INDIRECTNESS AND POLITENESS IN REQUESTING: 
AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC AND PRAGMATIC ASPECTS IN AN AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

AMANDA LE COUTEUR
B.A. (Hons.) Adelaide

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Department of Psychology
The University of Adelaide
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUTHOR'S STATEMENT</td>
<td>xix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>xx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 1</strong> INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 The Research Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Rationale and Significance</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1 Need for the Study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Theoretical Framework of the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.1 Why Study Requests?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.2 Research Questions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.3 Methods of Investigation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Limitations of the Research</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 2</strong> THEORIES OF SPEECH-ACT UNDERSTANDING: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND CRITIQUE</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Introduction</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Philosophical and Formal Linguistic Approaches to Indirect Speech</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Empirical Studies of the Literal Force Hypothesis</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 The Importance of Context</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.4 Conventionality and the Understanding of Indirect Requests</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.5 Summary: The Literal Force Hypothesis of Indirect Speech-Act</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Anthropological and Sociolinguistic Approaches to Indirect Speech-</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1 The Local Conversational Context</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2 Conversational Structure and Expectations</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.3 The Social Context and Expectations</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.4 Activities and Levels of Intention</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.5 Summary: Importance of Context in Indirect Speech-Act Understanding</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 3</strong> STUDY I: LANGUAGE-BASED VERSUS CONTEXT-BASED THEORIES OF INDIRECT SPEECH-ACT UNDERSTANDING: AN EXAMINATION OF RESPONSES TO A NON-CONVENTIONAL INDIRECT REQUEST FORM</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Two Interpretive Models</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Children's Interpretation of Non-Conventional Indirect Requests</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 A Study of Adults' Interpretation of a Non-Conventional Request Form</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 Predictions Based on the Two Models of Interpretation .................. 40
3.5 Results & Discussion .................................................................. 40
3.5.1 Question 1. Interpretability of a Non-Conventional Form .......... 40
3.5.2 Question 2. Interpretation of the Request For Information ........ 40
3.5.3 Question 3. Processing of Literal Form: Evidence From Pre-
Responses .................................................................................... 41
3.5.4 Question 4. Gender Differences in Replies ............................. 43
3.6 Conclusion .................................................................................. 43

CHAPTER 4 CONTEXT IN THE PRODUCTION AND INTERPRETATION OF
SPEECH ......................................................................................... 45

4.1 Introduction ............................................................................... 45
4.2 Definitions of 'Context' ............................................................... 45
4.2.1 Context Versus Situation and Setting ....................................... 48
4.2.2 Summary: Definitions of 'Context' .......................................... 50
4.3 The Problem of Contextual Classification ................................. 50
4.4 Participants' Views About the Relevance of Contextual Features ... 52
4.5 Taxonomies of Contextual Features ............................................ 54
4.5.1 Contextual Determinants of Language Use: 'Sociolinguistic'
Approaches ................................................................................. 55
4.5.2 Contextual Determinants of Language Use: 'Socio-Cognitive'
Approaches ................................................................................. 59
4.5.2.1 Dimensional models .......................................................... 59
4.5.2.2 Instrumental, goal-based models ....................................... 61
4.6 Representing Background Knowledge ...................................... 63
4.6.1 Schema, Scripts, and Frames ................................................ 63
4.6.2 Rule-Based Approaches ......................................................... 66
4.6.3 Criticisms of the Rule-Based Approach ................................. 68

CHAPTER 5 EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATIONS OF CONTEXTUAL
INFLUENCES ON LANGUAGE USE: THE CASE OF REQUEST
VARIATION ..................................................................................... 71

5.1 Introduction ............................................................................... 71
5.2 Studies of Request Variation in Natural Conversation .............. 72
5.2.1 The Distribution of American English Directives: The Work of
Ervin-Tripp .................................................................................... 72
5.2.2 Studies Based on Ervin-Tripp's Observations ......................... 73
5.2.3 Summary ............................................................................... 76
5.2.4 A Study of Requesting in Israeli Hebrew .............................. 77
5.2.5 Patterns of Similarity and Difference in Situated Directive Use
Across Studies ............................................................................... 79
5.2.6 Considerations of Gender in Studies of Natural Conversation ... 80
5.2.7 Summary and Statement of Research Questions ..................... 81
5.3 Experimental Studies of Situated Request Variation .................. 83
5.3.1 Tests of Predictions From Ervin-Tripp's Observational Study Using
Role-Play Techniques .................................................................... 83
5.3.1.1 A rating-scale study .......................................................... 83
5.3.1.2 A study of elicited spoken requests ................................... 84
5.3.1.3 A study of elicited written requests ................................. 85
5.3.1.4 Ratings of the relevance of situational dimensions.......................... 88  
5.3.2 Summary and Statement of Research Questions .................................. 89  

CHAPTER 6 THE FUNCTIONS OF INDIRECTNESS IN LANGUAGE ...................... 94  
6.1 Introduction............................................................................................... 94  
6.2 Indirectness: General Theoretical Perspectives ........................................ 94  
6.2.1 Interactional Threat .............................................................................. 95  
6.2.1.1 The legacy of Erving Goffman ...................................................... 96  
6.3 Rule-Based Explanations of Indirectness in Requesting .............................. 98  
6.3.1 The Conflict Between Communicative Clarity and Interactional Offense .... 98  
6.4 The Conversational-Contract View of Indirectness .................................. 102  
6.5 Strategic, Goal-Oriented Approaches to Indirectness ............................... 103  
6.5.1 Threats to Cooperative Social Relations: Conflicts of Will ................. 103  
6.5.2 The Threat of Hearer Resistance ....................................................... 105  
6.5.3 Threats to Face .................................................................................... 107  
6.5.4 Brown and Levinson's Model of Politeness ....................................... 109  
6.5.5 Sociological Variables Influencing Politeness ..................................... 112  
6.6 Tests of Brown and Levinson's Model of Politeness ................................ 113  
6.6.1 Experimental Manipulations of P, D, and R ........................................ 113  
6.6.1.1 Compliance-gaining research ....................................................... 113  
6.6.1.2 Research on apologizing ............................................................... 115  
6.6.1.3 Research on requests ...................................................................... 116  
6.6.2 Summary of Experimental Studies of Brown and Levinson's Model ...... 120  
6.6.3 Requests in Textual Dialogue ............................................................. 123  
6.6.4 Requests in Natural Conversation ..................................................... 124  
6.6.5 Summary of Tests of Brown & Levinson's Model ............................... 127  
6.7 Problems in Applying Brown & Levinson's Theory of Politeness, and Proposed Modifications ................................................................. 128  
6.8 Politeness, Indirectness, and Cultural Norms ....................................... 133  
6.8.1 Cultural Considerations of Face ......................................................... 134  
6.8.2 Cultural Considerations of Indirectness .............................................. 136  

CHAPTER 7 DIRECTIVE USE, POLITENESS, AND GENDER ...................... 141  
7.1 Introduction: 'Gender' in Brown and Levinson's Politeness Model ........... 141  
7.2 Empirical Investigations of Brown and Levinson's Model ........................ 143  
7.2.1 Summary ............................................................................................ 145  
7.3 Gender Differentiated Language Styles: Lakoff's Hypothesis ................ 146  
7.4 Empirical Investigations of Lakoff's Hypothesis ..................................... 150  
7.4.1 Lexical Traits ....................................................................................... 150  
7.4.2 Syntactic-Pragmatic Traits ................................................................. 150  
7.4.3 Summary ............................................................................................ 154  
7.5 Investigations of Lakoff's Claims in Natural Contexts ............................ 156  
7.5.1 Public Transactional Contexts ............................................................. 157  
7.5.2 Private, Informal Contexts ................................................................. 158  
7.6 Interpreting Differences: Gender, Power, or Role? .................................. 159  
7.7 The 'Two Cultures' Theory ................................................................. 165
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 8: STUDY II: SITUATIONAL FACTORS AND DIRECTIVE USE IN TWO SETTINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2.1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8.2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8.3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.9.7 Summary of Results Relating to Ervin-Tripp’s Observations ........................................ 223
8.10 Strategies for Modifying Directive Force ................................................................. 224
8.10.1 Office Setting ............................................................................................................ 227
8.10.1.1 Frequency of use of attenuating devices ......................................................... 227
8.10.1.2 Types of attenuating devices .............................................................................. 228
8.10.1.3 Power ................................................................................................................. 229
8.10.1.4 Social Distance .................................................................................................. 231
8.10.1.5 Imposition ......................................................................................................... 231
8.10.1.6 Overall weightiness of the imposition .............................................................. 232
8.10.1.7 Summary of analysis of attenuating devices in terms of Brown & Levinson’s model ................................................................. 233
8.10.2 Domestic Setting .................................................................................................... 234
8.10.2.1 Frequency of use of attenuating devices ......................................................... 234
8.10.2.2 Types of attenuating devices .............................................................................. 235
8.10.3 Summary of Attenuating Devices Used in the Domestic Setting ....................... 237
8.11 Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 237

CHAPTER 9 STUDY III: AN EXPERIMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL-CONTEXTUAL FEATURES ON PERCEPTION OF REQUEST STRATEGIES ............................................ 240

9.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................... 240
9.2 The Scenario Method ................................................................................................... 241
9.3 Method ......................................................................................................................... 243
9.3.1 Construction of Scenarios ...................................................................................... 243
9.3.2 Validation of the Situational Dimensions: Rank & Familiarity ......................... 244
9.3.3 Validation of the Imposition Variable ...................................................................... 248
9.3.4 Validation of the Request Dimension .................................................................... 252
9.4 Main Scenario Study .................................................................................................. 255
9.4.1 Subjects .................................................................................................................. 256
9.4.2 Procedure ................................................................................................................. 256
9.4.3 Results ..................................................................................................................... 258
9.4.3.1 Analysis of gender differences in participants’ ratings .................................. 258
9.4.3.2 Factor analysis of ratings of directive variants on 16 scales ......................... 259
9.4.3.2.1 Discussion ...................................................................................................... 261
9.4.3.3 Analysis of variance of factor scores .............................................................. 262
9.5 Summary of Findings From the Scenario Study ....................................................... 274
9.6 Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 276

CHAPTER 10 STUDY IV: PERCEPTIONS OF THE POLITENESS AND LIKELIHOOD OF USE OF REQUEST ALTERNATIVES UNDER CHANGING SOCIAL-CONTEXTUAL CONDITIONS: AN INTERVIEW APPROACH .................................................. 280

10.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................... 280
10.2 Method ......................................................................................................................... 281
10.2.1 Subjects .................................................................................................................. 281
10.2.2 Procedure ................................................................................................................. 281
10.3 Data Analysis .............................................................................................................. 283
10.4 Results ......................................................................................................................... 285
10.4.1 High-Power, High-Social-Distance, High-Imposition Scenarios ........................................ 285
10.4.2 Summary: High-Power, High-Social-Distance, High-Imposition Scenarios ......................................................... 290
10.4.3 Equal-Power Scenarios ................................................................................................................ 290
10.4.4 Summary: Equal-Power Scenarios ........................................................................................................ 294
10.4.5 Low-Power Scenarios ..................................................................................................................... 295
10.4.6 Summary: Low-Power Scenarios ........................................................................................................ 301
10.4.7 Patterns of Strategy Choice Across Scenarios ......................................................................................... 302
10.4.8 Patterns of Reasons for 'Most Likely' Choices Across Scenarios ......................................................... 305
10.4.9 Reasons Given to Explain Non-Choice of Variants ............................................................................. 309
10.4.10.1 Discrepancies between 'most likely' and 'most polite' choices ......................................................... 312
10.4.10.2 Summary ......................................................................................................................................... 316
10.4.10.3 Discrepancies between 'least likely' and 'most impolite' choices ...................................................... 317
10.4.11 Summary: 'Least Likely' Versus 'Most Impolite' Choices & Conclusion ................................................ 320

CHAPTER 11 STUDY V: POLITENESS AND LIKELIHOOD OF USE OF REQUEST ALTERNATIVES: AN EXTENDED INTERVIEW APPROACH .................................................. 323

11.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................................... 323
11.2 Design of the Study .................................................................................................................................. 324
11.3 Procedure ............................................................................................................................................... 326
11.3.1 Subjects ................................................................................................................................................ 326
11.3.2 Method ................................................................................................................................................ 326
11.4 Data Analysis .......................................................................................................................................... 328
11.5 Results .................................................................................................................................................. 328
11.5.1 High-Power Scenarios ......................................................................................................................... 329
11.5.2 Summary: High-Power Scenarios ....................................................................................................... 335
11.5.3 Equal-Power Scenarios ....................................................................................................................... 336
11.5.4 Summary: Equal-Power Scenarios ....................................................................................................... 341
11.5.5 Low-Power Scenarios ......................................................................................................................... 342
11.5.6 Summary: Low-Power Scenarios ....................................................................................................... 347
11.5.7 Patterns of Strategy Choice Across Scenarios ..................................................................................... 348
11.5.8 Patterns of Reasons for 'Most Likely' Choices Across Scenarios ...................................................... 352
11.5.9 Changes to Gender of Addressee ......................................................................................................... 357
11.5.10 Changes to Age of the Addressee ...................................................................................................... 359
11.5.11 Reasons Given to Justify Non-Choice of Variants ............................................................................... 363
11.5.12 Appropriateness Versus Politeness: A Comparison of 'Most Likely' and 'Most Polite' Choices .......... 375
11.5.12.1 Discrepancies between 'most likely' and 'most polite' choices ...................................................... 375
11.5.12.2 Summary ....................................................................................................................................... 380
11.5.13 Discrepancies Between 'Least Likely' and 'Most Impolite' Choices ..................................................... 381
11.5.14 Summary: 'Least Likely' Versus 'Most Impolite' Choices .................................................................... 385
11.6 Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................... 386

CHAPTER 12 OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS .................................................................................. 387

12.1 Retrospection .......................................................................................................................................... 387
12.2 Summary of Major Findings .................................................................................................................. 388
12.2.1 What Do Theorists and Researchers Mean By 'Context' as the Notion Applies to Language Use, and How Does Context Enter Into the Interpretation Process? ........................................ 388

12.2.2 What is the Social Distribution of Request Strategies Produced Within Particular Situations By Speakers of Australian English? ........ 389

12.2.3 To What Extent Do Shared Beliefs/Expectations Exist About the Appropriateness of Particular Request Forms in Different Contexts? .... 393

12.3 Theoretical Significance of the Findings ........................................ 402

12.4 Directions for Further Research .................................................. 404

12.5 Concluding Remarks ................................................................. 406

APPENDICES .................................................................................... 407

REFERENCES ................................................................................... 457
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.1</td>
<td>Distribution of reply types amongst addressees interpreting the statement as a request (N = 47)</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.2</td>
<td>Types of pre-responses to the provision of information</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6.1</td>
<td>Distribution of positive- and negative-politeness features according to status of addressee as reported by Scarcella &amp; Brunak (1981)</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.1</td>
<td>Directives analysed according to gender of participants: Office setting</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.2</td>
<td>Directives analysed according to gender of participants: Domestic setting</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.3</td>
<td>Directive strategies used in the office setting</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.4</td>
<td>Directive strategies used in the domestic setting</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.5</td>
<td>Type of imposition in request act by speaker gender in two settings</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.6</td>
<td>Distribution of request strategies by request goal: Office setting (%)</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.7</td>
<td>Distribution of request strategies by request goal: Domestic setting (%)</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.8</td>
<td>Seriousness of imposition by gender in two settings</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.9</td>
<td>Seriousness of imposition by request strategy (%): Office setting</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.10</td>
<td>Seriousness of imposition by request strategy (%): Office setting</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.11</td>
<td>Distribution of request strategies by Power</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.12</td>
<td>Distribution of request strategies by Social Distance</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.13</td>
<td>Distribution of request strategies in terms of combined P, D, R factors</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.14</td>
<td>Distribution of imperative strategies by rank and familiarity of addressee</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.15</td>
<td>Distribution of strategies to High-Rank addressees for high- &amp; low-probability-of-compliance requests</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.16</td>
<td>Distribution of requests for which S was the beneficiary</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.17</td>
<td>Distribution of strategies for requests for which there was a high probability of non-compliance: Office setting</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.18</td>
<td>Devices used to attenuate requests</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.19</td>
<td>Frequency of use of attenuating devices across request variants by Power</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.20</td>
<td>Frequency of use of attenuating devices by Familiarity of addressee</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.21</td>
<td>Frequency of use of attenuating devices by Imposition</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.22</td>
<td>Distribution of attenuating devices by weightiness of FTA</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8.23  Frequency of use of attenuating devices ........................................... 235
Table 8.24  Attenuating features by Imposition ...................................................... 236
Table 9.1  Mean ratings for 36 scenarios on the Rank scale .................................. 247
Table 9.2  Mean ratings for 36 scenarios on the Power scale ................................. 247
Table 9.3  Mean ratings for 36 scenarios on the Familiarity scale ............................ 248
Table 9.4  Mean ratings for 36 scenarios on the Friendliness scale .......................... 248
Table 9.5  Mean ratings for 36 scenarios on the Role scale .................................... 250
Table 9.6  Mean ratings for 36 scenarios on the Difficulty scale ............................. 251
Table 9.7  Mean ratings for 36 scenarios on the Compliance scale ........................... 251
Table 9.8  Mean ratings for 36 scenarios on the Imposition scale ............................ 252
Table 9.9  Summary of analysis of variance for pretest of request forms ................. 253
Table 9.10 Mean ratings for pretest of request forms ............................................ 254
Table 9.11  Principal-components factor analysis with oblique rotation, 16 scales (N = 96) .......................................................... 260
Table 10.1  Frequency of choice of 4 request variants as 'most likely' across High P scenarios .................................................. 286
Table 10.2  Frequency of choice of 4 request variants as 'most likely' across Equal P scenarios ................................................................. 291
Table 10.3  Frequency of choice of 4 request variants as 'most likely' across Low P scenarios ................................................................ 295
Table 10.4  Distribution of Imperative choices as 'most likely' form of request across all scenarios .................................................. 302
Table 10.5  Distribution of Imbedded Imperative choices as 'most likely' form of request across all scenarios ................................. 303
Table 10.6  Distribution of Question Directive choices as 'most likely' form of request across all scenarios ........................................... 304
Table 10.7  Distribution of Hint choices as 'most likely' form of request across all scenarios ............................................................ 304
Table 10.8  Frequencies of reason categories mentioned by participants to explain 'most likely' choices of four request alternatives ............ 305
Table 10.9  Reasons given by female and male participants for choice of Imbedded Imperative forms .................................................. 307
Table 10.10 Reasons given by female and male participants for choice of Question Directive forms .................................................. 308
Table 10.11 Reasons for non-choice of Imperative form .......................................... 309
Table 10.12 Reasons for non-choice of Imbedded Imperative form .......................... 310
Table 10.13 Reasons for non-choice of Question Directive form ............................. 310
Table 10.14 Reasons for non-choice of Hint form .................................................. 311
Table 10.15 Discrepancies between 'most likely' and 'most polite' choice: 'Most polite' as more direct form ........................................... 313
Table 10.16 Discrepancies between 'most likely' and 'most polite' choice: 'Most polite' as more indirect form ........................................... 315
Table 10.17 Percentages of request alternatives chosen as 'most likely' ................. 316
Table 10.18 Discrepancies between 'least likely' and 'most impolite' choices: 'Most impolite' as more direct ........................................... 318
Table 10.19 Discrepancies between 'least likely' and 'most impolite' choices: 'Most impolite' as more indirect .................................................. 319
Table 10.20 Percentages of request alternatives chosen as 'least likely' and as 'most impolite' ................................................................. 320
Table 11.1 Frequency of female and male choice of 4 request variants as 'most likely' across High P scenarios ........................................... 330
Table 11.2 Reasons given by female and male participants to explain Imbedded Imperative choice as 'most likely' in High P scenarios .......... 331
Table 11.3 Reasons given by female and male participants to explain Question Directive choice as 'most likely' in High P scenarios ............ 334
Table 11.4 Frequency of female and male choice of 4 request variants as 'most likely' across Equal P scenarios ....................................... 336
Table 11.5 Reasons given by female and male participants to explain Imbedded Imperative choice as 'most likely' in Equal P scenarios ....... 339
Table 11.6 Reasons given by female and male participants to explain Question Directive choice as 'most likely' in Equal P scenarios .......... 340
Table 11.7 Frequency of female and male choice of 4 request variants as 'most likely' across Low P scenarios ............................................. 343
Table 11.8 Reasons given by female and male participants to explain Imbedded Imperative choice as 'most likely' in Low P scenarios ........ 345
Table 11.9 Reasons given by female and male participants to explain Question Directive choice as 'most likely' in Low P scenarios .......... 346
Table 11.10 Distribution of Imbedded Imperative choices as 'most likely' form of request across all scenarios ........................................... 349
Table 11.11 Distribution of Question Directive choices as 'most likely' form of request across all scenarios .................................................. 351
Table 11.12 Distribution of Hint choices as 'most likely' form of request across all scenarios ................................................................. 352
Table 11.13 Frequencies of reason categories mentioned by participants to justify 'most likely' choices of four request alternatives ............... 353
Table 11.14 Reasons given by female and male participants for 'most likely' choice of Imbedded Imperative forms ................................. 355
Table 11.15 Reasons given by female and male participants for 'most likely' choice of Question Directive forms ........................................ 356
Table 11.16 Reasons for non-choice of Imperative form ............................................. 364
Table 11.17 Reasons for non-choice of Imbedded Imperative form .................................................. 365
Table 11.18 Reasons for non-choice of Question Directive form ............................................. 367
Table 11.19 Reasons for non-choice of Hint form .................................................. 370
Table 11.20 Discrepancies between 'most likely' and 'most polite' choice: 'Most polite' as less direct form .................................................. 376
Table 11.21 Discrepancies between 'most likely' and 'most polite' choice: 'Most polite' as more direct form ............................................. 378
Table 11.22 Percentages of request alternatives chosen as 'most likely' and as 'most polite' ................................................................. 380
| Table 11.23 | Discrepancies between 'least likely' and 'most impolite' choice: 'Most impolite' as more direct form | 382 |
| Table 11.24 | Discrepancies between 'least likely' and 'most impolite' choice: 'Most impolite' as less direct form | 384 |
| Table 11.25 | Percentages of request alternatives chosen as 'least likely' and as 'most impolite' | 385 |
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.1</td>
<td>Brown &amp; Fraser's (1979: 35) descriptive taxonomy of the situation.</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6.1</td>
<td>Lakoff's model of interaction (1979: 66).</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.1</td>
<td>Holmes' (1990b) model of social interaction.</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.1</td>
<td>Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in High P, High D, High R scenarios</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.2</td>
<td>Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in High P, High D, Low R scenarios</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.3</td>
<td>Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in High P, Low D, High R scenarios</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.4</td>
<td>Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in High P, Low D, Low R scenarios</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.5</td>
<td>Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in Equal P, High D, High R scenarios</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.6</td>
<td>Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in Equal P, Low D, High R scenarios</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.7</td>
<td>Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in Equal P, Low D, Low R scenarios</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.8</td>
<td>Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in Equal P, High D, Low R scenarios</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.9</td>
<td>Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in Low P, High D, High R scenarios</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.10</td>
<td>Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in Low P, Low D, High R scenarios</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.11</td>
<td>Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in Low P, High D, Low R scenarios</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.12</td>
<td>Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in Low P, Low D, High R scenarios</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A variety of alternative strategies exist by means of which people can make requests. This work examines the general questions of why directive acts occur with such variety, what factors determine their social distribution, and what social meanings are attributed to such variation. In broad terms, this thesis addresses the issue of the complex ways in which contexts influence the use and interpretation of directive acts. More particularly, the findings are used to evaluate two models of the knowledge and meaning processes involved in requesting, those of Ervin-Tripp (1976, Ervin-Tripp et al., 1987) and Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). Data from a range of sources generated by speakers of Australian English were employed in an attempt to build a picture of the types of contextual knowledge to which people have access in relation to the act of requesting.

In Study I, the types of replies provided by passers-by in response to an extremely indirect, non-conventional form of request were used as evidence in a comparison of two models of language understanding (context- and language-based) which portrayed the role of context in interpretation in different ways. The most convincing explanation of the responses obtained in this natural setting was provided by a context-based model which assumes that the processing of linguistic components of a request need only proceed as far as the identification of an object on which to focus action, and that context or situation then guides interpretation.

Having established some evidence for the importance of ongoing contexts of social relations, and of activity, to the understanding of speech acts such as requests, the next step involved an attempt to define the general types of speech situations in which particular request strategies were considered appropriate by members of a speech community. The first stage of this process (Study II) involved the investigation of request variants produced within two naturally-occurring situations (an office and a domestic setting) in terms of three social-contextual factors - Power (P), Social Distance (D), and Imposition (R) - involved in assessments of the face-threateningness of directive acts (Brown and Levinson, 1978). Analysis of the distribution of variants revealed broad support for Brown and Levinson's
model. The more direct forms of request were observed to be used less often, and the more indirect forms more often, as the weightiness of the face-threatening act (FTA) increased. However, the distribution of the most indirect, off-record hint variant did not fit the predicted pattern of greater indirectness being used to achieve greatest minimization of weighty FTAs. In both settings, hints occurred with some frequency in circumstances that involved the less weighty P, D, and R factor combinations. This pattern was more consistent with the social distribution of the variant described by Ervin-Tripp (1976), who observed hints to be used to subordinates for requesting routine tasks, and in families.

Analysis of the distribution of the naturally-occurring request variants in terms of speaker's gender revealed that particular strategies were used in different proportions by female and male interactants in the two settings. In particular, in the office situation, observed patterns of directive use were contrary to proposals that women, being more concerned to maintain standards of politeness, use forms of language that are more indirect than do men. It was suggested that some of the observed differences might have been related to differences in the types of goals of the request acts that female and male interactants in the two situations typically attempted to carry out.

A final analysis of these naturally-occurring request data involved an examination of internal modifications that attenuated the force of directive acts. It was concluded that, in respect of directives at least, politeness is not simply a matter of incorporating syntactic and lexical attenuation devices within variants, nor is it inevitably a matter of increasing indirectness of the form. The suggestion, put forward by Blum-Kulka (1987), that concern with clarity may be as essential to considerations of politeness as is concern for face, was considered as providing a potential account for the patterns of request usage observed.

The next three studies in the series took the form of scenario-based manipulations of social-contextual variables in which participants were asked to take the role of the speaker, and evaluate formal variants of directive acts. In Study III, a factor analysis of participants' judgements of request variants on a range of rating scales produced a solution in which factors labelled Politeness and Functional Appropriateness emerged as distinct, yet related, dimensions. It was also found that each of the three dimensions P, D, and R loaded
significantly on separate factors in the analysis. Furthermore, a significant five-way interaction involving variables identified by Brown and Levinson and Ervin-Tripp as determining request variation (P, D, R, nature of task, & request form) was obtained in an analysis of variance of factor scores on the factor *Functional Appropriateness*. Patterns of the distribution of formal variants in terms of these social-contextual factors provided some support for predictions derived from their frameworks. It was concluded that whereas broad sociological dimensions such as status/power, social distance/familiarity, and size of the requested act were important influences on the distinctions made by people evaluating the appropriateness of situated requests, other situational features referred to by some researchers as 'context-internal' also contributed to people's evaluations.

Investigation of 'context-internal' factors was considered to necessitate a different approach from the gathering of evaluations of requests-in-context using rating-scale methodology. An approach in which participants were encouraged to discuss their perceptions of formal variants in particular contexts was adopted in the two final studies. In Study IV, participants' explanatory accounts of their choices and non-choices of request alternatives in particular scenarios were examined. The forced-choice methodology employed in this study provided no more evidence than did the rating-scale technique to support predictions that indirect directive forms such as hints would be perceived as more likely when weighty or serious request acts were involved. It was recognized that this failure to confirm expectations might have resulted from the nature of the scenarios used to depict 'weighty' or 'imposing' contextual conditions rather than from inadequacies in available models of request distribution. However, the failure of other experimental studies to generate patterns of indirect hint usage that coincided with Brown and Levinson's predictions, together with the patterns of hint use in samples of requests uttered by speakers in the two natural conversational settings observed in the research reported here, lent support to the proposal that the distribution of such off-record forms is likely to be more complicated than has previously been suggested.

Reasons given by participants for their choices of request alternatives in this study cast further doubt on the theoretical assumption of straightforward association between
indirectness and politeness in linguistic variation, while also providing some insight into apparent inconsistencies in conclusions regarding hint use in previous research. It appeared that hints can be regarded as appropriate to both familiar and unfamiliar addressees but that these evaluations may be dependent upon other concurrent contextual conditions.

Information provided by participants in Study IV was also used to assess the general issue of whether politeness or appropriateness considerations motivated the choice of request forms. The findings were argued to add weight to the proposition that formal variants of speech acts such as directives do not carry particular politeness values, but rather that politeness meanings are influenced by the situational frames in which they occur. In this view, linguistic variation is conceptualized as due to participants' shared understandings of the appropriateness of forms in social contexts rather than to considerations of politeness (e.g., Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Blum-Kulka, 1990). The findings also challenged the view that increasing indirectness is inevitably associated with increasing politeness in requesting as argued by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), and were interpreted as supportive of Wierzbicka's (1985) proposal that direct speech is not always taken as conveying an absence of politeness and, conversely, that indirectness is not always reflective of politeness. It was concluded that rather than taking such an association for granted, researchers need to focus on the social meanings that members of a speech community attribute to variants that differ in directness.

Study V was designed to examine participants' accounts of their choices and non-choices of situated request variants in greater detail than had been possible in the previous study, and to enable more systematic comparisons of the choices and explanations proffered by women and men. As had been the case in Study IV, participants' choices of request variants did not support predictions that the most indirect, off-record hint forms would be more likely in the most weighty scenarios. The most notable gender difference observed was that, for men, patterns of imbedded imperative and question directive choice were more consistent with predictions from Wolfson's (1988) Bulge theory of the distribution of linguistic forms than with predictions from either Brown and Levinson's or Ervin-Tripp's frameworks. Other findings provided further evidence to support the conclusion from Study IV that increasing
indirectness is not inevitably perceived as associated with increasing politeness in requesting. Accounts provided by participants in both studies revealed that they were sensitive to the problem of being over-polite in context.

The findings from this series of studies suggest, when taken together, that although the perceived appropriateness of situated request forms is broadly affected by social-contextual factors such as power/status, familiarity/social distance, and imposition value of the task, as suggested by investigators such as Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and Ervin-Tripp (1976), variation in terms of such broad contextual factors does not tell the whole story. It was argued that a range of situation-specific or context-internal factors that are not captured by such broad sociological dimensions as are suggested in these models is also involved in people's assessments of the appropriateness of strategic request variants. If we are to increase our understanding of the types of contextual knowledge that people make use of in requesting situations, further work focussing on the situational features that are salient determinants of request variation from the point of view of participants is required, rather than more studies that take broad social-contextual factors for granted as part of the systematic manipulation of experimental conditions designed to test the validity of available models. At the broadest level, what the present findings indicate is the need for further exploration, in a range of speech communities, of the social meanings of concepts such as politeness, indirectness, clarity, communicative effectiveness, and so on, that have often been taken for granted in previous sociolinguistic and pragmatic investigations, and also of the ways in which such notions figure in people's social-contextual knowledge in relation to particular speech acts.
STATEMENT

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

Date 9/3/96
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Research Problem

The research problem addressed in this thesis derives from the observation that commonly, when people make requests, they do not use the most economical and explicit form to achieve their ends. Imperative forms, for example *Open the door.*, are frequently eschewed in favour of more indirect alternatives, such as:

*Can you open the door?*
*I want you to open the door.*
*Do you want to open the door?*
*Would you mind opening the door?*
*Could I ask you to open the door?*
*Why don't you open the door?*
*Are you going to leave me standing out here all day?*

The questions of why directive acts occur with such variety, what factors determine their social distribution, and what social meanings\(^1\) are attributed to such variation constitute the point of departure for the present research. Investigations directed towards answering these general questions focus on the types of situational/contextual knowledge that influence how people make and understand requests. I will argue that people's knowledge of particular social situations/contextual features results in certain requests being viewed as appropriate within particular settings. The issue of whether appropriateness conceived in this way has the same social meaning as politeness will also be examined. Furthermore, the question of how considerations of clarity or communicative effectiveness figure in people's situational/contextual knowledge of requesting, and in the meanings they attribute to request variation, will also be addressed. The general issue of whether women and men exhibit similar types of contextual knowledge and meaning attribution with respect to requesting is a theme that is developed throughout the investigation.
1.2 Rationale and Significance

The overall purpose of the present study is to contribute to an understanding of the ways in which contexts influence the use and interpretation of requests. Although it is generally accepted that context is crucial to the meaning of linguistic forms, research into which aspects of context influence the selection and interpretation of particular linguistic acts is not extensive. Theoretical structures and explanatory schemes have been proposed to account for observed regularities in situated language use. Recent cross-cultural evidence has cast some doubt over the generalizability and explanatory adequacy of these frameworks, however. The present study aims to evaluate the adequacy of proposed models of contextual determination using evidence from speakers' use of, and beliefs/expectations about, requesting in particular situations. The request usage of speakers of Australian English is examined in this study in an attempt to extend findings about the distribution of linguistic-forms-in-context to an English-speaking culture in which there has been relatively little systematic research of this type (compared with, for example, work focussing on American, British, and New Zealand English).

The value of this study lies in its potential contribution, via the collection and discussion of linguistic data using a variety of methods, to an evolving structure of knowledge concerning the nature of 'context', a notion considered fundamental, within the field, to linguistic meaning and use. The study also attempts to contribute to an understanding of the relationship between gender and socio-pragmatic variation. Although a considerable research literature has shown that there are differences in the communicative styles of women and men, a great deal remains to be known about the ways in which women and men use social, contextual knowledge in making and understanding particular communicative acts, and about how they attribute social meanings such as politeness or appropriateness to instances of linguistic variation in particular social situations. The study addresses the adequacy of various explanatory schemes or models of these knowledge- and meaning-processes, and attempts an evaluation of two important frameworks that are based on observed distributions of directives in natural language data: those of Ervin-Tripp (1976) and Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987).

On another level, the study contributes to the sociolinguistic data-base for Australian English, albeit in a limited domain: for one type of speech-act use by particular categories of
speaker in specific situations. Within these limitations, however, these sociolinguistic data provide valuable information as to the range of strategies for requesting that are used by speakers in particular situations, as well as information concerning their frequencies and social distribution. The findings of the present study also have potential application in the area of cross-cultural communication and, in particular, in second language learning, where knowledge of how to 'read' and use contextual information like a native speaker constitutes a valuable component in the teaching of communicative competence.3

1.2.1 Need for the Study

According to Blum-Kulka, Danet, & Gherson (1985: 114), there have been "surprisingly few studies that have actually attempted to empirically document the use of requests in any particular society". Ervin-Tripp's (1976) work on the social distribution of directives in American English was a ground-breaking study. Predictions based on the patterns she described have since been tested using directives from samples of naturally-occurring speech recorded in particular settings for American English (Pearson, 1989; Pufahl-Ba.t, 1986; Weigal & Weigal, 1985), British and New Zealand English (Holmes, 1983), and Israeli Hebrew (Blum-Kulka et al., 1985). As Wolfson (1988) has pointed out, however, it cannot be assumed that all speakers of a particular language share the same norms and values or rules of speaking. British, American, New Zealand, and Australian speakers, for example, although all sharing English as their dominant language, can be contrasted as separate speech communities (following Hymes, 1972) in the sense of having different norms and values for aspects of language usage. The present research attempts, in a modest way, to document the use of requests by speakers of Australian English in particular settings. To the extent that evidence about requesting behaviour in particular situations exists for other varieties of English, comparisons can be made with the findings for Australian English that are presented here.4

Similarly, in the field of language and gender differences, there have been relatively few studies that have investigated the distribution of requests in the speech of women and men. A great deal more work on the documentation of requesting behaviour is required in order to build a clearer picture of the possibility of systematic situational and (sub)cultural distributions for directive acts. The present study, which focuses on request usage in particular situations by
female and male speakers of Australian English, will contribute to the relatively small body of empirical evidence available in the field at the present time. Pauwels (1991: 319), for example, concluded her survey of Australian-based language and gender research by pointing out that although, in terms of phonological and grammatical variation, the linguistic behaviour of English-speaking women and men in Australia closely resembles that of men and women in other parts of the English-speaking world, "Australian data on sex-specific speech styles and on speech strategies used by women and men in various linguistic environments are very scarce" (see also Pauwels, 1987).

The present study can contribute, also, to an understanding of a concept that has been drawn upon repeatedly in recent work to explain situational variation in a range of speech acts: the concept of politeness. The extent to which theoretical models of linguistic politeness coincide with the ways in which ordinary language users employ the term to account for appropriate language use in particular situations has not been questioned by most scholars working within the field. Although politeness constitutes one aspect of appropriateness conditions with respect to situated requesting, other concerns, such as the perceived need for clarity or communicative effectiveness, have also been suggested as important components. One aim of the present research is to attempt an examination of the concept of politeness from the perspective of ordinary language users by investigating their accounts of situated request usage.

1.3 Theoretical Framework of the Study

In order to construct an historical and conceptual context for the development of the central concerns of this thesis, it has been necessary to consider the literatures of a number of allied disciplines. Explanations for variation in language use and interpretation have been developed within philosophy, linguistics, anthropology, sociology, and psychology by scholars working within the frameworks of a variety of language-oriented subdisciplines or fields, including sociolinguistics, pragmatics, the ethnography of speaking, ethnomethodology, and conversational analysis. The notion of speech acts constitutes a point of reference for the explanations of language use and meaning that have developed in each of these fields. Speech Act Theory (SAT) emerged in philosophy with the work of Austin (1962), which in turn had its background in the writings of Wittgenstein (1958). Wittgenstein emphasized the
dependence of meaning on use, that is, on the activities of which language was a part. Austin's concern, later developed and systematized by Searle (1965, 1967, 1969, 1975, 1976), was with the kind of acts that language could be used to accomplish; acts such as promising, requesting, apologising, warning, congratulating, thanking, and so on.

The focus of a great deal of the theoretical and empirical inquiry surrounding SAT has been upon the phenomenon of indirect speech acts. In traditional speech-act-theoretical terms, a distinction was made between direct speech acts, in which the speaker's meaning coincided with the literal meaning of the sentence uttered [e.g., *I request that you vacate these premises forthwith.* (performative construction), or *Get out of here.* (imperative)], and indirect speech acts, in which the speaker's meaning was more than or something other than the literal sentence meaning. The problem posed by indirect speech acts required an explanation of how it was possible for the conveyed or illocutionary meaning of an utterance to differ from its literal or surface meaning. How was it, for example, that a listener might correctly interpret *It's getting cold in here.*, as a request that she shut a window, when the utterance had the literal form of a statement? Recent developments in pragmatics and sociolinguistics have led to a questioning of the validity of speech-act-theory formulations of the 'problem' of indirectness. Concern has shifted to the more general question of the nature of language understanding in context. The issue of so-called 'indirect' usage is no longer considered to constitute a special case.

These and other issues concerning indirectness in language use are discussed in some detail in the review of the literature presented in Chapter 2, where they will serve as a spring-board for the development of a comparison between language-based and context-based theories of interpretation. The notion of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) is a key construct in this approach. The fundamental assumption of this notion is that the achievement of successful communication is grounded in people's knowledge, not only about what is grammatically correct in their language, but also in their knowledge and expectations about the extent to which a speech act is socially appropriate and acceptable in particular contexts. Hymes (1977: 52) defined the fundamental problem facing linguists as "to discover and explicate the competence that enables members of a community to conduct and interpret speech". This was to be achieved via "descriptive analyses from a variety of communities".
One explanatory model for the types of knowledge and meanings that people bring to bear on the phenomenon of indirectness that is examined in this thesis is Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory (which itself relies heavily on aspects of SAT). Another framework that will be considered is that presented by Ervin-Tripp (1976, 1980, 1981; Ervin-Tripp, Strage, Lampert, & Bell, 1987) concerning the social distribution of requests and the social meanings that are attributed to such variation. The investigation also makes use of explanatory frameworks from the field of language and gender research in order to compare the knowledge and expectations held by women and men about directness and indirectness in particular contexts.

These, then, are the sources that I have drawn upon in investigating the role of context in the production and interpretation of requests. The research proceeds generally along a line that can be described as part of the field of inquiry that Leech (1983) referred to as socio-pragmatics.

1.3.1 Why Study Requests?

The present research is directed towards an investigation of the communicative act of requesting, in particular, because of the rich variation that is evident in the linguistic forms used to perform requests, and because certain social implications have been observed to attach to the choice of formal variants in certain settings (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). Within the general sociolinguistic discourse, explanations of such variation take the following broad form. By virtue of their nature as acts of imposition or intrusion upon an addressee, request forms vary in directness according to the features of the social context (such as the power and social-distance relationships of the interactants; the imposition level of the request) within which they occur. Within this explanatory framework, the study of such variation provides insights into processes underlying strategic linguistic choice and interpretation, and the attribution of social meaning.

Requests, together with other forms such as orders, commands, pleadings, and so on were described by Searle (1969, 1976) as members of the speech-act category called Directives. Acts in this category were defined as involving those whose primary function was that of getting a hearer to do something, that is, to perform an action at some time in the future that s/he might not otherwise have performed (see also Gordon & Lakoff, 1975; Labov & Fanshel, 1977). In the present investigation, acts of requesting will be considered to involve any verbal
attempts by a speaker to get a hearer to carry out actions (or, indeed, to refrain from actions) where such actions include a non-linguistic response. A distinction is made between requests as so defined, and questions, in which a speaker attempts to get the hearer to perform an action of answering, or providing information only (following Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Holmes, 1983; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975).

1.3.2 Research Questions

In order to address the general purposes of this study as set out above, several specific research questions are examined:

1. What do theorists and researchers mean by 'context' as the notion applies to language use, and how does context enter into the interpretation process?

The specific aims of this preliminary phase of the research project are:

(i) to review the types of concepts and issues that scholars have employed in discussions of context in relation to language use.
(ii) to compare some taxonomies of contextual features that have been proposed.
(iii) to contrast context-based and language-based models of indirect speech-act understanding by examining how people interpret an extremely indirect, non-conventional form of request in a natural speech situation.

2. What is the social distribution of the request strategies produced within particular situations by speakers of Australian English?

The specific aims of this element of the research are:

(i) to investigate similarities and differences between patterns of situated directive speech-act use in samples of Australian English and those described in the literature for American, British, and New Zealand English.
(ii) to examine which of the social and situational features described as determinative of request variation by sociolinguists investigating directive use in a range of settings and languages coincide empirically with request variation in Australian English samples.
3. To what extent do shared beliefs/expectations exist about the appropriateness of particular request forms in different contexts, and what social and affective meanings are attached to variation in request usage?

The specific aims of this element of the research are:

(i) to examine evaluations of particular categories of request variants in a range of simulated situations;

(ii) to examine choices of 'most likely' request variant from a number of formal alternatives in a range of simulated situations;

(iii) to begin a characterization of the types of knowledge about social situations that are brought to bear on acts of requesting by examining explanatory accounts of such evaluations and choices, and the types of social and affective interpretations that are made of dispreferred variants in particular contexts.

4. (a). What is the relationship between judgements of the appropriateness of situated request variants and of their politeness?

(b). To what extent are politeness and indirectness parallel dimensions with respect to acts of requesting?

The aims here are:

(i) to compare evaluations of the appropriateness, politeness, and effectiveness of request forms in context in order to disentangle the relationship between these judgements, and to examine what roles they might play in the process of request selection and understanding.

(ii) to examine folk-formulations of politeness - a dimension proposed by theorists to lie at the heart of the requesting process - by comparing explanatory accounts of the situated use of request forms that vary in terms of their directness/indirectness.

5. Are there gender differences with respect to the act of requesting?

This research question is addressed in various studies throughout the thesis. Specific aims relating to the issue of gender in requesting are as follows:

(i) to examine variation in the interactional style exhibited by/attributed to women and men (that is, to identify whether there is a tendency for speakers of a particular gender to use more direct/indirect requests, or to use particular request variants).
(ii) to compare women's and men's assessments of request variants in different (simulated) social situations, and their perceptions of the relative importance attached to particular social and situational parameters.

(iii) to examine the social and affective meanings attributed to request variants in different contexts by women and men, in particular by comparing the relative politeness attributed to strategies varying along the directness/indirectness continuum.

1.3.3 Methods of Investigation

In order to investigate these research questions, a multi-method approach was adopted, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative elements. The data under examination include both naturally-occurring and elicited request forms, as well as evaluations and accounts of situated request variants.

In Study I, recordings were made, in a natural interactional setting, of responses to an extremely indirect and, for its context, unconventional 'request' form. The broad patterns of response are used as evidence in a comparison of language- and context-based theories of the process of indirect speech-act interpretation.

In Study II, a corpus of naturally-occurring requests was collected by recording instances of directive use by a small sample of Australian English speakers in two settings (one, a work setting, the other, a domestic setting). The varieties of request forms observed, and their social distribution, are described and comparisons are made with similar request corpora that have been reported for other English language varieties.

Another approach used in this investigation of requesting involved the methodology of role-play. Participants were shown scenarios that depicted particular social relationships between the interactants and were asked to take the role of the speaker who was about to make a request that involved either a high or a low level of imposition. In Study III, people's ratings of the appropriateness, politeness, and effectiveness of alternate request strategies in particular scenarios are used to test predictions from models of the situational determinants of request variation. These evaluations are also used to examine the validity of claims concerning the motivation underlying selection of request strategies in context. In Studies IV and V, participants' choices of 'most likely' request alternatives are contrasted with their choices of
'most polite' in particular scenarios. In these studies, semi-structured interviews with participants are also used to obtain accounts of these request choices and of the meanings attached to alternative choices in particular scenario settings. Throughout the research, comparisons are made between the request usage of women and men, and the similarities and differences in their evaluations and accounts of situated request variation are examined.

Further discussion of the rationale for particular choices in methodology and analysis is presented in the chapters that deal with specific research questions. The general structure of the thesis is as follows. After providing a general theoretical framework for the overall research program (Chapter 2), my starting point, empirically, will be to show how a social context can constrain the way in which people comprehend a very indirect request (Chapter 3). I will then present a brief review of the literature relevant to definitions of the notion of 'context' in relation to language use in Chapter 4, followed, in Chapter 5, by a summary of empirical investigations of the influence of contextual features on language use. In Chapter 6, I review theoretical models concerning motivation for the use of indirectness in speech acts such as requests, with particular emphasis on the issue of politeness. Chapter 7 contains a summary of available knowledge on the effects of gender on language use, and presents predictions relevant to the studies of situated requesting that are undertaken in this thesis. I will then describe a corpus of naturally-occurring request variants collected from Australian English speakers in particular situations (Chapter 8), before reporting studies based on request choices, evaluations, and accounts elicited in scenario studies (Chapters 9, 10, & 11).

Before commencing the literature review and empirical sections of the thesis, however, I should like to discuss some limitations on the scope or extent of this research. The discussion will provide a framework for the interpretation of the findings that are reported.

1.4 Limitations of the Research

The study described here falls within the general field of sociolinguistic enquiry in that it seeks to investigate systematic relationships between language use and social structure. The overall objective of the research is primarily descriptive in the sense that it aims to gain information about speech norms with respect to requesting (following Hymes' (1977: 43) suggestion that the primary concern of those attempting to explicate communicative competence
should be with descriptive analyses]. Underlying this particular sociolinguistic approach, or this particular discourse on language and society, are assumptions that can be questioned, for example: that various features of language can be explained on the basis of norms that exist as some simple expression of social structure, and that, more generally, language is a reflection of an underlying social order. It is beyond the scope of the present study to develop a full-blown critique of these assumptions. I mention them at the outset, however, in order that it not be assumed that the underlying epistemology within which the present research is situated has been taken for granted. Within this general sociolinguistic framework, however, it is possible to consider the particular limitations of the work undertaken here.

The present research is delimited by its focus on particular aspects of the communicative process with respect to requesting, by its use of particular samples of participants, and by the particular methods employed in the investigation. First, with respect to the communication of requests, the effects of prosody, intonation, and stress on the use and understanding of formal variants are not investigated in the present research. Paralinguistic concomitants of linguistic meaning (for example, gestures) are also omitted from this enquiry. Although the importance of such elements is acknowledged (see Potter (1983), for example, for a review of linguists' beliefs about the role of intonation in language), their study is considered to be beyond the scope of the present work. Furthermore, this research is not concerned with the effects of individual difference variables or dispositional features on communication style. Investigation of the effects of such variables as 'cognitive complexity', 'rhetorical sensitivity', and 'machiavellianism', has been undertaken in relation to compliance-gaining (for example, Hale, 1986; Hosman, 1978; Leichty & Applegate, 1991; Roloff & Barnicott, 1978; Tracy, Craig, Smith, & Spisak, 1984). The evidence suggests that situational factors are more important than individual differences in influencing the use of request variants. This type of research is based on the assumption that attributes of the 'person' are stable across situations. The investigation of such an assumption lies outside the scope of the present research.

Second, with respect to the participants sampled, the findings of this research are limited in terms of their generalizability. Participants in three of the five studies reported here, in which data comprised the evaluation or selection of request alternatives in response to different scenarios, were university students. In order to explore people's knowledge of the
appropriateness and politeness of request variants in different situations, the ideal would have been to select participants representative of a wide range of ages, social experience, background, and so on. However, because of the large number of participants required for these studies and because it was assumed that the communicative competence of students with respect to requesting would not differ vastly from that of other members of the speech community, it was deemed reasonable to undertake the research with this group of subjects. Further investigation, drawing on the knowledge of alternative groups of participants is, of course, required.

Findings from the two 'natural' conversational studies reported in this research are also limited, in terms of their generalizability, to the narrow range of participant roles and speech settings investigated here. It is also recognized that the number of speech participants involved in these studies was very small. However, in terms of the primary research objectives of this part of the research program: (i) to compare patterns of request usage by speakers of Australian English with those reported within particular contexts for speakers of other varieties of English, and (ii) to test the validity of specific predictions concerning the situational determinants of variation, small sample sizes were considered adequate given that a relatively large corpus of requests had been generated.

Thirdly, perhaps the main limitation of this research derives from the methodology adopted in rating-scale and forced-choice scenario studies of request variation. It is not claimed that the data generated using these methods represent the ways in which people actually make requests in real-life interactions. Moreover, it is recognized that in real interaction, politeness is most often realized sequentially rather than at the level of the individual act. The limitations inherent in such an investigative focus are duly accepted, however, it must be said that the objectives of the present research are different from those typically underlying conversation- and discourse-analytic studies which are concerned with the sequential use of politeness phenomena. The data generated by the methods described above are treated, in this study, as evidence of the participants' beliefs and expectations concerning the types of request that would typically occur in particular situations.

The inherent limitations of self-report data are also recognized. It is likely that the reported responses to scenario presentations will represent stereotypical and conservative examples of
language use. Indeed evidence from a number of sources has indicated differences between reported and actual language use. For example, Wolfson, D'Amico-Reisner, and Huber (1983) found that American English speakers reported using forms of invitations that were rare or absent in observed interactions. Conversely, these speakers expressed strong disapproval of forms that they were actually observed to use with some frequency in these interactions. Similarly, Blum-Kulka and House (1989) found that the frequency with which Israeli Hebrew speakers reported using hint forms of request was only half that of the actual occurrence of these forms in a sample of natural language data. It is perhaps worth pointing out that Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki, and Ogino (1986) saw some advantage in the use of self-report data to examine broad claims about polite language use. They argued, in justification of the method, that such data are more likely to tap people's "mental prototypes" (353), that is, the prototypes of variants occurring in an individual's actual speech, citing Hudson's (1980: 80) suggestion that prototype theory can account for "how people categorize the social factors to which they relate language... ".

Another aspect of the role-play methodology that limits the generalizability of the findings involves the limited range of contexts (and request alternatives) that was presented to participants. Of necessity, the scenarios reflect the researcher's range of experience with the world and this may not coincide with that of participants in the study. In their favour, however, it can be said that the findings generated by the scenario-based approaches employed in the present research provide useful information about which features of specific contexts influence participants' evaluations of, and choices among, request strategies that differ in directness. As Holmes (1990a) pointed out, such methods have the advantage of obtaining participants' responses to situations in which particular social-contextual factors can be systematically varied for contrastive purposes. Moreover by obtaining participants' evaluations or choices of request variants in a range of scenarios constructed around broad social parameters, interactions between these broad contextual factors and the local, particular features of example situations can be teased out. These findings can be used to evaluate the adequacy of models of situational variation that themselves have their origins in the analysis of limited samples of natural language data. As has been mentioned by a number of researchers working in the general area of socio-pragmatics (for example, Blum-Kulka, House, & Kaspar, 1989;
Holmes, 1990a; Leichty & Applegate, 1991; Preisler, 1986; Rintell & Mitchell, 1989), it is extremely difficult and resource-consuming to attempt to collect natural language data in situations that correspond to the full range of combinations of social features that have been specified as influencing variation in such models. It is hoped that the combination of methods involving self-reported use and actual usage in naturally-occurring contexts by both student and non-student respondents will result in data of increased authenticity that can provide insights of some value with respect to the general area of request variation in context. Taking into account the nature of the limitations discussed above, the findings of this study might usefully be interpreted as contributing one component towards a broader research scheme that has been described by Holmes (1991: 12) as requiring "a cyclic and multidimensional approach to understanding and describing speech acts".

As Katz and Fodor (1964: 489) rightly pointed out, investigations that concern themselves with contextualized understanding run the risk of including within their charter "the total sum of human knowledge and beliefs"; for the background to linguistic interpretation has such a scope. The concern of the research presented here will, therefore, be restricted to investigation of those contextual features commonly suggested by theorists to underpin the processes of request use and understanding. Before embarking on a review of this research literature, I will present, in the following chapter, a broad overview of the historical and conceptual developments that constitute the background to the central concerns of this thesis.

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1In the present research, the notion of social meaning is used to refer to "the symbolic significance of alternate linguistic choices", after Gumperz (1980a: 137).

2In this thesis, the term 'gender' is used in preference to 'sex' in order to emphasize the social and cultural nature of most differences between females and males (see Pauwels, 1987; Schlegel, 1989; Unger & Crawford, 1993).

3As Kaspar (1990: 193) has pointed out, "Not-so-competent participants [in social interaction], such as nonnative speakers, suffer the perennial risk of inadvertently violating politeness norms, thereby forfeiting their claims to being treated as social equals".

4The present study focuses on patterns of request usage among middle-class urban speakers of Australian English in particular settings. The findings cannot be generalized to all speakers of Australian English in all request situations. It is to be hoped, however, that the findings will be of value in aiding an understanding of the norms associated with requesting by Australian English speakers.

5As well as having literal, propositional meaning, utterances also have social meaning and force in the sense that they constitute the performance of acts, for example, of requesting, promising,
apologizing, and so on. The power of speech to perform specific actions is its illocutionary force (Austin, 1962).

6 According to Saville-Troike (1988: 662-3), communicative competence refers to "both knowledge and expectation of who may or may not speak in certain settings, when to speak and when to remain silent, whom one may speak to, how one may talk to persons of different statuses and roles, what appropriate nonverbal behaviors are in various contexts, what the routines for turn-taking are in conversation, how to ask for and give information, how to request, how to offer or decline assistance or cooperation, how to exercise power, how to enforce discipline, and the like - in short, everything involving the use of language and other communicative dimensions (including the arrangement of space) in particular social settings".

7 Leech (1983: 10) described socio-pragmatics as a field involving the sociological interface of pragmatics in which it is realized that "pragmatic descriptions ultimately have to be relative to specific social conditions".

8 Participants' responses to many of the scenarios presented in the interview studies indicated that they had experienced real circumstances that were similar in many respects to the situations being described. A selection of such responses is presented as Appendix A.
CHAPTER 2
THEORIES OF SPEECH-ACT UNDERSTANDING:
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND CRITIQUE

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present an overview of the theoretical and research literature that forms an historical and conceptual background to the study of communicative acts such as requesting. The purpose of this general introductory review is merely to provide an indication of the main directions taken by researchers, and to summarize the key constructs and general issues of interpretation that have arisen in what is a large and complex field of inquiry that spans several disciplines.

One body of literature relevant to the study of requests comprises those studies concerned with the processes by which indirect speech acts are understood. Within this literature, approaches have been described as falling into two camps (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Cicourel, 1980). Scholars taking one approach, predominantly philosophers and linguists, have viewed indirect speech-act understanding as resulting from the hearer's perception of a mismatch between the literal force of an utterance and its context. Their concern was to explain the process of inference which allows hearers to attribute some illocutionary force other than that associated with the sentence type to an indirect utterance. Scholars taking another approach, operating predominantly within sociological/anthropological frameworks, did not regard illocutionary force as built into sentence form. Utterances were regarded as being frequently equivocal in force, and the availability of a variety of means to achieve a particular communicative end was viewed as a vehicle by which speakers could convey additional social meanings.

Among the most coherent and comprehensive expositions of the philosophical tradition in speech-act analyses are the reviews by Stephen Levinson (1980, 1983). Levinson, himself an anthropologist, advocated a pragmatic approach to the problem of request understanding, which will be reviewed in detail in Section 2.3. Levinson's description of the internal difficulties associated with the explanations provided by philosophers and formal linguists for indirect speech acts is summarized below.
2.2 Philosophical and Formal Linguistic Approaches to Indirect Speech Acts: The Literal Force Hypothesis

The fundamental assumption underlying speech-act analyses in the philosophical tradition is that all sentences have a literal force or meaning which is inherent in their form and which is independent of context. When there is a mismatch between the illocutionary or speech-act force attributed to an utterance and its literal or surface form (as occurs in so-called indirect speech acts), some explanation of the hearer's ability to comprehend is required. Levinson identified 'idiom theories' as one type of explanation for indirect speech acts that is based on the assumption of literal force. In this type of explanation (see Sadock, 1974, 1975; Green, 1975), many indirect forms are considered to be idioms for their explicit performative equivalents (e.g., Can you open this jar? is an idiom for I request you to open this jar.). The ease with which such indirect speech acts are understood is explained by the proposal that "they are not compositionally analysed, but merely recorded whole in the lexicon with the appropriate semantic equivalence" (Levinson, 1983: 268). The problems associated with idiom theories are so numerous that they are no longer seriously entertained as explanations for indirect speech-act understanding. In particular, Levinson argued that in order to explain how a hearer determines the meaning of an indirect speech act on a particular occasion of use, idiom theory requires input from a pragmatic theory of interpretation in context. The necessity for such a theory of inference would then make idiom theory redundant.

Another type of explanation for the comprehension of indirect speech acts involves the claim that the indirect or conveyed force is an additional meaning which is inferred by taking contextual conditions into account. The essential properties of such 'inference theories' were summarized by Levinson (1983: 270) as follows:

(i) The literal meaning and the literal force of an utterance is computed by, and available to, participants.

(ii) For an utterance to be an indirect speech act, there must be an inference-trigger, i.e. some indication that the literal meaning and/or literal force is conversationally inadequate in the context and must be 'repaired' by some inference.

(iii) There must be some specific principles or rules of inference that will derive, from the literal meaning and force and the context, the relevant indirect force.

(iv) There must be pragmatically sensitive linguistic rules or constraints, which will govern the occurrence of, for example, pre-verbal please in both direct and indirect requests.
The views of Gordon and Lakoff (1971, 1975) and of Searle (1975) represent examples of such 'inference theories'. Gordon and Lakoff assumed that the trigger that set off the inference process for the understanding of indirect speech acts was provided whenever the literal force of an utterance was blocked by the context. Rules guiding the process of inference, labelled 'conversational postulates' by Gordon and Lakoff, specified that certain kinds of questions or statements can be used with the same kind of meaning as certain kinds of requests. For example, one could indirectly perform a request by stating or questioning a felicity condition on a speech act in contexts where the literal force of the assertion or question was blocked.

Felicity conditions were specified circumstances required for the success of particular speech acts. For example, for requests, felicity conditions would be that (a) the speaker (S) desires/wants the hearer (H) to do act A; (b) S assumes that H is able to do A; (c) S assumes that H is willing to do A; (d) S assumes that H would not do A in the absence of S's request. The following request examples are consistent with this explanation:

Mother to teenage son:
A1: I want you to take out the rubbish.
A2: Can you take the rubbish outside?
A3: You could take the rubbish outside.

Example A1 involves the **statement of the sincerity condition** on requests: A request is felicitous if S sincerely wants H to do the requested act. Example A2 involves the **questioning of the ability condition** on requests: A felicitous request requires that the H has the ability to perform the requested act. Example A3 involves **asserting the ability condition**.

The plausibility of Gordon and Lakoff's explanation has been questioned by Bates (1976) in the light of evidence from longitudinal studies of children's linguistic abilities. She found that children as young as 18 months used indirect forms of request. At this age, Bates argued, children would be insufficiently cognitively developed to perform the types of operations on conversational postulates that had been proposed by Gordon and Lakoff. Levinson (1983: 481-2) also questioned the utility of a theory of understanding based on "some huge set of ad hoc conventional rules for constructing and interpreting indirect speech acts". He used the following example to illustrate the point:
A: I could eat the whole of that cake.
B: Thanks. It's quite easy to make actually.

B's correct interpretation of A's remark as a compliment does not occur, according to Levinson, "by virtue of any general rule of the sort 'saying that you can eat the whole of X counts as a compliment on X'" (481).

John Searle's (1975) version of an inference theory involved a set of conditions similar to those described by Gordon and Lakoff that were considered "necessary for the successful and felicitous performance" (44) of directive speech acts. Like them, Searle also generalized from these conditions to describe a number of ways in which indirect requests might be made:

1. by asking whether or stating that a preparatory condition (H is able to perform act A) obtains.
2. by asking whether or stating that the propositional content condition (S predicts a future act A of H) obtains.
3. by stating that the sincerity condition (S wants H to do A) obtains.
4. by stating that or asking whether there are any good or overriding reasons for doing A (except where the reason is that H wants or wishes etc., H to do A, in which case S can only ask whether H wants, wishes, etc., to do A).

Searle's theory differed from that proposed by Gordon and Lakoff, however, in that the inference trigger (property (ii) in Levinson's catalogue of the features of inference theories) was based on Grice's (1975) widely cited theory of conversational cooperation. This theory holds that conversation, and interaction generally, are underpinned by the assumption that participants will cooperate with each other. With the general "Cooperative Principle", Grice (1975: 45) formulated this understanding as a kind of directive to which all interactants adhere: "make your contribution such as is required at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the task exchange in which you are engaged".

Grice described four maxims which participants may be expected to follow in the production of conversation that is in accordance with the general principle of cooperation. These maxims or rules define the conditions for conveying factual information in the most efficient, clear, precise manner possible.

1. Maxim of Quantity: Make your contribution as informative as, and not more informative than, is required.
2. Maxim of Quality: Do not say what you believe to be false, nor that for which you lack evidence.

3. Maxim of Relation: Be relevant.

4. Maxim of Manner: Avoid obscurity of expression, ambiguity; be brief and orderly.

According to Grice, although natural conversation rarely appears to follow these rules, deviations from the code of assumptions are meaningful and convey additional information. In particular, he proposed that any conversational contribution that results in the violation of these maxims (and hence appears 'defective' or 'inadequate' in context) gives rise to 'conversational implicatures' or inferences on the part of the hearer which resolve the dissonance between what is said and the conversational maxim, and preserve the assumption that the cooperative principle is being observed. Such inferences are based on the hearer's knowledge of the 'felicity conditions' for the performance of requests in much the same way as outlined by Gordon and Lakoff (1975).

For all such indirect speech acts, Searle believed that the indirect meaning or force was conveyed in addition to the literal meaning. This belief was based on his observation that responses to the literal meaning of indirect speech acts were appropriate to the conveyed meaning as well. This perspective on the comprehension of indirect speech acts became a major focus of research interest for a number of years. It has been referred to, by Levinson (1980), as the 'literal force hypothesis' on indirect speech-act understanding. A sketch of the types of evidence generated in relation to this hypothesis is presented in the next section.

2.2.1 Empirical Studies of the Literal Force Hypothesis

The supposition that utterance understanding involves an initial processing of the literal meaning or force of a speech act is contained within the following three-stage model of the comprehension of indirect speech acts as presented by Clark and Lucy (1975: 66). The model is based on Searle's (1975) inference theory.

Three-stage model of serial processing:

(1) H derives and represents the literal meaning of a sentence.
(2) H tests this interpretation against context to see whether it is plausible or not. If this literal interpretation does seem appropriate to context, it is taken to be the intended meaning. If, however, it contradicts some obvious fact or violates a rule of conversation (e.g., a conversational postulate), this interpretation is rejected.

(3) If such rejection occurs, the literal meaning is combined with an appropriate rule of conversation and this leads, by deduction, to the appropriate intended meaning.

This model predicts that indirect requests should take longer to process than literal or direct requests. Clark and Lucy (1975) tested this prediction by measuring the time taken by subjects to verify indirect or direct (literal) requests that were flashed on to computer screens. The results confirmed the prediction and were interpreted by the researchers as support for the literal force model of indirect speech-act understanding. The model's appropriateness was soon questioned, however, on the grounds that it ignored the role of context in interpretation. This criticism is discussed in some detail in the next section.

2.2.2 The Importance of Context

The experimental methodology used by Clark and Lucy (1975) to test the serial-processing model was criticized by Ortony, Schallert, Reynolds, and Antos (1978) and Gibbs (1979), amongst others. In the Clark and Lucy study, test sentences were presented to subjects in isolation from any situational and linguistic context which might have facilitated interpretation. Both Ortony et al. and Gibbs found that the results reported by Clark and Lucy could be replicated only if sentences were presented to subjects with insufficient contextual support. When appropriate prior contexts were provided, Ortony et al. (1978) found that indirect sentences took no longer to comprehend than literal ones, and Gibbs (1979) found that subjects took less time to understand the indirect meaning than the literal meaning of sentences. Gibbs (1979: 10) argued that the reaction-time differences observed by Clark and Lucy (1975) could have reflected difficulties experienced by speakers attempting to understand requests of different linguistic styles in the absence of appropriate context rather than being indicative of additional stages of processing in which the literal meaning of an utterance is first determined. Gibbs believed that hearers used context to understand indirect utterances directly; they did not have to start the comprehension process with an analysis of literal form. Ortony et al. (1978) reached a similar conclusion. They argued that the relatedness of an utterance to context, rather
than its literalness or non literalness, was the prime determinant of the amount of processing required.

Goffman (1981: 30-1) also argued that linguists' investigations of indirect speech acts were coloured by their penchant for using, as examples, sentences isolated from context. His opinion regarding the study of "sentences out of context" is neatly summarized in his use of Gunter's (1974: 17) description of such an enterprise as "the study of oddities at which we have trained ourselves not to boggle". In other words, as Enkvist (1980: 76) pointed out, "even uncontextualised grammatical examples have a context in being uncontextualised grammatical examples". The perspectives presented by Goffman (1981), Ortony et al. (1978), and Gibbs (1979) reflect the position advocated by the original speech-act philosopher, John Austin. He maintained that "what we have to study is not the sentence", in its pure or unattached form, but the "issuing of a sentence in a situation" (1962: 139). Indeed, it has long been accepted that meanings are affected by the situational context. Similar sentiments were expressed by the anthropologist Malinowski (1923: 307) who noted that "the context of situation is indispensable for the understanding of the words".

According to Brown and Yule (1987: 223), however, "one of the most persuasive illusions which persists in the analysis of language" is the belief that people understand the meaning of a linguistic message "solely on the basis of the words and structure of the sentence[s] used to convey [it]". The importance of other cues for the conveyance of meaning; "cues for guiding interpretation that are embedded in the physical and interpersonal setting" in Goffman's (1981: 32) words; has led many scholars to the conclusion that the whole notion of the ambiguity inherent in indirect speech acts is one that is largely irrelevant when the context of utterance is taken into account. As Goffman (1981: 11) explained:

For although ... someone coming upon the line out of the context of events, relationships, and mutual knowingness in which it was originally voiced might misunderstand, the speaker and hearers nonetheless can be perfectly clear about what was intended - or at least no less clear than they are about an utterance meant to be taken at face value.

This position has been argued for a number of years. De Mauro (1967: 40), for example, put it this way:

A phrase is not normally pluri-semantic for the hearer but for him [sic] it is not isolated: he hears it in a precise setting made up of all he knows about the person who pronounces it, about his past experiences, his plans, about what the author of the phrase intended and so forth. This enormous bundle of information, not linguistically formalized,
helps the rapid selection of meaning best adapted to the situation in which the phrase was pronounced. Isolated from this framework, every phrase may be pluri-semantic.

Schegloff (1978) referred to the problem of the "ambiguity" of indirect speech acts in a similar way, as an "overhearer's problem". The attempted interpretation of a bit of conversation in isolation from information as to "what-is-being-talked-about" and a knowledge of fine-grained contextual detail, creates problems for analysts of types that are not experienced by the actual conversational participants. Many scholars (including, e.g., Donaldson, 1979; Enkvist, 1980; Ferrara, 1980; Franck, 1979; Labov, 1970, 1972) have made the same point.

Other empirical evidence supports the view that language understanding occurs in a way that is inherently dependent upon the context in which the linguistic interaction takes place. In a series of studies, Shatz (1978a & b) found that children as young as 19 months responded with action to indirect requests, even when such requests did not explicitly state the required action. This evidence is not consistent with processing models that present the comprehension of indirect requests as dependent upon a combination of linguistic knowledge, rules of conversation, and inferential processes. Rather, Shatz proposed that children of the age of two years are capable of mapping the language they hear onto the non-linguistic world of action and objects using some simple action-oriented strategy of the form, MOTHER SAYS, CHILD DOES. The motivation for such a strategy, she suggested, is the child's desire for the maintenance of mother contact. This model is consonant with her finding that children regularly responded with action even to ill-formed directives such as May you shut the door? Despite such evidence, and the persistence of scholarly criticism, research focussing on differences between literal and conveyed meanings of indirect speech acts has continued. Some additional examples will be reviewed in the following section in order to provide a conceptual framework for some of the empirical work to be described in subsequent chapters.

2.2.3 Further Evidence for the Comprehension of Literal Force

A number of studies have proposed alternatives to the 'three-stage' model of indirect speech-act interpretation that has literal meaning analysed first in a series of processing stages. In 'multiple-meaning' models, as they have been called by Gibbs (1982), it is held that both literal and indirect meanings are processed, but not in serial fashion. Kemper (1989), for example, argued that people are sensitive to both the direct and indirect illocutionary forces of indirect
requests and offers. She tested subjects' memory for statements presented in contexts that biased interpretation towards direct (declaratives and interrogatives) or indirect (requests and offers) force. She then prompted recall using contexts that either preserved or changed the original force of the statements. Subjects who originally read the indirect uses could recall these forms equally well with direct and indirect context prompts. Subjects who originally read the direct uses recalled them better when prompted by the original context than by the changed context.

The literal force model of comprehension was also investigated further by Clark (1979). His research focus was on the way people responded to indirect speech acts. In a series of studies involving requests made over the telephone to local shopkeepers in California (such as *Can you tell me what time you close?*, *Could you tell me the price of a fifth of Jim Beam?*), he concluded that addressees responded to the literal meaning of indirect requests (for example, by prefacing their replies to the latter request (above) with *Yes*) when they had evidence that such meaning was intended to be taken seriously. This evidence came from linguistic aspects of the indirect speech act used. For example, conventional, 'transparent', or completely specified forms which include markers like *please* and *for me* convey that literal meaning is not to be taken seriously. However, Clark also referred to other evidence that came from the types of information that he was previously criticized for ignoring; expectations based on the context of utterance. For example, he proposed that responders made use of information concerning the obviousness of the answer to the literal component (in the request examples given above, the answer is assumed to be more obvious for the former question than for the latter), and the goals and plans that the speaker was assumed to hold.

Results consistent with those of Clark (1979) were reported by Abbeduto, Furman, and Davies (1989) in a study in which experimental subjects' interpretations of a series of sentences expressed in 'Could you', 'Would you', and 'Do you think' forms were found to vary with the manipulation of answer obviousness in context. Directive interpretations were more frequent, and question interpretations less frequent, when the obviousness of the answer was higher.

Clark and Schunk (1980) subsequently claimed that people must comprehend the literal meaning of indirect requests in order to convey politeness in their responses. This claim was based on the finding that responses to indirect requests that contained a literal move (as in *Yes,*
six o'clock.) were ranked by subjects as more polite than alternative responses that did not contain such a move.

People's responses to indirect requests were also the focus of Munroe's (1979) investigation of the place of literal meaning in comprehension. About half of the 61 pedestrians that he approached on the UCLA campus responded with an affirmation and a report of the time to indirect requests such as Excuse me, could you tell me the time? He interpreted these results as evidence that 'literal' speech-act readings are activated along with 'conveyed' readings when indirect utterances occur. That is, the affirmations that preaced reports of the time were explained by Munroe as responses to the literal meaning of the request; responses to a request for information about the hearer's ability.

An alternative interpretation of such affirmations in response to indirect requests was offered by Goffman (1981). He viewed such conversational exchanges as "ritual interchanges", in which affirmations were "back channel" expressions that served to let the speaker know whether or not what s/he was conveying was socially acceptable to the hearer. Affirmations were both an acknowledgement of the speaker's contact with the hearer and an assurance that the hearer did not consider such contact to be out of order, or offensive in some way. For Goffman, the Yes preface was "an immediately available means of showing that an encounter has been ratified" (36).

2.2.4 Conventionality and the Understanding of Indirect Requests

A number of researchers have argued that different models of processing are required for indirect requests that differ in terms of the conventionality of their forms (e.g., Ackerman, 1978; Schweller, 1978). The explanation offered by Searle (1975), in which literal content is first analysed and then checked against context, is argued to be appropriate only for non-conventional indirect requests. These are request forms that do not refer explicitly to the actor, recipient, or actions involved, and which typically are used with illocutionary forces other than that of a directive. By contrast, literal processing of conventional directive forms is considered to be short-circuited. Schweller (1978) claimed that such forms 'cue' hearers, or set up 'expectations' that a request is occurring. In one experiment designed to test this expectation model he found that the same conventional indirect requests were understood faster when
presented in contexts which favoured their interpretation as requests than when presented in contexts which favoured their literal interpretation. These results are opposite to predictions made under the serial-processing model which requires the derivation of literal meaning as the first step in the comprehension process.

Gibbs (1981a & b) also proposed that the meanings of conventional indirect requests which have become routine in recurrent communicative situations, for example, *Can you tell me the time?*, were "easily assumed" by hearers, and did not require the "elaborate process of inference" (1981a: 440) necessary for the understanding of non-conventional forms. After demonstrating that the conventionality of indirect request forms was closely tied to contexts of utterance (that is, the same request form could be highly conventional in one context: *Can I have a beer?*, yet was rated by subjects as non-conventional in another: *Can I have a parking sticker?*), Gibbs performed two studies to test his proposal. In one, he found that subjects took less time to comprehend indirect requests that were presented in contexts for which they were conventional than to comprehend similar indirect requests that were presented in contexts for which they were non-conventional (1981a). In the second study, his comparison of subjects' recognition memory for conventional and non-conventional indirect requests in context revealed that the non-conventionals were better remembered (1981b). According to Gibbs, the additional inferential processing required for the non-conventional forms made them more distinctive and, thus, more memorable.

A number of other investigators have suggested that conventional utterances are understood via some short-circuited process (e.g., Bach & Harnish, 1979; Clark, 1979; Clark & Clark, 1979; Clark & Schunk, 1980; Morgan, 1978; Munroe, 1978, 1979). What Gibbs' studies do is to emphasize the importance of context in request interpretation, even with respect to determining the property of the conventionality of utterances.

2.2.5 **Summary: The Literal Force Hypothesis of Indirect Speech-Act Understanding**

This brief review has indicated that much work in the linguistic and philosophical tradition has focussed on the role of literal meaning in the processing of indirect speech acts. Assumptions about literal meaning - that it inheres in the form of an utterance, and can be interpreted on the basis of the words and structures used to convey it in some way that is
independent of context - have been criticized. Support for a proposed serial-processing model of indirect speech acts in which literal meaning is assessed prior to the derivation of conveyed meaning was argued to be an artefact of a decontextualizing experimental methodology. Other evidence that literal or direct, and conveyed or indirect, meanings are simultaneously available to interpreters of indirect speech acts was presented. A refinement of this premise was that literal interpretations of indirect speech acts are not necessarily made in all cases; for conventional indirect requests, for example, it has been argued that people use their knowledge of what forms are expected in particular contexts to facilitate interpretation. Increasingly, the importance of literal meaning in the understanding of indirect forms has been downplayed. Research has focussed on the importance of contextualized understanding, and has highlighted the role played by expectations regarding situated language use.

2.3 Anthropological and Sociolinguistic Approaches to Indirect Speech-Act Understanding: Meaning as Context-Dependent

An alternative to the literal force hypothesis concerning the comprehension of indirect speech acts, based on a rejection of the fundamental assumption that sentences have literal forces, was proposed by Levinson (1980). The view is shared by many scholars. Fish (1978: 632), for example, argued that the concept of literal meaning can only be sustained under the assumption that meaning exists independently of context:

There is no literal meaning in the sense of some irreducible content which survives the sea change of situations; but in each of those situations, one meaning will seem so obvious that one cannot see how it could be otherwise, and that meaning will be literal.

Fish's point was that all utterances are understood in terms of speech participants' "shared background knowledge". The process is the same for 'direct' and 'indirect' speech acts. Illocutionary force is a function of the situation, and is not constrained by the form of the sentence that is used. The same point was made by Harré (1980: 35) in relation to the meaning of all human actions, not just speech acts. He referred to the "general disconnection between meaning and vehicle of meaning, which is remedied by only locally valid social conventions ... The same person in different social circumstances may use the handshake in greeting, leave-taking, congratulating, betting, and so on".

Levinson's (1980, 1983) position was the same. He denied the validity of the distinction between direct and indirect speech acts, and referred simply to the general problem of mapping
Illocutionary force onto sentences in context. In his own words, "Illocutionary force is then entirely pragmatic and moreover has no direct and simple correlation with sentence-form or -meaning" (1983: 274).

Levinson aligned himself with Wittgenstein (1958), whose assumption was that the use of particular sentence-types can vary with the nature of the 'language-games' or contexts in which they occur. In Levinson's own terms, different 'activity types' (culturally-recognized units of interaction like buying, selling, chatting, etc.) have associated with them particular 'constraints' which determine what will be an allowable contribution. These constraints result in the development of strong expectations about the functions of utterances within particular activity types. Knowledge of these constraints and the corresponding expectations are part of the speaker's communicative competence. The process of inference by which utterances are understood operates at a number of levels in this model. Most important in Levinson's (1979) initial development of his pragmatic theory were the 'activity-specific' inferences that are tied to the structural organization of particular activities. Other inferences develop on the basis of the general principles of cooperative interaction described by Grice (1975), and from factual world knowledge of the sort described by workers in cognitive psychology (artificial intelligence) as contained within 'frames' (this notion is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4).

2.3.1 The Local Conversational Context

More recently, Levinson's research focus has shifted away from these broad structural aspects of context. He embraced the conversation-analytic perspective and its primary concern with the constraints on language understanding that are imposed at the level of conversational structure. Specifically, Levinson has investigated the ways in which position in a conversational sequence is determinative of the force or function assigned to an utterance. His approach is similar to that of Merritt (1976), who examined how the structure of request sequences in service encounters contributed to interactants' pragmatic interpretations. Both researchers focussed on the 'adjacency pair' as the basic structural unit of conversation. A brief explanation of this notion will serve as a useful introduction to Levinson's development of the structural theme, and will show yet another way in which researchers have emphasized the
importance of speech participants' expectations in the processes of language use and understanding.

2.3.2 Conversational Structure and Expectations

As proposed by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1972: 721) in ethnomethodological studies of conversation, the term 'adjacency pairs' refers to pairs of sentences that occur sequentially in discourse: "characteristically, there are names for the components of such pairs, for example, Greeting-Greeting, Question-Answer, ... Offers followed by Acceptances or Rejections ...".

Goffman (1981: 12) explained the essential rationale for the existence of adjacency pairs in terms of the "fundamental requirements of talk as a communication system" which he saw as involving "a speaker's need to know whether his [sic] message has been received, and if so, whether or not it has been passably understood, and ... a recipient's need to show that he has received the message and correctly". The existence of such communicative needs provides an explanation for the fact that any utterance that follows a question, for example, is likely to be interpreted as an answer. An important aspect defining the notion of the adjacency pair is this characteristic of the 'conditional relevance' of one part on the other (Schegloff & Sacks, 1974). Conditional relevance is the expectation that, given the occurrence of the first part of the pair, the second part will follow (although several strategies for delaying or avoiding compliance may occur). An answer is, for example, conditionally relevant on a question. In such local structural analyses, the conversational 'slot' is considered determinative, to a large extent, of expectations that are set up by, and interpretations that are made of, conversational contributions. According to conversation analysts such as Schegloff (1978: 86), an utterance's structural location "can have attached to its slot a set of features that may overwhelm its syntactic or prosodic structure in primacy".

From within this conversation-analytic tradition, Levinson redefined the category of indirect requests as "pre-sequences designed for co-operative pre-emption or tactful evasion" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 42). In order to explain the designation of indirect requests as 'pre-sequences' it is necessary to introduce the concept of 'preference organisation'. This concept developed from the observation that some potential second parts are preferred over others in adjacency
pairs. For example, grantings are preferred over refusals as second parts to requests. The term 'preferred' refers to "the structural disposition, to the fact that conversational organization conspires to make it easier to use the preferred type of turn" rather than to participants' wishes in the matter (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 38). By using a pre-sequence or an indirect request (a 'pre-request'), a speaker can check whether a subsequent request is likely to succeed, thus avoiding the dispreferred outcome of a refusal. The fact that indirect requests usually question an addressee's abilities (Can you ...) or the availability of goods (Do you have ...) was used by Levinson as evidence to support this claim that pre-requests function to avoid subsequent request refusals: "What is checked in the pre-request is what is most likely to be the grounds for refusal; and if those grounds are present, then the request sequence is aborted" (1983: 358).

Similar explanations of the motivation behind the use of indirect requests have been proposed by Drew (1984), Harré, Clarke, & DeCarlo (1985), and Potter & Wetherell (1987).

Levinson also claimed that the use of pre-requests made it possible for the speaker to avoid formally requesting at all. This results from the fact that a potential second-part pair to a pre-request is an offer by the addressee. The point was illustrated by Levinson (1983: 359) with an example taken from a natural conversational corpus reported by Merritt (1976: 324):

PRE-REQUEST

C: Do you have pecan Danish today?

OFFER

S: Yes we do. Would you like one of those?

ACCEPTANCE OF OFFER

C: Yes please.

S: Okay. (turns to get)

Levinson argued (following Schegloff, 1977) that, in effect, request sequences seemed to be 'dispreferred' in relation to offer sequences in instrumental interactions.

Levinson built one final level into the concept of preference organization with respect to requesting. He argued that over and above the preference for offers compared to overt requests it was likely that "after a pre-request, it is preferred that neither a request nor an offer takes place at all" (1983: 359). A pre-request would then function as "an effective clue" to what the speaker wanted and the most preferred option may be "to provide it without more ado" (360).

An example of such a sequence was provided by Sinclair (1976: 60):

S: Have you got Embassy Gold please? (Pre-request)

H: Yes dear. (provides) (Response to non-overt request)
Evidence supporting the claim that offers are preferred to requests in conversational interaction was not presented by Levinson. The rationale is evident in his theory of face preservation (Brown and Levinson, 1978), however. In this model, broad levels of face-threateningness are associated with acts depending on the amount of imposition involved, and upon the power and social-distance relationships of the interactants - "clearly there is less face risk in A's inducing B to make an offer than in A making a request of B, because B may refuse the request, but not withdraw the offer" (1987: 39). The theory that face preservation underlies systematic patterns of language use will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Implications of the theory with respect to situated request variation will form the basis of empirical investigations in Chapters 9, 10, and 11. It is perhaps worth noting at this point that the research presented in this thesis is not framed in conversation-analytic terms. Although the importance of conversational organization in processes of language use and understanding cannot be denied, analysis at this structural level is not the aim of this thesis. Instead, the research presented here focuses on the broader level of social context, rather than on conversational or discourse context.

2.3.3 The Social Context and Expectations

One sociolinguist whose work, like that of Levinson, has had a major impact on the direction taken by scholars interested in requesting is Susan Ervin-Tripp (1976, 1980, 1981; Ervin-Tripp, Guo, & Lampert, 1990; Ervin-Tripp, O'Connor, & Rosenberg, 1984; Ervin-Tripp, Strage, Lampert, & Bell, 1987). She shares with Levinson the belief that aspects of context, situation, and activity type play a primary role in the process of interpreting speech acts. As evidence to support her argument that interpretation does not normally start from the 'literal' meaning of what is said, she used examples of reply puns in which responses that address the 'literal' meaning of indirect requests are treated as jokes (1976: 53). For example, the following interchange between spouses was used to indicate how humour can be generated by the unexpectedness of the response to a meaning that is not normally part of the interpretive process, that is, to the literal meaning.

(129) [Wife to Husband] Do you know how to put water in the windshield wiper squirter?

[Husband] How?
The humour of replies that address the 'literal' meaning of indirect requests is something that the serial-processing model of request comprehension cannot account for adequately. If the literal form of indirect requests is to be treated as part of their meaning, it is not easy to explain why the affirmative response on its own should be classed as a joke rather than as simply incomplete or inadequate.

Like Levinson, Ervin-Tripp argued that contexts "prime" hearers for certain interpretations; that is, that both the form and interpretation of speech acts such as requests are dependent upon the ongoing activities within which they occur. She pointed out that in some extremely structured situations, knowledge concerning the types of things that can be requested channels the possibilities of interpretation very narrowly. For example, in situations like classrooms, bars, and small shops, objects come to have "demand characteristics". Their mere mention can function as a request (for example, *Chalk*, *Gin and Tonic*, *Pack of Winfield Greens*, and so on). In other situations, the interpretation of novel utterances such as, for example, *I'm going to a wine tasting tomorrow*, used as a request between intimates, may involve relatively complex processing. Such processing may be based on information such as participants' shared knowledge of their normal activities at the time, and of what changes may be required (consequential on the obligations of the hearer) to meet the speaker's needs.

Ervin-Tripp's argument rests on the assumption that people develop knowledge of what to do in situations, and that they learn, as part of their communicative competence, to use and interpret utterances as directives in certain social contexts. Interpretive processes depend on expectations based on such situational knowledge. According to Ervin-Tripp (1976: 59) it is this "high predictability of forms" that explains the very rapid, "routinized" interpretation of indirect requests that occurs normally in conversation:

... the work of the hearer need not begin with the utterance, but... the set or priming of the hearer can be so great that a nod is a directive. But if the form is inappropriate to the context, it may not be heard as a directive at all.

Deviation from the expected use in context, then, becomes a resource for the communication of affective significance. A 'mismatch' between the expected form of directive and that realized in context provides the hearer with information about the speaker's view of their social relationship, or of the nature of the requested action. These affective interpretations arise because, in Ervin-Tripp's words: "the hearer assumes that the speaker is imputing different
social features than he [sic] thinks he has, and reacts to the imputation as deference, sarcasm, arrogance, coldness, undifferentiated annoyance, or a joke" (1976: 62).

However, even in circumstances where there is no deviation from the expected use in context, control acts like requests inevitably convey "both information about social assumptions and relationships, and information about desired acts and goals", according to Ervin-Tripp (1981: 208), who provided the following example to illustrate the point:

(5) Superior - inferior: Can we move the dust bin over here?
(9) Inferior - superior: Can we move the dust bin over here?

Since (5) and (9) are alike, we could say that the utterance conveys two potential messages:

(11) You will move the dust bins + you are inferior.
(12) You give permission + we will move the dust bins + we are inferior to you.


Researchers who have grappled with the problem of the multifunctionality of utterance acts in their attempts to analyze and interpret gender differences in natural language use (e.g., Holmes, 1984a & b, 1986a, 1989a, 1990b, 1993; Cameron, McAlinden, & O'Leary, 1988; Coates, 1987; see Chapter 7) have reached similar conclusions about the necessity of recognizing both the interpersonal and referential meanings of forms in context.

2.3.4 Activities and Levels of Intention

The positions advocated by both Ervin-Tripp and Levinson can be seen as having their roots in the writings of Firth (1957). The Firthian approach to language was concerned fundamentally with "the appropriateness of the behaviour of participants in a language event" (Kachru, 1981: 72). Knowledge of appropriateness involved, according to Firth, "learning to say what the other fellow expects us to say under the given circumstances" (1957: 28, emphasis added). In addition to linguistic expectations, Firth considered that enactments of social roles and hence, more generally, activities, were constrained by context. As he pointed out: "Once someone speaks to you, you are in a relatively determined context and you are not free just to do and say what you please" (1957: 28). Ervin-Tripp et al.'s (1987: 140) reference to "a kind of momentum in situations", deriving from the goal-directed character of human activity that influences people's decisions about how to act or respond to utterances, represents a similar
view. In contrast to interpretive models which proposed centrality for the understanding of speaker intention based on inferences from the literal meaning of what is said, Ervin-Tripp's proposal was that interpretive priority was given to understanding the practical or activity-based goals that are presumed to operate in a particular situation. From this perspective, the traditional, speech-act-theoretical focus on speaker intentionality, as expressed through individual speech acts, can be seen as a product of the method favoured in philosophic and formal linguistic analyses; a method that focussed on native speakers' interpretations of utterances presented in isolation from context. According to Ervin-Tripp et al. (1987: 140), it follows, then, that analysis of speaker intention at the level of the individual speech act is necessary only under "special conditions" such as the apparent irrelevance of an utterance, or lack of an adequate context. Under ordinary conditions, interpretation occurs against the background of the broader goals associated with an ongoing activity.

The importance, to interpretation, of the plan-based character of interaction was also referred to by Brown and Levinson (1978: 238). In their terms, "conversational understanding is achieved by reconstruction of levels of intent beyond and above and integrative of those that lie behind particular utterances or sentences". Gumperz (1981: 328-9) was another to argue the case:

... conversational inference is best seen not as a simple unitary evaluation of intent but as involving a complex series of judgements, including relational or contextual assessments on how items of information are to be integrated into what we know and into the event at hand, as well as assessments of content.

This process of interpretation was described by Gumperz (1981: 329) as a series of hierarchically-ordered stages, in which, as Ervin-Tripp had proposed, interpretive priority was given to the activity:

It is assumed that the initial assessment in an exchange concerns the nature of the activity being proposed or performed. This sets up expectations about what likely outcomes are, what topics can be covered, what can be put into words and what must be conveyed indirectly ...

Others have criticized the central role given to the analysis of speaker intention in speech act theory. Searle's focus on individual participants and their intentions was criticized by Franck (1979) and Streeck (1980) for failing to account for the fundamentally intersubjective nature of communication. As Franck pointed out: "the interactional meaning of the contributions to the conversation is to some extent subject to mutual negotiation" (1979a: 183). Bilmes (1986) was
another who argued for the importance of a sociological rather than a psychological emphasis in the analysis of action. Similarly, the form of speech act theory developed by philosophers such as Searle was criticized by Rosaldo (1982: 227) for "undue emphasis upon the speaker's psychological state, and corresponding inattention to the social sphere". She argued that Searle's choice of the act of promising as an illustration of the way in which speech acts are performed has resulted in scholarly concentration upon individual intentions, beliefs, and commitments as the determinants of meaning, at the expense of consideration of the social context in which the interaction takes place: "... the promise leads us to think of meaning as a thing derived from inner life. A world of promises appears as one where privacy, not community, is what gives rise to talk" (1982: 211). Like Ervin-Tripp, Rosaldo held that consideration of context should be central to analyses of language understanding, particularly because meaning depends so heavily upon interactants' expectations, and such expectations can only develop in socio-cultural milieux.

The "excessively privatized view of language" held by speech act theorists accounted for the theory's psychological focus, according to Pratt (1981: 9). Rather than considering people as speaking from within socially-constituted positions or roles, the philosophers and linguists who developed speech act theory took the one-to-one speech of speaker to hearer as the norm for language use. This led, in turn, to a concentration upon the intention underlying each utterance expressed by the speaker. Interactions involving multiple intentions and/or multiple participants were largely ignored, although they would appear to constitute the normal state of affairs (Dore and Mc Dermott, 1982). Pratt's position was that the speech act theory was restrictive in its conceptual foundation. Speech act theorists considered the personal qualities of speakers - qualities like self-consistency, rationality, and sincerity - to be the bed-rock upon which successful interactions were built, as a result of their view that speakers spoke for themselves, reproducing their own beliefs and intentions, rather than as representatives of others, or of institutions. In relating her critique to the analysis of indirect speech acts, Pratt (1981: 10) suggested that such forms should be considered as "acts which mediate and express complex intentional states, such as wanting to get people to do things as if it were they who wanted to do those things". In this, she appeared to be suggesting a mode of analysis very similar to that offered by Levinson for indirect requests. In his description, these indirect forms were pre-
sequences designed to induce the hearer to offer a service before it was necessary for the requester to produce a formal request. The question of whether such explanations of indirectness in requesting bear any similarity to the sorts of explanations typically employed by ordinary language users is one that is taken up in subsequent analyses of role-play participants' justificatory accounts (see Chapters 10 & 11).

2.3.5 Summary: Importance of Context in Indirect Speech-Act Understanding

The preceding review has indicated that much work in the anthropological and sociolinguistic traditions has been based on a rejection of the assumption that sentences have literal forces, and consequently, of the notion that processes of understanding are fundamentally different for direct and indirect speech acts. Meaning is viewed as a function of the context, situation, or activity type within which acts are performed, and interactants are considered to hold expectations about the functions served by utterances within particular contexts as part of their communicative competence. These functions include the conveying of social interpretations about the interactants' relationship as well as information about action goals.

The conversation-analytic perspective has focused on the types of expectations that are engendered by local conversational structure. In this perspective, indirect requests are viewed as functioning to avoid a measure of the awkwardness associated with subsequent refusals. Theorists focusing on broader levels of contextual influence have emphasized activity-based goals as the source of expectations that influence understanding. The central role given to the analysis of an individual speaker's intention in speech-act-theory models of interpretation has been criticized by those scholars who have argued that interpretive priority occurs at the level of the activity within which the speech acts are involved. The focus has shifted to the importance of the social, rather than the psychological, in the interpretation of meaning.

Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) theory of politeness is one such social model of situated language variation. Their theory, that considerations of face preservation motivate interactants' choices of linguistic forms such as requests, forms the basis for empirical investigations that are reported in Chapters 9 to 11. Predictions from another social framework, Ervin-Tripp's (1976, 1980, 1981; Ervin-Tripp et al., 1987) context-based model
of understanding, are examined empirically in the next chapter. In this introductory investigation, context-based and language-centred theories of understanding are compared with respect to the way people interpret a very indirect non-conventional request.

1Austin (1970: 251) claimed that all utterances, in addition to meaning whatever they mean, perform specific actions through having specific illocutionary forces: “We may be quite clear what 'Shut the door' means, but yet not at all clear on the further point as to whether as uttered at a certain time it was an order, an entreaty, or whatnot”.

2“Blocking” of literal meaning can be taken to mean that the literal meaning 'fails to make sense' (Glucksberg, Gidea, & Bookin, 1982) or is 'unreasonable' (Herrmann, 1983) in context.

3Gumperz (1977) used the term "speech activities" to designate similar recognizable units.

4For more information, on the conversation-analytic approach, see Schegloff (1978); Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson (1974).
CHAPTER 3

STUDY I:
LANGUAGE-BASED VERSUS CONTEXT-BASED THEORIES OF INDIRECT SPEECH-ACT UNDERSTANDING: AN EXAMINATION OF RESPONSES TO A NON-CONVENTIONAL INDIRECT REQUEST FORM

In this chapter, I report a comparison of two models of indirect request interpretation using people's responses to a very indirect non-conventional form of request as evidence.

3.1 Two Interpretive Models

One model of interpretation, the traditional speech-act-theoretical model that has underpinned philosophical and formal linguistic analyses of speech acts, is based on the notion that processing commences from a literal interpretation of what is said. It is held that this literal interpretation is checked against context for congruity. Only if there is a mismatch between the literal interpretation and the contextual features does the hearer consider non-literal interpretations of the speaker's utterance. In such models, context is assumed to play a secondary role in the interpretive process.

In contextually-based models, hearers are seen as giving priority to the situation in which the utterance occurs in arriving at their interpretations. It is assumed that hearers identify a situation, project activities for their role, and process language sufficiently to identify contextual referents and check incongruity with projected action. In these models, people are assumed to have knowledge of what to do in practical situations; knowledge about goals and normal activities. It is this knowledge that allows them to identify likely interpretations of any communications that occur. In the words of Ervin-Tripp, Strage, Lambert, and Bell (1987: 114), contexts "prime the hearer for certain interpretations. ... If there is a formatted activity frame, the speech will be heard as projecting relevant information for that activity". In such models, then, understanding starts from context. Language serves to confirm or supplement knowledge already available from what is going on. The processing of an utterance's literal interpretation is, under normal circumstances, unnecessary.
3.2 Children's Interpretation of Non-Conventional Indirect Requests

Support for the context-based model was reported by Ervin-Tripp et al. (1987) in a study of children's interpretations of indirect requests. They found a high rate of compliance amongst children aged 5 to 7 years to requests for action phrased in the form of hints which merely mentioned an object: *Oh, the cards!* (in reference to a deck of magnetic story cards that the interviewer had 'accidentally' knocked off the table during the experimental session). This prompted them to test children's interpretations of less explicit forms which they labelled 'anomalous mentions'. These statements were contextually odd or bizarre in that they provided redundant information, for example: *The cards have writing on them.* Although compliance was less frequent for the less explicit forms, the fact that it occurred at all in children as young as four and five years old led Ervin-Tripp et al. to conclude that "context alone can direct behavior without any aid from language" (124). They subsequently qualified this claim with the specification that "the only linguistic requirement is a noun that calls attention to the relevant object" (140).

3.3 A Study of Adults' Interpretation of a Non-Conventional Request Form

The aim of the study reported in this chapter was to test the notion that mentioning a desired object within a recognizable activity frame is sufficient to get that object from cooperative hearers using a sample of adult respondents in a natural situation. The study was designed as a simple investigation of respondents' replies to a very indirect, non-conventional form of request in a routine social encounter between strangers in a public place: requesting the time.¹ This form of interaction was chosen because it had been used as the basis of previous investigations of the comprehension of conventional indirect request forms (Clark, 1979; Goffman, 1981; Munroe, 1979).

The request form used in the study qualified as a non-conventional indirect form in that it did not refer explicitly to the actor or actions involved, and was not a form typically used with the illocutionary force of a directive. Indeed, the form gave no explicit indication of what was to be done, nor even that something was to be done. I approached lone pedestrians in the main shopping mall of the city of Adelaide, South Australia and said, using an even or statement intonation, *Excuse me, I've been trying to find a clock.* Addressees' replies were recorded on a small tape-recorder concealed in my shoulder bag. Transcripts of 50 conversations obtained
in this way from equal numbers of women and men were used to answer a series of questions concerning interpretation of the form, which are addressed in the Results section.

3.4 Predictions Based on the Two Models of Interpretation

Utterance-based models of interpretation would predict that a non-conventional form such as *Excuse me, I've been trying to find a clock.*, would get a literal reply, but would not necessarily result in action on the part of the hearer (in this case, the provision of information about the time). Context-based models would predict, however, that a form such as this, situated within a recognizable context of social relations and of activity (a request for 'free goods' (Goffman, 1972) by a non-threatening stranger in a public place) would be interpreted by cooperative addressees as a request for the time.

3.5 Results & Discussion

3.5.1 Question 1. Interpretability of a Non-Conventional Form

At the outset, it was not clear that the form would be capable of interpretation by those approached. It was possible that its meaning would be, simply, too opaque, given that the item requested (the time) was not even mentioned in the statement. However, 47 of the 50 addressees interpreted the statement as an indirect request for information (those classed as failing to comprehend the request responded only with requests for further information: *A clock?* (n = 2) and *What for?* (n = 1)).

3.5.2 Question 2. Interpretation of the Request For Information

Another question concerned the statement's literal or surface form. If addressees did understand the statement as a request for information, would they be biased towards an interpretation centring on the obtaining of clocks, rather than on the time of day?

It was of interest that the majority of respondents did provide information about the time in their replies. This implies that context can take precedence over the surface form of utterance in determining interpretation. Expectations as to what is likely to be requested in a particular setting can be so powerful that the desired object need not even be mentioned explicitly to a cooperative conversational partner. Table 3.1 shows the numbers of addressees who
responded with information about (i) the time alone, (ii) the position of nearby clocks, (iii) both the time and the position of clocks. Only 5 respondents provided information that pertained solely to the location of nearby clocks. Although it cannot be argued that these addressees understood the statement as a request for the time, since they failed to provide this information explicitly, the effect of their responses was consistent with a perception that the speaker was attempting to gain such information. Only one addressee interpreted the statement unambiguously as a request for the location of a clock. She heard it as a question from a potential purchaser of ... alarm clocks and things?

Table 3.1 Distribution of reply types amongst addressees interpreting the statement as a request (N = 47)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information provided</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time only</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time &amp; Clock location</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clock only - location</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clock only - purchase</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.3 Question 3. Processing of Literal Form: Evidence From Pre-Responses

A related interest concerned evidence that addressees were processing the literal form of the statement, even if they were interpreting it as an indirect request. Examination of the types of pre-responses\(^3\) to information in replies permitted a comparison of the utterance- and context-based models of request understanding.

Of the 47 request replies, 9 (19%) contained elements that were not incongruous with the surface form of the utterance Excuse me, I've been trying to find a clock. For example:

Have you dear?

Found one.

Just for that purpose.

However, pre-responses of a form inconsistent with the speaker's statement occurred almost as frequently, as can be seen in Table 3.2. Replies whose form did not match that of the
speaker's statement included:

*I haven't got a watch on me either.

I've no idea.

Sure.

Table 3.2  Types of pre-responses to the provision of information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of pre-response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent with S's statement</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistent with S's statement</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmation Query</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition of noun - alone</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition of noun - with other pre-responses</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another category of pre-responses involved addressees seeking confirmation of their interpretation. All such queries (13% of replies) targeted the time as the speaker's objective, for example: *To find the time?* Other addressees (8%) simply stated what they took to be the speaker's request, for example: *You want the time..* or *Time.*, as a pre-response to information. Most often, however, repetition of the words *A clock.* or *Clock.*, occurred in the initial position of a reply. This form of pre-response was followed by information about the time or the location of a nearby clock by 30 per cent of respondents. Repetition of the noun also occurred in conjunction with the other forms of pre-response mentioned. In total, 70 per cent of all responses to the indirect request contained this element. In 13 cases, a question intonation was used; in 20, it was stated with falling intonation.

These findings provide support for Ervin-Tripp et al.'s (1987) conclusion that the processing of the linguistic components of a request need only proceed as far as the identification of an object on which to focus action. The context or situation in which the communication occurs then guides the hearer's interpretation, via a series of expectations, schemes, or potential unfoldings (Goffman, 1981).
3.5.4 Question 4. Gender Differences in Replies

The final question under consideration was whether women and men would respond differently to an unconventional form of request. Evidence from Fishman (1977, 1978, 1980), that women do more "support work" in conversation to ensure the continuation of interaction, led to the hypothesis that women might be more cooperative, interactionally, when presented with very indirect requests. There was, however, little support for this proposition. Almost all addressees interpreted the statement as a request for information. It is possible that, in this situation, the power of contextual cues may have been sufficient to prevent the emergence of obvious gender differences of this kind. The only differences observed between women and men concerned the use of pre-responses. More men \( n = 6; 26\% \) than women \( n = 3; 12.5\% \) used pre-responses that were consistent with the literal form of the indirect request, and only women \( n = 4; 17\% \) stated their interpretation of the speaker's request as a preface to information about the time. These differences were not, of course, significant, given the low frequencies of occurrence of such forms of pre-response overall (see Table 3.2).

3.6 Conclusion

In general, the high level of cooperation with a very indirect, non-conventional form of request, together with the types of replies observed in the present study, suggest that those approached were not basing their interpretations primarily upon literal form. A more convincing explanation is provided by the contextual model that assumes that hearers identify a situation and then act according to their knowledge of what is normal within it.

The findings of this introductory study, then, have served to suggest the importance of ongoing contexts of social relations and of activity to the interpretation of speech acts such as requests. In subsequent chapters, the empirical focus falls upon the ways in which contexts influence the form of requests. Before reporting further empirical analyses, however, an examination of the ways in which the key notions of context and situation have been used by scholars investigating language use and understanding is undertaken in the next chapter.

Recently, Haberland, Mey, and Janney (1992: 394) commented upon "a great divergence among pragmaticians and others as to what the notion of context really stands for". The general purpose of the review that is presented in Chapter 4 is to throw some light on this "elusive, yet
so important" (395) concept. It is hoped that this review may bring some momentary sense of order to the complex interdisciplinary field that deals with the contextual determinants of language use. The exercise appears timely in view of the fact that this field of inquiry has been variously referred to as a "lumpen mass" (Brown and Yule, 1983); "fuzzy" and "vast" (Van Dijk, 1981); "awkward" (Enkvist, 1980); "messy" and "ambiguous" (Brown and Fraser, 1979); and as involving a "confusing array of definition and exemplification" (Taylor, 1975: 52).

1It could only be assumed that the relevant activity frame for respondents in this interaction was that of a request for the time in a public place. Addressees in the study would have perceived a woman (the researcher) in her late twenties, about 5'4" tall, and conventionally dressed, approaching them in a busy open-air mall. She was not wearing a watch.

2Hoppe-Graff, Hermann, Winterhoff-Spurk and Mangold (1985: 90) used the term 'standard' situations to refer to "often-recurring routine situations" in which even very indirect requests were correctly interpreted "as if following a script".

3Pre-responses were classed as any verbal communication that preceded the strictly informative portion of a reply to the indirect request.
CHAPTER 4

CONTEXT IN THE PRODUCTION AND INTERPRETATION OF SPEECH

4.1 Introduction

Although the importance of context to linguistic choice and interpretation is taken for granted by scholars, a common understanding among them of what is meant by the term, and how speech participants are influenced by context, remains problematic. This chapter provides a brief survey of the various ways in which the undifferentiated term 'context' has been used in the literature that deals with determinants of language use and understanding. I shall begin by reviewing some definitions of the term in order to indicate the historical development of its use in relation to research on language. Then, I will discuss some of the difficulties associated with attempts at contextual definition and classification. Finally, I will review, briefly, taxonomies of contextual dimensions that have been proposed in the past. The aim of the survey presented in this chapter is twofold: to clarify what is meant by the term 'context', and to indicate which parameters are considered by researchers working within a variety of related disciplines to be most constraining of the production and interpretation of speech. In the next chapter, a summary of the findings of empirical investigations into the effects of such contextual features on language use is carried out. The specific hypotheses concerning context that are examined in this thesis in relation to the speech act of requesting are also introduced there.

4.2 Definitions of 'Context'

According to Todd (1981), the term 'context of situation' was introduced into anthropological use by Malinowski (1923, 1935) and was later developed in the linguistics of Firth (1950, 1957), in Britain. Firth referred to the 'context of situation' as an abstract representation of the environment, describing it as "a suitable schematic construct to apply to language events" (1957: 182), which brought into relation the following three categories:

1. Participant features, including personalities, verbal and nonverbal actions,
2. Relevant objects in the environment,
(3) **Effect of the verbal action.**

Similar ideas about context came through the work of Halliday (1973, 1975, 1976, 1978), who referred to the experience of language as being always in relation to a scenario, some background of persons and actions and events from which the things which are said derive their meaning. This is referred to as the 'situation', so language is said to function in 'contexts of situation'... (1978: 28).

Situations could be broadly defined, according to Halliday, in terms of three aspects: "first, what is actually taking place; secondly, who is taking part; thirdly, what part the language is playing" (1978: 31). He viewed these three general dimensions as determinative both of the range of possible interpretations attributed to situated forms, and of the selection of formal variants, and summarized them under the following headings. **Field** referred to the social action within which the language was embedded (e.g., establishing personal contact); **tenor** referred to the nature of the role relationships between interactants; **mode** referred to the channel of communication (e.g., written or spoken). **Register** was another term coined by Halliday to explain the embeddedness of language within situations. It referred to the "particular configuration of meanings that is associated [by a member of a culture] with a particular situation type" (1975: 26).

Halliday's (1978: 32) description of the relevant field of contextual enquiry was phrased in terms of sociological correlation:

> All language functions in contexts of situation, and is relatable to those contexts. The question is ... which kinds of situational factor determine which kinds of selection in the linguistic system. ... given that we know the situation, the social context of language use, we can predict a great deal about the language that will occur, with reasonable probability of being right. The important theoretical question then is: what exactly do we need to know about the social context in order to make such predictions?

More recently, the term 'context' has been used as an abbreviation of 'context of situation' by many writers, and has acquired considerable breadth of definition to include various combinations of physical, social, linguistic, and psychological components. In a survey article, Enkvist (1980: 75), for example, used the abbreviated term 'context' in its widest sense to signify "the total socio-physical envelope of utterance". He discussed the problem of where to draw the line between linguistic, paralinguistic, and contextual features, arguing in favour of exempting paralinguistic features such as "tempo, voice, colour, loudness, gesture" (76) from the contextual category, and treating them as linguistic where possible. As mentioned in
Chapter 1, the research undertaken in this thesis follows Enkvist's lead in omitting paralinguistic features from consideration within the contextual field.

Slightly different definitional perspectives on context have been offered by scholars who have emphasized the contribution of background knowledge. Ochs (1979: 1-5), for instance, pointed out that

the scope of context is not easy to define... one must consider the social and psychological world in which the language user operates at any given time... it includes minimally, the language user's beliefs and assumptions about temporal, spatial, and social settings, prior, ongoing, and future actions (verbal, nonverbal) and the state of knowledge and attentiveness of those participating in the social interaction in hand.

The psychological aspects of context were also emphasized by Kreckel (1981), who elaborated upon a distinction originally made by by Ogden and Richards (1923) between external context in its "ordinary use", and "psychological context". According to Kreckel (1981: 20-21),

the former divides accompanying and surrounding events and entities from 'whatever is said to have a context'.... 'Psychological context' or context of experience, on the other hand, determines what becomes salient for the individual due to his [sic] past experiences with, or his existing knowledge about, the social and physical environment. That is, the individual will be predisposed to attend to certain features in the environment and to ignore others.

Kreckel's proposal also bears similarity to an early distinction by Stebbins (1967: 150) between objective and subjective situations. The objective situation involved "the immediate social and physical surroundings and the current physiological and psychological state of the actor", whereas the subjective situation referred to "those components of the objective situation which are seen by the actor to affect any one of his [sic] action orientations ...". According to Stebbins, factors affecting the definition of the subjective situation included, in addition to situational features, such "personality-cultural" features as

the individual's predispositions stemming from past definitions of situations, from his [sic] former and future plans of action, from his past and present action orientations, from his set of values and attitudes, and from his set of social and personal identities. (1967: 156 - 157)

The social-psychological notion of inter-subjectivity was invoked by Leech (1983: 13) in his definition of context. This notion referred to "any background knowledge assumed to be shared by s and h and which contributes to h's interpretation of what s means by a given utterance". Notions of shared or mutual background knowledge as important components of context have been developed by many authors operating within a cognitive perspective (e.g., Kreckel, 1981, 1982; Forgas, 1983, 1985).
It must be also be mentioned that, for many authors, context includes linguistic features. Gumperz (1977), for example, referred to such features as "contextualization cues", mentioning aspects of utterances such as prosody, paralinguistics, lexical and phonological choice, use of formulaic expressions, and code switching as important signals of interpretive frames. For conversation analysts (see Chapter 2), linguistic features are also an important aspect of the interpretive context: the local conversational context or sequence of utterances within which a particular utterance occurs is considered fundamentally determinative of its meaning.

In concluding this brief section on definitions of the term 'context', it is perhaps appropriate to make use of a summary of the literature provided, albeit somewhat disparagingly, by Brockway (1981: 67) in order to convey a sense of the ways in which writers have used the concept:

... a context is sometimes seen as ... a set of features, sometimes as a situation, sometimes as the physical environment, sometimes as the cultural or social environment, and sometimes as the surrounding text or discourse. In the absence of a central definition, a context can, it seems, be almost anything.

4.2.1 Context Versus Situation and Setting

In addition to the various definitions of context that have emerged, many writers have made the distinction between context and situation (e.g., see Gregory, 1967), as well as invoking the notion of setting in relation to speech events. According to Van Dijk (1977: 217), for example, "'context' is both a theoretical and cognitive abstraction, viz. from the actual physical-biological-etc. situation". This distinction is consistent with an earlier definition of 'situation' proposed by Fishman (1972: 438) who viewed it as "the occurrence of two (or more) interlocutors related to each other in a particular way, communicating about a particular topic in a particular setting". The terms situation and setting were distinguished in a similar way by Blom and Gumperz (1972). Situation was defined as the range of relevant social relationships at a particular point in time, and in a particular setting. They used the term social event to describe a particular definition of a situation at a particular point in time, in order to take account of the possibility that changes in the social relationships between participants may occur within the same setting. Participants may, for example, transact business in a formal way, and then conclude their interaction with an informal chat. This interaction would involve two different definitions of the situation, but the setting would remain the same.
Setting was also referred to as a component of the 'situation' by Brown and Fraser (1979: 34). Defining this component by way of example, they claimed that "interaction in a bedroom as opposed to a church as opposed to a football stadium would be described as involving three different situations", distinguished by their settings. However, according to Brown and Fraser, speech choice is not strictly determined by the physical setting of an interaction. They placed greater emphasis on the fact that "settings imbued with cultural import (what Hymes (1972) calls 'scenes') are associated with the activities which customarily take place in them: sermons in church, football on the playing field, buying and selling in the marketplace" (44). This emphasis on activities as key aspects of setting is similar to that in an earlier definition proposed by Ericson and Schulz (1977: 7): "Contexts are not simply given in the physical setting ... rather contexts are constituted by what people are doing and where and when they are doing it".

The importance of the association between settings and particular types of activity can also be seen in an early distinction proposed by Halliday (1973) between the two terms context and setting. Under the heading of context, Halliday placed such sociological matters as the establishment of familiarity and distance, and types of personal interaction. Setting, however, referred to the type of event (as defined by the activity involved) within which the language occurred, for example, in a game, a discussion, and so on. Taylor (1975) commented that Halliday's distinction was basically one between the involvement of persons (the context), and their activities (the setting). This emphasis on the activities within which people are engaged as determinative of utterance choice and interpretation is one that has been investigated empirically by Ervin-Tripp et al. (1987), as was described in Chapter 3. On the basis of studies conducted over a number of years, Ervin-Tripp (1973, 1976, 1980, 1981) developed the proposal that probabilities of utterance interpretation are constrained in terms of three main contextual dimensions: (1) Setting, (2) Personnel, (3) Activities. Similarities between these three dimensions and those suggested previously by Halliday (1978) and Firth (1957) are notable. Ervin-Tripp's notion was that people make use of information of the sort described by these contextual dimensions in order to 'recognize' the type of situation in which they are engaged. They can then use their accumulated knowledge of what actions are typical/appropriate in particular situations to interpret what is said.
4.2.2 Summary: Definitions of 'Context'

As this brief review indicates, the term 'context' has been used to refer to a range of aspects of the physical, social, psychological, and linguistic environments within which communication takes place. Features of participants and activities have received particular attention in discussions of what is meant by context. There is also a consensus regarding the necessity of considering language users' shared background knowledge - their beliefs and expectations about appropriate action - as part of the communicative context. Terms such as situation, setting, event, and scene have been used to refer to particular components of context such as the social relationships in operation between interactants, the physical environment within which the interaction takes place, and the cultural meanings associated with particular interactions or activities.

Attempts to identify the specific contextual dimensions that influence the form and meaning of linguistic acts have resulted in descriptive classifications of two broad types: those that focus on objective social features and descriptive characteristics, and those that focus on social psychological dimensions that serve as the basis for perceptions of situations. Problems associated with attempts at classification, and examples of descriptive taxonomies that have been proposed, are discussed in the next section.

4.3 The Problem of Contextual Classification

In the previous brief review it was only possible to hint at the variety of definitions and distinctions in use in the linguistic literature in relation to concepts of context. All those concerned with the relations between context and language use appear to agree, however, on the scope of the enterprise in which they are engaged. A selection of viewpoints is presented below. The range of potentially relevant contextual features is vast - some would say overwhelming. Indeed it was Katz and Fodor's (1964) opinion, for example, that the study of context incorporated, of necessity, consideration of the entirety of people's knowledge about the world. Twenty years later, Herrmann (1983: 47) made the same point:

Situational influences on speech are extremely diverse, hard to explore, and difficult to systematize. This is so ... because the term situational influence covers a wealth of phenomena which, taken together, make up a lion's share of all the conditions, circumstances, and determinants of human behaviour and mental life ever studied by psychologists.
Some have even argued that the aims of an enterprise such as the ethnography of speaking are unachievable. Bloch (1977: 281), for example, claimed that it was not possible to describe all aspects of the naturalistic settings of communication events because "there is no end to reality and the description of ever smaller events, ever more carefully gets us no nearer". More recently, Knorr-Cetina (1988: 28) made a similar point:

As the fineness of the grid [of situational typologies] and the number of relevant attributes increases, we are less likely to guess what the outcome of each arrangement of attributes that marks a social situation will be.

A similarly pessimistic view was presented by Enkvist (1980: 79):

the context analyst's first embarrassment is richness. There is an infinite number of speech situations and contexts, each of which can be described in terms of an infinite number of contextual features.

Many writers have, however, been prepared to suggest descriptive principles and classificatory systems in order to structure this complex and ambiguous concept of 'context'. Despite his gloomy prognosis, Enkvist (1964, 1980) himself produced a system of contextual classification. He pointed out that, in order to do so, it was necessary to make some specification of those aspects of context which are relevant to the production and interpretation of particular communicative acts. He concentrated on extracting "those features which correlate with stylistically significant choices in the language" (1980: 79), and classified contextual features into two primary classes: those that were stylistically significant (such as role relationship between speech participants) and those that were not. The discovery procedure for such an initial classification involved either commencing with a stylistically significant linguistic form and making an inventory of the contexts in which it occurred, or starting with a particular type of context and producing an inventory of the linguistic forms that occurred within it.

A similar call for greater precision in the distinction between "what is significant and relevant [and] what is trivial and irrelevant" in interactional contexts of language use was made by Taylor (1975: 45). Others have proposed the same point of departure for the process of contextual analysis. Levinson (1983: 22 - 3) put it this way:

First, one needs to distinguish between actual situations of utterance in all their multiplicity of features, and the selection of just those features that are culturally and linguistically relevant to the production and interpretation of utterances.
The position advocated by Halliday (1978: 29) was the same:

the 'context of situation' does not refer to all the bits and pieces of the material environment such as might appear if we had an audio and video recording of a speech event with all the sights and sounds surrounding the utterances. It refers to those features which are relevant to the speech that is taking place.

The process of situated understanding was described by Van Dijk (1977: 217) in a similar way:

a great number of features of the situation are not relevant for the correct comprehension of the illocutionary force of utterances ... . Hence a speech understander will focus attention on specific properties of the situation which might be relevant for the correct interpretation of both meaning/reference and pragmatic intentions/purposes.

Exactly how a theorist decides what constitutes a relevant contextual feature and what does not is, however, problematic. Coulmas (1979: 242) advised that "a great deal of patient and careful observation of communicative events in various cultures" was needed to enable decisions about "which parts of a situational description are to be taken into account, and which can be neglected". This advice has been followed by a good number of researchers, for example, Ervin-Tripp (1976), Pufahl-Bax (1986), Weigal and Weigal (1985), for American English directives; Blum-Kulka, Danet, and Gherson (1985) for Israeli Hebrew requests; Keenan (1974) for everyday and ceremonial modes of Malagasy speech use; Albert (1972) for Barundi petitioning styles; Basso (1972) for Apaché expectations about when not to speak; Philips (1974) for the organization of speaking in group meetings among American Indians; Mitchell-Kernan and Kernan (1975) for use of verbal insults among American and Samoan children. The research presented in this thesis also uses patterns identified from the observation and description of speech in natural settings (Chapter 8) as the starting point for the testing of hypotheses that relate contextual features and request variation.

4.4 Participants' Views About the Relevance of Contextual Features

Advice of a more specific nature on the problem of how to constrain "the flux of theoretically possible elements in a situation" in order to permit the study of contextual influences on language was offered by Brown and Fraser (1979: 57). As Stebbins (1967) had argued earlier, when distinguishing the 'subjective' situation from the social and physical surroundings in which interaction occurred, they suggested focussing on contextual features which had some emic status, that is, on those cues that speech participants actually attend to
and use, in deciding what to say and how to interpret utterances in situations. The preference of Brown and Fraser was for lines of research which "get at the actor's-eye-view of the situation" (56 - 7). Within this framework, then, "any element which does not appear in a member's decision- or attribution-process can be ignored" (57). Others have advocated the same approach (e.g., Blum-Kulka & House, 1989; Brown & Yule, 1983; Cicourel, 1973, 1980; Geohegan, 1971). For example, Cicourel (1980: 29) urged that "more explicit attention be given to the knowledge base attributed to speakers and hearers by researchers, as well as to the kind of knowledge that participants of discourse attribute to each other". Analyses in which contexts could be "described and validated as the participants' own categories" were also advocated by Dore and McDermott (1982: 374).

This focus on participants' points of view as a frame of reference for determining the relevance of contextual features matches that of statements made by earlier commentators on the problem of contextual classification. Wieder (1973: 110), on contemplating the plight of the person faced with an infinity of potentially relevant features in every situation of action, proposed that the person "does not treat every 'objectively' different situation in a different manner. Instead, he [sic] is responsive to a limited number of features that he has learned to perceive, be alert for, and act upon". Stebbins (1967: 164) also emphasized the need to determine which elements of the situation are important for the interactants:

the problem is that too many social scientists willingly assume they know the definitions of the situation of their subjects or respondents simply because they are members of the same culture.

Stebbins' point takes on particular significance in relation to questions about gender and language use. Some writers have proposed the notion of gender subcultures to account for research findings to the effect that women and men view the world and use language in different ways (e.g., Maltz & Borker, 1982). It is clear that researchers interested in investigating contextual influences on language use cannot afford to assume that men and women have identical views about, and relations with, context in their use of language.

As was highlighted in Chapter 2, the importance of people's past experience of situations and events for the formation of expectations and hypotheses about what are likely to be the relevant features of context within a particular type of communicative event has also become a
recurrent theme in the pragmatics literature. These issues are discussed in more detail in Section 4.6.

References to the perceptual capacities of human beings - their 'selective perception' (Stebbins, 1967) and 'limited monitoring capacity' (Kreckel, 1981) - have also been used to explain why only some contextual features are attended to. The shared perspective of these explanations is that context can be seen to have importance for linguistic choice and interpretation to the extent that particular features are 'selected' by interactants as relevant to the meaning of the interaction.

An emphasis upon the nature of the information that people have available to them in communicative situations, and a concern with how people describe rules, norms, roles, and values that are relevant to interaction, are common to ethnographical and ethnomethodological approaches to research. The research presented in this thesis follows this tradition of taking an emic approach to an investigation of the communicative act of requesting, focussing on the standpoints and interests of language users. The next section presents a selective review of taxonomies of contextual features that various scholars have identified as relevant to the use and interpretation of situated language. A review of empirical investigations of the adequacies of these taxonomies follows in Chapter 5.

4.5 Taxonomies of Contextual Features

To attempt to cover, within one chapter of a dissertation, all of the proposed taxonomies of contextual features potentially relevant to language variation would be neither practical nor possible. The proliferation of such taxonomies has resulted in a great deal of duplication. Enkvist's (1980: 85) reference to the "kaleidoscopic rearrangements of features and feature categories" involved in different proposals gives some indication of the extent to which a complete inventory might test a reader's interest and attention.

In structuring the brief summary presented here, I have made a somewhat arbitrary distinction, for the sake of expediency, between two related approaches to the issue of linguistic variation in context. In one approach, which I shall label broadly, 'sociolinguistic', the concern is to describe the social features that appear to be associated with people's selection and interpretation of strategic variants in context. In the second approach, which I shall label, again
broadly, 'socio-cognitive', the concern is to describe the social psychological dimensions that serve as the basis for people's perceptions of situations that influence the form and interpretation of linguistic acts occurring within them. The concerns of the two approaches overlap to a considerable extent. The distinction proposed here is merely a convenient way of summarizing a large body of literature. A sample of proposals generated from within a 'sociolinguistic' tradition is considered first.

4.5.1 **Contextual Determinants of Language Use: 'Sociolinguistic' Approaches**

Many models of the factors and components through which situations have an influence on language have incorporated Firth's (1957) schematic description of the "contexts of situation" as involving the features: 'Participants', 'Objects', and 'Effects' of verbal messages. Jakobson's (1960) model of the constitutive factors in any speech event, for example, involved the features of addresser, addressee, context, contact (a physical channel or psychological connection between interactants), and common code. The more extensive specification of situational features that Hymes (1967: 9) deemed important for an 'ethnography of speaking', or what people know about what kinds of things to say in what message forms to what kinds of people in what kinds of situations, has also served as a basis for many subsequent feature listings. This brief review will start by presenting Hymes' model in which the 'SPEAKING' mnemonic was used to summarize the relevant components of communicative events in contexts:

(S): SITUATION, involving components of **Setting** (time and place, physical circumstances) and **Scene** (psychological setting or cultural definition of an occasion).

(P): PARTICIPANTS, that is, **Speaker**, **Hearer**, **Audience**.

(E): ENDS, as **Outcomes** (purpose of event in terms of conventionally expected outcome) and **Goals** (purposes/strategies of participants in event).

(A): ACT SEQUENCE, involving **Form** of message, how something is said and **Content** of message or topic.

(K): KEY, **Tone**, manner, or spirit in which the act is communicated, e.g., mock versus serious.

(I): **INSTRUMENTALITIES**, involving **Channel** or medium of transmission (oral, written, etc.) and **Forms of Speech** (dialects, codes, registers specialized to particular uses).
(N): **NORMS of Interaction** or rules specifying properties of speaking (when to interrupt, organization of turn-taking, etc.) and **of Interpretation** (e.g., concerning appropriate posture, distance, pause fillers during conversation).

(G): **GENRES**, Categories of acts and events (e.g., poem, prayer, lecture, editorial etc.).

An even more elaborate schema for describing the components of situation was developed by Brown and Fraser (1979), who distinguished the features **Scene** (consisting of setting and purpose of the interaction) and **Participants** as primary determinative elements of the situation, defined as the context within which an interaction, or 'speech event', occurs (Figure 4.1). Many of the variables are similar to those discussed by Hymes (1967), although the focus is on social and psychological factors rather than textual determinants.

![Diagram of Situational Components](image)

**Figure 4.1** Brown & Fraser's (1979: 35) descriptive taxonomy of the situation.

Numerous other lists of contextual features have surfaced within the sociolinguistic literature. Only two additional examples will be cited here, using proposals separated in time
by more than a decade. The reader is directed to Enkvist's (1980) survey article on categories of situational context for an alternative (although also non-exhaustive) review.

The first of the two example listings of contextual features comes from Enkvist (1964). He discriminated between features in the 'intratextual' and the 'extratextual' context. The intratextual context included features associated with the "linguistic frame" of the utterance (for example, voice quality, tempo, sentence length, and complexity, punctuation), and features associated with the "compositional frame" (for example, beginning/middle/end of utterance, relationship of text to surrounding text and literary form). The extratextual context features, which are of greater relevance to the present research, included period, text-type, genre, relationship between speaker and listener (for example, sex, age, familiarity, education, status, common stock of experience), situation and environment, physical action, gesture, dialect, and language.

A later specification of contextual features relevant to the production and interpretation of utterances came from Lyons (1977: 574). His list was arranged in terms of the knowledge required by interactants of features such as: (1) Role and Status of Speaker and Addressee; (2) Location, both spatial and temporal; (3) Level of formality; (4) Medium (that is, code/style appropriate to a channel); (5) Subject matter; (6) Province (or domain to which the situation belongs).

The aim of this brief review is to indicate the extent to which there is "something like a shared view of what characteristics can be used to define a situation" (Brown & Fraser, 1979: 34). Taylor (1975: 45) made an attempt to "bring about some sort of order" in this field of enquiry concerning the situational determinants of language variation, which he viewed as "beset with terminological ambiguities". He created a list of the parameters that could be identified in various definitions of context, and classified these 'domains' in terms of a broad division between linguistic and nonlinguistic contextual features. Features of the linguistic context were categorized in terms of the following domains:

(1) Discoursal - covering the narrowly linguistic or traditional literary context of an utterance;
(2) Collocutional - tapping the way in which utterances produced by persons other than the speaker constrain his/her output, for example, what is revealed as known by both partners, what can or cannot be said to particular persons, how an utterance's illocutionary force is
interpreted, and also how the form of utterances indicates particular relationships between communicators;

(3) **Idiolectal** - involving that aspect of context having to do with past linguistic experiences of the speaker gained in producing utterances, understanding utterances, and participating in exchanges, and also in the linguistic experience gained from membership of a particular linguistic community.

Features of the **nonlinguistic context** were categorized by Taylor in terms of the following domains:

(1) **Situational** - covering aspects of the 'natural' situation or 'real life', making possible, for example, the distinction between spoken and written contexts;

(2) **Biographical** - incorporating contexts of the speaker's behavioural and cognitive development, his/her geographical and social origins and personality traits;

(3) **Paralinguistic** - dealing with utterance accompaniments like voice quality; kinesic, proxemic, and sartorial cues, as well as the role-relationships between communicants.

In reading this summary of the literature, it is important that the reader does not take away the impression that taxonomies of contextual features have been constructed as mere check-lists that permit the straightforward prediction of language choice in various situations. As many writers (e.g., Levinson, 1983) have pointed out, attempts to analyse natural discourse soon dispel the illusion of one-to-one mapping between situational factors and linguistic form. The sort of predictability with regard to formal variation that is under discussion by theorists is probabilistic rather than complete or invariant in nature. This has always been the framework within which sociolinguistic research into language variation has operated, as illustrated by the following extracts, which span twenty years of investigation. From Frake (1964a: 127):

Of course, an ethnography of speaking cannot provide rules specifying exactly what message to select in a given situation. If messages were perfectly predictable from a knowledge of the culture, there would be little point in saying anything. But when a person selects a message, he [sic] does so from set of appropriate alternatives.

From Brown and Yule (1983: 40):

It is very rarely the case in real life that we can predict in detail the form and content of the language which we will encounter, but, given all of the ethnographic information we have specified, the actual occurring utterance is much more likely (hence, we assume, much more readily processed by the addressee) ...
In the light of these comments, the research programme of this thesis was structured around an attempt to define the general types of speech situation in which particular request strategies are considered appropriate (and are therefore likely to occur). The general aim of the research is to contribute to an understanding of the types of knowledge used by competent participants in a variety of conversational interactions.

Within the limitations of a probabilistic framework, many researchers have attempted to verify, by empirical investigation, the status of the suggested situational determinants of language choice and interpretation. The review presented in Chapter 5 summarizes the findings that have been concerned, predominantly, with situated variation in the act of requesting. Before turning to this body of literature, however, I will conclude this chapter with a brief survey of 'socio-cognitive' approaches to the construction of taxonomies of contextual features that influence language use.

4.5.2 Contextual Determinants of Language Use: 'Socio-Cognitive' Approaches

A different approach to the classification and study of situational influences on language has been developed by researchers who focussed their attention on social psychological factors rather than on the types of social descriptive features mentioned in the previous section. These researchers held that objective classifications of context, such as those provided by Hymes (1967) and Brown and Fraser (1979) and others, fail to take account of interactants' subjective definitions of particular contexts of communication, and their cognitive representations of particular social characteristics and features. Although the present research has more in common with the 'sociolinguistic' treatment of contextual description, some of the insights of the socio-cognitive perspective are relevant to the interpretation of the present findings. A brief summary of the 'socio-cognitive' line of research is, therefore, provided below.

4.5.2.1 Dimensional models.

Forgas (1976, 1978, 1979, 1981, 1983, 1985) has been an outspoken advocate of the socio-cognitive approach to investigations of the influence of context on language use. Using the technique of Multi-Dimensional Scaling (M.D.S.) to examine people's cognitive representations of situations, he concluded that, regardless of the subcultural group studied (housewives, students, academic staff, rugby teams), such representations were primarily
based on affective characteristics rather than on features such as setting, participants, goals, and so forth: "It seems that in thinking about an interaction, what comes to mind immediately is not the location, the time of day or the partners involved, but rather a global, overall affective reaction to all of these things" (1981: 173). His studies showed that housewives, for example, reported perceiving situations in terms of dimensions that reflected "intimacy and friendliness" and their "subjective self-confidence or competence [as] actors, related to the regularity of the episodes" (1979: 282). Students' perceptions of commonly experienced situations could similarly be defined in terms of the dimensions: involvement, pleasantness, and knowing how to behave.

A series of M.D.S. analyses of ratings of hypothetical communicative episodes were summarized by Wish, D'Andrade and Goodnow (1980), who found that four stable dimensions characterized subjects' implicit cognitive representations of such episodes. These dimensions were interpreted as (i) cooperative & friendly vs. competitive & hostile; (ii) dominance vs. equality; (iii) task oriented & formal vs. socio-emotional & informal; and (iv) intense vs. superficial. The first two dimensions are similar to the participant features of solidarity and status that have been identified as important determinants of language variation by researchers taking a sociolinguistic approach to the representation of contextual dimensions (e.g., Brown & Fraser, 1979; Enkvist, 1964; Hymes, 1967; Jakobson, 1960; Lyons, 1977).

Factor-analytic techniques have also been used to investigate the dimensionality of subjects' judgements of the similarity of social situations. Five psychologically-relevant dimensions were identified by Magnusson (1971). He concluded that subjects perceived situations in terms of (i) their positive and rewarding character; (ii) their negative nature; (iii) the amount of passivity involved; (iv) the occurrence of social interaction; and (v) the activity of the individual. A seven-factor model was proposed by Cody, Woelfel, and Jordan (1983) involving: personal benefits, situation apprehension, resistance to persuasion, rights, intimacy, dominance, and relational consequences. Some overlap exists between these seven dimensions and those identified as influencing the perceptions of situations in the models reviewed above.
4.5.2.2 Instrumental, goal-based models.

An alternative cognitive perspective was developed by Hoppe-Graff, Herrmann, Winterhoff-Spurk, and Mangold (1985), who worked within an information-processing paradigm. Their model of the cognitive representation of situations was specifically concerned with the parameters that were determinative of request variation. Their investigative technique involved presenting subjects with general descriptions of different situations combined with particular request variants, for example, "Student S is working in the library .... He says to another student sitting nearby, 'Please do not disturb me, I want to read.'". Subjects were then asked to write down "what they thought must have taken place or what must be given to make verbalization of the respective request variant appear reasonable and instrumental in the given situation" (Herrmann & Winterhoff-Spurk, 1989: 178). Content analysis of 238 reconstruction protocols showed the following parameters to be important: (i) the H's ability to perform the requested act, (ii) the H's willingness to perform the act, (iii) the S's legitimacy to request the act of H (described as the extent to which S feels "entitled to obligate" H to some action [Herrmann, 1983: 117]).

The notion that linguistic variation can be explained in terms of the instrumentality of particular forms in context is a theme that is common to the work of many theorists and researchers. In these approaches, the emphasis is often upon the type of activity within which speech is embedded, as the key situational determinant of formal selection and interpretation. As was indicated in Chapter 2, the social activity or speech event (Hymes, 1972) is viewed not so much as a representation of specific social features or components as in terms of the interpretive framework that it generates. Such an emphasis can, of course, be traced back to Wittgenstein's (1958) notion of 'language games'. Put briefly, Wittgenstein's view was that speaking a language needed to be seen as part of an activity (such as the describing of objects, the giving of measurements, the telling of jokes, the giving of greetings, and so on). Knowledge of these activities or 'language games' played a central role in the process of use and understanding.

This was the theme developed by Levin and Moore (1977), for example, when they modelled interactions as classifiable in terms of the recurrent goal patterns involved (action-seeking, information-seeking, helping, and so on). They explained situational production as a
matter of choice that was "primarily determined by how likely the utterance is to further goals of the speaker if directed toward the particular other person" (415). Gumperz (1977) also focussed on interpretation as a function of an utterance's location within particular activities. He referred to the type of cultural knowledge that was organized in people's recognition of regular interactional occurrences or 'speech activities', such as 'discussing politics', 'chatting about the weather', 'lecturing in linguistics'. These activities generated expectations which, together with activity-associated linguistic markers that he referred to as 'contextualization cues' (e.g., intonation, choice of words, syntactic structure, use of formulaic expressions), could account for the process of understanding:

We use our knowledge of grammar, lexicon, and contextualization conventions as well as whatever background information we have about settings and participants to establish likely communicative goals and outcomes. We then build on these predictions to identify the communicative intent which we assume underlies particular utterances. (1980b: 106 - 7)

Levinson's (1979: 368) use of the notion of 'activity types', described as "goal-defined, socially constituted, bounded, events with constraints on participants, setting, and so on, but above all on the kinds of allowable contributions", is another example of this approach. In his view, different types of activity not only constrained what was likely to be said within them, but also engendered strong expectations about the function or meaning of any utterances that might be made.

The recurrent nature of identifiable social activities, and their association with the use of particular linguistic routines, was also emphasized by Gibbs (1985). As described in Chapter 2, his research showed that certain forms of request were perceived as conventional in certain situations. People's shared knowledge of such situational linguistic conventions involved, according to Gibbs (1985: 97) information concerning "the social setting, the particular roles that speakers and hearers play in conversations, the interaction of speakers' and hearers' beliefs, and their presuppositions about each other's plans and goals in different discourse situations".

The question of how such cultural or background knowledge concerning the forms of action that are instrumental and appropriate in particular situations might be represented cognitively, and used in an interactive way to guide conversational exchanges, has generated much interest among theorists. The notions of schema, scripts, and frames have been borrowed from cognitive psychology by a number of researchers (see, for example, Schank & Abelson, 1977)
to explain the organization of the types of background knowledge and expectations that guide linguistic interactions. Other researchers have favoured rule-based approaches. A brief review of these representations of linguistically relevant background knowledge appears in the next section.

4.6 Representing Background Knowledge

4.6.1 Schema, Scripts, and Frames

The term 'schema' was first used by Bartlett (1932) to explain the constructive nature of the memory process. In more recent applications of cognitive psychology it has been used by Rumelhart (1979: 85), among others, to refer to "an abstract representation of a generalized concept or situation". In this view, the process of comprehension involves "selecting and verifying conceptual schemata to account for the situation" (85). Theorists making use of the schema concept model comprehension as a 'top-down' process in which acts are understood in relation to their context, rather than viewing it as a 'bottom-up' process in which individual linguistic components have priority.

An elaborate model of knowledge pertaining to the comprehension process was developed by Van Dijk (1977), in terms of conceptual systems he called "frames", but which are variously referred to as scripts (Abelson, 1981) or schema. Like Ervin-Tripp et al. (1987), Gumperz (1977), Levinson (1979), and others, Van Dijk proposed that information from the context provides people with expectations about plausible goals within an activity, and hence about possible linguistic forms which might be used in the situation. As he pointed out, "if a complete stranger is heading for us on the street, we may be pretty sure that (globally) he [sic] will ask a question or make a request -- and not make some assertion about his love life, or a threat" (1977: 217).

A similar explanation of the interpretive process was offered by the schema theorists Reisbeck and Schank (1979: 248):

In order to understand what someone says it is necessary to have a highly developed model of the kinds of things he [sic] could say .... The hearer must have and use a great deal of knowledge about how things can happen in the world and their usual place and time for happening.

Cognitive notions like those of frames and schema, then, have been used to explain the organization and storage of cultural knowledge which allows people to judge the typicality or
appropriateness of situated actions. Both Ervin-Tripp (1976) and Van Dijk (1977) referred to the interpretational 'sets' induced by contextual features to explain the rapid processing of utterances which is characteristic of normal conversation. Van Dijk's (1977) listing of the sources of contextual (and general) knowledge involved can be compared with the taxonomies of relevant contextual features presented in section 4.5:

A. Properties of the structure of the utterance (as assigned on the basis of grammatical rules);
B. Paralinguistic properties such as speed, stress, intonation, pitch, ... and gestures, facial expression, bodily movements, etc. ... ;
C. Actual observation/perception of the communicative context (presence and properties of objects, other persons, etc.);
D. Knowledge/beliefs in memory about the speaker and his properties or about other properties of the actual situation;
E. Knowledge/beliefs with respect to the type of interaction going on, and the structures of preceding contexts of interaction;
F. Knowledge/beliefs derived from previous speech acts, previous parts of discourse, both at the micro- (or local) level and at the macro- (or global) level;
G. General semantic, in particular, conventional, knowledge about (inter)action, rules, etc., -- especially those of pragmatics;
H. Other kinds of general world knowledge (frames).

The components of this contextual information in terms of which people's judgements about language use and interpretation occurred were organized in terms of a hierarchy of relevance according to Van Dijk (1977: 218):

In order to be able to determine whether a speech act is appropriate, we should thus first of all be aware of the most general social setting in which the interaction takes place, and then about the more specific or ad hoc particulars of this setting, e.g. actual properties of the speech participants.

Social settings were categorized broadly under four general headings by Van Dijk: **private**, **public**, **institutional/formal**, and **informal**. These broad distinctions are similar to the experimentally-derived dimensions of people's perceptions of social situations that are reviewed in section 5.2.1. Van Dijk defined these general setting categories in terms of properties that have been used in most attempts at contextual taxonomy: **positions** (e.g., roles, status); **properties** (e.g., sex, age); **relations** (e.g., dominance, authority); and **functions** (e.g., 'father', 'waitress', 'judge'). In addition to these sorts of contextual constraints on
understanding, Van Dijk referred to sets of *conventions* ("rules, laws, principles, norms, values" 1977: 220) which defined the possible actions associated with particular positions within contexts. Put succinctly, then, schemata for the analysis of contexts operated in such a way that "if a context obviously satisfies a set of (ordered) key features it will be taken as characteristic for a specific set of possible speech acts" (1977: 217). The job of an empirical pragmatics, as Van Dijk (1981) saw it, was to specify the conditions under which an utterance counts as an appropriate speech act in some particular context.

A similar cognitive theory of language use which employed the concept of 'frames' to model the contextual knowledge necessary for evaluating the appropriateness of utterances was proposed by Coulmas (1979). In this model, situational frames were seen as providing "a situational description which matches the perception of the respective situation by the members of the group in whose culture it is defined" (1979: 244). In Coulmas' model, frames included conceptual representations of the following sort of information:

1. **Participants**: specifying sex, age, social role, hierarchy, authority, familiarity of participants.
2. **Setting**: specifying time, place of utterance.
3. **Why and Wherefore**: specifying time of event referred to by utterance, and reason for utterance.
4. **Contextual Restrictions**: specifying permissible style and position of utterance in communicative sequence.
5. **Concomitant Activity**: for example, gestures.

This model also features many of the components described in other contextual taxonomies. Tannen (1979) suggested that the concept of expectation unites the various models that make use of terms like 'schemata', 'scripts', and 'frames'. The underlying notion is that, "... based on one's experience of the world in a given culture (or combination of cultures), one organizes knowledge about the world and uses this knowledge to predict interpretations and relationships regarding new information, events, and experiences" (1979: 138 - 9). In fact, it has been argued that the fundamentally cooperative relationship that is theorized as underpinning communicative interaction in general (Grice, 1975), might usefully be conceptualized in terms of participants' mutual adherence to such expectations (Merritt, 1976). A central role for
expectations of what others would do in particular situations was recognized as early as 1951 by Parsons, who, following G.H. Mead, developed a model of the functioning of the social system that rested upon the linking of shared expectations to institutions (see Goody (1978) for a discussion).

An alternative to the modelling of linguistically relevant background knowledge and expectations in terms of schemata, scripts, and frames is discussed in the next section. Many authors, although maintaining as their central concept the notion of a culturally recognized social activity in which language is embedded, have modelled contextual constraints on language use and understanding in terms of activity-specific inference rules.

4.6.2 Rule-Based Approaches

The issue of how to conceptualize rules that constrain linguistic activity remains problematic (see for example, Taylor and Cameron, 1987; Bilmes, 1986, for reviews). Most theorists appear to take the view that rules are prescriptions that guide correct or appropriate situated action in the sense of being interpretive aids to such action (e.g., Cicourel, 1973; Grimshaw, 1980a; Harré & Secord, 1972; Sankoff, 1976; Shimanoff, 1980). In the social sciences, according to Taylor & Cameron (1987: 7), such rules can be described as social norms which are "meaningful only within certain social arrangements". This implies a view of rules as part of people's social background knowledge, and it follows that the ability to recognize appropriate contexts for their application is also part of this knowledge. The perspective adopted by Hymes (1977, 1987) on the nature of the shared norms that govern speech events and constitute people's communicative competence is a prime example of this position.

McLaughlin (1984: 21) summarized the general format of various conceptualizations of the form of linguistically relevant action rules in the following way: "the canonical rule-statement is of the form, 'If situation X occurs, do (do not do) Y'". An earlier attempt at the characterization of rules pertaining to "the socially appropriate construction and interpretation of messages" by Frake (1964b: 132-3) seems more consistent with theorists' realization that situated language variation is only predictable in a probabilistic way: "the model of an ethnographic statement is not: 'if a person is confronted with stimulus X, he [sic] will do Y', but 'if a person is in situation X, performance Y will be judged appropriate by naive actors'". 
This is also the rule perspective proposed by Morris and Hopper (1980), and Bilmes (1986). According to Bilmes (1986: 128), sociolinguistic rules should be thought of as "locat[ing] the linguistic form that a member will recognize as normal and appropriate, not the form that he [sic] will necessarily use".

Cicourel (1973) was an early advocate of the need to make explicit the interpretive work carried out by speech participants in deciding the situated meaning and applicability of rules. He suggested the following method of proceeding:

A key issue, therefore, is how to assess the extent to which higher-order conceptions of social structure constrain [the] local interactional settings. One source of information is the way participants assess the outcomes of such encounters after the fact in the form of accounts or summaries for others in subsequent social exchanges. (1980: 19)

A similar version of a rule-based explanation of human action was proposed by Harré (1981), who used the term 'ethogensics' to describe the study of rules as the generative mechanisms of appropriate, conventional, social behaviour. The ethogenic method is also characterized by its use of account analysis. Accounts are taken to be "the actor's own statements about why he [sic] performed the acts in question, what social meanings he gave to the actions of himself and others " (1977a: 284). The fundamental premise informing this method is that social knowledge underlies both appropriate action and the ability to provide warrants or explanations for such action.

Authors proposing rule-based mechanisms of language use and understanding cite evidence from a number of sources to support their position. The most basic evidence, according to McLaughlin (1984: 247), concerns behavioural conformity. There is evidence of what she referred to as a "regularly occurring relationship between some particular communicative behavior and a context for which it is claimed to be the appropriate action". A review of such evidence for one communicative act type - requesting - follows in Chapter 5. Another source of evidence is that people have knowledge of 'rules' relating action to particular contexts. However, the ability to articulate a rule has not been accepted by all theorists as reliable evidence of such knowledge (e.g., Nisbett and Wilson, 1977). It has been more commonly accepted that people's awareness of breaches or infringements of proposed rules constitutes evidence that such rules are known in some sense (e.g., Cicourel, 1980; Garfinkel, 1967; Habermas, 1979; Harré, 1974, 1977b). According to Harré (1977b) for instance, social knowledge is not necessarily explicit and capable of representation in the form of consciously
attended rules. However, such social knowledge can be shown to be represented tacitly in people's justificatory accounts of the propriety and impropriety of different paths of action. In Harré's (1978: 145) own words:

the test of whether a man's [sic] actions are the application of a rule is not whether he can formulate it, but whether it makes sense to distinguish between a right and a wrong way of doing things in connection with what he does.

The suggestion that people's accounts provide a useful source of information about situated language use is applied in components of the present research. Some of the studies reported here make use of hypothetical instances of 'rule infringements' in which participants were asked to account, not only for their choices of forms of request that would be appropriate within particular scenarios, but also to explain why alternative forms would be inappropriate. In this thesis, the 'rules' to which conversational interactants may be said to orient are conceptualized in an ethnomethodological sense to refer to the sorts of interpretive devices that render behaviour understandable or meaningful. In this treatment, rules are not seen as having causal status; they are viewed rather as "members' tools for demonstrating order in behaviour" (Bilmes, 1986: 5). The necessity of attending to people's own assessments of the meaning of their linguistic choices (and non-choices) in particular situations is clear, from an ethnomethodological perspective. In focussing on participants' views of the appropriateness of request variants in context, this research aims to provide insights into the social knowledge involved in decisions of 'rule applicability' (as rule theorists would put it), as well as into the social and affective meanings attributed to formal variants that are perceived as either appropriate or inappropriate in particular contexts. These aims place the present research within the realm defined by Leiter (1980: 11) as pertaining to the study of the concept, appropriateness, as it applies to contextualized action:

*Appropriateness* means two things. First, it refers to the articulation between a selected piece of the stock of knowledge and the situation. Members of society must decide which pieces of the stock of knowledge to use on a specific occasion. Second, because the meaning of the recipes, maxims, rules, and typifications is context dependent, appropriateness also refers to the construction of meaning.

### 4.6.3 Criticisms of the Rule-Based Approach

Some scholars have criticized the explanatory framework involved in rule-based models. Although I do not not wish to enter into a detailed examination of the merits and shortcomings
of the rule-based approach in this thesis, a brief digression will suffice to acquaint the reader with the general nature of the critique.

The arguments developed by Taylor and Cameron (1987) are representative of the points raised by authors who have questioned the assumption that conversational activity is rule-governed (see also, Heritage (1984) for a review). The main thrust of their critique concerns the foundation of the rules framework upon the unexamined principle of an intersubjective 'shared world'. In their view, there is "no really convincing evidence" (1987: 62) for the existence of such cognitive consensus as is indicated by the term intersubjectivity. Taylor and Cameron emphasized the need for theorists to consider the possibility that conversational interactants might have different views of "what is going on, what has happened, what is a next possible or probable event, and what it all means" (1987: 161).

The tendency of those adopting a rule-based approach to equate formalized descriptions of behaviour with normative rules has also been criticized. According to Taylor and Cameron (1987), the assumption that actors have knowledge of such formal descriptions, and that such 'rules' govern the production of behaviour, often goes unquestioned. Brown and Levinson (1978: 287) made a similar criticism of many rule-based approaches in which the statement of a rule became "the terminal point of investigation". They viewed such rule statements as another form of behavioural description, not as explanation, and have attempted in their own research to "push below such normative levels" in order to model the "systematic source" of such behavioural patterns (287). Shifting the analytic focus to the kinds of things that people try to do with language has led them to postulate universal goals, or rational desires (e.g., to be well regarded, or not to be imposed upon) as the motivational sources which explain the great variety of strategies which exist to perform speech acts such as requesting. Brown and Levinson's approach is grounded in a view of people which is consistent with the ethogenic perspective. In both approaches, people are viewed as plan-making, self-monitoring, goal-defining, and strategic actors.

The work of Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) constitutes a theoretical linchpin in terms of which major research components of this thesis are structured. Detailed discussion of their theory will occur in Chapter 6. The next chapter contains a review of empirical research that has attempted to verify various proposals concerning the features of context that influence the
selection and interpretation of linguistic acts. In reflection of the research focus of this thesis, the review is concerned, predominantly, with findings relating to situated variation in the act of requesting.

1Kachru (1981) discussed the possibility that the term had an earlier origin, tracing it back to Wegener's (1885) concept of 'situationstheorie'. Gregory and Carroll (1975: 88) made a similar claim.

2The speech event was the basic unit of analysis identified by Hymes (1972) in his study of communicative competence. It refers to activities that are governed by rules or norms for the use of speech, for example, two-party conversations, introductions, and so on.

3Block (1970, cited by Dascal (1981: 154)) half-humourously proposed the creation of a special discipline - 'contextics' - to deal with all of the aspects of context relevant to language.

4Langendoen's (1968: 50n) view that some theorists have made of context "a convenient dumping ground for people's knowledge about the world, their own culture etc.", echoes this point.

5'Emic' notions are actor-based (subjective, dependent on the informant's definition of the phenomena). 'Etic' categories are observer-based and aim at a systemic description of cultural behavioural patterns.

6The central assumption underlying the psychological use of M.D.S. techniques is that "psychological distance or similarity (between concepts, constructs, persons, traits, social episodes, natural stereotypes, etc.) can be represented and analysed in terms of euclidean distance formulations" (Forgas, 1979: 254). The procedure involves subjects rating objects of analysis (e.g., social episodes) on a series of bipolar scales. Measures of similarity between all scaled elements are then analysed by M.D.S. techniques with the aim of producing an optimal representation (of implicit cognitive structure) in terms of a number of dimensions.

7In terms of the 'frame' metaphor, knowledge is viewed as stored in cognitive structures that represent stereotyped situations/activities e.g., lecturing, chatting. Discourse understanding is conceptualized as "a process of fitting what one is told into the framework established by what one already knows" (Charniak, 1979, quoted in Brown and Yule, 1983: 239). A 'script' is considered to have a similar function, but is more programmatic than a frame, in that it contains "a standard sequence of events that describes a situation" (Reisbeck & Schank, 1979: 253). That is, knowledge is viewed as stored as stereotypic event-sequences. Scripts are associated, then, with events which occur in situations such as restaurants, theatres, buses. A more detailed review of the terms schema, script, and frame can be found in Tannen (1979).

8The findings of the empirical study reported in Chapter 3 support Van Dijk's proposal. Most respondents approached on the street by a non-threatening stranger in this study appeared to interpret a statement about a clock as a request for the time.
CHAPTER 5

EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATIONS OF CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES ON LANGUAGE USE: THE CASE OF REQUEST VARIATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the findings of empirical research on situated request variation with the aim of assessing the status of various proposals, as summarized in Chapter 4, concerning the relevance of contextual features to language use. Two general types of question appear to have motivated empirical investigations of request variation in context:

(1) Questions about the status of contextual components:
   Are the components mentioned in contextual taxonomies always relevant to a determination of request choice?
   Are these the only components that need to be considered?
   Can the components be ordered in some hierarchy of precedence?

(2) Questions about the relationships between components:
   How do the components interrelate or co-occur to produce different structures of appropriateness with respect to request variation?

These general issues have been addressed by researchers in two ways. Some have turned to the analysis of natural conversations, describing systematic variation in request usage in terms of observed situational features. Others have studied request variation experimentally, usually via the manipulation of contextual variables presented as scenarios in which participants have been asked to play the role of requesters. Both methods have been identified as having some limitations. The utility of naturalistic studies as tests of the contextual features relevant to linguistic variation is often questioned on the grounds that (i) these studies lack control over co-occurring features, and (ii) reliable comparisons between all possible combinations of particular social contextual features can rarely be made. Furthermore, as Ervin-Tripp (1973: 257) pointed out, one disadvantage of naturalistic studies is that there is often "so much variation at once that we can find descriptive information about distributions but little definitive knowledge of which of the covarying features may be effective".
The reductionist nature of much experimental research into the social contextual correlates of language use has also been commented upon (see, for example, Goffman, 1972; Mc Laughlin, 1984). However, experimental methodology continues widely to be employed. In the words of one researcher who carried out a series of investigations employing both naturalistic and experimental methods:

the available evidence seems to justify the employment of an experimental strategy in the study of the situational determination of requesting, if only because we do not know of any promising nonexperimental approach to the systematic and empirically controlled exploration of the dependence of specific request variants on specific situational influences. (Herrmann, 1983: 150)

I will begin this review of empirical research on the contextual determinants of request variation with a summary of studies that have utilized natural conversational data to examine patterns of requesting. Findings from these studies, and those from the experimental studies that follow, are reported in some detail here in order that comparisons can be made with the findings for request variation that are reported in Chapters 9, 10, and 11 for samples of Australian English speakers.

5.2 Studies of Request Variation in Natural Conversation

5.2.1 The Distribution of American English Directives: The Work of Ervin-Tripp

In a study that has inspired a large body of subsequent sociolinguistic research, Ervin-Tripp (1976) described systematic variation in directive use in American English using data collected over a number of years from natural conversations in a range of settings (which included domestic, office, hospital, educational, and shop locations). She observed that directive form varied in accordance with a number of social features such as the relative rank, age, and familiarity of the participants; their relative physical location; and the difficulty of the service requested; whether or not a task was expected for a participant in a particular role; and whether or not compliance was likely. The specific findings, reported in terms of decreasing directness of the request variant were, broadly, as follows:

(1) Imperative forms of request (Give me a copy.) were used in the sample:
   (a) to subordinates when the task required was within their expected duties, or
   (b) when the speaker and addressee knew each other well and were of similar age and rank, especially if the addressee was in the speaker's territory.
(2) Requests in the form of **Statements of Need or Desire** (*I'll need a 19 gauge needle.*) were observed in settings in which an obligation on the part of the addressee could be assumed; for example, they were used:

(a) to subordinates in work settings, and
(b) to parents by young children in family contexts.

(3) Requests in the form of **Imbedded Imperatives** (*Would you hand me Mr. Adams' chart?*) were used:

(a) to high-ranking or unfamiliar addressees if the task required was not difficult and compliance could be expected, or
(b) to familiar addressees when the beneficiary of the request was the speaker him/herself.

(4) **Directives in the form of requests for permission**, **Permission Directives** (*Can I have my records back?*), were also directed upward in rank, to addressees in control of particular resources.

(5) **Question Directives**, forms that state some condition which would make compliance impossible (*Do you have a room for twenty on Monday nights?*), were used when there was a strong possibility that an addressee could not comply.

(6) Requests in the form of **Hints** (*It's quite noisy in here.*) were used:

(a) to familiar addressees in families and communal groups where the speaker could rely on the addressee's shared knowledge and solicitude, or
(b) in settings where the tasks and roles were routine, to addressees of lower rank.

In relation to one of the settings in which requests were collected, Ervin-Tripp was prepared to claim that the social determinants exhibited a hierarchy of precedence. In a university office, at least,

... rank-related forms superseded person-related or solidarity forms. If a high-ranking person was not present, pressure or tension ... - e.g. at exam or registration time - might lead to the use of direct imperatives towards persons who normally didn't receive them. The next selector appeared to be familiarity. A new young employee received more elaborate requests for a month before her peers settled into the imperatives used normally in peer directives. (1976: 36)

### 5.2.2 Studies Based on Ervin-Tripp's Observations

A study that attempted to test the generalizability of Ervin-Tripp's claims concerning relationships between social variables and choice of directive variants was carried out by Weigal and Weigal (1985). They selected a sample that differed in socio-economic status, ethnicity, and organizational and physical environments from the predominantly middle-class, white-collar workers, professionals, and students originally observed by Ervin-Tripp (1976).
Apparently taking a lead from Ervin-Tripp's admission that her data had "major gaps" in the areas of "blue-collar work and task-oriented talk around interaction" (1976: 27), Weigal and Weigal employed both naturalistic and participant-observation methods to investigate the directive use of a group of predominantly black, male, migratory, agricultural labourers as they worked in the eastern seaboard region of the United States. Contrary to the general patterns found by Ervin-Tripp, Weigal and Weigal observed that, irrespective of the prevailing social-contextual features such as rank, familiarity, territorial location, and task expectations, **imperatives** were by far the most frequently used directive form, accounting for 88 per cent of the 98 directives recorded.¹

It is interesting to note that, insofar as Ervin-Tripp had anything to say about directive use in such work environments, her findings did coincide with those reported by Weigal and Weigal. She reported merely that "blue-collar workers interchange imperatives frequently while moving heavy objects ..." (1976: 32). The overwhelming use of the imperative form amongst male labourers was attributed, in part, by Weigal and Weigal to the 'antagonistic' nature of most of the interactions that occurred in the community (in particular, in relations between the farm-workers and the crew-leaders, which the researchers categorized as characterized by feelings of mistrust and tension), and in part, to the culture and socialization practices that characterized the group under study.

Imperative forms were also found to be the most frequently occurring directive variant in a study by Pufahl-Bax (1986) of the spoken and written requests used to assign work in an American university office. Using the method of participant observation, Pufahl-Bax wrote down identifiable request sequences that were addressed to her, or that occurred within her hearing. Short notes or memos containing directives were also collected. Ervin-Tripp's (1976) taxonomy was used to categorize the 32 written and 32 spoken directives in the corpus. The findings were as follows:

(1) **Imperatives** addressed to subordinates accounted for approximately half of the spoken directives, and 71 per cent of the written directives. A particular form of imperative occurred only in the spoken data. This had the form *You can X.*, for example, *You can type this.*, and was labelled 'state-preparatory' by Pufahl-Bax.
(2) The second most frequent directive variant in the data was the **imbedded imperative**, accounting for 25 per cent of the spoken, and 18 per cent of the written directives. In contrast to Ervin-Tripp's findings, the distribution of spoken imbedded imperatives in the office setting was not different from that of direct imperatives in terms of the social features: rank, difficulty or routineness of task, or territory. However, *written* imbedded imperatives were used in situations where (a) the addressee was under no obligation to comply, (b) a difficult or non-routine task was involved, or (c) the speaker was the beneficiary of the request.

(3) Two instances of **permission directives** were observed to occur downwards in rank, rather than upwards, as had been the case in Ervin-Tripp's corpus.

(4) **Question directive** and **hint** forms occurred infrequently in the corpus, with all instances being directed to high-rank addressees.

A similar pattern of directive variant use was described by Holmes (1983) for discourse recorded in elementary school classrooms in New Zealand and Britain. Teachers' directives most frequently occurred in **imperative** form, in line with Ervin-Tripp's observation of their use from superiors to subordinates. Like Pufahl-Bax (1986), Holmes identified structural variants of the imperative form. None of Holmes' categories appears identical, however, to the 'state-preparatory' imperative (*You can X.*) observed by Pufahl-Bax in the work setting, although Holmes' imperative category (ii) 'You + imperative' (e.g., *You go on with your work*), comes closest.

**Imbedded imperative** forms (e.g., *Would you X?*) were relatively common in the classroom setting, and their occurrence in situations where there was physical distance between S and H, or when H was in his/her own territory, coincided with Ervin-Tripp's observations about the social distribution of the form. Variants corresponding to Ervin-Tripp's categories of **need statements** and **hints** were also relatively frequent in the data. The use of the former category by teachers in the transactional setting of the classroom was clearly consistent with Ervin-Tripp's observation of the distribution of the form from superiors to subordinates. Teachers' use of the latter form was also consistent with her observation that the use of such indirect requests depended upon shared understandings of rules and obligations in interactive settings such as offices, hospitals, or classrooms. Variants coinciding with Ervin-Tripp's **question directive** category were infrequent in the classroom setting. Holmes speculated
that the interpretive ability of elementary school children was not sufficiently well developed to permit the successful use, by teachers, of these functionally ambiguous forms.

Ervin-Tripp's taxonomy of directive types was also used by Pearson (1989) to analyse the 'control acts' occurring at several business meetings in three church groups in midwestern USA. A total of 558 directives were recorded and analysed according to speaker's role as minister, chairperson, or group member. Overall, the pattern of directives used by the high-status ministers and the chairpersons who were responsible for the conduct of the meetings was similar; group members exhibited a somewhat different pattern of directive use:

1. Indirect hint forms were found to be the form of directive used most frequently by all speakers (constituting approximately 40 per cent of the directives uttered by speakers occupying each of the three roles).

2. Question directives constituted the second most frequent form used by ministers and chairpersons (approximately 20 per cent of their utterances), whereas imperatives and 'strong modals' (a category in which speakers emphasized their directive assertion using verbs such as 'ought' and 'must') were the forms used with the second highest frequency after hints by group members (at around 17 per cent of their utterances).

3. In line with Ervin-Tripp's (1976) findings, the high-status ministers made greater use of directives in the form of need statements than did other speakers.

5.2.3 Summary

These studies of request usage in a variety of natural settings provide some support for the conclusions drawn by Ervin-Tripp (1976) concerning the social distribution of formal variants. There are a number of inconsistencies in the findings, however, for patterns of request use across settings and categories of interactants. The studies provide some evidence to suggest that local situational characteristics (for example, an antagonistic relationship between interactants, the topic being discussed), and broader (sub)cultural orientations might influence the form of directive acts more strongly than social contextual parameters like rank, familiarity, task difficulty, and so on.

The findings for the categories of request variant originally identified by Ervin-Tripp can be summarized as follows:
(1) **Imperatives** were the form of directive used most frequently by a number of classes of speaker:

(a) male labourers (Weigal & Weigal, 1985), although the distribution of the form was not differentiated according to the contextual features of rank, familiarity, territorial location, or task expectation that Ervin-Tripp identified as influential.

(b) office workers (Pufahl-Bax, 1986), when assigning work, particularly to subordinates.

(c) teachers (Holmes, 1983) to children in classrooms. Patterns in (b) and (c) are consistent with Ervin-Tripp's observation of the form's distribution according to rank of addressee.

(d) low-status church-group members (Pearson, 1989) in meetings with higher-status church officers. This pattern is not consistent with Ervin-Tripp's findings, although no systematic information about the status of addressees was provided in the study.

(2) **Need Statements** were used frequently by high-status speakers (Holmes, 1983; Pearson, 1989) consistent with Ervin-Tripp's observations.

(3) **Imbedded Imperatives** were distributed according to features of rank and territorial location in one study (Holmes, 1983), but not in another (Pufahl-Bax, 1986, for spoken requests).

(4) **Permission Directives** were observed too infrequently to permit conclusions to be drawn.

(5) **Question Directives** were observed infrequently overall, but in one study, were used only to high-rank addressees (Pufahl-Bax, 1986) and in another, more often by high-status speakers than by low (Pearson, 1989). The feature of status was not identified by Ervin-Tripp as a determinant of question-directive distribution.

(6) **Hints** were used frequently in church business meetings (Pearson, 1989) and, as expected from Ervin-Tripp's description, by high-status speakers in classrooms (Holmes, 1983).

5.2.4 **A Study of Requesting in Israeli Hebrew**

A study that did not set out explicitly to test predictions based on Ervin-Tripp's (1976) findings, but which collected naturally-occurring requests in a range of settings similar to those
that she investigated (family, campus, and health service) was carried out by Blum-Kulka, Danet, and Gherson (1985) for Israeli Hebrew. They found the most important predictors of the level of directness of request strategies to be the type of request goal (specifically, whether the request required action, goods, or information from the addressee), and the relative age and power of the addressee. Of interest also were the variables of social distance, gender, and asking permission as a type of request goal, that had been hypothesized by the researchers to have strong explanatory value, but which failed to account for much variance in choice of request strategies, relative to the effects of other factors in the study.

A summary of Blum-Kulka et al.'s findings for Israeli Hebrew requests enables a useful comparison with Ervin-Tripp's descriptive analysis of requesting in American English. Blum-Kulka et al. (1985) differentiated among three directive types for the purposes of analysis:

(1) **Direct** requests such as imperatives (*Close the door.*), performatives (*I'm requesting you to close the door.*), and hedged performatives (*You should close the door.*);

(2) **Conventionally indirect requests** (which included Ervin-Tripp's (1976) categories of need statements, imbedded imperatives, and question directives);

(3) **Hints** (for example, *It's cold in here.*).

These formal variants were observed to be distributed according to the following social features:

(1) **Direct requests** were used predominantly in situations that involved:
   (i) requests for action,
   (ii) adult-to-child, or teenager-to-teenager speech,
   (iii) subordinate addressees,
   (iv) familiar addressees.

(2) **Conventionally indirect requests** were used in situations involving:
   (i) requests for goods or information,
   (ii) addressees of high or equal status.

(3) **Hints** were frequently used in situations that involved:
   (i) addressees of high rank,
   (ii) requests for permission.
Interaction effects between the social features of Power and Social Distance were also observed. Only when interactants were of equal power did the social-distance relationship between them influence the form of request. As Ervin-Tripp (1976) had found, direct forms of request were used to familiar equals, and indirect forms to non-familiar equals. Subordinates generally received direct strategies, and superiors, indirect strategies, regardless of levels of familiarity, however.

There have been a number of other studies of directive use in Israeli Hebrew. One analysis, by Bogoch and Danet (1984), of a lawyer-client interaction in a legal-aid office, provided further evidence that the form of directive is associated with the relative power of interactants. In the sample of 88 directives obtained, the (female) lawyer used ten times more directives than the (male) client. Most often, these requests for action were in the form of direct imperatives and performatives. The same pattern was reported by Yaeger-Dror and Sister (1987) to occur in data collected from Israeli radio talk-shows. The powerful (male) hosts used more directives, which were more frequently direct or unmitigated than were those used by the less powerful callers to the program. Another Hebrew study reported results consistent with Ervin-Tripp's observations for American English usage within families and communal groups.

Yaeger (n.d., cited by Yaeger-Dror & Sister, 1987) found that the most likely form of directive between kibbutz members who were "intimate equals doing the same job" was not the imperative but the hint, or other "relatively mitigating types of questions" (Yaeger-Dror & Sister, 1987: 1141).

5.2.5 Patterns of Similarity and Difference in Situated Directive Use Across Studies

Although the findings of Ervin-Tripp (1976), Weigal and Weigal (1985), Pufahl-Bax (1986), Holmes (1983), Pearson (1989), and Blum-Kulka et al. (1985) are not directly comparable for a number of reasons, it is nevertheless worthwhile to consider the similarities and differences in their findings about the situated distribution of request variants. These findings may be summarized under two headings.

First, in terms of the types of contextual factors that have been proposed as relevant to the determination of request choice, there was consistent evidence from the majority of these studies of natural language data that the power/rank feature of the social relationship between
interactants was important in determining request variation. There was evidence, too, from some studies, that factors such as social distance, task difficulty, likelihood of compliance, relative age of interactants, and type of request goal were also influential. Evidence for the way in which these factors interact in particular social situations to influence the type of request strategies employed was less consistent, as might be expected given the complexities involved in observational studies of natural language data to which reference was made at the beginning of this chapter.

Second, with respect to the distribution of specific request variants, the following patterns were evident. Direct requests such as imperatives were observed to predominate irrespective of social features, amongst the migratory agricultural labourers observed by Weigal and Weigal (1985). In the work assignments to office workers recorded by Pufahl-Bax (1986), imperatives were always directed to subordinates; and teachers' directives to students occurred most frequently in imperative form in Holmes' (1983) sample. In the range of settings sampled by Ervin-Tripp (1976) and Blum-Kulka et al. (1985), a similar pattern of use was evident. Imperative forms were used most frequently to subordinates or to high-familiarity peers, and conventional indirect request forms were used to high-rank addressees. However, the distribution of the very indirect request forms was different in the two studies. In Hebrew, hints tended to be used to superiors rather than to equal or subordinate addressees, and the tendency was for directness to rise with an increase in familiarity, whereas, in the American English sample, hints were used more often to subordinates or to familiar addressees. Other studies in both languages have also produced divergent results with respect to the distribution of hints in particular contexts. Yaeger's (n.d.) study in a kibbutz, for example, showed these indirect forms to be used frequently between intimate equals. Clearly, more needs to be known about the conditions under which speakers in different cultures, and in different contexts, consider the use of very indirect forms such as hints to be appropriate.

5.2.6 Considerations of Gender in Studies of Natural Conversation

Before continuing with this review of the literature pertaining to situated request variation, it is necessary to make mention of the importance of a contextual feature that, for a number of years, went disregarded by many researchers: the gender of participants in a conversational
interchange. The writings of Robyn Lakoff (1975, 1977a & b, 1979) on the relationship between women's language and politeness, provided the impetus for much recent work on gender and language use. A degree of inconsistency among initial findings concerning the influence of gender on language choice and understanding led many researchers to focus their attention on interactions between gender and other contextual features such as power, affect, and role. The issues involved in this field are sufficiently pertinent to the present research to warrant detailed consideration in a separate chapter. Chapter 7, therefore, is devoted to a review of relevant research on gender issues in language.

5.2.7 Summary and Statement of Research Questions

Findings from observational studies of request variation in natural conversation can be summarized in terms of the two general types of research question identified at the beginning of this chapter.

(1) Evidence for proposed components of contextual taxonomies.

The preceding review indicates that there is general agreement as to the importance of social-contextual variables such as status or power. Evidence regarding the influence of other features, including age, familiarity or social distance, type of service requested, likelihood of compliance, and gender of interactants, is less consistent. Clearly, further exploration of the impact of these features upon requesting in a variety of contexts and languages is required.

Observational, naturalistic studies have provided some evidence of the relevance of social situational features, all of which can be subsumed under the broad component headings occurring repeatedly in the various taxonomies that were reviewed in Chapter 4. Components of a more psychological nature, or those having to do with the expressive delivery of the request, were not the focus of these sociolinguistic analyses, however. The importance of psychological factors such as the personality characteristics of interactants, and their attitudes and emotions towards each other, and of individual characteristics of communicative style such as tone, voice quality, dialect, and so on, in the determination of request use and interpretation remains to be validated. Some of the research undertaken from a socio-cognitive perspective on the contextual influences on language that was discussed in Section 4.5.2 provides evidence for these psychological features.
There was some evidence from studies of natural conversational data for the existence of a hierarchy of precedence amongst the broader social determinants of request variation. Considerations of rank or status were found to supersede those of solidarity in most cases. There was less agreement between the studies reviewed here as to the manner in which social-contextual features interact to influence request use. The question of how various components interrelate to produce structures of appropriateness for request use is, therefore, another that requires further investigation. It was the case, for instance, that the interaction between rank of addressee and probability of compliance that emerged in Ervin-Tripp's (1976) American study as determinative of question-directive (High Rank, Low Probability of Compliance) rather than imbedded-imperative choice (High Rank, High Probability of Compliance), was not an effect that was identified by either Blum-Kulka et al. (1985) or by Bogoch and Danet (1984) in Israeli Hebrew requesting. Researchers also identified different situational features as determinative of the appropriate use of the hint form. In Ervin-Tripp's study, hints were used to familiar addressees who shared knowledge of the situation, or to subordinates, if the task was routine. In one Israeli Hebrew corpus, hints were found to be frequent between equal familiars (Yaeger, n.d.), but in another, the trend was for directness to be associated with increasing familiarity (Blum-Kulka et al., 1985). Furthermore, as will be discussed in Chapter 7, studies of gender differences in the use of direct and indirect requests have produced contradictory evidence. It is likely that investigations of the covariation of gender with other contextual features will shed some light on the controversy surrounding the distribution of indirect forms.

The research reported in Chapter 8 extends the state of knowledge concerning the contextual influences on request variation by testing the generalizability of propositions deriving from Ervin-Tripp's (1976) studies of the social distribution of request forms against patterns observed amongst samples of requests used by female and male speakers of Australian English, in two settings. Chapter 9 presents an experimental investigation of Ervin-Tripp's claims about the distribution of request forms. In the study reported there, participants' ratings of the appropriateness of formal variants in a range of settings are used to draw inferences about the influence of social-contextual features on request variation. Written scenarios are used to present the structured manipulation of variables using role-play techniques. The following
review of experimental research relevant to situated request variation provides a context for this
empirical approach.

5.3 Experimental Studies of Situated Request Variation

5.3.1 Tests of Predictions From Ervin-Tripp's Observational Study Using Role-Play
Techniques

5.3.1.1 A rating-scale study.

An attempt to replicate some of the findings reported by Ervin-Tripp (1976) for the situated
use of directives was carried out by Hosman (1978), using role-play techniques. As is often
the case in experimental studies of the contextual features influencing language, not all of the
variables described by Ervin-Tripp as important determinants of request variation were included
in this study. Only two features, the relative rank and familiarity of speech participants, were
systematically varied in the scenarios that were presented to subjects.\(^7\) Hosman factor-analysed
subjects' ratings of the politeness, courtesy, appropriateness, relevance, effectiveness, and
successfulness of situation/request-variant combinations, and produced a solution with one
main factor which he labelled a "competence judgement". He interpreted this outcome as an
indication that directives were chosen, and had their use evaluated, on the basis of
considerations of their politeness, appropriateness, and effectiveness \textit{in equal part}. In
subsequent analyses of variance using factor scores as dependent measures, Hosman was
unable to verify the conclusions that Ervin-Tripp had inferred from observations of requests in
natural settings. Contrary to expectation, the rank and familiarity of an addressee did not
interact or combine to affect ratings of request variants made by subjects taking the role of
speaker. Rather, in particular scenarios, one characteristic or the other influenced subjects'
judgements.

When \textit{rank} was the salient feature, imperatives were evaluated more positively when the
addressee was subordinate to, rather than superior to, the speaker. However, overall,
imbedded imperative forms were rated more positively than imperatives or hints regardless of
the rank of the addressee. It is of interest, in relation to the diverse findings for hints reported
in the previous section, that Hosman found subjects' ratings of these indirect forms to be
dependent on the scenario in which they were used; there was no consistent pattern with respect
to the rank of the addressee.
In scenarios where familiarity was the salient feature, hints were evaluated more positively when high, rather than low, familiarity addressees were involved. Again, however, imbedded imperatives were evaluated more positively, overall, than imperatives or hints, regardless of the familiarity of the addressee. In discussing these results, Hosman admitted that variables beyond those of rank and familiarity were left uncontrolled across the four scenarios that he used in the study, and that this could have contributed to the observed outcomes.

Hosman's findings also ran counter to expectations derived from Lakoff's (1975, 1977a & b, 1979) writings on gender differences and language use. Hosman hypothesized that men would rate imperatives more highly than women, whereas women would rate the more indirect hints and imbedded imperatives more highly than men. However, no significant differences were found between men's and women's evaluations of the three request forms investigated. A confounding factor in Hosman's research was that all speaker- and addressee-roles were described as male in the scenarios. The fact that no differences were found between female and male participants' ratings of request variants in these scenarios can, perhaps, be credited to the communicative competence of the women who assumed the role of a speaker of the opposite sex.

5.3.1.2 A study of elicited spoken requests.

A role-play study that required participants to generate their own requests in response to scenario-based manipulations of addressee status was carried out by Scarcella and Brunak (1981). Male speakers were required to invite a male addressee to an office party, and to request that he attend without his wife. Among other findings relating to the politeness features used (these findings will be described in more detail in Chapter 6), the forms generated in this role-play showed a trend towards greater indirectness with superior addressees than with equal familiars or subordinates. Furthermore, contrary to Ervin-Tripp's (1976) observation that hints were used to familiar addressees, Scarcella and Brunak noted that, for role-play requests of this type, more hints were used to superiors and subordinates than to equal familiars. They explained this failure to replicate in terms of the high degree of face threat involved in the chosen request, the implication being that once a certain level of face threat is reached, hint forms tend to be used irrespective of the status or social distance of the addressee. This
conclusion appears to be consistent with the finding for hints reported by Hosman (1978), although further systematic investigation of this explanation is clearly needed in light of the restricted number of scenario types employed in both of these experimental studies.

5.3.1.3 A study of elicited written requests.

Another variation on the role-play methodology was used in a project set up to investigate cross-cultural and intra-linguistic variation in two speech acts, requests and apologies: The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP, Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989). An elicitation instrument, the 'Discourse-Completion Test' (DCT), was used to generate patterns of request usage across situations that varied in terms of the relative social distance and dominance of the speaker and addressee. The investigators did not examine the effects of gender on request variation, choosing rather to vary the sex of speakers and hearers randomly across situations. In the DCT, university-student respondents were presented with brief written descriptions of a situation, accompanied by a scripted dialogue from which one turn had been omitted. Their task was to complete this dialogue by writing in an appropriate turn (speech act). For example:

At the university.
Ann missed a lecture yesterday and would like to borrow Judith's notes.

Ann:
Judith: Sure, but let me have them back before the lecture next week.

Requests generated in this way were coded by Blum-Kulka (1989) in terms of the same three levels of directness that had been used by Blum-Kulka et al. (1985) to classify naturally-occurring requests in Israeli Hebrew:

(1) Direct: The most direct, explicit level, involving requests that were syntactically marked as such, for example, imperatives.

(2) Conventional Indirect: Strategies that included reference to contextual preconditions necessary for request performance that are conventional in a given language.

(3) Nonconventional Indirect (Hints): A group of strategies that involved reference to the object or element needed for implementation of the request, or which referred to contextual cues.

The strategy type most frequently used, overall, by respondents who were native speakers of Australian English (AE), Canadian French, Israeli Hebrew, and Argentinian Spanish under
these elicitation conditions was the 'Conventional Indirect'. This finding coincides with Hosman's (1978) report that imbedded imperative forms were evaluated more positively, overall, than imperative or hint forms in his rating-scale investigation of Ervin-Tripp's (1976) claims. The second most frequently used strategy in all of the languages studied was the 'Direct'. 'Nonconventional Indirect' strategies were, overall, the least frequently used.

Speakers of AE, in comparison with respondents from other cultures, were the least direct in their requests overall: only 9.8 per cent of the 1,115 requests generated by these Australian respondents (N = 227) were phrased directly, whereas 82.4 per cent were conventionally indirect, and 7.8 per cent were phrased in the form of hints. There was also a relatively low degree of cross-situational variability in the AE request data, prompting Blum-Kulka and House (1989: 134) to conclude that Australian respondents opted for "highly scripted, routinized requestive behavior" in carrying out the Discourse-Completion Test.

Blum-Kulka (1989) also examined the types of sub-strategies that respondents used to perform the most frequent, 'Conventional Indirect' request type. Her observations for AE were as follows:

(i) the *Can/Could* substrategy was used most frequently (accounting for 66.5% of the 919 'Conventional Indirect' strategies generated by AE speakers).

(ii) the *Will/Would* and *Would you mind* substrategies were also relatively frequent (accounting for 17.7% and 10.5%, respectively, of 'Conventional Indirect' strategies).

The majority of these 'Conventional Indirect' requests in the AE data, as in all other languages studied, were hearer-oriented, in the sense of focussing on the role of the addressee in carrying out the request (for example, *Can you do it*?). For the AE requests, the second most preferred form involved a speaker orientation (for example, *Can I have it*?).

In another study in the project, House (1989) presented British and German speakers with incomplete dialogue situations in which the following features were varied:

(i) speaker's social right to pose the request,

(ii) addressee's obligation to comply,

(iii) social or communicative difficulty involved in making the request.

In 'standard' situations, which depicted the speaker's right to request and the addressee's obligation to comply as high, and the difficulty of making the request as low, participants
produced imperative forms relatively frequently. In 'non-standard' situations, characterized in terms of low requester rights, low addressee obligation to comply, and relatively high degree of difficulty, imperatives were produced very infrequently; conventional and hint forms were preferred. In these 'non-standard' situations, House reported that the greater the potential loss of face associated with a request, the more likely the respondents were to use conventionally indirect strategies (e.g., Would you mind moving your car?). By contrast, the smaller the face threat involved, the greater the likelihood that hints (e.g., You've left the kitchen in a mess.) would be used, either together with, or as an alternative to, the conventionally indirect forms. This latter pattern is not consistent with the explanation developed by Scarcella and Brunak (1981) for the distribution of hint forms in their scenario study (i.e., that once a certain level of face threat is reached, hints tend to be used irrespective of the status or social distance of the addressee), although House's finding for imperatives was as expected in terms of Ervin-Tripp's (1976) description of the distribution of the form in natural conversational data.

The notion of a 'standard' situation as a crucial determinant of request form was also used by Hoppe-Graff et al. (1985). Their results from a series of studies that included natural observational request data, artificially-generated and role-played requests, and rating-scale data, indicated that, in repeatedly occurring 'standard' situations, where the S could be certain, based on experience, that his/her legitimation to make the request was high, and that H was willing and able, very indirect forms of request (e.g., I'm trying to concentrate.) tended to occur since, according to Hoppe-Graff et al., the risk of H failing to understand the request interpretation was slight. This finding supports Ervin-Tripp's (1976) observation that indirect hint forms occurred in routine settings (typically directed downwards in rank) where everyone knows what must be done, and by whom.

However, in new or unusual 'non-standard' situations, in which legitimation for requesting was high but the perceived willingness of H was low, direct requests involving imperative forms or S's expression of legitimation (e.g., Please turn down the TV., or You have to turn down the TV.) were more likely. In all other non-standard situations defined by the parameters speaker legitimation, addressee willingness, and ability, conventional indirect requests in which S expressed a desire that H perform the act, or enquired as to H's willingness or ability to do it (e.g., I'd really like you to ..., or Could you ...), were preferred.
5.3.1.4 Ratings of the relevance of situational dimensions.

In a separate study within CCSARP, Blum-Kulka and House (1989) asked speakers of Israeli Hebrew, Argentinian Spanish, and German to rate five situations on various dimensions considered relevant to request variation. These assessments were correlated with the directness levels of the requests written in response to the situational descriptions. The following patterns were observed:

(i) The greater the relative social dominance of the speaker; the higher the speaker's degree of right to issue the request; the higher the addressee's degree of obligation to carry out the request, the more direct the request.

(ii) The greater the degree of difficulty involved in the speaker making the request, the more indirect the request.

A regression analysis performed to determine the relative weighting of the various social factors involved in determining the directness levels of requests identified the important variables as (i) the hearer's degree of obligation to carry out the request; (ii) the speaker's relative dominance, and right to demand compliance; and (iii) the estimated likelihood of compliance. Variables such as the social distance between the interactants, and the speaker's difficulty in making the request did not emerge as important determinants of the directness level of the elicited requests.

The results of this regression analysis also led Blum-Kulka and House to suggest that such situational factors as had been examined in CCSARP could not explain all of the observed situational variation in the elicited requests. They concluded that, in addition to features at a socio-institutional level (such as role relationship, dominance), 'context-internal' features (that is, factors associated with a particular speech act relative to a specific situation) such as type of request goal, must be considered in order to increase explanatory power. Their conclusion regarding the influence of such 'context-internal' features is consistent with observations made by other researchers using experimental approaches to investigate request variation (e.g., Hosman, 1978; Scarcella & Brunak, 1981).

Findings from experimental studies such as those reviewed here, in which requests are elicited by various artificial means cannot, of course, be claimed to represent the distribution of forms in naturally-occurring situations. However, the value of such methods in complementing
the findings of ethnographic studies has been widely recognized (see, for example, Blum-Kulka & House, 1989; Holmes, 1990a; Rintell & Mitchell, 1989). Among the perceived benefits of such elicited data, the following points are often cited:

(i) data from large samples can be gathered quickly,
(ii) comparable data for particular speech acts can be collected for different speech communities and language groups,
(iii) evidence of the stereotypical language forms considered appropriate in particular social situations can be obtained,
(iv) broad social and situational factors likely to affect linguistic choice and meaning can be identified.

5.3.2 Summary and Statement of Research Questions

Experimental attempts to assess the influence of the features of rank and familiarity, which appear in all contextual taxonomies as components that are relevant to the use and interpretation of linguistic forms, have not produced results that are consistent with studies based on naturalistic observation of request variation. In scenario presentations, for example, rank and familiarity were not found to affect ratings of the politeness, effectiveness, or appropriateness of request variants (Hosman, 1978), and indirect hint forms were not observed to be elicited more frequently under conditions of high familiarity between interactants (Scarcella & Brunak, 1981), as had been expected. A pattern that did emerge in some of the role-play studies involved participants expressing a preference for conventional, middle-of-the-directness-dimension forms (imbedded imperative: Hosman, 1978; 'conventional indirect': Blum-Kulka, 1989) over more direct (e.g., imperative) or more indirect (e.g., hint) forms, regardless of the rank or social-distance relationship described as pertaining between the speaker and the addressee.

A study of speakers' ratings of situations on parameters considered relevant to request variation did show that features associated with the relative status of the speaker and addressee correlated with the directness of elicited requests, and regression analyses indicated that factors of speaker dominance, hearer obligation, and likelihood of compliance were more influential than others in accounting for variation in the directness of forms (Blum-Kulka & House, 1989). There were also indications from several studies that 'context-internal' features must be
considered in addition to broader social-contextual parameters (such as role relationship) in order to account adequately for the social distribution of request variants.

The concept of 'standard' situations was used to refer to those situations in which interactants could be relatively certain that particular parameters defining the context of situation would define it as non-problematic with respect to requesting. Particular levels of the parameters: speaker rights and addressee obligations (House, 1989), speaker legitimation, addressee willingness and ability (Hoppe-Graff et al., 1985), and social or communicative difficulties associated with making the request (House, 1989), were identified as determining the standardness or non-standardness of request situations. Conclusions regarding the distribution of request forms in 'standard' or 'non-standard' situations were, however, mutually inconsistent. House (1989) found direct imperative forms to be more likely in 'standard' situations, whereas Hoppe-Graff et al. (1985) reported that indirect forms were more likely. Further investigation of the distribution of request forms in relation to such contextual parameters is clearly required.

Another area in which consistency in reported findings is lacking concerns the influence of gender on requesting. None of the experimental studies reviewed here was designed to examine the effects of gender on situated request variation; two depicted male interactants only (Hosman, 1978; Scarcella & Brunak, 1981), one, male interactants predominantly (Hoppe-Graff et al., 1985), and others involved scenarios in which the gender of speakers and addressees was varied haphazardly. Other studies that have not been specifically concerned with investigating the effects of broad contextual features on language variation have, however, focussed on the effects on language of interactants' gender. A review of findings relevant to the present research is presented in Chapter 7.

The question of why experimental, scenario-based studies have failed to confirm the patterns of social distribution observed for requesting in samples of natural speech remains open. The use of the scenario method in social experiments has been described as involving the process of "synthesizing the compound one thinks one understands on the basis of prior analysis" (Kroger, 1982: 816). Attempts to synthesize compounds of contextual features in the scenario approaches described here may have been inadequate due to such factors as were associated with the oversimplification of contextual components in the construction of scenarios, or
because the rating-scale methodologies or request-elicitation techniques employed are, more generally, inappropriate to the study of the subtle and complex considerations that are part of requesting in real interactions. Alternatively, it may be the case that researchers making inferences from patterns of request variation observed in natural situations do not understand as much as they think they do about the social contextual determinants involved.

As was pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the difficulty of observing all possible contextual covariants of request forms has been recognized by those researching the field, as has the possibility for misinterpretation of the salience of features that are observed to covary with requests (for example, issues such as whether 'gender' or covariates such as 'role' and 'status' provide more adequate explanations of variation in request form have arisen; see Chapter 7). A number of experimental scenario-based studies have focussed on variation, according to particular social determinants, in the 'politeness' with which requests are uttered. A discussion of the implications of these studies is presented in the next chapter, where the theoretical framework underlying the 'politeness' approach is examined in detail. At this point, however, it is important to note that the experimental studies, reviewed above, that attempted to replicate the patterns of requesting observed in natural settings could provide no evidence for the effects of an interaction between the participant features, rank and familiarity, nor could they provide any information concerning the effects of gender on situated request variation. Further, no additional insights were provided by these studies into the social distribution of the problematical category of very indirect requests (hints).

In Chapter 9 of this thesis, an experimental, scenario-based, role-play study that attempts to address some of the shortcomings identified in previous investigations of the effects of contextual features on request variation is reported. This study aims to achieve more valid scenario representations of situations than was the case in some previous investigations. First, it presents a wider range of situations from real life, not simply a number convenient to permutations of one or two social contextual variables. Second, a greater number of social contextual features are incorporated into scenarios than has been the case in previous studies. Third, the gender of speakers and addressees is systematically varied in scenarios. Finally, in addition to making use of people's judgements as to the appropriateness, politeness, effectiveness, and likelihood of situated request variants, the aim is to make use of other aspects
of their communicative competence with respect to requesting. In studies reported in Chapters 10 and 11, role-play participants are asked about their reasons for making particular choices between alternative forms of request in particular situations. They are also asked to compare and contrast the relative merits of alternative request forms in the same situation. The description of these justificatory accounts, people's "sense-making methods" (Leiter, 1980: 23), will constitute a major component of the analysis of contextual influences on request variation.

Before proceeding with a description of these empirical investigations, however, it is necessary to consider one further issue that is fundamental to any analysis of requesting. Scholars have addressed the question of what motivates the use of such a variety of direct and indirect forms of request as has been observed in studies of natural conversation. A review of theoretical models and general proposals about the function served by formal variation in speech acts such as requests is presented in the next chapter.

1 Weigal and Weigal (1985) chose to omit from their analysis two of the categories used by Ervin-Tripp (1976): those of 'question directives' and 'hints'. They claimed that such forms could not be classified with reliability due to the fact that there were "no consistently applicable syntactic criteria for these two categories" (68). Their tests of Ervin-Tripp's hypotheses were, therefore, restricted to the syntactically-based directive categories that she reported: imperatives, need statements, imbedded imperatives, and permission directives, as these could be classified on the basis of "the presence or absence of 'key word' identifiers and grammatical structure" (67).

2 Holmes (1983: 98) did not report the size of her corpus of schoolroom directives. Her aim was to "describe the various forms by which directives are realized in the classroom, rather than to provide detailed frequency data", and she confined herself to statements about "general tendencies which were consistently observable throughout the data".

3 Pearson (1989: 289) defined 'control acts' as including "both directives and disagreements".

4 Power was defined by Blum-Kulka et al. (1985) in terms of role in the immediate situation e.g., such as when a bus driver has power over the passengers.

5 The hosts were considered to be 'powerful' in the sense of being the providers of air-time.

6 There is also a large body of literature on norms of address which has revealed the importance of factors such as status, age, and social distance on linguistic variation (e.g., Brown and Ford, 1961; Brown and Gilman, 1960; Ervin-Tripp, 1973; Geohagan, 1971; Lambert and Tucker, 1976; Rubin, 1962). This literature lies outside of the research focus of the present study, however.

7 In Hosman's study, manipulations of the Rank and Familiarity factors were restricted to combinations at two levels: high and low. Investigations of Ervin-Tripp's observations in respect of the important category of equal rank in combination with different levels of speaker familiarity were not included in the analysis.
It should be noted that many of the studies on which Hoppe-Graff et al. (1985) based their conclusions about the relevant parameters of situational representation involved male subjects only.
CHAPTER 6

THE FUNCTIONS OF INDIRECTNESS IN LANGUAGE

6.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews a number of general proposals and some theoretical models concerning motivation for the use of indirectness in language. Brown and Levinson's (1978) formal model, introduced in the previous chapter as a theoretical linchpin for one of the lines of research developed in this thesis, is the most comprehensive and elegant of those to be reviewed. Indeed, it can be seen as an elaborate interweaving of most of the themes that have characterized proposals about the nature and role of politeness in conversational interaction since Searle's (1975: 64) definitive statement, "In directives, politeness is the chief motivation for indirectness".

Despite the fact that Gumperz (1987: xiii), in his foreword to the revised edition of Brown and Levinson's original publication, accorded it the honour of being "the classic treatment on politeness", the model is not without its critics. It is therefore described in some detail in this chapter, together with alternative perspectives on the treatment of politeness proposed by researchers such as Lakoff (1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1977a, b, & c, 1979, 1990), Fraser (1980, 1990), and Leech (1977, 1983). A review of the literature on applications of Brown and Levinson's model concludes the chapter.

6.2 Indirectness: General Theoretical Perspectives

In an early review of the literature pertaining to explanations for indirectness in language use, Hosman (1978) identified three general perspectives. Somewhat simplistically, he portrayed scholarly debate as involving controversy over which one of three considerations - politeness, appropriateness, or effectiveness - should be considered the primary motivation for indirect usage in speech acts such as requests. Adherents of the 'effectiveness' position emphasized that indirectness functioned to increase the likelihood of hearer compliance with a request. Advocates of the 'appropriateness' position argued that social norms known to
speakers and hearers led to the use of indirectness in certain situations. Those favouring the 'politeness' perspective held that the primary function of indirectness was to express politeness. In the updated review that follows, there is evidence that these three themes continue to inform scholars' views about the functions of indirectness. The fact that Hosman's (1978) own research (as reviewed in Chapter 5) led him to conclude that all three considerations contributed to a speaker's choice and evaluation of request variants lends support to this reading of the literature.

Although researchers continue to link different ways of making requests with outcomes such as effectiveness and appropriateness, the greatest scholarly emphasis has been on the politeness implications of indirect usage. Most of the theories developed to explain the use of indirectness in English-speaking societies, for example, have focussed on issues of politeness. However, increasing evidence from non-English-speaking cultures (in which clarity and directness are often more highly valued) has led to a renewed focus on the importance of effectiveness. Considerations of appropriateness, as independent of politeness, are also starting to receive greater attention in explanations of situated language use.

Explanations of the function of indirectness can be viewed, for the purposes of introduction, as variations around a central motif. To use Brown and Levinson's (1978) metaphor, the recurring theme is that of indirectness as the disarmament of interactional threat. This should not be taken to imply that researchers have arrived at common understandings of key concepts such as politeness, nor that the relationship between notions such as politeness, appropriateness, and effectiveness has been clearly described. It is rather to be inferred that researchers have agreed on a starting point for the process of theory development, which is increasing in its explanatory adequacy as more empirical evidence of the use of indirectness in conventional settings across a range of cultures is reported.

6.2.1 Interactional Threat

Underlying all discussions of the use of indirectness in English-speaking cultures is the recognition that some communications - and requests fall within this category - are of a kind that an addressee ordinarily might not want to receive. An addressee's reaction to such a communication may, in turn, be something that the speaker would prefer to avoid. To ensure
cooperation between interactants, such threatening communications must be 'softened', 'mitigated', 'remedied', or 'qualified' in some way. The nature of the interactional threats to both speaker and addressee that inhere in particular types of communication has been discussed in a number of ways by different authors. The influence of Goffman's (1955, 1963, 1967, 1972, 1976) pioneering work on social interaction can be traced throughout this literature. A brief review of Goffman's writings, therefore, precedes a more specific discussion of theories of indirectness as a response to interactional threat.

6.2.1.1 The legacy of Erving Goffman.

At the heart of Goffman's writings on social interaction was the notion that an individual, engaging in an encounter with others, experiences an emotional attachment to his/her image of self or 'face'. Goffman defined face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself [sic] by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (1955: 213). An individual also sustains feelings about the face of others with whom s/he interacts. The relative levels of these emotional involvements may vary according to the "rules of the group and the definition of the situation" (214).

Feelings of moral propriety surround face maintenance, according to Goffman, in such a way that individuals entering into interaction can expect to be sustained in their particular faces. Such feelings arise out of social norms or 'rules of conduct' which guarantee that everyone acts appropriately. These rules may impinge on individuals in two ways: as obligations, establishing how they are morally constrained to conduct themselves (i.e., specifying what they are required to do, or refrain from doing in regard to others); and as expectations, establishing how others are morally bound to act in regard to them. (This leads an individual to "anticipate righteously" that others will do, or refrain from doing, certain things in relation to him/her.) Infractions of the rules of conduct can lead to feelings of shame and embarrassment, either for the individual for whom the role is an obligation, or for the individual for whom it is an expectation. For encounters to run smoothly, temporary states of mutual acceptance of claims regarding self must be achieved. Because individuals feel an emotional commitment to these cooperatively maintained social identities, they fear loss of face for themselves and are disinclined to witness the defacement of others.
The achievement of this kind of mutual acceptance between interactional partners involves *face work*, the "habitual and standardized practices" that counteract threats to face. On the universality of face work, Goffman (1967: 13) wrote:

Each person, subculture, and society seems to have its own characteristic repertoire of face-saving practices. It is to this repertoire that people partly refer when they ask what a person or culture is 'really' like. And yet the particular set of practices stressed by particular persons or groups seems to be drawn from a single logically coherent framework of possible practices. It is as if face, by its very nature, can be saved only in a certain number of ways, and as if each social grouping must make its selections from this single matrix of possibilities.

Goffman described two basic kinds of face work: the *avoidance process*, where the person employs various defensive and protective measures to avoid contacts and events in which threats to face are likely to occur (e.g., avoiding some people and topics altogether, hedging any claims about self, being respectful and discreet in relations with others), and the *corrective (or remedial) process*, in which a person attempts to correct for the effects of face-threatening events that have occurred.

Goffman used the metaphor of *ritual* to describe the standard sequence of acts set in motion by an acknowledged threat to face. Borrowing from Durkheim's (1926) analysis of religion, he distinguished between two classes of ritual. Positive or *presentation* rituals consist of acts through which appreciation of the other can be expressed as, for example, in offerings like salutations, invitations, compliments, minor services. Negative or *avoidance* rituals involve acts associated with the keeping of distance between individuals as, for example, in proscriptions and taboos, and "the verbal care that actors are obliged to exercise so as not to bring into discussion matters that might be painful, embarrassing, or humiliating to the recipient" (1967: 65). Avoidance and presentation rituals constitute the two main forms of 'deference', which Goffman defined as "that component of activity which functions as a symbolic means by which appreciation is regularly conveyed to a recipient of this recipient, or of something of which this recipient is taken as a symbol, extension, or agent" (1967: 56).

One of the most crucial types of claim regarding the self or 'face', to which rituals are regularly addressed in encounters, is the claim exerted in regard to territory, according to Goffman. This territory includes an individual's personal space, possessions, and personal information, and extends to situational preserves such as houses, seats, tables, and so on. The central offense in interaction involves an intrusion or presumption, "in short a violation" (1972:
44), of these territory-like preserves. Acts of requesting involve just such an offense of encroachment upon an individual's territory. Ritual work is therefore required whenever a request is made. Goffman (1972: 114) described the process as follows:

A request consists of asking license of a potentially offended person to engage in what could be considered a violation of his [sic] rights. The actor shows that he is fully alive to the possible offensiveness of his proposed act and begs sufferance. At the same time he exposes himself to denial and rejection. The recipient of the request thus clearly is presented with the possibility of making an offer, one that would allow the supplicant's needs.

These ritual interchanges in terms of which "demands for action are qualified and presented as mere requests, which can be declined" (1976: 266), are a realisation of the rule-guided phenomenon of face preservation that is a constant feature of ordinary interaction. In the following overview of accounts of the social motivations for indirectness in language, the influence of Goffman's writings can be clearly traced. The review starts with a consideration of approaches that have taken an explicitly rule-based view of indirectness in requesting.

6.3 Rule-Based Explanations of Indirectness in Requesting

6.3.1 The Conflict Between Communicative Clarity and Interactional Offense

Some theorists have taken a rule-based, 'conversational-maxim' (Fraser, 1990) view in explaining the function of indirectness in language. Conflict between the rules/principles/maxims2 that are considered to underlie competent use is suggested as providing the motivation for indirectness. Lakoff's work (1972, 1974, 1975, 1977a,b, & c, 1979) is the classic example of this approach. She described the principles of general pragmatic competence in terms of "two basic rules" (1973: 296) which are often in conflict: (1) Be Clear, (2) Be Polite. These rules determine the extent to which utterances are well formed in terms of pragmatic factors such as the effect the speaker wishes an utterance to have on an addressee. The rules of Clarity, she argued, had been described by Grice (1975) in his formulation of the four maxims (Quantity, Quality, Relevance, Manner) that were associated with the efficient exchange of information in conversations. The rules of Politeness, she proposed, involved three principles or sub-rules:

R1. Formality: Don't impose. Create distance between the speaker and the addressee by asking permission to mention 'non-free' goods, and by using passive and impersonal expressions and technical terms.
R2. **Hesitancy:** Allow the addressee options. Imply, by employing hesitancy in speech, using questions or question intonation for declarative function, hedges, euphemisms, and avoiding direct imperatives, that the final decision as to the interpretation and outcome of the event will be left up to the addressee.

R3. **Equality or Camaraderie:** Act as though you and the addressee were equal/make the addressee feel good. Show friendliness/informality by using nicknames, first names, particles such as *y'know, I mean, like*, to express solidarity, give compliments to the addressee, use imperatives and simple forms of unmentionable or taboo words.

In presenting pragmatic competence as a matter of two (typically) opposing considerations, clarity versus politeness, Lakoff was following the Searlian position of equating indirectness with politeness. Her proposal hinged on the assumption that, in conversation, the rules of politeness take precedence over the rules of clarity: "in most cases ... it is considered more important in a conversation to avoid offense than to achieve clarity" (1973: 297). Whereas Searle (1975: 64) did not elaborate upon the type of offense for which indirectness was the polite remedy, save pointing out that "ordinary conversational requirements of politeness normally make it awkward to issue flat imperative sentences (e.g., *Leave the room*) or explicit performatives (e.g., *I order you to leave the room*), Lakoff suggested a number of possibilities. Following Goffman (1967), she characterized a type of interactional threat as occurring whenever 'non-free goods' (1977c) were involved. This notion has, as its basis, considerations of property/territory. Certain objects, topics, actions are considered the property of the addressee and hence cannot freely be used. A speaker must obtain special permission from the proprietor/addressee in order to use them without giving offense. According to Lakoff, adherence to Politeness Rules 1 & 2 ensures the smooth operation of conversation in this regard.

The notion of avoiding encroachments upon another's territory, and the associated concept of allowing an interactant his/her autonomy in the form of freedom to make decisions as to the interpretation and outcome of the exchange, are themes which recur in discussions of the nature of interactional threat throughout the politeness literature (see, e.g., Brown & Levinson's (1978) notion of 'Negative Politeness'). The assumption made by those who hold politeness to be the primary function of indirect usage is simply that, as far as politeness is concerned, the more options left open to an addressee (and hence the greater the indirectness), the better (e.g., Kasher, 1984; Allwood, 1976; Leech, 1977; Bach and Harnish, 1979).
As well as serving to redress interactional threats relating broadly to territory, indirectness, according to Lakoff, served as a means whereby a speaker who was afraid of repercussions could avoid responsibility for the threat implied in what s/he was saying. Other authors have discussed this function of indirectness (see, e.g., Weiser, 1974; Brown & Levinson, 1978: 100; Kemper & Thissen, 1981; Tannen, 1985: 205). Lakoff also discussed interactional threat in more general terms as anything "unpleasantly emotion-provoking" (1979: 64) that might be present, even covertly, in a communication, and which required "neutralization". Ultimately, this consideration was expressed in Politeness Rule 3: Make the addressee feel good. Similar themes, involving concerns for the addressee's feelings, for the maintenance of a good relationship, and for the creation of a favourable feeling about the information conveyed in order to enhance the likelihood of compliance, occur throughout the politeness literature. Tannen (1985), for instance, referred to the creation of 'rapport' as one of the main benefits of indirectness. In her view, an addressee's understanding of, and compliance with, a speaker's indirect act stands as evidence of a mutual understanding based on shared "background and style" (205). Brown and Levinson's (1978) notion of 'Positive Politeness' incorporates similar ideas.

The value of rule-based approaches such as Lakoff's has been challenged on the basis that they lack a theoretical framework which could explain the form of such rules and which would make their selection non-arbitrary. As Brown and Levinson (1978: 91) put it, "to posit highly specific and diverse universal rules is to invent a problem to be explained, rather than to explain it". Following Goffman, they proposed that such 'rules' are grounded in deeper social motivations related to basic human desires for face preservation. Lakoff's (1979) later writings about pragmatic competence presented a somewhat altered perspective, apparently in response to such criticism. Politeness was described, not as a set of rules, but in terms of position on a stylistic scale or continuum of strategies of interaction, reflecting variation in the degree of relationship between the interactants. Lakoff's (1979) schematic depiction of the model (Figure 6.1) is an attempt to represent the possibility of strategies being used in combination in such a way that the overall stylistic behaviour of an individual might fall at or between nodal positions in the structure.
In this new model of politeness in interaction, people's selection of strategies was still explained by Lakoff in terms of rules, however. Positions on the scale of interactions were described in terms of injunctions. For the Clarity strategy, the injunction was "Be Clear" (involving "no indirectness, circumlocution, or redundancy"). For the Distance strategy, it was "Remain Aloof" (involving "formal politeness, the rules of etiquette, diplomatic language, bureaucratese, and professional jargons of all kinds"); and for the Deference strategy, "Don't Impose - give options" (1979: 63-5). Lakoff contended that the interactive strategies had the status of universal modalities of interaction, but that the rules defining their appropriate use in particular contexts would differ cross-culturally. Although embracing cultural relativity to this extent, Lakoff appears not to have considered the possibility that her assumption of the sovereignty of politeness over clarity as a primary conversational objective might reflect an ethnocentric bias. Loveday (1982: 42-3) made the point that a "substantial proportion of sociolinguists" has taken cultural principles "for granted" in this way. This argument, which has been developed by a number of researchers in recent discussions of indirectness and politeness, cross-culturally, will be considered in greater detail in Section 6.8. It is worth noting, however, that Lakoff's (1979) approach has been seen as having merit in relation to polite usage in Japanese (Matsumoto, 1988), where other approaches (such as that of Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987) have been found lacking.

Other perspectives on indirectness and politeness have also been phrased, as was Lakoff's, in terms of Gricean conversational maxims, but without the explicit rule-based references. One alternative approach, the 'conversational-contract' view (Fraser, 1990), incorporated the notion of a Cooperative Principle, and Goffman's (1972) notion of deference. Other researchers have developed more strategic, explicitly goal-oriented lines of explanation to account for the fact that people tend to speak 'non-maximwise'. Both perspectives are summarized below.
6.4 The Conversational-Contract View of Indirectness

In the approach to indirectness developed by Fraser (1980, 1990; Fraser & Nolan, 1981), conversational interactants were postulated as having an understanding of a set of rights and obligations based on the ongoing, negotiable particulars of the encounter (including conversational conventions, requirements of social institutions, and situational factors such as power, role). This understanding constituted the terms of a 'conversational contract', and governed what types of speech acts (in terms of illocutionary force and content) could be expected. In this view, politeness is a matter of interactional cooperation, of observing the terms of the contract. In Fraser's terms, "being polite is taken to be a hallmark of abiding by the CP [Cooperative Principle] - being cooperative involves abiding by the CC [Cooperative Contract]" (1990: 233). He distinguished between politeness, as so defined, and deference, defined, following Goffman (1972: 56), as the symbolic conveying of appreciation (as when the speaker uses a form that implies that the hearer has a choice in deciding whether to comply, for example, Would you mind helping me today?). The inappropriate use of deference could result in impoliteness when "the level of status conveyed falls above or below that understood by the two parties" (Fraser and Nolan, 1981: 98). In this approach, then, the use of indirectness was not considered necessarily to imply politeness. Politeness was dependent on the extent to which the speaker acted appropriately in a particular context. Indirectness was, rather, an indication that the speaker intended to mitigate or reduce the anticipated unwelcome effects of a speech act (for example, by softening the effects of an order). Support for Fraser's contractual approach as against alternative perspectives such as that of Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) has come from a recent study of politeness in Nigerian culture (Nwoye, 1992). However, in terms of providing an adequate account of "the complex significance of face and politeness" in Chinese and Japanese cultures, the conversational-contract treatment has been seen as falling short (Mao, 1994: 470). Before considering the implications of cross-cultural research for theories of politeness (Section 6.8), I will describe the work of scholars who have taken more explicitly goal-oriented views of the nature of indirectness in language use.
6.5 Strategic, Goal-Oriented Approaches to Indirectness

A number of writers have developed functional accounts of indirectness as the strategic avoidance of interactional threat or conflict. A detailed examination of the dominant model of Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), which focuses on the strategic meeting of face wants as the major goal of conversational participants, follows a brief review of other proposals that share a 'goal' orientation.

6.5.1 Threats to Cooperative Social Relations: Conflicts of Will

As Lakoff had done, Leech (1977, 1983) built his explanation of indirectness as politeness upon Grice's framework of maxims of rational conversational behaviour. Leech's account was explicitly goal-oriented, however. He described speech acts of requesting as having 'impositive goals', that is, as involving the imposition of the speaker's will on an addressee. Such illocutionary goals would obviously conflict with other social or interactional goals such as those of avoiding uncooperative and impolite behaviour (both of which were underlying principles of social interaction, according to Grice (1975)). Leech developed Grice's suggestion of a Politeness Principle (PP) to explain the resolution of this form of interactional threat. The PP operated, according to Leech (1983: 105), to "mitigate the intrinsic discourtesy of the [impositive] goal"; it was a form of politeness with a negative character. By contrast, a positive form of politeness in which the speaker might seek "opportunities for comity" (105) would emerge in situations in which the speaker's illocutionary and social goals coincided rather than conflicted (as when the speaker offered, invited, or greeted the addressee).

Just as Lakoff had ascribed superiority to considerations of politeness over clarity in conversation, Leech (1983: 82) held that the PP had "a higher regulative goal than [the Cooperative Principle]: to maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being friendly in the first place". Manifestations of the PP were described in terms of six interpersonal maxims: Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, and Sympathy. Leech focussed on Tact as "perhaps the most important kind of politeness in English-speaking society" (107), defining it as "strategic conflict avoidance" (1977: 19). Within this framework, tactfulness was equated, in requesting, with indirectness: "in general, the more tactful a directive is, the more indirect and circumlocutionary
Leech's view was that indirectness served the function of avoiding conflicts associated with potentially adverse hearer reactions to directives (with their impositive goals). Such conflicts ranged from 'will incompatibility' (S's want that H do X might be countered by H's not wanting to do X) and 'will flouting' (where S's want might not be fulfilled), to 'disobedience' (S's order might be refused), and even 'physical contact' (where H might resist S's attempts to make H do X).

Leech (1977, 1983) identified five 'scales' that determined the degree of tact (or generosity, or approbation, etc.) appropriate to a particular situation:

(1) The COST-BENEFIT scale, on which is estimated the cost or benefit of the proposed action A to S or H.

(2) The OPTIONALITY scale, on which illocutions are ordered according to the amount of choice which S allows to H.

(3) The INDIRECTNESS scale, on which, from S's point of view, illocutions are ordered with respect to the length of the path (in terms of means-ends analysis) connecting the illocutionary act to its illocutionary goal.

(4) The AUTHORITY scale, which measures the power or authoritative status of H with respect to S.

(5) The SOCIAL DISTANCE scale, which measures the degree of solidarity between H and S.

The way in which these parameters influenced 'tact' was summarized by Leech as follows:

(i) the greater the cost of the action to the H; and

(ii) the greater the horizontal social distance of the H from the S; and

(iii) the greater the authoritative status of the H with respect to the S;

the greater will be the need for optionality, and correspondingly for indirectness, in the expression of an impositive if S is to observe the Tact maxim.

As will be seen in the next section, Leech's (1977, 1983) treatment of politeness is similar in many ways to the model developed by Brown and Levinson (1978). The same sociological factors were identified as crucial determinants of the level of politeness (tact) of directives in both. Leech's scales of Authority, Social Distance, and Cost-Benefit correspond to the Power, Social Distance, and Imposition dimensions identified by Brown and Levinson. The scaling of polite/tactful options for carrying out impositives or face-threatening acts is in terms of the optionality and indirectness of forms in both approaches. However, Leech chose to describe
negative politeness in terms of the avoidance of conflict, rather than in terms of "the saving of an abstract personal asset called FACE" (1977: 18).

Brown and Levinson (1987) criticized Leech's proposal for its 'unnecessary' proliferation of maxims to explain regularity in language use beyond those associated with Grice's Cooperative Principle. They argued that the presumption of cooperation underlies social interaction in a way that the presumption of politeness does not. Because of its special status as the embodiment of a fundamental assumption of interaction - that interactants will be rational and efficient in their actions (talk) - Grice's Cooperative Principle appears robust in a way that Leech's proposed Politeness Principle does not. As Brown and Levinson pointed out, it is difficult to undermine the assumption that one is cooperating, at some level, in a conversational interaction, yet it is not difficult to be interpreted as being impolite. In conversation, cooperation is presumed whereas politeness must be communicated. Criticism of claims that cooperation can be taken for granted as a foundational assumption of communication has arisen, however. The debate will be considered further in Section 6.7.

Damaging to the fundamental assumptions of both the Leech and Brown & Levinson models, however, is current evidence (e.g., from Blum-Kulka, 1987, 1990) that in actual usage, indirectness and politeness do not covary. This point will be discussed in greater detail following a description of the Brown and Levinson model. Leech's proposal retains some adherents, however. Its normative emphasis was considered more appropriate for the analysis of Chinese politeness by Gu (1990) than was Brown and Levinson's approach (see Section 6.8). Holmes' (1990a) analysis of apologies as essentially social or affective speech acts led her to argue that an adequate account of communication required reference to a social principle such as Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle, in addition to the information-oriented Cooperative Principle proposed by Grice (see Section 6.6.1).

6.5.2 The Threat of Hearer Resistance

Leech was not the only writer to suggest that the primary function of indirectness was to decrease resistance on the part of the addressee to speech acts like directives. Davison (1975), for instance, argued that rather than functioning to express politeness, indirectness served as a means of signalling the intrusion of a potentially disturbing topic into a conversation and,
hence, acted to forestall hearer resistance to speech acts conveying information of this sort. According to Davison, this explanation was more consistent than the politeness interpretation with the fact that indirect forms are often used to convey anger or rudeness (as in the examples: Why don't you shut up?, and Do you think you could possibly keep your children under control?).

An explicitly goal-oriented account of language was also developed by Grimshaw (1980b), who contended that much talk was directed towards manipulating others (altering their behaviour/beliefs in some way). Within this framework, he discussed speech acts as 'instrumentalities' designed to achieve certain 'results' or outcomes. Three sociological variables emerged from his analyses of naturally-occurring conversation as constraining the selection of 'instrumentalities': Power and Affect relations between the S and H, and the Utility of the result or outcome (the utility concept represented a combination of the desirability and cost of the result to both S and H). Grimshaw drew parallels between the variables he isolated as determinative of strategy selection and those identified by Brown and Levinson (1978) (Power, Social Distance, & Rank of Imposition), and by Labov and Fanshel (1977) and Brown and Gilman (1960) (Power & Solidarity). Following Grimshaw's (1980b) work, the importance of the social factor 'affect' (or liking) in accounting for variation in directive forms received renewed emphasis in the writings of both Brown and Levinson (1987) and Brown and Gilman (1989).

The view that indirectness served the purpose of maximizing a speaker's chances of success in achieving outcomes through speech acts like directives, which had the potential to provoke hearer 'reactance' or antagonism, was also held by Herrmann (1983). Enhancement of the instrumentality or effectiveness of utterances was considered an important function of indirectness in his model (see Chapter 4, Section 5.2.2). Herrmann referred to two general types of requesting 'errors' that he believed speaker's strategic choices of request variants were motivated to avoid:

(i) Reactance-provoking errors, which occur because certain request types may provoke the H to resist; and (ii) Misunderstanding-fostering errors, which occur because certain request types may lead to the hearer's failure to understand the request intention. In general, in Herrmann's model, the more direct the request, the greater the likelihood of provoking reactance; the more
indirect the request, the greater the likelihood of misunderstanding. However, as will be discussed in sections 6.7 & 6.8.2, other researchers have considered the possibility that *indirectness* in requesting might also be associated with reactance-provoking 'errors'. It is apparent that cultural values associated with directness and indirectness in requesting need to be taken into account in such models of the meaning of situated variation.

Bates (1976) applied the argument that indirectness served the function of maximizing a request's chances of success to explain children's acquisition of 'polite forms'. She explained the function of politeness as signalling to an addressee that no offense was intended, in much the same way as a smile or submissive gesture might act to regulate aggression. Children could thus acquire competence in the use of polite forms through a process of learning what worked and what did not:

> Presumably imperative signals will be tried and discarded depending on their success in achieving the child's goal. Hence, a more primitive notion of efficiency - e.g., getting cookies - may lead the child gradually into a discovery of politeness, as a better way of convincing adults to dispense cookies. (1976: 317)

Recent findings in both natural settings (Ervin-Tripp, O'Connor, & Rosenberg, 1984) and in role- and doll-play studies (Ervin-Tripp, Guo, & Lampert, 1990), that children's use of polite forms was associated with *higher* adult refusal rates suggest, however, that politeness should not be considered to be learned from success in persuasion. Other interactive rewards such as the gaining of attention, or sounding like a skilled speaker, have been proposed by Ervin-Tripp et al. (1990) to provide a better explanation of the process.

The theme of indirectness as serving to further the speaker's goals by virtue of increasing the likelihood of hearer compliance is one of the cornerstones of Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) strategic model of politeness. A description of this model follows.

### 6.5.3 Threats to Face

The theoretical framework developed by Brown and Levinson uses an explanatory metaphor of people as "rational actors oriented toward communicative goals and employing strategies to achieve these goals"(1978: 247). Brown and Levinson's broad aim in presenting their formal model was to account for the cross-cultural regularities in strategies of verbal interaction that they had observed in languages as diverse as Mayan Tzeltal, Indian Tamil, and British and American English. These regularities were of a particular type, which they described as
involving "divergences from some highly rational maximally efficient mode of communication" (1978: 60). Like Searle (1969), Brown and Levinson isolated politeness as the motive for such indirectness. The principles underlying such polite usage, according to Brown and Levinson, were fundamental to human relationships, and constituted the "mutual-knowledge assumptions of interacting individuals" (1978: 288). They stated these universal sociological principles to be:

1. **Strategic orientation to face,**
2. **Rationality**, or a mode of practical reasoning by which linguistic strategies are employed as *means* to achieve particular/mutual face-oriented *ends*.

Brown and Levinson derived their principle of 'face' from folk notions of politeness, and from the writings of Goffman (1967, 1972, 1976). In their definition, face consisted of two kinds of wants or desires that all interactants attribute to each other:

1. The desire to be unimpeded in one's actions (*Negative Face*)
2. The desire to be approved of in some respects (*Positive Face*).

In their model, a speaker's wish to fulfill a hearer's face wants to some degree is a rational means to secure the hearer's cooperation. The satisfaction of such face wants is not always a straightforward matter, however. On many occasions of interaction, conflict exists between a speaker's desire to satisfy another's face wants and the speaker's desire to infringe these wants by performing a particular kind of face-threatening act (FTA), for example, a request. Brown and Levinson (1978: 73) referred to at least three 'wants' that any 'rational agent' must weigh up in deciding on strategies for performing FTAs:

(a) the want to communicate the content of the FTA, (b) the want to be efficient or urgent, and (c) the want to maintain H's face to any degree. Unless (b) is greater than (c), S will want to minimize the threat of his [sic] FTA.

The universal need to minimize the threat inherent in FTAs, and the universal human application of rational means-end reasoning to the task, accounted for cross-cultural regularities in language usage according to Brown and Levinson. All rational agents assess the degree of threat to face involved in their actions in order to select FTA-minimizing strategies. Repeated application of such reasoning results in the employment of parallel politeness strategies, cross-culturally, as a means of partially resolving such fundamental conflict between communicative and face-oriented ends.
6.5.4 Brown and Levinson's Model of Politeness

Brown and Levinson described three main 'super-strategies' of politeness in their model:

1. **Positive Politeness**, which involves approach-based attempts to minimize the potential face threat of an act by providing assurances that the speaker wants at least some of the hearer's wants ("e.g. by treating him [sic] as a member of an ingroup, a friend, a person whose wants and personality traits are known and liked" (75)).

2. **Negative Politeness**, which involves avoidance-based attempts to minimize threat to the hearer's negative face by providing assurances that the speaker will not interfere with the hearer's freedom of action (e.g., by apologizing for interfering, hedging illocutionary force, distancing speaker and hearer from the act, "and with other softening mechanisms that give the addressee an 'out', a face-saving line of escape, permitting him to feel that his response is not coerced" (75)).

3. **Off-Record Politeness**, in which meaning is negotiable to a degree, in that the speaker cannot be held to have committed himself/herself to one particular interpretation of an act (e.g., by using metaphor, irony, understatement, or hints).

Brown and Levinson specified a range of linguistic means by which a speaker might achieve each of these strategic ends, and illustrated their model with numerous examples from English, Tamil, and Tzeltal. The lists presented (see p. 110) summarize the classes of linguistic expressions associated with each politeness strategy by Brown and Levinson.4

It is generally the case, with respect to output strategies for each of the politeness super-strategies, that the more effort S expends linguistically, the more S communicates his/her desire to fulfil H's face wants, according to Brown and Levinson (1978: 98). The use of multiple linguistic strategies to achieve particular Positive, Negative, and Off-Record ends therefore 'increases' the level of politeness conveyed. This implies that frequency counts of politeness features realizing particular politeness ends can be used as an indication (albeit rough) of the degree of politeness communicated.

The three politeness super-strategies are contrasted in the model with the strategy of doing the act **baldly, without redress** to the face of the addressee, in a manner which Brown and Levinson identified as speaking in conformity with Gricean maxims (Grice, 1975). Ordinarily, people's desire to pay attention to face ensures that utterances deviate from these maxims but, in
some circumstances, other considerations take precedence, for example, in situations requiring urgency or efficiency (Watch out!), where the act involved is clearly in the hearer's interest (as in offers, e.g., Come in.), or where S is vastly superior in power to H (Bring me wine, Jeeves.). The bald-on-record strategy, then, constitutes the fourth 'super-strategy' for doing FTAs in the model. The standard means of achieving the bald-on-record strategy is the direct imperative. A fifth strategic choice referred to in the model is 'Don't Do the FTA', where the S chooses to avoid offending the hearer at all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Politeness</th>
<th>Negative Politeness</th>
<th>Off Record</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Use in-group identity markers.</td>
<td>4. Minimize the imposition.</td>
<td>4. Understate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Seek agreement.</td>
<td>5. Give deference.</td>
<td>5. Overstate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Offer, promise.</td>
<td>10. Go on record as incurring a debt or as not indebting H.</td>
<td>10. Use rhetorical questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Bald-On-Record, the output strategies are simply realizations of Gricean maxims (as discussed in Chapter 2).

Brown and Levinson organized their model in terms of a hierarchy of payoffs or advantages intrinsic to the particular types of politeness strategies. Broadly, as one moves up the
hierarchy, progressive minimization of face threat is achieved. At the bottom of the hierarchy is the bald-on-record (non-redressed) payoff of **efficiency**. Other potential advantages of this strategy for the speaker include avoiding the dangers of being seen to be manipulative, and of being misunderstood. Next, in terms of increasing face redress, is Positive Politeness, which has the payoff of allowing S to **satisfy H's positive face wants** to some degree by, for example, asserting similarity with, and friendship for, H. Next comes the strategy of Negative Politeness, with its greater payoff of **satisfying H's negative face want** to be left unimpeded. Advantages associated with this strategy include, for example, being seen to pay respect to H, and giving H an 'out' should H choose not to comply. At the top of the hierarchy are the Off-Record strategies which afford payoffs of even **greater satisfaction of H's negative face**, and allow the S to appear tactful and non-coercive, and even to avoid responsibility for having performed an FTA at all (since the interpretation of an off-record remark as an FTA is left up to the H). In this model, the more dangerous a particular FTA is, in the S's estimation, the more likely a strategy from higher up in the hierarchy will be chosen, in order to ensure the H's cooperation. The reason that speakers do not "take out the maximum insurance policy" (1978: 79), and always choose off-record strategies to ensure maximum face redress for any FTA, involves interactants' mutual knowledge assumptions, according to Brown and Levinson. People have **expectations** regarding the degree of face threat associated with particular FTAs in particular circumstances. The use of a strategy appropriate for a seriously face-threatening act would lead interactants to overestimate the threat to face involved. As a result, the broader rational strategy of face-threat **minimization** would not be achieved.

In 1987, Brown and Levinson published a reappraisal of their original model in the light of research addressing its empirical applicability. They conceded that they might have erred in formulating the ranking of the three super-strategies of politeness as mutually exclusive dimensions. Both Harris (1984) and Strecker (n.d., cited by Brown & Levinson, 1987) had collected data revealing that these strategies can be mixed in discourse involving, for example, "positive-politeness markers within negative-politeness strategies like indirect requests" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 17). Brown and Levinson assessed this evidence as "too equivocal to entail the abandonment of our original scheme" (21), and provided an alternative explanation for the observed mixing of super-strategies in discourse that focussed on their own inclusion, in the
original framework, of intimate address forms and honorifics as examples of positive- and negative-politeness markers respectively. They pointed out that such address forms and honorifics may be used to redress FTAs, but need not always serve this function. They may also be used as indices of the degree of social relationship between a speaker and a hearer, and as such "may occur with an FTA of any R-value, and thus equally with markers of positive and negative politeness" (18).

A number of empirical investigations of the applicability of Brown and Levinson's theory have focussed on issues of politeness coding. A variety of suggestions for the model's modification and refinement have been generated. These proposals are summarized in section 6.7, following the discussion of another important component of Brown and Levinson's model: the specification, in terms of sociological variables, of the degree of face threat implied by an act.

6.5.5 Sociological Variables Influencing Politeness

In Brown and Levinson's model, the seriousness or weightiness of the FTA provides the speaker with the major reason for choosing among the different politeness strategies. Assessment of such risk "in many and perhaps all cultures", according to Brown and Levinson, is made in terms of three sociological dimensions which they claim "subsume all others (status, authority, occupation, ethnic identity, friendship, situational factors, etc.)" (1978: 85). These factors are:

1. the relative 'power' (P) of H over S - generally based on control of material and metaphysical resources in particular situations.

2. the 'social distance' (D) between S and H - which is often based on "frequency of interaction" or perceptions of "similarity/difference" (81-2).

3. the ranking of the imposition (R) involved in doing the FTA - involving situationally- and culturally-based ordering of costs involved in providing goods and services, and which takes account of interactants' rights and obligations.

The model presents strategy choice as determined by a simple summation of the values a
speaker assigns to the variables P, D, and R in particular circumstances, according to the formula:

\[ W_X = D(S, H) + P(H, S) + R_X \]

Where \( W_X \) is the numerical value that measures the weightiness of the FTA \( X \); \( D(S, H) \) is the value that measures the social distance between S and H; \( P(H, S) \) is a measure of the power that H has over S; and \( R_X \) is a value that measures the degree to which the FTA \( X \) is rated on imposition in that culture. This means that, regardless of the specifics of its composition, a particular value of seriousness of an FTA, once assessed, will always trigger the speaker's choice of a particular level of politeness to communicate it. As Brown and Levinson (1978: 83) explained, "thus 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".

A number of researchers have attempted to test predictions based on various aspects of Brown and Levinson's theory. Investigations have been carried out using both actual language data (either naturally-occurring or induced) and the experimental manipulation of theoretical features. A review of the findings is presented below, together with a summary of the types of difficulties experienced in attempted applications of the model.

6.6 Tests of Brown and Levinson's Model of Politeness

6.6.1 Experimental Manipulations of P, D, and R

6.6.1.1 Compliance-gaining research.

Attempts to link strategy use with situations that are varied experimentally in terms of features such as the power and familiarity relationship of the S and H, and the size of the requested act, have been made by a number of researchers investigating the general area of compliance-gaining. The notion of gaining compliance is central to the primary defining function of the directive class of speech acts, that of getting the H to do something that the S wants. Results generated within the compliance-gaining perspective (see Dillard & Burgoon, 1986, for a detailed review) have provided patchy support for Brown and Levinson's model. Tracy, Craig, Smith, and Spisak (1984), for example, concluded that although the situational variables, power, familiarity, and imposition have some impact on the selection of strategies designed to persuade an addressee to comply, a number of other social factors are influential
(e.g., such as whether or not compliance would benefit the H; and situation-specific expectations about appropriate action). McLaughlin, Cody, and Rosenstein (1983) found that situational variables corresponding to Brown and Levinson's variables of power and social distance did not predict polite usage, but that politeness did increase with the increasing imposition-value of the act. By contrast, the imposition dimension was reported to be unrelated to the perceived likelihood of use of persuasive strategies in a study by Baxter (1984). In this study, both power and familiarity were found to influence likelihood judgements, however. Consistent with the predictions of Brown and Levinson, polite strategies were judged less likely to be used as S's power increased but, contrary to predictions, polite strategies were judged more likely with increased S-H familiarity.

Findings reported recently by Leichty and Applegate (1991) and Lim and Bowers (1991) appear to support Baxter's results for familiarity. In an analysis of findings for positive and negative strategies separately, Leichty and Applegate reported more positive politeness being used in persuasive messages to high- than to low-familiarity addressees when high-imposition requests were involved. They argued that this pattern would explain the apparent inconsistency between Baxter's results and Brown and Levinson's model. Respondents in Baxter's study, perceiving the request scenarios with which they were presented as involving quite high levels of imposition, responded by offering more positive politeness to high-familiarity addressees. It is only for relatively small impositions that Brown and Levinson's prediction of an inverse relationship between familiarity and politeness holds, according to these researchers (who indeed found that for small requests, negative politeness was used less frequently to high-familiarity than to low-familiarity addressees). Other results reported by Leichty and Applegate (1991) were consistent with Brown and Levinson's claims for the P and R dimensions: negative politeness was used less by powerful speakers than by speakers who were equal in power with the hearer, and for less imposing requests rather than more imposing ones.

A finding of greater politeness to high-familiarity than to low-familiarity addressees for high-imposition requests was also reported by Lim and Bowers (1991) in a scenario study investigating compliance-gaining strategies. Their explanation for this finding was built upon the assumption that a willingness to tolerate certain levels of imposition develops as relationships become closer. In this view, requests involving low levels of imposition do not
constitute much in the way of face threat when addressed to high-familiarity addressees, and so do not require much polite redress. Requests involving high levels of imposition fall outside of such a "domain of tolerance" (422), and have the potential to engender dislike for the speaker. In order to maintain the liking relationship between high-familiarity interactants, more face work was viewed as being required to convey such unusual, imposing requests. In the words of another compliance-gaining researcher, although "getting one's way" probably becomes easier as a relationship becomes more intimate, this must be balanced against the necessity of maintaining the relationship as a cohesive entity (Bradac, 1983: 154).

6.6.1.2 Research on apologizing.

A different perspective on the relationship between levels of social distance and politeness was provided by Holmes (1990a), who examined Brown and Levinson's hypothesis in relation to a corpus of 183 apologies recorded in the speech of New Zealand adults. Although she reported some support for their predictions concerning the social factors R and P, the pattern of apology use with respect to the D variable was not consistent with predictions from the politeness model. Whereas, in line with expectation, more serious offenses tended to elicit more elaborated apology strategies than did light or medium offenses, and apologies to more powerful 'victims' embodied more elaborated strategies than those to equal or less powerful ones, Holmes found that offenses against strangers were less likely, rather than more likely, to elicit elaborated apologies than were offenses against friends and intimates. Holmes' data do not appear to support the types of explanations offered in the compliance-gaining research literature for results that were inconsistent with Brown and Levinson's predictions for the social-distance variable. Only two of the apologies occurring between friends in her data were for offenses that were "reasonably serious but not major (i.e., forgetting to do a promised task, knocking a cup of coffee over on the rug)", whereas there was "a substantial proportion (41%)" of slight offenses between friends (N = 91) that elicited an elaborated apology (1990a: 191).

Holmes favoured Wolfson's (1988) 'Bulge' theory of social interaction as an explanation for this pattern of results. Bulge theory is based on Wolfson's consistent finding of a difference between the speech that middle-class Americans used with addressees who fell within the categories "intimates, status unequals, and strangers, on the one hand, and with non-
intimates, status-equal friends, co-workers, and acquaintances on the other" (Wolfson, Marmor, & Jones, 1989: 184). The label 'Bulge' was used to describe the theory because relationships involving the two extremes of social distance appeared to evoke very similar patterns of linguistic behaviour, whereas relationships that were more toward the 'centre' evoked very different patterns. Wolfson held that relationships with friends are less 'certain', stable, or well-defined than those with either strangers or intimates - in which interlocutors are more likely to know what to expect of each other. The relatively 'unfixed' relationships that occur between friends are open to redefinition and so require greater levels of face work, and hence politeness, to maintain them. According to Holmes, "using more extended remedial exchanges in response to an offense appears to be one way in which these relationships are nurtured" (1990a: 192).

6.6.1.3 Research on requests.

Other researchers have investigated the influence of the situational features proposed by Brown and Levinson on the levels of politeness expressed in requests. Scarcella and Brunak (1981), for example (see Chapter 5), investigated the effect of variations in the power variable upon the politeness of requests produced in role-play elicitations. They reported that more positive-politeness features were used to equal-familiar and to subordinate addressees than to superiors. Conversely, more negative-politeness features were present in the speech used to superior addressees. Although these results can be interpreted as providing empirical support for the P factor in an experimental setting, some reservations must be expressed. The primary aim of Scarcella and Brunak's study was to investigate the politeness of speakers of English as a second language. For purposes of comparison, only a small 'control group' of native English speakers (N = 6) was used. Indeed, an examination of the tabled data upon which the researchers' descriptive conclusions were based, particularly the data for positive politeness, must engender doubts as to reliability. Table 6.1 (containing data presented in Table 9, Scarcella & Brunak, 1981) reveals the very small differences involved (for example, the frequency of positive-politeness features to superior and subordinate addressees is, in terms of raw data, almost identical).
Table 6.1 Distribution of positive- and negative-politeness features according to status of addressee as reported by Scarcella & Brunak (1981)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Superior</th>
<th>Addressee Status</th>
<th>Subordinate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Equal Familiar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Politeness</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Politeness</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scarcella and Brunak also restricted their sample to male speakers, and investigated only one, quite specific, requesting situation. Furthermore, within this situation, a second variable identified by Brown and Levinson as determinative of politeness appears to have been included in a non-systematic way. It was only for the equal-rank addressee that the familiarity relationship was made clear to role-play participants.

Other, more systematic attempts to investigate predictions from Brown and Levinson's model using scenario formats have been made. Holtgraves (1983, 1986), for example, examined the effect of the variable 'status'. The expected interaction between the directness of the request and the status relationship between S and H (that direct requests would be perceived as less likely and less polite when uttered by a low-status speaker than by a high-status speaker) emerged in subjects' ratings of the politeness of requests. In terms of the perceived likelihood of requests, all variants, irrespective of directness, were rated as more likely to have been produced by a high-status speaker than by a low-status speaker.

Holtgraves also manipulated the variable of face threat in his scenario presentations, predicting, on the basis of Brown and Levinson's model, that indirect requests would be perceived as more likely and more polite than direct forms when the requested information was face-threatening. Scenarios described interactants as preparing to discuss a topic (such as wearing an 'ugly' dress, or giving a poor oral presentation) that either reflected negatively on one of them (face-threatening), or on an absent third party (non-face-threatening). Again, the predicted interaction effect failed to emerge. Direct requests were generally perceived as more likely and more polite than indirect requests both when the information was face-threatening and when it was non-face-threatening. Holtgraves' explanation for this unexpected outcome was based on participants' responses to an open-ended question that had been designed to elicit reasons for their request ratings. Although no systematic analysis appears to have been undertaken, and descriptive statistics were not provided, Holtgraves reported that participants
perceived indirect requests as "sneaky", "underhanded", and "not upfront" (1983: 142). On this basis, he inferred the existence of a "general", "contemporary" cultural belief: "derived in large part from the popularity of self-help books and related practical psychological writings, that it is best to be direct when communicating with others (e.g. Berne, 1964)" (1983: 166). Holtgraves proposed that the salience of such a belief would be enhanced in the situation of a psychology experiment.

Holtgraves' findings of greater perceived politeness for direct compared with indirect requests are inconsistent with those reported by Clark and Schunk (1980) (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.3), who found that indirect variants of requests were rated as more polite than direct variants when the requests were presented to subjects for rating in isolation from any context. Holtgraves' proposals concerning people's perceptions of indirectness in requesting carry a certain intuitive appeal, however. The existence of expressions in English like 'Get to the point.', 'Out with it.', 'Don't beat about the bush.', and 'Let's get down to brass tacks.', add weight to his explanation. Other authors (e.g., Herrmann, 1983; Lakoff, 1977c; Leech, 1983) have also speculated along similar lines. Certainly, if Holtgraves is correct in assuming that the results of studies of request variation are, in part, a function of the experimental setting in which they are carried out, then the implications for future research in pragmatics need to be made clear. For this amongst other reasons (see Chapter 1), the research undertaken here involving further systematic investigation of people's perceptions of the social and affective meanings attached to directness and indirectness in requesting appears timely.

Results from a series of studies that continue this theme of testing aspects of Brown and Levinson's theory using subjects' ratings of request variants have recently been reported by Holtgraves. These findings suggest that the theory presents too simple a picture, and is in need of some refinement. For example, Holtgraves and Yang (1990) tested Brown and Levinson's claim that strategies for performing face-threatening acts could be ordered in terms of a politeness hierarchy based on the extent to which they minimized face threat. Subjects' ratings of requests that corresponded to the four politeness super-strategies: Bald-On-Record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, and Off Record, did not follow the expected ordering, however. For both American and Korean subjects, the most indirect, off-record forms of request (hints) were rated as significantly less polite than negative-politeness requests. Similar
results were reported by Blum-Kulka (1987) in a scenario study which compared English and Hebrew speakers' perceptions of the politeness and indirectness of requests. Subjects from both groups rated off-record, hint strategies as less polite than negative-politeness strategies. Another of Brown and Levinson's claims that was tested by Holtgraves and Yang (1990) concerned the relationship between imposition and politeness. They presented subjects with variants of negative-politeness requests that differed in terms of the amount of face threat involved, and found that, for American subjects as predicted, the greater the face threat, the lower the politeness rating. However, when the researchers varied the imposition level of the requested act, and examined subjects' ratings of the likelihood of the four politeness super-strategies, the predicted patterns were not reproduced exactly. Although, amongst American subjects, the more face-redressive negative-politeness and off-record strategies were rated more likely for large than for small requests (with the reverse being the case for the direct, bald-on-record strategies), ratings for positive-politeness requests did not differ for large or small impositions. Korean subjects' ratings were in the predicted directions for all but the most indirect, off-record hints, which they rated as significantly more likely for small than for large requests.

The effect of manipulations of face-threat on subjects' ratings of various interpretations of indirect questions and replies was also examined by Holtgraves (1991) using a scenario format. According to Brown and Levinson's model, strategies that show increasing attention to face also display increasing indirectness. Holtgraves showed that subjects did perceive indirect interpretations of questions as more likely when the topic was face-threatening than when it was not.7

Holtgraves and Yang's (1990) tests of the other two social factors claimed by Brown and Levinson to determine the weightiness of the face-threatening act did not confirm the proposal that P and D combine additively to affect the perceived likelihood of request strategies. For both groups of subjects, power had the predicted effect only when there was a degree of social distance between the S and the H. For distant relationships, bald-on-record and positive-politeness strategies were rated less likely and less polite when the addressee was of equal power than when the addressee was of lower power; and hints were rated as more likely and more polite when the addressee was of equal power than when the addressee was of lower
power. However, unexpectedly, negative-politeness strategies were rated *more* likely and *more* polite to low-power addressees than to equal-power addressees. The distance parameter had the predicted effect only in the equal-power condition. To an equal-power addressee, bold and positive-politeness strategies were rated *less* likely and *less* polite when the relationship was distant than when it was close, and negative and hint strategies were rated *more* likely when the relationship was distant than when it was close.

By contrast, each of the variables P, D, and R was found to contribute significantly to the politeness of requests in the directions predicted by Brown and Levinson's model in a subsequent study by Holtgraves and Yang (1992). Two coders rated the politeness of requests generated by American and Korean subjects in scenarios that presented three levels (high, medium, low) of each of these variables. The significant Power-by-Imposition and Distance-by-Imposition interaction effects that emerged in this study reinforced Holtgraves and Yang's view that the effects of the three factors were not additive, however. Specifically, the researchers argued that the effects of the interpersonal variables Power and Social Distance varied as a function of the imposition value of the requested act. The more imposing the request, the less importance was attributed to considerations of P and D. Extremely face-threatening request acts, then, would be expected to be carried out with a high level of politeness regardless of the status or the closeness of the relationship between interactants.

**6.6.2 Summary of Experimental Studies of Brown and Levinson's Model**

Experimental research has provided only partial support for Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) theory of politeness. Moreover, findings from different studies have sometimes been inconsistent. Research focussing on variation in compliance-gaining strategies has indicated the following patterns. First, the evidence relating to the influence of the situational variables P, D, and R is inconsistent. All three have been found to have some impact, as have other influential situational factors, on subjects' selection of strategies (Tracy et al., 1984), and on the politeness features used within strategies (Leichty & Applegate, 1991). The social feature R (but not P or D), was found to be predictive of politeness in one study (McLaughlin et al., 1983), whereas the features P and D (but not R) were found to be predictive with respect to likelihood judgements in another (Baxter, 1984). Second, support for Brown and Levinson's prediction
of an inverse relationship between familiarity and politeness was found only with respect to low-imposition requests (Baxter, 1984; Leichy & Applegate, 1991; Lim & Bowers, 1991). The importance, for participants, of maintaining the liking component of high-familiarity relationships under conditions of high imposition was emphasized.

Research on variation in acts of apologizing provided support for predictions concerning the R and P factors only. Apologies to more socially distant addressees were found to be less elaborated than those to addressees of greater familiarity (Holmes, 1990a), in contrast with predictions from the model, and this was the case even when low impositions were involved. Wolfson's (1988) 'Bulge' theory has been proposed as a more adequate explanation than Brown and Levinson's model for patterns of language use between interactants in various status and familiarity relationships.

Research on variation in situated requesting strategies has provided mixed support for Brown and Levinson's model. First, evidence for the hierarchy of politeness strategies (based on face redress) that was advocated by Brown and Levinson was not found in subjects' ratings of politeness: off-record hints were not perceived as the most polite strategic form, overall (Holtgraves & Yang, 1990; Blum-Kulka, 1987). Second, studies have indicated some support for the P factor in subjects' use of politeness features (Scarcella & Brunak, 1981), and in ratings of request politeness (Holtgraves, 1983, 1986). However, no support was found for predictions concerning the effects of increased face threat on the indirectness of requests. Direct requests were rated as more likely and as more polite than indirect requests regardless of the level of face threat involved. The existence of a general preference for directness over indirectness in requesting was proposed (Holtgraves, 1983, 1986). An investigation of this proposal forms part of the studies reported in Chapters 10 and 11, where participants' perceptions about the use of situated request variants were elicited in the form of their justificatory accounts for role-played choices.

Third, the effects of manipulating the R factor were also not consistently as predicted with respect to subjects' ratings of the likelihood of requests corresponding to the politeness super-strategies described by Brown and Levinson (Holtgraves & Yang, 1990). Manipulations of the P, D, and R factors provided evidence of interaction effects (P x D, P x R, D x R) that were not consistent with Brown and Levinson's claim concerning the additivity of social factors in the
assessment of the seriousness of an FTA (Holtgraves & Yang, 1990; 1992). What this evidence of interaction between factors suggests is that as the value of one becomes very high, the effects of the other variables on politeness are outweighed (e.g., if an extremely imposing request is made, the effect, on the form of the request, of a high-familiarity relationship or a low-status addressee will be reduced).

One way of interpreting the inconsistencies in findings relating to predictions from Brown and Levinson's model is to look for limitations in the experimental methodologies that generated them. Tracy et al. (1984), for instance, have argued that previous research has used too limited a range of situation types and message examples to operationalize the factors identified by Brown and Levinson as determining linguistic variation. Findings about strategy use and the influence of situational dimensions are thus often confounded with the specific example messages or situations used. Another explanation for inconsistency in findings concerns the different methods of testing predictions from the theory that have been employed in previous research. Holtgraves (1992), for example, has questioned the appropriateness of rating-scale assessments of politeness.

On the other hand, it may be that alternative formulations, such as that proposed by Wolfson (1988), more adequately describe situational variation in a range of linguistic acts than does Brown and Levinson's model. Certainly, Brown and Levinson's concept of simple additivity to describe the combined effects of social variables such as P, D, and R, appears in need of modification. Regardless of whether one attributes the lack of consistent support from previous studies for the predictions from Brown and Levinson's model to inadequacies in that research or to shortcomings in the theory, it is clear that further investigation of situated variation in a range of linguistic forms is required. We still understand relatively little about strategic variation in language use, and even less about the social and affective meanings associated with such variation in particular linguistic acts. The present research aims to contribute to understanding in the area by addressing some of the shortcomings of previous investigations of the situational determinants of acts of requesting.

Empirical research on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory has extended beyond its application to experimentally created settings. Investigators have also tested predictions from the model using data in the form of dialogue from written texts, and speech samples from
natural interaction. The following sections of this review chapter summarize the findings of such research.

6.6.3 Requests in Textual Dialogue

The genre of scientific writing was identified by Myers (1989) as an ideal source of interactions in which face maintenance was a crucial factor. He focussed on two types of FTAs that characterized scientific writing: (i) acts of making knowledge claims, in which writers impose their own views upon readers (constituting threats to negative face), and (ii) acts of denying or dismissing the validity of claims made by others (constituting threats to positive face). His analysis differs from that of others reported here, which focussed on acts of requesting, but the findings with respect to Brown and Levinson's model are of sufficient relevance to warrant inclusion in the present review.

On the basis of a collection of "about sixty" published articles in the field of molecular biology, Myers found evidence that the FTAs of claiming and denying claims were redressed using the positive- and negative-politeness strategies described by Brown and Levinson. Unredressed, bald-on-record statements of claims, or criticisms of rivals, were "the exception" (21) and only occurred, according to Myers, in circumstances consistent with Brown and Levinson's theory, when: (i) the imposition was small and the threat was outweighed by the assumed benefit to readers (such as when a "big discovery" was announced), (ii) the authors provided methods that readers could be assumed to be interested in learning, or (iii) the authors wrote with extreme brevity according to the confines of scientific formats such as abstracts or letters. Likewise, off-record statements of claims and criticisms were "relatively rare" in this corpus. Myers concluded that the interactive focus provided by analysis of politeness strategies had great utility for the sociological study of the culture of science.

Written texts of a different sort were analysed by R. Brown and Gilman (1989). They applied predictions based on Brown and Levinson's model to Shakespeare's use of Early Modern English in his four major tragedies. Their method was to isolate pairs of speech acts occurring in dialogues between the same two characters in each play such that only one of the dimensions P, D, and R differed for any particular contrast. The comparative politeness of the
speech pairs was scored by assigning points for instances of the positive- and negative-politeness features described by Brown and Levinson.

Predictions for P and R were confirmed using this method. Speakers with low power were invariably more polite, and politeness increased with increasing imposition of the act involved. Results for the social-distance variable, D, went against predictions made by Brown and Levinson, however. In the nine dialogue pairs relevant to this variable that R. Brown and Gilman isolated in the plays, lower social distance always resulted in more polite speech, and greater social distance in less polite speech. R. Brown and Gilman argued that the concept of social distance was better defined, with respect to politeness, in terms of two components which they labelled 'interactive closeness', and 'affect'. Whereas affect influences politeness usage (increased liking is associated with increased politeness, and decreased liking with decreased politeness), they claimed that interactive closeness had "little or no effect on politeness" (159).

The evidence used by R. Brown and Gilman to support their call for a revision of Brown and Levinson's politeness model must be described as being questionable, however (there was a very low frequency of contrary indications, and the data, in addition to being based on texts rather than natural language, consisted of Early Modern rather than contemporary English). Nevertheless, their findings are consistent with suggestions concerning the importance of 'liking' as a component of social distance that emerged in some of the experimental studies reported in the previous section. Other empirically-based suggestions for revisions to Brown and Levinson's model will be discussed following the final section of the review of studies testing predictions from the politeness theory - studies that utilized natural conversational data.

6.6.4 Requests in Natural Conversation

A number of researchers have applied Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness to natural language data. Some have focussed on language occurring within specific situations. For example, Shimanoff (1977) analysed, for politeness features, conversations recorded in a departmental office at an American university between a female receptionist and students or faculty members. She found that bald-on-record strategies were rare (constituting only 20 per cent of the 165 conversational turns in her corpus), and usually occurred in the context of the
giving or seeking of information. Speakers used positive-politeness features more often than negative-politeness features in polite turns at talk, overall, but there were gender differences involved: women used positive politeness more often than negative; men used both types of politeness with relatively equal frequency.

A corpus of nurses' talk to institutionalized elderly people in Britain was analysed, by Coupland, Grainger, and Coupland (1988), in terms of Brown and Levinson's model. Two major co-occurring patterns of FTA management were observed in the nurses' speech: (i) "a very high frequency" (259) of bald-on-record requests consistent with the nature of the power relations involved (nurses possessed institutional authority, expert status in the interactions), and with the task-oriented nature of the talk; and (ii) the common employment of positive-politeness features (notably in-group identity markers, giving reasons, and giving praise). Whereas the pattern for bald-on-record requests was consistent with predictions from Brown and Levinson's model, Coupland et al. argued that the observed pattern for positive politeness was inadequately accounted for. In the terms of the model, positive politeness would be interpreted as a strategy serving to decrease social distance between nurse and patient, and to redress the FTA of requesting that medicines be taken. In the interactions under study, however, the researchers claimed that the occupational and institutional roles of nurse and patient were more relevant than the interpersonal dimension that is emphasized in Brown and Levinson's model of politeness. Coupland et al. interpreted nurses' use of positive politeness in a public context in which acts of coercion were taking place as functioning more credibly to redress the threat to their own group or to the institution: "politeness here goes some way to preserving the nurses' identity in the performance of actions that threaten face both as a caring individual and as a competent professional" (260 - 1).

Requests (both spoken and written) collected in diverse settings (student dormitories, health clinics, dinner parties, on a bus, on campus, at home, memos between secretaries, government letters, etc.) were analysed by Blum-Kulka, Danet, and Gherson(1985) in terms of factors which included Power and Social Distance (from Brown and Levinson's model). In this sample of 478 Israeli Hebrew requests, there was some support for the model's predictions. When considered in isolation from other social factors, both P and D were found to be associated with a speaker's use of request strategy. There was a tendency for requests
addressed to people in positions of power (e.g., patients to nurses; students to teachers) to be *less direct* than requests made to people who were not in positions of power. With increased familiarity between speakers and hearers (e.g., between members of a nuclear family as opposed to strangers), the tendency was for *more direct* forms to be used. As Blum-Kulka et al. did not code their data for the social dimension of Imposition, no inferences can be drawn from this pattern regarding the validity of Leichty and Applegate's (1991) suggestion that it is only for relatively small impositions that Brown and Levinson's prediction of an inverse relationship between familiarity and politeness (indirectness) holds. Interaction effects between the variables of Power and Social Distance were confined to situations involving equally powerful interactants in the study. When social distance between equal interactants was great, indirect requests were preferred. By contrast, direct strategies tended to be used between familiar equals. This pattern - of social distance having the predicted effect only with respect to addressees of equal power - was also reported by Holtgraves and Yang (1990) in their experimental manipulation of social dimensions. In interactions characterized by power asymmetries, Blum-Kulka et al. reported that considerations of power appeared to take precedence over those of social distance.

In another study of politeness, Blum-Kulka (1990) investigated the directive acts used by parents during dinner-table conversations in three cultural groups: Israeli, American, and American-Israeli immigrant families. The majority (71.5%) of the 4,120 directive acts uttered by parents across all three groups were phrased *directly* (which in Blum-Kulka's coding system meant "explicit naming of the act to be performed" (266), e.g., *Close the window./I want you to close the window./You should close the window.*). Israeli parents were found to be more direct than either immigrant, or American, parents. However, approximately half of all instances of direct strategies were *mitigated*, in Fraser's (1980) sense of the term, that is, they included linguistic devices (drawing on in-group membership, and stressing bonding) that softened the degree of coerciveness with which the act was communicated. Further, Blum-Kulka found that politeness varied by type of directive goal. Parents' requests for action tended to be uttered either directly or in mitigated form, whereas requests for goods were less likely to be made in the direct mode, or to involve mitigation, being uttered most often in the form of conventionally indirect requests (e.g., *Could you /Would you do it?*). There were also cultural
differences in the ways in which parents marked their directives for politeness. Israeli parents tended to prefer the solidarity-politeness markers of directness and mitigated directness that are indices of positive affect, according to Blum-Kulka, whereas American and immigrant parents tended to prefer 'conventional politeness markers' (i.e., negative-politeness features, in Brown and Levinson's model).

6.6.5 Summary of Tests of Brown & Levinson's Model

Research based on textual and natural language data has provided some support for Brown and Levinson's theory. There has been more evidence to support predictions for P and R, however, and, as was the case in experimental research on Brown and Levinson's model, some findings with respect to the D variable suggested the need for modification of its conceptualization.

Evidence to support predictions, for P, that powerful speakers would be less polite (more direct) than speakers of lower power, came from analyses of Shakespearian texts (Brown and Gilman, 1989), nurses' talk (Coupland et al., 1988), requests in diverse settings (Blum-Kulka et al., 1985), and parental requests at family dinners (Blum-Kulka, 1990). Evidence to support predictions that, for R, bald strategies would be used when the imposition level of an act was low, came from analyses of scientific texts (Myers, 1989) and Shakespearian tragedies (Brown and Gilman, 1989). Evidence to support predictions, for D, that the lower the social distance between interactants, the lower the politeness (and the greater the directness) came from Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1985) request study and Blum-Kulka's (1990) parental directive study.

By contrast, Brown and Gilman (1989) suggested, on the basis of their textual evidence, that social distance is better conceptualized in terms of relationship affect as distinct from interactive closeness, as only the former is influential in terms of politeness usage. Another weakness of Brown and Levinson's interpersonal dimension, D, was highlighted by Coupland et al. (1988), who argued that some aspects of polite usage are better explained in terms of institutional and occupational roles. Other conceptual concerns have been raised by researchers who have attempted, unsuccessfully, to apply Brown and Levinson's model to language data. The difficulties encountered by these researchers have led to suggestions that the model under-represents the social complexity of the interactive process. A summary of these issues
stemming from problems in the application of Brown and Levinson's model is provided in the next section.

6.7 Problems in Applying Brown & Levinson's Theory of Politeness, and Proposed Modifications

Many problems have arisen out of attempts to implement Brown and Levinson's model as a coding scheme for politeness. Problems with quantification of the politeness of samples of natural discourse according to the output strategies described in the model were reported by Shimanoff as early as 1977. She noted instances among her university office data in which strategies described by Brown and Levinson as performing either a positive- or a negative-politeness function (see section 6.5.3) appeared to be fulfilling a function opposite to that specified. For example, "Positive features functioning as negative politeness were used to reduce the imposition of bad news. Negative features functioning as positive politeness were used to reduce the impact of disagreements" (1977: 230). She also noted that some utterances included both positive- and negative-politeness features, causing problems for interpretation.

Other researchers attempting to apply the model reported that frequency counts of the politeness features used did not capture their own, personal perceptions of the politeness of utterances on some occasions. Both Shimanoff (1977) and Craig, Tracy and Spisak (1986) documented difficulties of this kind:

There were times when the [politeness] characteristic count was high but my intuitions as a native speaker made me feel as if it was not very polite, while at other times the count was low, but I believed the turn was more polite. (1977: 228)

A message might, for example, include several negative politeness markers yet still strike the rater as being rather low in negative politeness for that situation. (1986: 455)

It appears, then, that interpretations of the politeness of particular features may vary in different contexts. Blum-Kulka's (1990) research on the directive acts used by parents to children, for example, indicated that within the interpretive framework of 'dinner-table conversation', parents' direct requesting style was understood as conveying social meanings of solidarity and positive affect. What her research suggests is that politeness features or strategies should not be thought of as carrying particular politeness 'values'; rather their politeness meanings are powerfully influenced by the situational frame (speech event) within which they occur. This was also the position advocated by Ervin-Tripp (1976) whose analyses
of directive use in American English led her to conclude, like Shimanoff (1977) and Cra"ig et al. (1986), that "forms do not lie along a scale of increasing politeness for all social conditions" (60). As discussed in Chapter 2, Ervin-Tripp challenged the idea that variation in directives was due to politeness, proposing instead that people shared understandings of the appropriateness of particular forms in social contexts.

Problems of implementation eventually led Craig et al. (1986) to abandon their attempt to apply Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to a corpus of requests generated via role-play in situations that varied in terms of the P, D, and R variables. They attributed some of the coding difficulties they experienced to the fact that Brown and Levinson did not present their politeness output strategies as a formal typology, but rather as "open-ended lists with considerable overlap in meaning among the members of each list and even, to some extent, between lists" (446). Other problems, such as the indeterminacy engendered by complex combinations of positive- and negative-politeness strategies within requests, they perceived as resulting more directly from the multifunctional nature of utterances in context. Brown and Levinson (1987: 17) recognized the possibility that speakers could accomplish more than one purpose by means of a particular linguistic form. They did not consider it necessary to adapt their theory to account for the possibility of multiple goals, however. Evidence that positive and negative strategies could be mixed in discourse was sufficient to persuade R. Brown and Gilman (1989: 165) to propose a modification of Brown and Levinson's model, in which positive and negative politeness were collapsed into one super-strategy of redress. In their version, acts of positive and negative politeness "may be mixed but need not be".

Another attempt to modify Brown and Levinson's model to account for the multifunctionality of discourse was made by Penman (1990). She proposed a conceptual framework built around the 'respect-contempt' dimension as necessary for the understanding of multiple goals in face work. Harré (1979: 15) had earlier proposed that the generation of respect and the avoidance of contempt was "the most fundamental of all structural principles around which human life is organized". Penman assumed this principle as the major goal of all face work. Her formulation, developed using discourse from Australian court hearings, involved 16 possible strategies analogous to Brown and Levinson's (1978) 'super-strategies', ordered along the respect-contempt continuum in terms of a hierarchical network of pathways
that allowed for the possibility of multiple goals, and for the fact that strategies can be speaker- as well as hearer-oriented. Penman's stated aim in extending Brown and Levinson's model in this way was to provide a conceptual structure or continuum that linked politeness output strategies, and that resulted in a systematic approach to the interpretation of communication.

Her framework incorporated another aspect of face work that received little consideration in Brown and Levinson's model: antagonistic face work or face attack. Penman reported that there was "a great deal" of this type of face work in court-room discourse, not only in cross-examination episodes, but also in the procedure of examination, in which counsels question witnesses they have called to assist their case, and in which "one would expect the fullest of cooperation" (36). An analysis of transcripts from New Zealand court hearings led Lane (1990) similarly to identify the procedure of cross-examination as an instance in which speech acts were uttered with the goal of maximizing H's face loss (the main purpose of the questioning being to undermine the credibility of the witness). Following Austin (1990), he labelled such speech acts 'face-attack acts'. Austin had proposed that face attention could best be thought of in terms of a continuum from polite to impolite, using an argument similar to that developed by Penman (1990). Austin proposed that there were many situations in which non-cooperative behaviour was used strategically, possibly for the purposes of maintaining power asymmetries and social distance between interlocutors, and illustrated her argument with an analysis of examples of the types of sexist language used to insult women.

Others have reported instances of face attack in natural language corpora, in which speakers have appeared motivated to aggravate a hearer's face wants rather than to protect them. Craig et al. (1986) observed such instances in role-played requests, as when, for example, a student asked for extra help from a professor by stating: Your lectures are not getting through to me. Such a statement might reasonably be taken as implying that the professor was, in part, responsible for the student's learning problem. Weigal and Weigal (1985) also found it necessary to refer to the 'antagonistic' nature of some relationships in order to explain the preference for imperative directive forms that they observed within a migratory farm-worker community in the eastern USA.

A similar distinction between strategies of 'aggravation' and of 'mitigation' was proposed by Labov and Fanshel (1977) in relation to requests that they had observed within a therapeutic
interview. They claimed, for instance, that reference to obligation in indirect requests, (e.g., as in *Shouldn't the room be dusted?*) was generally *aggravating*, whereas reference to needs and abilities (e.g., as in *Do you have time to dust this room?*) was generally *mitigating*. According to Penman (1990: 36) findings such as these raised "strong doubts" about the utility of the assumption made by Brown and Levinson, based on the general Gricean (1975) framework, that all interaction is cooperatively based. Austin (1990: 290-1) was another to dispute that the principle of cooperation underpinned interaction, arguing instead that it was rather "one of a number of assumptions, along with those assumptions which encode all the social facts about politeness and face attention, to which a hearer has access in determining the social implications of her interactions with others". Craig et al. (1986: 463) went further, questioning the validity of "any study that assumes cooperation is the overriding or only goal of social interaction"; proposing instead that all situations involve "some degree of tension between cooperation and antagonism", and that this is reflected in the face work that ensues. Hymes (1986) also referred to interactions characterized by conflict and contradiction as instances that were not accounted for by Brown and Levinson's model. In his view, cooperation was better conceptualized as "something to accomplish, not something given" (1987: 222). Each of these writers has identified the need for modifications to the theory of face work that present a more complex understanding of social action.11

Other empirical evidence supports claims that Brown and Levinson's model underrepresents the complexity of the social processes involved in communicative interaction. Numerous findings that greater politeness was associated with low levels of social distance between interactants in opposition to the model's predictions (Baxter, 1984; Brown & Gilman, 1989; Leichty & Applegate, 1991; Lim & Bowers, 1991), led to suggestions that it is 'affect' or liking that influences politeness, rather than merely interactive closeness or familiarity. In the face of such evidence, Brown and Levinson (1987: 16) conceded that "'liking' might be an independent variable affecting choice of politeness strategy" that was not originally captured by the D variable. However, they resisted any greater complication of the model which, as Coupland et al. (1988: 257) pointed out, was retained as a system of "independent variables feeding probabilities into a speech-output generating mechanism", rather than as a system that recognized the necessity of seeing relations as being negotiated in interaction, and as involving
more probabilistic modes of prediction. This point constitutes a fundamental ethnemethodological criticism of what is, basically, a structural-functionalist approach to the study of language variation.

Brown and Levinson (1987) also resisted making major refinements to their model in the face of contradictory evidence relating to their proposed hierarchy of politeness super-strategies. Findings reported by Blum-Kulka (1987) for American and Israeli subjects, and Holtgraves and Yang (1990) for American and Korean subjects, indicated that off-record strategies were evaluated as less polite than negative politeness strategies. In their attempts to explain this pattern of results, both researchers made reference to the concept of pragmatic clarity that Lakoff (1973, 1979) had made a principal element in her theory of communicative competence. According to Blum-Kulka (1987), for example, politeness is motivated by the need for pragmatic clarity as well as by the need to minimize face threat. This argument is based on the assumption that the length of inferential processing required for interpretation of an utterance plays an important part in the assessment of the imposition involved. The longer the inferential path that the H must take, the greater the imposition on him/her, and the lower the level of politeness which the utterance conveys. Politeness is thus conceptualized as a matter of the balance between clarity and apparent non-coerciveness. This model predicts that the highest levels of politeness ratings, should be awarded to strategies that satisfy both needs, that is, to negatively-polite strategies. Strategies that are biased towards pragmatic clarity (i.e., more direct strategies) or towards apparent non-coerciveness (i.e., more indirect, off-record strategies) should be perceived as less polite.

In response to arguments such as this, Brown and Levinson (1987) have accepted that "in some societies" an 'efficiency factor' is involved in the assessment of off-record versus on-record strategies for making requests, but they denied that it was "an intrinsic component of negative politeness for all kinds of FTAs" (1987: 19). Depending on culturally specific expectations, then, they observed that it may be perceived as impolite to require a high-status addressee to calculate the illocutionary potential of an off-record request. Coupland et al. (1988) argued that this qualification contradicted the basic predictions associated with their model's Power dimension.
The question of whether concern with pragmatic clarity is as universal as is concern with face maintenance in communicative interaction, or is something that is specific to particular cultures, clearly requires further investigation. As Blum-Kulka (1987: 145) suggested, we need to add to what we know about factors that motivate the avoidance of directness by considering factors that motivate the avoidance of indirectness. One focus of the empirical studies reported in Chapters 10 and 11 is the question of when, and why, people choose not to be indirect in requesting situations.

6.8 Politeness, Indirectness, and Cultural Norms

Research on the cross-cultural applicability of Brown and Levinson's model has led to much discussion about its validity as a universal explanatory framework. It will be recalled that Brown and Levinson attributed universal status to the abstract principles underlying politeness phenomena. Specifically, they made the following a priori claims:

(i) The universality of face, describable as two kinds of wants;
(ii) The potential universality of rational action devoted to satisfying others' face wants;
(iii) The universality of the mutual knowledge between interactants of (i) and (ii).

(1978: 249)

Further, they held that, in all cultures, the seriousness of an FTA would be assessed as a complex function of the three variables, 'distance', 'power', and 'rating of imposition'.

Many writers have argued that Brown and Levinson failed to give sufficient weight to cultural norms and values in their model (see, for example, Janney & Arndt, 1993; Kaspar, 1990; Mao, 1994; Watts, 1989; Watts, Ide & Ehlich, 1992; Wierzbicka, 1985). As Hymes (1986: 49) put it:

There is a particular tendency today to seek the satisfaction of universal frameworks without realizing the empirical inadequacy of them. Our sense of historical and cultural relativism and diversity seems attenuated, if not lost. The appeal of universal grounding tends to overcome any fear of ethnocentric origin, yet differences of social structure, ecology, class, religion, historically derived character, give rise to very distinctive cuts of cloth, grounded in fundamental concerns and motives of different kinds.

Brown and Levinson's response to such criticism was to attempt to assimilate evidence of ethnographic counter-examples within their politeness framework, describing the process as a matter of "cultural elaboration" upon a universal core concept (the notion of face). In their view, such 'elaborations' arose as a result of different emphases in individual societies upon the
sociological factors P, D, and R that determined the weightiness of FTAs and, hence, the level of politeness with which the acts should be expressed. They used the term "cultural ethos" to describe the general nature of such emphases in a given society, and observed that it was possible to distinguish, broadly, between types of society on this basis. "Positive-politeness cultures", where "impositions are thought of as small, social distance as no insuperable boundary to easy-going interaction, and relative power as never very great ... as in the western U.S.A. ... " (250), were contrasted with "negative-politeness cultures", such as "those lands of stand-offish creatures like the British ... the Japanese ... "(1978: 250). According to Brown and Levinson, these cultural differences filtered down into the linguistic details of the particular face-redressive strategies preferred in a society. In cultures that emphasized low social distance between interactants, and minimized relative power (such as in western U.S.A.), symmetrical use of relatively direct strategies - bald-on-record and positive politeness - would predominate. In cultures emphasizing high social distance in public encounters (e.g., Japanese or British), relatively indirect strategies - negative politeness and off record - would be more evident.

In this way, Brown and Levinson argued that their model was a useful framework for discussing cross-cultural differences. The continued reporting of counter-examples from a range of societies, however, has led to further questioning of the extent to which cultural norms and values, rather than so-called universal concerns, determine strategic variation and politeness perception. A selective review of this evidence will be sufficient for the purpose of providing the reader with the flavour of the critique.

6.8.1 Cultural Considerations of Face

The notion of face as a universal core concept has been shaken by evidence from diverse societies that have collectivist rather than (western) individualist orientations. Concern for the interests of the group endows politeness phenomena with normative characteristics in a number of non-western cultures, and results in a reduced importance for the notion of negative face and its associated politeness aimed at avoiding impositions upon the individual preserves of autonomy and territory.

Japanese culture has been commented upon extensively (e.g., Hill et al., 1986; Ide, 1982, 1989; Ide, Hori, Kawasaki, Ikuto & Haga, 1986; Mao, 1994; Matsumoto, 1988, 1989) as an
example of a society in which politeness is more a matter of conforming to expectations associated with one's place relative to other members of a social group than of redressing threats to individual face wants. Both Ide (1982) and Hill et al. (1986) have pointed out that Brown and Levinson's politeness theory fails to capture the notion of 'wakimae' or 'discernment' that is fundamental to the operation of polite interaction in Japanese. Once particular addressee and situational factors are discerned, the use of certain politeness expressions in this society is a matter of convention. Rather than involving an active choice between strategic alternatives in order to achieve particular goals, it is a matter of using appropriate, expected formulae. In Japanese society, loss of face occurs when others perceive that one has not comprehended and acknowledged the structure and hierarchy of the group (Matsumoto, 1988, 1989). As a result of this collective orientation, negative-face wants are not endowed with particular importance in this culture.

Politeness in modern Chinese society also has a normative aspect that is not captured adequately by Brown and Levinson's model, according to Gu (1990). He argued that a model that conceptualizes politeness as a matter of the face wants of rational actors is inadequate when applied to a culture in which politeness belongs "to the level of society" (242), and results in normative constraints on the language of each individual. Gu claimed that Brown and Levinson's notion of negative-face wants was lacking in this society. A similar argument was developed by Mao (1994). His analysis of the Chinese conceptualization of face showed that its emphasis was not upon the accommodation of individual 'wants' or 'desires', but upon the "harmony of individual contact with the views and judgement of the community" (460). One's dependence on the respect of the group or the community is foregrounded in Chinese conceptualizations of face.

Likewise, Nwoye (1992) argued that among the Igbo of Nigeria, politeness is a form of social contract between the group and its individual members, with the group's needs ranked uppermost. According to Nwoye, the Igbo are less concerned with the self-image of the individual than with the collective image of the group ('group face'). Politeness in Igbo society involves behaving in conformity with expectations that are culturally sanctioned. These institutionalized norms of regard for the collective good explain why acts such as requesting are not regarded as impositions in this culture, but as social rights which have associated with them
reciprocal obligations. This emphasis on the reciprocal, social-contractual nature of requesting was also noted amongst the Philippine Ilongot by Rosaldo (1982). In this society, directive use was a matter of affirming and negotiating social roles and bonds. The notion of concern with "a private and privileged self, leery of imposition" (233) did not arise in Ilongot discussions about requesting.

What the foregoing evidence seems to suggest is that the concept of politeness cannot be considered to be underpinned by a universal notion such as that of concern with face, because cultural values and norms themselves inhere in perceptions of 'face'. In the words of Blum-Kulka (1990: 262), "to understand diversity in cultural ways of speaking we need first to explore the emicly perceived social motivations attributed to communicative behavior within that culture". The research reported in Chapters 10 and 11, attempts just such an exploration, with respect to situated variation in requesting.

6.8.2 Cultural Considerations of Indirectness

Another aspect of Brown and Levinson's theory that has been challenged by cross-cultural evidence concerns their notion of a politeness hierarchy linking the indirectness of a strategy with its politeness. The logic of Brown and Levinson's argument is that increased redress to face is achieved as one moves up the scale of directness/indirectness from on-record, bald strategies to positive-, then negative-politeness strategies, and finally to off-record means of minimizing threats to face, because the speaker leaves progressively more options open in terms of which the threatening intent of the communicative act might be denied. There is much evidence that the social meanings of politeness and indirectness differ across cultures. With respect to indirectness in request realization, for example, ethnographic analyses have revealed emic perceptions that are inconsistent with Brown and Levinson's notion of a politeness hierarchy of increasing indirectness. Direct requests or demands are considered more polite than indirect forms among the Wolof-speaking Senegalese (Irvine, 1978, cited by Hymes, 1986), who believe that indirectness in making everyday requests (e.g., for coffee) implies that the speaker is asking for more attention, as an individual, than is warranted. In Polish culture, where warmth, cordiality, and spontaneity are central values, and distancing devices are associated with hostility and alienation rather than with respect for the authority of the
individual, imperative forms are considered one of the softer, milder directive options (Wierzbicka, 1985). Katriel's (1986) analysis of dugri speech (translatable as 'straight' or 'direct' talk) in the Sabra\textsuperscript{12} community of modern Israel likewise revealed the operation of a culturally-specific version of face work. To dugri speakers, directness, particularly in the expression of criticism or censure, is associated with the communication of respect towards the addressee rather than with disrespect. The assumption underlying a speaker's use of dugri speech, according to Katriel, is that the conversational partner possesses sufficient strength and integrity to accept the directness as a sincere and natural form of communication.

Both Katriel (1986) and Wierzbicka (1985) made reference to a general cultural ethos of directness in the societies that they studied. In these cultures, as in the others mentioned above, directness serves a positive-politeness function, emphasizing in-group membership and affect, which has been referred to as 'solidarity politeness' (Scollon & Scollon, 1983). Wierzbicka (1985) argued that such cultural preferences cannot adequately be accommodated by a politeness model that treats them merely as a matter of differential weightings of such social features as Social Distance and Power. She believed that cultural norms of politeness are so diverse, so imbued with socially-specific values, that issues of linguistic variation are better explained, not in terms of politeness, but in terms of the interpretation of what is socially acceptable or appropriate in a given culture. On this argument, just as direct speech should not always be taken as conveying an absence of politeness, indirect speech is clearly not always reflective of politeness. Using examples drawn from dramatic dialogue in contemporary Australian plays, Wierzbicka pointed out that indirectness was often used, even in this English-speaking culture, to convey abuse, for example: Why don't you shut your mouth?, Will you bloody well hurry up?, Could you bloody well shit in the hole for a change? Cultural values about the importance of individual autonomy and non-imposition on others, and norms restricting the use of direct imperatives, can account for the use of such indirect forms even in non-polite conversation. According to Wierzbicka, claims of universality for politeness as a way of structuring request performance amount to nothing more than Anglo-Saxon ethnocentricity.

A similar argument against the universality of politeness as the social meaning of indirectness was made by Blum-Kulka (1989). She distinguished between 'formal politeness'
- 'rules' or 'scripts' that are known to members of a culture that specify what to say (and not say) in specific social situations, and another dimension of appropriateness, 'tact' - the need to show consideration for others by using indirectness, thus providing the addressee with ways of avoiding conflicts associated with potential adverse reactions to impositive directives (as defined by Leech, 1983). Her point was that indirectness does not, in all cultures and situations, entail tact. She suggested that 'tact' and 'formal politeness' represented different aspects of politeness and that "each might carry a different range of social meanings for members of different cultures" (67). That is, in some cultures (and situations) the use of indirectness counts as conveying consideration for the addressee whereas, in others, the use of directness counts as the same thing. In a comparison of German and Greek polite usage in the context of the speech event of the telephone call, Pavlidou (1994) reached the same conclusion.

Hymes (1986) suggested a way of overcoming the problems cross-cultural studies raise for frameworks such as Brown and Levinson's that postulate universal relevance for particular categories and maxims (such as cooperation, quantity, quality, relevance, manner, positive and negative face) which underlie discourse. He argued that such categories and maxims are better conceptualized as dimensions to which any speech community will have an orientation. The interpretation and significance of these dimensions is, however, an empirical question with respect to the particular situations, events, activities, and relationships within which discourse occurs. The focus of investigation then becomes the use members of a speech community make of the dimensions, and the social meanings that are attributed to them. Similarly, in making suggestions with regard to a cross-cultural politeness research agenda, Watts et al. (1992) wrote of the necessity of distinguishing between conceptualizations of 'politeness' that particular researchers develop as part of their theories of "social behaviour and language usage", and the ways in which "polite behaviour is perceived and talked about by members of socio-cultural groups (1992: 3).

The research implications of these cross-cultural studies are clear. Attention must be paid to emic perceptions of request variation in context. Rather than being taken for granted on the basis of their proposed universal applicability, concepts such as politeness, face, directness, and social dimensions such as Power, Distance, and Imposition, become matters for investigation by discussion with members of a culture. To achieve these sorts of
understanding, research techniques need to extend beyond quantification; beyond the obtaining of people’s judgements of predetermined dimensions. This is what is attempted in Chapters 10 and 11, where people’s justificatory accounts for their choices and non-choices of request variants in role-played situations are examined in order to discover more about the ways in which members of a particular culture negotiate and interpret social meanings in particular situations.

On the basis of their own empirical experience with the politeness theory, Craig et al. (1986) wrote of the need to "extend and correct the Brown and Levinson framework" (462) by way of "a research program that ... would examine messages across a range of situations that varied in type and degree of face threat, and would analyze global judgements of ‘politeness’, ‘appropriateness’, and so on" (465). Similarly, in her overview of "current research issues" in linguistic politeness, Kaspar (1990: 213) identified the need for more studies devoted to investigating "the forms and meanings of politeness" in a variety of contexts which could contribute to the construction of more "empirically informed models". The research program described in the following chapters takes up these suggestions. Before reporting the results of these empirical investigations, however, I will review a final issue that has an important bearing on considerations of politeness in requesting - the issue of gender. The next chapter picks up the point that was recognized by Brown and Levinson (1987) in their reassessment of their theory: research on language and gender has been an important impetus for the development of ideas about politeness. The review presented in Chapter 7 consists of a selection of work that is immediately relevant to the research questions concerning gender and request-usage that are under consideration in the present study.13 The chapter commences with a discussion of Brown and Levinson’s treatment of gender considerations within their model of politeness, and then goes on to summarize the findings of empirical studies that have addressed the issue.

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1Goffman (1955: 213) defined a "line" as "a pattern of verbal and non-verbal acts by which [a person] expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself."

2See Leech (1983: 8-10) for a discussion of the different uses of such terms. Generally, however, these terms refer to descriptive rules/principles relating to behavioural conformity rather than to injunctions about how to behave.
7Leech's scales of Authority and Social Distance were based on Brown and Gilman's (1960) account of the distribution of pronouns of address in European languages in terms of Power and Solidarity. Brown and Levinson (1978) also utilized these dimensions in their model of politeness.

4Brown and Levinson noted that these lists of linguistic expressions or 'output strategies' for the different kinds of politeness were not exhaustive.

5In their original essay, Brown and Levinson (1978: 275) made reference to another form of mixing of positive and negative strategies within utterances. They explained that conventionally -indirect speech acts, "whose rational motivation lies in redress to negative face", could have positive-politeness usages too, as a result of the syntactic contraction and ellipsis that occurred when any form gained currency: "Since contraction and ellipsis serve positive-politeness ends, being markers of in-group membership and casual informality, this effectively stamps conventional indirectnesses (especially indirect speech acts) with a positive politeness visa and reissues them for different circulation (1978: 275-6).

6In Holtgraves' (1983, 1986) studies, requests for information were examined.

7In this study, Holtgraves (1991) used questions such as Did you notice my new coat?, where the indirect interpretation would be What do you think of it?, and the direct interpretation would be Did you notice it?

8Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth, and Othello.

9An emphasis on linguistic variation as a function of the institutional norms within which an interaction takes place, as well as on aspects of the social relationship between S and H (such as power), also characterized analyses carried out by Thomas (1984) into discourse occurring in a series of "unequal relationships" (e.g., the chief inspector of police and a detective constable, a headmaster and teenaged girls). Sarangi (1988) made a similar point with respect to communication within selection interviews, where the goals of the interviewer and interviewee are, at some levels, mutually exclusive.

10Particular strategies have the potential to address multiple goals, for example, the utterance Do me a favour?, may be used to apologize to H by admitting that an infringement is about to occur (a negative-politeness function) and/or to mark the relationship between S and H as friendly, to the extent that reciprocal favours are expected (a positive-politeness function).

11Several authors have challenged the typicality and normality attributed to cooperation as an underlying principle of communication on the grounds that social equality between interactants is a necessary precondition for cooperation to occur (e.g., Fairclough, 1985; Mey, 1987; Pratt, 1981; Sarangi & Slembrouck, 1992).

12The Sabra culture of Israel is described by Katriel (1986: 1) as "the subculture of native-born Israelis of Jewish heritage, mainly of European descent, which became crystallized in the prestate period of the 1930s to 1940s".

13A number of more exhaustive reviews of the language and gender research exist, for example, Coates & Cameron (1988).
CHAPTER 7

DIRECTIVE USE, POLITENESS, AND GENDER

7.1 Introduction: 'Gender' in Brown and Levinson's Politeness Model

In their discussion of the influence of gender on language use, Brown and Levinson (1987: 30) treated this variable as "just one of the relevant parameters in any situation ..." that could be subsumed by the crucial sociological determinants of FTA expression: P, D, and R. Referring to the line of research into gender-differentiated linguistic styles that was generated by Lakoff's (1975, 1977a & b, 1979) claim that women were more 'polite' than men, Brown and Levinson proposed their model as a means of specifying pertinent details such as "more polite than whom, to whom, about what and in what circumstances?" (30). They argued that the most 'obvious' source of the variation in politeness levels attributed to women and men was the Power variable. If it is assumed that gender acts as "a contributory factor in the perception of social asymmetry, power and authority" (30), it would be expected that women would be more polite to a particular addressee than would men of the same nominal status level. Correspondingly, a particular speaker would be expected to show more politeness to a male than to a female addressee of the same nominal status level.

Predictions such as these based on P are necessarily complicated by the fact that gender also plays a role in the assignment of the Social Distance factor, according to Brown and Levinson. Evidence from some societies [e.g., Madagascar (Keenan, 1974); Tenejapan (Brown, 1979, 1980); Tamil (Levinson, 1977)], that women operate denser social networks than men, led them to speculate that women, as a subculture, have a "subjective ideal of small values for D" (1978: 251). On this basis, they hypothesized that, in communities where women had the opportunity to develop such social networks, they would be more likely than men to employ positive-politeness strategies to a high degree.

The possibility that gender differences in politeness are due to perceived differences in the third sociological parameter, the R factor, that measures the Imposition value associated with a particular FTA, was also considered by Brown and Levinson. They concluded that the
systematic higher rating of FTAs by women that would account for greater politeness in the model was only likely in societies in which gender groups were relatively segregated. This kind of mechanism was proposed by Brown (1980) to explain differences in patterns of strategic use by women and men in a Mayan village. When speaking to other women, Tenejapan women used more politeness particles (both positive strengtheners, and negative weakeners) than did men speaking to men. Brown reported no clear-cut differences between women and men in respect of the number of politeness features used in mixed-sex dyads. However, she noted that women used more positive-politeness features to men than to other women, and more negative-politeness features to women than to men. Women and men also exhibited stylistic differences in their use of particular politeness features. Women characteristically used the positive-politeness strategies of irony, rhetorical questions, and negative assertions to emphasize in-group feelings and attitudes, and the negative-politeness strategy of hedging strong feelings. Men characteristically used the positive-politeness strategy of sincerity emphasizers (*truly, really*), employed a preaching/lecturing style, and used 'sexy joking'. These findings were interpreted as evidence that, overall, Tenejapan women were more sensitive to the possible face-threateningness of what they were saying, as well as being more sensitive to an addressee's positive-face wants. Brown ventured that men, as a group, had a higher assessment of the types of wants that conflicted with face wants, for example, wants for communicative efficiency. This sort of explanation was, however, not considered to constitute a likely reason for linguistic gender differences amongst the urban middle classes in industrialized societies, where the sexes are not so segregated.

Empirical tests of Brown and Levinson's model have included attempts to verify their predictions concerning the contribution of gender to assignments of the P, D, and R factors. Other research in the general field of gender differences in language use has produced findings that are directly relevant to an assessment of the contribution of these factors. In the following sections, a selective review of pertinent work in the general area of gender-differentiated language styles follows a discussion of studies that have investigated gender within the specific framework proposed by Brown and Levinson.
7.2 Empirical Investigations of Brown and Levinson's Model

One of the earliest studies using Brown and Levinson's model of strategic language-use as a framework for the investigation of stylistic differences in the speech of women and men was carried out by Shimanoff (1977), on conversations that occurred at a departmental receptionist's desk in an American university. In terms of the proportions of politeness features used, women and men were found to be equally polite. Shimanoff observed, however, that women and men characteristically used different types of politeness. Men tended to use positive- and negative-politeness features equally often, whereas women tended to use a greater proportion of positive-politeness features. In particular, men used more of the features described by Brown and Levinson as 'Conventional indirectness' and 'In-group markers' than did women, and women used more of the features that 'Attend[ed] to an addressee's wants, needs' than did men (A full list of the politeness features identified by Brown & Levinson was reported in Chapter 6, Section 5.4). The pattern of greater positive-politeness use by women than by men in this setting is consistent with Brown and Levinson's proposal that disparate evaluations of the Social Distance factor may play a role in accounting for stylistic gender differences.

In a more recent study, Brown and Levinson's descriptions of positive- and negative-politeness features were used to analyse a corpus of public-opinion surveys that had been conducted over the telephone by female interviewers in Texas, USA (Johnstone, Ferrera, and Bean, 1992). No statistically significant differences were found, overall, in the number of times politeness strategies were used to female and male addressees. The researchers reported some 'subtle' differences in usage according to addressee's gender, however. The positive-politeness strategy, 'Attend to H's wants, needs' was used more often to male than to female addressees, whereas the reverse was the case for another positive-politeness strategy 'Give sympathy, understanding, cooperation'. The negative-politeness strategy, 'Apologize' was also used more frequently to female addressees. This pattern of stylistic differences in the use of particular politeness features is consistent with findings from other studies (e.g., Shimanoff, 1977, Brown, 1980).

Investigations of Brown and Levinson's model have also been undertaken by researchers operating within the compliance-gaining framework. Findings of greater overall use of strategies of politeness or face-redress by women than by men have consistently been reported
(Applegate, 1982; Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Fitzpatrick & Winke, 1979; Kline, 1981). In a study that involved the systematic manipulation of Brown and Levinson's three situational determinants, P, D, and R, Baxter (1984), for example, found that American female role-playing subjects were more likely to employ positive- and negative-politeness compliance-gaining tactics than were male subjects.

Similarly, a recent study testing hypotheses derived from Brown and Levinson's framework by Holtgraves and Yang (1992) using both Korean and American subjects concluded that women were more polite than men. In this investigation, subjects wrote down requests that they imagined they would make in response to role-play situations that varied in terms of their P, D, and R features. Subjects' requests were rated for politeness, defined as "making the request in such a way as to avoid giving offence to the hearer" (249). A multiple-regression analysis to examine the effects of P, D, and R on overall politeness revealed that (i) the requests produced by women were more polite than were those produced by men; (ii) the politeness of men's requests varied more as a function of power than did the politeness of women's requests, but there were no significant differences for the social distance variable; (iii) men included more negative-politeness features in their written responses than did women.

Evidence supporting the proposition that differences in the weighting of offenses plays some part in accounting for stylistic differences between women and men came from Holmes' (1989b) analysis of apologies in New Zealand speech. Women were observed to apologize more frequently than men, and a greater proportion of women's apologies related to less weighty offenses (e.g., bumping in to someone). By contrast, a higher proportion of men's apologies concerned offenses of greater imposition value (for instance, causing someone to miss an important engagement). The pattern of apologies produced by male speakers was consistent with predictions from the politeness model, leading Holmes to conclude that "men rather than women give weight to the kind of computation of P, D, and R predicted by Brown and Levinson" (1989b: 205). The model predicts, for example, that apologies would occur more frequently to strangers (greater social distance) than to friends and intimates (lesser social distance). Holmes found that whereas men produced twice as many apologies to strangers or acquaintances as to friends, women apologized equally often to friends and to strangers.
A similar conclusion was reached by Lee (1993), who used Brown and Levinson's theory to explore the transmission of bad news in organizational hierarchies. Subjects in her study played roles of superordinates, subordinates, or peers in an experimentally-simulated organizational environment, and relayed written messages to an experimental confederate. The combined effect of P and D variables on strategy use was found to be consistent with the predictions of politeness theory for men. That is, as combined P and D increased, men used more politeness strategies. Women, however, used fewer politeness strategies as P and D increased. Lee speculated that these findings could be explained in terms of men's and women's differential interpretation of the use of politeness. When P and D are low, men may interpret the situation as not requiring the use of politeness strategies. Women, however, may interpret politeness as more important in similar situations because of the closeness of the relationship with the hearer. In Lee's words, "to maintain connections with close ‘others’, face-saving work is especially important for women when distance is low, not when distance is high as politeness theory would predict" (1148).

7.2.1 Summary

Research utilizing Brown and Levinson's politeness model to compare the speech of women and men has produced only partial support for predictions concerning the contribution of gender to assignments of the P, D, and R factors. Some studies indicated that, in terms of their use of politeness features, women and men were equally but differentially polite (Shimanoff, 1977; Johnstone et al., 1992). Other studies investigating the use of compliance-gaining strategies or written role-play requests (Holtgraves & Yang, 1992) found women to be more polite than men. Questions concerning whether such stylistic differences as have been observed can be attributed to factors relating to power differentials in society, or to disparate perceptions of social distance or imposition levels, remain to be resolved. There is some evidence from apology data (Holmes, 1989b) that Brown and Levinson's model is more appropriate to the politeness style adopted by men than by women. This suggestion clearly requires further investigation. To this end, the present research examines the effects of the variables P, D, and R on the request styles of women and men, using samples of requests from conversations occurring in two settings (Chapter 8). Comparisons of women's and men's
choices of request alternatives in settings that vary in terms of P, D, and R are also made (Chapters 9, 10, and 11). In addition, women's and men's accounts of their choices and non-choices of request variants in particular settings are compared (Chapters 10 & 11) in order to assess the merit of explanations for gender differences of the type proposed by Brown and Levinson: that women are more sensitive to the possible face-threateningness of what they are saying, as well as being more sensitive to an addressee's positive-face wants; whereas men are more sensitive to the type of wants that conflict with face wants.

The remainder of this chapter summarizes research that, although not dealing explicitly with gender differences in language from the perspective of Brown and Levinson's politeness model, still bears directly upon an assessment of the influence of social-contextual factors such as P, D, and R.

7.3 Gender Differentiated Language Styles: Lakoff's Hypothesis

The direction of research in the field of language and gender has been deeply influenced by one linguist's early attempts to describe and explain the folk-linguistic view that women are more polite than men. The work of Robin Lakoff (1972, 1973, 1975, 1977a,b, & c, 1979, 1990) continues to be invoked as a point of reference in contemporary reviews of the language and gender literature (Cameron, McAlinden, & O'Leary, 1988; Graddol & Swann, 1989; Henley & Kramarae, 1991).

As reported in Chapter 6, Lakoff (1973) conceptualized politeness and clarity as the two "Rules of Pragmatic Competence" that operated as guide-lines for determining the contextual appropriateness of utterances. The Rules of Clarity corresponded to Grice's (1975) formulation of the "Rules of Conversation" (i.e., Quantity, Quality, Relevance, Manner). The Rules of Politeness were described by Lakoff as a set of principles to which people appeared to conform in different situations:

Rule 1. Formality: Don't impose.

Rule 2. Deference: Give addressee options.

Rule 3. Camaraderie: Make addressee feel good/Produce sense of equality.

According to Lakoff, differential use of these rules by women and men explained the existence of popular perceptions of the norms for female and male speech in American culture.
On the basis of introspection, and her own (non-formal) observations of the language used in her speech community, she argued that there was a general tendency for men to speak in accordance with the Rules of Conversation - using straight factual communication (direct, clear, precise speech) - and with Rule 1 politeness (the creation of distance between the S and H). By contrast, women tended to speak in accordance with the Rule of Deference (indirect, imprecise, hesitant speech). Lakoff viewed the source of these tendencies as residing in the relations of power between the sexes. Women, having less real-world power than men, made greater use of deference because of the greater number of situations in which they found themselves addressing a superior addressee. Men, more often finding themselves to be of superior social status to their addressee, had greater use for the creation of distance, and for clear, direct forms.

In a later version of this model, Lakoff (1979) described differences between women's and men's ideal linguistic styles in terms of the interactive strategies deemed appropriate by each subcultural group within particular contexts. (A schematic representation of these interactive strategies was presented in Chapter 6.)

With respect to American culture, she described the ideal style of men's language as located on the Clarity/Distance axis (precise, direct, formally polite, impersonal, technical language), and that of traditional women's language as involving Deference (leaving the decisions up to the addressee). Strategies of Camaraderie, implying egalitarian relationships between interactants (e.g., colloquialism, slang, first names), she described as most likely to be used within same-sex groups, particularly those involving men.

The characteristic 'non-directness' of women's 'deferential' language was the focus of Lakoff's comparison of the linguistic styles of women and men. Her argument tied gender differences in the use of language explicitly to gender differences in the interpretation of contexts. That is, she suggested that women and men possessed different 'rules' of communicative competence:

We must, rather, assume, I think, that a given context is interpreted one way by a male speaker another by a female .... That is, what I mean by saying that traditionally women's language has tended toward nondirectness is that women will interpret a greater number of social contexts as being appropriate for nondirect expression than will men; and perhaps as well, that women will, in a situation in which both men and women would tend toward nondirectness, tend toward greater nondirectness. But this implies that a woman's social/psychological context is often, or perhaps always, different from that of a man. Whether innately, or through early education, a woman learns to perceive social situations, and interpret psychological events, one way, a man,
another. Hence a setting that would evoke one set of linguistic responses in a man would be expected to evoke another in a woman. (1977b: 83)

Clearly this is an argument that can be tested empirically, particularly with respect to the category of language under investigation in the present study: situated request usage. A large body of research findings has been generated by empirical investigations of Lakoff's specific claims about the characteristic features of women's language. The selective review that follows focuses on research pertaining most closely to the issues of politeness and indirectness that are considered in the present study.

The specific features claimed by Lakoff to characterize women's non-direct, deferential style of speech were organized in terms of three broad categories: (1) Lexical traits, (2) Phonological traits, (3) Syntactic-pragmatic traits. A brief summary will suffice to provide a background for the review of relevant empirical work (see Lakoff (1977a) for a detailed description of the characteristic features of 'women's language').

(1) **Lexical traits** characterizing women's language included special vocabulary items relating to gender-specific interests and roles; intensifiers (e.g., *so, such*) and trivializing adjectives (e.g., *divine*); restricted expression of anger and hostility; greater use of euphemistic and polite forms (e.g., *please, thank you*).

(2) **Phonological traits** included features of pronunciation, pitch and volume. These features are not strictly relevant to the issues under discussion in the present work, and so will not be considered further here.

(3) **Syntactic-pragmatic traits** included the use of tag questions and question intonation for declarative statements, and the use of hedging devices (epistemic modals and hedges such as *sort of, I guess*) in non- legitimate ways.

This last characteristic of women's language, the use of hedges in non-legitimate ways, requires some explanation. Lakoff distinguished between *justifiable or legitimate* uses of hedging (when the S was not certain as to the truth of an assertion, or was in danger of offending H due to the possible unfriendliness, painfulness, or unkindness of a statement), and *non-legitimate* uses (when neither of these circumstances pertained, but hedges still occurred). According to Lakoff, non-legitimate uses marked a speaker as lacking in authority and self-confidence. The inappropriate use of questions in situations where declarations would be expected, that is, in those circumstances "where the speaker is in possession of the necessary information, if anyone is" (1977b: 78), was treated by Lakoff as a similar marker. She supported her proposal that women exhibited a greater tendency to use questions and hedging
devices in non-legitimate ways by referring to cultural conventions concerning the appropriate presentations of self for women and men. Traditionally, in English-speaking cultures, she argued that women have gained acceptance by presenting themselves as unsure of the correctness of what they say, whereas men, traditionally, lose credibility if they project this quality. That is, members of the culture have been socialized to believe that being assertive and direct are masculine, not feminine traits.

Women's 'conventional', and therefore 'inflexible', uses of the deferential style in circumstances where there is no intellectual indecision on their part has important social consequences, according to Lakoff. In addition to reinforcing misogynistic stereotypes to the effect that women have no real opinions, and lack the ability to think clearly, the style is the source of the view that women are manipulative. As Lakoff (1977a: 234) described it, people are "apt to be suspicious" if a speaker continually behaves as if an addressee's interests/opinions outweighed her own. Continued use of the deferential style is likely to be interpreted as manipulative, and people feel used. In Lakoff's own words, "A person would rather be confronted directly with a request than feel afterward that he or she was snookered into it" (234).

Lakoff's claims about the assumptions underlying people's use of different politeness styles and the social meanings attributed to these usages have received scant attention from researchers. By contrast, the body of findings generated by investigations of Lakoff's specific claims about the features of women's language is considerable, although the inconclusive nature of this research has been noted by most reviewers (e.g., Eliasoph, 1986; Preisler, 1986; Smith, 1979; Thorne, Kramarae, & Henley, 1983). Studies focussing on women's and men's use of the particular linguistic features identified by Lakoff have yielded different and sometimes conflicting results, but importantly, they have generated recognition of the need for alternative theoretical and methodological approaches to the investigation of issues of gender in language. A brief summary of findings relevant to the present research is reported in the next section.
7.4 Empirical Investigations of Lakoff's Hypothesis

7.4.1 Lexical Traits

Evidence relating to the greater use by women of the types of lexical features identified by Lakoff is restricted to particular samples of speakers in particular interactional contexts. For instance, Hartmann (1976) reported that, amongst a group of speakers native to Maine, USA, who were aged 70 years and over, evaluative adjectives such as lovely, delightful, wonderful, pretty, and so on, were used more often by women than by men in the course of individual interviews. The use of intensifiers like so and such was also reported to be more frequent in the speech of college women engaged in conversations within all-female groups than among college men, in studies carried out on informal conversation in British Columbia by Lapadat and Seesahai (1977), and on conversation undertaken in problem-solving situations in mid-western USA by McMillan, Clifton, McGrath, and Gale (1977). In contrast, a study by Newcombe and Arnkoff (1979) that explicitly took account of the total talking time of participants of each gender, found no differences for lexical traits like so and such used as intensifiers, 'cute' adjectives of admiration, and euphemisms, in the speech of pairs of same- and mixed-sex American college students who were discussing topics of general interest.

7.4.2 Syntactic-Pragmatic Traits

By far the greatest amount of research on the features Lakoff identified as characterizing women's style has addressed the category labelled 'syntactic-pragmatic' traits. Several studies have focussed on folk-linguistic beliefs about such differences in the speech of women and men. Studies in which participants were required, for example, to evaluate samples of speech according to likely gender of speaker have produced evidence that people assume certain linguistic features to be typical of each sex. Features attributed to women include tag questions (Edelsky, 1976; Siegler & Siegler, 1976); the intensifiers adorable, so, very, just; the phrases Oh dear, and Oh my goodness; and the question form Won't you please ...? (Edelsky, 1976). Features attributed to men include use of damn (Edelsky, 1976), and strong assertions (Siegler & Siegler, 1976). Kramer (1977) reported that students differentiated 36 speech-related traits on the basis of how characteristic each was of the speech of women and men. Typically, female speech was judged to involve the characteristics:
friendly, gentle, polite, emotional, enthusiastic, open, self-revealing, good
grammar, clear enunciation, smooth, high pitch, wide range in rate and pitch,
fast, talks a lot, many details, smiles a lot while talking, uses hand and facial
expressions, shows concern for listener, trivial topics, gossip, gibberish. Male
speech was viewed as typically demanding, dominating, forceful, aggressive, straight
to the point, blunt, militant, authoritarian, boastful, loud, deep, showing anger, a
sense of humour, using swear words, slang, and as associated with relaxed
posture.

In the field of compliance-gaining research, Burgoon, Dillard, and Doran (1983) reported
experimental data indicating that male speakers were expected to use more verbally
aggressive strategies of persuasion, whereas female speakers were expected to use
prosocial strategies. Further, the persuasive effectiveness of messages was affected by
violations of these expectations, and women, but not men, were subject to reprimands for such
violations. A number of other studies have demonstrated that a speaker is evaluated differently
when s/he uses features typical of 'women's language' and when s/he does not. When these
features were used, the speaker was judged to be less intelligent, convincing, truthful,
competent, and trustworthy (O'Barr & Atkins, 1980), less assertive, warmer, and more polite
(Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979). Female speakers were judged to be less competent and
knowledgeable when taped presentations of persuasive messages included tag questions,
hedges, and disclaimers (e.g., I may be wrong but), than when they did not (Carli, 1990). No
such effects were noted for male speakers, however. Furthermore, female speakers were
judged by male raters to be more trustworthy and likeable when they used these features than
when they did not. Female raters, however, judged female speakers to be less trustworthy and
likeable when these features were used.

There is also evidence that the same linguistic features are evaluated differently when they
are used by women and by men. Bradley (1981) reported that women who used tag questions
and disclaimers were viewed as less intelligent and knowledgeable than men who used them.
To explain these findings, Bradley proposed that men's use of the features characteristic of
women's language was not interpreted as a sign of hesitancy or uncertainty, but rather as a sign
of politeness and orientation-to-the-other.
A large body of evidence concerning use of the syntactic-pragmatic features identified by Lakoff as characteristic of 'women's language' has been generated by investigations of speech produced under laboratory conditions. Usually, participants in these studies have been undergraduate students, typically American but occasionally New Zealand or British, and the speech samples have been drawn from individual interviews with a researcher, or from dyadic or small group discussions on selected topics between unacquainted participants. Amongst the earliest studies of this type were those reported by Hirschman (1973, 1974), who investigated dyadic conversations produced by American college students. In his first study, no differences were found between women's and men's use of hedging devices such as maybe, probably, I think, I guess. In a second study, Hirschman hypothesized that the greater male use of I think that he observed was a sign of the relative assertiveness of men (rather than as a sign of qualification or uncertainty), and that the greater female use of the mmhmm affirmative response was a marker of the relative supportiveness of women.

At around the same time, Jones (1975) examined the speech produced by New Zealand students during interviews with a female researcher for the presence of you know, another feature that was regarded by Lakoff (1975) as a hedging device. Women's conversation contained considerably more frequent use of this feature than did men's, and Jones suggested that you know was functioning in the interview context as a marker of solidarity between women, and not as a sign of uncertainty, as Lakoff had originally suggested. However, as Holmes (1986a: 20) pointed out, Jones failed to control for the quantity of speech produced by women and men in her interviews and, hence, the outcome may have been a reflection of the fact that women talked more than men. The same criticism can be levelled at another interview study, using ten New Zealand student participants, by Meyerhoff (1986), which reached the same conclusion. The more frequent use of hedges by women speaking to another woman, compared with the use of these forms by men to a female addressee, was interpreted as evidence that such hedges functioned as markers of in-group solidarity.

A tendency for tag questions to be more frequent in the speech of women was reported by McMillan et al. (1977), in an analysis of the group problem-solving discussions of 61 female and 37 male American undergraduates. In these groups, women also produced more imperatives in question form and more modal constructions (such as might have said)
than did men. The fact that women's use of these features was more marked in mixed-sex than in same-sex groups led the researchers to suggest two possible interpretations of women's linguistic style: (i) that it was a reflection of the greater value in women's culture on interpersonal sensitivity and emotionality, or (ii) that it resulted from women's supportive role and minority status in society.

Support for both of these interpretations of the features of women's speech was generated by Carli (1990), who analysed the speech of 59 female and 59 male American undergraduates as they discussed a 'sex-neutral' topic in mixed- or same-sex pairs. Using information from pretest questionnaires, speakers in this study were paired to ensure that they disagreed with each other on the topic. Women were found to use more of the following features of 'tentative behaviour' than men, but only in mixed-sex dyads: (i) **disclaimers** preceding a statement, such as *I may be wrong but* or *I guess*; (ii) **tag questions** (which were coded as questions (e.g., *isn't it?* or *right?*) added to the end of statements that were consistent with a subject's original attitude as measured by questionnaire); (iii) **hedges** or **adverbs** used in the middle of statements that were interpreted as conveying "either moderation or no particular meaning at all" (1990: 945).

Carli interpreted these results as evidence that women, when interacting with men, spoke more tentatively than when interacting with other women. It would appear that women's lower status in relation to men affected their speaking style. However, Carli also noted that, in same-sex dyads, women used more **intensifiers** such as *so*, *very*, and "**verbal reinforcers**" that indicated agreement, for example, *yeah* or *mmhmm*, than did men. This finding was interpreted as a reflection of women's tendency to engage in greater in-group socio-emotional behaviour than men.

Findings similar to Carli's, of greater female use of linguistic features such as hedges and tag questions, had been reported in an earlier investigation carried out by Crosby and Nyquist (1977) into the dyadic discussions (on assigned topics) of 16 female and 16 male American college students. Whereas Carli (1990) only found these differences in mixed-sex dyads, Crosby and Nyquist's results related to the linguistic features used more frequently by women than by men in same-sex dyads. They reported that women used more **hedges** and **tag questions**, as well as a feature they described as 'functionally undiscriminated instances of
empty adjectives' (e.g., charming, cute). They referred to this pattern as constituting a 'female register'.

By contrast, a study of the discussion styles of American college students interacting in both same- and mixed-sex pairs, by Newcombe and Arnkoff (1979), found no evidence of gender-based differences in the use of features such as tag questions or hedges. Leet-Pellegrini (1980) also reported that the variable of gender, on its own, was not associated with stylistic differences in the speech of 70 pairs (same- and mixed-sex) of American college students discussing an assigned topic. The interaction of gender with 'expertise' (manipulated in this study by giving topically-relevant information to one member of some dyads before the discussion commenced) was found, however, to account for the following stylistic differences: (i) male experts were more talkative than female experts; (ii) female experts used more assent terms (such as yeah, right) and supportive utterances (that involved a hearer recycling the speaker's words or completing the speaker's utterance) than did male experts.

7.4.3 Summary

Studies that have attempted to investigate Lakoff's claims concerning the characteristic features of women's language using experimental and interview methods have produced a tangle of findings. Empirical research focussing on gender differences in the use of lexical traits has generally been consistent with Lakoff's claims that women use more evaluative adjectives [e.g., lovely, charming (Hartmann, 1976; Crosby & Nyquist, 1977)] and intensifiers [so, such (Lapadaat & Seesahai, 1977; McMillan et al., 1977; Carli, 1990)]. Only one study of these traits reported no differences in female and male usage (Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979).

Findings with respect to the syntactic-pragmatic features identified by Lakoff as characteristic of women's speech are less consistent. Research on folk-linguistic beliefs about gender differences in speech supports Lakoff's claims: features like tag questions, intensifiers, politeness, are believed to characterize the speech of women, whereas verbal aggression, bluntness, swearing are believed to characterize that of men. Moreover, speakers using features characteristic of women's speech tend to be evaluated more negatively on a range of attributes (e.g., intelligence, truthfulness, competence, persuasive effectiveness) than those who do not.
Research on gender differences based on speech produced in experimental studies by, predominantly, university undergraduates has not provided consistent support for Lakoff's claims. Although some studies have found greater female use of some features: hedges (Carli, 1990; Crosby & Nyquist, 1977; Jones, 1975; Meyerhoff, 1986); tag questions (Carli, 1990; Crosby & Nyquist, 1977; McMillan et al., 1977); affirmative responses (Carli, 1990; Hirschman, 1974); modal constructions (Crosby & Nyquist, 1977); disclaimers (Carli, 1990); others have reported no differences between female and male use: for hedges (Hirschman, 1973; Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979); tag questions (Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979); affirmative responses (Leet-Pellegrini, 1980).

Furthermore, researchers have questioned the functions attributed to 'women's language' by Lakoff. Cameron (1985: 54-55), for instance, pointed out that "although women may be forced to learn a style of speaking that differentiates them from men and identifies them as women, the labels which condemn this style embody not obvious truths but value judgements ...". Rather than serving as indicators of female tentativeness and uncertainty, it has been suggested that the stylistic features of 'women's language' often function as markers of solidarity between women (Hirschman, 1974; Jones, 1975; Meyerhoff, 1986), and indicate women's greater socio-emotional orientation (Carli, 1990; McMillan et al., 1977). The failure of investigators to discriminate between the different functions performed by linguistic features in context has been proposed as an explanation for the inconclusive nature of the research findings. Holmes (1986a, 1987, 1993), for example, has pointed out that, very often, comparisons between the speech of women and men have been based on simple frequency counts of the features described by Lakoff, without regard for differentiation according to the function of such features in the context of utterance (see also Preisler, 1986; West & Zimmerman, 1985). Others have addressed the so-called 'form and function problem' (Cameron et al., 1988) by stressing that the linguistic features identified by Lakoff have multiple uses (often simultaneously) in particular contexts, which makes them difficult to categorize in empirical investigations (e.g., Holmes, 1983; Meyerhoff, 1986; Spender, 1985; Swann, 1988).

In addition to identifying weaknesses associated with a lack of concern with the function of linguistic features, many writers have focussed on the frequent lack of control evidenced in studies investigating Lakoff's claims, over the quantities of speech produced by women and
men as a possible explanation for inconsistency in outcomes (e.g., Aries, 1987; Holmes, 1986a, 1987, 1993). As Holmes (1986a: 12) pointed out:

since there is a considerable body of evidence to suggest that in such contexts it is rare for women to produce the same quantity of speech as men (e.g., Eakins & Eakins 1979; Edelsky 1981; Spender 1979; Swacker 1975, 1979; Zimmerman & West 1978), any comparison of the number of forms used by each sex clearly needs to control for differential opportunities for producing such forms.

To a lesser extent, writers have attributed inconsistencies between findings in the area to differences in setting [e.g., formal/public versus informal/intimate (Aries, 1987; Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979; Preisler, 1986; Smith, 1985)], and to differences in the gender composition of conversational groups [i.e., same- versus mixed-sex (Adams, 1980; Aries, 1987; Carli, 1990; Coates, 1988)]. Questions about the validity of research findings that are based on conversations occurring between unacquainted participants in experimental studies have also been raised (e.g., Hirschman, 1974; Parks, 1978). It is the case, however, that a number of investigations of gender differences in language use have been based on speech recorded in natural transactional contexts, and on conversations occurring between acquainted participants in informal, familiar settings. A summary of findings from these types of studies follows.

7.5 Investigations of Lakoff's Claims in Natural Contexts

A number of writers have proposed the context dependency of differences between the speech styles of women and men as an explanation for inconsistencies in research findings (Aries, 1987; Crosby and Nyquist, 1977; Pedersen, 1980; Philips, 1980). Mc Connell-Ginet (1985: 173) highlighted the need for a different focus in research: "More attention must be paid to the influence of contextual factors other than gender if we are to understand how gender interacts with such factors". An example from the research of Crosby and Nyquist (1977) serves to illustrate the complexities involved in investigations of gender differences in contextualized natural language use.
Public Transactional Contexts

Crosby and Nyquist recorded American English speech in two natural contexts: an information booth at an urban municipal centre (107 male and 90 female enquirers), and a suburban police station (45 male, 45 female clients, and 3 police personnel). In the former setting, no differences were found between women's and men's use of an index labelled 'female register'. (This was a composite score derived, in this study, from instances of hedges, polite expressions such as please and thanks, verb forms such as could, would, salutations such as hi, excuse me, and directness of request.) In the latter setting, however, female speakers were found to use more of the 'female register' (scored, in this study, as instances of tag questions, hedges, polite expressions) than did males, as did speakers in the general category of 'clients' when compared with police personnel.

Crosby and Nyquist suggested that the well-established format of the information-seeking encounter diminished the likelihood of gender differences appearing in the speech produced in this context. Findings from the police station were interpreted by the researchers as evidence that gender differences in language are a reflection of differences in the roles rather than in the status of interactants. Their argument was based on the observation that client speech in the police station did not vary as a function of police-personnel status, and that the speech of a low-status police clerk did not exhibit more of the 'female register' than did that of higher-ranking officers. As Aries (1987), amongst others, pointed out, however, the practice of summing occurrences of different linguistic features into indices in the service of a quantitative descriptive research agenda is problematic, given what is known of the potential multifunctionality of such forms, and of the importance of the local, conversational context to the assignment of meaning.

Support for Crosby and Nyquist's general conclusions about the context dependency of gender differences in language comes from findings of no difference between the speech of women and men in another routine, public requesting context, a ticket counter at a railway station. Brouwer, Gerritsen, and de Haan (1979) and Brouwer (1982) recorded utterances (from a total of 637 female and 576 male requesters) produced during ticket-buying transactions at Amsterdam Central Station. No differences were found between women's and men's speech for the linguistic features number of words, diminutives, and polite forms (such as salutations, modal constructions, please, thankyou). In both studies, however, it was noted that women
made more requests for information than men. This difference was attributed to the fact that women, in general, were likely to have had less experience of travelling than men. It was also observed in both studies that the gender of the addressee influenced the form of language produced. Both male and female speakers were observed to direct more polite forms to male rather than to female ticket sellers.

7.5.2 Private, Informal Contexts

Several investigations of the language used between familiars in informal contexts have been concerned with describing female/male stylistic differences. Soskin and John (1963), for example, persuaded a married American couple to carry radio transmitters with them on vacation so that samples of their spoken interaction could be studied. The context dependence of gender differences in language use was noted in this study, too, with the greatest differences between the wife’s and husband’s speech styles being reported as occurring in their more private rather than in their more public interactions. For example, the wife used directive utterances most frequently in the couple’s cabin, whereas the husband used them most often when the couple was out rowing. Overall, Soskin and John reported that the husband employed more messages designed to control behaviour, such as demands, prohibitions, invitations, and permissions, whereas the wife used more expressive messages designed to elicit verbal responses from her partner.

A similar pattern of results was reported by Fishman (1977, 1980) who recorded the conversations of three young American heterosexual couples as they engaged in normal daily interactions in their homes. She described the conversational styles of the women and men involved in the following way (although, as Holmes (1986a) pointed out, the validity of Fishman’s analysis is questionable because she failed to take account of the quantity of speech produced by women and men in the sample):

(i) Women asked more questions than did men, and in particular, more tag questions;
(ii) Women were more likely to initiate conversations, often prefacing new topics with phrases such as Do you know what?, and This is really interesting;
(iii) Many of the topics initiated by women failed to evolve into conversations, although this was never the case for topics introduced by men;
(iv) Women said you know more often than did men;
(iv) Women and men used minimal responses (e.g., mmhmm, yeah) in different ways. Women were more likely to insert them throughout the stream of a man's talk, whereas men were more likely to use them at the end of a woman's speaking turn.

On the basis of these patterns, Fishman concluded that women, more than men, actively supported and maintained conversation through the use of particular strategies. First, she argued that women's use of 'minimal responses' signalled their interest in their partner's conversation and encouraged continuation of talk. By contrast, men's use of 'minimal responses' (for example, using a form such as yeah and nothing else to fill a turn at talk), tended to convey a lack of interest in the conversation and discouraged interaction. Second, women's use of you know was interpreted as an attention-gaining device that served to keep the conversation going. Fishman noted that instances of you know tended to occur when speakers (usually women) were attempting unsuccessfully to pursue a topic (for example, in long turns at talk, after pauses where a hearer (usually a man) might have responded but did not). As Holmes (1986a) pointed out, however, Fishman did not make careful discriminations between the functions of these forms in context. Hers was a post hoc functionalist approach, involving the accumulation of all instances of a particular feature and the assignment of a "monolithic" (1986a: 4) functional status to it in explanation of the observed pattern. Finally, the tendency of women to ask more questions and to introduce conversational topics was also interpreted as evidence that they did more to facilitate the flow of conversation. Questions are designed to evoke answers from an addressee, and women used them as a way of ensuring responses from men, rather than because of a sense of insecurity, according to Fishman. However, at a fundamental level, Fishman shared Lakoff's view that the explanation of such stylistic differences involved considerations of hierarchy rather than gender. In Fishman's words (1977: 99), there is "a division of labor between men and women in conversation which supports [the] more general positions of power and powerlessness".

7.6 Interpreting Differences: Gender, Power, or Role?

Studies designed to distinguish between the effects of gender, power, and role as causes of differences in the language used by women and men have been carried out on conversations generated under experimental conditions and in natural situations. Using a complex experimental design, Preisler (1986), for example, attempted to discriminate the contributions
of interactional role and speaker's gender upon linguistic style. He video-recorded the interactions of mixed- and same-sex four-person groups of workers from British manufacturing firms as they discussed controversial topics such as those of corporal/capital punishment. Equal numbers of female and male participants were selected to represent one of two age groups (20 - 25 years/40 - 45 years) and three levels of job status (managerial, clerical, manual). All groups were internally homogeneous with respect to age and status. Conversations were coded using Bales' (1970) Interaction Process Analysis model, which distinguishes 12 types of communicative act under four main functional categories:

(i) Positive Reactions: seems friendly, dramatizes, agrees.
(ii) Attempted Answers: gives suggestion, gives opinion, gives information.
(iii) Questions: asks for information, asks for opinion, asks for suggestion.
(iv) Negative Reactions: disagrees, shows tension, seems unfriendly.

On the basis of these twelve act types, two interactants in each group were classified as having a relatively 'task-oriented' role (T) (defined as a high score on the Attempted Answers category), and two as having a relatively 'socio-emotional' role (S) (defined as a high score on the Positive Reactions category). Conversations were then coded for the presence of the types of linguistic features "generally acknowledged to have a bearing on the expression of tentativeness" (1986: 75) - tag questions, hedges (e.g., really, sort of), type of clause structure (declarative, interrogative, imperative), modal auxiliary verbs (can, could, may, might, etc.), and lexical modal forms (such as I think, certainly, possibly, etc.).

Frequencies of use of these linguistic features were then correlated with S/T role as well as with gender. Overall, Preisler found that women tended to use the so-called 'tentativeness' signals more often than men, in both single- and mixed-sex groups. Men were observed to use more imperative clause structures than women. Greater use of 'tentativeness' signals was also generally found to occur amongst speakers classified by Preisler as having a 'socio-emotional' role than amongst those having a 'task-oriented' role. However, the association of these signals with gender was stronger than with interactional role. Moreover, Preisler found no association between age of participants and patterns of gender-differential language use, nor was any pattern evident for the categories of social stratification.
There have been some criticisms of aspects of Preisler's work, centering primarily on the restrictiveness of the four-category communicative-act classification system that he employed (Graddol and Swann, 1989), and on the dichotomous role-classification system (Kramarae, 1981; Holmes, 1989a). Moreover, it has been pointed out that, like many other researchers in the area, Preisler underestimated the pragmatic complexity of the tag questions he observed. Using examples cited by Preisler, Holmes (1989a) proposed that rather than functioning as signals of tentativeness, many of the tag questions used by participants in the study appeared to be acting as facilitative devices and, further, that some appeared to be serving as expressions of certainty, that is, they acted to strengthen rather than to attenuate the force of utterances in which they occurred.

A study designed to distinguish between the effects of gender and power was carried out by Kollock, Blumstein, and Schwarz (1985) using conversations occurring between 35 couples who, on the basis of detailed questionnaires, had been stratified into two groups; those in which both members shared power equally, and those in which one partner had more power. Three types of cohabiting couples were compared; mixed-sex, all-male, and all-female couples. In their own homes, these couples were presented with short stories depicting conflict situations, which they were asked to resolve in the absence of the experimenters. Conversations generated in this way were tape-recorded, and served as the data-base for analyses of features of conversational dominance and support. Amongst other patterns, Kollock et al. reported the following results: (i) the rate of conversational interruptions appeared to be a function of power rather than gender. In mixed-sex couples, the more powerful partner, irrespective of gender, exhibited higher rates, whereas for couples of equal power, the rates were not different; (ii) the rates of back-channels, used as a sign of encouragement and support for the speaker's conversation, and of tag questions (although these were relatively infrequent in the corpus) were also linked to power rather than to gender. In mixed-sex couples, irrespective of gender, the less powerful partner displayed higher rates of these supportive features. This power difference was also found in the female couples. No gender differences were observed in equal-power couples. In summing up their findings, the researchers argued that the results "[went] a long way toward the conclusion that it is the power
dynamics of male-female relationships which account for the division of labor in conversation" (1985: 44).

An analysis of the speech used by women and men in an American courtroom led O'Barr and Atkins (1980) to the same conclusion. They argued that variation in the features discussed by Lakoff related more to "social powerlessness" than to gender. They coded the speech of three female and three male witnesses for the presence of the following features of 'women's language': intensifiers, hedges, hesitations (e.g., um, ah, well), question intonation and questions, spoken indications of direction (e.g., over there), polite forms (e.g., please, thank you), use of sir, and telling what someone else said using direct speech. These features were summed (without consideration of function) and a ratio of their number-per-answer-provided-in-testimony was calculated for each witness. On this basis, comparisons between female and male speech did not produce results consistent with Lakoff's predictions. Rather than being associated with gender, scores on the 'women's language' index appeared to be tied more closely to the speaker's social status or power. Both female and male witnesses of higher social status (educated, professional, middle-class) had low scores, indicating infrequent use of these features, whereas female and male witnesses of lower social status (subordinate job, housewife) tended to have high scores, indicating more frequent use. O'Barr and Atkins advocated renaming as 'powerless language' the linguistic style to which Lakoff referred as 'women's language'. The tendency for more women to use this style of speech than men could then be expressed in terms of the unequal distribution of power between the sexes in society.

The conclusion that it is power rather than gender that primarily determines linguistic style has been challenged, however. In an analysis of the linguistic features used by speakers to gain and hold the floor in group discussions, Woods (1988) unobtrusively recorded conversations occurring in an office between nine workplace triads involving either a male or female boss and one subordinate of each sex. Randomly selected conversational passages of two minutes in duration were submitted to frequency counts. On the basis of the following patterns, Woods concluded that gender rather than status exerted a greater influence over who held the floor: (i) male speakers interrupted more and were interrupted by others less often than were female speakers; (ii) male speakers had longer turns at talk (e.g., male subordinates held the
floor for a total of 56 seconds longer in 3 two-minute conversations than their female bosses); (iii) male speakers received more **minimal responses** (such as *mmhmm, yeah*). In other words, low-status men did not conform to the strategies used by low-status women, and high-status women did not adopt the strategies exhibited by high-status men, with respect to linguistic floor-holding. A similar finding was reported by West (1984), who observed that whereas female patients were **interrupted** by male doctors, female doctors tended to be interrupted by their male patients.

Earlier studies on gender and floor apportionment had found similar patterns of male dominance. Zimmerman and West (1975), for instance, investigated the influence of gender upon occurrences of *'simultaneous speech'* (i.e., speech involving overlaps and interruptions) and *'delayed minimal responses'* (i.e., minimal responses that did not immediately follow the speaker's previous turn). They recorded 31 conversations between pairs of interactants in public places and private residences in California. In same-sex pairs, the number of overlaps and interruptions was observed to be fairly equally distributed between speakers. However, in mixed-sex pairs, these features were virtually all produced by the male speakers, who also displayed a tendency to delay the use of assent terms when speaking to female addressees. Just as appropriately-timed minimal responses may signal the listener's interest and attention, delaying such responses can serve to indicate a lack of real interest. In another investigation, West and Zimmerman (1983) examined conversational interactions between mixed-sex pairs within a laboratory setting, where none of the undergraduate student participants acting under instructions to "get to know each other" were acquainted, as some participants had been in their earlier study. Again, male speakers were observed to **interrupt** more than female speakers. West and Zimmerman interpreted interruptions as signals of conversational control or dominance, and concluded that this strategy was one way in which speakers could establish power relations in conversation. Other researchers (e.g., Aries, 1987; Beattie, 1981; Graddol & Swann, 1989, amongst others) have pointed out, however, that as is the case for all conversational features, the function of a particular interruption must be interpreted in terms of the *context* of utterance. In some contexts, for example, interruptions may serve to indicate a speaker's agreement with, or interest in and support for, another's contribution.
Evidence provided by Coates (1988) on the nature of all-female conversations is revealing in this regard. The conversations of a group of women friends were unobtrusively recorded during regular social meetings that took place at Coates' home. In a corpus totalling 135 minutes in duration, four formal features were examined in detail: topic development, minimal responses, simultaneous speech, and epistemic modality. Coates' observations supported the notion that women's language tends to be cooperative in the sense that women work together to produce shared meanings (1988: 118). Women were observed to develop topics progressively and jointly, and topic shifts were gradual rather than abrupt (abrupt shifts are the norm in all-male conversation). Minimal responses were used by these women either to support the speaker and to indicate the listener's attention, or to signal agreement concerning different stages of conversational development. Coates also interpreted instances of simultaneous speech as signals of "active listenerness" and collaborative conversation:

In private conversation between equals ... where the chief goal of interaction is the maintenance of good social relationships, then the participation of more than one speaker is iconic of joint activity: the goal is not to take the floor from another speaker, but to participate in conversation with other speakers. (1988: 113)

Women's greater use of epistemic modal forms (such as I think, sort of, well) in this corpus was explained in terms of the notion of face, a cornerstone of Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness. Coates contended that the topics that women characteristically tend to discuss - people and feelings - are more face-threatening than those typically addressed by men, which more often concern "things". As women have greater need to mitigate the force of their utterances in order to respect an addressee's face needs than do men, they use more epistemic forms as hedges. This explanation of women's greater 'politeness' is an important variation on Brown and Levinson's (1987) suggestion that the higher rating of FTAs by women than by men could account for differences in their speech styles. Coates also observed women using tag questions in facilitative ways in this corpus, to invite others to speak, particularly as a way of checking on the cooperative progress of the conversation.

A number of researchers have characterized the different interactional styles and associated linguistic behaviours of women and men in terms of dimensions like cooperativeness and competition. It has been widely argued that women generally have a greater sensitivity to people, that they are more affiliative and responsive, and have a more social and interactional
orientation than men, who are seen generally to be more control- or task-oriented in their interactions (Cameron, 1985; Holmes, 1985; Piliavin & Martin, 1978; Poynton, 1985; Smith, 1985; Spence & Helmreich, 1978; Treichler & Kramarare, 1983). In a recent review of the literature, Klann-Delius (1988: 773) pointed to a need for more investigation in this area:

> Whether and in precisely which way these stereotyped ascriptions of different communicative orientations of the sexes manifest themselves in different sets of conversational strategies, regulating overt communicative patterns, awaits further research.

Most recently, Holmes' (1988, 1989b, 1990b, 1993) work on the gender distribution, according to function, of a number of linguistic features and strategies has produced strong evidence that women, more so than men, tend to use language in facilitative ways to support and encourage conversational partners. Her findings will be summarized in the next section. Before closing this discussion of explanations for observed gender differences in language use, however, one final view must be presented - the 'two cultures' theory (Henley & Kramarae, 1991) of Maltz and Borker (1982).

### 7.7 The 'Two Cultures' Theory

The view that differences in the language used by women and men are not so much a reflection of relations of dominance and subordination as of the fact that women and men differ in their social/cultural roles and identities, has been associated primarily with the writings of Maltz and Borker (1982, but see also Kramarae, 1981; Smith, 1979). Maltz and Borker argued that the communicative and interactional competences that differentiated female and male styles developed out of the gender-specific subcultures that are formed during childhood socialization in play groups. The rules for engaging in and interpreting friendly conversation are learned by children between the ages of 5 and 15 years, according to Maltz and Borker, when socialization occurs primarily within same-sex groups. As a result of their different experiences, girls and boys develop gender-specific sociolinguistic cultures. They learn to do different things with words in conversation, and they internalize different notions of the appropriateness of particular forms in conversational contexts.

Goodwin's (1980) study of the language used by children engaged in task-oriented play activities in single-sex groups is often cited as evidence of different female and male
communicative competences that reflect characteristic patterns of social organization in the two 
gender groups. Amongst the black working-class Philadelphian boys and girls (aged 8 - 13 
years) that she studied, Goodwin observed that, in the hierarchically structured boys' group, 
play was a competitive activity, whereas in the girls' group, this hierarchical structure was 
absent, and members played together on a more equal basis in a cooperative fashion. Different 
forms of directive use characterized the two groups. Boys used direct commands such as Give 
me the pliers., and Get off my steps., whereas girls' directives were phrased as suggestions or 
proposals for future joint action, for example: Hey y'all, let's go around Subs and Suds., and 
Let's ask her 'Do you have any bottles?'. Girls were also observed to make more use than 
boys of modal forms such as 'can' and 'could' in their directives.

Maltz and Borker's argument was that gender differences in language use are essentially 
cultural differences; that communication between women and men is cross-cultural 
communication. Misunderstandings can be explained in terms of the conversational patterns 
that are learned by members of the two cultures. Girls learn the communicative strategies 
necessary for the promotion of affinity, closeness, and cooperation; boys learn those necessary 
for the maintenance of competition, dominance, and identity.

A number of authors have expressed dissatisfaction with Maltz and Borker's approach, and 
with that of Tannen (1990), who based her popular text about male-female misunderstandings 
on their theory. The 'two cultures' explanation of linguistic gender differences has been 
criticized for its failure to consider the power hierarchies within which such differences are 
constructed and take on their social meanings (e.g., Coates, 1986, 1988; Cameron et al., 1988; 
pointed out, explanations need to incorporate both a recognition that the interactional styles of 
women and men may be different, and that many of these differences will be valued in men's 
favour thus serving to reinforce and reproduce social inequalities between the sexes.

7.8 Summary of Evidence for Lakoff's Claims Based on Investigations 
in Natural Contexts

Research based on the speech styles used by women and men in a variety of natural contexts 
provides evidence of the context-dependence of gender differences in language. The salience 
and meanings of gender in relation to language appear to vary in different contexts. For
example, there is some evidence that stylistic differences associated with speaker's gender are not apparent in routine, public requesting contexts (information booths (Crosby & Nyquist, 1977), ticket counters (Brouwer, 1982; Brouwer et al., 1979), married couple's interactions, (Soskin & John, 1963)]. Studies of speech in informal contexts, however, provided consistent indications that women used more linguistic forms designed to facilitate their partner's conversation (Coates, 1988; Fishman, 1977, 1980; Soskin & John, 1963). Investigations of the possibility that the different interactional roles of women and men in linguistic conversation, or their different status positions in society, are more directly determinative of linguistic style than is the factor of gender per se, have produced inconclusive results. Gender was found to be more strongly associated with linguistic style than was interactional role (Preisler, 1986). The same finding was reported with respect to power over gender (Kollock et al., 1985; O'Barr & Atkins, 1980), and with respect to gender over power (West, 1984; Woods, 1988; West & Zimmerman, 1983). Explanations of such inconsistency have focused on the necessity for analysts to take interactional function rather than linguistic form alone into account. The need for theories that attempt to integrate sources of difference like social inequality and gender-based interactional subcultures - that attempt, in Coates' (1988) terms, to incorporate 'dominance' as well as 'difference' explanations - has been recognized.

Empirical research that has attempted to deal with the theoretical and methodological problems that have been highlighted as possible sources of explanation for the generally inconclusive nature of the findings on gender differences in language use is described in the following section. These studies, which focus on the social functions of linguistic forms as well as the action goals they convey, provide more consistent and persuasive insights into the nature of differences between women's and men's uses of language in context.

7.9 The Work of Janet Holmes

7.9.1 The Importance of Distinguishing Between Referential and Affective Meaning

that the key to an understanding of the diverse research findings relevant to Lakoff's characterization of women's language lay in a distinction between two types of meaning that had often been confused in empirical studies. Most of the comparisons of the speech of women and men had examined features that constituted expressions of epistemic modality. These expressions convey degrees of certainty concerning the validity of the information asserted, and include such modal verbs as may, might, could, noun phrases like a possibility, and adverbials like apparently, probably. Holmes argued that forms such as these could be used to express two types of meaning: (1) primarily 'modal' or referential meaning, that is, reflecting the speaker's degree of certainty regarding the truth of a proposition (a 'speaker-oriented' meaning), or (2) primarily 'affective' meaning, reflecting the speaker's attitude to the addressee in the context of the utterance (an 'addressee-oriented' meaning). Moreover, the latter, affective function can be differentiated further according to whether the speaker uses (i) facilitative devices, which indicate interest in the speaker and encourage his/her contributions to the interaction, or (ii) softening devices, which express concern for the addressee's feelings. The latter distinction coincides with Brown and Levinson's (1978) description of positive- and negative-politeness functions. Facilitative devices serve solidarity-enhancing or positive-politeness functions; softening devices serve mitigating or negative-politeness functions.

As had Lakoff (1979) before her, Holmes (1990b) proposed a schematic model of women's and men's social interaction. In Holmes' model, interaction was conceptualized by way of a two-dimensional framework of analysis formed by two axes, one referential and another affective (Figure 7.1), simultaneously expressing both propositional and affective meaning. Holmes (1990b: 253) described this model of interaction that provides a framework for discussing linguistically expressed politeness as follows:

The area within the four quadrants of the square represents interactional space. Any utterance, expression or interaction, may be located in that space according to the extent to which it expresses both referential content, on a scale from 0 to 100 %, and affective meaning on a scale running from high solidarity at one end to maximum social distance or deference at the other.

This model satisfies Ervin-Tripp's (1981) injunction that models of language interpretation and production must attend both to social meaning and politeness, and to meaning pertaining to
action goals, as such meanings are always conveyed jointly in control acts like requests (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referential Axis</th>
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<tr>
<td>Example (4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pop station patter</td>
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<td>Family gossip</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affective Axis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC World Service news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather forecasts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Bureau response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLIDARITY 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camaraderie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive Politeness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thanks</td>
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<td>Apology</td>
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<td>Example (1)</td>
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**Figure 7.1** Holmes' (1990b) model of social interaction

Holmes examined gender differences in politeness in terms of differences in the emphasis placed by women and men on the affective and referential axes in interaction. Using large corpora of New Zealand and British speech, she focussed on the gender distribution of a number of linguistic forms that have interested researchers investigating Lakoff's claims. Her data sets contained equal quantities of female and male speech, collected in matched contexts (e.g., radio and television interviews, classroom discussions, and casual conversations between friends). In general, her findings did not support the claim that forms signalling uncertainty are characteristic of women's linguistic style. In fact, the evidence suggested that men use forms in this way more frequently than do women. Holmes has argued that, in informal interactions, women's speech is more affectively oriented than men's, whereas men tend to produce more referentially-oriented utterances (See Figure 7.1). A brief summary of Holmes' findings, organized in terms of specific linguistic features that simultaneously express both referential and affective meaning is presented in the next section.
7.9.2 Tag Questions: Role-Related Signs of Interactional Maturity?

On the basis of a 43,000 word corpus, Holmes (1984a) reported that the overall distribution of tag questions \( N = 90 \) was not very different for women (57%) and men (43%). However, there were significant differences between the two genders in the functional distribution of these forms. Women used more tag questions with affective meanings, whereas men used them more often referentially, to convey modal meanings. In particular, women's tags tended to be facilitative in function whereas men's functioned more often to express uncertainty, requesting reassurance or confirmation of the propositions being asserted. Holmes also examined the distribution of tag questions according to the speaker's role in the interaction. Participants responsible for leading or for ensuring the smooth running of the interaction (such as those occupying the roles of teacher, group leader, host) were observed to use more tags than those not occupying such roles. In particular, women were more likely than men to use tag questions when occupying these roles.

Holmes' results bear upon a number of claims that have been made in the literature concerning women's use of tag questions. The identification by Lakoff of a category of 'illegitimate' uses of tag questions characteristic of women's style (See Section 7.3) was described by Holmes (1984a: 52) as nothing more than a 'chimera', whose appeal owed more to the existence of powerful negative stereotypes about women than to evidence of the ways in which language was actually used. In the 90 tag questions that occurred in her corpus, Holmes was only able to identify two of the three general uses that Lakoff ascribed to hedging devices. Holmes reported that tag questions were used to convey either modal meaning (genuine uncertainty) or affective meaning (mitigation of unfriendliness), but that the third category ('non-legitimate' uses where the speaker was not uncertain, and there was no danger of offence, but the tag still occurred) "simply did not show up" (1986a: 2).

According to Cameron et al. (1988: 81) the type of tag questions that were identified by Holmes as the facilitative kind, conveying affective meaning, were the type that Lakoff had interpreted as 'illegitimate'. In Lakoff's "restrictive view" (81) of the functions served by tag questions, this type of tag was read as the signal par excellence of women's uncertainty; as "an apology for making an assertion at all" (Lakoff, 1975: 54). Far from using 'illegitimate' tags, it
would seem, in the light of Holmes' results, that women use tags as one strategy to fulfil an important interactional function - the facilitation of conversation.

Further evidence supporting women's use of linguistic features to facilitate the conversational contributions of others was reported in studies of the informal interactions of opposite-sex couples (Section 7.5.2). Fishman (1977) referred to this work that women do as "interactional shitwork". However, unlike Fishman (1977, 1980) and others (e.g., O'Barr & Atkins, 1980; Lakoff, 1975, 1977), Holmes challenged claims that issues of power underlie variations in the use of linguistic features between women and men. She perceived a speaker's interactional role (leader/facilitator versus non-leader) to be the more pertinent determinant of how language was used. Holmes argued that linguistic devices such as tag questions, which are commonly used by women and those in leadership roles, entail the speaker taking the initiative and reflecting a concern for the face needs of conversational participants. Rather than viewing the use of such devices negatively, as evidence of women's inferior status, she suggested that they might better be regarded as evidence of "women's interactional maturity relative to men" (1990b: 270).

7.9.3 Questions: Role-Related Functions

Similar conclusions were reached by Johnson (1980) regarding the use of question forms in conversation. The distribution of questions by function was analysed in a sample of four hours of taped interaction between women and men that was produced at monthly meetings of a large American industrial corporation. Each of the 203 questions that occurred was categorized according to its primary function as either (i) a request for information (Information Question), (ii) a request for feedback to check or confirm understanding (Confirmation Device), or (iii) a request used to maintain interaction (Facilitation Strategy). Variation in the use of questions was not found to be associated with speaker's gender; rather the speaker's role appeared to influence the kind of questions asked. The man in the role of group leader, for example, asked a disproportionately high number of questions of a facilitative kind, to maintain and support the interactions of other members. Johnson claimed that the role obligations of the leader in this context paralleled those of women in the context of intimate interaction with a male partner. Furthermore, she pointed out that, as the leader in the group had the highest status of all
interactants, explanations of the use of facilitative linguistic forms (such as questions and other features that encourage an addressee's contributions) could not adequately be couched in terms of speaker powerlessness and lack of status, as some researchers had suggested. Johnson looked instead to explanatory frameworks that gave priority to the "purpose and intent of the speaker" (1980: 74), as determined by that speaker's perception of his/her linguistic role.

7.9.4  I Think: Deliberative vs Tentative Functions

The distribution of I think, another of the forms described by Lakoff as a hedging device, was analysed by Holmes (1985) in a 25,000 word corpus of New Zealand speech. Findings were similar to those for tag questions, in relation to the use of the form to convey uncertainty. Overall, Holmes observed that I think was used more often in a "deliberative" way by speakers expressing personal confidence in an assertion than in a "tentative" way to signal a speaker's uncertainty about a proposition, or to convey deference to an addressee's feelings. Moreover, Holmes reported that, in her corpus, men used more instances of I think in these tentative ways than did women.

7.9.5  You Know, Sort Of, Of Course: Positive and Negative Functions

Holmes' (1986a, 1987) findings for you know and sort of, two other features that had been identified as reflecting women's lack of self confidence were similar to those for I think. In a 63,232 word corpus of New Zealand and British speech, she reported no differences in the frequency with which women and men used you know. However, women were observed to use the form more frequently in its positive-politeness function of expressing confidence or certainty (for instance, by attributing relevant background knowledge or experience to the addressee, for example: Well, you know we went to Sally's that night.). Men used the form more often to express uncertainty, either oriented to the addressee [for instance, by appealing for reassurance concerning the addressee's attitudes or likely responses, e.g., ... and it was quite, well, it was all very embarrassing you know. (1986a: 10)]; or oriented to the message [for instance, in expressing the speaker's awareness of imprecision in his/her linguistic encoding, e.g., I mean look what Travolta as a as a you know he's not a pretty face or anything. (1986a: 11)].
These results are clearly contrary to Lakoff's proposals, as were Holmes' findings for *sort of*, which showed that men used the form more frequently, overall, than did women. In terms of function, both sexes used *sort of* more frequently in a positive-politeness way, as a signal of lexical imprecision, rather than as a negative-politeness device to hedge the strength of a speech act.

Using the same corpus, Holmes (1987) also examined the distribution of *of course* by gender and function. Again, no differences were found in the overall frequency with which the form was used by women and men. Both British and New Zealand men, however, used *of course* more frequently to perform an "impersonal" or negative-politeness affective function, whereby they conveyed their awareness of the possibility of intruding upon an addressee by presenting information that was already known to him/her. British women used *of course* more often in "intimacy-signalling" or "confidential" ways; that is, with a positive-politeness function, whereby they conveyed their assumption that the addressee shared their beliefs and attitudes, or referred to previously shared personal information.

### 7.9.6 Misunderstandings: Referential vs Affective Meanings

Holmes (1985, 1990b) focussed on instances of miscommunication between women and men in casual conversation to advance an explanation for observed differences in their use of linguistic devices and communicative strategies. She suggested that women and men (in New Zealand, at least) assigned different weightings or value to the communicative principles of 'Informativeness'/"Referential Meaning" [or 'Clarity', as Lakoff (1979) called it] and 'Rapport'/"Affective Meaning" [or politeness, as Brown & Levinson (1978), and Leech (1983) referred to it]. As mentioned in Section 7.1, Brown (1980) had reached a similar conclusion regarding men's and women's differential assessment of face wants versus wants for communicative efficiency. Holmes drew attention to a pattern evident in instances of misunderstanding that New Zealand women and men reported as occurring in their informal, private conversations. Typically, it was the case that in instances of miscommunication, men assumed that a female speaker's major goal was to *elicit information* or *advice*, whereas the women's goal had been primarily *interpersonal* and *affective*. Holmes concluded that in New Zealand, women gave greater weight to the principle of Rapport (that is, the conveying of
affective meaning) in informal interactions, whereas men attached greater importance to referential meaning.

A similar interpretation of female-male miscommunication in terms of different communicative purposes and styles - women's 'rapport' and men's 'report' styles - was presented by Tannen (1990). Using anecdotal examples to illustrate her point, Tannen argued that women tended to focus on the relational level of conversation, using talk to establish connections and emphasize similarities, whereas men tended to focus on the content or report level, using talk to maintain their independence and status.

7.9.7 Applications of Holmes' Framework

Holmes' (1984a) framework of a modal-referential/affective meaning distinction in expressions of epistemic modality was applied to an analysis of tag questions in a 45,000 word corpus of British English conversational speech by Cameron et al. (1988). Some problems of classification were encountered in using this distinction, however. For example, the researchers reported that unambiguous assignment to one or the other category was not always possible: "there were instances where it seemed most satisfactory to analyse a tag as having some orientation to both speaker [referential meaning] and addressee [affective meaning]" (83). They concluded that the essential multifunctionality of utterances in discourse ensured that "a certain degree of arbitrariness" (1988: 85) was inherent in functional classifications of this kind. Difficulties associated with classification, and the intrinsic subjectivity of the process, had not escaped Holmes' (1984a: 50) attention. However, she concluded that although utterances are often multifunctional, it is still generally possible, in context, to identify one function or type of meaning as primary.

Of the 96 tag questions that Cameron et al. observed in their British corpus, use by male speakers was more frequent than by females (62.5% versus 37.5%). In terms of function, female speakers used three times as many facilitative, as they did modal, tags, repeating the pattern observed by Holmes (1984a). However, male speakers also used one-and-a-half times more facilitative, than modal, tags. In explanation of this unexpected pattern, Cameron et al. reported that the results for three speakers (two of whom were male) in their sample may have been skewed. These speakers had been aware that they were being tape-recorded, and may
have attempted to generate conversation for the study by eliciting talk from co-participants, thus effectively assuming the roles of conversational 'facilitators'. The researchers speculated that, overall, their findings pointed towards a conversational-role- rather than gender-based explanation of stylistic differences. Once again the research evidence suggests that men adopting facilitative roles generate the kind of facilitative language that many authors have characterized as indicative of women's style.

In a second study designed to investigate this hypothesis, Cameron et al. (1988) postulated an alternative explanation of the distribution of tag questions in conversation. Taking the lead from discourse and conversational analysts who interpreted questions, generally, as markers of power and control in talk, they suggested that tag questions could be seen as "highly assertive strategies for coercing agreement, and not indications of tentativeness" (1988: 87). This possibility was also recognized by Holmes (1990b), who referred to the strengthening, as well as attenuating, potential of epistemic devices such as tag questions. In contexts involving "unequal encounters", participants who have institutional rights and obligations to control the interaction (for instance, magistrates, teachers, doctors), would be expected to use a disproportionate number of questions. To illustrate their argument, Cameron et al. provided the example of a magistrate addressing a defendant with the following type of tag question:

You're not making much effort to pay off these arrears, are you?

In this instance, they claimed that the tag question functioned as an invitation to the addressee to agree with the speaker's negative assessment of him.

Cameron et al. (1988) used Holmes' framework to classify 116 tag questions that occurred in nine hours of recorded conversation from three radio and television programmes, in which the salient roles were those of presenter and audience, and status of speakers as powerful (usually presenter) or powerless (usually audience) was balanced across gender. Very little difference was found between the number of tags used, overall, by women and men (53% versus 49%). However, whereas male speakers used approximately equal numbers of modal and affective tags, overall, female speakers used more affective tags, especially of the facilitative type. When the distribution was analysed according to the variable of power, a pattern emerged in which participants categorized as 'powerless' in these contexts, regardless of gender, did not use tags with affective meanings. 'Powerless' speakers tended to use more
modal tags than did powerful participants (in a proportion of two to one). These results were interpreted by Cameron et al. as support for the view that the use of some tag questions (notably, facilitative ones) is associated with power. These tags can be used in an assertive way, to coerce a subordinate's agreement. By contrast, the use of modal tags to confirm information does not appear to be a 'powerful' move (90). As an alternative to Fishman's (1978) explanation that women's use of facilitative strategies was tied to their subordinate role, Cameron et al. suggested that such usage might better be perceived as a marker of women's attempts to overcome or resist the conditions of their oppression, that is, as signs of attempted control over conversation. They called for the development of more sophisticated analyses of the distribution of linguistic forms that would incorporate a number of variables including interactional role, relative status, and the objectives of the interaction, in addition to gender, in order better to reflect "the complexity of both linguistic and social behavior" (92).

7.9.8 Summary of Holmes' Work

Holmes' analyses of the functional distribution of a number of linguistic forms according to speaker's gender do not support claims that forms expressing uncertainty are characteristic of the speech of women. By contrast, for a number of such forms (for example, tag questions, I think, you know, of course), meanings expressing uncertainty and tentativeness were found to be more frequent in the speech of men. In women's speech, tag questions tended to function as facilitative devices, and particles such as I think, you know, and of course were used to convey confidence in assertions and a sense of solidarity in terms of shared knowledge or values. This pattern of results parallels that described by a number of researchers (Eakins & Eakins, 1978; Edelsky, 1981; Fishman, 1980; Hirschman, 1974; Meyerhoff, 1986), who concluded that women tended to adopt facilitative roles in conversation, taking greater responsibility than did men for the maintenance of conversational flow and the encouragement of interaction. Further support for the importance of interactional role as a determinant of language use comes from Johnson's (1980) analysis of the functional distribution of questions in conversation, and Cameron et al.'s (1988) functional analysis of tag questions in the speech of women and men. Cameron et al. cited uses of facilitative tag questions in which speakers attempted to control the conversational contributions of others as evidence of the
inappropriateness of alternative explanations that are couched in terms of speaker's 'powerlessness'.

7.10 Gender Differences in the Use of Particular Speech Acts

One feature of language use that has received relatively little attention from researchers investigating gender differences has been the distribution of particular speech acts. Some work has, however, been done. Evidence of gender differences in the distributional patterns of two acts, **apologies** and **compliments** was presented, for example, by Holmes (1986b, 1988, 1989b, 1990a, 1993), Fraser (1981, for apologies), and Wolfson (1983, for compliments). Holmes interpreted her finding that New Zealand women gave and received apologies and compliments more than did men as evidence that these speech acts may be interpreted differently by the two genders. She proposed that men used apologies only when they judged there to be a greater likelihood of causing offense by failing to apologize, whereas for women, apologies appeared to play a role in maintaining close relationships. Among men, the omitting of apologies seemed to serve as a signal of solidarity. Likewise, compliments, among women, appeared to be used and interpreted as signals of solidarity, whereas among men, compliments appeared more likely to be perceived as face threatening. Holmes interpreted these patterns as further evidence that women give greater weight to the interpersonal or affective aspects of interaction than do men. In terms, then, of paying more attention to the wants (for approval and non-imposition) of their conversational partners, women are more 'polite', in Brown and Levinson's sense.

Evidence pertaining to gender differences in the speech act of **requesting** is not extensive. There is evidence from laboratory-based, experimental studies of differential use of directive forms by women and men. As reported in Section 7.8, greater male use of **imperatives** in mixed-sex discussion groups was reported by Preisler (1986) for British speakers. McMillan et al. (1977) reported that American female undergraduates produced more **imbedded imperatives in question form** (e.g., *Will you please + imperative?*) than did males, in group discussions. Studies of the language used by parents during play sessions with their pre-school children in laboratory settings have also yielded relevant results. Bellinger and Gleason (1982) reported that mothers were more likely to use conventional **imbedded**
imperative forms (e.g., Would you + imperative?) whereas fathers were more likely to use imperatives (e.g., Turn the bolt with that wrench.) or implied directives (statements from which the child had to infer the requested action, such as, The wheel is going to fall off.).

Similarly, Engle (1980) reported that fathers used more directive statements (e.g., Why don't you make a chimney?, Off, take it off!) to their children, whereas mothers were more likely to ask about the child's wants (e.g., What would you like to play with now?).

Evidence that children make allowances for the influence of gender (and role) on directive forms comes from role-play studies. Andersen (1978), for example, found that four- and five-year-old American children playing the roles of 'Father' and 'Doctor' used more direct imperatives, but received few requests in this form, whereas 'Mothers' and 'Nurses' received more imperatives and used more hint forms. In a study of 'pretend play', Sachs (1987) analysed the language used by American five-year-olds interacting in same-sex dyads. She found that boys used imperative forms and prohibitions (e.g., Don't touch anything.) much more frequently than did girls, who used more pretend directives (e.g., Pretend you had a chill.), 'joint' directives (Let's sit down., Now we'll cover him up.), and tag questions. This pattern was similar to that reported by Goodwin (1980) for American 8- to 13-year-olds interacting in same-sex play groups: boys used more direct commands, whereas girls' directives were phrased as suggestions or proposals for joint action.

Haas' (1979) study of the language used by 4-, 8-, and 12-year-old American children interacting spontaneously in mixed-sex pairs also indicated that boys used more direct requests than girls.

Studies of female and male naturally-occurring request use in conversation have produced inconclusive results. A greater tendency for English-speaking men to use imperative forms than for women to do so was reported in two studies (Soskin and John (1963) for an American husband and wife; Lapadat and Seesahai (1977) for Canadian all-male student groups compared with all-female groups). By contrast, Blum-Kulka et al. (1985) reported that, in Israeli society, variation in naturally-occurring spoken and written request strategies was not associated with gender. Contrary to Lakoff's hypothesis, Israeli women were not found to be less direct than men. Similarly, Jones (1992) reported no clear tendencies for either American men or women to use particular directive forms (including imperatives, conventionally-indirect imbedded
imperatives, need statements, and very indirect, off-record forms), in her analysis of 67 directives that occurred within a three-hour discussion at a dance-group meeting attended by 9 women and 9 men. She observed however, as had Holmes (1984a) regarding the use of tag questions by speakers in leadership/facilitator roles, that the speaker occupying the role of group facilitator (in Jones' sample, a woman) both gave and received more directives than any other group member. Again, inconsistencies in the research findings indicate that explanations of gender differences in the distribution of request forms need to go beyond claims that women are more polite than men. What is needed is a consideration of the contextual features that influence the linguistic options of women and men in particular social situations, and a concern with investigating what women and men are attempting to do when they choose to express their directive acts in particular ways.

7.11 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed evidence regarding differences in the use of language by women and men, and has summarized the prevailing explanations of such gender differences. The key to satisfactory analyses of language use, and to adequate interpretations of the meaning of stylistic differences in women's and men's use, appears to lie in a recognition of the multifunctionality of linguistic features. Acceptance of such a perspective forces researchers to confront the complexity involved in analyses of how language is used in context. Complexity is also inherent in the notion of gender itself. Both the salience and the meaning of the concept varies in different communicative contexts. The task of building up a picture of the complex interactions between gender and socio-cultural contextual information has been begun by those researchers concerned to illuminate the communicative ends to which particular linguistic features are typically put in various types of exchange. The present research attempts to add to this picture by examining women's and men's use of request variants in particular social contexts.

The empirical investigations reported in the subsequent chapters address the following research questions that have emerged from this review of the language and gender literature:

1. Do women and men prefer to use different request strategies to convey directive acts?
2. Do women and men select different linguistic (in particular, 'politeness') features for expressing particular request strategies?
(3) Are the social and affective meanings of particular request strategies different for women and men?

(4) Do women and men place similar weight or value upon communicative principles such as informativeness, clarity, politeness, friendliness, directness, indirectness in particular contexts?

(5) (a) Are women more polite than men in Brown and Levinson's sense, when requesting and, if so,

(b) is this a consequence of the contribution of gender to assignments of the social-contextual factors, P, D, and R?

Lakoff's (1977) assertion that gender differences in the use of language were tied to gender differences in the interpretation of contexts (particular contexts were proposed to be interpreted one way by male speakers and another way by female speakers), led to an early research focus upon the identification of differences in the linguistic forms used by women and men in particular settings. More recent suggestions (e.g., Holmes, 1990b) that gender differences in linguistic expression are related to differences in the way women and men view interaction have grown out of, and continue to inform, research that focuses on the social meanings, values, and functions assigned to particular usages in context.

In the studies on requesting in the following chapters, an attempt is made to integrate these two interpretations of the underlying nature of gender differences in language use. A number of sources of information are utilized: women's and men's beliefs about language and social behaviour in context are taken into account, as are their patterns of usage in different social situations, and the focus is on what women and men are attempting to do with their language. In this way, the research attempts to contribute to the building of a more adequate understanding of the communicative competences that underlie linguistic variation.

1 The data from which Lakoff drew her conclusions were (i) her own intuitions as a female native speaker of English, (ii) observations of the speech of her peers, and (iii) language used in the media to portray women.

2 Gender differences in pronunciation and intonation have been found in a number of studies, with women generally using more standard forms than men (Horvath, 1985; Labov, 1966; McConnell-Ginet, 1978; Milroy, 1980; Mitchell & Delbridge, 1965; Trudgill, 1972).

3 Kramarae (1981) argued that Bales' dichotomous role classification could not account adequately for the experiences of interactants. Holmes (1989a) commented specifically on the narrow conceptualization of the kinds of communications specified by Bales as distinguishing the socio-emotional and task-oriented roles. She noted that a speaker who asks questions to
facilitate the contributions of others, and who also supports and encourages those generating promising ideas could just as easily be classed as task-oriented as could a speaker who tended to answer many questions, as Bales' model has the defining behaviour.

4Power in this study was operationalized in terms of a series of questions about which partner had greater influence in day-to-day decision-making in the relationship (e.g., concerning decisions about where to go out to eat).

5Bellinger and Gleason (1982) also reported that, by the age of four, children in the ten families they studied were patterning their own directive forms on the model provided by the same-sex parent. Girls used more of the conventionally polite forms than boys, and boys used more imperative and implied directive forms than girls.
CHAPTER 8

STUDY II:
SITUATIONAL FACTORS AND DIRECTIVE USE IN TWO SETTINGS

8.1 Introduction

The research described in this chapter constitutes an attempt to document the distribution of directives in two settings: a public, work situation and a private, domestic situation, based on an Australian English corpus. A description is provided of the range of strategies used by speakers to make requests in these settings; syntactic variants of broad directive categories that differ in their directness are discussed, as are the types of linguistic devices that function to modify the force with which particular variants are expressed.

The relationship between social-contextual factors and the form of directive utterance is also explored in each of the settings. The discussion of the observed situational variation in requesting occurs in relation to predictions derived from the empirical observations of two researchers: (i) Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) in whose model of politeness three factors: Power (P), Social Distance (D), and Imposition (R) are claimed to determine the seriousness of the face-threatening act involved in a request and, hence, the level of directness with which it is communicated, and (ii) Ervin-Tripp (1976) who described the social distribution of directive variants in terms of features such as the rank and familiarity relationships of S and H, likelihood of addressee's compliance with the requested act, relationship of requested action to addressee's normal duties, and beneficiary of the request.

A particular focus of the investigation is the question of whether there are differences in the way women and men make requests. Where the data-base is sufficiently large to permit it, comparisons of those aspects of usage that have been referred to above are made for the requests uttered by female and male speakers in the two settings.

In the sections that follow, I provide, first, a description of the collection of request data from the two settings investigated, and a discussion of the limitations associated with these data. Then, I introduce the system of classification of requests that was used in the study, and describe the range of strategies that was identified in each setting. These strategies are then
analyzed in terms of the social features identified by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and Ervin-Tripp (1976) as related to the distribution of directive variants. Finally, I explore the types of linguistic devices that serve to modify the force with which particular request variants are expressed in relation to the weightiness of the request act.

8.2 The Request Corpora

The request strategies analyzed in this research are examples of actual usage in two naturally-occurring contexts, one a public (work) situation (the general office of a university department), the other a private (domestic) setting (the kitchen of a household). These two types of context were chosen to allow contrastive analysis of request usage in the types of situations in which requests have been previously examined, and for which researchers have developed explanatory frameworks.

8.2.1 The Work Setting

The general office of the university department was situated in a large room that housed: (a) two typists, whose desks faced an enquiry counter, (b) a clerical assistant, whose desk was side-on to the counter, and (c) an office junior, who had no allocated workplace, but moved around in the performance of various duties. The departmental secretary's office was located in a room adjacent to the general office, but the connecting doors were always left open, and both conversation and movement occurred freely between the two workspaces.

A total of 25 students approached the counter, in the course of the period of observation, to make requests about their courses. They were attended to principally by the junior typist but, if she was occupied, other members of the office staff attended promptly to any presence at the counter. Members of the academic staff walked in and out of the office depositing work, and making requests. Four members of the technical staff who were frequent occupants of the general office also generated request data for this study. With one exception, all members of staff, both office and academic, had known each other for periods of years (the office junior had commenced work three months prior to the study), and all referred to each other by first names. A university caretaker who was well known to all other staff, and a salesman for
a publishing-house also produced requests in this corpus. A summary presented in Appendix B provides more information about the individuals whose speech is represented in the corpus.

8.2.1.1 Method of data collection.

A participant observation method of natural data collection was employed in the office setting.¹ The researcher was present in the office at various times over a period of five days (duration of recording approximately ten hours), and systematically wrote down all identifiable directives, and responses to them, that occurred during interactions together with relevant contextual details. A total of 113 directive speech acts was identified in this way. The data used in this investigation were thus collected using the same method that had been employed by Ervin-Tripp (1976), with the exception that directives were not elicited by the researcher, as had apparently occasionally been the case in her study. It should be noted that the researcher, a post-graduate student at the time of the study, was known to all participants except the student enquirers and the salesman who made requests in this setting. The public nature of the large departmental office was such that it was unlikely that the researcher's presence constituted a threat to the participants, or made them alter their language behaviour markedly. In addition, the researcher's lowly status in the university hierarchy, and familiarity with most participants, would have been expected to mitigate such problems.

8.2.2 The Domestic Setting

Conversations in a domestic setting were recorded in order to provide some form of comparison with the public work situation of the university office. A tape-recorder was set up in the kitchen of a household for a period of 14 days. The household belonged to a married couple in their late twenties (friends of the author) who were both employed as researchers. In the discussion of the results, the participants are identified as Wife and Husband. The participants were, of course, free to interrupt the recording of their conversations at any point, in order to maintain their privacy. As it turned out, however, they did not avail themselves of this option. The samples of conversation collected in the domestic setting constituted blocks of continuous interaction. The duration of the recording was approximately 19 hours. The data from this setting were obtained by selecting all identifiable instances of directives from
transcripts of the tape-recorded conversations. A total of 182 directive acts was identified in this way for the married couple.

8.3 Limitations of the Data

In addition to the general limitations associated with the research carried out for this thesis that were described in Chapter 1, some limitations specific to the naturally-occurring request data collected for the present study are discussed here. One aspect of the study that was somewhat less than ideal concerns the reliance, in the office setting, on written transcription of request instances by the researcher. Ideally, a tape-recorder would have been used in this setting, as it was in the domestic context, however, some of the office staff involved were unprepared to accept this procedure, although all were willing to have the researcher sit in the office and engage in manual recording of their conversations. This method of data collection has been practised by other researchers (e.g., apart from Ervin-Tripp (1976), by Holmes (1990a); Pufahl-Bax (1986)). The major advantage of such an approach is that the researcher can make notes of relevant contextual information (e.g., age, gender, role/status, familiarity, location, whether compliance could be expected, and so on) that would be unavailable if a tape-recorder had been used. This is particularly important in public settings, where unknown participants are continually entering the conversational arena.

The use of a tape-recorder in the domestic setting meant that there was a lack of relevant contextual information (e.g., physical location, unreferenced objects and events in the environment, likelihood of compliance, and so on), but at least, here, the social characteristics of participants and their relationship to each other remained stable. In order to fill in some of these gaps in contextual information, the married couple were asked to listen to particular sections of the tape-recordings in an interview session at their home one day after the final period of recording in order to 'talk the researcher through' some exchanges, explaining 'what was going on', where this had been unclear to the researcher. Notes were made as to the nature of tasks typically performed at meal preparation times, routine responsibilities and practices. The information provided consisted of the couple's recollections. They appeared to have no difficulty remembering the details of their interactions in the circumstance of listening to the conversational record. However, the information provided may have been different from that
which would have been recorded by the researcher-as-observer. Although it is recognized that the procedure used is far from ideal, it did serve to provide some relevant contextual information concerning the physical location of the interactants (e.g., in an adjacent room watching television but still conversing), and the occurrence of unseen events (e.g., Speaker has her hands full and a pot is boiling over).

One week later, the couple was shown a type-written list of requests (identified by speaker) that had been transcribed from their recordings. They were asked to consider each request and, together, to categorize it in terms of the beneficiary of the requested action, and the imposition value involved (using categories that are described in Section 8.5).

Another issue of concern in the present study was that of participant reactivity to the recording methods. It should be noted, first of all, that none of the participants in the study was aware that its purpose was to examine variation in the use of directives. When participants' cooperation was sought, they were told that the researcher wanted to gather some examples of natural conversation. As a precautionary measure, however, the first fifteen minutes of recorded data from both the work and domestic settings were omitted from the analysis. By this time it was hoped that participants might have become somewhat accustomed to the presence of the researcher in one setting, or the presence of the tape-recorder, in the other. It was noted, on the first day of recording in both settings, that overt reactions of participants to the data collection procedure appeared to be (i) minor (e.g., initial joking references occurred along the lines of "I suppose we should watch what we say now."), (ii) relatively short-lived (hence the decision to use a fifteen minute 'acclimatization' block of unanalysed speech), and (iii) to reflect a focus on the content of what was said (e.g., lest it be incriminating, for example, in the office setting) rather than on the form of expression, which was the focus of the research.

A final drawback associated with the data used in this analysis is that the settings sampled are not directly comparable with respect to the numbers of requests generated in each, nor with regard to the amount contributed by female and male participants and their role/status positions. The bulk of directives in the office setting, for example, was produced by female speakers who, although differing in status and role amongst themselves were, as a group, of lower status than the academic staff participants. In the domestic setting, the wife made more requests
than the husband during the activity of meal preparation that was studied. On the basis of findings in these settings, then, it will not be possible to draw general conclusions of the sort: "Women are more likely than men to ... ", or "Hints are more likely than imperatives to be used when ... ". However, it will be possible to provide information about the range of request strategies and the syntactic features used to perform them within these particular settings, and also to examine whether the social features identified by other researchers as influencing request variation appear to be influential in this corpus. It is also recognized that patterns of utterance vary in terms of the broad goals or purposes that conversational interactants are attempting to fulfill in particular situations. Both of the situations under investigation in this study involved a broad task-orientation: in the office setting, requests were uttered in a work situation; in the domestic setting, requests occurred during meal preparations. In both of these situations, however, participants engaged in the negotiation of interpersonal relationships and the expression of interpersonal meanings. It remains for future research to examine patterns of use in other types of conversational interactions, and between speakers and addressees engaged in other forms of social relationship than co-workers or spouses, as was the case here.

Given these limitations, the analysis described in this chapter has, as its focus, the description of the broad patterns that emerged in each of the settings for request usage. These patterns constitute a useful source of information that permits (i) comparisons with findings reported by Ervin-Tripp (1976) for directive variation across a number of contexts in a corpus of American English speech, and (ii) testing of predictions from Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) model of politeness.

8.4 Classification of Requests

As will be recalled, requests were classified for the purposes of this investigation as acts involving verbal attempts by a speaker to get a hearer to carry out actions (or to refrain from actions) where such actions included a non-linguistic response (Chapter 1). In practice, requests were distinguished from other types of utterances in the corpora of natural conversational data under examination here using the criterion adopted by Herrmann (1983) and Holmes (1983): the purpose of the utterance from the speaker's perspective, that is, in terms of the speaker's (assumed) intentions. Specifically, following Jones' (1992) suggestion, I
attempted to identify requests by asking myself the question: *Is the speaker's main purpose to get the addressee to do something?* As Jones pointed out, however, the more indirect the directive attempt, the harder it is to be certain that a directive act was intended.

An alternative strategy for distinguishing requests from other categories of utterance was advocated by conversation analysts, who claimed that observing the hearer's response to an utterance was the key. However, there are difficulties with this approach, as Herrmann (1983) has indicated. For instance, if a hearer 'misinterpreted' an utterance as being a question, or a statement, even though the speaker had intended it to be taken as a request, then the utterance could not be categorized as a request. As such misunderstandings appear to be experienced quite commonly in interaction, particularly in mixed-sex communication, this approach seemed somewhat inappropriate for the purposes of the present analysis.

So, although neither approach to the problem of classification can ensure the possibility of unproblematic assessments because of the multifunctionality of conversational utterances, the first approach was deemed more appropriate for use here. Those utterances whose primary function appeared, in context, to be that of requesting were identified by attending to the types of contextual information to which Holmes (1984a: 55) referred when she advised that the functional classification of utterance forms, although "obviously difficult and to some extent subjective", was nevertheless feasible in context. The possibility that some misinterpretation of speaker's intentions occurred in the process of analysis is duly recognized, however.

The requests thus identified were then categorized using Ervin-Tripp's (1976) six general classes of syntactic realizations of directive strategies (see Chapter 5): Need Statement, Imperative, Imbedded Imperative, Permission Directive, Question Directive, and Hint. Various subcategories were also used to describe the structural variants of these basic directive forms that were identified in the data. A number of subcategories have been proposed for directives by researchers such as Holmes (1983) for New Zealand English, and Weigal and Weigal (1985) for American English. The classification employed here was developed by using these empirically-derived subcategories as a basis, coining new ones where necessary to cover the range of forms realized in the corpus. The full range of strategies observed, together with examples of request forms, is shown below.
1. Need Statement:
   - Express need, e.g., I/We need ...
   - Express desire, e.g., I would like ...
   - Express want, e.g., I'll have ...

2. Imperative:
   - Positive imperative, e.g., Get ...; Go ask ...; Send ...; Put ...
   - Negative imperative, e.g., Stop ...; Don't ...; Try not to ...
   - Positive imperative + modifier, e.g., Sling it ... if you like.
   - Negative imperative + modifier, e.g., Don't knock ... will you.
   - You + positive directive, e.g., You can ...; You give ...; You get ...
   - You + positive directive + modifier, e.g., You can ... if you like.
   - Name + positive directive, e.g., G can design ...; L, come here.
   - You + positive directive + reason, e.g., You'll have to ... I can't.; You tell ... and I'll go.
   - You + modifier + positive directive + reason, e.g., You might want to turn ... if you want to catch the weather.
   - You + negative directive, e.g., You don't want to ...
   - Name + negative directive, e.g., T don't ...
   - Modifier + you + negative directive + modifier, e.g., I mean, you shouldn't ... or anything like that.
   - Let's imperative, e.g., Let's see ...
   - Verb ellipsis, e.g., One of each. (i.e., Give me ...); Quick cuppa? (i.e., Make one.)
   - Verb ellipsis + modifier, e.g., Up there please, if you wouldn't mind.
   - Present participle form of verb, e.g., Coming? (i.e., I want you to come.)
   - Positive directive + modifier, e.g., And write ... please.; Get me ... will you, ducky.
   - Just + positive directive, e.g., Just put ...
   - Just + positive directive + modifier, e.g., Just check ... will you.
   - Just + negative directive, e.g., Just leave ...

3. Imbedded imperative:
   - Modal + you, e.g., Will you ...; Could you ...
   - Modal + we, e.g., Shall we go ...
   - Name + modal, e.g., L, could you ...
   - Want question, e.g., Do you want to ...
   - Name + want question, e.g., G, do you want to ...
   - Modifier + you + modal, e.g., If you would ...; Maybe you should ...; I think you should ...
   - Modifier + we + modal, e.g., I suppose we should ...
   - Modifier + I + modal, e.g., I think I had better ask ...
   - Modifier + you + imperative, e.g., As long as you leave ...
   - Are you + imperative, e.g., Are you going to ...; Are we going to ...
   - Did you + imperative, e.g., Did you look ...
   - Negative + you + modal, e.g., Don't you think you should ...
4. **Permission Directive:**
   - Modals, e.g., *Can I ...*
   - Modal + please, e.g., *Can I please ...; Can I ... please.*
   - Name + modal, e.g., *G, can I ...*

5. **Question Directive:**
   - Questions about H's possession of requested item, e.g., *Have you got ...; You've got some ... haven't you.*
   - Questions about H's knowledge of requested item, e.g., *Any idea how long ...; Do you know ...*
   - Questions about availability of requested item, e.g., *Are there any ...; Have we got ...*
   - Questions about H doing the requested act, e.g., *Did you just do ...; Are you ready or not?*
   - Questions about H's wants and wishes, e.g., *You wouldn't like ... would you.; Did you want ...*
   - Questions about H's competence, e.g., *Are you going completely mad?*
   - Questions about need to do the act, e.g., *Is that clean, that one?*

6. **Hint:**
   - Statement by S of what s/he is attempting to do, e.g., *I was looking for the staple unpicker.; I've been told to see if I can see a Dr. N.*
   - Statement about object of required activity, e.g., *I think she's got some forms here, T.; The stones are still there.; I can't find a lid.*
   - Statement by S contrary to H's proposed action, e.g., *Unless we just want to keep it.; T didn't want a change on his research interests.*
   - Statement about H's duties, e.g., *G, got a job for you please dear.; T would like you downstairs to do some engraving.*

8.5 **Gender of Requesters and Requestees**

In the request corpora under investigation it was the case that, in both the office and domestic settings, women produced greater proportions of the recorded directives than did men. In the office setting (Table 8.1), this finding is confounded by the fact that more women than men were present. In the domestic setting (Table 8.2), where the requests produced by one woman and one man were compared, another source of bias was that the woman spoke more often, overall, than did the man. For it to be possible to make general statements about the overall frequency of directive use by women and men in particular settings, it would be necessary to ensure that the comparisons were made in terms of corpora that contained, for each gender, equal numbers of turns at talk, or equal numbers of words uttered. The data in Tables 8.1 and 8.2 are presented here merely to establish proportional frequencies for differential female and male use in the recorded corpora of directives. Subsequent descriptions of aspects of directive use by women and men will be discussed in terms of these proportional differences. The first aspect of women's and men's requesting behaviour that is considered is
that of the types of request strategies that were used by speakers of each gender in the two settings.

**Table 8.1** Directives analysed according to gender of participants: Office setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requester - Requestee</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female - Female</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female - Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal (Females)</strong></td>
<td>89</td>
<td>78.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male - Female</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>113</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8.2** Directives analysed according to gender of participants: Domestic setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requester - Requestee</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wife - Husband</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband - Wife</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>182</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**8.6 Request Strategies**

**8.6.1 The Office Setting**

The full range of request strategies used in the 113 directive acts identified in the office setting is shown in Table 8.3. In terms of the six main categories described by Ervin-Tripp (1976), imperatives were by far the most frequently occurring form in this setting, accounting for 38% of all requests used. Imbedded imperatives and question directives were the next most frequent forms, overall, accounting for 19 and 18% respectively, of all requests used. Hints were slightly less frequent (14%) in this setting, followed by permission directives (10%), with need statements (2%) being the least frequently used form, overall. This pattern is generally consistent with that reported by Pufahl-Bax (1986) for directives used to assign work in an American university office, where imperatives were observed to be the most frequently occurring variant, overall, followed by imbedded imperatives, with question directives and hint forms occurring less frequently.
Table 8.3  Directive strategies used in the office setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Requester Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Male Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need Statement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- express need</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- express desire</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- you + negative directive</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- name + modal</td>
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<td>1.1</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>- modifier + you + modal</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subtotal (Permission Directives)</td>
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<td>Question Directive</td>
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<td>Questions about:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- H's possession of item</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
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<td>- H's knowledge of item</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- availability of item</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- H's wishes/wants</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- H's doing the act</td>
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<td>1.1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Subtotal (Question Directives)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Statements about:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- object of activity</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- what H is attempting to do</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- contrary to H's action</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- H's duties</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal (Hints)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A comparison of female and male use of the six categories of request investigated here shows different patterns of use. Proportional to the number of strategies used by speakers of each gender overall, there was evidence of greater female use of the imperative form (47.2% vs 4.2%). Of female imperatives, the most frequently used sub-strategy was the 'positive-imperative' form, for example,

*Put them in the computing pigeon-hole.*

This was the form referred to in Holmes' (1983) classification as "Base form of verb". This pattern - of the 'positive-imperative' form of the request being the most frequently employed variant - matches findings reported by Holmes (1983) for a corpus of teachers' directives collected in elementary school classrooms in New Zealand and Britain, and by Weigal and Weigal (1985) for directives collected amongst a group of male agricultural workers in eastern USA. Two other sub-strategies were used by women with slightly higher frequency than were other forms of imperative: (i) a variant on the 'positive-imperative' form - the 'positive directive + modifier' - that involved the addition, to the positive form of the imperative, of post-posed modals, post-posed address terms, or please, for example,

*Have a look at these, will you?*

and (ii) the 'you + positive-directive' form, for example,

*You give me that Aberdeen address.*

By contrast, there was little difference in women's and men's use of imbedded imperatives (19.1% vs 16.7%). The most frequently used imbedded imperative sub-strategy by both genders was the 'modal + you' form. The majority of these (33.3%) took the form of

*Can you imbeddings, for example,

*Can you lend me a hand here?*

Three strategy types were used proportionally more frequently by male speakers than by females: permission directives (20.8% vs 6.7%), question directives (33.3% vs 13.5%), and hints (25.0% vs 11.2%). These forms were used too infrequently, overall, to permit discussion of the distribution of sub-strategies. It is perhaps worth noting with respect to hints, however, that only women used the sub-strategy of making a 'statement about the object of the required activity', for example,
I think she's got some forms here, Ned. (i.e., Come and get them.)

Almost all of the hints produced by men (though there were only a small number of these), by contrast, were in the form of 'statements about what the speaker was attempting to do', in which the speaker reported on his own activity, for example,

I was looking for the staple-unpicker. (i.e., Get it for me.)

The low frequency with which hints occurred in the corpus, overall, casts some doubt over the robustness of these patterns, however.

Due to the low frequency of male speech in this corpus, a measure of the strength of association between directive strategy use and gender was calculated using three categories of directive types, collapsed in terms of general level of directness:

**Level 1:** Most direct, incorporating need statements and imperatives;

**Level 2:** Moderate indirectness, involving imbedded imperatives and permission directives;

**Level 3:** Most indirect, involving the question directive and hint forms.

This collapsing of directive categories in terms of directness levels follows similar analyses performed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1985) and Weigal and Weigal (1985). The frequency data indicate that men made proportionally fewer of the most direct forms of request than did women, but proportionally more of the most indirect forms. The association between gender and use of directive type was moderate in this setting (Cramer's $\Psi^2 = 0.40$; see Appendix C for relevant tables and calculations). With such a small sample of male speech involved, this association between gender and the use of broad levels of directive type must be interpreted cautiously. It is also necessary to recall that the majority of female speakers in this setting had lower levels of social status than the male speakers. It can be said, however, that the data do appear to support a finding reported by Ervin-Tripp (1976: 37) that the imperative form was the most frequently used directive type between women in an office setting. At least in one setting, then, a pattern of female preference for direct forms of request is emerging. This is contrary to the view that women, being more concerned to maintain standards of politeness, use forms of language that are more indirect than do men. The question of whether such patterns of use as have been described above result from gender-based preferences for strategy selection, or from aspects of speaker's status and role in an activity, can only be answered by investigation of a
speaker's status and role in an activity, can only be answered by investigation of a large number of interactions in a range of settings. In the present study, data for request usage by a man and a woman in a domestic setting are provided in order to permit a general comparison with the pattern of results from the office corpus.

8.6.2 The Domestic Setting

In terms of the six main request strategies shown in Table 8.4, the imbedded imperative, accounting for approximately half (48.9%) of the 182 request instances identified in the domestic setting, was the most frequently used form, overall. Imperatives were used with the second highest frequency (33.5%), followed by question directives and hints (both 7.7%). Need statements and permission directives were used infrequently in this setting (1.1%). This is a different pattern, overall, from that exhibited in the office setting. Although imperatives accounted for a similar proportion of all requests made in the office (38%), the imbedded imperative form occurred with lower frequency in the office (19%) than in the domestic setting, and other forms occurred with higher frequencies in the office setting, for example, question directives (18%), hints (14%), permission directives (10%).

An examination of the directive strategies used by the wife and husband in terms of these six categories also reveals a different pattern from that observed for female and male use in the office setting. Proportional to the number of strategies used by the wife and the husband overall, there was greater male use of the imperative form in the domestic setting (38.8% vs 29.4%). More than half of the husband's imperatives were in the form of 'positive imperatives', for example,

*Put it back on the element.*

Although the 'positive-imperative' form was also the most frequently used sub-strategy by the wife, she used a greater range of formal variants than did her spouse. Again, however, the low frequency of imperative use in the corpus means that such patterns must be interpreted with caution.

As had been the case in the office, there was little difference in male and female use of imbedded imperatives in the domestic setting. The 'modal + you' sub-strategy was the most
frequently used by both the wife and the husband. The majority of these (61% for wife and 56% for husband) took the form of *Can you* imbeddings, for example,

*Can you keep your eye on this teapot?*

It is worth noting, perhaps, that the husband used only two other sub-strategy types, (i) the *'want question + imperative'*; in which an imperative was imbedded in a question about the addressee's wants, for example,

*Do you want to put those in the bin?*,

and (ii) the *'modifier + you + modal form'*; for example,

*If you'd like to bring your plate over.*

A wider range of imbedded imperative sub-strategies was used by the wife. As was the case for the husband's data, the *'want question + imperative'* was the second most frequent imbedded imperative form used by the wife.

Unlike the data from the office, there was a greater female than male use of the indirect forms, question directive and hint, in the married couple's data. The frequencies with which these forms were used, however, were too low to permit discussion of the distribution of sub-strategies. One point that might perhaps be noted, however, is that almost all of the hints used by the wife were in the form of *'statements about the object of the required activity'*; for example,

*The stones are still there.* (i.e., Remove them.)

An analysis of the relationship between gender and level of directive type used in the domestic setting revealed only a slight degree of association (Cramer's $\Psi' = 0.18$; see Appendix C). However, the fact that a lower level of relationship was observed in this setting than in the office setting raises the possibility that a speaker's role in an activity, rather than a speaker's gender, influences the type of strategies that are used to perform directive acts.
Table 8.4  Directive strategies used in the domestic setting

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
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<th></th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need Statement</td>
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<td>- express need</td>
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<td>2.5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>2.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>- you + positive directive + modifier</td>
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<td>- you + modifier + positive directive + reason</td>
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<td>1.0</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>8.8</td>
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<td>4.9</td>
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<td>3.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questions about:</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- H's possession of item</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- H's knowledge of item</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>- availability of item</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
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<td>- H's wishes/wants</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>- H's doing the act</td>
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<td>1.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- H's competence</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statements about:</td>
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<td>- object of activity</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>- what H is attempting to do</td>
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<td>1.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- contrary to H's action</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
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8.6.3 Summary: Request Strategies Used in Two Settings

One way of summarizing these findings concerning the distribution of request strategies is to compare the patterns of use exhibited in the two settings for each of the strategy types, starting with the most direct ones. First, with respect to the strategy of need statements, it can be seen that there was a similar pattern of low frequency of use across the settings. Second, a similar proportion of total requests in the two settings was observed to occur in the form of imperatives (38.1% in the office vs 33.5% in the domestic setting). The 'positive-imperative' sub-strategy was the most frequently used in both settings. However, whereas in the domestic setting the frequency of imperative use was slightly higher for the husband than for the wife, in the office setting, all but one of the requests in imperative form were uttered by female addressees. Some sub-strategies of the imperative form occurred in the office setting that did not occur in the domestic setting (e.g., 'name + positive directive', 'name + negative directive', 'verb ellipsis', 'present participle form of verb') and vice versa (e.g., 'you + positive directive + reason', 'you + positive directive + modifier', 'you + modifier + positive directive + reason'), however, corpora involving much larger numbers of requests would need to be examined before any meaningful patterns of sub-strategic use in particular settings could be discerned.

Third, a greater proportion of total requests in the domestic setting was uttered in the form of imbedded imperatives (48.9%) than was the case in the office setting (18.6%). However, in both settings, the frequency of female and male use of the form was virtually identical. Again, the same sub-strategy was used most frequently in both settings - the 'modal + you' form - with the Can you variant of this sub-strategy being most frequent in both settings. Two sub-strategies occurred more frequently in the domestic setting than in the office: the 'want question + imperative' (21.3% vs 9.5%), and the 'modifier + you + modal' (9.0% vs 4.8%). A wider range of imbedded imperative sub-strategies also occurred in the domestic setting.

Fourth, permission directives were used more frequently in the office setting (9.7%) than in the domestic setting (1.1%). Finally, both question directive and hint forms were used more frequently (as a proportion of total requests) in the office setting than in the domestic setting (for question directives: 17.7% vs 7.7%, and for hints: 14.2% vs 7.7%). In the office setting, the proportion of male use of both of these indirect forms was more than double that of female
use, whereas in the domestic setting, the wife's use more than doubled that of her husband. In both settings, numbers were too small to permit comparisons between usages at sub-strategy level.

What these patterns suggest is that particular request strategies are used in different proportions in different circumstances. In order to examine further the socio-contextual features associated with the occurrence of different strategies, I turn first to a consideration of the type of imposition, or goal of the request act (Blum-Kulka et al., 1985) as a component of the situation, and then to a related issue, the relative seriousness of the imposition associated with the request act. These considerations lead into an examination of the adequacy of Brown and Levinson's model of politeness-as-face-threat as an explanation of the observed patterns in the request data.

8.7 Type of Imposition/Goal of the Request

Directive acts are intrinsically face-threatening in that they indicate that S does not intend to avoid impeding H's freedom of action. Directives can be classified in terms of the type of imposition they involve, that is, in terms of the goal of the request or the type of act that S is intending to get H to perform in uttering the request. Broadly, two types of imposition or request goal can be identified (Brown and Levinson, 1978: 82): requests for (a) services/action (in which the provision of some service is predicted of H), and (b) goods (in which compliance involves the provision of material goods by H). A number of sub-types of these categories were used to discriminate between the various types of imposition/request goal that occurred in the data; a discrimination based primarily on considerations of who was the beneficiary of the requested act: (i) the speaker ('For Me' requests), (ii) the addressee ('For H' requests), (iii) both S and H ('For Both' requests), (iv) a third party ('For Other' requests) or, in general, (v) the successful performance of a task ('Task-related' requests), and whether the request involved (vi) an ' Interruption', or (vii) 'Postponement' of something that the H was doing. A final sub-category of (viii) 'Joking' requests was included. Further details of the categorisation of imposition/request goal types can be found in Appendix D. Table 8.5 summarizes the distribution of these types of imposition in the office and domestic settings.
Table 8.5  Type of imposition in request act by speaker gender in two settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requests for Services/Action</th>
<th>Office Setting</th>
<th>Domestic Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Task-related</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-For S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-For H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Interruption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Joke</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-For Both</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Postponement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-For Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal Requests for Services</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>77.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests for Goods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Task-related</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Educational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-For S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-For H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-For Both</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal Requests for Goods</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of requests in both the office and domestic settings were for services/action on the part of the addressee (70.8% of all requests in the office setting, and 84.1% in the domestic setting). In both settings, however, it was the case that male speakers made proportionally more requests for goods than did female speakers. However, the association between gender and type of imposition/request goal was only moderate in each instance (Cramer's $\Psi^2 = 0.26$ and 0.17, respectively; see Appendix C).

Although the small number of male requests, overall, in the office setting makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the distribution of sub-categories of request-goal across gender, the larger number of male requests recorded in the domestic setting permit tentative comparisons to be made. The wife's data reveal her to have a tendency to make proportionally more task-related requests for activity (e.g., *Do these next, cause they've got problems*), and she alone made service requests for which the beneficiary was someone else (*'For Other' requests*, e.g.,
Husband's parents are waiting to hear from him: *Wife: Perhaps you should ring up tonight.*

The husband's data show him to exhibit a tendency to make proportionally more of the three sub-categories of 'Goods requests': those that were (i) task-related (e.g., *We need another lid*.), (ii) for which he, himself, was the beneficiary (e.g., *Could you pass it to me please*?), or (iii) for which both he and his wife were the beneficiaries (*Can you get the umbrellas*?).

There is some suggestion from the patterns evident in the domestic setting, and from the differences in the distribution of female and male requests in terms of imposition type (services vs goods) that were evident in both settings, that gender differences in request usage may, in part, relate to differences in the goals of request acts that women and men characteristically attempt to carry out. A more detailed analysis of the distribution of imposition type in relation to the request strategies used by women and men in the corpora was attempted in order to throw more light on this suggestion. The relevant data are presented in Tables 8.6 and 8.7.

### 8.7.1 Office Setting

Table 8.6 illustrates that women's task-related service requests showed some tendency to be made using imperatives (55.1% compared with an overall average of 47.2% in the corpus as a whole), and hints (16.3% vs 11.2% in the corpus as a whole). Service requests for which H was the beneficiary also showed some tendency to be made by women in the form of an imperative (66.7%). By contrast, both service and goods requests for which S was the beneficiary were more likely than average to be uttered in the form of imbedded imperatives. These patterns coincide closely with the descriptions provided by Ervin-Tripp (1976) of the situational distribution of these forms, of which more will be said later.
Table 8.6  Distribution of request strategies by request goal: Office setting (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request Strategy</th>
<th>Need Statement</th>
<th>Imperative</th>
<th>Imbedded Imperative</th>
<th>Permission Directive</th>
<th>Question Directive</th>
<th>Hint</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Corpus</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task-Related</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Requests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task-Related</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For H</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For S</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Both</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postpone</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrupt</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joke</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total N(Service requests)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total % (Service requests)</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goods Requests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task-Related</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For S</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For H</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total N(Goods requests)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal % (Goods requests)</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.7.2 Domestic Setting

Table 8.7 shows that task-related service requests tended to occur most often in the form of imbedded imperatives for both the wife and the husband in this setting. This was also the case for the task-related goods requests uttered by the husband, whereas the wife was most likely to use the question directive form for these requests, although the numbers for this category of imposition-type were quite low, overall. For service requests for which the speaker was the beneficiary, both women and men restricted their use to the imbedded imperative and
permission directive forms. When both the wife and husband were the beneficiaries of service requests, the imbedded imperative form predominated in the usage of both speakers.

Table 8.7  Distribution of request strategies by request goal: Domestic setting (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request Strategy</th>
<th>Need Statement</th>
<th>Imperative</th>
<th>Imbedded</th>
<th>Permission Question</th>
<th>Directive</th>
<th>Hint</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total corpus</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Requests</td>
<td>Task-related</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For H</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For S</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Both</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Other</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrupt</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goods Requests</td>
<td>Task-related</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For S</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Both</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.8  Brown and Levinson's Politeness Model

8.8.1  Seriousness of the Imposition

The ranking of impositions (R) in a particular culture constitutes one of the three sociological variables that Brown and Levinson argued are involved in assessments of the seriousness of a directive as a face-threatening act and, hence, in strategic-variant choice. Following Holmes' (1990a) treatment of apology strategies in terms of Brown and Levinson's model, an attempt was made to rank the impositions identified in the directive data independently of the overall weightiness of the FTA involved (which, in Brown and Levinson's model, incorporates calculations of P and D). Assessments of R took into account the factors mentioned by Brown and Levinson (1978: 82-83) as relevant to the relative ranking of negative-face impositions in a
particular culture. A three-point scale (Holmes, 1990a) was used to rank the impositions involved in directive acts:

1. **small imposition**: for example, provision of educational goods such as a class handout; within-role, task-related activity such as photocopying; activities involving minimal effort such as turning on a light.

2. **medium imposition**: for example, an unusual task such as emergency shopping for office stationery requirements; interruption of addressee's ongoing activity; contradiction of addressee's action; requesting a task that takes some time to carry out.

3. **high imposition**: for example, personal favours for S; something that S knows that H does not want to do; strong contradiction of H's action; activities involving a great deal of effort.

Table 8.8 summarizes the distribution of female and male requests across different levels of seriousness of imposition in the two settings. Very few impositions were assessed as 'high'. In the office setting only 5.3% (6 instances), and in the domestic setting only 8.2% (15 instances) involved requests for acts categorized as high imposition. Obviously, more data are needed before reliable patterns of directive choice for serious impositions can be described. Different patterns were evident in the two settings with respect to the two other categories of imposition. In the office setting, small-imposition requests prevailed (accounting for approximately 70% of all requests uttered), whereas in the domestic setting, requests were more equally distributed across small and medium impositions (46.7% vs 45.1%, respectively).

### Table 8.8  Seriousness of imposition by gender in two settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seriousness of Imposition</th>
<th>Office Requester Gender</th>
<th>Domestic Requester Gender</th>
<th>Total Requester Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


With regard to gender differences in the use of requests, Table 8.8 shows that, in the office setting, similar proportions of female and male requests involved small and medium impositions. Only women made requests for acts involving high levels of imposition in this setting, although the number of male requests, overall, is too low to permit generalization. In the domestic setting, very similar proportions of female and male requests involved each of the three levels of imposition categorized. These data would provide little support for any suggestion that women and men differ in terms of the frequency with which they request acts that carry different levels of seriousness or imposition value.

Tables 8.9 and 8.10 show the breakdown of request strategies across the three levels of imposition. In the office setting, small impositions were most likely to be performed with an imperative strategy by female speakers (51.6%), but with a question directive strategy by males (35.3%). In the domestic setting, both the wife and the husband were more likely to make small-imposition requests using the imbedded imperative form (40.4% & 52.6%, respectively), with imperative strategies coming second in terms of frequency. These patterns of strategic use were replicated for medium-imposition requests in both settings, although, in the domestic setting, numbers of male requests involving medium levels of imposition were too low to be considered reliable. Numbers were also low with respect to high-imposition requests. It is perhaps worth noting, though, that in the office setting it is only for high-imposition requests that women's use of imbedded imperative forms is more frequent than their use of the imperative. In the domestic setting, whereas the wife used imbedded imperative forms more frequently than other strategies for high-imposition requests, the frequency of her use of the more indirect question directive strategy for high-imposition requests was higher than the norm for the corpus as a whole (i.e., 22.2% vs 9.8%), and the opposite was the case for the direct imperative form (11.1% for high imposition vs 29.4% for the corpus as a whole). By contrast, the husband's proportionally high frequency of use of imperatives for high-imposition requests was not as predicted by Brown and Levinson's model. It was the case, however, that the husband also used off-record hint forms for high-imposition requests with a frequency greater than the norm for the corpus as a whole (16.7% vs 3.8%).
Table 8.9  Seriousness of imposition by request strategy (%): Office setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request Strategy</th>
<th>Total corpus</th>
<th></th>
<th>Small</th>
<th></th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th></th>
<th>High</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need Statement</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission Directive</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.10  Seriousness of imposition by request strategy (%): Domestic setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request Strategy</th>
<th>Total corpus</th>
<th></th>
<th>Small</th>
<th></th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th></th>
<th>High</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need Statement</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission Directive</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Holmes (1990a: 184) pointed out, considerations of the seriousness of imposition associated with a request-act need also to take into account other relevant aspects of the social context of utterance - in particular the relationship between the participants. In terms of Brown and Levinson’s model, considerations of P and D are used to define this relationship. The contribution of each of these factors to the distribution of request strategies is considered separately below, before the combined effects, with R, on directive use are discussed.
8.8.2 Power

According to Brown and Levinson (1978: 82), P is an "asymmetric social dimension of relative power" that reflects "the degree to which H can impose his [sic] own plans and his own self-evaluation (face) at the expense of S's plans and self-evaluation". They referred to two sources of P: "material control (over economic distribution and physical force) and metaphysical control (over the actions of others, by virtue of metaphysical forces subscribed to by those others)". They also pointed out that values of P that attach to individuals or to roles can be mediated by situational sources such as "momentary weaknesses in bargaining power, strength of character, or alliances" (84). Leech (1983: 126) discussed power in a similar way, referring to it as an "asymmetric" measure that depends on "relatively permanent factors" such as status, age, but also on "temporary" relative roles and the rights and duties associated with them.

For the most part, these descriptions of Power proved adequate to define the relationships observed in the office and domestic settings using the three categories of High P: H has higher power than S; Equal P: H has same degree of power as S; Low P: H has less power than S.

In the office setting, the existence of work-related hierarchical role structures meant that the categorization of power relationships between staff members was relatively straightforward. However, interactions between office staff and students making requests at the office counter were less easily definable, in terms of relative power. Students might have been viewed as occupying a 'customer' role in relation to the office staff member's 'service provider', in which case the student would be seen to occupy a higher relative status. For a number of reasons, however, primary amongst which was the issue of resource control, students were viewed as possessing lower relative power in these interactions than members of the office staff. The general nature of the requests made by students indicated them to be at a relative disadvantage in terms of knowledge and resources. So, by virtue of their possession of, and authority to, manage the resources required by students, office staff were viewed as having higher power in the interactions. The fact that students displayed signs of apparently subordinate demeanour (hesitant, high-pitched speaking-voices; general uncertainty about the requested objects) when interacting across the office counter, reinforced this view. In the domestic setting, the wife and husband were viewed broadly as having equal power. The married couple interpreted their
own relationship in this way to the investigator, particularly in respect of the food-preparation tasks in which they were primarily engaged during tape-recording of their conversations.

These broad categorizations of relative power do not, of course, take into account the power dynamics of individual relationships. As there could be no variation, within the domestic corpus, on the basis of the Power factor, only the data for the office setting are presented in Table 8.11.

8.8.2.1 Distribution of request variants by Power in the office setting.

The majority of directives, overall, in the office corpus were expressed to Low P addressees (61 instances or 54%). Directives were used least often to Equal P addressees (20 or 17.7%), with directives to High P addressees being approximately one-and-a-half times more frequent (32 or 28.3%). Table 8.11 shows the distribution of directive variants used by female and male speakers in the office setting in relation to the power relationships between S and H.

Table 8.11 Distribution of request strategies by Power: Office setting(%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request Strategy</th>
<th>Total corpus</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Equal</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need Statement</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directive</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| N                | 89     | 24   | 22    | 10   | 18     | 2    | 49     | 12   |

It is clear, from these data, that the more direct request variants were expressed to addressees with less power in this setting. Whereas it is the case that for female speakers, on average, the direct imperative strategy accounted for 47.5% of the requests made, this strategy accounted for only 27.3% of requests used to addressees of high power. It was more common
for female speakers to make requests in the form of indirect question directives to high-power addressees (31.8%). This was also the case for men, who addressed the majority of their requests to high-power addressees in the form of relatively indirect permission directives and question directives (40% each).

The direct imperative strategy predominated in the requests made by female speakers to addressees of equal and lower power than themselves, with the on-record imbedded imperative strategy also being used with reasonable frequency in such relationships. The distributions of male speakers' requests to equal- or lower-power addressees were not consistent with this pattern, however. The small number of male requests involved means that circumspection is required in interpreting these trends. What can be said is that the patterns of request use by female speakers in the office setting support Brown and Levinson's predictions that directive acts to a powerful addressee will be assessed as more weighty or serious than those to an equal or a subordinate, and thus will require more indirect expression.

### 8.8.3 Social Distance

Brown and Levinson (1978: 81-2) described D as "a symmetric social dimension of similarity/difference within which S and H stand for the purposes of [the face-threatening] act". They added that, "in many cases (but not all), it is based on an assessment of the frequency of interaction and the kinds of material or non-material goods (including face) exchanged between S and H" (82). The degree of liking between S and H, referred to in Brown and Levinson's introduction to the reissue of the paper (1987: 16) as another factor that may determine FTA expression, can also be considered an aspect of D. Their model predicts that the greater the social distance between S and H, the greater the weightiness of the FTA.

For the purposes of the present analysis, the social-distance relationships between speakers and addressees were classified in terms of two categories: High Familiarity (friends, relatives, colleagues, and work-mates who were in constant contact with each other); and Low Familiarity (distant acquaintances and strangers). These were the broad categories originally used by Ervin-Tripp (1976) to describe the social distribution of directive variants. As all of the requests uttered by the married couple involved a high-familiarity addressee, analysis of the distribution of strategic variants in terms of differences in S-H familiarity is confined to data
from the office setting. Table 8.12 shows the distribution of request variants in the office setting to addressees categorized as having high- or low-familiarity relationships with the S. These data are broken down by speaker's gender and, once again, it must be kept in mind that the numbers for male speakers are very small.

8.8.3.1 Distribution of request variants by Social Distance in the office setting.

In the office setting, many more requests were uttered, overall, to High Familiarity (93 instances or 82.3%) than to Low Familiarity (20 or 17.7%) addressees. Furthermore, the majority (90%) of Low Familiarity directives involved students making requests for educational resources at the office reception counter. Because of the low frequency of data, and the specific nature of the directive acts involved, the data for Low Familiarity addressees should be interpreted cautiously in the following analysis. Despite these qualifications it might be noted from Table 8.12 that the data are in accordance with what would be expected under Brown and Levinson's model. Thus, the direct, imperative strategy, and the on-record strategy of using the imbedded imperative variant were more frequently employed by both female and male speakers to High Familiarity addressees than to Low Familiarity. The more indirect permission directive, and the contextually ambiguous question directive forms, were used proportionally more frequently by female and male speakers to Low Familiarity addressees than to High Familiarity ones. It can also be seen that the most indirect, off-record hints were used with similar frequency to High and Low Familiarity addressees by female and male speakers. This pattern was not as expected on the basis of Brown and Levinson's model, which sees greater politeness (more indirectness) being associated with any factors (such as low familiarity) that increase the weightiness of an FTA. Possible explanations for this lack of congruence with general predictions based on Brown and Levinson's model must await consideration of the compound effects of P and R in addition to D. However, a point made by Holmes (1990a: 186) in relation to the distribution of apology strategies with respect to social distance, bears repeating here. She commented on the increased likelihood with which acts involving more serious impositions are addressed to familiar addressees. This additional factor could account for the observed use of off-record strategies in relation to both High Familiarity and Low Familiarity addressees.
Table 8.12 Distribution of request strategies by Social Distance: Office setting(\%) 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request Strategy</th>
<th>Social Distance</th>
<th>Total Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>High Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Low Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need Statement</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td></td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded Imperative</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission Directive</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>89</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, the distribution of request strategies according to the social distance between the participants does not suggest that women evaluate D differently from men in a work setting. If the distribution of the wife's and husband's requests across strategic variants is considered in terms of what would be expected from Brown and Levinson's model for the use of forms to high-familiarity addressees (Table 8.4), it can be seen that the more direct forms - imbedded imperative and imperative - predominated in the corpus, in line with predictions. It might also be noted that the pattern of requests used by the husband was more consistent with Brown and Levinson's prediction. He used proportionally more of the direct imperative form and less of the indirect question directive and off-record hint forms than did the wife.

8.8.4 Overall Weightiness of the Directive Act

The combined effect of the P, D, and R factors on the choice of directive variants will now be considered in terms of the predictions from Brown and Levinson's model.\textsuperscript{10} The preceding discussion, limited to the effects of the individual components, showed that there was partial support for Brown and Levinson's theory. In general, low-imposition directives tended to be uttered in the form of direct imperatives, whereas more imposing directives took the form, most often, of the conventionally indirect imbedded imperative. (Evidence regarding serious impositions, however, could not be obtained from the present data, and this is an obvious area...
for future research.) Distributions of more indirect question directive and hint forms were not as consistent with predictions from the model with respect to Imposition, however. Further, directives to High Familiarity or to Equal P or Low P addresseees were more likely to be uttered in the form of direct imperatives or on-record imbedded imperatives, whereas those to Low Familiarity addresseees or to High P addressees were more likely to occur in the form of the more indirect permission directives or question directives. The use of the most indirect form, the off-record hint, was not differentiated according to the familiarity of the addressee, although it did vary with the power relationship between S and H, but not in the way predicted. Hints were used with similar frequency to addressees at either end of the power dimension, and were least frequently uttered to addressees of equal power.

The extent of support for Brown and Levinson's theory provided by patterns of directive variant use under various combinations of the P, D, and R factors is discussed in the following section, in relation to the office setting, on the basis of the data displayed in Table 8.13. The data-base is relatively small, however, and the following discussion can only be suggestive. In constructing this table, the data from the office setting were examined to identify the range of combinations of P, D, and R that occurred. In other words, all exchanges involving directive acts were classified in terms of their P, D, and R weightings. The distribution of directive variants for each combination could then be displayed. The table presents these combinations ordered in terms of the three levels of the Power factor. Brown and Levinson's prediction that the more weighty the FTA, the more indirect will be the strategy used to perform it, is considered first in terms of comparisons between combinations at the same level of P.

For combinations involving maximum levels of P (Max. P), there was some support for the theory. Combinations A.1 and A.2 differed only in terms of the D factor. The more direct imperative and imbedded imperative strategies were not used for the more weighty maximum D (Max. D) combination, A.1. By contrast, these direct strategies did occur in the minimum D (Min. D) version of this combination (A.2). Moreover, the proportions of indirect question directive and hint requests used in the less weighty combination were lower than those used in combination A.1.
For combinations involving medium levels of P (Med. P), which differed only in terms of the R factor, (B.1, B.2, B.3), there was some support for the theory in that the least weighty combination, B.3, had the highest proportion of its requests in the form of the direct imperative. On the other hand, it was the only Med. P combination in which indirect question directive and hint forms occurred.

For combinations involving minimum levels of P (Min. P), comparisons can be made across three levels that differ in terms of values of R alone (C.1, C.2, C.4), and across two levels that differ in terms of values of D alone (C.3, C.4). There was some support for the theory with
respect to increasing weightiness afforded by changes in R. The proportion of direct imperative strategies decreased in order from Min. R (C.4) to Med. R (C.2) to Max. R (C.1), as predicted. Furthermore, more indirect strategies such as permission directives and question directives were proportionally less frequent in the Min. R (C.3, C.4) combinations than in the Med. R (C.2). This pattern was not confirmed by the distribution of hints, however, which were used proportionally more frequently by women in the least weighty combination.

A comparison of the Max. D (C.3) and Min. D (C.4) versions of the Min. P, Min. R combinations did provide some support for the theory. Proportionally, direct imperatives were more frequent in the less weighty of the two (C.4). However, it was only in this less weighty combination, C.4, that indirect strategies were used.

Comparisons across levels of the P factor can also be made. Combinations A.2, B.3, and C.4 differ only in terms of the P value involved. The pattern of request-strategy use across these combinations provides some support for the theory. Direct imperatives were used with proportionally greater frequency in the less weighty Med. P (B.3) and Min. P (C.4) combinations than in Max. P (A.2). Furthermore, the more indirect question directive strategy constituted a lower proportion of requests in the least weighty Min . P combination than in Med. P and Max. P. The pattern for the off-record hint form was not as expected, however, in that it was used relatively frequently in the less weighty Min. P, Min. D, Min. R combination.

8.8.5 Summary of Results Relating to Brown and Levinson's Politeness Model

Although it can be said that, broadly, Brown and Levinson's claims appeared to hold for the distribution of request strategies such as imperatives, imbedded imperatives, permission directives, and question directives (in that the more direct forms were used less often, and the more indirect forms more often, as the weightiness of the FTA as assessed by the factors P, D, and R increased), the distribution of the most indirect, off-record hint variant did not fit the predicted pattern. In both settings, hints occurred with some frequency in the less weighty P, D, and R combinations. In particular, female speakers appeared to make use of this off-record strategy in less weighty combinations. Perhaps, in view of the low frequencies, the failure of the hint strategies to conform to the theory should not be taken too seriously. However, the pattern of hint use emerging from this, admittedly small, data-base can be interpreted as
providing support for Blum-Kulka's (1987) proposed revision of Brown and Levinson's (1978) model of politeness. As reported in Chapter 5, Blum-Kulka found that in both English and Hebrew, the strategies rated by subjects as the most indirect - off-record hints - were not judged as the most polite. She suggested that "a certain adherence to pragmatic clarity is as essential for the successful achievement of interactional balance as is maintaining face" (1987: 145).

However, more studies of the social distribution of greater numbers of off-record forms in different social settings are required before it is possible to evaluate the adequacy of Brown and Levinson's face theory of politeness-as-indirectness with greater certainty. What can be said here is that, to the extent that the patterns observed in the corpora under investigation have been reported by other researchers, the problems associated with Brown and Levinson's treatment of indirectness are beginning to come into sharper focus. As a final discussion of these patterns, I turn now to a comparison between the Australian English request data observed here, and patterns described for American English request usage by Ervin-Tripp (1976).

8.9 Ervin-Tripp's Description of the Social Distribution of Request Utterances

The question of whether the Australian English request data collected in an office and a domestic setting confirm the patterns described by Ervin-Tripp for the social distribution of American English request utterances in similar settings is addressed, briefly, in the following sections. Comparisons are made in terms of each of the request categories identified by Ervin-Tripp (1976).

8.9.1 Need Statements

This variant occurred too infrequently in the settings investigated to allow an adequate test of Ervin-Tripp's description of its social distribution. One of the two instances in the office setting, from the departmental secretary to a laboratory assistant:

[47] Tim, don't go away. I need you.

appeared consistent with Ervin-Tripp's observation of need statement use in work settings, where "a statement of need by a superior implied an obligation on the part of the subordinate"
(1976: 29). The other instance in this setting involved a female student requesting educational goods from a member of the office staff:

[52] I'd like to take out two tests from the test library.

This use of a need statement might be described as similar to the type of usage described by Ervin-Tripp as typical of children. What is common both to children, and to the student in this example, is a lack of access to desired resources, as well as an assumption of role-determined obligation on the part of the addressee to comply.

The two instances of need statements that occurred in the domestic setting were uttered by the husband, and concerned requests for task-related goods:

[B21] We need another lid.

[F44] We need another tomato.

Although Ervin-Tripp observed need statements in family settings, she described them as occurring (as they did also in work settings) between persons differing in rank. This was not the case in the domestic setting observed here, where the wife and husband shared meal-preparation duties and were ostensibly equal in terms of their power in the situation. The husband's use of the plural pronoun in the need statements might be interpreted as signalling solidarity rather than difference in these instances. Clearly, samples of conversation from a range of different settings are required in order to confirm claims about the social distribution of directives in the form of need statements.

8.9.2 Imperatives

Ervin-Tripp described imperative variants as being used to subordinates and to high-familiarity, equal-rank addressees. The present data supported her observations. In the office setting, where imperatives were used overwhelmingly by female speakers (97.7%), the form tended to be directed to low-rank addressees and to equal-rank familiars (Table 8.14).

Instances of imperative use to high-familiarity, high-rank addressees that did not conform to Ervin-Tripp's predictions involved, notably, in all but one case where an imperative functioned as a 'joke' directive, circumstances in which the hearer was the beneficiary of the request. For example:

[41] Departmental secretary to male lecturer about a document he required: Go ask Greta to do you a photocopy.
[84] Senior typist to male lecturer:

*You tell me what you're looking for and I'll tell you where to find it.*

Lecturer continues searching in cupboards.

*Come along, Bob.*

Table 8.14 Distribution of imperative strategies by rank and familiarity of addressee: Office setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High</th>
<th>Rank Equal</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Familiarity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the domestic setting, where the wife and husband were of equal rank and of high familiarity, it might be expected that the imperative form of request would predominate. It was, however, observed that, overall, imbedded imperative forms were the variant most frequently used by both participants (See Table 8.4). Even when the data are considered in terms of the level of imposition of the requested act (Table 8.10), it is still the case that imbedded imperative forms were used more frequently than imperatives for each level, that is, for small-, medium-, and high-imposition requests. If the data are considered in terms of request goal, or type of imposition (Table 8.7), imbedded imperative forms can be seen to be used proportionally more frequently than imperatives for all categories with the exception of service requests for which the hearer was the beneficiary.

This finding, that imperative forms were not the most likely form of directive between intimate equals, matches that reported by Yaeger (n.d., cited by Yaeger-Dror & Sister, 1987) for requests among kibbutz members. Hints and other relatively imposition-mitigating types of request were used more frequently than imperatives in this group.

8.9.3 *Imbedded Imperatives*

Ervin-Tripp (1976: 33-37, 46) described a number of circumstances in which imbedded imperatives were likely to be used:

(i) unfamiliar addressees,
(ii) high-rank addressees if it was probable that the addressee could comply with the request,

(iii) addressees of equal or low rank when the task was outside role expectations,

(iv) equal-rank, high-familiarity addresses when the speaker was the beneficiary of the request.

With respect to (i) unfamiliar addressees, the data from the office setting did not confirm Ervin-Tripp's observations. Low familiarity (Low D) did not appear, in itself, to be a determinant of imbedded imperative use (See Table 8.12). For circumstances in which (ii) there was a high probability that a high-rank addressee could comply with a request, there was again little evidence in the data to support Ervin-Tripp's observation of imbedded imperative use. When the distribution of request variants addressed to high-rank addressees in the office data was broken down in terms of the probability of addressee compliance (high or low)\textsuperscript{11}, imbedded imperative use did not predominate in the high-probability condition (although the numbers involved, overall, were very small; see Table 8.15). More indirect forms such as permission directives and hints were used proportionally more frequently than the imbedded imperative to high-rank addressees when there was a high probability of compliance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need Statement</th>
<th>Impressive</th>
<th>Imbedded</th>
<th>Permission</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Hint</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Prob.</td>
<td>F 1 M 6</td>
<td>F 2</td>
<td>F 2 M 4</td>
<td>F 1 M 4</td>
<td>M 2</td>
<td>15 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Prob.</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>- - 6 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Hi R</td>
<td>F 1 M 6</td>
<td>F 2</td>
<td>F 2 M 4</td>
<td>F 7 M 4</td>
<td>M 4</td>
<td>21 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With respect to the third circumstance in which Ervin-Tripp observed the use of imbedded imperative forms to equal-rank addressees, when (iii) the task was outside the addressee's normal role expectations, or (iv) the beneficiary of the requested act was the speaker herself or himself, there was support from the request data in the office setting. There were only seven occasions in the corpus on which requests for acts that were outside of the H's role were issued. On four of these occasions imbedded imperative strategies were used (two instances
involving an equal-rank addressee, and two involving a low-rank addressee). On the other occasions an imperative was used to a subordinate H, and question directives were directed to a high- and to a low-rank H. When requests were uttered for which S was the beneficiary (17 instances), imbedded imperative forms were proportionally more likely to be used to equal-or low-rank addressees than were other forms such as imperatives (7.1%), permission directives (18.2%), question directives (5.0%), or hints (12.5%).

Ervin-Tripp's description of the use of imbedded imperatives to equal-rank addressees for requests for which the S was the beneficiary can also be considered in relation to the domestic setting. As can be seen in Table 8.16, of the 31 instances of such requests in the corpus, the wife and husband used similar proportions of imperative and imbedded imperative variants.

**Table 8.16** Distribution of requests for which S was the beneficiary: Domestic setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need Statement</th>
<th>Imperative</th>
<th>Imbedded</th>
<th>Permission Directive</th>
<th>Question Directive</th>
<th>Hint</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 8.8.4 Permission Directives

Ervin-Tripp observed only six instances of the use of permission directives in her corpus. She noted a "tendency" for such forms to be directed upward in rank, and hypothesized that permission directives were also more likely to be addressed to unfamiliar addressees. The distribution of permission directive forms in the office setting did not confirm Ervin-Tripp's predictions. Although six instances of the use of permission directives upward in rank involved addressees who were of low familiarity, there were also five instances downward in rank, all of which involved high-familiarity addressees. The use of permission directives upward in rank was by students requesting educational resources across the office counter (hence the Low Familiarity association). For those permission directives that were addressed to subordinates, there was a tendency for the requested tasks to involve the speaker as beneficiary
In tasks that imposed upon the addressee through an interruption of his/her activity, or an appropriation of goods and services. For example:

[9] Setting: Departmental secretary to office junior who is using the photocopier.
   D.S.: *Can I interrupt here?*
   O.J.: *Yeah, I suppose.*

[95] Setting: Senior typist to office junior who is using the photocopier.
   S.T.: *Greta, could I just rip in with one?*
   O.J.: *Mmhmm.*

[36] Setting: Female lecturer to senior typist.
   L.F.: *Can I help myself to some fine-point pens?*
   S.T.: *Yes, you may, Helen.*

[101] Setting: Male lecturer, wrapping a parcel, to senior typist.
   L.M1.: *May I have a finger?*
   S.T.: *You may.*

In the domestic setting, permission directive strategies were infrequent (2 instances), and in that sense alone provided some confirmation of Ervin-Tripp's observations about the social distribution of the form to unfamiliar high-rank addressees.

### 8.9.5 Question Directives

Ervin-Tripp observed question directive strategies to occur under conditions where there was a strong probability that an addressee could not comply. The distribution of variants in the office setting confirmed her observations. Table 8.17 shows that, proportionally, question directive strategies were used more frequently than other variants under conditions where non-compliance might be expected.

**Table 8.17** Distribution of strategies for requests for which there was a high probability of non-compliance: Office setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need Statement</th>
<th>Imperative</th>
<th>Imbedded Imperative</th>
<th>Permission Directive</th>
<th>Question Directive</th>
<th>Hint</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F M</td>
<td>F M</td>
<td>F M</td>
<td>F M</td>
<td>F M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (non-compliance)</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>- 1</td>
<td>- 11</td>
<td>- 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>2 -</td>
<td>42 1</td>
<td>17 4</td>
<td>6 5</td>
<td>12 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Almost half \((n = 8)\) of the question directives used under conditions where there was a strong possibility of non-compliance involved students making requests at the office counter. In many instances, these students could not be sure that the items they were requesting were available, or that the office staff would be in a position to comply. For example:

[6b] Student to junior typist:  
\textit{Are there any reading lists for Psychology rat prac?}

[16] Student to senior typist:  
\textit{I was wondering whether there were any spare Psychology rat-prac. write-up booklets.}

The other instances of question directive use under conditions of possible non-compliance \((n = 10)\) were approximately equally distributed across levels of addressee rank, but were only used when there was high familiarity between the S and H. For example:

[98] Setting: After searching in numerous cupboards, junior typist to departmental secretary.  
J.T.: \textit{Have you got that box of reference cards?}

[50] Setting: Laboratory technician to clerical assistant at adjacent desk.  
L.T.: \textit{Have you got a pair of scissors there?}
C.A.: [Looks in desk drawer.]

The distribution of request strategies in the domestic setting also confirmed Ervin-Tripp's observations about question directives. All of the requests for which there was a possibility that the addressee could not comply \((n = 9)\) were uttered, in this setting, in the form of question directives (6 by the wife and 3 by the husband). For example:

[G5] Husband: \textit{Have you got some stuff to go in there?}

[G20] Husband: \textit{We got any soap?}

[G39] Wife: \textit{Have you got the chilli there?}

\section*{8.9.6 Hints}

Ervin-Tripp (1976: 42-45) suggested that hints could occur in three types of social circumstance:

(i) from children, who rely on care-takers to satisfy their needs;

(ii) from familiars, who are reluctant to be explicit regarding a 'special' service;

(iii) from superiors or older speakers, when routine roles exist, and everyone "knows what must be done and by whom".
In the office setting, the majority of the hints that occurred were addressed to familiar subordinates (9/16 or 56.3%) for either medium- (n = 3) or small-imposition (n = 6) requests. This pattern was consistent with that described by Ervin-Tripp in (iii) above. However, a reasonable proportion of hints (6/16 or 37.5%) was also used to make small-imposition requests of superiors. Half of these hints to more powerful addressees (n = 3) involved students making requests at the office counter. This usage appears to parallel that described by Ervin-Tripp for children, as in (i) above:

[42b] Female student to junior typist.

I asked for one of these a few weeks ago for Psych. I, and I've got the wrong one.

The other hints addressed to more powerful addressees (n = 3) involved request acts for which H was the beneficiary:

[90] Senior typist to male lecturer.

I think she's got some forms here, Ned.

In the domestic setting, where requests were exchanged between equal familiars, hints were also more often used for either small- or medium-impositions (6/14 or 42.9% for both). The most frequent request goal involved in these hints was for task-related services (8/14 or 57.1%). The wife was responsible for the majority of the hint forms used (78.6%). She appeared to be using hints to organize her husband's participation in joint tasks, and to remind him of things that he might otherwise forget to do. For example:

[B2] Setting: Wife places papers on the table for husband who is about to visit his parents.

Wife: I've got these here for your mother.

[B3] Setting: Wife is attempting to update the accounts.

Wife: I asked you this morning to get the receipt out of your bag.

[B26] Setting: Wife is looking in refrigerator.

Wife: Andrew, you've got no drink in the fridge to take with you.

[C15] Setting: Husband is washing dishes, wife is drying.

Wife: This glass vase can be washed too.

[C24] Setting: Husband is placing fruit in a compost bin.

Wife: The stones are still there.
8.9.7  Summary of Results Relating to Ervin-Tripp's Observations

In summarizing this section, it can be said that most of the predictions derived from Ervin-Tripp's observations of American English requests were confirmed in the two settings investigated here:

(1) **Imperative** request forms tended to be used to subordinates and to high-familiarity equals in the office setting.

(2) **Imbedded Imperatives** tended to occur to equal- or low-rank addressees when (a) the requested task was outside of normal role expectations, or (b) when the S was the beneficiary of the requested act, in the office setting.

(3) **Question Directives** were used, in both settings, when there was a possibility that an addressee could not comply with a request.

(4) **Hints** tended to be used to familiar subordinates for requests that were not very imposing in the office setting. They were also used by students to the office staff on whom they relied for the provision of educational goods.

Some of the hypotheses derived from Ervin-Tripp's observations could not be confirmed:

(1) The frequency of **Need Statements** was too low to permit testing.

(2) **Imbedded Imperatives** were not used more frequently to unfamiliar addressees; the opposite pattern was displayed in the office setting. Similarly, there was no evidence that they were used more frequently to high-rank addressees to request feasible, appropriate acts.

(3) **Permission Directives** were directed to subordinates as frequently as they were directed upward in rank, and were not more likely to be addressed to unfamiliar addressees in the office setting.

(4) **Hints** tended to occur between equal familiars in the domestic setting more frequently to request acts that were not very imposing than to request 'special' services.

Patterns of association between use of request forms and social features that emerged in the present corpora included the following:

(1) **Imperatives** were used by female speakers to high-familiarity superiors when the addressee was the beneficiary of the request.
(2) **Permission Directives** were directed to low-rank addressees when the requested action involved an interruption of the addressee's ongoing activity.

(3) **Hints** were sometimes used to superiors to make requests for which the addressee was the beneficiary. They were also frequently used by the woman in the domestic setting to organize her husband's carrying-out of task-related activity.

To a large extent, Ervin-Tripp's claims about the social distribution of directive forms appear to be generalizable to samples of Australian English request data. In particular, Ervin-Tripp's description of the use of the indirect hint form to perform 'routine' requests as well as to make 'special' (i.e., more weighty) requests of familiar addressees was supported by the patterns observed in the Australian English corpora. These patterns do not conform with predictions from Brown and Levinson's model that the most indirect off-record strategies will be used in order to achieve the greatest minimization of increasingly weighty face-threatening acts. Further investigation of the conditions under which these very indirect request forms are considered appropriate and/or polite is clearly needed. These issues are explored using a number of different approaches in the following chapters. Before concluding the present description of patterns of request-form usage in real conversational settings, however, one final aspect of the politeness of request forms must be considered. As well as choosing more or less direct variants to perform request acts, people can modify the force with which a particular variant is expressed, using a range of linguistic devices. A brief discussion of the distribution of such devices in the present corpora follows.

### 8.10 Strategies for Modifying Directive Force

Holmes (1984c: 345) referred to "two general communicative strategies for modifying the force of speech acts": attenuation and boosting. In the following discussion, the focus will be upon modifications that downgrade (attenuate) or intensify (boost) the force of directive acts. Holmes argued that linguistic devices used to modify illocutionary force convey affective meaning, that is, they express the S's attitude to the H in the context of utterance by serving to increase or decrease social distance. In her terms, strategies that boost *negatively-affective* speech acts, such as directives, do so by increasing social distance.
In the analysis that follows, I have applied Holmes' (1984c) analysis of the linguistic devices that can be used to realize the strategies of boosting and attenuation. A brief summary, with examples provided by Holmes, follows.

**Boosting illocutionary force**

(1) **Prosodic devices:**
- contrastive pitch and volume, e.g., You idiot! uttered at maximum volume.
- strong stress, e.g., It's *ridiculous*.

(2) **Syntactic devices:**
- interrogative structures, e.g., Isn't she lovely?
- exclamation, e.g., What a mess you've made!
- tag statements, e.g., That was a lark, that was.

(3) **Lexical devices:**
  (i) **S-oriented boosters:**
  (ii) **H-oriented boosters:**
  (iii) **Content- or other-oriented boosters:**
- Referring to the veracity and reliability of the S, e.g., frankly, truly, in my opinion, I believe.
- Appealing to H's experience and knowledge of the world, e.g., you know, you see, of course.
- Commenting personally on the validity of the proposition, e.g., certainly, without doubt.
- Boosting a focal element within the proposition, e.g., absolutely, just, totally, very.

(4) **Discoursal devices:**
- intra-textual or metapragmatic devices, e.g., I ask you, I tell you, let me stress, as you say, or linking signals e.g., besides, furthermore.

**Attenuating illocutionary force**

(1) **Prosodic devices:**
- Fall-rise intonation pattern, e.g., You are silly.
- high pitch, low volume,
- weakened stress.

(2) **Syntactic devices:**
- tag questions, e.g., You were there weren't you?
- impersonalization devices, e.g., passive construction, agent deletion, impersonal pronouns, nominalization, double negative, e.g., not unlikely, not unreasonable.

(3) **Lexical devices:**
  (i) **S-oriented downtoners:**
  referring to S's doubts concerning the validity of the proposition, e.g., it seems to me; I gather; I suppose; or to S's reservations concerning his/her warrant, e.g., if I'm not mistaken; unless I misunderstood you.
(ii) *H-oriented downtoners:* focussing on H's desires and willingness to cooperate, e.g., *if you like; if you wouldn't mind; perhaps you could.*

(iii) *Content- or other-oriented downtoners:* suggesting content is dubious or uncertain, e.g., *could, may, might, possibly, probably.*

Assigning responsibility for the truth of assertions to a third party, e.g., *allegedly, presumably.*

Focussing on semantic distinction between appearance and reality, e.g., *on the face of it, ostensibly, technically.*

Using adverbials that attenuate elements occurring within the proposition, e.g., *fairly, pretty, quite, rather, just a bit.*

(4) *Discoursal devices:* linking signals, e.g., *by the way, incidentally.*

In the following analysis, the directive acts recorded in two settings were scrutinized for the presence of the syntactic and lexical devices described above by Holmes (1984). The nature of the recording in one setting made it impossible to consider the ways in which prosodic devices were used to modify directive force, and so the effects of prosody were not included in the analysis. This is recognized as a major limitation of the study. The study is also limited in that its use of a classification system "inevitably distorts [the total communication process] by failing to reflect the extent to which different devices work together to convey meaning", a point of reservation made by Holmes herself (1984: 363). However, as part of a preliminary descriptive exercise, in conjunction with descriptions of the distribution of directive variants in context, this use of a classification system was seen as a worthwhile, although limited, tool.

Devices used to modify the force of directives in the office setting will be described first, followed by patterns of modification in the domestic setting. At the outset, however, it is worth pointing out that there was little evidence of linguistic devices being used to *boost* the directive force of utterances in either setting. In the office, there were only three instances of forms serving to strengthen the force of directives (that is, 3/113 directives, or 3%), and only two instances in the domestic setting (that is, 1% of all directive acts). It is hardly surprising that the boosting of illocutionary force was a rare occurrence given that the acts in question were all directives, that is, negatively-affective speech acts whose effects were 'unwelcome' to the H (Fraser, 1980: 342). Attenuation of these directive acts occurred frequently, however, as the following discussion will reveal. In terms of Brown and Levinson's model of politeness, it might be stated that such attenuation strategies, by weakening the force of a directive act,
function to minimize the threat to H's face implied in its performance. In their model, attenuating features are seen as negative-politeness devices. The issue will be considered of whether such devices are more frequently used in the directive variants described as more polite in the hierarchy of strategies presented by Brown and Levinson.

8.10.1 Office Setting

8.10.1.1 Frequency of use of attenuating devices.

Sixty-six per cent of the 113 directive acts recorded in this setting contained an attenuating feature of the type described by Holmes (1984c). Overall, proportionally more of the requests uttered by men in this setting were attenuated (87.5%) than were the requests uttered by women (58.4%). Indirect directives were more likely to be uttered with attenuating features than were direct forms. The percentage of forms attenuated was lowest for the most direct need statement and imperative forms (50% and 47%, respectively). For on-record imbedded imperative forms the proportion attenuated was somewhat higher (71%), as it was for the less direct permission directive (73%) and question directive forms (65%). Each of the most indirect hint forms uttered in this setting (i.e., 100%) contained attenuating features. In the sense, then, of being more likely to contain an attenuating feature, indirect directive variants were more 'polite' than direct forms. This pattern is generally consistent with what would be predicted by Brown and Levinson's model (i.e., that greater 'politeness' is associated with increasing indirectness in the execution of increasingly face-threatening acts). However, it was also the case that some attenuated directive acts contained more than one attenuating feature. For instance, the twenty attenuated imperative directive variants contained a total of twenty-six attenuating devices. A similar pattern was observed for the more indirect imbedded imperatives (18 devices in 15 attenuated acts), permission directives (9 devices in 8 attenuated acts), and question directives (16 devices in 13 attenuated acts). Attenuated hint forms contained the highest number of attenuating devices per act (27 devices in 16 attenuated forms). When looked at in this way, then, the pattern of politeness-feature use is not as might be predicted on the basis of a model that associates increased indirectness with increased politeness. Although the most indirect directive variant did contain the greatest number of attenuating features, there was no simple
monotonic association between the sheer number of features used by speakers and the performance of directive acts of increasing indirectness.

8.10.1.2 Types of attenuating devices.

The lexical devices described by Holmes (1984c: 360-361) as *Hearer-oriented* or *Content-/Other-oriented downtoners* were the most frequently used forms of attenuation, overall, in the data from the office setting (Table 8.18). *Hearer-oriented downtoners*, for example (underlining in examples indicates linguistic features leading to device classification),

[31b] Up there please, *if you wouldn't mind.*

accounted for 15% of all devices (*n* = 96) used in this setting. *Content-/Other-oriented downtoners*, for example,

[102b] *Greta, Theo would like you downstairs to do some engraving.*

were used even more frequently (33%). Other types of linguistic device that were used to attenuate the force of requests in this corpus can be seen in Table 8.18.

A much larger data set than was available here would be required in order to permit reliable conclusions to be drawn about the distribution of attenuating devices across directive strategy types, or across gender, in this work setting. It is possible, on the basis of the present data, to consider the distribution of types of attenuating devices across the levels of the three social factors, P, D, and R that were identified by Brown and Levinson as determinants of the level of the politeness of an FTA. It must be kept in mind, of course, that the observed patterns of use can only be suggestive, due to the low frequencies involved.
Table 8.18 Devices used to attenuate requests: Office setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Need Statement</th>
<th>Imperative</th>
<th>Request Strategy</th>
<th>Permission Directive</th>
<th>Question Directive</th>
<th>Hint</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syntactic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tag question</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 8%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 19%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impersonalize</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5 19%</td>
<td>1 6%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 19%</td>
<td>9 33%</td>
<td>18 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-oriented downtoner</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 6%</td>
<td>3 11%</td>
<td>4 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H-oriented downtoner</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 15%</td>
<td>8 47%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 13%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content-/Other-oriented downtoner</td>
<td>1 100%</td>
<td>6 23%</td>
<td>5 29%</td>
<td>6 67%</td>
<td>5 31%</td>
<td>9 33%</td>
<td>32 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discoursal device</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5 19%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 11%</td>
<td>1 6%</td>
<td>1 4%</td>
<td>8 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address term</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 4%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 4%</td>
<td>2 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 8%</td>
<td>2 12%</td>
<td>2 22%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 7%</td>
<td>8 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural pronoun</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 4%</td>
<td>1 6%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 6%</td>
<td>2 7%</td>
<td>5 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Devices</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is also possible to consider the types of attenuating features that were used in association with different levels of the three social factors P, D, and R that were identified by Brown and Levinson as determinants of the level of politeness. The patterns of use can only be suggestive, however, due to the low frequencies involved.

8.10.1.3 Power.

The pattern of use of attenuating devices across levels of P bears little resemblance to what might be predicted on the basis of Brown and Levinson’s model where, all things being equal, greater politeness (and, hence, greater use of attenuating features) is expected with increasing power of addressee (increased weightiness of FTA). As can be seen in Table 8.19, directive acts that were addressed either to High P or Low P addressees were somewhat more likely to contain attenuating devices (65.6% & 68.9%, respectively) than were those addressed to Equal P addressees (45.0%). The pattern of results may be due to the lower frequency with which directive acts were used to Equal P addressees in the corpus, however. For instance, if one
looks at the request forms that were addressed to Equal P addressees, it can be seen that relatively high proportions of imperative (44.4%), imbedded imperative (66.7%), and hint (100%) acts were attenuated; it is only for question directive forms \( n = 4 \) that no attenuation devices were used to Equal P addressees.

Another aspect of the distribution that is perhaps worth pointing out is that for imperative forms, unlike other directive variants, no attenuating features were used in requests made to High P addressees. A possible reason for this relates to the fact that, as mentioned in Section 8.8, these imperatives addressed to High P addressees all involved directives for which H was the beneficiary. In their context of utterance, then, there was little need for attenuation of these forms.

The types of attenuating features used most frequently under each of the three power conditions varied too. Content-oriented downtoners accounted for the majority of features used in directives to High P (26.9%) and Low P (24.1%) addressees. H-oriented downtoners were most frequently used in directives to Equal P addressees (58.3%), however, with Content-oriented downtoners being infrequent (8.3%).

**Table 8.19** Frequency of use of attenuating devices across request variants by Power of addressee: Office setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Strategies</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total Attenuated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>High P</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Equal P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need Statement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1/1 100%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0/6 0%</td>
<td>4/9 44.4%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15/27 55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1/2 50%</td>
<td>4/6 66.7%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6/9 66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directive</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1/2 50%</td>
<td>4/4 66.7%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2/4 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5/7 71.4%</td>
<td>3/4 75%</td>
<td>0/3 0%</td>
<td>0/1  -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directive</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4/4 100%</td>
<td>2/2 100%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1/1 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12/22 54.5%</td>
<td>9/10 90.0%</td>
<td>8/18 44.4%</td>
<td>1/2 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16 10 11 1</td>
<td>43 15 70 26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N(Devices) 16 10 11 1 43 15 70 26
8.10.1.4 Social Distance.

The pattern of use of attenuating features in directives addressed to familiar and unfamiliar addressees, as shown in Table 8.20 is as might be predicted from Brown and Levinson's model. Overall, a greater percentage of directive acts addressed to Low F addressees contained attenuating devices (80.0%) than did those addressed to High F addressees (60.2%). This pattern was evident for all but two directive variants: imperative and imbedded imperative forms were used too infrequently in directives to Low F addressees to permit comparison of attenuating devices. Directive acts addressed to High F addressees were most frequently attenuated by the use of Hearer-oriented downtoners (19 instances or 24.7% of all devices) and Content-/Other-oriented downtoners (19.5%). Those to Low F addressees were most frequently attenuated by the use of Content-/Other-oriented downtoners (8 instances or 42.1% of all devices).

Table 8.20 Frequency of use of attenuating devices by Familiarity of addressee: Office setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request Strategy</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Familiarity</th>
<th>Total Attenuated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need Statement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>1/1 100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>19/41 46.3%</td>
<td>1/2 50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14/20 70.0%</td>
<td>0/1 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission Directive</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3/5 60.0%</td>
<td>5/6 83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7/13 53.8%</td>
<td>6/7 85.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13/13 100.0%</td>
<td>3/3 100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>56/93 60.2%</td>
<td>16/20 80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (Devices)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.10.1.5 Imposition.

The pattern of use of attenuating features for acts of different levels of imposition is shown in Table 8.21. The frequency of High R acts in the corpus was too low to permit reliable comparisons. However, it can be seen that a slightly higher percentage of directive acts involving medium-level impositions contained attenuating devices (74.1%) than did acts
involving small impositions (61.1%). This pattern is in line with expectations under the Brown and Levinson model. The attenuating device used most frequently in requests involving medium-imposition directive acts was Content-/Other-oriented downtoners (10 instances or 33.3%) and Hearer-oriented downtoners (7 instances or 23.8%). A similar pattern was observed for small requests: Hearer-oriented downtoners (15 instances or 23.8%) and Content-/Other-oriented downtoners (11 instances or 17.5%).

Table 8.21 Frequency of use of attenuating devices by Imposition: Office setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request Strategy</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Total Attenuated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need Statement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1/2 50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>14/34</td>
<td>5/7</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>20/43 46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6/9</td>
<td>6/8</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>14/21 66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>8/11</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10/17</td>
<td>3/3</td>
<td>8/11</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13/13</td>
<td>3/3</td>
<td>8/11</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>49/80</td>
<td>20/27</td>
<td>3/6</td>
<td>72/113 63.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (Devices)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.10.1.6 Overall weightiness of the imposition.

It is also possible to consider the types of attenuating features used in directive acts according to the combined components of P, D, and R. The data-base is small for making such comparisons. However, it can be seen in Table 8.22 that the pattern of use of attenuating devices according to the overall weightiness of the imposition involved in the directive act was similar to that found for the factor of Power on its own. Percentages of attenuated directive acts were highest for the weightiest (A.1: 88.2%), and least weighty (C.2 & C.4: 75.0% & 74.2%), impositions. Directive acts involving medium-weight impositions were less frequently attenuated.
**Table 8.22** Distribution of attenuating devices by weightiness of FTA: Office setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weightiness</th>
<th>Attenuated Requests</th>
<th>Number of Devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A.1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max. P</td>
<td>15/17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max. D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. R</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A.2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max. P</td>
<td>6/15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. R</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B.1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Med. P</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. R</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B.2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Med. P</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. R</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B.3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Med. P</td>
<td>5/13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. R</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C.1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. P</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max. R</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C.2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. P</td>
<td>18/24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Med. R</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C.3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. P</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max. D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. R</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C.4</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. P</td>
<td>22/31</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. R</td>
<td>71.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (N)</strong></td>
<td><strong>72/113</strong></td>
<td><strong>96</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>63.7%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 8.10.1.7 Summary of analysis of attenuating devices in terms of Brown & Levinson’s model.

The frequency with which directive acts were attenuated in the office setting was generally consistent with expectation under Brown and Levinson's model, in that increasing indirectness of the directive variant was associated with an increasing proportion of attenuated acts (i.e., with increased 'politeness'). The sheer number of attenuated features used within particular directive variants did not display a monotonic association with increasing indirectness of the variants, however.
With respect to the social dimensions proposed in Brown and Levinson's model, the use of attenuation devices was in the predicted direction for Social Distance and Imposition, with higher proportions of attenuated directives being uttered to low- rather than high-familiarity addressees, and for medium- rather than for low-imposition acts. However, the pattern for Power was not as expected, with similarly high proportions of directive acts to both High and Low P addressees being attenuated. This pattern of greater attenuation of directive acts occurred also with respect to the most and least weighty combinations of P, D, and R. The data-base from the office setting was not large enough to permit analysis of the complexities of the relationship between the use of attenuation devices and directness levels of directive variants. However, the description of patterns has shown the necessity of taking both potential contributions to the 'politeness' of an act into account.

A consideration of the distribution of attenuation devices in the directive acts observed in the domestic setting follows. The discussion provides a general contrast to the patterns found in the office setting.

8.10.2 Domestic Setting

8.10.2.1 Frequency of use of attenuating devices.

Fifty-nine per cent of the 182 directive acts recorded in the domestic setting contained at least one attenuating feature. For most directive variants where there was comparable frequency of use, the proportions attenuated in the domestic setting were of similar magnitude to those recorded for the office setting. The proportion of attenuated imperatives was 54.1% (versus 46.5% in the office), for imbedded imperatives it was 61.8% (versus 71.4% in the office), for question directives, 57.1% (versus 65% in the office). However, the proportion of hint forms that were attenuated in the domestic setting was lower, at 71.4%, than the 100% observed in the office setting. There was no clearcut association, in the data from the domestic setting, between increased indirectness of the directive form and likelihood of attenuation. Multiple attenuating devices were most frequently used in imbedded imperative variants (76 devices in 56 attenuated instances), but were also present in imperative variants (38 devices in 33 attenuated instances), question directives (9 devices in 8 attenuated instances), and hints (13 devices in 10 attenuated instances).
The husband and wife speakers in this setting used attenuating devices in their requests with different frequencies. Two thirds of the requests uttered by the wife were attenuated (68 instances or 66.7%), whereas only just over a half of those used by the husband (42 instances or 52.5%) contained an attenuating device.

8.10.2.2 Types of attenuating devices.

The lexical attenuation device, *H-oriented downtoner* (e.g., [B11]: *If you’d like to get out that oval-shaped pot.*) was the most frequently used form by both the wife and the husband in this setting (See Table 8.23). Indeed, more than half of the attenuating devices used by the husband (63.3%) were of this form, with the second-most-frequently-used form of device, *Content-/Other-oriented downtoners* (e.g., [B12]: *Just put them on top.*) occurring at a much lower frequency (14.3%). The wife, by contrast, used *Content-/Other-oriented downtoners* with similar frequency (24.7%) to that of *Hearer-oriented downtoners* (32.6%). All other devices were used with much lower frequencies.

**Table 8.23** Frequency of use of attenuating devices: Domestic setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attenuating Device</th>
<th>Wife N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Husband N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hearer-oriented downtoner</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content-/Other-oriented downtoner</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural Pronoun</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker-oriented downtoner</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tag Question</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address Term</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agent Deletion</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive Construction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discoursal Device</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Attenuated</strong></td>
<td><strong>89</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is possible to consider the types of attenuating devices which were used in association with different levels of R (Imposition) that were involved in the directive acts observed in this setting. Again, these patterns can only be suggestive due to the relatively small numbers
involved. It can be seen from Table 8.24 that the most weighty directive acts uttered in the domestic setting (those which were categorized as involving High Imposition acts) did not contain the highest percentage of attenuated request forms for either the wife's or the husband's data. For the wife, the highest percentage of attenuated forms occurred for Medium Imposition requests (73.9%), with both High and Low Imposition requests being observed to contain attenuation devices about half of the time. For the husband, approximately half of all request acts uttered contained attenuating devices, irrespective of imposition level. This pattern was not as might have been predicted from Brown and Levinson's model; however, the comparatively low frequency of high-imposition acts in the data might explain this result. If one examines the pattern of attenuation across the request variants within those levels of imposition for which there were relatively frequent utterance acts in the corpus, it can be noted that the wife tended to use attenuating devices at a similar rate for request variants involving medium levels of imposition (71.4% - 100%) and small levels of imposition (52.6% - 66.7%). In the husband's data for both medium- and small-imposition acts, higher percentages of imbedded imperative variants contained attenuation devices than did imperative forms (56.3% vs 46.2% for medium; 66.7% vs 33.3% for small).

Table 8.24 Attenuating features by Imposition: Domestic Setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request Strategy</th>
<th>Total Strategies</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Total Attenuated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need Statement</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1/1 100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1/1 100.0%</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>10/14 71.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Directive</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3/5 60.0%</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>19/26 73.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission Directive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0/1 0/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1/2 50.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1/1 100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0/1 100.0%</td>
<td>1/1 100.0%</td>
<td>4/4 100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>5/9 55.6%</td>
<td>3/6 50.0%</td>
<td>34/46 73.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (Devices)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.10.3 Summary of Attenuating Devices Used in the Domestic Setting

In the directives observed in conversations between a married couple in a domestic setting there was no clear pattern of association between increasing indirectness of directive variant and increasing use of attenuation devices. Thus, the data do not provide clear evidence to support the proposition that increased politeness of indirect directive acts is, in part, a matter of the presence of attenuation devices, as described by Holmes (1984c). The only evidence consistent with what would be predicted from Brown and Levinson's model came from the wife's data, where higher proportions of requests involving medium impositions contained attenuating devices compared with those involving low impositions. It was also the case that, overall, a higher proportion of the requests uttered by the wife in this setting contained attenuating devices compared with those uttered by the husband (roughly, two-thirds versus one half). Both speakers used *Hearer-oriented downtoners* more frequently than any other form of attenuating device, however. Another device, *Content-/Other-oriented downtoners*, was used proportionally more frequently by the wife than by the husband to attenuate request acts in this setting. These patterns can only be suggestive, due to the limitations of the data-base, but they do point to the need for more detailed inquiry into polite usage both at the levels of request variation and of attenuating-device usage.

8.11 Conclusion

Patterns of request-variant distribution and the use of attenuation devices within forms in two different settings have shown that, in respect of directives at least, politeness is not simply a matter of incorporating syntactic and lexical attenuation devices within such variants. Although there was some evidence to suggest that more indirect directive forms were likely to occur when the acts involved were rated as more serious, in terms of the face-threateningness involved, this was not invariably the case. The most indirect request forms - hints - were often used to carry out directive acts of comparatively minor seriousness (weight) in terms of the three factors P, D, and R described by Brown and Levinson. Furthermore, the role played by attenuation devices requires further investigation, particularly with regard to the effects of the range of different devices by which attenuation can be achieved, and also with respect to the effect of multiple uses of such devices within particular strategies.
The suggestion, put forward by Blum-Kulka (1987), that a concern with clarity may be as essential to considerations of politeness as is a concern for face, provides an interesting potential account for the pattern revealed by the preliminary investigation discussed here. The suggestion that it is possible to 'overdo' the indirectness of a negatively-affective act such as a directive, with the result that one is perceived as impolite, just as it is possible to err on the side of impoliteness by being too direct, provides an explanation of why, for instance, higher proportions of attenuating devices were not uniformly evident as additions to the more indirect directive strategies observed in the corpora. The issue of the relevance of concepts of clarity and indirectness to people's assessments of the politeness of request forms will be taken up in the studies to be described in Chapters 10 and 11. In the next chapter, I present the results of an investigation that employed the methodology of experimental manipulation of social-contextual factors using scenario presentations in order further to test predictions about the use of request variants.

1 The importance of participant observation as a method of data collection in speech-act research has been emphasized by Manes and Wolfson (1981) and Wolfson (1983, 1986).

2 The researcher sat at a bench to one side of the large office, at some distance from the working places of the office staff, and could not be seen by people approaching the counter to make requests.

3 Holmes (1984a) referred to the following sources of contextual information as important in the analysis of function: intonation and syntactic position of linguistic features, purpose and degree of formality of the interaction, the relative statuses and roles of participants, and the amount of shared background knowledge and experience they can assume.

4 Limitations on resources of both time and money in this study meant that the tape-recorded interactions in the domestic setting could not be transcribed in their entirety. As a result, exact word-counts of the amounts of speech produced by the wife and husband, respectively, were not available for comparison. The researcher's impression from listening to the tapes for the purpose of identifying and transcribing directive acts was that the woman spoke more frequently in this setting than did the man.

5 In all cases of comparison where cell entries could not be regarded as independent, significance tests of association based on Chi-square were not appropriate. However, although the data do not lend themselves to interpretation of significance levels, the size of apparent relationships involved can be reported using Cramer's $\psi$ statistic of association.

6 In Brown and Levinson's model, ranking of negative-face impositions in a particular culture involves "a complex description like the following:

(i) (a) rank order of impositions requiring services
    (b) rank order of impositions requiring goods
(ii) Functions on (i):

(a) the lessening of certain impositions on a given actor determined by the obligation (legally, morally, by virtue of employment, etc.) to do the act A; and also by the enjoyment that the actor gets out of performing the required act.

(b) the increasing of certain impositions determined by reasons why the actor shouldn't do them, and reasons why the actor couldn't (easily) do them". (1978: 82 - 3)

Using the example of someone asking for a 'dime' just outside a telephone booth as compared with asking in the middle of a street for no apparent reason (1978: 84 - 85), Brown and Levinson also pointed out that "the perceived situational reasonableness of the request enters into an assessment of its R value" too.

For data gathered in the domestic setting, the married couple ranked their own requests for relative imposition value in terms of the three categories: High, Medium, and Low as described in Section 8.2.1.

The similarity of the pattern of variant use for 'medium-' and 'small-' imposition directives may, of course, be a result of the artificiality of the categorization procedure. The distinction between so-called 'medium-' and 'small-' imposition directives was subjective and, furthermore, was carried out purely for the purpose of analysis. The resulting pattern may represent a type of discrimination that would have little bearing on how people actually assess impositions in normal conversational interaction.

Ervin-Tripp (1976: 38) described question directives as "directives which are not what they appear to be ... they give the listener ... an escape route, in treating the question directive as if it were an information question".

A general qualification applying to the discussion of the data concerns the fact that analysis of the effects of P, D, and R factors was limited to the combinations that were observed in the settings investigated. It must be kept in mind that the data did not contain many instances of certain values of P, D, and R. For instance, frequencies of Medium P, High D, and High R were low in the office setting and, in the domestic setting where the combinations varied, of necessity, only in terms of the R factor, frequencies of High R were again low. Research on data-bases of greater size and variety is required before general conclusions can be reached concerning the appropriateness of Brown and Levinson's model.

Decisions about the categorisation of compliance likelihood were based on the descriptions provided by Ervin-Tripp (1976: 40) concerning the circumstances that distinguished question directive from imbedded imperative use in her corpus. When there was "a substantial possibility that the listener cannot comply" because, for example, there is doubt about the availability of the requested object, or when the act was not one that was "clearly within the choice of the listener ", low probability of compliance was the classification employed.
CHAPTER 9

STUDY III
AN EXPERIMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL-CONTEXTUAL FEATURES ON PERCEPTION OF REQUEST STRATEGIES

9.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the social distribution of naturally-occurring request variants in corpora collected from Australian English speakers in two settings was reported. The present chapter describes a study in which request variation was investigated experimentally via the manipulation of social-contextual variables presented in the form of written scenarios. These scenarios depicted particular social relationships between interactants, and participants were asked to take the role of the speaker who was about to make a request that involved either a high or a low level of imposition. The data for this study consist of people's evaluations of situated request alternatives that varied in terms of directness.

It is assumed, in the explanatory frameworks provided by both Ervin-Tripp (1976) and Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), that people have knowledge concerning the expected forms of particular speech acts in particular contexts. In the present study, participants' ratings of the appropriateness of formal variants of a request act are used to draw inferences about the influence of social-contextual features on request variation. The experimental methodology permits the systematic variation of the social-contextual features that have been proposed in explanatory frameworks which, themselves, have their origins in the analysis of natural-language data. The question of how various features interact to influence perceptions of appropriateness in request use is of particular concern in this investigation.

It is not claimed that the data generated in this study using rating-scale measures of the appropriateness of forms in context represent the ways in which people make requests in real-life interactions. It was hoped, however, to obtain evidence concerning the stereotypical language forms considered appropriate in particular social situations identified by broad social and contextual factors. Such information can be used to test predictions from models of the situational determinants of request variation as proposed by Ervin-Tripp (1976) and Brown and
Levinson (1978, 1987) and, also, may be compared with findings from similar scenario-based studies of request variation that have been carried out using other language varieties (e.g., American English, Israeli Hebrew) as a base.

Another issue addressed in this investigation is the relationship between judgements of the appropriateness of situated request variants, and of their politeness. Researchers have linked variation in request forms with outcomes such as politeness and appropriateness. The communicative effectiveness or clarity of request forms has also been suggested as an important factor that underlies variation in use. In the present study, people's evaluations of the appropriateness, politeness, and effectiveness of request forms in context are compared in an attempt to disentangle the relationship between these dimensions. Another focus of the study is a comparison of women's and men's assessments of situated request variants. Before describing the study in more detail, a brief discussion of the choice of the scenario-based, 'role-play' methodology is presented.

9.2 The Scenario Method

The use of scenarios and role-play techniques as a method for testing structural hypotheses such as those that can be extrapolated from models of the situational determinants of request variation has long been advocated. Ginsberg (1979: 144), for instance, described the method as useful in 'structural' research that involved "discovering or verifying the patterns and sequences of events and processes within a particular type of episode, or in identifying the role/rule framework relevant to the episode". Likewise, Harré (1981: 156) held that structural hypotheses should be tested "by the replication of the reality of which one supposes one knows the structure". Earlier, he had described the method as follows:

In one application of the scenario method people are asked to give their views on the propriety or impropriety of certain courses of action in defined situations, in short to comment upon the scenario of an episode. This is exactly the process which in imaginative and reflective form an ethogenist would claim to be an essential part of the main generative process in social action .... The method of scenarios is the exact complement of the collection and analysis of accounts and can, I believe, perform the very same scientific function, in giving clues as to the paradigms of correct social action, and the rules according to which various actions and action sequences are decided upon. (1974: 154)

As reported in Chapters 5 and 6, a number of experimental studies employing scenarios to present hypothesized social-contextual determinants of request variation have been carried out.
In general, however, these attempts to replicate the patterns of social distribution for requesting that have been observed in samples of natural speech, and upon which explanatory frameworks have been generated, have produced inconsistent findings. The general impression produced by this research is that the available models of request variation present too simple a picture, and are in need of some refinement. It will be recalled, however, that many experimental studies have investigated a restricted number of the social-contextual factors (sometimes only one at a time) that had been described as influencing request variation in their scenario depictions. For instance, Hosman's (1978) attempt to replicate the pattern of social distribution for requesting that had been observed by Ervin-Tripp (1976), involved only two of the features that she had identified as important contextual referents: Rank and Familiarity. Hosman did not take into account the effects associated with the cost or difficulty of the request (Imposition-value in Brown and Levinson's model). Such an omission is of particular concern in light of Hosman's conclusion that considerations of politeness, appropriateness, and effectiveness constituted a single dimension motivating choice of directive variants in context. Although a particular form of request may be used when the imposition involved for the addressee is low because it is polite, appropriate, and effective, it is arguable that considerations of communicative effectiveness, for example, might become less salient when the request constitutes a substantial imposition.

It is also the case that most previous studies have used a very limited range of scenario-types and request-examples in order to operationalize the factors identified as influencing request variation. Furthermore, in light of the conclusion reached by a number of researchers that 'context-internal' features (that is, factors associated with a particular speech act relative to a specific situation) were as determinative of linguistic variation as broader social-contextual factors, it would appear that further investigation of the adequacy of the available models of the situational determinants of request variation is warranted. We still understand relatively little about strategic variation in request use, particularly in respect of the issue of gender and requesting. Few of the experimental investigations that have been carried out were designed, for instance, to examine the effects on request variation of gender.

The present study aimed to address some of the shortcomings of previous experimental investigations of the situational determinants of acts of requesting by presenting more valid
scenario representations of social-contextual features than has previously been the case. First, it presented a wider range of situations from real life, not simply a number convenient to permutations of one or two variables. Second, a greater number of social-contextual factors were depicted in scenarios than has been the case in many previous studies. Third, the gender of speakers and addressees in scenarios was systematically varied in combination with other social-contextual factors.

9.3 Method

9.3.1 Construction of Scenarios

A series of scenarios was constructed, based upon the types of settings in which Ervin-Tripp (1976) had made observations of natural conversation: office, hospital, and laboratory interaction, discourse between neighbours, interactions within libraries, schools and universities, at restaurants and cafeterias, in shops, and during bureaucratic exchanges. Thirty-six different settings were used in the study.

Each scenario was written with the aim of providing a realistic depiction of a situation in which one character, the speaker, required the assistance of another person, or wanted this person to do something for him/her. The interactions depicted in these scenarios were of a type expected to be familiar to members of the student population who participated in the study. The scenarios were written to illustrate different levels of four features considered to be important determinants of directive choice: Rank/Power of addressee, Familiarity/Social Distance of addressee, Degree of Imposition associated with a request, and the Nature of the task requested. Manipulations of the feature, Rank of addressee, occurred at three levels (high, equal, and low). Hosman's (1978) specifications for the construction of high- and low-rank relationships were followed here. This involved describing one character "as having a higher position in an organizational hierarchy and holding power over the other person" (53). Relationships of equal rank were also described in which both characters occupied identical positions in an organization or institution. The ages of all characters were provided in order to reinforce the rank relationship between them (high-rank characters were older than low-rank; characters of equal rank were of similar ages), and to facilitate the role-playing process. Indications of the relative age of participants are normally present in natural conversations, so
this information was provided in the scripts in an attempt to enhance the quality of the simulation.

**Familiarity** was manipulated in scenarios by describing the addressee as being new to the job or as having just arrived in a situation (low familiarity) or, alternatively, as having worked, or associated closely, with the other character for at least two years (high familiarity). In each case, a statement indicating that the two characters either knew each other well, or did not know each other well, was included in the scenario. The amount of **Imposition** associated with a requested action was manipulated at two general levels (high or low). Finally, the nature of the task requested was varied in terms of three broad features identified by Ervin-Tripp (1976) as influencing request variation in natural conversation: (i) the physical difficulty involved, (ii) whether the task was within or outside of the role obligations of an addressee, and (iii) the likelihood of compliance. Thus, situations were described as involving tasks which were either (a) difficult or easy to perform (in a physical sense); (b) within or outside of the normal role expectations for particular addressess; or (c) for which there was either a high or low probability that the addressee could comply.

The gender of the speaker depicted in each scenario was also varied to coincide with that of the participant taking the role. The addressee's gender was always depicted as opposite to that of the speaker. Thus, all of the evaluations in this study refer to people's perceptions of directive use in cross-sex interactions.

### 9.3.2 Validation of the Situational Dimensions: Rank & Familiarity

The scenarios were subjected to a series of pretests to ensure that they generated the appropriate perceptions of the rank and familiarity relationships between the characters. Two random samples of subjects from the same Australian-English-speaking², university-student population as the proposed role-play participants took part in this pretest. Each sample (n = 17) responded to one half of the original scenarios (it was considered that rating all 36 scenarios on dimensions of Rank and Familiarity might fatigue or bore subjects). Subjects received a booklet containing 18 scenarios, one to a page, prefaced by an instruction sheet explaining that the situations within it could be thought of as "pieces which set the scene for a dialogue" between the two people described. Subjects were asked to evaluate the relationship
between the characters described in these situations on the rating scales provided on each page.

Seven-point scales were used to evaluate:

1. the addressee's rank (very low /very high), and power (very little /a great deal), in relation to the addressee;

2. the familiarity and friendliness of the two characters (not very familiar /very familiar; not very friendly /very friendly).

To keep evaluations as specific to the situations described in each scenario as possible, question prompts for each scale contained explicit reference to the names of the S and H participants. To guard against the formation of a response set, the scale-poles and scales were randomly ordered between the scenarios. Each scenario appeared in a randomly selected order in each booklet.

Ratings on each of the scales were submitted to analysis of variance. The mean ratings generated for individual scenarios on these scales of evaluation can be seen in Tables 9.1 - 9.4.

The analysis showed that the Rank effect was significant on both the Rank and Power scales ($F_{\text{Rank}} = 323.98$, $F_{\text{Power}} = 200.31$, $df = 2, 576$, $p < .01$), and also on the Familiarity and Friendliness scales ($F_{\text{Fam}} = 3.49$, $p < .05$; $F_{\text{Friend}} = 13.61$, $p < .01$, $df = 2, 576$).

The Familiarity effect was significant on the Familiarity ($F(1, 576) = 1466.86$, $p < .01$) and Friendliness scales ($F(1, 576) = 719.19$, $p < .01$), as well as on the Rank scale ($F(1, 576) = 4.86$, $p < .05$). A significant Rank by Familiarity interaction effect was also evident for the Rank ($F(2, 576) = 6.11$, $p < .01$), Power ($F(2, 576) = 3.86$, $p < .05$) and Familiarity scales ($F(2, 576) = 4.33$, $p < .05$).

Comparisons between the mean ratings using the Scheffé test (Winer, 1971) revealed the source of the interaction. On the Rank scale, addressees in Low-Rank, Low-Familiarity scenarios were perceived to be of lower rank than addressees in Low-Rank, High-Familiarity scenarios ($Ms = 5.62$ and $5.01$, $CV_{\text{Scheffé}} (5, 576) = 0.557$, $p < .05$). On the Power scale, High-Rank, Low-Familiarity addressees were perceived as slightly more powerful than High-Rank, High-Familiarity addressees ($Ms = 2.80$ and $2.30$), although the difference was not significant. On the Familiarity scale, High-Rank, High-Familiarity addressees were perceived as less familiar than Equal-Rank, High-Familiarity addressees ($Ms = 2.51$ and $1.91$, $CV_{\text{Scheffé}} (2, 576) = 0.554$, $p < .05$).
Due to the massive main effects of the Rank and Familiarity manipulations, these interaction effects were not interpreted as constituting a serious confounding of the treatment variables. Examination of the means for the Rank, Familiarity, and Friendliness scales revealed that all but two scenarios had been perceived by subjects as representing the desired rank and familiarity relationships between speakers and addressees. These two scenarios generated slightly inconsistent ratings on the Rank scale, and were subsequently altered as described below. Both of the scenarios involved the depiction of a low-rank addressee (Low-Rank, High-Familiarity, Outside Role & Low Probability of Compliance, see Table 9.1). They received similar mean ratings as scenarios depicting equal-rank relationships, however. To highlight the lower status of the addressee in the two scenarios, the adjective "cadet" was inserted in front of "journalist" in one scenario, and "junior" was used to describe an "office assistant" in the other. The scenarios were then re-tested (n = 10) and, as they received ratings similar to other low-rank scenarios, no further adjustments were made.

Differences between the average ratings for High-, Equal-, and Low-Power were not quite as clear-cut as those across levels on the Rank, Familiarity, and Friendliness scales. Although High-Rank addressees were clearly perceived as powerful by subjects, the mean ratings given to Equal- and Low-Rank addressees were similar ($M_{\text{Equal}} = 5.25, M_{\text{Low}} = 5.49$). As the scenarios were clearly discriminated in terms of the three levels of rank on the Rank scale itself, and as the Power scale was not intended to be used as a distinct variable in the main study, this finding was not considered sufficiently contra-indicative to warrant scenario changes. Although the question concerning the relative power of the addressee had been included in the pretest as a measure of the strength of the Rank manipulation, it appears that it may not tap this precise dimension.3

In summary, then, despite the presence of interaction effects, all High-Rank scenarios were rated higher on the Rank scale than Equal-Rank scenarios which, in turn, were rated higher than Low-Rank scenarios. Similarly, High-Familiarity scenarios were rated higher (in terms of familiarity and friendliness) than Low-Familiarity scenarios. The presence of the interaction effect between Rank and Familiarity was considered to be an inevitable by-product of scenarios which attempted realistic descriptions of natural relationships between people.
Table 9.1  Mean ratings for 36 scenarios on the Ranka scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Rank</th>
<th></th>
<th>Equal Rank</th>
<th></th>
<th>Low Rank</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Familiarity</td>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
<td>High Familiarity</td>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
<td>High Familiarity</td>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Roleb</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>6.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Role</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>5.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult Task</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>5.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy Task</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>5.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low P Comply</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>5.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High P Comply</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>5.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRxF</td>
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<td>2.22</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>5.01</td>
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<td>MRank</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. High-Rank addressee rated as 1, Low-Rank rated as 7.

b. Strictly, these labels were not applicable to scenarios presented in this pretest, as requests did not accompany the scenarios. The request-scenario combination produces the appropriate 'Imposition' designation. However, the appellations are used here to allow comparison with later pretests, and with the main study.

Table 9.2  Mean ratings for 36 scenarios on the Powera scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th>Equal Rank</th>
<th></th>
<th>Low Rank</th>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>High Familiarity</td>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
<td>High Familiarity</td>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Role</td>
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<td>2.29</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>5.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Role</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>5.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficult Task</td>
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<td>5.12</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy Task</td>
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<td>5.24</td>
<td>5.35</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low P Comply</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High P Comply</td>
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<td>1.76</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.88</td>
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<td>MRxF</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5.25</td>
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<td>5.49</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Powerful addressee rated as 1.
Table 9.3  Mean ratings for 36 scenarios on the Familiarity\textsuperscript{a} scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Familiarity</th>
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<th></th>
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<td>2.06</td>
<td>6.00</td>
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<td>6.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Role</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>6.06</td>
<td>4.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult Task</td>
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<td>1.41</td>
<td>2.76</td>
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<td>6.06</td>
<td>5.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy Task</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>5.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low P Comply</td>
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<td>2.18</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>6.24</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>6.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High P Comply</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>6.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$M_{RXF}$</td>
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<td>2.31</td>
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<td>$M_{Fam}$</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.92</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a} High-Familiarity addressee rated as 1.

Table 9.4  Mean ratings for 36 scenarios on the Friendliness\textsuperscript{a} scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Familiarity</th>
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<tr>
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<td>5.94</td>
</tr>
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<td>Within Role</td>
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<td>2.76</td>
<td>4.82</td>
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<td>4.35</td>
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<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low P Comply</td>
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<td>2.47</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>4.53</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4.74</td>
<td>4.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$M_{Fam}$</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a} Very friendly addressee rated as 1.

9.3.3  Validation of the Imposition Variable

A second pretest was performed in order to verify that the scenarios generated the intended perceptions of the levels of imposition associated with requests. This could not be done by asking subjects to rate requests in isolation, as evaluations of imposition are fundamentally context-relative. As Brown and Levinson (1978: 85) pointed out, the "perceived situational reasonableness" of requests constitutes a major part of the assessment of imposition. Subjects were, therefore, presented with the complete version of each scenario, comprising a situational
description, a pre-request in the form of a statement which initiated conversation between the two interactants\textsuperscript{4}, and a request.

Four formal variants of the request-act were composed for each scenario: an imperative, an imbedded imperative, a question directive, and a hint. A random sample of 48 subjects from the same population as the role-play participants took part in this pretest. Each subject received a booklet containing 36 scenario-request combinations, each on a separate page.\textsuperscript{5} A different formal variant of each request act was presented in combination with the same scenario to four separate groups (n = 12) of subjects (again, to guard against the possibility that subjects might become fatigued or bored by the repeated rating tasks involved if all scenario-request combinations had been presented to one group). An instruction sheet at the front of the booklet asked the subjects to read the scenarios carefully, and then to consider the second utterance made by the speaker in each situation. They were instructed to consider this utterance as a request that the addressee perform some task, and were asked to evaluate this task on the following seven-point scales: High/Low Imposition, Difficult/Easy, Within/Outside Addressee's Normal Duties, High/Low Probability that the Addressee Could Comply.

Descriptions of the meaning of each of these scales were provided on a separate sheet, to allow easy reference when subjects were rating each scenario-request combination (See Appendix F).

Once again, the scales and scale-poles were randomly ordered for each scenario presentation. Ratings on the scales were submitted to analysis of variance. A significant effect for Imposition was found on all four scales ($F_{\text{Impos}} = 178.13$, $F_{\text{Role}} = 103.86$, $F_{\text{Diff}} = 141.80$, $F_{\text{Comply}} = 117.92$, $df = 1, 540$, $p < .001$). Mean ratings indicated that, overall, High-Imposition scenarios ($M = 3.62$) were rated as more imposing than Low-Imposition scenarios ($M = 5.42$). Other significant effects included:

(i) Nature of Task, on the Role ($F(2, 540) = 18.79$, $p < .001$), Difficulty ($F(2, 540) = 3.73$, $p < .05$) and Comply scales ($F(2, 540) = 4.40$, $p < .05$).

(ii) Familiarity, on the Role scale ($F(1, 540) = 9.67$, $p < .01$).

(iii) Rank, on the Imposition ($F(2, 540) = 5.85$, $p < .01$), Role ($F(2, 540) = 52.48$, $p < .001$), and Comply scales ($F(2, 540) = 15.70$, $p < .001$).

The interaction between all four of the treatment variables Rank, Familiarity, Nature of Task, and Imposition was also significant on the Difficulty ($F(4, 540) = 5.64$, $p < .001$) and Comply scales ($F(4, 540) = 3.59$, $p < .01$). Inspection of the tables of mean ratings\textsuperscript{6}
(Appendix G) reveals the source of these interactions. For example, on the Difficulty scale, there was some confounding of ratings for High- and Low-Imposition scenarios involving Low-Rank addressees. Further, some Low-Imposition scenarios depicting Equal-Rank addressees were rated more imposing than some High-Imposition scenarios involving High-Rank and Low-Rank addressees.

Rather than focussing on those scenarios which deviated from expectation in a strictly statistical sense, a more conservative strategy was followed. In an attempt to ensure an equitable baseline for the main study, any mean rating which appeared inconsistent with others within the same level of the factor Imposition was taken as indicative of a need for reconsideration. The following discussion of changes made to the original scenarios is thus not based on the results of statistically significant *aposteriori* comparisons. Mean ratings for all scenarios were scrutinized carefully in order to detect any deviations from the expected patterns at various levels of Imposition. Scrutiny of results on the Role scale (Table 9.5) indicated that the manipulation of the variable Role (whether the requested task was outside or within the normal duties of the addressee) was successful. All mean ratings for Outside-Role scenarios (overall mean = 2.06) were lower than those for Within-Role scenarios (overall mean = 5.20), as expected.

### Table 9.5  Mean ratings for 36 scenarios on the Role scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Imposition</th>
<th>Low Imposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside Role</td>
<td>Within Role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult Task</td>
<td>Easy Task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low P Comply</td>
<td>High P Comply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High R</td>
<td>High Fam</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Fam</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>4.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal R</td>
<td>High Fam</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Fam</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low R</td>
<td>High Fam</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Fam</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>6.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 1 = Outside Role, 7 = Within Role.

Results on the Difficulty scale (Table 9.6), however, indicated that the manipulation of the variable of Task Difficulty had not been completely successful. Although ratings of scenarios
depicting Easy Tasks were as expected (overall mean = 6.22), some of the Difficult-Task scenarios were not perceived as particularly difficult. These scenarios were changed in order to emphasize the level of difficulty involved in the tasks (e.g., by making the task more time-consuming for the addressee, or by requiring more skill to perform it).

Table 9.6  Mean ratings for 36 scenarios on the Difficulty scalea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Imposition</th>
<th>Low Imposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside Role</td>
<td>Difficult Task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High R High Fam</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Fam</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>4.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal R High Fam</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>5.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Fam</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low R High Fam</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Fam</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 1 = Difficult, 7 = Easy.

Results for the Comply scale (Table 9.7) indicated that the manipulation of the variable compliance had not been completely successful. Ratings of scenarios depicting tasks with a high probability of compliance were as expected (overall mean = 6.05), but ratings of scenarios depicting low probability of compliance, involving Low-Rank addressees, were as high as those in the High-Probability conditions. Changes were made to these scenarios in order to enhance the perception of low probability of addressee compliance.

Table 9.7  Mean ratings for 36 scenarios on the Compliance scalea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Imposition</th>
<th>Low Imposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside Role</td>
<td>Difficult Task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High R High Fam</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Fam</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>5.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal R High Fam</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>6.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Fam</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>4.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low R High Fam</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>5.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Fam</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>5.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 1 = Low P (Comply), 7 = High P (Comply).
The mean ratings for the more general scale, *Imposition* (Table 9.8), reflect the findings of inconsistencies for the more specific Task-Difficulty and Probability-of-Compliance scales, in that four scenarios - the Equal-Rank, High-Familiarity, & Low-Rank, Low-Familiarity, Difficult-Task versions, as well as the Low-Rank, High- & Low-Familiarity, Low-Probability-of-Compliance versions - were all perceived as slightly less imposing than expected. The changes made to the four scenarios on the basis of this pretest were re-tested (n = 10) and were found to produce lower mean ratings (indicative of higher imposition) on *Imposition*, *Task-Difficulty*, and *Probability-of-Compliance* scales.

**Table 9.8** Mean ratings for 36 scenarios on the Imposition scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Imposition</th>
<th>Low Imposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside Role</td>
<td>Difficult Task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High R High Fam</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High R Low Fam</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal R High Fam</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal R Low Fam</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low R High Fam</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low R Low Fam</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 1 = High Imposition, 7 = Low Imposition.

### 9.3.4 Validation of the Request Dimension

A third pretest was performed to ensure that the formal variants of each request constructed for the different scenarios varied in terms of perceived directness. Four request forms: an imperative, an imbedded imperative, a question directive, and a hint had been written for each scenario. Ervin-Tripp's (1976) descriptions of the characteristics of each form in natural conversation were used in producing these variants. Four groups of 11 subjects each received booklets containing instructions, and 36 pairs of sentences. Subjects were asked to imagine these sentence pairs as something "one person might say to another". They were also asked to consider each pair as "part of a conversation initiated by the person named in each case", for example:
Joan Green:  *Oh Mark, I forgot to buy bread at lunchtime. Get me a loaf on your way back please.*

Subjects were instructed to evaluate the second sentence on three 7-point scales bounded by the adjectives: *Direct*/*Indirect, Very Clear*/*Very Confusing, Very Likely To Be Understood*/*Very Likely To Be Misunderstood*. Statements elaborating the meanings of these adjectives were provided for the subjects to consult as they worked through their booklets (see Appendix H). These scales had been used by Hosman (1978) to measure the directness of messages. In addition, in the present study, subjects were asked to respond to the question: *How likely is it that the person hearing this sentence could fail to recognize that a request had been made of him/her?* Responses were made on another 7-point scale bounded by the terms *Very Likely*/*Very Unlikely*.

Subjects in each group evaluated 9 imperatives, 9 imbedded imperatives, 9 question directives, and 9 hints. The request forms associated with each scenario were allocated randomly to the four groups with two restrictions: (i) each group received an equal number of all forms, and (ii) the same variants from a particular scenario were not repeated twice within any group. The order of request-form presentation was randomized within groups, as was the order of scales and scale-poles.

The data were submitted to analysis of variance. A significant main effect for request form (*p* < .01) was found on all four scales. A summary of the analysis of variance on each of these scales is presented in Table 9.9.

**Table 9.9  Summary of analysis of variance for pretest of request forms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F&lt;sub&gt;a&lt;/sub&gt;</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>1132.94</td>
<td>220.23</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>398.17</td>
<td>162.31</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>403.74</td>
<td>123.61</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize as Request</td>
<td>699.77</td>
<td>202.29</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. d. f. = 3, 320.

Post-hoc comparisons<sup>8</sup> revealed the following pattern on all scales:

(i) Mean ratings for hints were significantly different from all other forms (*p* < .01);
(ii) Question directives were rated significantly differently from imbedded imperatives and imperatives \( (p < .01) \); 
(iii) The difference between ratings for imbedded imperatives and imperatives did not reach significance.

Hosman (1978) also failed to find significant differences between ratings of imperatives and imbedded imperatives on scales of directness, clarity, and likelihood-of-understanding. The finding from this pretest supports his conclusion that most people find these forms "equally explicit as to the user's intention" (80), due to their common use in everyday discourse.

The mean ratings of the four request forms were in the expected direction on each scale of measurement. As Table 9.10 shows, for all four dimensions; directness, clarity, ease-of-understanding, and recognizability-as-a-request, the mean ratings increased in the order: (i) hints, (ii) question directives, (iii) imbedded imperatives, and (iv) imperatives. Note that a rating of 1 represents a 'High' score on each dimension.

**Table 9.10** Mean ratings for pretest of request forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request Form</th>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Clear</th>
<th>Understood</th>
<th>Recognizability as Request</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>4.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ratings for each of the 144 requests presented in the pretest were also compared. It was considered necessary to examine the means for each of these requests on the various scales of measurement to ensure that each example of a particular request-variant was rated appropriately in relation to examples of the other formal variants (for example, to ensure that each of the 36 hints was rated as less direct than each of the 36 imperatives, imbedded imperatives, and question directives, and so on). Examination of the rank order of individual means was undertaken in preference to tests of the significance of the differences between means because it was deemed important, at a pretest stage, to identify requests that did not fall clearly into the intended category of directness.
Requests of a particular form which achieved ratings falling within the range associated with another category of request form were identified. Such requests were re-written in an attempt to enhance or diminish (as appropriate) their perceived directness. Changes were made to (i) eight question directives which had not been perceived as particularly indirect, (ii) two question directives which had been judged as being more indirect than some hints; (iii) five hints which were not perceived as sufficiently indirect; and (iv) two imperatives which had not been judged to be particularly direct. These changes were then evaluated by a group of 11 subjects who had taken part in the original pretest. Mean ratings for these 17 requests were checked to ensure that they fell within acceptable ranges for each category of request form before the forms were substituted into the relevant scenarios for use in the main study.

The greater variability of directness ratings for requests in the question directive and hint categories, compared with those in imperative and embedded imperative form, was not surprising. Ervin-Tripp (1976: 48) noted that "hints and question directives are forms in which there can be a wide range in the explicitness with which the speaker specifies what is wanted". Imperatives and embedded imperatives are more "obvious" directives in that, typically, all components of the request are verbally explicit. The degree of indirectness of the less obvious forms is a function of how much of what is contextually left open is made verbally explicit. The fact that contextual information was not presented with requests in this pretest may have made the task of evaluating the directness of question directive and hint forms particularly difficult.

Additional analyses were conducted to ascertain whether there were any differences between the ratings of directness for the 36 examples of each request type. Post-hoc comparisons between the mean ratings of imperatives revealed no significant differences in terms of their directness, clarity, likelihood of being understood, and recognizability as a request. Similar comparisons within each of the categories, embedded imperative, question directive, and hint also showed that there were no significant differences on any of the scales of measurement.

9.4 Main Scenario Study

This section describes the procedure for presenting the scenario-request combinations used in the main study. Overall, the design of this scenario study can be visualized as constituting a
matrix of 36 scenarios by four request forms. The 36 scenarios were originally developed around combinations of the social-contextual factors: Rank (3 levels), Familiarity (2 levels), Degree of Imposition (2 levels), and Nature of Task (3 levels). In order to achieve a randomized experimental design in which each treatment combination was equally replicated, the distribution of scenarios to role-play participants was arranged in the following way.

Twelve of the 36 scenarios were randomly assigned, without replacement, to each participant, with the constraint that three instances of each request type should also be experienced by every participant. Replication of this procedure allowed for different assignments of request types to scenarios until all combinations were exhausted. This was achieved after 12 subjects had each been allocated 12 different scenario-request combinations. This was analysed as a randomized design although, strictly, it has elements of repeated measures within it. This conservative analysis was deemed preferable because of its relative simplicity, and because the within-subject correlations were low as a result of the constraint imposed on subjects' responses by the use of seven-point rating scales.

9.4.1 Subjects

Ninety-six students enrolled in Psychology at the University of Adelaide whose native language was Australian English participated in the study. Eight replications of the experimental design were carried out, with equal numbers of male and female participants in each replication.

9.4.2 Procedure

Participants were given a booklet containing 12 scenarios on separate pages. The pages opposite each scenario bore sixteen 7-point scales (see Appendix I). The first six of these scales had been used by Hosman (1978). They were bounded by the adjectives: appropriate/inappropriate, relevant/irrelevant, polite/impolite, courteous/discourteous, successful/unsuccessful, and effective/ineffective (all except the last of these scales had been validated previously by Simmons, 1974). To this group was added one other scale bounded by the adjectives, tactful/blunt. Participants were asked to rate the second sentence uttered by the speaker in a scenario on each of these scales.
In using the next group of four scales, participants were asked to consider the speaker's second utterance as a request to the other character described in the scenario. This request was then rated as: difficult/easy, high/low imposition, outside/within the addressee's normal duties, high/low probability that the addressee can comply. The next pair of scales, bounded by very resentful/not very resentful, and very offended/not very offended, related to the question: How would you expect [addressee's name] to feel about carrying out the request?

A scale bounded by very likely/not very likely followed, and was used to evaluate the question: How likely is it that [speaker's name] would often make a request of this nature to [addressee's name]? The final pair of scales measured the familiarity of the speaker and addressee (very familiar/not very familiar), and the speaker's rank in relation to the addressee (high rank/low rank).

Instructions to participants were printed on the front page of each booklet (see Appendix J). The purpose of the study was also explained here, as "... an attempt to understand how people know what is the appropriate thing to say in the many different situations in which they find themselves in their daily lives". It was explained to participants that the situations they would find described within the booklet should be thought of as "pieces which set the scene for a dialogue" between the two people involved in each case. They were encouraged to imagine each situation as "a real situation with real people involved", and also to imagine how the conversation "would be spoken in a natural situation". In order to evaluate these conversations, participants were told that, at times, it would be necessary to "take on the role of the speaker and [consider] how the person in this role would say these lines". At other times, it would be necessary to consider how the conversation would sound to the addressee. To achieve this, participants were told to "imagine how a person in the role of the addressee would feel if someone said these words to her/him in a real situation".

Instructions emphasized that participants should take time over each situation: "Read each situation slowly and carefully to get the feel of what's going on". After having made an attempt to imagine the conversation in a real setting, the next part of their task was to evaluate the speaker's second sentence in terms of each of the rating scales on the opposite page. Inside the front cover of the booklet was a loose sheet containing a description of how each of the scales was to be interpreted (see Appendix J).
9.4.3 Results

In this section, the results of three analyses are reported:

1. An analysis of gender differences in the evaluation of situated requests.
2. A factor analysis of a mix of independent and dependent variables, some of which have been proposed as motivating the use of indirectness, some of which have been suggested as important situational determinants of directive choice, and some of which have been proposed as important addressee characteristics influencing choice of directive form. This analysis was carried out in an attempt to evaluate Hosman's (1978) finding that a single dimension, reflecting a "competence judgment" based on considerations of appropriateness, politeness, and effectiveness in equal part, motivated the use of different directive forms in context.
3. An analysis of results across scenarios. The aim here was to shed some light on the complex interrelation between proposed social-contextual determinants of request variation.

9.4.3.1 Analysis of gender differences in participants' ratings.

An initial analysis was performed in order to determine whether women and men differed in their ratings of the four request forms used in the scenario study. A series of one-way analyses of variance was carried out in which gender was the independent variable and ratings of the request forms: imperative, imbedded imperative, question directive, and hint were the dependent variables.

With respect to the imperative form, a significant difference was found between the ratings provided by women and men on the relevance \((F_{(1, 286)} = 5.34, p < .05)\) and imposition \((F_{(1, 286)} = 5.18, p < .05)\) scales. Men rated imperatives as more relevant and more imposing than did women. For the imbedded imperative form, the only significant difference between women and men occurred in ratings on the tactfulness scale \((F_{(1, 286)} = 5.29, p < .05)\). Women rated imbedded imperatives as more tactful than did men. For the question directive form, the difference between women's and men's ratings on the imposition scale was the only one that came close to significance \((F_{(1, 286)} = 3.65, p < .057)\). Men rated question directives as less imposing than did women. Finally, with respect to hints, significant differences were found on the courtesy \((F_{(1, 286)} = 3.84, p < .051)\), tactfulness \((F_{(1, 286)} = 5.16, p < .05)\), and
effectiveness scales \( F(1, 286) = 3.71, p < .055 \). Men rated hints as more courteous and tactful, but as less effective than did women.

These differences need to be interpreted with caution. In total, the series of comparisons between women's and men's ratings on each of the 16 scales for four request forms involved 64 F-tests. At the .05 level of significance, it would be expected that three or four comparisons should reach significance on the basis of chance alone. In view of the fact that so few of the comparisons yielded differences between the judgements of women and of men, it was not considered appropriate to pursue separate lines of investigation for each gender in subsequent analyses of the results. However, this decision was not taken under the assumption that such differences in the perception of request variants are unlikely to exist. Rather, it is suggested that the use of rating scales to explore people's knowledge of situated request usage is probably not a technique subtle enough to reflect the complex differences between the judgements which may be made by women and by men. It is possible, for example, that similar ratings may be given to a particular form in a particular situation, but for quite different reasons. It was therefore considered appropriate to pursue the analysis of possible gender differences in the communicative competence associated with requesting using a slightly different methodology (which nevertheless maintained the basic scenario structure of the initial study). The analysis of the accounts or reasons given by women and men for the appropriateness or inappropriateness of various forms in particular contexts was the focus of subsequent investigations which are reported in Chapters 10 and 11.

9.4.3.2 Factor analysis of ratings of directive variants on 16 scales.

One aim of the present study was to attempt to discover the important dimensions underlying people's judgements of alternative forms of request in various situations. To this end, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted, in which participants' evaluations of the various request forms were submitted to iterative principal-component factor analysis. An oblique rotation was performed, as Hosman's (1978) study had already shown that factors of Appropriateness, Politeness, and Effectiveness were correlated with respect to judgements of requesting. The factor solution is presented in Table 9.11. Taking eigen-values greater than unity as the factor-extraction criterion, a four factor solution was obtained. However, the
extraction of a fifth factor with an eigen-value of 0.961 was deemed appropriate, as it produced a more complete picture of the data (in that all 16 scale variables, or adjectives used in the rating task, then loaded significantly on at least one of the extracted factors). This decision was supported by Child's (1973) report that when fewer than 20 variables are involved, the criterion of unity for eigen-values results in a tendency toward the extraction of a conservative number of factors. The five factors extracted in this analysis accounted for 71.2% of the variance in participants' ratings.

**Table 9.11** Principal-components factor analysis with oblique rotation, 16 scales (N = 96)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scales</th>
<th>F1</th>
<th>F2</th>
<th>F3</th>
<th>F4</th>
<th>F5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politeness</td>
<td>.8589</td>
<td>.0077</td>
<td>-.0687</td>
<td>-.0042</td>
<td>.0113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtesy</td>
<td>.8975</td>
<td>.0173</td>
<td>-.0382</td>
<td>.0419</td>
<td>.0033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tact</td>
<td>.6167</td>
<td>-.0238</td>
<td>.0034</td>
<td>-.0288</td>
<td>-.0528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriateness</td>
<td>.2127*</td>
<td>.0125</td>
<td>-.5878</td>
<td>.0496</td>
<td>-.0490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>.0398</td>
<td>-.0225</td>
<td>-.6249</td>
<td>.0452</td>
<td>.0376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successfulness</td>
<td>-.0100</td>
<td>.0426</td>
<td>-.7964</td>
<td>-.0112</td>
<td>-.0392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
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<td>.0426</td>
<td>-.8284</td>
<td>-.0149</td>
<td>-.0614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Difficulty</td>
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<td>.8463</td>
<td>-.0015</td>
<td>.0024</td>
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<tr>
<td>Imposition</td>
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<td>.0726</td>
<td>.1377</td>
<td>-.0801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Expectation</td>
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<td>.1132</td>
<td>.0710</td>
<td>.6498</td>
<td>-.0301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P (Comply)</td>
<td>-.0454</td>
<td>.6534</td>
<td>-.2088*</td>
<td>.0203</td>
<td>-.0211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offense</td>
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<td>.1791</td>
<td>-.0336</td>
<td>-.0681</td>
<td>-.6908</td>
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<td>Resentment</td>
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<td>.3006</td>
<td>-.0865</td>
<td>-.0771</td>
<td>-.0840</td>
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<td>Likelihood of Request</td>
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<td>.0249</td>
<td>-.0091</td>
<td>.5680</td>
<td>-.0562</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-.0659</td>
<td>-.0176</td>
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<td>-.3085</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rank of Addressee</td>
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<td>.0212</td>
<td>.0537</td>
<td>-.3921</td>
<td>-.0202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Underlining indicates scales' highest factor loadings. All such loadings were significant at *p < .01.*

* *p < .05.*

The request variables of *courtesy, politeness, and tact* all loaded significantly (*p < .01*) on the first factor, which was labelled **Politeness.** The variable **appropriateness** also loaded on this factor (0.2127, *p < .05*). However, given Child's (1973) recommendation that either the
one per cent level or factor loadings of at least ±0.3 should be adopted as the criteria for significance, appropriateness was not considered to load significantly on Factor 1.

The variables of physical difficulty, imposition value, and probability of compliance associated with a requested task, as well as the degree of resentment engendered in the addressee, all loaded significantly (p < .01) on the second factor, which was labelled Imposition.

The third factor extracted consisted of significant loadings (p < .01) from the request variables effectiveness, successfulness, relevance, and appropriateness. The task variable probability of compliance also loaded on this factor (-0.2088, p < .05). The factor was labelled Functional Appropriateness, as it seemed to represent pragmatic considerations along the lines of (i) Bartsch's (1979: 20) notion of "appropriateness with respect to a perlocutionary goal", or efficacy in getting a task carried out; and (ii) Cicourel's (1980: 18) description of people's knowledge of "socially appropriate behavior in the pragmatic sense of getting things done".

The variables role expectation, likelihood of making a request, and rank all loaded significantly (p < .01) on the fourth factor. This 'bipolar factor' (Child, 1973: 48) seemed to represent considerations of the Customariness/Expectedness of Making Requests to low-rank addressees.

Finally, the variables offense, resentment, and familiarity loaded significantly (p < .01) on the fifth factor which was tentatively labelled Inoffensiveness.

9.4.3.2.1 Discussion.

The solution extracted in this factor analysis, which yielded multiple discrete, yet related, dimensions, contrasts with the results obtained by Hosman (1978) who reported that a single dimension could satisfactorily represent subjects' assessments of directives in context. In defense of the multiple-factor solution, two major weaknesses associated with Hosman's study will be discussed. First, Hosman provided no justification for his decision to employ a direct method of factor analysis in which the results of principal-components factor analysis were used in arriving at the final interpretation of the degree of correlation between variables. Child (1973: 51) questioned whether the reference axes from direct solutions necessarily produce "information which offers the most adequate interpretation of the variables under examination".
Hosman's preference for a direct, rather than a derived, solution based on the rotation of reference axes, requires some explanation. The second point of criticism relates to the experimental design. Hosman himself pointed out that the emergence of a single dimension underlying subjects' assessments of directives may not be generalizable beyond the scenarios used in his study. For example, he admitted the possibility that the scenarios "may not have been designed in such a way that subjects could distinguish among the appropriateness, politeness, and effectiveness of directives" (123). As Hosman made use of only four scenarios, representing only two social-contextual components, Rank and Familiarity, to investigate request variation, this possibility represents a considerable weakness in his argument. Scenarios constructed for use in the present study show that participants were able to make distinctions between a number of factors relevant to the evaluation of directives. Participants distinguished, in their evaluations, between the appropriateness and politeness of request variants. This finding supports Ervin-Tripp's (1976) view that the two dimensions represent different aspects of people's communicative competence. Furthermore, the obtained factor solution provided support for Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) model of the three social dimensions that determine strategic choice: the scales of Rank (Power), Familiarity (Social Distance), and Imposition each loaded significantly on separate factors.

9.4.3.3 Analysis of variance of factor scores.

Factor scores were built on the basis of the oblique solution using the Factor procedure (Kim, 1975: 488) which includes all variables to construct the factor scores, not only those with substantial loadings on a given factor. These factor scores were used as the dependent variables in a 3 x 2 x 3 x 2 x 4 (Rank by Familiarity by Nature of Task by Imposition by Request Form) analysis of variance. A significant five-way interaction was obtained, but only on scores constructed from Factor 3: Functional Appropriateness ($F_{(12, 1008)} = 1.89, p < .05$). A list of all significant lower-order interaction and main effects from the analysis can be seen in Appendix K). Only the highest order (5-way) interaction effect is discussed in detail in this chapter. The five-way interaction indicated that ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of a request strategy depended on the rank and familiarity of the addressee, as well as the imposition value and nature of the
requested task. Graphical representations of the interaction, arranged by different levels of Rank, Familiarity, and Imposition, occur in Figures 9.1 to 9.12. The results for each combination of Rank/Power (P), Familiarity/Social Distance (D), and Imposition (R) features are discussed separately, starting with the High P, High D, High R combination that represents, in Brown and Levinson's model, the highest degree of seriousness or face threat (from the equation for 'Weightiness': \( W_X = P (H, S) + D (S, H) + R_X \)).

**High-Power, High-Social-Distance, High-Imposition scenarios.**

On the basis of predictions from Brown and Levinson's model, off-record hint strategies would be expected to be rated as appropriate in scenarios that involved 'weighty' request acts, as hints are the most face-redressive strategic variants. Similar predictions might be made for the question directive form, another indirect strategy for performing an FTA. By contrast, the negatively-polite imbedded imperative form might be expected to be perceived as less appropriate for the performance of a weighty FTA, with the imperative form being regarded as the least appropriate strategic variant in the circumstances.

Predictions relevant to the High P, High D, High R scenario type can also be found in Ervin-Tripp's (1976) explanatory framework of the social distribution of request variants. Similar expectations with respect to the appropriateness of indirect forms arise from her observations that, in natural conversations, question directive forms were used to high-rank addressees to request difficult tasks (High P, High R), or when requests for which there was a low probability of compliance (High R) were involved. Hints were also observed by Ervin-Tripp to be used when non-compliance was possible or when a special service was required (High R).

Some support for these predictions can be found in the pattern of appropriateness ratings illustrated in Figure 9.1 (Tables of the ratings of the functional appropriateness of request variants in all scenario combinations can be found in Appendix L). In both the Outside-Role and Low-Probability-of-Compliance versions of this High R scenario type, question directive forms achieved the highest appropriateness ratings and imperative forms, the lowest. In the Difficult-Task version, imperatives were also perceived as the least appropriate request form overall, but imbedded imperative forms were rated somewhat higher on appropriateness than
question directive variants. In all three high-imposition scenarios, the appropriateness ratings of hint forms were not as high as expected under predictions from the two models of request distribution. However, this finding does not necessarily imply a lack of support for the models. It may be that such off-record forms are reserved for requesting more serious face-threatening acts/more 'special' services than were depicted in the scenario manipulations presented here. On the other hand, when considered in conjunction with evidence from other studies (e.g., Blum-Kulka, 1987; Holtgraves & Yang, 1990; see Chapter 7) that politeness and likelihood ratings for hint forms were not consistent with predictions from Brown and Levinson's model, it must be said that there is still some question as to the adequacy of available models of the distribution of these very indirect forms.

**Figure 9.1** Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in High P, High D, High R scenarios.

a. These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

The patterns of appropriateness ratings for the most weighty (in Brown and Levinson's terms) combination of P, D, and R factors (High P, High D, High R) can be contrasted with those for other High P scenario combinations:

(i) **High P, High D, Low R**;

(ii) **High P, Low D, High R**; and

(iii) **High P, Low D, Low R**.

A comparison of the appropriateness ratings for High P, High D, High and Low R scenarios, for example, revealed the following differences. In none of the Low R versions of
the scenarios (Figure 9.2) did the pattern observed in two *High R* versions (Outside-Role and Low-Probability-of-Compliance) of question directive as most appropriate request form, and imperative as least, emerge. Rather, in the Within-Role version of the *Low R* scenario, imperatives were rated most appropriate and hints, least; whereas in the High-Probability-of-Compliance version, imbedded imperatives were rated most appropriate and question directives, least (Figure 9.2). These patterns are consistent with what might be expected from Brown and Levinson's model of request distribution: more direct forms (imperatives and imbedded imperatives) being perceived as more appropriate for *Low R* requests and more indirect forms (question directives) as more appropriate for *High R* requests and vice versa with respect to directness and ratings of the least appropriate forms. (Although it must be said that high appropriateness ratings for an imperative form to a high-rank addressee were not expected, either on the basis of Brown and Levinson's model, nor from Ervin-Tripp's description of the social distribution of requests. It would appear that some features specific to the situation depicted in this Within-Role scenario contributed to the high rating for the imperative form.) In one scenario manipulation, Task Difficulty, similar patterns of appropriateness ratings for the *High* and *Low R* versions emerged. In both Difficult-Task and Easy-Task conditions, imbedded imperatives were rated as most appropriate, and imperatives as least appropriate, request forms. The pattern of imbedded imperative forms being rated most appropriate to High-Power addressees when the requested act involved an easy task or high probability of addressee compliance coincides with observations made by Ervin-Tripp of the distribution of natural requests.
Figure 9.2 Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in High P, High D, Low R scenarios

- These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

A comparison of the High P, High R scenarios across High (Figure 9.1) and Low D (Figure 9.3) versions revealed a similar pattern of ratings in the Outside-Role condition: question directives were rated most appropriate and imperatives, least appropriate. In the Difficult-Task condition, imbedded imperatives were rated as the most appropriate form in both High and Low D scenarios, but different forms were perceived as least appropriate. In the Low D scenario, the more indirect question directive and hint forms were rated least polite; in the High D scenario, imperatives were considered least appropriate. In the Low-Probability-of-Compliance condition, different patterns emerged according to familiarity manipulations. In the Low D version, imperatives were rated most appropriate, and imbedded imperatives, least appropriate; in the High D version, question directives were most appropriate, and imperatives, least. This difference is consistent with what would be expected under Brown and Levinson's model: greater directness being associated with Low D than with High D.

![Figure 9.3 Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in High P, Low D, High R scenarios](image)

- These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

A comparison of the appropriateness ratings for the most weighty High P, High D, High R scenario (Figure 9.1) and the less weighty High P, Low D, Low R (Figure 9.4) combination revealed no differences with respect to the Role Expectation conditions: in both Outside-Role and Within-Role versions, question directives were rated the most appropriate request form,
and imperatives, the least appropriate. Similarly, in both Difficult- and Easy-Task versions, imbedded imperative forms were rated most appropriate. The forms achieving the lowest appropriateness ratings were different however: in the more weighty scenario, imperatives were adjudged least appropriate; in the less weighty scenario, the more indirect question directive form was rated least appropriate. In the High- and Low-Probability-of-Compliance versions, however, the patterns were not similar. Following Ervin-Tripp's prediction, question directives were considered most appropriate when there was a low probability of compliance, and imperatives were rated least appropriate; when there was a high probability of compliance, imbedded imperatives were considered the most appropriate, with indirect hints being rated the least appropriate form.

![Figure 9.4](image)

**Figure 9.4** Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in High P, Low D, Low R scenarios

a. These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

**Equal-Power scenarios.**

Scenarios in which the Speaker and Addressee were depicted as being of equal power can also be compared in terms of the 'weightiness' of the combined factors P, D, and R. The most weighty combination: Equal P, High D, High R would be expected, on the basis of Brown and Levinson's model, to invite higher appropriateness ratings for more indirect request forms than would the relatively less weighty Equal P scenarios involving either Low D or Low R combinations. Predictions with respect to the distribution of request forms in Equal P scenarios can also be found in Ervin-Tripp's (1976) framework. Her observations of a
distinction between the use of direct imperatives to equal-rank, high-familiarity addressees when tasks were within the addressee's normal duties (Equal P, Low D, Within Role) and the use of imbedded imperatives when an equal-rank addressee was unfamiliar (Equal P, High D), or when tasks were outside an addressee's normal duties (Equal P, Outside Role) are consistent with the general association of increasing indirectness with increasing seriousness of FTA described in Brown and Levinson's model.

Some support for predictions from Ervin-Tripp's framework can be found in the pattern of appropriateness ratings displayed in Figure 9.5. The pattern of ratings for two of the three High R conditions in the Equal P, High D scenario combinations was similar. In Outside-Role and Difficult-Task conditions, imbedded imperative forms were rated most appropriate, and imperatives, the least. In the Low-Probability-of-Compliance condition, the most indirect hint form was rated most appropriate and, again, imperatives were rated least appropriate (Figure 9.5). This rating of hint forms as most appropriate under conditions of possible non-compliance coincides with observations made by Ervin-Tripp about the distribution of the form.

**Figure 9.5** Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in Equal P, High D, High R scenarios

a. These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

When compared with the ratings for High P, High D, High R scenarios in which question directive forms were considered most appropriate in the Outside-Role and Low-Probability-of-Compliance versions, the Equal P, High D, High R scenarios generated higher appropriateness
ratings for more direct imbedded imperative forms of request. In terms of this general comparison across the power dimension, then, the pattern of ratings can be seen as reasonably consistent with predictions from Brown and Levinson's model of politeness.

When comparisons are made between scenario combinations that involved Equal P interactants it is apparent that imbedded imperative forms were rated as the most appropriate request form in the majority of combinations (8/12 or 67%). In particular, in the Equal P, Low D combinations (Figures 9.6, 9.7), all but one scenario (Low D, Easy Task, in which imperatives were rated most appropriate) involved highest appropriateness ratings to imbedded imperative forms. This pattern does not display as clearly as might have been expected the distinction described by Ervin-Tripp between imperative and imbedded imperative use to familiar equals when high- and low-imposition requests were involved. It was also the case that in all but one of these Equal P, Low D combinations (Low D, Low-Probability-of-Compliance, in which imperatives were rated least appropriate), hints were considered the least appropriate form of request. In the High D versions of Equal P, High R scenarios, the more direct imperative forms were consistently rated least appropriate, by contrast. This pattern provides further support for the observation that very indirect forms such as hints are perceived as inappropriate when social distance is low, rather than being seen as appropriate, as Ervin-Tripp's description has it.

![Factor Scores](image)

**Figure 9.6** Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in Equal P, Low D, High R scenarios

a. These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.
Figure 9.7  Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in Equal P, Low D, Low R scenarios\textsuperscript{a}

These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

The pattern of ratings across versions of the Equal P, High D, Low R combination was not consistent with expectations from Brown and Levinson's model (Figure 9.8). By comparison with the more weighty Equal P, High D, High R combinations, more direct variants should have been perceived as appropriate in the less weighty Low R versions of the Equal P, High D scenarios. In the Within-Role version, however, question directive forms were rated most appropriate, and imbedded imperatives, the least; and in the High-Probability-of-Compliance version, question directives and imbedded imperatives were rated most appropriate, and hints, least. Only in the Easy-Task version was the pattern consistent with expectation: imperatives were rated most appropriate, and question directives, least.

Figure 9.8  Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in Equal P, High D, Low R scenarios\textsuperscript{a}

These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.
Low-Power scenarios.

In scenarios in which the addressee was of a lower rank than the speaker, all else being equal, it would be expected, on the basis of Brown and Levinson's model, that more direct forms of request would be considered appropriate than in the case of scenarios depicting High or Equal P addressees. Predictions with respect to the distribution of request forms in Low P scenarios can also be found in Ervin-Tripp's (1976) framework. Her observations that imperatives were used to subordinates to request tasks that were within the addressee's normal duties, whereas imbedded imperatives tended to occur when the task fell outside of such duties are consistent with the general association of increasing indirectness with increasing seriousness of FTA described in Brown and Levinson's model. However, another of Ervin-Tripp's observations from natural language data, that hint forms were also often used to addressees of lower rank when routine tasks were requested, does not coincide with the general trend described by Brown and Levinson.

Some broad support for predictions from Brown and Levinson's model can be found in comparisons of appropriateness ratings for imperative forms across scenarios differing in terms of the three levels of Power. Imperatives were rated most appropriate more frequently in scenarios depicting Low P addressees (5/12 scenarios) than in those depicting High P (2/12 scenarios) or Equal P addressees (2/12 scenarios). However, no consistent pattern of appropriateness ratings was evident within the Low P scenario combinations (Figures 9.9, 9.10, 9.11, 9.12). In the most weighty Low P scenario involving the High D and High R combinations (Figure 9.9), imbedded imperatives were rated most appropriate in the Difficult-Task and Low-Probability-of-Compliance conditions as might have been predicted on the basis of Ervin-Tripp's observations, whereas imperatives were rated most appropriate in the Outside-Role condition. Different request forms were rated least appropriate in each condition (hint in Outside-Role, question directive in Difficult-Task, and imperative in Low-Probability-of-Compliance).
Figure 9.9  Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in Low P, High D, High R scenariosa

a. These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

In the Low P, Low D, High R condition (Figure 9.10), there was no consistency across conditions in terms of appropriateness ratings. In the Outside-Role condition, imperatives were rated most appropriate, and hints least; in the Difficult-Task condition, hints were rated most appropriate and question directives least; and in the Low-Probability-of-Compliance condition, imbedded imperatives were rated most, and imperatives least, appropriate. Only the pattern of ratings in the latter Low-Probability-of-Compliance condition coincides with what might have been expected under Ervin-Tripp's description of request distribution.

Figure 9.10  Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in Low P, Low D, High R scenariosa

a. These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.
In the *Low P, High D, Low R* combination, there was some consistency in ratings to the extent that hints were perceived as the least appropriate request form across all three conditions (Figure 9.11). In the Within-Role condition, question directives were rated most appropriate; in the Easy-Task condition, imperatives and imbedded imperatives were considered most appropriate; and in the High-Probability-of-Compliance condition, imperatives were rated most appropriate. The patterns in the two latter Easy-Task and High-Probability-of-Compliance conditions are consistent with expectations under Ervin-Tripp's framework.

![Graph](image)

**Figure 9.11** Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in Low P, High D, Low R scenarios

a. These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

The least weighty combination of all, *Low P, Low D, Low R*, might have been expected to generate the highest ratings for the most direct imperative form under Brown and Levinson's model. This was so for the Within-Role condition (Figure 9.12) where the more indirect question directive form was rated least appropriate. In the Easy-Task condition, however, imbedded imperative forms were rated most appropriate (with hints least appropriate), and in the High-Probability-of-Compliance condition, hint forms were considered most appropriate (with imperatives least appropriate). The latter finding provides support for Ervin-Tripp's observation that hints often occurred to low-rank addressees when routine tasks were being requested.
274

Figure 9.12  
Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in Low P, Low D, High R scenarios
a

a. These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

9.5  Summary of Findings From the Scenario Study

Of the total 36 scenarios\(^{10}\) in which ratings were made, imbedded imperatives were the request form that was most often rated most appropriate, overall (in 19 scenarios or 52.8%). Imperatives (9 scenarios or 25%) and question directives (7 scenarios or 19.4%) had the next highest frequencies of being rated most appropriate, and hints (3 scenarios or 8.3%) were rated most appropriate least often, overall. This pattern is consistent with the findings of Hosman (1978) who, using a similar scenario-based method of presentation, found that imbedded imperatives were rated more positively, overall, than imperative or hint request forms regardless of the rank- or familiarity-relationship depicted. In another scenario-based approach that required participants to complete the accompanying discourse (D.C.T.), Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) also found that "conventional indirect" request strategies (i.e., imbedded imperatives) were the form of request used most frequently by participants, overall.

Although the numbers are small for making such comparisons, it is possible to say that the types of scenarios in which imperative forms received the highest appropriateness ratings relative to other request alternatives were consistent with the observations of Ervin-Tripp (1976) concerning the distribution of natural request forms, and with the model associating indirectness with increased 'weightiness' of an FTA as described by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). Imperatives were rated most appropriate relatively more frequently in Low P scenarios (5/12 or 41.7%) than in High or Equal P (2 instances or 16.7% each), and more
frequently in Low R (6/18 or 33.3%) than in High R (3 instances or 16.7%) scenarios. The scenarios in which imbedded imperatives received the highest appropriateness ratings were not distinguished by any particular social-contextual features. Imbedded imperatives were rated most appropriate with similar frequency in High, Equal, and Low P scenarios (in 6, 8, and 5 out of 12 scenarios, respectively), in High and Low D scenarios (in 9 and 10 out of 18 scenarios, respectively), and in High and Low R scenarios (in 10 and 9 out of 18 scenarios, respectively).

The low frequencies with which question directives and hints were rated most appropriate request forms makes commenting on patterns difficult. Question directives were rated most appropriate form of request only 7 times overall, (4/12 High P scenarios, 2/12 Equal P, and 1/12 Low P; 5/18 High D and 2/18 Low D scenarios). It can be noted, however, that question directives were not rated most appropriate more often in High-Imposition than in Low-Imposition scenarios (3 instances versus 4 out of 18 scenarios), as would have been expected on the basis of Ervin-Tripp's description of their distribution under conditions of low probability of addressee compliance, and Brown and Levinson's linking of indirectness with increasing weightiness of FTA. Hints were rated most appropriate form of request even less frequently, overall. Of the 3 instances, one occurred in an Equal P, High D, Low-Probability-of-Compliance scenario, and two in Low P, Low D scenarios: Difficult-Task and Low-Probability-of-Compliance. The pattern for hints rated as most appropriate with respect to the P factor does not coincide with what would be expected under Brown and Levinson's model where greater indirectness of form is associated with increased weightiness of an FTA (and increased P is one component of this). Evidence for the pattern of use described by Brown and Levinson was previously obtained by Blum-Kulka (1987) for hints in a Hebrew sample. Contrary to the pattern observed in the present study, Blum-Kulka found that hints were more often used to superior than to equal- or low-rank addressees. The pattern of results from the present study is not inconsistent, however, with Ervin-Tripp's observation that, in American English, hints tended to be used to subordinate addressees, although not always, it would seem from these findings, for making requests that involved routine tasks.
9.6 Conclusion

In this section, consideration is given to what the data suggest in relation to the specific research questions addressed by this rating-scale study. The general question of how the findings of such a study contribute to an understanding of ways in which contexts influence the use and interpretation of requests is also addressed.

(1) *What is the relationship between participants' judgements of the appropriateness, politeness, and communicative effectiveness of situated request variants?*

A factor analysis of people's evaluations of request variants on a range of variables produced a solution in which factors labelled Politeness (involving variables of politeness, courtesy, and tact) and Functional Appropriateness (involving variables of appropriateness, relevance, successfulness, and effectiveness) emerged as distinct, yet related, dimensions. This result contrasts with an earlier factor-analytic study performed by Hosman (1978) in which the three considerations of politeness, appropriateness, and effectiveness were found to contribute in equal part to a one-factor solution that he labelled a "competence judgement" underlying request usage. The finding of the present study, that politeness and appropriateness are, in a sense, distinct considerations that apply to judgements about situated request use supports claims made by Ervin-Tripp (1976) and others (e.g., Blum-Kulka, 1987, 1989) concerning the importance of distinguishing between these dimensions of evaluation of requests in context.

(2) *To what extent do women and men differ in their evaluations of situated request variants?*

The following differences between women's and men's ratings of request forms emerged from a series of one-way analyses of variance:

(i) Men rated imperatives as more *relevant* and *imposing* than did women.

(ii) Women rated imbedded imperatives as more *tactful* than did men.

(iii) Women rated question directives as more *imposing* than did men.

(iv) Men rated hints as more *courteous* and *tactful* but as *less effective* than did women.

In view of the number of comparisons involved in the analysis, the fact that so few differences were found between women's and men's evaluations was interpreted as an indication that methods of investigation permitting more subtle exploration of people's knowledge of situated request usage may be required before answers to questions about the
The nature of gender differences in this area of language use can be offered with any degree of reliability.

(3) To what extent do proposed frameworks of the contextual determination of request variation (such as those of Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and Ervin-Tripp (1976) predict patterns of evaluation of formal variants presented in scenario formats using role-play methodology?

The data from this study present a complex picture that makes it difficult to provide a simple response to this question. It was the case that the three social dimensions P, D, and R identified by Brown and Levinson as determinants of strategic choice each loaded significantly on separate factors in the analysis of rating-scale data for requests in scenarios. A significant five-way interaction involving variables identified as determining request variation (P, D, R, nature of task, request form) was obtained in an analysis of variance of scores on the factor 'Functional Appropriateness'. Due to the complexity of this interaction effect, the meaning of the patterns of evaluation for request variants in particular scenarios was not always entirely clear, however. There was some support for predictions from the models presented by both Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and Ervin-Tripp (1976) regarding the social distribution of request forms. The patterns of ratings were not always as predicted, however. What this outcome suggests is that, as found previously by Wolfson et al. (1989: 191), in evaluating requests in scenarios, participants were making distinctions that "could not [always] be captured by such broad variables as social distance and social dominance", nor by imposition, as had been proposed by theorists. So-called "context-internal" factors or local situational characteristics such as age of participants, degree of intimacy, frequency of interaction, optionality of relationship, liking, circumstances that would tend to lessen the inconvenience of compliance, and topic being discussed, or the request goal, have been identified by Wolfson et al. (1989) and other researchers (e.g., Blum-Kulka & House, 1989; Brown & Fraser, 1979; Coupland Grainger, & Coupland, 1988; Gibbs, 1981a; Tracy et al., 1984) as strong influences that contribute in intricate ways to people's evaluations of requests in particular situations. As Tracy et al. (1984: 532) concluded in a study of compliance-gaining and request variation, "status, familiarity, and size [of request act] clearly have some impact, but the number of other situational features that can influence the selection of strategies may turn out to be very large".
Returning to the general research question: How do the findings of a study using participants' evaluations on rating scales of request-in-scenario depictions of social-contextual variables contribute to an understanding of ways in which contexts influence the use and interpretation of requests? As the preceding discussion demonstrates, the use of rating scales to explore people's perceptions of request variants in situations defined by broad social-contextual features is informative. It revealed the necessity of distinguishing between considerations of politeness and appropriateness in discussions of what motivates situated linguistic choice. It was also noted that a rating-scale methodology might not be a sufficiently subtle device to reveal differences in women's and men's perceptions of situated request variants. The study also provided evidence of the influence of broad social-contextual factors on participants' evaluations of requests. Patterns of ratings for request alternatives were consistent to some extent with predictions from available models of the social distribution of directive acts, but some inconsistencies were also noted. The need for further study of the influence of contextual features on request variation employing alternative methods of investigation was apparent. In particular, the investigation of the salience and influence of "context-internal" factors (or situation-specific characteristics) would appear to necessitate a different approach from the gathering of ratings based on systematic manipulations of broad dimensions. An approach in which participants were encouraged to discuss their perceptions of request alternatives in particular contexts is adopted in the studies described in the following chapters in the hope of (i) gaining more insight into the ways in which contexts influence requesting behaviour, and (ii) providing additional information about the adequacy of available models of the social distribution of request forms.

1Copies of all scenarios together with the four formal variants of the request-act that was used in each case can be found in Appendix E.

2Only those who reported that Australian-English (as opposed to British-, American-, or other varieties of English) was their first language were included as participants in these pretests and in all other experimental studies in this research.

3Brown & Levinson's (1978) definition of the social-contextual feature 'Power' as based on control of material and metaphysical resources in particular situations was considered, however, to be consistent with the characterization of the variable labelled 'Rank' here. Similarly, Brown & Levinson's definition of 'Social Distance' as based on frequency of interaction was considered to be consistent with the characterization of the variable here labelled 'Familiarity'.

4A prerequest or conversation-initiator was thought necessary in each scenario, to enhance the naturalistic quality of the role-play. Participants were asked to imagine themselves making the
statement, and then following on with a request. It had been observed in the previous study of natural conversation reported in Chapter 8 (Study II) that subjects rarely began conversations with a request.

5Subjects were presented with all 36 scenarios in this pretest. The performance of subjects in the previous pretest of the Rank and Familiarity manipulations indicated that they could cope with evaluating more scenarios than the 18 they had been given there, without becoming fatigued or bored by their task.

6Ratings for the four request variants associated with each scenario were averaged, for the purposes of this pretest of the strength of the Imposition manipulation.

7'Please' was added to the end of every imperative constructed, as the bald statements appeared too abrupt in conversational contexts, and it had been noted in Study II that 'please' was generally added to imperatives that were uttered in natural conversations. Following Lim & Bowers (1991: 436), it was assumed that the presence of 'please' would not reduce the imposition value of the direct imperative, because it does not imply that the S does not have the right to impose on H as the use of 'please' in imbedded imperative forms seems to imply. Furthermore, as House (1989) has argued, 'please' is not a politeness marker but a requestive marker when used in association with imperative forms.

8Scheffé tests were used in all post-hoc comparisons made on the pretest data.

9It is acknowledged that the adjectives courteous/discourteous may not have been fully familiar terms to all of the subjects in this study. However, it was decided to use this scale in addition to polite/impolite in order to replicate Hosman's (1978) investigation.

10Frequencies of 'most appropriate' ratings for the four types of request form do not sum to 36 due to the fact that, in two scenarios, two forms were almost equally highly rated.
CHAPTER 10

STUDY IV
PERCEPTIONS OF THE POLITENESS AND LIKELIHOOD
OF USE OF REQUEST ALTERNATIVES UNDER CHANGING SOCIAL-
CONTEXTUAL CONDITIONS: AN INTERVIEW APPROACH

10.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reported a study in which request variation was investigated experimentally via the manipulation of social-contextual variables presented in the form of written scenarios. The data for this study consisted of participants' evaluations, on a series of rating scales, of situated request alternatives that varied in terms of directness. The results provided some support for predictions concerning the influence of broad social-contextual features on request variation as described in the frameworks provided by Ervin-Tripp (1976) and Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). The patterns of ratings were not always as predicted, however. This led to the suggestion that participants' evaluations of requests in context were influenced by other situational variables than had been captured by the broad dimensions of P, D, and R that had been manipulated in the study.

In the present chapter, the range and salience of such 'context-internal' features are explored using a variation on the previous scenario-based study in which participants' accounts of their choices and non-choices of request alternatives in specific situations (rather than their numerical ratings of variants on particular scales) are the focus of interest. A semi-structured interview technique was chosen, to enable the exploration of participants' reasons for particular request choices in particular situations. The technique permitted a focus on the meanings attached by participants both to choice and non-choice of request alternatives in particular situations. This approach to the study of contextual influences on language focusses more particularly on contextual features that have some emic status. By focussing on participants' points of view as a frame of reference for determining the relevance of contextual features it is hoped to build a clearer understanding of the ways in which contexts influence the use and interpretation of requests.
The 36 scenarios constructed for the previous study were re-used in the present investigation. Participants were again asked to take the role of requester in a variety of situations. However, instead of evaluating a particular directive on a series of rating scales, participants in this study were asked to choose, from a range of four formal variants, "the one that you would be most likely to say next, that is, the one that sounds most spontaneous, natural, and appropriate in this situation". Participants were also given the option of deciding that none of the available alternatives was likely to have been uttered. Additionally, participants were asked to nominate the most polite directive variant for each scenario. This permitted an assessment of Ervin-Tripp's (1976) claim that considerations of politeness do not underlie observed variation in the use of directive forms. If it were to emerge that, in general, role-play participants tended to select the same directive form as 'most likely' and as 'most polite' in a range of scenarios, Ervin-Tripp's claim would appear to be mistaken, and her context-based theory of directive understanding would be weakened.

The forced-choice methodology employed in the study has limitations. It cannot be claimed, for example, that choices of 'most likely' form represent what people would actually say in real conversational interactions. However, in the context of attempting to verify observations concerning the social distribution of particular directive forms, and in view of claims that such "norms of distribution" form part of people's communicative competence (Ervin-Tripp, 1976), this forced-choice method, and the associated interviewing of participants that such choices permit, can provide valuable insights when used as one component of a multiple approach to understanding requesting behaviour.

10.2 Method

10.2.1 Subjects

Twelve male, and twelve female, introductory Psychology students who were native speakers of Australian English participated in this exploratory study.

10.2.2 Procedure

The 36 scenarios constructed for the previous study [consisting of combinations of the three levels of the variable, Rank/Power (P), the two levels of Familiarity/Social Distance (D), the
two of Imposition (R), and the three of Nature of Task Requested] were used as the materials for this study. Each participant was presented with six scenarios in which the speaker's gender was changed, if necessary, to ensure it corresponded with that of the participant (the gender of the addressee was always opposite that of the speaker, however). Each group of six scenarios contained High and Low D versions for each of the three levels of High, Equal, and Low P Addressee. Combinations of Imposition and Nature of Task completed these assignments of scenarios to groups such that all 36 scenarios were viewed by four subjects in total.

Each scenario was presented to participants separately, on a single sheet of paper. Printed underneath the scenario were four alternative forms of the same request - an imperative, an imbedded imperative, a question directive, and a hint, labelled: A, B, C, and D, respectively (with the order of presentation randomized for each scenario). An example of a similar presentation format can be seen in Appendix E (where only the labels for each request variant and the randomized ordering are not shown).

At the start of the study, each participant was told that she/he was involved in an investigation into "how people make decisions about what is the right thing to say in the various situations in which they find themselves in their daily lives". Participants were asked to take the role of the speaker in each scenario. They were encouraged to read each scenario slowly and carefully before attempting to take on the role of the speaker. It was emphasized that the point of the role-play was for them to attempt to assume the role of the speaker by taking on the characteristics ascribed to him/her (as appropriate to participant's gender) in the scenario. They were asked to choose, from the four alternatives listed beneath each scenario, the alternative which seemed to be "the one that the speaker would be most likely to say next". Participants were informed that their responses would be audiotaped, and their consent for this procedure was obtained.²

Participants were allowed as much time as they wanted to read each scenario, and to make their choice of the 'most likely' alternative. When they had done so, a semi-structured interview took place, guided by the following questions:

1. *Can you explain why you chose [A/B/C/D] as the most likely thing that [speaker's name] would say next?*

2. *Why didn't you choose [each of the other three alternatives was asked about separately]?*
3. Which of the three alternatives that you didn't chose do you think is the least likely thing that [speaker's name] would have said next?

4. Why is this form least likely?

5. Which of the four alternatives do you think is the most polite?

6. Why is this form most polite?

If the participant's choice of 'most polite' alternative differed from his/her choice of 'most likely', this was pointed out, and he/she was asked:

6b. Why do you think it's alright to use anything other than the most polite form in this situation?

7. Which of the four alternatives so you think is the most impolite?

8. Why is this form most impolite?

If the participant's choice of 'most impolite' alternative differed from his/her choice of 'least likely', this was pointed out, and he/she was asked:

8b. Why do you think that [letter identifying request alternative] is the least likely whereas [letter identifying request alternative] is the most impolite?

10.3 Data Analysis

Tapes of the 24 interviews were transcribed by the researcher. The aims of the analysis of participant's responses to the scenarios were threefold. First, choices of 'most likely' request form were compared with the pattern of results from the previous study which had employed rating scales to investigate the appropriateness of request variants in context. The aim was to determine whether the inconsistencies between available frameworks of the social distribution of requests and findings from the previous study were artefacts of the rating-scale methodology employed in the study, or represented replicable divergences generated by the presentation of particular scenarios to a sample of Australian-English-speaking participants.

Second, participants' reasons for the choice or non-choice of particular forms were analyzed. Whereas the first aim was verificatory in nature, the second was exploratory. The aim of the latter analysis was to use the information provided by participants' explanations as the foundation for a more focussed exploration of the type of contextual knowledge that participants themselves considered relevant to directive use. In addition, it was hoped that consideration of participants' reasons or justifications might shed some light on the question of whether there were gender differences in the perception of situated request usage. Third,
participants' choices of 'most likely' request form were compared with choices of 'most polite'. The aim was to provide further evidence of the extent to which the two dimensions represented distinct motivations underlying situated request variation.

Participants' explanations of their choices (or non-choices) for each of the questions posed by the researcher were catalogued into reasons according to the verbatim expressions used. Examples of the coding process are provided below (underlining is used to indicate those aspects of the participants' responses that were coded into reason categories).

**High P, Low D, High R (Outside Role)**

**INT.: Most likely?**

**S2M:** [Imbedded Imperative]. *That's because she's that much older than him. I don't think he'd be ... he wouldn't be as casual as he'd normally be. Because he's asking her to do something to go out of the way. He'd want to be as polite as possible.*

Reasons for choice of the imbedded imperative in this scenario were identified as:

1. Greater age of the addressee;
2. Task out of way for addressee;
3. Politeness of form.

In the following example, the participant's reasons for choice of the imperative form were identified as (1) Informality of form; (2) High familiarity of addressee; (3) Low power of addressee; (4) Politeness of form.

**Low P, Low D, Low R (Within Role)**

**S5F:** [Imperative] *because it's sort of informal, the way she says it --- she's not saying 'can you' or 'would you' because she's known him for a while and because he's only an orderly, she knows that --- well, they both know that she's in charge, so he has to do what she says. And also, it's sort of polite as well. So it's got those three things combined.*

This method of categorization made it possible to code as many distinct reasons for the choice of a particular request form as were mentioned by a participant. Use of this method of verbatim translation for creating categories meant that a number of similar reasons were coded separately, rather than under a single generalized heading. For example, different categories were used for the reasons: *Orders and Demands*; and for reasons such as *Indirect* and *Form may not be interpreted as a request*. This procedure was adopted in order to generate categories that were reasonably close to the explanations used by participants. It was believed that the exploratory aims of the analysis would not be served by reducing, prematurely, the variety of
information contained in the accounts. The catalogue of reasons generated for use in this study is reproduced in Appendix M.

10.4 Results

To facilitate comparisons between the patterns of participants' choices of request variants in situations as obtained in the present study, and participants' ratings of these situated variants as obtained in the previous study, a similar format to that used in Chapter 9 for reporting of results is followed here. The pattern of results for each combination of P, D, and R features is discussed separately, starting with the High P, High D, High R combination that represents, in Brown and Levinson's model, the highest degree of seriousness or weightiness of face threat.

10.4.1 High-Power, High-Social-Distance, High-Imposition Scenarios

As discussed in Chapter 9, Brown and Levinson's model predicts that off-record hint and indirect question directive strategies would be more likely to occur in scenarios that involved 'weighty' request acts than would the more direct imbedded imperative form, and that the bald-on-record imperative strategy would be least likely in such circumstances. Similar predictions are found in Ervin-Tripp's explanatory framework, where question directive forms were described as being appropriate for requesting difficult tasks of high-rank addressees (High P, High R), or when there was a low probability that an addressee could comply with a request (High R). Hints were also described by Ervin-Tripp as being appropriate when non-compliance was possible or a service was special (High R).

The pattern of participants' choices of 'most likely' request form in High P scenario combinations is displayed in Table 10.1. In the most weighty scenario combination (Column 1: High P, High D, High R), the pattern of results did not coincide with predictions from the models. Imbedded imperative forms were chosen most frequently by participants as the 'most likely' form of request to have been uttered in these scenarios (there were three versions of the High P, High D, High R combination: Outside-Role, Difficult-Task, and Low-Probability-of-Compliance). This pattern was repeated in all but one of the High P scenario combinations: in the Low D, High R combinations (Column 3), the indirect question directive form was chosen
most frequently, overall, as the 'most likely' form of request, in line with predictions from the models.

The pattern of imbedded imperative choice as 'most likely' form of utterance in the two High P, Low R combinations (Columns 2 & 4) is also consistent with expectation. These Low R scenarios are less weighty than the High P, High R versions and, thus, do not require as much indirectness to minimize face threat under Brown and Levinson's model. Furthermore, the pattern is consistent with Ervin-Tripp's observation that imbedded imperatives were used to high-rank addressees when the requested task was not difficult and compliance was likely.

Table 10.1 Frequency of choice of 4 request variants as 'most likely' across High P scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<td>Low R\textsuperscript{b}</td>
<td>High R</td>
<td>Low R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. There were three versions of each High R scenario: Outside-Role, Difficult-Task, Low-Probability-of-Compliance.

b. There were three versions of each Low R scenario: Within-Role, Easy-Task, High-Probability-of-Compliance.

Off-record hint strategies were chosen as 'most likely' very infrequently in any of the High P scenario combinations. As was mentioned in Chapter 9 with respect to unexpectedly low appropriateness ratings for hint forms in 'weighty' High P scenarios, such findings do not necessarily constitute evidence against the available models. The same scenario depictions were used in the two studies, and it may be the case that off-record forms are reserved for requesting more serious face-threatening acts or more 'special' services than were described in these instances.

Reasons given by participants for not choosing the more indirect strategies of hint and question directive in the most weighty High P, High D, High R scenarios involved, most frequently, reference to the *indirectness* of these forms (on 3/5 occasions on which reasons
were given for non-choice of question directives; and on 5/7 occasions on which reasons were
given for non-choice of hints). For example:

**High P, High D, High R (Outside Role)**

S7F: [Question Directive]'s not direct, not direct enough anyway.
   You're not getting to the point.

**High P, High D, High R (Difficult Task)**

S10M: [Hint] is not direct enough. I suppose it's just another way of saying the same thing
   except he might not get the response he wants, not necessarily. Probably would in
   this situation but not .... It's just the difference between requests and sort of
   statements. In [Imbedded Imperative] he's actually making a request for help and in
   [Hint] he's just sort of stating that he can't do it by himself. He's not really directly
   asking any request. He could still get the same response, it's just not the accepted
   form of doing it, that's all.

Imperative forms were not chosen as 'most likely' form of request in any of the High P
scenario combinations. This finding is consistent with expectation under the models of the
social distribution of requests. Comparisons with patterns of choices in other, less weighty
combinations (i.e., involving Equal & Low P addressees) are necessary to ensure that there is
variation associated with social-contextual features rather than merely a broad preference for
some forms of request over others. These comparisons will be made following a brief
description of the reasons given by participants for their choices of 'most likely' forms of
request in the High P scenario combinations.

The most frequently mentioned reasons for choices of imbedded imperative forms as 'most
likely' in these High P scenario combinations included:

(a) *The politeness of the form*: This reason was mentioned by a minimum of 3 and a maximum
   of 5 participants under each of the High P scenario combinations (for a total of 14 instances).
   For example:

**High P, High D, High R (Outside Role)**

S16F: [Imbedded Imperative]. She's being polite and she's asking him in a straightforward
   manner.

**High P, High D, Low R (Easy Task)**

S1F: [Imbedded Imperative]. She's a lot younger than him and she's only just started and
   so she needs the politest ... sort of form of address.
High P, Low D, High R (Outside Role)
S3M: [Imbedded Imperative] ... because he's asking her to do something to go out of the way. He'd want to be as polite as possible.

High P, Low D, Low R (Within Role)
S10M: [Imbedded Imperative] because even though he knows the lecturer well, he's still a student, he still has to give some semblance of politeness.

(b) The familiarity relationship between the S and H:

Low familiarity was mentioned by 3 participants in High D, High R versions of the High P scenarios, and by 6 participants in the High D, Low R versions. For example:

High P, High D, High R (Outside Role)
S7F: [Imbedded Imperative] because she doesn't know him all that well ...

High P, High D, Low R (Easy Task)
S6F: [Imbedded Imperative]. She doesn't know him very well and he's her boss ... .

High familiarity was mentioned by 3 participants in the High P, Low D, Low R scenario. For example:

High P, Low D, Low R (Easy Task)
S7F: [Imbedded Imperative]. Well, she knows him well enough and there are no formalities and she just asks him politely, I think.

(c) The high power of the addressee: This reason was given by a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 3 participants under each of the High P scenario combinations (for a total of 7 instances). For example:

High P, High D, High R (Low Probability of Compliance)
S17F: Because he's the manager, she's a bit frightened of him. I would say [Imbedded Imperative].

High P, High D, Low R (Easy Task)
S13F: [Imbedded Imperative] I guess -- the very polite one, as he's in charge of the shop and because she doesn't know him.

High P, Low D, High R (Outside Role)
S2M: [Imbedded Imperative] ... because she's that much older and she'd demand respect, being the cook and that.

High P, Low D, Low R (Within Role)
S10M: [Imbedded Imperative] because even though he knows the lecturer well, he's still a student, he still has to give some semblance of politeness.
(d) *The fact that the form asked the addressee:* This reason was given by a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 2 participants under each of the *High P* scenario combinations (for a total of 6 instances). For example:

**High P, High D, High R (Outside Role)**

S7F: [Imbedded Imperative] *because ... she would have asked him, not told him, as she did in [Imperative].* "Could you ...", not "Call in ... ".

**High P, High D, Low R (Easy Task)**

S6F: [Imbedded Imperative] *it would be more reasonable for her to ask "Could he ..." rather than demand as in [Imperative].*

**High P, Low D, High R (Outside Role)**

S20M: [Imbedded Imperative] *because it asks him whether he will do something in a polite way.*

**High P, Low D, Low R (Easy Task)**

S22F: [Imbedded Imperative]. *It just asks for what she wants.*

Reasons given by participants for choosing the question directive form as 'most likely' in these *High P* scenarios (a total of 15 instances, overall) also frequently involved the *politeness of the form* (5 references to politeness occurred, in total, in the two *High R* combinations), and the fact that the *addressee was busy* at the time that S made the request (5 references, in total, in the two *High R* combinations). For example:

**High P, High D, High R (Low Probability of Compliance)**

S5F: [Question Directive] *because she's asking a question and .... she's sort of polite to him in that way.*

**High P, Low D, High R (Difficult Task)**

S18F: [Question Directive] *"Could you bring ...", in [Imbedded Imperative] he's referring to the action, I think, and in [Question Directive] he's referring just to thinking about it and it's not as definite, that's for sure. And in that sense, it's polite, I suppose.*

**High P, Low D, High R (Low Probability of Compliance)**

S1F: [Question Directive] *He's the editor-in-chief and also, he's obviously busy -- so he's not in a relaxed, sort of, humorous, sort of mood. So I think you have to be polite when asking him.*
10.4.2 Summary: High-Power, High-Social-Distance, High-Imposition Scenarios

The forced-choice methodology employed in the present study provided no more evidence than did a rating-scale technique to support predictions that indirect request forms would be perceived as more likely when weighty or serious request acts (defined in terms of high values of the social-contextual variables P, D, and R) were involved. It is possible, however, that this failure to confirm expectations related more to the nature of the specific scenarios used to depict High P, High D, and High R conditions (participants may not have perceived them as sufficiently weighty to justify the use of indirect forms) than to inadequacies in the available models of request distribution. However, the failure of other experimental studies to generate patterns of indirect hint usage that coincide with predictions suggests that the distribution of such off-record forms is one area of requesting behaviour that is in particular need of further investigation.

Predictions concerning the distribution of more direct imbedded imperative and imperative forms in High P scenarios were generally supported in both studies. In the less weighty combinations, imbedded imperatives were, as expected, perceived as appropriate, and imperative forms were generally considered not to be likely forms of request when speaking to a High P addressee. Reasons given by participants to justify their choices of 'most likely' request form provided some evidence of the situational features that were salient determinants of formal variation. The politeness of both the imbedded imperative and question directive forms was frequently mentioned as a reason for their choice as 'most likely'. Participants choosing imbedded imperative forms, however, frequently mentioned the high power of the addressee in justification of their choice of the form as most likely, whereas those choosing question directives frequently referred to the fact that the addressee was busy at the time of the request.

10.4.3 Equal-Power Scenarios

In this section, scenarios in which the Speaker and Addressee were depicted as being of equal power are compared in terms of the weightiness of the combined factors P, D, and R. As discussed in Chapter 9, Brown and Levinson's model predicts that indirect forms would be considered more appropriate in the most weighty combination: Equal P, High D, High R than in the less weighty Equal P scenarios involving Low D or Low R combinations. Similarly,
indirect forms would be expected to be considered more appropriate in the more weighty High P scenario combinations than in their Equal P equivalents (e.g., High P, High D, High R vs Equal P, High D, High R and etc.). Similar predictions stem from Ervin-Tripp's (1976) observations that patterns of imperative and imbedded imperative use were distinguishable in terms of whether the tasks requested of equal-rank, high-familiarity addresssees were within (imperative) or outside of (imbedded imperative) the addressee's normal duties, and whether the equal-rank addressee was unfamiliar (imbedded imperative).

The pattern of participants' choices of 'most likely' request form in Equal P scenario combinations is displayed in Table 10.2.

Table 10.2 Frequency of choice of 4 request variants as 'most likely' across Equal P scenarios

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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. There were three versions of each High R scenario: Outside-Role, Difficult-Task, Low-Probability-of-Compliance.

b. There were three versions of each Low R scenario: Within-Role, Easy-Task, High-Probability-of-Compliance.

In the most weighty Equal P combination (Column 1), the pattern of 'most likely' choices is broadly consistent with expectation under Brown and Levinson's model. The indirect question directive form was chosen most frequently as the 'most likely' form of request to have been uttered. In the less weighty Equal P combinations (Columns 2, 3, and 4), the more direct imbedded imperative form was chosen, by comparison, more often than in the most weighty scenarios as the 'most likely' request. Support for Ervin-Tripp's claim that imbedded imperatives and imperatives addressed to equal-familiar addresssees could be distinguished by the level of imposition involved in the requested task was not evidently supported in the pattern of choices shown in Columns 3 and 4. Although it was the case that the imbedded imperative
was the form most frequently chosen as 'most likely' under High R conditions (Column 3) as predicted, the imperative form was not chosen with any greater frequency under Low R conditions (Column 4). In fact, the more indirect question directive and hint forms were more often selected as 'most likely' under Low R than High R, Equal P, Low D conditions.

These patterns of 'most likely' choices in Equal P scenarios can be contrasted both with choices of 'most likely' form in High P scenarios, and with the ratings of the appropriateness of request alternatives in Equal P scenarios that were obtained in the previous study (as reported in Chapter 9). First, with respect to choices of 'most likely' form in High P scenarios of the present study (Table 10.1), it can be said that there is little evidence to support Brown and Levinson's claim that increasing weightiness is associated with increasing indirectness of request form. In three out of the four direct comparisons that can be made in which only the value of the P factor varies from High to Equal, it was the case that there was a higher frequency of indirect (i.e., question directive & hint) choices in the Equal P scenarios (e.g., Tables 10.1 & 10.2: Columns 1, Columns 2, & Columns 4). It was only for the scenario combinations: High P, Low D, High R and Equal P, Low D, High R (Tables 10.1 & 10.2: Columns 3) that the pattern of choices was as predicted, with more frequent selection of the question directive form as 'most likely' in the High P scenarios than in the Equal P, and more frequent choices of the more direct imbedded imperative form as 'most likely' in the Equal P than in the High P scenarios. Furthermore, although the bald-on-record imperative forms were never chosen as 'most likely' in High P scenarios, as might have been expected, they were only chosen twice, overall, in Equal P scenarios, thus failing to support predictions based on Ervin-Tripp's description of their use between familiar equals for low-imposition tasks.

Second, with respect to ratings of the appropriateness of request alternatives in Equal P scenarios, the findings from the present forced-choice study are more consistent with expectation for the most weighty combination. In the previous study, imbedded imperative forms tended to be rated most appropriate in Equal P, High D, High R scenarios whereas, in the present study, the indirect question directive form was chosen most frequently as the 'most likely' request to have been uttered in these scenarios. What these findings suggest is that the method employed to assess perceptions of situated request use has a strong influence on the results obtained. It should be pointed out, however, that the patterns of results generated in the
two studies were more similar with respect to the less weighty scenario combinations, where imbedded imperative forms were frequently rated as being most appropriate, and were frequently chosen as 'most likely'.

Reasons given by participants for their choices of 'most likely' forms of request in the Equal P scenarios can also be contrasted with those given to justify 'most likely' choices in High P scenarios. Starting with the question directive form that was chosen most frequently as most likely in the most weighty Equal P combination (and also with some frequency in other Equal P scenario combinations; a total of 17 instances, overall), the most frequently mentioned reasons for its choice included:

(a) The familiarity relationship between S and H: Low familiarity was mentioned by 4 participants in High D scenarios; high familiarity by 4 participants in Low D scenarios. The following reasons all occurred with the same, slightly lower frequency of 3 references each:

(b) The equal power of the addressee.

(c) The politeness of the form.

(d) The fact that the addressee was busy at the time of the request.

(e) The fact that the requested act was out of the way for the addressee.

An example of the latter reason is as follows:

**Equal P, High D, High R (Outside Role)**

**S9M:** I'd use [Question Directive] because it's not quite so much of a command. It's a bit more friendly and it's not putting her out. If she's going down there, well, she could get them, but I wouldn't certainly make her go out of her way for a packet of cigarettes.

In the High P scenario combinations, question directive choice as 'most likely' form was explained most frequently in terms of two of the reasons mentioned above: the politeness of the form, and the fact that the addressee was busy.

Turning to reasons given for imbedded imperative choice as 'most likely' in Equal P scenarios (a total of 19 instances, overall), the most frequently mentioned included:

(a) The politeness of the form: This reason was mentioned by a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 5 participants (for a total of 8 instances) in all scenarios except the most weighty Equal P, High D, High R combination.
(b) The fact that the form asked the addressee: This reason was given by a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 6 participants (for a total of 8 instances) in all scenarios except the most weighty combination.

(c) The directness of the form: This reason was mentioned by a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 3 participants (for a total of 6 instances) under each of the Equal P scenario combinations.

In the High P scenarios, imbedded imperative choice as 'most likely' was likewise explained frequently by reference to the politeness of the form, and the fact that it asked the addressee. The directness of the form was not mentioned as frequently as in the Equal P scenarios, however. By contrast, the high power of the addressee and the familiarity relationship between S and H were mentioned more frequently as reasons for imbedded imperative choice in High P scenarios than in Equal P combinations.

10.4.4 Summary: Equal-Power Scenarios

Patterns of participants' choices of 'most likely' request forms in scenarios depicting Equal P addressees were generally in line with predictions from available models of request distribution. The more indirect question directive form was chosen most often as 'most likely' in the most weighty Equal P combination, whereas the more direct imbedded imperative form was selected with higher frequency in the less weighty Equal P combinations. Patterns of choice did not support Ervin-Tripp's observation that imbedded imperatives and imperatives addressed to equal-rank, familiar addressees could be distinguished in terms of the imposition value of the requested task.

Reasons given by participants to explain their choices of 'most likely' request form in Equal P scenarios that occurred with different frequencies for question directive and imbedded imperative forms included, for the question directive, the familiarity relationship between S and H, the equal power of the addressee, that the addressee was busy at the time of the request, and that the requested act was out of the way for the addressee; for the imbedded imperative, that the form asked the addressee, and the directness of the form. The politeness of both forms was also frequently mentioned as a reason for their choice as 'most likely'. It must be noted, however, that a focus on being polite in requesting may have been a product of the simulation task that required a forced choice between request alternatives. Participants may have given
more weight to considerations of traditional politeness-etiquette in selecting their responses than they would have in real interactions involving natural conversation.

10.4.5  Low-Power Scenarios

In this section, scenarios in which the addressee was depicted as being of lower power than the speaker are compared in terms of the weightiness of the combined factors, P, D, and R. As described in Chapter 9, Brown and Levinson's model predicts that of the Low P combinations, the most weighty (Low P, High D, High R) should be associated with a higher likelihood of more indirect request forms than the relatively less weighty Low P combinations, but that, overall, more direct forms of request should be chosen in Low P scenarios than in their Equal P and High P equivalents. Similar predictions stem from Ervin-Tripp's observations that patterns of imperative and imbedded imperative use in requests to Low P addressees were distinguishable in terms of whether the tasks requested were within the addressee's normal duties (imperative) or fell outside of them (imbedded imperative). Her observation that hint forms were also often used in requests to addressees of low rank for routine tasks does not match with the general trend described in Brown and Levinson's model, however.

The pattern of participants' choices of 'most likely' request form in Equal P scenario combinations is displayed in Table 10.3.

Table 10.3 Frequency of choice of 4 request variants as 'most likely' across Low P scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request Form</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<td>High R²</td>
<td>Low R²</td>
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<td>Low R</td>
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<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. There were three versions of each High R scenario: Outside-Role, Difficult-Task, Low-Probability-of-Compliance.
b. There were three versions of each Low R scenario: Within-Role, Easy-Task, High-Probability-of-Compliance.
In the most weighty Low P scenario (Column 1), the pattern of 'most likely' choices is consistent with expectation under Brown and Levinson's model. Direct imperative forms were not chosen as 'most likely' in these relatively weighty scenarios. Rather, the more indirect imbedded imperative, question directive, and hint alternatives were selected by participants with similar frequency. In the less weighty Low P, High D, Low R combination (Column 2), fewer of the question directive and hint forms were chosen as 'most likely'; the majority of 'most likely' choices involved the imbedded imperative form. The pattern for Low P, Low D, High R scenario combinations (Column 3) is not consistent with expectation. All but one 'most likely' choice involved the indirect question directive and hint forms. Similarly, the pattern of 'most likely' choices in the least weighty Low P combination (Column 4) is not as expected on the basis of available models of request distribution. Although imperative forms were chosen more frequently as 'most likely' to have been uttered in this Low P, Low D, Low R combination than in any other Low P combination, the number of imbedded imperative and question directive choices as 'most likely' is higher than expected. The choice of hint forms as 'most likely' in these scenarios is consistent with Ervin-Tripp's observations of their use to subordinates for routine tasks (Low P, Low R), however, it must be noted that hints were not chosen any more frequently in this Low R condition, nor in the other Low R condition (Column 2) than in the High R versions (Columns 1 & 3). One possible explanation for this lack of support is that the scenarios constructed in the present study did not accurately represent tasks and roles as 'routine'. Although the requests formulated in the Low-Imposition scenarios were all of a straightforward, easy-to-accomplish nature, they might not have involved the same sense of 'routine' as had been observed by Ervin-Tripp (1976) in her original study.

Furthermore, support for Ervin-Tripp's claim that imbedded imperative and imperative use to Low P addressees could be distinguished by the level of imposition involved in the requested task was not evident in the pattern of choices shown in Columns 3 and 4. Although imperatives were more frequent under Low R conditions, as expected, imbedded imperative forms were also chosen more often as 'most likely' in Low R than in High R scenarios.

The patterns of most likely choices in Low P scenarios can be contrasted both with choices of 'most likely' form in High and Equal P scenarios, and with the ratings of the appropriateness of request alternatives in Low P scenarios that were obtained in the previous study (reported in
Chapter 9). First, with respect to choices of 'most likely' form across High, Equal, and Low P scenarios (Tables 10.1, 10.2, & 10.3), it must be said that there is little clear evidence from participants' choices of 'most likely' request form to support Brown and Levinson's claim that increasing weightiness is associated with increasing indirectness of form. Of the four direct comparisons that can be made in which only the value of the P factor varies from High to Equal to Low, none of the patterns of direct and indirect 'most likely' choices follows the broad trend depicted under their model. For instance, in the comparison across High D, High R scenarios varying in P, it was the case that there was a higher frequency of indirect (i.e., question directive & hint) choices as 'most likely' in the less weighty Equal and Low P conditions than in the High P condition (and conversely, a higher frequency of direct (imperative & imbedded imperative) 'most likely' choices in High P than in Equal and Low P conditions), contrary to expectations. The same pattern occurred in comparisons across Low D, Low R scenarios.

In the High D, Low R combinations, by contrast, similar frequencies of indirect (question directive & hint) and direct (imperative & imbedded imperative) 'most likely' choices occurred in High, Equal, and Low P scenarios. Finally, in the Low D, High R combinations, a different pattern, again, emerged. Higher frequencies of indirect (question directive & hint) 'most likely' choices occurred in High and Low P scenarios than in Equal P (and, conversely, a higher frequency of direct (imperative & imbedded imperative 'most likely' choices in Equal P than in High or Low P scenarios). The pattern is more in line with predictions under Wolfson's (1988) Bulge theory (as described in Chapter 6), that describes differences in the forms of language used to status unequals (High & Low P addressees) and status-equal friends, co-workers, and acquaintances (Equal P addressees).

Second, with respect to ratings of appropriateness of request alternatives in Low P scenarios, the findings from the present study are more consistent with expectations for the most weighty combination. In the previous study, imbedded imperatives and imperatives were rated most appropriate in Low P, High D, High R scenarios, whereas the more indirect question directive and hint forms were often selected, along with imbedded imperatives, as 'most likely' to have been uttered in these scenarios. In the other, less weighty Low P scenario combinations, the patterns of appropriateness ratings and 'most likely' choices did not show a great deal of consistency. Again, there is evidence to suggest that in experimental studies,
different methodologies generate different outcomes with respect to perceptions of situated request use.

Reasons given by participants for their choices of 'most likely' forms of request in the Low P scenarios can be contrasted with those given to justify 'most likely' choices in High and Equal P scenarios. Starting with the imbedded imperative form that was chosen more often as 'most likely' request alternative in Low P scenarios (a total of 16 instances), the most frequently mentioned reasons for its choice included:

(a) The politeness of the form: This reason was only mentioned by participants in the Low P, Low R scenario combinations: 4 times in the High D condition, and 3 times in the Low D.

(b) The low power of the addressee: This reason was given by a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 3 participants (a total of 6 instances) in all scenarios except Low P, Low D, High R. Examples are as follows:

**Low P, High D, High R (Outside Role)**

S3M: [Imbedded Imperative]. ... She's just a junior.

**Low P, High D, Low R (Easy Task)**

S2M: [Imbedded Imperative]. ... She's just a trainee stewardess ... He's saying specifically what he wants in a way that um keeps her in her place.

**Low P, Low D, Low R (Within Role)**

S15M: [Imbedded Imperative]. ... if the nurse in charge doesn't act authoritarianly, he probably won't get ... be able to handle the patients and things like this.

In both the High and Equal P scenarios, imbedded imperative choice as 'most likely' was also justified frequently by reference to the politeness of the form. The fact that the imbedded imperative form asked the addressee was also mentioned frequently in High and Equal P scenarios but was only referred to by one participant in Low P scenarios.

Turning to choices of question directive form as 'most likely' in Low P scenarios (a total of 15 instances, overall), the most frequently mentioned reasons included:

(a) The fact that the form gave the addressee an option to refuse: This reason was given by a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 2 participants (for a total of 5 instances) under each of the Low P scenario combinations. For example:

**Low P, High D, High R (Low Probability of Compliance)**

S4F: [Question Directive]. ... I don't know, it's just that when I ask for things, I don't ask for what I'm looking for, I ask a sort of preliminary question before I ... like if you
say "Do you have any spaces left in the underground carpark?" -- if they say "Yes", then you can say "Could I please have a permit?". And if they say "No", you say "Thank you very much.", and leave.

Low P, High D, Low R (High Probability of Compliance)
S12F: [Question Directive]. ... if she asks him "Do you know how to do it?", she's asking him to do it, but also giving him the chance to say "No", he doesn't.

Low P, Low D, High R (Outside Role)
S16F: [Question Directive]. [Imbedded Imperative] was the other choice I had but ... that's alright except doesn't really give him a choice, 'cause he can't really say "No" to her. Just that [Question Directive] seems, I don't know, I just picked [Question Directive]. Just gives more of a choice for him to say "No, I won't be passing a deli, but do you want me to get you anything?"

Low P, Low D, Low R (High Probability of Compliance)
S13F: [Question Directive] is showing that she is the editor, but she's asking him, therefore he's got the option to say that he might have something else to do.

(b) The fact that the requested task was out of the way for the addressee: This reason was given by 4 participants in total, all in the Low P, Low D, High R scenario combinations.

For example:

Low P, Low D, High R (Outside Role)
S6F: [Question Directive]. She would have to ask him whether he is going to pass a deli on his way back, and if it would be convenient for him to pick it up for her. It may not be.

Low P, Low D, High R (Outside Role)
S13F: [Question Directive]. Well, I wouldn't really want people to go out of their way and for him to offer.

(c) The high familiarity of the addressee: This reason was given by 4 participants, 2 in each of the Low P, Low D scenario combinations.

(d) The politeness of the form: This reason was given by 3 participants in the Low P, Low D, Low R scenario combination.

In both the High P and Equal P scenarios, the latter reason was mentioned frequently to justify question directive choice as 'most likely'. The fact that the requested task was out of the way for the addressee was also given frequently as a reason by participants in Equal P scenarios.
Finally, choices of hint forms as 'most likely' in Low P scenarios (a total of 13 instances, overall) can be examined in terms of the reasons given by participants. Two reasons occurred with some frequency:

(a) *The low power of the addressee:* This reason was given by a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 4 participants (for a total of 7 instances) in all scenarios except Low P, High D, Low R. For example:

**Low P, High D, High R (Outside Role)**

**S10M:** *If the situation hadn't occurred before where he had to ask this person to do something, he'd say [Hint] because that would put the woman into a situation ... into a position to do something about it, because she's in a subordinate role ... subordinate position to the manager. He's the manager of the bank. She'd probably lose her job otherwise.*

**Low P, High D, High R (Low Probability of Compliance)**

**S9M:** *As far as I'm concerned, even though it's not theoretically most polite, I'd probably say [Hint], cause it's a fairly informal statement and if you knew her fairly well, it's the sort of thing --chit chat -- you wouldn't be quite so worried about doing the right thing if she's the tea lady whom you've known for a fair while and who's been working there for ages.*

**Low P, Low D, Low R (High Probability of Compliance)**

**S4F:** *[Hint]. The others, coupled with what comes before them seem too overdone, too polite. Although they're friends, she still is in authority and I don't think that she'd be quite that informal and too polite.*

(b) *The familiarity relationship between the S and H:* High familiarity was mentioned by 5 participants, and low familiarity by 3 participants.

In High P scenarios, hints were chosen as 'most likely' sufficiently infrequently (a total of 5 instances) that the search for patterns in participants' reasons was not possible. In Equal P scenarios, the frequency of hint as 'most likely' choice was higher (a total of 10 instances), and the reason mentioned most often by participants to justify their choice was that the form would *bring the addressee into conversation with the speaker* (3 participants mentioned this in Equal P, High D scenarios). For example:

**Equal P, High D, Low R (High Probability of Compliance)**

**S17F:** *[Hint]. *... Oh, it's more conversational. It's trying to make conversation and the others, well ... she doesn't know him very well. she might *want to get to know him very well and ... they're not conversational.*
This aspect of hint use was not mentioned by participants in scenarios involving High D, Low P combinations, however. The fact that the hint form of directive may be chosen as an 'icebreaker' when addressing an unfamiliar addressee because of its conversation-initiation properties was not commented upon by Ervin-Tripp (1976). She observed that hints, because of their indirectness, would be appropriate between familiar rather than unfamiliar interactants because hints required shared knowledge in order to be successfully interpreted.

10.4.6 Summary: Low-Power Scenarios

Patterns of participants' choices of 'most likely' forms in scenarios depicting Low P addressees were, to some extent, consistent with expectations based on available models of request distribution. In the most weighty Low P, High D, High R combination, the relatively indirect imbedded imperative, question directive, and the off-record hint forms were chosen with equal frequency as most likely to have been uttered. In the less weighty Low R version of this combination, imbedded imperative forms were chosen much more frequently as 'most likely' than were the more indirect strategies. Patterns in the two Low D, Low P scenarios (High and Low R) provided some support for Brown and Levinson's claim that increasing directness is associated with decreasing weightiness of an FTA in that imperatives were more frequently chosen as 'most likely' in the least weighty Low P scenario combination. However, patterns of choice did not strongly support Ervin-Tripp's observation that imbedded imperative and imperative use to Low P addressees could be distinguished in terms of the imposition value of the requested task.

Reasons given by participants to justify choices of 'most likely' request form in Low P scenarios that occurred with different frequencies for imbedded imperative, question directive, and hint forms included: the politeness of the form for imbedded imperative and question directive forms; the low power of the addressee for imbedded imperative and hint forms; the familiarity relationship between the S and H for question directives and hints; and for question directives, the fact that the form gave the addressee an option to refuse, and that the task was out of the way for the addressee.

Comparisons of the pattern of 'most likely' choice across similar High, Equal, and Low P scenario combinations did not fit predictions under Brown and Levinson's model that increased
indirectness of form would be associated with increased weightiness of an FTA. Finally, comparisons of forced-choice and rating-scale methodologies with respect to obtained patterns of request variation revealed that participants' choices were more consistent with expectations for the most weighty combination than were their scaled evaluations. Patterns for the less weighty Low P combinations were not consistent across the two methods, suggesting that in experimental studies of situated request use, the methodology used to assess participants' perceptions plays an important role in the types of findings that are generated.

10.4.7 Patterns of Strategy Choice Across Scenarios

Another way of looking at participants' choices of 'most likely' request form in scenarios that differed in terms of the features P, D, and R involves examining the patterns produced for each request variant separately across the full range of scenarios. For the imperative form, for instance (Table 10.4), it can be seen that the frequency of choice was low, overall (6 instances in 144 possible occasions of choice, or 4.2% of all choices), and was restricted to scenarios depicting Equal-Power, Low-Social-Distance (2) and Low-Power, Low-Imposition (4) combinations. This pattern is consistent with Ervin-Tripp's observation that imperatives were used to familiar equals and subordinates.

Table 10.4 Distribution of Imperative choices as 'most likely' form of request across all scenarios

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<tr>
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<th>Equal P</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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For imbedded imperative forms (Table 10.5) the overall frequency of 'most likely' choice was the highest of the four request alternatives provided (63 out of 144 possible choices or 43.8%). Imbedded imperatives were chosen as 'most likely' more frequently in High P scenarios (28 choices or 44.4%) than in Equal P (19 choices or 30.2%) or Low P (16 choices or 25.4%) scenarios. Imbedded imperative choices were also slightly more frequent, overall, in High D (36 choices or 57.1%) than in Low D (27 choices or 42.9%) scenarios, and in Low
R scenarios (39 choices or 61.9%) than in High R (24 choices or 38.1%). This pattern of imbedded imperative predominance under conditions of High P, High D, and Low R is consistent with Ervin-Tripp's (1976) observations about the distribution of the form. As was the case for the bald-on-record imperative form (3 female, & 3 male choices), the overall frequency of female and male choice of imbedded imperative as 'most likely' form across scenarios was almost equal (32 female, 31 male).

Table 10.5 Distribution of Imbedded Imperative choices as 'most likely' form of request across all scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High P</th>
<th>Equal P</th>
<th>Low P</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total P</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Question directives were the form chosen second-most-frequently as 'most likely' in the study (47 out of 144 possible choices or 32.6%). As can be seen from Table 10.6, question directives were chosen with similar frequency across the three levels of Power depicted in the scenarios (High P: 15; Equal P: 17; Low P: 15), however, they were slightly more frequent in Low D scenarios (27 choices or 57.4%) than in High D (20 choices or 42.6%). This pattern of greater question directive frequency with Low D addressees occurred when there was a power difference between the speaker and the addressee, that is, in High and Low P scenarios, where question directive choices with Low D addressees were twice as frequent as those with High D addressees (10 vs 5 in both cases). In Equal P scenarios, the distribution of question directives across High and Low D conditions was more equal (10 vs 7, respectively). Question directives were also chosen more frequently, overall, in High R scenarios (33 choices or 70.2%) than in Low R (14 choices or 29.8%). This pattern of question directive preference for High R requests occurred across all levels of power, but was not consistent across High and Low D conditions. Only in High D scenarios was it the case that question directives occurred consistently more frequently for High R than Low R requests. In Low D scenarios, question directives were more equally distributed across High and Low R conditions. The pattern for question directive choice under High R conditions is generally in line with the observations of
question directive use by Ervin-Tripp (1976). Frequencies of female and male choice of question directive form as 'most likely' differed. Women chose question directives more frequently (29 choices or 61.7%) than did men (18 choices or 38.3%).

Table 10.6 Distribution of Question Directive choices as 'most likely' form of request across all scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High P</th>
<th></th>
<th>Equal P</th>
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<th>Low P</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>High R</td>
<td>Low R</td>
<td>High R</td>
<td>Low R</td>
<td>High R</td>
<td>Low R</td>
<td>High R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High D</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low D</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total P</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, off-record hint forms (Table 10.7) were chosen as 'most likely' 28 times (out of 144 possible choices or 19.4%). Hints were chosen as 'most likely' least frequently in High P scenarios (5 choices or 17.9%). They were more frequently chosen in Equal P (10 choices or 35.7%) and Low P (13 choices or 46.4%) scenarios. Hint choices were equally frequent in High and Low D scenarios (15 & 13 choices, respectively) and in High and Low R scenarios (14 choices in each). These general patterns are not in line with expectations under Brown and Levinson's model. There was evidence of a different pattern of choice of hints as 'most likely' within Equal P and Low P scenarios for requests of different levels of imposition, however. Hints were chosen more frequently with Equal P addressees when Low R requests were involved (7 vs 3 choices). For Low P addressees however, hints were more frequent for High R than Low R requests (9 vs 4 choices). Whereas the pattern for hint choices under Equal P, Low R conditions is consistent with observations made by Ervin-Tripp, that for the Low P, High R combination is not. As was the case for indirect question directive forms, there was a difference between female and male choice of the hint form as 'most likely'. In contrast with the pattern for question directive use, men chose off-record hints more frequently (20 choices or 71.4%) than did women (8 choices or 28.6%).

Table 10.7 Distribution of Hint choices as 'most likely' form of request across all scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High P</th>
<th></th>
<th>Equal P</th>
<th></th>
<th>Low P</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High R</td>
<td>Low R</td>
<td>High R</td>
<td>Low R</td>
<td>High R</td>
<td>Low R</td>
<td>High R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total P</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Patterns of Reasons for 'Most Likely' Choices Across Scenarios**

A final comparison of participants' role-play responses will be made across all scenario presentations. Table 10.8 presents categories of reasons mentioned by participants to explain their choices of the four directive forms, in order of overall frequency of occurrence. The most frequently cited reasons for choice of a particular form as 'most likely' are underlined for each of the four directive forms.

**Table 10.8** Frequencies of reason categories mentioned by participants to explain 'most likely' choices of four request alternatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Imperative</th>
<th>Imbedded Imperative</th>
<th>Question Directive</th>
<th>Hint</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N(choices)</td>
<td>N(choices)</td>
<td>N(choices)</td>
<td>N(choices)</td>
<td>N(choices)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50.0(^a)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Fam.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Fam.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low P Addressee</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks H</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option to Refuse</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High P Addressee</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressee Busy</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Probability of Compliance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Addressee's Way</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal P Addressee</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Probability of Compliance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brings H into conversation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Percentage of those choosing a particular request form as 'most likely' who mentioned the reason.
Comparison of the frequencies with which particular reasons were cited with respect to the four directive types provides a very general insight into participants' perceptions of these variants in use, and of the sorts of conditions under which the different forms were considered 'likely' to have occurred. Due to the different frequencies with which each of the four forms was chosen as 'most likely', however, any such comparisons must be treated cautiously. For example, in proportion to its overall frequency of choice, the imperative form was explained more frequently than were other directive forms in terms of the (i) low power (66.7%) and (ii) high familiarity (50%) of the addressee. The imbedded imperative form was explained proportionally more frequently than other forms in terms of a cluster of reasons that included (i) the fact that it asked the addressee (25.4%), (ii) the high power of the addressee (11.1%), and (iii) the directness of the form (12.7%). Reasons given proportionally more frequently to explain question directive choice than for other directive forms included (i) the fact that it gave the addressee an option to refuse the request (21.3%), (ii) that the addressee was busy at the time of the request (19.1%), (iii) that the request was out of the addressee's way (14.9%), and (iv) that there was a low probability that the addressee could comply with the request (10.6%). Reasons associated proportionally more frequently with the choice of hints than with other forms included the fact that it could be used to bring the addressee into conversation (10.7%).

Some reasons were used with higher proportional frequencies for two variants than for others. For example, politeness was used with similar high frequency to explain imperative (50%) and imbedded imperative (47.6%) choice, and low familiarity was used with similar high frequency to explain imbedded imperative (22.2%) and hint (25.0%) choice.

Overall, the pattern of reasons given by participants to explain their choices of directive forms in context using a role-play procedure corresponded closely with the conclusions drawn by Ervin-Tripp (1976) from observational studies on the social distribution of directive variants.

Table 10.9 shows a breakdown of reasons given to explain 'most likely' choice of imbedded imperative form by women and men (reasons given for imperative choices will not be broken down by gender due to their low overall frequency of choice as 'most likely' request form). The clearest difference can be seen with regard to women's more frequent reference to the fact that the imbedded imperative form asked the addressee as a reason (43.8% of the 32 women vs
6.5% of the 31 men who chose imbedded imperative as 'most likely'). Women also mentioned the low familiarity of the addressee more often, proportional to their choices of imbedded imperative form in High D scenarios (55% for women vs 18.8% for men).

Table 10.9 Reasons given by female and male participants for choice of Imbedded Imperative forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Womena</th>
<th></th>
<th>Menb</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks Addressee</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Familiarityc</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Powerd</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Powerc</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. N (Women choosing Imbedded Imperatives) = 32.
b. N (Men choosing Imbedded Imperatives) = 31.
c. Percentages for Low Familiarity were determined using male and female frequencies of imbedded imperative choice in Low-Familiarity conditions (f(women) = 20; f(men) = 16).
d. Percentages for High Power were determined using male and female frequencies of imbedded imperative choice in High-Power conditions (f(women) = 13; f(men) = 15).
e. Percentages for Low Power were determined using male and female frequencies of imbedded imperative choice in Low-Power conditions (f(women) = 5; f(men) = 11).

Table 10.10 displays the reasons given by women and men to justify 'most likely' choices of the question directive form. The clearest difference here can be seen in terms of the fact that only women commented that the question directive form gave the addressee an option to refuse the request (34.5% of the 29 women choosing question directive as 'most likely'). Women also mentioned the fact that the addressee was busy more frequently than did men (27.6% of the 29 women vs 5.6% of the 18 men).
Table 10.10 Reasons given by female and male participants for choice of Question Directive forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women(^a)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Men(^b)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option to Refuse</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressee Busy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Familiarity(^c)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Familiarity(^d)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. \(N\) (Women choosing Question Directives) = 29.
b. \(N\) (Men choosing Question Directives) = 18.
c. Percentages for High Familiarity were determined using male and female frequencies of question directive choice in High-Familiarity conditions \((f(\text{women}) = 9; f(\text{men}) = 18)\).
d. Percentages for Low Familiarity were determined using male and female frequencies of question directive choice in Low-Familiarity conditions \((f(\text{women}) = 9; f(\text{men}) = 11)\).

The frequencies with which particular reasons were given by women and men to explain hint choices were too low to permit valid comparison (8 female choices & 20 male choices of hints, overall).

On the basis of the relatively small numbers of female and male participants involved in the present study, it appeared that there may be differences in women's and men's perceptions of most likely request variants under role-play conditions. Further investigation of the distribution of choices between the sexes using larger samples seemed warranted. There is also evidence that women and men may choose particular request variants in particular situations for somewhat different reasons. It also seemed to be a worthwhile exercise to investigate these patterns further. The study reported in the next chapter takes up this issue of gender differences in the perception of situated request usage, using a similar interview format to that described here. Before turning to this issue, however, the final sections of the present chapter address two further questions:

(i) what information can be obtained from an examination of participants' reasons for non-choice of particular request forms concerning the validity of available models of request distribution, and

(ii) do appropriateness or politeness considerations underlie participants' choices of situated requests?
10.4.9 Reasons Given to Explain Non-Choice of Variants

Participants' reasons for not choosing particular forms of request in each scenario exhibited patterns which were consistent with claims made by Ervin-Tripp. Table 10.11 displays the reasons most frequently mentioned to explain non-choice of the imperative form.

Table 10.11 Reasons for non-choice of Imperative form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orders</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demands</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impolite</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Power Addressee</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrupt</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tells Addressee</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too Direct</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (Non-choice of Imperative)</td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>87</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons centering on the *impoliteness* of the imperative form, the fact that it *ordered*, *demanded*, or *told* the *addressee*, were most frequently mentioned to explain the non-choice of the form. The social features of *low familiarity* and *high power of addressee* were also mentioned frequently as reasons for non-choice of imperatives. These reasons are consistent with Ervin-Tripp's observations of the social distribution of the form in requests to equal- and low-rank, familiar addressees. There were no substantial gender differences apparent for the majority of reasons given for the non-choice of the imperative form. It is worth noting, however, that only female participants mentioned the fact that the imperative *tells the addressee* (*n* = 10), and only males mentioned that the imperative was *too direct* (*n* = 8) to be used.

Table 10.12 shows the reasons most frequently mentioned to explain the non-choice of imbedded imperatives. The *high familiarity of the addressee* and the *over-politeness of the form* were mentioned most often as explanations. A range of other reasons for the non-choice of imbedded imperatives occurred with lower frequencies. Due to the small numbers involved, it would be dangerous to generalize about gender differences in the citing of these reasons.
Table 10.12 Reasons for non-choice of Imbedded Imperative form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Familiarity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too Polite</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Power Addressee</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Addressee's Way</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too Direct</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (Non-choice of Imbedded Imp.)</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10.13 reveals that, for question directives, the *indirectness of the form* and the *low power of the addressee* were the reasons mentioned most frequently to explain non-choice. A range of other explanations occurred with lower frequencies. Although the numbers involved were small, there were some differences worth noting between female and male participants' reasons for not choosing the question directive form. Men were proportionally more likely to mention the *indirectness of the form* to explain their non-choice of question directives, and women alone referred to the *high probability of compliance* as a reason for non-choice of the question directive form.

Table 10.13 Reasons for non-choice of Question Directive form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Power Addressee</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Familiarity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Probability of Compliance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (Non-choice of Question Dir.)</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>54</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10.14 shows that the fact that the hint form was *indirect*, a *statement*, and *did not ask the addressee*, were the most frequently given explanations for its non-choice. The *low
familiarity of the addressee was also mentioned with some frequency as a reason for not choosing the hint form (this explanation is consistent with Ervin-Tripp's observations of its use), as was the fact that the hint would make the addressee offer to perform the request.

Participants' use of the latter reason is not consistent with conversation-analysts' explanation of the function of indirect requests as 'pre-requests' that provide the addressee with the opportunity to make an offer to perform an act before it is necessary for the speaker to ask directly. Offers by the addressee are regarded as 'preferred' above requests by the speaker in this model of conversational-preference organization. The fact that the hint might not be interpreted as a request by the addressee, and failed to give the addressee a choice of whether to comply, were also given as reasons for the non-choice of the form. The latter explanation appears at odds with Ervin-Tripp's claim that hints "go farthest in leaving options open" (1976: 42). The most marked gender difference in relation to reasons for the non-choice of hints was the greater frequency with which female participants proffered explanations. Although the numbers involved were small, it is also worth noting that more female participants gave the reason that hints would make the addressee offer, and only females mentioned that the hint did not give the addressee a choice to comply in discussing its non-choice.

**Table 10.14** Reasons for non-choice of Hint form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn't Ask Addressee</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would Make Addressee Offer</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May not be interpreted as request</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn't Give Addressee a Choice</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (Non-choice of Hint)</strong></td>
<td><strong>110</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10.4.10 Appropriateness Versus Politeness: A Comparison of 'Most Likely' and 'Most Polite' Choices

Information provided by participants in the interviews was used to address the general issue of whether politeness or appropriateness considerations motivated the choice of request forms. Evidence relating to an association between politeness and indirectness was also examined. Two sources of information from the interviews were pertinent to these issues. One involved the existence of discrepancies between participants' choices of 'most likely' and 'most polite' forms. The other involved discrepancies between choices of 'least likely' and 'most impolite' forms. Those occasions on which participants made different choices in response to questions concerning the 'most likely' and 'most polite' directive forms in context are summarized first. Reasons provided by participants in explanation of discrepancies are also examined.

10.4.10.1 Discrepancies between 'most likely' and 'most polite' choices.

A total of 59 'discrepant' choices between 'most likely' and 'most polite' forms were observed out of a possible 144 occasions of choice (representing change from 'most likely' choice on 41% of occasions). Such changes were made with similar frequency by male and female participants ($N_{Female} = 27; N_{Male} = 32$).

'Most polite' as the more direct form.

The majority of the changes in participants' choices (40 out of 59, or 67.8%) were in the direction of a more direct form for 'most polite' choice. Changes from question directive or hint forms as 'most likely' to the more direct imbedded imperative form as 'most polite' occurred with the highest frequency. As can be seen from Table 10.15, 34% of all choices of question directive forms as 'most likely' were changed to imbedded imperative as 'most polite'; 61% of all choices of hint forms were changed in the same way. A smaller number of hint choices were changed to the more direct question directive as 'most polite' (21.4%), and one imbedded imperative choice was changed to an imperative as 'most polite'.
Table 10.15 Discrepancies between 'most likely' and 'most polite' choice: 'Most polite' as more direct form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Likely</th>
<th>Most Polite</th>
<th>Frequency of change</th>
<th>Percent of total frequency of choice of form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative (N = 63)</td>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive (N = 47)</td>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint (N = 28)</td>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons given by participants to explain choices of request variants as 'most polite' that were more direct than those that had been chosen as 'most likely' involved, most often, reference to the fact that the high familiarity (11) and low power (3) of the addressee meant that the most polite form was too polite to be likely to have been used. For example:

**Equal P, Low D, Low R (High Probability of Compliance)**

**S8M:** [Imbedded Imperative] *seems too polite for the situation, and for the fact that they're friends. She just wouldn't talk to him that way if they'd known each other for long.*

**Low P, Low D, Low R (High Probability of Compliance)**

**S16F:** [Imbedded Imperative] *seems a bit false because she's got the head position, she doesn't really need to say all of that because she's ... it's her magazine and he's under her so he should just abide by her ideas.*

The greater politeness of a more direct request form such as the imbedded imperative was most often explained by those participants who chose the relatively indirect question directive and hint forms as 'most likely' in terms of the fact that the imbedded imperative:

(a) *asked the addressee* (7), for example:

**Low P, Low D, High R (Low Probability of Compliance)**

**S9M:** [Imbedded Imperative]'s *probably the most polite, cause it asks her if it's alright by her and finishes off with a 'please' which I suppose is always the right thing.*

(b) included *'please'* (6),

(c) included *'could you'* (4), and

(d) gave the addressee an *option to refuse the request* (3). For example:

**Low P, High D, High R (Difficult Task)**

**S8M:** [Imbedded Imperative] *would be the most polite because ... he asks 'please', and asks 'Could you', as if the person has a choice.*
Those participants who selected the hint as 'most likely' also most frequently explained the greater politeness of the more direct question directive form in terms of this latter reason (3).

For example:

**Low P High D, High R (Difficult Task)**

S11M:  [Imbedded Imperative]. *You're asking them if they can -- sort of leaves them an opening, you know, to say "Aw, yeah well, I'm busy at the moment.", or "I can't.", for some other reason.

In accounting for discrepancies between their 'most likely' and 'most polite' choices of request forms, some participants made explicit reference to the fact that particular request variants were over-polite for the situation. For example:

**Low P, High D, High R (Low Probability of Compliance)**

S4F:  *It isn't a situation where you have to use explicit politeness. And therefore you use a substitute which isn't rude, but isn't the most polite.*

**Equal P, Low D, Low R (High Probability of Compliance)**

S8M:  [Imbedded Imperative] *seems too polite for the situation.*

**Low P, Low D, Low R (High Probability of Compliance)**

S7F:  [Imbedded Imperative] *is perhaps just a bit too polite.*

**Equal P, Low D, Low R (Within Role)**

S13F:  [Question Directive] *because she knows him very well and therefore she doesn't have to be over-polite.*

**Low P, Low D, Low R (High Probability of Compliance)**

S16F:  [Imbedded Imperative]. *Over-polite for this type of set-up.*

**Low P, High D, Low R (Within Role)**

S13F:  [Question Directive]. *But the politeness doesn't really seem to fit the case of the situation.*

'Most polite' as the less direct form.

Changes in the direction of a less direct form for 'most polite' than for 'most likely' choice occurred less frequently than changes to a more direct form as 'most polite'. Thirty-two per cent of all changes between 'most likely' and 'most polite' choices (19 out of 59) were in this direction. As can be seen from Table 10.16, the most frequently occurring changes in this direction involved 'most likely' choices of imbedded imperatives changing to 'most polite' choices of question directives (11 instances, or 17.5% of all imbedded imperative choices as
'most likely'); and 'most likely' choices of imperatives changing to 'most polite' choices of imbedded imperatives (6 instances, or 100% of all imperative choices as 'most likely').

Table 10.16 Discrepancies between 'most likely' and 'most polite' choice: 'Most polite' as more indirect form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Likely</th>
<th>Most Polite</th>
<th>Frequency of change</th>
<th>Percent of total frequency of choice of form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N = 6)</td>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N = 63)</td>
<td>Hint</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N = 47)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons given by participants to explain their choices of more indirect request variants as 'most polite' than as 'most likely' involved, most often, reference to the fact that the high familiarity (5) and low power (4) of the addressee meant that the most polite form was too polite to be likely to have been used. The same reasons were used most frequently to explain choices of more direct forms as 'most polite' than as 'most likely'. Examples of the use of these reasons to explain the selection of more indirect forms of request as 'most polite' included the following:

Low P, Low D, Low R (Within Role)

S3M: [Imbedded Imperative] Because of the length of time they've known each other and because of the ... their ranks, it's not really the right sort of thing he'd say to her. It's too polite.

Equal P, Low D, Low R (Within Role)

S1F: I don't think she'd have to over-do it, as in [Question Directive], which is again the most polite. But it's sort of over-done cause they are friends and she wouldn't sort of have to go to those lengths ... I'd get the impression the person was being too formal, sort of, for the friendship that exists.

The greater politeness of a more indirect form such as the imbedded imperative was most frequently explained by those participants who chose the direct imperative form as 'most likely' in terms of the fact that the imbedded imperative included the 'Could you' form (3). This explanation of the imbedded imperative's politeness also occurred reasonably frequently amongst participants who changed from a more indirect 'most likely' form to the imbedded imperative as 'most polite' (see p. 313).
The pattern of participants' choices of 'most likely' and 'most polite' request forms, overall, is compared in Table 10.17.

Table 10.17  Percentages of request alternatives chosen as 'most likely' and as 'most polite'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>61.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relative frequency with which the four variants were chosen was the same for 'most likely' and 'most polite' choices; however, some differences may be noted. Imbedded imperatives were selected more frequently as 'polite' forms than as 'likely' forms, whereas hints were more often chosen as 'likely' than as 'polite' forms. In terms of the gender distribution of choices, the following patterns were apparent. The similar frequency of male and female choice of imbedded imperatives as 'most likely' was maintained in imbedded imperative choices as 'most polite'. In turn, the predominance of female participants choosing question directives as 'most likely' was repeated in the pattern of question directive choices as 'most polite'. Similarly, males predominated in choosing the hint form as 'most likely' and, although the frequency of selection of the hint form was lower, males alone chose hints as 'most polite'.

10.4.10.2 Summary: 'Most likely' versus 'most polite' choices.

Although it was the case that in the majority of instances (85 out of 144, or 59% of occasions of choice) participants selected the same request variant as 'most likely' and as 'most polite' in a particular scenario, there were a substantial number of occasions (41%) on which a different form was chosen as 'most likely' and as 'most polite'. This finding adds weight to suggestions that formal variants of speech acts such as directives do not carry particular politeness values, but rather that politeness meanings are powerfully influenced by the
situational frames in which they occur. Under this view, linguistic variation is conceptualized as due to people's shared understandings of the appropriateness of forms in social contexts rather than to considerations of politeness (e.g., Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Blum-Kulka, 1990). The fact that the majority of 'discrepant' choices (68%) that were observed involved the selection of a more direct form as 'most polite' than as 'most likely' challenges the view that increasing indirectness is invariably associated with increasing politeness in requesting (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987). The findings of the present study provide confirmation of Wierzbicka's (1985) proposal that direct speech is not always taken as conveying an absence of politeness and, conversely, that indirectness is not always reflective of politeness. What the findings suggest is that further investigation of concepts such as 'politeness', 'indirectness', and 'appropriateness' is warranted. The focus of such research needs to be on the use members of a speech community make of such concepts, and the social meanings they attribute to them. These issues will be taken up in the study to be described in the following chapter. Before concluding the present discussion, however, a final comparison between participants' choices of 'least likely' and 'most impolite' forms of request in situations is made. These findings contribute further information to the issue of whether politeness or appropriateness considerations motivated request choice, and provide some insight into the social meanings attributed to impoliteness and inappropriateness.

10.4.10.3 Discrepancies between 'least likely' and 'most impolite' choices.

Fifty-seven 'discrepant' choices between 'least likely' and 'most impolite' forms were made by participants in 144 occasions of choice (representing change from 'least likely' choice on 39.6% of occasions). Such changes were made with similar frequency by male and female participants \(N(\text{Female}) = 30; N(\text{Male}) = 27\).

'Most impolite' as more direct.

The majority of the changes in participants' choices (41 out of 57, or 71.9%) were in the direction of a more direct form for 'most impolite' choice. Changes from hint or question directive forms as 'least likely' to the more direct imperative form as 'most impolite' occurred with the highest frequency. As can be seen from Table 10.18, half of all choices of hint and question directive forms as 'least likely' were changed to imperative choices as 'most impolite'.
A smaller number of hint choices as 'least likely' were changed to the more direct question directive choice as 'most impolite' (12.5%). Imbedded imperatives were chosen very infrequently as 'least likely' form \( n = 5 \), and 60% of these choices were changed to the imperative form as 'most impolite'.

Table 10.18 Discrepancies between 'least likely' and 'most impolite' choices: 'Most impolite' as more direct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Least Likely</th>
<th>Most Impolite</th>
<th>Frequency of change</th>
<th>Percent of total frequency of choice of form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N = 5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N = 26)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint (N = 40)</td>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons given by participants for their choices of more direct request forms as 'most impolite' than as 'least likely' involved, most frequently, reference to

(a) the indirectness of the 'least likely' form: hint (4 mentions), question directive (3 mentions), for example:

**High P, Low D, Low R (Easy Task)**

S16F: [Hint] *because it's the most roundabout.*

**High P, Low D, Low R (Easy Task)**

S7F: [Question Directive]. *It's not to the point.*

(b) the fact that the form was a statement: hint (4), for example:

**High P, Low D, High R (Difficult Task)**

S11M: [Hint] *I don't tend to use that kind of implied ... you're making a statement and trying to get them to do something for you.*

(c) the fact that the form might not be interpreted as a request: hint (3), question directive (1), for example:

**Equal P, Low D, High R (Outside Role)**

S17F: [Hint]. *That's just too obscure. I wouldn't be surprised if he wouldn't catch on at all to that, really. If he knows her that well, she's a year younger than him, and she makes a statement like that, just out of the blue really. She's not asking a question, she's not suggesting he does anything. It's pretty silly really.*
Reasons for choices of a more direct form for 'most impolite' than for 'least likely' that involved the imperative form being nominated as 'most impolite' included, most often, the fact that it ordered (5 mentions), and did not ask the addressee (4 mentions). For example:

**High P, High D, High R (Outside Role)**

S7F: [Imperative] because she's giving him a direct order, not asking him. She doesn't really know him all that well.

**Less Direct Form as 'Most Impolite'**

Changes in the direction of a less direct form for 'most impolite' than for 'least likely' choice occurred less frequently than changes to a more direct form as 'most impolite'. Twenty-eight per cent of all changes between 'least likely' and 'most impolite' choices (16 out of 57) were in this direction. As can be seen from Table 10.19, the most frequently occurring changes involved 'least likely' choices of question directive (8 instances, or 30.8% of all question directive choices as 'least likely') or imperative (5 instances, or 6.8% of all imperative choices as 'least likely') changing to 'most impolite' choices of hint.

**Table 10.19** Discrepancies between 'least likely' and 'most impolite' choices: 'Most impolite' as more indirect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Least Likely</th>
<th>Most Impolite</th>
<th>Frequency of change</th>
<th>Percent of total frequency of choice of form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperative (N = 73)</td>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded Imperative</td>
<td>hint</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>(N = 5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>(N = 26)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to the small number of changes involved, few patterns could be observed in the reasons given by participants for their choices of more indirect forms as 'most impolite' than as 'most likely'. Some consistency emerged in reasons given by participants to explain 'most impolite' hint choices. There were references to the fact that the form was a statement only (5 mentions) and did not ask the addressee (4 mentions). For example:

**Low P, High D, Low R (High Probability of Compliance)**

S5F: [Hint]. She's just stating something and she's forcing him to do it. She's telling him that he has to do it.
Low P, High D, Low R (Within Role)

S1F: [Hint] I think. She doesn't really even ask him. I think it's polite to ask. That's sort of just an assumption ... not an assumption um ... tch, I don't know. It's perhaps a little too familiar that she doesn't ask him directly.

The pattern of participants' choices of 'least likely' and 'most impolite' forms of request, overall, are compared in Table 10.20.

Table 10.20 Percentages of request alternatives chosen as 'least likely' and as 'most impolite'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Least Likely</th>
<th>Most Impolite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female N</td>
<td>Male N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded Imperative</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relative frequency with which the four variants were chosen was the same for both 'least likely' and 'most impolite' choices; however, some differences may be noted. Imperatives were selected more often as 'impolite' forms than as 'unlikely' forms whereas question directives and hints were chosen more often as 'unlikely' than as 'impolite'. The gender distribution of choices showed a similar pattern in selections of 'least likely' and 'most impolite' forms. A slightly greater proportion of men than women chose question directives as 'least likely' than as 'most impolite'; a slightly greater proportion of women than men chose hints as 'least likely' than as 'most impolite'.

10.4.11 Summary: 'Least Likely' Versus 'Most Impolite' Choices & Conclusion

The pattern of choices of 'least likely' and 'most impolite' situated request forms mirrored those obtained for comparisons between 'most likely' and 'most polite' choices. Although in the majority of instances (87 out of 144, or 60.4% of occasions of choice) participants selected the same request variant as 'least likely' and as 'most impolite' in a particular scenario, there were a number of occasions (39.6%) on which a different form was chosen as 'least likely' and as 'most impolite'. The majority of these 'discrepant' choices involved the perception of a
more direct form as 'most impolite' than as 'least likely'. Whereas this finding is in line with predictions from Brown and Levinson's model, which associates increasing indirectness with increasing politeness (face-threat-minimization), the finding that a majority of changes between 'most likely' and 'most polite' forms also involved the selection of a more direct form for 'most polite' is not.

Together, these findings for likelihood and politeness add weight to suggestions that politeness and appropriateness considerations represent different dimensions with respect to situated language use, and that there is no simple, linear relationship between the politeness and indirectness of a linguistic form. Indeed, from the findings of the present study, it might be inferred that the concepts of politeness and impoliteness do not represent the two ends of a dimension that runs parallel with that of indirectness - directness. There is evidence that directness and impoliteness are associated under some particular situational conditions but not others, and the same is true for the association between indirectness and politeness.

The study to be described in the following chapter attempts a more detailed investigation of the concepts of politeness, appropriateness, and indirectness in the hope of teasing out these relationships. A semi-structured interview technique is again employed to explore the social meanings attributed to such concepts by participants. A similar scenario-based presentation is used to ascertain people's perceptions of particular request forms in particular situations. A smaller number of scenarios is used to depict social-contextual features than in the study described in the present chapter, however, and the questions put to participants in the interview focus more upon exploring the social meanings participants assign to particular variants-in-situations. A larger sample of participants is also employed in order to permit comparisons between the perceptions of women and men.

1 For more detail on the theoretical basis and methodology of account-gathering as a procedure, see Harré and Secord (1972); Brown and Sime (1977, 1981).

2 The assumption was made that the interview methodology affected female and male participants' performance in the same way. Given that the interviewer was a woman, this assumption may be questionable. However, the information obtained concerning women's and men's perceptions of the appropriateness of a number of directive forms seemed to warrant the method employed. To have used a male interviewer for male participants would have necessitated holding strictly to a predetermined interview format to ensure consistency between interviewers - the interviewers would not have been as free to follow the lines of thought put forward by participants as was the individual interviewer who followed a semi-structured format.
Following Potter (1983: 77), the transcription of interviews was performed in a way that was intended to "facilitate the maximum readability of the finished product". By this is meant that the recorded talk was structured into sentences and punctuated according to the conventions of written English. However, word orders were not changed, hesitations and corrections were not deleted, and neither were filler words like "um" and "ah". A speaker's use of heavy stress was indicated in the transcript by means of underlining, and the presence of laughter was shown by this term written in brackets. In addition, spellings were sometimes altered to convey colloquial features of pronunciation.

Patterns of strategic alternative choice as 'most likely' are reported descriptively, in the Results section of this study, in terms of their similarity or dissimilarity with predictions, for various combinations of social features, from available models of request distribution.

Examples of a particular category of reason will only be provided in the text on the first occasion of the reason's mention.
CHAPTER 11

STUDY V

POLITENESS AND LIKELIHOOD OF USE OF REQUEST ALTERNATIVES: AN EXTENDED INTERVIEW APPROACH

11.1 Introduction

The following study was designed to permit a more detailed and systematic investigation of three outcomes of general theoretical interest from the previous scenario study:

(1) that participants discriminated between likely and polite usages of particular request variants in context (and similarly, between unlikely and impolite usages);

(2) that participants' perceptions of the politeness of request variants were not related in a straightforward way to the directness/indirectness of the form;

(3) that women and men exhibited some differences in their views on the social meanings and use of particular request variants in context.

The study reported in this chapter follows the basic format of the previous scenario study, with one major difference: it involves a reduced number of scenarios to depict levels of the social-contextual features P, D, and R that were identified by theorists as determinative of variation in request use. This change was made for two reasons:

(i) it permitted the expansion of the interview component of the method to incorporate greater questioning of participants about their reasons for particular request choices in particular situations. This was done in an attempt to gain a more detailed understanding of the social meanings attributed to request variation.

(ii) it permitted a more systematic comparison of the choices and explanations proffered by female and male participants than had been possible in the larger, original version of the scenario depictions.

Originally, 36 scenarios depicting various levels of the social features Power, Social Distance, Imposition, and Nature of Task were used. The second interview study was streamlined so as to consist of nine different scenario presentations only, each of which was to
be considered by every participant. Decisions underlying the changes from an expanded to a reduced series of situational depictions are described in the next section.

11.2 Design of the Study

The recasting of the original scenario material was based upon observations made in an earlier investigation in which a series of rating scales was used to evaluate requests in context (see Chapter 9). Analyses of variance performed on these ratings revealed that participants responded similarly to requests in two of the three High-Imposition scenarios used: Difficult-Task and High-Probability-of-Compliance. Requests in scenarios depicting tasks as Outside-of-the-Addressee's-Role were evaluated differently, however. For example, the Outside-Role requests were considered somewhat less imposing and less expected than Difficult-Task and Low-Probability-of-Compliance requests.

In view of the general pattern of similarity between mean ratings for requests involving difficult tasks and low probability of compliance, it was considered appropriate, in the pursuit of the greater understanding that might result from expanding the interview component of the study, to omit one of these conditions from a second investigation. Examination of the data from the rating-scale study revealed that there was greater convergence, overall, between ratings for Low-Probability-of-Compliance and Outside-Role conditions than between Difficult-Task and Outside-Role conditions. Scenarios depicting Low-Probability-of-Compliance were therefore retained for use in the present study. As the data had shown divergences in participants' evaluations of scenarios depicting different conditions of High Imposition, it was considered most appropriate to treat the Outside-Role and Low-Probability-of-Compliance manipulations in the present investigation as separate manifestations of different contextual conditions, rather than as alternative representations of the condition 'High Imposition'. It was also considered unnecessary to present interview participants with the three variations of Low-Imposition scenarios that had been employed in the previous studies. Data from the previous rating-scale study indicated that all three conditions (Within-Role, Easy-Task, High-Probability-of-Compliance) had been evaluated similarly by participants. For the purposes of the present investigation, the scenario in each group of three (at each level of Power and Social-
Distance combinations) that had been rated as 'least imposing' by participants was selected for use.

Finally, in the interests of achieving more specific information from participants regarding their choices of request forms, investigation of the influence of the factor Social Distance was carried out, in part, by asking participants whether a change in this feature (from High to Low D or vice versa) would affect their choice within a particular situation.

The decision as to whether to use the High or Low D version of the original scenarios depicting the various levels of Power of addressee in combination with the three conditions: *Outside-Role, Low-Probability-of-Compliance, and Low-Imposition*, was made on the basis of results obtained from a pretest of the scenarios (Chapter 9). Participants' ratings of the strength of the Power and Imposition manipulations in each of the High and Low D pairs of scenarios in this pretest were compared. The scenario receiving the most representative ratings for particular levels of P and R was chosen for use in the present interview study. Each scenario so selected was then prepared in two versions, depicting both a High and a Low D relationship between the speaker and the addressee. This was done to ensure that responses to both the High and Low D versions of a particular scenario required participants to role-play. If participants had only been asked to judge whether a change in the social distance between the interactants would alter the appropriateness of a particular request form, they might not have engaged in the process of taking the role of the speaker before making their choices.

As a result of these streamlining procedures, a total of nine scenarios was obtained for use in the second interview study. Each of these nine scenarios existed in a 'High D' and a 'Low D' version. Half of the participants were shown one set of nine scenarios, consisting of a mix of High and Low D versions. The other half of the participants received nine scenarios depicting the opposite set of social-distance relationships.

The nine scenarios used in the present study are listed below, labelled by number to facilitate the identification of those scenarios selected from the 36 originals as presented in Appendix E.

- High Power, Outside-Role #1
- High Power, Low Imposition #4
- High Power, Low-Probability-of-Compliance #5
- Equal Power, Outside-Role #19
- Equal Power, Low-Probability-of-Compliance #17
- Equal Power, Low Imposition #14
11.3 **Procedure**

11.3.1 **Subjects**

Thirty-six individuals, 18 female and 18 male introductory Psychology students who were native speakers of Australian English, participated in the study.

11.3.2 **Method**

Each participant was presented with nine scenarios as described above. Female participants read scenarios which described a woman addressing a man. Male participants encountered identical scenarios, but for the fact that the gender of the speaker and addressee had been reversed. Each scenario was presented to participants separately, on a single sheet of paper. Printed underneath the scenario were four alternative forms of the same request - an Imperative, an Imbedded Imperative, a Question Directive, and a Hint, labelled A, B, C, D respectively (with the order of presentation randomized for each scenario). This was the same presentational format as had been used in the previous interview study.

Instructions given to participants were also identical to those used in the Study IV. As before, consent was obtained from participants to audio-tape their responses to the scenario-based interview. The set of questions put to participants during the interview was an expanded version of that used in the previous study. As before, participants were first asked to explain their choice of 'most likely' request form in each scenario. They were also asked to explain their reasons for not choosing other alternatives. They were asked to report on the form which would have been least likely to have been used in the context, and on the form which was the most polite and the most impolite. Where there were differences between choices of 'most likely' and 'most polite' forms, and between 'least likely' and 'most impolite' forms, these differences were brought to the participants' attention for discussion. In addition, the following issues were introduced in the second interview:

(i) **Influence of Social Distance**: Following their choices of 'most polite' and 'most impolite' forms of request, participants were reminded of their choice of 'most likely' form and were
then asked to discuss whether a change in the social distance between Speaker and Addressee would affect this choice. The interviewer's question was couched as follows:

Now, you chose [A, B, C, or D] as the most likely form in this scenario. Would your opinion about the form most likely to have been used change if

(a) [Speaker's name] and [Addressee's name] had not known each other well --
   if [Addressee's name] had just started working there?
   or

(b) [Speaker's name] and [Addressee's name] had known each other well --
   if they had known each other for over two years?

Formats (a) or (b) were substituted, as appropriate, to contrast with the social-distance relationship originally described in the scenario.

(ii) Influence of Gender: Each of the nine scenarios depicted an addressee of the gender opposite to that of the speaker. Participants were asked to consider whether their choice of 'most likely' request form would change if the addressee had been of the same gender as the speaker. The question was put immediately after the question concerning a change in the social-distance relationship between S and H, and was worded as follows:

In this situation, if [Addressee's name] had been a woman/man, would your opinion about the most likely form change?

(iii) Influence of Age of Addressee: In each of the nine scenarios, the ages of the speakers and addressees were described as corresponding to their status positions (high-power addressees were older than speakers; low-power addressees were younger; equal-power addressees were the same age). As there had been some evidence, from the first interview study, that participants considered the age of the addressee to be a salient determinant of most likely request form in some situations, participants were asked to discuss the effects of age-power disparities. These disparities involved circumstances such as a High P addressee who was (a) the same age or (b) younger than the speaker; an Equal P addressee who was (a) older or (b) younger than the speaker; and a Low P addressee who was (a) the same age or (b) older than the speaker. The question put to participants stressed that the status relationship between the interactants remained the same and that only the age relationship had changed:

In this situation, if [Addressee's name] had been older/younger than the same age as [Speaker's name], but was still [status position relative to Addressee e.g., the
proprietor/a shop assistant], would your opinion about the most likely request form change?

11.4 Data Analysis

Tapes of the interviews were transcribed by the researcher. Frequency counts of request forms chosen as 'most likely', 'least likely', 'most polite', and 'most impolite' were made for female and male participants. Reasons given by participants in explanation of the choices were catalogued in terms of the expressions used, in the same manner as for Study IV (Appendix M). The transcripts were re-read and catalogued again seven months after the first analysis and, apart from minor discrepancies, the same catalogue descriptors were generated and identical frequency scores were obtained. All transcripts were then read and coded by a male colleague who worked in the area of Psychology, but who was not a specialist in the field of language, using the catalogue of reasons prepared by the researcher. The two sets of codings of participants' reasons were compared, as a rudimentary check on the reliability of the coding procedure. For the most part, identical attributions of reasons to categories were made, but in the few instances where discrepancies occurred, opinions were sought from two colleagues as to the most appropriate category for the ambiguous reasons. The final decision followed the majority opinion in these instances. The majority of reasons cited by participants were able to be coded in categories that were the same as those which had been used in the Study IV. This permitted a close comparison between the first and second interview studies of the explanations accompanying the use of particular request forms. Another primary objective of the second interview study was the comparison of women's and men's perspectives on request use in context.

11.5 Results

To facilitate comparisons between the findings of the two previously reported scenario-based studies (Studies III & IV) and those from Study V, a similar format to that used in Chapters 9 and 10 for reporting of results is followed here.
11.5.1 *High-Power Scenarios*

Relevant predictions from Brown and Levinson's model for the most weighty *High P, High D, High R* scenarios are that off-record hint and indirect question directive strategies would be more likely to occur in scenarios that involved 'weighty' request acts than would the more direct imbedded imperative form, and that the bald-on-record imperative strategy would be least likely, overall, in such circumstances. Similar predictions are found in Ervin-Tripp's explanatory framework, where question directive forms were described as being appropriate for requesting difficult tasks of high-rank addressees (*High P, High R*), or when there was a low probability that an addressee could comply with a request (*High R*). Hints were also described by Ervin-Tripp as being appropriate when non-compliance was possible or a service was special (*High R*).

The pattern of participants' choices of 'most likely' request form in *High P* scenario combinations is displayed in Table 11.1. In only one of the two most weighty scenario combinations (Columns 1 & 2) did the pattern coincide with predictions from the models. In the *High P, High D, Low-Probability-of-Compliance* scenario (Column 2), relatively indirect question directive forms were more frequently chosen by both male and female participants as 'most likely' to have been used than were other directive forms. By contrast, in the *Outside-Role* version, female participants chose imbedded imperative and question directive forms with similar frequency as 'most likely', and males chose imbedded imperatives more often than other variants.

Different patterns also emerged in the two *Low D, High R* combinations (Columns 4 & 5). Again, the more frequent choice of indirect question directive forms as 'most likely' by both males and females in the *High P, Low D, Low-Probability-of-Compliance* scenario (Column 5) was in line with predictions. In the *Outside-Role* version, however, both males and females more often chose imbedded imperative forms than other directive forms as 'most likely'.

The pattern of imbedded imperative choice as 'most likely' form of utterance in the two *High P, Low R* combinations (Columns 3 & 6) by both male and female participants is consistent with expectations, and reproduces patterns that were found in Study IV. According to Brown and Levinson's model, these *Low R* scenarios are less weighty than the *High P, High R* versions and, thus, do not require as much indirectness to minimize face threat. The pattern
also coincides with Ervin-Tripp's observation that imbedded imperatives were used to high-rank addressees when the requested task was not difficult and compliance was likely.

Table 11.1 Frequency of female and male choice of 4 request variants as 'most likely' across High P scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
<th>Column 3</th>
<th>Column 4</th>
<th>Column 5</th>
<th>Column 6</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High P</td>
<td>High D</td>
<td>Low Prob. of Compliance</td>
<td>High P</td>
<td>High D</td>
<td>Low R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F M F M F M F M</td>
<td>9 9</td>
<td>9 9</td>
<td>9 9</td>
<td>9 9</td>
<td>9 9</td>
<td>9 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>1 -</td>
<td>1 -</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>2 2</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>- -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>5 5</td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>8 9</td>
<td>6 5</td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>8 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>4 1</td>
<td>5 5</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>7 7</td>
<td>- 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>2 -</td>
<td>3 2</td>
<td>1 -</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>1 -</td>
<td>1 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9 9</td>
<td>9 9</td>
<td>9 9</td>
<td>9 9</td>
<td>9 9</td>
<td>9 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As had been the case in Study IV, hint forms were chosen as 'most likely' very infrequently in these High P scenarios, although their selection by both male and female participants in the High D, Low Probability-of-Compliance combination (Column 2) provides some support for Ervin-Tripp's description of hint use under conditions where non-compliance is possible.

Imperative forms were also chosen infrequently as 'most likely' forms in the present study, although in Study IV, they were never selected by participants in High P scenarios. Amongst those participants who did select imperatives as 'most likely' in the present study, the high familiarity of the addressee was always mentioned as a reason ($N(Male) = 2; N(Female) = 2$) in Low D combinations, indicating that the salience of this feature may have overridden other social-contextual considerations, for example:

**High P, Low D, Outside Role**

**S9F:** [Imperative]. Well, as you say, it was what I would say. And if I was standing there holding the dishes -- a whole bunch of dirty dishes, and she's known him for two years -- she knows him well. [Imbedded Imperative] seems a bit formal for someone you've known for two years.
High P, Low D, Outside Role

S33M: [Imperative]. Well, obviously I know her fairly well and you want to be polite because she’s a friend of yours, and that’s the object you want to get. You want to get the dishes cleared away and you want to do it without being rude so that would be the best one.

The most frequently mentioned reasons for 'most likely' choice of other request alternatives can also be considered. As can be seen in Table 11.2, both women and men referred most often to the politeness of the imbedded imperative form in explaining their 'most likely' choices. For example:

High P, Low D, Low R

S1F: I'd choose [Imbedded Imperative] cause it's the most polite, even though she's known him, even though she's familiar to him.

Table 11.2 Reasons given by female and male participants to explain Imbedded Imperative choice as 'most likely' in High P scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N(choices)</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N(choices)</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness of form</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks Addressee</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directness of form</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High P Addressee</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater age of Addressee</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Familiarity</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Could you' form</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessary for S to get</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>someone to help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The fact that the form asked the addressee, and was direct, were also mentioned frequently by both women and men as reasons for choice of imbedded imperative as 'most likely'. For example:

High P, Low D, Low R

S2M: I'd use [Imbedded Imperative] for this one, because obviously, you want the door open so you may as well ask for it straight out, because you know the person and [Imbedded Imperative] is a polite way of saying it. The other three - except [Imperative]- [Hint] and [Question Directive] beat about the bush a bit. They just...
she'd get the idea, but if you want the door opened, you might as well say, specially if you're holding the record-player.

**Low P, High D, Low R**

S25F: [Imbedded Imperative]. *She wants to be direct. I think she should tell Paul that she wants some more tacks but she can't really demand it so ... I think [Imbedded Imperative]'s a good idea because she's asking him nicely even though she's the superior in this case. I think you should have manners in a situation like that.*

Two addressee characteristics, high power and greater age, were also given as reasons for 'most likely' choice of imbedded imperatives by both women (24% of imbedded imperative choices) and men (13% of imbedded imperative choices). For example:

**High P, Low D, Low R**

S25F: [Imbedded Imperative] because he's older than she is and he's a headmaster as well, so she would want to be polite to him. And she's asking him directly what she wants. She's not hinting -- she's asking him politely, not like [Imperative].

**High P, High D, Outside Role**

S18F: [Imbedded Imperative] definitely. Well, I've worked in a restaurant actually, and I've sort of been in the same situation. [Imbedded Imperative] is the sort of polite way to talk to someone older than yourself and who is in a sort of higher position than yourself.

The addressee's *high familiarity* was referred to more frequently by men (23%) than by women (7%), as was the fact that the imbedded imperative form involved 'Could you' (19% vs 3%), and was likely because the speaker needed to get someone to help him/her (19% vs 3%).

Examples of these reasons are as follows:

(i) *high familiarity:*

**High P, Low D, Low R**

S33M: [Imbedded Imperative]. *Well, he knows her fairly well by the look of it. I would think that he should be able to - he knows her - know whether he could ask her in a phrase like that. I know she's the headmistress but it's no big deal to open the door. So he's just asking politely whether she would help him get the equipment back to the room.*

**High P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance**

S31M: [Imbedded Imperative] because it's probably the most polite. No, it's not the most polite, [Question Directive] would be the most polite, but seeing he knows her pretty well he could say [Imbedded Imperative] instead of [Question Directive].
High P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance

S12M: I would guess [Imbedded Imperative]. Well, he knows her fairly well - known her since his cadetship, calls her Elizabeth. There would be the 'Could you'. There is implicit politeness.

(ii) 'Could you':

High P, Low D, Low R

S27M: [Imbedded Imperative]. I seem to like the word 'could you'. I think it implies some thought for that person's time and effort that they're putting in - or that they're about to put in, and gives them the option of not doing it.

(iii) S needed to get someone to help:

High P, High D, Low R

S6M: Probably [Imbedded Imperative] because it's obviously going to be very difficult for him to open the door on his own. That's just a direct request that ... [Imperative]'s probably a bit impolite. [Imbedded Imperative] is a little bit more polite than [Imperative].

High P, High D, Low R

S23M: [Imbedded Imperative] ... obviously, someone's got to open the door, cause if he can't open the door by himself, he's going to stand there until someone walks past, so it's a matter of working out the best question to ask her to open the door ... so I think that's the nicest way of putting it.

Reasons mentioned most frequently by participants to explain question directive choices as 'most likely' in High P scenarios were somewhat different from those given for imbedded imperative forms. Although the politeness of the form and the high power of the addressee were mentioned reasonably frequently to explain both question directive and imbedded imperative choices, other reasons, such as the fact that the addressee was busy at the time of the request, and that the question directive form gave the addressee an option concerning time, occurred more frequently in explanation of question directive choices. Examples of the former two reasons for question directive choice as 'most likely' are:

High P, Low D, Outside Role

S21F: [Question Directive] because he's older than her for a start. I'd tend to be fairly polite about it and probably because he's holding a higher position than I am, I'd probably be very polite and I'd consider [Question Directive] to be the most polite out of all of them and the natural one to say to someone in a higher position than I was.
High P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance

S2M: Fairly tricky situation. I suppose I'd use [Question Directive] because David Walsh is new at the paper, he's half her age and she's the editor-in-chief, so [Question Directive] would be the most polite and sensible way of asking for it, I think.

Examples of the latter two reasons for question directive choice, addressee busy at the time of request, and form gives addressee a time option, are as follows:

High P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance

S18F: [Question Directive] because she's being nice and taking into account that he's very busy, and she's not really ordering him to do anything. In [Imperative] and [Hint] she's sort of saying to him "Look, if you don't look through it now, then it's not going to be done, so you've got to give up what you're doing and have a look through it". Whereas in [Question Directive] she's taking into account that he hasn't got much time and she's sort of being nice about it -- just asking him to have a look at it.

INT: What about [Imbedded Imperative]?
That's not too bad, but she's not really taking into account that he's very busy -- she's not realizing that.

High P, High D, Outside Role

S10F: She should ask [Question Directive] because she's asking if he has the time to, you know, if it's not too much bother, you know, would you be able to help me?

Table 11.3 Reasons given by female and male participants to explain Question Directive choice as 'most likely' in High P scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N(choices) = 17</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N(choices) = 16</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressee Busy</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness of form</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives time option</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High P Addressee</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in Table 11.3, for both of these reasons concerning busyness and time pressure, the proportion of mentions by female participants was higher than that for males. This was also the case for explanations involving the low familiarity of the addressee. For the other frequently-occurring reasons listed in the table, the reverse was the case.
Finally, with respect to hint choices as 'most likely' in High P scenarios, although the numbers involved were small, it was the case that the *busyness of the addressee* was mentioned as a reason on half of all occasions of hint choice (3 of the 6 female choices; 2 of the 4 male choices) in line with Ervin-Tripp's description of the form's distribution under conditions where non-compliance was possible. For example:

**High P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance**

*S10F*: [Hint] because she's sort of saying "Oh, I respect that you're busy and um ... I can sort of wait until you're not as busy as you are.

### 11.5.2 Summary: High-Power Scenarios

There was some support for available models of the distribution of request forms in the patterns of 'most likely' choices made by female and male participants in *High P* scenarios. Indirect question directive forms were chosen most frequently in scenarios depicting a low probability of addressee compliance, as had been predicted on the basis of Ervin-Tripp's observations. In other relatively weighty (in Brown and Levinson's terms) *High R* combinations, the more direct imbedded imperatives were most frequently chosen as 'most likely' rather than the more indirect forms. This was not as expected on the basis of Brown and Levinson's model. However, the predominance of imbedded imperative choice as 'most likely' under *High P, Low R* conditions was consistent with their predictions, and with the observations of Ervin-Tripp. Overall, the patterns of male and female choices of 'most likely' request alternative in *High P* scenarios were very similar. There were similarities, as well as some differences, in the types of reasons given by women and men to explain their choices. The *politeness of the form* and the *high power of the addressee* were frequently mentioned by women and men to justify both imbedded imperative and question directive choices. Imbedded imperatives were also justified with similar frequency by women and men in terms of their *directness*, the fact that they *asked the addressee*, and the *addressee's greater age*. Male participants made more frequent reference to the *high familiarity of the addressee*, the *presence of the 'Could you' form*, and the *need for the speaker to get someone else's help*, in explaining their choices of imbedded imperatives than did women. For question directive choices, women made more frequent reference than did men to the fact that the *addressee was busy* and to the *need to give the addressee a time option*. 
11.5.3  Equal-Power Scenarios

The pattern of participants' choices of 'most likely' request form in EqualP scenarios is displayed in Table 11.4. In the two most weighty EqualP combinations (Columns 1 & 2), the outcome was broadly in line with predictions from Brown and Levinson's model, that indirectness is associated with increased weightiness of an FTA, and with Ervin-Tripp's observations that question directive and hint forms were likely to be used under conditions where non-compliance was possible. The distribution of male participants' choices in the EqualP, High D, Outside Role combination (Column 1) involving a predominance of question directives as 'most likely' choice is closer to predictions from the models than is the female participants' more equal split between imbedded imperative and question directive choices. For the High D, Low-Probability-of-Compliance combination (Column 2), however, the pattern of choices for male and female participants was more similar, being spread predominantly between question directive and hint choices.

Table 11.4 Frequency of female and male choice of 4 request variants as 'most likely' across Equal P scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
<th>Column 3</th>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal P, High D, Low Prob. of Compliance</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the less weighty Low D versions of these two High R combinations, the patterns were also consistent with expectations under the models. In the Low D, Outside-Role combination (Column 4), both female and male participants chose the more direct imbedded imperative form most often as 'most likely'. This pattern can be contrasted with the greater frequency of
indirect question directive choice in the more weighty High D, Outside-Role combination (Column 1). In the Low D, Low-Probability-of-Compliance combination (Column 5), female participants also chose the more direct imbedded imperative form most often as 'most likely' rather than favouring the more weighty question directive choice, as occurred in the High D version (Column 2). Male participants maintained a preference for the indirect question directive and hint choices as 'most likely' in the Low D, Low-Probability-of-Compliance combination, indicating that the low-probability-of-compliance factor may have been a more salient determinant of their request choice than was the case for females, whose selections, according to predictions from the models, were more in line with what might be expected on the basis of changes in the social-distance factor across the two conditions.

Finally, patterns in the two Low R combinations can be seen as providing little support for Ervin-Tripp's observation that imperative and imbedded imperative use to equal-rank addressees for tasks involving a low level of imposition could be distinguished by the level of familiarity between the speaker and the addressee. In both the High and Low D versions of the Low R scenarios (Columns 3 & 6), male and female participants' choices were about equally split between imbedded imperative and question directive choices as 'most likely'. Comparisons across Equal P, Low D, High and Low R combinations also failed to support Ervin-Tripp's suggestion that imperative and imbedded imperative use could be distinguished on the basis of the imposition level involved.

Reasons given by participants for not choosing the more direct imperative strategy in the least weighty Equal P, Low D, Low R scenario combination involved, most frequently, the fact that it told the addressee what to do ($N(Female) = 3, N(Male) = 2$), and that it ordered the addressee ($N(Female) = 2, N(Male) = 2$). Men also made reference to the equal power of the addressee ($N(Male) = 3$) as a reason for not choosing imperatives in this scenario. Examples of these reasons include the following:

**Equal P, Low D, Low R**

**S8F:** I wouldn't say [Imperative] because that's telling him what to do again.

**Equal P, Low D, Low R**

**S6M:** He wouldn't use [Imperative], that's an order. It's more the sort of thing you'd say to someone who was more your junior. If he was the boss of an office and she was the clerk, he might say [Imperative]. But if they're, they're both clerks -- much the same aren't they?
The patterns of 'most likely' choices in Equal P scenarios can be contrasted with choices of 'most likely' form in High P scenarios (Table 11.1). In three out of the six direct comparisons that can be made in which only the value of the P factor varies from High to Equal, it was the case that there was a higher frequency of indirect (question directive and hint) choices in Equal P scenarios (Tables 11.3 & 11.4: Columns 1, 3, & 6). In the remaining three comparisons across High and Equal P scenarios (Tables 11.3 & 11.4: Columns 2, 4, & 5) the distribution of indirect and direct forms was very similar. These patterns provide no support for Brown and Levinson's claim that increasing weightiness of an FTA is associated with increasing indirectness of the request form.

Reasons given by participants for their choices of 'most likely' forms of request in Equal P scenarios can also be contrasted with those given to justify 'most likely' choices in High P scenarios. As can be seen in Table 11.5, both women and men most often referred to the politeness of the imbedded imperative form, and to the fact that it asked the addressee, in explaining their 'most likely' choices of this variant in Equal P scenarios. These reasons were also given with the highest frequencies for imbedded imperative choices in High P scenarios (Table 11.2). The high familiarity of the addressee was also mentioned reasonably frequently to explain imbedded imperative choices to addressees of both levels of power. Other reasons that occurred with some frequency for imbedded imperative choice to High P addressees but which were only mentioned infrequently in Equal P scenarios included the directness of the imbedded imperative and the fact that it was necessary for the speaker to get someone else's assistance. References to the power and age of the addressee which had occurred with reasonable frequency in High P scenarios, were also less frequent in explanations of imbedded imperative choice in Equal P scenarios.
Table 11.5 Reasons given by female and male participants to explain Imbedded Imperative choice as 'most likely' in Equal P scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N(Choices) = 17</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N(Choices) = 16</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness of form</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks Addressee</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Familiarity</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directness of form</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Could you'</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal P Addressee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same age Addressee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons given most frequently by participants in explaining question directive choices as 'most likely' in Equal P scenarios were different from those given for imbedded imperative forms. As can be seen in Table 11.6, both women and men most often referred to the fact that the question directive form gave the addressee an option to refuse the request, and to the fact that the addressee was busy at the time of the request, as reasons for their choice. For example:

**Equal P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance**

**S26F:** [Question Directive] because if he's just a new teacher ... if it was anybody, you should really, I would have said "Have you got time to take over?", and she's not making him say yes. If she said[I'mbedded Imperative], it's not giving him an option of saying no.

**Equal P, Low D, Outside Role**

**S23M:** [Question Directive]. [Imperative] and [Imbedded Imperative] were sort of not giving her a chance to say yes or no really. He was sort of saying "Pick them up for me.", or "Could you" whereas [Question Directive] leaves her open to give her a chance to say if she's not going down - it's going out of her way. And it's just more considerate for her.

**Equal P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance**

**S18F:** [Question Directive] because she can see that he's marking some tests and like, she has to ask him - she has to sort of take that into account and sort of ask him whether he's got time to do it rather than just asking whether he can do it. Like she's being nice about it by asking him whether he's got time.
Equal P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance

S20M: [Question Directive] because doing yard-duty takes up, say, all the lunch-time and since she would be, she might be doing something, it would be better to ask "Do you have the time?".

Table 11.6 Reasons given by female and male participants to explain Question Directive choice as 'most likely' in Equal P scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N(choices) = 22</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N(choices) = 27</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives option to refuse</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of way for Addressee</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressee Busy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness of form</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives time option</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal P Addressee</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Men, more frequently than women, mentioned that the request was out of the addressee's way as a reason for choosing the question directive form (26% of male question directive choices vs 14% of female). For example:

Equal P, High D, Outside Role

S34M: [Question Directive] cause in that situation she might be going somewhere miles from where ... oh, not miles, but a long way away from where he wants her to go ... in which case he'd be more likely to ask her if she's going there.

Women mentioned the addressee's low familiarity more often than did men (27% vs 7%). For example,

Equal P, High D, Outside Role

S14F: I think [Question Directive]'s the most appropriate because seeing she doesn't know him very well, she's not asking him straight out to do something, she's just saying [Question Directive].

By comparison with the types of reasons given for question directive choice in High P scenarios (Table 11.3), it can be seen that references to the question directive's politeness, to
the fact that it gave the addressee a time option, and to the power of the addressee, were less frequent in explanations in the Equal P scenario choices.

Finally, with respect to choices of hints as 'most likely' in Equal P scenarios, although the numbers involved were small, it was the case that the busyness of the addressee was again mentioned most often in total (3 of 5 female choices & 2 of 7 male choices of hint as 'most likely'), as it had been in the High P scenarios. Again, this explanation is consistent with Ervin-Tripp's description of hint use as occurring under conditions in which non-compliance is possible. Examples of this reason are as follows:

**Equal P, Low D, High Probability of Compliance**

S14F: [Hint] ... cause then she's not asking him directly, and if she knows that he's got to have the tests back, he might try and get someone else to do it, or something.

**Equal P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance**

S7M: I think [Hint]. I am about to ... what I'm wanting from Paula is for her to drop what she's doing and go and do something for me. Whereas supplying a reply like [Hint] I'm leaving room for her to say "Oh yes, I'll do that for you, Ian.", or "I think I'm too bogged down here. I've got this to do.", and that's sort of putting the onus on her to reply either yes or no, and is leaving me out of it altogether. I don't have to formally ask her to do it for me. I'm just sort of stating the situation and if she's willing to come to my aid, she'd read it into that request and be able to supply "Oh yes, I'll do it for you, Ian". If she's not able to come to my aid and therefore doesn't, or doesn't want to read into that request, she can just sit there and go on with what she's doing.

### 11.5.4 Summary: Equal-Power Scenarios

Patterns of participants' choices of 'most likely' request forms in scenarios depicting Equal P addressees provided some support for available models of request distribution. The more indirect question directive and hint forms tended to be selected with higher frequencies in the more weighty High D versions of Equal P, High R scenarios than in the less weighty Low D versions, where imbedded imperatives were more frequent 'most likely' choices. There was some evidence to support Ervin-Tripp's conclusion that hint forms are appropriately used under conditions where non-compliance is possible. Patterns of choice, however, did not support her observation that the use of imbedded imperative and imperative forms in addressing equal-rank, familiar addressees could be distinguished in terms of the imposition-value of the task, nor that
their use to equal-rank addressees for low-imposition tasks could be distinguished in terms of the level of familiarity between the speaker and the addressee. For the most part, the pattern of male and female choices of 'most likely' request-form in Equal P scenarios was similar.

In comparison with the pattern of 'most likely' choices for High P scenarios, the pattern obtained for Equal P scenarios was not, overall, less indirect, as would have been expected on the basis of Brown and Levinson's model that associates increased weightiness of an FTA with increased indirectness.

Reasons given by participants for their choices of 'most likely' request form in Equal P scenarios were different for imbedded imperative and question directive choices. The politeness of the form, the fact that it asked the addressee, and the addressee's high familiarity were mentioned most frequently to explain imbedded imperative choice; whereas for question directives, the fact that the form gave the addressee an option to refuse the request, that the task was out of the way for the addressee, that the addressee was busy, and the low familiarity of the addressee were all mentioned frequently. There were few major differences in the frequencies with which women and men mentioned various reasons to explain their choices of 'most likely' form in these scenarios although, proportionally, more women referred to the familiarity relationship between the speaker and the addressee, to explain both imbedded imperative and question directive choices, and more men to the fact that the requested task was out of the addressee's way, to explain question directive choice.

11.5.5 Low-Power Scenarios

The pattern of participants' choices of 'most likely' request form in Low P scenarios is displayed in Table 11.7
**Table 11.7** Frequency of female and male choice of 4 request variants as 'most likely' across Low P scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low P, High D, Outside Role</strong></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low P, Low Prob. of Compliance</strong></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low P, Low D, Low R</strong></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the two most weighty combinations (Columns 1 & 2) the pattern of predominantly imbedded imperative and question directive choice as 'most likely' was in line with predictions from Brown and Levinson's model; however, similar patterns in the two less weighty *Low R* combinations (Columns 3 & 6) were not consistent with their claim that increased weightiness is associated with increased indirectness. There was also little support in the obtained patterns of choice for Ervin-Tripp's description of the distribution of hint forms under conditions of non-compliance (Columns 2 & 5) or when routine tasks are requested of *Low P* addressees (Column 6). It can be noted, however, that imperative forms were chosen as 'most likely' more frequently in the less weighty *Low P* combinations (Columns 3 - 6) than in the more weighty (Columns 1 & 2). No support was evident for Ervin-Tripp's suggestion that patterns of imperative and imbedded imperative use in requests to *Low P* addressees could be distinguished in terms of whether the tasks requested were within the addressee's normal duties (imperative) or fell outside of them (imbedded imperative). There were few differences between the patterns of female and male choices of 'most likely' forms in these *Low P* scenarios (e.g., Columns 3 - 6). Some differences are apparent for the two most weighty combinations: in the *High D, Outside-Role* version (Column 1), women chose only imbedded imperatives and question directives; men's choices included hint forms. In the *High D, Low P*
version (Column 2), men chose more imbedded imperative and fewer question directive forms than did women.

The patterns of choices in Low P scenarios can be contrasted with choices of 'most likely' form in High and Equal P scenarios. Of the six direct comparisons that can be made in which only the value of the P factor varies from High to Equal to Low, only two confirmed expectations of an association between weightiness and indirectness (Tables 11.1, 11.4, 11.7: Column 2, where there was a lower frequency of indirect [question directive & hint] forms in Low P scenarios than in High or Equal P ones, and Column 5, where there was a higher frequency of indirect [question directive & hint] forms in High P scenarios than in Equal or Low P). Patterns in the other comparisons either showed very few differences across levels of P (Tables 11.1, 11.4, 11.7: Columns 1 & 4), or showed trends that were opposite to the prediction (Tables 11.1, 11.4, 11.7: Columns 3 & 6).

Reasons given by participants for their choices of 'most likely' forms of request in Low P scenarios can also be contrasted with those given to justify 'most likely' choices in High and Equal P scenarios. As can be seen in Table 11.8, both women and men most often referred to the following reasons for their choice of the imbedded imperative form:

(i) the politeness of the imbedded imperative form. For example:

**Low P, High D, Low R**

S17F: [Imbedded Imperative] cause it's the nicest and most polite thing to say.

(ii) the fact that it asked the addressee, and (iii) was direct. For example:

**Low P, High D, Low R**

S25F: [Imbedded Imperative]. She wants to be direct. I think she should tell Paul that she wants some more tacks, but she can't really demand it so ... I think [Imbedded Imperative]’s a good idea because she's asking him nicely even though she's the superior in this case, I still think you should have some manners in a situation like that.

These reasons were also given with high frequency for imbedded imperative choices in High P scenarios, and the first two were also used quite frequently across all three levels of power as explanations of imbedded imperative choice. Reference to the power differentials between the speaker and addressee (High or Low P) occurred more often to explain imbedded imperative choice than did reference to equality of power, and in Low P scenarios, male participants made
more frequent reference to the addressee's power than did females (29% of male imbedded imperative choices vs 11% of female choices). For example:

**Low P, High D, Low R**

**S12M:** [Imbedded Imperative]. *Jim is much older, he doesn't need to beat around the bush. Julie's his employee, this is on the job.*

**Table 11.8** Reasons given by female and male participants to explain Imbedded Imperative choice as 'most likely' in Low P scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N(choices) = 27</td>
<td>N(choices) = 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks Addressee</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness of form</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directness of form</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low P Addressee</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Could you'</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Familiarity</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons mentioned most often by participants to explain question directive choices as 'most likely' in Low P scenarios (Table 11.9) included, most frequently, the fact that the requested task was out of the way for the addressee. For example:

**Low P, Low D, Outside Role**

**S24F:** *I'd probably say [Question Directive]. You are asking a favour cause this person might have to go out of his way to get it so ... it's not really being indirect by asking him [Question Directive].*

**Low P, Low D, Outside Role**

**S2M:** *I think I'd use [Question Directive] because it's a very unusual sort of thing to ask someone during work hours, so you don't want to be too direct and presumably it's a bit unfair to ask someone to go out of their way during work hours.*
Table 11.9 Reasons given by female and male participants to explain Question Directive choice as 'most likely' in Low P scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N(choices) = 23</td>
<td>N(choices) = 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of way for Addressee</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger age of Addressee</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives option to refuse</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness of form</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low P Addresssee</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women also mentioned with some frequency the younger age and low familiarity of the addressee, as well as the fact that the form gave the addressee an option to refuse the request to explain their question directive choices. For example:

**Low P, Low D, Outside Role**

S15F: *I'd say [Question Directive] because she's older, she probably wouldn't like him to think that she's bossing him around, you know, "Could you get me a loaf on your way back, please?", and so she'd sort of say... or, try to make it, you know, "Will you be passing a deli on your way back?". So in a way she's not like ordering him to do something - because she's older.*

**Low P, High D, Outside Role**

S25F: *[Question Directive] because she doesn't know him very well, and even though he's younger than she is... and she doesn't know him all that well so they'd still be on fairly polite terms, and also there it's giving him the option of saying "Yes," or "No, I won't be passing a deli".*

**Low P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance**

S3F: *[Question Directive]. I think [Hint] is a bit presumptuous. I mean, she doesn't know if there's any places or not. And that goes the same with [Imperative] - you just assume that there's somewhere for you. Yes, I think that's the same reason for all of them, really. That she doesn't know, in the situation, she doesn't know if the person before her had a reserved place so the first question - before you can ask for something you have to see if there's any space.*

All of these reasons had been given for choosing question directives as 'most likely' in **Equal P scenarios.** However, in **Equal P scenarios**, the busyness of the addressee, a similar type of reason, was frequently mentioned in explanation of question directive choice. Reasons
cited quite frequently in explaining choice of question directives as 'most likely' in High P scenarios - the politeness of the form, the fact that it gave the addressee an option, and the power of the addressee - did not occur as frequently in the Low P scenarios.

11.5.6 Summary: Low-Power Scenarios

Patterns of participants' choices of 'most likely' forms in scenarios depicting Low P addressees did not provide much in the way of support for available models of request distribution. Imbedded imperative and question directive forms were chosen with similar frequency as 'most likely' over most of the Low P scenario combinations irrespective of changes in values of D- or R-factors. In other words, the patterns of choice were not consistent with Brown and Levinson's claim that increased weightiness was associated with increased indirectness in request form. Furthermore, there was little evidence to confirm Ervin-Tripp's observations of hint use under conditions where non-compliance was possible, or to low-rank addressees to request routine tasks, nor that patterns of imperative and imbedded imperative use in requests to subordinates could be distinguished in terms of whether the task was within or outside of the addressee's normal role.

In comparison with the pattern of 'most likely' choices for High and EqualP scenarios, the pattern obtained for Low P scenarios was not, overall, consistent with Brown and Levinson's model of an association between increased weightiness and increased indirectness.

Reasons given by participants for their choices of 'most likely' request form in Low P scenarios were different for choices of imbedded imperatives and question directives, and showed strong similarities to the patterns produced in response to EqualP scenarios. For imbedded imperatives, reasons most frequently involved the politeness and directness of the form, the fact that it asked the addressee and, particularly from male participants, the low power of the addressee. For question directives, reasons most frequently involved the fact that the task was out of the way for the addressee and, particularly from female participants, the lower age and low familiarity of the addressee, and that the form gave the addressee an option to refuse the request.
Patterns of Strategy Choice Across Scenarios

Participants' choices of 'most likely' request form can also be looked at in terms of the patterns produced for each request variant separately across the full range of scenarios. For the imperative form, for instance, the frequency of choice was low, overall (5 female & 6 male choices in 162 possible occasions of choice for each gender, or 3.1% & 3.7%, respectively). Unlike the pattern for imperative choice that emerged in Study IV in which Ervin-Tripp's observation that imperatives were distributed to familiar equals and subordinates was confirmed, some of the participants' imperative choices in the present study occurred under High P, Outside-Role conditions ($N_{\text{female}} = 2$, $N_{\text{male}} = 3$). This pattern was also inconsistent with predictions under Brown and Levinson's model. It was the case, however, that the majority of choices of imperatives as 'most likely' occurred in Low D scenarios (100% of female choices & 66.7% of male choices) as would have been expected.

Because of the unexpectedness of imperative choices under Outside-Role conditions, the reasons given by participants for these choices are considered below. The most frequently mentioned reason for imperative choice in Outside-Role scenarios was the high familiarity of the addressee (in each of the 4 female choices, and 2 of the 4 male choices). For example:

Equal P, Low D, Outside Role
S24F: [Imperative]. In this situation, with them knowing each other for a long time, it probably wouldn't make much difference with the 'Could you' or just 'Pick them up.', cause you're still saying 'please'. It's more casual. They're not actually working, they're on their coffee break and as they know each other fairly well, it's more informal.

High P, Low D, Outside Role
S30M: [Imperative]. You've known them for two years.

Female participants also mentioned the informality of the form ($N_{\text{female}} = 2$) and the presence of 'please' ($N_{\text{female}} = 2$), whereas males referred to the politeness ($N_{\text{male}} = 2$) and directness ($N_{\text{male}} = 2$) of the imperative. For example:

High P, Low D, Outside Role
S33M: [Imperative]. Well, obviously I know her fairly well and you want to be polite because she's a friend of yours and that's the object you want to get. You want to get the dishes cleared away and you want to do it without being rude.

The urgency of the task was also mentioned by a woman and a man in justification of their imperative choice. For example:
High P, High D, Outside Role

S26M: [Imperative]. Well, if you're standing there with an arm full of dishes, they're probably pretty heavy so I don't think you could really ... I don't suppose there's much difference between [Imbedded Imperative] and [Imperative] but if you stand there saying [Imbedded Imperative], it's a bit long to stand there and say. [Imperative]'s a bit more direct. So probably [Imperative].

It would appear that social-contextual features other than the fact that the task requested was outside of the addressee's normal duties or role - most frequently, the high familiarity of the addressee - were perceived as more salient determinants of request choice by these participants.

The overall frequency of 'most likely' choice for imbedded imperative forms (Table 11.10) was the highest of the four request alternatives provided (82 out of 162 possible choices for both female and male participants, or 50.6%) This was also the case in Study IV, where an equal frequency of female and male choice of imbedded imperatives as 'most likely' was also recorded. In the present study, imbedded imperatives were chosen as 'most likely' with similar frequency across High, Equal, and Low P scenarios by female participants (29, 26, & 27 choices, respectively). Male participants, however, chose imbedded imperatives less frequently in Equal P scenarios (20 choices or 24.3%) than in High or Low P scenarios (31 choices or 37.8% in both).

Table 11.10 Distribution of Imbedded Imperative choices as 'most likely' form of request across all scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High P</th>
<th></th>
<th>Equal P</th>
<th></th>
<th>Low P</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside Role</td>
<td>Low P</td>
<td>Prob. of Comply</td>
<td>Low R</td>
<td>Outside Role</td>
<td>Low P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High D</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low D</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total P</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When considered in combination with the distribution of male imperative choices across levels of the P factor, this pattern of imbedded imperative choice by males continues a trend that is consistent with Wolfson's (1988) Bulge theory of the distribution of linguistic forms, which predicts similarity between usage to strangers and intimates.

In terms of their distribution across levels of the D factor, choices of imbedded imperative forms were different for women and men. Men's choices were equally distributed across High and Low D scenarios (41 choices or 50% in each); women chose imbedded imperatives slightly more often in Low D (46 choices or 56.1%) than in High D (36 choices or 43.9%) scenarios. There was also a different pattern for female and male choice across levels of the R factor. Women chose imbedded imperatives with equal frequency in Outside-Role and Low R scenarios (32 choices or 39.0% in both) and with lower frequency in the Low-Probability-of-Compliance condition (18 choices or 22.0%). Men's choices were more in line with predictions from the models, with most imbedded imperatives being selected in Low R scenarios (37 instances or 45.1%) and fewer in the two High R scenarios (24 choices or 29.3% in Outside-Role; 21 choices or 25.6% in Low-Probability-of-Compliance scenarios).

Question directives were the form chosen second most frequently as 'most likely' in this study (62 female choices or 38.3%; 60 male choices or 37.0%), as they had been in Study IV, but the predominance of female choice of the form observed there was not reproduced in these patterns. As can be seen from Table 11.11, question directives were chosen with equal frequency across levels of the P factor by women (17, 22, & 23 choices in High, Equal, & Low P respectively, or 27.4%, 35.5% & 37.1%), but men's choices were more frequent in Equal P scenarios (27 choices or 45.0%) than in High or Low P scenarios (16 & 17 choices respectively, or 26.7% & 28.3%). This pattern for male question directive choices again appears consistent with predictions from Wolfson's (1988) Bulge theory.
Table 11.11  Distribution of Question Directive choices as 'most likely' form of request across all scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>High P</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Low P</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside</td>
<td>Equal P</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prob. of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prob. of</td>
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<td>Comply</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comply</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High D</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low D</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total R</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total P</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total D</strong></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With respect to question directive choices under levels of the D factor, an equal distribution across *High* and *Low D* scenarios for men (29 or 48.3% of choices in *High D*, 31 or 51.7% in *Low D*) resembled that for the imbedded imperative form. The pattern for female choices of question directive form was the reverse of that obtained for imbedded imperatives, however, with more question directives being chosen in *High D* (38 or 61.3% of choices) than in *Low D* (24 or 38.7%) conditions.

The patterns for both women's and men's choices of question directive as 'most likely', under different levels of the R factor, were broadly similar to those observed for choices of imbedded imperative form. Women chose question directives with equal frequency in *Outside-Role* and *Low R* scenarios (18 choices or 29.0% in both) but with higher frequency in the *Low-Probability-of-Compliance* scenario (26 choices or 41.9%), consistently with Ervin-Tripp's observation of question directive use under conditions of possible non-compliance. Men's choices were again more in line with predictions from Brown and Levinson's model, with more question directives being chosen in *High R* scenarios (21 choices or 35.0% in *Outside-Role*; 25 choices or 41.7% in *Low-Probability-of-Compliance* scenarios) than in the Low R scenario (14 choices or 23.3%).

Finally, off-record hint forms (Table 11.12) were chosen as 'most likely' with similar frequencies by female and male participants (13 out of 162 possible female choices or 8.0%; 14 male choices or 8.6%). The predominance of male hint choice observed in Study IV was not
reproduced here. The numbers involved are too small to permit gender comparisons across levels of P, D, and R factors, although it is worth noting that, in accordance with Ervin-Tripp's observation of their use, hints tended to be chosen with some frequency in *Low-Probability-of-Compliance* scenarios by both women and men.

**Table 11.12** Distribution of Hint choices as 'most likely' form of request across all scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
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<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High D</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low D</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R</td>
<td>2</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Equal P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High D</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low D</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low P</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside Role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High D</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low D</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High D</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low D</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**11.5.8 Patterns of Reasons for 'Most Likely' Choices Across Scenarios**

A final comparison of participants' role-play responses will be made across all scenario presentations. Table 11.13 presents categories of reasons mentioned by participants in accounting for their choices of the four directive forms, in order of overall frequency of occurrence. The most frequently cited reasons for choice of a particular form as 'most likely', for each of the four directive forms, are underlined.
Table 11.13  Frequencies of reason categories mentioned by participants to justify 'most likely' choices of four request alternatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Imperative (N=11)</th>
<th>Imbedded Imperative (N=164)</th>
<th>Question Directive (N=122)</th>
<th>Hint (N=27)</th>
<th>Total (N=144)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks Addressee</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Familiarity</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives option to refuse</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressee Busy</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High P Addressee</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Addressee's way</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Addressee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low P Addressee</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S would be doing S a favour</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger S</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Could you'</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives time option</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Probability of Compliance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Please'</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not out of addressee's way</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessary for S to get some help</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urgent request</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specifies what S wants</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparison of the frequencies with which particular reasons were cited with respect to the four directive types provides a very general insight into participants' perceptions of these variants in use, and of the sorts of conditions under which the different forms were considered 'likely' to have occurred. Because of the different frequencies with which each of the four forms was chosen as 'most likely', however, any such comparisons must be treated cautiously. For example, in proportion to its overall frequency of choice, the imperative form was explained more frequently in terms of the high familiarity of the addressee (63.6%) than were other directive forms. A similar pattern was observed in Study IV.

The imbedded imperative form was explained proportionally more frequently than other alternatives in terms of a cluster of reasons that included: (i) the politeness of the form (40.2%), (ii) the fact that it asked the addressee (32.3%), (iii) the directness of the form (23.2%), (iv) the fact that the directive contained "Could you" (9.8%), and (v) that it was necessary for the speaker to get someone's help in carrying out the requested task (6.1%). In Study IV, reasons (ii) and (iii) were also observed to be proportionally more frequent in explanations of imbedded imperative choice than for other request alternatives.

Reasons given proportionally more frequently to explain question directive choice than to explain other forms included: (i) that the requested task was out of the addressee's way (17.2%), (ii) the low familiarity of the addressee (16.4%), (iii) that the form gave a time option (13.1%), and (iv) that there was a low probability that the addressee could comply with the request (9.8%). Reasons (i) and (iv) were also observed Study IV to be proportionally more frequent in explanations of question directive choice. These explanations are in line with Ervin-Tripp's proposals concerning the typical situational features that determine the appropriate use of the question directive form.

Some reasons were used with higher proportional frequencies for two variants than for others. For example, gives the addressee an option to refuse the request was used with similar high frequency to explain hint (25.9%) and question directive (23.0%) choice; and addressee was busy at the time of the request was used also to explain hint (37.0%) and question directive (23.0%) choice. Again, these reasons coincide with Ervin-Tripp's descriptions of the social distribution of the two indirect forms. In addition, the former reason - that indirect forms give the addressee an option to refuse a request - is consistent with some proposals concerning the
function of indirectness in requesting. Levinson's (1983) suggestion that indirectness functioned to avoid some of the awkwardness associated with request refusal, and Blum-Kulka's (1987) proposal that indirectness served to convey a sense of non-coerciveness, both obtain support from these accounts.

Table 11.14 shows a breakdown of reasons given to account for choice of the imbedded imperative form as 'most likely', by women and men (reasons given for imperative choices will not be broken down by gender due to their low overall frequency of choice as 'most likely' request form). Unlike Study IV, where women made more frequent reference to the fact that the imbedded imperative asked the addressee as a reason, differences in the frequencies with which a range of reasons were given by women and men to explain imbedded imperative choice in Study V were very small.

Table 11.14 Reasons given by female and male participants for 'most likely' choice of Imbedded Imperative forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks Addressee</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Familiarity</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Power</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Power</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Please'</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger S</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not out of Addressee's way</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Could you'</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. \( N \) (Women choosing Imbedded Imperatives) = 82.
b. \( N \) (Men choosing Imbedded Imperatives) = 82.
c. Percentages for High Familiarity were determined using male and female frequencies of imbedded imperative choice in High-Familiarity conditions \( f(women) = 46; f(men) = 41 \).
d. Percentages for Low Familiarity were determined using male and female frequencies of imbedded imperative choice in Low-Familiarity conditions \( f(women) = 36; f(men) = 41 \).
e. Percentages for High Power were determined using male and female frequencies of imbedded imperative choice in High-Power conditions \( f(women) = 29; f(men) = 31 \).
f. Percentages for Low Power were determined using male and female frequencies of imbedded imperative choice in Low-Power conditions \( f(women) = 27; f(men) = 31 \).
Table 11.15 displays the reasons given by women and men for choices of the question directive form as 'most likely'. The clearest difference can be seen with regard to women's more frequent reference to the low familiarity of the addressee (proportional to their choice of question directives in High D scenarios), and to the fact that the question directive gave the addressee a time option. The pattern of differences observed in Study IV - of women (only) mentioning the fact that the question directive gave the addressee an option to refuse the request and that the addressee was busy - was not replicated here.

Table 11.15 Reasons given by female and male participants for 'most likely' choice of Question Directive forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Womena</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Menb</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gives option to refuse</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressee Busy</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Addressee's way</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Familiarityc</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives time option</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks Addressee</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Familiarityd</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. N (Women choosing Question Directives) = 62.

b. N (Men choosing Question Directives) = 60.

c. Percentages for Low Familiarity were determined using male and female frequencies of question directive choice in Low-Familiarity conditions ($f(\text{women}) = 38 : f(\text{men}) = 29$).

d. Percentages for High Familiarity were determined using male and female frequencies of question directive choice in High-Familiarity conditions ($f(\text{women}) = 24 : f(\text{men}) = 31$).

As was the case in Study IV, the frequencies with which particular reasons were given by women and men to explain hint choices were too low to permit valid comparison (13 female choices & 14 male choices of hints, overall).

The suggestion, from Study IV, that there may be systematic differences in women's and men's perceptions of 'most likely' request variants under role-play conditions was not borne out by these patterns of findings from a second study involving a reduced range of scenario presentations and larger sample sizes. The frequencies with which female and male participants chose the four request variants as 'most likely' was, overall, very similar in Study V. Patterns
of more frequent female choice of the question directive form and less frequent choice of the hint form, in comparison to male choices, that were observed in Study IV were not reproduced Study V. Similarly, few differences were observed, in the second study, between the types of reasons given by female and male participants for their choices of particular request forms as 'most likely'. The study also examined the effects on 'most likely' request choice of changes to the gender of the addressee, as well as changes to the addressee's age. These are described in the next section.

11.5.9 Changes to Gender of Addressee

As part of the interview, participants were asked whether their choice of 'most likely' form of request in a particular scenario would alter if the addressee's gender had been the same as, rather than opposite to, that of the speaker. Thus, female participants were asked whether their choice would change if the addressee had been a woman (all other P, D, and R characteristics remaining consistent), and male participants were asked to consider their choice if the addressee had been a man.

More male choices than female choices of 'most likely' request form were changed when the addressee was described as being of the same sex as the speaker rather than as the opposite sex \( N(Male) = 31 \) changes, \( N(Female) = 12 \). Women were about equally likely to opt for a more direct request form \( N(Female) = 5 \) as 'most likely' to a female than to a male addressee of the same P, D, and R features as they were to opt for a less direct form \( N(Female) = 7 \). Men, on the other hand, opted more often for a more direct request form as 'most likely' to a male addressee \( N(Male) = 24 \) than they did for a less direct form \( N(Male) = 7 \).

Reasons given by men to explain changing their 'most likely' choice to a more direct form when a male rather than a female addressee was involved were sufficiently frequent to enable patterns to be identified. The reasons mentioned most frequently included:

(a) that it was not necessary to be as polite to another man \( N(Male) = 5 \). For example:

**High P, Low D, Outside Role**

**Interviewer:** If [Addressee] were a man would your opinion about the most likely form change?

**S22M:** Probably [Imperative] - the idea that you're supposed to be more polite and all that sort of thing to ... yeah, there's an idea that you got to be polite and all this
sort of thing to females, and ... can be more rough and ready kind of thing with males.

**Equal P, Low D, Outside Role**

**S20M:** Probably would have tended to be a bit more rude because he's ... they're probably good mates or whatever, so he would probably say [Imperative] because the other male wouldn't be as hurt as easily as a, probably, as a female.

**Low P, High D, Outside Role**

**S6M:** He might be more inclined to [Imperative] than [Imbedded Imperative].

**Interviewer:** Why do you think he would have used [Imbedded Imperative] to a woman?

**S6M:** [Sotto voce] Um, gentlemen are always polite to women. There's always the possibility he's going to get into her pants some time.

and (b) the directness of the form ($N_{(Male)} = 5$). For example:

**Equal P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance**

**S4M:** Probably [Imbedded Imperative]. He wouldn't leave it open. He wouldn't want to appear to be sort of less than the other man, whereas it doesn't really matter with a woman because she's not competition.

**Interviewer:** So why can't he use [Hint] to a man?

**S4M:** Would look as if he's crawling to the other person. He's not coming direct, he's beating about the bush.

**Low P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance**

**S6M:** He might choose [Imbedded Imperative] because um ... I think you've got to assume that he ought to be able to have a permit. So he's not going to ask "Do you have any spare spaces left?", but he's not going to play the game where the clerk has to guess what he wants. So say what he wants - he wants a permit for the underground carpark.

**Interviewer:** Why does he have to make the clerk guess what he wants if the clerk is a woman?

**S6M:** Mmm ... that probably says something terrible about my relationship to women. Probably because there are all sorts of things that women have to guess that men want without them actually saying, whereas when a man wants something from a man, usually it's something they ask for more directly.

Although the number of changes in the direction of a more direct request form for a female addressee by female participants were much less frequent than similar changes by males, it can be noted that similar reasons with respect to the *directness of the form* used to a same-sex addressee were mentioned by women to explain their altered choices ($N_{(Female)} = 2$). For example:
High P, High D, Low R

S36F: Probably [Imbedded Imperative] then. It's direct, it asks her straight out in a way that indicates what is wanted.

No specific reference was made by female participants to it being unnecessary to be as polite to a same-sex addressee, as in the reasons given by male participants to explain their changed choices. However, female participants did suggest that a greater sense of familiarity was possible between women than between a woman and a man in accounting for their choices of more direct forms as 'most likely' with a female than with a male addressee (N(Female) = 2).

For example:

Equal P, Low D, Outside Role

S28F: If it's a female that she knew well, cause females can get a lot closer than a female and a male in friendship, so she'd probably say [Imperative].

11.5.10 Changes to Age of the Addressee

Participants were also asked, as part of the interview, questions concerning whether their choice of 'most likely' form of request in a particular scenario would alter if the addressee's age had been different to that described. In the original scenarios, the ages of the speaker and addressee were always described as consistent with the power relationship between them. The questions, then, posed in respect of the High-Power scenarios, were whether 'most likely' choice would change if the addressee had been (a) the same age as the speaker, and (b) younger than the speaker. In Equal-Power scenarios, the questions related to an addressee who was (a) older than, and (b) younger than the speaker. In Low-Power scenarios, the questions concerned an addressee who was (a) the same age, and (b) older than the speaker. The question put to participants stressed that the status relationship between the interactants remained the same, and that only the age relationship had changed. In High P scenarios, similar numbers of women and men made changes to their 'most likely' choices when the High P addressee was described as being the same age as the speaker (N(Female) = 12, N(Male) = 14). There were roughly equal numbers of changes in the direction of a less direct form (N(Female) = 5, N(Male) = 8) and a more direct form (N(Female) = 7, N(Male) = 6).

When the High P addressee was described as being younger than the speaker, similar numbers of men and women changed their 'most likely' choices (N(Female) = 13, N(Male) = 14). This time, however, the majority of changes made by women were in the direction of a
more direct form for the younger High P addressee \((N(Female) = 10)\) than in the direction of a less direct form \((N(Female) = 3)\). For men, the number of changes in the direction of a more direct \((N(Male) = 8)\) and less direct form \((N(Male) = 6)\) was roughly equal.

The notion that the age changes diminished the addressee's power in the relationship was the reason mentioned most frequently, overall, to explain changes in the direction of a choice of a more direct form as 'most likely' for same age High P addressees \((N(Total) = 4)\), and younger addressees \((N(Total) = 5)\) in comparison to choices made for an older High P addressee. For example:

**High P, High D, Outside Role**

Interviewer: If [addressee's name] was older than [speaker's name]?

S31M: [Imbedded Imperative]. *I'm just imagining myself in that situation. Probably if she's the same age as him, it seems as though ... she's not that much more important than him, in a situation like that - chef and kitchen-hand.*

**High P, Low D, Outside Role**

Interviewer: If [addressee's name] was the same age as [speaker's] name?

S19F: *Probably [Question Directive] because ... I think when it's just a closer age ... [laughs] you wouldn't look up to him as much as your boss if you were closer in age.*

There were no obvious patterns in the types of reasons given by participants to explain changes in the direction of choosing a less direct request form as 'most likely' for same age and younger addressees in comparison to choices made for an older High P addressee. Changes in the direction of a less direct request form for a same age or younger High P addressee than for a High P addressee who was older than the speaker involved, most often overall, reference to the *informality of the less direct form* \((N(Total) = 3)\), and to the idea that the *less direct form would be interpreted readily as a request by age-equal or younger addressees* \((N(Total) = 3)\). For example:

**High P, Low D, Low R**

Interviewer: If [addressee's name] was the same age as [speaker's name]?

S34M: *If they knew each other well, I think he'd be more likely to be more casual.*
High P, High D, Low R

Interviewer: If [addressee's name] was older than [speaker's name]?
S31M: Probably [Hint] cause seeing she's younger, she's probably a bit more happy-go-lucky and probably ... more likely to cotton-on to what he's getting at, talking about.

In EqualP scenarios, similar numbers of women and men made changes to their 'most likely' choices when the EqualP addressee was described as being older than the speaker ($N_{Female} = 15, N_{Male} = 11$). More of the changes were in the direction of a less direct form of request for the older EqualP addressee ($N_{Female} = 11, N_{Male} = 7$) than in the direction of a more direct form ($N_{Female} = 4, N_{Male} = 4$). When the EqualP addressee was described as being younger than the speaker, similar numbers of women and men changed their choices ($N_{Female} = 12, N_{Male} = 16$). This time, however, the majority of the changes were in the direction of a more direct form of request ($N_{Female} = 3, N_{Male} = 5$) than in the direction of a less direct form ($N_{Female} = 3, N_{Male} = 5$).

The reasons given most frequently to explain changes to a less direct form of request when the EqualP addressee was described as older than the speaker, rather than the same age, involved (a) the politeness of the form ($N_{Total} = 3$), (b) the fact that the less direct form showed respect to the older addressee ($N_{Total} = 3$), and (c) that the form gave the addressee an option to refuse ($N_{Total} = 3$).

The reason given most often to explain changes to a less direct form of request as 'most likely' when the EqualP addressee was described as being younger than the speaker was the diminishing of the addressee's power ($N_{Total} = 3$). For example:

Equal P, Low D, Low R

S1F: If he was that younger, she'd probably say [Hint], I think ... you know, order him rather than ask him.

This reason was also mentioned most often to explain choices of a more direct form as 'most likely' to a younger EqualP addressee ($N_{Total} = 4$). For example:

Equal P, High D, Low R

S1F: I think he might say [Imbedded Imperative] in that case. Being older ... that's sort of like he's more in a position of power.

These accounts by participants are consistent with Ervin-Tripp's observations that both (direct) imperative and (indirect) hints were used to subordinate addressees to request routine tasks.
In Low P scenarios, similar numbers of women and men made changes to their 'most likely' choices when the Low P addressee was described as being the same age as the addressee \((N(\text{Female}) = 7, N(\text{Male}) = 10)\). Changes occurred both in the direction of more direct \((N(\text{Female}) = 3, N(\text{Male}) = 3)\) and less direct \((N(\text{Female}) = 4, N(\text{Male}) = 7)\) request forms. When the Low P addressee was described as being older than the speaker, similar numbers of women and men changed their choices \((N(\text{Female}) = 7, N(\text{Male}) = 9)\). The majority of changes were in the direction of a less direct form of request for the older Low P addressee \((N(\text{Female}) = 5, N(\text{Male}) = 9)\) than toward a more direct form \((N(\text{Female}) = 2, N(\text{Male}) = 0)\).

Reasons given most often by participants to explain their changes to a less direct form of request as 'most likely' when the Low P addressee was described as either the same age or older than the speaker included (a) the politeness of the form, and (b) the need to show respect to the addressee. For example:

**Low P, Low D, Outside Role**

**Interviewer:** If [addressee's name] was the same age as [speaker's name]?

**S34M:** Possibly be more likely to use [Imbedded Imperative] in that situation, just to be polite - when speaking to an older person.

**Low P, High D, Outside Role**

**S4M:** She wouldn't be so much an inferior. He'd treat her more as an equal, be more polite.

**Low P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance**

**Interviewer:** If [addressee's name] was older than [speaker's name]?

**S19F:** Might say [Imbedded Imperative] just, you know, more polite. And respect for him cause he's a lot older.

The reason mentioned most frequently to explain changes to a more direct 'most likely' choice was the more equal power-relationship that would exist between the speaker and a same-aged subordinate \((N(\text{Total}) = 3)\). For example:

**Low P, Low D, Outside Role**

**S15F:** I might say [Imbedded Imperative] now. I'd tend to say [Imbedded Imperative]. You'd be more on an equal footing so, um, you wouldn't have to worry about offering them anything or getting them annoyed or anything. So you could just ask straight out for them.

**Low P, High D, Low R**

**S6M:** Probably [Imbedded Imperative], I'd choose. They'd be on more equal terms and probably use more direct sort of requests.
The final sections of this chapter investigate two issues: (i) what information can be obtained from an examination of participants' reasons for non-choice of particular request forms, concerning the validity of available models of request distribution, and (ii) the question of whether appropriateness or politeness considerations underlie male and female participants' choices of situated requests.

Participants' reasons for not choosing particular forms of request in each scenario can provide information concerning the validity of available models of the social distribution of requests. In the next section, it will be seen that patterns of reasons given to account for non-choice of particular request forms were generally consistent with claims made by Ervin-Tripp concerning their distribution.

11.5.11 Reasons Given to Justify Non-Choice of Variants

Table 11.16 displays the reasons given most frequently by male and female participants in explaining non-choice of the imperative form. As in Study IV, reasons centering on the ordering, demanding, telling, and commanding aspects of the imperative form were most frequently cited as explaining its non-choice, with similar frequency by male and female participants. For example:

**Equal P, High D, Outside Role**

S1F: *Um ... ah I don't think [Imperative]'s very likely. She's um ... she's more or less ordering him to go and do it, rather than asking him.*

**Equal P, Low D, Low R**

S20M: *[Imperative] tends to be a demand. It tends to be ... oh, you can't really just go around demanding everybody to do everything. Probably wouldn't last very long or you'd be hated, but if you ... you'd probably be better off to be more polite.*

**High P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance**

S17F: *Well, she hasn't really got any right to tell him to read it through. She ought really to ask him nicely.*

**Equal P, Low D, Low R**

S19F: *No, [Imperative]'s just a command. I wouldn't say that even though you do know him - or they're good friends - so you'd just ask them. You wouldn't say "Take them".*
Table 11.16 Reasons for non-choice of Imperative form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orders</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demands</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Power Addressee</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tells Addressee</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commands</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressee Busy</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impolite</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not ask Addressee</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrupt</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Power Addressee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 'Could you'</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressee New</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rude</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (Non-choice</strong></td>
<td><strong>258</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>225</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most noticeable differences between the frequencies of male and female reasons was that men referred more often to the fact that the imperative *did not ask the addressee* (7% of male reasons for non-choice of imperatives versus 2% of female reasons), and to the *equal power of the addressee* (6% of male versus 1% of female reasons). For example:

**Equal P, High D, Outside Role**

S11M: [Imperative]'s sort of... I mean even though the 'please' is there, that's sort of somewhat of a command rather than asking her to do something. And seeing as they're round about the same age, and they're both clerks, so there doesn't seem to be any sort of superiority between the two, then that seems sort of, rather sort of... what one would say to one's inferior rather than to one's superior, or one's equal.

Consistently with Ervin-Tripp's observations of the distribution of imperative forms (to equal- or low-rank familiars for routine tasks), the *high power of the addressee*, the *low-familiarity relationship between the speaker and addressee*, and the fact that the *addressee was*
busy at the time of the request were cited as reasons for the form's non-choice by both male and female participants. For example:

**High P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance**

S8F:  *Wouldn't say [Imperative] at all, cause he's the editor-in-chief, he's above her, and I don't think she'd tell him what to do, especially since he's got work to do.*

**Equal P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance**

S1F:  *[Imperative]'s just not on at all, I don't think. She's ordering him and she doesn't know the guy at all, and um he's got the obligation of returning to his class.*

Table 11.17 displays the reasons most frequently mentioned by male and female participants to explain the non-choice of imbedded imperative forms. The fact that the addressee was busy at the time of the request was mentioned most often by males and females to explain their failure to choose the imbedded imperative. For example:

**High P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance**

S18F:  *[Imbedded Imperative]'s not too bad but she's not really taking into account that he's very busy - she's not realizing that.*

**High P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance**

S6M:  *I almost chose [Imbedded Imperative] but I preferred [Question Directive] because I wanted her to realize that I know that she's busy.*

**Table 11.17** Reasons for non-choice of Imbedded Imperative form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AddresseeBusy</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not give option to refuse</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tells Addressee</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Probability of Compliance</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not give a time option</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Addressee's way</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (Non-choice of Imbedded Imp.)</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The *low familiarity* of the addressee and the fact that the imbedded imperative form *did not give the addressee an option to refuse the request* were also mentioned with reasonable frequency, as were the *directness* and *formality of the form*, and the fact that the imbedded imperative *told the addressee*. For example:

(i) *low familiarity:*

**Low P, High D, Outside Role**

**S4F:** [Imbedded Imperative]'s a bit forward for only knowing him over a week - asking him to do something for her.

(ii) *did not give option to refuse:*

**High P, Low D, Outside Role**

**S21F:** By saying "Could you", I'm really asking him to do it straight away, not finding out whether he's available to do it, cause he might have had his hands full with something as well. And [Imbedded Imperative] to me seems to be indicating that I want him to do it regardless of what he's doing. And he can't really say "No" to me here.

(iii) *directness of form:*

**Low P, Low D, Outside Role**

**S15F:** Even though [Imbedded Imperative]'s polite, it's still ... you know, it's really direct and with that ... oh, I don't know. He could quite easily have taken it the wrong way "All these old people always telling me what to do".

(iv) *formality of form:*

**High P, Low D, Outside Role**

**S11M:** I suppose [Imbedded Imperative] looks the sort of formal sort of way of saying it. Um, "do you have time", as opposed to "could you please" sort of just seems a more relaxed way of saying it.

(v) *tells addressee:*

**Equal P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance**

**S32M:** In [Imbedded Imperative] you tend to be telling her more than what you are in [Question Directive].

Overall, a pattern can be seen in the types of reasons used to explain non-choice of imbedded imperatives. Aside from the *low familiarity of the addressee* and the *formality of the form*, reasons for non-choice focussed on the difficulty associated with addressee compliance (*addressee busy, low probability of compliance, task out of the way for the addressee*), the lack of options provided by the imbedded imperative form (*no option to refuse, no time option*), and its directness (*direct, tells addressee*). Of these reasons, only three, *low familiarity, formality,*
low probability of compliance, emerged with any frequency in Study IV. There was very little
difference, overall, in the frequencies with which these reasons were mentioned by male and
female participants. The greatest difference occurred with respect to the directness of the
imbedded imperative form, which more females gave as a reason for its non-choice (8% of
female reasons versus 3% of males).

Table 11.18 reveals that, for question directives, the indirectness of the form was the reason
given most frequently by male and female participants to explain non-choice. This reason had
also emerged as the most frequent in Study IV. Examples include:

**Low P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance**

**Interviewer:** What about [Question Directive]?

**S14F:** No, I think if she asks straight out she's got more hope of getting a permit. Because if you have a negative attitude when you ask questions like that, someone in that position, a clerk, would probably say "No, there aren't any at all".

**High P, Low D, Low R**

**S33M:** [Question Directive] is pretty weak actually. He's known her for several years, so he should be able to ask her for a favour without being afraid of her.

**Table 11.18** Reasons for non-choice of Question Directive form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressee would know answer to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Familiarity</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not ask Addressee</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too polite</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Familiarity</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Probability of Compliance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (Non-choice of Question Dir.)</strong></td>
<td>176</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A range of other explanations occurred with considerable frequency. Most of these (for
example, high familiarity, high probability of compliance, low familiarity) had also been
observed to occur with some frequency in Study IV. Again, there were very few differences
between the frequencies of male and female citations of these reasons. The types of reasons that women and men mentioned in conjunction with high or low familiarity as explanations for their non-choice of the question directive form were different, however. These patterns provide some illustration of the ways in which both the high and the low familiarity of the addressee could be perceived as reasons for not choosing a particular request form in particular situations.

The reason most frequently given in conjunction with the high familiarity of the addressee as an explanation for non-choice of the question directive form by women was that the question directive form was *too polite to be used to a high-familiarity addressee* (*N(Female) = 4*). For example:

**Equal P, Low D, Outside Role**

**S5F:** *Oh, [Question Directive]'s a polite thing. She knows him, so she doesn't need to be that polite.*

Men, however, referred most frequently to the inappropriateness of using such an indirect form of request to a high-familiarity addressee (*N(Male) = 4*). For example:

**Equal P, Low D, Outside Role**

**S16M:** *[Question Directive]'s um ... no, that's *too* corny for someone who knows them for two years.*

**Interviewer:** In what sense 'corny'?

**S16M:** *Well, I mean, you shouldn't have to beat about the bush like that, for someone whom you've known for two years.*

Patterns of reasons accompanying mentions of low familiarity as an explanation for non-choice of the question directive form were not as apparent in the data. What can be said is that further exploration of the inappropriateness of using strategies such as the question directive to addressees occupying varying social distances appears warranted on the basis of the information obtained from the present investigation.

Table 11.19 shows that the most frequent reasons given by participants to explain their non-choice of the hint form all had to do with the form not constituting a direct request that the addressee perform some task. The hint was described as *failing to ask the addressee*, as *indirect*, a *statement* only, and as a *form that would make the addressee offer* to do what the speaker wanted. For example:
(i) doesn't ask addressee, and (ii) indirectness of form:

**High P, High D, Outside Role**

S25F: Well, [Hint] is very indirect. She's just making a statement, she's not asking him to do it or anything. So if she wants him to do it for her, she should say "Can you do it please?", or "Do you have time?".

**Equal P, Low D, Outside Role**

S6M: I suppose if I said [Hint], that'd be a roundabout way of asking her to get them. I'd complain "They've probably disappeared", and she'd offer to pick them up while she's down there.

**Interviewer:** So why didn't you choose [Hint] here?

S6M: Well, if I'm going to ask someone to do something, I ask them, you know what I mean? Rather than doing it in a more roundabout way.

(iii) statement only:

**Equal P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance**

S29F: [Hint]'s not a question, it's sort of throwing the ball over to the other person and making it their problem. Cause the ways you could answer that, you could say "Oh well, what are you going to do? You'll have to get someone to take over". I just see that sort of statement/question as a statement that's already got an answer - as if she's going up to him already knowing that she's going to get him to do it.

(iv) would make addressee offer:

**Equal P, High D, Low R**

S15F: Um, [Hint]'s sort of like prompting him to offer. Like you say "Oh, they can go back to your office now", sort of like. And he'd say "Oh, do you want me to take them?", something like that. So it's a bit ... that's what I thought about that one, I wouldn't have said that.

**Interviewer:** What's wrong with making someone offer to do something?

S15F: Oh, it's a bit [laughs] ... I'd much rather be much more direct than say "Look, they can go back". Sort of like imposing, that's almost.

**Equal P, High D, Outside Role**

S34M: Oh, I don't like [Hint] because ... it's been sort of expecting you to jump up and say "Oh, I'll do it, and most people don't like you expecting that cause then it's ... they're not sort of doing anything for you when they say that they will do it. And it's not really being appreciated if they do offer to do something, whereas if you had asked them to do something, and they will, then it's being appreciated.
Reference was also made to the 'sneaky', 'devious', and 'sly' nature of hinting by some participants. For example:

**Equal P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance**

**S15F:** [laughs, repeats Hint] You know, it's sort of as if, you know, it's *your* turn to say "Oh look, I will, don't worry about it.", sort of thing. So it's really playing on the other people's good nature in a way, things like that.

**Equal P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance**

**S19F:** [laughs] Well, I mean it'd be nicer to ask him than just kind of hint around it and hope that he's going to say "Oh well, look, I'll do it for you".
Interviewer: Why is it nicer to ask?

*Um, I don't know, cause that seems kind of a sneaky way of doing it, hinting at it, whereas if you're coming straight out and asking him, it's not.*

Interviewer: How might he feel if she'd said [Hint]?

S19F: *He'd think, "Oh no, she wants me to do it now," and he's thinking to the light that he should say "Well look, I'll do it for you." - cause that's what she's hoping he's going to say.*

**Equal P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance**

S24F: *I wouldn't even bother saying to him [Hint]. It's a roundabout, sneaking way of maybe getting him to say yes, but ... he's got other things to do. He promised to return those marks, so if she says something like that hoping that he'll take the hint - he's not going to because he's got other things to do. If he had nothing to do, maybe yes, but he's busy so he wouldn't take the hint.*

Interviewer: In what ways is [Hint] 'sneaking'?

S24F: *Well, it's not asking them, but it's putting them on the spot because they know [laughs] that you're asking.*

The frequency with which reasons for the non-choice of hints were broadly to do with the indirectness of the form adds some weight to the suggestion postulated by Holtgraves (1983: 165) that there exists a "contemporary [western] cultural belief, derived in large part from the popularity of self-help books and related practical psychology writings, that it is best to be direct when communicating with others". Holtgraves had based this suggestion on "anecdotal" reports that he had gathered from subjects taking part in rating-scale studies of the likelihood and politeness of requests presented in scenario formats. The accounts provided by participants in the present interview study indicate that there does seem to be some shared understanding of the disadvantages associated with indirectness in requesting. In particular, the notion that indirectness could lead to a situation in which an addressee would offer to carry out a particular action before it was necessary for the speaker to make an outright request was mentioned as a reason for avoiding hint forms. These accounts were not consistent with claims made by Levinson (1983) that one of the functions of indirectness in requesting is to allow a hearer to offer to perform a service before it is necessary for the speaker to make an explicit request.

Slightly less frequently (Table 11.19), explanations of the non-choice of hints suggested that the form *might not be interpreted as a request and did not specify what the speaker wanted.* These types of reasons had also emerged frequently in Study IV. Examples include:
High P, High D, Outside Role
S5F: [Hint]'s just a statement. If ... he could have just said "So?", or "So what?", or anything like that. It's not really getting what she wants from him.

High P, Low D, Outside Role
S2M: [Hint] doesn't really say anything ... uh, it doesn't, you know, make your intentions clear - your wishes.

The occurrence of these types of reasons for the non-choice of indirect hint forms provides some support for claims such as those made by Herrmann (1983) and Blum-Kulka (1987, 1989) that linguistic variation in acts such as requesting is motivated by considerations of the achievement of communicative effectiveness and clarity, as well as by considerations of the avoidance of hearer resistance, refusal, and apparent speaker-coercion. Other reasons for the non-choice of hints concerned either the high or low familiarity of the addressee (Table 11.19) Participants who mentioned the high familiarity of the addressee as a reason for failing to choose the hint form tended to focus on the indirectness of the form, and the speaker's failure to ask the addressee, for example:

High P, Low D, Low R
S8F: Well, [Hint] is once again. ... she's just hinting, aw it just doesn't seem ... she knows him well, she may as well just ask him.

High P, Low D, Low R
S29F: ... if you know someone well, you don't sort of ... you shouldn't have to beat around the bush like that.

Equal P, Low D, Outside Role
S15F: ... if they know each other fairly well there's no need to try and get him to do something for you without asking for it.

Equal P, Low D, Low P Comply
S33M: ...with good friends I wouldn't use that one. Oh, I think if they're that good a friend you should be able to ask them a favour straight out to start with.

By contrast, participants who mentioned the low familiarity of the addressee as a reason for not choosing the hint form tended to include in their explanations the suggestion that the form would not be interpreted as a request. For example:

High P, High D, Outside Role
S5F: ... it's a bit, bit of a useless thing to say unless you're very friendly with the other person and they kind of know what you mean.
Low P, High D, Outside Role
S29F: ... if she said [Hint] to him, I really don't think he'd know what to say. Cause he wouldn't realize that what she was getting at was could he get her something.

Equal P, High D, Low R
S31M: Well, if you don't know someone very well they might not cotton-on to it.

The idea that the hint form would make the addressee feel obliged to comply was mentioned reasonably frequently as a reason for not choosing it, as was the fact that the addressee was busy (Table 11.19). For example:

Equal P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance
S34M: [Hint] is again a bit of a sob-story - you're trying to make her feel obliged to do it.

High P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance
S21F: I don't think I could say [Hint] because I know it would be putting him on the spot and plus he's very much my senior in both areas. And realizing he's a busy man, I couldn't just assume that he's going to stop and read it through when he's got this deadline to meet.

Both the high and low power of addressees were also mentioned as reasons for non-choice of the hint form. Participants who mentioned the addressee's high power tended to refer, also, to the addressee being busy (N(Total) = 6) or to the notion that the form would make the addressee feel obliged to comply (N(Total) = 4). For example:

High P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance
S16M: [laughs] [Hint]'s a bit outrageous. I don't think he would have said that.

Interviewer: In what way outrageous?
S16M: Um, because he's beneath her and he's saying "I don't want to go on until you" ... you know, sort of like "Stop what you're doing and read it now.", or whatever. And I wouldn't say that to a senior person, a boss of mine.

High P, Low D, Outside Role
S1F: Ah well ... I guess [Hint]'s not really ... um, she's sort of making a statement which would oblige him to do so, which he would probably think "Oh, then ... ", you know. But I don't think it's polite. I think that she should sort of ask him, and also say please as well.

Interviewer: In what way does [Hint] oblige him to do it?
S1F: I think saying "All of those clean dishes are in the way.", I think it's sort of being a bit impertinent. Um, I don't think it's right to say something like that. Maybe she might say to someone her own age or someone her junior, but I think because he's her senior, I don't think she should say something like that.
Participants who mentioned the *addressee's low power* as a reason for non-choice of hints tended to refer, also, to the *indirectness of the form* \(N(\text{Total}) = 3\). For example:

**Low P, High D, Outside Role**

*S6M:* **Well** [Hint]'s *even more roundabout*. I think he's in a position where he can easily say [Imbedded Imperative], and she'll get a loaf of bread for him.

Other reasons given with some frequency for non-choice of the hint form (Table 11.19) included that it was *something the speaker might think to him/herself rather than say to someone else*, for example:

**Equal P, High D, Outside Role**

*S3F:* I would consider that's more what she would have *thought* than what she would have *said*.

**Equal P, Low D, Outside Role**

*S16M:* [Hint]'s probably something he might have thought to himself but I don't ... but wouldn't have said it out loud, I don't think.

The idea that the hint form was an *obvious request* also occurred with some frequency as a reason for its non-choice \(N(\text{Total}) = 11\), for example:

**Equal P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance**

*S5F:* With [Hint] they know what you mean [laughs] straight away. They know what your hint's meant to be about. They kind of *laugh* at you. They laugh at you doing the hint, cause they know exactly what you're getting at, so they think it's funny.

**Interviewer:** Why is it funny?

*S5F:* Cause you didn't come straight out and ask him. You're just beating around the bush about it.

**Equal P, High D, Low R**

*S26M:* Probably [Hint] is a bit. ... as I said it might just be some of the people I've worked with, but if you say something like that which is pretty obvious, that you're standing there with all these dishes and there are dishes everywhere ... it's a bit of an obvious statement and people tend to make a joke of it - or make fun of it.

Another frequently mentioned reason for non-choice was that the hint constituted *telling the addressee what to do* \(N(\text{Total}) = 11\), for example:

**Equal P, High D, Low R**

*S25F:* Well [Hint]'s sort of as if she's in authority - telling him "They can go back now".
The frequency of male and female use of these reasons for the non-choice of hints was very similar overall, although, as had been the case in Study IV, female participants proffered more reasons for their non-choices than did males.

11.5.12 Appropriateness Versus Politeness: A Comparison of 'Most Likely' and 'Most Polite' Choices

Two complementary sources of information from the interviews were pertinent to the question of whether appropriateness or politeness considerations motivated men's and women's choice of request form. One involved the existence of discrepancies between participants' choices of 'most likely' and 'most polite' forms. The other involved discrepancies between choices of 'least likely' and 'most impolite' forms. Those occasions on which participants made different choices in response to questions concerning the 'most likely' and 'most polite' directive forms in context are summarized first. Reasons provided by participants in explanation of discrepancies are also examined.

11.5.12.1 Discrepancies between 'most likely' and 'most polite' choices.

A total of 105 'discrepant' choices between 'most likely' and 'most polite' forms were observed out of a possible 324 occasions of choice (representing change from 'most likely' choice on 32% of occasions). Such changes were made with similar frequency by male and female participants $(N_{Female} = 51; N_{Male} = 54)$.

'Most polite' as the less direct form.

The majority of changes in participants' choices (61 out of 105, or 58.1%) were in the direction of a less direct form for 'most polite' than for 'most likely' choice. As can be seen from Table 11.20, the most frequently occurring changes in this direction for both female and male participants involved 'most likely' choices of imbedded imperatives changing to 'most polite' choices of question directives.
Table 11.20  Discrepancies between 'most likely' and 'most polite' choice: 'Most polite' as less direct form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Likely</th>
<th>Most Polite</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>% of total frequency of choice of form</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>% of total frequency of choice of form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons given by participants for their choices of less direct request variants as 'most polite' than as 'most likely' involved, most frequently, reference to the fact that the high familiarity of the addressee meant that the most polite form was too polite to be likely to have been used \( (N(\text{Female}) = 10; N(\text{Male}) = 3) \). For example:

**Equal P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance**

**Interviewer:**  Most likely?

**S15F:** [Imbedded Imperative]

**Interviewer:**  Most polite?

**S15F:** [Question Directive]

**Interviewer:**  Why not use the most polite form?

**S15F:** Well, they've been working together for a few years so, um you still need to be polite but not as polite as when you first meet each other, when you're first starting work together.

**Equal P, Low D, Low R**

**Interviewer:**  Most likely?

**S21F:** [Imbedded Imperative]

**Interviewer:**  Most polite?

**S21F:** [Question Directive]. She knows him well enough to just say "Could you take them?" She's not ... she doesn't feel like she's got to show the utmost respect to him by asking him if he wanted to.

The greater politeness of a less direct request form such as the question directive was most often explained by those participants who selected the more direct imperative and imbedded imperative forms as 'most likely' in terms of the ideas that the question directive

(a) gave the addressee an option to refuse \( (N(\text{Female}) = 2; N(\text{Male}) = 6) \), for example:
Low P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance

Interviewer: Most likely?
S23M: [Imbedded Imperative]

Interviewer: Most polite?
S23M: [Question Directive]. *I suppose that's the most polite way of saying it, cause it's giving her the option of saying "No, I'm sorry. It's full up".*

(b) was a form that recognized that there was a low probability of compliance \( N(\text{Female}) = 4; N(\text{Male}) = 2 \). For example:

Low P, Low D, Outside Role

Interviewer: Most likely?
S10F: [Imperative]

Interviewer: Most polite?
S10F: [Question Directive]. *It's more "I don't want you to go out of your way too much". Trying to be polite in the way that ... how she's asking. She's trying to make polite the way she says "by any chance", you know it's sort of ... oh, he could easily say ... you know, if they say "by any chance", you know sounds as though I know there's only a small chance of you going so there's more room for him to say "No, I can't". It's sort of indirectly polite.*

Those participants who selected imbedded imperatives or question directives as 'most likely' explained the greater politeness of the more indirect hint form by referring, in a variety of ways, to its *indirectness*. For example:

High P, Low D, Low R

Interviewer: Most likely?
S13M: [Imbedded Imperative]

Interviewer: Most polite?
S13M: [Hint] *... you're sort of hinting at a person to do something for you. And they feel, "Oh, I'll help him out. He's got a few problems here". [Laughs] ... It's very hard asking someone who's in a position of authority above you to do things for you.*

Low P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance

Interviewer: Most likely?
S16M: [Imbedded Imperative]

Interviewer: Most polite?
S16M: [Hint] *because it's beating around the bush a bit more.*

High P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance

Interviewer: Most likely?
S8F: [Question Directive]
Interviewer: Most polite?

S8F: [Hint] In [Hint] she's not actually asking him to do it for her, but she's pointing out to him why she can't get it finished.

The final category of reasons given by participants to explain a less direct form as 'most polite' involved changes from imperative as 'most likely' to imbedded imperative as 'most polite'. There was little consistency amongst the reasons given in this low-frequency category, although two female participants mentioned the presence of "Could you" in the imbedded imperative form as a politeness characteristic.

'Most polite' as more direct form.

Changes in the direction of a more direct form for 'most polite' than for 'most likely' choice occurred less frequently than changes to a less direct form as 'most polite'. Forty-two per cent of all changes between 'most likely' and 'most polite' choices (44 out of 105) were in this direction. As can be seen in Table 11.21, the most frequently occurring changes for both male and female participants in this direction involved 'most likely' choices of question directives changing to 'most polite' choices of imbedded imperatives (12 instances, or 20% of male choices of question directives; 15 instances, or 24% of female choices). Choices of hints as 'most likely' in particular scenarios were also frequently changed to choices of question directives and imbedded imperatives as 'most polite'.

Table 11.21 Discrepancies between 'most likely' and 'most polite' choice: 'Most polite' as more direct form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Likely</th>
<th>Most Polite</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>% of total frequency of choice of form</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>% of total frequency of choice of form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reasons given by participants to explain choices of more direct request variants as 'most likely' than as 'most polite' most frequently involved the high familiarity \(N(Total) = 7\) of the addressee. For example:

**High P, Low D, Low R**

**Interviewer:** Most likely?

**S11M:** [Question Directive]

**Interviewer:** Most polite?

**S11M:** [Imbedded Imperative]. *Despite the fact that it is most polite, I think it's a little too formal for these two people who know one another fairly well.*

**Equal P, Low D, Low R**

**Interviewer:** Most likely?

**S19F:** [Question Directive]

**Interviewer:** Most polite?

**S19F:** [Imbedded Imperative] *Because I realized that she knows him well and I think, if she knew him well, she wouldn't use a real formal question "Could you take them back with you". She'd just say, in conversation,"Do you want to take them back with you?".*

Those participants who selected question directives or hints as 'most likely' most often explained the greater politeness of the more direct imbedded imperative form in terms of the presence of 'please' \(N(Female) = 5, N(Male) = 5\), its formality \(N(Female) = 1, N(Male) = 6\), and its asking the addressee \(N(Female) = 4, N(Male) = 0\). For example:

**Equal P, High D, Low R**

**Interviewer:** Most likely?

**S2M:** [Question Directive]

**Interviewer:** Most polite?

**S2M:** [Imbedded Imperative] *because it's a formal question and has the 'please' at the end, so that would be the most commonly accepted form.*

**Low P, High D, Low R**

**Interviewer:** Most likely?

**S10M:** [Question Directive]

**Interviewer:** Most polite?

**S10M:** [Imbedded Imperative]

**Interviewer:** Why is [Imbedded Imperative] more polite?

**S10M:** *Because she's asking him to do something ... and it's, you know, he could say ... he would have to say "Yes" but she's still sort of asking him if he would like to with a 'please' on the end.*
Those who selected hint as 'most likely' used a variety of reasons to explain the greater politeness of the more direct question directive form, including the suggestions that it gave the addressee an option to refuse \( N(\text{Female}) = 1, N(\text{Male}) = 1 \), asked the addressee \( N(\text{Female}) = 1, N(\text{Male}) = 1 \), and that the addressee was busy \( N(\text{Female}) = 1, N(\text{Male}) = 1 \).

The patterns of participants' choices of 'most likely' and 'most polite' request forms, overall, are compared in Table 11.22.

**Table 11.22** Percentages of request alternatives chosen as 'most likely' and as 'most polite'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most Likely</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Most Polite</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female N %</td>
<td>Male N %</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female N %</td>
<td>Male N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>5 3.1</td>
<td>6 3.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded</td>
<td>82 50.6</td>
<td>82 50.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>84 51.9</td>
<td>72 44.4</td>
<td>82 50.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>62 38.3</td>
<td>60 37.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>72 44.4</td>
<td>82 50.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>13 8.0</td>
<td>14 8.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 3.7</td>
<td>8 4.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>162 100</td>
<td>162 100</td>
<td></td>
<td>162 100</td>
<td>162 100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the relative frequency with which the four variants were chosen is the same for both 'most likely' and 'most polite' choices, some differences may be noted. Question directives were selected more frequently as 'polite' forms than as 'likely' forms, whereas hints and imperatives were more often chosen as 'likely' than as 'polite' forms. In terms of the gender distribution of choices, the following patterns were apparent. The similar frequency of male and female choice of imbedded imperatives and question directives as 'most likely' was not maintained in imbedded imperative and question directive choices as 'most polite'. Fewer men chose imbedded imperatives as 'most polite' and more men chose question directives as 'most polite' than did women. Other changes in overall frequencies involved, not surprisingly, the lack of choice of imperative forms as 'most polite', and the higher frequency of hint choice as 'likely' than as 'polite'. This pattern for hints had also emerged in Study IV.

**Summary: 'Most likely' versus 'most polite' choices.**

Although it was the case that in the majority of instances (219 out of 324, or 68% of occasions of choice) participants selected the same request variant as 'most likely' and as 'most
polite' in a particular scenario, there was a substantial number of occasions (32%) on which a different form was chosen as 'most likely' and as 'most polite'. As was suggested for similar findings in Study IV, this outcome adds weight to conceptualizations of linguistic variation as due to people's shared understandings of the appropriateness of forms in social contexts rather than to considerations of politeness (e.g., Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Blum-Kulka, 1989, 1990; Wierzbicka, 1985). The finding that only a little over half of the 'discrepant' choices (58%) that were observed involved the selection of a less direct form as 'most polite' than as 'most likely' reinforces the point made on the basis of similar findings from Study IV that increasing indirectness is not always perceived as associated with increasing politeness in requesting, contrary to the model proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). The findings of the Study V do, however, provide confirmation of Wierzbicka's (1985) proposal that direct speech is not always taken as conveying an absence of politeness and, conversely, that indirectness is not always reflective of politeness.

Participants in both of the interview studies conducted showed that they were sensitive to the problems of being over-polite. Their accounts of discrepancies between 'most likely' and 'most polite' choices revealed, in both studies, that the most polite form of request was often perceived as inappropriate for use because of the high familiarity of the addressee.

Before concluding the present discussion, a final comparison between participants' choices of 'least likely' and 'most impolite' forms of request in situations is made. These findings contribute further information to the issue of whether politeness or appropriateness considerations motivate request choice, and provide some insight into the social meanings attributed to impoliteness and inappropriateness.

11.5.13 Discrepancies Between 'Least Likely' and 'Most Impolite' Choices

A total of 109 'discrepant' choices between 'least likely' and 'most impolite' forms were made by participants in 324 occasions of choice (representing change from 'least likely' choice on 33.6% of occasions). Such changes were made with slightly higher frequency by female than by male participants \(N(Female) = 60; N(Male) = 49\).
'Most impolite' as more direct.

The majority of the changes in participants' choices (90 out of 109, or 82.6%) were in the direction of a more direct form for 'most impolite' choice. Changes from hint as 'least likely' to the more direct imperative form as 'most impolite' occurred with the highest frequency (Table 11.23). A smaller number of choices of question directives as 'least likely' were changed to imperatives as 'most impolite'. There were no obvious gender-based patterns associated with changes in this direction.

Table 11.23 Discrepancies between 'least likely' and 'most impolite' choice: 'Most impolite' as more direct form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Least Likely</th>
<th>Most Impolite</th>
<th>Frequency of Change</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female % of total</td>
<td>Male % of total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>frequency of choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reason given most frequently by participants to explain their choices of the hint form as 'least likely' was that it did not ask the addressee (N(Female) = 9, N(Male) = 7). For example:

High P, Low D, Outside Role
S7M: [Hint] Well, that's least appropriate of them all. It's obvious that they're in the way, or may be obvious that they're in the way. It doesn't set about to ask for any help as ... seems to be inferring that on that statement, Helen should realize that you need help.

Low P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance
S34M: [Hint] because he's not asking for anything. All the others, he's asking a question, whereas [Hint], he's just making a statement and assuming that she's gonna do everything that he wants.

High P, Low D, Outside Role
S19F: Probably [Hint] cause you're not really asking him and you're not ... you're just coming and saying "Oh, the dishes are in the way". I'd ask him.

Equal P, Low D, Low R
S21F: [Hint] because you could say it and he could say "Oh yeah, good.", and walk off. It's not assuming - well from that question I'm sort of assuming that she's wanting
him to take them back so she doesn't have to either go there herself or send the courier or whatever to take them since he's on his way anyway. And saying something like that, to me would be just like stating a fact, not asking him to take them, and I guess, like if someone said that to me, I'd probably be facetious about it and say "Well, that's nice.", [laughs] and go back to my office.

For choices of question directive as 'least likely', the most frequently mentioned reason was the indirectness of the form \( N(\text{Female}) = 2, N(\text{Male}) = 1 \). For example:

**High P, Low D, Low R**

S22M: [Question Directive]. *It's a really big hint. It's being very indirect.*

**High P, Low D, Low R**


The greater impoliteness of a more direct request form such as the imperative was most often explained by those participants who chose the relatively indirect question directive and hint forms in terms of the ordering \( N(\text{Female}) = 6, N(\text{Male}) = 4 \), demanding \( N(\text{Female}) = 4, N(\text{Male}) = 3 \) characteristics of the imperative including, for males, the idea that it commanded \( N(\text{Male}) = 5 \) and, for females, that it told the addressee \( N(\text{Female}) = 6 \). For example:

**Low P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance**

S22M: [Imperative]. *It's sort of an order. She's sort of providing the service and he shouldn't really demand it like that.*

**Low P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance**

S34M: *I suppose [Imperative]. [Hint]'s pretty aloof but it's not really impolite. [Imperative] is less polite cause it's a command.*

**High P, Low D, Outside Role**

S1F: [Imperative] *Even though she said please. It's the fact that she's sort of ordering him: "Clean these dishes out of the way, please". You know, she' just telling him and I don't, you know... I think if I was him, I'd feel offended.*

**Equal P, Low D, Outside Role**

S18F: [Imperative] *is an order- like she's telling him to pick them up, even though she's saying please, she's ... it's a bit. ... should put "Could" before it - before it becomes nice.*
Less Direct Form as 'Most Impolite'.

Changes in the direction of a less direct form for 'most impolite' than for 'least likely' choice occurred less frequently than changes to a more direct form as 'most impolite'. Seventeen per cent of all changes between 'least likely' and 'most impolite' choices (19 out of 109) were in this direction. As can be seen from Table 11.24, the most frequently occurring involved 'least likely' choices of imperative or question directive changing to 'most impolite' choices of hint. This pattern of change was also observed in Study IV.

Table 11.24  Discrepancies between 'least likely' and 'most impolite' choice: 'Most impolite' as less direct form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Least Likely</th>
<th>Most Impolite</th>
<th>Frequency of Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons given by participants to explain their choices of 'least likely' forms were various. However, there was some consensus amongst participants with regard to reasons for 'most impolite' choice of the hint form. The most frequently mentioned reasons were that hints did not ask the addressee (N(Female) = 4, N(Male) = 2), and lacked a 'please' (N(Female) = 23, N(Male) = 2). For example:

High P, Low D, Outside Role

S11M: [Hint] because [Hint] is not sort of interfering, you know, "What are you gonna do about it?". I mean, there's no sort of please in it either, which is sort of a ... that sort of makes things ... makes the conversation a bit more polite.

Low P, Low D, Low R

S9F: [Hint]. As I said, it's not asking. That's a form of being impolite, just sort of making your complaint and expecting someone to do something about it.

The patterns of participants' choices of 'least likely' and 'most impolite' forms of request, overall, can be compared in Table 11.25.
Table 11.25 Percentages of request alternatives chosen as 'least likely' and as 'most impolite'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Least Likely</th>
<th></th>
<th>Most Impolite</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>162</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>162</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relative frequency with which the four variants were chosen was the same for both 'least likely' and 'most impolite' choices, however, some differences may be noted. Imperatives were selected more often as 'impolite' forms than as 'unlikely' forms whereas question directives and hints were chosen more often as 'unlikely' than as 'impolite'. The distribution of female and male choices showed a similar pattern in selections of 'least likely' and 'most impolite' forms. These patterns reproduce findings from Study IV.

11.5.14 Summary: 'Least Likely' Versus 'Most Impolite' Choices

The pattern of choices of situated request forms as 'least likely' and 'most impolite' mirrored those obtained for comparisons between choices as 'most likely' and 'most polite'. Although, in the majority of instances (215 out of 324, or 66.4% of occasions of choice), participants selected the same request variant as 'least likely' and as 'most impolite' in a particular scenario, there were a number of occasions (33.6%) on which a different form was chosen as 'least likely' and as 'most impolite'. The majority of these 'discrepant' choices involved the choice of a more direct form as 'most impolite' than as 'least likely'. This finding is in line with predictions from Brown and Levinson's model, which associates increasing indirectness with increasing politeness (face-threat-minimization). However, as was argued in relation to Study IV, this outcome, when considered in conjunction with the finding that a substantial proportion of the changes made by participants between 'most likely' and 'most polite' request forms were in the direction of a more direct form for 'most polite' choice, adds weight to suggestions that politeness and appropriateness considerations represent different dimensions with respect to
situated language use. It would appear that a simple equation of indirectness with politeness in requesting cannot be made. Examination of the reasons given by participants for their choices revealed that the directness of a form was not invariably perceived as increasing its impoliteness, nor indirectness as increasing its politeness.

11.6 Conclusion

The results of the Study V reinforce those of Study IV in furnishing evidence that politeness and impoliteness do not represent the two ends of a dimension that runs parallel with that of indirectness - directness. There is evidence that directness and impoliteness are associated under some particular situational conditions but not others, and the same is true for the association between indirectness and politeness.
CHAPTER 12

OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

12.1 Retrospection

The broad research problem addressed by the work described in the preceding chapters derived from the observation that a variety of alternative strategies exist by means of which people can make requests. Although, on the surface, such an observation might appear relatively trivial due to a sense of its apparent matter-of-factness, at its basis is the far from insubstantial issue of the complex ways in which contexts influence the use and interpretation of directive acts.

For the purposes of the present research, the observation led to the formulation of the following general questions as points of departure:

1. Why do directive acts occur with such variety?
2. What factors determine their social distribution?
3. What social meanings are attributed to such variation?

In addressing these questions in the series of studies just described, I have tried to provide a broad view of some of the ways in which people use social-contextual knowledge in making and understanding requests, and of the types of social and affective meanings that are assigned to instances of request variation in particular social situations. In particular, the findings generated by the research were used in an attempt to evaluate two models of the knowledge and meaning processes involved in requesting, those developed by Ervin-Tripp (1976, Ervin-Tripp et al., 1987) and Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987).

Data from a range of sources were employed in this work to address a number of specific research questions. These sources included samples of naturally-occurring requests, rating-scale evaluations of requests presented in scenario formats, forced-choice selections of request forms from a number of theory-based alternatives and semi-structured interviews designed to elicit participants' accounts of requesting-in-situations. The range of data sources was chosen in recognition of the complexity of the research objective - an attempt to build a picture of the
types of contextual knowledge that people have access to in relation to the act of requesting - and also in an attempt to remedy some of the weaknesses inherent in previous investigations in the area that had been limited to request data of a particular type. The findings of the present research concerning the influence of context on acts of requesting were diverse and, as was anticipated at the outset, often complex. The many-sided and intricate nature of these findings made them difficult, at times, to unravel and no doubt contributed to the usual problems experienced by readers of heterogeneous research projects: difficulty in keeping track of the findings, and in reducing them to an orderly arrangement for the purposes of recall and interpretation. In this final chapter, I will proceed by summarizing the major findings in sequence, reflecting on the various kinds of data used to produce them, before discussing the theoretical significance of the findings. Finally, some of the implications of the work for future research in the fields of language and cross-cultural studies will be considered.

12.2 Summary of Major Findings

The studies constituting this thesis were designed to examine a number of specific research elements. This summary of the major findings is organized in terms of the framework of research questions that was originally presented in Chapter 1. One question, in particular, concerning the issue of gender differences in the act of requesting, was addressed at various stages throughout the research enterprise.

12.2.1 What Do Theorists and Researchers Mean By 'Context' as the Notion Applies to Language Use, and How Does Context Enter Into the Interpretation Process?

In the introductory chapters of this thesis it was pointed out that the term 'context' had been used to refer to a range of aspects of the physical, social, psychological, and linguistic environments within which communication takes place. Brief reviews of the literature in a number of related disciplines (e.g., sociolinguistics, pragmatics, ethnography, social cognition) were used to illustrate the particular attention that has been paid to the features of 'participants' (their interpersonal and role relationships) and 'activities' (culturally recognized events or units of interaction) in discussions of what is meant by context. It was also pointed out that a great deal of emphasis has been placed on the importance of people's knowledge or expectations
concerning what can be said or done in particular situations and how such actions are to be understood.

From within this conceptual framework, the first step, empirically, in the development of the thesis was a comparison of two models of language understanding which portrayed the role of context in interpretation in different ways (Study I, Chapter 3). In language-based models, context is assumed to play a secondary role to the interpretation of literal form in the interpretive process; in contextually-based models, interpretive priority is given to the context or situation. The first study tested the proposition that mentioning a desired object within a recognizable activity frame is sufficient to get that object from cooperative hearers. The types of replies provided by passers-by in response to an extremely indirect, non-conventional form of request for the time were interpreted as evidence that people were not basing their interpretations primarily upon the literal form of the indirect request. A more convincing explanation of the responses obtained in this natural setting was provided by the context-based model which assumes that the processing of linguistic components of a request need only proceed as far as the identification of an object on which to focus action. The context or situation then guides the hearer's interpretation. In line with Ervin-Tripp et al.'s (1987) conclusion, it appeared that people were identifying a situation/activity and were acting in accordance with their knowledge/expectations of what was normal within it.

12.2.2 What is the Social Distribution of Request Strategies Produced Within Particular Situations By Speakers of Australian English?

Having established some evidence for the importance of ongoing contexts of social relations, and of activity, to the understanding of speech acts such as requests, the next step in the development of the research involved an attempt to define the general types of speech situations in which particular request strategies are considered appropriate by members of a speech community. The first stage of this process involved the investigation of request variants produced within two naturally-occurring situations by speakers of Australian English (Study II, Chapter 8). Different patterns of request usage were observed in the two settings investigated. In the office setting, in which requests categorized as involving 'small' levels of imposition predominated, the pattern was generally consistent with previous reports of directive use in American university offices (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Pufahl-Bax, 1986). Imperatives were
observed to be the most frequently occurring variant, followed by imbedded imperatives and question directives, with hints and permission directives occurring less frequently, and need statements hardly at all. The most frequently used imperative sub-strategy in the office setting, the 'positive imperative' form (e.g., *Put them ...*) had also been found to be the most frequent in other corpora [teachers' directives in elementary school classrooms (Holmes, 1983); directives used by male agricultural workers in eastern USA (Weigal & Weigal, 1985)]. In the second setting investigated, a private, domestic setting, where requests between a wife and husband were more equally distributed across 'small' and 'medium' levels of imposition, the imbedded imperative form occurred more frequently than other variants. Imperatives were used with the second highest frequency in this setting, with question directive and hint forms being much less frequent, and need statements and permission directives, even less so. The most frequently employed imbedded imperative sub-strategy was the 'modal + you' form (e.g., *Can you ...*) and, as had been the case in the office setting, the 'positive imperative' was the most frequently used sub-strategy of the imperative request form.

Analysis of the distribution of these request variants in terms of speaker's gender revealed that particular strategies were used in different proportions by female and male interactants in the two settings. In the office setting, analysis of directive use in terms of the three levels of directness employed in previous studies by Blum-Kulka et al. (1985) and Weigal and Weigal (1985) revealed an association between directness level and gender: Men used proportionally fewer of the most direct forms of request (need statements & imperatives) but proportionally more of the most indirect forms (question directives & hints) than did women. At least in one setting, then, observed patterns of directive use were contrary to proposals that women, being more concerned to maintain standards of politeness, use forms of language that are more indirect than do men. In the domestic setting, however, there was a much lower level of association between the types of directive strategies classified in terms of the three levels of directness and speaker's gender.

Overall, there was no evidence to suggest that women and men differed in terms of the frequency with which they requested acts that carried different levels of seriousness or imposition values. However, it was suggested that some of the observed differences between female and male directive usage might have been related to differences in the types of goals of
the request acts that female and male interactants in the two situations typically attempted to carry out. In both settings, men made proportionally more requests for goods than did women, whereas a greater proportion of women's requests were for services/action than was the case for men. Although the data-set was rather small for such comparisons, some trends were observed with respect to the types of request strategies used to carry out request acts with different goals. This is one area in which more research might profitably be carried out, using larger samples of naturally-occurring conversational data than was available here, and exploring other types of interactional situations or settings.

In addition to describing the general patterns of request use in the speech produced in these settings, another aim of this part of the research enterprise that used samples of naturally-occurring requests as data was to examine which of the social-contextual features that had been identified as determinative of request variation coincided, empirically, with the observed situated requesting behaviour of these speakers of Australian English. An analysis of the distribution of request variants in terms of the three social-contextual factors P, D, and R identified by Brown and Levinson (1978) as involved in assessments of the seriousness of directives as face-threatening acts resulted in findings of broad support for the model with respect to the strategic variants imperative, imbedded imperative, permission directive, and question directive. The more direct forms were observed to be used less often, and the more indirect forms more often, as the weightiness of the FTA as assessed by the factors P, D, and R increased. The distribution of the most indirect, off-record hint variant did not, however, fit the predicted pattern of greater indirectness being used to achieve greatest minimization of weighty FTAs. In both settings, hints occurred with some frequency in circumstances that involved the less weighty P-, D-, and R-factor combinations.

Observed patterns of hint use were more consistent with the social distribution of the variant as described by Ervin-Tripp (1976), who observed the form to be used to subordinates for requesting routine tasks and, in families, for 'special' tasks and by children for requests directed to their caretakers. In the office setting, hints tended to be used to familiar subordinates for requests that were not very imposing. They were also used by students to the office staff on whom they relied for the provision of educational goods. Many of the conditions described by Ervin-Tripp as being associated with the distribution of other variants
were also confirmed in the two settings investigated in the present study. Imperative forms tended to be used to subordinates and to high-familiarity equals in the office. Imbedded imperatives tended to occur to equal- or low-rank addressees when (a) the task was outside of normal role expectations, or (b) the speaker was the beneficiary of the requested act in the office setting. Question directives were used, in both settings, when there was a possibility that an addressee could not comply with a request.

Other descriptions provided by Ervin-Tripp were not confirmed, however. Need statements occurred too infrequently to permit comparison with her observations. Imbedded imperatives were not observed to be used more frequently to unfamiliar addressees in the office setting, where the opposite pattern was in fact displayed. Similarly, there was no evidence to suggest that imbedded imperatives were used more frequently to superior addressees when the requests involved feasible, role-appropriate acts. Permission directives were directed to subordinates as frequently as they were directed upward in rank, and they were not more likely to be addressed to unfamiliar addressees in the office setting. Hints tended to occur between equal familiars in the domestic setting more frequently to request acts that were not very imposing than to request 'special' services, as was suggested by Ervin-Tripp regarding the use of such indirect forms within families.

A final analysis of these naturally-occurring request data involved an examination of internal modifications that attenuated the force of directive acts. In accordance with expectation under Brown and Levinson's model, increasing indirectness of directive variant was associated with an increasing proportion of internal attenuating devices (that is, with increased 'politeness' or face-threat minimization) in the office setting. Furthermore, with respect to the social-contextual dimensions of the model, the use of attenuation devices was as predicted in this setting for D and R, with higher proportions of attenuated requests being used to low- than to high-familiarity addressees and for medium- than for low- imposition acts. However, the pattern for P was not as expected, with similarly high proportions of directive acts to both high- and low-power addressees being attenuated. In the requests used by the married couple in the domestic setting, there was no clear pattern of association between increasing indirectness of directive variant and increasing use of attenuation devices. The only evidence consistent with what would be expected from Brown and Levinson's model came from the wife's requests:
attenuating devices occurred in a higher proportion of acts involving medium impositions than of those involving low impositions.

The inconsistencies in the patterns of attenuation observed in the data from the two settings indicated that more detailed inquiry into 'polite' usage at both the levels of variation in the directness of requests and in the use of internal attenuating devices is needed across a greater range of situations involving requests of different levels of imposition. What was concluded on the basis of the present data was that, in respect of directives at least, politeness was not simply a matter of incorporating syntactic and lexical attenuation devices within variants, nor was it inevitably a matter of increasing indirectness of the form. The suggestion, put forward by Blum-Kulka (1987), that concern with clarity may be as essential to considerations of politeness as is concern for face, was considered as providing a potential account for the patterns of request usage in this preliminary investigation. The argument that it is possible to 'overdo' the indirectness of a negatively-affective act like a request, with the result that one is perceived as being impolite, just as it is possible to err on the side of impoliteness by being too direct, was considered worthy of further examination. The issue was taken up in studies designed to address the two related research questions whose findings are discussed in the next section.

12.2.3  
(1) *To What Extent Do Shared Beliefs/Expectations Exist About the Appropriateness of Particular Request Forms in Different Contexts, and What Social and Affective Meanings are Attached to Variation in Request Usage?*  
(2) *What is the Relationship Between Judgements of the Appropriateness of Situated Request Variants, and Their Politeness?*

Investigations that addressed these questions took the form of scenario-based manipulations of social-contextual variables in which participants were asked to take the role of the speaker, and evaluate formal variants of directive acts. The rationale for this procedure rested on the assumption that people have, as part of their communicative competence, knowledge of the expected forms of speech acts in particular contexts. In the first of these investigations (Study III, Chapter 9), a factor analysis of participants' judgements of request variants on a range of rating scales produced a solution in which factors labelled *Politeness* (involving scale variables of politeness, courtesy, and tact) and *Functional Appropriateness* (involving scale variables of appropriateness, relevance, successfulness, and effectiveness) emerged as distinct, yet related,
dimensions. This finding, that politeness and appropriateness are, in a sense, distinct judgements that apply to situated request use, supports claims made by researchers (e.g., Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Blum-Kulka, 1990) concerning the importance of distinguishing between these dimensions of evaluation of requests in context.

Analysis of women's and men's evaluations of the request variants presented in the scenarios revealed a few differences that could only be suggestive, given the large number of comparisons involved in the analysis. Men rated imperative forms as more relevant and imposing, and hint forms as more courteous and tactful, but as less effective, than did women. Women rated imbedded imperatives as more tactful, and question directives as more imposing, than did men. It was argued that investigations of gender differences in requesting might more usefully involve methods that permitted greater subtlety of exploration than was possible using rating-scale techniques.

A final aim of the analysis of these data generated using rating-scale methodology was to examine the extent to which models of the social-contextual determination of request variation predicted the obtained patterns of evaluation. It was found that the three dimensions P, D, and R identified by Brown and Levinson (1978) as determinants of strategic choice each loaded significantly on separate factors in the analysis. Furthermore, a significant five-way interaction involving variables identified by Brown and Levinson and Ervin-Tripp (1976) as determining request variation (P, D, R, nature of task, request form) was obtained in an analysis of variance of factor scores on the factor Functional Appropriateness. Patterns of the distribution of formal variants in terms of the social-contextual factors provided some support for predictions derived from the frameworks of Brown and Levinson and Ervin-Tripp. The pattern of ratings was not always as predicted, however. It was concluded that whereas broad sociological dimensions such as status/power, social distance/familiarity, and size of the requested act were important influences on the distinctions made by people evaluating the appropriateness of situated requests, other situational features, referred to by some researchers as 'context-internal' (e.g., Blum-Kulka & House, 1989; Gibbs, 1981a; Kaspar, 1990; Tracey et al., 1984), also contributed to people's evaluations. The need for further study of the influence of contextual features on request variation was apparent. In particular, investigation of 'context-internal' factors appeared to necessitate a different approach from the gathering of people's evaluations.
of requests in context using rating-scale methodology. An approach in which participants were encouraged to discuss their perceptions of formal variants in particular contexts was adopted in the two final studies undertaken as part of this research project. This approach to the investigation of contextual influences on language focusses more particularly on those features that have some emic status.

In the first of two studies that focussed on participants' accounts of their choices and non-choices of request alternatives in specific situations (Study IV, Chapter 10), the same scenarios as had been used in the rating-scale study were employed to depict particular combinations of social-contextual features. The forced-choice methodology employed in Study IV provided no more evidence than did the rating-scale technique to support predictions that indirect directive forms such as hints would be perceived as more likely when weighty or serious request acts (defined in terms of high values of the social-contextual variables P, D, and R) were involved. It was recognized that this failure to confirm expectations might have resulted from the nature of the scenarios used to depict 'weighty' or 'imposing' contextual conditions rather than from inadequacies in available models of request distribution. However, the failure of other experimental studies to generate patterns of indirect hint usage that coincided with predictions, together with the patterns of hint use in samples of requests uttered by speakers of Australian English in the two natural conversational settings observed in the research reported here, lent support to the proposal that the distribution of such off-record forms is likely to be more complicated than has previously been suggested. The social distribution of these off-record forms is clearly one area of requesting behaviour in which further investigation is required.

By contrast, predictions concerning the distribution of more direct imbedded imperative and imperative forms in High P scenarios were generally supported in the forced-choice study, as they had been in the study using rating-scale methodology. Likewise, patterns of participants' choices of 'most likely' request forms in scenarios depicting Equal P and Low P addressees were generally consistent with predictions from Brown and Levinson's model of request distribution, in that the more indirect forms were indicated most often as being 'most likely' in the weightier scenario combinations, and the more direct forms were indicated most often as being 'most likely' in the less weighty scenarios.
The overall frequencies of choice of the various forms were also generally consistent with Ervin-Tripp's observations of the social distribution of requests. Although the frequency of choice of the bald-on-record imperative form in this study was low, choices were restricted to scenarios depicting Equal $P$, Low $D$ and Low $P$, Low $R$ combinations in line with Ervin-Tripp's observations of the use of the form to familiar equals and subordinates. Imbedded imperative variants were chosen most frequently, overall, as 'most likely' form of request in this study, and their pattern of predominance over other variants in scenarios depicting High $P$, High $D$, or Low $R$ conditions was consistent with Ervin-Tripp's observations of their distribution. There was no strong support, however, for Ervin-Tripp's claim that imbedded imperative and imperative use to equal-rank familiar and low-rank addressees could be distinguished in terms of the imposition value of the requested task.

Question directive forms were chosen with the second highest frequency in the study, and predominate in scenarios depicting High $R$ conditions. Again, this pattern was in line with observations of question directive use by Ervin-Tripp. Off-record hint forms were chosen as 'most likely' more frequently, overall, in Low $R$ scenarios and were also frequent in Low $P$, High $R$ scenarios. The former pattern was consistent with observations made by Ervin-Tripp of the use of hints, but the latter was not. With respect to gender differences in choices of 'most likely' request forms, the overall frequency of female and male choice of the relatively direct imperative and imbedded imperative forms was almost identical. There were differences with respect to the more indirect forms, however, with women choosing question directives proportionally more often than men who, by contrast, chose the off-record hint forms more frequently than did women.

Reasons given by participants for their choices of 'most likely' request form in this study provided some evidence of the situational features that were salient determinants of formal variation. Participants choosing imperatives as 'most likely' referred most often to the low power and high familiarity of the addressee, and to the politeness of the form as reasons. The latter finding casts further doubt on the theoretical assumption of straightforward association between indirectness and politeness in linguistic variation. Participants choosing imbedded imperatives as 'most likely' also cited the form's politeness as a reason most often. The low familiarity of the addressee and the fact that the form asked the addressee were also frequently
mentioned as reasons for imbedded imperative choice, particularly by female participants. Choices of question directives were likewise most often explained in terms of the form's *politeness*, and also in terms of the fact that the form *gave the addressee an option to refuse* (female participants only), the *high familiarity* of the addressee, and the fact that the *addressee was busy at the time of the request*. Hint choices were most often explained in terms of the *low power* of the addressee, and both the *high* and *low familiarity* of the addressee. The latter finding of both high- and low-familiarity relationships being seen as appropriate for the use of off-record hint forms sheds some light on apparent inconsistencies in findings regarding hint use in previous research. It appeared that hints can be regarded as appropriate to both familiar and unfamiliar addressees but that these evaluations may be dependent upon other, concurrent, contextual conditions. Further investigation of this issue was considered necessary in the final scenario-based interview study undertaken in this research (Study V), which was also designed to permit closer examination of potential gender differences in perceptions of situated request usage.

Reasons given by participants for not choosing particular forms of request in particular scenarios were also examined in Study IV, and were found, generally, to be consistent with claims made by Ervin-Tripp (1976) concerning the social distribution of formal variants. Some explanations for non-choice of the most indirect hint form appeared to be at odds with researchers' perceptions of the form's function, however. For example, a number of participants perceived that the hint *failed to give the addressee a choice of whether to comply*, whereas Ervin-Tripp (1976: 42) had described the form as the one that went "farthest in leaving options open". A number of participants also referred to the fact that a hint attempts to *make an addressee offer* to perform a task as a reason for its non-choice. This explanation is not consistent with the conversation-analytic view of the function of indirect requests as 'pre-requests' that provide an addressee with the opportunity to make an offer before it is necessary for the speaker to ask directly for what is wanted.

Information provided by participants in this study was also used to assess the general issue of whether politeness or appropriateness considerations motivated the choice of request forms. Evidence pertaining to an association between politeness and indirectness was also examined. Two sources of information were pertinent to these issues; discrepancies between (i)
participants' choices of 'most likely' and 'most polite' forms in context, and (ii) participants' choices of 'least likely' and 'most impolite' forms. The finding of a substantial number of discrepancies between participants' choices of (i) 'most likely' and 'most polite' form, and (ii) 'least likely' and 'most impolite' form of request in a particular context was argued to add weight to the proposition that formal variants of speech acts such as directives do not carry particular politeness values, but rather that politeness meanings are influenced by the situational frames in which they occur. In this view, linguistic variation is conceptualized as due to participants' shared understandings of the appropriateness of forms in social contexts rather than to considerations of politeness (e.g., Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Blum-Kulka, 1990).

Furthermore, although the majority of discrepant choices between 'least likely' and 'most impolite' request forms involved the choice of a more direct form as 'most impolite', the fact that the majority of the discrepant choices between 'most likely' and 'most polite' involved the selection of a more direct form of request as 'most polite' than as 'most likely' challenged the view that increasing indirectness is inevitably associated with increasing politeness in requesting as argued by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). The findings were interpreted as supportive of Wierzbicka's (1985) proposal that direct speech is not always taken as conveying an absence of politeness and, conversely, that indirectness is not always reflective of politeness. Rather than taking such an association for granted, researchers need to focus on the social meanings that members of a speech community attribute to variants that differ in directness.

The second of the two studies that used participants' accounts of their choices and non-choices of situated request variants (Study V, Chapter 11) was designed to permit more detailed and systematic investigation of outcomes from Study IV. Although following the basic scenario format of the previous study, Study V employed a reduced number of scenarios to depict levels of the social-contextual variables P, D, and R, in order to allow greater questioning of participants about their reasons for particular choices in particular situations, and to enable more systematic comparisons of the choices and explanations proffered by women and men.

As had been the case in Study IV, participants' choices of 'most likely' form of request alternative in the most weighty scenarios did not support Brown and Levinson's (1978)
predictions that the most indirect, off-record hint forms would be more likely under such conditions. Although indirect question directive forms were chosen most frequently in High P scenarios depicting low probability of addressee compliance - in line with Ervin-Tripp's (1976) descriptions of their use - in other weighty High P, High R combinations, imbedded imperative forms were most frequently chosen as 'most likely'. It was the case, however, that imbedded imperative choices predominated in High P, Low R scenarios, a finding that was consistent with predictions from both Brown and Levinson's and Ervin-Tripp's frameworks.

The distribution of request choices in scenarios depicting Equal P addressees was also broadly in line with Brown and Levinson's predictions in that the more indirect forms tended to be selected with greater frequency in the more weighty scenario combinations. Less support for these predictions came from the pattern of choices in Low P scenarios, in which imbedded imperative and question directive forms were chosen with similar frequency as 'most likely' in most combinations irrespective of the values of D or R factors.

There was also some evidence in the patterns displayed in Equal P scenarios to support Ervin-Tripp's conclusion that hint forms are perceived as appropriate under conditions where non-compliance is possible. As in Study IV, patterns of choice in both Equal and Low P scenarios did not, however, support her observation that imbedded imperative and imperative use to equal-rank, familiar addressees could be distinguished in terms of the imposition value of the task, nor that their use to equal-rank addressees for low-imposition tasks could be distinguished in terms of the level of familiarity of the speaker and addressee.

The overall frequencies of choice of the various request forms were not as consistent with Ervin-Tripp's observations of their social distribution as had been the case in Study IV. Imperative forms, for instance, were not restricted to scenarios depicting familiar equals and subordinates, but also occurred in scenarios depicting superior addressees. Examination of participants' reasons for these latter choices revealed that they were focussing on the high familiarity of the addressee in making their imperative choices. With respect to imbedded imperatives, it was the case that, as in Study IV, the form was chosen with the highest frequency, overall, as 'most likely' request variant. The distribution of these request choices did not display the same consistency across the two studies with regard to Ervin-Tripp's observations of their patterns of use, however. Question directive choices occurred with the
second highest frequency in Study V, as they had in Study IV. Their distribution across levels of the R factor provided broad support for Ervin-Tripp's observations of their use in High R conditions, particularly when non-compliance was possible. The distribution of off-record hint forms also supported Ervin-Tripp's claims of their use in circumstances where there was a possibility that the addressee could not comply.

The patterns of gender difference in choices of 'most likely' request forms that were observed in Study IV were not replicated in Study V. Although the overall frequency of female and male choice of the direct imperative and imbedded imperative forms was very similar in both studies, there were almost no differences in the frequencies with which the indirect question directive and hint forms were chosen by women and men in the second study. The design of the Study V did permit examination of patterns of female and male choice across levels of the factors P, D, and R, and differences were observed - most notably that the pattern of imbedded imperative and question directive choice for men was more consistent with predictions (of similarity between usage to strangers and intimates) under Wolfson's (1988) Bulge theory of the distribution of linguistic forms than with predictions from either Brown and Levinson's or Ervin-Tripp's frameworks.

Participants' reasons for their choices of 'most likely' request forms provided similar evidence to that obtained in Study IV concerning the situational features that were salient determinants of formal variation. Participants choosing imperatives as 'most likely' referred most often to the low power, high familiarity, and informality of the form as reasons. As in Study IV, those choosing imbedded imperatives most often cited the form's politeness, and the fact that it asked the addressee, as reasons. Unlike the pattern in Study IV, however, those choosing imbedded imperatives in Study V more often mentioned the addressee's high familiarity as a reason than his/her low familiarity. Choices of question directives were most often explained in terms of the form's politeness, the fact that it gave the addressee an option to refuse, the addressee's low familiarity, and that the addressee was busy at the time of the request, as was found in Study IV. Hint choices were most often explained in terms of the fact that the addressee was busy, that the form gave the addressee an option to refuse the request, and the high familiarity of the addressee. Two reasons for hint choices that were mentioned
with high frequency in Study IV, the *low familiarity* and *low power* of the addressee, did not occur with any great frequency in the second study.

The suggestion, from Study IV, that there may be systematic differences in women's and men's perceptions of 'most likely' request variants under role-play conditions was similarly not borne out by the patterns of findings from the second study, that involved larger sample sizes. Gender differences were apparent in Study V in participants' responses to a question concerning the effect, on choice of 'most likely' request alternative, of a change in the addressee's gender from same as, to opposite, that of the speaker. More male choices than female choices of 'most likely' request form were changed when the addressee was described as being of the same sex as the speaker (in a ratio of almost 3:1). Whereas women were about as likely to opt for a more direct request form as they were to opt for a less direct form when the addressee was changed from opposite to same sex as the speaker, men were much more likely to opt for a more direct form as 'most likely' to a same-sex addressee.

As had been the case in Study IV, reasons given by participants for not choosing particular forms of request in particular scenarios were generally consistent with claims made by Ervin-Tripp (1976) concerning the social distribution of formal variants. The finding, from Study IV, that participants considered that the indirect hint form would *make an addressee offer* to perform a task as a reason for its non-choice was reproduced in Study V. Similarly, the finding of a considerable number of discrepancies between participants' choices of (i) 'most likely' and 'most polite' form, and (ii) 'least likely' and 'most impolite' form of request in a particular context was reproduced in Study V. Although most of the changes observed in the second study were in the direction of a more indirect form of request for 'most polite' than for 'most likely' choice, and a more direct form for 'most impolite' than for 'least likely', there were a substantial number of changes in the opposite directions. These findings provided further evidence to support the conclusion from Study IV that increasing indirectness is not inevitably perceived as associated with increasing politeness in requesting, contrary to the model proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). Accounts provided by participants in both Studies IV and V revealed that they were sensitive to the problem of being over-polite in context and most often, the high familiarity of the addressee was cited as a reason for not using the 'most polite' request form in a particular situation.
12.3 Theoretical Significance of the Findings

Returning to the observation that constituted the starting point for this enquiry, the research reported here has investigated the range of ways in which people might phrase a particular request in particular situations. The findings from the series of studies undertaken (although necessarily limited in terms of their generalizability, and the implications that can be drawn from them, by the particular methods of data collection involved in each case) suggest, when taken together, that the perceived appropriateness of situated request forms is broadly affected by social-contextual factors such as power/status, familiarity/social distance, and imposition value of the task, as suggested by investigators such as Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and Ervin-Tripp (1976) who have proposed explanatory frameworks of the systematic distribution of requests.

Variation in terms of such broad contextual factors does not tell the whole story, however. The frameworks proposed by Brown and Levinson and Ervin-Tripp were not found to be sufficient to account for all observed variation in request use in the present studies, and it was argued that a range of situation-specific or context-internal factors that are not captured by such broad sociological dimensions as are suggested in these models is also involved in people's assessments of the appropriateness of strategic request variants. If we are to increase our understanding of the types of contextual knowledge that people make use of in requesting situations, further work focussing on the situational features that are salient determinants of request variation from the point of view of participants is required, rather than more studies that take broad social-contextual factors for granted as part of the systematic manipulation of experimental conditions designed to test the validity of available models. Indeed, it might be argued that the traditional sociolinguistic approach of attempting to discover systematic relationships between broad aspects of social structure and language use may have exhausted its potential for contributing to our understanding of situated language use. There is now a body of empirical research indicating that various predictions made on the basis of structuralist models are not upheld in either natural or simulated language samples, and there have been suggestions that such models are overly simplistic (e.g., Coupland et al., 1988). Approaches to sociolinguistic analysis that have sought to resolve some of the epistemological limitations inherent in the structural-functionalist perspective need to be explored in order that we might
continue to develop our understanding of the "complex social processes that define and are
defined by communicative interaction" (Coupland et al., 1988: 257). In such a process-
oriented view, it has been suggested that context might more usefully be interpreted along the
lines of a "situationally-restricted potential for meaningful courses of behaviour" (Bateman,
1985: 115). Approaches such as ethnomethodology, in which the focus is on how people see,
describe and, therefore, create social order, and on how inter-subjective knowledge and
understanding is achieved, offer new possibilities of investigation in this direction.

Those advocating feminist models of language (e.g., Cameron, 1985; Cameron, Frazer,
Harvey, Rampton & Richardson, 1992) have also stressed the need for researchers to attend to
what people say about talk, and how they analyse it, arguing that these aspects represent a
crucial part of understanding the significance of sex differences. Cameron (1995: 168), for
instance, argues that categories such as gender, that traditional sociolinguistics has treated as
givens that reflect something existing prior to and irrespective of speakers' acts, might more
appropriately be treated as relatively unstable constructs. In this case, language is treated as
part of the explanation; as one of the things that constitutes an identity as a particular kind of
speaking subject, for example, as a white middle-class woman. In this view, social identities
are not merely reflected in language but are performed through repetition of particular acts ('acts
of identity') which are, in turn, subject to normative regulation.

Another pattern that emerged across the studies undertaken for this research demonstrated
that considerations of appropriateness and politeness with respect to request usage, at least, are
not necessarily the same thing and, furthermore, that politeness in requesting is not simply a
matter of increasing the indirectness with which an act is communicated. These findings have
obvious implications for theoretical models of politeness such as the face-preservation model
proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) which has long been considered the classic
treatment of the concept. Accumulated research findings now point to the need for serious
modification and conceptual expansion of this model. Evidence from a number of the studies
presented as part of the present research that indirectness is not always and unequivocally
perceived as polite with respect to requesting is generally supportive of alternative treatments of
politeness (such as that proposed by Blum-Kulka, 1987, 1989, 1990), in which it is argued
that concerns other than the minimization of face-threat via indirectness are essential to issues of
linguistic politeness. At the broadest level, what the present findings indicate is the need for further exploration of the social meanings of concepts such as those of politeness, indirectness, clarity, communicative effectiveness, and so on, that have often been taken for granted in previous sociolinguistic and pragmatic investigations, and also of the ways in which such notions figure in people's social-contextual knowledge in relation to particular speech acts.

The findings of the present research have implications for another conceptual issue - how should indirect speech acts, in general, be conceptualized and, in particular, what function is served by indirectness in requesting? Although there was little evidence, in terms of the accounts given by participants of their choices and non-choices of request variants in scenario formats, to support Levinson's (1983) proposal that indirectness in requesting functions to allow an addressee to make an offer before it is necessary for the speaker to make an overt request which might result in refusal, there was some support for the more general suggestion that indirectness serves to avoid the awkwardness typically associated with request refusal. Forms such as question directives and hints were perceived as less coercive than more direct variants in the sense of providing the addressee with an inbuilt option to refuse. Accounts provided by participants for their non-choices of such indirect forms tended to focus on problems of communicative effectiveness. Together, these patterns provided further support for general conclusions like that of Blum-Kulka (1987) who argued that politeness was a matter of achieving a balance between clarity in requesting and apparent non-coerciveness.

12.4 Directions for Further Research

In addition to the suggestions made in the preceding sections for further work in the area of request variation, the findings of the present research have implications for study in other, related areas of social psychology, cross-cultural studies, and language learning. One avenue for future investigation involves the consideration of speech acts other than requests. Although research has been carried out on the social distribution and functions of acts such as apologies (e.g., Garcia, 1989; Holmes, 1989b, 1990a, 1990b, 1993; Olshtain, 1989; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Rintell & Mitchell, 1989), compliments (e.g., Holmes, 1986b, 1988, 1989b, 1990b, 1993; Manes, 1983; Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Wolfson, 1981a & b, 1983, 1984; Wolfson & Manes, 1980), invitations (e.g., Wolfson, 1981b; Wolfson et al., 1983), and complaints (e.g.,
House & Kaspar, 1981; Olshtain & Weinbach, 1987), most empirical work in the field of linguistic politeness has focussed on requests. More work following up the insights provided by these researchers, and investigating other utterance types (e.g., suggestions, reminding, excuses, threats, warnings, contradictions, disagreements, expressions of criticism, anger, disapproval) is needed. The findings of such studies would have important implications for the field of social psychology in that analyses of the structure and function of such communicative act types can add to an understanding of the ways in which interpersonal processes are negotiated and conceptualized.

A second avenue for future research involves investigation of the cultural 'ethos' of particular communities along the lines of Katriel's (1986) examination of Israeli Dugri society. This would appear to be one way in which valuable insights into the meanings associated with concepts like those of communicative appropriateness, indirectness, and politeness might be gained. Some work has already been carried out into the cultural ethos and core values of Australian society (e.g., Conway, 1971; Encel, Mackenzie, & Tebutt, 1974; Smolicz, 1979, 1981; Summers, 1975), yet the relation of such broad socio-cultural values to the realization of particular linguistic acts and a general communicative style amongst Australian speakers remains to be explored. As Pauwels (1991: 322) has argued, the existence of a rigid division of the sexes in Australia since early colonial days, and of strong cultural stereotypes, is likely to have affected the perception of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour for the sexes, as well as affecting actual linguistic behaviour.

Further cross-cultural comparisons of the type carried out by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) as part of the CCSARP study, or by Tannen (1981) on ethnicity as conversational style, would be of particular value in terms of the potential for conceptual expansion that is afforded by exploration of the relevance and meaning of so-called linguistic and social universals such as 'face', 'politeness', 'cooperation', and so on, in different speech communities. The potential also exists for such findings to be applied in areas of cross-cultural and second-language learning where differences in expectations and values, and communicative competence generally, can result in misunderstanding and conflict. The implications, for language-teaching methodology, of the study of speech acts were drawn out by Holmes (1989b: 194). Investigating the Face-Threatening Act of apologizing, she pointed to the complexity of the
language-learner's task in acquiring communicative competence, commenting that "learning how to produce, interpret, and respond to [the socio-cultural values of a speech community] appropriately requires a thorough familiarity with those values". As Clyne (1985) has suggested, in a multi-cultural and multi-lingual community such as that of Australia, there is a particular need for the collection of a great deal of data pertaining to speech-act realizations, communicative intentions, and social and affective meanings associated with usage of specific utterances within particular language groups and ethnic communities. In particular, the study of cross-cultural pragmatic failure and other forms of mis-communication resulting from unfamiliarity with culturally-appropriate forms of linguistic politeness could shed some light on the phenomenon of ethnic stereotyping (Kaspar, 1990).

12.5 Concluding Remarks

This thesis attempted to begin a characterization of the types of knowledge about social situations that people bring to bear on acts of requesting by observing people's uses and interpretation of requests in particular natural circumstances, their evaluations of alternative request forms on dimensions considered relevant to variation, and their explanatory accounts of preferred and dispreferred request alternatives in a range of simulated situational conditions. In so doing, it is hoped that the broad purpose of the research enterprise - of contributing, as part of a cyclic and multidimensional approach, to an understanding of the complex ways in which contexts influence the use and interpretation of requests - has been fulfilled.
LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:  EXAMPLES FROM INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS' ACCOUNTS

APPENDIX B:  DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS IN STUDY II: SITUATIONAL FACTORS AND DIRECTIVE USE IN TWO SETTINGS

APPENDIX C:  CRAMER'S $\Psi^i$ TESTS OF ASSOCIATION, STUDY II

APPENDIX D:  CATEGORISATION OF IMPOSITION TYPE / REQUEST GOAL, STUDY II: EXAMPLES

APPENDIX E:  SCENARIOS USED IN STUDY III

APPENDIX F:  DESCRIPTIONS PROVIDED FOR RATING SCALES USED IN THE PRETEST OF SCENARIO MANIPULATIONS, STUDY III

APPENDIX G:  PRETEST OF SCENARIO MANIPULATIONS, STUDY III: RATINGS ON SCALES OF ROLE EXPECTATION, TASK DIFFICULTY, PROBABILITY OF COMPLIANCE

APPENDIX H:  DESCRIPTIONS PROVIDED FOR RATING SCALES USED IN THE PRETEST OF REQUEST MANIPULATIONS, STUDY III

APPENDIX I:  RATING SCALES USED IN STUDY III

APPENDIX J:  INSTRUCTIONS TO SUBJECTS, STUDY III

APPENDIX K:  ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF FACTOR SCORES, STUDY III

APPENDIX L:  RATINGS OF THE 'FUNCTIONAL' APPROPRIATENESS OF REQUEST VARIANTS, STUDY III

APPENDIX M:  CATALOGUE OF REASONS GENERATED IN STUDIES IV & V
APPENDIX A

EXAMPLES FROM INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS' ACCOUNTS

INDICATING THAT THEY HAD EXPERIENCED REAL CIRCUMSTANCES THAT WERE
SIMILAR TO THE SITUATIONS THEY WERE ASKED TO ROLE-PLAY IN REQUEST
SCENARIOS

High P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance
S12M:  ...I've been working with journos recently, in that sort of situation.

High P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance
S16M:  ...Oh, this is like ... I work at the Pizza Hut and er ... I sort of ... I got a boss there
and that's what I'd say to him if I had to, you know, ask him 'Do you think I could
have this day off?', or something. I wouldn't say 'Could I have the day off?'.
I always would say 'Do you think I ... .

High P, Low D, Outside Role
S7M:  ... I have worked for a half a dozen years with - in many cases - people of that
similar sort of age difference, and much older. And they were just workmates,
they were friends, just as people of my age were friends.

High P, Low D, Outside Role
S33M:  ... About the only thing I could think of'd be in the Navy - in the Navy Reserves.
Occasionally you have to ... not really, but you have to be a bit more stern to get
things done ... the men, to make them do things. So, but that's the only time I'd use
it.

High P, High D, Outside Role
S16M:  ... at work, my boss would say that to me. He'd say 'Oh, all the ...', 'Oh, that's in
the way.', 'Oh, right-o! I'll just get that out the road for you.'. Just sort of ... but
not saying 'Get it out of the way, you scum.', but just as ... because, to help him
out, you know. He's my boss, so he can say that to me, I suppose. ...I mean,
I've said that to people at work. You know, not sort of asked, just said 'Oh, all
those dishes are in the way.', you know. ...This is like the Pizza Hut. I got a boss
who's older than me and another boss who's about my same age, and the only
difference is, the boss who's the same age - I've been working there longer than he
has, but he's just come and done the managers' course there, and whatever, and I'd
sort of say [Imbedded Imperative] more to him than my older boss.
APPENDIX A (Continued)

Equal P, Low D, Low Probability of Compliance

S33M:  [Hint] - my mum uses that all the time. When she goes to the shop or something - she wants me to go to the shop - she goes 'Oh, I have to go to the shop to get milk.', and then, of course, you have to offer to go up to the shop. So that's how she does it, anyway.

Equal P, High D, Low Probability of Compliance

S19F:  Oh, I've done it at work to one of the ... Mr. Jennings - one of the bosses. He was mucking around, subtly hinting to me to put some crumpets up. You know, he was only mucking around, and I said 'Oh, just ask me and I'll do it.', and he said 'Okay, put the crumpets up!', so I went and did it, but he was only joking around then, so ...

Low P, Low D, Outside Role

S13M:  Basically, because I used to live with a guy who always used to try that [laughs]. And I found that within me it just sort of promoted a siege mentality. You just sort of stopped that and you just didn't do anything [laughs] cause you didn't want to.

INT:  Why did you feel like that?

S13M:  Oh, cause he always ... that's the way ... he never asked anything directly. You know, roundabout, trying to coerce you into doing things.

Low P, High D, Outside Role

S23M:  My brother uses it [Hint] to me all the time. Beating around the bush. Like, we're sitting watching telly and it's late at night and he'll take his shoes off and then tell me to take the milk bottles down because he hasn't got his shoes on, type of thing. I suppose that's alright. I mean we know each other pretty well [laughs]. We've lived with each other for 20 years. But I think if you don't know a person very well, you shouldn't ever say something like that. At least if you're going to ask 'em to go out of their way and do something for you, you should be able to have the courage to ask 'em straight out. Not sort of hint at them.

Low P, High D, Low R

S16M:  I've got a female boss and a male boss, and she treats me just like she treats the waitresses, and I treat her just the way I treat my male bosses anyway.
Equal P, Low D, Outside Role

S10F: Oh, my mother does that [laughs]. I usually say ... I always ask her ... I sort of reply, but I don't ask her if that's what she wants me to do. As though I should feel concerned about it, and it's up to her ... then I ask her if she wants me to get them for her or not. I don't say 'Well, I'll go get them for you.' - I might, I don't know. But if I ask her again, if I ask her if she wants me to get something for her, then that's sort of because she's telling me what to do, and it's my responsibility, and she's sort of ... yeah, exactly, telling me what to do.

High P, High D, Outside Role

S18F: Well, I've worked in a restaurant, actually, and I've sort of been in the same situation.
APPENDIX B

DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS IN STUDY II: SITUATIONAL FACTORS AND DIRECTIVE USE IN TWO SETTINGS

The office staff:

D. S.: The departmental secretary, a woman in her mid-fifties.

S. T.: Typist, second in terms of office status, a woman in her mid-forties.

J. T.: Junior typist, in her early twenties.

C. A.: Clerical assistant, in her early twenties.

O. J.: Office junior, in her late teens and relatively new to the department, having commenced work approximately three months prior to the study.

The academic staff:

L. M. 1 & L. M. 2: Male senior lecturers in their late forties.

A. P.: Newly-created associate-professor, in his late forties.

L. F1: Lecturer, in her early forties.

L. F2: Lecturer, in her late forties.

The technical staff:

T1: Technician, in his late thirties.

T2: Technician, in her late forties.

L. A. 1: Laboratory assistant, in her early twenties.

L. A. 2: Laboratory assistant, in his early twenties.

Other participants:

C. T.: Caretaker, in his mid-fifties.

S. M.: Salesman, in his late thirties.

Students at enquiry counter: 14 males, 11 females.
APPENDIX C

CRAMER'S $\psi'$ TESTS OF ASSOCIATION, STUDY II

Table C.1  Chi-square test of the independence of strategy use and gender: The office setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request Categories</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>$E$</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>$E$</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need Statement &amp; Imperative</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative &amp; Permission Directive</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive &amp; Hint</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>89</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>113</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum (fo - fe)^2}{fe} = 17.86 \; df = 2$

$\psi' = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{N(L-1)}} = 0.40$

Table C.2  Chi-Square test of the independence of strategy use and gender: The domestic setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request Categories</th>
<th>Wife</th>
<th>$E$</th>
<th>Husband</th>
<th>$E$</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need Statement &amp; Imperative</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative &amp; Permission Directive</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive &amp; Hint</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>102</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
<td><strong>182</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum (fo - fe)^2}{fe} = 5.88 \; df = 2$

$\psi' = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{N(L-1)}} = 0.18$
### Table C.3

Chi-Square test of the independence of speaker's gender and type of request goal: The office setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request Goal</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Goods</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>80</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = \frac{\sum (f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e} = 7.71 \quad df = 1 \]

(* represents Yates' Correction)

\[ \psi = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{N(L-1)}} = 0.26 \]

### Table C.4

Chi-Square test of the independence of speaker's gender and type of request goal: The domestic setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request Goal</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Goods</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>85.8</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = \frac{\sum (f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e} = 5.50 \quad df = 1 \]

\[ \psi = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{N(L-1)}} = 0.17 \]
APPENDIX D

CATEGORISATION OF IMPOSITION TYPE / REQUEST GOAL, STUDY II: EXAMPLES

1. Requests for Services/Action

(i) **Task-related activities:** Where S asked H to perform some activity that was related to an ongoing activity or a work task. For such tasks, there was no clear sense in which either S or H was the beneficiary of the requested action, for example:

[4] Typist to office junior re photocopying:  
Will you do this lot first?

[10] Wife to husband:  
Do these next, cause they've got problems.

(ii) **For me activities:** Where S asked H to perform some activity for which S was the primary beneficiary, for example:

[17] Senior typist to technician:  
Can you open the rubbish for me.

[14] Wife to husband:  
Could you ask him to give me a ring please?

(iii) **For H activities:** Where S asked H to perform some activity for which H was the primary beneficiary, for example:

[41] Departmental secretary to male lecturer:  
Go ask Greta to do you a photocopy.

[26] Wife to husband:  
You've got no drink in the fridge to take with you.  
[i.e., Put some in.]

(iv) **For other activities:** Where S asked H to perform some activity for which the primary beneficiary was someone other than S or H, for example:

[19] Wife to husband whose parents are waiting to hear from him:  
Perhaps you should ring up tonight.

[2] Wife to husband:  
I've got these tests here for your mother.  
[i.e., Take them to her.]
(v) **For both activities:** Where S asked H to perform some activity for which both S and H were equal beneficiaries, for example:

[21] Wife to husband, both are hungry:  
*I reckon you should go and cut some Gourmet cake.*

[34] Husband to wife:  
*Do you want to turn the news on?*  
[Both regularly enjoy watching the evening news.]

(vi) **Interrupt activities:** Where S asked H to stop performing some activity so that S could intercede and do something him/herself, for example:

[95] Senior typist to office junior who is using the photocopier:  
*Greta, could I just rip in with one?*

[26] Husband to wife:  
*Excuse me.*  
[Get out of the way.]

(vii) **Postponement activities:** Where S asked H to come back at a later time in order to get what was required, for example:

[15] Senior typist to male postgraduate:  
*Can you come back in about half an hour?*

(viii) **Joke activities:** Where S asked H to perform (or refrain from performing) some activity, as a joke. These forms were hard to categorise in terms of imposition type; they were not really task-related, and had no obvious beneficiary aside from the general audience who could appreciate the joke. Examples include:

[19] Senior typist to male technician:  
*Stop preaching!*

[85] Senior typist to male lecturer:  
*Make a money order out to Mrs. Smith, Nigel.*

2. **Requests for Goods**

(i) **Task-related goods:** Where S asked H to provide some item(s) related to an ongoing activity or work task, for example:

[32] Junior secretary to male lecturer:  
*Can you leave a copy with us?*

[21] Husband to wife:  
*We need another lid.*
APPENDIX D (Continued)

(ii) *Educational goods:* Where S asked H to provide some educational resource(s). This type of imposition was restricted to students making enquiries at the office counter, for example:

[1] Student:
*Have you got a handout for the first-year Psychology prac.?*

(iii) *For me goods:* Where S asked H to provide some item(s) for which S was the primary beneficiary, for example:

[58] Junior typist to laboratory assistant:  
*Could you pass me the dictionary while you're there?*

[20] Wife to husband:  
*Can you bring me the wooden spoon?*

(iv) *For H goods:* Where S asked H to provide some item(s) for which H was the primary beneficiary, for example:

[41c] Departmental secretary to male lecturer:  
*You give me that Aberdeen address.  
[So that S could forward H's mail.]*
APPENDIX E

SCENARIOS USED IN STUDY III

SCENARIO # 1: High Rank, High Familiarity, High Imposition (Outside Role Expectation).

SITUATION: MELANIE FISHER (about 18 years old), the dishwasher at a city restaurant, has just carried a tray of dirty dishes from the far side of the kitchen to the sink, when she finds that there is nowhere for her to put them down. The chef, ROBERT COUPIE (about 40 years old), with whom Melanie has worked for almost two years and whom she knows well, is also in the kitchen, preparing the salads.

MELANIE FISHER: Oh, Robert, there's no room for me to put this tray down anywhere.

   Clear some of those clean dishes out of the way please.
   Could you clear some of those clean dishes out of the way please?
   Do you have time to clear some of these clean dishes out of the way?
   All of these clean dishes are in the way.

SCENARIO # 2: High Rank, High Familiarity, Low Imposition (Within Role Expectation).

SITUATION: JAMES WARD (about 21 years old), a university student, is in a practical class watching slides shown by the lecturer, KATHRYN HILL (about 35 years old) who has lectured him in Biology for the last three years, and whom he knows well. The slides do not take long to run through, and most of the students leave the class early, although James is one of those who stays behind.

JAMES WARD: Those last two slides of DNA molecules were really interesting, Kathryn.

   Run through them again please.
   Could you run through them again please?
   Is it possible to turn the projector back?
   I didn't really have time to see them properly, though.
SCENARIO # 3: High Rank, High Familiarity, High Imposition (Difficult Task).

SITUATION: TOM EDWARDS (about 24 years old), the type-setter at a small printing press which operates on a university campus for the benefit of its staff, is walking back to the press after lunch. On his way, he sees FAYE COOPER (about 49 years old), a Professor of English at the university with whom he has been working on the layout of a book for many months, and whom he knows well.

TOM EDWARDS: Oh Faye, I know it's short notice but the publishers have just advanced our deadline by four weeks.

Bring the final manuscript to my office by tonight please.
Could you bring the final manuscript to my office by tonight please?
Do you think you can have the final manuscript at my office by tonight?
The final manuscript really needs to be in at my office by tonight.

SCENARIO # 4: High Rank, High Familiarity, Low Imposition (Easy Task).

SITUATION: KATE MILLER (about 26 years old), a teacher at a State Primary School, has been giving her pupils folk-dancing lessons in the school playground. As she approaches the audio-visual storeroom to return a large record-player, she sees the Headmaster, NORMAN STEELE (about 50 years old), under whom she has worked for several years and knows well, walking toward the door.

KATE MILLER: These old record players certainly are a handful, Norman.

Open the door for me please.
Could you open the door for me please?
Are you going into the storeroom, by any chance?
I don't think I'll be able to get the door open by myself.
SCENARIO #5: High Rank, High Familiarity, High Imposition (Non-compliance Possible).

SITUATION: CHRISTINE WALSH (about 26 years old), a reporter on a large daily newspaper, is in the office of the editor-in-chief, STEWART JENNINGS (about 52 years old), under whom she has worked since her cadetship, and whom she knows well. As usual, in the late hours of the afternoon, STEWART is extremely busy organizing the layout of articles in time for the printer's deadline.

CHRISTINE WALSH: Max, I'm having trouble finishing off that review on South Africa for next weekend.
   Read it through now and tell me what you think please.
   Could you read it through now and tell me what you think please?
   Do you have time to read it through now and tell me what you think?
   I don't want to go on until I know what you think of it.

SCENARIO #6: High Rank, High Familiarity, Low Imposition (Compliance Expected).

SITUATION: ANNE CARTER (about 35 years old), a secretary in the English Department of a large Teacher's College, is saying farewell to RON MATTHEWS (about 52 years old), a senior lecturer who has worked in the department for several years and whom she knows well. He is about to go on study leave, and is standing at the door of her small office, saying goodbye.

ANNE CARTER: Oh Ron, before you go home.
   Give me your new address in America please.
   Could you give me your new address in America please?
   Do you know what your new address in America will be?
   I don't have your new address in America as yet.
SCENARIO # 7: High Rank, Low Familiarity, High Imposition (Outside Role).

SITUATION: SANDRA YATES, (about 27 years old), the receptionist for an engineering firm located on the outskirts of the city, is working through her lunch-hour to update recent customer files. LES BANNER (about 49 years old), the manager of the firm’s factory whom Sandra does not know very well, enters the office and tells her that he will be out at a business lunch at the Festival Centre Restaurant in the city.

SANDRA YATES: Oh, Mr. Banner, I was supposed to go there in my lunch-hour and collect some tickets for the ballet tonight.
Call in at the booking office and get them for me while you’re there please.
Could you call in at the booking office and get them for me while you’re there please?
Are you going anywhere near the booking office, by any chance?
It’ll probably be all booked out by the time I get there this evening.

SCENARIO # 8: High Rank, Low Familiarity, Low Imposition (Within Role).

SITUATION: TIM WILKS (about 20 years old), a junior laboratory assistant who has been working in the university Genetics Department for just over a week, is assisting ELIZABETH JOHNSON (about 40 years old), the laboratory director, whom he does not know very well, to arrange blood samples in the container of a steel centrifuge. Tim is about to lower its heavy lid into place when he notices that one of the sample trays has slipped out of position inside it.

TIM WILKS: Oh Dr. Johnson, the fifth sample tray has slipped out of its bracket.
Straighten it up for me please.
Could you straighten it up for me please?
Can you see the one I mean?
I can’t get to it while I’m holding this lid.
APPENDIX E (Continued)

SCENARIO # 9: High Rank, Low Familiarity, High Imposition (Difficult Task).
SITUATION: RICK BOWEN (about 23 years old), a volunteer worker at a rehabilitation centre for handicapped people, is struggling to lift a young man back into his wheelchair at the end of a physiotherapy session. HEATHER LOGAN (about 39 years old), a psychologist who works at the centre, but whom Rick does not know very well, walks into the room on her way to the cafeteria.

RICK BOWEN: Oh Dr. Logan, I have to take this man to the recreation room. Help me lift him back into his chair please. Could you help me lift him back into his chair please? Do you have time to help me lift him back into his chair? I can't quite manage to lift him back into his chair on my own though.

SCENARIO # 10: High Rank, Low Familiarity, Low Imposition (Easy Task).
SITUATION: DEBORAH JUDD (about 19 years old), a shop assistant who has only just begun working at White's shoe store in the city, is in the storeroom stretching for a box of shoes on a ledge which is just out of her reach. HARVEY WHITE (about 40 years old), the manager of the shop, whom she does not know very well, has just entered the storeroom to choose some shoes for another customer.

DEBORAH JUDD: Oh dear, I really wish I was taller, Mr. White. Pass me that box on the next shelf up please. Could you pass me that box on the next shelf up please? Can you reach that box on the next shelf up? I just can't reach that box on the next shelf up.
SCENARIO # 11: High Rank, Low Familiarity, High Imposition (Non-compliance Possible).

SITUATION: TANIA BENNETT (about 20 years old), in her first week as a waitress at a popular city restaurant, is having difficulty finding chairs to seat the constant stream of lunchtime customers. At one point she runs upstairs to the second floor of the restaurant, which she finds equally crowded and sees JEFF CRAMER, the manager, whom she does not know very well, standing at the door.

TANIA BENNETT: We've got more customers than we can cope with downstairs, Mr. Cramer.

    Give me a couple of spare chairs please.
    Could you give me a couple of spare chairs please?
    Do you have any spare chairs up here?
    I'm looking for a couple of spare chairs already.

SCENARIO # 12: High Rank, Low Familiarity, Low Imposition (Compliance Expected).

SITUATION: PETER FOAKES (about 17 years old), a delivery boy who has only just begun working at "Mayfair Florists" is leaving the shop, his arms full of bouquets for the morning deliveries, when he notices a large bunch of tulips that he has left on the counter. GRACE HODGE (about 54 years old), the florist in charge of the shop, stands behind the counter arranging some posies on a display shelf.

PETER FOAKES: Oh Mrs. Hodge, I nearly forgot that last order for tulips.

    Pass them over to me please.
    Could you pass them over to me please?
    Can you see the ones I mean?
    I don't think I can pick them up now I've got my hands full.
SCENARIO # 13: Equal Rank, High Familiarity, High Imposition (Outside Role).

SITUATION: STEVEN WEBB (about 20 years old), a junior clerk in the Public Service is working through his lunch-hour to catch up on a backlog of filing as ordered by his supervisor. JANE THOMPSON (about 21 years old), another clerk in the department who has worked with Steven for over a year and whom he knows well, passes his desk on her way out to lunch.

STEVEN WEBB: Oh Jane, I've got to work through lunch to finish this great pile of filing.
Mail this package to my mother while you're out please.
Could you mail this package to my mother while you're out please?
Are you going past the post-office on your way, by any chance?
Now I won't be able to mail this package to my mother in time for her birthday.

SCENARIO # 14: Equal Rank, High Familiarity, Low Imposition (Within Role).

SITUATION: LYN GOLDING (about 30 years old), a clerk in the general office of the Universal Insurance Company, is returning from the staff lunchroom with JOHN CARPENTER (about 29 years old), a clerk from the claims department, whom she knows well. On the way back to his own department, John has to pass through the general office and when they reach Lyn's desk, they stop for a moment.

LYN GOLDING: Oh John, I've got those claims for your department done at last.
Take them back with you please.
Could you take them back with you please?
Do you want to take them back with you?
They can go back to your office now.
**APPENDIX E (Continued)**

**SCENARIO # 15:** Equal Rank, High Familiarity, High Imposition (Difficult Task).

**SITUATION:** MARIE GREY (about 27 years old), a research assistant in the Physics Department of a large university, is eating lunch in the crowded staff cafeteria with BILL CHAPMAN (about 26 years old), a research assistant in the same department, whom she has known well since her undergraduate years. Bill, having forgotten to pick up some cutlery with his meal, is just about to return to the servery.

MARIE GREY: Oh Bill, I forgot to get a drink when I was at the counter. Get me a chocolate milkshake while you're there please. Could you get me a chocolate milkshake while you're there please? Are you going as far as the milkshake bar, by any chance? I meant to get a chocolate milkshake.

**SCENARIO # 16:** Equal Rank, High Familiarity, Low Imposition (Easy Task).

**SITUATION:** PAUL WEST (about 20 years old), a second-year physiotherapy student at the Institute of Technology, is sitting at a large table in the library taking notes from a variety of textbooks. He is sharing the books with the girl seated opposite him, JANET PRIME (about 20 years old) who is taking the same course as Paul and whom he knows well.

PAUL WEST: I can never remember what the names of these diseases mean, Janet. Pass me that medical dictionary please. Could you pass me that medical dictionary please? Is that medical dictionary still there? I've got to look at that medical dictionary every time.
APPENDIX E (Continued)

SCENARIO # 17: Equal Rank, High Familiarity, High Imposition (Non-compliance Possible).

SITUATION: IAN KING (about 43 years old), a teacher at a metropolitan Primary School, is about to leave the staff-room to do his rostered yard-duty when he remembers that he has an appointment to meet his wife in the city. Seated next to him, PAULA CLARK (about 41 years old), another teacher, with whom he has worked for several years and knows well, has just started marking some tests which she promised her class to return after lunch.

IAN KING: Oh Paula, I'm supposed to be meeting Carolyn for lunch today and I'm rostered on for yard-duty as well.

Take over here for me please.

Could you take over here for me please?

Have you got time to take over here for me?

I'm going to have to get someone to take over here for me.

SCENARIO # 18: Equal Rank, High Familiarity, Low Imposition (Compliance Expected).

SITUATION: JUDY PARKES (about 23 years old), a nurse working in the Intensive Care ward of a public hospital, has just come on night duty to relieve MIKE BAXTER (about 23 years old), a nurse with whom she trained, and who knows her well. Mike is clearing his desk before he goes off duty, and is about to replace the patients' records in the filing cabinet when Judy enters the nurses' station.

JUDY PARKES: Oh Mike, I've just looked in on Mr. Adams in 216.

Pass over his chart please.

Could you pass over his chart please?

Have you put his chart away yet?

I haven't seen his chart though.
APPENDIX E (Continued)

SCENARIO # 19: Equal Rank, Low Familiarity, High Imposition (Outside Role).

SITUATION: KEVIN POTTER (about 20 years old), a mail sorter at the GPO, has just returned to the mailroom following his coffee break when he sees ANGELA BURT (about 19 years old), another sorter who has just started work there and whom he does not know very well, getting ready to go to the cafeteria for her morning coffee. As she is leaving, Kevin realizes that he has left his cigarettes behind.

KEVIN POTTER: Damn, I've left my cigarettes in the locker room again, Angela.

Go to my bag and get them for me while you're downstairs please.

Could you go to my bag and get them for me while you're downstairs please?

Are you going down there during your break, by any chance?

They'll probably have disappeared by the time I can get down there.

SCENARIO # 20: Equal Rank, Low Familiarity, Low Imposition (Within Role).

SITUATION: SYLVIA MILES (about 30 years old), a window-dresser for "Farnham's", a city department store, is positioning two mannequins for a large swimwear display in one of the main windows. ANDY SCOTT (about 29 years old), the window-dresser from Farnham's biggest suburban outlet, who has just come to work at the city store and whom Sylvia does not know very well, is completing the background beach scenery.

SYLVIA MILES: Right Andy, if I can just get rid of a bit of this seaweed in front, it'll be perfect.

Pass me the scissors please.

Could you pass me the scissors please?

Have you got the scissors there?

I can't quite reach the scissors at the moment though.
SCENARIO # 21: Equal Rank, Low Familiarity, High Imposition (Difficult Task).

SITUATION: KAREN PETERSON (about 35 years old) has just moved into a small cottage in the suburbs, and is attempting to shift a large crate out of the shed in her backyard. Finding that she can't move it on her own, she walks into the garden and sees DARRYL ELLIS (about 36 years old), her next-door neighbour whom she does not know very well, working in his yard.

KAREN PETERSON: Oh Darryl, I'm in need of some assistance here.

   Help me shift an old crate out of my shed please.
   Could you help me shift an old crate out of my shed please.
   Do you have time to help me shift an old crate out of my shed?
   I can't budge an old crate I've found cluttering up my shed.

SCENARIO # 22: Equal Rank, Low Familiarity, Low Imposition (Easy Task).

SITUATION: DAVID DEACON (about 43 years old), a senior lecturer in a university Anthropology Department, has just sat down in the staffroom opposite NANCY SLADE (about 44 years old), a senior lecturer who is new to the department, and whom he does not know very well. She is reading one of a number of programs for the forthcoming Annual Australian Anthropological Conference that lie in front of her, on the table.

DAVID DEACON: Oh Nancy, I see you've found some programs for the annual conference.

   Toss me a copy please.
   Could you toss me a copy please?
   Are you collecting them by any chance?
   I've been waiting to see what's on the agenda.
APPENDIX E (Continued)

SCENARIO # 23: Equal Rank, Low Familiarity, High Imposition (Non-compliance Possible).

SITUATION: DONALD THORNE (about 45 years old), an accountant with the Capital Loans Corporation, is in the company's file library updating his records in preparation for an unscheduled board-meeting. ALISON MURRAY (about 44 years old), an accountant who has only recently started work with the company, and whom he does not know very well, is also in the library busily preparing her first financial report for the meeting.

DONALD THORNE: I've just been told that our Managing Director needs to be picked up from the airport this afternoon, Alison.

   Drive out and get him please.
   Could you drive out and get him please?
   Will you be finished your report by then?
   I'll never get through all these records in time to go myself.

SCENARIO # 24: Equal Rank, Low Familiarity, Low Imposition (Compliance Expected).

SITUATION: ANITA BERGER (about 37 years old), a buyer working for the antique dealers Baxter & Possingham who specializes in Victorian glassware, has just arrived at an auction sale. BRIAN SCHILZ (about 38 years old), the firm's specialist in Edwardian furniture who only recently transferred from interstate, and whom Anita does not know very well approaches the crowded auctioneer's table with her, and steps forward to get a catalogue of sale.

ANITA BERGER: I've never seen so many people crowding for catalogues, Brian.

   Get one for me please.
   Could you get one for me please?
   Is there one left for me?
   I'll be lucky to get through them all to get one.
APPENDIX E (Continued)

SCENARIO # 25: Low Rank, High Familiarity, High Imposition (Outside Role).

SITUATION: JOAN GREEN (about 40 years old), the departmental secretary of a university Biology Department, is talking to MARK LEWIS (about 21 years old), a junior office assistant who has been working in the department for almost two years, and whom she knows well. Mark is just about to walk into the city to buy some stationery for the office, when Joan remembers that she has forgotten to buy some bread for her family's dinner that evening.

JOAN GREEN: Oh Mark, I forgot to buy bread at lunchtime.
Get me a loaf on your way back please.
Could you get me a loaf on your way back please?
Will you be passing a deli on your way back, by any chance?
Now I won't have time to get to a shop before they close tonight.

SCENARIO # 26: Low Rank, High Familiarity, Low Imposition (Within Role).

SITUATION: JEAN COOK (about 47 years old), the matron in charge of the Outpatients' ward in a large metropolitan hospital, is busy arranging the file cards of a group of patients assembled in the reception area. TIM JONES (about 25 years old), an orderly who has worked in the ward for two and a half years and whom Jean knows well, is also standing behind the reception desk at the time.

JEAN COOK: Tim, these patients are all to see Dr. Kirby.
Show them to waiting room 'B' please.
Could you show them to waiting room 'B' please?
Do you want to take them to waiting room 'B'?
They need to go to waiting room 'B'.
APPENDIX E (Continued)

SCENARIO # 27: Low Rank, High Familiarity, High Imposition (Difficult Task).

SITUATION: MAX ARMSTRONG (about 41 years old), the chief librarian at a large College of Advanced Education, is attempting to rearrange sections of the library at short notice from a renovations crew of The Public Buildings Department. He is at the circulation desk when PAMELA GRANT (about 21 years old), a library assistant who has worked under him for almost two years, and whom he knows well, returns from her afternoon coffee break.

MAX ARMSTRONG: Pamela, the renovations crew will be arriving first thing tomorrow morning.

Transfer all the books from the Education section to the basement before you go tonight please.

Could you transfer all the books from the Education section to the basement before you go tonight please?

Do you think you can have all the books from the education section transferred to the basement before you go tonight?

All the books from the Education section have to be transferred to the basement before then.

SCENARIO # 28: Low Rank, High Familiarity, Low Imposition (Easy Task).

SITUATION: JIM O'NEILL (about 50 years old), the proprietor of a suburban newsagency, is using a stepladder to hang tinsel decorations from the ceiling in preparation for the Christmas season. JULIE DEAN (about 18 years old), a shop assistant who has been working for Jim for over a year and whom he knows well, is standing at the foot of the ladder surveying the decorations.

JIM O'NEILL: Just one last piece of tinsel to go now, Julie.

Toss up two more tacks please.

Could you toss up two more tacks please?

Are there a couple more tacks left down there?

Damn it, I'm two tacks short.
APPENDIX E (Continued)

SCENARIO # 29: Low Rank, High Familiarity, High Imposition (Non-compliance Possible).

SITUATION: DAVID CROMPTON (about 48 years old), the resident optician in the eye clinic of a large public hospital, is alone in his office finishing off his cup of coffee. Through the open door he sees OLIVE SMITH (about 39 years old), a tea-lady who has worked at the hospital for a number of years and whom he knows well, as she wheels her trolley back to the hospital kitchen after having distributed coffee to the crowd of patients in the waiting room.

DAVID CROMPTON: Oh Olive, before you go back to the kitchen.
  Give me another cup of coffee please.
  Could you give me another cup of coffee please?
  Is there any more coffee left there?
  Another cup of coffee would be wonderful.

SCENARIO # 30: Low Rank, High Familiarity, Low Imposition (Compliance Expected).

SITUATION: MAGGIE BRYANT (about 42 years old), the editor of Greenfingers, a monthly gardening magazine, is attempting to finalise the contents of a forthcoming special 'Herbs of the World' edition. In her office is BRUCE FRYE (about 24 years old), a journalist who has worked under her since the magazine's inception nearly two years ago, and who knows her well.

MAGGIE BRYANT: That article of yours on the history of herbs would be great for this edition, Bruce.
  Bring me a copy of it sometime in the next week please.
  Could you bring me a copy of it sometime in the next week please?
  Do you think you can have a copy of it ready sometime in the next week?
  I'd like to look at a copy of it sometime in the next week.
APPENDIX E (Continued)

SCENARIO #31: Low Rank, Low Familiarity, High Imposition (Outside Role).

SITUATION: GEORGE RUSSELL (about 56 years old), manager of a city branch of The Bank of Australasia, is carrying a cup of coffee as he leaves his desk and hurries into the general office on his way to an appointment with the board of directors. CHERYL WILLIAMS (about 19 years old), a junior teller whom George does not know very well, enters the office just as he spills his coffee in his haste to put on his coat.

GEORGE RUSSELL: Damn it all, Cheryl, this really isn't my day.
   Sponge my jacket while I let the board of directors know I'll be late, please?
   Could you sponge my jacket while I let the board of directors know I'll be late, please?
   Do you know how to remove coffee stains, by any chance?
   Now I'll have to let the board of directors know I'll be late, but this needs sponging straight away.

SCENARIO #32: Low Rank, Low Familiarity, Low Imposition (Within Role).

SITUATION: HELEN MORGAN (about 45 years old), the public relations manager of The Helping Hand Society, a worldwide charitable organization, is drafting a report on the annual fund-raising activities. Assisting her with the report is TREVOR LEWIS (about 25 years old), a project officer who has recently started work with the Society and whom she does not know very well.

HELEN MORGAN: Well Trevor, that report will be fine.
   Send a copy to each of our major branches.
   Could you send a copy to each of our major branches?
   Do you think you can send a copy to each of our major branches right away?
   Each of our major branches usually receives a copy right away.
APPENDIX E (Continued)

SCENARIO # 33: Low Rank, Low Familiarity, High Imposition (Difficult Task).

SITUATION: ALBERT BRIDGES (about 46 years old), the manager of a busy petrol station at a major city intersection, is watching BETH ROWLEY (about 24 years old), a pump attendant who has only been working at the station for a few days, as she serves customers. At one point, there is a break in the stream of cars and Albert walks over to talk to her.

ALBERT BRIDGES: Beth, I think we should show more interest in the customers as a gesture of good will.

Check under the bonnet of each car that comes in please.
Could you check under the bonnet of each car that comes in please?
Do you know how to check under the bonnets of cars as they come in?
They like having the attendant check under the bonnets of their cars.

SCENARIO # 34: Low Rank, Low Familiarity, Low Imposition (Easy Task).

SITUATION: ARTHUR TEMPLETON (about 48 years old), a senior pilot with Pan Australian Airlines, is flying his regular run from Melbourne to Adelaide. SUSAN MATTERS (about 21 years old), a trainee steward whom he does not know very well, has come into the cockpit with coffee and biscuits for the crew and after setting down her tray, stands at the door taking in the view.

ARTHUR TEMPLETON: Oh Susan, before you go back to the galley.

Pass me a couple of biscuits from that tray please.
Could you pass me a couple of biscuits from that tray please?
Are there any biscuits left on that tray?
I can't quite reach the biscuits on that tray.
APPENDIX E (Continued)

SCENARIO # 35: Low Rank, Low Familiarity, High Imposition (Non-compliance Possible).

SITUATION: AUDREY ROWLES (about 50 years old), a senior lecturer who has only recently arrived in the Law Department, is on a visiting exchange from a large, interstate university. She is at the administration office, trying to obtain a parking permit for the crowded underground carpark from ROGER POWELL (about 22 years old), the clerk who handles their allocation.

AUDREY ROWLES: I've just taken up a position in the Law School, and I'll be driving my car in everyday.

   Give me a permit for the underground carpark please.
   Could you give me a permit for the underground carpark please?
   Do you have any spaces left in the underground carpark?
   As yet, I don't have a permit for the underground carpark.

SCENARIO # 36: Low Rank, Low Familiarity, Low Imposition (Compliance Expected).

SITUATION: ROMA THORNTON (about 43 years old), a solicitor with the distinguished firm of Thornton, Thornton, & Smart, is in her office planning a brief for an upcoming case. Assisting her with the case is JUSTIN ROCHE (about 22 years old), an article clerk who has only recently entered the firm, and whom she does not know very well.

ROMA THORNTON: Justin, I must find out how much time I've got before this case is due to be heard.

   Phone the clerk of the court and find out for me please.
   Could you phone the clerk of the court and find out for me please?
   Do you know how to phone the clerk of the court and find out?
   The clerk of the court should be able to tell you.
APPENDIX F

DESCRIPTIONS PROVIDED FOR RATING SCALES USED IN THE PRETEST OF SCENARIO MANIPULATIONS, STUDY III

The scales were described as follows:

**High/Low Imposition:** How much does the speaker impose upon the other person by making such a request? Does the task involved have a high-, or a low-imposition value?

**Difficult/Easy:** Is the task involved difficult to carry out, or is it a relatively easy task to do?

**Within/Outside Addressee's Normal Duties:**

Under ordinary circumstances, is the task a part of the normal duties of the listener, or is it outside of the range of duties which he/she would normally be expected to perform?

**High/Low Probability that H can Comply:**

What is the probability that the listener is able to comply, or act in accordance with this request? Is the act of compliance clearly within the choice of the listener, or is it possible that realistic obstacles may exist which could prevent his/her compliance?
APPENDIX G

PRETEST OF SCENARIO MANIPULATIONS, STUDY III: RATINGS ON SCALES OF ROLE EXPECTATION, TASK DIFFICULTY, PROBABILITY OF COMPLIANCE

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APPENDIX H

DESCRIPTIONS PROVIDED FOR RATING SCALES USED IN THE PRETEST OF REQUEST MANIPULATIONS, STUDY III

These are the ways in which each scale should be interpreted:

DIRECT/INDIRECT:

Is the sentence a direct way of communicating the effect that you would expect the speaker to have in mind, or is it indirect?

Is the speaker being straightforward or roundabout in using this sentence?

VERY LIKELY /VERY LIKELY

TO BE /TO BE

UNDERSTOOD /MISUNDERSTOOD:

In normal circumstances, is the sentence likely to be understood by the person to whom it is addressed, or misunderstood?

CLEAR/CONFUSING:

Is the sentence a clear communication of the effect that you would expect the speaker to have in mind, or is it a confusing sentence?
APPENDIX I

RATING SCALES USED IN STUDY III

Consider the second sentence that [Speaker's name] utters.

Rate this sentence on each of the following scales.

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INAPPROPRIATE  UNSUCCESSFUL  DISCOURTEOUS  IMPOLITE  INEFFECTIVE  IRRELEVANT  BLUNT

Consider [Speaker's name] statement as a request that [Hearer's name] do something for him/her.

Rate this task on the following scales.

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<th>DIFFICULT</th>
<th>LOW PROBABILITY THAT HE/SHE CAN COMPLY</th>
<th>LOW IMPOSITION</th>
<th>WITHIN HIS/HER NORMAL DUTIES</th>
<th>EASY</th>
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HIGH IMPOSITION  LOW IMPOSITION  OUTSIDE HIS/HER NORMAL DUTIES  WITHIN HIS/HER NORMAL DUTIES  DIFFICULT  EASY  HIGH PROBABILITY THAT HE/SHE CAN COMPLY

How would you expect [Hearer's name] to feel about carrying out the request?

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VERY RESENTFUL  NOT VERY RESENTFUL  VERY OFFENDED  NOT VERY OFFENDED
APPENDIX I (Continued)

How likely is it that [Speaker's name] would often make a request of this nature to [Hearer's name]?

VERY LIKELY NOT VERY LIKELY

How familiar are these two people?

VERY FAMILIAR NOT VERY FAMILIAR

How would you describe [Speaker's name] in relation to [Hearer's name]?

HIGH RANK LOW RANK
INSTRUCTIONS TO SUBJECTS, STUDY III

This study is an attempt to understand how people know what is the appropriate thing to say in the many different situations in which they find themselves in their daily lives.

On the following pages, you'll find a number of different situations, each involving two people. Think of the situations as pieces which set the scene for a dialogue between these people, in a similar fashion to the introduction of an act in a play.

Read each situation slowly and carefully to get the feel of what's going on. Try to imagine it as a real situation, with real people involved. After the description of each situation, there follows a conversation, initiated by one of the people described. I would like you to evaluate this conversation using the rating scales which appear on the opposite page. In using these rating scales, you will find that you'll need to consider each situation from the point of view of both of the people involved - from both the Speaker's, and the Listener's point of view.

For example, I would like you to imagine how the conversation would be spoken in a natural situation. This would involve putting yourself in the place of the Speaker and considering how you would say these lines.

I would also like you to consider how these lines would sound to the other person involved - the person to whom they are addressed in each situation. Again, try to imagine how you would feel if someone said these words to you in a real situation.

Take your time with each situation. After you have made an attempt to imagine how the conversation would sound in a real setting, I would like to know your opinions about it. Specifically, I am interested in what you think about the second sentence that the Speaker utters. Your task is to evaluate the Speaker's second sentence in terms of each of the rating scales which appear on the page opposite.
APPENDIX J (Continued)

For example, the first scale might be "APPROPRIATE/INAPPROPRIATE". There are seven spaces for your rating. If you think that the second sentence is a very appropriate one for the Speaker to say in the situation, place a cross (X) on the line closest to the word "APPROPRIATE". If you think that the Speaker's second sentence is very inappropriate, place a cross (X) on the line closest to the word "INAPPROPRIATE". If you think that the second sentence is about midway between appropriate and inappropriate, place a cross (X) on the middle line. And so on. After rating the first situation and statement, turn to the other situations and repeat the procedure for each.

Be sure to mark every scale. Please put only one cross on a scale. I want your initial reaction, so please don't try to change your responses.

Please turn to the next page and read how each scale is to be interpreted.

These are the ways in which each scale should be interpreted:

**APPROPRIATE/INAPPROPRIATE:** Is the statement an appropriate thing for the Speaker to say in the situation, or is it an inappropriate way for him/her to speak to the other person?

**SUCCESSFUL/UNSUCCESSFUL:** In normal circumstances, would the statement succeed in getting the Speaker's point across? Is it a successful or an unsuccessful way of communicating the effect you would expect the Speaker to have in mind?

**COURTEOUS/DISCOURTEOUS:** Does the statement show that the person making it is being courteous or discourteous?

**POLITE/IMPOLITE:** Does the statement show that the person making it is being polite in the situation?

**EFFECTIVE/INEFFECTIVE:** Would the statement be effective or ineffective in accomplishing the goal that the Speaker intended it to?

**RELEVANT/IRRELEVANT:** Is the situation relevant to the situation above it? If it sounds as though it belongs in that situation, then it is relevant. If it sounds as though it belongs in a different situation, then it is irrelevant.

**TACTFUL/BLUNT:** Does the statement show that the person making it is being tactful or blunt in the situation?
APPENDIX J (Continued)

**HIGH/LOW IMPOSITION:**
How much does the Speaker impose upon the other person by making such a request? Does the task involved have a high, or a low, imposition value?

**WITHIN/OUTSIDE LISTENER'S NORMAL DUTIES:**
Under ordinary circumstances, is the task part of the normal duties of the listener, or is it outside of the range of duties which he/she would normally be expected to perform?

**DIFFICULT/EASY:**
Is the task involved difficult to carry out, or is it relatively easy to do?

**HIGH/LOW PROBABILITY THAT LISTENER CAN COMPLY:**
What is the probability that the listener is able to comply, or act in accordance with this request? Is the act of compliance clearly within the choice of the listener, or is it possible that realistic obstacles may exist which could prevent his/her compliance?

Please turn to the first situation and begin. Judge the Speaker's second sentence on each of the rating scales, as defined above, and answer the remaining questions on each page.
### APPENDIX K

**ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF FACTOR SCORES, STUDY III**

**Table 1** Analysis of variance of Factor 1 scores (Politeness)

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APPENDIX L

RATINGS OF THE 'FUNCTIONAL' APPROPRIATENESS OF REQUEST VARIANTS, STUDY III

Table L.1  Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in High P, High D, High R scenarios

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a. These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

b. The highest mean appropriateness rating under each scenario type is underlined.

Table L.2  Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in High P, Low D, Low R scenarios

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a. These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

b. The highest mean appropriateness rating under each scenario type is underlined.

Table L.3  Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in High P, Low D, High R scenarios

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<td>Imperative</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

b. The highest mean appropriateness rating under each scenario type is underlined.
### Table L.4 Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in High P, Low D, Low R scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Within Role</th>
<th>Easy Task</th>
<th>High Probability of Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>-0.44</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>-0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>-0.75</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>-0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

b. The highest mean appropriateness rating under each scenario type is underlined.

### Table L.5 Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in Equal P, High D, High R scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Outside Role</th>
<th>Difficult Task</th>
<th>Low Probability of Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>-0.61</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

b. The highest mean appropriateness rating under each scenario type is underlined.

### Table L.6 Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in Equal P, Low D, High R scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Outside Role</th>
<th>Difficult Task</th>
<th>Low Probability of Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>-0.37</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>-0.72</td>
<td>-0.62</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

b. The highest mean appropriateness rating under each scenario type is underlined.
APPENDIX L (Continued)

Table L.7  Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in Equal P, Low D, Low R scenarios\(^{a}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Within Role</th>
<th>Easy Task</th>
<th>High Probability of Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
<td>-0.85</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
<td>-0.70</td>
<td>-0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
<td>-0.66</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{a}\) These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

The highest mean appropriateness rating under each scenario type is underlined.

Table L.8  Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in Equal P, High D, Low R scenarios\(^{a}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Within Role</th>
<th>Easy Task</th>
<th>High Probability of Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>-0.97</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{a}\) These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

The highest mean appropriateness rating under each scenario type is underlined.

Table L.9  Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in Low P, High D, High R scenarios\(^{a}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Outside Role</th>
<th>Difficult Task</th>
<th>Low Probability of Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>-0.40</td>
<td>-0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{a}\) These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

The highest mean appropriateness rating under each scenario type is underlined.
APPENDIX L (Continued)

Table L.10 Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in Low P, Low D, High R scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outside Role</th>
<th>Difficult Task</th>
<th>Low Probability of Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

b. The highest mean appropriateness rating under each scenario type is underlined.

Table L.11 Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in Low P, High D, Low R scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Within Role</th>
<th>Easy Task</th>
<th>High Probability of Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>-0.71</td>
<td>-0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
<td>-0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>-0.81</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

b. The highest mean appropriateness rating under each scenario type is underlined.

Table L.12 Ratings of the 'functional' appropriateness of request variants in Low P, Low D, Low R scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outside Role</th>
<th>Difficult Task</th>
<th>Low Probability of Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>-0.80</td>
<td>-0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbedded Imperative</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Directive</td>
<td>-0.50</td>
<td>-0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hint</td>
<td>-0.57</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. These ratings are based on an analysis of variance of factor loadings which, for Factor 3, were negative. A negative score, therefore, indicates greater 'functional' appropriateness.

b. The highest mean appropriateness rating under each scenario type is underlined.
APPENDIX M

CATALOGUE OF REASONS GENERATED IN STUDIES IV & V

Rank of Addressee
Age of Addressee
Shows respect for Addressee
Does not emphasize Speaker as more important than Addressee

Familiarity relationship between Speaker and Addressee
Use to get to know a low familiarity Addressee
Friendly form to a low familiarity Addressee
Addressee is new to job
Brings Addressee into conversation
Reciprocity of hinting to a high familiarity Addressee

Low imposition request
Task out of Addressee's way
Probability of non-compliance / High probability of compliance
Addressee busy

Indirect
Implies question without asking
Statement only
May not be interpreted as a request
Does not specify what Speaker wants
Leaves interpretation of request up to Addressee
Statement of Speaker's needs only

Gives Addressee no choice to refuse
Presumes Addressee will comply without asking
Makes Addressee feel obliged to comply
Gives no time options
Open-ended

Task-related request
Task is Speaker's responsibility to fulfil / Task is Addressee's responsibility
Places all the responsibility on the Addressee
Not Speaker's responsibility for having to ask
Problem is Speaker's and should not be placed on Addressee
Speaker should ask someone other than Addressee
Involves both Speaker and Addressee in task
Necessary for Speaker to get someone to help
Implies Addressee should have done the task before it became necessary for Speaker to ask

Would make Addressee offer
Does not give Addressee the opportunity of making a voluntary offer
Impolite / Polite
Not over-polite
Rude
Cheeky
Impertinent
Pushy
Abrupt
Demands
Is forceful
Orders Addressee
Commands Addressee
Tells Addressee
Would offend Addressee
Addressee would react negatively and not comply
Addressee would feel put down
Would make Addressee's refusal sound rude
Shows consideration for Addressee
Asks Addressee
Suggests
Sounds humble
Says 'please'
Says 'could'

Working relationship influences form used
Need for efficiency at work

May not result in immediate compliance
Urgent request

Use when there is a possibility of future interaction
Takes Addressee for granted
Does not refer to the Addressee
Speaker is worried about impression made on Addressee
Use to get on the right side of employees
Speaker is the type of person embarrassed to ask questions for help

Sarcastic
Indicates that Speaker is angry
Joke
Formal

Would not get done what Speaker wants
Speaker can deny asking Addressee specifically
Gives explanation of reason for request
Addressee is doing Speaker a favour
Think to self but not say to someone else
Speaker would know the answer to the Question Directive
Gives impression that Addressee is incompetent / Gives impression that Speaker is incompetent
Does not stress the relationship between Speaker and Addressee

Sex of the Speaker
Audience present
Beneficiary of request is another
Blackmail-type question
REFERENCES


Fish, S. E. (1978). Normal circumstances, literal language, direct speech acts, the ordinary, the everyday, the obvious, what goes without saying, and other special cases. *Critical Inquiry*, 4, 625 - 645.


Hartmann, M. (1976). A descriptive study of the language of men and women born in Maine around 1900 as it reflects the Lakoff hypothesis in "Language and women's place". In B. L. Dubois & I. Crouch (Eds.), The sociology of the languages of American women (pp. 81 - 90). San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press.


