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The use of different style variants and style shifting and their functions in the speech of an EFL teacher

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Abstract

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää eri tyylilajien käyttöä opettajan puheessa sekä tyylinvaihtelua luokkahuonevuorovaikutuksessa. Lisäksi tutkimus pyrkii selvittämään tyylilajien sekä tyylinvaihtelun pragmaattisia että sosiolingvistisiä syitä. Aikaisemmin on todettu, että opettajien puheessa esiintyy tyylinvaihtelua kohderyhmän mukaisesti sekä painopisteen ollessa muodollisessa kielenkäytössä oppilaiden sosiolingvistiset kyvyt jäävät puutteellisiksi. Tutkimuksen aineistona on viisi (kolme 45-minuutin ja yksi 90-minuutin) lukiotason englannin oppituntia. Tunnit ovat osa laajempaa kokonaisuutta, joka on kerätty Jyväskylän yliopiston huipputkimusyksikön (VARIENG) tarpeisiin.

Kyseessä on laadullinen tutkimus, joka pyrkii tarkastelemaan ja analysoimaan syvemmin aineistossa esiintyviä vuorovaikutustilanteita. Tutkimuksessa käytetyt metodit ovat diskurssianalyysi sekä variaatioanalyysi. Aineistoa analysoidessa on hyödynnetty myös puheaktiteoriaa sekä kielellistä kohteliaisuusteoriaa.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että opettajan puheessa esiintyy runsaasti eri tyylilajien käyttöä sekä tyylinvaihtelua. Eri tyylilajien tai tyylinvaihtelun avulla opettaja voi suorittaa eri puheakteja tai noudattaa kohteliaisuusstrategiaa ja näin ollen myös korostaa tiettyä roolia.

Tämä tutkimus ei pyri osoittamaan yhteyksiä esim. kielenoppimiseen, vaan keskittyy pelkästään tarkastelemaan eri tyylien käyttöä vieraassa kielessä. Jatkotutkimuksia kuitenkin tarvittaisiin selvittämään esim., kuinka tietoista opettajan kielenkäyttö on ja kuinka eri tyylilajien käyttö vaikuttaa oppilaiden vieraan kielen oppimiseen sekä sosiolingvistisiin kykyihin.

Asiasanat: classroom discourse, style variants, style shifting, speech acts, politeness strategies, identity roles

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1 Introduction

In classrooms where foreign languages are being taught and learned, the teacher's speech has a significant role. Traditionally it has been a question of code switching - that is, whether the teacher speaks the foreign language or the mother tongue. However, it has been shown that not only the choice of language, but also the choice of style, is essential, in the teacher-led input of classrooms. According to Nadasdi, Mougeon and Rehner (2005), the sociolinguistic competence of the students needs improving when concentrating on the use of different style variants suitable for the context. Also, Labov (2002:85) has stated that children learn to speak differently according to the models they acquire from adults. According to Bell (2002:139), a style can be defined in a context of being a speaker – a first person, an I, an ego, an identity or identities – together with the situation she or he is in. Thus, since using different style variants and style shifting has a significant role in students' learning and acquisition of foreign languages (Nadasdi et al. 2005), also the teacher's role is essential when discussing style and language in the classroom context.

When using a language the speaker makes linguistic choices (Verschueren 1999:12) and utterances can mean more than they say (Blum-Kulka 1997:38). Also, when a speaker uses a certain style variant notably, that is – the speaker uses a certain style variant in a visible manner, or the style of the speech varies from one style to another, in other words, style shifting occurs, the speaker may be transmitting a conscious message. Therefore, the style shift serves a certain purpose (Schilling-Estes 2004:376). In these situations persons are recognized to choose among styles, and the choices to have social meanings (Coupland 2002:190). The pragmatic and social reasons behind the use of different style variants and style shifting can be related to the speaker's identity (Nikula and Tainio 2005), or the speaker may be using a certain style variant to perform a particular speech act (Verschueren 1999:25). The possible functions that may underlie style variation can be explained from a pragmatic point of view. As mentioned earlier, when a speaker changes the style of speech, he or she may be performing a certain speech act. By altering the style the speaker can perform a speech act. For instance, if a teacher says *What a ruckus!* in a classroom, he or she is performing an indirect request for the students to

be quiet, and emphasizes the request by using a vernacular variant *ruckus*. Other speech acts typical of style variation include assertives, directives, comissives, expressives, and declarations (Verschueren 1999:24). Also, the aspect of face saving, that is – the level of politeness, can greatly affect the degree of formality in speech. Blum-Kulka (1997:50-52) points out that the majority of communicative acts encompass a risk to the hearer's face. The degree of politeness, and politeness strategies, determine how great the risk is for the speaker, and for the hearer how to respond to it. Thus, considering politeness and face saving as one of the major facts influencing style variation will presumably be a good starting point for a closer examination of the phenomenon.

The purpose of this study is to attempt to fill the gap in the research of style variation in a classroom context, the focus being on the teacher. Not many studies have investigated different style variants and style shifting in classrooms, and even fewer have concentrated on the teacher's speech. Since it has been acknowledged that students' sociolinguistic competence strongly relates to the different style variants that are used in classrooms (Nadasdi et al. 2005), there is a need to examine the teacher's use of different style variants. The purpose of this study is not, however, to view style variants and their effect on learning, but rather, the main purpose is to recognize style variation and to find out the social and pragmatic reasons for it, and the goals that the speaker may be trying to achieve when altering the style. The context of classroom can also be considered to be a natural environment for this kind of study, since according to Mey (1993:48), linguistic functions of use are best studied where people use language face to face, interacting normally.

This study focuses on recognizing the altering use of style variants and style shifting. The different variants are examined by placing them along a stylistic continuum (Nadasdi et al. 2005) and also by labelling them into being either informal (vernacular or spoken) or formal (institutional, hyper formal). More precisely, this study concentrates on recognizing the situations where a specific style variant is being used or shifting of style occurs in the teacher's speech. In other words, this study seeks to answer the question that also Bell (2002:139) has pointed out: "*Why did this speaker say it this way on this occasion?*" The data of the study comprise five English as a foreign language (hereafter EFL) lessons (three 45-minute lessons

and one double lesson) from upper secondary school (lukio). The purpose of the study is to examine how and when the style in the teacher's speech varies and then try to explain the changes from a pragmatic point of view, explaining it by face saving or performing a speech act. First, the primary interest is on identifying different style variants and style shifting in the teacher's speech. Secondly, the style variants will be placed in a context, that is – what sort of situation they occur in. These will include, for instance, the teacher's use of a vernacular in order to reduce the risk to threaten the hearers' face in a context of performing a directive, for instance, giving out instructions. The methods of analysis in this study will be discourse analysis utilizing variation analysis and speech act theory, explained and motivated in detail in section 5.3.

The aim of the study is to deepen our understanding of the phenomenon of language and style in a classroom context and to shed more light to the teacher's use of language and the goals he or she may want to achieve by altering his or her way of speaking. This study will also try to increase our understanding of style variation as a way for a speaker to achieve a certain communicative goal. This study will hopefully bring new insights to learning as well, even though the purpose is not to discuss or comment on the learning process, it may, however provide some views also to the learning process as well, since the teacher's input and classroom interaction in general affect learning a great deal (see Allwright and Bailey 1991).

2 Language and style: different variants and style shifting

As Labov (1978b:19) has pointed out, there are no single-style speakers. This chapter will examine the terminology concerning language and style. It will clarify the terms concerning different style variants and, also style shifting. Furthermore, the aspects of style variants and style shifting are discussed in relation to the classroom context, as different style variants and style shifting do occur also in classrooms. According to Labov (1978b:9), it is essential for the teacher to realise that the manner in which his or her students speak is determined by various factors besides their knowledge of the language. Therefore, it can be assumed that also the manner in which the teacher speaks will influence students a great deal, and thus requires attention. Also, it is important for the speaker to realise that by altering the style he or she, furthermore, is able to convey indirect messages.

The different styles that can be found when taking a look at someone's speech are called by various terms. Labov (1978b) makes a difference between standard and non-standard language, which are further divided into hypercorrect and vernacular. Somewhat similar terms can be found in Nikula and Tainio's study (2005) where they studied variation in a language and found the teacher's speech to be either somewhat formal, institutional speech or informal, spoken language. When style variants occur, they can be phonological, grammatical, and/or lexical in nature (Nadasdi et al. 2005). Also, when discussing style variants, the shifts between these variants cannot be left without attention. The study by Nadasdi et al. (2005:544) introduces **a stylistic continuum**, which includes variants ranging from **vernacular** (*I ain't goin'*), and **informal** (*I'm not goin'*), to **formal** (*I am not going*) and **hyper formal** (*I shall not go*). Labov (1978b:19) did not only speak about different variants, but also about stylistic shifts and how they are determined by either the relations of the speakers, and particularly the relations of power or solidarity among them, the social context, or the topic. Thus, it can be assumed that the context of classroom will be a profitable environment for style shifting, since the relations of the speakers are inequal in terms of power, as the teacher traditionally has the role of a disciplinarian and therefore more power than students, which in turn can be indicated by style shifting.

In general, Labov (2002:86) has noted that style shifting is related to the degree of speakers' social awareness of a linguistic variable. Also, in style shifting it is important to remember that both adaptation to different audiences and audio-monitoring in different levels are involved (Labov 2002:87). These different style variants are next discussed in a greater detail, proceeding from informal to formal, and then finally explaining shifting between different style variants.

2.1 Vernacular / Spoken / Informal language

When considering the characteristics of different style variants, and specifically the variants from the informal end of the spectrum, Nadasdi et al. (2005:545) point out that the primary insight with the vernacular variants is that "they are not in keeping with the rules of the standard language". Further, vernacular variants are seen as inappropriate in a formal context, such as communication with public authorities. Informal variants, similarly to vernacular, do not follow the rules of the standard language either, but in contrast to the vernacular, are accepted also in formal situations (Nadasdi et al. 2005:545).

As Nadasdi et al. (2005) have pointed out, spoken language does in general follow the rules of the standard, or written, language. Traditionally these rules have been considered to be grammatical in nature. Other defining markers of spoken language, according to Nikula and Tainio (2005), include features such as the *okay*-particle, reduced forms (for example *let's* and *don't*), tag-questions (for example, *this was your homework, wasn't it?*), discourse particles (for example, *by the way*) and other markers of politeness (for example, the speaker avoids posing threats to others' face, to be discussed in detail in chapter 3).

Hieke (1998) has also studied language and style in terms of dynamics of casual and careful speech, pointing out that in casual conversations words do not need to be paid attention to and social barriers are moderately low. Here, the informal style is described as casual speech, which refers to normal, everyday use of language. Also the classroom context can be considered to be of the type where social barriers are moderately low. Even though power relations between the teacher and students are

inequal (Cazden 2001), it can be argued that the degree of language use is normal, everyday use, as the participants and situation are familiar to the interlocutors (Hieke 1998). Thus, it is presumable that informal language has a steady position in classrooms regardless of the fact that the context of school is formal in nature (Labov 1978b:19).

Why, then, do people use the vernacular or informal language? According to Eckert (2002:123):

> I don't think it's clear that it's the lack of monitoring or the act of being ourselves that is the most salient in our production of vernacular variants. More likely, it is both and a number of other things as well.

In other words, Eckert (2002) emphasizes the fact that the reasons for using informal language, or the vernacular, are a combination of factors. First, it can be argued that the use of the vernacular has a link with how conscious the speaker is of his or her language use, that is – of monitoring. Second, Eckert (2002) refers to speakers being themselves as one possible factor for using the vernacular. Also Nikula and Tainio (2005) refer to this subject as they point out that identities and style variation are closely connected and by using a vernacular the speaker can demonstrate his or her role as being equal with other interlocutors, and especially his or her role as their "natural" themselves. But, as Eckert (2002) has also pointed out, these facts alone do not contribute to the use of the vernacular and informal language. The reasons are ambiguous, and it should be kept in mind that these variants may be used to serve a certain purpose as well. This will be discussed in detail in chapter 7 of this study.

To conclude, as Labov (1978b) has pointed out, it is essential to realise that non-standard language is a system of rules that is different from the standard language but not necessarily inferior when discussing the means of communication. It should not be underestimated, especially regarding the conveying of a pragmatic message. Especially in the context of classroom, the use of informal language can be justified with its relation to power and identities (Nikula and Tainio 2005). As the teacher makes him- or herself more equal with the students by using a vernacular, he or she presumably becomes more approachable. Also, according to Labov (1978b:10), in order for teaching to be most efficient, it is extremely important to be able to

understand the underlying structure of the nonstandard vernacular. By understanding this, the teacher will be able to use informal language consciously, and use it to serve a certain purpose, and also enhance the students' learning process, concerning both the language abilities and sociolinguistic competence (Nadasdi et al. 2005).

2.2 Formal / Institutional / Hyper formal language

The other end of the spectrum is dominated by formal variants of a language. It includes also institutional and hyper formal variants. When identifying different style variants, sociolinguistic studies, which have focused on linguistic variables, have pointed out that it is much easier to identify formal language, that is – careful speech, defined as the main body of conversational exchanges between participants that are unfamiliar to each other (Labov 2002:88). Accordingly, formal language can also be called careful speech. In careful speech the speaker monitors his or her speech more carefully, that is - he or she pays more attention to the words used (Eckert 2002, Hieke 1998). Hieke (1998) also points out that these formal, or careful, variants refer to careful, even-measured speech, typical of formal contexts, such as official speeches, lectures and presentations.

As mentioned earlier, careful speech has also often been related to the attention paid to speech. The greater the attention, the more careful the style of speech. According to Eckert (2002), it is important to point out that the attention paid to speech is related to socially meaningful motivations, certain topics may be of such nature that they remind people of how they are speaking, and they may become nervous about their self-presentation and so forth. Also, there are speakers in every community who are more aware than others of the prestige standard of speech, and whose behaviour is more influenced by an exterior standard of excellence (Labov 1978a:215). In other words, such speakers use formal language more deliberately, possibly wishing to emphasize their abilities as sufficient language users.

Formal variants, as opposed to the vernacular and informal variants, do conform to the rules of the standard language (Nadasdi et al. 2005). These formal variants are typically found in careful speech, and also, in written language, and are usually grammatically correct. According to Nadasdi et al. (2005), hyper formal variants,

like formal variants, conform to the rules of the standard language, but are more rare in spoken language and can even be seen as inappropriate in informal settings. They are typical of formal or literary written language.
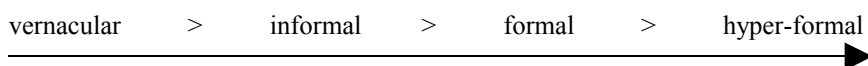
Nikula and Tainio (2005) refer to the formal language also in terms of institutional language. Also Drew and Sorjonen (1997) discuss institutional dialogue. Institutional language means that people use language to manage practical tasks and perform the particular activities associated with their participation in institutional contexts, such as teaching. Drew and Sorjonen (1997:94) further point out that the institutionality in speech is established by participants orientating to their identities and roles relevant to the institution, such as school. The participants possessing these roles and identities, then, manage different tasks and activities, being manifested in verbal conduct, in other words, speech (Drew and Sorjonen 1997:94-97). In institutional speech various grammatical forms are the resources available to speakers when they are managing their institutional tasks. According to Drew and Sorjonen (1997:101); "Certain grammatical forms may be prevalent in certain settings; or they may show characteristic patterns of use, which are associated with the characteristic activities in which participants engage in a setting."

Different style variants in general are phonological, grammatical, and/or lexical in nature (Nadasdi et al. 2005), and this is the case with formal language too, especially concerning phonology and pronunciation. Schilling-Estes (2004) points out that a feature of formal language use can be found in a speaker's higher usage levels for pronunciation in a formal situation. In other words, the speaker pronounces words in a manner that he or she would not use in every day situations. Also, Nikula and Tainio's study (2005) identifies formal features when discussing pronunciation. On the grounds of pronunciation different varieties can be found, one of them being a hypercorrect, "posh", variant, which the speaker uses to emphasize his or her identity or to emphasize some other purpose, such as indirectly indicating expertise of the language.

2.3 Stylistic continuum and style shifting

The style variants introduced in the previous sections together constitute a range of styles varying from vernacular to hyper formal, also called a stylistic continuum (Nadasdi et al. 2005:545, see figure 1).

Figure 1: Stylistic continuum by Nadasdi et al.

vernacular   >   informal   >   formal   >   hyper-formal

From the speech that is being studied, it is possible to identify these variants alone or also, shifts between them. According to Labov (1978a:208), there are no speakers with only one style, but every speaker will inevitably use different style variants as the social context and topic change. Further, Labov (1978b:19) discusses style shifts, and how the relations of speakers determine them, or more specifically the relations of power or solidarity between them. In addition, Labov (1978b) suggests that the wider social context also influences style shifts. Again, the classroom context provides a profitable environment for studying style shifting, as school itself is one of the domains Labov (1978b:19) claims of being a possible wider social context for style shifting, and also it is a place where there naturally are differences in power relations. Also, the teacher not only can indicate power by altering the style he or she speaks in, but also solidarity by, for instance, shifting towards more informal variants.

According to Schilling-Estes (2004), style shifts, in other words, shifts into and out of different style variants, can be deliberate and conscious, serving a certain purpose. By style shifting a speaker can emphasize his or her position in power relations or he or she can show solidarity by making a shift towards the informal end of the stylistic continuum. Schilling-Estes (2004) further points out that style shifts can be intentional and involve use of features that the speaker is conscious of, and also the audience is aware of these features, or they may be unconscious, when people do not realise the features they are using. Also Eckert (2002:121-122) has pointed out that the difference in the degree and nature of the differentiation from variant to variant is an indication that each of these variants has different social meanings that may

further be related to specific subevents. In other words, different style variants are used in different situations to emphasize the social meanings in question.

Bell (2002:144-145) likewise has discussed the question of why style shifting occurs. His explanation is that style shifting should correspond with the audience, that is – the speaker should modify his or her speech according to the audience. For instance, the teacher should modify his or her speech to be appropriate for the students in the classroom. Schilling-Estes (2004), on the other hand, points out that the broad range of factors influencing style shifting include not only external factors, such as audience and setting, but also speaker-internal factors such as purpose, key and frame. These purposes and social meanings in terms of pragmatics will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

3 Pragmatic point of view

Now, that the terms relevant to this study, concerning different style variants and shifts between them have been reviewed, the pragmatic point of view will be the next topic of discussion. As discussed in section 2.3, style shifts may be performed to serve a certain purpose. These purposes and possible social reasons behind them will be explained with the help of pragmatics. As Mey (1993:35) points out, pragmatics is not only interested in the end-product, in other words, the language, but also, in the process of producing language and its producers, the interlocutors. Also, the motivation to explain the use of style variants and style shifting from a pragmatic point of view derives from the fact that a style has generally been recognized as intra-personal, and somehow linked to variation in the situational context (Coupland 2002:188). Pragmatics focuses on studying, among other things, language producers, giving thus explanations for intra-personal reasons, for instance, of style variation. Also, the context is essential when concerning pragmatics, as the sentences and utterances are examined in context. Coupland (2002:189) also pointed out that it would therefore seem to be appropriate to try to explain styles and their functions with regard to an individual's social motivations, even though difficult in methodological terms. Further, Coupland (2002:197) points out that a style can be construed as a special case of presentating of self, articulating relational goals and identity goals.

According to Verschueren (1999:7), pragmatics deals with the full complexity of linguistic behaviour. In other words, with the help of pragmatics, people's use of language, a form of behaviour or social action, can be studied. Verschueren (1999:12) explains the use of language as continuous making of linguistic choices. According to Verschueren (1999:12), the speakers must consider:

> variability – the property of language determining the range of possible choices, negotiability – the choices are not mechanical but guided by flexible principles and strategies, and adaptability – the property of language which enables human beings to make negotiable choices from a variable range of possibilities in such a way as to satisfy communicative needs.

This definition where language use is seen as the making of choices, implies that language users do, in fact, know what they are doing when using a language (Verschueren 1999:187). Therefore it can be claimed that also the choice of style is, at least to some degree, conscious and made to serve a certain purpose.

Mey (1993:7), in turn, argues that if human language behaviour is to be understood more fully, deeply and in general more reasonably, pragmatics is needed. Mey (1993:55) further introduces pragmatic principles that include a communicative principle. It means that when people talk, the words are intended to convey a message, in other words, they want to communicate something to somebody. Other aspects of pragmatics, relevant to this study, include first discourse pragmatics, which concentrates on conversation and the context. Second, politeness, being one of the main reasons behind the use of different style variants. And third, speech act theory, which also contribute a great deal to how people speak. These will be discussed in detail next.

3.1 Discourse pragmatics

According to Blum-Kulka (1997:38), words can mean more, or they can mean something else than what they say. In discourse pragmatics the focus is on the process of communication, but also on the products of communication, including its cultural embeddedness and social consequences. Blum-Kulka (1997:47) also points out that the same utterance, depending on its context, may perform different pragmatic functions.

Speech act theory, to be discussed in detail in 3.3, contributes to discourse pragmatics by drawing attention to four major phenomena. First, Blum-Kulka (1997:47) points out that utterances are made both to express propositions and to perform linguistic actions. Second, speakers are provided, by languages, a variety of linguistic means, ranging from direct to indirect in performing different speech acts, that is – in conveying messages. The third point, according to Blum-Kulka (1997:47), is that the same utterance can fill different pragmatic functions depending on the context. To conclude, Blum-Kulka (1997:47) claims that if speech acts are to

be performed successfully they need to be able to be differentiated by specifying the required types of contextual preconditions.

Conversational implicature, according to Mey (1993:40), is understood as "the principle according to which an utterance, in conversational setting, is always understood in accordance with what can be expected". In other words, the interlocutors discussing with each other are aware of the fact that they have to interpret the messages received, but also that the messages sent will be understood correctly. Also, context is what gives the utterances their deeper meaning (Mey 1993), that is – the same sentence uttered in a different context can, in addition, have a different meaning. Van Dijk (1981) in turn, argues that if the utterances in a discussion are to be interpreted properly, a pragmatic basis is necessary. For instance, if the participants in a discussion are to interpret pronouns that have no antecedents and that are being used deictically, the participants need to be able to interpret the utterances pragmatically to make sense of the message.

Van Dijk (1981) discusses discourse pragmatics from the point of view where discourse is defined as a function from internal states to external states and these functions, or actions, are inevitably caused by acts of intention. In other words, the speakers' internal thoughts are being produced into output, or utterances, with an intention to deliver a certain message. Further, van Dijk (1981:120) explains actions as "binary change operations on possible words brought about through an intentional and controlled change of the bodily state of a conscious person". This change of the bodily state can also be defined as a certain doing, with an intention of bringing about a change. Also, when discussing discourse pragmatics van Dijk (1981:148) talks of a pragmatic focus, defined as an act of selection that is determined by the criterion of how successful and effective communication and interaction are. With the help of this criterion, objects of conversation, that is – separate words and conveyed messages, are selected and sentences uttered are considered most relevant for the hearer to know about, and then, to act upon. Although, even if some of the sentences can be considered relevant for the hearer and they refer to things and properties of various kinds, yet only a part of them perform in serving the development of the discourse or conversation. In other words, elements of

information that are not later presupposed are not essential or necessary properties of a conversation (van Dijk 1981:149).

Finally, van Dijk (1981:192-193) points out that a pragmatic functional analysis of language should be carried out at several levels. First, the analysis can be done within a sentence, where single words or grammatical features are studied. Second, the focus of analysis can be on the sequences of sentences, which means that both the sentences and correlation between them are under analysis. The third, and final level of analysis is within the discourse or conversation as a whole. Then, the main interest lies in the pragmatic functions of the whole discussion, and single units of the conversation, that is - separate words, are analysed as part of a greater entity, having a different meaning than they would have when treated individually. According to van Dijk (1981:193), these levels should be linked, if pragmatic functions are to be explained. This being the outset, the discourse pragmatics, the discussion in this study proceeds to a smaller function and entity of pragmatics, politeness.

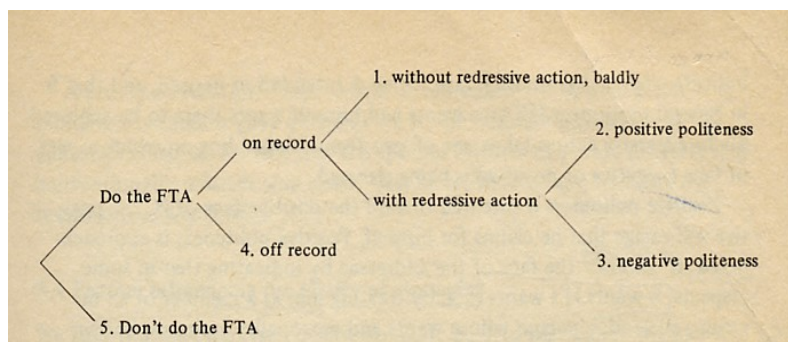## 3.2 Politeness: the pragmatic perspective

In this section some fundamentals of linguistic politeness are introduced, as politeness seems to be one of the most common explanations for the use of different style variants and style shifting. According to Brown and Levinson (1987:61), politeness, or maintaining one's face, is intentional strategic behaviour of an individual meant to satisfy self and other face wants in case of threat, enacted by means of positive and negative styles of redress.

According to Mey (1993:72), the notion of face has two aspects. A positive face means that a speaker has a status of an autonomous, independent and free agent, whereas negative face refers to a situation where a speaker's immunity from outside interference and undue external pressure is stressed. Mey (1993:72) also points out that in co-operative acting speakers try to strengthen their interlocutors' positive face and simultaneously try to diminish threats to negative face. Further, Mey (1993:72) discusses how both the positive and the negative face are threatened when there is a face-threatening situation in a conversation. For instance, when responding to a request to help, the interlocutor can either increase the positive face (*you are the only*

one who can help me), or pay regard to the negative face (*I know this is an order, but could you please help me?*). In other words, saving or being considerate to the interlocutor's face is a way of maintaining politeness (Mey 1993:73).

Blum-Kulka (1997:50) points out that most acts of communication are inherently imposing or face-threatening. For instance, in conversations where directives (the hearer is expected to do something) occur, his or her need for freedom of action is challenged, that is – there is a threat to the hearer's negative face, whereas his or her positive face would be threatened by warnings and criticisms. In the context of vulnerability of face, the participants of the conversation seek to avoid face-threatening acts (Brown and Levinson 1987:68). Further, Brown and Levinson (1987) introduce politeness strategies that are the means by which participants in a conversation fend off and redress such risks to face. The strategies introduced by Brown and Levinson (1987) are divided further to various sub-categories, but the present study focuses on relying on the main strategies (see figure 2), which are introduced next.

Figure 2: Possible strategies for doing face-threatening acts (Brown and Levinson 1987:69)

In a classroom the teacher's language of control usually relies heavily on the use of imperatives, such as *open your books* and *listen to the tape* (Blum-Kulka 1997). In such a case the speaker performs the communicative act in the most direct way possible, that is – does an act **baldly, without redress**. In other words the speaker is making thus use of a **bald-on strategy** (Brown and Levinson 1987:69). In a classroom context the suspension of politeness considerations and the use of a bald-on strategy are more easily accepted because of the asymmetrical relations of the teacher and pupils, as the teacher controls classroom interaction (see Cazden 2001).

Further, Brown and Levinson (1987:69) point out that the bald-on strategy "will be done in this way only if the speaker does not fear retribution from the addressee".

A **positive politeness strategy**, on the other hand, enhances the positive face needs of the interlocutors. Brown and Levinson (1987:70) point out that the strategy in question stresses reciprocity, displays a point of view that is common to all the participants and shows optimism. Also, other typical positive politeness strategies include the use of slang, jokes, endearments and nicknames. The addressee is treated as a, for example, a friend or a "member of an in-group" (Brown and Levinson 1987:70).

Next, Brown and Levinson (1987:70) introduce a **negative politeness strategy**. It includes indirectness in questions, for example, *could you do X for me*, which enhances the hearer's negative face as the statement is done by asking rather than telling. Also, hedging (*I wonder if...*) and minimizing the imposition (*you might consider...*) are included in a negative politeness strategy.

In instances where the risks to face are estimated to be very high, the speaker may perform an act that leaves maximal options for deniability, and thereby makes use of an **off-the-record strategy** (Brown and Levinson 1987:69). For instance, by uttering *it's a bit chilly in here*, the speaker cannot be held accountable for a request, and therefore the hearers are just as excusable if they do not understand the intended request.

In addition to the strategies discussed by Brown and Levinson (1987), Blum-Kulka (1997:52) introduces a strategy called **opting out**. It gives the speaker a possibility to decide not to say anything if the risk to face is considered too great. Further, Blum-Kulka (1997:52) points out that eventual intended utterances may be consequently abandoned after the risk to one's face has been weighed and verified too high. Brown and Levinson's (1987) counterpart for the opting out strategy is **don't do the FTA** (see figure 2).

To conclude, Brown and Levinson (1987:71-74) point out that the choice between these five options is determined by the configuration of three contextual variables,

that is, the social distance between the speaker and the hearer, the relative power of the speaker and the hearer and the absolute ranking of the various impositions in the given culture. The degree of politeness, in other words, face saving, the decision of which strategy to use, and encoding a linguistic act, depend on the risks of the face loss involved.

3.3 Speech acts

As this study seeks to analyse the possible pragmatic functions of different style variants and style shifting, a quite natural and evident tool for that is speech act theory. Speech acts have been studied a great deal and by many researchers, and have been categorised in various ways. Here, the speech acts are explained and defined with the help Searle (1977).

Searle's (1977:16) definition of a speech act as follows:

> The unit of linguistic communication is not, as has generally been supposed, the symbol, word or sentence, or even the token [roughly: the occurrence] of the symbol, word or sentence, but rather the production or issuance of the symbol or word or sentence in the performance of the speech act.

That is to say "speech acts are actions happening in the world" (Mey 1993:111). For instance, a simple utterance such as *It's cold in here* can be interpreted as a statement but at the same time having perlocutionary effects. Searle (1977) makes the division between act, force and point, which emphasizes the fact that "there are different kinds of difference that enable us to say that the force of this utterance is different from the force of that utterance" (Searle 1977:27).

First, according to Searle (1977:34), speech acts called **representatives**, or **assertives**, "carry the value of true or false", at least based on the speaker's beliefs. In other words, a representative is an utterance that describes a state of affairs. Second, the speech acts that encompass a speaker's effort to get the hearer to do something, in other words, direct him or her towards a particular goal are called **directives**. Traditionally directives are performed by acts such as ordering,

commanding, begging, requesting and asking. The third category Searle (1977:35) generates are **commissives**. They are similar to directives as they create an obligation, but contrariwise to directives, the obligation is in the speaker, not in the hearer. For instance, a request is a directive, where the hearer is being requested to do something, whereas a promise is a commissive, since the promise creates an obligation in the promiser. Other comissives include, for instance, vowing and pledging alliance. Fourth, the speech acts called **expressives** "express an inner state of the speaker which, --, says nothing about the world" (Searle 1977:36). For instance, apologies are counted as expressives, as well as thanking, congratulating and condoling. The fifth and last category, according to Searle (1977:37), include **declarations**. A declaration is a speech act that changes the state of affairs. For instance in utterance *I just resigned*, the speaker's state has changed from being in a working life into being out of work.

Speech acts are a widely researched area of linguistics and many other researchers have contributed to this area. In this study, however, only Searle is being cited. This study will not discuss whether Searle's categories are the most comprehensive when discussing speech acts and neither will it discuss how these categories are viewed by other pragmatists. The reason why Searle is cited in this study is simply because the categories that Searle has introduced gives tools in analysing the possible reasons and functions behind the use of different style variants and style shifting, that is, the focus of this study.

To conclude, pragmatics is a wide area of linguistics that covers many other aspects in addition to the ones mentioned here. Also, it is an area that is very significant in foreign language teaching. As Labov (2002) and Nadasdi et al. (2005) have pointed out, students adopt, not only language itself, but also the manners in which to speak from teachers. Thus, it is essential to pay attention to pragmatic aspects in addition to traditional teaching, since the knowing of the language does not only include language skills, but also sociolinguistic competence. One has to know what to say and whether it is appropriate in that given context.

4 Previous studies

As mentioned earlier, there are not many studies concerning style variants and style shifting conducted in a classroom context. It is a research area that has not been studied much, especially concerning the teacher's speech. Another aspect concerning this study and the previous studies is that I will try to find and analyse the possible social and pragmatic reasons, such as politeness and face saving or speech acts, related to the use of different style variants and style shifting, whereas the previous studies have been of quantitative nature, concentrating on identifying different style variants. Next there are studies reviewed, which are relevant to this study. Even though they are not strictly similar, they give an adequate starting-point, since the topics of the studies resemble this study. The difference is on the focus, that is, whether the teacher or students are being studied, and further, the previous studies have concentrated on identifying the use of different style variants and have not given pragmatic reasons to the phenomena as this the present attempts to do. In addition, the previous studies provide some terminology.

A study by Nikula and Tainio (2005) discussed linguistic variation in EFL classrooms in Finland. In addition to the students' speech one part of the study examined that of the teacher's and some explanations were provided for the functions of the linguistic variation that occurred in the data. The data consisted of two Finnish EFL classrooms where the students were studying English for their third year. The approach of the study was a combination of pragmatics and conversation analysis. Their findings show that the teacher's speech was for the most part somewhat formal and institutional. It did, however, include certain features of spoken language, such as the *okay* -particle, *let's* and other similar reduced forms. Other typical features of spoken language, such as discourse particles and markers of politeness were, on the other hand, lacking. Nikula and Tainio (2005) also argued that the variation in the foreign language occurred considerably between spoken language and formal, institutional language, which was strongly related to the context, that is, the material used in the classroom. Nikula and Tainio (2005) point out that these variations could be explained by the speaker's identity. For instance,

the teacher's use of informal variants happened in situations where she was maintaining a positive atmosphere of interaction or in sequences where she was pleading the students to do something or making an argument. By means of language and style variants the teacher can adopt a certain role, or identity. According to Nikula and Tainio (2005), formal variants emphasize the teacher's role as an expert and intellectual authority, whereas informal variants make the teacher more equal with the students and portray her as a friendly acquaintance. Somewhat formal, institutional colloquial language identifies the teacher as an organizer of lessons. Nikula and Tainio (2005) conclude that by altering style variants, the institutional roles of the teacher and the students are indicated and that the variation in language is closely related to the speaker's identity.

A study made by Storhammar (1995) focused on the variety of speech, called Teacher Talk. It referred to the language spoken by the teacher in a classroom. Storhammar's (1995) interest was on the manner the Finnish teacher spoke to foreigners in a language classroom. The data consisted of the speech of four university teachers. The speech was addressed to learners of different proficiency levels, from beginners to advanced. That speech was then compared to the speech that the same teachers used when addressing native speakers of Finnish to find out the differences in the teacher's use of colloquial Finnish versus standard Finnish when speaking to foreign students and native speakers of Finnish. Storhammar's (1995) results showed that when teachers addressed their speech to non-native speakers, they used almost entirely standard Finnish variants, whereas when native speakers of Finnish were addressed the colloquial variants were used very frequently. Storhammar (1995) also points out that the Teacher Talk that was addressed to non-native speakers did not only include features typical of standard Finnish, but resembled closely written Finnish, too.

Another study that concerns the foreign language classroom and the using of different style variants has a focus on students. Nadasdi et al. (2005) examined the variable use of different style variants by French immersion students and how they were able to control sociolinguistic features related to the use of stylistic variables. The data was collected by carrying out face-to-face interviews with 41 immersion students, whose mother tongue was English and who had very few opportunities to

use French outside the school setting. Nadasdi et al. (2005) found that the sociolinguistic competence of the immersion students were lacking in relation to the overuse of formal and hyper formal forms, whereas vernacular and informal variants were rarely or never used. According to Nadasdi et al. (2005), it is essential for the students to be able to manage various situations in relation with the appropriate use of style variant if they are to speak in a more native-like manner. Further, they suggest that the teaching of foreign languages should concentrate more on informal variants rather than spending time and effort on teaching hyper formal variants at the expense of spoken language. Thus, a reasonable goal for students to attain would be a productive knowledge of the middle points of the stylistic continuum. Teaching should raise students' awareness of the context related to linguistic variation, by exposing them to number of variants and giving them opportunities to produce different style variants in communicative activities.

Yet another study by Mougeon, Rehner and Nadasdi (2004), concentrated on the learning of sociolinguistic variants, again by immersion students. In this study they analysed the speech of 41 immersion students learning French in Toronto, Canada. The purpose of the study was to find out whether the immersion students used the same range of sociolinguistic variants as did the native speakers of Quebec French, if these variants were used with the same discursive frequency as they were in L1 speakers' speech, and finally if the immersion students' use of variants were correlated with the same linguistic constraints that were observed in L1 speech. In other words, Mougeon et al. (2004) examined whether the immersion students' sociolinguistic competence, that is, governing also the spoken language variants, correlated with that of L1 speakers. Also, they discussed the independent variables influencing the immersion students' learning of the variants, one of the aspects being how the teacher used, or treated, the variants. The results showed first that the immersion students never used vernacular variants or used them only marginally. Second, they used mildly marked variants at levels of frequency that were considerably lower than that level of the native speakers of Quebec French. Third, the immersion students overused the formal variants in comparison to the L1 speakers. Fourth, only partial mastery of the linguistic constraints on variation were displayed by the immersion students compared to variation that was observed in native Quebec French. Fifth, and finally, the teacher's treatment, that is − the

educational input, of variation provided considerable insights into many of the other results. Mougeon et al. (2004) suggest that learners should be provided with significantly more opportunities to develop their sociolinguistic competence. Also, for instance, materials that especially have focus on sociolinguistic variation should be designed. To conclude, Mougeon et al. (2004) point out that the development of sociolinguistic competence of immersion students was considerably lower that of native speakers of Quebec French. Further, the researchers argued that this study provided "a roadmap for examining the effect of the crucial variable of educational input" (Mougeon et al. 2004:428). In other words, for instance, in examining the frequency of variants in the teacher's speech.

All these studies have showed that there, in fact, occurs quite a significant amount of stylistic variation in a classroom context. The studies concerning students' use of style variants indicate that attention should paid to the educational input, on the teacher's speech, since it has a considerable effect on the development of students' sociolinguistic competence. The teacher's speech has been studied in terms of whether there occurs variation, and also the study by Nikula and Tainio (2005) has given some explanations of the functions underlying the variation. The challenge of the present study is in trying to fill the gap in the studies concerning the teacher's speech and stylistic variation and to explain the possible functions as well. Based on the previous studies the teacher's speech influences the students' sociolinguistic abilities a great deal, and therefore deserves more attention.

5 The present study

Now that the theoretical framework and the terminology concerning the examining of the functions of different style variants and style shifting in EFL classrooms have been reviewed, the starting point for this study will be set forth briefly before proceeding to the actual analysis of the data. The research gap in the studies of language and style in EFL classrooms that was briefly mentioned in the previous chapter will be now discussed in greater detail to motivate the present study. Also, the research questions that are the guidelines of the analysis will be discussed, following with the presentation of the data of the present study and the methods of analysis.

5.1 Motivation of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the use of different style variants and style shifting in EFL classrooms in the teacher's speech. The previous studies concerning language and style and sociolinguistic competence have concentrated primarily on students' speech as shown in chapter 4. However, the teacher's speech has a significant role and requires more attention, as the previous studies (Nadasdi et al. 2005, Mougeon et al. 2004) have shown that the development of students sociolinguistic competence and the use of different style variants heavily rely on the models they achieve in the classrooms, thus there is a need to examine the teacher's speech also in the Finnish context.

Some studies (Nikula and Tainio 2005, Storhammar 1995) have also examined the teacher's speech to find out the use of different style variants. However, they have not analysed the functions behind style variation as this study aims to do. Nikula and Tainio (2005) discussed the subject to some extent as they explained the use of different style variants in relation to the speaker's identity, but Storhammar's (1995) study was content with mentioning that style shifting occurs in relation with the hearer. This study, in turn, will try to find out, in addition to the identity that the speaker expresses by using different style variants, the pragmatic reasons affecting style variation, such as performing a certain speech act or pursuing a politeness

strategy, which further is displayed in style shifting, or in the use of different style variants.

The research questions of the present study will be introduced in the next section. When taking a look at the research questions and in analysing the data it should be remembered that variation in style is not a "clear-cut-division", but rather a continuum. For this study the examples were chosen when the use of certain style variant had a pragmatic reason. By answering the research questions that are next introduced, the present study will try to shed more light to the phenomenon of style variants and their functions as used by the teacher in EFL classrooms.

5.2 Research questions

The aim of this study is to find out what sort of intra-language style variants occur in the teacher's speech in EFL classrooms, and what different functions those variants have. I am interested in the kinds of functions that have social and pragmatic reasons, such as when style variant is being used due to perform a speech act or pursue a politeness strategy in order to, for instance, accomplish a face-saving act. The primary interest is on recognising the use of different style variants and style shifting and then finding out the pragmatic reasons affecting the speech:

1. What different style variants and what sort of style shifting occur in the teacher's speech in EFL classrooms?
2. Do the different style variants and style shifting perform a certain speech act or pursue a certain politeness strategy?
3. Do the combination of certain style variant, speech act and politeness strategy emphasize some identity role of the teacher?

As it becomes evident from the research questions the focus of this study will be on the speech of the teacher. The teacher's speech will be examined to find out the use of different style variants and style shifting, that is - answering the first research question. The whole interaction event will not be explained, but certain examples are picked from the data as they represent a certain style variant or style shifting, and also are such where a speech act or politeness strategy can be recognised by the

criteria of Searle (1977) and Brown and Levinson (1987). The different style variants and style shifting are determined with the help of stylistic continuum by Nadasdi et al. (2005:545).

The second research question examines the pragmatic reasons that affect the use of different style variants and style shifting. First, it will be examined whether the utterance in question also performs a certain speech act. Speech act theory (Searle 1977) was reviewed in chapter 3. Second, the analysis will try to find out the possible pursuing of a politeness strategy, in order to emphasize the hearers' negative or positive face by using a specific style variant. The politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987, Blum-Kulka 1997) were also reviewed in chapter 3.

The third research question focuses on examining whether the combination of the use of different style variants or style shifting, a speech act and a politeness together emphasize some specific role of the teacher (Nikula and Tainio 2005). For instance, the formal style can emphasize the teacher being an intellectual authority, but the pursuing of a politeness strategy can change the role to a neutral organizer of the lesson.

5.3 Data

The data for this study comes from a larger pool of data and was provided by VARIENG, the Centre of Excellence for the Study of Variation, Contacts and Change in English, which is a shared undertaking of the University of Helsinki and the University of Jyväskylä (for further information see www.jyu.fi/hum/ laitokset/kielet/varieng). It consists of English language lessons that have been video-recorded and transcribed. The transcription conventions can be found in appendix 1. The focus is on two different teachers. The first one teaches first-year students in upper secondary school in Jyväskylä and the second one teaches second-year students, also in Jyväskylä. These sets include three 45-minute lessons and one 90-minute lesson. Both the teachers have two different groups. The reason why I chose the data from different teachers and different school levels was to get a more varied picture of the language use, and in that way also in the use of style variants and style shifting. Also, by examining two different teachers in this study, I am able to ensure

that the possible shifts and using of different style variants are not only bound to personal aspects and manners of speaking.

The first-year students are approximately 16 years old and have started to study English in their third year at school and are now studying it for the eight year. There are nine students in the double lesson and 14 students in the other group. The teacher of these groups is female and in her fifties. The second-year students are approximately 17 years old and have also started to study English in their third year at school and therefore this is their ninth year of studying English. In the first group there are 17 students and in the second group there are 14 students. The teacher is female and in her thirties. The lessons have been recorded in Jyväskylä in January 2003.

Table 1. Description of the data

Grade	Grade of starting English	Year of studying English	Number of students	Teacher
1st year, group 1	3rd	8th	9	female,~50 years old, A
1st year, group 2	3rd	8th	14	female,~50 years old, A
2nd year, group 1	3rd	9th	17	female,~30 years old, B
2nd year, group 2	3rd	9th	14	female,~30 years old, B

The lessons all have different themes. The class, for example, studies grammar, does listening comprehension exercises, and also studies textbook chapters. The teaching modes also vary from lesson to lesson and they have different kinds of activities and exercises. There are traditional modes of teaching, where the teacher, for example, asks questions and the students answer, but also, for example, free discussions, and the teacher encourages the students to produce output through her own example, that is, speaking the foreign language. The lessons are teacher-led to a great extent, but have also pair- and group-work.

5.3 Methods of analysis

The study will not provide numerical accounts of style variants and shifts and therefore is a descriptive one. The reason for this is that the main interest of this

study is not to find frequencies, but to analyse and understand the functions behind them. Also, the division between formal and informal language is not so much a division but rather a continuum, and therefore difficult to count. I will concentrate only on the extreme-ends of this continuum, that is, the clear cases of informal and formal speech, and analyse them.

In this study, I will identify instances of style shifting and the distinguishable use of certain style variants and analyse them. I will also try to find whether they have any specific social and pragmatic functions. The main interest will be in the teacher's style shifting and use of style variants. Firstly, the method of analysis will be discourse analysis (Schiffrin 1994). I chose this method because discourse analysis concentrates on discourse, whether spoken or written. In the context of classrooms, discourse analysis means that the analysis is made of spoken language as used by the teacher and students (Allwright and Bailey 1991). Also, the way of collecting the data is similar to that of discourse analysts, that is, audio- or video-recordings and transcriptions. Secondly, I will make some notions with the help of variation analysis as the variationists try to discover the social and linguistic factors that may cause variation in the ways of speaking (Schiffrin 1994:282). A variationist approach to discourse is a linguistic approach that attempts to find out the social context under certain methodological and analytical circumstances. Thirdly, as I am interested in the social and pragmatic functions of style shifting, other methods used in this study are speech act theory (Searle 1977) and politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1987). Speech act theory supports the ideas of discourse analysis and offers an approach where spoken language is divided into acts with communicative functions, which then are identified and labelled (Schiffrin 1994:90). Politeness theory, on the other hand, provides tools to identify the face saving acts behind the use of different style variants. This multiple use of methods is reasoned by the fact that a combination of different methods can provide better possibilities in analysing classroom discourse than one method could alone (Rampton et al. 2002), thus an eclectic approach in analysing the data.

The first task in the analysis is to look at the data and observe the events in the classroom that include interaction and if there appears different style variants or the style of speaking changes. Next, the instances of style shifting and use of certain

style variants will be divided into different categories according to the stylistic continuum by Nadasdi et al. (2005), and then those cases are studied and analysed to find out the possible speech acts they perform or politeness strategies they pursue. Finally, the examples are analysed in order to find out whether the utterances in question reflect a certain identity role of the teacher, emphasized by stylistic variation and pragmatic aspects.

6 The teacher's use of different style variants and style shifting in EFL classrooms

This chapter focuses on reporting the use of different style variants and style shifting found in the data. In addition to reporting the examples, they are analysed in terms of whether they perform a certain speech act or pursue a politeness strategy. The data was treated as a whole and the examples are not introduced in order to their lessons, that is – for instance, introducing first all the lessons from teacher A, and then from teacher B, but depending on to their style categories. Also, the examples are not put in order according to any other pattern, as the purpose of this study is not to, for example, find out frequencies in the use of politeness strategies or speech acts, or any other of similar kind. There will therefore not be any comparisons between the teachers or the lessons, but an analysis of different style variants and style shifting and what their possible functions are, and this random order was chosen, because I hoped to get a comprehensive picture of style shifting as a phenomena, not being restricted to a single person, or a situation, etc.

The terms and the categories that will be referred to in the present study can be found in chapters 2, 3 and 4, where they were discussed in detail. The politeness strategies that are used are provided by Brown and Levinson (1987) and speech acts identified according to Searle (1977). The identity roles found in the present study are also similar to the ones presented earlier by the study of Nikula and Tainio (2005). The examples chosen to be analysed were selected from the data because they illustrated clear cases of style shifting or some particular style was used distinctly. The analysis then proceeds in the following order: examples are introduced first by identifying the words, or utterances, that are instances of certain style variants or style shifting, then the examples are examined in relation to politeness strategies, speech acts and identity roles. After the examples are introduced and analysed, the actual example is provided. As mentioned earlier the formality level in language is rather a continuum of styles (Nadasdi et al. 2005) than a clear division of different styles, and therefore this study concentrates on the extreme-ends of the stylistic continuum, and on the shifts between them, and the examples chosen illustrate these ends and shifts.

6.1 Informal style variants

The informal style variants present the variants from the informal end of the stylistic continuum including vernacular and spoken language variants (Nadasdi et al. 2005). In Example 1, the informality of the speech is well illustrated on lines 2 and 5 where the teacher is using informal phrases *if you like* and *wha'ever you like it*. The situation is of the kind where the teacher is giving instructions to the students, in other words, performing a speech act of a directive. The directive is not, however, a direct command, but rather a request as the teacher says on line 1 *you can take your books* compared to, for example, a direct command *take your books*. Giving instructions by asking rather than by telling, the teacher pursues a negative politeness strategy and therefore enhances the hearers', that is - the students', negative face. By pursuing a negative politeness strategy while performing a directive the teacher's role is moderated from a disciplinarian to a neutral organizer of the lesson.

Example 1

```
1 T     .hh an you can take your books an:
2        go to page forty four if you ↑like
3        or you can keep your books [shut        ]
4 LM4                               [((coughs))]
5 T     or >wha'ever you like it<
        (3.3)
(2nd year, group 2, teacher B)
```

In Example 2, the informal style is shown on line 3 where the teacher uses the word *thing* instead of, for example, *exercise* or *task*, which would be more formal in style. Here, by using an informal style the teacher diminishes the inequality in their power relationship, even though the speech act performed is a directive where the student is expected to do something, in this case answer the question and also show that he has done an exercise he was supposed to do. Not only is the teacher using an informal style variant to moderate her role in relation to power, but she also makes use of a negative politeness strategy. This strategy is shown in the indirect nature of the question that the teacher addresses to the student. The informal style together with the use of a negative politeness strategy refers to the teacher being a neutral organizer of the lesson, if not even equal partner.

Example 2

1 T   an Ivan (.)
2   did you do this (0.8)
3   aah (0.4) thing on the page (0.2) fifty nine
(1st year, group 1, teacher A)

Example 3 illustrates how one word can function as a question. On lines 1 through 3, the teacher is wondering whether the information was obtained and she does that by either with the tone of voice, in other words, with raised intonation to mark the question, or with a question *did you get that?*. Compared to formal and written language it is possible in spoken and informal language to ask a question with only one word together with raised intonation. As this situation includes an act of asking, it again functions as a directive. The politeness strategy used here is typical of the school context, where speech acts are accepted also in the most direct way, and that because of the asymmetrical power relations of the teacher and students. This example also proves that with the help of informal style the teacher can emphasize those power relations, especially by using the bald-on strategy. Here, even though the informal style is being used, the teacher's role is the disciplinarian of the class, as illustrated with the use of the bald-on strategy.

Example 3

1 T   girls? (0.4)
2   Laura? (0.6)
3   did you get that?
(1st year, group 2, teacher A)

The previous example showed how only one word combined with intonation can function as a question, and this is possible only in informal language. Another example of informal style are reduced constructions, as is evident in Example 4. First, on line 1, the teacher reduces the utterance in question by assimilating words together from *what do you think?* to *whaddo you think?*, which is typical of spoken language. Secondly, on lines 5 and 6, the teacher uses informal language to encourage the students to participate and to think of the possible answer to the question, and she does so, again, by using reduced forms *or a bad husband* instead of *is he a bad husband*. The speech act performed here is again a directive as the situation involves asking of a question. The question, however, is presented in an indirect way, as it is initiated with *whaddo you think*, and thus fills the distinctive

features of a negative politeness strategy. With the help of the negative politeness strategy and by using informal language the teacher enhances the students' negative face and therefore diminishes the gap between the teacher and students, emphasizing thus also the teacher's role as an equal partner.

Example 4

```
1 T     whaddo you think?
2 LF    .hhh
3 T     a two timer
4       (3.3)
5 T     is he a nice hus↑band (0.5)
6       or a ba:d husband
(2nd year, group 1, teacher B)
```

As the lessons consist of different themes and parts it is necessary to have transitions between these themes and parts. Often, as the subject changes, so does the style. The use of different style variants is not bound to the subject but, for example, to different situations and functions. In Example 5, grammar, the next subject that the class is about to study, could be seen as formal, but the language, on the other hand, is of informal nature. On line 3, the teacher makes a remark *and continue with other stuff later, okay*. The words *stuff* and *okay* are both very typical features of spoken, informal language. By using informal language, the teacher makes the transition easier to the students as the subject, on the other hand, is something that the teacher masters. In this situation the students are directed towards a particular goal, thus the teacher again makes use of a directive. As mentioned earlier, the subject itself can be viewed as formal in nature and the teacher uses informal style to make the subject more approachable to the students. To enhance the use of informal style the teacher utilizes a positive politeness strategy. The teacher enhances the students' positive face needs by saying on lines 1 and 2 that *because we have to do some grammar* and *I suggest we do it now*. According to Blum-Kulka (1997:51), the use of the pronoun *we* stresses reciprocity and creates an atmosphere where a common view is displayed. In this example, the teacher's role is that of a neutral organizer of the class, as the politeness strategy used compensates for the asymmetrical relations of the teacher and students.

Example 5

```
1 T     okay >and because we have to do some grammar
```

2   I suggest we do it now
3   and continue with other stuff la↑ter< (.) o↑kay
4   (1.3)
(1st year, group 1, teacher A)

Example 6 is another illustration of how style becomes informal when using reduced forms. On line 2, the teacher takes the floor and suggests a change in the subject by saying *we'd better continue* instead of using the complete form *we had better continue*, which would be more formal in style. With the reduced construction the teacher's speech is more informal in nature and therefore more approachable to the students. The speech act performed here is a directive since the speaker, the teacher, makes an effort to get the hearers, the students, to do something, in this case to continue with other subjects. She does so by using a positive politeness strategy, which is shown in the emphasizing of reciprocity, that is – the use of the pronoun *we*. Even though in this example the teacher orders the students to do something, the politeness strategy together with informal style reflects the teacher's role as an equal partner.

Example 6

1 T   so I think we'll better (.)
2   we'd better continue with the
3   (5.4)
(1st year, group 1, teacher A)

In Example 7, the situation is of the kind where the teacher makes a transition from studying to the announcing of common matters. The utterance begins with *okay* on line 1, which is a typical particle in spoken language. Overall, this utterance is of informal nature with short words, such as *so* on line 1, and reduced forms, such as *a few announcements* on line 2, instead of a complete sentence *I have a few announcements*. The informal style used here indicates a change in the teacher's role. She uses informal style to highlight the fact that now she is neither the expert nor the authority, but an organizer of common matters that needs to be listened carefully. The speech act that the teacher performs is an assertive, also called representative. A representative describes a state of affairs, in this case a changed situation, which causes a change in their schedule. While the teacher makes the transition to common matters she is also making use of an off-the-record strategy. In other words, by uttering *okay so a few announcements* on lines 1 and 2 the teacher makes an effort to

get the students to pay attention to the upcoming announcement. As she is using the off-the-record strategy, she does so by an indirect statement, instead of plainly declaring that she has something to say and she wants the students' attention. The risk to the hearers', the students', face was weighed too high, thus the use of the off-the-record strategy and indirect message by means of informal style.

Example 7

```
1 T    okay so (1.1)
2      a few announce↑ments (1.0)
3 T    we've had to change our schedule (0.2)
4      for many rea↑sons (0.5)
(2nd year, group 2, teacher B)
```

The lessons are not only about teaching and learning, but also the atmosphere in the classroom is very essential. One way of influencing the atmosphere is the use of humour. When humour is being used, the atmosphere gets more relaxed, creating an environment that encourages the students, leading them to better learning results. In Example 8, the teacher makes a humorous remark and the style that she speaks is expectedly informal. On lines 2 and 3, she is using reduced forms, for instance, by leaving out the verb (line 3), which do not follow the rules of formal, standard language, which is typical of informal style and on line 6, the choice of words, *nasty*, highlights the informal style. In this example, the teacher prompts the students to describe her with an adjective, and therefore directs them towards a particular goal, thus performing a speech act of a directive. By implying on line 6 that, *there aren't any nasty ones so you can't*, she utilizes a positive politeness strategy as, according to Blum-Kulka (1997:51), the positive politeness strategy typically includes joking. By using humour and making jokes, the teacher emphasizes her role as an equal partner, rather than, for example, a distant organizer.

Example 8

```
1 T    and now you can give (.)
2      one (.) adjective describing me (.)
3      only ↑one (.) the best one (.)
4      pick up one
5      (1.6)
6 T    there aren't any nasty ones so you can't (.)
7 LM5  (so it's very hard)
(1st year, group 1, teacher A)
```

One important role of the teacher is to be a disciplinarian of the class. One way of upholding the maintaining of the order in the class is by using a specific speech style. In Example 9, the teacher wants the male students to be quieter by raising her voice and demanding them to be quiet by saying *shut up you guys there*, on line 1. Both *shut up* and *guys* are illustrations of the vernacular. With this utterance the teacher also makes an indirect request, which makes this example a directive. As the request itself does not take the hearers' face into consideration, it demonstrates the use of a bald-on strategy. Such a direct communicative act is possible in a classroom context because of the asymmetrical relations of the teacher and pupils. Also, the use of the vernacular emphasizes the request as it differs distinctly from formal language, arousing thus the pupils' attention.

Example 9

```
1 T    SHUT UP YOU GUYS THERE
2      your comments please
```
(1st year, group 2, teacher A)

In Example 10, there is again a situation where the teacher is requesting the class to be quieter. When performing this request the teacher begins by saying *hey*, which is a typical particle in informal, spoken language. As the utterance is being performed in order the get the pupils to quiet down, this example fills the distinctive features of the speech act of a directive. Then again, if the words in this utterance are to be predicted per se, this is a case of a representative. The utterance in question carries the value of true or false and thus describes a state of affairs, here the teacher's verification of the subject that is being discussed. However, when treated as a directive, this example also illustrates the use of an off-the-record strategy. In contrast to the previous example the teacher here does not want to emphasize her role as the disciplinarian and after the risk to the hearers' face was weighed too high, the teacher ends up performing an act that leaves maximal options for deniability. The use of informal language together with the off-the-record strategy emphasizes the teacher's role and identity as a neutral organizer of the lesson.

Example 10

```
1 T    HEY ITS BEGINNING TO SOUND LIKE
2      MORE ABOUT  (0.5)
```

3   <the latest on the:> (0.5) ↑danse prac[↑tise]
4 LF7   [(heh)]
5 T   .hh an not on those ar↑ticles (0.3)
(2nd year, group 2, teacher B)

In Example 11, the use of informal style can be seen on line 5, *or something like that*, but also, on lines 2 and 4 where the teacher is using Finnish, the mother tongue, by saying *nelisilmä (four eyes)*, *silmälasit pöllö (eyeglasses an owl)*[1]. The use of informal style in this case indicates the teacher's role as an organizer of the teaching situation. The speech act in question is a representative as the utterance carries the value of true, at least based on the speaker's beliefs. Taking face saving into consideration, this example illustrates the use of a positive politeness strategy. On line 1 *yeah that's right* stresses reciprocity as it shows optimism, and also the describing of eyeglasses with different names is a feature of a positive politeness strategy as it includes the use of nicknames.

Example 11

1 T   yeah that's [right]
2 T   [nelisi]lmä
3   (0.7)
4 T   silmälasit (pöllö)
5   or something like that
(2nd year, group 1, teacher B)

In Example 12, the teacher addresses a specific student, requesting him to follow the lesson by using informal variants. On lines 1 and 4 the teacher uses the *okay* -particle, which is a typical feature of spoken language. Also, on line 5, where the teacher asks *feeling well* instead of using the complete question *are you feeling well?*, the use of informal style is being illustrated, as the reduced forms indicate spoken language. By uttering *okay today Jarkko* the teacher performs a speech act of a directive. The pupil in question is requested indirectly to follow the lesson. As the request is made indirectly the politeness strategy that is being used here fits the criteria of an off-the-record strategy, but it has distinctive features of a bald-on strategy too, since the pupil is being addressed quite directly, demonstrating the asymmetrical power relation between the pupil and the teacher, also enhancing the teacher's role as an organizer of the lesson.

---

[1] when the original discourse is in Finnish the English translation is given in parentheses after the direct quote from the data

Example 12

1 T   okay today Jarkko?
2   (1.2) ((there's little talk))
3 LM7 (pardon?)
4 T   okay? (0.6)
5 T   [feeling] well
(1st year, group 2, teacher A)

In Example 13, the use of informal style is illustrated on line 1, by *hey*, *so*, and *let's*. *Hey* and *so* are both typical particles of spoken language, as are reduced forms, in this example *let's*. The situation is of the kind where the class has been discussing a topic, and now the teacher wants the class to move on, and to do so, she needs to plead for the students' attention. The teacher does so by performing a speech act, a directive, as she is requesting the students to start studying. In this example, the teacher does not order the students to do anything, but rather requests them, making thus use of a positive politeness strategy. By using the positive politeness strategy the teacher enhances the students' positive face needs, which can be seen, for instance, in the use of *let's*, a reduced form of *let us*, which stresses reciprocity and displays a common view, thus the teacher's role as an equal partner is being emphasized.

Example 13

1 T   hey (0.2) so let's start studying (0.8)
2   if you remem↑ber=
(2nd year, group 1, teacher B)

In Example 14, the teacher is motivating the students by linking the exercise with another subject, in this case geography, that they have been studying. Not only does she motivate the students by linking, but also with the help of using a certain style variant, in this case informal style. On line 1, the teacher says *I'm pretty sure* and *something like this* and on line 3, she uses the phrase *at least*, which are informal when concerning vocabulary. This utterance simultaneously performs two different speech acts. First, by uttering *I'm pretty sure you have studied something like this in geography* the teacher performs a representative since it carries the value of true based on the speaker's, the teacher's, beliefs. Second, the utterance in question is a directive as the students are requested to answer the question when the teacher says *you can at least guess*. As the request is made indirectly, in other words, it is done by

saying rather than ordering, the students' negative faces are being enhanced, which is a feature of a negative politeness strategy. By using informal style and a negative politeness strategy the teacher emphasizes her neutral role as an organizer of the teaching situation.

Example 14

1 T   I'm pretty sure you have studied something like this in geography so
2   (0.8)
3 T   (°you can at least guess°)
(2nd year, group 1, teacher B)

In Example 15, the informal style is being used in a situation where the class has just finished listening to a tape and the teacher is now introducing the upcoming exercise. The teacher begins with *okay* and *so*, which both are typical particles used in spoken language. On lines from 2 to 4 the style can also be identified as informal, since it does not include any verb phrases, and thus does not comply with the rules of standard language. This utterance in question performs the speech act of a representative as the teacher is making statement, in other words, she is describing a state of affairs. As this utterance serves also as an introduction to an upcoming exercise the teacher makes use of an off-the-record strategy. By doing so, the teacher cannot be held accountable for a request, and that, together with the informal style, emphasizes the teacher's role as an equal partner.

Example 15

1 T   (okay) so that (.) served (1.2)
2   °as an° introduction to our <theme> (0.5)
3   the inequality between (0.3)
4   nations on this ↑world
(2nd year, group 2, teacher B)

An essential part of the learning process, and lessons in general, is to produce foreign language. Alongside the traditional teaching the teacher can keep up a discussion in class and, in that way, inconspicuously make students produce output. When directing a conversation, in Example 16, the teacher is using informal style. She initiates the conversation by posing a question to the students on line 1. The informal style is illustrated first by how the words *what* and *do* are assimilated together into *whaddo*. The assimilation of words is a typical feature of spoken language. Second,

the teacher uses reduced forms on line 2, *watch tv* instead of *do you watch tv*, which is also typical of spoken language. In this example the hearers, the students, are expected to do something, in other words, they are directed towards a particular goal, in this case to answer the question, and therefore the speech act in question is a directive. The act is performed in a direct way, thus making use of a bald-on strategy. Even though the bald-on strategy emphasizes the asymmetrical power relations of the teacher and students, the use of informal style softens the impression, enhancing the teacher's neutral role as an organizer of the lesson.

Example 16:

```
1 T      =whaddo you do at home (.) in the evenings (0.5)
2        watch ↑tv
3 LF5    yeah
4        (1.1)
5 T      all the ↑time
(1st year, group 1, teacher A)
```

6.2 Formal style variants

The other end of the stylistic continuum covers the formal variants of the language, including institutional language along with hyper formal style (Nadasdi et al. 2005, Nikula and Tainio 2005). Example 17 illustrates how the use of the conditional establishes the style to be formal in nature. Instead of using the reduced form *what I'd like you to do*, typical of spoken language, the teacher says on line 1 *what I would really like you to do*. By doing so, the teacher makes an indirect request, in other words, performs a speech act of a directive. As the request is done indirectly the hearers', that is, the students', negative faces are being enhanced. The politeness strategy used here is a negative politeness strategy, which includes indirectness in questions and requests as illustrated here with *would* on line 1. Even though the use of formal style emphasize the teacher's role as an intellectual authority, the politeness strategy used in this example, however, compensates for the inequality between the teacher and the students, as the students are asked to do something rather than demanded.

Example 17

```
1 T    but what- what I would really like you to do (0.3)
```

2   is to (0.4) **find** (0.4) the arguments
3   that they **give** (0.5)
(2nd year, group 1, teacher B)

In Example 18, most of the speech is somewhat formal and regular institutional speech, as it does not include any typical features of spoken language, such as reduced forms or discourse markers, but comply with the rules of the standard language. On lines 1 and 6 the utterance *shall we say* refers to the use of a hyper formal style, indicating the speaker's language expertise. The speech act in question is a directive, as the students are directed towards a particular goal, in this case writing the summary. The teacher performs the speech act by utilizing an off-the-record strategy. The students are not directly instructed to do anything, and therefore are excusable if they do not understand the intended request. In this example, the formal style together with the off-the-record strategy moderates the teacher's role from an intellectual authority to a neutral organizer of the lesson.

Example 18

1 T   ts .hh an shall we say that the:: (0.5)
2   main idea in writing summary is
3   >that you find the main points in the text<
4   .hh a:n you are able to write it (0.8)
5   in (0.5) your own style
6   so that it is an >shall we say< an **inde**pendent text
(2nd year, group 2, teacher B)

The next example exemplifies the formal style of lexical nature. With the choice of words the teacher can make use of different style variants. In Example 19, on line 2, the teacher chooses to use the word *corresponding*, which is formal in nature, instead of, for example, *similar*, which would be more typical of spoken language. The situation in this example is of the kind where the teacher makes a statement about the current exercise, and thus fills the distinctive features of the speech act of a representative. In other words, the utterance in question describes a state of affairs. Also, as the statement is made directly, it is an example of a bald-on strategy. The asymmetrical relation of the teacher and pupils is emphasized with the bald-on strategy as well as with the use of formal lexicon, which furthermore affirms the teacher's role as an intellectual authority.

Example 19

```
1 T      THIS (ONE) WAS ABOUT FI-FINDING (0.2)
2        CORRESPOND[ING NOUNS OR] VERBS OR (0.7)
3 LF(13)              [((COUGHS))     ]
4 T      or perhaps uhh (0.4)
5        words belonging to the same word class (0.2)
(2ⁿᵈ year, group 2, teacher B)
```

In Example 20, similarly to example 18, the formal style can be first recognized in with the fact that there are no typical features of spoken language, for instance, on lines 1 and 2 the teacher uses the complete form *you would like*, which is more formal in nature than the reduced form *you'd like*. Second, the choices of words emphasize the formal style. On line 3, the teacher chooses to use the word *demand* instead of, for example, *need* or *have*, which would be more typical of spoken language when talking about human beings and their qualities. Also, the word *quality* illustrates the more formal style, as the alternatives *character* or *property* would be more informal in style, that is, more typical of spoken language. In this example the teacher performs two speech acts. First, by stating *you would like them to be more precise*, the teacher is making use of a representative, as the utterance describes a state of affairs that carry the value of true based on the speaker's beliefs. Second, on line 3, the teacher is asking a question *what other qualities do they demand*, and thus accomplishes a directive, which include, for instance, asking. The politeness strategy used here is a negative politeness strategy. It is shown here by indirectness, for example, on line 1 *you would*, which enhances the hearers' negative face. Here, the formal style enhanced with a negative politeness strategy emphasizes the teacher being an intellectual authority.

Example 20:

```
1 T   (but) you would (1.0)
2      ahh like them to be more precise
3      what other qualities (1.3) do they demand?
(1ˢᵗ year, group 1, teacher A)
```

In Example 21, the teacher is asking a question. The style being formal is shown firstly in the speaker's "higher usage levels for pronunciation" as pointed out by Schilling-Estes (2004:375). In other words, the risen intonation and the stressing of the words that are found in the teacher's speech illustrate formal style. The style is formal also due to the choice of words. The teacher is asking the students on line 2

*do you think it had the atmosphere of a **real** situation?,* instead of, for example, *did it feel real?*, which would be more typical of spoken language. As the teacher is asking a question from the students, this example again illustrates the speech act of a directive. The question begins with *do you think*, which minimizes the imposition and therefore enhances the hearers' negative face, and so filling the distinctive features of a negative politeness strategy. The use of a formal variant emphasizes the teacher's role as an intellectual authority, but the politeness strategy in question compensates for the inequality.

Example 21

1 T   [hmm]
2 T   do you think it had the atmosphere of a **real** situation?
(1st year, group 2, teacher A)

In Example 22, the style being used is formal, and some forms are even hypercorrect. On lines 1 and 2 the style, in general, is formal as it follows the rules of the standard language, and it does not have any distinctive features of spoken language. On line 3, the teacher utters *shall we say*, which points to a hyper formal style. The situation in this example is of the kind where the teacher is giving instructions on what the students are supposed to do next, in other words, the teacher is ordering the students, and thus performing a speech act directive. As the teacher is using formal, and even hyper formal, language and also ordering the students, her role as an intellectual authority is enhanced. However, the ordering is done by making use of the positive politeness strategy, which on the other hand creates an atmosphere where the teacher and the students are more equal partners. The positive politeness strategy is illustrated here in the stressing of reciprocity on lines 2 (*we are going to talk)* and 3 *(shall **we** say)*, which enhances the positive face needs of the hearers.

Example 22

1 T   but for a few (0.3) minutes or (.) next two lessons
2   we are going to talk about (0.3)
3   shall we say
4   the risks (.) that the future **holds** (0.4) for us
(2nd year, group 1, teacher B)

One way of teaching vocabulary in EFL classrooms is to emphasize words. Both teachers of this study used this method. They did not only stress the words but also

used different style variants connected to the stressing of words to make even a stronger impression, that is, to help the students to remember the new words easier. In Example 23, on line 3, the teacher's tone of voice highlights certain words and represents the formal style. Also, the manner in which the words are pronounced, that is, a more careful manner than, for example, the surrounding general language, illustrates the more formal style. The teacher is here reciting options for a certain word, but also performing a representative, as the utterance describes a state of affairs, in this case the student's state of affairs based on the speaker's, that is, the teacher's, beliefs. The teacher makes the statement directly without, for instance, minimizing the imposition, making thus use of a bald-on strategy. Suspension of politeness and the formal style emphasize not only the teacher's role as an intellectual authority, but also as an organizational authority.

Example 23

```
1 T      you are not
2 LM5   no
3 T      <influencing [direc]ting (.) advicing others>
4 LM5                 [ yes  ]
(1st year, group 1, teacher A)
```

Example 24 is similar to the previous example in that the style being used is phonological in nature. On line 1 the word *undergo* is articulated in a very formal manner. The teacher's pronunciation manner is very careful compared to other words in this utterance. Also, the formality of style is shown by the choice of the word, as the word *undergo* is much more formal than, for example, *experience*, which would be more typical of spoken language. The students are not in this example directed towards any specific goal, but the teacher is simply making a statement that describes a state of affairs, performing thus a representative. To compensate for the inequality between the teacher and students that arises from the use of a formal style, the teacher makes use of a positive politeness strategy. On line 2, the teacher shows optimism by saying *ihan hyvä (fairly good)*, which is a feature of a positive politeness strategy.

Example 24

```
1 T     as an undergo great (0.2) °changes° (0.6)
```

2 T   (<°ihan hyvä°>)
3   (2.0)
4 T   during tai in the next few (0.6)
(2nd year, group 2, teacher B)

In Example 25, the situation is of the kind where a group of boys are about to give a presentation and the teacher is pleading for attention from the rest of the class. By doing so, the teacher uses formal style. On line 1, the teacher addresses the rest of the class as *audience*, instead of, for instance, simply *the rest of you*, which would be more typical of spoken language. Also, there does not occur any other features of spoken language, such as reduced forms, which are very typical of spoken language. For instance, on line 3 the teacher says *I will ask you to comment*, whereas in spoken language the presumable utterance would be *I'll ask you to comment*. In this example the students are given instructions, thus the utterance in question is a directive. The manner in which the students are directed towards the desired goal is indirect, as the teacher is using phrases such as *you are suppose to* (line 1-2) and *I will ask* (line 3). The indirectness in questions is included in the negative politeness strategy. The formal style enhances the teacher being the intellectual authority, but the negative politeness strategy, on the other hand, makes the teacher more equal with the students rather than a strict disciplinarian.

Example 25

1 T   AND the- the rest **the** audience you are suppose
2   to to comment on their presentation
3   I will ask you to comment
(1st year, group 2, teacher A)

In Example 26 the style variant that is being used is formal, and even hyper formal. The teacher is introducing an upcoming exercise that the students have to do based on a listening comprehension exercise they have just finished. The style in general is formal as it follows the rules of the standard language, and it does not have any distinctive features of spoken language. The hyper formal style is illustrated on line 3, when the teacher uses the utterance *shall we say*. As the teacher is making a statement about the current exercise, she also performs a representative, in other words, describes a state of affairs. While conversing about the exercise, the teacher does not give orders or ask questions, making thus use of an off-the-record strategy. Even though formal and hyper formal styles emphasize the teacher's role as an

intellectual authority, the making use of an off-the-record strategy compensates for the inequality between the teacher and the students, enhancing the role of the neutral organizer of teaching situation.

Example 26

```
1 T    =they all dealt with (0.2)
2       >sort of<
3       shall we say (0.8)
4       modern inventions modern conveniences
5       the internet (0.2) space travel
(2nd year, group 1, teacher B)
```

As mentioned earlier in this analysis, the choice of words has an essential role when considering a style. Example 27 is again a good example of that. In general, the style is formal and typical of institutional speech. A particularly formal style can be found on line 1, where the teacher is using the word *keen*, which is formal in nature when compared to, for example, *interested* or *exited*, which would be more informal and typical of spoken language. The speech act, in this example, is a representative, which implies that the teacher is describing a state of affairs that carries the value of true, based on the speaker's beliefs. The use of the pronoun *we*, as illustrated on line 3 *we will find out soon* indicates to the use of a positive politeness strategy, as it stresses reciprocity. The use of the positive politeness strategy decreases the gap when concerning power between the teacher and the students, rather than enhancing the teacher's role as an intellectual authority, as the use of formal and hyper formal style would indicate.

Example 27

```
1 T    <well if you are not that (.) keen on (0.7)
2       new space news> you probably don't know what (0.4)
3 T     we will find out soon
(2nd year, group 1, teacher B)
```

In Example 28, the style in general is formal as it complies with the rules of the standard language. Neither does it have any typical features of spoken language such as reduced forms or discourse markers. On lines 3 and 6, the teacher uses the hyper formal style by saying *shall we say*. Also, the manner of articulation in general in this example is formal, as the speaker stresses careful pronunciation. The teacher is

making a statement after the class has finished listening to a tape, and thus performs a representative, as the statement describes a state of affairs and carries the value of true, at least based on the speaker's beliefs. The speech act is performed by making use of a negative politeness strategy. The in-between phrases *shall we say* (lines 3 and 6) minimize the imposition, enhancing thus the hearers' negative face needs. The combination of formal style, representative and negative politeness strategy, reflects the teacher's role as a neutral organizer of the teaching situation.

Example 28

```
1 T    <or> listened to a debate
2      .hh <about the: (1.2) threats or::> (0.3)
3      shall we say ↑well
4      the impact of technolo↑gy (0.2)
5      on our lives
6      °>shall we say°
7      an the threats an risks that go with it<
(2nd year, group 2, teacher B)
```

In Example 29 the formal style is phonological and lexical by nature. The manner of articulation is formal on lines from 1 to 4 as the teacher pronounces the words very carefully. On line 2, the teacher again uses the phrase *shall we say*, which can be described as hyper formal in style. Also, the choice of words makes the utterances formal in nature. For instance, on line 4 the teacher says *very exact phrases*, which is more formal than instead of, for example, *definite sentences*. In this example, the teacher makes a statement about the texts that the students had to read and comments on the difficulty level. In other words, the teacher is describing a state of affairs that carries the value of true, performing thus the speech act of a representative. Similarly to the previous example, the politeness strategy in question is a negative politeness strategy, and it is illustrated by minimizing the imposition with an in-between phrase *shall we say* (line 2). Also, the teacher is not a strict disciplinarian here, but a neutral organizer of the teaching situation.

Example 29

```
1 T    some of you had very (0.5)
2      shall we say very **diffi**cult text (0.5)
3      very scienti↓fic
4      very exact phrases
(2nd year, group 2, teacher B)
```

6.3 Style shifting

The previous sections of the analysis concentrated on the extreme-ends of the stylistic continuum. Together the informal and formal language constitute a range of styles. Speakers can make use of that range and style shifting to serve a certain purpose as pointed out by Schilling-Estes (2004). The examples in this section were analysed as cases of style shifting, and not as instances of using a style as in the previous sections, because in these examples it was possible to identify clear cases from both ends of the stylistic continuum in contrast to the previous sections where the examples were of the kind where only the other end of the stylistic continuum was identifiable and the surrounding language was too difficult to identify to be placed in the stylistic continuum, and therefore were labelled as separate instances of a style variant, that is – informal or formal. In this section the order of the examples is also random, as it was in the previous sections 6.1 and 6.2. Even though these examples illustrate more versatile use of style variants, they are not in any distinct order because, as mentioned earlier, this study concentrates on identifying and analysing style shifting and its possible functions, and will not, for example, make any comparisons between the teachers.

In example 30, lines from 2 to 5 illustrate the use of formal style, as the language complies with the rules of standard language. It does not either include any typical features of spoken language, such as reduced forms or discourse markers. However, before the teacher begins to give instructions on lines from 2 to 5, the initial utterance is done by making use of informal, spoken language, shown on line 1 with a reduced form *we'll see*. Also, when finishing the instruction the teacher uses an informal style by saying *stuff like that* (line 10). In other words, the initiation and the finishing is performed by making use of informal, spoken language, and the actual instruction is given using formal style. The act of giving instructions performs the speech act of a directive, as the students are directed towards a particular goal, in this case checking out the questionnaire with a partner. The instruction is given in a manner where the communicative act is performed directly. The politeness strategy used is a bald-on strategy. As the actual instruction is given by making use of formal style and a bald-on strategy, the teacher's role as an intellectual, and disciplinarian, authority is emphasized, whereas before and after the instruction the informal style

indicate to the teacher being a neutral organizer of the lesson. The style shifting serves the purpose of getting the students to pay attention to the teacher's emphasized role.

Example 30

```
1 T      but @we'll see@ (.)
2        you do follow up one with a partner (.)
3        a:nd (0.5) you can check (1.6)
4        check the the questionnaire with your partner
5        and discuss them one and (1.1) two (0.7)
6        very good exercises
7        talk english
8        (1.0)
9 T      an:d (1.3) an:d (0.7)
10       °stuff like that°
11       (1.9)
(1st year, group 1, teacher A)
```

Example 31 illustrates a situation where the students are ordered to do something. The teacher initiates the instruction by making use of spoken language as shown in the use of the *okay* –particle, which is a typical feature of spoken language. After the initiation the style shifts to formal. The formal style is phonological and lexical by nature. On lines 2 and 3 the instruction is pronounced in a formal, careful manner, compared to the surrounding language, and also the choice to use *polish your pronunciation* instead of, for example, *practise your pronunciation*, which would be more typical of everyday use and spoken language. In this example, the students are directed to pay attention to their pronunciation, therefore the speech act in question is a directive. The instruction is given in a direct way without any discourse markers or considerations of politeness, making thus use of a bald-on strategy. Here, the purpose of the style shift is to enhance the teacher's role as an intellectual authority, and it is aided with the bald-on strategy, which for its part accentuates the asymmetrical relations of the teacher and pupils.

Example 31

```
1 T    okay and eight (0.8)
2      polish your pronunciation
3      mark the- the stresses
(1st year, group 1, teacher A)
```

Example 32 is an instance of an utterance, which begins with formal style, but is then finished with informal style. Lines from 1 to 4 exemplify formal style, as the utterance complies with the rules of the standard language, and also the phrase *shall I say* (line 2) can be described even as hyper formal. However, the style shifts from formal to informal on line 5, where the teacher says *but we'll try it anyhow*. The informality is shown in the reduced form *we'll* instead of *we will*, and in the use of the word *anyhow*, which is a typical feature of spoken language. During this utterance the teacher performs different speech acts. Firstly, as the teacher is commenting on the exercise, the speech act performed is a representative, as it carries the value of true based on the speaker's beliefs. Secondly, the teacher states that *we'll try it anyhow*, and thus performs a directive, as she directs the students towards a particular goal. The politeness strategy that the teacher uses in this example is a positive politeness strategy. The hearers' positive face needs are being enhanced as the teacher displays a common view (lines 1-4), and also stresses reciprocity with the use of the pronoun *we* (line 5). The teacher's role is first that of an intellectual authority enhanced with the formal style, but then the style shift serves the purpose of moderating the asymmetrical relations of the teacher and pupils, the role of the teacher becomes a neutral organizer of the lesson, if not even an equal partner.

Example 32

1 T   this is NOT (0.3)
2   shall I say **part**icularly (0.5) good exer↑cise
3   because you had to find so **many** things
4   or pick up so many points from the (0.2) text (0.5)
5   but-th (1.1) we'll try it anyhow
(2nd year, group 2, teacher B)

Example 33 illustrates a situation where the style shifts from informal to formal and then back to informal. On line 1 the informal style is shown in the use of the *okay* -particle, a typical feature of spoken language. Next, the teacher states that *you seem to be very skillful* (line 4), the style being formal as the word *skillful* is formal in nature when compared to, for instance, *good* or *capable*. Finally, the style returns back to informal as the teacher asks *how 'bout you girls any special skills* (line 5), the informality shown in the reduced forms. The lines from 1 to 4 indicate the teacher's use of the speech act of a representative, as she is describing a state of

affairs, carrying the value of true. After that the teacher asks a question, performing thus a directive, as they include an act of asking. When performing these speech acts the teacher makes use of two different politeness strategies. First, the teacher is showing optimism and endearment as she is praising the students (line 4), both features that are aspects of the positive politeness strategy. Second, when asking a question (line 5), the teacher uses a hedge *how 'bout*, which enhances the hearers' negative face needs. In other words, the teacher makes use of the negative politeness strategy. The style shifting and versatile use of politeness strategies refer to the teacher being an intellectual authority, but still also an equal partner.

Example 33

```
1 T       okay that's enough [°I think°    ]
2 LM5                          [((laughter))]
3 LM5  yes
4 T       okay yo- you seem to be very skillful
5 T       HOW 'BOUT YOU girls any special (0.9) skills
(1st year, group 1, teacher A)
```

In Example 34 the style shifts from informal to formal. On lines from 1 to 3 the manner of speaking is casual and informal in nature. There are typical features of spoken language, such as reduced forms *I'll give you the answers*, and also the articulation is done in the everyday manner. The shift from informal to formal occurs on line 4, where the teacher uses the politeness marker *please* quite suddenly in the middle of the sentence. The informal sentences (lines 1-3) perform the speech act of a representative, as they carry the value of true, describing a state of affairs. The formal sentence, on the other hand, accomplishes the speech act of a directive, since the students are directed towards a particular goal, in this case to answer the question. The question is asked indirectly, therefore the speaker makes use of a negative politeness strategy. First, the teacher's role is a neutral organizer of the lesson as indicated with the use of informal style, but then the style shift is established in order to retrieve the traditional relationship between the teacher and pupils, where the teacher holds the role of an intellectual authority.

Example 34

```
1 T     exerci↑ses different (.) basic different texts (0.4)
2       I'll give you the answers so you can (0.3)
3       look at them together as a ↑group (0.8)
```

4 T   so please tell me which text you (0.2) had (0.5)
(2nd year, group 1, teacher B)

Example 35 illustrates a shift from informal to formal, similarly to the previous example. The style being used is first informal, as can be found on lines from 1 to 3 including, for instance, reduced forms *it's just to* (line 3). However, the phrase *to brush up your vocabulary* (line 4) illustrates the more formal style when concerning the word choice. The style shifts to formal as the teacher chooses to use the phrase *to brush up*, instead of, for example, *take a look at*, which would be more typical of spoken language. In addition, the phrase *brush up your vocabulary* (line 4) is articulated in a careful manner to indicate the formal style. The speech act in question is a directive, as the teacher is directing the students towards a particular goal, that is, to pronounce the words together. When considering politeness, the teacher makes use of two different politeness strategies. The positive politeness strategy is shown in the stressing of reciprocity, in other words, in the use of the pronoun *we* (line 1). Also, even though the students are directed to something, the request is not done by ordering, and thus the negative face needs of the hearers' are being enhanced, which indicates to the negative politeness strategy. The shift towards the formal direction, in general, emphasizes the teacher's role as an intellectual authority, but in this case the politeness strategies that are being used moderate the effect, and the teacher's role remains as a neutral organizer of the lesson, even though she is telling the students to do something.

Example 35

1 T   I thought we could go through it together
2   straight away (0.3)
3   it's just to (0.3)
4   meant to brush up your vocabulary
(2nd year, group 1, teacher B)

In Example 36 the style shift, again, occurs from informal, spoken language towards formal language. Lines from 1 to 3 illustrate informal style use. First, the teacher begins with *so*, which is a typical initiation particle in spoken language. Second, the utterances on line 2 do not comply with the rules of the standard language, but, for example, include incomplete forms. Third, the manner of articulation is informal, typical of vernacular. For instance, on line 3, the teacher pronounces the word *and* in

an informal manner, resulting in the reduced form *an*. Then, on line 4 the language changes towards more formal style. The teacher's manner of articulation changes, as she stresses the pronunciation, that is, the pronunciation manner is different from everyday situations, and from typical spoken language, as it was on lines from 1 to 3. Also, the language use becomes complete in terms of it complying with the rules of the standard language. The situation is of the kind, where the class has just finished a listening exercise and the teacher is talking about the content of the tape. Thus, the speech act that is being performed is a representative, as the teacher is describing a state of affairs that carries the value of true. The students are not being ordered to do anything or asked to answer any questions, therefore the teacher makes use of an off-the-record strategy. By doing so, the teacher is talking about subjects that the students are supposed to be familiar with, but as she exercises an off-the-record strategy, she cannot be held accountable, for instance, for a request to take notes. Therefore, the students are just as excusable if they do understand the intended meaning, in this case paying attention to the teacher's speech, as she is talking about matters that the students should become familiar with. The style shifting in this example serves the purpose of emphasizing the teacher's role as an intellectual authority. As the topic and content changes, the style also changes from informal to formal and the teacher's role is again of traditional nature where the teacher holds higher power than the students.

Example 36

```
1 T    so (0.2)
2      Jennifer (.) it said (.) that she studies ecology (0.6)
3      an (0.3) she say:s that
4      people are not e- (.) equal in terms of technological developpement
5      in different parts of the world (0.2)
(2nd year, group 1, teacher B)
```

Example 37 illustrates style shifting first from informal to formal, and then back to informal. Lines from 1 to 4 illustrate features typical of spoken language. For instance, on line 1 a question is indicated with the raised tone of voice and an incomplete form *you read*, which is lacking of an auxiliary verb. Also, there are typical discourse markers of spoken language, such as *aha* and *so* (line 4). However, the question that the teacher is asking on line 5 *what is your favourite dish*, is of formal nature. The manner of articulation indicates formal style in addition to the

choice of words. The word *dish* (line 5) is an example of formal language when compared to, for instance, *meal* or *food*. After using formal style when asking the question, the teacher returns back to informal style. The phrase *you can cook yourself* (line 7) is in turn articulated in an informal manner. Also, it performs a question even though it is not a grammatically complete form of a question, thus it does not follow the rules of the standard language. A vernacular variant is shown on line 10, where the teacher is using the word *stuff* to indicate *food*. These utterances include the act of asking and therefore perform the speech act of a directive. As the questions include indirectness, such as the use of discourse marker *so* (line 4), and minimizing of the imposition, such as using a plain statement as a question *you can cook yourself* (line 7), the teacher makes use of a negative politeness strategy. The use of informal style emphasizes the teacher being a neutral organizer of the lesson, if not even an equal partner. The question asked in a formal manner, however, maintains the traditional asymmetrical relations of the teacher and pupils, the teacher being an intellectual authority of the classroom.

Example 37

```
1 T      you ↑read (.)
2        you don't cook o:r
3 LF5    yes sometimes
4 T      aha (0.8) so do you cook amm (0.5)
5        wha kind of fo- what is your favorite dish
6        (4.0) ((LM1 and LM2 talk during the pause))
7 T      you can cook yourself
8        (3.2) ((the same pair talks still, talk unidentifiable))
9 LF5    yeah I don' know
10 T     mm↑m (0.7) Finnish sh-sh--stuff [or]
(1st year, group 1, teacher A)
```

7 Conclusion

The following sections of chapter 7 include some general remarks of the analysis to help the reader better understand the present study, the summary of the main findings, and also the discussion of the findings in the context of the previous studies. The findings of the present study contributed to the examining of style variation in the teacher's speech in EFL classrooms, but there were certain limitations that will be discussed in section 7.3. Also, suggestions for further studies concerning this subject will be made.

7.1 General remarks

Firstly, I want to point out that this study is about changes of style in intra-language, that is, EFL. In foreign language lessons there is also a great deal of switching between languages and those switches have features of style shifting, but I decided to concentrate on only the teacher's style shifts and specifically when she speaks English. This is because then the instances are clearer. The focus is on the teacher because her use of language is presumably more consistent than students' language use and therefore the choices are probably more aware. Also, when students speak in pairs or in groups they often use Finnish, and as it is their mother tongue the vernacular is the most widely used variant and the shifts in style do not have that strong functions behind them. This is also the reason why I chose the analysed language to be English when concerning the teacher's speech. As English is a foreign language for her as well, even though she is an expert user of the language, she is supposedly more conscious when using English rather than when using Finnish, her mother tongue.

Secondly, even though the majority of the teacher's speech is somewhat formal and institutional, there are clear cases when the speech is either informal or very formal, if not even hyper formal. This using of different style variants and style shifting have functions behind them, such as performing a speech act or pursuing a politeness strategy. Roughly speaking, the teacher has different roles depending on the style she is using, as pointed out by Nikula and Tainio (2005). The neutral, and somewhat

formal style emphasizes the teacher's role as an organizer of the teaching situation. When the style changes into a more formal, even hyper-formal direction, the teacher becomes an expert and an authority, whereas the more informal variants make the teacher more equal and approachable to the students.

Thirdly, the cases that were analysed were not only shifts from formal to informal language or vice versa, but also separate instances of certain style variants that were being used. Also, it is important to remember that the data did not consist only of formal or informal language, but in between there is an area that covers most of the interaction. That area is very difficult to define to either formal or informal language style and therefore I have concentrated on the cases that are clearly formal or informal or show some sort of a shift.

7.2 Summary of the findings

The analysis of the data has shown that there occurs style variation in the teacher's speech in EFL classrooms. As there were two different teachers examined, it can be argued that the use of different style variants and style shifting is not simply a matter of a personal manner of speaking, but a common phenomenon as Labov (1978b:19) has pointed out when saying that there are no single-style speakers. All variants along the stylistic continuum (Nadasdi et al. 2005) were present in the data, that is, ranging from vernacular and informal language to formal and hyper formal. Also, shifting between these variants occurred. The teacher used the different style variants and style shifting in various situations, not bound, for instance, to some specific exercises or in controlling the class.

Out of the five speech acts (representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations by Searle 1977) only two were used by the teacher in the present study. Directives were the most common speech act, which is explained by the teacher controlling the classrooms (Cazden 2001), and thus she can simply tell students to do things by making use of directives. The other speech act that was present in the data was a representative. They were used in relation to the organising of the lessons. In other words, the teacher "stated" things, described a state of affairs, for instance, when clarifying the content of an exercise, when making a transition from one

exercise to another. Commissives, expressives and declarations were not found in the data, at least being used simultaneously with some specific style variant or style shifting.

The study also revealed that there was versatile use of politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987:68-71). First, a bald-on strategy, a politeness strategy that is not very common in other contexts but typical in classrooms because of the asymmetrical relations of the teacher and pupils (Blum-Kulka 1997:51) was found quite often in the data. The teachers made use of the bald-on strategy (Brown and Levinson 1987:69), for instance, for reasons of efficiency. Second, it is evident that the teachers did not only control the classroom, but displayed points of view that were common to all the participants, stressing also reciprocity. In other words, the politeness strategy in question was a positive politeness strategy (Brown and Levinson 1987:70). Third, the teachers did not always ask students to do things directly, but used a negative politeness strategy. Indirectness was indicated, for instance, by using hedges and by minimizing the imposition. Fourth, there were occasions where the teachers performed acts that left maximal options for deniability, exercising an off-the-record strategy. Instances where the off-the-record strategy was used were of the kind where the teachers did not request or order students to do something but anyhow were conversing of matters that were important in nature. The strategy called opting out was not found in the data. When making use of that specific strategy the speaker decides not say anything, thus those instance were not paid attention to as there was not any style variant used either.

Another aspect that was examined in this study was to find out whether the teachers' use of different style variants and styles shifting, together with a certain speech act and politeness strategy, reflect a specific role. It turned out that the use of a style variant alone does not indicate a certain role, but it varies depending on the speech act that is being performed, and also on the politeness strategy that is being used. The results of the present study were similar to the study of Nikula and Tainio (2005) where they found out that general spoken language emphasizes the teacher being a neutral organizer of the lesson, whereas formal variants emphasize the teacher's role as an intellectual authority, and the vernacular, on the other hand, reflected a role of an equal partner. This study, as mentioned earlier, identified similar roles, but

however, there was variation depending on which speech act was being performed and which politeness strategy was being pursued. The formal variants were, for instance, performed with the speech act of a representative (Searle 1977:35), utilizing a positive politeness strategy (Brown and Levinson 1987:70), which changed the teacher's role from an intellectual authority to a neutral organizer of the lesson. Also, the teacher was able to maintain her role as an intellectual authority even when informal variants were used as she simultaneously performed a directive (Searle 1977:35) making use of a bald-on strategy (Brown and Levinson 1987:69).
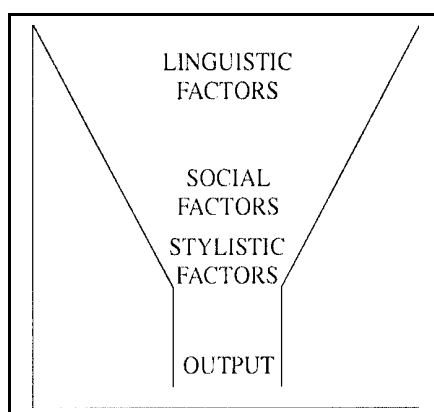
In this study the social factors were treated from a pragmatic point of view, such as speech acts and politeness strategies, and displaying a certain role. Hopefully, it also succeeded in filling the gap in this area of research and in giving new perspectives on stylistic factors in language use. However, the present study is rather narrow research in its scope, as only two teachers were examined, and were not, for instance, interviewed of how conscious is their language use and if they considered sociolinguistic factors and pragmatics when producing output. Also, the identifying of different style variants was a challenging task and could presumably be done in various ways, and therefore the results would be different, too. Thus, the subject should be more widely researched and suggestions for further studies will be made in the next section.

7.3 Discussion

It seems evident from this study that stylistic factors are a considerable part of the teacher's output. According to Coupland (2002), style is present everywhere, and thus cannot be left without attention. The findings of this study also confirmed Labov's (1978b) argument that every speaker inevitably will use different styles when speaking, as the data showed that the teacher's speech included all variants along the stylistic continuum (Nadasdi et al. 2005).

This study also showed that the teacher's final output is affected by many factors, as Preston (2002:280) has similarly argued when saying that the output is affected by linguistic factors, social factors, stylistic factors and output (see figure 3).

Figure 3: The "strength" of factors influencing variation (Preston 2002:280)

The present study also agreed with Nikula and Tainio's (2005) study in the sense that different style variants emphasize certain roles of the teachers. Further, this study found out that the roles introduced by Nikula and Tainio (2005) can vary depending on the speech act (Searle 1977) that is being performed, or depending on the politeness strategy (Brown and Levinson 1987) that is being pursued. However, this study did not examine how pupils receive the teacher's output, and how the stylistic variation affects their sociolinguistic development. The previous studies (e.g. Nadasdi et al. 2005, Mougeon et al. 2004) have pointed out that as a result of formal teaching students' sociolinguistic competence is inadequate, and therefore teaching should include aspects of spoken language. As this study showed that the teachers' language use varies a great deal when concerning the use of different style variants, the effect of the teacher's output should be more thoroughly examined also in the Finnish context. Also, spoken language and learning through it should be examined in a greater detail, as Halliday (1985:96) has pointed out that some features of learning take place more efficiently through spoken language.

As mentioned earlier, the teachers of this study were observed from a dvd-format and transcripts to examine their language use. Thus, as the tool for the analysis was observation, the functions of the use of different style variants and style shifting were determined by the visible and audible distinctive features of speech acts (Searle 1977) and politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987). To be able to gain a fuller understanding and draw conclusions about teachers' conscious use of different style variants, for instance, face-to-face interviews would be needed.

In addition, the effect of materials used in the classrooms concerning the use of different style variants and style shifting in the teacher's speech should be examined more thoroughly. The materials can be argued to play a role in the teacher's speech (see Pitkänen-Huhta 2003), which is also displayed in the style of speaking, and therefore would require more attention and further examination. This study, however, cannot discuss the role of the material in the style of speaking as it concentrated only on identifying certain style variants and style shifting and finding out the underlying pragmatic reasons.

The present study has revealed new insights into the teacher's language use in EFL classrooms. It reviewed the use of different style variants and style shifting, and also what possible functions those style variations had. As pointed out earlier in this section, there are, however, many more aspects of the styles of speaking and sociolinguistic features of speech in EFL classrooms that need to be studied in order to be able to understand the complex nature and significance of the phenomenon.

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Appendix 1. Transcription conventions

Transcription symbols

[text]	overlapping speech
[text]2	
(.)	a pause, shorter than 0.4 seconds
(0.7)	a pause, timed in tenths of a second
(2.0)	a pause, timed in seconds
(~2.2.)	estimated length of a pause
text=	
=text	latching speech
CAPITALS	loud speech
bold	prominence, via pitch and/or amplitude
exte:nsio:n	noticeable extension of the sound or syllable with the
colon	
cut off wo-	cut of word or a sentence
◦ high circles◦	soft speech
.	falling intonation
↑	rising intonation
↑↓	falling-rising intonation
,	continuing intonation
<u>marked</u>	marked pronunciation
mispronounced	mispronunciation
((coughs))	transcriber's comments
(x)	incomprehensible item, probably one word only
(xx)	incomprehensible item of phrase length
(xxx)	incomprehensible item beyond phrase length
(text)	uncertain transcription
• laughing•	laughing production of an utterance
(h) (h)	laugh tokens
@	altered tone of voice
<tekstiä>	slow speech
>tekstiä<	fast speech
♪singing♪	singing production of an utterance
whispering	whispering production of speech
h h	outbreath
◦hh	inbreath

Symbols to identify who is speaking

T	teacher
LM1	identified male learner, using numbers (M1, M2, etc)
LF1	identified female learner, using numbers (F1, F2, etc.)
LM	unidentified male learner
LF	unidentified female learner
LF(3)	uncertain identification of speaker
LL	unidentified subgroup of class
Ls	learners
LMs	male learners
LFs	female learners