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**POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN BUSINESS LETTERS
WRITTEN BY NON-NATIVE
AND NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH**

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Hyvään kielitaitoon kuuluu kieliopin ja sanaston hallinnan lisäksi myös kyky muuntaa kielenkäyttöä eri tilanteisiin sopivaksi. Eräs tällainen kielenkäytön pragmaattinen ulottuvuus on kohteliaisuusstrategioitten käyttö erilaisten puheaktien pehmentämisessä. Tutkielman tarkoituksena on tutkia suomalaisten vieraan kielen puhujien kohteliaisuusstrategioiden käyttöä englanninkielisissä liikekirjeissä ja selvittää, eroavatko ne natiivipuhujien käyttämistä strategioista. Materiaali koostuu suomalaisten kielenoppijoiden ja englannin natiivipuhujien englanninkielisistä, ja oppijoiden äidin- eli suomenkielisistä kirjeistä, jotka kerättiin kirjoitustehtävän avulla Suomessa ja Yhdysvalloissa. Tutkielmassa tarkastellaan, millaisia kohteliaisuusstrategioita kielenoppijat käyttävät kritiikin ja pyynnön esittämiseen ja millaisia strategioita he käyttävät puheaktien ulkopuolella, kirjeiden alussa ja lopussa. Oppijoiden käyttämiä strategioita verrataan natiivipuhujien ja oppijoiden omalla äidinkielellään käyttämiin strategioihin.

Analyysin perustana on Brownin ja Levinsonin (1987) kohteliaisuusteoria ja heidän käyttämänsä strategialuokitukset (*bald*, negatiivinen ja positiivinen kohteliaisuus sekä *off record*). Kritiikin ja pyynnön strategioita luokiteltaessa erotetaan toisistaan pää- ja auttavat kohteliaisuusstrategiat. Päästrategiat määritellään muun muassa pyynnön verbimuodon ja kritiikin suoruuden asteen perusteella. Auttavat kohteliaisuusstrategiat esiintyvät yhdessä päästrategioiden kanssa samassa lauseessa tai puheaktin välittömässä läheisyydessä, esimerkiksi edeltävässä lauseessa.

Tulokset osoittavat että oppijat ovat tietoisia sosiopragmaattisten tekijöiden vaikutuksesta kielenkäyttöön, sillä he käyttävät erilaisia kohteliaisuusstrategioita puheaktien pehmentämiseen. Oppijoiden ja natiivipuhujien välillä on kuitenkin eroja sekä strategioitten määrässä että jakautumisessa. Natiivipuhujat käyttävät hieman suurempaa määrää strategioita kuin suomalaiset vieraalla- ja äidinkielellään, ja he käyttävät enemmän strategioita kirjeiden avaus- ja lopetusosissa. Erot päästrategioiden jakautumisessa puheaktien välillä ovat merkittävämpiä. Kielenoppijat ovat suurempia kuin natiivit ilmaistessaan kritiikkiä, he eivät aina pehennä sitä ollenkaan tai tarpeeksi. Sen sijaan oppijat ovat epäsuorempia esittäessään pyynnön. Auttavien strategioiden jakautumisessa ei havaittu merkittäviä eroja.

Asiasanat: pragmatics. interlanguage pragmatics. cross-cultural pragmatics.
politeness.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The world of business is getting more and more international. In Finland an increasing number of enterprises are expanding abroad and many companies are starting to use other languages than Finnish, usually English, also in their internal communication. Louhiala-Salminen (1994) studied the use of English in Finnish companies and the findings revealed that English is used very frequently both in spoken and written communication throughout the Finnish business community, not just in the import or export companies. Half of the business professionals needed English every day, 25 % every week. This means that the business professional needs an excellent knowledge of English in his/her work.

Studies on the use of foreign languages have shown that even advanced learners of English (and other languages) even if grammatically flawless, may sometimes sound inappropriate. This is because the learners often do not vary and adapt their language to suite different contexts. Thus it is not only necessary for the learner to know grammatical rules and has a large vocabulary, but s/he has to also know *how* to use language in various situations. Cultures have different norms concerning communication, that is, what about and to whom one can talk to and how one must talk in particular situations. Learners are often unaware of these constraints of language use, called sociopragmatic rules, and when they deviate from those rules of the target language they may be regarded as rude or unfriendly (this phenomenon is called a pragmalinguistic failure, which is dicussed in more detail in section 2.3).

Linguistic politeness is tightly connected with the sociopragmatic rules of language use. Politeness in the present study does not mean the traditional idea of polite language use, such as greeting or thanking. Politeness is defined as strategic conflict avoidance which is motivated by the desire to avoid offence and to achieve or maintain smooth and successful communication. Brown and Levinson (1987), on whose theory this study is based, propose that people handle conflict situations (e.g. complaining, thanking, requesting etc.) by

employing various politeness strategies to minimize and soften the threat of those situations. This can be done, for example, by leaving the addressee freedom of action by not assuming that s/he is willing to do anything, or the speaker might be totally indirect and only give hints of his/her intentions. It is assumed that linguistic politeness is universal, but there are different forms of politeness which different cultures value differently. People are not often conscious about what kind of politeness strategies they employ in particular situations in their native language and there may be transfer from their mother tongue to the language they are learning. This kind of transfer may result in miscommunication as described above.

Awareness of pragmatic principles of language use is important especially for those who use English at their work. Hagge and Kostelnick (1989:331) point out that many business communication situations by their nature include potential threats and thus demand the use of politeness strategies, which occur “of necessity to grease the wheels of human interaction”. They also remind that business communicators rarely have to convey only the content, frequently they have to also adjust their language “to the delicate demands of interpersonal diplomacy”. If interpersonal aspects of business communication are ignored in transactions, it may mean a lost client.

The present study investigates the use of politeness strategies in written language. Politeness has been quite extensively studied in spoken interaction while written language in professional settings has not yet received much attention. The choice of the written mode can be further justified by studies (e.g. Louhiala-Salminen 1994) which confirm that the amount of writing, especially free writing, in companies seems to be increasing because new technical devices such as the fax machine and e-mail have been introduced.

The aim of the present study is to examine what kind of politeness strategies Finnish learners of English (business students) use in business letters in which they must express criticism and a request to the customer. The learners' English

performance is compared to letters written by native speakers of English as well as to letters written by the learners in their native language, Finnish. The purpose is to find out whether there are differences in the use of strategies between the learners of English and native speakers of English and whether the differences are caused by transfer from the learners' mother tongue.

In chapter 2 pragmatics, the domain of linguistics which investigates language use, is introduced because in order to understand politeness phenomena it is important to be familiar with the context in which the theories of linguistic politeness emerged in the 1970s. In addition, it would be difficult to discuss politeness without the concepts introduced in the pioneering works concerning the language user and use, including the theories of Austin and Grice. In chapter 3 I will define politeness as it is used in the present study and briefly discuss other theories than that of Brown and Levinson's, which is introduced in more detail in chapter 4. Relevant previous studies on politeness in requests, complaints and disagreements in spoken and written language are discussed in chapter 5. The research questions and the basis of analysis, as well as a description of the data, are introduced in chapter 6. The politeness strategies used in the letters written by Finnish learners of English, native speakers of English and the learners in their mother tongue are analysed in chapter 7. Finally, the significance of the findings is discussed in chapter 8.

2 THE PRAGMATIC SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Pragmatics is a fairly young discipline of linguistics which dates back to the 1960s (Leivo et al. 1992:16). Before the emergence of pragmatics language was mainly studied as an isolated system separated from its context and use (Nikula, in press). According to Mey (1994:3261,3262), there were several factors which contributed to the rise of a new linguistic discipline. The most significant factor was the theories of language philosophers, such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and John L. Austin, who emphasized the importance of language use and found the study of language in the framework of traditional semantics fruitless. The philosophical discussions were later brought into the attention of linguists by those who protested against the dominating “syntacticism” in linguistics. The trend required every subject of study to fit in the syntactic framework.

In this chapter I will first make an attempt to define pragmatics. Secondly, two cornerstone theories developed by Austin and Grice will be discussed, and thirdly, relevant pragmatic sub-disciplines will be introduced.

2.1 What is pragmatics?

Defining pragmatics is a troublesome task. Mey (1994:3260; emphasis original) describes the problem quite sharply: “Among pragmaticians, there seems to be no agreement as to how to do pragmatics, nor as to what pragmatics is, nor how to define it, nor even as to what pragmatics is *not*”. Despite the disagreements in the field, following Mey (1993), two main approaches to pragmatics can be distinguished. The first is oriented towards grammaticality which takes language as a system as its starting point (Mey 1993:38). Levinson (1983:9; emphasis original) defines it as “the study of those relations between language and context that are **grammaticalized**, or encoded in the structure of the language”, which includes the study of deixis, honorifics etc. According to Levinson (1983:11), the advantage of this approach is that it restricts the

research to purely linguistic matters, but as it excludes those principles that explain how extra meaning is read into utterances without actually being encoded in them, such as implicature (discussed in 2.2), it is not useful for the present study.

The second definition is much broader placing the emphasis on language use in context and interaction (Leino et al. 1992:17), and is thus considered relevant for this study. Whereas the first approach studied the elements of language (e.g. deictical expressions) in isolation, the user-oriented point of view is interested in how these elements are used in a specific context. This definition is quite satisfactory since it recognizes that not all extra-linguistic factors can be excluded from a pragmatic evaluation (Mey 1993:38,42). Nikula (in press) claims that from a pragmatic point of view language use is motivated or goal-oriented, in other words, people have reasons to use language as they do in particular situations. Pragmatics asks *why* people use language as they do and what they achieve by it. The emphasis lies in the use and function of language. She regards also Halliday's functional view of language as important. Two functions introduced by Halliday are especially essential in pragmatics. First, the interpersonal function, which means the conveying of attitude and emotion, and the creation and maintenance of interpersonal relationships. The second function includes the non-linguistic factors in language use.

Essential to the user-oriented view is Verschueren's (1995) functional approach. He criticizes component thinking in linguistics, which means that pragmatics should study only one feature of language such as implicature or speech acts. He claims that pragmatics can study any feature of language, its structure, words, even tones of voice. According to Nikula (in press), this view provides pragmatics with tools that can explain features of language use that other disciplines cannot account for. Consider for example the Finnish suffix *-han*. It is without meaning when standing alone, but pragmatically it tells about the participant's attitude towards the message and the context of communication.

It would be impossible to explain politeness without having some knowledge of the pioneering works concerning language use. The works of Austin and Grice are still considered fundamental to the theory and research in pragmatics. Their theories will be discussed briefly in the following.

2.2. The speech act theory and the Cooperative Principle

Austin's **speech act theory** has had an enormous impact on research in pragmatics (Mey 1993:108). Austin (1962, summarized in Levinson 1983:226-283) realized that some declarative clauses are used without any intention to make true or false statements; they are not used to merely state things but also to do things. These clauses are called performatives and include expressions such as *declare a war*, *baptize* or *warn*. Performatives do not have truth values. There are, however, certain conditions, called felicity conditions, that they must meet in order to be valid; consider the example *I pronounce you husband and wife*. It is valid only if the speaker is in a position to join people in marriage and the procedure is legal in the country the speaker utters them.

At first Austin separated performatives and constative clauses (statements, assertions), but later abandoned the division and suggested that all utterances can be used to do things. Leiwu et al. (1992:24) summarize the idea of speech acts as follows: all clauses are linguistic actions which are used to present information (stating), to acquire information (asking) or to make someone do something (ordering) etc. The meaning of an utterance has three aspects: the locution is the non-ambiguous meaning of an utterance; the illocution is the force of the utterance, its function; and the perlocution is the effect the utterance has on the hearer. Nikula (in press) remarks that one locution can have different illocutions depending on the context. An utterance such as *It's cold in here* can mean a request to close the window or a complaint about forgetting the heating. Mey (1993:113) remarks that the illocutionary force has been studied the most, while in fact the perlocutionary aspect would be more

useful in order to understand for what purpose people use their illocutionary acts.

Searle (1975:59-61) developed Austin's theory further and made a distinction between direct and indirect speech acts. Speech acts are direct when the syntactic form of a sentence matches with its function. Thus declaratives are used to make assertions, interrogatives to ask questions, and imperatives to make orders or requests. However, the form and the function do not often match, and the concept of indirect speech act is needed. The illocution of an utterance is different from its syntactic form. In fact, almost all speech acts are indirect (Levinson 1983:264). Grundy (1995:95) illustrates the issue with the following examples: *Please turn off the music* is a direct speech act, because an imperative is used to give an order, while *I wonder when the train leaves* and *Have a good journey* are indirect, in the former there is a declarative form functioning as a question, and in the latter an imperative functioning as an assertion.

The speech act theory showed that language use is often indirect but it did not explain how people manage to interpret indirectness (Nikula, in press). Another language philosopher Grice (1975) approached the issue of indirectness by describing conversations. He concluded that using a language was as rational behaviour as any other social action and that people attempt to cooperate with one another. He introduced the **Cooperative Principle**, which consists of four conversational maxims: quantity (be as informative as required), quality (be truthful), relation (be relevant) and manner (avoid ambiguity, be brief). By following the maxims speakers achieve maximally efficient communication. In everyday communication, however, the maxims are often violated. In spite of the surface-level violations people assume that the Cooperative Principle is in operation and they interpret the speech or writing relevant to the situation.

Grice (1975:43-45) used the term *conversational implicature* to explain indirectness in language use. Implicature is an additional meaning conveyed in

an utterance, that is, how speakers mean more than they actually and literally say. Implicature is always dependent on the context and it is not tied to the conventional meaning of an utterance. An example from Thomas (1995:58) *Great! That really made my Christmas!* can be interpreted either positively or negatively, depending on the situation in which it is uttered. In Levinson's example (1983:97) *Can you tell me the time? Well, the milkman has come* the answer seems illogical and violates the maxim of relevance. The answer is, however, interpreted to be informative at some level. The speakers share some background knowledge which makes the answer relevant to the situation. Shared background knowledge is thus an essential precondition for implicature.

The theories discussed above have received a great deal of criticism since their publication. Nikula (in press) points out that both are originally based on non-empirical material, which creates considerable problems when applying them to real language use. Speech acts, for example do not necessarily limit themselves to single clauses or utterances and it is far more complicated to identify and classify them than Austin's theory suggests. Grice's Cooperative Principle has also been criticized. Leiwo et al. (1992:39) wonder whether it is psychologically realistic: can a speaker really make inferences according to the maxims? Also Mey (1993:74,67) finds the idea of general rationality too broad. He argues further that there are intercultural differences as to what people regard as cooperative behaviour, and without recognizing the differences there could be "disastrous consequences for the naive, would-be cooperative conversationalist". The maxims could also sometimes be mistaken for a moral code of behaviour, or some kind of rules as how to be a good conversationalist. Leiwo et al. (1992:39) question why there are not more maxims, or could they be formulated in another way? A new theory has been introduced by Sperber and Wilson (1986) which claims to account for the shortcomings of Grice's theory. According to *the relevance theory*, only one principle is needed, which is the relevance principle. It means that every utterance creates an expectation of relevance in the addressee. Mey (1993:82), however, points out that the

relevance theory has been criticized for excluding social dimensions of language use.

In spite of the criticism the theories have revealed and established some basic notions and assumptions which are still relevant to pragmatics. According to Nikula (in press), the speech act theory brought up the idea of language use as action and indicated that syntactic form and illocutionary function do not necessarily match. The Cooperative Principle emphasized the motivated character of language use and it is still an accepted theory despite its weaknesses.

2.3 Cross-cultural, contrastive and interlanguage pragmatics

The scope of pragmatics has in recent years expanded to the field of intercultural and cross-cultural communication, and it has proved to be a useful tool in studying different aspects of communication between cultures. The sub-disciplines of pragmatics which investigate among other things different communicative styles and differences in speech act performance between learners and native speakers are introduced in the following.

Cross-cultural pragmatics is needed to study the extent to which the principles of language use are language-specific and which are universal. According to Wierzbicka (1991:69), the main ideas in cross-cultural pragmatics are that in different societies and different communities people speak differently and that the differences are both profound and systematic. She adds that the differences reflect different values, or at least different hierarchies of values, and that different communicative styles and ways of speaking can be explained by pointing out that there are different cultural values and priorities. According to Piirainen-Marsh (1995:37,39), cross-cultural pragmatics investigates how speakers of different languages realize different speech acts, that is, how people make requests, apologise or thank. Studies have pointed out various problem

areas where subtle differences in the pragmatic aspects of language use may increase the risk of intercultural misunderstanding.

Nikula (in press) points out that in order to do cross-cultural research different languages have to be compared. **Contrastive pragmatics** compares pragmatic features of two or more languages. The object of study is the linguistic production of native speakers. The detected differences and similarities can be used to assess what kind of pragmatic features are likely to cause difficulties to learners of a foreign language.

Whereas cross-cultural pragmatics concentrates on differences between native speakers, **interlanguage pragmatics** studies a learner's linguistic performance. Kasper and Dahl (1991:1) define it as the non-native speaker's comprehension and production of speech acts. Research in interlanguage pragmatics has focused mainly on describing differences between the learners' and native speakers' speech act performances

Learners may sometimes be unable to communicate successfully even if they master the grammar and vocabulary of the foreign language. In chapter 1 it was mentioned that even advanced learners of English may sometimes sound strange or inappropriate. Therefore it is equally important for the learner to know what kind of language is appropriate in various situations, in other words, to be pragmatically competent. According to Ellis (1994:696), pragmatic competence is part of an overall communicative competence which consists of knowledge of grammatical rules and knowledge of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour in a particular situation

Miscommunication may arise when two different interactional styles meet (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989:5). The risk for miscommunication is especially great when participants do not share the same native language and/or the same sociocultural rules of language use (Gass and Varonis 1991:122). This is most likely to happen in interaction between native and non-native language users.

Thomas (1983:94) sees pragmatic failures that learners unintentionally make as one of the main cause of misunderstandings, alongside with grammatical errors. **Pragmatic failure** occurs when the hearer perceives the learner's utterance differently from what s/he intends, for example if an utterance is received as an order instead of a request. Thomas (1983:99,101-102) separates two kinds of pragmatic failures which form a continuum of pragmatic errors rather than two separate categories. **Pragmalinguistic failure** is connected to the structural features of language. It arises when different linguistic forms are used to express similar functions or similar forms are used to express different functions in different languages. The learner attempts to perform the right speech act but uses wrong linguistic means to do it. Thomas (1983:101-102) gives an example where a similar form has a different function: in Russian *konesno* 'of course' is often used instead of *da* 'yes' to mean 'indeed' or 'certainly'. In English the expression 'of course' sometimes implies that something is self-evident, and thus misunderstanding may arise in the following dialogue between A (native speaker of English) and B (Russian learner of English): A: *Is it a good restaurant?* B: *Of course.* What B wants to say is that the restaurant is indeed a good one, but A may interpret B's answer as criticism for making a really stupid question.

At the other end of the continuum there is **sociopragmatic failure** which is closely connected with the cultural norms of appropriate language use, in other words, to expectations of what and whom one can talk to, and what kind of language use (e.g. formal or informal) is appropriate in a given situation. Here the speaker performs a wrong speech act. (Thomas 1983.) Nikula (in press) points out that such sociopragmatic knowledge is self-evident to native speakers who acquire it through socialization, but very difficult for the learner to acquire.

Pragmatic errors are quite dangerous because they are less apparent than grammatical errors, which are easily recognized. If the non-native speaker speaks fluently and grammatically correct but fails to speak according to the

sociopragmatic rules of the target language, s/he is seen negatively (as rude or unfriendly) as a person by the native speaker. Pragmatic errors explain partly cultural stereotypes, such as the insincere American or the abrasive German. (Thomas 1983:96-97.)

Also politeness strategies can be a source of pragmatic failures and misunderstandings. Politeness strategies are closely bound to sociocultural rules of language use and different cultures emphasize positive, negative and off record politeness differently. Negative politeness oriented communities may value more (in conflict situations, e.g. asking for a favour) formal linguistic behaviour than positive politeness oriented communities. Thus a member of a negative politeness culture may appear distant and indirect to a member of a positive politeness culture, and vice versa. A speaker from a culture which values positive politeness may seem pushy and overfriendly to a person of a negative politeness culture.

3 THEORIES OF POLITENESS

As could be seen from the previous chapter, indirectness has received a lot of attention in research on pragmatics; Austin pointed out the indirect nature of language use with indirect speech acts and Grice's Cooperative Principle functioned as a tool to explain how people interpret indirectness. According to Nikula (in press) the next step was to find out *why* language is so often used indirectly in spite of the fact that indirectness may cause misunderstandings. Thomas (1995:143-145) finds politeness to be one of the major reasons for indirectness, but it should be noted that politeness does not consist exclusively of indirect language use. Nikula (in press) states that the social nature of language use is often seen as the main reason for paying more attention to the interpersonal aspects of communication (e.g. showing friendliness or avoiding intrusiveness) than clarity of the message.

Politeness in language is a very complex and controversial phenomenon. It has been studied a great deal, but the term politeness itself still remains elusive and hard to grasp. One of the problems in defining politeness is that it lies at the junction of many disciplines; sociology, anthropology, linguistics, even psychology. Politeness as a pragmatic phenomenon should not be mixed with the common view of politeness, polite behaviour, such as greeting or thanking.

Politeness has been a growing subject of study for the past 25 years and it could even be said that it has developed into a sub-discipline of pragmatics (Thomas 1995:149). Its origins can be found in the sociological and philosophical discussions about human rationality and goal-orientation of interpersonal communication (Piirainen-Marsh 1995:19). Watts (1992:58) remarks that the earliest study of politeness concentrated on terms of address. Piirainen-Marsh (1995:22) mentions two central concepts that are helpful when explaining politeness: the first, *communicative goal*, refers to the effects that a speaker wants to achieve by a certain utterance. The second concept, *strategies*, are the means for achieving the communicative goals. Today we find many theories of

politeness, some of which have attained more recognition than others. However, in spite of the abundance of theory, Fraser (1990:219,243) finds one major shortcoming in all the models of politeness. The term politeness is not exactly and precisely defined in any of them. He claims that the researchers lack consistency in determining what politeness actually is.

The basic assumptions of politeness mentioned above (that is, rationality, the social nature of the phenomenon, goal-oriented communication and strategies) contribute to the definition of politeness which is accepted by most linguists and which is used in the present study. In the most important theories linguistic politeness is seen as *strategic conflict avoidance* (see Kasper 1990, Thomas 1995, Fraser 1990). Piirainen-Marsh (1995:15,20) summarizes the central ideas of politeness that are generally agreed upon: politeness is one of the dimensions of language use which is “oriented to the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relations”. Politeness is motivated by “the desire to avoid offence and to achieve and/or maintain cooperation or ‘smooth’ or ‘successful’ communication”. In other words, people do not usually say bluntly what they want or what they mean in all situations; rather they choose from a repertoire of linguistic options the most suitable way to say what they want or mean, i.e. they use different strategies, and their choice depends on the situation. Politeness is thus seen as one of the underlying forces which influence human interaction and interpersonal communication.

Janney and Arndt (1992:34) take an interesting sidestep into the field of sociobiology and develop the idea of conflict avoidance further by arguing that politeness in language can be traced to the biological characteristics of human behaviour. They claim that politeness is a uniquely human form of conflict avoidance, but the conflicts themselves are not human in origin. All species have ways of regulating conflict situations (e.g. aggression, attraction) which disrupt group activities important for survival. Animals fight or flee, whereas people use complicated, noninstinctive and culturally acquired strategies of politeness, thus avoiding a conflict in advance. This viewpoint, although not purely linguistic,

may be helpful when trying to understand the nature of politeness and how it affects human life.

Fraser (1990) distinguishes four different approaches to politeness: the social norm-view, the conversational-maxim view, the face-saving view and the conversational-contract view. These will be briefly discussed in the following.

The first approach, **the social-norm view**, is what most people understand with the term politeness. It has little to do with linguistics, rather, it could be referred to as “good manners”. Every society has its own standards of proper social conduct which have changed in the course of history. When a member of a society behaves according to the norm, his/her behaviour is regarded as polite, but when s/he acts against those norms, his/her behaviour is interpreted as impolite. (Fraser 1990:220-221.) Kasper (1990:3206) remarks, however, that politeness as a pragmatic phenomenon must be seen as a broader concept than a simple etiquette of conduct. Thus this view is not considered useful for the present study.

In the second approach, **the conversational-maxim view**, two scholars base their models on the work of Grice. Lakoff (1973, as quoted by Fraser 1990:223-224) was the first to adopt the Gricean framework in the study of politeness. Lakoff claims that people follow certain rules when they speak, which dictate whether an utterance is pragmatically well-formed or not. She extends the idea of grammatical rule and the notion of well-formedness associated with it to pragmatics. The rules form the concept of pragmatic competence which consists of two pragmatic rules: 1) be clear, which Fraser considers to include Grice’s maxims, and 2) be polite. The second rule has three sub-maxims; 1) don’t impose, 2) give options and 3) make A feel good. Lakoff sees politeness in conversation to be more important than the clarity of the message. The politeness rule is superordinate to the Cooperative Principle and it is put in use when the social aspect of communication is more important than

the content of the message. Here politeness is defined as a device used to reduce friction in interpersonal communication.

Another more detailed model of politeness based on the Gricean Cooperative Principle was presented by Leech (1983:80-81), who uses politeness as a means to explain exceptions and deviations from the Cooperative Principle, in other words, why people so often speak indirectly and not with maximum efficiency. In his opinion, this position “rescues” the Cooperative Principle. The Cooperative Principle is expanded by adding a Politeness Principle to it, which is further divided into six maxims: maxim of tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. The Politeness Principle assumes that people are more likely to be polite than impolite and they strive to be as polite as possible on various levels. In terms of the Politeness Principle it means minimizing the cost and maximizing the benefit for the addressee, or conversely, minimizing the benefit and maximizing the cost for the addressant. (Leech 1983:107-109.) Watts et al. (1992:6-7) maintain that Leech’s approach can be used to explore the “fine shadings” of politeness, but criticize it for being too theoretical to apply to actual language use. Thomas (1995:167) remarks also that the list of sub-maxims is open-ended, and in principle it would be possible to make a new maxim for every regularity in language use.

The third approach, **the face-saving view**, is the best known and most influential of all the models of politeness. Brown and Levinson introduced their theory in 1978 and a revised version of it in 1987. The model will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4 but a brief account will be presented here. Brown and Levinson (1987) base their assumptions on the Gricean framework, but go beyond it. They introduce the concept of “face”, feeling of self-worth or self-esteem which every individual has. Face is divided into positive and negative face. Positive face means a person’s wish to be liked and approved of, while negative face represents a person’s wish to have freedom of action and not to be imposed. In interaction face can be maintained, damaged or lost, and it is constantly threatened by certain linguistic acts, face-threatening acts (FTA), for

example by requests, apologies or criticism. However, the speaker can control the FTAs by using strategies to compensate or minimize the face threat. The speaker can choose between not doing the FTA at all, doing it with or without redressive language, or indirectly, by hinting. This theory claims to have universal applicability, but the universality has been challenged by a number of researchers (see next chapter).

The fourth model of politeness, **the conversational-contract view**, was presented by Fraser himself (1975) and Fraser and Nolen (1981) and leans also on the Cooperative Principle and the concept of face (Fraser 1990:232-233). The model maintains that participants in a conversation have an understanding of “some initial set of rights and obligations” which determine what the participants can expect from one another. The rights and obligations, such as turn-taking in conversation, form the concept of conversational contract, which can be negotiated during interaction or when the context of interaction changes. Participants are aware of the conversational contract, and usually act in accordance with it. If they do not, they are perceived as impolite. According to Fraser (1990:234), the main difference to Brown and Levinson’s model is that whereas Brown and Levinson see politeness as a result of deviation of maximally efficient communication, Fraser and Nolen maintain that politeness belongs inherently to maximally efficient communication. Watts et al. (1992:12) find this model especially useful for accounting for the dynamic and changing nature of politeness. It has, however, not found very much support among researchers.

However different these three views of politeness may be (the social-norm view excluded), there are certain aspects they have in common. Piirainen-Marsh (1995:20-21) finds three central notions in the models: presentation of self, concern for the other and avoidance of infringement. She also notes that they lean on the work of Grice and Austin. Kasper (1990:194) observes further similarity in the definitions: politeness is seen as strategic conflict avoidance as was mentioned earlier in this chapter. The theories have also received much

criticism. Firstly, the theories seem over-simplistic in the light of the knowledge we have today about communication (Kasper 1990:194). Secondly, the theories based on conversational maxims are formulated only for spoken communication and may include features that may not apply to written interaction (Yli-Jokipii 1994:84). Thirdly, a distinction between linguistic (verbal) and non-linguistic (nonverbal) politeness is not made, and politeness is not separated clearly enough from such concepts as deference, tact or civility (Fraser 1990:234). Fourthly, it is widely agreed upon that politeness is yet neither a complete term nor exhaustively defined (Watts et al. 1992:16).

4 BROWN AND LEVINSON'S THEORY OF POLITENESS

As observed in the previous chapter, Brown and Levinson (1987:3,5) accept the Gricean framework as essentially correct. They perceive the Cooperative Principle as a socially neutral, unmarked framework for communication, and claim that there is “no deviation from rational efficiency without reason”. Politeness is seen as the reason for not following strictly the conversational maxims in everyday speech. Brown and Levinson thus agree with Leech’s suggestion that politeness is the main motivation for violating the maxims. They also claim that linguistic politeness has to be communicated, in other words, the speaker has to show his/her intention to be polite. The failure to convey the intention may be interpreted as absence of polite behaviour. Consider the examples *Would you please shut the door?* and *Shut the door.* The first example includes a request and the intention to be polite, while the second may be taken to be without polite intention. This conclusion does not, however, hold up in a variety of contexts and cultures, because indirectness is not the only way of conveying polite intentions.

Brown and Levinson (1987:61) claim that all competent members of a community have two properties; rationality and face. Earlier it was stated that communication is goal-oriented in nature, and that speakers use strategies to achieve their goals. Brown and Levinson (1987:61,65) hold this position and argue that a speaker has certain rational capacities which enable him/her to conclude from ends (or goals) the means (strategies) that will achieve the desired ends. Another aspect of rational behaviour is the speaker’s ability to weigh up different linguistic strategies to achieve a goal and choose the most appropriate strategy.

4.1 Face

In addition to rationality, **face** is the other essential property of a member of a society, and it is considered to be the core concept of Brown and Levinson’s

theory. It was originally introduced by Goffman (1967), but Brown and Levinson expand his idea. Face is defined as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (Brown and Levinson 1987:61). It is something that can be lost, damaged, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to during interaction. Face is further divided into negative and positive face which consist of two basic human needs; need for autonomy and need for togetherness. Negative face means a person’s wish to have freedom of action and freedom from imposition. Positive face represents a person’s wish to be approved of. These aspects of face are basic wants which a member of a society has and knows other members to have; thus there is a mutual interest to maintain each other’s face. People can be expected to defend their faces if threatened, and while defending their own faces they are likely to threaten other people’s faces in return. Therefore it can be assumed that it is generally in everyone’s best interest to maintain each other’s face and also to show their intention to be polite. The speaker maintains the addressee’s face unless s/he can get the addressee to maintain the speaker’s face without recompense, for example, by trickery or coercion. (Brown and Levinson 1987:60-62.)

Brown and Levinson (1987:13) claim that face is a universal property. They admit that face is affected by cultural variation. There are differences between cultures as to what kinds of acts are considered face-threatening, and who have special rights to face-protection. But despite rich cultural elaborations they insist that the “core ideas have a striking familiarity”.

4.2 Face-threatening acts

According to Brown and Levinson (1987:65) face is constantly threatened by certain linguistic acts, face-threatening acts (FTA). Some acts (e.g. requests and complaints) are considered to be intrinsically face-threatening. These kind of acts run by their nature contrary to face wants of the addressee or the speaker. A threat to face arises from such linguistic action which in some way restricts

the participant's autonomy (negative face) or calls in question his/her wish to be approved of (positive face). Brown and Levinson (1987:65-68) propose a classification of FTAs, which is summarized in figure 1 (from Meier 1995:382).

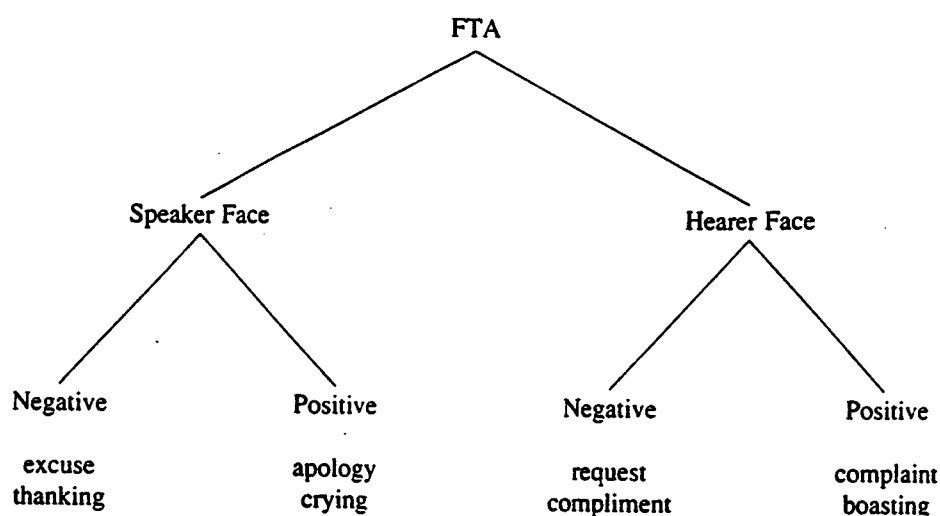


Figure 1. Face-threatening acts (Meier 1995:382)

Both the addressee's and the speaker's face can be threatened. Also, positive and negative face can be exposed to threat. The addressee's negative face can be threatened by ordering, requesting, threatening or offering. A threat to his/her positive face can be caused by the speaker's negative evaluation of some aspect of the addressee's positive face, including acts of disapproving, criticizing, disagreeing. The speaker can also ignore the addressee's face wants. It must be noted that these categories overlap, because certain FTAs, such as complaints and interruptions, threaten both positive and negative face. The speaker's negative face may in turn be threatened by thanking or accepting an offer, and his/her positive face by such acts as apologizing, confessing or accepting compliments.

This view suggests that practically all linguistic acts can be face-threatening. Even "polite" acts, such as offers or expressions of thanks, can be seen to restrict the addressee's freedom of action, thus imposing the speaker's will on the addressee in one way or another. (Piirainen-Marsh 1995:24.)

4.3 Politeness strategies

Participants know that face is mutually vulnerable, and they try to avoid FTAs or use strategies to minimize the threat, unless they want to communicate with maximum efficiency (Brown and Levinson 1987:68). The function of the strategies is twofold: firstly, they are used to mitigate the threat, and secondly, they are used to communicate the speaker's polite intention. Brown and Levinson (1987:85) assume that for the most part strategies are not conscious. However, they seem to be consciously used when participants try to manipulate others.

When the speaker chooses to do an FTA, s/he must decide how much s/he wants to soften it and then choose an appropriate strategy. Some acts are more risky than others and require different amounts of redress. To be able to choose an appropriate strategy the speaker must determine the degree of face risk involved in doing a particular act by considering three social factors. The first factor is **social distance**, which accounts for the degree of familiarity and solidarity between participants. The relation is symmetrical. The second factor, relative **power**, means the speaker's power with respect to the addressee, in other words, the degree to which the speaker can impose his/her will on the addressee. It is an asymmetrical social relation. The third factor, **ranking of impositions** accounts for the seriousness of a particular act in a particular culture. The degree of distance and power is received and evaluated subjectively by the participants. These dimensions are culture-specific and are sensitive to complex situational and cultural variation. (Brown and Levinson 1987:74-81.)

Brown and Levinson (1987) claim that politeness strategies are hierarchial and propose four super-strategies for doing the FTA: 1) baldly, without redression, 2) positive politeness, 3) negative politeness, 4) off record, and 5) not doing the FTA. The strategies and the choices the speaker has to make are summarized in figure 2.

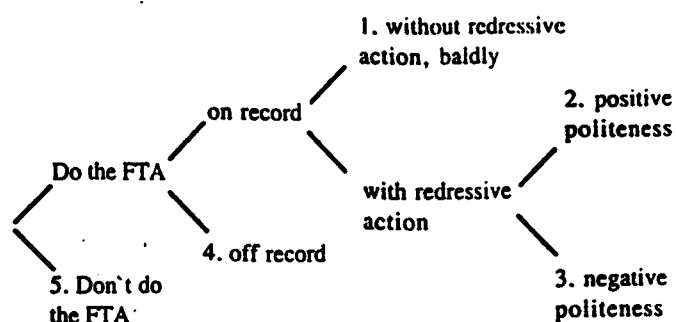


Figure 2. Possible strategies for doing face-threatening acts (Trosborg 1994:27).

The choice of strategy depends on the seriousness of the face-risk, and the more the act threatens the addressee's face, the more indirect the strategy chosen. Piirainen-Marsh (1995:25) points out that this assumption is sometimes seen to represent a straightforward link between indirectness and politeness. It is not, however, supported by research. Brown and Levinson (1987:83) partly recognize the problem by saying that not all FTAs are done with the least risk (with the most indirect strategy). This is due to the fact that it costs more both in effort and in clarity and may also indicate that the FTA is more threatening than it actually is.

The first three strategies are done "on record", which means that the speaker's intention is clearly conveyed and that there is only one way others can interpret the speaker's utterance. On record strategies will be dealt with one by one below.

When an act is done **baldly**, it is said in the most direct and clearest way (Brown and Levinson 1987:94-101). No attempt is made to minimize the threat to face. It is employed when the face wants are not as important as the maximally efficient communication, for example, in situations of urgency: *Help!*, *Watch out!*. Also when the speaker has power over the addressee direct strategy can be used: *Bring me wine, Jeeves!* Non-minimization is also likely to occur

with invitations and offers, especially when the distance between the participants is small. This happens for example in family situations (e.g. *Pass the salt*) and when the utterance is to the addressee's benefit (e.g. *Come in!* and *Have some more cake*).

Positive politeness includes the use of redressive action directed to the addressee's positive face. It does not necessarily minimize the threat directly as negative politeness does, but ranges to the general wants to be approved of. It is used to imply common ground or shared wants, even between strangers. Positive politeness is sometimes also called solidarity politeness (Scollon and Scollon 1981:175). Its linguistic realizations are in many respects similar to normal interaction between intimates where interest and approval of each other is commonly shown. The only element to separate positive politeness from everyday language use is exaggeration. The positive politeness strategies are enlisted below (Brown and Levinson 1987:103-129)

A) Claim for common ground

1. Notice, attend to the addressee (his/her wants, needs, interests, goods)
2. Exaggerate interest, approval, sympathy with addressee
3. Intensify interest to addressee
4. Use in-group identity markers
5. Seek agreement
6. Avoid disagreement
7. Presuppose / assert / raise common ground
8. Joke

B) Convey that the speaker and the addressee are co-operators

9. Assert or presuppose speaker's knowledge of and concern for addressee's wants
10. Offer, promise
11. Be optimistic
12. Include both speaker and addressee in activity
13. Give (or ask for) reasons
14. Assume or assert reciprocity

C) Fulfil addressee's want for some X

15. Give gifts to addressee (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)

According to Brown and Levinson (1987:130), **negative politeness** accounts for redressive action directed to the addressee's negative face. The term deference politeness is also sometimes used (Scollon and Scollon 1981:175). Whereas positive politeness is free-ranging, negative politeness is specific and focused; it minimizes a particular FTA. It is used to convey the speaker's intention not to impose on the addressee but to leave him/her freedom of action. In western countries negative politeness is the most elaborate and provides the most conventionalized set of linguistic strategies for minimizing a face threat. The list of negative politeness strategies is the following (Brown and Levinson 1987:130-210):

- A) Be direct
 - 1. Be conventionally indirect
- B) Don't presume / assume
 - 2. Hedge
- C) Don't coerce addressee
 - 3. Be pessimistic
 - 4. Minimize the imposition
 - 5. Give deference
- D) Communicate speaker's want not to impinge on addressee
 - 6. Apologize for doing the FTA
 - 7. Impersonalize speaker and addressee
 - 8. State the FTA as a general rule
 - 9. Nominalize
- E) Redress other wants of addressee
 - 10. Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting addressee

To perform an act **off record** means that it is done very indirectly (Brown and Levinson 1987:211). An utterance can be interpreted in many ways and it is left to the addressee to decide what the speaker means. In this way the speaker has a 'way out', and s/he can even deny making a certain act. Also the hearer can choose not to recognize the speaker's real intentions. Consider, for example, an utterance *That cake looks really delicious* which the addressee can interpret

either as a request to have a taste of the cake or as a compliment to the cook. There are 15 off-record strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987:213-227):

A) Invite conversational implicatures

1. Give hints
2. Give associate clues
3. Presuppose
4. Understate
5. Overstate
6. Use tautologies
7. Use contradictions
8. Be ironic
9. Use metaphors
10. Use rhetorical questions

B) Be vague or ambiguous

11. Be ambiguous
12. Be vague
13. Over-generalize
14. Displace H
15. Be incomplete

4.4 Criticism of Brown and Levinson's theory

Brown and Levinson's theory has received much criticism, especially for its claim to have universal applicability. The theory relies on analysis of three very different languages (English, Tzeltal and Tamil), but in the light of new empirical evidence it cannot be said to be universal. The strongest criticism comes from Asian researchers who argue that the theory has not been able to avoid ethnocentricity (Ide 1989, Matsumoto 1988, Hill et al. 1986). Janney and Arndt (1993:18,14) remark that Brown and Levinson's ideas are based on a particularly western view of interaction and that their theory is too culture-bound to be applicable to non-western politeness.

Face has been studied much and it has been found to be more complicated and culture-dependent than the original model suggests (Trosborg 1994:28).

Matsumoto (1988:405,423) argues that in western cultures the emphasis is on the individual's independence and territory, whereas in the Japanese culture the relative position of a member to others in a group is the basic notion in interaction. She claims that the Japanese concept of face is fundamentally different from that of western cultures. Trosborg (1994:29) remarks, however, that it is not the content of face which is subject to criticism, but the weight attached to it.

Ide (1989) finds another neglected aspect in Brown and Levinson's theory which is the distinction between politeness as strategic conflict avoidance (volitional politeness) and social indexing (discernment politeness) (see also Kasper 1990). Hill et al. (1986) was the first to make a distinction between discernment and volitional politeness. Discernment means showing verbally and non-verbally one's sense of place or role in a given situation according to social conventions. It is encoded in language in forms of address terms (e.g. sir, madam), pronouns (T/V) or speech formulas. In an honorific language (e.g. Japanese) there are no neutral forms. Ide (1989:233) notes that formal linguistic forms (honorifics) are among the most important means of expressing politeness in cultures such as that of Japan. The use of honorifics is especially important in cultures where the person's self-image is defined through his/her position in a group and his/her relations to others. Volitional politeness is expressed through verbal strategies suggested by Brown and Levinson and it is essential that the speaker can actively choose a strategy. Each language and culture can be assumed to have these two types of politeness, but there are differences as to how much weight is put on them in a particular culture. For example, in North-American culture (and in western cultures at large) discernment is not as important as it is in Japanese or Chinese culture. Brown and Levinson do not make a clear distinction between these aspects, and the emphasis on their theory is on volitional politeness.

Janney and Arndt (1993:26,36) point out that there may well be as many different notions of politeness and face as there are different cultures and

languages. Therefore there exists a need for a neutral and culture-free framework in research on cross-cultural politeness. They argue that establishing such a framework is very difficult, because a vast amount of cultural assumptions should be overcome. Trosborg (1994:29) finds the criticism useful as it forces researchers to broaden their perspective beyond a western linguistic tradition.

Nikula (in press) sees the accounting for situational factors (power, social distance and the size of imposition) as one of the major advantages of Brown and Levinson's theory. She points out, however, that the relationship between these factors and politeness is far more complex than the theory suggests. There are also other contextual factors that can have an effect on language use, such as the preceding stages of one speech event.

In spite of the criticism I have chosen Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness as the basis for my analysis. Most of the criticism has been made long after the theory was published, and it is understandable that extensive research has provided a broader understanding of politeness, and indicated aspects where the theory needs refinement (Nikula 1996:95). It has gained the most support in the literature (Kasper 1990:194) and is the only one to have been systematically challenged (Fraser 1990:235). It also operationalizes politeness as an employment of certain strategies, and is thus easier to use as a tool for research than models that deal with politeness at a more abstract level, like Fraser and Nolen's theory. In addition, much of the research on politeness so far has been based on Brown and Levinson's framework. (Nikula 1996:92,95.) Finally, also as the languages (English and Finnish) studied in this study can be considered to belong to western culture, Brown and Levinson's theory should be able to account for them.

5 EARLIER RESEARCH ON POLITENESS

The present study investigates two face-threatening acts: expressing bad news about the customer, which threatens the addressee's positive face, and request, which threatens the addressee's negative face. The realizations of different face-threatening speech acts have been the main focus of research on politeness; either the perception of different degrees of politeness or production of speech acts. Research does not usually make a distinction whether a speech act threatens the addressee's positive or negative face, but in order to report findings relevant for the present study, such a distinction is useful.

Acts that threaten the addressee's negative face have been studied most extensively, especially requests and apologies, but also compliments, offers and suggestions have received attention. Studies of acts that pose a threat to positive face are less frequent, and it was difficult to find studies which would have a similar FTA to the positive face as the present study and which would offer comparable results. However, research on complaints, refusals, and disagreements provide relevant information. (For an overview of research see e.g. Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993, Kasper 1994, Blum-Kulka et al. 1989).

The main body of research has focused on spoken language, but gradually researchers have taken an interest also in written language. Politeness has been studied from cross-cultural and interlanguage perspectives, both of which are relevant for the present study. Studies on interlanguage have focused on describing the differences between the way in which learners and native speakers perform specific speech acts (Ellis 1994:186). Cross-cultural research has revealed both similarities and systematic variation in speech acts across languages and cultures. Differences have been found, for example, in the level of indirectness; speakers of Hebrew and German preferred more direct strategies than English speakers in the same situations studied in a Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project (see Blum-Kulka et al. 1989).

Research in both sub-disciplines of pragmatics has revealed some general aspects of speech act behaviour. Firstly, speakers of different languages use systematic patterns and routines to perform specific speech acts. Secondly, it has been found that acts costly to the speaker (e.g. requests) are done with mitigating strategies (e.g. negative politeness strategies), whereas acts beneficial to the addressee (e.g. compliments) are done with maximation strategies (e.g. positive politeness strategies). Thirdly, there is variation in strategies in different social situations. Here the issue of indirectness is often brought up, and as has already been mentioned, the claim that increased risk or social distance results in more indirect strategies is not unanimously supported by research. (Piiirainen-Marsh 1995:27-29.)

However, the emphasis of this study is on the learner, and thus research in interlanguage will be discussed in greater detail. In the following sections I will review research on requests, complaints, disagreements and refusals, both in spoken and written language.

5.1 Research on spoken language

At this point it must be noted that many studies do not base their analysis solely on Brown and Levinson's theory but often use it as one component of the analysis. Instead, directness and indirectness of the realizations of different speech acts is investigated. In a number of studies, for example in the Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project, requesting strategies are classified into three broad categories according to their level of directness. The first category includes the most direct requesting strategies, such as the use of imperatives or performatives (e.g. *I am asking you to clean up the mess*). The second group consists of conventional indirect strategies, such as utterances asking the addressee's ability or willingness to do something (e.g. *Could you clean up the kitchen?*). The last category contains non-conventional indirect expressions, such as hints. (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989:18.) These categories have rough equivalents in Brown and Levinson's theory; the direct requesting strategies are

comparable to bald on record, conventional indirectness to negative politeness strategies, and non-conventional strategies to off-record strategies. Thus in the following when different levels of directness are mentioned, the above schema should be born in mind.

Complaints have also been categorized in a similar manner. House and Kasper (1981:159-160) distinguish eight levels of directness in complaints, depending on how explicit or implicit the cause for the complaint, the speaker's negative evaluation of the cause, or the addressee's involvement in it is expressed. Olshtain and Weinbach (1993:111) established five complaining strategies from native Hebrew data. The speaker can choose from more or less direct strategies; s/he can avoid explicitly mentioning the offensive event or express it more directly by accusing or threatening the addressee, eg. by saying *Next time I'll let you wait for hours* to someone who was very late from a meeting.

5.1.1 Perception of politeness

Research indicates that there are differences between cultures in how politeness is perceived and what kind of politeness is used in certain speech acts and situations. Blum-Kulka (1987) used material from the Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project to study how native speakers of Hebrew and English rank indirectness and politeness in requests. In both languages the most direct strategy (imperative e.g. *Do x!*) was perceived as the least polite, while the most polite strategy was conventional indirectness (e.g. *Can you do x?*). A very important observation was that the most indirect strategies were not perceived the most polite; however, the English perceived hints more polite than speakers of Hebrew.

The Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) examined requests and apologies in seven countries (Blum-Kulka et al.1989). The data were collected through a discourse completion task where the subject is given a short description of the situation followed by a short dialogue with an empty

slot which the s/he fills in by writing the request (or some other speech act) s/he would make. The data has been analysed from different viewpoints by different researchers. Blum-Kulka and House (1989) found that in certain situations there was agreement in the level of indirectness across languages, while in other situations there was disagreement. They also observed that conventionally indirect strategies were the most frequently used in the languages studied. This last observation is supported by Blum-Kulka (1989) who used the same data and found that conventional indirectness was the most frequent strategy in requests. A study conducted among Finnish learners of English by Kalaja and Koski (1993) gives supporting results. The students ranked conventional indirectness as the most polite and 50 % of their requesting strategies consisted of conventionally indirect strategies.

Learners are able to distinguish different degrees of politeness of different linguistic forms, but their perceptions do not always agree with those of native speakers (Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993:6). Carrell and Konneker (1981) found that English learners of Hebrew tended to be oversensitive to politeness markers; they perceived seven politeness levels, whereas native speakers perceived five. Ellis (1994:168) remarks that learners, at least advanced learners, do not experience many problems in recognizing a distinction between polite and less polite forms. However, learners at all levels experience problems in producing situationally appropriate speech acts.

5.1.2 Production of FTAs

Learners' realization strategies of different face-threatening speech acts have often been found to be situationally or socioculturally inappropriate, even advanced learners deviate from the target language norm. (Pirainen-Marsh 1995:41). This is supported by several findings from studies on speech acts. First of all, learners' distribution of strategies and forms varies from those of native speakers (Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993:7). Some studies report that learners use more direct strategies. Fukushima (1990) found that Japanese

learners of English used too direct expressions to make offers and requests in most situations and sounded rude. Nyysönen (1990) analysed various speech acts (requests, reminders, complaints) in conversations of Finnish learners of English and the results show that they often seem too direct and blunt.

Pearson (1986) compared disagreement strategies used by Japanese learners of English and native English speakers. She found that the Japanese often did not express disagreement when they should have done so or used too direct strategies, for example *I disagree*. Native English speakers did not use the verb *disagree* at all, instead they used often an expression which Brown and Levinson (1987:113-114) classify as positive politeness strategy “Avoid disagreement”; *Yes, but...* in which the speaker pretends to agree with the addressee.

Beebe and Takahashi (1989a) studied FTAs that threaten the addressee’s positive face, such as chastisement and disagreement, in both naturally occurring speech and data from a discourse completion task between native speakers and Japanese learners of English. The results were similar to those in Pearson’s study: the Japanese learners were more direct in their disagreements than native speakers, they often expressed it explicitly e.g. *I don’t think that’s a good idea*, especially in situations where they were in a higher position than the addressee. The native speakers softened their differing opinions with positive politeness strategies, e.g. *Thank you for your concern and efforts to...*, which the Japanese used very rarely.

Other studies give contradictory results by reporting that learners are more indirect than native speakers. Blum-Kulka (1982) found that learners of Hebrew used fewer direct strategies when making different speech acts than native speakers. Olshtain and Weinbach (1987, as quoted by Kasper and Dahl 1991:13) studied complaining strategies used by non-native and native speakers of Hebrew in data collected through a discourse completion task. Both groups were found to use every type of complaining strategy, but there were

differences in preference for more or less direct strategies. The non-native speakers used less direct, or milder strategies than the native speakers. Also Beebe and Takahashi (1989b) found that Japanese learners of English were more indirect than American native English speakers when giving embarrassing information in lower-to-higher status situations. The Japanese opted out more, that is, they did not say anything at all, and they relied more on hints. The researchers point out that when showed to American informants, the hints were not understood.

Secondly, the learner's repertoire of strategies is more restricted and less complex than the native speaker's, which may often explain why learners are too direct. Trosborg (1994) used role play to gather data on Danish learners of English and compared them to native speakers. She found that in requests less advanced learners had the lowest number of strategies, and that advanced learners used more strategies, but still fewer than native speakers. She analysed also complaints, and found that learners produced fewer complaints and used less modality markers, such as hedges than native speakers. The learners had problems in softening their complaints and they did not provide enough supportive moves as justification for their complaints. Also Piirainen-Marsh (1995) used role play to study different FTAs in conversations of Brunei learners of English and observed that the strategies used by learners were less complex and more restricted than those of native speakers.

Thirdly, even though learners demonstrate sensitivity to contextual factors that affect their choice of strategy (see e.g. Piirainen-Marsh 1995), they sometimes show less consideration than native speakers for contextual factors in their strategy choices. Tanaka (1988 as summarized in Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993:8) found that Japanese learners of English used the same requestive strategies in a conversation with their equals and with persons of higher or lower status.

Finally, learners tend to be verbose; they use systematically longer utterances than do native speakers. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) analysed data from the Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project and found that in all languages high-intermediate learners used longer requests than low-intermediate or advanced learners when compared to native speakers. The greatest differences were in the external modification of requests. The non-native speakers used more words than the native speakers to perform the same speech act.

5.2 Research on written language

Until recently the written medium has been largely ignored in studies on politeness. However, researchers are beginning to expand politeness theories also to different written genres. Cherry (1988) analysed authentic letters addressed to the president of a university written by university staff of different status (from professors to graduate students). The writers expressed their support to a colleague who had not been promoted and they requested the president to reconsider his decision. There were two face-threatening acts: a request and a challenge to the president's judgement. Brown and Levinson's theory would predict that writers of higher academic rank make the request in the least polite way. Despite the fact that a variety of strategies were used, Cherry found that the writers of the lowest status used the least polite ways of requesting.

Myers (1989) studied claims and denials of claims in scientific articles and was able to demonstrate that many features of scientific language that are considered conventions can be explained with reference to linguistic politeness. For example, the commonly used pronoun *we* is a positive politeness strategy used to stress solidarity. Negative politeness strategies, such as the passive voice and other impersonal constructions are used to soften claims that are typical of scientific writing.

Trosborg (1995) analysed regulative acts (directives and commissives) in authentic English legislative texts and contracts. In both types of legal documents direct strategies were dominant, although no imperatives were found, and also performatives were rare. Instead the obligation was expressed through constructions such as *The Carrier shall be relieved of its obligation to....* When directives in English legislative texts were compared with those found in everyday conversations, considerable differences were detected: conventional indirectness, which, according to numerous studies, is the most frequently used directive strategy in everyday conversation, was totally absent in legislative texts. Trosborg (1995:52) suggests that the differences could be explained by external factors of the social situation rather than the medium (spoken versus written).

Some studies have made use of authentic business letters. Yli-Jokipii (1994) studied requests in authentic English (British and American) and Finnish company letters and telefaxes. She found that Finns were relatively indirect and used negative politeness strategies. In particular, they were reluctant to indicate the participant to whom the request was addressed to. Finnish data showed a higher frequency in the use of passive constructions and non-animate participants, such as the name of the participant's company, an aspect which was practically absent in the English data. Yli-Jokipii finds this feature to be a possible source of miscommunication if the Finnish business writer transfers the Finnish conventions into his/her English business letters. In addition, the Finnish data showed relatively little variation in strategies. There were also differences between American and British letters: Americans used more direct ways, whereas the British preferred conventional indirectness. Yli-Jokipii (1994:28) quotes also a study by Morris (1991) who analysed Finnish business writers' apologies in English. Morris found that Finns were more apologetic than the situation required and thus implied a greater offence than there actually was.

Pilegaard (1997) analysed requests in authentic business letters written by native English speakers to native readers. He found that in the early stages of a business contact positive and negative politeness were equally frequent, but once the relationship had been established, negative politeness dominated. Positive politeness strategies were used in the beginning of the letter, that is, external to the request itself. Negative politeness strategies were used in close connection with the request. Strategies were used to prepare ground for the request, to redress the FTA and to round off the letter.

Yeung (1997) made a quantitative analysis on English and Chinese business correspondence to see if power, distance or the size of an imposition could predict a linguistic choice in making requests. He found that only the size of an imposition had statistical importance. Sims and Guice (1992, as quoted by Yli-Jokipii 1994:28) compared letters of inquiry by native and non-native speakers of English (students) and found that the non-natives' letters contained exaggerated politeness.

Hagge and Kostelnick (1989) used semi-authentic letters to analyse politeness strategies in business writing. The letters were models for "suggestion letters" drawn up by employees in an accounting company, which provided evaluations and consultations for other companies. The letters point out a problem in the client's company and make suggestions for improvements. The researchers found that four negative politeness strategies were amply used: "Be pessimistic", "Hedge", "Nominalize", and "Impersonalize the speaker and addressee". For example, agentless passives were used to delete any mention of who might have caused the problem. The findings were compared to model-letters in text books business writing, which were found to emphasize clarity and brevity and discourage the use of passives and nominal constructions. The researchers regard the company's letters to be closer to the practices in the real business world and see that these results should have some implications for the teaching of business writing.

Maier (1992) used an assignment to gather written data from students to analyse requests and apologies of non-native and native speakers of English. She found that the non-native speakers showed an awareness of various types of politeness strategies, but there were still striking differences when the two groups of speakers were compared. Native speakers used more negative politeness strategies to preserve the addressee's face. Non-native speakers used more potentially risky positive politeness strategies and tended to be less formal and more direct than native speakers. In addition, the non-native speakers avoided using certain strategies and relied more heavily on others than did the native speakers. Maier's findings suggest that non-native speakers' business writing, even though grammatically correct, may be perceived negatively by the reader because of inappropriate use of politeness strategies. Many letters gave an impression that the writers were somehow too casual, desperate, personal or detached.

It has been affirmed above that learners have many kinds of pragmatic problems when using a foreign language. Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993:7) claim that learners have access to the same range of strategies for linguistic action as do native speakers, but there are differences in the selection of strategies. They explain this by using Blum-Kulka's (1991) concept of *general pragmatic knowledge* which every language user has. It consists of "basic notions associated with the use of language in context", such as the ability to interpret indirect utterances correctly and a general sensitivity to contextual factors when choosing a way of performing a linguistic action (Blum-Kulka 1991:255). Ellis (1994:182-183,187) lists several possible reasons why learners do not use their general pragmatic knowledge and thus deviate from native speakers. One of the most important factor is the learners' linguistic proficiency in the target language: learners with little lexical and grammatical knowledge can perform only a limited set of speech acts. They cannot speak or write as native speakers, unless they possess sufficient linguistic means to do so. Another important reason is negative transfer of the norms of language use from the learners' first language to the target language. Learners may also overextend a strategy from a

situation in which it is appropriate to one in which it is not. Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993:7) remark that learners may have non-native perceptions of the norms of the target language and sometimes learners can even show purposeful loyalty to the cultural patterns of their native language.

5.3 Discussion of earlier research

From the review in this chapter it can be seen that the majority of the studies on politeness has focused on spoken language in non-professional settings, largely neglecting the written mode. The literature on research methods and overviews of research concentrate almost solely on spoken language.

The research methods have been criticized to some extent. Ellis (1994:162) describes an ideal research design as a situation in which there are three kinds of data: speech acts performed by learners in the target language, by native speakers, and the same speech act performed by learners in their native language. Only in this way is it possible to determine to what extent the learners' performance differs from that of the native speakers, and whether the differences are caused by transfer from the native language. Ellis remarks, though, that this design has been used only in a few studies.

Another drawback on the methodology is the extensive use of written questionnaires, such as the discourse completion task, to gather data for analysing spoken language instead of naturally occurring speech. The task can be used to collect large amounts of data quickly, but the responses are rather written versions of intended speech than actual speech. The findings of studies using this method report about learners' competence in controlled situations but tell very little about their ability to communicate in real-life situations. (Trosborg 1994:56-57.) A role play is an improved method, in which the subject, after being presented a description of a situation, performs the act orally, either with other learners or with the researcher (Ellis 1994:163). According to Kasper and Dahl (1991:19-20), role plays have certain

advantages. First of all, speech act behaviour can be examined in its full discourse context; the instructions of the task include the initial situation and the player's communicative goal, but do not prescribe how the goal is to be reached. It provides much richer data than discourse completion tasks. Secondly, they are replicable unlike authentic conversations.

All controlled data collecting methods have some common limitations. Ellis (1994:164) claims that there are "doubts about the extent to which the elicited data can serve as evidence of learners' pragmatic competence, as they may not accurately reflect actual language use". Bonikowska (1988) points out that in natural situations speakers always have the option of "opting out", but tasks force learners to perform linguistically, even when they would normally keep quiet. However, Nikula (in press) regards the possibility of controlling contextual features of a situation as an advantage of elicitation methods when compared to naturalistic data collecting.

Pilegaard (1997:240) sees the application of Brown and Levinson's theory to written language as a good opportunity to test the model. In written texts, the linguistic expressions of politeness are not the primary means of expressing politeness, they are the only ones. The sender of a written message cannot use prosodic and non-verbal features of a language so typical of speech, but s/he has to rely on verbal means of politeness solely. Therefore all the politeness the sender wishes to communicate has to be put into verbal means. Furthermore, written texts are not as elusive as spoken words, and as the participants are separated physically and temporally, it can be anticipated that greater effort is spent on "adapting the text to its illocutionary purpose in written than in oral communication". The studies discussed in section 5.2 show that Brown and Levinson's theory can be applied to written language.

The pragmatic competence of learners, as mentioned earlier, has been studied relatively extensively and general findings reveal that learners have problems in mastering pragmatic features of language use: the way non-native speakers use

language differs from that of native speakers (Nikula, in press). Trosborg (1994:56) remarks that non-native speech act performance has been studied in only a few target languages, mainly in English. There is a wide variety of learners' first languages, but for example Finnish has received very little attention, both in spoken and written form.

6 THE PRESENT STUDY

The previous chapter shows that research in pragmatics and politeness has largely ignored one important area of language: the written form. The present study examines this partly neglected mode of language, and its purpose is to study the use of politeness strategies in business letters written by non-native and native speakers of English. The letters contain two face-threatening acts: a criticism and a request. The writers express criticism when they convey that the customer has forgotten a piece of information from her order and they ask the customer to deliver the missing piece of information. The letters were collected by using a writing task in a university in Finland and the United States. The analysis of the strategies is not limited to those strategies that mitigate directly the two FTAs but it is extended to the politeness strategies which are found external to the FTAs. These strategies are used for more general purposes in the letter, for example to create a friendly atmosphere, and they are found in the opening and closing sections of the letters.

In section 6.1 the research questions and the definitions of the FTAs are discussed in more detail, sections 6.2 and 6.3 describe the research design, the collection of data and the subjects more thoroughly. The principles of the analysis of the data are discussed in section 6.4.

6.1. Research questions

This study has three broad aims connected to the use and comparison of politeness strategies in business letters. The first aim is to investigate what kind of politeness strategies Finnish learners of English use in business letters and compare them to the strategies used by native speakers of English and native speakers of Finnish. The learners produce thus letters both in English and in their native language, Finnish. Both the internal strategies (used directly to mitigate the FTAs), and the external strategies (found outside the immediate

surroundings of the FTAs, in opening and closing sections of the letter) are analysed.

The second aim is to study to what extent the strategies of the non-native speakers of English differ from those of the native speakers'. It is also studied whether the differences can be traced to the non-native speakers's mother tongue, Finnish. The non-native English data is thus compared to the native English and the native Finnish sets of data.

The research questions are as follows:

1. What kind of politeness strategies do the Finnish learners of English use to mitigate the two FTAs: an expression of criticism and a request?
2. What kind of politeness strategies are used external to the FTAs?
3. Are there differences in the politeness strategies used by the Finnish learners of English and native speakers of English?

The two FTAs in the letters pose a threat both to the addressee's positive and negative face. The addressee's positive face is threatened because the writer has to criticize the customer by expressing that the s/he has made a mistake, and the addressee's negative face is threatened by a request to send the missing piece of information. Defining the first FTA presented some problems. When the writer expresses that there is a problem in the order caused by the customer, s/he clearly threatens the customer's positive face. It does not, however, correspond totally to any speech act that threatens the addressee's positive face enlisted in Brown and Levinson (1987:66): expressions of disapproval, criticism, complaint, accusation, contradiction, disagreement and challenge. The FTA is a combination of features of different speech acts. First of all, it has characteristics of a conflict situation (e.g. a reminder). Pilegaard (1997:226) defines a letter of conflict as a document in which information concerning a point of conflict between two parties is exchanged. The letters are typically concerned with the exchange of information and bringing about action necessary

to bring an unsuccessful business relationship on the right course again. Secondly, it has many common features with the speech act of complaining. According to Trosborg (1994:311-312), a complaint is an illocutionary act in which the speaker expresses his/her disapproval or negative feelings towards the state of affairs, and for which s/he holds the addressee responsible, either directly or indirectly. In the case of the problem in the order the writer also has to express something negative about the customer, and about something that the customer is responsible for.

Also criticizing is close to the first FTA of this study. Collins Cobuild Dictionary (1987:336) defines criticism as “a comment which expresses disapproval of something or someone”. The definitions of complaint include a sense of moral judgement or blame, which is absent in the definition of criticism. The FTA is therefore defined as criticism, since it is a more general term for expressing something negative about something or someone. It must be born in mind that the customer has the power over the seller, because she does not have to buy anything from the company, and therefore the writer has to pay special attention to the way in which s/he expresses the criticism.

The second FTA, the request, is defined as an act whereby the speaker conveys to the addressee that s/he wants the addressee to perform an act which is for the benefit of the speaker. The act may be a request for an object or action, or it can be a request for verbal goods, for example, for information. (Trosborg 1994:187.)

6.2. Research design and data collection

The material for the present study was obtained by using a writing task at the universities of Jyväskylä and Indiana. The subjects were instructed to write a letter as a response to the situation described in the assignment. Three kinds of data were collected to construct an ideal research design described by Ellis (see section 5.3): written material in the target language produced by Finnish

learners of English and native speakers of English, and by the same group of Finnish learners in their native language, Finnish.

The data consist of a total of 17 letters written by native speakers of English and a total of 25 native Finnish and 30 letters written by Finnish learners of English. From the Finnish data 15 English and Finnish letters were identified to have the same writer and thus taken into the analysis. This makes it possible to determine if there has been any transfer from the subjects' mother tongue. In order to make the three groups comparable, two letters were randomly eliminated from the native English data. Thus the data consist of three sets of 15 letters written by Finnish learners of English (in English and in Finnish) and native speakers of English.

In the writing task the subjects were given a three-page handout (see appendix 1), which contained the instructions to the task, a "copy" of an order form and a blank letter format. In the first page the subjects were given a short description of the situation they should imagine themselves in: the subject works as a trainee in a mail-order house and checks all the incoming orders. One customer has forgotten to mark the size of a pullover or a desired colour of hiking boots, and while expressing the reason why the writer has made the contact, s/he has expressed criticism towards the customer. The subject has been unable to reach the customer by phone and is thus asked to write a letter to make a request to the customer to provide the information desired. The letter was to be written by hand by the students on a letter format attached to the assignment.

On the second page there was the order form filled in and sent by the customer, and in which the missing information was highlighted. The order form was printed on brown paper in order to make it look more authentic. It was included in the assignment to provide the subjects with information of the customer and the company they worked in. The order form made the situation more 'real' and the subjects made use of it, for example, by referring to the date of the order, to other items in the order or the item's code number in their letters. The third

page consisted of a letter format in which the subjects wrote their letters by hand.

The instructions in the tasks were in Finnish in both of the Finnish assignments and in English for the American subjects. The tasks of the Finnish subjects differed slightly from one another. In the task which required the letter in Finnish the missing item was the colour of the hiking boots, in the task which required a response in English, it was the size of the pullover and, thus the same as for the native speakers of English.

There were several factors that supported the choice of using an elicitation data collecting method. As Yli-Jokipii (1991:68-69) remarks, it is difficult to find authentic Finnish business correspondence which forms a representative corpus, and it may also be hard work to persuade business people to co-operate. She finds several reasons for this. For example, firms tend to destroy the correspondence they are not required to store, which means that the researcher might have to wait a considerably long time before getting enough material. Enterprises are also not generally willing to give out “negative” material, such as replies to complaints they have received.

According to Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991:27), elicitation techniques require subjects to produce the linguistic item the researcher wants to study. In this study two FTAs were the focus of investigation. Requests are quite frequent in real-life business letters and there would probably not have been significant problems in finding letters containing requests. However, the FTA of expressing criticism is more vague and thus difficult to control and there would have been difficulties in finding similar FTAs threatening the receiver’s positive face. Thus the writing task allows the researcher to obtain just the kind of data s/he wishes to investigate.

The writing task combines features of two controlled instruments discussed by Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991:29-30): guided composition and role play. In

guided composition subjects produce an oral or written composition in response to some set of organized stimuli, in this case the instructions in the task. Role play is a useful means of studying learner's pragmatic competence, since many contextual features, such as distance and power between the participants, age or sex, that affect the speaker's behaviour can be controlled. In this study the subjects were described a situation in which they should imagine themselves in. Also the contextual features, such as the distance between the interactants (the trainee and the customer), were held constant.

The idea for the writing task was found in Maier's (1992) study on politeness strategies of requests and apologies in business letters. The task designed for the present study was constructed by the researcher. The model for the letter format was confirmed from several business communication coursebooks. The names of the companies and customers were imaginary and were formulated so that they would not have any humorous or negative connotations. Also the phone numbers and addresses had correct areal codes, but were otherwise invented. The credibility of the names, addresses and phone numbers of the American company and the English customer were checked by a native speaker of English.

6.3 Subjects

The Finnish subjects were second, third and fourth year university students at the university of Jyväskylä. Their majors were Economics and Marketing. The subjects can be considered to be fairly advanced speakers of English since they have studied it between five and nine years in the elementary school and in the upper secondary school. The subjects in the United States were third and fourth year students at the Indiana University Purdue University, majoring mainly in English and Business.

The Finnish data were collected by the researcher herself at an English course for business students at the University of Jyväskylä in the spring term of 1996.

The two sets of Finnish data were collected on two separate occasions, during lessons in two successive weeks. The students were given a short description of the task orally by the researcher. The letters were written in class.

The English data were collected at an business and administration writing course at the Indiana University Purdue University in Indianapolis, the United States, in autumn 1997. The assignments were sent by mail to the United States, where they were handed out to students and gathered by a teacher in the writing class. Students wrote the letters in class. The filled assignment papers were then sent back to Finland.

6.4 Analysis of data

I will adopt Pilegaard's (1997) way of analysing politeness strategies in business letters, which means that also external politeness strategies are included in the analysis. Originally my aim was to study those politeness strategies that were used to redress the face-threatening acts directly, but the analysis was expanded to the politeness strategies found outside the request and the expression of criticism since they have an important role in creating the overall tone and style of the letter. The majority of speech act studies has concentrated only on examining the strategies on the sentence level, ignoring thus the linguistic action (that is, speech or writing) before and after the speech act in the same speech event. Pilegaard studied how politeness strategies operated in the whole letter and made a distinction between internal and external politeness strategies. Strategies internal to the FTAs are in close connection with them, often in the same sentence. External strategies, however, do not redress the FTAs directly, but they are used for other purposes in the letter, for example, to round off the letter. The distribution of these two types of redress is fairly strictly tied to their position in the letter, so that external politeness strategies are found in the opening and closing sections of the letter.

Pilegaard (1997:228) divides a business letter into three parts. The opening section contains a formal greeting and opening lines of the letter. Yli-Jokipii (1994:45) remarks that Finnish business letters do not necessarily have a formal greeting comparable to the English *Dear...* at all. The opening lines often locate the letter in a context, for example, by referring to previous correspondence. The politeness strategies found in this section are external to the face-threatening acts, henceforth **external strategies**. The propositional section is the most central part of the letter. It contains the core communicative aims of the letter either explicitly or implicitly. The politeness strategies in the propositional section are internal to the FTAs and are called **internal strategies**. The closing section also contains external strategies. (Pilegaard 1997:228.)

The data will be analysed by using Brown and Levinson's revised 1987 model of politeness according to the outlined schema above. Some adaptations to the negative politeness categories were made, which will be explained in the next chapter. The three parts of a business letter were identified in the letters as can be seen in the sample letter below. Stars (*) are used to separate the sections. Pilegaard (1997:228) remarks, however, that the sections may vary extensively in length and may be missing altogether, a feature which was noticed in the data. The propositional section was further divided into two parts, of which the first contains the criticism and the second the request. The separation is marked with a slant (/).

Problematic, however, is that politeness strategies rarely operate alone to mitigate a certain FTA. They often combine within a sentence and occur in sentences before and after the FTA. I therefore found it necessary to separate the **main strategy** in doing the FTA, or the head act in the FTA and **supportive strategies**. In the case of the request the main strategy was defined by examining the verb form, thus for example imperatives and performatives were counted to the category "Bald on record". In the letter below the head act of requesting is done with strategy "Hedge" (5), further softened by politeness marker *kind* (6).

The criticism is expressed with an impersonalisation strategy (4) thus not referring directly to the customer saying “you have forgotten”, but using *the size* as the subject of the sentence:

Dear Ms Miller,

Thank you for Your order (1). We are looking forward to sending You the EuroInWear products You ordered (2). Unfortunately (3) the size of the pullover in Your order form was missing (4). / If you could (5) be so kind (6) as to inform us about the size we could send You the shipment without further delay.* I am positive that You will be satisfied with EuroInWear products.(7)*

Yours sincerely
signature

The FTA can also be redressed with other strategies than just with the one that is used to do the head act. Those strategies that were found either in the preceding sentence, in the sentence after the FTA or in the same sentence outside the head act are categorized as supportive strategies. In the sample letter above the head act of criticizing is done with an impersonalisation strategy, and it is further softened with a supportive strategy *unfortunately* (3), which is a positive politeness strategy. The writer uses also external strategies (1), (2) and (7) which are all positive politeness strategies.

The letters can be found in appendix 2 in typed form. They have been written out word for word, except for the names of the writers which are coded as “signature”. No attention is paid to the spelling mistakes or grammatical errors, and they do not account in the analysis in any way.

7 RESULTS

The present study attempts find answers to three research questions. Firstly, what kind of politeness strategies do the Finnish learners of English use to mitigate two FTAs, a criticism and a request? Secondly, what kind of politeness strategies are found external to the FTAs, and thirdly, are there differences in the politeness strategies used by the Finnish learners of English and native speakers of English? The non-native English data is also compared to the native Finnish data in order to see if any transfer from Finnish to English can be detected.

In the first two sections of this chapter, the two FTAs will be analysed. They will be discussed in the same order as they appear in the letters; first the criticism and then the request. The main politeness strategies are discussed before the supportive politeness strategies. The order in which the categories of politeness strategies are presented follows the order of the strategies in Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory from the most direct to the least direct strategy: bald on record, negative politeness, positive politeness and off record strategies. In the third section, I will analyse what kind of politeness strategies can be found in the opening and closing sections of the letters, outside the immediate surroundings of the FTAs. A comparison between the three sets of letters is made throughout every section. Since all strategies were not present in the data, only those which were found will be discussed.

The following abbreviations are used in the analysis. In the examples from the data the abbreviations are followed by a number which identifies the writer as a non-native speaker number 1, number 2 and so on:

NNSE = non-native speaker of English

NSE = native speaker of English

NSF = native speaker of Finnish

Translations for the Finnish examples are given under the examples in single quotation marks (‘ ’). The aim has not been to produce idiomatic translations, but rather to translate the Finnish clauses word for word.

7.1 Expressing criticism

7.1.1 Main strategies

The main strategies of criticizing are determined by examining whether the writer has directly expressed that the customer has made a mistake e.g. *You had forgotten* or if it is expressed in some other, more indirect way e.g. *The size was missing*. Four different strategies were discovered: bald on record, negative politeness strategy “Impersonalize”, positive politeness strategy “Avoid disagreement” and off record strategy “Be vague or ambiguous”. The strategies are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. The main politeness strategies in expressing criticism

Politeness strategy	NNSE	NSE	NSF
Bald	8	2	2
Negative politeness Impersonalize	6	11	13
Positive politeness Avoid disagreement	1	-	-
Off record Be vague or ambiguous	-	2	-
Total	15/15	15/15	15/15

In the next sections the main strategies will be discussed in more detail.

7.1.1.1 Bald on record

The first main strategy in expressing criticism is bald on record. When an act is done baldly, it is said in the most direct way. All expressions which explicitly

name the customer as the party who has made a mistake are included in this category. Of the three groups the non-native speakers of English use this strategy most often, whereas only two occasions are found in the native English and Finnish data. The writers use expressions, such as:

- (1) You had forgot to sign the size of the pullover... (NNSE1)
 - (2) You haven't marked the size of the pullover... (NNSE7)
 - (3) ...you had omitted the size of the pullover... (NSE3)
 - (4) ...olitte unohtaneet kenkien värin. (NSF5)
- '...you had forgotten the colour of the shoes'

It must be emphasized that most of the direct expressions are somehow softened, either in the preceding sentences or by using a mitigating phrase such as *unfortunately* in the same sentence as the head act. For example, all but one of the non-native speakers of English using a direct expression employ a softening device of one kind or another. The most frequent strategy among them is the phrase *unfortunaly/valitettavasti*, but also *although*, *however/kuitenkin* are used, as can be seen in the following examples:

- (5) ...but *unfortunately*, you have forgot to size... (NNSE5)
 - (6) *Although* the reason I'm contacting you is that you forgot to mention... (NNSE13)
 - (7) *Valitettavasti* olitte unohtaneet kenkien värin. (NSF5)
- 'Unfortunately you had forgotten the colour of the shoes'
- (8) Unohditte *kuitenkin* merkitä haluamanne värin... (NSF15)
- 'You forgot however to mark the colour you desire...'

Phrases such as *unfortunately* and *however* were counted as positive politeness strategies, thus adopting the view of Myers (1989:8-9), who sees *unfortunately* as a way of expressing unhappy emotions. This and other softeners outside the head act of criticizing are discussed in more detail in section 7.1.2.2.

7.1.1.2 Negative politeness strategies

As mentioned earlier, negative politeness is used to convey the speaker's intention not to impose on the addressee and to leave him/her freedom of action. The negative strategy found in the expression of criticism is "Impersonalize". Impersonalization can be achieved by replacing the pronoun *you* with some other subject, by using passive voice and evasive orientation.

Impersonalize

When the speaker or the addressee is impersonalized the FTA is phrased as if the agent were other than, or possibly not the speaker alone, and as if the addressee were someone other than the addressee. This can be done in a variety of ways by avoiding pronouns *I* and *you* (Brown and Levinson 1987:190).

The writers use various linguistic means to avoid direct reference to the customer's active role in making the mistake. The most frequently used strategy for expressing criticism among the native English and native Finnish speakers is impersonalization. Their criticism is expressed by impersonalizing the customer in different ways. The writers are trying to avoid stating explicitly and directly that the customer has forgotten to provide some essential piece of information in her order.

Replacement of the pronoun *you*: Brown and Levinson (1987:197) claim that the pronoun *you* can be replaced by some other word to take the attention off it, like in a sentence *You finished the cookies* the subject *you* can be replaced by some other, more general or vague subject, for example *I-can't-guess-who finished the cookies*.

When the writers want to avoid direct reference to the active role of the customer, the pronoun *you* is replaced by some other subject. The most popular "other" subject in the letters written by the Finnish students in English and Finnish is *the size* or *väri* 'colour', as the examples (9)- (13) demonstrate. In the non-native English letters all five cases, and in the native Finnish letters 11 out of 13 cases of impersonalization are done by replacing the subject:

- (9) ...the *size* of the pullover *was missing*. (NNSE2)
- (10) ...the *size* of the pullover in Your order form *was missing*. (NNSE9)
- (11) ...tilauskupongistanne *puuttui* vaelluskenkien *väri*. (NSF1)
 ‘...the colour of the hiking boots was missing from your order form’
- (12) ...Trekker-vaelluskengän *väri puuttui* tilauslomakkeestanne. (NSF9)
 ‘...the colour of the Trekker-hiking boots was missing from your order form’
- (13) ...koska tilauslomakkeesta *puuttuu* Trekker-vaelluskenkien (W-676793) *värivaihtoehto*. (NSF11)
 ‘...because the choice of the colour for the Trekker-hiking boots is missing from the order form.’

The native speakers of English show a greater variety in choosing some other subject than *the size*, although two of them use it. Expressions such as in examples (14) and (15) are counted to this category because they do not point directly to the customer and are in the active voice (in contrast to the passive voice):

- (14) *The pullover* (Item No. S-207983)...*did not request* a particular size. (NSE4)
- (15) ...*the order form* that the service departement received from you *was incomplete*. (NSE8)

Passive voice: Brown and Levinson (1987:194) consider the passive to be a very significant means in English of avoiding reference to persons involved in FTAs. No passive constructions are found in the non-native English and native Finnish data. Only the native speakers of English (four out of 13 impersonal strategy uses) use the passive voice:

- (16) ...the size needed was not indicated on the order form. (NSE10)
- (17) The size column for item number...was left blank. (NSE11)

(18) ...it came to our attention that the size of the pullover...was left unspecified. (NSE12)

(19) ...to speed your order for the pullover the size is needed. (NSE13)

Yli-Jokipii (1994:203-213) established a category of **evasive oriented** expressions, because the Finnish passive can imply a human, plural agent. She found that some Finnish expressions were in the active voice in surface form but were situated at the passive end in the continuum between the active and passive voices. Evasive utterances free the writer from having to pinpoint the participant in the act. Evasiveness is most easily recognized in the native Finnish data in which the two impersonal active expressions are found. Example (20) is translated as a passive in English and example (21) with neutral *there* as the subject:

(20) Tilauksesta oli jäänyt kenkien väri ilmoittamatta. (NSF8)

‘The colour of the shoes had been left unannounced from the order.’

(21) Vaelluskenkien värivalinnasta ei ollut merkintää. (NSF12)

‘There was no indication of the choice of colour for the hiking boots.’

Also some English expressions are considered to belong to this category: one both in the non-native and the native data. Example (23) shows a clause in which *there* acts as a grammatical subject. It is clearly more impersonal than an expression such as *because you did not indicate the size of the pullover you would like*. Example (22) has a diverse surface form, but as the missing information (*size*) is explicitly named whereas the agent *you* is not, it is excluded from the off record category and counted as an evasive oriented expression:

(22) I tried to call you for the size of your pullover. (NNSE4)

(23) ...because there is no indication of the size of pullover you would like. (NSE5)

7.1.1.3 Positive politeness strategies

Positive politeness is directed to satisfy the addressee's positive face wants, that is, to be liked and approved of. The only positive politeness strategy found in the main strategies of expressing criticism is "Avoid disagreement", which is discussed below.

Avoid disagreement

According to Brown and Levinson (1987:113-114) the want to avoid disagreement arises from the desire to agree or appear to agree with the addressee. The speaker can pretend to agree with the addressee by using phrases such as *Yes, but...* rather than bluntly expressing his/her differing thoughts, opinions etc.

This strategy is used by only one non-native speaker of English. The writer first states something positive before conveying the bad news:

(24) Everything was right, but we have a one problem with size of pullover. (NNSE3)

7.1.1.4 Off record

Brown and Levinson (1987:211) claim that the core of off-record strategies is that an utterance can have more than one interpretation. It is left to the addressee to decide what the speaker means, thus leaving the speaker a way out and a possibility to deny having made a particular act. Off-record utterances are essentially indirect uses of language. The speaker can for example choose to say something that is more general than is actually the case. The Finns do not go off record when criticising the customer, whereas two native speakers of English do. Both cases, examples (25) and (26), are considered to belong to a large category of off-record strategies "Be vague or ambiguous", because it is not explicitly pointed out that the size of the item wanted is missing, but it is said in a more general level that there is something "wrong" in the order:

(25) While reviewing your order I noticed some missing information. (NSE1)

(26) ...in filling your order because of necessary information (NSE6)

7.1.2. Supportive strategies

A number of politeness strategies are used to soften the criticism. Five negative politeness strategies, “Hedge”, “Apologize”, “Impersonalize”, “Give deference” and “Nominalize”, and one positive politeness strategy are found in the data. They are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Supportive politeness strategies used to soften the criticism

Politeness strategy	NNES	NES	NFS
Negative politeness	2	1	2
Hedge			
Apologize	1	3	-
Impersonalize	7	12	12
Give deference	15	14	12
Nominalize	1	1	-
Positive politeness	6	8	7

7.1.2.1 Negative politeness strategies

Hedge

Hedging is a wide strategy which can be realized linguistically in many different ways. Brown and Levinson (1987:145) define hedge as a particle, word or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of the speaker to an issue. Markkanen (1989:142) adds that hedging 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”. Hedges are realized linguistically by phrases, such as

pretty, quite or *sort of*. The most common Finnish hedges mentioned by Lampinen (1990:87) are very similar to the English ones; *yksi* (one), *pieni* (small, little), *vain* (only), and *vähän* (little). Similar expressions are found also in the data as can be seen from examples (27) - (31), in which the writers soften their imposition by adding some reservations to their statements. Two subjects in both of the Finnish groups and one subject in the native English group used hedges:

(27) ...but there was *a little* mistake. (NNSE1)

(28) ...but before we will send You those items, we would want to ask You for *one more* detail. (NNSE12)

(29)...I noticed *some* missing information (NSE1)

(30) Tilauksesi oli kuitenkin *sen verran* puutteellinen... (NSF10)

‘Your order was however that much imperfect/insufficient...’

(31) ...mutta ennen tuotteiden toimittamista haluaisimme *hiukan* tarkennusta siihen. (NSF12)

‘...but before delivering the products we would like *little/some* specification to it’

Apologize

By apologizing for doing the FTA, the speaker can indicate that s/he is reluctant to impinge on the addressee’s negative face (Brown and Levinson 1987:187-189). Of the several ways of realizing this strategy two techniques can be distinguished: ‘Admit the impingement’ and ‘Give overwhelming reasons’. Firstly, the speakers directly admit the imposition: one non-native and two native speakers of English apologize the delay in the order as in examples (32) and (33). Secondly, the speaker can give overwhelming reasons by claiming that s/he has compelling reasons for doing the FTA. Three writers, all native speakers of English, use this strategy. They mention that they have been trying to call (36) or explain the imposition of writing by their responsibilities at work, as in (35). Sentence (34) actually combines admitting the impingement and

overwhelming reasons. Native speakers of Finnish do not use apologies at all when making their criticism:

(32) We are sorry we haven't been able to send you the the clothes you ordered. (NNSE11)

(33) We also regret the delay in filling your order...(NSE6)

(34) However, as I process your order form I notice a discrepancy which I misunderstood and apologize for. (NSE7)

(35) As a representative of the customer service departement for J.P. Williams company, it is my responsibility to review your order and then send it to the correct departement to be filled. (NSE1)

(36) I have tried to reach you by phone but was unsuccessful. (NSE14)

In (34) the writer draws attention to him/herself by emphasizing that s/he misunderstood something. Lampinen (1990:85) considers this kind of linguistic action to be negative politeness used especially in situations where the speaker has to say something negative about the addressee. The FTA is redressed by talking about oneself when actually the speaker talks about the addressee.

Impersonalize

Two ways of impersonalizing either the writer or the receiver are found in the data: 'Replacement of the pronoun *I*' and 'Business *we*'. They will be discussed individually below.

Replacement of the pronoun *I*: According to Brown and Levinson (1987:204), the speaker can avoid direct reference to him/herself by replacing the pronoun of reference with other words. They give an illustrating example in which President Nixon talks about himself, but without using the pronoun *I*: *But the President should not become involved in any party of this case.* Only one subject, a native speaker of English, example (37) has replaced *I* with another word denoting the agent, *the service departement*. The Finns do not use this strategy at all in their criticisms:

(37) ...the order form that the service department received from you... (NSE8)

The use of the first person plural pronoun *we* is a widely spread impersonalization strategy, which is used to avoid reference to *I*. Alongside the less common 'royal *we*' Brown and Levinson (1987:202) introduce '**business *we***'. It may rise from two distinct sources, thus having two kinds of connotations of power; *we* refers to the company as a whole, and also to the group, functioning as "a reminder that I do not stand alone" (Brown and Levinson 1987:202).

The use of business *we* is very common in all language groups. It is, however, somewhat unsystematically used. Of the non-native speakers of English 12 out of 15 have used *we* in some part of their letter, in seven cases it has been systematically used throughout the letters and thus also in expressing criticism, see examples (38) and (39). The rest of the 12 writers have also used the pronoun *I* in some part of their letter. Three non-native subjects (examples (40) and (41)) have used *I* when expressing the customer's mistake. A similar tendency is also found in the other two language groups. Of the 15 native speakers of English 13 use business *we* in some part of their letters, but a total of 11 writers use it in their criticism. In addition to those five writers who use *we* systematically throughout their letters, six native speakers of English use it specifically to soften the criticism. One native speaker of English has used both pronouns (*we* and *I*) in the same sentence as can be seen in example (42). Of the native speakers of Finnish 13 out of 15 subjects use this strategy, 12 use it systematically and thus also in the criticism:

(38) ...*we* would like to ask You... (NNSE12)

(39) ...*we* have a one problem with size of the pullover. (NNSE3)

(40) Allthoug the reason *I*'m contacting you... (NNSE13)

(41) *I* checked your list, and *I* noticed that the size...was missing (NNSE10)

(42) *I* am writing to inform you that *we* have noticed that... (NSE14)

(43) *We* will be unable to send the pullover at that time... (NSE9)

(44) Valitettavasti *emme* ole vielä saaneet tilaamianne tuotteita...
(NSF1)

‘Unfortunately we have not yet been able to deliver the products you have ordered...’

Give deference

The speaker can give deference to the addressee either by humbling him/herself or raising the addressee, thus creating a perception of a high difference in power between the participants. This strategy mitigates the FTA by indicating that the addressee’s rights for non-imposition are recognized. One of the most important means to give deference is the use of honorifics, which are grammatical encodings of relative social status between participants. The use of plural pronouns to singular addressees is a widespread honorific, also called the T/V system, (from Latin *tu* ‘you singular’ and *vos* ‘you plural’). (Brown and Levinson 1987:178-181.) The singular second person pronoun is used between people who are familiar with each other, or when the speaker wants to reduce the distance between the participants. By using the plural pronoun the speaker raises the addressee by implying that the distance between them is relatively great.

The use of T/V pronouns is the most important way of giving deference in the data. In the English data it is relatively difficult to make a distinction between T and V usage of the pronoun *you*, since the form of the pronoun is the same in the singular and plural. Yli-Jokipii (1994:55) observed that the mode of address was apparent in the greetings. The T mode was present in letters beginning with “Dear ‘first name’” or just “first name”, and the V mode in letters beginning with “Dear ‘Mr/Mrs/Ms Last name’, ‘Sir’ or ‘Madam’”. In Finnish the distinction is very clear because the personal pronouns have different forms ‘*sinä*’ (you singular) and ‘*te*’ (you plural), and the verb inflections indicate the different persons.

Following Pilegaard (1997) I exclude greetings and closings (for example *yours sincerely/faithfully*) from the analysis because they are formalities used in business letters and can be expected to be found in every letter. However, it was possible to determine whether the letters were written in the T or V mode by looking at the greetings. In the non-native English data all 15 writers use a formal greeting, such as *Dear Ms. Miller*, or *Dear Ms. Lisa Miller*. One Finnish student has written *Thank you for your order Ms. Lisa Miller*, which is not a conventional greeting, but is counted as a V mode, since *Ms* is a formal way of addressing a person. The Finns have one curiosity in their English letters, which can be traced to their mother tongue. The pronoun *you* is written with a capital *y* in five letters as in the examples below:

- (45) ...the size of the pullover in Your order form was missing.
(NNSE9)
- (46) But before we will send You those items You wanted... (NNSE12)

This is a common feature in Finnish business letters used to emphasize the distance in power between the participants. The Finnish learners of English probably found it difficult to indicate that they addressed the customer in the V mode and tried to make it more overt by using a capital *y*. In the native Finnish data five out of the 12 native Finnish V-pronoun users emphasize the degree of distance by writing *te* (you pl) with capital *T* in some part of their letter, as in the following example:

- (47) Kiitämme Teitä tilauksestanne. (NSF3)
- ‘We thank You for your order.’

In the native English data 13 out of 15 writers use formal greeting and thus also the V mode in their letters. Two American letters did not have a formal greeting at all, but only one is considered to be in the T mode. Even though native speaker of English 9 (see appendix 2) does not use a formal greeting, the style of the letter is more formal when compared to the T mode letter written by native speaker of English 3. In the native Finnish data 12 writers use the V and

three the T mode of address. The V mode is identifiable in the verb inflection, the pronoun ‘te’ itself is omitted in all cases, as in example (48).

(48) tilaus jonka lähetti^{te} meille oli valitettavasti puutteellinen, sillä siitä puuttui tilaamienne vaelluskenkien väri. (NSF11)

‘the order that you sent us was unfortunately imperfect, because the colour of the hiking boots you ordered was missing from it.’

Nominalize

Brown and Levinson (1987:207-208) state that degrees of negative politeness (or formality) are in close connection with the degree of nominalization of an expression. Compare the following phrases: *that you failed to reply*, *at your failing to reply* and *at your failure to reply*. The last phrase expresses the most formality and creates a feeling of greater distance between the participants.

Nominalization strategy is used by one non-native and one native speaker of English, but not by the Finns in their native language. For example (49) has a high degree of “nouniness” when it is contrasted to a clause like *That is because the order form was incomplete*:

(49) That is because of the incomplete order form (NNSE11)

(50) ...because of necessary information. (NSE6)

7.1.2.2 Positive politeness strategies

Sentences which express the company’s inability to deliver the customer’s order, or which directly express that the customer has made a mistake are often softened with *unfortunately*, *however*, and *kuitenkin* (however) which are defined as a positive politeness strategy. According to Myers (1989:8-9), *unfortunately* can be used to express unhappy emotions by assuming the point of view of the addressee. Of the non-native speakers of English six, native speakers of English eight, and of the native speakers of Finnish seven mitigate their criticism with one of the words mentioned above. The following cases are counted as cases of positive politeness:

- (51) *Unfortunately* we can't send you your packet yet... (NNSE7)
- (52) *Unfortunately*, the size of the pullover... (NNSE9)
- (53) *Unfortunately*, we are unable to fill the order... (NSE5)
- (54) *However*, as I process your order form... (NSE7)
- (55) *Valitettavasti* emme ole voineet vastata tilaukseenne...(NSF11)
'Unfortunately we have not been able to respond to your order...'
- (56) Tilauslomakkeestanne puuttuu *kuitenkin* tilaamienne vaelluskenkien väri. (NSF7)
'However the colour of the hiking boots you ordered is missing from your order form.'

7.1.3 Summary: strategies used to express criticism

A total of four main politeness strategies are found in the letters: bald on record, negative politeness strategy "Impersonalize", positive politeness strategy "Avoid disagreement" and off record politeness. The non-native and native speakers of English both employ three strategies whereas the Finns use only two strategies in their native language when expressing the criticism. The most considerable differences between the three sets of data can be found in the use of bald on record strategies and impersonalizing strategies. The non-native speakers of English are more direct than the native speakers of English and Finnish: eight learners of English use bald on record strategy, that is, they explicitly name the customer as the party who has forgotten a piece of information, whereas only two native speakers in the English and Finnish letters express their criticism without any mitigation. It must be noted, however, that the non-native speakers use phrases such as *unfortunately* or *however* to soften the FTA. The native speakers of English and Finnish rely most frequently on negative politeness strategies and more specifically, on different ways of impersonalizing the customer. Nearly all of them avoid directly expressing that the customer has forgotten something. Instead, they replace the pronoun *you* with other some other subject, for example *the size* or *the colour* (*the size of the pullover is missing*), and use the passive and structures similar to the passive.

Positive politeness is used once by a non-native speaker of English and off record strategy is used by two native speakers of English.

Also a number of supportive strategies, a total of six, are used to soften the criticism. The majority of the strategies are negative politeness: “Hedge”, “Apologize”, “Impersonalize”, “Give deference”, and “Nominalize”, whereas only one unclassified positive politeness strategy is found. The non-native and native speakers of English employ six strategies while the native Finnish group makes use of four strategies. There are no significant differences in the way the groups use the strategies, except “Impersonalize”, which is used more in the native speakers’ letters.

7.2. The request

7.2.1. Main strategies

Four main strategies are found in requests: bald on record, negative politeness strategies “Be conventionally indirect” and “Hedge”, and off record politeness. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. The main strategies for making a request

Politeness strategy	NNSE	NSE	NSF
Bald	5	11	5
Negative politeness Be conventionally indirect	8	1	8
Hedge	1	1	-
Off record	1	1	2
Total	15/15	15/15	15/15

7.2.1.1 Bald on record

An act done baldly is said in the most direct way, without any minimization to the imposition. In the data two kinds of verb forms were included in this category: imperative and performative verbs.

Imperatives in the letters occur either alone, that is, without any softening, or with some mitigating device. The non-native English speakers do not use a bald imperative at all, but two cases are found in the other groups: one in the native English (57) and the other in the native Finnish (58) material:

(57) Feel free to phone fax or write the correct size you wish. (NSE 4)

(58) Ottakaa meihin yhteyttä ja täydentäkää tilauksenne. (NSF 14)

‘Contact us and complete your order.’

Example (57) cannot be considered to be very imposing, since the wording of the sentence leaves the addressee a choice of opting out. The Finnish request in turn is more direct, because it is minimally mitigated, only the V mode of address is used. Also no softening strategies are present in the immediate surroundings of the head act.

The imperatives occur seldom alone, most of them are softened with courtesy subjuncts (Quirk et al. 1985:569), or politeness markers (Faerch and Kasper 1989:233) *please* and *kindly/ystävällisesti*. Only three non-native speakers of English use an imperative with *please*, whereas among the native speakers of English it is the most frequently used politeness strategy in requesting. It is used by eight out of 12 native English bald on record strategy users, as in examples (59) - (62). In the Finnish material no requests are done with an imperative verb form mitigated with *ole hyvä*, the Finnish equivalent of *please*.

(59) Please, contact us and tell the size... (NNSE12)

(60) Please send us the pullover size... (NSE2)

(61) Please contact me...or write me... (NSE3)

(62) Please fill in the size you have selected and fax the order form back to us... (NSE17)

Many studies on requesting strategies include performative verbs in the most direct category of strategies. A performative is an utterance in which the illocutionary force is explicitly named, for example *I am asking you to clean up the mess* (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989:18).

Two learners of English as well as two native speakers of English use performative verbs in their requests as in examples (63) - (66). The use of the performatives is most frequent among the native speakers of Finnish, four out of five requests done baldly are performatives, two are further mitigated by suffix *-kin* in the performative verb and one by conditional inflection *-isi-*. The verb is in all cases *ask/pyytää*.

(63) ...we are asking you to inform us about the size you want
(NNSE2)

(64) Therefore, we ask that you inform us about the size you want
(NSE10)

(65) Pyydänkin teitä nyt ystävällisesti ottamaan meihin yhteyttä (NSF2)
'I ask you now kindly to contact us'

(66) ...jonka pyytäisin pikimiten minulle ilmoittamaan. (NSF10)
'...which I would ask (you) to let me know as fast as possible.'

Ikola (1986:76) states that the suffixes are not independent words, they occur only with other words as affixes. According to Hakulinen and Karlsson (1979:328), *-kin* means that something is expected when used with a verb, thus example (65) roughly translates as *Therefore I now ask you...* It implies that the writer is doing something logical and expected, the suffix functions thus as a softening device.

7.2.1.2 Negative politeness strategies

Be conventionally indirect

Brown and Levinson (1987:130,132-133) claim that when using this strategy the speaker is faced with two opposing tensions: the desire to give the

addressee a way out by being indirect, and the desire to go on record and at the same time avoiding obscurity. A compromise is reached by using conventional indirectness. It is defined as the use of phrases and sentences that have contextually unambiguous meanings which are different from their literal meanings. Thus *Can you pass the salt?* is understood as a request, not an inquiry about the addressee's ability to pass the salt.

The problem with Brown and Levinson's definition of conventional indirectness is that it combines features of two other strategies, "Question, hedge" and "Be pessimistic". Brown and Levinson (1987:173) include subjunctive forms of modal auxiliaries *could*, *would* and *might* to the latter strategy, while at the same time they maintain that there are different degrees of politeness in indirect requests. Thus *Could you pass the salt?* is a more polite indirect request than one beginning with *can*. If subjunctive forms were included in "Be pessimistic" and only indicative forms of modal auxiliaries were counted as conventional indirectness, there would have been only one occasion of the use of this strategy in the data. Since studies investigating different requesting strategies include expressions beginning with *could* and *would* to 'conventional indirectness', I will follow Pilegaard (1997:231) who maintains that the term 'indirect' is often used to refer to illocutions involving preparatory conditions, such as the addressee's ability or willingness to perform. Thus requests beginning with *can/could* and *will/would* are considered to belong to conventional indirectness. This classification makes it easier to compare the results with those studies that do not use Brown and Levinson's theory as such, but have classified the requesting strategies according to levels of directness.

According to Blum-Kulka (1989), inquiring about the addressee's ability or willingness to do something (also called whimperative) is a commonly used device to make requests in many languages, also in Finnish, as Markkanen (1985:27) points out. Lampinen (1990:82,79) says that modal verbs such as *voida* (can) can be used to take the attention off the request itself. Also *-ko*, *-kö* suffixes which mark a verb as a question can be included in this strategy.

According to Markkanen (1985:28), *voida* occurs frequently in whimperatives either in the indicative or conditional form. Finnish does not have a good translation for the modal auxiliary *will* which expresses future time, and thus Markkanen considers also its indicative form *Oletko hyvä ja suljet ikkunan?* ‘Will you please shut the window?’ to be a whimperative.

The non-native English data reveals eight occasions of conventional indirectness, the same number of cases is found also in the native Finnish data. In the non-native English letters the students use expressions such as *Would you* and *could you* as in examples (67), (68) and (69). In the native English data only one student uses this strategy, (example (70)). As can be seen from the examples below most of the non-native and native speakers of English also use politeness markers *please* and *kindly*. Some students use both politeness markers, only two do not use either of them:

(67) Could you please call or send a letter... (NNSE1)

(68) Please, would you tell me... (NNSE4)

(69) Would you please kindly inform us about the right size? (NNSE6)

(70) Would you be so kind as to telephone... (NSE1)

In the native Finnish data the most frequent (seven out of eight occasions) conventional indirectness strategy is a question beginning with *voisitteko* ‘could you’ in (72), *voitteko* ‘can you’, or *olisitko ystävällinen* ‘would you be so kind’, in (71). Also a question in the indicative form is found: one student has used a verb with a suffix *-kö* in his/her request *lähetätkö tiedot* ‘will you send the information’. The politeness marker *ystävällisesti* ‘kindly’ is used by four out of eight students.

(71)...olisitteko ystävällinen ja ottaisitte meihin yhteyttä... (NSF13)

‘...would you be kind and contact us...’

(72) Voisitteko ystävällisesti ilmoittaa sen meille... (NSF7)

‘Could you kindly inform about it to us...’

Hedge

Brown and Levinson (1987:146) remind that hedging can be achieved in indefinite numbers of surface forms. Also other kind of hedges are found in requests than those reported in expressing criticism. According to Brown and Levinson (1987:162), *if*-clauses are a productive way of hedging in English.

Both in the non-native and native English data only one *if*-clause (examples (73) and (74)) is found. The native Finnish data does not show any hedging strategies of this sort at all.

(73) If you could be so kind as to inform us of the size... (NNSE9)

(74) If you could fax or telephone us with this information... (NSE5)

Also the phrase *I wonder* is regarded as a hedge in Brown and Levinson's theory (1987:147) since it reduces the coerciveness of orders. One such expression is found in the native English data:

(75) I wonder if you could respond, either by mail...or by phone...
(NSE7)

7.2.1.3 Off record

As already mentioned, off record strategies consist of indirect language use. In addition to vague and ambiguous expressions also the so called **anticipatory statements** are included in this strategy. According to Yli-Jokipii (1994:173), anticipatory statements are realized through lexical items such as *hoping* 'toivominen', which she considers to be off record as it is possible to attribute more than one communicative intention to it.

One non-native speaker of English and one native speaker of Finnish make their request using anticipatory statements as in the following examples. Example (77) is further softened by a conditional inflection *-isi*:

(76) Therefore I hope you will contact us... (NNSE11)

(77) ...toivoisimme että ilmoitatte siitä pikimiten meille. (NSF12)

'We would hope that you let us know of it as soon as possible.'

Only one subject in the native English data has chosen to go off record. The request in example (78) is combined with the FTA of expressing criticism, which alone would suffice as an indirect request:

(78) However, to speed up your order for the pullover the size is needed. You may contact us at the above addresses or for faster service by telephone at... (NSE13)

A similar case is found in the native Finnish data: the request in example (79) is not expressed explicitly at all, rather it is assumed that the addressee realizes what s/he must do:

(79) Kenkä on saatavana ruskeana, mustana ja harmaana. Lähetämme koko tilauksenne saatuamme tietää oikean värin. (NSF6)

‘The shoe is available in brown, black and grey. We will send your whole order after we have found out the right colour.’

7.2.2 Supportive strategies

There are a number of supportive strategies combined with the main strategies that are used to mitigate the request. These are “Hedge”, “Apologize”, “Impersonalize”, “Give deference”, “Notice, attend to the addressee”, “Offer, promise” and unspecified negative politeness. Three sub-categories were found under the strategy “Impersonalize”: ‘Agent deletion’, ‘Replacement of the pronoun *I*’ and ‘Business *we*’. All the subjects use one or more impersonalization sub-strategy, and because some of these categories were at times “fuzzy” and it was difficult to draw clear borders between them, the number of subjects using a particular sub-category are not specified in the table. The negative politeness strategy “Give deference” is not listed in Table 4 because it has already been discussed in the previous section. The T and V modes are used systematically throughout the letter and the results from the expression of criticism are extended also to the requests. The strategy will be

briefly discussed in section 7.2.2.1. The supportive strategies are summarized in table 4.

Table 4. Supportive politeness strategies used to redress the request

Politeness strategy	NNSE	NSE	NSF
Negative politeness: Hedge	6	3	8
Apologize	2	-	2
Impersonalize	15	15	15
Unspecified	2	4	1
Positive politeness: Notice, attend to the addressee	-	5	-
Offer, promise	3	1	4

7.2.2.1 Negative politeness strategies

Most of the writers have given reasons for making the imposition. In the previous section giving reasons was one subcategory of the negative politeness strategy “Apologize”. Brown and Levinson (1987) include giving reasons to a total of three strategies, to “Apologize”, “Hedge” and “Give (or ask for) reasons”. In the data two types of giving of reasons were found, both of which belong to negative politeness strategies, “Hedge” and “Apologize”. They will be discussed below.

Hedge

According to Brown and Levinson (1987:164,170), hedges can be addressed to Grice’s maxims. These hedges emphasize that the cooperative condition is met, or it may not have been met, or they question whether it has been met. The relevance of an utterance can be emphasized by clauses that give reasons why the speaker made the utterance. Brown and Levinson (1987:170) give an example *Do you have any flour to spare, because I’ve just run out*. The request is done relevant by stating the reason for doing it.

In the data the request is made relevant by stating the reason for making it: only after the missing information has been delivered, will the company be able to send the products to the customer. This is expressed mainly through clauses, which are situated before or after the request, beginning with subordinating conjunctions *so*, *so that*, *jotta* (so that, in order to) and *että* (that) as in examples (80) - (83). The strategy is abundant especially in the Finnish data; six non-native speakers of English and eight speakers of Finnish, but only three native speakers of English use this strategy:

(80) ...so that we can deliver all your purchases together. (NNSE14)

(81) ...so that your order can be forwarded to the clothing department.
(NSE8)

(82) ...jotta voimme lähettää tilaamasi tuotteet yhdellä kertaa. (NSF2)

‘...so that we can send you the products you ordered at the same time.’

(83) Emme ole tavoittaneet Teitä puhelimitse, joten pyydämme.... Näin voimme lähettää Teille tilaamanne tavaran mahdollisimman nopeasti.
(NSF11) ‘We have not reached You by phone, so we ask you...This way we can send You the items you ordered as fast as possible.’

Apologize: give overwhelming reasons

The speaker can claim that he has compelling reasons for doing the FTA, thus also implying that normally “he wouldn’t dream of infringing“ the addressee’s negative face (Brown and Levinson 1987:189). This strategy is used in both Finnish groups, in the native English letters the reasons are situated around the criticism. The Finnish writers usually mention that they have tried to call the customer but failed to reach her, and are therefore forced to write the letter. Of the non-native speakers of English two give reasons to redress the act of requesting (examples (84) and (85)):

(84) I have tried to call you, but I haven’t caught you by phone. I can’t send your order forward until I get the size. (NNSE10)

(85) I have also tried to call you but wasn't able to reach you.
Therefore.... (NNSE13)

In example (84) it sounds as if the writer is accusing the customer, but the other writer is not inappropriate.

In the native Finnish data two students mention that they have been trying to call:

(86) Yritin tavoittaa sinua puhelimitse, mutta en saanut sinua kiinni.
(NSF8) 'I tried to reach you by phone, but I did not reach you.'

(87) Olemme yrittäneet tavoittaa Teitä puhelimitse siinä kuitenkaan onnistumatta. (NSF13)

'We have tried to reach You by phone but without success.'

Impersonalize

This strategy is very common and widely used in all language groups. Brown and Levinson (1987:190-206) discuss various possibilities of impersonalizing either the sender or the receiver, in the following only the ones that are found in the data will be discussed. These are 'agent deletion', 'replacement of the pronoun *I*' and 'business *we*'.

Agent deletion: In English, it is possible to omit the subject (*you*) only in imperatives. If *you* is left to the command, it is considered very rude. Compare the examples *Take that out!* and *You take that you!* (Brown and Levinson 1987:191.) In many other languages, including Finnish, it is possible to indicate the subject (or agent) of an utterance in the verb suffix, and the word denoting the subject can be left out. It is thus possible to say either (example from Yli-Jokipii 1994:222) *pyydämme* 'ask-we' (first person plural suffix) or *me pyydämme* 'we ask-we' for the English *we ask*.

The results reveal no surprises: in all letters written in English in which the requests were done with the imperative, that is, baldly, the agent *you* is omitted. Also in the Finnish letters the word denoting the agent is always left out. Even

though there are no cases like *me pyydämme*, where both the pronoun and the suffix indicate the agent, verb forms such as *pyydämme Teitä* (ask-we you) and *Voisitko ilmoittaa sen meille* (Could-you let us know) cannot be considered to be pure cases of agent deletion. This is because the person and number of the agent can be identified in the suffix.

One further interesting case of evasiveness can be found in the Finnish data, where a particular effort is made to efface the addressee:

(88) Tilauksestasi puuttuu Trekker vaelluskenkien väri, jonka pyytäisin pikimiten minulle ilmoittamaan (NSF10)

‘The colour of the Trekker hiking boots is missing from your order, which (colour) I would ask to let me know as soon as possible’.

There is no clear indication who should send the information, though it becomes clear from the word *tilauksestasi*, in which the inflection indicates the party who should inform the writer.

Replacement of the pronoun *I*: The non-native speakers of English do not avoid using the first person pronoun *I* in their letters. Four native English and one native Finnish writer avoid direct reference to themselves especially when expressing the party which the customer should contact by replacing the pronoun *I* with words referring to the company as can be seen in the examples below:

(89) Would you be so kind as to telephone *the customer service departement* (NSE1)

(90) ...we ask that you phone *one of our sales representatives* at...Please let *them* know what size pullover you would like. (NSE10)

(91) ...pyydämme Teitä ottamaan pikaisesti yhteyttä *yrityksemme*. (NSF11)

Another way of avoiding pinpointing the party to be contacted is to use constructions in which it does not have to be made explicit at all. This can be achieved by using intransitive or transitive verbs which do not require an

indirect object, that is, who the customer should contact (see Quirk et al. 1985), as in example (92).

The Finns avoid reference to themselves as the party to be contacted in three letters both in the English and Finnish material. In the native English data only one case is found. In Finnish many verbs can be used intransitively without making the clause incomplete, as in examples (93) and (94) where the writers do not mention to whom the customer should send the information needed.

(92) Feel free to phone fax or write the correct size you wish. (NSE4)

(93) Voisitteko ottaa yhteyttä lähipäivien aikana. (NSF1)

‘Could you contact / get in touch in the next few days.’

(94) ...ja lähettäisit kenkien värin joko postitse, puhelimitse tai faksilla.

(NSF5) ‘...and send the colour of the shoes either by mail, phone or fax.’

The non-native speakers of English employ the same means in English, and have written

(95) Would you sent the size of the pullover... (NNSE3)

instead of *would you send me/us the size*, and similarly

(96) Could you inform the wanted size number... (NNSE13)

(97) Could you please call or send a letter and tell the right size.

(NNSE1)

instead of *Could you inform me/us* and *Could you please call or send me/us*.

Examples (95) and (97) are not ungrammatical whereas (96) is because it lacks an object. Now it implies that the size number should be informed about something.

Business we: Business *we* is very abundant throughout the data. Of the non-native speakers of English 11, of the native speakers of English eight and of the native speakers of Finnish 12 use it to mitigate the request:

(98) Would you please kindly inform *us* about the right size... (NNSE6)

(99) Please contact *us* so that *we* may complete this order... (NSE 12)

(100) Voisitteko ystävällisesti ilmoittaa sen *meille*...(NSF7)

‘Could you kindly inform it to us...’

Only three non-native and three native speakers of English and two of the native speakers of Finnish use *I* in their requests. Fairly many writers mix *I* and *we* in the request, for example:

(101) Therefore *I* hope you will contact *us* and give *us* the missing information so *we* can send you the fabulous EuroInWear garments.

(NNSE11)

(102) Pyydänkin Teitä ottamaan pikaisesti yhteyttä *meihin* ja ilmoittamaan puuttuvan tiedon... (NSF15)

‘Therefore I ask you to quickly contact us and inform us about the missing information...’

Give deference

This strategy has already been discussed in section 7.1.2.1, where it was noticed that the Finnish learners of English sometimes write the pronoun *you* with capital *y* when they want to emphasize the distance between the participants. Interesting, however, was that two writers, in examples (103) and (104) use the capital letter only in their request, and not elsewhere in their letter.

(103) We can't deliver *your* order before everything is clear and that's why we are asking *You* to inform us about the size *You* want. (NNSE2)

(104) Fortunately we were not able to send *you* the things *you* ordered....Would *You* please kindly inform us about... (NNSE6)

Before moving on to the positive politeness strategies which are used to soften the request, I will look at some unspecified negative politeness strategies that are used to make the request more polite. These are mainly realized in “extra” requests, situated after the main request. Two non-native speakers of English emphasize the customer's freedom to act by using expressions such as

(105) Please contact us as soon as possible! (NNSE13)

(106) You can also call us (NNSE7)

Four Americans use similar expressions but do not sound as direct as the non-native speakers:

(107) Please call at your convenience. And of course call collect or please call our 800 service line that is toll free. (NSE1)

(108) Please feel free to call (NSE6)

In the Finnish letters this kind of strategy is almost absent, only one writer uses an impersonal expression:

(109) Yhteystiedot löytyvät ohesta (NSF13).

‘The contact addresses (information) are found below’

7.2.2.2 Positive politeness strategies

There are considerably fewer supportive strategies in the requests than in the criticism. Two positive politeness strategies found in the data are discussed in the following. These are “Notice, attend to the addressee” and “Offer, promise”.

Notice, attend to the addressee (his/her interests, wants, needs, goods)

According to Brown and Levinson (1987:103), the speaker can claim common ground with the addressee by conveying that some want of the addressee is of interest also to the speaker. The Finns do not use this strategy at all and only the native speakers of English, a total of five, soften their requests by attending to the customer’s want to have good service with expressions such as

(110) ...and we will be glad to process and ship your order. (NSE2)

(111) We would like to provide the best service we can to you and send the correct size. (NSE4)

Offer, promise

The speaker can also soften the FTA by stressing his/her cooperation with the addressee by claiming that whatever the addressee wants, also the speaker wants for him/her and will help to obtain it. Offers and promises are a common

way of doing this, since they indicate that the speaker wants to satisfy the addressee's positive face wants. (Brown and Levinson 1987:125).

All groups realize this strategy mainly by promising or offering to send the shipment after the customer has delivered the missing information, like in example (112). This strategy is employed more frequently by the Finns than the Americans, of which only one has chosen to promise. In the non-native English letters three and in native Finnish letters four cases are found:

(112) Then we will send the clothes that you've ordered as fast as we can. (NNSE1)

(113) ...we could send you the shipment without further delay. (NNSE9)

(114) ...niin saatte tilaamanne tavarat. (NSF7)

'...so that you get the items you ordered.'

7.2.3 Summary: strategies used to make the request

A total of four main strategies are used to make the request: bald on record, negative politeness strategies "Be conventionally indirect", "Hedge" and off record. The non-native and native speakers of English use all four strategies, the native speakers of Finnish three strategies. The greatest difference between the Finns and Americans is found in the degree of directness in which the request is expressed. Only a third of the Finns (in letters written in English and in Finnish) relies on bald on record (imperatives and performatives) whereas it is the most frequently used strategy among the native speakers of English. The imperatives are often softened with courtesy subjuncts *please* or *kindly*, which is why the requests cannot be considered to be rude or less polite than those made with other strategies. The most frequently used strategy among the Finns (in letters written in English and Finnish) is "Be conventionally indirect" (requests beginning with *can/could/would you*), which is practically absent in the native English data.

Among the supportive strategies six strategies are detected: four negative politeness strategies “Hedge”, “Apologize”, “Impersonalize”, unspecified negative politeness strategy, and two positive politeness strategies “Notice, attend to the addressee” and “Offer, promise”. All groups employ a total of five supportive strategies. Among the Finns (both in the English and Finnish data) the strategy not used is the positive politeness strategy “Notice, attend to the addressee”, among the native speakers of English it is the negative politeness strategy “Apologize”. The Finns use more negative politeness strategies in their letters written in English and Finnish, such as hedges and apologizing connected with giving reasons. The native speakers of English use considerably less negative politeness strategies and employ more positive politeness strategies than the Finns.

7.3 Politeness strategies in the opening and closing sections of the letters

Politeness strategies reported in this section are external strategies, that is, they occur in the opening or closing part of the letter and have other functions than redressing the FTAs. First I will look at politeness strategies in the opening sections, and then those in the closing sections of the letters.

7.3.1 Politeness strategies in the opening section

Not all letters have an opening section besides the salutation. In the non-native English data it is missing in three letters, in the native Finnish data in four letters, whereas the native English letters all have an opening section. A total of five politeness strategies are found: four positive politeness and one negative politeness strategy. These are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Politeness strategies in the opening sections

Politeness strategy	NNSE	NSE	NSF
Negative politeness: Apologize	-	2	-
Positive politeness: Notice, attend to the addressee	9	10	8
Use in-group identity markers	-	-	4
Presuppose/raise/assert common ground	-	2	-
Be optimistic	1	-	-
Total	15	15	15

The openings of the letters in which the writers merely state that the order has been received (examples (115) - (117)) are not regarded as politeness strategies.

(115) We receive your order.... (NNSE5)

(116) We have received your order that you made on October 25, 1997.
(NSE4)

(117) Olemme vastaanottaneet tilauksenne vaelluskengistä. (NSF5)

‘We have received your order on hiking boots.’

The opening sections of two non-native, three native English and three native Finnish letters are thus excluded from the analysis.

7.3.1.1 Negative politeness strategies

Apologize

The only negative politeness strategy in the opening sections of the letters is found in the native English data. In example (118) one native English writer announces his/her regret for the imposition, and is thus accounted to the sub-category ‘Admit the impingement’. Also one case of ‘Give overwhelming reasons’ is detected in the native English data. In example (119) the writer gives a lengthy explanation why s/he has written to the customer:

(118) We regret we have not been able to reach you by phone. (NSE6)

(119) As a representative of the customer service department for J.P. Williams company, it is my duty to check all the incoming orders before they are sent to the customer. (NSE8)

7.3.1.2 Positive politeness strategies

Four different positive politeness strategies can be found in external positions of the letters, that is, outside the FTAs. These are “Notice, attend to the addressee”, “Use in-group identity markers”, “Presuppose/raise/assert common ground” and “Be optimistic”. They are discussed in the following.

Notice, attend to the addressee (interests wants, needs)

Brown and Levinson (1987:103) maintain that one way for the speaker to indicate that both the speaker and the addressee belong to some set of persons who share specific wants is to notice or attend to the receiver. In the letters this is mainly achieved by thanking the customer for her order, like in examples (120) - (126), or by conveying that some want of the addressee is of interest also to the speakers, like in examples (127) and (128). Nine non-native, ten native speakers of English and eight native speakers of Finnish use this strategy:

(120) Thank you for your order. (NNSE1)

(121) We would like to thank you for your order. (NNSE12)

(122) We thank you for your interest towards our company and we are more than happy to deliver your order as quickly as possible. (NNSE13)

(123) Thank you for your order. I am glad you are ordering from J.P. Williams company. (NSE1)

(124) Thank you for purchasing from J.P. Williams. We appreciate your business. (NSE12)

(125) Kiitos tilauksestanne. (NSF1)

‘Thank you for your order.’

(126) Kiitos tilauksestanne Luosto-postimyyntille. (NSF11)

‘Thank you for your order to Luosto-mail order house’

(127) ...ja toivomme voivamme toimittaa sen teille mahdollisimman nopeasti. (NFS7)

‘...and we hope to be able to deliver it to you as fast as possible.’

(128) I would like to thank you for your interest in and order from the the J.P. Williams Company. It is exciting to know that our products travel all over the world. (NSE7)

Use in-group identity markers

Although I do not regard greetings as politeness strategies, in the native Finnish data four writers use a greeting that is clearly a positive politeness strategy. By beginning the letter with *Arvoisa/hyvä asiakkaamme* ‘Dear customer-our’, the writers convey that the participants belong to the same group. This way of conveying in-group membership is possible only in the Finnish data, as the structure of the language allows such suffixes.

Presuppose/raise/ assert common ground

There are also a few other positive politeness strategies that are used to claim common ground with the addressee. The greatest variation of these strategies is among the native speakers of English. Example (128) shows a sentence beginning with *It is exciting...* which can be accounted as a positive politeness strategy. The speaker can emphasize his/her general interest to the addressee through **small talk**, that is, by talking about unrelated topics before making an FTA, thus indicating that the FTA is not the only reason why the speaker has contacted the addressee.

Another sub-category of “Presuppose/raise/assert common ground” is to use **point-of-view operations** (Brown and Levinson 1987:119-120), as in example (129).

(129) As you know, the J.P. Williams Company specializes in providing the highest quality outdoor clothing. (NSE11)

Here the writer uses *you know* as a means to switch the places between the speaker and the addressee: the speaker speaks as if the addressee’s knowledge

were equal to the speaker's knowledge. The Finns do not use any of these strategies in their letters in English or Finnish.

Be optimistic

When the speaker is optimistic s/he assumes that the addressee will co-operate with the speaker. This strategy is more frequent in the closing section and will therefore be discussed in more detail in section 7.3.2. One non-native speaker of English uses this strategy in the opening section in his/her letter:

(130) We are looking forward to sending You the EuroInWear products you ordered. (NNSE9)

7.3.2. Politeness strategies in the closing section

There is a great difference in the number of closing sections in the letters written by the Finns as compared to those written by the Americans. More than half of the letters written by the Finns (both in English and Finnish) do not either have a closing section at all or do not contain any politeness strategies. In the native English data only two letters do not contain a closing section. Three positive politeness and three negative politeness strategies are found in the data. They are enlisted in Table 6.

Table 6. Politeness strategies in the closing sections

Politeness strategy	NNSE	NSE	NSF
Negative politeness Hedge	-	1	-
Apologize	1	3	1
Impersonalize	-	1	-
Positive politeness Notice, attend to the addressee	-	3	1
Be optimistic	3	7	4
Unclassified positive politeness	1	-	1
Total	15	15	15

7.3.2.1 Negative politeness strategies

Hedge

It has already been shown that hedging can be realized in various linguistic surface forms. In section 7.2.1 it was mentioned that *if*-clauses are included in hedging. In example (131) one native speaker of English uses it in the end of his/her letter:

(131) If you have any further questions about this order please contact me through customer service. (NSE1)

Apologize

When compared with the native speakers of English, the Finns apologize very little. Only one case of the sub-category 'Admit the impingement' is found in the non-native English and native Finnish data:

(132) I am sorry about all the caused trouble. (NNSE6)

(133) Valitan aiheutunutta viivästystä. (NSF6)

'I apologize for the caused delay'

In the native English data three writers explicitly express their regret of the situation:

(134) I apologize for the trouble and delay for your order. I have been unsuccessful at reaching you by telephone and therefore writing to you now. (NSE7)

(135) The service department wishes to apologize for the delay and hopes to remedy the situation as soon as possible. (NSE8)

Example (134) also reveals one case of the other sub-category 'Give overwhelming reasons' in the data.

Impersonalize

This strategy is used once in the native English data in combination with apology. In example (135) the writer replaces the pronoun referring to him/herself with the word *service department*.

7.3.2.2 Positive politeness strategies

Notice, attend to the addressee (interest, wants, needs)

Whereas the non-native speakers of English use this strategy only at the beginning of their letters, three native speakers of English and one native speaker of Finnish use it also in the closing sections. All three native English writers that use this strategy in the closing section employ it also in the opening section. The writers attend to the addressee by again stating their appreciation for her being a customer for the company:

(136) We appreciate your business. (NSE10)

(137) Thank you for shopping J.P. William Company. (NSE11)

(138) I thank again for choosing J.P. Williams. (NSE15)

(139) Kiitämme tilauksestanne ja toivomme että voimme jatkossakin palvella Teitä mahdollisimman hyvin. (NSF13)

‘We thank you for your order and hope we can serve You as well as possible also in the future.’

One business language convention *I appreciate your business* with modification such as *we are happy to have your business* is present only in the letters written by the American subjects.

Be optimistic

The strategy of being optimistic derives from the want to convey that the speaker and the addressee are co-operators. The speaker assumes that the addressee will co-operate with the speaker, an example from Brown and Levinson (1987:126) illustrates the point: *You'll lend me your lawnmower for the weekend, I hope/won't you*. Optimistic expressions minimize the size of the face threat by implying that it is nothing to ask. Pilegaard (1997:239) states that they typically express optimism about a future business relationship and/or presuppose the potential buyer's reaction to a quotation.

Three non-native, seven native speakers of English and four native speakers of Finnish use this strategy. According to Pilegaard (1997:239-240), optimism can be expressed, for example, with the phrase *look forward to*, which is also found in the data for the present study:

(140) We are looking forward your reply as soon as possible. (NNSE3)

(141) We look forward to a long relationship and hope you are fully satisfied with our products. (NSE9)

(142) The J.P. Williams company looks forward to filling your order and getting the merchandise shipped quickly to your home. (NSE11)

The writers use also a variety of other expressions to show their belief in the customer's positive reaction to their letter as can be seen from the examples below:

(143) I am positive that you will be satisfied with EuroInWear products. (NNSE9)

(144) Thank you already forward and we wish you are pleased and satisfied with our products. (NNSE12)

(145) I thank you for providing the shirt size to allow us to meet your needs. (NSE13)

(146) Thank you for your cooperation and we will have your pullover sent as soon as possible. (NSE14)

(147) Odotamme vastaustanne mahdollisimman pian. (NSF3)

'We await for your reply as soon as possible.'

(148) Kiitos jo etukäteen vaivannäöstäsi. (NSF10)

'Thank you already in advance for all the trouble you have taken'

(149) Toivottavasti olette tyytyväinen palveluumme ja tuotteisiimme ja asioitte kanssamme uudelleen. (NSF12)

'Hopefully you are satisfied with our service and products and will do business with us again.'

There are two cases of positive politeness usage in the Finnish data which could not be classified into any particular strategy:

(150) Have a nice spring! (NNES14)

(160) Aurinkoista kevättä! (NFS8)

‘Have a sunny spring!’

This kind of wishing is clearly directed to satisfy the customer’s positive face wants. It is a typical convention in written Finnish language.

7.3.3 Summary: external politeness strategies

A total of five strategies are found in the opening sections of the letters. The majority are positive politeness strategies: “Notice, attend to the addressee”, “Use in-group identity markers”, “Presuppose/raise/assert common ground”, “Be optimistic” and unclassified positive politeness. Only one negative politeness strategy is found: “Apologize”. The Finns use only two strategies in their letters written both in English and Finnish, whereas the native speakers of English use three strategies. All groups employ the positive politeness strategy “Notice, attend to the addressee” which is realized in various ways of thanking the customer for her order.

In the closing sections a total of six strategies is found: negative politeness strategies “Hedge”, “Apologize”, “Impersonalize” and positive politeness strategies “Notice, attend to the addressee”, “Be optimistic” and unclassified positive politeness. Again the native speakers of English employ more strategies than the Finns: the Americans use five strategies whereas the Finns use three strategies in their letters in English and four strategies in their letters in Finnish. The only strategy used by all groups is “Be optimistic”, which is realized with phrases expressing optimism about the business relationship, for example *look forward to*.

Even though a number of external politeness strategies are employed by the writers, there are considerable differences in their distribution, that is, which strategies are preferred and used in each group. Both in the opening and closing sections there is just one strategy that is used by all three groups.

8 DISCUSSION

The results of the present study show that there are differences in the use and production of politeness strategies between the Finnish learners of English and native speakers of English. This finding cannot be considered to be unexpected since previous studies on interlanguage pragmatics have demonstrated that there are differences in the speech act performance and use of politeness strategies between non-native and native speakers. In the following I will discuss the quality of the differences and their significance in greater detail. Both the number of the strategies used by each group and the distribution of the strategies are discussed. I will firstly deal with the main strategies, secondly with the supportive strategies and finally with the external strategies.

8.1 Comparing the main politeness strategies

Small differences can be found in the number of the main politeness strategies used to redress criticism, but not the request. The native speakers of English use slightly more strategies to criticize the customer than the learners of English. This finding is supported by other studies (e.g. Trosborg 1994) which have reported that learners, especially at less advanced levels, use fewer strategies than native speakers. The fact that the Finnish subjects are considered to be advanced learners of English may explain the minimal differences in the number of the strategies. The Finns, however, show less variation in their strategy choices in their native language both in expressing criticism and requesting. In the former FTA they use only two main politeness strategies, whereas the Americans use three. This tendency was also discovered by Yli-Jokipii (1994) who found that Finns (in Finnish) used considerably fewer requesting strategies than British and American writers.

More significant differences are found in the distribution of strategies, that is, which strategies are preferred in each group. The two FTAs give differing

results: the learners of English are more direct than the Americans when criticizing the customer, but more indirect when making the request.

In the case of criticism the greatest difference between the Finnish learners and native speakers of English in the main strategies is the degree of directness. The non-native speakers of English make significantly more use of the bald on record strategy than either of the native speaker groups. This finding is in agreement with results from earlier studies of conflict situations in which the addressee's positive face is threatened (Pearson 1986, Fukushima 1990, Beebe and Takahashi 1989a). For example, the learners have often been found to express their disagreement very directly (see section 5.1.2) with *I disagree*, which can be paralleled with the most explicit way which was used to express criticism in the present study; *you have forgotten*. It must be emphasized that the majority of the criticisms made by the non-native speakers of English are softened with *unfortunately* or *however*, which indicates that the learners are aware of the imposing nature of the speech act and have tried to redress the imposition.

The native speakers of English and Finnish are more indirect than the non-native speakers of English when threatening the addressee's positive face (expressing criticism). Of the native speakers of English and Finnish nearly all use some other strategy than bald on record to criticize the customer. Their choices of strategy make them thus more indirect than the non-native speakers of English. More than half of the native speakers employ impersonalizing strategies, whereas less than half of the non-native English speakers do so. Previous studies support this finding: native speakers are often more indirect than learners when expressing bad news about the addressee (Fukushima 1990, Nyssönen 1990, Beebe and Takahashi 1989a). The analysis also reveals somewhat surprising results concerning indirectness: the Americans use more off record politeness in criticism than the two other groups. Many studies report that Americans rarely rely on indirectness, which is a property usually

considered to be typical of eastern cultures (see eg. Beebe and Takahashi 1989b).

These findings do not suggest that the Finns are more direct in their linguistic behaviour than the Americans even though they make considerably more use of the bald on record strategy when making their criticism. This can be confirmed by looking at the Finns' performance in their native tongue; only two Finns have used "Bald on record" strategy. Instead, this difference in directness may be due to the fact that the speech act of criticizing is placed at a nonroutinized end of speech act production, in other words, there are not as many frequently used conventions for expressing criticism as there are, for example, for requests (e.g. *could/would you*) or apologies (e.g. *apologize, regret, to be sorry*). The writers have had to rely more on their own creativity than on conventional routines. Most of the Finnish subjects probably have the linguistic competence to use other than direct means to express criticism, but it is possible that the writing situation has affected their performance. They may have concentrated more on performing the request than expressing the criticism, because the instructions specifically tell the subjects to make a request.

The analysis of politeness strategies used to mitigate the request reveal opposite results than those concerning the criticism. The learners are more indirect than the native speakers. This conclusion can be made by looking at the main politeness strategies. The majority of the Finnish subjects use other more indirect strategies than "Bald on record" as their main strategy both in their English and Finnish letters, whereas the majority of the Americans employ "Bald on record" combined with politeness marker *please* (e.g. *please send us*). More than half of the Finns rely on the negative politeness strategy "Be conventionally indirect" (requests beginning with *could/would you*) in both the learner and native speaker group letters. This finding is in accordance with earlier studies conducted on requests which have confirmed that requests beginning with modal auxiliaries are perceived as the most polite and they are often the most frequent strategy for requesting, at least in spoken language. For example,

Blum-Kulka and House (1989) found that conventional indirectness was the most frequent way to make requests in seven different languages. Also Kalaja and Koski (1993) reported that half of the Finnish learners of English used conventional indirectness in their requests.

On the basis of these earlier findings on requesting behaviour it is somewhat surprising to find that requests beginning with *could* or *would* are practically absent in the native English data. This can be partly explained by comparing the results to Yli-Jokipii's (1994) study. She discovered that whereas the British used frequently conventional indirectness to make requests, the Americans expressed them with more direct means. She (1994:193) concludes that American business writing tolerates more direct ways of requesting than the British and Finnish conventions, and that the American business writing may be stylistically closer to the language of marketing and advertising than European business communication is. This difference between American and British business writing conventions may partly explain the requesting performance of the Finnish learners because it is likely that they have been taught British business correspondence conventions and English taught at school relies generally more on British than American standards. This is the most probable explanation for the high preference for conventional indirectness in the non-native English speaker group.

The frequency of the strategy "Be conventionally indirect" in the native Finnish data can be considered to be also quite unexpected because Yli-Jokipii (1994) found in her study that the Finns did not employ conventional indirectness at all in the letters in their native language. Yli-Jokipii (1994:165) points out that a request such as *Voitteko lähettää* (Can you send) is normal in spoken service situations, but it is not considered suitable for written discourse. She describes Finnish business letters as relatively formal in style and adds that expressions that do not require a personal tone are common. The most likely explanation for the excessive use of this strategy in the native Finnish data is that the subjects have not been aware of the differences between business conventions in spoken

and written discourse. It is also possible that they did not consider the situation to be so imposing that it would demand more formal language, or they may have consciously wanted to be more personal and reduce the distance between themselves and the customer by employing a more informal mode of language. Transfer from English to Finnish is also possible, since the letter in Finnish was written during an English course. This is, however, difficult to confirm because not all Finnish subjects making their request with a modal auxiliary in their letter in English use it in their letter in Finnish.

The Finns use also very few imperatives. A similar tendency was found in Yli-Jokipii's study. She (1994:155-156) explains the rarity of the imperative in Finnish requests by formal properties of the language: the imperative form carries an explicit reference to the addressee, which makes it more direct than the imperative in English. It produces too challenging a form of address for the Finn. This may have caused the rarity of the bald on record strategy in the non-native English data.

Differences in the use of positive politeness strategies used as main strategies were small. Earlier studies of conflict situations (e.g. Pearson 1986) suggest that Americans use more positive politeness, especially the strategy "Avoid disagreement" which learners do not use at all. The results of this study do not support this: even though positive politeness is rarely used, it is found in the non-native English but not in the native English data.

8.2 Comparing the supportive politeness strategies

The analysis of supportive strategies does not show as great diversity in the use of politeness strategies. There are no differences in the number of supportive politeness strategies between the non-native and native speakers of English. Only the native speakers of Finnish make less use of them when softening their criticism. This finding is similar to the one which was discovered when analysing the main strategies where the native speakers of Finnish were also found to use

fewer strategies. However, there are small differences in the distribution of supportive politeness strategies. Some strategies are preferred more by the Finns than the Americans and vice versa. When criticizing the Americans apologize more. Positive politeness is used equally frequently in all groups in the case of criticism, but in the request the Americans use it more. When requesting the Finns use considerably more strategies which include giving reasons; they make a much greater effort to justify their requests both in English and Finnish. It may be that the Finnish communication style values non-imposition, and the imposition therefore has to be well “legitimized” in order to be acceptable.

Because indirectness and directness are an important part of the concept of politeness, I will discuss them also in connection with supportive strategies even though the results are not as clear as in the main strategies. Indirectness in supportive strategies is realized by using negative politeness impersonalization strategies in which direct reference to the writer or receiver is avoided. Overall, Finns use very little *I*, it is most often replaced by *we* in both the non-native English and native Finnish material. Also the party to be contacted (the company, the writer) is avoided. In some non-native English letters this results in ungrammaticality, when the strategies to efface the writer have been transferred from Finnish to English by leaving out the indirect object from verbs that demand one in English but not in Finnish. These results are similar to those of Yli-Jokipii’s (1994) study. She found that the Finns were reluctant to single themselves or anyone else out in written discourse. The pronoun *I* is replaced with a noun most frequently in the native English data. This can be considered to be somewhat surprising because Yli-Jokipii (1994) found that Americans did not use a noun phrase e.g. *the customer service departement* as a reference to themselves at all, whereas the Finns often used such constructions.

The Finns are also found to use more the T mode of address in their letters in Finnish than the English groups. There has been a growing tendency in the Finnish speech community to extend the familiar T mode to the polite form of

address (see Yli-Vakkuri 1989), but I expected that in the written mode the language and thus also the form of address would be more formal. It is possible that the writers using the T mode have wanted to make the face threat smaller by indicating with the familiar address mode that the imposition is not in fact very great.

8.3 Comparing the politeness strategies in the opening and closing sections

Politeness strategies in opening and closing sections are nearly as important as the politeness strategies used to mitigate an FTA directly. Even though external politeness strategies do not redress any particular FTA, they are crucial in business transactions because they create the overall business atmosphere and pave way to subsequent FTAs. The use of external politeness strategies indicates that the speaker pays special attention also to other face wants of the addressee than only to those that are directly threatened by an FTA. There are significant differences in both the number and distribution of external strategies. The Americans use more external strategies: all of them use external politeness strategies either in the closing or opening section of their letters and more than half of them use politeness strategies in both sections. Of the learners of English more than half use external strategies, but only three use them in both sections of the letters. A similar tendency is found in the native Finnish data, in which also more than half use external strategies but only a small part have used them both in the opening and closing parts of the letters. The difference can be made especially visible by comparing the number of strategies used in the closing section: the native speakers of English have used a total of five politeness strategies whereas the non-native speakers only three.

Differences can also be found in the distribution of strategies. Take for example the opening section; a total of five strategies are used, but only one is used by all groups, that is, "Notice, attend to the addressee" which is employed by more than half of the writers in each group. The strategy is realized by expressing thanks to the customer for her order. All other strategies are used by only one

group. In the closing section the differences in the distribution of the strategies is less apparent. This may suggest that there are not many established business language conventions for the opening part of a letter, which could be defined as linguistic realizations of politeness strategies as there are for the closing section.

8.4 Implications

This study gives some interesting results concerning the use of politeness strategies by Finnish learners of English. The findings are supported by several other studies on interlanguage pragmatics which were discussed in chapter 5. The most important finding is that the learners' production and use of politeness strategies differ from those of the native speakers: learners use less strategies and they rely more heavily on other strategies than the native speakers. The differences have often been found to lead to sociocultural or situational inappropriateness. It is not the purpose of the present study to determine whether the Finnish learners are perceived as appropriate or inappropriate by native speakers of English. However, the majority of the non-native speakers do not sound in any way inappropriate, whereas some learners do give an impression of being too direct (see e.g. NNSE2 in appendix 2). These writers have used only a minimal number of politeness strategies, they do not use them in external positions at all, and it, as already mentioned earlier, affects the general tone of the letter.

There are also differences between the two FTAs: the learners experienced more problems in criticism, which was often expressed too directly. Reasons for this were already discussed earlier in sections 8.1 and 8.2. The impression of being too direct might be the result of a combination of a lack of external strategies and an inability to soften the criticism, and in some cases the rather informal use of language. The learners perhaps do not recognize what kind of language use is considered suitable for the written and spoken modes in the target language, and therefore mix the conventions of the two forms. But it is important to note that the differences in the use of politeness strategies do not

always mean that the learner is inappropriate. For example, the non-native speakers of English who make their requests with *could/would* are not in any way more inappropriate than those native speakers who use a bald on record strategy. This can be explained through differences in preference for certain strategies between American and British conventions.

The reasons for the differences in the use of politeness strategies are difficult to determine. Transfer is one possible explanation. In the data the clearest cases of transfer occur on the lexical level. For example, the pronoun *you* which is written with capital *y* is a convention transferred from the Finnish business practice. The learners have produced some idiomatic errors, such as the use of the phrase *kiitos jo etukäteen* which was translated word for word as *thank you already forward* instead of an idiomatic translation *thank you already in advance*. Also the structural feature of the Finnish language which allows many verbs to appear without an indirect object can be detected in the English letters of the Finnish subjects. Far more difficult, however, is to prove transfer of politeness strategies from Finnish into English. The sample of the letters is too small and it does not allow a comparison on a more general level. The similarities and differences in the use of politeness strategies between individual writers remain as single cases and no general observations of the use of politeness strategies can be made, concerning for example what kind of politeness strategies are likely to cause difficulties to Finns and what kind of strategies they might typically transfer.

To be a competent user of a foreign language it is important to know the pragmatic features of the target language, that is, whom one can talk to, about what kind of topics and what kind of language is appropriate in those situations. It is not enough that learners, or as in this case, future business professionals can write or speak grammatically correct English. Some letters in this study, even though grammatically flawless, sounded too direct, which might in real life result in miscommunication and maybe lead the addressee to think negatively about the writer as a person. Nikula (in press) claims that pragmatic

knowledge should be taught because it has been shown that pragmatic competence does not develop automatically alongside with other components of linguistic knowledge e.g. vocabulary or pronunciation. The teaching of pragmatic principles is, however, very difficult since the principles cannot be considered to be similar to grammatical rules and because every situation requires different kind of language use. Nikula stresses that it is important to make the learner aware of the pragmatic features of language use in general, starting from his/her native language. Pragmatic principles of a language are automatic to native speakers who are often not even aware of the sociopragmatic rules of their native language. Thus as speakers are made aware of the fact that they vary and adapt their language according to different situations in their mother tongue, it is easier for them to understand that it is important, if not necessary, to vary their language use also in the language they are learning.

This study confirms that it is important to teach pragmatic features of language to learners of foreign languages. Learners show intuitional awareness that they have to adapt their language, but they transfer conventions from their native language and are not always appropriate in their linguistic behaviour.

9 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the use of politeness strategies that Finnish learners of English employ when performing two kinds of FTAs in business letters and what kind of strategies are used outside the FTAs in the opening and closing sections of the letters. The results from the non-native English data were compared with letters written by native speakers of English and the learners in their native language. The analysis shows that there are differences in the number and distribution of strategies between native and non-native speakers of English. Americans use a wider repertoire of strategies than Finnish learners to redress the FTAs, but this difference is not as significant as the difference in the distribution of strategies. Finnish learners of English used

more direct strategies than native speakers of English when expressing the criticism, but employed more indirect strategies when making the request. In general, non-native speakers of English showed sensitivity to the contextual constraints of the writing situation and mitigated the FTAs with different politeness strategies. In the opening and closing sections Americans used more politeness strategies than non-native speakers of English and native speakers of Finnish.

Brown and Levinson's theory politeness offers an interesting way to study interlanguage pragmatics and learner performance. By studying the use of politeness strategies it can be determined whether the learner is pragmatically competent, that is, can s/he use language appropriately in different situations. This sociopragmatic aspect in language is very important, because if the learner fails to speak or write according to the sociopragmatic rules of the target language, s/he can be perceived rude or unfriendly as a person. Another study would be needed in order to determine whether native speakers of English perceive the letters written by the learners in any way inappropriate, but it can be cautiously assessed that some non-native speakers do sound a little too direct.

There are, however, some difficulties concerning the applicability of Brown and Levinson's theory as the only basis for analysis. Even though their description of the strategies is very detailed it is sometimes difficult to decide to which strategy a certain expression belongs. This is because several different strategies have similar characteristics, for example, giving reasons is included in three strategies: negative politeness strategies "Hedge", "Apologize" and positive politeness strategy "Give (or ask for) reasons". In addition, there often is more than just one strategy used to do or soften a single speech act: the strategies combine with each other across sentences (or utterances). The theory does not account for this kind of combination of strategies.

The results of the present study cannot be generalized because the sample of the letters is far too small. It does, however, give some implications concerning the teaching of English. Learners should be made aware of the sociopragmatic rules that govern language use, one of which is politeness. Rules that would apply in every situation cannot be taught, but learners should be made aware of the kind of politeness (negative, positive or off record) is valued in the target language culture and what kind of language is preferred in those situations.

Politeness offers many opportunities for further research. Learners' sensitivity to contextual features of a situation could be studied by varying the social variables, such as power and distance. It would be interesting to see if the learners use different strategies in, for example, requesting when speaking with their equal or someone with a higher social status. Also, the present study would provide more generalizable results if the number of the letters under investigation were more extensive. The studies using elicitation techniques to gather data have been somewhat criticized for not providing really authentic language, and thus more useful results can be reached by studying authentic, real-life business letters. Results from naturalistic material could offer true insights to the present state of the business professionals' knowledge of foreign language and could indicate the need for further language training.

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Birmingham SW1X 8HW
GREAT BRITAIN

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 65
00751 Helsinki
FINLAND

Address:

Apilatie 6
00751 Helsinki
FINLAND

Telephone:

+358-0-783 6784
Telefax:
+358-0-783 6645

ASSIGNMENT

BACKGROUND

You are working as a trainee in the customer service department of an international mail order house, the J.P. Williams Company. The company specializes in outdoor clothing, and it has a large number of customers all over the world, especially in Europe. One of your jobs is to check all the incoming order forms, before you send them forward

YOUR TASK

You notice that one order form (see page 2), sent by Ms Lisa Miller, is incomplete. She has forgotten to mark the size of a pullover in her order form. You have tried to reach her by phone, but without success. Therefore you should now write her a short letter to ask for the size, so that you can forward her order to the clothing department.

Please write the letter by hand on the letter-format on page 3.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND EFFORT !

J.P. Williams Company

ORDER FORM

Please use this form to order J.P Williams Company products and return it to:
J.P Williams Company, 1575 Stocton Drive, Minneapolis, MN 55400, U.S.A.
Tel: (612) 703-9470
Fax: (612) 703-9737

ITEM	ITEM NUMBER	SIZE	PRICE	QTY.
"JUNGLE" T-SHIRT	N-182836	M	12 \$	1
PULLOVER	S-207983		24 \$	1
LEATHER GLOVES	W-883677	6	6 \$	1

TITLE	MS	SURNAME	MILLER
FIRST NAME	LISA		
ADDRESS	38 CHESHAM STREET		
	BIRMINGHAM SWTX 8HW, GREAT BRITAIN		
TELEPHONE NO.	44 777 358 6200		
Signature	Lisa Miller		Date 25 October 1997

METHOD OF PAYMENT

- I enclose a cheque, payable to J.P Williams Company for \$
- Please send me a pro-forma invoice
- Please charge my credit card
 - Visa American Express Diners Club

Card No.																				
----------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Card expiry date _____

J.P Williams Company

1575 Stocton Drive
Minneapolis
MN 55400
U.S.A.

Ms. Lisa Miller
38 Chesham Street
Birmingham SW1X 8HW
GREAT BRITAIN

Address:
1575 Stocton Drive
Minneapolis
MN 55400
U.S.A.

Telephone:

Telefax:

TEHTÄVÄ

Olet kesätöissä suomalaisen eräasusteisiin erikoistuneen Luostopostimyyntiyrityksen asiakaspalvelussa. Tehtäviisi kuuluu ottaa vastaan postitse tulevat tilaukset, tarkistaa ne ja lähettää edelleen eteenpäin.

Olet huomannut, että oheiseen tilauskuponkiin ei ole merkitty vaelluskenkien haluttua väriä. Olet yrittänyt tavoittaa asiakasta, Jaana Virtasta, koko viikon puhelimitse, siinä kuitenkin onnistumatta. Sinun täytyykin nyt kirjoittaa kirje tiedustellaksesi värivaihtoehtoa, jotta saisit lähetettyä tilauksen nopeasti pakkausosastolle.

Kiitos vaivannäöstäsi!

Luosto oy TILAUSLOMAKE

Tilaa tällä lomakkeella haluamasi tuotteet ja postita se osoitteeseen:
 Luosto oy, PL 17, 13101 Hämeenlinna
 Puhelin: 917-258 9450 Telefax: 917-258 9467

Ole hyvä ja täytä tekstaten

Tuote	Tuotenro	Koko	Hinta	Väri	Kpl
THINSUKATE HANSIKKAAT	R-58746	8	70,-	MUSTA	7
TREKKER VAELLUSKENGÄT	W-676793	40	700,-		7

Nimi	JAAVA VIRTANEN
Lähiosoite	MÄNTYTIE 7 A 16
Postinumero ja -toimipaikka	33700 TAMPERE
Puh.	931-5627794
Allekirjoitus	Jaana Virtanen

- Maksan postiennakolla
 Maksan luottokortilla
 Visa MasterCard Diners Club International

Kortin numero																				
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Voimassa _____ asti

Päiväys _____

Allekirjoitus _____

Luosto oy

PL 17
133101 Hämeenlinna

Jaana Virtanen
Mäntytie 7 A 16
33100 Tampere

Osoite:
PL 17
13101 Hämeenlinna

Puhelin:
917-258 9450

Telefax:
917-258 946 7

Appendix 2. The letters written by the subjects

NNSE 1

Dear Ms. Miller,

Thank you for your order. We would have sent your order already but there was a little mistake. You had forgot to sign the size of pullover (item number: S-207883). Could you please call or send a letter and tell the size. Then we will send the clothes that you've ordered as fast as we can.

Sincerely,
signature
Sale departement
EuroInWear

NNSE 2

Dear Ms. Miller,

The order you sent us wasn't perfect, because the size of the pullover was missing. We can't deliver your order before everyhting is clear and that's why we are asking You to inform us about the size You want. Please contact us as soon as possible!

Yours sincerely;
signature
EuroInWear

NNSE 3

PULLOVER SIZE

Dear Ms Miller

Thank you for your order 25 May 1996. Everything was right, but we have a one problem with size of pullover (Item number S-207983) Would you sent the size of pullover by fax. Our fax number is +358-0-7836645. We are looking forward your replay as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely
EuroInWear
signature

NNSE 4

Thank you for your order Ms. Lisa Miller. I tried to call you for the size of your pullover. Please, would you tell me if it is S, M or L. After that we'll post your order soonest possible.

Yours signature

NNSE 5

Dear Lisa Miller

We receiv your order, but unfortunately, you have forgot to size of your pullover. Pleas, send it us using mail, fax or call, as soon as possible.

Your's EuroInWear
signature

NNSE 6

Dear Ms. Miller

Fortunately we were not able to send you the things ordered. This is because the size of the pullover was missing. Your order was item number S-207983, price 24, Would You please kindly inform us about the right size (mail, telephone or fax) I am sorry about all the caused trouble.

Yours sincerely signature

NNSE 7

Dear Ms. Miller,

we want to thank you for your order. Unfortunately we can't send you your packet yet. You haven't marked the size of the pullover you ordered in the order form. Would you please send

us a new order form with the pullover size marked. You can also call us. We'd like to send you the things you ordered as soon as possible.

Yours, signature

NNSE 8

Dear Ms Miller,

Thank you for your order an 25 May 1996. You had ordered "jungle" t-shirts, pullovers and leather gloves. Unfortunately you had forgot to write the size of pullover. Could you please send me the information by male or by fax so I can then send to you the products, the sooner the better.

Yours,
signature

NNSE 9

Dear Ms Miller,

Thank you for Your order. We are looking forward to sending You the EuroInWear products You ordered. Unfortunately, the size of the pullover in Your order form was missing. If You could be so kind as to inform us of the size we could send You the shipment without further delay. I am positive that You will be satisfied with EuroInWear products.

Yours sincerely,
signature
Sales representative

NNSE 10

Dear Lisa Miller,

I checked your list, and I noticed that the size of the pullover was missing. Could you please send me a new list or call and tell the missing size. I have tried to call you, but I haven't caught you by the phone. I can't send your order forward until I get the size.

Yours
signature

NNSE 11

Dear Mrs. Miller,

Thank you for your order for EuroInWear clothes. We are sorry we haven't been able to send you the clothes you ordered. That is because of the incomplete order form: The size of the pullover, code W-883677, is missing. Therefore I hope you will contact us and give us the missing information so we can send you the fabulous EuroInWear garments.

Yours sincerely,
signature
EuroInWear

NNSE 12

Dear Ms Lisa Miller,

We would like to thank You for your order. But before we will send You those items You wanted, we would want to ask You for one more detail. You hadn't defined the size of the pullover you ordered. Please, contact us and tell the right size, so that we can deliver all your purchases together. Thank You already forward and we wish You are pleased and satisfied with our products.

Yours,
signature

NNSE 13

Dear Ms. Miller!

We thank you for your interest towards our company and we are more than happy to deliver your order as quickly as possible. Although the reason I'm contacting you is that you forgot to mention which size pullover wish to have. I have also tried to call you but wasn't able to reach you. Therefore, could you inform the wanted size number, so that we can deliver your pullover soon.

Yours truly; signature

NNSE 14

Dear Lisa Miller,

You have forgotten to mark to the order form the size of the pullover You have ordered. Please contact us and tell the size, so that we can post Your order as quick as possible.

Have a nice spring!

Best wishes

signature

EuroInWear

NNSE 15

Dear Ms Miller

I'm contacting you because of your order. You forgot to write the size of the pullover you ordered. That's why I ask you to call or write me, so that I can deliver your correct order to clothing departement as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely, signature

NSE 1

Dear Ms Miller

Thank you for your order. I am glad you are ordering from J.P. Williams Company. As a trainee in customer service, it is my responsibility to review your order and then send it to the correct departement to be filled. While reviewing your order I noticed some missing information. Would you please be so kind as to telephone the customer service departement and clarify the size you would like for the pullover item #S-207983. Please call at your convenience. And of course call collect or please call our 800 service line that is toll free. If you have any further questions about this order please contact me through customer service.

Sincerely,

signature

J.P. Williams Company

NSE 2

Dear Ms Miller,

We received your order for a "jungle" T-shirt, a pullover and a pair of leather gloves; however the size for the pullover was missing. Please send us the pullover size and we will be glad to process and ship your order.

Sincerely

order processor

NSE 3

Thank you for your your order. In reviewing your order I noticed you had omitted the size of the pullover that you ordered. Please contact me at (617) 703-9470, or write me at the above addresses to give me the size you need for the pullover. In the meantime I will ship the other items of your order.

Sincerely,

signature

NSE 4

Dear Ms. Miller:

We have recieved your order that you made on October 25, 1997. The pullover (Item No. S-207983) that you have ordered did not request a particular size. We would like to provide the best service we can to you and send you the correct size. Feel free to phone fax, or write the correct size you wish and we will rush your order to you.

Thank you,

signature

NSE 5

Dear Ms. Miller:

We have received the order you placed on October 25, 1997. Unfortunately, we are unable to fill the order because there is no indication of the size of pullover you would like. If you could fax or telephone us with this information, we will fill your order as quickly as possible. We are sorry for the inconvenience.

NSE 6

Dear Ms. Miller,

Thank you for your order of J.P. Williams Company's products. We regret we have not been able to reach you by phone. We also regret the delay in filling your order because of necessary information. I have enclosed the order form and the space is clearly marked for you to fill in. Please phone us collect also at my number 1-612-703-9470 for faster service in getting the information to me. We are happy to have your business. Please feel free to call. Your other items are on their way.

Sincerely,
signature

NSE 7

Dear Ms. Miller,

I would like to thank you for your interest in and order from the J.P. Williams Company. It is exciting to know that our products travel all over the world. However, as I process your order form I notice a discrepancy which I misunderstood and apologize for. The size of the £24 pullover item is missing from the form. I wonder if you could respond, either by mail (with the provided stamped envelope) or by phone (at our cost), to our dilemma and let us know of the appropriate size to send. Again, I apologize for the trouble and delay for your order. I have been unsuccessful at reaching you by telephone and am therefore writing to you now. Hoping to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,
J.P. Williams Co.

NSE 8

Dear Ms. Lisa Miller,

As a representative of the customer service department for J.P. Williams Company, it is my duty to check all the incoming orders before they are sent to the customer. Unfortunately, the order form that the service department received from you was incomplete. Naturally, I am asking you to complete the form (size of pullover), so that your order can be forwarded to the clothing department. Enclosed is another order form to be filled out at your convenience. The service department wishes to apologize for the delay and hopes to remedy the situation as soon as possible.

NSE 9

Thank you for your order dated 25 October, 1997.

The "Jungle" T-shirt and gloves you ordered will be processed and mailed to you immediately. We will be unable to send the pullover at that time as the size you wanted is missing. Please call me with the size of pullover you would like for me to send. You may fax or mail this information if you wish. After receiving this information I will process your order for the pullover the same day. We look forward to a long relationship with you and hope are fully satisfied with our products.

Sincerely,
signature

NSE 10

Dear Ms. Miller,

Thank you for your recent order with the J.P. Williams Company. In your order you requested a pullover (item # S-207983). Unfortunately, the size needed was not indicated on the order form. We would like to serve you in a timely fashion. Therefore, we ask that you phone one of

our sales representatives at (612) 703-9470. Please let them know what size pullover you would like. Thank you. We appreciate your business.

Sincerely,

NSE 11

Dear ms Miller:

Thank you for your recent order of merchandise. As you know, the J.P. Williams Company specializes in providing the highest quality outdoor clothing. Unfortunately, we have been unable to fill your recent order. The size column for item number S-207983, a pullover, was left blank. There have been several unsuccessful attempts to contact you by phone. The J.P. Williams Company looks forward to filling your order and getting the merchandise shipped quickly to your home. Please take a moment to call me and let me know what size you would like for the pullover. Thank you for shopping J.P. Williams Company.

NSE 12

Dear Ms. Miller:

Thank you for purchasing from J.P. Williams. We appreciate your business. While processing your order, it came to our attention that the size of the pullover you ordered, item # S-207983, was left unspecified. Please contact us so that we may complete this order.

Thank You,
signature
Sales Associate

NSE 13

Dear Lisa Miller,

Thank you for your recent clothing order. The jungle T-shirt and leather gloves that you ordered are already being processed for delivery to you. However, to speed your order for the pullover the size is needed. You may contact us at the above address or for faster service by telephone at (612) 703-9470 or fax at (612) 703-9737. We are looking forward to filling your complete order accurately. I thank you for providing the shirt size to allow us to meet your needs.

Sincerely,
Order Processing Associate

NSE 14

Dear Ms. Linda Miller,

Thank you for your order to the J.P. Williams Company. I am writing to inform you that we have noticed that your order form is incomplete. I have tried to reach you by phone, but was unsuccessful. Please mark the size of the pullover on the order form that I am sending along with this letter. Thank you for your cooperation and we will have your pullover sent as soon as possible

Thanks
Service department

NSE 15

Dear Ms. Miller:

Thank you for choosing J.P. Williams for your outdoor clothing selection. Unfortunately we are unable to complete your selection, as you have not provided a size for your pullover (please see the attached order form). Please fill in the size you have selected and fax the order form back to us, or you may reach us at the number listed below. as soon as we have received your order we will put a rush on your pullover. Thanks again for choosing J.P. Williams.

Sincerely,

NSF 1

Hei!

Kiitos tilauksestanne. Valitettavasti emme ole vielä saaneet tilaamianne tuotteita toimitettua, sillä tilauskupongistanne puuttui vaelluskenkien väri. Voisitteko ottaa yhteyttä lähipäivien aikana (puhelimitse, postitse), niin toimitamme tilauksenne teille mitä pikimmin.

Kevätterveisin,
 allekirjoitus
 Myyntiosasto
 Luosto Oy

NSF 2

Hyvä Jaana Virtanen,
 tilaus jonka lähetitte meille oli valitettavasti puutteellinen, sillä siitä puuttui tilaamienne vaelluskenkien väri. Pyydänkin teitä nyt ystävällisesti ottamaan meihin yhteyttä kyseisessä asiassa, jotta saisimme tilauksenne toimitetuksi mahdollisimman nopeasti. Yhteystietomme näette alhaalla.

Kunnioittaen,
 allekirjoitus
 Luosto Oy

NSF 3

VAELLUSKENGÄT

Kiitämme Teitä tilauksestanne. Tilauksestanne puuttui Trekker-vaelluskenkien väri. Voitteko postittaa tai faksata meille numeroon 917-2589467 haluamanne väri vaihtoehdot. Odotamme vastaustanne mahdollisimman pian.

Yhteistyöterveisin
 Luosto Oy
 allekirjoitus

NSF 4

TREKKER VAELLUSKENGÄT

Kiitos paljon tilauksestasi. Olen yrittänyt tavoittaa sinua puhelimitse, koska tilauslomakkeestasi puuttui Trekker-vaelluskenkien väri vaihtoehto. Voisitko ilmoittaa sen meille, jotta voisimme pikaisesti lähettää tilaamasi tuotteet.

Terveisin
 allekirjoitus
 asiakaspalvelu

NSF 5

Tilauksenne vaelluskengistä

Olemme vastaanottaneet tilauksenne vaelluskengistä. Valitettavasti olitte unohtaneet kenkien värin. Olisitko ystävällinen ja lähettäisit kenkien värin joko postitse, puhelimitse tai faxilla. Kiitoksia vaivannäöstänne.

Terveisin
 allekirjoitus

NSF 6

Tilaus

Tilauksestanne 15.4.1996 Trekker vaelluskenkä, tilausnumero W-676793 koko 40, hinta 700,- puuttuu oikea väri. Kenkä on saatavana ruskeana, mustana ja harmaana. Lähettämme koko tilauksenne saatuamme tietää oikean värin. Valitan aiheutunutta viivästystä.

allekirjoitus

NSF 7

Arvoisa asiakkaamme

Olemme vastaanottaneet tilauksenne ja toivomme voivamme toimittaa sen Teille mahdollisimman nopeasti. Tilauslomakkeesta puuttuu kuitenkin tilaamienne vaelluskenkien väri. Voisitteko ystävällisesti ilmoittaa sen meille joko uudella tilauslomakkeella tai puhelimitse alla mainittuun numeroon, niin saatte tilaamanne tavarat.

Ystävällisin terveisin,
 allekirjoitus

NSF 8

Hei!

Olit tehnyt tilauksen koskien vaelluskenkiä (tuotenro W 676793). Koko oli 40. Tilauksesta oli jäänyt kenkien väri ilmoittamatta. Yritin tavoittaa sinua puhelimitse, mutta en saanut sinua kiinni. Lähetätkö tiedot väristä, että pystyn lähettämään haluamasi kenkäparin.

Aurinkoista kevättä!

allekirjoitus

NSF 9

Arvoisa Neiti Virtanen,

Kiitoksia tilauksestanne. Valitettavasti emme ole voineet toimittaa tilaustanne, sillä Trekker-vaelluskengän väri puuttui tilauslomakkeestanne. Voisitteko ystävällisesti ilmoittaa värin meille, niin voimme toimittaa tilauksenne välittömästi.

Ystävällisesti

allekirjoitus

NSF 10

Hyvä tilaaja,

Kiitos tilauksestasi. Tilauksesi oli kuitenkin sen verran puuttellinen, etten voi laittaa sitä ilman selvennystäsi eteenpäin. Tilauksestasi puuttuu Trekker vaelluskenkien väri, jonka pyytäisin pikinmiten minulle ilmoittamaan. Kiitos jo etukäteen vaivannäöstäsi.

Terveisin

allekirjoitus

NSF 11

Hyvä Jaana Virtanen,

Kiitos tilauksestanne Luosto-postimyynnille. Valitettavasti emme ole voineet vastata tilaukseenne, koska tilauslomakkeesta puuttuu Trekker-vaelluskenkien (W-676793) väri vaihtoehto. Emme ole tavoittaneet Teitä puhelimitse, joten pyydämme Teitä ottamaan pikaisesti yhteyttä yritykseen. Näin voimme lähettää Teille tilaamanne tavaran mahdollisimman nopeasti.

Terveisin, allekirjoitus

Luosto OY

NSF 12

Arvoisa asiakkaamme,

Kiitos tilauksestanne, mutta ennen tuotteiden toimittamista haluaisimme hiukan tarkennusta siihen. Vaelluskenkien väri valinnasta ei ollut merkintää ja toivoisimme, että ilmoitatte siitä pikinmiten meille, jotta voimme lähettää tilaamasi tuotteet yhdellä kertaa. Toivottavasti olette tyytyväinen palveluumme ja tuotteisiimme ja asioitte kanssamme uudelleen.

Ystävällisin terveisin

allekirjoitus

NSF 13

Hyvä asiakkaamme!

Vastaanotimme tilauksenne ja huomasimme siitä puuttuvan HALUTTU VÄRI vaelluskenkien kohdalla. Olemme yrittäneet tavoittaa Teitä puhelimitse siinä kuitenkaan onnistumatta. Jotta voisimme toimittaa tilauksenne hyvissä ajoin olisitteko ystävällinen ja ottaisitte meihin yhteyttä ja ilmoittaisitte puuttuvan tiedon. Yhteystiedot löytyvät ohesta. Kiitämme tilauksestanne ja toivomme, että voimme jatkossakin palvella Teitä mahdollisimman hyvin.

Ystävällisin terveisin;

NSF 14

Tilauksenne 15.4.

VAELLUSKENKIEN VÄRI

Läheittäimätänne tilauslomakkeesta puuttuu haluaminne vaelluskenkien väri. Ottakaa meihin yhteyttä ja täydentäkää tilauksenne, jotta voimme toimittaa tilaamanne asusteet teille mahdollisimman pian.

Kevätterveisin

allekirjoitus
Asiakaspalveluvastaava
Luosto oy

NSF 15

Arvoisa asiakkaamme

Tilasitte meiltä tilauslomakkeella hansikkaat ja vaelluskengät. Unohditte kuitenkin merkitä haluamanne värin Trekker-vaelluskenkiin. Pyydänkin Teitä ottamaan pikaisesti yhteyttä meihin ja ilmoittamaan puuttuvan tiedon, jotta saisitte tuotteet mahdollisimman nopeasti.

Ystävällisin terveisin

allekirjoitus
tilausvastaava