Utrecht University

Dutch Directness and British Politeness

A comparison on directness and politeness in Dutch and British contexts

Master's Thesis

ANGLO-DUTCH TRANSLATION GUIDE

What the British say...	What the British mean...	What the Dutch understand...
I hear what you say.	I disagree completely.	They accept my point.
With all due respect ...	I think you are wrong.	They are listening to me.
Oh, by the way ...	This is the primary purpose of this discussion.	This isn't very important.
I'll bear it in mind.	I won't do anything about it.	They will use it when appropriate.
Perhaps you could give this some more thought.	Don't do it, it's a bad idea.	It's a good idea. Keep developing it.
Very interesting.	I don't agree/like it.	They are impressed.
Could you consider some other options?	Your idea is not a good one.	They haven't decided yet.
That is an original point of view.	Your idea is stupid.	They like my idea.
I am sure it's my fault.	It is your fault.	It is their fault.

Figure 1. From "Anglo-Dutch translation guide", by N. Ripmeester, n.d., https://www.labourmobility.com/anglo-dutch-translation-guide/.

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Abstract

Politeness is important in social interactions. Politeness takes form through language. A specific phrasing of a speech act can have a certain effect on one's goal. The term *politeness* in Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory is explained in terms of taking care of the *face*. In interaction, *face-threatening acts* or *FTAs*, speech acts that threaten or damage someone's face, can occur. The damage of a face-threatening act can be limited with the used of *politeness strategies.* There are five politeness strategies: 1) bald on record, 2) positive politeness, 3) negative politeness, 4) off record, and 5) do not perform.

This culture-comparative research examines the use of politeness strategies when performing face-threatening acts in British English and Dutch. The research question is: How are face-threatening acts done by speakers of Dutch and speakers of British English?

The current research will look at differences and similarities in politeness in British English and Dutch to examine the stereotype of the "direct Dutch" and the "polite Brit". It will demonstrate how to conduct non-essentialist culture-comparative research.

This research uses a mixed method with a discourse completion task, which are used to do a contrastive discourse analysis of face-threatening of British English and Dutch speakers. The participants are given five discourse situations where they have to perform a face-threatening act. The participants' responses are coded and categorised one of the five politeness strategies. The responses of the Dutch speaking participants and the British English speaking participants are analysed and compared.

The results indicate that in general Dutch speakers and British speakers show a preference of using negative politeness strategies when doing a face-threatening act. Overall a significant difference in politeness strategies between the Dutch and the British group was found.

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1. Introduction

Politeness is important in social interactions. Redeker (1994) calls politeness the 'lubricant' for social interactions. Politeness takes form through language. "Could you please pass me the salt?" and "Pass me the salt" are two utterances, with the same objective, using different politeness forms. "Pass me the salt" is a speech act that is formulated in a direct manner. In contrast to this command, "Could you please pass me the salt?" is a question that is formulated in a more indirect and less efficient way. We tend to be more willing to pass someone the salt when the speaker uses the second phrasing, because we consider this to be more polite. These examples show how specific phrasings of speech acts can have certain effects on one's goal.

Language and culture are connected, and this is expressed in politeness. Politeness is expressed considerably differently in different cultures (Kasper, 1990; Morand, 2003; Wierzbicka, 1985). I have experienced this myself during my study abroad in Australia, in the second semester of 2017. This exchange programme that I took part in, was part of the inter-university partnership between Utrecht University and Monash University. At Monash University, I lived in a hall where I was mostly surrounded by the local students, British exchange students, and Dutch exchange students. During this semester, I noticed quite a few different communication strategies between my British peers and my Dutch peers. My Dutch peers would say things or phrase things in a way that seemed to shock my British peers. "Wow, what's wrong with you? You look bad". This is what my Dutch friend asked my other Dutch friend, one morning when she came into the common room looking sick. I turned to our three British friends that we were hanging out with to continue our conversation and I was met with three very shocked faces. I shot them a questioning look, they looked at each other and one of them asked me in a hushed voice: "Did she really just say that to her?". This led us to a conversation about directness, openness, and honesty. My two Dutch friends and I

explained to our British friends that when you tell someone close to you that they look bad, it is not meant as an insult. Rather it shows solidarity, since you are honest to them and showing concern, because you can tell that something it out of the ordinary. Our British friends felt that this was too direct and would come across as rude to them. They said that they would approach this kind of situation by asking the person how they are and let them do the talking without mentioning that they looked bad even when they would mention it themselves. This instance, and many others, showed me how important phrasing could be, especially in interaction with speakers of different languages.

The objective of this thesis is to compare the use of politeness strategies in Dutch and in British English when performing face-threatening acts. The politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) about *politeness strategies* will be applied in this culture-comparative research. This theory has been greatly influential on research on politeness in interaction and the interests of interlocutors in conversation. The term *politeness* in this theory is explained in terms of taking care of the *face*. In interaction, speech acts that threaten or damage someone's face can occur. These acts are called *face-threatening acts* or *FTAs*. In Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, there are five politeness strategies that are used when performing a face-threatening act. The terms face, face-threatening acts, and politeness strategies will be explained in the next section.

The current research is a descriptive research, that utilises a contrastive discourse analysis to examine politeness in British English and Dutch. The majority of cross-cultural research on politeness in different languages and between different languages has been on remarkably contrasting cultures (Fukushima, 2000; Nelson, Carson, Al Batal, & El Bakary, 2002; Sifianou, 1999; Wierzbicka, 1985). Moreover, there seems to be a stereotypical image that people have of Dutch culture and British culture which regards these two cultures as contrasting in terms of politeness. Dutch people are regarded as direct, blunt, rude sometimes,

while British people are regarded as polite and indirect. However, not much comparative research on politeness on these two so called contrasting cultures has been done. Therefore, this research will explore politeness in these two western European cultures, that have very contrasting images. This research will look at differences and similarities in politeness in British English and Dutch to attempt to put a less essentialist view on culture-comparative research.

According to previous research on politeness in Dutch, there is a preference for indirect requests and the use of negative politeness strategies. Le Pair (2005) found that Dutch speakers mainly used indirect requests, van der Wijst (1996) and Hendriks (2008) both found that Dutch speakers mainly used negative politeness strategies in requests. The British culture has been described as a negative politeness culture (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Fukushima, 2000; Ryabova, 2015). Ryaboya (2015) found that British English speakers use negative politeness strategies along with positive politeness strategies in interaction. Stewart (2005) found that British English speakers mainly use negative politeness and off record strategies when performing certain face-threatening acts.

This culture-comparative research uses a mixed method with a discourse completion task and a judgement task, which are used to do a contrastive discourse analysis of face-threatening of British English and Dutch speakers. The politeness strategies used by participants of these two groups are compared. This will be explained further in the method section.

This research is divided into seven sections. The next section explains the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987) and the limitations of this theory. After that, previous research on British and Dutch politeness will be discussed. Section 3 presents the research question, the subquestions, and the hypothesis. The methodology is described in section 4. This section will explain how this research is set up and how the data will be analysed. The

results are presented in section 5. Section 6 will discuss these results, attempt to connect these with the literature review and make suggestions for further research. The conclusions are drawn in the final section.

2. Politeness

This section will give an overview of relevant insights on the way in which language is used to express politeness. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory plays a crucial role in this.

2.1 Face and face wants

Brown and Levinson's (1987) *politeness theory* has been most influential in research on *politeness* in communication. According to this theory, the term *face* is crucial to understanding politeness. This term was introduced by Goffman (1967) and has been further developed by Brown and Levinson. They distinguish between a *positive* and a *negative face*, that match two contrasting *face wants*.

The positive face is described as the need to be recognized by other members of society. People have the urge to be in contact with others, they want to be part of a community and want to be appreciated and desired by others. On the contrary, the negative face wants to maintain its personal freedom. The negative face wishes to be autonomous, independent and unimpeded. Freedom of action is the main priority.

In interaction, these two paradoxical face wants can put interlocutors in a dilemma, because every interaction could be potentially face threatening. An interlocutor participates in a conversation with the intention to maintain his own face and his conversation partner's face. When interlocutors communicate, they put their face on the line. In interaction, anyone could

say something that could cause himself or someone else to "lose face". These acts, that cause damage to one's face, are called *face-threatening acts* or *FTAs* (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

2.2 Face-threatening acts

In interaction, interlocutors strive to not damage their own or the other's face with inappropriate language, out of self-respect and respect for the other (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1967). During an interaction, both positive and negative face of anyone participating in the conversation could be threatened. A face threatening act that threatens the positive face is an act that threatens the good image of an interlocutor. This can happen when interlocutors do not pay attention to each other's feelings. For example, when one critiques another, he ignores the face want to be appreciated by others. An FTA that threatens the negative face is an act that threatens someone's freedom. Requests and advice are examples of face-threatening acts that threaten the negative face. These kinds of acts imply that the other will cooperate, which goes against their face want to be independent and unimpeded by others, thus the negative face is threatened.

A face-threatening act transpires when conflicting face wants of speaker (S) and addressee (H) meet. People have the natural instinct to protect their own face. However, when one protects their own face, they might threaten someone else's face at the same time. A face-threatening act can cause a conflict between speaker and addressee. To avoid conflicts, it is important that interlocutors avoid attacking another's face as much as possible. Nevertheless, damage to the face is inevitable sometimes (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 65).

2.2.1. Threats to the addressee's face

The addressee's positive face is threatened when the speaker damages the addressee's want to be recognized. The speaker can do this consciously or unconsciously by showing a

negative evaluation of the addressee's wants, acts, personal characteristics, goods, beliefs or values (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 66). Furthermore, the speaker can display indifference to the addressee's positive face with expressions of violent emotions, mention of taboo topics, bad news about H, good news about S (boasting), raising of controversial topics, non-cooperation, and use of status-marked identifications (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 66-67).

The addressee's negative face is threatened when his freedom of action is impeded. This can occur when the speaker predicates some future act of the addressee, like orders, requests, suggestions, advice, reminders, threats, warnings and dares (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 65-66). The addressee's negative face can also be threatened when the speaker predicates some future act of the speaker towards the addressee, like offers or promises (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 66). Moreover, the speaker can threaten the addressee's negative face by predicating some desire towards the addressee or the addressee's possessions. For example, with compliments, expressions of envy or admiration, and expressions of strong emotions towards H (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 66).

2.2.2. Threats to the speaker's face.

In interaction, besides the addressee's face, the speaker's face can also be threatened. The speaker's positive face can be threatened with apologies, acceptance of a compliment, self-humiliation, confessions and loss of control physically or emotionally (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 68).

The negative face of the speaker can be threatened by expressing thanks, acceptance of H's gratitude or H's apology, excuses, acceptance of offers, responses to H's blunders (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 67).

2.3 Politeness strategies

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), interlocutors do their best to avoid doing a face-threatening act as much as possible. Three face wants are taken into consideration when making the decision of performing a face-threatening act: 1) the want to communicate the content of the FTA, 2) the want to be efficient or urgent, and 3) the want to maintain H's face to any degree (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 68). In situations where face-threatening acts are unavoidable or when the interlocutor decides to still perform the FTA, the damage can be limited with *politeness strategies.* Brown and Levinson (1987) constructed politeness strategies that can soften face-threatening acts. They distinguish five groups of face politeness strategies (1987, pp. 94-227), the complete list of politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson (1987) is included in Appendix A.

1. *Bald on record*

   A short and concisely worded utterance. This is the most direct way to do a face-threatening act. With this strategy, the speaker does not mind the addressee's face. "S wants to do the FTA with maximum efficiency more than he wants to satisfy H's face (p. 95).

2. *Positive politeness*

   Redressive action directed to the addressee's positive face.

3. *Negative politeness*

   Redressive action directed to the addressee's negative face.

4. *Off record*

   The utterance is indirect, the addressee can interpret the utterance in different ways. This is the most indirect way to perform a face-threatening act.

5. *Do not perform*

   The speaker does not perform the face-threatening act.

These five groups are ordered on gradations of directness, from direct to indirect. This order also applies to the risk of face loss. Figure 2 gives an overview of the politeness strategies.
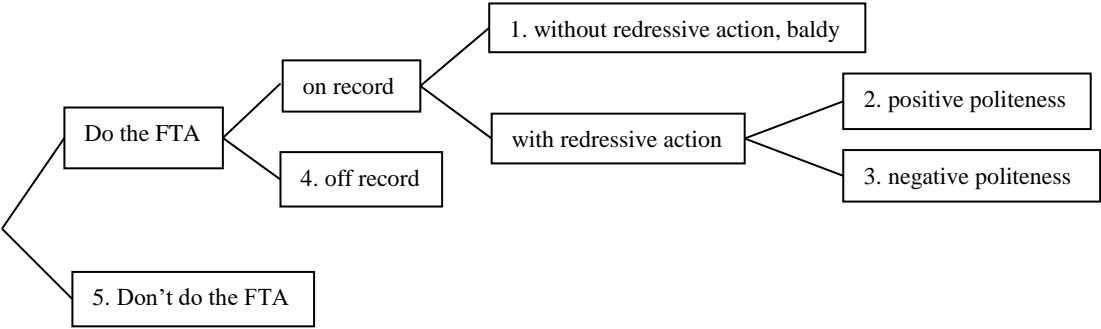

Figure 2. Overview of possible strategies for doing FTAs (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 69)

The assessment of the seriousness of a face-threatening act and which politeness strategy to use is dependent on three situational factors: 1) the social distance (D) of S and H, 2) the relative power (P) of S and H, and 3) the absolute ranking (R) of impositions in the particular culture (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 74). The weightiness of a particular face-threatening act (W) can be calculated when adding these three factors up:

$$W = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R$$

With this formula, the choice of politeness strategy can be explained. Brown and Levinson (1987) explained that the weightiness of the FTA determines the politeness strategy, regardless of the composition of the formula: "One goes off record where an imposition is small but relative S-H distance and H's power are great, and also where H is an intimate equal of S's but the imposition is very great" (p. 78). FTA_x, for example, where S would ask his boss to grab him a pen and situation, has the same weightiness as FTA_y, where S would ask a close friend to look after his dog for a week, even though the FTAs are made up of different components.

The social distance between speaker and addressee is a symmetrical relation. It is determined based on frequency of interaction, thus how much contact the speaker and the

addressee have. The more unfamiliar the speaker and the addressee are with each other, the bigger the social distance. For example, colleagues have a smaller social distance than strangers. A speaker is more likely to speak more directly to an addressee they have a smaller social distance with than to a complete stranger (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Huls, 2011).

Huls (2001) discussed three kinds of power relations: The speaker is superior to the addressee, the speaker and addressee are equal, and the speaker is inferior to the addressee. The more inferior the speaker is to the addressee, the bigger P is, the bigger W is. The relative power between the speaker and the addressee is an asymmetrical relation. There is a vertical, hierarchical relation between the speaker and the addressee. The direction and the difference of relative power is important, because the speaker adjusts his strategy choices with this. When the speaker is hierarchically significantly inferior to the addressee, he will choose a relatively indirect strategy.

The absolute ranking of impositions depends on culture and situation (Brown & Levinson, p. 77). The absolute ranking does not apply to the speaker or the addressee themselves, the individual, but to the collective, the culture or the subculture.

As a face-threatening act gets more serious, the speaker will choose a more careful strategy (Houtkoop & Koole, 2000). The heavier the weight of a face-threatening act, the more indirect the strategy that is chosen. In conclusion, the speaker adapts his choice of politeness strategy to the social distance between speaker and addressee, the relative power between speaker and addressee and the ranking of impositions in the particular culture.

2.3.1. Critique on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory

This theory has received criticism regarding its claim to be universally valid. Kasper (1990) stated that Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987) cannot explain politeness universally because of the differences between cultures and languages. Gu (1990) agreed with

this statement. She argues that politeness should be looked at in regard to cultural traditions. Studies have argued that Brown and Levinson's model is too ethnocentrically Anglo-Saxon and does not take non-Western societies into account (Hendriks, 2002). Mao (1994) and Ide (1989) have both expressed that Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987) is heavily based on Western cultures, which emphasize individualism and free choice, compared to many non-Western cultures where one's identity is tied to the group and its responsibilities. Several studies have shown that Brown and Levinson's theory is not compatible with Japanese and Chinese societies (Gu, 1990; Ide, 1989; Mao, 1994; Matsumoto, 1988; Watts, 2003).

Despite its shortcomings, this theory has provided a useful foundation to describe the course of intercultural communication and miscommunication in detail. The framework offers a simple classification system which can be used to define positive or negative face wants of any group of speakers in any particular context (Meyerhoff, 2006). Thus, this framework is a useful tool, for culture-comparative work, since it enables this kind of categorisation. Furthermore, the politeness theory is useful in guiding individuals in ways to improve their speech and actions (Goldsmith, 2007).

The current research looks at two Western societies. Consequently, it will avoid the concern with the theory being too Eurocentric. In fact, Brown and Levinson's framework (1987) will be a useful guide to examine the politeness strategies used by speakers of Dutch and speakers of British English.

2.4 Overview of Dutch and British politeness

In interactions, the choice of words and phrasing of a sentence may indicate how speakers perceive their relationship with each other or would like it to be perceived (le Pair, 2005).

Many have written about how "British people", and their politeness, often confuse people from other nationalities and cultures, when they communicate with their unique language use. According to Rottier, Ripmeester, and Bush (2011), "the British" have a special way of expressing values or opinions, and sometimes these paradoxical meanings are not clear to others. They claim that this might be especially problematic to "the Dutch", that are known for being direct. Despite their essentialist approach, taken with caution, there does seem to be some truth in miscommunication between speakers of Dutch and speakers of British English. This section will give an overview of literature on the Dutch politeness and British politeness.

2.4.1 Dutch politeness

"The Dutch" are known for being direct (Rottier, Ripmeester, & Bush 2011). According to van Rijswijk (2002), in business, the Dutch are known for being direct and even a little rude (cited in van Meurs, 2003, p. 111). Van Mulken (1996) cites what previous authors have written about Dutch people: "Beware of the Dutch: They are direct and to the point and sometimes a bit rude in their behaviour (Altany, 1989, p. 20)" (p. 689), "Netherlanders are straightforward and pragmatic (Merk & Browaeys, 1992, p. 58)" (p. 689), "The Dutch are reserved and blunt, bordering on rude (Freriks, 1995, p. 36)" (p. 689).

Notwithstanding, these stereotyping comments about Dutch speakers, research shows that Dutch speakers use politeness strategies that are more on the indirect side of the spectrum. Le Pair (2005) examined the differences and similarities in strategy between Spanish speakers and Dutch speakers when doing requests. The Dutch speaking participants in this study mainly used indirect requests. This result gives support to van der Wijst's (1996) research on communication strategy by non-native speakers. In this research, communication strategies of native Dutch speakers speaking another language was studied. The outcome of the research was that the native Dutch speakers use more negative politeness strategies in their requests.

This outcome corroborates with Hendriks's (2008) research results. The outcome of this research was that there was a clear preference for negative politeness strategy 4, minimize the position, in Dutch (p. 351). Thus these studies contradict the stereotypical image of Dutch speakers being direct and rude.

Hendriks (2002) has done research regarding the language use of native English speakers, native Dutch speakers and Dutch learners of English when doing requests. She found that the native Dutch speakers formulated relatively few direct requests compared to the native English speakers. This outcome is surprising, because of the "direct Dutch" and "polite Brit" stereotypes. This result demonstrates that, caution must be taken to not take an essentialist approach when doing research on a culture and/or the individuals of a culture. The current research will demonstrate how to conduct non-essentialist culture-comparative research.

2.4.2 British politeness

Status is important in British society (Goddard, 2012). Sinkeviciute's (2017) research corroborates this statement. In this research, she compared the Australian and the British culture. According to her, being able to not take yourself too seriously and to be able laugh at yourself even when others are laughing at you, is an important value in the Australian society. However, British people do not appreciate it when they are "taken the mick out off". This embodies the concern to be taken seriously in the British society.

Not only is status important, the British society consciously chooses to acknowledge social differences and to act on them accordingly (Goddard, 2012). These social differences have an impact on social distance. In the United Kingdom, interaction between strangers can be challenging (Goddard, 2012). It is unusual to start a conversation with a stranger on the street. These values of status and social distance is reflected in the language. The way

someone speaks, their accent, and their language use are all indicators of their social status (Fox, 2004; Goddard, 2009).

Goddard's (2012) and Sinkeviciute's (2017) statements are to be taken with caution, because these of course will not apply to every individual speaker of British English. Despite their tendency to be essentialist, there might be some truth to these generalisations.

"British English tends to be presented as essentially an avoidance-based, negatively-oriented culture" (Stewart, 2015, p. 117). The British culture, often described as a negative politeness culture (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Fukushima, 2000; Ryabova, 2015), is a culture that is concerned with other's face need to not be impeded. This means that one respects the other's desire to not be imposed on. Restraint, caution and contact-avoidance are characteristics of negative politeness (Ryaboya, 2015, p. 92). Subsequently, the speaker prefers to use indirect speech acts to keep face (Ryaboya, 2015, p. 93). Along with negative politeness strategies, speakers of British English also use positive politeness strategies in interactions (Ryaboya, 2015).

Fukushima (2000) studied requests done by Japanese speakers and by British English speakers, two negative politeness cultures. In this study, both groups used conventionally indirect and off record strategies when they did requests. However, the British English speakers used a smaller diversity of strategies and avoided bald-on-record strategies. According to Stewart (2005), British English tends to use negative politeness and off record strategies when performing certain face-threatening acts.

3. Research question

The current research looks at the use of politeness strategies when performing face-threatening acts in a Dutch context and British context. This leads to the research question:

RQ: How are face-threatening acts done by speakers of Dutch and speakers of British English?

The research also addresses the following subquestions:

SQ1: Is there a correlation between observed directness and perceived directness?

SQ2: Is there a correlation between observed directness and perceived politeness?

SQ3: Is there a correlation between perceived directness and perceived politeness?

In Le Pair's (2005) study about requests in Spanish and in Dutch, the Dutch speakers mainly used indirect requests. Van der Wijst (1996)'s research results, where native Dutch speakers used more negative politeness strategies in their requests, corroborates with the outcome of Hendriks's (2008) study, where there was a clear preference for negative politeness strategy 4, minimize the imposition, in Dutch (p. 351).

Past research has described British English as a negative politeness culture (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Fukushima, 2000; Ryabova, 2015; Stewart, 2015). According to Ryaboya (2015) speakers of British English use negative politeness strategies and positive politeness strategies in interactions. In Fukushima's (2000) research both Japanese speakers and British English speakers used conventionally indirect and off record strategies when doing requests. In this research the British English speakers used a smaller diversity of strategies and avoided bald-on-record strategies. Lastly, according to Stewart (2005), British English tends to use negative politeness and off record strategies when performing certain face-threatening acts.

In Hendriks's (2002) study, about the language use of native English speakers, native Dutch speakers and Dutch learners of English when doing requests, the native Dutch speakers formulated relatively few direct requests in comparison with the native English speakers.

According to previous research on politeness Dutch and British, discussed in section 2, there seems to be a preference for negative politeness strategies in both Dutch and British English. Therefore, the hypothesis for the current research is that the Dutch speaking

participants and the British speaking participants will both show a preference for negative politeness strategies when performing face-threatening acts.

4. Methodology

The current research uses a mixed method discourse analysis. The aim of this research is to discover how Dutch speakers and British English speakers perform face-threatening acts. The face-threatening acts made by Dutch speakers and British English speakers are examined on (in)directness and (im)politeness and compared afterwards. In addition, the research will also look at how direct and polite Dutch speakers and British English speakers perceive themselves to be. Ultimately, the research analyses whether there is a relation between directness and politeness. In order to do this, a survey with a discourse completion task and an evaluation task are used to collect data from Dutch speaking participants and British English speaking participants. The current section describes how data for the current research is collected and analysed.

4.1 Participants

In total there were 127 respondents. However not all of these respondents: 1) were Dutch or British by nationality, 2) had lived in the Netherlands or United Kingdom for more than 5 years, or 3) associated themselves with either culture. The respondents that matched one or more of these criteria were counted as participants for either the Dutch or British group. In total there were 107 participants, 45 British English speaking participants and 62 Dutch speaking participants. Participants include 25 males and 82 females ($n_m = 25$, $n_f = 82$). 84% of the participants were in the age category 18-24 ($n = 90$).

The participants were recruited via Facebook, where I posted the survey on my personal feed and in two survey exchange groups. I found the survey exchange groups on Facebook by

typing in the key terms "survey exchange" in the search bar looking explicitly at Facebook groups. The two groups that I joined were "Dissertation Survey Exchange" and "Dissertation Survey Exchange – Share Your Research Study, Find Participants", the groups with the most members.

4.2 Instrument

The instrument used to collect data in the current research is an online survey, made with Qualtrics. The survey is divided into three parts. The first part contained a written production task, the second part contained an evaluation task, and the third part of the survey contained demographic questions. The production task was a discourse completion task, where the participants were asked to respond to given situations. In the evaluation task the participants were asked to reflect on their responses in the first task. The participants were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 to 5 how direct and how polite they would rate their own responses. In the third section, demographic information and questions about the participant's linguistic and cultural background were asked. The goal of this survey was to elicit the most natural speech-like written responses according to the participant's own language and culture; therefore, the survey has two versions, a Dutch and an English version (see Appendix B and Appendix C).

4.2.1 Discourse Completion Task

This research focuses on the productive use of specific features of language use, in this case face-threatening acts. Therefore, discourse data is needed. The discourse completion task is the chosen tool for the current research. The *discourse completion task* (or *DCT*), designed by Blum-Kulka (1982), is an instrument used to produce certain speech acts. In general, the DCT is used to elicit more natural responses from the participants. A DCT is a one-sided

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roleplay in various settings. A DCT starts with situational information, for context, and is followed by an unfinished dialogue that is to be completed by the participant. This open slot is designed to elicit the desired communicative act.

The DCT is chosen as an appropriate instrument in this research, because authentic, naturally occurring speech can be hard to find (Sweeney & Hua, 2016, pp. 215-216). The speech act that the research is focusing on could not occur in these instances. Furthermore, the DCT is a useful tool to capture variables such as power and distance in language use, because they can be controlled, in contrast to natural speech (Yuan, 2001). These variables are not as easily controlled in natural contexts as they are in a DCT. Because of the different discourse situations in the DCT with differing power and social distance, the language use of a participant is easy to compare per situation.

However, there are concerns that come with using the DCT method. The major concern is that during the DCT, the participant has to respond to hypothetical interlocutors in hypothetical contexts (Chen, Yang, & Qian, 2015). The way the participant responds in these non-authentic situations and the language used may differ significantly from how they would respond in natural speech (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Another concern is that, the DCT is more similar to a test than natural discourse (Sasaki, 1998). This might influence the participant and what he responds might be different from what one would actually say in a real-life situation. Furthermore, Brown and Levinson (1987) state that hypothetical situations in DCT are simplified in comparison to the complexity of interaction in natural discourse. Therefore, the data collected using the DCT method should not be regarded as natural speech.

Nonetheless, the DCT is still widely regarded as a reliable instrument (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009; Sweeney & Hua, 2016). Nurani (2009) states that DCT is a suitable method to compare a large amount of data and draw generalizations on. According to Kasper and Rose (2002), the DCT is a dependable tool that could demonstrate certain language forms and

strategies used in certain situations. Turnbull (2001) states that the DCT methodology is especially useful for comparing pragmatics across cultures, for example the Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989). Motivated by researching perceptions of directness and politeness cross-culturally, the CCSARP project investigated speech acts in different cultural contexts. The study focused on request and apologies across eight languages.

For this research, five situations were taken from the CCSRAP (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) and adjusted, inspired by Quartero's (2016) thesis about Dutch politeness in English. For every DCT item, a quick description of the context is given, followed by the question of what the participant would say in this situation. This differs from the classic DCT, where a dialogue takes place with an open turn for the participant. This way the participant is given information about the context, but the participant himself can imagine what the exact situation looks like, for the most natural response. By asking the participant directly about what he would say in this situation, instead of a classic roleplay situation, the participant is encouraged to do a face-threatening act and word it in a way that they would do in an authentic situation. Below are the five situations in this DCT:

1. **In a restaurant**
You are in a restaurant with a friend. You would like to see the menu before you order. What do you say to the waiter?

2. **At a clothing shop**
You are in a clothing shop and found something you like. When the owner of the shop tells you the price of the shirt, you think it is quite expensive. What do you say to the owner of the shop?

3. **With the professor**

You have failed your exam for the second time. You feel like it is because the questions in the exam differ too much from the course work you have done in class. What do you say to your professor?

4. At a party

You are at a party. You want to go home, because you have an exam the next morning. Your friend does not want to walk all the way home. She finds out that your mutual friend Tom is driving home in the same direction. What do you say to Tom?

5. On the street

You are walking to the train station with your friend. You are afraid you are going to miss your train. Your friend suggests to ask someone in the for directions. You see a man close to you. What do you say to the man?

The situational settings used in this DCT differ in three dimensions: Power, social distance and the ranking of imposition. These terms are explained in the theoretical framework. These three terms determine the weight of the speech act and which politeness strategy one would use in certain situations (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Therefore, the five situations used in the DCT are designed to include different power statuses and social distance between speaker and hearer. The ranking of imposition also differs in all five situations. However, it is harder to explicitly determine the ranking of imposition per face-threatening act, since the participants all produce different responses in the DCT, they do not perform the same face-threatening act. Some participants make requests, some make complaints, and some end up making a comment.

The first situation takes place in a restaurant setting, were the hearer is the waiter and the participant, the speaker, is the customer. The participant is in the position of higher status and the social distance between the hearer and the speaker is high, because they are unacquainted. The second situation has a similar design of power and social distance, however the size of imposition of the speech act is higher. In the third situation, the participant is the position of

lower status than the hearer, who is the professor. However, the social distance between the speaker and hearer is smaller than in the first two situations, since the hearer and the speaker are acquainted in this setting. In the fourth and fifth situation the hearer and the speaker have a similar level of status. The big difference in these two situations, is the social distance between the speaker and hearer, which is small in the fourth situation, the speaker and hearer are acquainted and big in the fifth situation, the speaker and hearer are unacquainted.

4.2.2 Evaluation Task

In the second part of the survey the participants judged each of their own answers on directness and politeness on a five-point semantic differential scale. A semantic differential scale is a continuum between two bipolar adjectives (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 105). The two pairs of bipolar adjectives were indirect and direct, and not polite and polite. An example is illustrated below.

> You responded with "…" in the restaurant scenario. How direct would you rate your response?
>
> Indirect   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   Direct

4.3 Procedure

For the analysis the answers of the participants of the first task are categorized by me using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies as the coding scheme. This politeness strategy focuses on how direct face-threatening acts are done, thus this coding scheme is used to score the participant's directness, observed directness. For some discourse situations, the participants did not directly say what they would say in the situation, rather they described what they would say. For example, in discourse situation 3, one participant responded with: "I explain that the exam is unfair and not on the course content". These responses were counted as missing values.

Below is shown how some of the participants' responses from discourse situation 3 were categorised into Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987):

1. Bald on record: "Why were the questions so different?". This utterance is short, concise, and worded directly without regard to the addresssee's face.

2. Positive politeness: "Ik heb het idee dat de behandelde stof niet overeenkomt met de stof op het tentamen. Kunt u zich daarin vinden? (I feel like the content of the course work does not align with the questions asked on the exam. Would you agree?)". This is a redressive action directed to the addressee's positive face by seeking agreement.

3. Negative politeness: "Waar had ik het antwoord op deze vraag terug kunnen vinden in de lesstof? (Where can I find the answer to this question in the course content?)". This is a redressive action directed to the addressee's negative face by being inconventionally indirect and asking questions.

4. Off record: "Ik denk dat ik tijdens de colleges een verkeerd beeld heb gekregen van de stof die van belang is voor het tentamen. Zouden we hier samen naar kunnen kijken? (I think that I got the wrong idea about what is important for the exam during class. Could we look at this together?)". This utterance is indirect, the addressee can interpret this utterance in different ways. The speaker is hinting that he thinks that the questions on the exam did not represent the course content, however the addressee could interpreted this utterance as the speaker admitting his own faults or that the addressee was not clear enough in his instructions during class.

5. Do not perform: "Nothing".

Data from the Dutch and the British participants were compared using descriptive analytics on IBM SPSS Statistics 25 and tested on significant differences. Afterwards, to examine if directness and politeness were correlated, the scale of how direct and polite

participants rated their own responses, perceived directness and perceived politeness, were tested on correlation.

4.3.1. Data analysis

First, descriptive statistics were used to determine the percentages of politeness strategies used by the Dutch and the British group per DCT situation.

Afterwards, the scores for the DCT, observed directness, were reversed to match the scores of the evaluation task. In the evaluation task, the highest score stood for a direct response, while the highest score in the DCT stood for the most indirect strategy. Descriptive statistics were used to compute the means of the scores for the Dutch and the British group for observed directness, perceived directness and perceived politeness.

A t-test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the two groups for these three dimensions. The means of the total scores of observed directness, perceived directness and perceived politeness of all five situations were used for this. Afterwards, another t-test was used to determine whether there were significant differences per situation. The scores for the three parameters for all five situations were used for this test.

Lastly, a correlation test was used on these three parameters to determine whether observed directness, perceived directness and perceived politeness are significantly correlated. The means of the total scores of observed directness, perceived directness and perceived politeness of all five situations were used to determines any correlations between the three parameters. Afterwards, another correlation test was used to determine whether there were any significant correlations per situation. The scores for the three parameters for all five situations were used for this test.

5. Results

This section will discuss the results of the current research. Table 3 to 10 and Figure 3 to 7 give a quick overview of the results. Table 3 to 7 show the percentage of the politeness strategies chosen by the British group and the Dutch group for every discourse situation. Figure 3 to 7 compliment Table 3 to 7 with a quick overview. Table 8 to 10 show the means of observed directness, perceived directness and perceived politeness of the British and Dutch group in all five discourse situations.

5.1 Politeness strategy

Note that all the percentages were rounded to the nearest percentage. Due to rounding, percentages may not always add up to total in 100%.

5.1.1 Discourse situation 1

Discourse situation 1 was a restaurant setting, where the participants had to ask for a menu. Looking at Table 3 and Figure 1, the scores for both groups are almost identical when not counting the missing values. Both groups only used politeness strategy 3, negative politeness.

Table 3.
The distribution of the use of politeness strategies for DCT 1

Group	Politeness strategy					
	1	2	3	4	5	missing
British (*n* = 45)	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%
Dutch (*n* = 62)	0%	0%	98%	0%	0%	2%

1 = bald on record; 2 = positive politeness, 3 = negative politeness; 4 = off record; 5 = do not perform
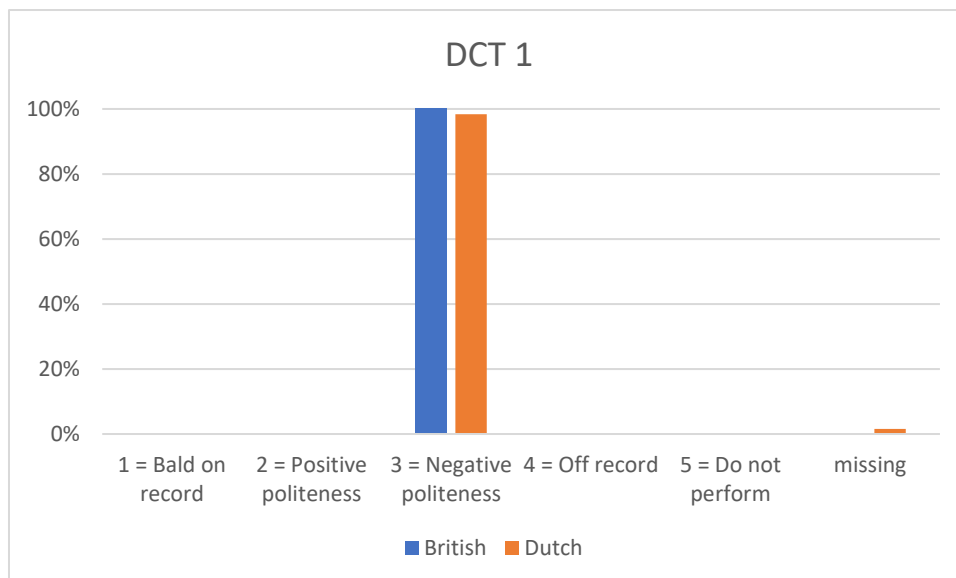
Figure 3. The distribution of the use of politeness strategies for DCT 1

Typical responses from the British group were formulated as follows: "(Excuse me) can I/we see/have the menu please?". Some of the participants' responses were: "Can I see the menu please?", "Excuse me, can we see the menu please?", "Could we have the menu please?", and "Please can I have the menu".

Typical responses from the Dutch group were formulated as follows: "Zou/zouden ik/we de menukaart mogen (zien)?", which translates to "Could/Can I/we have/see the menu?". Some of the participants' responses were: "Mogen we de menukaart zien? (Can we see the menu?)", "Zou ik de menukaart mogen? (Could I have the menu?)", and "Mag ik de menukaart? (Can I have the menu?)". It is notable that the British group uses the politeness marker "please" more than the Dutch group.

5.1.2 Discourse situation 2

Most remarkable in DCT 2, the shop setting, is that 36% of Dutch participants used politeness strategy 1, bald on record, while only 9% of British participants used this strategy. Most of the participants used strategy 4, off record, and none of the participants used a negative politeness strategy.

Table 4.
The distribution of the use of politeness strategies for DCT 2

Group	Politeness strategy					
	1	2	3	4	5	missing
British (*n* = 45)	9%	11%	0%	56%	22%	2%
Dutch (*n* = 62)	36%	7%	0%	45%	11%	2%

1 = bald on record; 2 = positive politeness, 3 = negative politeness; 4 = off record; 5 = do not perform
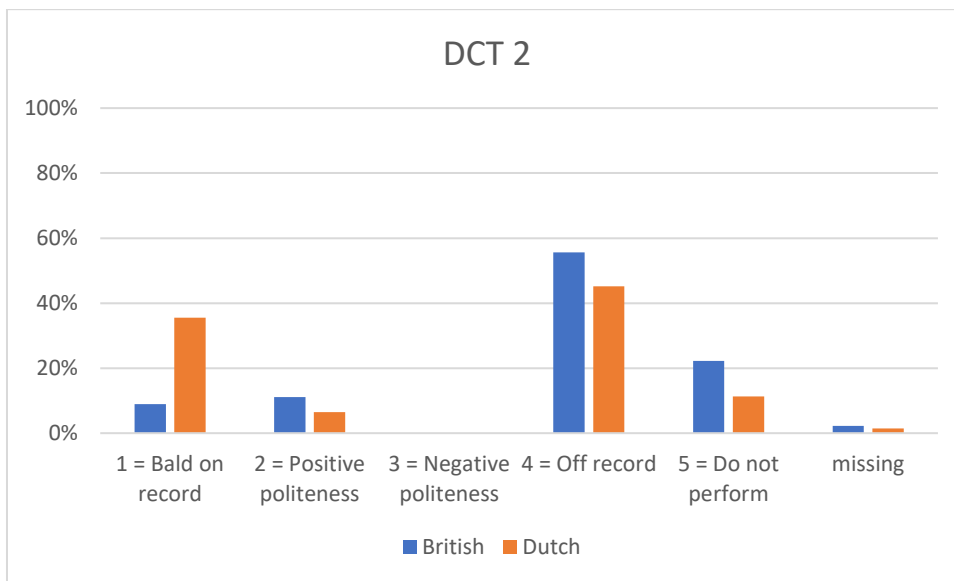

Figure 4. The distribution of the use of politeness strategies for DCT 2

The British group responded typically with: "Okay/Thank you, I'll have to think about it" or "Oh okay, thank you". Some of the participants' responses include: "Ahh thank you", "I'll have a think, I may come back later", "Oh, thank you, but I need to have a think. I might come back later", "Thanks", "Oh ok, thank you", "Okay thanks", "Ah okay! Thanks very much", and "Okay, I'll have a think about it".

Most of the responses, using politeness strategy 4, from the Dutch group were formulated as: "Oke/Bedankt, ik ga er nog even over nadenken (Okay/Thank you, I'll think about it)", "Oké, dankjewel (Okay, thank you)" and "Dankjewel, ik kijk nog even verder (Thank you, I'll keep looking)". Some examples of these responses are: "Ooh oké (Ooh okay)", "Ah oké bedankt, dan kijk ik even verder (Ah okay, thanks, I'll keep looking)", "Oké, ik ga er nog

even over nadenken (Okay, I'll have to think about it)" "Ik denk er nog even over na (I'll have to think about it)", "Sorry maar ik kijk nog even verder (Sorry, I'll keep looking)", "Oké, dankjewel (Okay, thank you)", "Oké bedankt (Okay thank you)", and "Ik kijk nog even verder, maar bedankt (I'll keep looking, but thank you)".

Most of the responses using politeness strategy 1, from the Dutch group was formulated as: "(Sorry), dat is te duur voor mij ((Sorry), that is too expensive for me)" and "Dat is helaas boven mijn budget (Unfortunately, that is out of my price range)". Some examples are: "Sorry, dat is helaas te duur voor mij (Sorry, unfortunately that is too expensive for me)", "Oh, dat is een beetje te duur voor mij (Oh, that is a bit too expensive for me)", "Dat is boven mijn budget (That is out of my price range)", "Helaas, dat is mij toch te duur (Unfortunately, I find that too expensive)", "Helaas, dat is boven mijn budget (Unfortunately, that is out of my price range)", "Oh, dat is niet helemaal binnen mijn budget. Toch bedankt!" (Oh, that is not in my price range. Thank you though!)", and "Sorry, dat is boven mijn budget (Sorry, that is out of my price range)".

5.1.3 Discourse situation 3

In the setting with the professor, both the British as the Dutch group used the most direct politeness strategy, bald on record, the most.

Table 5.
The distribution of the use of politeness strategies for DCT 3

Group	Politeness strategy					
	1	2	3	4	5	missing
British (*n* = 45)	53%	0%	22%	16%	9%	0%
Dutch (*n* = 62)	61%	3%	23%	5%	3%	5%

1 = bald on record; 2 = positive politeness, 3 = negative politeness; 4 = off record; 5 = do not perform
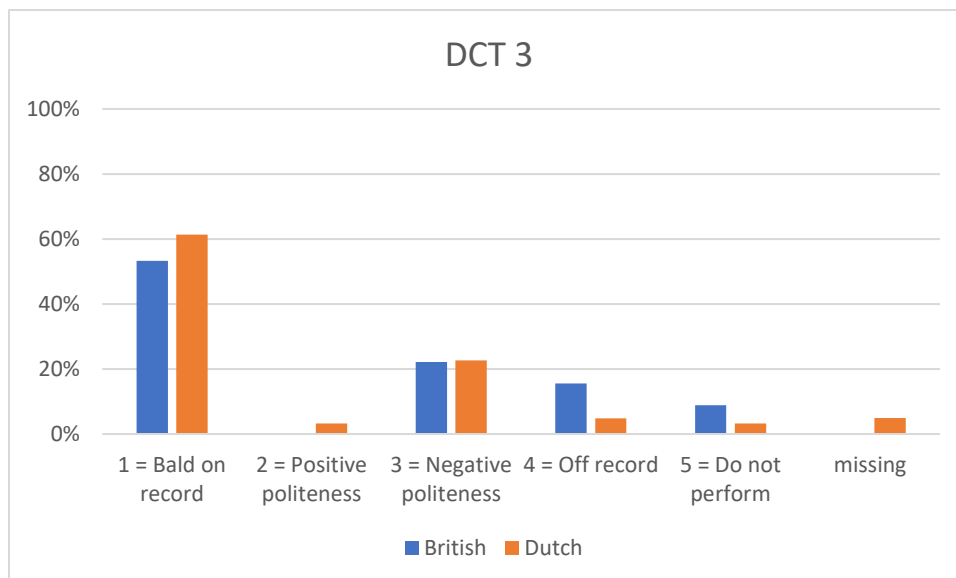
Figure 5. The distribution of the use of politeness strategies for DCT 3

The typical response from the British group was formulated as follows: "I feel that the questions differ too much from the one's we had in class as preparation" and "The exam differs too much from the course work we did in class". Some of the responses of the participants include: "I am quite upset about the content of the exam. I think it was too different from the course", "The exam differs too much from the course work we done in class", "I think different material is coming up in the exam", "I don't think the exam questions were anything we had been preparing for" "I feel like the exams don't follow the course and it's not how one would expect the exam", I feel like the question in the test is were quite different to the coursework", and "I have found this exam difficult because I feel that the questions are not consistent with what I have learnt in class".

The typical response from the Dutch group was formulated as follows: "Ik vond de stof uit het college niet zo goed aansluiten op de vragen in het tentamen (I thought that the course work covered in class did not correspond well with the questions on the exam)", "Naar mijn mening komt de lesstof niet overeen met de vragen op het tentamen (In my opinion, the course work and the exam questions did not align)", and "Ik heb het idee/gevoel dat de lesstof en de tentamenvragen niet overeenkomen (I feel like the course work and the exam questions

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did not align)". Some examples are: "Ik vond de stof uit het college weer niet zo goed aansluiten op de vragen in het tentamen (I felt like the course work we did in class and the questions on the exam again did not align with each other)", "Ik heb eerlijk gezegd wel het idee dat de vragen niet aansluiten op de stof die we hebben geleerd (To be honest, I feel like the questions do not align with the course work we have done)", "Voor mijn gevoel is de tentamenstof anders dan de stof die ik heb geleerd (I feel like the exam content was different from the course work I studied)", "Naar mijn mening komt de collegestof en tentamenstof niet overeen (In my opinion, the course work and the exam content did not align)", "Ik vind dat het tentamen geen goede reflectie was van de lesstof in de colleges (I think that the exam was not a good reflection of the course work we did in class)", "Sorry maar ik ben van mening dat de vragen niet overeenkomen met de behandelde stof (Sorry, in my opinion, I think that the questions did not align with the course work we did)", and "Ik vind dat het tentamen niet representatief is aan de lesstof (I think that the exam does not represent the course work)".

5.1.4 Discourse situation 4

For the party setting, most participants chose the third politeness strategy, negative politeness. 2% of British participants used politeness strategy 2, positive politeness, versus 0% Dutch participants. Politeness strategy 1 and 4 were not used by both groups.

Table 6.
The distribution of the use of politeness strategies for DCT 4

Group	Politeness strategy					
	1	2	3	4	5	missing
British ($n = 45$)	0%	2%	91%	0%	2%	5%
Dutch ($n = 62$)	0%	0%	97%	0%	2%	2%

1 = bald on record; 2 = positive politeness, 3 = negative politeness; 4 = off record; 5 = do not perform
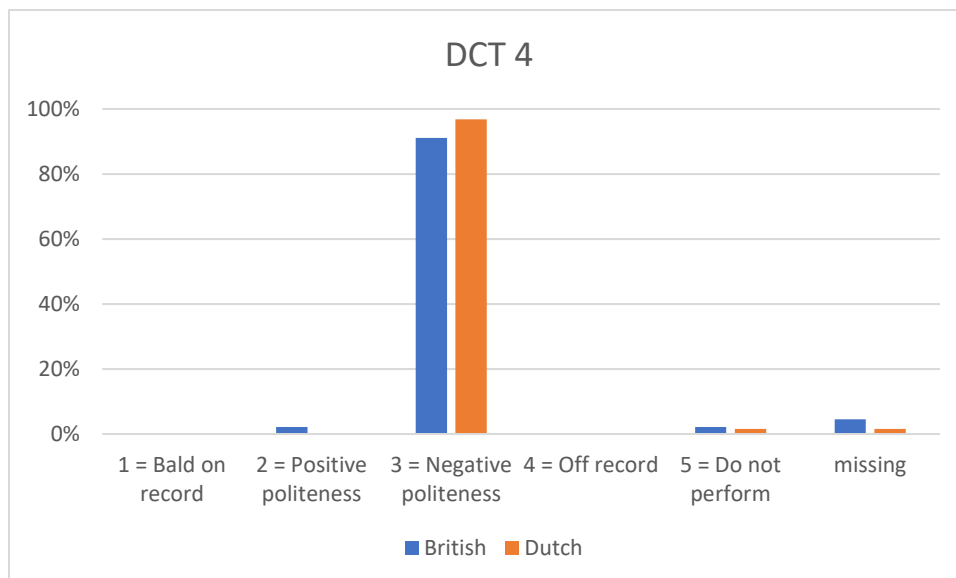
Figure 6. The distribution of the use of politeness strategies for DCT 4

The typical response from the British group was formulated either: "Hey Tom, do you mind dropping my friend home (when you go)?" or "Hey Tom, can you give me a lift?". Some examples of the participants' responses are: "Do you mind dropping my friend home?", "Hello Tom can you give me a ride home?", "Please can you give me a lift home?", "Would you mind giving me a lift home?", "Can you take her home when you go?", "Hey Tom, mind giving me a lift home? I've got an exam tomorrow", "Any chance I can get a lift when you leave?", "Tom, I'm going home because I have an exam tomorrow. Would you mind taking my friend home on your way back? She wants to stay a bit longer", and "Hey Tom, are you heading home soon? My friend needs a lift home and I was just wondering if you'd mind giving her a lift?"

The typical response from the Dutch group was formulated as follows: "Hey Tom, kunnen we misschien met je meerijden, Tom? (Hey Tom, could could you give us a lift?)". Some examples of the participants' responses are: "Hee, ga jij toevallig ook al naar huis, zo ja, mogen wij een stukje meerijden? (Hey, are you by any chance going home soon? Could we get a bit of a lift?)", Hee Tom, hoelaat wil jij ongeveer naar huis? Kunnen wij misschien met jou meerijden? (Hee Tom, what time are you planning to go home approximately? Could we

get a lift?)", "Hey Tom, kun je ons misschien thuis afzetten? Volgens mij ga jij dezelfde kant op... Dan hoeven we niet helemaal te lopen (Hey Tom, could you drive us home? I think you are going the same direction… That way we don't have to walk all the way)", "Hoi Tom, zou je het erg vinden om ons even thuis af te zetten toevallig? (Hey Tom, would you mind dropping us home by any chance?)", "Mogen we meerijden? (Could you give us a lift?)", "Hey Tom, zouden wij misschien met jou mee kunnen rijden? (Hey Tom, could we get a lift?)", "Hey Tom zouden wij met je mee kunnen rijden? (Hey Tom could we get a lift?)", "Zou je ons onderweg kunnen afzetten? (Could you drop us on your way?)", "Zou je ons misschien thuis willen afzetten als het je uitkomt? (Could you drop us home if that is convenient for you?)", "Zouden we met je mee mogen rijden Tom? (Could you give us a lift Tom?)", "Hallo Tom, kunnen we een stuk met jou meerijden? (Hello Tom, could we get a bit of a lift?)", "Kunnen wij misschien met je meerijden, Tom? (Could you give us a lift, Tom?", and "Zouden we misschien een lift naar huis mogen? (Could we maybe get a lift home?)".

What is interesting is that in the British group, the participants mostly asked for a lift for either themselves or their friend, while in the Dutch group, the participants asked for a lift for both them and their friend.

5.1.5 Discourse situation 5

For the last discourse situation, the situation with a stranger, 76% of the British participants and 81% of the Dutch participants used negative politeness. The Dutch participants only used three of the five politeness strategies, while the British participants used all five of the politeness strategies.

Table 7.
The distribution of the use of politeness strategies for DCT 5

Group	Politeness strategy					
	1	2	3	4	5	missing
British (*n* = 45)	9%	7%	76%	2%	4%	2%
Dutch (*n* = 62)	5%	0%	81%	15%	0%	0%

1 = bald on record; 2 = positive politeness, 3 = negative politeness; 4 = off record; 5 = do not perform
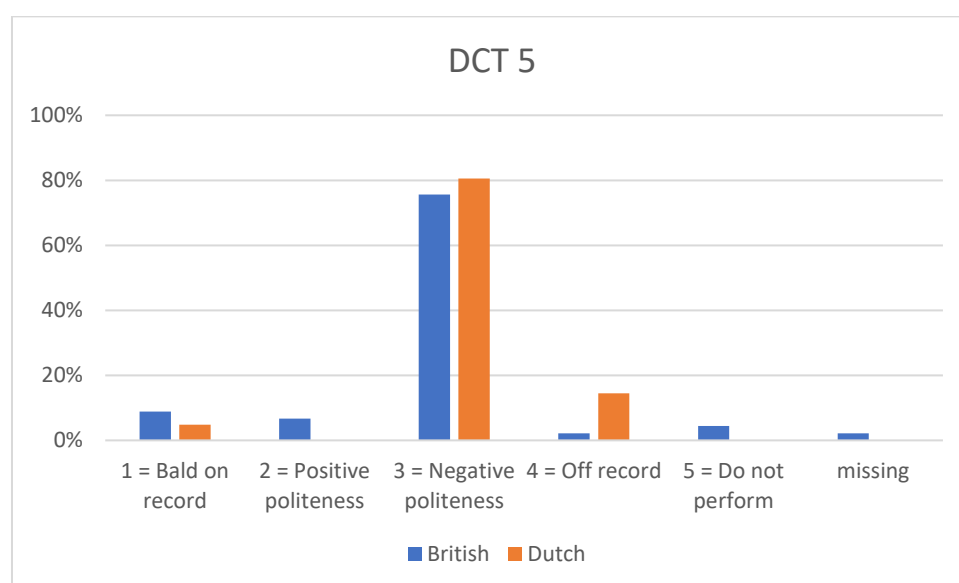

Figure 7. The distribution of the use of politeness strategies for DCT 5

   The typical response from the British group was as follows: "Excuse me, do you know where the train station is?". Some examples of participants' responses are: "Excuse me, which way's the train station?", "Excuse me where is the train station?", "Excuse me, do you know where the train station is?", "Excuse me, do you happen to know where the train station is?", "Excuse me which way is the train station please?", "Excuse me, do you know the way to the train station?", and "Excuse me, do you know where the train station is?". The few responses that used politeness strategy 2 were notable. These responses all used the in-group identity "mate": "Sorry mate, which way to the station?", "Hi mate do you know where the train station is?", "Sorry mate, I'm looking for the train station?"

The typical response from the Dutch group was formulated as follows: "(Mag ik u wat vragen?) Hoe komen we het snelste bij het station? (Sorry/Sir, (can I ask you something?) How can we get to the station the quickest?)" and "(Mag ik u wat vragen?) Weet u waar het station is? (Sorry/Sir, (can I ask you something?) Do you know where the station is?)". Some examples are: "Sorry, weet u hoe komen we bij het station komen? (Sorry, do you know how we can get to the station?), Sorry mag ik wat vragen? Waar is het station? (Sorry can I ask something? Where is the station?)", "Weet u misschien de weg naar het station? (Do you maybe know the way to the station?)", "Meneer, mag ik u iets vragen? Weet u wat de snelste weg is naar het station? (Sir, could I ask you something? What is the quickest way to the station?)", "Sorry mag ik wat vragen? Is dit de weg naar het station? (Sorry can I ask something? Is this the way to the station?)", "Mag ik u wat vragen, hoe komen wij het snelste bij het station? (Can I ask you something, how can we get to the station the quickest?)", "Pardon mag ik u iets vragen. Hoe kunnen we het beste naar het station lopen? (Excuse me can I ask you something. What is the best way to walk to the station?)", Mag ik wat vragen? Hoe moeten we naar het station lopen? (Can I ask something? How do we walk to the station?)", "Sorry meneer, weet u misschien waar het station is? (Sorry sir, do you know where the station is?)", "Hoi meneer, weet u misschien de weg naar het station? (Hi sir, do you know the way to the station?)", "Mag ik u iets vragen, wat is de snelste weg naar het station? (Can I ask you something, what is the quickest way to the station?)", "Meneer, weet u wat de snelste route naar het station is? (Sir, do you know what the quickest way to the station is?)", and "Dag meneer, mag ik u wat vragen? Wat is de snelste weg van hier naar het station? (Hello sir, can I ask you something? What is the quickest way to the station?)". Participants that did not ask for the way to the station in their responses, but asked whether they could ask the man something first, were categorised into politeness strategy 4: "Pardon, zou ik iets mogen vragen? (Pardon, could I ask you something?) and "Meneer, mag ik u wat vragen? (Sir,

can I ask you something?)". Some examples are: "Pardon, mag ik u iets vragen? (Excuse me, can I ask you something?)", "Meneer, mag ik u iets vragen? (Sir, can I ask you something?)", Hallo meneer, mag ik u wat vragen? (Hello sir, can I ask you something?)", and "Sorry, mag ik u wat vragen meneer (Sorry, can I ask you something sir?)".

5.2 Directness and politeness

Table 8, 9, and 10 respectively give an overview of the means of observed directness, perceived directness, and perceived politeness for every discourse situation for the British and Dutch participants using descriptive statistics. Any differences observed in these three tables are based on descriptive statistics.

Table 8 gives an overview of the means of observed directness for British and Dutch participants for all five discourse situations. As explained in the method section, the scores for the five discourse situations reversed are the observed directness scores. The scores are reversed to match the scores for the evaluation task with 1 = indirect and 5 = direct.

Looking at Table 8, the differences between the British and the Dutch participants overall are not very big. The biggest difference is the observed directness in the second discourse situation, where the British participant scored a mean of 2.27 and the Dutch participants scored 3.10. Another slight difference can be found in the third discourse situation, where the British participants scored 3.73 and the Dutch participants scored 4.20. In most of the discourse situations the Dutch participants seem to be more direct than the British participants or about the same on the scale of directness. However, in the last discourse situation the British participants seem to be slightly more direct than the Dutch participants. In two of the five situations the Dutch participants scored higher than the British participants. In two other situations the British participants scored higher on directness, however, one of these only differed by 0.01. Therefore, we could say that the Dutch participants were more direct than

the British participants in two situations, the British participants and the Dutch participants scored the same on directness in two situations, and the British participants scored higher than the Dutch participants in one of the situations. In the first discourse situation the British and the Dutch group scored the same on directness.

Table 8.
Means of observed directness of British and Dutch participants for every discourse situation

	DCT 1	DCT 2	DCT 3	DCT 4	DCT 5
British (*n* = 45)	3.00	2.27	3.73	2.98	3.14
Dutch (*n* = 62)	3.00	3.10	4.20	2.97	2.95

1 = indirect; 5 = direct

Table 9 shows an overview of how direct the participants perceived themselves for every situation. Overall the scores of the British and the Dutch participants are quite similar. In three out of the five situations the Dutch participants scored higher than the British participants, these were discourse situation 2, 4, and 5. In situation 1 and 3 the British participants scored slightly higher on the scale of perceived directness.

Table 9.
Means of perceived directness of British and Dutch participants for every discourse situation

	DCT 1	DCT 2	DCT 3	DCT 4	DCT 5
British (*n* = 45)	4.24	2.20	3.64	4.09	4.00
Dutch (*n* = 62)	4.16	2.95	3.48	4.39	4.42

1 = indirect; 5 = direct

Overall, the scores between the British and the Dutch group for the perceived politeness are quite similar, see Table 10. In situation 1, 2, and 4, the British group scored higher on the scale of perceived politeness than the Dutch group.

Table 10.
Means of perceived politeness of British and Dutch participants for every discourse situation

	DCT 1	DCT 2	DCT 3	DCT 4	DCT 5
British (*n* = 45)	4.73	4.02	3.53	4.11	4.29
Dutch (*n* = 62)	4.55	3.89	3.63	3.85	4.63

1 = not polite; 5 = polite

Interestingly enough, the scores for observed directness and perceived directness are not similar overall. The scores in DCT 2 are similar for both groups: The British group scored 2.27 for observed directness and 2.20 for perceived directness and the Dutch group scored 3.10 for observed directness and 2.95 for perceived directness. The scores for the British group in DCT 3 are also similar: 3.73 for observed directness and 3.64 for perceived directness. Yet, the scores for the other discourse situations are not very similar, for example 2.97 and 4.39 in DCT 4.

5.2.1 T-test

A significant difference was found between the British and the Dutch group for overall observed directness ($t(105) = 2.60$, $p = .011$). For only one of the discourse situations, DCT 2, there was a significant difference in observed directness between the British and the Dutch participants ($t(103) = 3.05$, $p < .001$).

A significant difference was also found between the two groups for overall perceived directness ($t(105) = 2.26$, $p = .026$). No significant difference was found in relation to a specific discourse situation.

5.2.2 Correlation

Table 11 shows the correlations between observed directness, perceived directness and perceived politeness.

Table 11.

Correlations of observed directness, perceived directness and perceived politeness

	Observed directness	Perceived directness	Perceived politeness
Observed directness	1	.36[*]	.03
Perceived directness	.36[*]	1	.01
Perceived politeness	.03	.01	1

* *p = < .001*

There is a significant positive correlation between observed directness, the politeness strategy used in the DCT, and perceived directness, how direct the participants perceived themselves, *r* = .36, *p* < .001.

No correlation between observed directness and perceived politeness, and perceived directness and perceived politeness were found for any specific discourse situation.

6. Discussion

The results of the current research on the use of politeness strategies by Dutch speakers and by British English speakers when performing a face-threatening act, have a few similarities with previous studies. The results for most of the scenarios were quite similar, however, a t-test shows that there is a significant difference between the use of politeness strategies for these two groups overall.

The current research only found a significant difference between the use of politeness strategies for one of the five scenarios. In this scenario, discourse situation 2, the shop situation, the Dutch group was significantly more direct than the British group. This is contrary to Hendriks's (2002) study, where native Dutch speakers formulated less direct requests than the native English speakers. Previous research cannot explain why there was a split between the scores of the Dutch group in this situation. The majority of the Dutch group used politeness strategy 4, off record, while another significant part of the Dutch group used politeness strategy 1, bald on record. As a Dutch person myself, I suspect that this has something to do with the mentioning of money in this situation. In my experience, expressing

that something is too expensive, is not unusual in a Dutch context. This is why I suspect that a significant part of the Dutch group formulated a bald on record strategy to perform this face-threatening act. This context would be worth investigating in future research.

The other significant difference that was found between the British and the Dutch participants was perceived directness. This means that there was a significant difference in how direct the British and the Dutch participants scored themselves. This is an interesting finding, however previous literature cannot explain why. I suspect that, because Dutch people are always told that they are direct, they scored themselves higher. This is something worth investigating in future research.

Another interesting finding is that there is a significant positive correlation between the used politeness strategy and how direct the participants scored themselves. This means that when one of these variables increases, the other increases too. For example, if the participant used a more direct politeness strategy, they would also score themselves as more direct. This means that the participant's intuition and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategy are approximately on the same line. Previous research cannot explain why might be, so this would also be worth investigating in future research.

The current research has a few shortcomings. Most of the participants were female university students between the age of 18 and 24. Future research could gather more heterogenous participants to get a more inclusive picture. The current research also used a written discourse completion task to elicit semi-natural responses. However, the participants' responses cannot be used as spontaneous speech. For further research it might be interesting to use an oral discourse completion task to elicit their first spontaneous responses or to interview participants to find out their intentions behind certain speech acts. More suggestions for further research will be discussed in the next section.

6.1 Further research

For further research, there are many more interesting aspects to explore. In the section above, a few ideas have already been suggested. This section will mention other ideas.

Future research could explore specific wording and/or politeness markers. Another suggestion would be to look at how Dutch people express politeness in English and to compare this with native English speakers or to compare it with how much their politeness in English differs from their native tongue, Dutch. This way the relation between language, culture and politeness can be further explored. Another suggestion for future research, with an eye on the shortcomings of the current research, has to do with the coding scheme used. The current research used Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies as a coding scheme, further research could look more detailed at the specific strategy within the politeness strategy group or use a different theory as a code scheme, as this may lead to different interesting results. The last suggestion is to include more language groups into further research for inclusivity.

7. Conclusion

The conclusion of the current study is that the Dutch and the British participants used similar politeness strategies when performing FTAs overall. In most situations both groups used the same politeness strategies. In the first situation where the participant has a higher status and the social distance between the speaker and the addressee is high, the Dutch and the British participants only used negative politeness. The second situation has a similar design of power and social distance, however the size of imposition of the speech act is higher. To this situation the Dutch and the British group responded significantly differently. The Dutch participants were significantly more direct than their British counterparts. The Dutch group used both bald on record strategies and off record strategies, while the British group only used

off record strategies. In the third situation, the participants were of lower status than the addressee, but the social distance was small. In this situation, the most used politeness strategy was bald on record. In the fourth DCT, the status of the speaker and the addressee is equal and the social distance between the speaker and addressee is small. The most used politeness strategy is negative politeness. In the fifth situation the speaker and the addressee have equal power, but the social distance between them is big. Both groups of participants use the negative politeness strategy the most.

The research question for the current study was: "How are face-threatening acts done by speakers of Dutch and speakers of British English?". To answer the research question, both Dutch and British participants use negative politeness strategies most frequently when doing a face-threatening act. This result corroborates with the hypothesis that the Dutch participants and the British participants would both show a preference for negative politeness strategies when performing face-threatening acts.

The subquestions are can be answered as following:

- *Is there a correlation between observed directness and perceived directness?*
Yes, there is a significant positive relation between observed directness, the choice of politeness strategy, and perceived politeness, how direct the participant scored themselves.

- *Is there a correlation between observed directness and perceived politeness?*
No, there is no correlation between observed directness and perceived politeness.

- *Is there a correlation between observed directness and perceived politeness?*
No, there is no correlation between observed directness and perceived politeness.

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Appendix A: Complete list of Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies (1987, pp. 94-227)

1. *Bald on record*
2. *Positive politeness*
   1) Notice, attend to H (his interest, wants, needs, goods)
   2) Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with hearer)
   3) Intensify interest to H
   4) Use in-group identity markers
   5) Seek agreement
   6) Avoid disagreement
   7) Presuppose/raise/assert common ground
   8) Joke
   9) Assert or presuppose S´s knowledge of and concern for H´s wants
   10) Offer, promise
   11) Be optimistic
   12) Include both S and H in the activity
   13) Give (or ask for) reasons
   14) Assume or assert reciprocity
   15) Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)
3. *Negative politeness*
   1) Be conventionally indirect
   2) Question, hedge
   3) Be pessimistic
   4) Minimize the imposition
   5) Give deference
   6) Apologize
   7) Impersonalize S and H
   8) State the FTA as a general rule
   9) Nominalize
   10) Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H
4. *Off record*
   1) Give hints
   2) Give association clues

3) Presuppose

4) Understate

5) Overstate

6) Use tautologies

7) Use contradictions

8) Be ironic

9) Use metaphors

10) Use rhetorical questions

11) Be ambiguous

12) Be vague

13) Over-generalize

14) Displace H

15) Be incomplete, use ellipsis

5. *Do not perform*

Appendix B: Survey English Version

Before you start this survey, please select the language that you are most proficient in above. This survey will take approximately 4 minutes. Right now, you have selected English.

Selecteer hierboven de taal waarin je het meest vaardig bent. Momenteel heeft u gekozen voor Engels.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. Your responses will be confidential and anonymous. Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that:
- you give the researcher, Michelle Lau, consent to use your responses for her research for her MA thesis
- you voluntarily agree to participate

o   Agree

You are in a restaurant with a friend. You would like to see the menu before you order. What do you say to the waiter?

You are in a clothing shop and found something you like. When the owner of the shop tells you the price of the shirt, you think it is quite expensive. What do you say to the owner of the shop?

You have failed your exam for the second time. You feel like it is because the questions in the exam differ too much from the course work you have done in class. What do you say to your professor?

You are at a party. You want to go home, because you have an exam the next morning. Your friend does not want to walk all the way home. She finds out that your mutual friend Tom is driving home in the same direction. What do you say to Tom?

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                     │
│                                                     │
│                                                     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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You are walking to the train station with your friend. You are afraid you are going to miss your train. Your friend suggests to ask someone in the for directions. You see a man close to you. What do you say to the man?

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                     │
│                                                     │
│                                                     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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You responded with "…" in the restaurant scenario. How direct would you rate your response?

Indirect ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Direct

You responded with "…" in the shop scenario. How direct would you rate your response?

Indirect ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Direct

You responded with "…" in the professor scenario. How direct would you rate your response?

Indirect ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Direct

You responded with "…" in the party scenario. How direct would you rate your response?

Indirect ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Direct

You responded with "…" in the street scenario. How direct would you rate your response?

Indirect ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Direct

You responded with "…" in the restaurant scenario. How polite would you rate your response?

Not polite ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Polite

You responded with "…" in the shop scenario. How polite would you rate your response?

Not polite ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Polite

You responded with "…" in the professor scenario. How polite would you rate your response?

Not polite	○	○	○	○	○	Polite

You responded with "…" in the party scenario. How polite would you rate your response?

Not polite	○	○	○	○	○	Polite

You responded with "…" in the street scenario. How polite would you rate your response?

Not polite	○	○	○	○	○	Polite

What is your age?
- ○ Below 18
- ○ 18 – 24
- ○ 25 – 34
- ○ 35 – 44
- ○ 45 - 54
- ○ 55 and above

What is your gender?
- ○ Male
- ○ Female

What did you study/are you studying?

What is/are your first language(s)?

What language(s) do your use the most?

What is your nationality?

What is your ethnicity?

Where were you born?

In which country have you lived most of your life?

How long have you lived there?
- ○ Less than 5 years

- ○ 5 – 10 years
- ○ More than 10 years

Which culture(s) do you most closely identify with?

[ ]

Which culture(s) do you think has had the most influence on your sense of directness?

[ ]

Which culture(s) do you think has had the most influence on your sense of politeness?

[ ]

If you have any comments, feel free to leave them below.

[ ]

Thank you so much for your participation. Thanks to you I will be able to write my MA thesis and graduate! If you have any questions, feel free to send an email to m.z.lau@students.uu.nl.

Appendix C: Survey Dutch Version

Selecteer hierboven de taal waarin je het meest vaardig bent. De survey duurt ongeveer 4 minuten. Momenteel heb je gekozen voor Nederlands.

Before you start this survey, please select the language that you are most proficient in above. Right now, you have selected Dutch.

Uw deelname aan dit onderzoek is vrijwillig. Uw gegevens zullen vertrouwelijk en anoniem worden behandeld. Wanneer u op de "mee eens" knop klikt, geeft u aan dat:
- u de onderzoeker, Michelle Lau, toestemming geeft om uw gegevens voor haar onderzoek voor haar MA thesis te gebruiken
- u vrijwillig meedoet aan dit onderzoek

Je bent uiteten met een vriend. Je wil graag de menukaart zien voordat je bestelt. Wat zeg je tegen de serveerder?

Je bent aan het winkelen en hebt in een winkel iets gevonden wat je mooi vindt. De eigenaar van de kledingwinkel vertelt je hoe duur het shirt is en je vindt het erg duur. Wat zeg je tegen de eigenaar van de winkel?

Je hebt je tentamen voor de tweede keer niet gehaald. Dit komt volgens jou doordat de stof die je tijdens de colleges hebt behandeld anders is dan de stof waarnaar gevraagd wordt in het tentamen. Wat zeg je tegen je professor?

Je bent op een feestje. Je wilt naar huis, omdat je de volgende ochtend een tentamen hebt. Je vriendin wil niet helemaal naar huis lopen. Ze heeft gehoord dat jullie vriend Tom met de auto is en dezelfde kant op moet. Wat zeg je tegen Tom

Je bent met een vriend naar het station aan het lopen. Jullie zijn bang dat jullie je trein gaan missen. Je vriend stelt voor om aan iemand op straat te vragen hoe jullie moeten lopen. Iets verderop loopt een man. Wat zeg je tegen de man?

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In het restaurant scenario heb je geantwoord met "…". Hoe direct vind je je reactie?

Indirect   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   Direct

In het scenario in de kledingwinkel heb je geantwoord met "…". Hoe direct vind je je reactie?

Indirect   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   Direct

In het scenario met je professor heb je geantwoord met "…". Hoe direct vind je je reactie?

Indirect   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   Direct

In het scenario op het feestje heb je geantwoord met "…". Hoe direct vind je je reactie?

Indirect   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   Direct

In het scenario op straat heb je geantwoord met "…". Hoe direct vind je je reactie?

Indirect   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   Direct

In het restaurant scenario heb je geantwoord met "…" Hoe beleefd vind je je reactie?

Niet beleefd   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   Beleefd

In het scenario in de kledingwinkel heb je geantwoord met "…". Hoe beleefd vind je je reactie?

Niet beleefd   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   Beleefd

In het scenario met je professor heb je geantwoord met "…". Hoe beleefd vind je je reactie?

Niet beleefd   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   Beleefd

In het scenario op het feestje heb je geantwoord met "…". Hoe beleefd vind je je reactie?

Niet beleefd   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   Beleefd

In het scenario op straat heb je geantwoord met "…". Hoe beleefd vind je je reactie?

Niet beleefd ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Beleefd

Wat is je leeftijd?
- ○ Onder de 18
- ○ 18 – 24
- ○ 25 – 34
- ○ 35 – 44
- ○ 45 - 54
- ○ Boven de 54

Wat is je geslacht?
- ○ Man
- ○ Vrouw

Wat heb je gestudeerd/studeer je?

Wat is/zijn je moedertaal/moedertalen?

Welke taal/talen spreek je het meest?

Wat is je nationaliteit?

Wat is je etniciteit?

Waar ben je geboren?

In welk land heb je het grootste deel van je leven gewoond?

Hoe lang heb je daar gewoond?
- ○ Korter dan 5 jaar
- ○ 5 – 10 jaar
- ○ Langer dan 10 jaar

Met welke cultuur/culturen identificeer jij je het sterkst?

Welke cultuur/culturen heeft/hebben de grootste invloed gehad op jouw gevoel van directheid?

Welke cultuur/culturen heeft/hebben de grootste invloed gehad op jouw gevoel van beleefdheid?

Hieronder is ruimte voor opmerkingen. Mocht je geen opmerkingen hebben dan kan je doorklikken.

Hartelijk dank voor je deelname. Dankzij jou kan ik mijn MA scriptie schrijven en afstuderen! Voor vragen kan je me bereiken via m.z.lau@students.uu.nl.