notes, "it is only when people are convinced that their own rules are somehow the only rules that we encounter the kind of negative stereotyping that can do serious, and perhaps irreparable damage".

8.4   Summary

The discussion above considered, firstly, the interplay between the non-native speakers' pragmatic proficiency and the use of pragmatic force modifiers. It was argued that even though modifiers only constitute one area of pragmatic proficiency, failure to use them appropriately can lead to more or less serious interpersonal consequences. The greatest problems for the non-native speakers in the present study have to do with their insufficient skills in using modifiers strategically. That is, the rather infrequent use of modifiers need not be a problem per se. Thus, even though the learners make use of pragmatic force modifiers in the NS-NNS data, they often fail to use them in situations where there is potential for face threat. The learners, also, adapt the use of modifiers to changing role relationships less skilfully than the native speakers of either English or Finnish.

There are several possible reasons for the differences that emerge between native and non-native performance. Formal language teaching and one-sided attention to formal aspects of language is one possible factor. Native language influence may also be at issue, even though the discussion above suggests that the non-native speakers' way of using modifiers differs considerably from the way native speakers of both English and Finnish use them. It was argued above, therefore, that the learners' performance is often characterised by non-transfer rather than transfer.

The difficulties that even advanced foreign language speakers encounter with the appropriate use of pragmatic force modifiers suggest that more attention ought to be paid to pragmatic aspects of language also in language teaching. It was pointed out above that it may be difficult to teach pragmatic phenomena because they resist any clear-cut categorizations and rule-formulations. Instead, raising language learners' metapragmatic awareness was advocated as a way in which they could be sensitized to pragmatic matters in both their native and target language. It is far from clear, however, as to which would be the best ways to go about achieving pragmatic awareness. There is, therefore, much room for further research which would attempt to clarify the notion of pragmatic awareness-raising, on the one hand, and the connection between awareness-raising and pragmatic success, on the other hand.

9 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

9.1 The findings: an overview

The present study has sought to investigate one aspect of pragmatic proficiency, i.e. the way speakers use pragmatic force modifiers in the context of an unstructured, informal conversation. More specifically, the present study has adopted an interlanguage perspective and focused on how non-native speakers master this area of language use in a conversational setting. The conversations studied involved Finnish speakers of English, native speakers of English, and native speakers of Finnish. The analysis sought to specify the extent to which speakers resort to pragmatic force modifiers during conversational interaction, the ways in which speakers in different sets of data use pragmatic force modifiers for interpersonal purposes, and to shed light on the interplay between speakers' roles and pragmatic force modifiers.

The study had both a theoretical and an empirical aim. It was argued in chapter three that in earlier research, there have been various, sometimes conflicting, accounts of modifying devices. Even though such diversity illustrates the complexity of the modification phenomenon, it can be difficult to draw together findings from studies with different approaches and theoretical underpinnings. One of the main difficulties in relating earlier approaches to each other is due to different suggestions as to the ways of subcategorizing pragmatic force modifiers. It was argued above, moreover, that the suggested divisions are often hierarchical, which means that they rarely succeed in capturing the essentially fuzzy-edged, multifunctional, and ambivalent nature of modifying devices. Therefore, an attempt was made in the present study to come up with a descriptive model of the modification phenomenon that would be able to account for these characteristics, and that would make it possible to integrate earlier views on modifiers in a meaningful way. Consequently, a model of pragmatic force modifiers was described in chapter three, its basic tenet being that rather than

opting for clear-cut hierarchical categories, pragmatic force modifiers are best seen in terms of continua — from more explicit to more implicit, from softening to strengthening — cutting across each other. In addition, the basic distinctions ought to be such that, in principle, choices at various verbal and non-verbal levels can be incorporated into the model if they share similar pragmatic modification functions even if, for practical purposes, attention is restricted to certain surface forms only.

In the present study, the focus has been on the verbal level. That is, the analysis has been narrowed down to realizations of pragmatic modification strategy at the verbal-phrasal and morphological levels. This has been done for practical reasons, as a broader approach to modifiers would have made the comparison between the three types of speakers (L1, IL and L2), involving two different languages, a daunting task for one study. It is, thus, important to bear in mind that the present study does not attempt to give an all-encompassing account of pragmatic modification strategies in interaction. However, as the chapters above have suggested, lexical-phrasal modification strategies are used in abundance throughout the conversations. This suggests that analysing them systematically can make a contribution towards advancing understanding of the modification phenomenon in general.

Earlier studies dealing with pragmatic force modifiers have often been based on data collected by elicitation techniques (e.g. House and Kasper 1981, Trosborg 1987, Beebe and Takahashi 1993). In the present study, an attempt was made to broaden the focus to conversational language in more general terms, and to investigate how speakers choose to manage conversations and use pragmatic force modifiers when they are not asked to perform specific acts. Hence, the empirical aim of the present study was to address the following broad research question: How do advanced Finnish speakers of English master the use of pragmatic force modifiers in a conversational setting, and how does their performance relate to that by native speakers of both English and Finnish?

The present findings are in line with much of the earlier research in suggesting that the non-native speakers' performance was, on the whole, characterised by a greater tendency towards directness than the performance by the native speakers (e.g. Kasper 1981, Koike 1989, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford 1990). However, the difference in the relative frequency of pragmatic force modifiers used was not very great between the non-native and native speakers as such. Rather, the impression of directness on the part of the non-native speakers was often due to the fact that they failed to use pragmatic force modifiers where they would have been a salient choice in interpersonal terms. For example, the learners' greater tendency to express even strong and critical opinions with no redressive use of modifiers, as well as the occurrence of unmitigated questions and disagreements in their speech, can easily lead to unfavourable assessments about their pragmatic success. This assumption was supported by the fact that the native speakers usually took great care to modify the impact of similar face-threatening activities.

As was pointed out in section 5.2 above, the non-native speakers also differed considerably from their native counterparts as far as the choice between

explicit and implicit pragmatic force modifiers was concerned. The non-native speakers mainly opted for explicit modifiers, whereas in the native speakers' performance implicit modifiers were very common. It was argued above that implicit modifiers are powerful means by which speakers can assume shared assumptions and create a sense of common interests in ways that are less threatening than doing so explicitly by, for example, resorting to emphasis and exaggeration (see Brown and Levinson 1987:116). Assuming shared assumptions implicitly leaves speakers more room to negotiate, because implicit modifiers make such subtle claims to reciprocity that they can, if challenged, be denied (cf. Östman 1986). Even though implicit modifiers were most frequent in the NSE and NSF conversations, where speakers were acquaintances, their frequent use by the native speakers in the NS-NNS data suggested that they can also be used to create a sense of involvement and common assumptions among strangers. Given the importance of implicit modifiers in positive politeness and involvement, especially in encounters that are framed as casual and relaxed, the non-native speakers' tendency to use them rather infrequently is probably one reason why they often sounded more detached and formal than their native counterparts in the NS-NNS conversations.

Previous studies by, for example, Thomas (1986), Vincent Marrelli (1988) and Tanaka (1993) suggest that speakers' roles during an interaction form an important contextual constraint on their language use. Earlier studies on second language interaction have, however, paid little attention to speakers' roles apart from those as native and non-native speakers. Therefore, an attempt was made in the present study to assess the interplay between speakers' roles and pragmatic force modifiers. Three role sets were selected for closer analysis: speakers' roles as native and non-native speakers, as acquaintances and strangers, and as experts and non-experts. These sets were chosen because they brought out differences and asymmetries between speakers, thus making it easier to assess whether roles influence their use of modifiers. The overall findings suggested that, in addition to the type of act performed, speakers' roles constituted a factor which affected their use of pragmatic force modifiers.

Roles, furthermore, were found to complicate the assessment of the interpersonal consequences of the use and non-use of modifiers, because different roles can mean different needs for speakers to use modifiers. For example, there is probably a connection between the findings that the conversations where speakers most clearly activated their roles as acquaintances (NSF conversations) were also the conversations in which implicit modifiers were favoured the most. It was, furthermore, suggested that the non-native speakers' relative directness ought to be assessed against the fact that, quite often, they occupied roles as 'experts', or 'relative knowers', in relation to their native counterparts (see Zuengler 1991). As this role invests the non-native speakers with more power it is unlikely that the small number of modifiers in their speech is always a problem. However, the findings also suggested that the non-native speakers were less skilful than the native speakers in adapting their use of modifiers to the changing and evolving role relationships. That is, while changes in the native speakers' use of

modifiers could often be tied to their changing roles, the non-native speakers' use of modifiers seemed more haphazard and less clearly tied to changing role relationships. The reason why this can be a problem is connected to the two-way relationship between speakers' roles and the use of modifiers: the use of modifiers not only reflects context but can also be seen as creating context. Therefore – especially if non-native speakers are fluent in other respects – native speakers can easily interpret their tendency to directness as an intentional challenge and as an attempt to assume an assertive role.[1]

As far as pragmatic transfer is concerned, earlier studies have demonstrated that learners' interlanguage performance bears resemblance to their native language behaviour (see Kasper 1992, and Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993b). In the present study, however, it turned out to be difficult to assess the extent to which the learners' native language is reflected in the way they use pragmatic force modifiers. It was especially difficult to find any clear evidence of the non-native speakers transferring incorrect forms from their native language. This is probably due to the fact that the non-native speakers in the present study were more advanced foreign language speakers than has usually been the case in earlier studies on NS-NNS interaction (e.g. Varonis and Gass 1988a, 1988b). The aspects of the non-native performance in which pragmatic transfer might have been an explaining factor concerned, firstly, the learners' tendency to favour those modifiers that had a close translation equivalents in Finnish and that were also used for modifying purposes in the NSF conversations (see also Nikula 1992). Secondly, it was argued that the learners' tendency to use fewer modifiers with personal reference might be due to native language influence, as the speakers in the NSF conversations often resorted to impersonal strategies (see also Hakulinen 1987). It is important to reiterate, however, that native language influence does not necessarily equal pragmatic failure. That is, the learners' tendency to favour different modification strategies does not inevitably mean that they fail to achieve interpersonal success with the strategies that they choose.

Comparisons between the non-native speakers' and the Finnish speakers' performance yielded the conclusion that the evidence of non-transfer was more apparent than that of transfer. That is, the Finnish speakers' performance was characterised by frequent use of pragmatic force modifiers in general, and by an abundance of implicit modifiers in particular, but neither of these tendencies could be found in the non-native speakers' use of modifiers. It was suggested, therefore, that great care should be taken before regarding even fluent foreign language speakers' performance as a mirror-image of their native language or of their cultural preferences. The discrepancy between native speakers' and non-native speakers' ways of using pragmatic force modifiers thus suggests that there is need for pragmatic awareness-raising in much the same ways as suggested, for example, by Bardovi-Harlig et al. (1990), Schmidt (1993), and Wildner-Bassett (1994).

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[1]   Cf. Tyler (1995) who, similarly, shows that non-native speakers may, unintentionally, use language in ways which their native counterparts interpret as a signal of the type of role that the speaker wants to assume.

It is an important overall finding of the present study that the picture that emerges of pragmatic force modifiers and their significance in interaction is very complex and multi-layered. Firstly, the analysis of the interpersonal functions of pragmatic force modifiers suggested that it is difficult to pin down neat form-function mappings. What this means, in essence, is that it is possible to interpret the same modifier differently in different contexts, or, one modifier can lend itself to various interpretations. This is why it was often difficult, for example, to draw any clear borderlines between the politeness and involvement functions of modifiers. Instead, modifiers were often capable of contributing something to both politeness and involvement. It has been argued in various connections above that the multifunctionality and fuzziness of pragmatic force modifiers should be seen as advantageous for the participants rather than as something that creates problems for communication. This is because multifunctionality and ambivalence leave room for speakers to negotiate their perspectives and points of view, which is an inherent characteristic of interaction, at least in informal, unstructured, and casual settings.

Another, related, issue concerns the complexity of contextual constraints on speakers' use of pragmatic force modifiers. The analysis above indicated that not only the type of speech act performed, but also the kind of social role speakers occupy at a given time can affect the way in which pragmatic force modifiers are used and interpreted. Moreover, the present study has not taken into account factors pertaining to speakers' personality or to psychological factors such as, for example, anxiety, which are also likely to intersect with the contextual features mentioned above. In addition, there may be contextual factors in operation which, as Kopytko (1995:486) suggests, are not easily identifiable due to their ambivalent character. Explanations about the functions of pragmatic force modifiers and about their interplay with contextual factors thus remain rather nebulous if researchers want to do justice to the complexity and fuzziness involved in the use and interpretation of pragmatic force modifiers.

9.2   Limitations of the present approach

It is important to be aware of the limitations that the choice of one approach over others entails. The first consideration worth taking up in this respect concerns the features in the present study which affect the extent to which the findings can be generalized. Firstly, the number of subjects in the conversations studied is rather small. This applies to all the groups, but the number of non-native speakers is especially small as there are only eight non-native speakers altogether. Even though attention was focused on recurrent features in the non-native speakers' performance as a whole rather than on each speakers' idiosyncratic choices, it is possible that the observed tendencies might have been different if there had been more subjects.

Another point worth making is that even though an attempt was made to keep the situations as natural as possible by not giving the participants any strict

advice on how to conduct the conversations, the fact still remains that the conversations took place in a rather artificial recording situation, in which the speakers were probably more conscious of the way they use language than they would have been in more authentic encounters. This is another reason why the findings cannot as such be generalized to other contexts; as Kasper and Dahl (1991:216) point out, different tasks constrain language use in different ways so that there is always a connection between research outcomes and the types of data collected.

For the reasons discussed above, it would be important to compare the findings of this study with findings based on data obtained from different sources such as, for example, more authentic conversations, and also from more structured interactions. It has to be borne in mind, however, that no matter how controlled the conversations – and this was especially evident at the third stage of the analysis in this study – speakers always have the choice of activating different roles which constrain language use in different ways, along with all the other contextual constraints. Therefore, it is unlikely that generalizations based on *any* data would as such be applicable to other contexts. Instead, more detailed information is needed about the ways in which contextual factors and the use of modifiers interact.

The decision to concentrate on pragmatic force modifiers that are realized at the verbal level is a limitation in that, as was argued in chapter three, a fully-fledged pragmatic approach would have meant paying attention to choices at other levels as well. As, for example, Arndt and Janney (1987) indicate, speakers can use also prosodic and kinesic choices to modify the impact of their messages. Even though speakers' prosodic choices were occasionally taken into account in connection with the use of verbal pragmatic force modifiers in the present study, it would be worthwhile to carry out a more comprehensive investigation of prosodic and kinesic modification strategies and their interplay with pragmatic force modifiers at the verbal level. This would be especially interesting in terms of distinguishing pragmatic force modifiers along explicit-implicit lines. Both prosodic and kinesic choices would tend more towards the implicit end of the continuum in that it is difficult to pin down any specific function for them; they only become meaningful in relation to the context in which they are used. Moreover, the implied meanings can often be denied, which is more difficult with more explicit modification strategies. Implicitness is also at issue in Cruttenden's (1986:58) contention that prosodic meanings tend to be "intangible and nebulous"; the same is likely to apply to kinesic choices as well. The findings of the present study suggested that the non-native speakers in the NS-NNS conversations were often unable to make strategic use of implicit modifiers at the verbal level, realized mainly as pragmatic particles. It would, therefore, be interesting to find out if the same applies to prosodic and kinesic choices as well. The finding that the non-native speakers in the present study tended to resort to rather level intonation contours with, for example, tag-questions (see p. 131) suggests that they might also encounter problems at the prosodic level. This, however, is an assumption that has to be addressed by further research.

Whenever pragmatic research on conversational data is conducted, the analyst is faced with the problem of not having access to the participants' own assessments and judgements which, eventually, determine whether or not a speaker's performance is considered pragmatically appropriate. The way in which researchers have tried to overcome this problem is to record playback interviews where the original participants have a chance to go over the data and offer their comments on them. The purpose of the playback sessions is to gather information about the participants' own views of the interaction and about the moments that they considered problematic in the encounter (e.g. Kärkkäinen and Raudaskoski 1988, Tyler 1995). If playback recordings had been made immediately after the recording of conversations for this study took place, the speakers would probably have been able to give a general account of how they felt during the interaction and the reasons for some of their conversational choices. However, the problem remains that speakers do not, on the whole, pay much conscious attention to their linguistic choices in general, and they often remain unaware of the pragmatic implications of those choices in particular. As Blum-Kulka and Sheffer (1993:219) put it, "self-awareness seems to stop short at the borderline between linguistics and pragmatics". This is also supported by Preisler (1986:33), who maintains that speakers are usually unaware of the ways in which they use modifying expressions. Faerch and Kasper (1989:243) also extend the notion of unawareness to hearers' interpretations, maintaining that as long as modifying elements are used appropriately, listeners do not pay attention to them. It is only when they are used inappropriately that they rise to the level of awareness, and it is possible, even then, that speakers do not notice the actual source of interactional trouble. Instead, speakers may just have a feeling of "something mysteriously going wrong", as Byrnes (1986:192) puts it. Therefore, it is questionable how much playback interviews would have revealed about speakers' perceptions concerning their own and their coparticipants' use of pragmatic force modifiers. Obviously, participants' attention could be directed to noticing their use of pragmatic force modifiers during playback sessions by questions asked by the analyst. It is probable, however, that such prompting would reveal little of the participants' reactions during the encounter itself.

The question of the ways in which non-native speakers' pragmatic skills develop over time also deserves attention in interlanguage pragmatics. This question could not be addressed in the present study, however, due to the fact that the data was cross-sectional rather than longitudinal. That is, it is not possible to draw any conclusions about pragmatic development in the non-native speakers' interlanguage on the basis of the present data because they only reflect the learners' performance at one point in time (cf. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford 1993). The reason why all the non-native speakers were chosen from among advanced speakers of English had mainly to do with the assumption that non-native speakers can only start taking pragmatic aspects of communication into account when they have the basic linguistic means at their disposal for doing so (see also Wolfson 1989b:148-149). That is, involving less proficient speakers in NS-NNS conversations would probably mean that the learners would be so fully occupied

231

with the formulation of their messages that there would be little time for them, within the constraints of a real-time conversation, to pay attention to pragmatic consequences of their messages. Nevertheless, how non-native speakers' pragmatic skills develop is, in itself, a very interesting question that is worthy of study. For such purposes, however, the data would either have to contain material by non-native speakers who are at different stages in their linguistic development, or the material would have to be collected from the same participants at various points in their language learning.

The interlanguage perspective in the present study has had implications for the methodology adopted in that non-native speakers' performance has been compared with native speakers of both their L1 and L2 in order to find similarities and differences between them. In other words, the comparative perspective means that the different groups have, in essence, been treated separately. Moreover, when studying the NS-NNS conversations the main focus has been on how the native and the non-native speakers use pragmatic force modifiers, even though attention to contextual constraints, especially to speakers' roles, has also highlighted the need to take into account the ways in which speakers adapt their performance to that of others. Recent studies on second language interaction have stressed the need to approach NS-NNS encounters as situations that are jointly constructed and interactively negotiated by both the native and non-native speakers (e.g. Shea 1993, Piirainen-Marsh 1995). Such an approach means that instead of comparing the performance of native and non-native speakers, attention is focused on their mutual successes and failures in constructing conversations and negotiating shared meanings. It is, therefore, obvious that the findings of the present study need to be complemented by studies which focus on the role of pragmatic force modifiers in joint negotiation processes. It has often been suggested in the course of this study that pragmatic force modifiers are strategically important in leaving room for negotiation and reformulation. Further research is needed, however, to investigate the ways in which and the extent to which speakers jointly exploit this interpersonal potential.

9.3   Implications for further research

In the course of discussing the limitations of the present study above, some directions for further research were already suggested. These include, for example, the need to extend the analysis of pragmatic force modifiers beyond the verbal level, and the need to carry out analyses on different types of data in order to unravel the context-dependency of pragmatic force modifiers. Further points of departure for future research will be suggested in this section, which is less closely concerned with the limitations of the present approach.

In the present study, the distinction between explicit and implicit pragmatic force modifiers has been fruitful and pragmatically interesting as it brought out clear differences in the way in which non-native and native speakers resort to these two types of modifiers. In terms of further research in this area, the

same applies as stated above: it would be worthwhile to study language in different types of contexts in order to investigate the relative importance of explicit and implicit strategies in each type of data. For example, the present study shows the importance of implicit modification strategies in casual conversations between relative equals, but the situation might be different in more formal contexts. Östman (1995:4) argues that "the object of research in pragmatics is to explicate implicitness". Therefore, the distinction between the explicit and the implicit in language is certainly worth investigating in relation to other pragmatic aspects of language besides the use of modifying expressions. If implicitness turns out to be as important in other areas of language use, it will be worthwhile to investigate to what extent non-native speakers run into problems in expressing implicit meanings. As pointed out above, the findings of the present study suggest that mastering the use of implicit modifiers seems particularly difficult for non-native speakers. If the same also applies in other areas of language use it sets an obvious challenge for foreign language teaching, given the interpersonal and strategic importance of implicitness.

Teaching pragmatic force modifiers, as teaching pragmatic aspects of language in general, is certainly an area where there is much room for future research. Relatively little is known, as yet, about how learners acquire pragmatic knowledge, and what would be the best ways in which learners' pragmatic proficiency could be enhanced. It is not clear, either, whether pragmatic aspects ought to be taken into consideration right from the start, or whether it is more fruitful at later stages of learning when learners already have the basic linguistic skills at their disposal. The notion of awareness-raising was advocated in the chapter above as a useful way in which to increase learners' pragmatic awareness. It remains a task for future research, however, to investigate the relative effectiveness of awareness-raising when it focuses on the target language as opposed to awareness-raising that is based on learners' L1 as well as on their L2 and where learners are also made aware of the skill with which they are able to regulate their own language according to pragmatic constraints.

Chapter seven focused on the interplay between speakers' roles and the use of pragmatic force modifiers. Only three role-sets were chosen for a more detailed analysis, but it was pointed out that there are various other roles which speakers can activate and that different situations involve different types of roles. Therefore, roles form an aspect of interaction that merits much more attention in pragmatic research in the future. This applies to speakers' roles in general, and to non-native speakers in particular. It was argued in chapter seven above that when learners are at an advanced level, other roles easily supersede that of the non-native speaker and become more important for the success of the interaction. There is, however, no knowledge about whether it is possible to determine the cut-off point, in terms of non-native speakers' linguistic proficiency, beyond which the non-native speaker role ceases to be of central importance. Studies on NS-NNS interaction that would focus on how speakers' roles as native and non-native speakers interact with other roles that become activated are thus called for.

The interlanguage approach in the present study has involved comparisons of pragmatic force modifiers in two different languages. Even though there were many similarities between the languages, the speakers of English and Finnish were also found to employ different means of modification. The most obvious difference was that, due to the different structural features of their language, the speakers of Finnish made abundant use of morphological clitic particles to modify the impact of their messages whereas the speakers of English typically opted for lexical modifiers. However, there is much room for further research in the field of contrastive pragmatics in terms of specifying which features can be considered pragmatically equivalent across languages. As Janicki (1990:53) points out, this would also involve determining what are comparable contexts across languages. Moreover, it is, as yet, far from clear whether it is possible to consider features across languages as fully equivalent pragmatically. As different cultural assumptions and attitudes come into play, it may be the case that it is only possible to talk about pragmatic similarity rather than equivalence across languages. There is, thus, need for research that would consider the assumptions underlying contrastive pragmatic research and the tenability of those assumptions.

Finally, it is important to bear in mind that when much theoretical attention is focused on a particular aspect of communication (as is the case in the present study with pragmatic force modifiers), its role easily appears more central than is the case in actual encounters where, obviously, a plethora of phenomena that can have an impact on how speakers use language and on how they interpret each other's messages are in operation simultaneously. It would, therefore, be important for researchers studying different pragmatic aspects of communication to combine their efforts so that a picture of interaction could be achieved that would highlight the complexity of the factors involved. It is thus important to emphasize that in addition to using pragmatic force modifiers, speakers make choices at all levels of language use — from the smallest morphological minituae to conversational organization — and that choices at all levels can have pragmatic significance.

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Appendix 1

LIST OF CONVERSATIONS

NS-NNS 1
Participants:
N1 male native speaker of English
N2 male native speaker of English
F1 female Finnish speaker of English
F2 female Finnish speaker of English
Main topics:
travelling abroad
Finnish/British culture
studying languages

NS-NNS 2
Participants:
N1 male native speaker of English
N2 female native speaker of English
F1 female Finnish speaker of English
F2 male Finnish speaker of English
Main topics:
university studies in Finland and Britain
language teaching at school
living on campus

NS-NNS 3
Participants:
N1 male native speaker of English
N2 female native speaker of English
F1 female Finnish speaker of English
F2 male Finnish speaker of English
Main topics:
university studies in Finland and Britain
reasons for studying at that particular university

NS-NNS 4
Participants:
N1 male native speaker of English
N2 female native speaker of English
F1 female Finnish speaker of English
F2 female Finnish speaker of English
Main topics:
language studying in Finland
sightseeing in the local area
films and plays

NSE 1
Participants:
All native speakers of English
S1 male
S2 female
S3 male
Main topics:
pros and cons of poll tax
reasons for not paying the tax/
anecdotes of own experiences

NSE 2
Participants:
All native speakers of English
S1 male
S2 female
S3 male
S4 female
Main topics:
pros and cons of poll tax
students and taxation
British political system

NSE 3
Participants:
All native speakers of English
S1 female
S2 female
S3 female
Main topics:
pros and cons of poll tax
rents
students' free prescriptions

NSE 4
Participants:
All native speakers of English
S1 female
S2 female
S3 female
Main topics:
students' attitudes to poll tax
speakers' family backgrounds
national health service

NSF 1
Participants:
All native speakers of Finnish
S1 female
S2 female
S3 female
Main topics:
use of English in Finland
studying languages
refugees in Finland

NSF 2
Participants:
All native speakers of Finnish
S1 male
S2 female
S3 female
Main topics:
speaking/studying English
animal testing
male/female equality

NSF 3
Participants:
All native speakers of Finnish
S1 female
S2 female
S3 female
S4 female
Main topics:
studying foreign languages
Finnish grammar
foreigners' skills in Finnish

NSF 4
Participants:
All native speakers of Finnish
S1 female
S2 male
S3 male
Main topics:
using/studying foreign languages
English in advertising
song lyrics

Appendix 2

Transcription conventions

[nnn] [[nn]]	overlapping speech For example: S2 no that's [never] happened to [[me]] S3 [very odd] [[no]]
,	a sort pause, indicating intonation unit boundaries For example: N1 I don't think this country is, well anyway it's politics, but you know I think that er,
-	truncated speech For example: N2 wha- what d'you mean they don't unders- they don't understand English
VERY	extra prominence by stress or intensity For example: N1 it was EXCELLENT
nn= =nn	turn lateched onto the previous one For example: N2 I certainly intend to= N1 =I'd quite like to learn RUSSIAN
(nnn)	unclear word(s)
(-) (--) (---)	unintelligible word/words/longer stretches of speech
/	rising intonation For example: N1 how about yourselves/
\	falling intonation For example: F2 I don't know\
\/	falling-rising intonation For example: N2 alright\/
((pause))	transcriber's comments e.g. on laughter or long pauses

YHTEENVETO

Pragmaattista sävyä modifioivat ilmaukset kielenoppijoiden puheessa

Tausta ja tavoitteet

Pragmatiikka on kielentutkimuksen alue, joka on kiinnostunut kielen funktioista ja kielen ja kontekstin yhteyksistä. Pragmaattinen kielitaito puolestaan tarkoittaa sitä, että puhuja osaa kielen muodollisen hallinnan ohella käyttää kieltä niin, että se on sopivaa suhteessa puhekumppaneihin ja tilanteeseen. Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan yhtä pragmaattisen kielitaidon osa-aluetta, ns. modifioivien ilmausten käyttöä. Modifioivia ilmauksia ovat esim. *I suppose, sort of, very* tai *you know*. Puhujien on usein todettu käyttävän tällaisia ilmauksia joko lieventämään tai vahventamaan viestiensä pragmaattista sävyä. Aikaisempi tutkimus on osoittanut, että modifioivilla ilmauksilla on usein tärkeä interpersonaalinen merkitys etenkin kielellisen kohteliaisuuden ja kasvojen suojelemisen kannalta. On myös huomattu, että pragmaattisen tason hallinta tuottaa helposti ongelmia vierasta kieltä puhuville. Usein on kuitenkin keskitytty kuvaamaan vain tiettyjä kasvoja uhkaavia kielellisiä toimintoja ja modifioivien ilmausten roolia niissä (esim. pyynnöt, anteeksipyynnöt). Vaikka modifioivilla ilmauksilla on todettu olevan keskeinen sija kasvoihin kohdistuvan uhan lievittämisessä tällaisten toimintojen yhteydessä, niiden funktioita keskusteluissa yleisemmin ei ole kattavasti tutkittu. Tämä tutkimus käsitteleekin modifioivien ilmausten käyttöä juuri keskustelutilanteissa. Tutkimuksessa keskitytään siihen, miten vieraskieliset puhujat — sujuvasti englantia puhuvat suomalaiset — hallitsevat tämän kielenkäytön osa-alueen. Heidän puhettaan verrataan syntyperäisiin englannin kielen puhujiin yhtäältä ja syntyperäisiin suomen kielen puhujiin toisaalta. Tutkimusasetelma on siis tyypillinen interlingvan tutkimukselle, koska oppijoiden kieltä arvioidaan suhteessa sekä heidän kohdekieleensä että äidinkieleensä.

254

Tutkimusaineisto

Tutkimusaineisto koostuu strukturoimattomista ryhmäkeskusteluista, joita on kolmentyyppisiä. Pääaineiston muodostavat suomalaisten ja syntyperäisten englannin puhujien väliset keskustelut (4 kpl). Tämän lisäksi vertailumateriaalina on englantia äidinkielenään puhuvien välisiä keskusteluja (4 kpl) ja suomalaisten puhujien keskusteluja (4 kpl). Keskusteluissa on 3-5 osallistujaa; kaikki osallistujat ovat suunnilleen samanikäisiä yliopisto-opiskelijoita, sekä miehiä että naisia. Osallistujat tiesivät nauhoituksesta, mutta eivät keskustelumateriaalin tarkemmasta käyttötarkoituksesta. Keskustelut kestivät keskimäärin 30 minuuttia.

Vaikka vertailtavuuden varmistamiseksi keskustelut olivat järjestettyjä, ne etenivät kuitenkin varsin joustavasti. Jokaiselle ryhmälle annettiin jokin aihe keskustelun käynnistämiseksi, mutta mahdollisimman luontevien keskustelujen saamiseksi osallistujille kerrotiin, että he voivat puhua mistä aiheesta haluavat ja siirtyä vapaasti aiheesta toiseen. Aineisto edustaa varsin onnistuneella tavalla tyypillistä keskustelukäyttäytymistä, koska puhujat toimivat omana itsenään ja omilla ehdoillaan sen sijaan, että heitä olisi pyydetty käyttämään kieltä jollakin tarkasti määritellyllä tavalla. Vaikka tilanteista ei voida tehdä yleistyksiä kielenkäyttöön yleensä, ne tarjovat mahdollisuuden tarkastella keskustelukielelle tyypillisiä piirteitä ja modifioivien ilmausten funktioita keskusteluissa.

Modifioivat ilmaukset

On selvää, että puhujat voivat säädellä viestiensä pragmaattista sävyä monin eri keinoin, aina eleistä ja ilmeistä äänenpainoihin. Pragmaattisessa tutkimuksessa olisi siis periaatteessa otettava samanaikaisesti huomioon kaikki puhujien käyttämät modifiointistrategiat. Koska tämä on kuitenkin yhden työn puitteissa mahdotonta, tässä tutkimuksessa keskitytään kielelliseen tasoon, tarkasti ottaen leksikaalisiin modifioiviin ilmauksiin ja fraaseihin. Niiden tutkiminen ja niiden pragmaattisen merkityksen ymmärtäminen on lähtökohta, josta näkökulmaa voidaan tarvittaessa laajentaa myös muille kielellisille ja ei-kielellisille tasoille.

Aikaisemmassa tutkimuksessa modifioivia ilmauksia on usein luokiteltu ja jaoteltu melko kaavamaisesti joko viestin pragmaattista sävyä pehmentäviin tai vahventaviin ilmauksiin. Kategorioiden tiukka erillään pito on kuitenkin osoittautunut hankalaksi johtuen siitä, että modifioivat ilmaukset voivat olla eri funktiossa tilanteesta riippuen. Luokittelu on näin ollen mahdollista vasta, kun jokaista ilmausta on tarkasteltu sen käyttökontekstissa. Tämän lisäksi on olemassa joukko ilmauksia, joiden funktio jää usein kontekstissakin epämääräiseksi ja tulkinnanvaraiseksion ja joita on siksi vaikea luokitella kategorisesti. Tällaisia ovat esimerkiksi suomen morfologiset liitepartikkeli ja englannin ja suomen pragmaattiset partikkelit.

Koska hierarkiset kuvausmallit tekevät harvoin oikeutta modifioivien ilmausten tulkinnanvaraisuudelle ja joustavuudelle, tässä tutkimuksessa käytetään niiden kuvaamiseen hierarkisen jaottelun sijaan jatkumoa muistuttavaa kuvausmallia. Jatkumo perustuu käsitykselle, että kielessä on yhtäältä ainesta,

jonka merkitys on selvää ja toisaalta ainesta, joka on tulkinnanvaraista ja häilyvämpää. Tätä voidaan kutsua kielen eksplisiittisyydeksi ja implisiittisyydeksi. Samoin modifioivia ilmauksia voidaan sijoitella jatkumolle sen mukaan, ovatko ne eksplisiittisiä vai implisiittisiä. Eksplisiittiset ilmaukset ovat sellaisia, joiden pragmaattinen funktio on suhteellisen selvä myös kontekstin ulkopuolella, tai ainakin selviää kontekstin avulla (esim. *I suppose, a bit*; *luultavasti, vähän*). Implisiittiset modifioivat ilmaukset taas tyypillisesti jäävät tulkinnanvaraisiksi jopa kontekstissa. Niilläkin kuitenkin on kiistaton vaikutus viestien pragmaattiseen sävyyn, mutta niiden funktioita on vaikeampi kuvata yksiselitteisesti. Edellä mainitut pragmaattiset partikkelit ja liitepartikkelit ovat tyypillisiä implisiittisiä modifiointikeinoja.

Silloin kun modifioivia ilmauksia kuvataan jatkumona, on vaikea tehdä mitään selvärajaista eroa eksplisiittisten ja implisiittisten ilmausten välillä ja luokitella eri puhujia sen mukaan. On kuitenkin mahdollista ajatella jatkumoa eräänlaisena 'keinulautana', joka mahdollisesti painottuu joko eksplisiittiseen tai implisiittiseen suuntaan eri tilanteissa ja eri puhujien kohdalla. Tässä tutkimuksessa kiinnostavaa on erityisesti se, eroavatko syntyperäiset ja vieraskieliset puhujat toisistaan sen suhteen, kumpaan suuntaan heidän modifioivien ilmausten käyttönsä painottuu.

Analyysimenetelmät

Koska modifioivien ilmausten funktioiden ymmärtäminen edellyttää, että niitä tarkastellaan niiden esiintymisympäristössä, tutkimuksessa käytetyt menetelmät ovat kvalitatiivis-deskriptiivisiä. Tulkinnat pragmaattisten ilmausten funktioista perustuvat siis aina siihen, että niitä tarkastellaan osana keskustelukontekstia, suhteessa puhujiin, heidän väliseen suhteeseensa ja tilanteeseen yleensä. Yksinkertaisia modifioivien ilmausten määrän laskelmiakin tehdään, mutta niiden tarkoitus on lähinnä olla taustana kvalitatiiviselle analyysille.

Aineiston analyysin taustalla on kolmivaiheinen analyysikehikko, jonka tasot tulisi nähdä samanaikaisina tai sisäkkäisinä mieluummin kuin erillisinä. Näitä tasoja voidaan kuvata niin, että samalla kun edetään puhtaasti kielelliseltä tarkastelutasolta kohti sosiaalisempaa tasoa myös käsitys kontekstista laajenee. Ensimmäisessä vaiheessa modifioivat ilmaukset eritellään aineistosta. Ympäröivä kielellinen konteksti on tässä prosessissa tärkeä, mutta sellaisiin pragmaattisesti tärkeisiin kysymyksiin kuin esimerkiksi modifioivien ilmausten käytön syihin ei tässä vaiheessa vielä pyritä vastaamaan. Paitsi että modifioivien ilmausten määrää vertaillaan eri ryhmien kesken, huomiota kiinnitetään myös siihen, missä määrin puhujat eri ryhmissä käyttävät eksplisiittisiä ja implisiittisiä ilmauksia.

Toisessa vaiheessa näkökulma on puhtaammin pragmaattinen, sillä huomio kohdistuu niihin interpersonaalisiin funktioihin mihin puhujat modifioivia ilmauksia käyttävät (esim. kohteliaisuus, kasvojen suojelu). Kiinnostavaa on myös tarkastella, käyttävätkö puhujat eksplisiittisiä ja implisiittisiä ilmauksia erilaisiin tarkoituksiin. Tässä vaiheessa on myös tärkeää huomioida, missä määrin sellaiset kontekstin seikat kuin puheaktityyppi tai keskustelun kulloinenkin vaihe

vaikuttavat puhujien tapaan käyttää modifioivia ilmauksia sekä siihen, minkä tyyppisiä ilmauksia (eksplisiittisiä vai implisiittisiä) puhujat keskustelujen kuluessa valitsevat.

Analyysikehikon kolmannella tasolla kontekstin käsite laajeenee sosiaaliseen suuntaan, koska tarkastelun kohteeksi otetaan se, miten puhujien tilanteessa omaksuvat roolit vaikuttavat heidän tapaansa käyttää modifioivia ilmauksia. Keskustelijoiden keskinäinen suhde ja sen vaikutus kielenkäyttöön nousee siis keskeiselle sijalle. Tarkempaan analyysiin valitaan seuraavat rooliparit: kielenoppija/syntyperäinen puhuja, asiantuntija/ei-asiantuntija, ja tuttava/vieras. Kahdessa ensimmäisessä parissa puhujien välinen suhde on epäsymmetrinen, jolloin kiinnostavaksi kysymykseksi nousee, vaikuttaako epäsymmetria siihen, miten puhujat käyttävät modifioivia ilmauksia. Aineiston keskusteluissa on puolestaan eroja sen suhteen, ovatko puhujat toisilleen vieraita vai entuudestaan tuttuja, joten myös tämän kontekstin tekijän huomioiminen on tärkeää.

Tulokset

Tulokset tukevat aikaisempia pragmaattisia tutkimuksia siinä, että ne osoittavat modifioivilla ilmauksilla olevan tärkeän tehtävän kielenkäytössä. Lisäksi ilmausten runsaus kautta koko aineiston osoittaa, että niillä on merkitystä myös rennoissa keskustelutilanteissa. Erityisesti syntyperäiset puhujat käyttivät modifioivia ilmauksia hyvin runsaasti. Niitä esiintyi myös kielenoppijoiden puheessa, joskin he käyttivät modifioiva ilmauksia selvästi harvemmin kuin kummatkaan äidinkieliset puhujat. Tulokset osoittivat myös, että oppijat ja syntyperäistet puhujat suosivat erityyppisiä ilmauksia. Syntyperäiset puhujat, sekä suomen- että englanninkieliset, käyttivät hyvin runsaasti implisiittisiä modifiointikeinoja, kun taas vieraskieliset käyttivät pääasiassa eksplisiittisempiä ilmaisuja. Todennäköisesti oppijoiden on vaikea hahmottaa implisiittisten ilmausten merkitystä vuorovaikutuksessa.

Kaikki keskustelijat käyttivät modifioivia ilmauksia strategisesti, interpersonaalisiin funktioihin. Niitä käytettiin paljon esimerkiksi mielipiteenilmaisujen yhteydessä, jolloin ne tavallisesti voitiin tulkita puhujan pyrkimykseksi lieventää mielipiteensä kärkevyyttä tai kategorisuutta. Myös kysymysten hyökkäävyyttä lievennettiin usein modifioivien ilmausten avulla. Pragmaattista sävyä korostavia ilmauksia esiintyi selvästi vähemmän kuin lieventäviä, mikä tukee ajatusta siitä, että kielellinen kohteliaisuus on usein yhteydessä nimenomaan viestien sävyn pehmentämiseen ja kasvoihin kohdistuvan uhkan minimoimiseen.

Myös vieraskieliset puhujat käyttivät modifioivia ilmauksia interpersonaalisiin tarkoituksiin, mutta heidän tapaansa käyttää niitä leimasi sattumanvaraisuus. Siinä missä syntyperäiset puhujat käyttivät modifioivia ilmauksia hyvin systemaattisesti varsinkin kasvoja uhkaavissa tilanteissa, vieraskielisten puhujien modifioivien ilmausten käyttö ei ollut yhtä selvästi interpersonaalisesti motivoitua. Tästä oli osoituksena esimerkiksi se, että he saattoivat olla hyvin suoria tilanteissa, joissa kasvouhka oli ilmeinen (esim.

kriittiset kommentit, erimielisyydet). Oppijoiden pragmaattisen tason ongelmat eivät siis johtuneet niinkään modifioivien ilmausten vähäisestä määrästä kuin heidän puutteellisesta kyvystään käyttää niitä strategisesti kielellisen kohteliaisuuden ja kasvojen suojelun keinoina.

Modifioivilla ilmauksilla oli myös muita interpersonaalisia funktioita kasvoihin kohdistuvan uhkan lieventämisen ohella. Syntyperäiset puhujat – sekä suomen- että englanninkieliset – käyttivät niitä hyvin usein myös tavalla, joka oli tulkittavissa innostuksen, kiinnostuksen tai yhteenkuuluvuuden osoitukseksi (ns. 'involvement'-funktio). Erityisesti implisiittisiä ilmauksia käytettiin hyvin hienovaraisina keinoina osoittaa kiinnostusta tai puhujien välistä yhteenkuuluvuutta. Vieraskieliset puhujat eivät hallinneet tällaista modifioivien ilmausten käyttöä, minkä vuoksi he kuulostivat usein etäisemmiltä ja muodollisemmilta kuin syntyperäiset puhujat.

Roolien käsite osoittautui tutkimuksessa hyödylliseksi, koska sen avulla voitiin osaltaan selittää modifioivien ilmausten käytössä esiintyvää vaihtelua. Erityisen kiinnostavaa oli tarkastella syntyperäisyyttä ja vieraskielisyyttä rooleina, jotka tuovat erilaisia oikeuksia ja velvollisuuksia kielenkäytön suhteen jopa niin, että oppijan, vieraskielisen roolissaan, ei ehkä odotetakaan käyttävän kieltä samalla tavoin kuin syntyperäinen puhuja. Modifioivien ilmausten analysointi suhteessa rooleihin osoitti ensinnäkin, että oppijoiden suosimat suorat strategiat eivät automaattisesti merkitse pragmaattista virhettä. Silloin kun heillä on asiantuntijan rooli, suoruus on usein täysin odotuksenmukaista. Samoin heidän roolinsa vieraskielisinä puhujina saattaa antaa heille enemmän liikkumavaraa ja vapauksia modifioivien ilmausten käytön suhteen kuin mitä syntyperäisillä puhujilla olisi vastaavissa tilanteissa. Toisaalta analyysi toi myös selvästi esille sen, että oppijat eivät olleet yhtä taitavia kuin äidinkieliset puhujat mukauttamaan modifioivien ilmausten käyttöä kulloistenkin roolien mukaisesti, vaan suosivat suhteellisen suoria strategioita läpi keskustelujen. Vaikka suoruus on asiantuntijaroolin mukaista, se ei ole kaikkiin rooleihin sopivaa. Onkin tärkeää huomata, että vieraskielisten suoruus saatetaan kokea tarkoitukselliseksi, jopa pyrkimykseksi omaksua hyökkäävä rooli. Kontekstin, tässä tapauksessa roolien, ja modifioivien ilmausten käytön suhde on siis aina kaksisuuntainen: yhtäältä puhujat mukauttavat kielenkäyttöään roolien mukaisesti, mutta toisaalta myös heidän tapansa käyttää modifioivia ilmauksia voidaan tulkita osoitukseksi omaksutusta roolista. Kolmas tarkasteltavana oleva roolipari, tutut ja vieraat, osoittautui ongelmalliseksi. Tuttuuden ja vierauden vaikutusta modifioivien ilmausten käyttöön oli vaikea eritellä, joskaan ei luultavasti ole sattumaa, että implisiittisiä keinoja esiintyi kaikkein eniten suomenkielisissä keskusteluissa, joissa toisilleen tutut puhujat selvimmin viittasivat yhteiseen taustaansa ja yhteisiin kokemuksiinsa.

Tulosten arviointia

Tulokset siis osoittavat, että oppijat käyttävät modifioivia ilmauksia hyvin eri tavoin kuin syntyperäiset puhujat. On kuitenkin tärkeä huomata, että eroja ei voi

tulkita kulttuurisesti heijastukseksi oppijoiden äidinkielestä ja kulttuurista. Päinvastoin, suomalaisten tapa käyttäämodifioiviailmauksia englanniksi poikkesi selvästi sekä englannin- että suomenkielisestä vertailumateriaalista. Pragmaattiset taidot eivät siis näytä siirtyvän automaattisesti äidinkielestä vieraaseen kieleen edes sujuvasti vierasta kieltä puhuvilla.

Modifioivien ilmausten perusjako eksplisiittisiin ja implisiittisiin ilmauksiin osoittautui mielenkiintoiseksi. Syntyperäiset puhujat käyttivät hyvin runsaasti ja monipuolisesti implisiittisiä keinoja, joilla oli usein tärkeä rooli keskinäisen kiinnostuksen ja yhteenkuuluvuuden ilmapiirin luojina. Oppijoille sen sijaan juuri implisiittisten ilmaisujen strateginen käyttö tuotti vaikeuksia. Jatkossa olisi tärkeää tutkia eksplisiittisen ja implisiittisen kieliaineksen 'työnjakoa' myös muiden kielenkäytön pragmaattisten ilmiöiden osalta.

Tutkimustulokset nostavat esille kysymyksen siitä, miten kielenoppijoiden pragmaattista kielitaitoa voitaisiin parhaiten kehittää. Koska pragmaattiset ilmiöt ovat aina tilannesidonnaisia, niitä ei ole yksinkertaista muotoilla opetettaviksi 'säännöiksi'. Siksi usein puhutaankin mieluummin pragmaattisen tietoisuuden herättämisestä kuin opettamisesta. Tässä tutkimuksessa ei pragmaattisten ilmiöiden oppimista ja opettamista voitu käsitellä, mutta jatkossa olisi syytä selvittää, missä määrin oppijoiden pragmaattista kielitaitoa voitaisiin parantaa tietoisuuden lisäämisellä. Koska kielen puhujat ovat harvoin tietoisia pragmaattisen tason valinnoistaan edes äidinkielellään, olisi myös tärkeää tutkia, missä määrin tietoisuuden herättämisen pitäisi perustua opittavaan kieleen ja missä määrin äidinkieleen.

Tässä tutkimuksessa on keskitytty vain yhteen pragmaattisen kielitaidon osa-alueeseen, modifioivien ilmausten käyttöön. Tulokset tuovat kuitenkin selvästi esille sen, että kyseessä on hyvin moniulotteinen ja kompleksinen ilmiö, johon vaikuttavat puhetilanteen sekä kielelliset, sosiaaliset että kulttuuriset tekijät. Yksi pragmaattisen kielentutkimuksen tulevaisuuden haasteista onkin kuvata missä määrin nämä tekijät ovat kieli- ja tilannesidonnaisia ja missä määrin universaaleja, kaikkia kieliä koskevia.