Comparing the use of Expressions of Procedural Meaning by Native English Speakers and Dutch Speakers of English

by

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**Abstract**

**This thesis aims to compare the use of expressions of procedural meaning by native English speakers and Dutch speakers of English. A different use of EPMs can lead to a misclassification of the interlocutor as being (im)polite. Research has demonstrated which types of EPMs are commonly used by native English speakers (House, 2006; Ogiermann, 2009; Hendriks, 2008) and by the Dutch while speaking Dutch (Hendriks, 2008; van Mulken, 1996). It has, however, not been researched which EPMs are used by the Dutch when speaking English. For this study, twelve University students were asked to complete an oral production questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two different situations which they could encounter at University. Their responses were recorded, transcribed and the EPMs in their speech were highlighted. The use of EPMs by the two groups was compared and the mean and standard deviation was calculated for each category. The results include: (1) the English and the Dutch use similar EPMs in their speech; (2) the English use more EPMs than the Dutch; (3) the English use a wider range of EPMs than the Dutch.**

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1. **Introduction**

There are many factors which can influence how a person in perceived during a conversation, one of these is politeness. What is considered polite in one language, can be seen as impolite in another. Watts (2003) states that native speakers rely on the “feel for the game” (p.75) when determining what is considered appropriate behaviour during communication. As this varies per language, it can be challenging to apply the correct lexical expressions to a second language. Hendriks (2008) claims that linguistic misunderstandings, which occur when Dutch people are speaking English, can cause the English to misclassify the Dutch as “blunt and arrogant”. This is largely caused by pragmatic failure in how the Dutch translate their speech into English and has an influence on how the non-native speaker is perceived by the native speaker. Due to such differences, it is important to compare the use of expressions of procedural meaning between native speakers of English and Dutch speakers of English. Expressions of procedural meaning (EPMs) determine largely whether a person is perceived as polite or impolite. Research on this topic will help provide an understanding of the different, and similar, ways in which the English and the Dutch use the English language.

**2. Theoretical framework**

**2.1 Theory of politeness**   
Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson’s (1987) theory of politeness has had a large influence on the field of linguistic politeness and cross-cultural studies. Their theory suggests that there are two distinct types of face that people can have during communication, positive face and negative face. Face is a construct which is used by people as a means of achieving communicative goals and needs to be continuously attended to during communication (Watts, p.85). Brown and Levinson have defined positive face as “the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others” (p. 312). Negative face has been defined as “the want of every ‘competent adult member’ that his actions be unimpeded by others” (p. 312). During a conversation, the participants should try to maintain both their own face and the other participant’s face. They therefore must try to avoid face-threatening acts during which one’s face can be threatened or even completely lost. Participants can soften the impact of a face threating act by using different strategies in order to restore the face. This notion of face work can be connected to the term expressions of procedural meaning.

**2.2 Expressions of procedural meaning**  
Watts (2003) has suggested the term ‘expressions of procedural meaning’ for linguistic expressions which have undergone pragmaticalisation. During pragmaticalisation the word or expression loses its propositional content and functions as a marker which indicates procedural meaning (pp. 176-177). According to Watts, instances of pragmaticalisation are learnt through “a process of socialisation into their correct usage” (p. 176). This could then mean that people learning English as a second language might not have the same range of EPMs as native speakers as they have not been through the same process of socialisation. As each language has its own pragmatic rules and contexts in which these are applied, it can be difficult to communicate effectively in a second language. The learner’s native language can have an influence on their use of a second language (Kasper and Schmidt, 1996) and this can lead to pragmatic failure. According to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) pragmatic failure occurs due to “cross-linguistic differences in speech act realization rules” (p. 196) between different languages. Directness in requests is one of the factors which plays an important role in pragmatics. Whereas the English prefer indirect requests (Ogiermann, 2009) the Dutch are known for being “direct and to the point” (van Mulken, p. 689). Both the English and the Dutch can misinterpret the level of directness which is used as being polite or impolite.

Expressions of procedural meaning play an important role in verbal interaction and, according to Watts (2003), they can have an impact on how the speaker is perceived. He connects EPMs to the term ‘politic behaviour’, which he describes as “that behaviour which the participants construct as being appropriate to the ongoing social interaction” (p.276). The behaviour which is considered appropriate can vary per situation and so can the EPMs which are expected. If certain EPMs which are considered appropriate to a social situation are absent from the conversation, this can be perceived as “’impolite’, ‘brash’, ‘inconsiderate’, ‘abrupt’, ‘rude’, etc.” (p. 169). This can lead to a face-threatening act. An excessive use of EPMs can similarly be perceived as polite. Trosborg (1987) has found that in general speakers with a higher language proficiency use more EPMs in their speech. It is, however, not clear whether this is due to an improvement in their use of pragmatic markers, or an improvement of their vocabulary (Bardovi-Harlig 1999 p. 167).

**2.3 Downgraders**  
During a conversation there are ways for the interactants to impact the effect of an utterance. These are divided into two categories, one of which downgrades the impact and the other which increases the impact. Intensifiers are an example of upgraders which increase the utterance’s force on the interactants, such as ‘extremely’, ‘really’ and ‘quite’. Takahashi and Beebe (1987, cited in Bardovi-Harlig, 1999, p.687) have found that speakers with a higher proficiency use a larger range of intensifiers in their speech than speakers with a lower proficiency.

Edmondson (1977) has called the expressions which are used to downgrade an utterance ‘gambits’ and has divided them into two categories ‘cajolers’ and ‘appealers’. According to House (2006), the English tend to frequently use cajolers in their speech. Cajolers are expressions which are used to “increase, establish or restore harmony” (Watts, 184) between the interactants. Examples of such EPMs are ‘you see’, ‘look’ and ‘really’ and can be used to soften the face-threat which may follow. These are often used by the English in order to gain sympathy from the addressee and increase their attention.

House and Kasper (1981) have also suggested a number of expressions which downgrade the impact of an utterance such as ‘understaters’, ‘downtoners’, ‘politeness markers’, ‘ play-downs’ and ‘consultative devices’. According to van Mulken (1996) and Hendriks (2008), the Dutch often use understaters in their speech. Understaters are adverbs which are used to soften an utterance, such as the EPMs ‘briefly’ and ‘a little bit’. Two examples of Dutch understaters which are often used are ‘even’ and ‘misschien’. However, although they were often used in Dutch speech, Hendriks found that the English equivalents were rarely used by the Dutch when speaking English (p. 351). Although the English equivalent ‘maybe’ does not have the same connotation as the Dutch understater, it is an exact translation of ‘misschien’ in other contexts. Van Mulken (1996) also found that downtoners are often used in Dutch speech. Downtoners are also used to adjust the impact of the utterance and weaken the impact it has on the addressee. Examples of downtoners in English are ‘perhaps’ and ‘simply’. Van Mulken has, however, not researched whether they are still used frequently when the Dutch speak English. Finally, in Dutch it is possible to omit the politeness marker ‘please’ and not sound too harsh. Instead the Dutch often use understaters to soften the impact of the utterance (Hendriks, 351). In English, however, it is more common for people to use ‘please’ in order to receive cooperation during interaction. This can lead to linguistic misunderstandings caused by pragmatic failure.

According to Ogiermann (2009), the English frequently use consultative devices in their speech (p.202). By using these EPMs, the speaker downgrades the utterance by also taking the addressee’s opinion into consideration and asking for cooperation. A few examples of consultative devices are ‘would you mind’ and ‘could you’. House, Ogiermann and Hendrik’s findings provide a basis as to which downgraders are frequently used by native English speakers. Van Mulken and Hendriks have provided downgraders which are often used in Dutch speech. Little research has been done which analyses English speech by Dutch native speakers. Although van Mulken’s findings have not been applied to the English of native Dutch speakers, it still provides a basis for which EPMs could be used.

Due to the differences in proficiency, and socialisation of native English and Dutch speakers of English, differences in the use and range of EPMs used by both groups are expected. Some research has been focused on the use of EPMs in Dutch, but not on the use of EPMs by Dutch speakers of English. Similarly, some research has focused on the use of EPMs in English, but these have not been compared to those used by the Dutch. This thesis aims to bring these together and answer the research question: are there significant differences between the use of EPMs in the speech of native English speakers and Dutch speakers of English? The EPM categories which will be focused on are: understaters, downtoners, play-downs, politeness markers, cajolers, consultative devices and intensifiers.

**3. Method**

The method which was used in order to compare the speech of both Dutch and English students was an oral production questionnaire. This is one of the methods which is used by Hendriks (2008) when comparing Dutch and English requests. The method was considered appropriate for this study for a number of reasons. Firstly, the use of speech as opposed to a written questionnaire was significant in order to receive an authentic response which is not altered in the process of writing. Secondly, because the respondents received the same two situations, a certain ‘politic behaviour’ (see section 2.2) is expected from them. Because the expectations are the same, their speech and use of expressions of procedural meaning can easily be compared. As Hendriks mentions, the use of an oral production questionnaire has often been criticised for not providing authentic data. However, it has also proved to be more suitable for studies which require a certain situational control (p. 338).

This study employs a qualitative approach. By analysing the speech of both groups, a comparison between them can be made. The EPMs which were used will be noted down to be able to compare the number of EPMs used by the participants as well as the range. The results will be represented by describing the differences or similarities between the use of EPMs by both groups. This will help to answer the research question whether there are differences between the use of EPMs by native English speakers and Dutch speakers of English.

**3.1 Participants**  
The respondents consisted of two groups: (1) the native English speakers and (2) the Dutch participants who speak English as a second language. The native English group consisted of six students who attended the University of Southampton and were in the second year of their Bachelor’s degree. The non-native group consisted of six Dutch students who attended a university in the Netherlands. These students were also in the second year of their Bachelor’s degree and did not study English. They have, however, followed between two and four university courses which were taught in English. Furthermore, all participants received six years of English classes in secondary school. The respondents in both groups were between nineteen and twenty-two years old. Finally, the English group consisted of four female and two male students, whereas the Dutch group consisted of three female and three male students.

**3.2 Test design**  
The oral production questionnaires with the native English group were recorded at University of Southampton. The questionnaires with the Dutch students were recorded using the computer programme Skype, in order to video call with the participants. The participants were presented with two scripted situations to which they were asked to respond. They received two minutes per situation to decide how they would react if this was to occur to them in real life. They had no prior knowledge about the study before responding to the situations, so that this would not influence their answers. The two situations were as following:

1. For one of your classes you have just received your mark for the essay you spent a lot of time and effort on. The mark turns out to be considerately lower than you expected it to be and you do not understand why. You are disappointed and want an explanation from your teacher, Ben. After class you want to go to the teacher to discuss this and ask for an appointment to go through your essay. What do you say to your teacher?
2. For one of your classes you have been assigned to give a presentation tomorrow. However, your sister is delivering her baby tomorrow and you want to be there for her. This would mean not being able to go to class. You see your teacher, Ben, walking down the hallway and you want to explain the situation. You don’t know if he has time to talk, but you stop him anyway to explain the situation and to ask if he would let you give your presentation next week instead. What do you say to your teacher?

These situations were chosen, because they are considered situations which could occur at University and which the students can easily relate to. In these situations it is clear that they are speaking to a university teacher and before being presented with the situations they were told to keep this in mind. With their consent, their responses were recorded using a mobile phone. The twelve respondents were recorded during a period of eight days. Completing the oral production questionnaire took no longer than seven minutes.

**3.3 Transcription**  
After the data was collected, the speech was transcribed using the HIAT transcription system. This system is used by Watts (2003) in *Politeness*. It was chosen because it does not contain a large amount of detail which is unnecessary for this research, and clearly indicates pauses […] and hesitations [:er:]. Besides these transcription signs, Watts also provides information about the interpretation of the speech as being ‘politic’, ‘polite’ or ‘impolite’. He also provides the transcriptions with the categories of expressions of procedural meaning which have been used. This is indicated by using small capital letters which are placed under the bolded utterance it refers to. After the transcription had been completed the data was analysed. This was done by highlighting the EPMs which were used by the participants. The utterances leading up to their requests and their requests were analysed. This ensures that the responses are similar and can be compared to one another. Finally, the use of EPMs by the native speakers was compared to the use of EPMs by the Dutch students. For the transcripts of the Dutch participants, see Appendix A and for the transcripts of the English participants, see Appendix B.

**4. Results**

The average number of expressions of procedural meaning which were used by the participants is shown in Table 1 below. These results show that the English participants used more EPMs overall with a mean of 13.5. The Dutch participants, however, merely obtained a mean of 9.5 EPMs. Additionally, table 1 shows that the English used more EPMs per category. The only category for which this is not the case is for ‘consultative devices’ which have an equal average of 0.5 for both groups of speakers. The average number of words used by the respondents is slightly higher for the English group. The Dutch respondents reached an average of 195.3 words per participant, whereas the English respondents used an average of 204.3 words.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations   Expression of procedural meaning | English  Mean St. Dev. | | |  | Dutch  Mean | St. Dev. |
| Understaters | | 2 | 1.20 | | 1.5 | 0.89 |
| Downtoners | | 2.67 0.69 | |  | 1.83 | 1.41 |
| Play-downs | | 1.83 0.64 | |  | 1.67 | 1.27 |
| Politeness markers | | 3.17 0.99 | |  | 2 | 1.20 |
| Cajolers | | 0.66 0.69 | |  | 0.33 | 0.44 |
| Consultative devices | | 0.5 0.46 | |  | 0.5 | 1.71 |
| Intensifiers | | 2.67 1.27 | |  | 1.67 | 0.44 |
| Total | | 13.5 6.94 | |  | 9.5 | 7.36 |

Figure 1: Means per type of understater

In Figure 1 the means of the different types of understaters which were used by the participants are displayed, according to the group they belong to. As shown, the understaters ‘a little bit’ and ‘a moment’ were both used an average of 0.5 times by the participants in both the English and the Dutch group. The understater ‘quickly’ was also used by both groups, with an average of 0.33 for the English and 0.17 for the Dutch participants. The English group used the understater ‘a second’ the most frequently with an average of 0.67. The Dutch, however, did not use ‘a second’ at all. This is the opposite for the understater ‘kind of’, which has an average of 0.33 for the Dutch, but was not used at all by the English group.

Figure 2: Means per type of politeness marker

The means of the different politeness markers which were used by the participants have been displayed in Figure 2. The politeness marker ‘sorry’ was used considerably more frequently by the English participants than by the Dutch. The marker ‘excuse me’, however, was used an average of 0.83 times by the Dutch and only an average of 0.33 by the English respondents. Although both markers can be used as a request for forgiveness, the non-natives preferred ‘excuse me’ rather than ‘sorry’. Finally none of the Dutch respondents used the marker ‘please’, while it was used an average of 0.33 times by the English participants.   
  
Figure 3: Means per type of intensifier  
Figure 3 shows the means of the intensifiers used by both groups of participants. The largest difference can be found in the use of the word ‘really’. In both groups this was the most frequently used intensifier, but the English had a higher average of 2, as opposed to 0.83 for the Dutch group. In the English group, however, six of the twelve times it was used by two participants. This concerns participants number 7 and 8 and each used it three times. The intensifiers ‘quite’ and ‘very’ were used an equal amount of times by both groups, with an average of 0.33 and 0.17 respectively. The Dutch group used two intensifiers which were not used by the English, ‘such’ and ‘just’, whereas the English only used one, ‘so’, which was not used by the Dutch group. In the English group, ‘quite’ was, however, only used by one participant, participant number 8. In the Dutch group there were two participants who each used it once.

Figure 4: Means per type of downtoner

In Figure 4 the means of the downtoners used by both groups have been displayed. The downtoner ‘maybe’ was used an average of 1.17 times by the Dutch, while the English only reached an average of 0.33. Although ‘maybe’ was used seven times by the Dutch, five of these are a result of one participant, participant number 3. The frequent use of this downtoner by one participant, leads to a high standard deviation of 1.41. The downtoners ‘perhaps’ and ‘just’ were used more frequently by the English group than by the Dutch group. ‘Just’ was the most frequently used intensifier by the English participants, while this was ‘maybe’ for the Dutch participants. Finally, ‘possibly’ was used an average of 0.17 by the English participants, whereas the Dutch did not use it at all.

The three categories play-downs, cajolers and consultative devices were also analysed. The play-downs which were used by both groups were ‘I was wondering’ and ‘I wondered’. Additionally the English also used ‘I wonder’. For the Dutch group, the mean was 1.67, whereas the English group scored slightly higher with a mean of 1.83. Within the Dutch group, only four participants used play-downs, whereas all of the participants in the English group used them at least once. Participants 1, 3 and 5 in the Dutch group each used the play-downs three times. As play-downs were not used by two of the six participants, the standard deviation is significantly higher for the Dutch group. The next category which will be discussed is the cajolers. Both groups did not use these EPMs frequently. The Dutch participants merely gained an average of 0.33 for the cajoler ‘actually’. The English group, however, used two different cajolers, namely ‘really’ and ‘you see’, and both were used an average of 0.33 times by the participants. Finally, consultative devices were used an equal number of times by both groups. The Dutch used ‘do you think’ an average number of 0.5 times and the English had an average of 0.17 for ‘if you wouldn’t mind’ and 0.33 for ‘would you mind’. Similarly to the cajolers, both groups used different types of consultative devices.

**5. Discussion**

The outcome of the study partly corresponds with past research which has been done on expressions of procedural meaning. One of the findings which agrees with existing literature is the use of the politeness marker ‘please’. Hendriks (2008) has stated that it is common for Dutch for people to omit ‘please’ from their speech and do so without sounding too harsh. It has not been researched whether this is similarly transferred into their English speech. This study has, however, shown that the politeness marker ‘please’ is not once used by the Dutch speakers. The omission of ‘please’ has been transferred into their English speech. However, it was similarly not used very often by the English respondents, with a mean of 0.33.

Another finding which agrees with the existing literature is the number of EPMs which are used by both groups. According to Trosberg (1987), people with a higher proficiency in a certain language make use of more EPMs while speaking. When applied to this study, this would suggest that the English group would use more EPMs than the Dutch group. As can be seen in the previously shown Table 1, this is one of the results which has been found. The native English group used an average of 13.5 EPMs per respondent, while the Dutch group used an average of 9.5 EPMs.

There were, however, a number of findings which did not correspond with the literature. As is mentioned by Hendriks (2008) and van Mulken (1996), the Dutch frequently use the Dutch downtoner ‘misschien’ in their speech. One of the English translations of this word is ‘maybe’. Where Hendriks has found that the Dutch do not use ‘maybe’ very often, this study has revealed that it was their most frequently used downtoner. In addition, it was used five times more by the Dutch than by the English speakers with a mean of 1.17 as opposed to 0.33. Although ‘maybe’ was the Dutch group’s most preferred downtoner, it was mainly used by one participant and as a result has a high standard deviation.

Another finding which does not agree with the literature is that the English group should use a larger range of intensifiers than the Dutch. This is claimed to be the case as the proficiency level is higher (Takahashi and Beebe 1987, cited in Bardovi-Harlig, 1999, p.687). The results in Figure 3 show that the Dutch use five different intensifiers, whereas the English merely use four. This, however, cannot be seen as a striking difference as most of the intensifiers are only used once or twice. As can be seen in Figure 3, only one intensifier, ‘really’, is used frequently by both groups. The means for the Dutch and English group regarding the use of ‘really’ are 0.83 and 2 respectively. The English group did, however, have a slightly higher average of 10 words per respondent, meaning their speech could contain a larger number of EPMs.

House (2006) has claimed that the English use a large number of cajolers in their speech. In this study only a small number of cajolers are used. The English group merely used two cajolers, ‘really’ and ‘you see’, and both were used twice with a mean of 0.67. This is a larger number than was used by the Dutch group, which only used one type of cajoler with a mean of 0.33. This is, however, not considered a remarkable number compared to the other expressions of procedural meaning. Similarly, Ogiermann (2009) has claimed that the English use consultative devices frequently. The results of this study, however, do not show a frequent use. They are the least used expressions of procedural meaning for the English group and the second least for the Dutch group with an average of 0.5.

**5.1 Limitations**   
There are a number of limitations to the type of study which had been chosen for this thesis. The first and most significant limitation of this study is the size of the test groups. The number of participants who took part in the study is not large enough to come to a significant conclusion. Many of the EPMs were only used once by the participants, which is not considered a large number. If a study were to be carried out with more participants, it could be tested whether these EPMs would be used more often. For future research, a larger group of participants will be needed in order to come to a conclusion which can be considered representative for both groups of speakers.

Secondly, the results were not subjected to much statistical analysis. Merely the mean and standard deviation were calculated for the different categories and further statistical analysis was not applied to the results. The research was considered to be exploratory and the results were not represented using statistics. This research provides insights into the differences in use of EPMs and can be used as basis for quantitative research. Future quantitative research will needed to be carried out on a larger scale in order to provide numerical data and statistics which will lead to clear, substantial results.

The final limitation is the choice of an oral production questionnaire. This may lead to the participants’ responses not being comparable to their natural, spontaneous speech. Some students may be nervous and feel uncomfortable pretending to speak to a teacher. This is not something they are used to doing and their response might not be the same as it would be in a real life situation. In addition, the participants do not receive a response to their questions. This could have an influence on their use of politeness markers. A number of students added ‘please’ or ‘thank you’ to the end of their utterances while others did not. In an actual conversation the politeness marker ‘thank you’ would be used after the interlocuter has responded. Due to this limitation, less politeness markers could have been used than in an authentic conversation.

**6. Conclusion**

The native English and the Dutch group use similar expressions of procedural meaning in their speech. However, both groups preferred to use different EPMs within the categories and some were used more often than others. In addition, the group of English speakers used a remarkably larger number of EPMs than the Dutch group. Finally, the English group made use of a wider range of different EPMs in their speech. This shows that there are differences between the use of EPMs by both groups, although some cannot be considered significant. If these results were to be confirmed by future research on a larger scale, this would mean that the limited use of EPMs by the Dutch, compared to the English, could lead to them being perceived as impolite. In particular the use of politeness markers, which proved to be the largest difference between the two groups, could be misinterpreted. As there was limited previous research on the use of EPMs by the Dutch while speaking English, the results were exploratory and could not be compared to previous research. A number of the results did not agree with previous research regarding the use of EPMs, and more research on this topic is necessary in order to provide a conclusion which is representative for both groups of speakers.

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**Appendices**

**Appendix A: Dutch group**

Participant 1  
Situation 1:   
\Sir **I was wondering if** you could spare a moment .. \ :er:\ . I just received my mark for the   
 PLAY-DOWN   
essay I .. :er: turned in … \ and I was **kind of** surprised by the outcome\ I- :er: I … expected it  
 UNDERSTATER  
to be higher **actually** and I don’t . \ completely understand what I did wrong .. \ and I was   
 CAJOLER  
**kind of** disappointed by it\ so . **I wondered whether** we could make an appointment \ to go   
UNDERSTATER PLAY-DOWN

through the essay and … \ :er: yeah well see what I did wrong and what I can do better\

Situation 2:   
\Sir,\ :er: **sorry** to bother you \ :er: as you know \ I’m supposed to give a presentation   
 POLITENESS MARKER

tomorrow .. \ but my sister is delivering her baby \ and I **really** want to be there when my   
 INTENSIFIER

niece is born \ and would not be able to :er: .. make it to class \ so **I was wondering** .\ whether   
 PLAY-DOWN

I could give \ my presentation next week instead of this week . \ would that be possible \

Participant 2  
Situation 1:   
\ **Excuse me** sir . \ I just received your grade on my essay \ . and I was **quite** disappointed   
POLITENESS MARKER INTENSIFIER

**actually** \ .. I’ve put a lot of time and effort in it .. \ and I would like to know . \ why you gave   
CAJOLER

me **such** a low grade … \ I thought I would get higher \ … :er: is there any way we can meet   
 INTENSIFIER

up after class \ .. so we can discuss it .. \ **thank you** \  
 POLITENESS MARKER

Situation 2:  
\ Hi .. Ben \ **Excuse me** . \ do you have **a little bit** of time to spare .. \ :er: .. I know I’m   
 POLITENESS MARKER UNDERSTATER

supposed to have a presentation tomorrow .. \ but I just heard that my sister is going to .. \ deliver her baby \ .. so my question is \ . if **maybe** I could move the presentation to next week   
 DOWNTONER

.. \ **thanks** \   
POLITENESS MARKER

Participant 3  
Situation 1:   
\ Hello Ben . \ **I was wondering if** **maybe** I could ask you a question … \ :er: I’ve received   
 PLAY-DOWN DOWNTONER

my grade \ .. and I have to tell you that I’m not **very** happy about it …\ because the grade   
 INTENSIFIER

turns out to be lower .. \ than I expected . \ since I put a lot of time and effort in the :er: .. assignment \ and :er: .. **I was wondering if maybe** I could make an appointment with you \   
 PLAY-DOWN DOWNTONER

So that you can give me some explanation . about the mark \ and tell me how to improve myself . for the future \   
  
Situation 2:   
\ Sir .. do you **maybe** have some time for me \ .. I would like to ask you a question …\ :er: I   
 DOWNTONER

know that I have a presentation tomorrow . \ but my sister is pregnant . \ and will be delivering her baby tomorrow \ and I would like to be there for her to show some support \ … and :er: I can’t combine that with the presentation \ so **I was wondering if** :er: ..\ **maybe** we   
 PLAY-DOWN DOWNTONER

can figure out a solution for this problem \ so .. :er: **maybe** I can do the presentation later \  
 DOWNTONER

Participant 4  
Situation 1:   
\ Sir \ can I ask you something \ I just saw the mark for my essay \ and I was **a little bit**   
 UNDERSTATER

disappointed \ .. I think I was expecting it to be higher \ I did spend a lot of time on it :er: .. \ and would like to know what I did wrong \ could we **perhaps** make an :er: .. appointment \ .   
 DOWNTONER

to go through my essay \

Situation 2:   
\ **Excuse me** . sir \ do you have **a moment** \ it’s about my presentation tomorrow \ I found out   
POLITENESS MARKER UNDERSTATER

that my sister is giving birth tomorrow \ and :er: . I would **just** love to be there for her \ but   
 INTENSIFIER

:er: . I can’t combine this with the presentation \ and :er: .. I- **I was wondering if**- \ ..   
 PLAY-DOWN

**do you think** we can move my presentation to next week \ I would **really** appreciate it \   
CONSULTATIVE DEVICE INTENSIFIER

**thank you** \  
POLITENESS MARKER

Participant 5  
Situation 1:   
\ Hi Ben . \ is this an appropriate moment for me to ask you something .. \ :er: you just gave us our grades for last semester’s essay . \ and to be honest :er: . I feel **a little bit** disappointed \   
 UNDERSTATER

because I put a lot of effort into it .. \ and my grade … it **just** isn’t as high as I was expecting \   
 DOWNTONER

so **I was wondering if** it is **maybe** alright :er: \ … to make an appointment for later on this   
 PLAY-DOWN DOWNTONER

week \ .. to discuss my essay and . see what I can improve for my future essays \ I **really** want   
 INTENSIFIER

to learn from it :er: .. \ and would **really** appreciate it if you’ve got some time for me \  
 INTENSIFIER

Situation 2:   
\ Ben \ .. **excuse me** . :er: \ is it alright if I interrupt you for **a moment** \ :er: .. you know about   
 POLITENESS MARKER UNDERSTATER

the presentations that we have tomorrow \ I just received word from my mother ..\ that my sister is going to be in labour a week early \ .. and I want to be there for her \ :er: … so I can’t make it to class tomorrow \ . which means I can’t do my presentation \ :er: .. this is obviously a problem \ . and **I was wondering if** we could **just** take **a moment** .. \ and see if we can   
 PLAY-DOWN DOWNTONER UNDERSTATER

arrange something .. \ to solve this \ **I was wondering if** you could help me out with this \ ..   
 PLAY-DOWN

and let me give my presentation next week . instead \ **thank you** \  
 POLITENESS MARKER

Participant 6  
Situation 1:   
\ Hi Ben \ .. :er: I just saw the mark that I received for my essay \ and to be honest \ it was a lot lower than I expected \ .. I did spend a lot of time working on it \ and I thought that I did **quite** well \ :er: . I guess this is not the case \ but **do you think** that we could make an   
INTENSIFIER CONSULTATIVE DEVICE

appointment \ to go through my essay \ :er: . to see what went wrong \ and where I can improve next time \ that would be great \ **thanks** \  
 POLITENESS MARKER

Situation 2:   
\ **Excuse me** . Ben \ . can I **just** ask you something real **quickly** \ :er: .. so I’m supposed to   
POLITENESS MARKER DOWNTONER UNDERSTATER

give my presentation tomorrow \ an- but I just heard that my sister is going into labour \ and :er: . I would **really** like to be there when she gives birth to her first child \ .. **do you think** it’s   
 INTENSIFIER CONSULTATIVE DEVICE

possible to move my presentation \ to next week instead \ . would that be a problem \ **thanks** \  
 POLITENESS MARKER

**Appendix B: English group**

Participant 7  
Situation 1:   
\ Hi Ben \ :er: **I just** **wondered if** I could talk to you and that it concerns about \ :er: .. the   
 DOWNTONER PLAY-DOWN

mark you gave me on my last piece of work \ :er: .. to be honest I worked **really** hard on the  
 INTENSIFIER

essay . \ and I wasn’t expecting it to be **so** low \ . and **I was just wondering if** \ there would   
 DOWNTONER PLAY-DOWN

be any chance that . \ :er: if you have any time to speak to me at all \ . after class about this \ we can discuss where I went wrong \ and how I can improve in the future \ or **maybe** I can get   
 DOWNTONER

an appointment to go through it as well \ **if you wouldn’t mind** . \ **thank you** \   
 CONSULTATIVE DEVICE POLITENESS MARKER

Situation 2:   
\ Hi Ben \ I’m **really** **sorry** \ I don’t know if you’re busy at the moment \ :er: . but I don’t   
 INTENSIFIER POLITENESS MARKER

think I’m going to be able to make the presentation \ . I was supposed to give tomorrow . \ because my sister is having a baby \ and I **really** want to be there \ :er: . **sorry** I know you’re  
 INTENSIFIER POLITENESS MARKER

in the middle of something \ but . would it be possible \ . that I give the presentation next week instead \ . **please** \  
 POLITENESS MARKER

Participant 8  
Situation 1:   
\ Hi Ben \ .. :er: **I wonder if** I could talk to you for **a second** \ . I would like to book an   
 PLAY-DOWN UNDERSTATER

appointment \ to talk to you about the essay . \ that I’ve just received feedback on .. \ :er: . the mark that I got was **quite** a lot lower . than I wanted \ and **I wondered if** we could :er: \   
 INTENSIFIER PLAY-DOWN

discuss **perhaps** how I could do better next time \ and what I did wrong .. \ because I put   
 DOWNTONER

**quite** a lot of effort into the essay \ . would it be possible to talk about that some time \   
INTENSIFIER

Situation 2:   
\ I’m **really sorry** Ben \ do you have **a moment** to talk to me \ I **just** :er: can’t make class   
 INTENSIFIER POLITENESS MARKER UNDERSTATER DOWNTONER

tomorrow \ . because my sister’s giving birth . \ to her first child \ and I **really** would like to   
 INTENSIFIER

be there .. \ if it’s possible . **would you mind** if I did my presentation next week instead \ . I   
 CONSULTATIVE DEVICE

would **really** appreciate it \  
 INTENSIFIER

Participant 9  
Situation 1:   
\ Hi Ben \ .. so **I was wondering if maybe** we can talk sometime \ .. about my mark for the   
 PLAY-DOWN DOWNTONER

essay \ I’m **just** not **really** sure where I went wrong ..\ **perhaps** we could make an   
 DOWNTONER CAJOLER DOWNTONER

appointment to go through my essay \ . and **perhaps** you can explain to me why I got the   
 DOWNTONER

mark I did \ so I can improve my work next time \ would that be possible \ **thanks** \  
 POLITENESS MARKER

Situation 2:   
\ **Excuse me** Ben \ . **I wonder if** you have **a second** to talk to me \ **I was wondering if** I could   
POLITENESS MARKER PLAY-DOWN UNDERSTATER PLAY-DOWN

\ do my presentation next week \ instead of tomorrow .. \ **you see** .. it’s just that my sister’s   
 CAJOLER

giving birth \ and I’d **really** like to be there \ **would you mind** \ . :er: .. if we moved it to next   
 INTENSIFIER CONSULTATIVE DEVICE

week instead \ I’m **sorry** for the inconvenience \   
 POLITENESS MARKER

Participant 10   
Situation 1:   
\ Sir \ .. do you have **a moment** \ about my assignment .. \ I didn’t **really** get what I wanted to   
 UNDERSTATER CAJOLER

on it \ . and **I was just wondering** whether you could \ .. provide some feedback which would   
 DOWNTONER PLAY-DOWN

sort of help me \ do better in the future and get the mark I was hoping for \ .. because I felt like I put a lot of work and effort into this particular paper \ it would be great if you cou- you could **just** give me some feedback \ about how I went wrong \ and what can be improved \ I   
 DOWNTONER

would **very much** appreciate that .. \ **thanks** \  
 INTENSIFIER POLITENESS MARKER

Situation 2:   
\ Dr. Ben \ :er: . is it okay if I talk to you for **a second** \ .. it’s about the presentation that I’m   
 UNDERSTATER

supposed to give tomorrow \ .. :er: my sister is expecting tomorrow \ .. and we would both like to be there for one another \ and meet my nephew or niece \ :er: . **I’m** **sorry** . \ but that   
 POLITENESS MARKER

would mean I would have to miss tomorrow’s \ is there any way possible that I can miss this presentation slot this time \ . and give it on any other day that isn’t this day \ preferably next week \ .. obviously if that doesn’t work for you then I- I \ .. accept that I will have to do tomorrow \ but I was **really** hoping that you could be compassionate \ . and **perhaps** help me   
 INTENSIFIER DOWNTONER

do both \ **thanks** \  
 POLITENESS MARKER

Participant 11  
Situation 1:   
\ Hi sir \ :er: . I had a **quick** question \ regarding the essay mark that we have just received  
 UNDERSTATER

back \ I worked **really** hard on it \ and I was **a little bit** disappointed when I saw my mark \   
 INTENSIFIER UNDERSTATER

:er: . **I was wondering if** there’s any way that we \ . can **perhaps** set up an appointment to   
 PLAY-DOWN DOWNTONER

meet \ I would love to go through your feedback \ . **just** to help improve on my future essays \   
 DOWNTONER

**thank you** \   
POLITENESS MARKER

Situation 2:   
\ **Excuse me** \ Sir \ :er: . I know that you’re probably busy \ but I wanted to **quickly** speak to   
POLITENESS MARKER UNDERSTATER

you \ about my presentation that’s due tomorrow \ .. my sister’s scheduled to deliver her baby \ and I would **really** love to be there \ :er: . unfortunately that would mean not being able to be   
 INTENSIFIER

in class \ to give my presentation \ is there any possible way that I would be able to reschedule it \ for any other time \ I know . **I’m sorry** \ this is **a little** inconvenient \ but could we **please**   
 POLITENESS MARKER UNDERSTATER POLITENESS MARKER

reschedule \

Participant 12   
Situation 1:   
\ :er: Ben \ . **sorry** can I interrupt you for **a moment** \ can I ask you a question \ .. I’m **a bit**   
 POLITENESS MARKER UNDERSTATER UNDERSTATER

disappointed with my mark for that last essay \ . and **I wondered if** I could have an   
 PLAY-DOWN

appointment with you \ . to go through my essay \ . **just** to understand where I went wrong \   
 DOWNTONER

so that I can improve it for next time \ if that’s all right with you \ **thanks** \   
 POLITENESS MARKER

Situation 2:   
\ Ben . hi \ . **sorry** \ . can I interrupt you for **a second** \ I **just** need to ask you something \   
 POLITENESS MARKER UNDERSTATER DOWNTONER

about the presentation that I’m supposed to be giving tomorrow \ I’m not sure if I can be in the class \ because my sister’s baby is due tomorrow \ and I **really** want to be there for her \ .   
 INTENSIFIER

so **I wondered if** I can **possibly** do my presentation next week \ . obviously it’s a **really**   
 PLAY-DOWN DOWNTONER INTENSIFIER

important presentation and I need to be there .. \ but **you see** I would love to be with my sister   
 CAJOLER

at the same time \ . so I hope that’s okay and you can understand that \ is that all right \ **thanks** \  
POLITENESS MARKER