



## **Bachelor Thesis**

### **That's not my job! Exploring the impact of language and explanations on requests in a corporate setting**

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## **Abstract**

The current study sought to explore the impact of the presence or absence of an explanation, as well as the use of native and non-native language, on the persuasiveness of a non-hierarchical request in a business context. Previous research has found requests accompanied by explanations to increase the persuasiveness of the requests and those made in a native language to be perceived as less of an imposition than those posed in a non-native language. The study analysed how native Dutch speakers evaluated a request posed in either Dutch or English and with or without an explanation. An online questionnaire posed a hypothetical non-hierarchical request to participants. The results of the questionnaire indicated that the use of an explanation and language did not have a significant effect on the persuasiveness of the request. The findings of questionnaire were inconsistent with prior research and may have been influenced by the questionnaire failing to address the degree of imposition and social distance variables of politeness theory. Highlighting the importance considering these sociological determinants may have on the persuasiveness of a request.

**Keywords:** requests, native vs non-native, corporate communication, explanations

## Introduction

With increasing cross-cultural communication, multiple cultures are faced with the need to interact with each other. This has inevitably led to the requirement for and creation of a “global language”. While there is no official definition for the term "global language", it is generally understood to mean a language that is used internationally by both native and non-native speakers. In practice, English has emerged as the most prevalent global language, with around 360 million English native speakers and almost twice as many who speak it as their second language (Crystal, 2003).

Communication in a non-native language differs from communication in a native language. A study by Brunak and Scarcella (1979) on Native Speakers (NS) and Non-Native Speakers (NNS) of English found that NNS employ less idiomatic language, such as colloquial terms, less inappropriate language as well as fewer statements of personal desire (Brunak & Scarcella, 1979). Further studies by House and Kasper (1986) also supported and expanded Brunak and Scarcella’s research by finding that NS’s were more likely to make their requests shorter and more explicit. These studies support the hypothesis that NS are likely to be more informal and explicit in making requests and that their requests are also likely to be shorter. Additionally, the finding that NNS are likely to be more formal in their use of language is also supported.

Developing on this theme, depending on the language in which an individual is spoken to, ie native vs. non-native, they may process or perceive their surroundings differently and so arrive at different conclusions. Exploring the impact language has on cognitive ability can provide greater insight into how use of a non-native language, in particular, may affect cognitive ability. Studies have been conducted on whether or not use of a second or foreign language changes a person’s moral judgment.

The studies presented scenarios where a participant was presented with a moral dilemma, for example a hypothetical dilemma of saving a number of people at the expense of letting one person die (e.g., Cushman, Young, & Hauser, 2006; Greene, Sommerville, Nystrom, Darley, & Cohen, 2001; Greene et al., 2009; Pellizzoni, Siegal, & Surian, 2010). The referenced studies found where a scenario was described in a non-native language the outcome was an increase in action endorsement i.e “it is justifiable to kill one to save five”. According to Costa et al. (2014) the recorded outcome is due to the fact that use of a non-native language creates less of an emotional attachment which leads to a more objective

decision. This conclusion is based on the phenomena that when a person is forced to answer a dilemma, such as the one presented above, they must utilise controlled processes which in turn require cognitive resources (Greene et al., 2008). The stress that such a dilemma places on an individual's cognitive ability reduces their ability to make utilitarian choices. In addition, when coupled with the fact that they must do so in a non-native language, the cognitive load is further increased (Costa et al., 2014). The greater the cognitive strain the more likely they will struggle with making a utilitarian decision. Thus, creating greater objectivity or moral leniency when addressing a dilemma in a foreign language.

In multinational organisations, employees may be required to communicate in a non-native language; this may have negative impact on them professionally. Bringing many different individuals together and allowing for greater dissemination of ideas has been shown to put some individuals at a disadvantage. Particularly in a business setting negative perceptions may be experienced; an example of this is negative perception by NS of NNS, through stigmatisation (Birney et al., 2020).

Communication is a vital part of any organisation (Markovic & Salamzadeh, 2018) A common element of corporate communication within an organisation is making a request of a colleague (Eatough et al., 2006). In general terms, a request can be viewed as a means to persuade the recipient of a request to act in a way the maker of the request, the requester, wants (Pinto & Raschio, 2007). Part of working together effectively is being able to make requests (e.g., Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1996; Ho, 2018).

Research has shown that the language in which a request is made impacts how the recipient perceives both the requester and the request itself. Requests by NNS were perceived, when compared against requests made by NS, as being a greater imposition (Hartford & Bardovi Harlig, 1996). The study elaborated that its findings may be due to various factors, including NNS not following cultural norms when expressing a request.

Furthermore, requests may create a negative opinion of the requester (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996). Another study examined emails between students and teachers at an American university (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). The study sought to investigate the effect of language on the perception and evaluation of the emails including whether teachers reacted to emails from NNS more negatively than to those from NS, and in addition would subsequently have a more negative view of NNS. The results of the study found that when NNS wrote emails, which did not conform to the language norms of NS, that the receiving teacher developed a negative view of the NNS students' personalities (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). However, Kasper and Schmidt (1996), point out in their study that

the negative evaluation of NNS requests may simply occur from negative stereotyping of the requestor's culture, which may have nothing to do with their actual message.

Returning to and building on the concept of a request. "A request expresses the requesters' expectation of the recipient in relation to a certain potential action which is required" (Ho, 2018, p. 71). A request is seen as a face threatening act, as defined by Brown and Levinson (1987). Face is defined as the social value an individual claims for themselves which is in accordance with the value they have been assigned by others (Goffman, 1967). Furthermore, politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), states that three aspects need to be determined in order to decide whether a politeness strategy, such as an explanation, is needed. These three aspects are: power distance, degree of imposition and social distance. Briefly explained, power distance refers to the relationship between the requester and recipient and whether it is asymmetric; i.e. does one hold more power than the other. Degree of imposition refers to how the recipient ranks the threat to their face. Lastly, social distance refers to the social distance between requester and recipient; how symmetric is the relation between them (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The theory, states that when a request is made, which is perceived to be highly face threatening, it must be accompanied with a reason, also known as an explanation (Baranova & Dingermanse., 2016). This finding is corroborated by previous research which concluded that when a request is supported by an explanation compliance toward the request is increased (Langer et al., 1987; Baranova & Dingermanse., 2016).

How the requester and recipient relate to each other, i.e. their social distance plays a vital role in the ultimate success of a request. The hierarchical distance previously referred to simply as power distance in politeness theory (Brown & Levinson., 1987, is unavoidable and necessary in any organisation (Hofstede, 2001). A common relationship, in a work setting, is the subordinate-superior. Research has found that power distance impacts the perception of a request by the recipient, influencing the perceived reasonableness of the request and the likelihood of compliance (Hendriks., 2010). A reason for this may be that in a subordinate superior relationship there is a perception of obligation felt by the recipient towards the requester (Hendriks., 2010; Blum-Kulka & House., 1989). Furthermore, politeness theory dictates that if there is an asymmetric power relation, as exists between a superior and subordinate in a work setting, the requesting superior is likely to be less inclined to use a positive politeness strategy; rather they are likely to apply a more direct approach going for a more direct bald on-record strategy instead (Brown & Levinson, 1987). From this one can surmise that a superior is less likely to employ a politeness device such as an explanation when making a request.

Accompanying a request with an explanation has been shown to increase the likely success of the request, as well as diminishing the threat to the recipient's face. Explanations can be used to reduce fears and uncertainties produced by a request; this can be done by offering details, motives and reasons for the request (Kelley & Waldron, 2007). Explanations often utilise details to help provide sense to the situation in which the request is taking place (Clifton, 2012; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011). In the corporate setting an explanation for a request is often used on subordinates, as it mitigates or can lessen the impact of a face threatening act (Lian et al, 2014). From research it is clear that requests are a common part in corporate communication (Eatough et al., 2006), not just for managers addressing subordinates but rather for all involved even when there is no power distance (e.g., colleagues in same department). It is also apparent that without explanations the effectiveness of requests is reduced. How use of explanations can change recipients' response to a request is illustrated in a study by Langer et al. (1978). The study sought to explore how people reacted to a request which was imposed on them and also how they responded when the request was accompanied by an explanation. The study also considered whether differing forms explanations impacted response to the request. The results of this study showed providing any form of explanation increased compliance with the request (Langer et al., 1978).

A request may sometimes be made of a recipient that does not fall within the bounds of what is usually asked of them. This is known as an illegitimate request, a subtype of request, which can be encountered at work settings but is not exclusive to them. Illegitimate requests due to their face threatening nature are dangerous to a productive workplace as they can evoke resentment, anger and revenge seeking behaviour (Eatough et al., 2016; Semmer et al, 2010). Illegitimate task requests can be seen as especially face threatening as they may infringe on public image, even more so if the task is viewed as demeaning (Hastings & Castle-Bell, 2018). Research suggests that by using explanations the face threatening nature of illegitimate requests can be reduced, thus increasing the request being complied with and with less animosity from the recipient (Fairhurst, 2011).

To summarise, non-native use of language has been shown to influence how people communicate and how they can be viewed in the workplace. Against this background, requests play an important role in the workplace, but can be seen as a face threatening act; explanations can be used to diminish face threat. Authority and use of explanations have been shown to have an impact on how a request is received, which is of note when looking at the business context. Nonetheless, research into the field of request perception has been limited and there are few studies which address how requests are perceived, as the majority of

research has been focused on the production of requests (Hendriks.,2010). Moreover, few studies have examined requests in a business context without using power distance as a variable i.e., looking at colleagues at the same hierarchical level within an organisation. Additionally, examining how the effectiveness of an explanation is impacted by use of native or non-native language has received little attention. Therefore, this study will seek to combine and assess these previously unconnected factors by examining the impact a non-native language may have on the effectiveness of requests paired with an explanation when applied in a non- hierarchical workplace setting.

To measure the effectiveness of selected requests, this study will investigate the persuasiveness of the requests made to a recipient. This will be based on the Fishbein and Ajzen theory (2010). Their study quantified persuasiveness through intention to comply (e.g. how likely are you to carry out the request) and attitude towards the request (e.g. carrying out this request is...).

The goal of this study is to address an important area of business communication. As previous studies have indicated, when badly received requests can result in unhealthy work environments which can then in turn diminish an organisation's productivity (House, 2006). This outcome is something any organisation would seek to avoid. Therefore, by looking to provide greater understanding of how language and explanation can impact reaction to and compliance with requests. It should be of particular use to multinational corporations who employ NS and NNS.

The research questions that this study aims to answer are:

1. *What is the effect of an explanation (present vs. absent) on the persuasiveness of a request?*
2. *What is the effect of language (native vs. non-native) on the persuasiveness of a request?*

It is hypothesised:

1. The request which is accompanied with an explanation will score higher on persuasiveness than the one which is not.
2. The request that is produced in the native language will score higher on persuasiveness than the request produced in a non-native language.

## Methodology

### Materials

The independent variables for this study were language (Dutch or English) and explanation (present or absent). This created four texts and therefore four groups. The first group was exposed to a Dutch text with an explanation. The second group was exposed to a Dutch text without an explanation. The third group was exposed to an English text with an explanation. The fourth group was exposed to an English text without an explanation. The scenario, request and explanation were influenced by those made in the Minei et al. (2018) study (see Appendix A for original version). The text was adapted from the third to the first person in order to make it easier for the participants to imagine themselves in the scenario. Furthermore, the requested task was altered to fit a more Dutch setting; picking up dry cleaning was amended to picking up a package which was deemed to be more appropriate for a Dutch subject group. The scenario was presented as follows: *“Imagine that you are working in a multinational organisation in the Netherlands as an administrative assistant. You are an administrative assistant with 10 years’ experience on this job and are proud of the hard work that is put into the job every day. Your work tasks involve preparing documents, reports, and letters, answering and directing phone calls, attending meetings and taking minutes, greeting visitors and deciding if they should gain access to specific individuals, bookkeeping, and performing general office work. Your colleague with the same job and experience approaches you.”* The colleague then poses the request: *“Can you pick up my package from the PostNL point by 4PM?”*. The group who receives an explanation are provided with the following text: *“I don’t have time to run this errand myself”* (Minei et al., 2018)

### Subjects

The number of participants in the study was 245. Of these 245, 159 were viable with the rest being excluded from the experiment. Of the responses which were excluded 12 indicated a mother tongue other than Dutch, 3 indicated they possessed no work experience and 71 of the responses were incomplete. The participants of the study were native Dutch speakers who were contacted through multiple channels mainly on social media and messaging platforms. Any non-native speakers were automatically excluded from the study. The age of the

participants ranged from 18 to 61 years of age ( $M = 24.31$ ,  $SD = 8.55$ ). Regarding the gender of the participants there were more female respondents (50.3%) than male (47.8%) with the smallest group choosing not to indicate their gender (1.9%). The educational levels of the participants varied from preparatory scientific education (37.7%), to university of research level (20%), to university of applied sciences (17.6%), to secondary vocational school (11.3%), to higher general continued education (7.5%) and secondary school (3.8%). The remaining participants indicated that they had another level of education as their highest level obtained (1.3%). The work experience of the participants ranged from 8 to 41 months ( $M = 25.26$ ,  $SD = 135.65$ ). Participants were also asked to indicate their level of English proficiency ( $M = 5.57$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ), based on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “*Extremely bad*” (1) to “*Excellent*” (7) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2010).

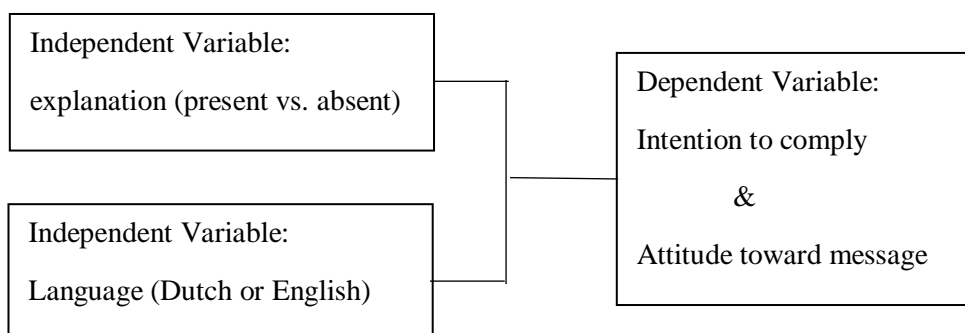
For the distribution of the participants a chi-square test was performed. A chi-square test showed that the distribution of educational level ( $\chi^2(18) = 20.97$ ,  $p = .281$ ), gender ( $\chi^2(6) = 7.18$ ,  $p = .304$ ) and work experience ( $\chi^2(120) = 120.24$ ,  $p = .48$ ) were equally distributed across all conditions. Finally, a one-way analysis of variance showed that the self-assessed levels of English ( $F(3, 155) = 1.18$ ,  $p = .319$ ) and age ( $F(3, 155) = 1.39$ ,  $p = .247$ ) were equally distributed across all conditions.

## Design

The study used a 2x2 between-subjects design with two independent variables being language (Dutch or English) and explanation (either present or absent) resulting in four conditions.

Figure 1.

Analytical model of the present research



## Instruments

The dependent variable of this study was persuasiveness, this was measured as a mean score of 'attitude towards the message' and 'intention to comply with request'. To measure a participant's 'attitude towards the message' they were asked to respond to a question using a semantic differential scale. The question was "*Picking up the package by 4pm is: ...*" and the scales consisted of the following; "good – bad", "unpleasant – pleasant", "harmful – beneficial", "interesting – boring" and "wise – unwise" (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2010). The reliability for 'attitude toward the message' consisting of five items was good  $\alpha = .75$ , after removing the item 'interesting – boring'. The scores of items 1,4 and 5 were reverse coded (1 = 7, 2 = 6, 3 = 5, 5 = 3, 6 = 2, 7 = 1), so that a mean score could be calculated. To measure participants 'intention to comply with request' participants were provided with the statement "*I intend to pick up the package by 4pm*" and asked to rate their response on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from "*Definitely not*" (1) to "*Definitely*" (7) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2010).

## **Procedure**

The questionnaire, which was created using Qualtrics, was done in English, except for the materials. The participants were contacted through online messaging platforms or offline by the researchers involved in the study. When a participant was contacted, they were also informed that they would not receive any reward for taking part in the study. Once a participant had agreed to take part in the study, they were sent a link to the questionnaire via either a messaging platform such as "WhatsApp" or via email. Once they clicked on the provided link, they were randomly assigned one of the four conditions. Before the participants were able to commence with the actual questions, they were provided with the instructions of the questionnaire and they were also informed how much time, approximately, the questionnaire would take (see Appendix C). Following this they were also asked to provide their consent to taking part and having their data used in the experiment. This section was followed by a couple of screening questions where participants had to respond to some demographic questions as well as their self-assessed English proficiency. After this section participants were shown a scenario which would have been in either Dutch or English and with or without an explanation. Following this part participants were then directed to questions regarding the persuasiveness of the request. This was measured on a semantic differential and seven-point Likert scale. After the participant had provided an answer to each

scale they were directed to the final page of the questionnaire where they were thanked for their participation.

### **Statistical treatment**

For the study various statistical analyses were performed. Initially a one-way analysis of variance was performed to investigate the effect of language on the persuasiveness of the requests. Additionally, another one-way analysis of variance was performed to explore the effect an explanation would have on the persuasiveness of the request.

## **Results**

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact language (either Dutch or English) and an explanation (present or absent) would have on the persuasiveness of a request made.

A one-way analysis of variance did not show a significant effect of language on the persuasiveness of the request made and the explanation ( $F(1, 158) = .63, p = .430$ ). Table 1., which presents the mean and standard deviation for the effect of language on persuasiveness of the request, indicates that the groups presented with the scenario in Dutch.

Another one-way analysis of variance did not show a significant effect of the presence of an explanation on the persuasiveness of the request ( $F(1, 158) = 1.48, p = .226$ ).

### *Descriptive statistics*

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation for self-assessed level of English, based on Likert scale (1= extremely bad, 7= extremely good).

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Reading	5.83	0.93
Listening	5.74	0.89
Writing	5.33	0.98
Speaking	5.40	0.95

### **Discussion & Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to examine how explanations as well as language (native or foreign) impact the persuasiveness of a request. Additionally, the broader context of this study was to examine this relationship in a corporate setting. Specifically, between two co-workers with the same hierarchical position.

Research question 1 sought to explore the impact an explanation or the absence of one may have on the persuasiveness of a request. The results of the current study showed no significant effect of an explanation (present or absent) on the persuasiveness of a request. This is rejection of H1, which had stated that the request accompanied with an explanation would be perceived as more persuasive. These results are not in line with the previous positive body of research, which had found that when a request was accompanied by an explanation compliance towards to request increased (Baranova & Dingermans, 2016; Langer et al., 1987).

A possible explanation for these results, may be found when considering politeness theory. The current study posed the request as coming from someone with an equal amount of power as the recipient. By doing so the study eliminated power distance, as defined in politeness theory, as a contributory factor and rather may have made the participants focus on

the other two determinants of politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The other determinants of politeness theory are degree of imposition and social distance, both of which were not addressed in the stimulus material provided to the participants. It is possible that participants of the study gave greater weight to the degree of imposition and social distance as they knew there was no power distance. Previous research has shown that power can create a sense of obligation by the recipient towards the requester (Hendriks, 2010; Blum-Kulka & House, 1989). Without this sense of obligation, participants may have taken into account considerations not in the material, for example distance to the PostNL package drop-off point. Such considerations could affect the degree of imposition felt towards the request. Additional potential considerations could have included; the size of the package and therefore the ease with which it could be transported.

Expanding on this, participants may have also considered the nature of their relationship with the requester outside of the office. Social distance, as previously discussed (Brown & Levinson, 1987), states that depending on the symmetry of a relationship requests may be more or less face threatening. As the stimulus material did not include information on the social distance between the requester and recipient, participants may have assumed it was a symmetric relationship rather than asymmetric thus making the request less face threatening. Furthermore, the explanation given to the participants may have not been sufficiently persuasive considering the other determinants. Participants could have assumed that there was no personal relationship with the recipient and that the PostNL point was far away, thus creating a greater imposition on them. Therefore, the explanation and its content may have faced greater scrutiny by the participants and may have been found to be insufficient. These other determinants and the fact that they were not explicitly addressed by the study could be an explanation for the results not being in line with previous research.

Research question 2 examined what impact language (native or non-native) may have on the persuasiveness of a request. The results of the study showed that language did not have significant effect on the persuasiveness of the request. This therefore rejects H2, which had stated that a request made in a native language of the requestor would be more persuasive. This result is also not in line with previous research, which had found that requests made by non-native speakers (NNS) were deemed to be a greater imposition than those made by native speakers (NS) (Hartford & Bardovi Harlig, 1996). Furthermore, previous research had also found that decisions made in a non-native language would be more objective than those in a native language (Costa et al., 2014). This would have caused the non-native language conditions to be perceived differently than the native language ones, which was not borne out

by the outcome to Research question 2, contradicting previous research.

A possible explanation for these results is that the English proficiency of the participants was high given the Dutch are the world's most proficient non-native English speakers (Michel et al., 2021). The participants data showed that the `self-assessed level of English` was high for all participants which may have mitigated the negative impact a non-native language is anticipated to have on the persuasiveness of requests (Hartford & Bardovi Harlig, 1996). Furthermore, considering the English proficiency of the participants, the English used in the stimulus material may have been too simple, causing the native and non-native language to be perceived equally. The fact the current study was conducted online resulted in various limitations. Firstly, the fact that the survey could not be conducted with the direct supervision of the research team meant that there was no guarantee the survey was completed by the participants alone, so calling into question the reliability of the data collected. Another limitation was the 71 uncompleted responses recorded. This high level of non-completion potentially indicates the questionnaire was too long or that the motivation for participating was not high enough, therefore causing a significant loss of possible responses.

Further limitations of the study concern the stimulus material provided to the participants. As previously noted, there was no background provided on the personal relationship between the requester and recipients which according to politeness theory can determine the likelihood and nature of a response (Levinson & Brown, 1987). Furthermore, no background was provided on how far away the PostNL package drop off was or how large the package was. This additional information would potentially have impacted the degree of imposition of the request so impacting the likelihood of compliance. It cannot be excluded that the lack of this information may have caused participants to draw their own conclusions and thus respond in a manner contrary to what previous research in this area would have indicated. Future researchers should consider providing this type of information to their study participants so that all sociological variables of politeness theory are addressed.

Future researchers should also consider widening the breadth of their research as this study merely looked at one potential area of request response. Future research may in addition wish to consider implementing more explanation variables to widen the external validity of results and the use of participants for whom there is weaker language ability between the native and non-native languages selected for the research.

The implications of the results of this study can be used by corporate managers to help understand the impact not considering all sociological variables of politeness theory may have on effective communication.

The limitations of the study underscore the importance of considering all the sociological variables of politeness theory and effect that not doing so may have on research outcomes. It highlights how not understanding the degree of imposition as well as the social distance of a requester will affect a request. Nonetheless, this study should be considered as providing data on how of how removing power distance as a politeness theory variable can influence a request in the business context. One can only assume on the outcome of the study had only social distance been addressed instead of power distance and degree of imposition. Postulation would suggest there would be a similar result due to these missing aspects.

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## Appendix A

### Original materials

Minei et al., (2018) original text which was adapted for the proposed study:

*S.J. works as an administrative assistant. S.J. has 10 years' experience on this job and is proud of the hard work that is put into the job every day. S.J.'s primary work tasks involve preparing documents, reports, and letters, answering and directing phone calls, attending meetings and taking minutes, greeting visitors and deciding if they should gain access to specific individuals, bookkeeping, and performing general office work.*

The explanation in the study was: *"I know this task is not within the parameters of your job but I need you to pick up my dry-cleaning today by 4 p.m."*

### Edited materials

The situation described in the present study for the Dutch condition was as followed: *"Beeld u in dat u als administratief assistent werkt in een multinationale organisatie in Nederland. U heeft 10 jaar ervaring in deze functie en bent trots op het harde werk dat u iedere dag levert. Uw werkzaamheden betreffen het voorbereiden van documenten, rapporten, en brieven; het*

*beantwoorden en doorverbinden van telefoongesprekken; het bijwonen van vergaderingen, het notuleren van vergaderingen, het begroeten van bezoekers en bepalen of zij toegang krijgen tot bepaalde personen; het bijhouden van de boekhouding; en het verrichten van algemene kantoorwerkzaamheden.* The request used in this condition was: “*Uw collega met dezelfde functie en ervaring als u benadert u met de volgende vraag: “Kun je mijn pakketje ophalen bij het PostNL afhaalpunt voor 16:00?”* accompanied by the following argument (only for the condition with argument) “*Ik heb geen tijd om dit klusje zelf te doen.*”

The situation described in the present study for the English condition was as followed: “*Imagine that you are working in a multinational organisation in the Netherlands as an administrative assistant. You have 10 years of experience in this job and are proud of the hard work that you put into your job every day. Your work tasks involve preparing documents, reports, and letters, answering and directing phone calls, attending meetings and taking minutes, greeting visitors and deciding if they should gain access to specific individuals, bookkeeping, and performing general office work.* The request used in this condition was: “*Your colleague with the same job and experience approaches you with the following question: Can you pick up my package from the PostNL point by 16:00 hrs?*” accompanied by the following argument (only for the condition with argument) “*I do not have time to run this errand by myself.*”

## **Appendix B.**

Self-assessment questions for the English proficiency of the participants, responses will be rated on a seven-point Likert scale and based on the study by Krishna and Ahluwalia (2008).

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Media and language use<sup>a</sup>

What type of music do you listen to?

What type of movies do you watch?

What language newspapers and magazines do you read?

In what language do you watch TV?

What language do you use in the following situations?<sup>a</sup>

At home

At school

With friends

What medium of instruction have you had in your schooling?<sup>a</sup>

How proficient are you in English in the following areas?<sup>b</sup>

Speaking

Writing

Reading

---

## Appendix C

### General information English



Dear participant,

We are a group of students, currently studying International Business Communication at Radboud University in Nijmegen. We would like to invite you to participate in an experiment we conduct for our Bachelor Thesis. The goal for this experiment is to study interactions in workplace settings. You will be asked to read a short description of a work situation, followed by a few questions about this situation. Taking part in this study will approximately take 3 minutes of your time.

Your participation in this experiment is voluntary and you are able to stop your participation at all times during the experiment. All your answers will be stored confidentially and anonymously. This means your answers will not be traced back to you. The collected research data will be stored according to guidelines set by Radboud University. If you have any questions or remarks, please contact us via [alessodibinoudis@ru.nl](mailto:alessodibinoudis@ru.nl)

---

I have read and understood the above information

Yes

No

---

I agree to participate in this study

Yes

No

---

I am 18 years or older

Yes

No

Before starting, we would like to ask you some general questions.

---

What is your native language/mother tongue?

Dutch

Other

Before starting, we would like to ask you some general questions.

---

What is your gender?

Male

Female

Other

Prefer not to say

What is your age?

---

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Vmbo
Havo
Vwo
Mbo
Hbo
Wo
Other

Please indicate your English proficiency on the following aspects:

	Extremely bad	Very bad	Bad	Neither good nor bad	Good	Very good	Excellent
Speaking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Listening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## General information Dutch



Beste participant,

Wij zijn een groep derdejaars studenten International Business Communication aan de Radboud Universiteit. Wij zouden u willen uitnodigen om deel te nemen aan een onderzoek dat we uitvoeren in het kader van onze Bachelorscriptie. In dit onderzoek bestuderen wij interactie op de werkvloer. U zult worden gevraagd om een korte beschrijving van een werksituatie te lezen en er een aantal vragen over te beantwoorden. Het invullen van de vragenlijst zal ongeveer 3 minuten in beslag nemen.

Uw deelname is vrijwillig en u kunt op ieder moment stoppen met deelnemen. Al uw antwoorden blijven vertrouwelijk en anoniem, dit wil zeggen dat uw antwoorden niet naar u persoonlijk te herleiden zullen zijn. Onderzoeksdata zullen opgeslagen worden volgens de richtlijnen van de Radboud Universiteit. Mocht u vragen of opmerkingen hebben, neem dan contact op met ons via [alessio.dibinoudis@ru.nl](mailto:alessio.dibinoudis@ru.nl)

---

Ik heb de bovenstaande informatie gelezen en begrepen

Ja

Nee

---

Ik stem in met deelname aan de studie

Ja

Nee

---

Ik ben 18 jaar of ouder

Ja

Nee

---

Voordat het onderzoek begint, willen we u een paar algemene vragen stellen.

---

Wat is uw moedertaal?

Nederlands

Anders



---

Voordat het onderzoek begint, willen we u een paar algemene vragen stellen.

---

Wat is uw werkervaring (deeltijd of voltijd) in jaren?

(Geef a.u.b. uw antwoord in cijfers. Als u meerdere (bij)banen voor 1 jaar had, dan is uw antwoord 1. Als u 1 of meerdere (bij)banen voor 1 maand had, dan is uw antwoord 1/12.)

Voordat het onderzoek begint, willen we u een paar algemene vragen stellen.

Wat is uw geslacht?

Man

Vrouw

Anders

Zeg ik liever niet

Hoe oud bent u?

Wat is uw hoogste afgeronde opleiding?

Vmbo

Havo

Vwo

Mbo

Hbo

Wo

Anders

Geef aan hoe goed uw Engels is op de volgende gebieden

	Extreem slecht	Zeer slecht	Slecht	Noch slecht noch goed	Goed	Zeer goed	Extreem goed
Spreken	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Schrijven	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lezen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Luisteren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## English condition / No argument



Below, a work situation is presented to you. Please read it carefully, you will have to answer some questions about the situation.

Imagine that you are working in a multinational organisation in the Netherlands as an administrative assistant. You have 10 years of experience in this job and are proud of the hard work that you put into your job every day. Your work tasks involve preparing documents, reports, and letters, answering and directing phone calls, attending meetings, taking notes during meetings, greeting visitors and deciding if they should gain access to specific individuals, bookkeeping, and performing general office work.

Your colleague with the same job and experience approaches you with the following question. "Can you pick up my package from the PostNL point by 16:00?"

Below, you see some questions regarding this situation.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I intend to pick up the colleague's package from the PostNL point.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will pick up the colleague's package from the PostNL point.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am willing to pick up the colleague's package from the PostNL point.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I plan to pick up the colleague's package from the PostNL point.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Me picking up the colleague's package at the PostNL point is:

Good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Bad
Unpleasant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Pleasant
Harmful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Beneficial
Interesting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Boring
Wise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unwise



Do you have any comments or remarks about the questionnaire? If not, you can skip this question.

## Dutch condition / No argument



Hieronder wordt u een werksituatie voorgelegd. Lees deze alstublieft aandachtig door, u zult enkele vragen over deze situatie moeten beantwoorden.

Beeld u in dat u als administratief assistent werkt in een multinationale organisatie in Nederland. U heeft 10 jaar ervaring in deze functie en bent trots op het harde werk dat u iedere dag levert. Uw werkzaamheden betreffen het voorbereiden van documenten, rapporten, en brieven; het beantwoorden en doorverbinden van telefoongesprekken; het bijwonen van vergaderingen, het notuleren van vergaderingen, het begroeten van bezoekers en bepalen of zij toegang krijgen tot bepaalde personen; het bijhouden van de boekhouding; en het verrichten van algemene kantoorwerkzaamheden. Uw collega met dezelfde functie en ervaring als u benadert u met de volgende vraag:

"Kun je mijn pakketje ophalen bij het PostNL afhaalpunt voor 16:00?"

Hieronder ziet u een paar vragen over deze situatie

Hieronder ziet u een paar vragen over deze situatie

	Volledig mee oneens	Oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Eens	Volledig mee eens
Ik neem mezelf voor om het pakketje van de collega op te halen bij het PostNL afhaalpunt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik zal het pakketje van de collega ophalen bij het PostNL afhaalpunt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik ben bereid het pakketje van de collega op te halen bij het PostNL afhaalpunt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik ben van plan om het pakketje van de collega op te halen bij het PostNL afhaalpunt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Als ik het pakketje van mijn collega ophaal bij het PostNL afhaalpunt is dat:

Goed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Slecht
Onaangenaam	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Aangenaam
Schadelijk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Gunstig
Interessant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Saai
Verstandig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Onverstandig

Heeft u vragen of opmerkingen over de vragenlijst? Zo niet, kunt u deze vraag overslaan.



## English condition / With argument

Below, a work situation is presented to you. Please read it carefully, you will have to answer some questions about the situation.

Imagine that you are working in a multinational organisation in the Netherlands as an administrative assistant. You have 10 years of experience in this job and are proud of the hard work that you put into your job every day. Your work tasks involve preparing documents, reports, and letters, answering and directing phone calls, attending meetings and taking notes during meetings, greeting visitors and deciding if they should gain access to specific individuals, bookkeeping, and performing general office work.

Your colleague with the same job and experience approaches you with the following question. "Can you pick up my package from the PostNL point by 16:00? I don't have time to run this errand myself."

Below, you see some questions regarding this situation.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I intend to pick up the colleague's package from the PostNL point.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will pick up the colleague's package from the PostNL point.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am willing to pick up the colleague's package from the PostNL point.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I plan to pick up the colleague's package from the PostNL point.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Me picking up the colleague's package at the PostNL point is:

Good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Bad
Unpleasant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Pleasant
Harmful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Beneficial
Interesting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Boring
Wise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unwise



Do you have any comments or remarks about the questionnaire? If not, you can skip this question.

## Dutch condition / With argument

Hieronder wordt u een werksituatie voorgelegd. Lees deze alstublieft aandachtig door, u zult enkele vragen over deze situatie moeten beantwoorden.

Beeld u in dat u als administratief assistent werkt in een multinationale organisatie in Nederland. U heeft 10 jaar ervaring in deze functie en bent trots op het harde werk dat u iedere dag levert. Uw werkzaamheden betreffen het voorbereiden van documenten, rapporten, en brieven; het beantwoorden en doorverbinden van telefoongesprekken; het bijwonen van vergaderingen, het notuleren van vergaderingen, het begroeten van bezoekers en bepalen of zij toegang krijgen tot bepaalde personen; het bijhouden van de boekhouding; en het verrichten van algemene kantoorwerkzaamheden. Uw collega met dezelfde functie en ervaring als u benadert u met de volgende vraag:

"Kun je mijn pakketje ophalen bij het PostNL afhaalpunt voor 16:00? Ik heb geen tijd om dit klusje zelf te doen."

Hieronder ziet u een paar vragen over deze situatie

	Volledig mee oneens	Oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Eens	Volledig mee eens
Ik neem mezelf voor om het pakketje van de collega op te halen bij het PostNL afhaalpunt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik zal het pakketje van de collega ophalen bij het PostNL afhaalpunt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik ben bereid het pakketje van de collega op te halen bij het PostNL afhaalpunt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik ben van plan om het pakketje van de collega op te halen bij het PostNL afhaalpunt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Als ik het pakketje van mijn collega ophaal bij het PostNL afhaalpunt is dat:

Goed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Slecht
Onaangenaam	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Aangenaam
Schadelijk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Gunstig
Interessant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Saai
Verstandig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Onverstandig

Heeft u vragen of opmerkingen over de vragenlijst? Zo niet, kunt u deze vraag over slaan.



## Appendix C

## Statement of own work

Sign this *Statement of own work* form and add it as the last appendix in the final version of the Bachelor's thesis that is submitted as to the first supervisor.

Student name: Christopher Leddy      Student nr:s1047820

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:                      Christopher Leddy

Place and date:                Nijmegen, 13.06.2022\_\_\_\_\_