# I'm sorry, but I have something else…

## A study of the L1 knowledge of the appropriateness of politeness strategies and its possible transfer to similar L2 knowledge

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**Abstract**

The current article examines whether Dutch speakers of English transfer their knowledge of their native language on what (amount of) politeness strategies are appropriate to their second language. Goffman has elaborated on the notion of face and has coined the term line, which are the esteem given to the speaker and the image they uphold themselves, respectively. This prompted Brown and Levinson to propose their politeness theory, which states that interlocutors have to do face-work to protect each other's faces and use politeness strategies in order to do so. They also proposed three factors that are relevant in selecting appropriate politeness strategies to use: the difference in power between speakers, their social relationship, and the weight of disposition. These factors share different ratios depending on the situation which, in turn, can be categorized in politeness systems (Scollon & Scollon). These were the main studies that prompted the question: To what extent does native knowledge of politeness strategies that are appropriate in the L1 transfer to the L2 in advanced learners of English with a Dutch L1? An experiment was conducted to yield results that would answer the research question. The experiment consisted of a discourse completion task, filled in in either Dutch or English, featuring three situations – each with different impositions, social distances and power differences – and an interview. The paper argues that high-proficiency Dutch speakers of English will use more politeness strategies when they are speaking English than when they are speaking Dutch and that there will be no transfer of Dutch politeness norms to their L2. It is concluded that this hypothesis is mostly correct, but that English norms are not completely accepted either, so that some kind of interstate that enables speakers to quickly switch between attitudes has to exist.

Keywords: politeness strategies, Dutch L1, English L2, transfer, politeness systems, politeness theory

# Contents

**Introduction**

People say that stereotypes exist for a reason and the same would be true of the stereotypes of the 'blunt Dutchman' and the 'polite proper Englishman'. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory asserts that politeness is determined by the politeness strategies used by interlocutors in order to cause minimal offence to their conversation partner's face – the social esteem they receive from others (Yang, 1945; Goffman, 1967). This 'saving' of the other communicator is called face-work in the study of politeness strategies The stereotype implies that the Dutch use fewer – or less appropriate – politeness strategies than the English do in similar situations. Scollon and Scollon (2000) have proposed three possible categories in which such situations can fall that they called the politeness systems. These systems were based on Brown and Levinson's notion on the factors that are relevant in a politeness situation: the difference in power between interlocutors, their social relationship, and the weight of the imposition. Such stereotypes as those mentioned in the first sentence do, of course, generalise common assumptions and do not take into account the factors that contribute to the politeness strategy selection process. Moreover, they overlook whether learners of English adhere to the stereotype pertaining to their native culture or to the English stereotype – and thus do not transfer their L1's norms on the appropriate strategies in their use of English. The current study aims to find out whether language learners rely on their L1 politeness norms when they have to use politeness strategies in their L2 with Dutch as the L1 and English as the L2, specifically. It would make sense for learners who have acquainted themselves with only the grammatical and semantic aspects of the language to use their native knowledge as they have limited knowledge of the norms in the L2 (Takahashi, 1996). Learners who have had intensive contact with their target language – and have thus acquainted themselves with the L2's norms and attitudes on politeness strategies – do, however, show a higher proficiency and near-native use of the L2 (Felix-Brasdefer, 2004). This study aims to study whether high-proficiency Dutch learners of English who have had long-term extensive contact with English show transfer from their L1

politeness norms, which has led to the question: To what extent does native knowledge of politeness strategies that are appropriate in the L1 transfer to the L2 in advanced learners of English with a Dutch L1?

The proposed hypothesis is that Dutch speakers of English will, as these speakers are advanced and have had long-term academic contact with their second language, show little to no transfer of politeness norms and use from their first language to their second language. Furthermore, the Dutch results will show more focus on the social distance between the speaker and hearer rather than the power or rank of the hearer, whereas the English results will show the opposite, although it is expected that the imposition-factor will be the most influential across all situations and in both languages.

**Literature Background**

The current study wants to establish whether Dutch speakers of English transfer their knowledge of their native language on what (amount of) politeness strategies are appropriate to their second language. In order to do so, a literature study has been done to see what the consensus is on these issues, consisting of studies that discuss transfer and second language acquisition and politeness theory and face. First, the concept of face – as coined by Yang and further developed by Goffman – is explained and brought within context of the current study, along with derived terms such as face-work and negative and positive face. Next, the role of politeness in doing face-work is clarified within Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, which is followed by several studies that have analysed and/ or highlighted different situations in which politeness theory is relevant. Third, the importance of politeness systems in the current study is made clear, accompanied by examples of the roles politeness systems can play. Last, articles that have studied issues regarding transfer and second language acquisition are laid out and placed within the context of the current study.

The first paragraphs will show that different cultures have different views on what politeness strategies are appropriate in which situations (Yang, 1945; Goffman,1955; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Scollon & Scollon, 2001; Jary, 1997; Escandell-Vidal, 1998; Song, 2017; Sifianou, 1994; Chang &Haugh, 2011; Felix-Brasdefer, 2004), but these articles do not elaborate on the situations or contexts that require the use of politeness strategies or the factors that influence the politeness strategy selection process. They make conclusions on general issues whereas the current study hopes to do the same for the specific case of high-proficiency Dutch learners of English – and by extension for high-proficiency second language learners as a whole. The next few paragraphs present the consensus that intercultural transfer is very well possible, but they yield no data on the transferability between L1 Dutch and L2 English specifically (Takahashi, 1996; Koike, 1989; Kuriscak, 2015; Eshnhinejad & Moini, 2016; Sifianou, 1989). Once again, the problem is formed by conclusions that are too vague or general to be fully applicable to the issues presented in this

study. Thus, the current study hopes to build further upon the conclusions made in these studies and to investigate whether these conclusions can be applied to the case of high-proficiency second language learners – and high-proficiency Dutch learners of English specifically – by answering the question: To what extent does native knowledge of politeness strategies that are appropriate in the L1 transfer to the L2 in advanced learners of English with a Dutch L1?

*The concept of face*

The study of politeness theory began with the concept of face, which was borrowed from the Chinese 'lien' or 'mien' that, in combination with other idioms, can mean both 'face' and 'prestige'. Yang described face as "a personal psychological satisfaction, a social esteem accorded by others" (167) and studied the several factors that influence the losing or gaining of face. According to his theory, both the hearer and the speaker have a face and the both of them have to protect their own and each other's faces when they engage in conversation. Although it is a relatively complex and abstract notion – interlocutors have to be aware of each other's ranking, their sensitivities, possible third persons or parties etc. – it seems that it is an inherent system that is general to all those who communicate. This idea was elaborated by Goffman, who theorised that interlocutors do not only have an image as is seen by their environment, but that they also uphold a certain image themselves, which he called a 'line'. Line is a system or pattern of certain verbal and non-verbal actions that convey a speaker's stance in a situation, which in turn provides the interlocutors with an image of the speaker (Goffman 7). If the line is changed then that compels the face to change as well, as the face is based on the line a communicator upholds to their conversationalists, and it is logical that one speaker has different lines for different hearers and vice versa. Thus, face is constant within one communication but very susceptible to external change and can differ between crowds and social interactions. Goffman also points out that a speaker is expected to keep to the same line in future conversations once they have presented one as interlocutors tend to base their responses on that line

(8; Scollon & Scollon, 2000). Sudden changes in either face or line can lead to miscommunications and loss of or offence to face and thus interlocutors will try to save each other from losing face by using politeness strategies that tend to minimise the risks and plights that naturally come with interacting. Each conversation is a careful balance between protecting the face of both the speaker and hearer and every conversations poses risks to face – even simple requests can cause loss of face. If a speaker experiences such a loss of face, 'face-work' needs to be done. Goffman describes 'face-work' as "the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face" (8), i.e. the actions someone takes that will negate the loss of 'face' or at least minimise the damage done. Whether the face-work is done by the speaker themselves, the offender, or a third person or party seems to be secondary to the actual action and all participants seem to be involved in the face-work, even though an action by one interlocutor alone proves enough (9). This proposed relationship between line and face can be seen as a kind of paradox (Scollon & Scollon 46) as a speaker has to take into account both the fact that they have to show some kind of involvement with the hearer and/ or their environment and that they simultaneously have to respect the hearer's autonomy. A speaker cannot be expected to always hold the balance between these aspects of face, after all, and as such "there is no faceless communication" (48). Debates on what exactly 'face' is are still going on to a certain extent, but the one provided by Goffman seems to be a good start and very much applicable to the issues presented in the current study. However, it cannot be that the speaker's face is the same 'kind' of face as the one of the hearer, as they call for different face-work strategies. If both faces called for the same politeness strategies, doing face-work would become obsolete, after all. Thus, some sort of distinction between the faces of the speaker and the hearer needs to be established.

*Politeness Theory*

Brown and Levinson (1987) provided this distinction in their article, wherein they presented their 'Politeness Theory'. This theory states that politeness is a universal concept and that politeness is used when speakers wish to not cause harm to face, be it the speaker's or the hearer's. Their study would later prove the base for research on politeness strategies. Similar to Goffman, Brown and Levinson proposed that interlocutors use politeness strategies to control risks carried by certain face threatening acts towards the collocutor in order to save their own faces and/ or the faces of their conversational partners. It would thus be more practical to try to maintain each other's face in the first place. According to their theory, negative face is the speaker's autonomy and their want that their actions are unhampered. Positive face is the speaker's consistent self-image and their want to have that image be accepted by others (311-12). Negative face is jeopardized when a speaker is not planning to try to bypass the impediment of the interlocutor's freedom of action and choice, and positive face is jeopardized when an interlocutor does not take the interactor's self-image and/ or feelings seriously or does not want the same as the interactor (313-14). Brown and Levinson differentiated between different politeness strategies, which where divided into strategies that pertained to either negative or positive politeness. These notions are fairly self-explanatory: negative politeness strategies try to avoid imposition from the speaker and positive politeness strategies try to make a hearer feel confident and/ or better (317). Lastly, Brown and Levinson's theory presents three sociological factors that influence the adopted politeness strategy and the impact of the face threatening act (FTA): the social distance between interlocutors, the power difference between interlocutors, and the rank of imposition, which together constitute the 'weight' of an FTA. Of these factors, power and social distance are more resistant to change, whereas rank of imposition is influenced the most by individual conversations (Scollon & Scollon, 2000). This would mean that it can be expected that the experiment's results will show similarities in situations that mostly feature power and/ or social distance and show noticable differences in those that

mostly feature rank of imposition. These factors are a major part of the experiment in the current article and will be the main focus of the analysis of the results. The experiment was conducted in such a way that would show which of these factors was the main participant in selecting a politeness strategy and whether the subjects switched in factors between communicating in their first language (Dutch) and their second language (English). This theory should not be confused with Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory, which states that interlocutors will select that politeness strategy that will still ardently convey the supposed meaning – whereas politeness theory states that politeness strategies follow the proposed meaning. For the sake of the current study, politeness theory and its ideas of universal politeness will be accepted as truth for two reasons: former studies have done so as well and the current study hardly has the range to try to disprove politeness theory. Furthermore, the research question calls for focus on politeness strategies rather than on relevance or proposed meaning. Politeness theory has laid the foundation for most – if not all – studies done on politeness strategies and, naturally, has led to several other studies that examined the interesting role that politeness plays in communication. However, that does not mean that relevance theory should be omitted from this theoretical framework. It should rather be used as a way to distinguish between face and line, seeing as a speaker will try to convey a message – and inherently their line – cloaked in politeness and thus it could be said that politeness itself is an implicature and as such will always convey a message on its own (Escandell-Vidal 49). This would mean that it is up to the hearer to use relevance when faced with politeness strategies in order to understand the speaker's message hidden within the politeness and, assuming that Brown and Levinson's idea on universal politeness is true, that should not pose a problem for inter-language communication. A recurring problem with inter-language communication is that different cultures have different ideas on what is appropriate and/ or polite and thus will have difficulties adjusting to a second language's norms, but this can be solved with extensive face-work. In such situations, politeness theory can help subjects to know the amount of politeness strategies is appropriate – as more face-work requires more

politeness strategies –, after which relevance theory can help them to filter the available strategies to enable a smooth selection process. Or, in short, a speaker will opt for strategies and forms that will provide the hearer with evidence that the hearer's assessment of the esteem in which the speaker holds them is solid (Jary 13).

Several studies have included politeness theory within a cultural framework (Song 2017, Sifianou 1994) and have yielded interesting results. Song found that, in her comparison of American and East Asian students, the American students 'scored' higher in their weightiness perception scores. According to politeness theory, this would mean that the American students contribute more value to politeness. However, the difference in power dominates the weight in the East Asian students' culture and thus they would receive the higher score if the experiment focused on the factor of power rather than on weight, showing that it is a matter of perspective (68). The second problem is, naturally, that the three factors as proposed by Brown and Levinson can impossibly ever be proven as ultimately true and as such remain purely hypothetical. Song's study would show that rank of imposition is not the most influential factor, as is hypothesised in the current study, but instead that power has the most impact and even that rank of imposition has the least impact. This conclusion is valid only in hierarchical cultures, but since English (British) culture is more hierarchical than Dutch culture, Song's conclusion could still be applicable to the current study – at least partly. It would seem that English speakers in general tend to adhere more rigorously to social norms that restrict the suitableness of directness: "[i]n English, ability questions have been so conventionalized as polite requests that native speakers are more likely to interpret them as requests than as questions of ability" (Sifianou 228). This specific study compared English ideas on politeness with Greek ideas and distinguished between positive politeness (i.e. verbalizations of solidarity) and negative politeness (i.e. verbalizations of formality) – Sifianou concluded that Greeks tend more towards positive politeness, whereas the English tend more towards negative politeness. Consequently, speakers of Greek are less elaborate in their speech than speakers of

English, as they associate elaborateness with formality and negative politeness – and thus focus too much on the independence element of face. Similar could be said of the Dutch views on politeness, which are surely less rigid than those of the English and when compared to each other, Dutch speakers clearly favour positive politeness over negative politeness, as opposed to English speakers. Dutch people are less careful about face and take more risks in their face-work and will be more straight-forward in requesting something, which can scare and/ or offend English people (Krook, 2017; RVO Nederland).

*Politeness Systems*

Song's conclusion showed that different cultures assert different values to Brown and Levinson's social factors: a hierarchical culture will be mainly influenced by power rather than rank of imposition or the social relationship between interlocutors. This is an example of politeness systems: the relationships between Brown and Levinson's sociological factors (Scollon & Scollon, 2000). These three systems are based on deference, solidarity, and hierarchy and highlight the different social situations that are caused by standing and/ or personal relationships and warrant different (amounts of) politeness strategies. The politeness system based on deference is shown when speakers are equal on paper yet still keep a distance; the solidarity system when interlocutors share an egalitarian system wherein there is neither a difference in power nor social distance; the hierarchy system when they accept and respect the power difference and thus assume a social distance. Of course, Dutch speakers and English speakers cannot be categorized as belonging to one of these politeness systems – this will differ with each conversation, after all – but the experiment was conducted in such a way that would feature at least two politeness systems in order to ensure that any differences between Dutch and English answers could be properly compared. Scollon and Scollon conclude that it can be quite hard for second language learners to shift and/ or differentiate

between these politeness systems and that it can be difficult for them to discern between subtle differences within their L2 that would seem logical to native speakers (59).

*Difficulties and differences in learning second language politeness*

Multiple studies have researched the difficulties that second language learners face when confronted with politeness, requests, apologies etc. and/ or the pragmatic differences between native speakers and learners (Sifianou, 1989; Koike, 1989; Takahashi, 1996; Felix-Brasdefer, 2004; Chang & Haugh, 2011; Kuriscak, 2015; Eshnhinejad & Moini, 2016). One of the most obvious and hard-to-learn difficulties with learning a language is learning its culture and specifically the differences between a native culture and a target language's culture, or as Sifianou states: "[s]uccessful communication may require knowledge of culturally bound rules, including rules relating to the selection of the appropriate discourse channel" (527). Not upholding those rules can lead to mismatching expectations between interlocutors and in turn to miscommunications. These differences can be quite big: Australians believe friendliness is an important factor in determining whether an apology is polite or not, whereas Taiwanese people see it as irrelevant in ascertaining sincerity (Chang & Haugh 428) or small: women favour negative politeness strategies – often seen as the more polite option – but there are no noticeable differences in the use of positive strategies between men and women (Eshnhinejad & Moini 10). Concerning intercultural miscommunication, the most common supposition is that it is often the effect of L2 learners who use elements like sociocultural norms and conventions from their L1. This is either a case of sociopragmatic transfer (negative transfer from L1 to L2) or of pragmalinguistic transfer (L1 influence on a learner's perception and production of form-function mappings in an L2) – there is no consensus (yet) on which theory is more correct (Takahashi 213-14). According to Takahashi, pragmatic transferability relies on two criteria: the appropriateness – as estimated by learners – of an L1 strategy within an L2 context and the equivalence of the strategy and its L2 counterpart in terms of contextual

appropriateness (196). This statement assumes that second language learners will entertain a politeness strategy from their native language before they would one from their target language, but it does not take into account other factors that could contribute to this selection process (the amount of contact with the target language, the intensity of that contact, proficiency etc.). Residence in a target culture would be a good way to have optimal contact with a target language, which would supposedly increase a learner's competence. Felix-Brasdefer found that English learners of Spanish integrated typical native Spanish tactics into their use of L2, but also that they used prerefusal strategies – strategies that native Spanish speakers sparingly use. They probably do this in order to be polite before they have even reached their actual apology and thus avoid direct confrontation with the hearer as to not come across as an obvious learner of Spanish. Frequent use of prerefusal strategies was found in the L1 English data as well, so learners were relying on their L1 (631). Felix-Brasdefer also found that most of the learners transferred their L1 behaviour based on independence, directness, and honesty to L2 contexts, although the L2 culture favour indirectness and a concern for the other (636). It is interesting that this study concludes that even intimate, long-term contact with a target culture at most minimises the influence L1 politeness strategies have on the selection process of strategies in L2. This is not in line with the main hypothesis, which agrees with the general impression that extensive contact has a very positive effect on L2 proficiency and a negative effect on the influence of L1 politeness strategies. Takahashi himself highlights the importance of contact with the target language, as well:'even' low-proficiency learners can still show higher pragmatic competence than high-proficiency learners if they have had enough contact with the target culture and community, as they would then be more able to connect certain social values with certain preferred expressions and would thus be less likely to rely on their L1 strategies. So, following this conclusion, both low- and high-proficiency learners can be competent enough to not rely on their L1 politeness strategies. This supports the current study's hypothesis that the subjects will show little to no favour towards their L1 – the subjects are both high-proficiency and

have been having extensive contact with the target language for at least two years, after all. Language learners opt for the pragmatic form that is most easily produced in the L2, but they soften their crude expression with other linguistic options (Koike, 1989). Learners also tend to produce longer and more direct expressions than native speakers, but they use more indirect politeness strategies, illocutionary force indicating devices ('sorry', 'apologies' etc.), and supportive moves as they become more proficient in their L2 (Kuriscak, 2015). Koike also discusses a 'speech act interlanguage', as it seems that adult learners (unconsciously) have access to their L1 pragmatic knowledge, yet do not necessarily use that knowledge in both their L2 and L1 production. Such an interlanguage is created when learners produce forms that are inappropriate in both the L1 and the L2 and many learners only drop this form when they have enough confidence in their L2 proficiency to use pragmatically appropriate L2 forms. Pragmatic development is quicker than grammatical development, so pragmatic concepts are produced only in ways and forms allowed by the acquired level of grammatical complexity and thus such an interlanguage may eventually grow into a more native-like L2 (286-7). This study focuses on lower- to- medium-proficiency learners, whereas the current study is is directed at high-proficiency learners. This will provide the current study with the chance to see whether similar conclusions can be made about learners who have more experience with their target language.

Concluding this background chapter, it is fair to say that there seems to be no clear consensus on whether a learner's native language has an influence/ transfers knowledge if that learners is of a high proficiency. Some studies have shown that language learners are (strongly) influenced by their L1 regardless of contact with the target culture or proficiency (Felix-Brasdefer, 2014), where others have shown the reverse to be true as well (Takahashi, 1996), and then there are those that are somewhere inbetween (Koike, 1989; Kuriscak, 2015). Felix-Brasdefer concluded that hierarchy politeness systems featured the most influence from the first language, whereas the main hypothesis of the current study is that, first and foremost, there will be little to no transfer from the

first language and, secondly, two of the three situations in the experiment feature a hierarchy politeness system. However, the questionnaire is constructed in such a way that the participants are forced to confront the hearer, which is something the participants from Felix-Brasdefer's experiment could avoid. This forced confrontation will likely push the participants to give an honest, clear answer, much like they would do if they were suddenly put in such situations in real life. On the other side, there is Takahashi who stated that learners who have a low proficiency can still show higher pragmatic competence in their second language than high-proficiency learners. They have no more need of their knowledge of their first language thanks to the contact with their target community. This is similar to how the current study's participants have been in close academic contact with their second language, add to that that they are all high-proficiency learners and it can logically be concluded that these participants will not show transfer of their L1 knowledge to their second language.

Brown and Levinson's sociological factors will play a substantial role in the current study's experiment and the analysis of its results. The results are analysed on the basis of these factors in order to find out what the motives behind the use of politeness strategies are. This will provide insights into what elements of the proposed situations had an influence on the participants' choice and thus from what angle they were assessing the situation. The results will also be examined based on the politeness systems as they were introduced by Scollon and Scollon. They will be evaluated per situation as each situation has its own politeness system and thus its own standard sociological factors (for example, a hierarchy politeness system will always feature asymmetry between both the social distance and the power difference).

**Method**

*Participants*

A total of twenty-two students of English Language and Culture participated in this study. Each participant's first language is Dutch and their (most prominent) second language is English. All of them are in their second year and have passed a first year proficiency course, so they all have a proficiency level of at least B2. Moreover, they communicate mostly in English when in class and they study the language intensively and in an academic setting, so all students have a thorough understanding of English. The data were gathered during a lecture of Introduction to Middle English Literature at Radboud University (Nijmegen). The students were presented with the questionnaire – they could only see the front page with a general explanation of the task – but were not forced to participate. In addition to the written explanation on the first page, participants were also instructed verbally prior to the questionnaire when everyone was seated in order to make sure that every participant had received the same (amount of) information.

The questionnaires were handed out in such a way that two students sat next to each other did not have a questionnaire in the same language, resulting in two groups: one group of participants who filled it in in their native language (Dutch) and a group who did so in their second language (English). This discouraged the participants to discuss amongst each other, as it was detrimental to the study and the eligibility of the results that they formed their own answers and decisions. This division was made completely randomly and resulted in a Dutch (or L1) group consisting of ten participants and an English (or L2) of twelve participants.

The participants' age, gender, and other personal info was not asked as a) such information was irrelevant to the goals of the study and b) the results had to be analysed in an objective way without the risk of associating certain participants/ answers with certain subjective views.

Participants were given the choice whether they wanted to be interviewed on a separate occasion to discuss the answers they had given in the questionnaire and the considerations they

made in doing so. As they had to write down and their name and, if they so wishes, a phone number or e-mail address, the interview was not mandatory to participate in the experiment in order to give participants to chance to remain anonymous. Of the L1 group, two participants were interviewed and three participants of the L2 group were interviewed, resulting in a total of five interviewees. These interviews serve as a supplement the questionnaires and to compensate for the small participant population as they yield more specific knowledge on the motivations and trains of thought of subjects in their politeness strategy selection process. The interviews give the participants the chance to elaborate on their answers and to explain why they chose certain strategies and they provide the current study with more understanding of the cognitive processes that precede such a selection process.

*Materials*

The data for the present study were collected using two versions of the same questionnaire: a Dutch task and an English task – each filled in by a different group of participants. The questionnaire was designed as a discourse completion task (will be referred to as 'DCT') in order to have complete control over the featured situations. There are two major issues that are associated with opting for a DCT over review of natural speech data. The first issue with DCT's is that they are no authentic representation of what the participants would actually say when they are confronted with similar situations. This problem is not seen in natural data collection as such tasks urge subjects to answer as they would in real situations and as such are direct representations of what participants would say or do in similar situations. However, the current study requires controlled situations, relationships, and impositions to make for easier and more straightforward comparisons. Free speech would not have allowed these factors to be continuous throughout conversations with different participants. It would have yielded different answers that could have been attributed to the (slight) differences in situations and not to the personal considerations of the subjects. The experiment would thus have resulted in complex comparisons – if the results were comparable at all – and would not serve for

the current study. A DCT is a more logical option for an experiment that requests comparable data, which requires the situations that result in that data to be identical in order for the results to be valid. (Schneider 106). Schneider also points out that DCT's yield results that serve as a "tertium comparationis", i.e. results that are easier to compare. The second issue with DCT's is the fact that the answers are written down rather than physically produced, which can lead to participants who might dwell longer than is preferred on their answers and who focus on the grammaticalities of the things they write down rather than on their actual answers. The goal of the experiment is to extract answers that show what is expected to be said rather than what would actually be said by subjects, hence the set-up of the experiment as a DCT. Questionnaire data show the underlying norms and expectations that come with the use of politeness strategies and/ or face-work and as such are independent from random external elements that are present in most conversations (Schneider 107). Cyluk (2013) stated that a DCT, alone, is no valid data-gathering method as it gives no insight into how a particular politeness strategy was selected. However, DCT's are very suitable if the goal of the experiment is to find out what considered appropriate (110), so this experiment – the DCT's along with the interviews – will cover all the necessary areas to validate this study. The questionnaire was accompanied by an interview to give the participants the chance to (further) explain their choices and to give a more extensive insight into the motivations behind the use of politeness strategies. Cyluk studied the effectiveness of DCT's and found that a DCT "enables the subject to provide the responses which would normally cause a loss of face in natural interactions" (107). This would enable the subjects to give a different response in real time in order to save face, but the DCT gives a more direct, and perhaps more honest, insight into what the participants deemed as appropriate. The current study aims to discover whether Dutch speakers of English rely on their native knowledge on what is appropriate when selecting a politeness strategy in their second language. This goal does not call for results that display answers that would have actually been said in certain situations but rather what answers subjects thought appropriate. The

aforementioned arguments have led to the choice for discourse completion tasks as the major data collecting instruments, with the inclusion of optional post-task interviews to study certain participants' motivations behind their politeness strategy selection process.

The two versions of the questionnaire differed only in language (either their native language Dutch or their second language English) and the explanation on the first page and the situations on the following pages all held the same information and were presented in the same order in both languages. The participants were not aware of the 'bilingual' questionnaire and – as far as they knew – everyone got the same questionnaire in the same language. They were also instructed to not discuss their answers and the situations with each other until everyone was finished in order to minimise external influences. The questionnaire was explained in Dutch to yield data that would reflect what native speakers of Dutch deemed was appropriate in their first language. It was expected that the participants that received the Dutch questionnaire used their knowledge on Dutch (their L1) to decide what and how many politeness strategies were appropriate to be used. The questionnaire was presented in English to yield data that would reflect what Dutch second language speakers of English believed to be appropriate in their second language. It was expected that the participants who had to fill in the English questionnaire used their knowledge on English (their L2), which should be of at least B2-level (on the CEFR-scale) as all of the participants had been having intimate academic contact with the English language for the last two years.

The questionnaire itself was divided over four pages: one title page with a general explanation of the tasks and three pages with one situation on each page, along with the option to be interviewed after the DCT on the third page. The situations were designed in such a way that the first one of them would feature an institutional relationship, the second a familial relationship, and the third a relationship that was both institutional and familial. See appendices B and C for the questionnaires in English and Dutch, respectively. Both questionnaires featured three situations and

each one was translated as literally and grammatically correct as possible as to minimise any effects that minor differences between the English and Dutch versions could have on the subjects' answers.

The first situation places the participants at work, they are almost at the end of their shift but their boss asks them to cover another shift and stay for an additional three hours. The participant has made a reservation at a restaurant with friends, however, and it cannot be cancelled. The power difference and the social difference between the boss and the participants are considerable enough – they are both asymmetrical – to ensure that both parties respect those differences, which places them in the hierarchical politeness system, as coined by Scollon and Scollon (2001). The imposition is of quite high a rank as the participant cannot (easily) cancel the reservation and they do not want to disappoint their friends. Still, the participants' friends are closer to them than the boss is and the power difference is ignorable, so that would theoretically make it easier for the participants to refuse their friends than to do their boss.

The second situation situates the participants with close friends during lunch time. The friends ask the participant if they will join them when they go swimming this weekend, as they do each month, but the participant has promised their parents to help in the garden for the whole weekend. The friends and the participant demonstrate the solidarity politeness system, as the difference in power and the social distance are symmetrical and close, respectively. The imposition's rank is relatively high, as the participants (probably) do not want to break a promise they made to their parents, but they also do not want to disappoint their friends. Some of the participants may opt to bargain with their parents, which is allowed by their close social distance.

The third situation places the participants at work once more, but now they are confronted by a team leader, with whom they are friends, who asks them to print some documents. The boss – who is also the superior of the team leader – has ordered them to retrieve documents from another floor, however, and the participant has time for only one of those tasks. The team leader and the participant demonstrate a hierarchy politeness system with an asymmetrical difference in power –

although it is more symmetrical than it was in the first situation – but with a quite close social distance. The imposition's rank is very high, as a boss' order is difficult to ignore and a friendly colleague's request is easier to refuse. The fact that the power difference between the team leader and the participant is asymmetrical is compromised by the more asymmetrical power difference between the boss and the participant. However, the close social distance between the participant and the team leader may lead to the former to accept the latter's request, for the sake of their relationship.

Participants could fill in their names at the end of the questionnaire if they were willing to participate in a post-task interview, or if they simply wanted to expand on their motivations for their chosen politeness strategies. They were informed beforehand that the interview's audio would be recorded. The interview was not mandatory as a) the DCT would then not be anonymous by default and that could have resulted in inferior data, b) there was not enough time to interview every participant, and c) forcing participants to elaborate on their answers without their voluntary cooperation would yield incomplete or undependable results. When a participant had consented to an interview, they were contacted and a meeting was scheduled at a time and place that were relatively quiet in order to safeguard the participant's privacy and the quality of the recordings. They were asked what they thought about all three situations in general – where they difficult to imagine, could they come up with answers relatively quick and/ or easy, where they realistic? – followed by situation-specific questions. They were also asked which of the three factors (the weight of imposition, the social relationship, the power/ rank) had played the largest role in their consideration for a certain politeness strategies. This has given insights into their motives for opting for specific (amounts of) politeness strategies, which in turn has told more about which factors are more popular with the Dutch group and which are more popular with the English group. The interviews served as an addition to the questionnaires and were constructed in such a way that more insights into participants' motivations in their choice for certain politeness strategies could be made.

They were added to the original questionnaire to make up for the limited data set and to compensate for the DCT's inability to yield metacognitive data. Additionally, the interviews were a chance for the participants to further elaborate on their answers and/ or motives. So, even though the participant population is small, the yielded data and results could be analysed within the frame provided by the subjects in the interviews. The subjects who participated in the interviews went deeper into their answers and their motivations behind them, which provided the current study with a dependable framework that shows what elements played a role and/ or were prominent in the subjects' choice for the use of a certain (amount of) politeness strategies in both Dutch and English answers.

**Results and analysis**

Firstly, the general results among the two groups and across the three situations are presented, followed by an examination of main factors that attributed to the choice for certain politeness strategies per language (the weight of the imposition, the power of the hearer and/ or the person towards whom the speaker had other obligations, or the relationship the speaker had with them). Lastly, both the English politeness strategies and the motives behind them are compared to the Dutch ones.

 *Differences in the appropriateness of certain politeness strategies*

Figure 1 shows the average amount of politeness strategies that is used by native speakers of Dutch and Dutch learners of English per situation. Together, the two groups used a total of 255 strategies, or 91 in the first situation, 76 in the second situation, and 88 in the third situation. Even though no significant dissimilarities were found between the amount of strategies used by the Dutch group and the English group in the second and third situations, the participants of the English group
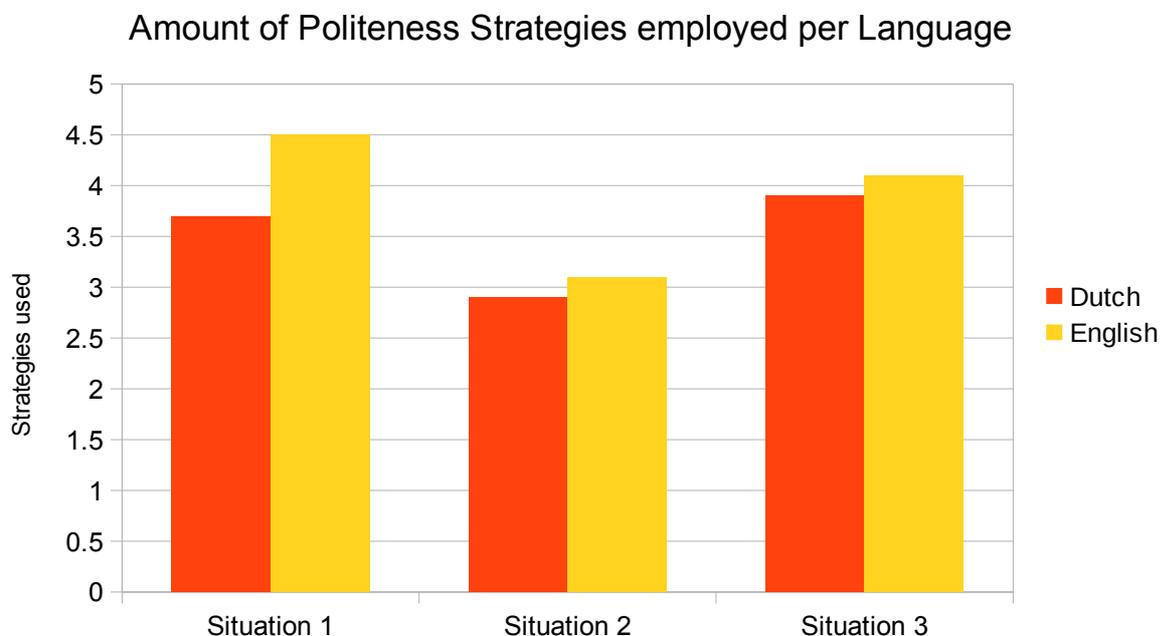


*Figure 1*. The average amount of politeness strategies that were employed across several situations that featured different politeness systems: hierarchy (+P/ +D), solidarity (-P/ -D), and hierarchy (+P/ -D).

showed more preference for politeness strategies in the first situation. They employed little less than one strategy more than the Dutch group, whereas that difference was barely noteworthy for the last two situations. This could be attributed to the fact that situation 1 features a hierarchy politeness system, with an asymmetry in both social distance and power difference, were it not that situation 3 presents such a politeness system as well. Thus, the significant difference in the amount of politeness strategies employed is presumably ascribed to the contrast in asymmetry, as the hierarchy politeness system from situation 3 shows more symmetry in social distance between the speaker and the hearer than the system from situation 1 does.

The results, as shown in figure 1, seem to insinuate that there is little difference in how many politeness strategies are used in Dutch (as an L1) and English (as an L2), unless the interlocutors share a hierarchical relationship and yet show little social distance. Comparing the first and the third situations, the Dutch group have used a similar amount of politeness strategies, whereas the English group have employed almost one strategy more in situation 1, on average. This implies that there is little to no difference in how many and which politeness strategies are appropriate in a hierarchy politeness system with asymmetries in both social distance and power difference and in one with more symmetrical social distance in Dutch. The English group shows precisely such a difference, however, and thus it can be deduced that the participants of the English group did not use their native knowledge of Dutch in order to determine which and how many politeness strategies they would employ. This goes against Felix-Brasdefers conclusion that hierarchy politeness systems feature the most influence from the L1, but this contrast between results in similar contexts can be attributed to the fact that subjects of this study's experiment could give direct answers without actually risking an offence to the hearer's face – something that Felix-Brasdefer's subjects could not do. This deduction takes a step into the direction of confirming the current study's hypothesis – that the participants have had ample intense academic contact with their second language to minimise transfer from their native language – as correct.

There are no further significant or interesting differences between the results of the Dutch and English groups, although it should be noted that, on average, the English group has always employed more politeness strategies than the Dutch group did. The difference in the amount of used strategies between the two groups in the second situation is equal to the difference in the amount in the third situation, which could imply that, even though the Dutch and English questionnaires were filled in by different people, Dutch learners of English use more politeness strategies in their second language than they do in their native language, no matter the situation. This would go against several conclusions made by previous research that stated that second language learners heavily rely on their first language (Felix-Brasdefer) but it goes along with Koike's and Kuriscak' conclusions that language learners use more native-like politeness strategies as they become more proficient. Furthermore, it should be noted that these findings heavily insinuate that high-proficiency Dutch speakers of English tend to incorporate L2 ideas on the appropriate amount of politeness strategies in their use of English. This is an interesting notion for several sources that dealt with subjects with other first languages – and some even with other second languages – have concluded that language learners had trouble with shifting between selecting an appropriate amount of politeness strategies in their L2 (Scollon & Scollon, Sifianou). This, in turn, suggests that Dutch learners have less trouble adjusting to a second language's norms, are less inclined to rely on their L1 than learners with other native languages and perhaps even that they are more aware of the expectations that surround politeness strategies than their direct demeanour would suggest.

Processing the data in such a way that shows which politeness strategies were used how frequently would result in a complex, inpractical graph that would be virtually impossible to read. Instead, the results have been processed in tables (Appendix D) that have no further relevance to the experiment other than to provide a clear overview of which strategies were used the most and in which situation and/ or language. These tables show that the strategy 'provide reasons' – i.e. explain why they are rejecting the speaker's offer/ request or vocalise what keeps them from accepting –

has been used most frequently in the second and third situations and is second only to 'apologise' in the first situation in the Dutch questionnaires. The results from the English questionnaires show no such overwhelming preference for a certain politeness strategy but instead show that the subjects from the English group tend to use more multiple politeness strategies over a few. These confirm both the conclusions made by several studies (Sifianou, Krook) and the stereotype that English speakers favour use of multiple politeness strategies. Dutch speakers appear to prefer positive politeness strategies that adhere more to the hearer and their comfort in order to make them feel more at ease rather than to use negative politeness strategies to lesser the imposition they pose – English speakers tend to do both. The first situation features a strong hierarchical politeness system, which has probably pushed the subjects to apologise for the inconvenience they cause with their refusal of their boss' request. At least it did so for subjects from the Dutch group, yet not as much for those from the English group, even though the English culture is more hierarchical and it would thus be more logical for English speakers to be influenced by a hierarchical politeness system (Sifianou 228). It is highly likely, however, that the English subjects tried to compensate for their insufficient knowledge on which politeness strategies were most appropriate in the first situation by using more of them. The Dutch subjects do not use multiple politeness strategies at the level the English subjects did, which suggests that their strategy is based not on their L1 knowledge on politeness strategies but rather on the knowledge they have on English culture and its favour of politeness. The results of the Dutch group are similar to those of the English group only in the third situation, where the latter mostly went for both strategies, with the inclusion of 'be direct/ conventionally indirect' – a strategy that is frequently used in the third situation by both groups. This implies that either Dutch learners of English rely on their L1 in situations that feature a hierarchical politeness system with little social difference but a significant difference in power or that both Dutch and English speakers prefer to use a few select politeness strategies in high frequency in such situations. The latter condition appears to be more topical in the current study, as

it would be remarkable for subjects to suddenly rely on their L1 knowledge in one situation when they did not (seem to) need to in the other two situations. A possible explanation for this would be that speakers feel less obliged to accept their supervisor's request in the third situation, as the imposition's rank is relatively high and subjects seem to believe that a request made by their boss weighs heavier than one made by a supervisor. This attitude would then be present in both English speakers and Dutch speakers.

*Main factors involved in selecting appropriate politeness strategies*

This section discusses the results on the factors that play a role in determining the appropriate (amount of) politeness strategies to use in order to further ascertain whether (native) speakers of Dutch pay attention to certain factors specifically in making a choice on politeness strategies and whether those preferences are transferred to their second language. The last paragraph will also include the interviews in order to shed more light on the underlying motives the participants have had in making their decisions.

Figure 2 presents the relative proportions between the contributing factors in the process of selecting an appropriate politeness strategy: the weight of the imposition, the social relationship between the speaker and the hearer or the speaker and the person(s) towards whom they have an obligation, and the latter parties' rank/ power over the hearer. For example, looking at the Dutch group's answers in the first situation yields that 40% of the answers were influenced (mostly) by the factor of power. First and foremost, the results show that the weight of imposition is the most contributing factor across both languages and situations. This makes sense, as all three situations featured another obligation that were the focus of the issue and were the main reason the participants had to employ politeness strategies. It is very understandable – and expected – that speakers tend to aim their attention at the factor that poses the largest problem, which was the (weight of the) imposition in all three cases. Nonetheless, this conclusion does not agree with

Song's (2017) that stated that the power difference had more influence on the total weight and that the imposition is the least influential. This difference in conclusions may be attributed to significantly different cultural views between Europeans and East Asians and/ or Americans as Asian culture is hierarchical, more so than the English culture.

Second, the results present the social relationship between the speaker and the hearer and/ or the person(s) they have promised something to as the least influential in the first and the third

## Motives for the use of Politeness Strategies
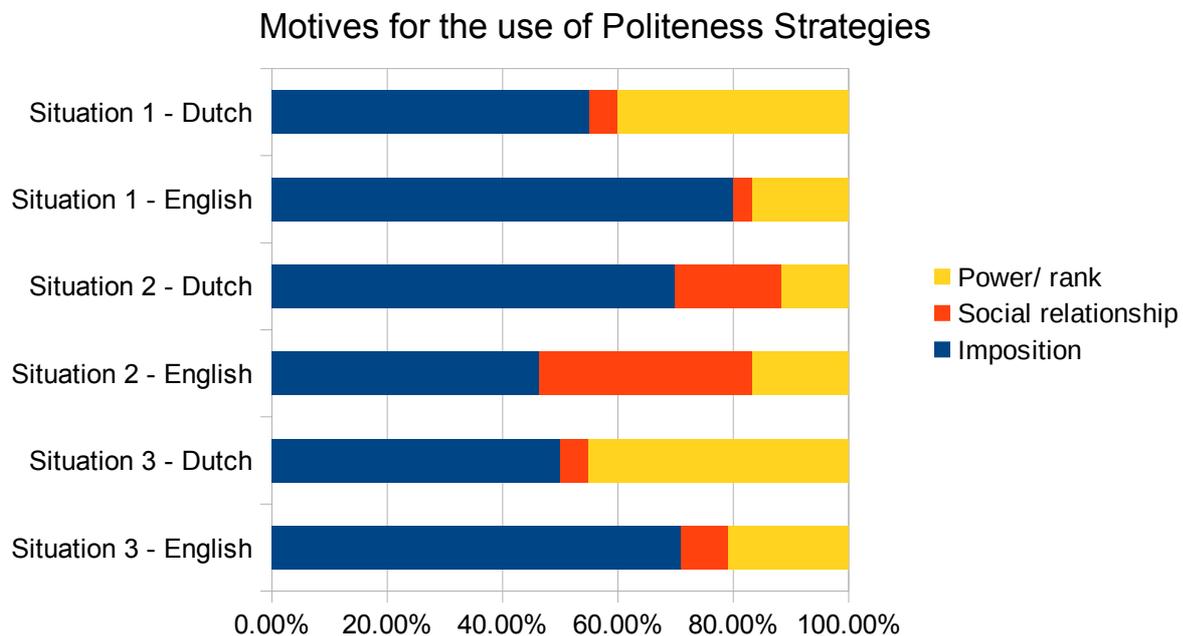


*Figure 2*. A presentation of the relative ratios between the contributing factors in the selecting of an appropriate politeness strategy: the weight of the imposition, the social relationship between the speaker and the hearer or the speaker and the person(s) towards whom they have an obligation, and the latter parties' rank/ power over the hearer.

situation, yet it is the second-most influential factor in the second situation. These findings imply that the social relationship is of little to no influence in situations that feature a hierarchy politeness system, but can have considerable influence in situations that present a solidarity politeness system. This conclusion was anticipated, as it makes sense for a social relationship to not play a significant role in a hierarchical relationship that is highly likely based on professionalism and formal contact. Of course, in a situation such as the second one, where social distance is more symmetrical and there is hardly difference in power, social relationships can affect a speaker's judgement on what is appropriate more intensely.

In accordance with these previous findings, the power or rank of the hearers is the second-most influential factor in situations that feature a hierarchical relationship, but is of little significance in a situation that presents a solidarity politeness system. It should be noted, however, that the power/ rank as a factor is less apparent in the English group than it is in the Dutch group in both the first and the third situations. This is surprising, as English culture is more hierarchical and class-based than Dutch culture (Sifianou 228) and a hierarchical culture naturally will be mainly influenced by power (Scollon & Scollon 45), so it was expected that the Dutch speakers of English would integrate that sociocultural knowledge in their knowledge of their L2, or at least transfer similar sociocultural knowledge from their L1. Seeing as the participants from the Dutch group allow the power/ rank factor to have more influence it would seem that native speakers of Dutch value that factor more than Dutch speakers of English do, so there is definitely no transfer from the L1 Dutch to the L2 English – or at least not in that respect.

*Interviews*

Out of the twenty-two participants, five were willing to be interviewed. Three of those have filled in the English questionnaire and two did the Dutch version. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and translated in English. Appendix E contains the literal translation – included to convey the actual thought process of the subjects with minimal alterations/ losses caused by translation – and appendix F contains the grammatically correct translation – included to convey the subjects' selection processes in a clear manner. When an interview is referenced and/ or quoted, it will be done so based on appendix F. Interviews A and B did the Dutch version of the questionnaire, interviewees C, D, and E did the English one.

The consensus on the first situation was that the participants were aware of the authority that a boss has, but that they have their limits in regards to what a boss can ask of them. Most of them agreed that an uncovered shift is the boss' problem and that it should not be an employee's (sole)

responsibility to cover that shift, but they also understood the situation and said that if their boss would ask a similar thing of them that would probably accept. All but one said that since a boss is the boss and the speaker is an employee, the boss is allowed to ask the speaker for certain favours and is allowed to ask them to work overtime. Most explained that they had another obligation that could not be cancelled or moved, but interviewee E says that the arrangement made with friends and that she thought it more important to not bail on friends than to consider the reservation. She also made very clear that she shares an informal relationship with her boss, but only to a certain extent. All interviewees seem to be aware of the fact that their boss is their superior, not only in 'rank' but also in work-related skills, and as such deserves a certain amount of respect. All interviewees – from both the English and the Dutch groups – have shown that they based their answers on situations that they experienced in their real lives and were thus solved according to Dutch politeness norms. This is remarkable, as the results from the questionnaires show clear differences between the two groups in specific areas and none of the English interviewees showed a different attitude influenced by the language they used. It could be that the subjects automatically answered the questionnaire from a personal – and thus Dutch – view, but that would be incongruent with the results, which show noticeable differences between the Dutch and English questionnaires. Another explanation could be that Dutch speakers of English maintain their Dutch attitude as along as they do not have to communicate in their L2, but are subconsciously aware of the differences between their cultures and are able to easily switch between those norms between languages. This conclusion contrasts starkly with Scollon and Scollon, who concluded that it can be quite hard for second language learners to discern between subtle differences within their L2 (59). So, in conclusion, the general agreement was that authoritative figures and their requests should be respected, but that there are certain limits to what they can ask of their inferiors. All of them had opted to refuse the boss' request as their other obligation could not be cancelled or moved, but some offered to work for an additional hour or two to give the boss a chance to find someone else. This

matches the results that show an overwhelming focus on the imposition factor in figure 2 and the considerable high average amount of politeness strategies used by both groups in figure 1. Another interesting point to raise is that most interviewees described their relationship with their boss as somewhere in-between formal and informal with the option of being formal when necessary. This is a Dutch phenomenon that is probably attributable to the fact that employees and their superiors want to have a nice work environment and that they believe that semi-formal contact is most appropriate for such situations. English employees prefer a more professional and formal relationship with their supervisors and sometimes even their colleagues and will portray more informal behaviour only when they feel it is appropriate to do so (RVO Nederland). The English interviewees (C, D, and E) said that they have a somewhat informal relationship with their superiors in real-life, yet showed no such informality in their answers in the questionnaire. This suggests that Dutch speakers of English will retain their informal attitude towards superiors, yet do not transfer such norms to their use of their second language.

Regarding the second situation, participants were more divided on what the appropriate course of action was. Most rejected their friends' offer to swim and explained that they had other arrangements for the weekend and a considerable number of these participants offered to reschedule the meeting or promised that they would attend the next one. Interviewee D, however, offered to call her parents to ask permission to go swimming, a notion that is both proof of the respect she has for her parents and of the close relationship she shares with them – especially since she said that she thought the obligation to her parents was more important. Interviewees B and E were the only ones to show a clear wish to fulfil their obligation to their parents, whereas the others found ways to go swimming and help their parents later/ with another matter. Interviewee B was mainly focused on the promise they made to their parents, whereas E focus mostly on the social distance between her and her parents. There was no general opinion on whether the obligation (imposition) or the arrangement with friends (social distance) was more important; some said that friendships are more

important to maintain, while others (B and E) were of the opinion that a promise made is a promise you have to hold yourself to and that parents should be respected. Regardless of the divergent motives in this situation, both groups used less politeness strategies on average than in the other two situations so which party is more important to the speaker holds no significance in their process of selecting of appropriate politeness strategies. All interviewees except for C asserted that they felt that their obligation/ promise to their parents was more important than any made to their friends and E said that she would go with her friends if they had been first. Interviewee C was the only one to very clearly argue that she liked the event with her friends more than the prospect of helping her parents and she said that "[she values] friendship over family", yet eventually compromised and said that she would go with her friends and that she would help her parents later. Those that did refuse their friends (B and E – and perhaps A and D) did so not because of the imposition per say but because they made a promise to their parents. This suggests that the social relationship-imposition ratio is proportionally smaller in these kinds of situations when compared to the other two situations, which is in line with the results as presented in figure 2. These results match with the claims made in the interviews – most interviewees mentioned the importance of their relationship with their parents and not once the 'rank' their parents have over them as their caretakers. It is no surprise, then, that the results show that the subjects focused less on the factor of power/ rank in this situation than they did in the other situations.

As for the third situation, the interviewees seem to agree more with each other. All of them refused their team leader's request in favour of finishing the job their boss gave them and most of them asserted that the boss comes first. An interesting point to make is that almost each interviewee had a different reason for doing so – D and E had similar reasons. A said that, surely, there are other employees that are not busy who the supervisor could ask for help, which cannot easily be put within one of the three factors' range. For the sake of the current study, her motive was placed within the rank/ power factor as the team leader could use her rank to request another employee to

do it, but these kinds of exceptions to Brown and Levinson's rule support Song's critical viewpoint of their theory. B's motive was very clearly linked to the social distance factor as she said that the supervisor would understand her refusal and would not hold grudges because they are so close. C, once again, said that whichever request was made first will be accepted and thus focused mostly on the rank of imposition factor. Interviewees D and E portrayed similar motives for refusing their supervisor – D said that a boss has more influence on an employee's career than a team leader has and E said that there are bigger consequences linked to this decision than to the first decision. Both focused on the power/ rank factor when selecting the appropriate politeness strategies to use. It seems that the interviewees were divided on which factor was the most relevant in their selection process, but all of them very clearly asserted that the boss was superior to the team leader and thus focused on the power factor to a certain degree. Regardless of the sociological factors that influenced the subjects' motives – which are, supposedly, too personal to link with either the Dutch or the English group –, one difference can be seen in the interviewees considerations. The two interviewees who belonged to the Dutch group (A and B) showed a more casual refusal method, saying that there are other employees who could help or assuming that the supervisor would definitely understand their refusal. The English interviewees (C, D, and E), however, were less concerned with how they could save their team leader's face and were more professional in their refusals. They showed a more formal stance, stating either that earlier set obligations come first or that the boss had more influence on their future career than their team leader does. This would be in line with the fact that English speakers do not appreciate informal behaviour when they are at work (RVO Nederland).

It is interesting that Dutch speakers of English seem to retain – but not show – their Dutch norms and attitude in their use of English and thus do not transfer those attitudes per say. Even though the subjects have had more experience with Dutch norms on politeness and have most likely assumed those norms to be their own. They have had enough experience and contact with their

second language to know where the languages differ on matters such as politeness strategies and which customs belong to which language and culture. If Scollon and Scollon's notion on how difficult it is for second language learners to discern between the subtleties in the languages is true, then it can be concluded that a higher proficiency will lead to a deeper and better understanding of the second language, its culture, and in which manners it differs from the first language. Furthermore, the data from the questionnaires suggest that the Dutch subjects valued the power factor more than the English group did in situations where it proved most relevant (1 and 3), whereas the English subjects focused more on the social distance factor in the second situation wherein the social relationship between parties proved most important. Assuming that the data from the Dutch group are the general norms of Dutch native speakers, it can be said that the English subjects have not transferred and/ or used those norms in their use of English. There are clear differences between the English and the Dutch groups, which suggests that the subjects adopted a different attitude depending on which language their questionnaire was in and thus that high-proficiency Dutch speakers of English have two separate set of politeness norms – one for their native language and one for their second language.

**Conclusion and discussion**

In conclusion, it seems that high-proficiency Dutch speakers of English only subconsciously maintain their L1 norms on politeness in their use of English, but that they do not explicitly use that knowledge. They do not show transfer of or reliance on their L1, but the interviews have shown that the subjects had very personal and subjective attitudes towards the presented situations that most likely have their origin in native Dutch norms. The extensive contact the subjects have had with the English language and culture has resulted in speakers who are acutely aware of the English' preference for use of multiple politeness strategies and are able to show that knowledge in their use of the L2, even though their L1 has a clear preference for frequent use of a few select politeness strategies. Thus the hypothesis is correct to some extent – there is no actual transfer of Dutch politeness norms in English, but Dutch speakers do not fully incorporate English norms either, there is some kind of interstate that enables speakers to quickly switch between attitudes.

Dutch speakers of English appear to focus less on the factor of power in their utterances in English than they do in their utterances in Dutch, which is interesting given that English culture is more hierarchical and class-based than Dutch culture (Sifianou 228) and a hierarchical culture naturally will be mainly influenced by power (Scollon & Scollon 45). It is, however, not the current study's aim to discover why (non-native) speakers of English tend to focus less on the factor or power, but that phenomenon will undoubtedly be covered in a different study. What this does entail for this study is that Dutch speakers of English do not transfer their 'power-focused' attitude to their L2 and thus are less likely to transfer other attitudes towards politeness-related elements. They do not focus as much on the factor of imposition in their L1, which could be attributed to the fact that in Dutch culture – even in hierarchical politeness systems – interaction tends to be less formal (than it is in English culture). Thus speakers feel less obliged to include their imposition in their refusal and rather use more politeness strategies to limit the damage done to the hearer's face. Dutch speakers of English do, however, focus more on the factors of social difference and power in their

use of English in situations that feature a solidarity politeness system than they do on the factor of rank of disposition. It would be interesting to study whether English speakers of Dutch employ a similar tactic or whether the conclusions made in the current study are simply an effect of other factors, such as the prestige English enjoys as a world and trade language.

Dutch speakers of English are very much aware of hierarchical structures and the differences in power and rank that come with them, despite the stereotype of the 'blunt Dutchman'. They understand that refusing a superior person requires more appropriate politeness strategies than when they want to refuse an inferior one, but they are very clear in their personal boundaries. They are also aware of the fact that they have to employ more politeness strategies in their use of English and have integrated that into their knowledge of their second language and thus do not have to rely on or transfer from their L1.

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**Appendix A**

*Positive politeness strategies*

Attend to the hearer's interests, wants, etc.

Use of in-group identity markers ('we')

Seek agreement

Avoid disagreement

Presuppose/ raise/ assert common ground

Offer or promise

Be optimistic

Give reasons

*Negative politeness strategies*

Be direct/ conventionally indirect

Question, hedge

Be pessimistic

Discuss the size of imposition

Give deference

Apologise

Impersonalise interlocutors

(Brown & Levinson, 1987)

**Appendix B – Questionnaire (English)**

**Situation 1**

Imagine you're at work finishing your last few assignments of your four-hour shift when your boss walks towards you. He has been working here for five years, you have for 2.5 years. He is nice enough and you can work together pleasantly, but you share no relationship outside of work and only see each other on your days off out of coincidence. He asks you: "Hello X, I know you've been here for a couple of hours, but I urgently need you to cover someone else's shift for the next three hours. You really are my only option at the moment." However, you have made reservations at a restaurant for you and some friends in two hours and you cannot cancel, so you say:

_____

_____

_____

_____


**Situation 2**

Imagine you're seated at a table with some friends at lunch. You have been friends ever since you started school six years ago and you have a 'tradition' of going swimming once a month. One of your friends asks you: "Hey X, it's time for another meetup at the swimming pool, care to join us this Saturday?" However, you have promised your parents, who you live with, that you would help them tend to the garden the whole weekend in preparation for a big barbecue party on Sunday, so you respond with:

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Situation 3**

Imagine you're at work when one of your team leaders walks towards you. She and you have become friends since you started working here two years ago. You often take breaks together and also meet frequently outside of work. She asks you: "Hey X, would you please print some documents for me? It will only take half an hour!" However, your boss has instructed you to get some files from another department, which should also take about half an hour and you only have time to finish one task, so you say:

_____

_____

_____

_____

If you want to be interviewed, please write your name below and I will contact you to schedule a meeting:

_____

**Appendix C – Questionnaire (Dutch)**

**Situatie 1**

Stel je voor dat je aan het werk bent aan de laatste paar taken van je vieruursdienst op werk, wanneer je baas richting jou loopt. Hij werkt hier al vijf jaar, jij voor tweeënhalf jaar. Hij is vriendelijk zat en jullie werken prima samen, maar jullie gaan buiten werk niet met elkaar om. Hij vraagt: "Hallo X, ik weet dat je al een paar uur hier bent, maar ik heb je echt nog drie uur nodig om de dienst van iemand anders over te nemen. Je bent mijn enige hoop op dit moment." Je hebt echter al een reservatie voor over twee uur staan met wat vrienden bij een restaurant en je kunt het niet afzeggen, dus jij antwoordt met:

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Situatie 2**

Stel je voor dat je met wat vrienden aan het lunchen bent. Jullie zijn al bevriend sinds het begin van de middelbare school zes jaar terug en jullie hebben een maandelijkse 'traditie' om te zwemmen. Eén van je vrienden vraagt je: "Hey X, het wordt tijd voor nog een zwemafspraak bij het zwembad, ga je mee zaterdag?" Je hebt je ouders, bij wie je in huis woont, echter beloofd dat je dit gehele weekend meehelpt in de tuin om voor te bereiden voor een barbecue-feest op zondag. Jij antwoordt:

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Situatie 3**

Stel je voor dat je op het werk bent als één van je teamleiders naar je toe loopt. Jullie zijn al bevriend sinds je begonnen bent met werken twee jaar geleden. Jullie pauzeren vaak samen en ontmoeten elkaar ook regelmatig buiten werk. Ze vraagt: "Hey X, zou je wat documenten voor mij willen printen? Zal maar een half uur duren!" Jullie baas heeft jou echter de opdracht gegeven om wat mappen van een ander kantoor terug te brengen, een taak die ook ongeveer een half uur nodig heeft en je hebt maar tijd voor één taak, dus jij zegt:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Als je geïnterviewd wilt worden, schrijf dan hieronder je naam op en dan neem ik contact met je op om een moment af te spreken:

_____

# Appendix D – Tables with Results

| English Situation 1 | Strategies | Questionnaires 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 – E | 11 – C | 12 – D | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attend to the hearer's interests, wants, etc. | X | X | | | | X | | | | | X | | 4 |
| | Use of in-group identity markers ('we') | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Seek agreement | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Avoid disagreement | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Presuppose/ raise/ assert common ground | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Offer or promise | X | X | | X | X | | X | | | X | X | | 7 |
| | Be optimistic | X | | | X | | | | | | X | | | 3 |
| | Give reasons | X | X | X | | X | X | | X | | | X | X | 9 |
| | Be direct/ conventionally indirect | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | | | | X | 8 |
| | Question, hedge | X | | X | X | | | | | | | | X | 4 |
| | Be pessimistic | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Discuss the size of imposition | X | | X | | | X | | X | X | X | | X | 7 |
| | Give deference | | | | | | | | X | | | | | 1 |
| | Apologise | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 11 |
| | Impersonalise interlocutors | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Total** | | 7 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 4.5 / 6 |

| English Situation 2 | Strategies | Questionnaires 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 – E | 11 – C | 12 – D | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attend to the hearer's interests, wants, etc. | X | | X | | | | | | | | X | | 3 |
| | Use of in-group identity markers ('we') | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Seek agreement | | | | | | X | | | | | X | X | 4 |
| | Avoid disagreement | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Presuppose/ raise/ assert common ground | | | | X | | | | | | | X | X | 3 |
| | Offer or promise | X | X | | X | X | | | X | | X | X | X | 8 |
| | Be optimistic | X | X | X | | | X | | | | X | | | 5 |
| | Give reasons | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 12 |
| | Be direct/ conventionally indirect | | | | X | X | X | X | | | X | | X | 6 |
| | Question, hedge | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Be pessimistic | | | | X | | | | | | X | | | 2 |
| | Discuss the size of imposition | | | | | | | X | | | | | | 1 |
| | Give deference | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Apologise | | | | X | | X | | | | X | | | 3 |
| | Impersonalise interlocutors | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Total** | | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3.1 / 4.7 |

| English Situation 3 | Strategies | Questionnaires 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 – E | 11 – C | 12 – D | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attend to the hearer's interests, wants, etc. | X | | X | X | X | | | | | | | | 4 |
| | Use of in-group identity markers ('we') | X | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| | Seek agreement | | | X | | | | | X | | | | | 2 |
| | Avoid disagreement | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Presuppose/ raise/ assert common ground | | | X | | X | | | | | | | | 2 |
| | Offer or promise | X | | | X | X | | X | X | | X | | | 6 |
| | Be optimistic | | | | | | | X | | | | | | 1 |
| | Give reasons | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 12 |
| | Be direct/ conventionally indirect | X | X | X | | X | X | X | | X | | | X | 8 |
| | Question, hedge | | | X | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| | Be pessimistic | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Discuss the size of imposition | | X | | X | | | | | | | X | X | 4 |
| | Give deference | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Apologise | X | X | | | | X | X | X | X | | X | X | 8 |
| | Impersonalise interlocutors | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Total** | | 6 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4.1 / 4.5 |

| Dutch Situation 1 | Strategies | Questionnaires 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 – B | 10 – A | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attend to the hearer's interests, wants, etc. | | | | X | | X | | X | | | 3 |
| | Use of in-group identity markers ('we') | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Seek agreement | | | | X | | X | | | | | 2 |
| | Avoid disagreement | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Presuppose/ raise/ assert common ground | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Offer or promise | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | 7 |
| | Be optimistic | | | | | X | | | | | | 1 |
| | Give reasons | X | | | X | X | | X | | X | X | 6 |
| | Be direct/ conventionally indirect | X | | | | | X | | | X | X | 4 |
| | Question, hedge | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Be pessimistic | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Discuss the size of imposition | | X | X | X | | | | X | X | X | 6 |
| | Give deference | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Apologise | X | X | X | | X | X | X | | X | X | 8 |
| | Impersonalise interlocutors | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Total** | | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 3.7 / 4.6 |

| Dutch | Questionnaires | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9-B | 10-A | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Situation 2** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategies | Attend to the hearer's interests, wants, etc. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Use of in-group identity markers ('we') | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Seek agreement | | X | | | X | | X | | X | | 4 |
| | Avoid disagreement | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Presuppose/ raise/ assert common ground | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Offer or promise | | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | 8 |
| | Be optimistic | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Give reasons | X | | X | X | X | X | | | | | 5 |
| | Be direct/ conventionally indirect | X | X | | X | X | | X | | | X | 6 |
| | Question, hedge | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Be pessimistic | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Discuss the size of imposition | | | | | | | | | X | | 1 |
| | Give deference | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Apologise | X | X | | X | X | X | | | | | 5 |
| | Impersonalise interlocutors | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Total** | | 3 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2.9 / 4.8 |

| Dutch | Questionnaires | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9-B | 10-A | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Situation 3** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategies | Attend to the hearer's interests, wants, etc. | | | | | X | | | X | X | | 3 |
| | Use of in-group identity markers ('we') | | | X | X | | | | | | | 2 |
| | Seek agreement | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Avoid disagreement | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Presuppose/ raise/ assert common ground | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Offer or promise | | | | | | | | X | | | 1 |
| | Be optimistic | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Give reasons | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 10 |
| | Be direct/ conventionally indirect | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | X | 8 |
| | Question, hedge | | | | | X | | | | X | | 2 |
| | Be pessimistic | | | X | | | | | | | | 1 |
| | Discuss the size of imposition | | | | X | X | | | | | X | 3 |
| | Give deference | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Apologise | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | 9 |
| | Impersonalise interlocutors | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Total** | | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3.9 / 4.3 |

**Appendix E – Transcriptions Interviews (literal translation)**

*A (Dutch)*

**"What did you think of the questionnaire, was it hard to do?"**

I had to think about it for a bit, but I could imagine pretty well what the situation was and write down what I myself would say in such a moment. I have had this happen this in my life and that makes it easier.

**[Situation 1] "Do you think it's okay for your boss to ask such a thing?"**

Yes, he's my boss and I'm his employee, so he should be able to ask me such questions, as he is my employer.

**[Situation 1] "Do you think there's a big difference between you and your boss hierarchy-wise? Do you think that relationship is formal or informal?"**

Something inbetween. I don't think it's as informal as I am with my friends. I have worked for a florist and there I had a manager who was around the same age and a 'real' boss. With that manager I could have fun and when you had to be serious you were serious. With your boss you behave different. He was a friendly boss so you didn't have to do very formal, but there was a clear difference in authority.

**[Situation 1] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

Yes that reservation I made earlier than my boss asked me something and I can't cancel it then 'sorry'. I assume I'm not the only employee there so there's bound to be someone else. If there really isn't anyone else, then you could continue asking whether you can stay one hour or a half hour longer, that could be possible.

**[Situation 2] "Do you feel more obliged to your parents or to your friends?"**

I promised my parents to help. So in that sense I feel more obliged to my parents than to my friends.

**[Situation 2] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

I would ask it to my parents. If they say no, then I won't go and if they say yes, then I will go.

**[Situation 3] "What did you think of this situation?"**

I made the arrangement with my boss first, so that's what I'm going to do. I promised I'd do that, it was agreed on earlier and thus I'll do that.

**[Situation 3] "Did you think this situation differed from the first two? Was it easier?"**

I think this one was similar to the first one, as it happened in a work situation and not as similar to the second one, as that is more a familial level, so the bonds with the persons in the story are somewhat different. I thought similarly as I did when answering the first situation.

**[Situation 3] "In general, did you pay more attention to your other obligation or to the relationship you had with your team leader?"**

My first thought was 'my boss was first so I'll do that', I'm already busy. I won't be the only employee, so she undoubtedly has other people who can help her. If my supervisor had been first, then I would have told my boss 'she asked me to do something already and I don't have time for this'.


*B (Dutch)*

**"What did you think of the questionnaire, was it hard to do?"**

I didn't find it that difficult.

**[Situation 1] "Do you think it's okay for your boss to ask such a thing?"**

Ah well it happens daily. If I notice that I'm completely done with work, especially if I just had a long shift, most of the time I say no. But I do sometimes say yes.

**[Situation 1] "Do you think there's a big difference between you and your boss hierarchy-wise? Do you think that relationship is formal or informal?"**

I'm pretty informal with my boss, but that's because I've been working there for quite a long time. Two-and-a-half years think I enough to handle your boss more informally. Then you can say 'no' more often.

**[Situation 1] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

Yes it says here 'he has been working here for five years, you have for two-and-a-half', I think that that doesn't matter that much, as your boss is higher than you regardless. Also the 'you don't meet each other outside of work' have I not considered, as it just is your boss so you have to be formal with him. Only the fact that you have an obligation to your friends that you cannot cancel, so it just cannot happen.

**[Situation 2] "Do you feel more obliged to your parents or to your friends?"**

I think the obligation to my parents is more important, yes alright it's a tradition but that can be on another date. Having a tradition with friends entails that you have to ensure that everyone can be there.

**[Situation 2] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

I had something like 'it's a monthly tradition, okay, but is it also monthly in the same week?' Because if it's just monthly, then you can just propose next week and then it won't matter that much.

**[Situation 3] "What did you think of this situation?"**

I still had the idea that a boss is higher than a colleague so if you're that well befriended with your coworker, then you can say 'ask someone else, as the boss has asked me something else'.

**[Situation 3] "Did you think this situation differed from the first two? Was it easier?"**

It was more similar to the second situation, as of course you already had an obligation to your parents and here it is also a bit colleague and boss.

**[Situation 3] "In general, did you pay more attention to your other obligation or to the relationship you had with your team leader?"**

Yes, because if you want to keep your job then you can better listen to your boss than to your colleague.

*C (English)*

**"What did you think of the questionnaire, was it hard to do?"**

No, not per say. I didn't think it too difficult. It was a bit of thinking on 'what would I do?' but my answers fairly quickly ready.

**[Situation 1] "Do you think it's okay for your boss to ask such a thing?"**

Yes, I get that he asks me to, but the moment he says 'you're my sole option' you as requested person are quicker to say 'yes I'll do it', as it IS your boss and you're afraid that if you don't your contract won't be extended or whatever, when you had other plans. I can imagine that that when there is a difference in power and someone has influence on whether you can or cannot keep working there, that that can lead to saying things you do not necessarily mean. I get why he asks it, but there's a nasty tone behind it. If he didn't say 'you're my sole option', someone would think something like 'whether I do it or someone else doesn't matter, I cannot so I say no'. When if he does say that, you'll go something like 'yes, if I don't what will happen to me?'

**[Situation 1] "Do you think there's a big difference between you and your boss hierarchy-wise? Do you think that relationship is formal or informal?"**

I'm trying to think back to when I was working at McDonald's when I had a boss with whom I could work informally well and then you can be more deviant. But you shouldn't forget that he is above you. It's nice if you can interact well with people and the boss isn't all 'you're, the employee, I'm the boss so do as I say'. It's nice to have good contact, but I wouldn't get too informal with a boss, because then you can forget that he is above you and that can lead to difficult situations.

**[Situation 1] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

It says here 'you share no relationship outside of work' and you do not see each other otherwise, so then I believe such a relationship to be less important than reservations at a restaurant with friends. I think my friends are more important than someone with whom I don't have a good relationship. He does give you a choice and so I think 'okay my friends are more important than people with whom I can work well but with whom I don't have a very good bond. Then the choice is easy.

**[Situation 2] "Do you feel more obliged to your parents or to your friends?"**

I think that I value friendship over family, as you live with your parents and those you see often enough. They will be there for you regardless and at the moment when you cancel your friends, friendships can be quite fragile and then I would say 'okay I think my friends in this moment are more important, as those friendships have to now be actively maintained'. While you see your family every day and they will be there for you anyway. So I would in this case choose my friends.

**[Situation 2] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

Yes, I have of course promised my parents that I would do it, so who's first is first. But when it said 'you live with your parents' I thought, well, the promise I made to my parents I don't like, the activity I'm going to do with my friends I do, so that's also a consideration I made. And I thought 'okay, swimming doesn't have to take the whole day or the entire weekend, probably if I plan the swimming now I can help my parents at a different moment, maybe not in the garden but in another way.

**[Situation 3] "What did you think of this situation?"**

This I found harder, as it said 'a supervisor and a boss' and I assume that a supervisor is lower than a boss, so the consideration I made in this case is AND my boss asked first dan my supervisor AND my boss is higher than my supervisor and his instructions are thus more important than those of my

supervisor. Although my supervisor and I of course are closer personally, that's of course a shame because you want to help someone you like and you think it's important that that person can finish their tasks as well, but someone who you know better can you easier sell on the fact that you won't manage. This was already set, so this one was logical.

**[Situation 3] "Did you think this situation differed from the first two? Was it easier?"**

Yes it was a different situation. I think the third and the first one are similar, because you work for someone and you don't want, well look it's not the case with your parents that your father is the boss of the house, but if you work somewhere, the boss or supervisor has quite some influence on for example your wage and how much you work. The more dependent you are on that, the bigger the distance between you and your boss will be, as he has some kind of power over your income. So I thought that weighed quite much in both situations and that was not the case in the second situation at all. It said that a different meeting was set in all three situations, but I made different choices. I thought this situation was easier, as this was already set AND this person is more important than the other – the boss is more important than the supervisor – and with the supervisor I have good contact, so I can more easily convince her that it just won't work. She will understand it more easily and won't hold a grudge about it.

**[Situation 3] "In general, did you pay more attention to your other obligation or to the relationship you had with your team leader?"**

I think I started thinking 'okay, I had something else and that goes first, as who's first is first', but I do think that I made those decisions that I took based on my relationship with the other person and how they would react if I choose the one or the other. I think I based my choices on that, the starting point was always 'okay, the first promise goes first', but that that, especially with the second situation, predominated. For example with the third situation, say it was the reverse, then I'd have chosen to listen to my boss as well, as my boss is higher than my supervisor. So I do think that's more important.

*D (English)*

**"What did you think of the questionnaire, was it hard to do?"**

Not at all, because I've often enough been in such situations myself, so it was pretty relatable.

**[Situation 1] "Do you think it's okay for your boss to ask such a thing?"**

When I was working at the Jumbo, this happened to me. Then I'd had worked the whole day from 10 to 5 and then colleagues would not show so I was asked if I wanted to stay until 9. So it's not something weird or something. I always check when I'm asked such a thing. If I have the time, if I can work, then I will virtually always do so. I have often enough said yes, I have often enough said no.

**[Situation 1] "Do you think there's a big difference between you and your boss hierarchy-wise? Do you think that relationship is formal or informal?"**

I personally found that when my boss and I handled each other more informally it was more comfortable at work. He was very intimidating, that work relationship was very intimidating at the start. When we got to know each other better it was nice to work together. Then I dared to say 'no' more often.

**[Situation 1] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

For me it was important that you couldn't cancel the arrangement and also the idea of 'well you're the boss, it's your problem so figure it out yourself'.

**[Situation 2] "Do you feel more obliged to your parents or to your friends?"**

I think the obligation towards my parents is more important.

**[Situation 2] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

For me it was if my parents really need my help, I have said in my answer 'I actually have to help my parents, can't we do this on another day or let me call my parents and ask whether it is

necessary that I help'. If my parents then say 'if you come home, you can help for another hour' then I would go.

**[Situation 3] "What did you think of this situation?"**

I have in this case chosen for the boss, that I had my own work to do and that she should solve it herself.

**[Situation 3] "Did you think this situation differed from the first two? Was it easier?"**

It was for me a combination of situation 1 and 2, as in situation 1 there was the boss to whom you were obliged and in situation 2 the friends.

**[Situation 3] "In general, did you pay more attention to your other obligation or to the relationship you had with your team leader?"**

Definitely the obligation. If you haven't finished your work in time then that's your fault. If you then say 'yes but I have printed something for this and that person' then the boss will say 'yes but you have to do your own work'. That is then the reaction you receive. So then I'll do my own work.


*E (English)*

**"What did you think of the questionnaire, was it hard to do?"**

No, I thought it was relatable, that sort of stuff can happen to you easily every day and they have happened sometimes, so I had no trouble.

**[Situation 1] "Do you think it's okay for your boss to ask such a thing?"**

I do get it. You're a hired force, so it makes sense that they will ask things of you. You sometimes get called if you can cover for someone else.

**[Situation 1] "Do you think there's a big difference between you and your boss hierarchy-wise? Do you think that relationship is formal or informal?"**

Somewhere inbetween. I couldn't cover them as there has to be someone who can take care of everything so at that point they're above me. But in principle it's very informal, we go after work

sometimes grab a drink with everyone. I do 'tutoyeer' them [addressing someone in an informal manner].

**[Situation 1] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

I was very apologetic in my answer, but I don't do it because I already have a different arrangement set and probably I have been looking forward to it and I think it's a dick-move to cancel last-minute just because my boss has a problem that I in principle cannot do something about. I think it's more fun to do something with my friends. I have been looking forward to doing something with my friends and I won't cancel that last-minute and that was more important to me than a reservation I couldn't cancel.

**[Situation 2] "Do you feel more obliged to your parents or to your friends?"**

I felt like it said I was more obliged to my parents.

**[Situation 2] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

Again, an arrangement was already made and I really dislike to break my promises, especially with two people who I care a lot about. Say they were two neighbours with whom I do not have a good relationship, then I would have cancelled last-minute. They are my parents, I have a very good relationship with them and I like it to help them, so then I wouldn't have gone that time or I would've said 'maybe later'. If my friends would have been first, I would have gone swimming.

**[Situation 3] "What did you think of this situation?"**

My answer was because my boss is higher than me in principle, even if I work with a good friend, I would be like 'it's our work' and she will probably get it when I say 'I've already got a task, I can try to be quick but I can't promise anything'.

**[Situation 3] "Did you think this situation differed from the first two? Was it easier?"**

I think it was different because this one had bigger consequences if you were to ignore your boss, with the other one it was more 'too bad you can't cover'. And this is really professional and at work and I take that seriously and it's a somewhat more serious situation. In my head is that after your shift you can quickly cover a shift if you can but you don't have to. In this situation you're actually obligated to do something, as in you told your boss you would do it.

**[Situation 3] "In general, did you pay more attention to your other obligation or to the relationship you had with your team leader?"**

The other obligation to my boss. If my supervisor had been first I would've said to them 'our boss has asked me to do this and that, maybe you should converse', as he's probably higher so I would've said something like 'I have two different tasks now, maybe you two should do something because I don't know what I have to do now'.

**Appendix F – Transcriptions Interviews (grammatical translation)**

*A (Dutch)*

**"What did you think of the questionnaire, was it hard to do?"**

I had to think about it for a bit, but I could imagine pretty well what the situation was and write down what I myself would say in such a moment. I have had this happen this in my life and that makes it easier.

**[Situation 1] "Do you think it's okay for your boss to ask such a thing?"**

Yes, he's my boss and I'm his employee, so he should be able to ask me such questions, as he is my employer.

**[Situation 1] "Do you think there's a big difference between you and your boss hierarchy-wise? Do you think that relationship is formal or informal?"**

Something inbetween. I don't think it's as informal as I am with my friends. I have worked for a florist and there I had a manager who was around the same age and a 'real' boss. With that manager I could have fun and when you had to be serious you were serious. With your boss you behave different. He was a friendly boss so you didn't have to do very formal, but there was a clear difference in authority.

**[Situation 1] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

Yes that reservation I made earlier than my boss asked me something and I can't cancel it then 'sorry'. I assume I'm not the only employee there so there's bound to be someone else. If there really isn't anyone else, then you could continue asking whether you can stay one hour or a half hour longer, that could be possible.

**[Situation 2] "Do you feel more obliged to your parents or to your friends?"**

I promised my parents to help. So in that sense I feel more obliged to my parents than to my friends.

**[Situation 2] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

I would ask it to my parents. If they say no, then I won't go and if they say yes, then I will go.

**[Situation 3] "What did you think of this situation?"**

I made the arrangement with my boss first, so that's what I'm going to do. I promised I'd do that, it was agreed on earlier and thus I'll do that.

**[Situation 3] "Did you think this situation differed from the first two? Was it easier?"**

I think this one was similar to the first one, as it happened in a work situation and not as similar to the second one, as that is more a familial level, so the bonds with the persons in the story are somewhat different. I thought similarly as I did when answering the first situation.

**[Situation 3] "In general, did you pay more attention to your other obligation or to the relationship you had with your team leader?"**

My first thought was 'my boss was first so I'll do that', I'm already busy. I won't be the only employee, so she undoubtedly has other people who can help her. If my supervisor had been first, then I would have told my boss 'she asked me to do something already and I don't have time for this'.

*B (Dutch)*

**"What did you think of the questionnaire, was it hard to do?"**

I didn't find it that difficult.

**[Situation 1] "Do you think it's okay for your boss to ask such a thing?"**

Ah well it happens daily. If I notice that I'm completely done with work, especially if I just had a long shift, most of the time I say no. But I do sometimes say yes.

**[Situation 1] "Do you think there's a big difference between you and your boss hierarchy-wise? Do you think that relationship is formal or informal?"**

I'm pretty informal with my boss, but that's because I've been working there for quite a long time. Two-and-a-half years think I enough to handle your boss more informally. Then you can say 'no' more often.

**[Situation 1] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

Yes it says here 'he has been working here for five years, you have for two-and-a-half', I think that that doesn't matter that much, as your boss is higher than you regardless. Also the 'you don't meet each other outside of work' have I not considered, as it just is your boss so you have to be formal with him. Only the fact that you have an obligation to your friends that you cannot cancel, so it just cannot happen.

**[Situation 2] "Do you feel more obliged to your parents or to your friends?"**

I think the obligation to my parents is more important, yes alright it's a tradition but that can be on another date. Having a tradition with friends entails that you have to ensure that everyone can be there.

**[Situation 2] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

I had something like 'it's a monthly tradition, okay, but is it also monthly in the same week?' Because if it's just monthly, then you can just propose next week and then it won't matter that much.

**[Situation 3] "What did you think of this situation?"**

I still had the idea that a boss is higher than a colleague so if you're that well befriended with your coworker, then you can say 'ask someone else, as the boss has asked me something else'.

**[Situation 3] "Did you think this situation differed from the first two? Was it easier?"**

It was more similar to the second situation, as of course you already had an obligation to your parents and here it is also a bit colleague and boss.

**[Situation 3] "In general, did you pay more attention to your other obligation or to the relationship you had with your team leader?"**

Yes, because if you want to keep your job then you can better listen to your boss than to your colleague.

*C (English)*

**"What did you think of the questionnaire, was it hard to do?"**

No, not per say. I didn't think it too difficult. It was a bit of thinking on 'what would I do?' but my answers fairly quickly ready.

**[Situation 1] "Do you think it's okay for your boss to ask such a thing?"**

Yes, I get that he asks me to, but the moment he says 'you're my sole option' you as requested person are quicker to say 'yes I'll do it', as it IS your boss and you're afraid that if you don't your contract won't be extended or whatever, when you had other plans. I can imagine that that when there is a difference in power and someone has influence on whether you can or cannot keep working there, that that can lead to saying things you do not necessarily mean. I get why he asks it, but there's a nasty tone behind it. If he didn't say 'you're my sole option', someone would think something like 'whether I do it or someone else doesn't matter, I cannot so I say no'. When if he does say that, you'll go something like 'yes, if I don't what will happen to me?'

**[Situation 1] "Do you think there's a big difference between you and your boss hierarchy-wise? Do you think that relationship is formal or informal?"**

I'm trying to think back to when I was working at McDonald's when I had a boss with whom I could work informally well and then you can be more deviant. But you shouldn't forget that he is above you. It's nice if you can interact well with people and the boss isn't all 'you're, the employee, I'm the boss so do as I say'. It's nice to have good contact, but I wouldn't get too informal with a boss, because then you can forget that he is above you and that can lead to difficult situations.

**[Situation 1] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

It says here 'you share no relationship outside of work' and you do not see each other otherwise, so then I believe such a relationship to be less important than reservations at a restaurant with friends. I think my friends are more important than someone with whom I don't have a good relationship. He does give you a choice and so I think 'okay my friends are more important than people with whom I can work well but with whom I don't have a very good bond. Then the choice is easy.

**[Situation 2] "Do you feel more obliged to your parents or to your friends?"**

I think that I value friendship over family, as you live with your parents and those you see often enough. They will be there for you regardless and at the moment when you cancel your friends, friendships can be quite fragile and then I would say 'okay I think my friends in this moment are more important, as those friendships have to now be actively maintained'. While you see your family every day and they will be there for you anyway. So I would in this case choose my friends.

**[Situation 2] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

Yes, I have of course promised my parents that I would do it, so who's first is first. But when it said 'you live with your parents' I thought, well, the promise I made to my parents I don't like, the activity I'm going to do with my friends I do, so that's also a consideration I made. And I thought 'okay, swimming doesn't have to take the whole day or the entire weekend, probably if I plan the swimming now I can help my parents at a different moment, maybe not in the garden but in another way.

**[Situation 3] "What did you think of this situation?"**

This I found harder, as it said 'a supervisor and a boss' and I assume that a supervisor is lower than a boss, so the consideration I made in this case is AND my boss asked first dan my supervisor AND my boss is higher than my supervisor and his instructions are thus more important than those of my

supervisor. Although my supervisor and I of course are closer personally, that's of course a shame because you want to help someone you like and you think it's important that that person can finish their tasks as well, but someone who you know better can you easier sell on the fact that you won't manage. This was already set, so this one was logical.

**[Situation 3] "Did you think this situation differed from the first two? Was it easier?"**

Yes it was a different situation. I think the third and the first one are similar, because you work for someone and you don't want, well look it's not the case with your parents that your father is the boss of the house, but if you work somewhere, the boss or supervisor has quite some influence on for example your wage and how much you work. The more dependent you are on that, the bigger the distance between you and your boss will be, as he has some kind of power over your income. So I thought that weighed quite much in both situations and that was not the case in the second situation at all. It said that a different meeting was set in all three situations, but I made different choices. I thought this situation was easier, as this was already set AND this person is more important than the other – the boss is more important than the supervisor – and with the supervisor I have good contact, so I can more easily convince her that it just won't work. She will understand it more easily and won't hold a grudge about it.

**[Situation 3] "In general, did you pay more attention to your other obligation or to the relationship you had with your team leader?"**

I think I started thinking 'okay, I had something else and that goes first, as who's first is first', but I do think that I made those decisions that I took based on my relationship with the other person and how they would react if I choose the one or the other. I think I based my choices on that, the starting point was always 'okay, the first promise goes first', but that that, especially with the second situation, predominated. For example with the third situation, say it was the reverse, then I'd have chosen to listen to my boss as well, as my boss is higher than my supervisor. So I do think that's more important.

*D (English)*

**"What did you think of the questionnaire, was it hard to do?"**

Not at all, because I've often enough been in such situations myself, so it was pretty relatable.

**[Situation 1] "Do you think it's okay for your boss to ask such a thing?"**

When I was working at the Jumbo, this happened to me. Then I'd had worked the whole day from 10 to 5 and then colleagues would not show so I was asked if I wanted to stay until 9. So it's not something weird or something. I always check when I'm asked such a thing. If I have the time, if I can work, then I will virtually always do so. I have often enough said yes, I have often enough said no.

**[Situation 1] "Do you think there's a big difference between you and your boss hierarchy-wise? Do you think that relationship is formal or informal?"**

I personally found that when my boss and I handled each other more informally it was more comfortable at work. He was very intimidating, that work relationship was very intimidating at the start. When we got to know each other better it was nice to work together. Then I dared to say 'no' more often.

**[Situation 1] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

For me it was important that you couldn't cancel the arrangement and also the idea of 'well you're the boss, it's your problem so figure it out yourself'.

**[Situation 2] "Do you feel more obliged to your parents or to your friends?"**

I think the obligation towards my parents is more important.

**[Situation 2] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

For me it was if my parents really need my help, I have said in my answer 'I actually have to help my parents, can't we do this on another day or let me call my parents and ask whether it is necessary that I help'. If my parents then say 'if you come home, you can help for another hour' then I would go.

**[Situation 3] "What did you think of this situation?"**

I have in this case chosen for the boss, that I had my own work to do and that she should solve it herself.

**[Situation 3] "Did you think this situation differed from the first two? Was it easier?"**

It was for me a combination of situation 1 and 2, as in situation 1 there was the boss to whom you were obliged and in situation 2 the friends.

**[Situation 3] "In general, did you pay more attention to your other obligation or to the relationship you had with your team leader?"**

Definitely the obligation. If you haven't finished your work in time then that's your fault. If you then say 'yes but I have printed something for this and that person' then the boss will say 'yes but you have to do your own work'. That is then the reaction you receive. So then I'll do my own work.


*E (English)*

**"What did you think of the questionnaire, was it hard to do?"**

No, I thought it was relatable, that sort of stuff can happen to you easily every day and they have happened sometimes, so I had no trouble.

**[Situation 1] "Do you think it's okay for your boss to ask such a thing?"**

I do get it. You're a hired force, so it makes sense that they will ask things of you. You sometimes get called if you can cover for someone else.

**[Situation 1] "Do you think there's a big difference between you and your boss hierarchy-wise? Do you think that relationship is formal or informal?"**

Somewhere inbetween. I couldn't cover them as there has to be someone who can take care of everything so at that point they're above me. But in principle it's very informal, we go after work sometimes grab a drink with everyone. I do 'tutoyeer' them [addressing someone in an informal manner].

**[Situation 1] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

I was very apologetic in my answer, but I don't do it because I already have a different arrangement set and probably I have been looking forward to it and I think it's a dick-move to cancel last-minute just because my boss has a problem that I in principle cannot do something about. I think it's more fun to do something with my friends. I have been looking forward to doing something with my friends and I won't cancel that last-minute and that was more important to me than a reservation I couldn't cancel.

**[Situation 2] "Do you feel more obliged to your parents or to your friends?"**

I felt like it said I was more obliged to my parents.

**[Situation 2] "Do you remember which considerations you made in making your choice for an answer?"**

Again, an arrangement was already made and I really dislike to break my promises, especially with two people who I care a lot about. Say they were two neighbours with whom I do not have a good relationship, then I would have cancelled last-minute. They are my parents, I have a very good relationship with them and I like it to help them, so then I wouldn't have gone that time or I would've said 'maybe later'. If my friends would have been first, I would have gone swimming.

**[Situation 3] "What did you think of this situation?"**

My answer was because my boss is higher than me in principle, even if I work with a good friend, I would be like 'it's our work' and she will probably get it when I say 'I've already got a task, I can try to be quick but I can't promise anything'.

**[Situation 3] "Did you think this situation differed from the first two? Was it easier?"**

I think it was different because this one had bigger consequences if you were to ignore your boss, with the other one it was more 'too bad you can't cover'. And this is really professional and at work and I take that seriously and it's a somewhat more serious situation. In my head is that after your shift you can quickly cover a shift if you can but you don't have to. In this situation you're actually obligated to do something, as in you told your boss you would do it.

**[Situation 3] "In general, did you pay more attention to your other obligation or to the relationship you had with your team leader?"**

The other obligation to my boss. If my supervisor had been first I would've said to them 'our boss has asked me to do this and that, maybe you should converse', as he's probably higher so I would've said something like 'I have two different tasks now, maybe you two should do something because I don't know what I have to do now'.