



**Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen**

**Non-native English Politeness in English E-mail Requests:  
Non-native Reader Evaluations of Non-native Writers**

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## **Abstract**

The growth of multinational organisations has led to increased international business communication between non-native English (NNE) speakers. This has consequently raised questions about the interlocutors differing pragmatic competencies. Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) research has found NNE speakers to deviate from the native English (NE) speaker norms, for example in their use of linguistic modification strategies. Little research has focused on the influence of the deviations on interpersonal evaluations of NNE writers made by NNE readers, even though it could be deemed highly important in the growing international communication contexts. Therefore, the present study investigated the impact of NNE politeness in professional e-mail requests on personal and message evaluations made by NNE speakers. Moreover, the knowledge of the e-mail writer's foreign origin was manipulated to investigate its influence the personal and message evaluations. In an online experiment, 192 NNE speakers took part in a between subjects study in which they evaluated an e-mail message and its writer. The findings indicate that the levels of politeness and the knowledge of foreign origin influenced the evaluations of the messages and NNE writer to a certain extent. The NNE writer was found to be evaluated more positively on likeability when the level of politeness was moderate and the foreign origin was known. Furthermore, the findings suggest that NNE readers have a relatively positive perception of the NNE writers and their messages overall. This both supports and contradicts previous ILP studies on interpersonal evaluations concerning e-mail requests. The findings complement the knowledge on NNE-NNE e-mail communication and provide NNE speaking professionals insights on the consequences of their pragmalinguistic capabilities.

## **Introduction**

Increasing international business communication has led to rising occurrences of interactions between non-native English speakers. These interactions are often carried out with English as the lingua franca and facilitated by computer mediated technology, for example e-mail communication. However, the asynchrony and lack of non-verbal cues lay pressure on the modification of linguistic means to convey meaning. Especially non-native speakers of English have been found to face issues due to their linguistic modifications that deviate from the native speaker norm (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005; 2007; Hendriks, 2008). The deviations have been suggested to have a negative influence on interpersonal evaluations between interlocutors (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2016; Hendriks, 2010). However, there is some evidence of the possibility to control for these negative evaluations by making the foreign origin of the message sender explicit to the evaluator (Vignovic & Thompson, 2010).

Expressing politeness by linguistic means is essential for good interpersonal relationships. For example, the concept of facework (Goffman, 1955), the politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and the expectations of efficient communication (Grice, 1975) suggest that the politeness of a message is considered important universally. For example, the way politeness is expressed in professional requests is highly essential for the success of relationships and business. Previous research has investigated the non-native English politeness modification strategies in written communication, but mainly focused on the interpersonal evaluations by native English speakers rather than non-native English speakers (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2016; Hendriks, 2010; Vignovic & Thompson, 2010). To close this gap in research, the present study focused on the interpersonal evaluations of non-native English speakers by other non-native English speakers in a professional e-mail context. The study contributes to the knowledge on message and non-native writer perceptions by non-native e-mail readers, specifically on the influence of politeness and writer's foreign origin in an international business communication context.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Interactions between non-native speakers of English have increased due to the globalisation of trade and cultures that have increased the occurrence of intercultural environments. Societies are becoming increasingly multicultural due to international movement and migration connected to academia and business. For example, organisations that embrace the diversity and inclusivity in selecting their employees have been found to benefit from the multinational perspectives and competencies they acquire (Fitzsimmons et al., 2011).

Furthermore, the lingua franca in internationally oriented and multinational organisations is often English (Barner-Rasmussen & Aarnio, 2011; Harzing & Pudelko, 2013). Thus, English is no longer used only between native English (NE) speakers and non-native English (NNE) speakers, but increasingly only between NNE speakers in business communication. The importance of successful interpersonal communication is thus gaining more attention from businesses than ever before. Therefore, businesses, individuals, and research are focused on improving business communication between international NNE speakers.

Business interactions have largely shifted online in the past years due to the development of various computer-mediated communication (CMC) platforms and the COVID-19 pandemic. CMC technology has given organisations tools to increase the effectivity and quality of the employees' interpersonal communication. For example, e-mail communication allows for the basic functions of interaction asynchronously without the receiver of the message having to be present. However, limitations connected to the asociality and lack of non-verbal cues can cause miscommunication, weaker interpersonal ties, and even escalate conflicts (Friedman & Currall, 2003). To avoid this, appropriate e-mail communication between multinational teams is essential. However, interactions between NNE speakers might not always be carried out according to the conversational partners' wishes due to the differing linguistic conventions used by the interlocutors. Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) research, for example the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) project (e.g., Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) has investigated the universalities of speech acts and the differing ways second language learners' use the target language. Especially requests as speech acts have been found central in research concerning pragmatics and appropriate communication due to their imposition to the requestee (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Hendriks, 2002; Trosborg, 1995).

Request strategies have been suggested to range from the most imposing imperatives to the least imposing hints (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). These requests strategies can be formulated using different modifications, for example internal and external request modifications, to adjust the requests according to the context and receiver (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The internal request modification denotes altering the 'head act' or the most essential part of the request, while external request modification means the alteration of utterances surrounding the head act (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The most conventionally indirect requesting strategy is the query preparatory strategy that questions the ability of the receiver as shown in (1a) (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Furthermore, syntactic modifiers, for

example past tense modal “could” (1b), are used to mitigate the imposition of the request by modifying the head act. Similarly, phrasal modifiers, for example downtoners ‘maybe’ or ‘possibly’ (1c), are generally used to further reduce the threat of the imposition (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Hendriks, 2002; House & Kasper, 1987; Trosborg, 1995).

- (1) a. *Can you help me?*  
b. *Could you help me?*  
c. *Could you possibly help me?*

Request modification strategies stem from theories concerning the maxims of conversation (Grice, 1975), facework (Goffman, 1955), and politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). According to Grice (1975), the basic assumption of communication is the interlocutors’ cooperative aim for conversational success and respect towards the maxims of quality, quantity, relevance, and manner. The maxim of manner has been suggested to be essential for conversational success in requesting strategies due to appropriate manner, for example politeness, being universally expected from the conversational partner (Grice, 1975). Researchers argue that there are different social variables, for example power, distance, and ranking that determine the level of politeness used (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Moreover, the researchers suggest that the social status, social closeness, and imposition of the message are central factors in formulating appropriate utterances.

Politeness is considered to stem from the desire to save ‘face’, which is defined as the positive social value a person claims for oneself (Goffman, 1955). According to Goffman (1955), people protect this value by performing ‘facework’ that is consistent with the surrounding environment. Adding to Goffman’s theory, Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest that person’s ‘face’ can be categorised into positive and negative face. According to the study, positive face concerns the way person wants to be seen by others, while negative face concerns the person’s freedom to act. If this freedom to act is threatened, the imposition to the person’s negative face should be reduced. For example, requests as face threatening acts (FTA’s) subject the requestee under pressure to act according to or against the request. This poses a threat to the person’s positive social value. Brown and Levinson (1987) distinguish four different politeness strategies, namely positive, negative as well as on- and off-record politeness to reduce the imposition of FTA’s. The dimensions are intertwined with the present relationships and contents of messages within each social context. According to the

theory, the threat to person's negative face can be reduced with the negative politeness strategy, which emphasises the distance between the interlocutors. For example, the internal request modification strategy with syntactic and phrasal modifiers defined by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) is generally used to reduce the threat of requests. Different evaluations about the politeness, clarity, appropriateness, and reasonableness of requests have been investigated in different contexts (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2016; Hendriks, 2010). Study by Hendriks (2010) found that the sender was evaluated more positively by NE speakers the more elaborate the request modification was.

However, the complexities of different request modification strategies and FTA's pose stress on the pragmatic capabilities of NNE speakers. ILP studies have found NNE speakers to differ from the NE speaker norm in terms of having limited pragmalinguistic qualities (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005, 2007; Hendriks, 2008). A study conducted by Biesenbach-Lucas (2005) suggests that international NNE speaking students are limited in their pragmalinguistic qualities in comparison to American students in their e-mail communication. The NNE speakers were found to combine multiple expressions of phatic language to maintain good social relations and use ambiguous means to request a favour more than American students. Furthermore, Dutch NNE speakers have been found to undermodify requests, while simultaneously reducing the imposition by downtoners (e.g. 'possibly' and 'maybe') together with past tense modal 'could' and lexical politeness marker 'please' more compared to the NE speaking counterparts (Hendriks, 2002; House & Kasper, 1987; Trosborg, 1995). These limitations in the NNE speakers' pragmalinguistic competencies have been found to lead to negative evaluations of the writer of the message (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2016; Hendriks, 2010; Vignovic & Thompson, 2010). Previous studies suggest that the underuse of linguistic modification in e-mail messages written by NNE writers lead to negative personal evaluations by NE evaluators (Hendriks, 2010) but not NNE evaluators (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2016). Economidou-Kogetsidis (2016) found evidence that NNE speakers might possibly be unaware of the NNE pragmatic deviances from NE norm and evaluate the NNE writers and their messages more positively compared to NE evaluators.

These deviations of NNE speakers from the NNE norms in e-mail messages have been further categorised to technical language violations and etiquette norm violations (Vignovic & Thompson, 2010). The researchers categorised technical language violations concerning spelling and grammar mistakes to connect to language proficiency, while etiquette norm violations can be seen as mistakes made despite a high language proficiency.

This can for example be the inappropriate modification of requests. Both violations were found to lead to negative evaluations of the e-mail writer by NE speakers (Vignovic & Thompson, 2010). Furthermore, the researchers manipulated the explicitness of the foreign culture of the e-mail writer. Half of the participants read an instruction with the foreign linguistic and cultural background of the writer explicitly disclosed and half did not have any indication of these details. The study found that the writer whose e-mail contained technical violations was evaluated less negatively if the writer's foreign cultural background was explicit. This did not happen to such extent for etiquette violations. The researchers argue that the writer's perceived level of intention might play a role and thus the higher intention behind the etiquette violations results in more negative interpersonal evaluations regardless of the explicitness of foreign origin. However, this study was conducted in a NE evaluator context and thus lacks generalisability to the NNE speaker contexts. Therefore, it would be beneficial to investigate these findings on etiquette norm violations and the knowledge of foreign origin further in an NNE writer to NNE reader context.

Various previous studies have created constructs to measure evaluations of NNE speakers in different contexts. The interpersonal evaluations measured in ILP studies have mostly centered around constructs likeability, status, competence and hirability in large accent attitudinal surveys (Bayard et al., 2001; Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010; Grondelaers et al., 2019; Hendriks, 2010; Hendriks et al., 2014, 2016; Nejjari et al., 2012). The construct likeability has generally measured the perception of friendliness, the construct status evaluations of social status, the construct competence the capabilities of the person being evaluated, and the construct hirability has been used to gauge the probability of hiring a job candidate.

Especially hirability has been studied due to the implications from previous research, which has indicated that the perception of inappropriate use of politeness strategies could possibly influence professional relations (Hendriks, 2010; Vignovic & Thompson, 2010). Previous research has mainly concentrated on the e-mail communication between lecturers and students (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2016), thus the findings lack generalisability to the business contexts that are increasingly multinational. Some studies have investigated the manager-subordinate (Hendriks, 2008, 2010) and organisational (Vignovic & Thompson, 2010) context, but still lack insights on the NNE-NNE interpersonal e-mail communication. Therefore, the present study was set in a business context with the focus on e-mail communication between a department head and a student subordinate.

The present study aimed to investigate personal evaluations of NNE e-mail writers made by NNE e-mail readers in reference to the level of politeness conveyed in the requests and the knowledge of foreign origin of the sender. Furthermore, another aim was to investigate e-mail message evaluations made by NNE e-mail receivers in reference to the level of politeness conveyed in the requests and the knowledge of foreign origin of the sender. The purpose of the study was to contribute to the knowledge on NNE speaker and message perceptions of other NNE speakers in a professional e-mail communication context. The different levels of politeness in the e-mail requests and the knowledge of the writer's foreign origin were manipulated to investigate their influence on the interpersonal and message evaluations. Furthermore, the experiment was conducted in an international business communication context, which adds to its practical importance. Ideally, the study would contribute to understanding the impact of politeness in the NNE-NNE sender-receiver e-mail communication context better and benefit the field by giving insight on the topic. In practice, NNE speakers could benefit from the insights of the present study in their business communication with other NNE speakers.

Considering the lack of research on NNE reader evaluations of NNE writers and the limited knowledge on the consequences of NNE modifications of requests this present study aimed to close the gaps in knowledge by investigating these themes. Furthermore, the study intended to investigate whether the knowledge of foreign origin influences personal and message evaluations in this context. The purpose was to highlight the importance of intercultural competencies and the development of NNE communication practices in international business contexts. For this purpose, the following research questions were presented:

**RQ1:** To what extent do differing levels of politeness in NNE requests and knowledge of writer's foreign origin influence personal evaluations of an e-mail writer by NNE readers?

**RQ2:** To what extent do differing levels of politeness in NNE requests and knowledge of writer's foreign origin influence message evaluations by NNE readers?

## **Methodology**

### *Materials*

The independent variables in the study were the level of politeness (low, moderate, high) and the knowledge of origin (known vs unknown). The level of politeness was operationalised by embedding three levels of politeness modification strategies into three professional internship-related e-mail messages according to the request modification strategies defined by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) as well as Hendriks (2002). The least polite request was operationalised with an indirect strategy, namely questioning the ability of the receiver in “Can you look over my CV and tell me whether I am a suitable candidate for the internship?”. Furthermore, the moderately polite request was operationalised with an internal modification strategy, namely the past tense modal and syntactic modifier “could” in “Could you look over my CV and tell me whether I am a suitable candidate for the internship?”. The most polite request was operationalised similarly with an internal modification strategy, but a phrasal modifier and a downtoner “possibly” in “Could you possibly look over my CV and tell me whether I am a suitable candidate for the internship?” was used to further reduce the threat of the FTA. See appendices (4, 5 & 6) for full e-mail messages.

The knowledge of origin was operationalised by disclosing the e-mail writer’s foreign origin as Dutch in half of the instructions while this was omitted from the other half of the instructions, similarly to the study by Vignovic and Thompson (2010). The manipulation of foreign origin was not embedded in the e-mail message itself because a completely neutral name without any indication of foreign origin is extremely hard to find. The participants were told that the sender’s name was not included for privacy reasons. The manipulated sentence was “You have just received an e-mail from a (Dutch) student looking for an internship in your company.” with the operationalisation of the known origin in the parentheses. See appendices (2 & 3) for full instructions.

### *Subjects*

Overall, there were 192 non-native English speakers as participants (age:  $M= 25.8$ ,  $SD= 9.14$ ;  $R= 18-73$ ; 64% female). The sample was highly international with 36 nationalities speaking 29 different first languages. Most participants were Dutch (29%), German (21%), and Finnish (15%) with respective numbers of speakers of these languages. Furthermore, the participants indicated their weekly use of English, which was 25.7 hours ( $SD= 36.51$ ) per week on average. The level of the participants’ general English proficiency was

measured with a LexTALE test embedded in the questionnaire. The general proficiency was high with an average of 81% answers correct ( $SD= 10.69$ ). According to Lemhöfer and Broersma (2012) this percentage denotes levels C1 and C2 on the European standard grading scale of English proficiency.

The participants were mostly students (56%) and in terms of education, most (46%) participants mentioned bachelor's degree as their current or highest completed level of education. Most participants had no hiring experience (78%).

The participants were mostly evenly distributed across the six conditions (3 levels of politeness & 2 levels of origin). The one-way ANOVA for age ( $F(5, 186) < 1$ ), chi-square for gender ( $\chi^2(15) = 21.25, p = .129$ ), chi-square for level of education ( $\chi^2(30) = 26.72, p = .638$ ), chi-square for employment status ( $\chi^2(30) = 28.08, p = .566$ ), chi-square hiring experience ( $\chi^2(10) = 10.24, p = .419$ ), and one-way ANOVA for weekly communication in English ( $F(5, 186) < 1$ ) were all insignificant indicating an even distribution. However, one-way ANOVA for English proficiency ( $F(5, 186) = 2.75, p = .020$ ) was found significant and thus not distributed evenly. The first condition (low politeness & known origin) having higher English proficiency ( $M=86.7, SD= 10.10$ ) compared to the third condition (high politeness & known origin) ( $M= 78.12, SD= 10.18$ ). However, the uneven distribution was deemed to not cause problems because the overall average of English proficiency was high.

### *Design*

The study followed a 2 (known vs unknown origin) x 3 (low, moderate & high politeness) between subjects design. The foreign origin of the writer was manipulated by disclosing it in the instructions while the three levels of politeness were embedded in the three different e-mail messages.

### *Instruments*

The dependent variables were the perception of the e-mail message and perception of the writer. The perception of the message was measured with constructs clarity, politeness, reasonableness (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2016; Hendriks, 2010), and appropriateness (self-constructed). The reliability of each scale was measured with Cronbach's alpha.

Clarity was measured with three 7-point Likert scales, which were introduced by the statement "I think this e-mail is..." and anchored by 'strongly disagree-strongly agree'. The

items measuring clarity were ‘clear’, ‘well-structured’, and ‘informative’. The reliability of three items for clarity was adequate  $\alpha = .78$ .

Appropriateness was measured with three 7-point Likert scales, which were introduced by the statement “I think this e-mail is...” and anchored by ‘strongly disagree-strongly agree’. The items measuring appropriateness were ‘appropriate’, ‘professional’, and ‘disrespectful’ (reverse coded). The reliability of three items for appropriateness was good  $\alpha = .86$ .

Politeness was measured with four 7-point Likert scales, which were introduced by the statement “I think this e-mail...” and anchored by ‘strongly disagree-strongly agree’. The items measuring politeness were ‘Is polite’, ‘Is abrupt’ (reverse coded), ‘Acknowledges its imposition on the receiver’, ‘Gives the receiver a lot of choice’. The reliability of the four items for politeness was insufficient  $\alpha = .62$ . The third item, ‘acknowledging imposition’, was analysed separately after which the reliability of three items for politeness became slightly better, borderlining adequate  $\alpha = .68$ .

Reasonableness was measured with three 7-point Likert scales, which were introduced by the statement “Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements” and anchored by ‘strongly disagree-strongly agree’. The items measuring reasonableness were ‘It is likely that the person who received this e-mail will comply with this request’, ‘The writer of this e-mail has the right to make this request’, and ‘The receiver of this e-mail has the obligation to fulfill this request’. The reliability of three items for reasonableness was poor  $\alpha = .58$ , thus all three items were analysed separately as constructs ‘compliance’, ‘rightfulness’, and ‘obligation’. Overall, all scale items were considered to measure the perception of the e-mail message reliably. Thus, the means of all items were used to calculate the composite means for each construct, which were used in the further analyses. The items for each construct of the variable are in the appendices (7).

The variable perception of the writer had four constructs, namely likeability, status, competence, and hirability (based on Bayard et al., 2001; Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010; Grondelaers et al., 2019; Hendriks et al., 2014, 2016; Nejjari et al., 2012). The reliability of each scale was measured with Cronbach’s alpha.

Likeability was measured with eight 7-point Likert scales, which were introduced by the statement “In my opinion, the writer of this e-mail seems...” and anchored by ‘strongly disagree-strongly agree’. The items measuring likeability were ‘credible’, ‘sympathetic’, ‘warm’, ‘unfriendly’ (reverse coded), ‘humorous’, ‘tactful’, ‘polite’, and ‘irritating’ (reverse coded). The reliability of eight items for likeability was good  $\alpha = .85$

Status was measured with three 7-point Likert scales, which were introduced by the statement “In my opinion, the writer of this e-mail seems...” and anchored by ‘strongly disagree-strongly agree’. The items measuring status were ‘authoritative’, ‘self-confident’, and ‘influential’. The reliability of three items for status was adequate  $\alpha=.71$ .

Competence was measured with six 7-point Likert scales, which were introduced by the statement “In my opinion, the writer of this e-mail seems...” and anchored by ‘strongly disagree-strongly agree’. The items measuring competence were ‘reliable’, ‘intelligent’, ‘competent’, ‘hard-working’, ‘educated’, and ‘trustworthy’. The reliability of six items for competence was excellent  $\alpha=.92$ .

Hirability was measured with five 7-point Likert scales, which were introduced by the statement “Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements...” and anchored by ‘strongly disagree-strongly agree’. The items measuring hirability were ‘I would recommend employing the writer of this e-mail’, ‘I would feel satisfied if the writer of this e-mail would be invited for an interview’, ‘I feel favourably towards the writer of the e-mail’, ‘The writer of this e-mail would be an asset to the company’, and ‘There is a high likelihood of the writer of this e-mail being invited for an interview’. The reliability of five items for competence was excellent  $\alpha=.95$ . Overall, all scale items were considered to measure the perception of writer reliably. Thus, the means of all items were used to calculate the composite means for each construct, which were used in the further analyses. The items for each construct of the variable are in the appendices (8).

### *Procedure*

The participants were recruited by convenience and snowball sampling via online social media platforms WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. The online questionnaire was administered via online statistical analysis tool Qualtrics and filled in independently by participants. The procedure was the same for all participants.

Firstly, the participants were introduced to the experiment (Appendix 1) and asked for their consent (according to the EACH, Appendix 9). The aim of the study was not disclosed. The participants were presented with two open-ended screening questions because only over 18 years old non-native English speakers were recruited. In the introduction, all participants were explained the business context and their position as a head of the human resources division with the task to assess and recruit new interns (Appendices 2 & 3). Secondly, the participants were randomised. Half of the participants read that the writer of the e-mail was an NNE speaker, namely a Dutch student, while the

other half did not get any indication of the foreign origin of the writer. All participants were once more randomised to read one e-mail message with either low, moderate, or high politeness modification strategy (Appendices 4, 5 & 6). Thirdly, all participants were presented with a questionnaire consisting of questions about the writer of the e-mail and the e-mail message itself.

The general English proficiency of the participants was measured with a LexTALE test (Lemhöfer & Broersma, 2012) that presented the participants' 60 words and asked whether they are existing English words or not. The test was embedded within the questionnaire and took about five minutes to complete. After this the participants were asked some background questions, namely their gender, nationality, education, employment, hiring experience, and extent of weekly communication in English. Lastly, the participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation. The experiment took approximately ten minutes to complete, however for some participants it took longer ( $M=37.5$ ,  $SD=300$ ).

#### *Statistical treatment*

Multiple two-way ANOVAs were conducted to investigate the NNE writer and e-mail message evaluations to analyse possible main and interaction effects related to the level of politeness and knowledge of foreign origin.

### **Results**

The purpose of the study was to investigate whether different levels of politeness and the knowledge of a foreign origin influence the evaluations of e-mail messages and NNE e-mail writers in a professional request context.

#### *Perception of the message*

Perception of the message was analysed to answer the research question about the effect of politeness and origin on the evaluations of the e-mail requests. The composite means were calculated for seven constructs and all 11 constructs were analysed with two-way ANOVAs with politeness and origin as factors.

The two-way ANOVA for clarity with politeness and origin as between-subjects factors showed no significant main effects on politeness ( $F(2, 186) < 1$ ) or origin ( $F(1, 186) < 1$ ). Furthermore, no significant interaction effect between politeness and origin was found ( $F(2, 186) = 2.52$ ,  $p = .083$ ). Table 1 presents results of this analysis.

The two-way ANOVA for appropriateness with politeness and origin as between-subjects factors showed no significant main effects on politeness ( $F(2, 186) < 1$ ) or origin ( $F(1, 186) < 1$ ). Furthermore, no significant interaction effect between politeness and origin was found ( $F(2, 186) = 1.99, p = .140$ ) (Table 1).

**Table 1** *Perceived Clarity and Appropriateness of the Message in Function of Politeness and Origin (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)*

|                 | Origin   |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
|-----------------|----------|-----------|----|----------|-----------|----|----------|-----------|-----|
|                 | Known    |           |    | Unknown  |           |    | Total    |           |     |
|                 | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | n  | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | n  | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | n   |
| Politeness      |          |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
| Clarity         |          |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
| Low             | 4.46     | 1.28      | 32 | 5.01     | 1.08      | 37 | 4.75     | 1.20      | 69  |
| Moderate        | 4.92     | 1.17      | 30 | 4.47     | 1.35      | 31 | 4.69     | 1.27      | 61  |
| High            | 4.57     | 1.23      | 32 | 4.79     | 1.57      | 30 | 4.68     | 1.40      | 62  |
| Total           | 4.64     | 1.23      | 94 | 5.13     | 0.96      | 98 | 4.71     | 1.28      | 192 |
| Appropriateness |          |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
| Low             | 4.72     | 1.52      | 32 | 4.89     | 1.45      | 37 | 4.81     | 1.48      | 69  |
| Moderate        | 5.20     | 1.22      | 30 | 4.57     | 1.57      | 31 | 4.88     | 1.43      | 61  |
| High            | 4.91     | 1.44      | 32 | 5.26     | 1.44      | 30 | 5.08     | 1.44      | 62  |
| Total           | 4.94     | 1.41      | 94 | 4.90     | 1.49      | 98 | 4.92     | 1.45      | 192 |

The two-way ANOVA for politeness with politeness and origin as between-subjects factors showed no significant main effects on politeness ( $F(2, 186) = 1.44, p = .241$ ) or origin ( $F(1, 186) = 2.22, p = .138$ ). Furthermore, no significant interaction effect between politeness and origin was found ( $F(2, 186) = 1.20, p = .302$ ). Table 2 presents results of this analysis.

The two-way ANOVA for imposition with politeness and origin as between-subjects factors showed no significant main effects on politeness ( $F(2, 186) < 1$ ) or origin ( $F(1, 186) = 1.66, p = .199$ ). Furthermore, no significant interaction effect between politeness and origin was found ( $F(2, 186) < 1$ ) (Table 2).

**Table 2** *Perceived Politeness and Imposition of the Message in Function of Politeness and Origin (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)*

|            | Origin   |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
|------------|----------|-----------|----|----------|-----------|----|----------|-----------|-----|
|            | Known    |           |    | Unknown  |           |    | Total    |           |     |
|            | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | n  | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | n  | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | n   |
| Politeness |          |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
| Politeness |          |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
| Low        | 4.21     | 1.13      | 32 | 4.16     | 1.08      | 37 | 4.18     | 1.09      | 69  |
| Moderate   | 4.67     | 1.21      | 30 | 4.04     | 1.20      | 31 | 4.35     | 1.24      | 61  |
| High       | 4.57     | 1.20      | 32 | 4.49     | 1.16      | 30 | 4.53     | 1.18      | 62  |
| Total      | 4.48     | 1.18      | 94 | 4.22     | 1.15      | 98 | 4.35     | 1.17      | 192 |
| Imposition |          |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
| Low        | 4.22     | 1.24      | 32 | 4.46     | 1.41      | 37 | 4.35     | 1.33      | 69  |
| Moderate   | 4.07     | 1.39      | 30 | 4.45     | 1.43      | 31 | 4.26     | 1.41      | 61  |
| High       | 4.44     | 1.13      | 32 | 4.53     | 1.07      | 30 | 4.48     | 1.10      | 62  |
| Total      | 4.24     | 1.25      | 94 | 4.48     | 1.31      | 98 | 4.36     | 1.28      | 192 |

The two-way ANOVA for compliance with politeness and origin as between-subjects factors showed no significant main effects on politeness ( $F(2, 186) = 1.47, p = .232$ ) or origin ( $F(1, 186) < 1$ ). Furthermore, no significant interaction effect between politeness and origin was found ( $F(2, 186) = 3.04, p = .050$ ). Table 3 presents results of this analysis.

The two-way ANOVA for rightfulness with politeness and origin as between-subjects factors showed no significant main effects on politeness ( $F(2, 186) = 2.54, p = .081$ ) or origin ( $F(1, 186) < 1$ ). Furthermore, no significant interaction effect between politeness and origin was found ( $F(2, 186) < 1$ ) (Table 3).

The two-way ANOVA for obligation with politeness and origin as between-subjects factors showed no significant main effects on politeness ( $F(2, 186) = 1.87, p = .157$ ) or origin ( $F(1, 186) < 1$ ). Furthermore, no significant interaction effect between politeness and origin was found ( $F(2, 186) < 1$ ) (Table 3).

**Table 3** *Perceived Extent of Compliance, Rightfulness, and Obligation of the Message in Function of Politeness and Origin (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)*

|              | Origin   |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
|--------------|----------|-----------|----|----------|-----------|----|----------|-----------|-----|
|              | Known    |           |    | Unknown  |           |    | Total    |           |     |
|              | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | n  | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | n  | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | n   |
| Politeness   |          |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
| Compliance   |          |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
| Low          | 4.25     | 1.65      | 32 | 3.92     | 1.57      | 37 | 3.61     | 1.63      | 69  |
| Moderate     | 4.40     | 1.25      | 30 | 3.68     | 1.66      | 31 | 4.03     | 1.51      | 61  |
| High         | 3.87     | 1.64      | 32 | 4.03     | 1.87      | 30 | 3.95     | 1.74      | 62  |
| Total        | 3.83     | 1.58      | 94 | 3.88     | 1.68      | 98 | 3.85     | 1.63      | 192 |
| Rightfulness |          |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
| Low          | 5.00     | 1.66      | 32 | 5.08     | 1.57      | 37 | 5.04     | 1.60      | 69  |
| Moderate     | 5.13     | 1.25      | 30 | 4.74     | 1.65      | 31 | 4.93     | 1.47      | 61  |
| High         | 5.66     | 1.26      | 32 | 5.33     | 1.30      | 30 | 5.50     | 1.28      | 62  |
| Total        | 5.27     | 1.42      | 94 | 5.05     | 1.52      | 98 | 5.16     | 1.48      | 192 |
| Obligation   |          |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
| Low          | 2.22     | 1.21      | 32 | 2.16     | 1.26      | 37 | 2.19     | 1.23      | 69  |
| Moderate     | 2.57     | 1.55      | 30 | 2.68     | 1.78      | 31 | 2.62     | 1.66      | 61  |
| High         | 2.50     | 1.50      | 32 | 2.73     | 1.51      | 30 | 2.61     | 1.50      | 62  |
| Total        | 2.43     | 1.42      | 94 | 2.50     | 1.51      | 98 | 2.46     | 1.47      | 192 |

*Perception of the writer*

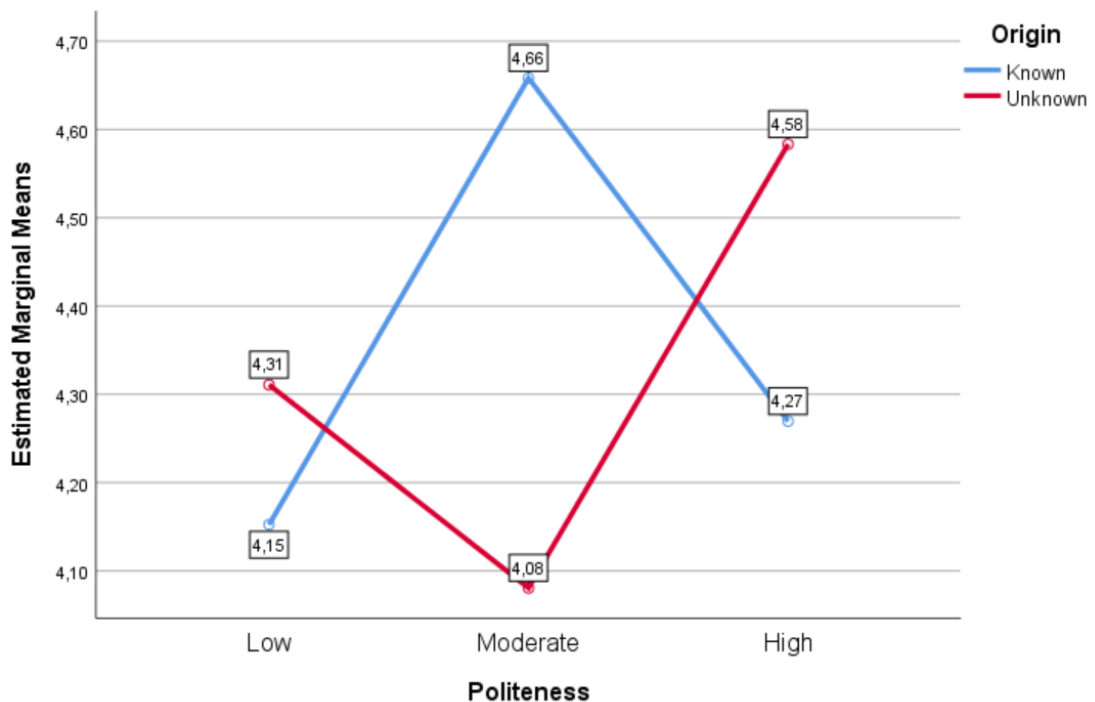
The perception of the writer of the e-mail was analysed to answer the research question about the effect of politeness and origin on the evaluations of the writer of the e-mail. The composite means were calculated for all four constructs and analysed with two-way ANOVAs with politeness and origin as factors.

The two-way ANOVA for likeability with politeness and origin as between-subjects factors showed no significant main effects on politeness ( $F(2, 186) < 1$ ) or origin ( $F(1, 186) < 1$ ). However, an interaction effect between politeness and origin was found ( $F(2, 186) = 3.50, p = .032$ ). Table 4 presents results of this analysis.

After splitting the file, a one-way ANOVA for known origin with politeness as between subject factor showed no significant main effect on likeability ( $F(2, 91) = 2.33, p = .103$ ). Similarly, another one-way ANOVA for unknown origin with politeness as between subject factor showed no significant main effect on likeability ( $F(2, 95) = 1.80, p = .172$ ).

Similarly, after splitting the file, one-way ANOVA for low politeness with origin as between-subject factor showed no significant main effect on likeability ( $F(1, 67) < 1$ ). However, a one-way ANOVA for moderate politeness with origin as between subject factor showed a significant main effect on likeability ( $F(1, 59) = 5.37, p = .024$ ). The likeability of the writer of the moderately polite request was evaluated significantly higher when the reader knew the Dutch origin of the writer ( $M = 4.66, SD = 0.85$ ) than when the foreign origin of the sender was unknown ( $M = 4.08, SD = 1.08$ ). Figure 1 presents this interaction. A one-way ANOVA for high politeness with origin as between-subject factor showed no significant main effect on likeability ( $F(1, 60) = 1.36, p = .249$ ).

**Figure 1:** *Interaction Plot of Politeness and Origin in Function of Likeability (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)*



Another two-way ANOVA for status with politeness and origin as between-subjects factors showed no significant main effects on politeness ( $F(2, 186) < 1$ ) or origin ( $F(1, 186) = 3.23,$

$p = .074$ ). Furthermore, no significant interaction effect between politeness and origin was found ( $F(2, 186) < 1$ ) (Table 4).

**Table 4** *Perceived Likeability and Status of the Writer in Function of Politeness and Origin (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)*

|             | Origin   |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
|-------------|----------|-----------|----|----------|-----------|----|----------|-----------|-----|
|             | Known    |           |    | Unknown  |           |    | Total    |           |     |
|             | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | n  | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | n  | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | n   |
| Politeness  |          |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
| Likeability |          |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
| Low         | 4.15     | 0.98      | 32 | 4.31     | 0.96      | 37 | 4.23     | 0.96      | 69  |
| Moderate    | 4.66     | 0.85      | 30 | 4.08     | 1.08      | 31 | 4.36     | 1.01      | 61  |
| High        | 4.27     | 1.04      | 32 | 4.58     | 1.08      | 30 | 4.42     | 1.06      | 62  |
| Total       | 4.35     | 0.98      | 94 | 4.32     | 1.05      | 98 | 4.34     | 1.01      | 192 |
| Status      |          |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
| Low         | 4.10     | 0.97      | 32 | 4.46     | 1.35      | 37 | 4.29     | 1.20      | 69  |
| Moderate    | 4.04     | 1.24      | 30 | 4.27     | 1.09      | 31 | 4.16     | 1.16      | 61  |
| High        | 3.84     | 1.14      | 32 | 4.19     | 1.25      | 30 | 4.01     | 1.20      | 62  |
| Total       | 4.00     | 1.11      | 94 | 4.32     | 1.24      | 98 | 4.16     | 1.19      | 192 |

The two-way ANOVA for competence with politeness and origin as between-subjects factors showed no significant main effects on politeness ( $F(2, 186) < 1$ ) or origin ( $F(1, 186) < 1$ ). Furthermore, no significant interaction effect between politeness and origin was found ( $F(2, 186) = 2.43, p = .090$ ). Table 5 presents results of this analysis.

Another two-way ANOVA for hirability with politeness and origin as between-subjects factors showed no significant main effects on politeness ( $F(2, 186) = 1.44, p = .240$ ) or origin ( $F(1, 186) < 1$ ). Furthermore, no significant interaction effect between politeness and origin was found ( $F(2, 186) = 2.60, p = .077$ ) (Table 5).

**Table 5** *Perceived Competence and Hirability of the Writer in Function of Politeness and Origin (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)*

|            | Origin   |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
|------------|----------|-----------|----|----------|-----------|----|----------|-----------|-----|
|            | Known    |           |    | Unknown  |           |    | Total    |           |     |
|            | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | n  | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | n  | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | n   |
| Politeness |          |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
| Competence |          |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
| Low        | 4.16     | 1.06      | 32 | 4.48     | 1.28      | 37 | 4.33     | 1.18      | 69  |
| Moderate   | 4.57     | 0.88      | 30 | 4.17     | 1.23      | 31 | 4.37     | 1.08      | 61  |
| High       | 4.21     | 1.11      | 32 | 4.61     | 1.07      | 30 | 4.41     | 1.10      | 62  |
| Total      | 4.31     | 1.03      | 94 | 4.42     | 1.20      | 98 | 4.37     | 1.12      | 192 |
| Hirability |          |           |    |          |           |    |          |           |     |
| Low        | 3.48     | 1.26      | 32 | 3.89     | 1.47      | 37 | 3.70     | 1.38      | 69  |
| Moderate   | 4.37     | 1.07      | 30 | 3.71     | 1.46      | 31 | 4.03     | 1.32      | 61  |
| High       | 4.04     | 1.19      | 32 | 3.98     | 1.50      | 30 | 4.01     | 1.34      | 62  |
| Total      | 3.95     | 1.22      | 94 | 3.86     | 1.46      | 98 | 3.91     | 1.35      | 192 |

### Discussion & Conclusion

The present study was conducted to gain deeper understanding of message and personal evaluations of NNE e-mail writers made by NNE e-mail readers. The purpose was to investigate whether different levels of politeness in e-mail requests affect NNE-NNE interpersonal and message evaluations in a professional e-mail communication context. Furthermore, it was investigated whether knowing the foreign origin of the writer would affect the perceptions of the message and writer. The previous ILP research has indicated that NNE modifications of requests deviate from the NE norm (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Hendriks, 2002). Further research has found evidence of NNE writers being evaluated less positively by NE readers due to these deviations (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2016; Hendriks, 2010; Vignovic & Thompson, 2010). However, some findings suggest that this effect can be reduced if the foreign origin of the NNE writer is explicitly made known (Vignovic & Thompson, 2010). Based on the previous literature investigation on the evaluations of NNE by NNE evaluators in a professional context could possibly complement the existing knowledge and benefit the field of research.

The present study found a significant interaction between NNE politeness and knowledge of the writer's foreign origin in one construct of the NNE-NNE interpersonal evaluations. Namely, the findings suggest that an e-mail request with moderate politeness ("Could you...?") together with knowing foreign (Dutch) origin elicit more positive evaluations of likeability of the writer compared to conditions with low ("Can you...?") or high ("Could you possibly...?") politeness or not knowing the foreign origin. This finding partially concurs with a previous study in which the underuse of request modification in e-mails was found to lead to less positive personal evaluations of the sender compared to more advanced request modification strategies (Hendriks, 2010). However, the high politeness strategy with advanced request modification was not found to elicit better personal evaluations and thus does not concur with this previous research (Hendriks, 2010). Similarly, the findings do not align with a previous study which has found evidence of the e-mail writer's foreign origin to not have influence on the personal evaluations based on etiquette errors, for example politeness modifications (Vignovic & Thompson, 2010). However, this previous study was conducted in an NNE-NE context, which could imply that NNE evaluators are more sensitive to the knowledge of foreign origin compared to NE evaluators.

Furthermore, the levels of politeness or knowledge of the writer's foreign origin were not found to have an influence on the status, competence, or hirability evaluations of the writer. However, the average sentiments for the constructs were positive, which suggests the consensus on the writers was good. This concurs with the previous research in which NNE evaluators have been found to evaluate other NNE writers positively (Economidou-Koetsidis, 2016). This positive consensus suggests that NNE writers might not have to be concerned about their modifications of politeness or foreign origin in NNE-NNE professional e-mail communication. Especially the implications of NNE evaluators being indifferent towards politeness modifications and knowledge of foreign origin in hiring situations benefits the NNE job applicants. Furthermore, the indication that NNE deviations from NE politeness modifications influence NNE-NE interpersonal evaluations negatively (Hendriks, 2010; Vignovic & Thompson, 2010), can be suggested not to apply in NNE-NNE contexts.

To answer the first research question, it could be said that different levels of NNE politeness patterns and the knowledge of foreign origin influence the personal evaluations of the NNE writer by NNE readers to a certain extent. Namely the NNE writer was evaluated more positively on likeability when the level of politeness was moderate, and the foreign origin was known. In practice, these findings suggest that applicants could

convey moderate politeness in their requests and mention their foreign origin explicitly in NNE-NNE e-mail communication to elicit the best interpersonal evaluations of likeability. Overall, the findings suggest that NNE readers have a relatively positive perception of all NNE e-mail writers regardless of the level of politeness or knowledge of foreign origin.

Furthermore, the levels of politeness or knowledge of the writer's foreign origin were not found to influence the evaluations of the e-mail messages. Namely, the constructs clarity, appropriateness, politeness, imposition, rightfulness, compliance, and obligation were evaluated similarly within all the three levels of politeness modifications and two levels of knowledge of foreign origin. This concurs with previous research that has found NNE readers to not be affected by the NNE pragmatic deviances from NE norm and evaluate the NNE writers positively regardless (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2016). According to the findings of previous research and the present study, the differing levels of politeness modification strategies defined in the CCSARP project (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) might not elicit differing personal evaluations in NNE-NNE e-mail communication.

To answer the second research question, the results suggests that the different levels of NNE politeness patterns and the knowledge of foreign origin do not have an influence on the evaluations of e-mail messages made by NNE readers. The findings imply that NNE readers do not attach meaning to the levels of politeness modifications or the foreign origin of the writer. This suggests that in practice, NNE writers might not have to be concerned of their level of politeness in e-mail requests or knowledge of their foreign origin in professional personal evaluation situations.

Overall, the findings partly align with previous research on ILP and specifically studies on request modification. The present study replicated the findings of undermodification leading to less positive personal evaluations compared to more advanced request modification strategies due to the interaction effect between moderate politeness and known origin (Hendriks, 2010). Similarly, the findings were not found to align with research suggesting that the knowledge of the writer's foreign origin might not have an influence on interpersonal evaluations when it comes to etiquette errors due to the same interaction effect (Vignovic & Thompson, 2010). The findings might be due to the differences between NNE-NE and NNE-NNE communication contexts investigated in the studies. However, the present study agreed with previous research in which NNE evaluators have been found to evaluate other NNE writers and their messages positively in general (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2016).

The study has its limitations. For example, the young mean age of the participants and the sample being largely students might have influenced the data. It is less likely for younger

participants to have experience in professional settings, which might thus be hard to relate to and evaluate in the study. Furthermore, most participants did not have hiring experience. This suggests that it might have been harder for the participants to position themselves as the head of human resources with the task to assess and recruit interns due to their lack of experience. The young average age and lack of experience could have thus influenced the perception of professional speech act norms in e-mail communication setting and thus lowered the ecological validity of the research. Future research could consider this and conduct the experiment within a multinational organisation or with employees with hiring experience. The findings could also suggest that the manipulations were not clear or prominent enough for the participants to differentiate the levels of politeness and origin. While the levels of politeness were based on previous literature, the knowledge of foreign origin could be revised in future research. For example, closing the email with a foreign or a neutral name would assure the ecological validity better than embedding this information in the instructions. The future research could take these mentioned limitations into account and implement the recommendations by adding screening questions, developing the constructs, and improving the manipulations. Furthermore, further research is needed on the construct likeability for NNE personal evaluations in the e-mail communication context to support the findings of this present study.

This present study contributes to the scientific knowledge on NNE-NNE e-mail communication in a professional business context. Especially the impact of differing levels of request politeness and knowledge of foreign origin on NNE-NNE interpersonal evaluations and message evaluations contributes to the field of ILP research. The insights on politeness modifications of requests support and challenge the previous findings and add to the knowledge of NNE-NNE communication. The societal importance of the study connects to the practical implications for NNE applicants and multinational companies in terms of international business communication.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Instructions

#### Instructions

In this questionnaire you will be asked to evaluate an e-mail. The name of the sender has been removed due to privacy reasons. As we are interested in your spontaneous reactions to the message, we would like to ask you not to think too long about your answers. We are interested in your personal opinion, so your answers can never be wrong.

You will first be asked to read a description of the situation in which the e-mail was sent, followed by the e-mail itself. You will then be asked to give your opinion about the e-mail using scales ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree'. **Please note** that some scales have a reversed sentiment (e.g. "Unpleasant" instead of "Pleasant").

### Appendix 2: Situation 1 – Known Origin

*Imagine the following situation:*

You are the head of the Human Resources division in a London-based multinational corporation named Beta. You are responsible for assessing and recruiting new interns for Beta's European divisions. You have just received an e-mail from a Dutch student looking for an internship in your company. Based on their e-mail, you are to determine whether they are a suitable candidate for a follow-up interview. Please read the following e-mail and fill in the questionnaire.

### Appendix 3: Situation 2 – Unknown Origin

*Imagine the following situation:*

You are the head of the Human Resources division in a London-based multinational corporation named Beta. You are responsible for assessing and recruiting new interns for Beta's European divisions. You have just received an e-mail from a student looking for an internship in your company. Based on their e-mail, you are to determine whether they are a suitable candidate for a follow-up interview. Please read the following e-mail and fill in the questionnaire.

#### **Appendix 4: E-mail 1 – Low Politeness**

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am approaching you to apply for a 6-month internship at Beta. Intrigued by the company as a whole and the sector in Europe, I am posing my candidature for the position of an intern. I believe my relevant skills and experience would be a good fit for this internship and I hope to have the opportunity to discuss in more detail how I could help support Beta's international marketing strategy. Can you look over my CV and tell me whether I am a suitable candidate for the internship?

Yours faithfully,  
X

#### **Appendix 5: E-mail 2 – Moderate Politeness**

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am approaching you to apply for a 6-month internship at Beta. Intrigued by the company as a whole and the sector in Europe, I am posing my candidature for the position of an intern. I believe my relevant skills and experience would be a good fit for this internship and I hope to have the opportunity to discuss in more detail how I could help support Beta's international marketing strategy. Could you look over my CV and tell me whether I am a suitable candidate for the internship?

Yours faithfully,  
X

#### **Appendix 6: E-mail 3 – High Politeness**

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am approaching you to apply for a 6-month internship at Beta. Intrigued by the company as a whole and the sector in Europe, I am posing my candidature for the position of an intern. I believe my relevant skills and experience would be a good fit for this internship and I hope to have the opportunity to discuss in more detail how I could help support Beta's international marketing strategy. Could you possibly look over my CV and tell me whether I am a suitable candidate for the internship?

Yours faithfully,  
X

#### **Appendix 7: Perception of the Message - Items**

Clarity

I think this e-mail is...

|                 | Strongly disagree     | Disagree              | Somewhat disagree     | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree        | Agree                 | Strongly agree        |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Clear           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Well-structured | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Informative     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

## Appropriateness

I think this e-mail is...

|               | Strongly disagree     | Disagree              | Somewhat disagree     | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree        | Agree                 | Strongly agree        |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Appropriate   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Professional  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Disrespectful | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

## Politeness

I think this e-mail...

|   | Strongly disagree     | Disagree              | Somewhat disagree     | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree        | Agree                 | Strongly agree        |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Is polite                                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Is abrupt                                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Acknowledges its imposition on the receiver | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Gives the receiver a lot of choice          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

## Reasonableness

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements:

|   | Strongly disagree     | Disagree              | Somewhat disagree     | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree        | Agree                 | Strongly agree        |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| It is likely that the person who received this e-mail will comply with this request | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The writer of this e-mail has the right to make this request                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The receiver of this e-mail has the obligation to fulfill this request              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

## Appendix 8: Perception of the Writer of the E-mail - Items

### Likeability

In my opinion, the writer of this email seems...

|             | Strongly disagree     | Disagree              | Somewhat disagree     | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree        | Agree                 | Strongly agree        |
|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Credible    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sympathetic | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Warm        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Unfriendly  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Humorous    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Tactful     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Polite      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Irritating  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

### Status

In my opinion, the writer of this email seems...

|                | Strongly disagree     | Disagree              | Somewhat disagree     | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree        | Agree                 | Strongly agree        |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Authoritative  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Trustworthy    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Self-confident | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Influential    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

### Competence

In my opinion, the writer of this email seems...

|              | Strongly disagree     | Disagree              | Somewhat disagree     | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree        | Agree                 | Strongly agree        |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Reliable     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Intelligent  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Competent    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Hard-working | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Educated     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

## Hirability

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements:

|  | Strongly disagree     | Disagree              | Somewhat disagree     | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree        | Agree                 | Strongly agree        |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I would recommend employing the writer of this email.                                  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I would feel satisfied if the writer of this email would be invited for an interview.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I feel favourably towards the writer of this email.                                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The writer of this email would be an asset to the company.                             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| There is a high likelihood of the writer of this email being invited for an interview. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

## Appendix 9: *The EACH*

### Checklist EACH (version 1.6, november 2020)

You fill in the questions by clicking on the square next to the chosen answer

After clicking, a cross will appear in this square

1. Is a health care institution involved in the research?

*Explanation: A health care institution is involved if one of the following (A/B/C) is the case:*

- A. One or more employees of a health care institution is/are involved in the research as principle or in the carrying out or execution of the research.
- B. The research takes place within the walls of the health care institution and should, following the nature of the research, generally not be carried out outside the institution.
- C. Patients / clients of the health care institution participate in the research (in the form of treatment).

No → continue with questionnaire

Yes → Did a Dutch Medical Institutional Review Board (MIRB) decide that the Wet Medisch Onderzoek (Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act) is not applicable?

Yes → continue with questionnaire

No → This application should be reviewed by a Medical Institutional Review Board, for example, the Dutch CMO Regio Arnhem Nijmegen → end of checklist

2. Do grant providers wish the protocol to be assessed by a recognised MIRB?

No → continue with questionnaire

Yes → This application should be reviewed by a Medical Institutional Review Board, for example, the Dutch CMO Regio Arnhem Nijmegen → end of checklist

3. Does the research include medical-scientific research that might carry risks for the participant?  No → continue with questionnaire

Yes → This application should be reviewed by a Medical Institutional Review Board, for example, the Dutch CMO Regio Arnhem Nijmegen → end of checklist

### **Standard research method**

4. Does this research fall under one of the stated standard research methods of the Faculty of Arts or the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies?

Yes → 1. Standard evaluation and attitude research → continue with questionnaire

No → assessment necessary, end of checklist

### **Participants**

5. Is the participant population a healthy one?

Yes → continue with questionnaire

No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

6. Will the research be conducted amongst minors (<16 years of age) or amongst (legally) incapable persons?

Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

No → continue with questionnaire

## Method

7. Is a method used that makes it possible to produce a coincidental finding that the participant should be informed of?

Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

No → continue with questionnaire

8. Will participants undergo treatment or are they asked to perform certain behaviours that can lead to discomfort?

Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

No → continue with questionnaire

9. Are the estimated risks connected to the research minimal?

No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

Yes → continue with questionnaire

10. Are the participants offered a different compensation than the usual one?

Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

No → continue with questionnaire

11. Should deception take place, does the procedure meet the standard requirements?

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

12. Are the standard regulations regarding anonymity and privacy met?

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

### **Conducting the research**

13. Will the research be carried out at an external location (such as a school, hospital)?

- No → continue with questionnaire
- Yes → Do you have/will you receive written permission from this institution?
- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

14. Is there a contact person to whom participants can turn to with questions regarding the research and are they informed of this?

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

15. Is it clear for participants where they can file complaints with regard to participating in the research and how these complaints will be dealt with?

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

16. Are the participants free to participate in the research, and to stop at any given point, whenever and for whatever reason they should wish to do so?

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

Yes → continue with questionnaire

17. Before participating, are participants informed by means of an information document about the aim, nature and risks and objections of the study? (zie explanation on informed consent and sample documents).

No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

Yes → continue with questionnaire

18. Do participants and/or their representatives sign a consent form? (zie explanation on informed consent and sample documents).

No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

Yes → checklist finished

**If you want to record the results of this checklist, please save the completed file.**

**If you need approval from the EACH due to the requirement of a publisher or research grant provider, you will have to follow the formal assessment procedure of the EACH.**

## **Appendix 10: *The Statement of Own Work***

### **Statement of Own Work**

Student name: Laura Tarsa

Student number: s1039572

PLAGIARISM is the presentation by a student of an assignment or piece of work which has in fact been copied in whole or in part from another student's work, or from any other source (e.g. published books or periodicals or material from Internet sites), without due acknowledgement in the text.

#### **DECLARATION:**

- a. I hereby declare that I am familiar with the faculty manual (<https://www.ru.nl/facultyofarts/stip/rules-guidelines/rules/fraud-plagiarism/> ) and with Article 16 "Fraud and plagiarism" in the Education and Examination Regulations for the Bachelor's programme of Communication and Information Studies.
- b. I also declare that I have only submitted text written in my own words
- c. I certify that this thesis is my own work and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation, whether they be books, articles, reports, lecture notes, and any other kind of document, electronic or personal communication.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Place and date: Nijmegen, The Netherlands 13.06.2022