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**Politeness, indirectness and efficacy
in Italian and German requestive speech acts**

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Prologue

“An Italian Erasmus student in Germany, Gaia, invites round for dinner some friends: Artur, who comes from Austria, Rob, from England, Anne, from France, James, from Scotland and Martin, from Poland. Gaia is laying the table when Rob arrives. “Hey! It’s a pleasure to meet you” exclaims Gaia, and continues “Sit, sit! Have a drink!” Rob feels he has been addressed as if he was a dog, and, slightly embarrassed, takes a seat at the table and starts sipping his drink. Gaia feels discouraged by Rob’s frosty attitude, but soon after the bell rings. It’s Artur, who smiles friendly carrying a box of beers. Rob shakes hands and introduces himself to Artur “I’m Rob, what’s up?” Artur is fine, and answers “Thanks, thanks”. Rob, puzzled, rolls his eyes and thinks that this is going to be a long evening. At that moment, Martin enters the room, and after having introduced himself to the group, asks Artur “Give me the beers”. Artur concludes that Martin is angry for some reasons, but he hands the beers to everyone, just as James enters the kitchen. He waves hand at three meters distance (“Does the kitchen stink?”- wonders Gaia) declaiming his name and goes for a seat. Unfortunately, Anne comes right after him and heads straight for James’ cheeks to kiss them three times. James almost faints for the assault. Rob feels so bad for James that unintentionally drops a plate, which breaks into pieces. With a poker face, he declares: “I’m sorry”. Martin mutters to Anne “He could at least apologize” and sweeps the floor. Finally, the dinner is served, and Artur wishes everyone “Time to eat!” “He must be very hungry” is the general deduction...”

Introduction

The history of the European Union is characterized by several storms, which threaten its foundations from within. In these moments, the firm belief usually emerges that an “open dialogue”, a “genuine debate” and the “sharing of opinions” could pave the way out of the crisis. English is spoken quite fluently by all of us, the World Wide Web and its social platforms offer countless and easy opportunities to meet. In short, no obstacles seem to hinder the process of communication.

Nonetheless, the anecdote reported in the prologue ironically shows how, despite the common language we can use, our “ways of speaking” still (and luckily) differ significantly, and clashes in communication, with consequences that range from irony to serious misunderstandings, are at the order of the day. Interestingly enough, despite the shared awareness of our differences in roots and values, alternative speech acts behaviour is often attributed to the personality of the speaker, who may be judged uncooperative or impolite. In this way, the failure to appreciate the multiple conventions of politeness in different European societies may confirm stereotypes and result in hatred between nations. Research on these topics and projects promoting awareness of our different communicative styles are essential to allow an honest and fruitful dialogue. This work has been triggered by these considerations.

More specifically, the purpose of this research project is to answer some questions which have been triggered by my Master Thesis’ research “A comparison of the realisation of requestive speech acts in Italian and German” (2013) and at the same time to try to further examine the relationship between indirectness and politeness as regards German and Italian requests.

The original research project was undertaken in order to find out to what extent request strategies used by Italian and German speakers overlap or diverge. 320 requests were collected by means of a “Discourse Completion Test” containing four socio-pragmatic situations. Realizations of requests were analysed according to the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project’s (CCSARP) “coding manual”, reported in Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989), and scrutinized at two levels: the cross-cultural variation and the situational variation. The analysis of the data sparked in me further curiosity and the wish to thoroughly investigate into the dynamics at play when a request is issued in Italian and German.

In particular, the main question of my research project was: “How is indirectness and politeness linked in Italian and German requests?”

To answer this question, some other questions had to be preliminary posited, namely:

- 1) Did Brown and Levinson's framework for the analysis of requests apply correctly to Italian and German? Is the directness of the nine request strategies perceived in the same way in the two languages at issue?
- 2) Are directness and politeness linked in the same way in the two language communities at issue?
- 3) Was the face threat of the four situations rated correctly?
- 4) Was the priority of respondents that of being polite or that of being effective?
- 5) Are interruptions (and in particular "Zwischenfragen"¹) perceived differently in the Italian and in the German speech communities? To what extent do members of the three speech communities agree on the perception of their politeness?
- 6) Can we detect similar patterns in the two languages as far as the position of the most important point in discourse is concerned?
- 7) Considering Hall (1976) distinction between low context and high context cultures, with which model are the Italian, the German and the Austrian communicative styles more connected to?
- 8) Is Italian and German external modification of requests more linked to an attempt of *Überzeugung* or *Überredung*? And more towards positive politeness or negative politeness?

The thesis is divided into 8 chapters. In each chapter, several studies are presented, with which I tried to find an answer to the research questions. In the conclusion, I offer a personal, final position on the topic and introduce the importance of the dimension of efficacy.

Chapter 1 opens this dissertation with some preliminary theoretical considerations. A meticulous description of the requestive speech act is given, together with an introduction on the main theories of verbal politeness, which range from Searle's indirect speech acts theory, to Lakoff's politeness principle and Leech's Tact maxim. On the grounds that requests have been defined as face-threatening acts par excellence, Goffman's idea of face and Brown and Levinson's face savings strategies are also addressed. The chapter closes with some clues concerning the possible reasons there could be behind the choice of formulating a request directly.

In the second chapter of the study, the results of Venuti (2013) are illustrated, together with an overview of the literature on the matter. The employment of an improved version of the Discourse Completion Test as the method to gather verbal data is discussed, and the four interactional situations proposed in order to trigger the production of requests are explored. After having presented the research variables, I discuss the framework adopted for the analysis of

¹ The term "*Zwischenfragen*" stands in German for the questions that are asked interrupting the speaker, usually in order to clarify a point.

requests, with respect to perspective, strategy type, internal modification and external modification of the utterance.

Thirdly, the classification of Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) is put into question and the perception of Italian and German respondents as regards indirectness, rate of imposition and efficacy is examined. This part also offers a closer look into the role of politeness in the pragmatic choices of the two communities at issue. In the third part, results are revisited according to the findings.

The first part of the thesis cleared therefore the field from possible mistakes of interpretation of data of my master thesis research. In the second part, the discussion is broadened with the intent of tracing a detailed conversational profile for the two language communities at issue. In this perspective, the preliminary theoretical considerations of chapter 4 represent a crucial step towards the formulation of hypothesis on the conversational behaviour of the two language communities at issue.

In particular, the study attempts to shed further light on the perception of politeness whereby examining interruptions in conversation (by means of *Zwischenfragen*), the position of the most important point in discourse (topic-comment or comment-topic), and the communicative style being low-context or high-context in the two language communities at issue.

In the fifth part, the important role played by supportive moves is analyzed according to the dichotomy between *Überzeugung* vs *Überredung* suggested by Drinkmann/Groeben (1989). Likewise, section six concentrates on supportive moves, whereby interpreting them as an expression of positive or negative politeness.

The so obtained result is a picture of the communication mode of the two language communities at issue, which enables a more truthful interpretation of the directness of the illocutionary force in requests. Taking everything into consideration, in chapter seven I try to give an accurate view of the interplay of politeness and indirectness in the two languages, and argue that the by far investigated dichotomy needs to be extended to the dimension of efficacy. The discussion leads me to formulate the “Maxim of Assertiveness”.

Finally, the pedagogical implications of the findings are considered in chapter eight and some proposals of instructional material for the development of intercultural pragmatics awareness in Italian students of German are made.

1. Preliminary theoretical considerations.

Requests, politeness and indirectness

Following one of the key principles in Austin's thought, "Words are our tools, and, as a minimum, we should use clean tools"², I would like to try and reach a thorough definition of the meaning of the term with which I am going to work. Therefore, I will offer, in the following, a definition of the terms "requests", "face", "indirectness" and "politeness".

1.1 Why investigating requests?

There seem to be many reasons why requests have deserved the attention and the investigation of scholars and researchers in philosophy of language, intercultural communication, cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics. The first reason is the fact that requests are one of the speech acts which are most frequently used in everyday human interaction. The huge role requests play in life is easy to detect just by thinking about the countless needs we are likely to have in the course of a day, the greatest part of which require the intermediation, the support, or even the assumption of whole responsibility of another person. Needless to say, the great impact requests can have in a learner's experience in a foreign country and in conversation with native speakers has aroused the interest of language educators and of devisers of language education curricula, who rely on linguists for the investigation of these matters.

The second reason is that what is meant to be a request may very often be presented as a suggestion, an advice or a warning (thus pretending that the requested act is for the "common good" or in the interest of the hearer).

The third reason is implicit in the situation that can give rise to a request, namely a situation of inequality: the requestee has something that in that particular moment the requester has not, or has the authority/the possibility/the ability to do something that the speaker cannot do. Consequently, natural circumstances put the requestee on a condition which is superior to that of the

² J.L. AUSTIN, *A Plea for Excuses*.

requester. That is why, if the speaker issues the request in a tactful way, he³ is simply sticking to the natural scheme of things, and conveys to the hearer a sense of proper deference in virtue of the fact that he is *asking* him something. In contrast, if he issues the request in a way that seems to be disrespectful and bossy, he immediately conveys to the interlocutor the sensation that he thinks of himself as superior and therefore worthy of seeing his orders executed as soon as they are uttered.

Nonetheless, if we look at requests from “the other side of the coin”, we easily notice that requests may also imply a potential position of superiority on the part of the requester. The dominance may stem from the fact that to ask someone to do something basically means to influence someone’s behaviour so that it fulfils one’s own wishes, to impose, in a certain sense, one’s will upon someone’s other will. This characteristic has led Haverkate (1984) to coin in this regard the definition of “impositive”:

“Impositive speech acts are described as speech acts performed by the speaker to influence the intentional behaviour of the hearer in order to get the latter to perform, primarily for the benefit of the speaker, the action directly specified or indirectly suggested by the proposition” (Haverkate 1984, p. 107, cited in Trosborg, 1995, p. 184).

Consequently, there is strong evidence to claim that, in Brown and Levinson’s (1987) terms, requests are likely to threaten the negative face of the interlocutor. The ground is briefly explained: by trying to exercise power or control over the behaviour of the hearer, the speaker automatically seems to impinge on the requestee’s freedom of action and freedom from imposition and therefore threatens his negative face. At the same time, also the requester runs the risk of losing face himself, e.g. if the requestee reacts in an unpredictable or embarrassed way, or simply because he refuses to comply with the speaker’s wishes.

What is more, even if this aspect has not caught scholars’ attention, it seems to me that not only does the speech act “request” represent a possible menace for the “negative” face of speaker or hearer, but also for their “positive” face. In fact, if the requester issues the request in a way which seems to be disrespectful and bossy, he not only conveys that he does not intend to refrain from impinging the requestee’s freedom of action, but also reveals a low opinion and scarce appreciation of the hearer as a person. At the same time, debasing himself at the hearer’s eyes, the careless requester will damage his own positive face as well.

³ I am aware that I should have used “he or she” or “he/she” in order to designate a person whose gender is unknown or simply unspecified. Nonetheless, in the attempt of avoiding wordiness, I have arbitrarily chosen to use the male gender throughout this work. With this choice, I did not intend in any way to diminish or undermine the worth of women.

All the above mentioned reasons make requests crucial in cross-cultural pragmatics, since it is precisely in this domain that learners and speakers of a foreign language risk to unconsciously and involuntarily commit the most serious mistakes.

1.2 What is a request?

As we have seen in the previous paragraph, a request is an act with which a requester A asks a requestee B to perform an action. In the following, I will try to analyse in detail the requestive speech act, following the model elaborated by Searle in his work “A classification of illocutionary acts” (1976), and “Speech Acts. An Essay in Philosophy of Language” (1969).⁴

1. **Point (or purpose) of the (type of) act: ILLOCUTIONARY POINT.** The illocutionary point can be the same for many illocutionary acts and it can be defined as the reason why the act is being performed, or, in Austinian words, the action that one is trying to perform when uttering those words. **Directive:** To try and get the hearer to do something.
2. **DIRECTION OF FIT BETWEEN WORDS AND THE WORLD.** Utterly dependent on the illocutionary point, the direction of fit stands for the way in which the propositional content of the sentence relates with the world. **Directive:** “World to words”: to get the world match the words (what is requested/ordered/suggested).
3. **Expressed psychological state: SINCERITY CONDITION.** As Austin (1962) pointed out, the person who appeals to the linguistic procedure must have correspondent thoughts, feelings and intentions.
Directive: desire or want that the hearer does an action.
4. **FORCE OR STRENGTH.** Suggesting and insisting, guessing and swearing, requesting and ordering are all couples of verbs that entail the same illocutionary point, but vary greatly in the level of force with which they are expressed. It can be partly identified with the directness of the utterance, but it is more easily and visually detectable as the "intensity" with which the act is performed.
Directive: in the directive category of speech acts many levels of force are contemplated.

⁴ For a more thorough analysis of the speech act “request”, including its felicity condition, see Venuti (2013).

5. **STATUS AND POSITION OF SPEAKER AND HEARER.** There are cases in which the position and the role of the speaker seem to play a key role in determining the hearer's interpretation as to which type of illocutionary act has been issued.

Directives: This aspect is obviously of the utmost importance for directives. As a matter of fact, if the boss asks the cleaning lady to clean up the room, this is likely to be intended as an order or a command rather than a suggestion or a proposal. This deduction cannot be made if the same utterance is issued by a colleague of the lady. In short, the directive "to order, to command", has as a felicity condition the fact that the speaker must be in a position of authority with respect to the hearer⁵.

6. **RELATION OF THE UTTERANCE WITH THE INTEREST OF THE SPEAKER AND THE HEARER.**

Directive: Searle includes in the category "directives" both acts that are or would not be at all at cost for the hearer, as "Have a piece of cake" (invite) or "Have a seat" (permission), and acts that imply a "sacrifice" for the hearer. The acts which are the object of my analysis, requests, are by definition a solicitation of an action that is favourable to the speaker and at cost for the hearer. Requests' interactional characteristics can be schematized as follows:

S wants H to do A	S: Speaker
-----	H: Hearer
A is at cost to H	A: Action

7. **PROPOSITIONAL CONTENT (TEMPORAL SETTING⁶) DETERMINED BY THE ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE-INDICATING DEVICE.** In order for some illocutionary acts to be felicitous, they must necessarily refer to the future or to the past.

Directive: The performance of a request implies the fact that the speaker refers to (and wishes) a future Action of the hearer.

8. **NEED TO "VERBALIZE" (CORRECTLY) THE ACT.** As Searle notes, some acts must necessarily be speech acts (among these, the most evident ones are Austin's original performatives), others can also be performed silently. Examples of the former type are

⁵ See also point 9.

⁶ It is clear that here Searle refers to the time reference.

promising, warning, declaring, apologising whereas estimating, diagnosing, concluding fall under the latter category.

Directive: Even if it is obvious that the essential condition for a speech act to come into play is that it must be verbalised, this is particularly true and meaningful for requests. A request needs to be verbalised: even if I can silently pray or command someone to do something, in order for my request to be actually performed and to come into effect I need to express it clearly. In fact, from the very moment in which I issue a "felicitous" request, I create a kind of "commitment" for the hearer: he now has the full freedom and responsibility to accept, to refuse, to negotiate or simply to ignore my request⁷.

9. **NEED OF THE EXISTENCE OF AN EXTRA-LINGUISTIC INSTITUTION.** Among illocutionary verbs, there are some acts that need to be uttered by a person in charge of a particular official position.

Directive: The speech act of request does not need to be performed by a speaker who is in a particular institutional position, but the situation changes for verbs that express orders, which fall nevertheless under the category of "directive", which are the object of my analysis. An order that creates a kind of obligation for the hearer must be issued by a speaker who is endowed either by an institutional position or by a status with the right to give orders, otherwise the "order" will be considered just as a rude request. My analysis aims at taking account of this aspect as well, whereby investigating, in situation 1 and 4, the relationship between directness/force or strength and the difference in institutional position/status⁸.

Speaking of "extra-linguistic factors" that influence the force of an utterance, Searle (1969, p. 68) draws the reader's attention on a crucial point: most of times it is the context that makes clear *what one is doing with words*; it is the context that, satisfying the essential condition⁹ for the performance of that (and only that) speech act, makes the use of a Illocutionary Force Indicating Device perfectly unnecessary. To put it in another way, if,

⁷ Nonetheless, it could be argued that non-conventional indirect requests, as hints, do not fully satisfy this condition.

⁸ Note the difference between a status and an institutional position. The faculty to give orders may be held by a police man in virtue of his institutional position, but also by a thief holding a gun, considered his momentary status.

⁹ As we will see below, Searle names "essential condition" the fact that the issuing the act B (for instance, the statement "The bull is charging") counts as C (a warning).

during an operation, a surgeon says “Bistouries”, it is immediately clear to all the bystanders that he is asking for an instrument, and not, say, naming the objects around him. Searle (1969, p. 69) explains all the “courteous circumlocutions” in the light of this “explicatory function” of the context: indirect formulations of requests as, for instance, questions about the ability of the hearer to perform the requested action, are possible and nonetheless effective due to the fact that most of times the context discloses the real force of the utterance.

10. CORRESPONDENCE OF THE ILLOCUTIONARY POINT WITH A PERFORMATIVE VERB. Another aspect considered by Searle as equally important in the characterisation of an illocutionary act is whether the illocutionary force can be made explicit through a performative verb.

Directive: All the directive verbs seem to correspond to an explicit performative: ask, order, command, beg, pray, allow, advice. This can be due to the fact that people have always felt the need to have the linguistic possibility to express as clearly as possible their needs in requests, and at the same time to give the hearer the chance to immediately perceive the "way in which their utterance should have been taken".

The following scheme could be useful to briefly summarize the features of a “directive” illocutionary act (the symbolism¹⁰ used is the one proposed by Searle):

1. ILLOCUTIONARY POINT	Attempt by the speaker to get the hearer do something [(H does A)]
2. DIRECTION OF FIT	World to words (↑)
3. SINCERITY CONDITION	Desire or want [W(H does A)]
4. FORCE OR STRENGTH	Different, from modest to fierce
5. STATUS AND POSITION OF SPEAKER AND HEARER / 6. NEED OF AN EXTRA-LINGUISTIC	For orders: S has a status or an institutional position that endow him with the faculty to give orders. For invites: S has the faculty to invite H to do H in that particular context. For permissions: S has the power to allow H to do A.

¹⁰ S stands for speaker; H for hearer, A for act.

INSTITUTION	
7. RELATION OF THE UTTERANCE WITH THE INTEREST OF THE SPEAKER AND THE HEARER	The action is favourable to the speaker and at cost for the hearer.
8. TEMPORAL SETTING / PROPOSITIONAL CONTENT	The hearer does some future action A.
9. NEED TO "VERBALIZE"	A request must be verbalised or at least expressed through gestures: the point is that it cannot remain unexpressed.
10. CORRESPONDENCE OF THE ILLOCUTIONARY POINT WITH A PERFORMATIVE VERB	All directives seem to correspond to a performative verb, that is to say that it seems to be possible to turn all directive acts into explicit performative acts.

Table 1. Directive acts: Constative rules

Using again the symbolism proposed by Searle, we should have the following symbolism:

! ↑ W (H does A)

Some of the features Searle pinpoints as constative of directive acts, together with some of Austin's most interesting remarks on illocutionary verbs in general, can be taken in order to define the "felicity conditions" of an act that can be considered a "pure" request¹¹, at least in the sense in which I am considering it for the scope of my analysis. In the following, I will summarize them, adding two pre-conditions.

1.	Austin	There is an accepted conventional procedure that includes the utterance of certain words by certain persons in those particular circumstances in order to
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¹¹ I adopt here sometimes Searle's (1976 p.104), sometimes Austin's (1962) terminology.

		get a particular result.
2.	Austin	The particular persons and circumstances must be appropriate for the invocation of that particular procedure.
3.	Austin	There are normal conditions of emission and reception . The act is performed correctly and completely.
4.	Searle	Propositional content condition. The speaker's request concerns a future act of the hearer.
5.a	Searle	Preparatory condition. The hearer has not already done the requested act nor is he/she doing it , or the speaker believes so ¹² .
5.b	Searle	Preparatory condition. The speaker believes the hearer is able to perform the requested act .
5.c	My proposal	Preparatory condition. The speaker truly believes that the hearer has the possibility to perform the requested act , that is to say that external circumstances give him/her the power or the free choice to do it.
5.d	Searle	Preparatory condition. It is not obvious that the hearer would perform the requested act without being asked , in the normal course of events.
5.e	Searle	Preparatory condition. The speaker genuinely thinks that the hearer is willing to perform the requested act.
5.f	Searle	Preparatory condition. The speaker thinks that the requested action is at cost for the hearer and favourable to him/herself.
6.a	Searle/Austin	Sincerity condition. The speaker genuinely hopes that the hearer will perform the requested act .

¹² As Searle (1976, p. 92) notes, this rule can be interpreted as an example of the least action principle: language, as many other activities, aims at having the maximum result with the least effort; that is why it would be non-sense to tell someone to do something that he/she is already doing.

6.b.	My proposal	Sincerity condition. The speaker does not believe that the hearer should have already done the requested act (in this case in fact we could consider the request an indirect (or partial) telling-off). ¹³
7.	Searle	Essential condition. The utterance counts as an attempt by the speaker to get the hearer to do the requested action.

Table 2. The requestive speech act: Felicity conditions

It goes without saying that when the speaker is not sure about whether or not to perform the request (due to the potential face-threat) he will do it in a way that could be neither correct (e.g. because it is too ambiguous or non-conventionally indirect) nor complete (e.g. because the sentence is not completely uttered or what is asked does not fully correspond to what is expected), making the act "purported but void". When responding to such an act, the hearer is less obliged to perform the requested action or to react in any way, since he can always justify himself by saying "I didn't get it" or by giving the impression of not having interpreted the utterance correctly. This greater (often apparent) "freedom" on the part of the hearer has led some scholars to think of this voluntary indirectness as a way to redress the potential face-threatening character of requests, that is to say a politeness - strategy. In the next paragraph this question will be addressed.

1.3 How indirectness unfolds in requests

The simplest communicative situation in which we could find ourselves is, according to Searle, the one in which the speaker says exactly what he means: in other words, the force of the utterance is clearly to be inferred by its structure. Were all forms of communication of this kind, understanding each other would be a child's play. Unfortunately (or fortunately, according to one's own tastes in terms of communicative styles) civilization has led people to develop countless ways to soften, mitigate, or even disguise one's own aims and drives (as Thomas 1995:1 says "People do not always or even usually say what they mean"). Searle (1975) investigates all these cases but focuses his attention on indirect speech acts used with a directive illocutionary point.

¹³ In the choice of the situations to contemplate in the Discourse Completion questionnaire, I chose not to include some of the original situations devised by Blum-Kulka in her CCSARP, 1984, precisely because they were in my opinion partial reproaches.

The first fact Searle highlights is that these utterances (i.e. sentences like “I would like you to do...”, “Can you...” or “Would you mind if...”) do not entail any imperative intent, the evidence of this being the fact that you can combine them with sentences that deny an imperative intent without inconsistency (e.g. “I’d like you to do X, but I’m not requesting that you do it or ordering you to do it”). Secondly, Searle is rather convinced of the fact that these utterances are by no means ambiguous as far as their illocutionary force is concerned, which is not, at least literally, impossible.

Indirect requests are usually realized through questions aimed at ascertaining the existence of preparatory conditions necessary for the felicitous performance of the directive speech act itself. For instance, in order to ask someone if he can lend me a pen I must sincerely believe that he has a pen. Therefore, an indirect request could be “Do you by chance happen to have a pen?”.

The most interesting thing about this kind of utterances (“I would like you to do...”, “Can you...” or “Would you mind if...”) is the apparent paradox they display. This paradox lies in the fact that they do not seem to entail any imperative intent, but nevertheless they are “standardly, ordinarily, normally, indeed – as I shall argue – conventionally” (Searle 1975) used to issue directives, or, in simpler words, to ask someone to do something. This incontrovertible observation is further supported by the fact that it is not rare for these utterances to be accompanied by a “please”, something which univocally marks the illocutionary point of the sentence as directive.

Having concluded that convention is the reason beyond these utterances, one may be tempted to believe that they are idioms. Nevertheless, as Searle points out, they are not idioms, at least not in the same way idioms as “John kicked the bucket” are; but they are idiomatic expressions. They are idiomatic expressions in the sense that they are idiomatically used as requests and, even if literally they mean something else, they are immediately recognized as requests.

Still, they sometimes also admit literal responses that presuppose that they are uttered literally (e.g. “Why don’t you just be quiet?” “Well, there are several reasons for not being quiet”). In fact, there can be cases, even if they are not so common, in which conventionally indirect requests can be pronounced in the literal sense, as for example in the question “Can you reach the salt?”, uttered by an orthopedist wishing to know the medical progress of your arm.

To this end, Searle pinpoints also the fact that the intonation plays a major role in the interpretation of the sentence as having a directive scope or just its literal illocutionary force. The secondary force is only added to the primary illocutionary force, the sentence still “means” what it actually means. The primary illocutionary act is still performed, in all these cases the speaker issues a directive by way of performing a statement, or a question. In fact, a request as “I want you to do X” can be reported both as “He asked me to do X” and “He told me that he wanted me to do X”.

Searle tries therefore to explain why an interactant, having heard the sentence “Can you pass me the salt?” usually responds by passing the salt and not answering “Yes, I think so”, and manages to do so reconstructing, step by step, the inferential path followed by him/her. The inferential process should therefore, according to Searle, go roughly as follows:

1. *Y has asked me whether I am able to pass the salt.*
2. *I assume that he is cooperating in the conversation and that his question must have some point.*
3. *The context of conversation is not such as to make an interest in my salt-passing ability probable or likely. What is more, the speaker sees whether I am close to the salt or not, so he probably knows that the answer to the question is “yes”.*
4. *Consequently, he probably wants to do something by uttering those words.*
5. *He is trying to ascertain if I am able to do something, a condition which is prior to the performance of any directive illocutionary acts.*
6. *We are at dinner, and people usually use salt at dinner, passing it back and forth (factual background information).*
7. *Hence, he has hinted at the satisfaction of a condition for the performance of a request which is quite likely and sensible in this context.*
8. *From all the above mentioned premises, it can be concluded that he is asking me to pass the salt.*

As point 2 make clear, the key passage in understanding this kind of utterances is to be found, according to the philosopher, in one of the principles for cooperative conversation postulated by Grice (1975), namely the Maxim of Relation. As a matter of fact, only if we assume the speaker to talk cooperatively, we will be able to understand that, while eating dinner, if someone says “Can you pass me the salt” he is not interested in probing our physical abilities but rather in having some salt and that, if someone says “Do you by chance have a pen?” he is not interested in probing the content of our bag but rather in borrowing a pen.

There are at least two points of Searle’s analysis that it is worth noting for the purposes of our analysis. In the first place, he states that the chief motivation to use this kind of utterances is politeness (1975: 64). Thus, he seems to maintain that an indirect formulation should universally be perceived as polite. Nonetheless, at the same time he admits that the link between the indirect form used and the “secondary” illocutionary point is conventional, and, as such, culturally bound: literal translations of these utterances from a language to the other do not work always. Only if we stick to

this position we could be able to see why, in Italian, it is considered rather polite to ask “Can you please close the window?”, but not, as in English, “Why don’t you close the window?” (the negative-question construction is perfect for an invite but does not sound like a genuine question; rather as a reproach for a stubborn behaviour).

All things considered, we could conclude that, even if Searle identifies politeness as the main reason behind indirect requests, which should be clear to the hearer thanks to his “general powers of rationality and inference” (1975:61), he is also aware of the fact that they are subject to different cultural norms and cultural assumptions.

1.4 Reasons for being indirect: Lakoff’s “politeness principle” and Leech’s “tact maxim”.

The Western tradition

What is politeness? Austin was convinced that sometimes the best way to understand a philosophical or a linguistic concept is to go back to the use that ordinary people make of the term designating that concept in ordinary life. Watts (2003) as well reminds us of the importance of keeping our feet firmly on the ground, and avoid getting lost too easily in abstractions such as “face” or “culture”. Following this method, my mind goes back to my primary school teacher reminding us constantly “Freedom ends where the other’s nose begins”. To her, politeness, or at least its first command, meant not to impinge on each other’s needs and desires.

Interestingly enough, this conception of politeness, as deeply connected with granting one another the “freedom of movement”, is the same the entire Western philosophical tradition displays. John Locke had stated that individuals are completely different from one another and everyone has the right to see his right of independency respected.

To the same idea concurs Robin Lakoff (1973), who states the importance of the Maxim of Courtesy in conversation. In her view, there are three rules to respect: R1. Do not impose; R2. Give options; R3. Put D at ease – be friendly.

The three indications deserve particular attention since they go back to Durkheim’s (1915) distinction between positive and negative rites and at the same time anticipate Brown and Levinson’s (1987) dichotomy of positive and negative politeness.

If by following rule 1 or rule 2 we pursue the aim of conveying the will not to impinge on his behaviour, through rule 3 we convey our friendship, our solidarity, our camaraderie towards the interlocutor. Lakoff lays special emphasis – and I believe this is what makes her contribution so relevant for a cross-cultural perspective – on the fact that the best way to be polite can oscillate

from R1 to R2, to R3 according to the situation, to the relationship existing with the hearer, to the society in which the communicative act takes place.

Similarly, Leech (1977) and (1983) try to account for language usage in which the maxims of Grice's cooperative principle are flouted for reasons of social interaction, and he does so by introducing the maxim of "tact". The Tact maxim, to which Leech adds the maxim of generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy, is especially related to my study since it claims a positive correlation between tactfulness (as one, but not the only one, expression of politeness) and indirectness. Leech maintains that the most indirect requests are the most tactful ones, since they leave the hearer free to say "yes" or "no" according to his desire to do the requested action. As Goffman (1967, p. 30) explains:

"Tact in regard to face-work often relies on its operation on a tacit agreement to do business through the language of innuendo, ambiguities, well placed pauses, carefully worded jokes, and so on. The rule regarding this unofficial kind of communication is that **the sender ought not to act as if he had officially conveyed the message he has hinted at**, while **the recipients have the right and the obligation to act as if they have not officially received the message** contained in the hint. Hinted communication, then, is deniable communication; it need not be faced up to. It provides a means by which the person can be warned that his current line or the current situation is leading to a loss of face, without this warning itself becoming an incident".

1.5 Goffman's "face" and Brown and Levinson's "face saving strategies"

As Goffman (1967) notes, the maintenance of face is crucial in interaction. The notion of face probably originates from the English folk term of "losing face" (which has its equivalent in many other European and non-European cultures, including the Italian, the Spanish and the Chinese ones, to name only some of them) that means to suddenly feel embarrassed or humiliated as a consequence of someone's other behaviour. In sociological terms, face is the public image and the personal perception of the self; the positive social value that every member of society – until proven otherwise – has and claims for himself.

Goffman points out that face is an extremely changeable concept: it can be lost, maintained, or enhanced during interaction with others. Just as everyone is expected to have self-respect and to protect his own face, he is also expected to go to such lengths as to safeguard the feelings and the face of the other people, and to do so in virtue of a spontaneous emotional identification with them. In fact, a person who is able to cause (or assist) to another person's humiliation without feeling sorry is said to be "heartless", just as someone who can witness his own face loss unfeelingly is

considered “shameless”. The expected result of these commonly shared feelings of “considerateness for the others” and “self-respect” is that, as in a sort of tacit agreement, everyone will generally cooperate in maintaining each other’s face during interaction, and, in so doing, he will protect his own face as well. A person who is not able to play this “face game” is perceived as socially “unreliable” and is generally not appreciated.

When some “incidents” occur and therefore someone’s face is threatened, face-savings practices become the heart of conversation. Interestingly enough, these practices become extremely ritualised and standardised in a society and in its language; in fact, they are compared by Goffman to traditional steps in a dance. Every person, every culture seems to have a preference for some face-saving strategies in spite of others, to such an extent that, according to Goffman, knowing this specific repertoire would mean to know how a person or a culture “is really like”. Goffman uses the term “face work” to designate not only the whole range of practices that are used to counteract “face losses”, but also those used to prevent “face threats”.

The speech event “request” is such a fascinatingly complex and deeply intricate phenomenon that it is by no means easy to unravel the manifold elements and variables that have a direct influence on the eventuality and on the seriousness of a face threat. When it comes to requests as perfect examples of FTAs, there is a wide range of possible choices as far as face-work is concerned. In particular, Brown and Levinson set up a model that describes all the options a speaker has when dealing with potential FTAs, reported in Fig. 1.

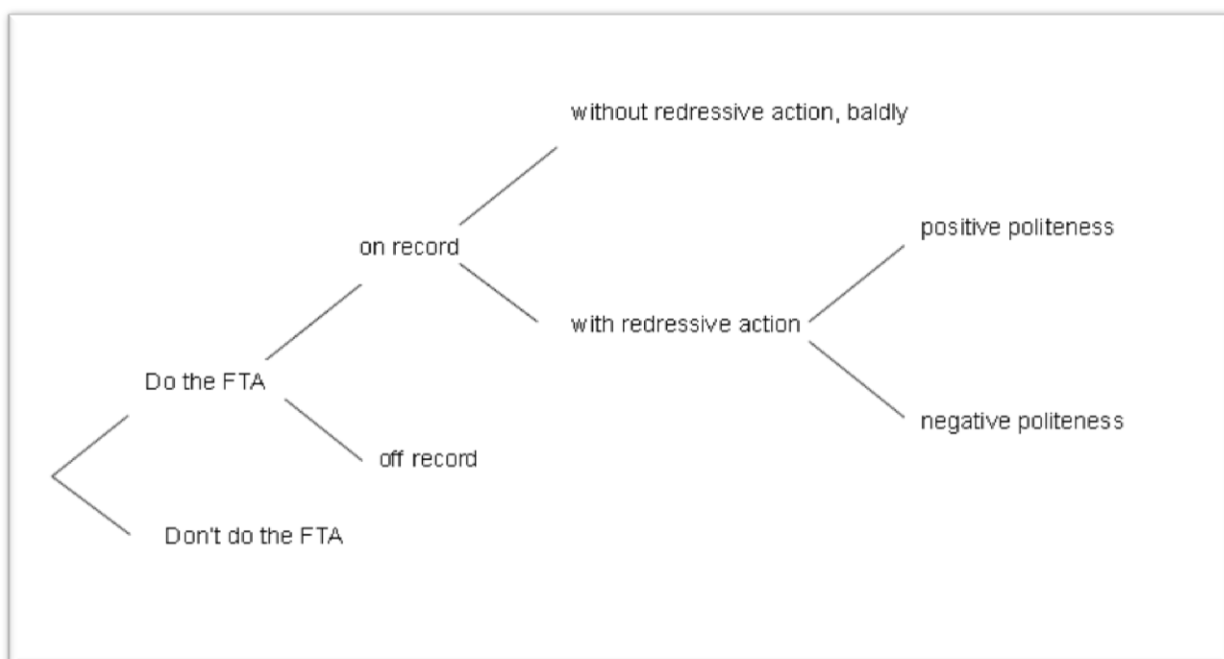


Fig.1 Possible strategies for doing FTAs (Brown and Levinson 1987, p. 69).

To better explain this schema, we could take as an example the following scenario: a student is waiting at the bus stop, when he notices that he has no tickets and no money with him. He sees there is also a friend of him who is waiting for the bus. He would like to ask his friend to lend him a ticket (FTA). He can choose:

STRATEGY	EXAMPLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not to do the FTA (avoid the performance of the FTA); • to do the FTA and: 	<p>Walk home.</p> <p>Decide to ask for a ticket or money.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to go off record, that is to say to vaguely hint at the question but without making clear the purpose of his speech act; 	<p>Say “Damn, I have no tickets and I am out of cash, and I absolutely need to catch this bus”.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to go on record: to express his intent openly and unambiguously; and in particular: • not using any particular strategy to minimize the FTA; i.e. without redressive action, very directly; 	<p>Say “Hey John, hand me a ticket!”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using some kind of redressive action, i.e. any strategy that counteracts the threat to the face. Within this frame, the speaker can employ two types of practices, that refer respectively to: • <u>Positive Politeness</u>, i.e. by emphasising the hearer’s solidarity and validating his self-image; 	<p>Say “Hey John, be a pal and lend me a ticket ‘till tomorrow”.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Negative Politeness</u>; i.e. the speaker demonstrates that he does not mean to invade the addressee’s personal territory and freedom of action. 	<p>Say “I’m sorry to bother you, but could I possibly borrow a ticket until tomorrow”?¹⁴</p>

Table 3. Strategies for doing a FTA: an example

¹⁴ These examples are freely adapted from the ones proposed at http://www.elanguages.ac.uk/los/ma/social_interaction_and_face.html

In addition, Brown and Levinson (1987 p. 74), single out three factors, which they claim to be the most relevant in estimating the seriousness of a face threat, in many and perhaps all cultures.

1. The **rate of imposition** (this can be ascribed to the “ends”): it is the effort the requestee would have to make to comply with the speaker’s request. For instance, when someone asks someone else the way to the railway-station, the requested act is not likely to threaten the interlocutor’s face very much; this is obviously not the case when the solicited action is to lend some money.
2. The **social distance** (in Hymes’ words, “participants”): in other words, the degree of familiarity existing between the speaker and the hearer. It goes without saying that the closer the relationship is, the slightest is the possibility of a face-threat taking place. This is given by the fact that the more acquainted with a person one gets, the more ready he will be to interpret the other’s words favourably, perhaps seeing an apparently rude turn of phrase as justified by rush or by some psychological state of the interlocutor and not as a personal affront.
3. The **power (or status) difference between speaker and hearer** (meant in terms of both “setting” and participants), or, in better words, the (institutional) **additional power the requestee holds** with respect to the requester. The reason why I choose to focus on the additional power of the requestee is that the likelihood of a face-threat grows as long as the person to whom the face-threatening act (hereafter FTA) is addressed is in an “upper” position. As a matter of fact, if we receive an order by a person which we rate to be, due to external circumstances, in a “down” position, we hardly accept it and, even if we do, we will surely feel depreciated and offended. We perceive a face-threat and certainly the requester has, at least for the moment and at our eyes – lost his face. This is not the case if the person imparting an order is a superior: in this case we would ascribe his/her “explicitness” to reasonable grounds: rush, need of clarity, the will to give an “aura” of familiarity to the relation.

According to the two authors the weight of a face threatening act can be computed simply adding these three variables, as explicated in the formula:

$$W_x = D(S,H)+P(H,S)+R_x$$

Weight of the FTA x = Distance (between speaker and hearer) + Power (that the hearer has over the speaker) + Rate of the imposition (of the act x)

Brown and Levinson admit that probably some more composition of values may be involved in contributing to the seriousness of the FTA, and that the assessment of the various factors may vary across cultures. Nonetheless, these three parameters are claimed to be essential in rating the face threat and therefore the level of politeness with which, other things being equal, an FTA will be communicated.

1.6 O’Driscoll’s concept of face

Of all the main models of politeness we have seen so far, Brown and Levinson's is the one that advocates most firmly a “pan cultural” validity, and assumes to be applied more easily to intercultural studies.

Several scholars have attempted to elaborate it, some of them accepting, others refusing the idea according to which positive and negative wants are universals in communication.

In particular, O’Driscoll (1996, 2011) point out that face is a crucial concept in cross-cultural communication, since it does not univocally link with a specific culture but, on the contrary, it characterizes all kinds of societies. In O’Driscoll (2011), the author advocates through an anecdote that face and interpersonal affairs are different. Face is something individuals have and claim for themselves independently of the relationship they are having with their interlocutors. In other words, an interaction may be extremely face – deprecating even if the relationship with the interlocutor is good and the face-offence was completely involuntary. In the same way, the face-work may be smooth and effective even if two interlocutors hate each other.

Another important point O’Driscoll makes is the importance of the group of people who witnesses the interaction. As a matter of fact, even by-standers who are not usually involved in the interaction feel they should protect their faces as well, since the communicative event may seriously effect both their public image and their inner definition of themselves. Along similar lines, Arundale (2009) argues that face is not a fully individual possession, but rather the result of the interplay between the personal face and the face of the group one belongs to.

Thirdly, O’Driscoll maintains that face and politeness are closely intertwined but the author criticises the view according to which face is the only explanation for politeness and politeness is the only aspect of behaviour which face can explain. In his opinion, Brown and Levinson’s framework is to be seen as a theory of face more than a theory of politeness. In particular, as far as Brown and Levinson’s model is concerned, O’Driscoll (1996) argues that the face-dualistic model

developed by the two scholars has universal validity, but needs a small shift in angle of view. In particular, he claims that face should be considered as the product of three reflexes: a culture-specific face, i.e. the conscious desire to be attributed a “good”- yet culture specific - face; a positive face, i.e. the need for proximity and belonging, and negative face, i.e. the need for distance and individualism.

The key innovative element with respect to Brown and Levinson’s model seems to be therefore a triangular representation of face as the result of an interplay between the demand of a socially approved face, and the wants to feel at the same time included but also independent.

O’Driscoll asks himself when is face particularly relevant. The obvious answer is: “every time there is an interaction”. What is more, face saving strategies seem to be respected even when interlocutors are not face-to-face and communication is somehow displaced (on the phone, but also via e-mail, SMS, or a WhatsApp audio-message). The reason behind this phenomenon may be that human beings are programmed for face-to face interactions and therefore the rules they apply for immediate communication are adopted everywhere. The danger of face loss is, as Tracy (1992) points out, immanent. Nonetheless, one should not commit the mistake of thinking that face work is the ultimate end of every human interaction: as Spencer-Oatey underlines (2009), there are many cases in which the goals of communication make face irrelevant (as for instance when somebody is yelling for help).

After having clarified when and how people deal with each other face, the author is determined to illustrate all the aspects face is composed of. In the first place, and before the interaction takes place, face is made of wants, that is to say of our desires to be seen and considered in a certain way. Also our personal characteristics, our reputation, the history of encounters with the interlocutor, and our self-image seem to concur to the face construct. After the interaction has taken place, a face damage may have occurred and therefore face repairing strategies may be pursued. In addition to this, the author also stresses the fact that we carry everywhere our blocks of faces, which are the results of previously made encounters with any other person we have met in our life. Nevertheless, all the aspects of face interact at the same time and rearrange themselves in every interaction. As Goffman (1967:7) underlines:

“During a contact of a particular type, an interactant...can expect to be sustained in a particular face...Given his attributes and the conventionalized nature of the encounter, he will find a small choice of lines will be open to him and a small choice of faces will be waiting for him.”

To conclude, O’ Driscoll puts forward the idea of seeing face as make-up, a particular make-up that people apply during interaction and that can be sometimes applied to someone else. Precisely as

make-up, face is composed of various elements, which are chosen according to personal taste, expectations of the others, and situational availability.

1.7 Criticism to the classic model and reasons to be direct

Brown and Levinson's model has increasingly been criticised by the so called "third wave politeness", especially for having proposed her framework as "universal". Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2005), for instance, focus on the importance of interpersonal relations, rather than on the individual performing politeness: great emphasis is therefore laid on interpersonal relations as variables. Other scholars, as Culpeper (2011), Turner (2003) and Marina Terkourafi (e.g. 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005a, 2005b) highlights how it is contexts and frames of use which create the perception of politeness. Holtgraves (1994), for instance, found that knowing that a speaker was of high status was enough to interpret any remark in a directive illocutionary force (see also Ervin-Tripp et al. 1987 and Gibbs 1981, for the general importance of social context in speech act interpretation).

The main aspect of criticism to the classical theory of politeness is, nevertheless, the association of indirectness with politeness. In particular, an increasing amount of researchers has pointed out that in some cultures directness is positively associated with honesty and frankness. Furthermore, face wants may not be universally the most valued interactional elements, and other parameters as sincerity or clarity in expression may be preferred over non-imposition. Wierzbicka (1991 p. 90), for instance, draws the reader's attention on the fact that in the Israeli society people are expected to express freely and bluntly what they want (thus saying, for example "I want you to do x"), what they don't want (refusals are often expressed by a curt "No"), what they think and what they do not think (thus saying simply "I disagree!"). This open, blunt confrontation is encouraged and cherished as reflection of spontaneity, closeness and mutual trust, all values which indicate an interactional style that we could define "solidarity politeness oriented"¹⁵.

To be fair to Brown and Levinson, they did acknowledge (1987, p. 71) the possible advantages of using on record strategies: getting credit for honesty, thus indicating that one trusts the addressee, getting credit for outspokenness and not giving the impression to be a manipulator, avoiding the danger of being misunderstood.

In addition to this, as Lakoff (1973) notes, if two people have reached a level of acquaintance and close friendship which make superfluous the need to mitigate face threatening

¹⁵ For a more thorough discussion on the link between directness and positive vs. negative politeness see chapter 4.2.

speech acts, the sudden use of indirect formulas by one of the two would immediately arouse suspicion on the good faith of his/her courtesy, and the indirectness would be most probably interpreted as a mark of distance or of a break of the relationship.

Similarly, Wierzbicka (1985) and Ogiermann (2009) stress the possible negative effects indirectness can have in Polish and in Russian. From Ogiermann's viewpoint, the reluctance to clearly formulate one's own wishes may be interpreted as an attempt to save one's own face while putting the hearer in the position where he has to take the initiative for the speaker's wishes to be fulfilled. The supposed increased level of optionality in her opinion is in the end illusive since once the hint is dropped, the hearer feels obliged to take it up and do what the speaker fears to ask for.

Wierzbicka (1985) argues that the association of politeness with indirectness stems from an ethnocentric Anglophone cultural point of view, which is perfectly summarized in Clark and Shunk's (1980, p. 111) assertion:

“When people make requests, they tend to make them indirectly. They generally avoid imperatives like Tell me the time, which are direct requests, in preference for questions like Can you tell me the time? Or assertions like I'm trying to find out what time it is, which are indirect requests”.

Wierzbicka claims that the roots of this “astonishing ethnocentrism” lie in the fact that the early philosophers dealing with speech acts based their assumptions on English alone, taking for granted that what they observed in speakers of English could hold for “people generally”.

First of all, she harshly criticizes Searle's conclusion that a form of the “Can you” type (see par. 1.3) is not ambiguous and is easily interpreted by the hearers in virtue of their “general powers of rationality and inference” (Searle, 1979, p. 176), on the grounds that this is not necessarily true for speakers of all languages. If we stuck to Searle's assumption, Wierzbicka continues, we would conclude that Polish people sadly lack those powers of rationality and inference.

Secondly, she points out that none of the formulations which are typically used in English to phrase a request could be literally translated in Polish without sounding like genuine questions (e.g. “Why aren't you quiet?”¹⁶), criticism (“Won't you close the window?”¹⁷), or implying unreasonable and stubborn behaviour on the part of the addressee (e.g. “Why don't you close the window?”¹⁸). In particular, these pseudo-questions, which ostensibly inquire about the addressee's desires but are in fact to be interpreted as requests, give to Polish speakers the impression of naïve hypocrisy.

¹⁶ We would obtain the same effect if we translated the question in Italian.

¹⁷ As above.

¹⁸ As above.

Thirdly, she casts further doubts on the connection between indirectness and politeness when she reports examples of interrogative directives used together with swearwords, thus obviously without the intent to be polite: “Will you bloody well hurry up?” (Wierzbicka, 1991, p. 35).

All things considered, in order to better compare speech acts across cultures it appears to be essential to broaden the perspective beyond the Western linguistic tradition and to achieve a theory of politeness which can be claimed to be truly universal.

Some researchers are working on this issue, which is not the aim of my study. Still, the curiosity on this aspect, and the impression that the Italian linguistic behaviour tends towards Wierzbicka’s concept of politeness, has triggered my interest in this area and has led me to investigate and compare the requestive speech acts realization patterns in Italian and German.

1.8 A framework for the analysis of requests

The findings of my Master Thesis Dissertation (2013) which resulted from this interest, will be reported in the next section. Nonetheless, before going deeper into that, I would like now to illustrate the model for the analysis of requests I have adopted in the 2013 research. This will be particularly useful for the interpretation of the results presented in chapter 2.3.4.

When comparing requests across cultures, the features that are commonly taken into consideration are:

- the perspective;
- the strategy type of the head act;
- the presence and typology of internal modification (downgraders and upgraders);
- the presence and typology of external modification (alerters and supportive moves).

This classification was reached by scholars working within the CCSARP¹⁹, and was in turn inspired by the model for linguistic politeness suggested by Brown and Levinson (1987). In the following, I will briefly present these categories, focusing primarily on request strategies. For a more thorough explanation of all the types of internal and external modification see Venuti (2013).

¹⁹ Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project, a collective study initiated by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain in 1984 to investigate intra-language and inter-language (cultural) variability in the realization patterns of requests and apologies amongst eight languages, with attention to the comparison between native and non-native speakers.

1.8.1 The perspective

The perspective from which the speaker issues the request is an extremely important choice, since it plays an equally vital role in the perception of coerciveness and politeness of the request itself. A request can emphasise the role of the requester, and be “**speaker oriented**” (as in the request “Can I borrow your notes?” or “**hearer oriented**” (as in the request “Can you do me a favour?”). Another possibility is to formulate the request in an “**inclusive**” way (“What do you think, shall we clean the kitchen?”), or in an “**impersonal**” way (“Washing up needs to be done”). As requests are inherently imposing, avoiding the explicit mention of the requestee as an actor reduces the level of coerciveness of the request: this is for instance the advantage of the speaker oriented formulation. The same result can be obtained with the “inclusive perspective”, which may sound even more polite and tactful thanks to the implicit suggestion to perform the required action together, thus sharing the effort and the responsibility.

1.8.2 The strategy type of the head act

Requests are classified into a nine-point scale of mutually exclusive categories ranging from the most direct (almost imperative) to the most indirect (mild hints). The categories build on previous research, in particular on the theories of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), (1976) as interpreted by Brown and Levinson (1987) and represent the coding scheme for the analysis of the data collected in my study.

As you can see from Table 4, the classification displays three major levels of directness:

- the direct strategies, which consist in syntactically marked requests;
- the conventionally indirect strategies, which realize the speech act by ascertaining the existence of preparatory conditions necessary for its performance;
- the non-conventionally indirect strategies, through which the speaker opaquely hints at the requested act or give some clues that make the request inferable thanks to the context.

Requests strategies			
	Type	Description	Example
DIRECT STRATEGIES	0.ELLIPTICAL PHRASES	The fact that just the mention of the object(s) is to be considered a request is usually clear thanks to the context: established rules already noted to the interlocutor, objects for sale, on distribution, tools required to carry out a task.	0.a Un caffè, per favore! 0.b Zweimal Kaffee, bitte. 0.c Two coffee, please.
	1.MOOD DERIVABLE	The illocutionary point of the utterance is inferable from the grammatical mood of the verb.	1.a Pulisci la cucina! 1.b Mach die Küche sauber! 1.c Clean up the kitchen!
	2.EXPLICIT PERFORMATIVE	The illocutionary force of the utterance is explicitly named in the utterance itself. The request is what Austin defined a “performative”.	2.a La prego di spostare la Sua macchina. 2.b Ich bitte Sie woanders zu parken. 2.c I am asking you to move your car
	3.HEDGED PERFORMATIVE	The illocutionary force of the utterance is named but it is at the same time softened through syntactical or grammatical devices.	3.a Ti posso chiedere di pulire la cucina? 3.b Ich muss dich bitten, die Küche sauber zu machen. 3.c I have to ask you to clean up the kitchen.
	4.LOCUTION DERIVABLE	The fact that the utterance is a request is clearly inferable by	4.a. Dovrebbe lasciare libero questo posto.

		the semantic meaning of the locution and more specifically of the verb.	4.b. Sie sollten diesen Platz freihalten. 4.c You'll have to move your car.
	5.SCOPE STATING	The speaker verbalises his/her request expressing his/her intentions, desire, or feelings towards the eventuality that the hearer does X.	5.a Speravo che tu potessi prestarmi i tuoi appunti. 5.b Ich würde gern deine Mitschrift leihen. 5.c I'd like to borrow your notes.

CONVENTIONALLY INDIRECT STRATEGIES	6.LANGUAGE SPECIFIC SUGGESTORY FORMULA	The sentence contains a more or less explicit suggestion to do X.	6.a Che ne dici di pulire la cucina? ²⁰ 6.b Wie wär's, wenn du mal die Küche aufräumen würdest? 6.c How about cleaning up the kitchen?
	7. REFERENCE TO PREPARATORY CONDITIONS	The utterance includes a reference to preparatory conditions (e.g. ability, willingness, etc.) for the performance of the speech act itself, as conventionalised in any specific language.	7.a. Non è che potrebbe darmi un passaggio? 7.b Ich wollte mal hören, wenn ich mit Ihnen nach Hause fahren kann. 7.c I was wondering if you could give me a lift.

²⁰ This formulation sounds in Italian slightly ironic, at least if the requested task requires a certain level of effort as the fact of cleaning the kitchen. For this reason, it would be generally combined with a "speaker and hearer oriented" perspective, as in the example "Che (ne) dici, puliamo la cucina?".

NON CONVENTIONALLY INDIRECT STRATEGIES	8. STRONG HINTS	The speaker drops a hint that can be easily disambiguated since it directly refers to a condition, an element or an object that is needed for the performance of the act.	8.a Sta andando a casa? 8.b Fahren Sie jetzt nach Hause? 8.c Will you be going home now?
	9. MILD HINTS	This formulation does neither refer to the proper request nor to any of its elements but is usually interpretable through the context as a request.	9.a Ma che bell'ordine abbiamo qui! 9.b Sieht ja toll aus hier. 9.c You have been busy here, haven't you?

Table 4. Request strategies

I will now outline the main features of the categories, starting from the most direct to the most indirect one.

1.8.3 On record strategies: Direct requests

0. Elliptical phrases

1. Mood derivable

Imperatives directly signal that the utterance is an order. In fact, if not modified, it can appear as rather authoritative and even offending. This may stem from the fact that in most cultures orders are usually issued by people who have an authority over the hearer, in virtue of their social prestige, chronological age and professional hierarchy. If we agree on this point, we could state that in Schmidt's terms (see p. 15), this kind of formulation is one of the most revealing of the speaker's definition of the relationship existing with the hearer, namely the complementary one. For these reasons, imperatives are often softened by tags or politeness markers as "please", "bitte" or "per favore" (they are pretty equivalent in the three languages).

Still, imperatives could be motivated by external reasons other than the relationship, as for instance the situation (rush, danger), the particular state of mind of the speaker, his linguistic habits, but the degree to which this formulation is "justified" or even normally accepted varies greatly according to the culture.

2. Explicit Performative

3. Hedged Performative

Even if syntactically performatives are more complex than imperatives and pertain for this reason to a second level of directness, it should be noted that the use of a performative construction may in some cases make the request even more explicit than the previous category. In fact, an utterance as “Close the door!”, even if direct, may be also interpreted as an (involuntarily) brusque request, whereas the inclusion of a performative verb as in “I order you to close the door” explicitly and unequivocally marks the sentence as an order.

Nevertheless, there are some choices available to the speaker who wants to soften the demanding effect of these utterances, the so-called “hedged performative”: “I must ask you to leave”, “Ti chiederai se puoi prestarmi gli appunti della scorsa volta” or “Ich würde dich gern bitten, dein Referat eine Woche eher zu halten”. These consist in a modification, with the use of a conditional clause or a modal verb, of the performative verb, which results in a softened illocutionary force and in a much more tactful request.

4. Locution derivable

Requests realized in this way are also called “obligation statements”, since they express the necessity or, in better words, the obligation, for the hearer, to perform the required act. The “authority imposing” entity could be either the speaker itself, who has the right to do so, or an external entity (laws, rules, morality, religion) to which the speaker simply appeals. The difference is sometimes marked by the single languages, sometimes not. For example, in English, structures with *should* and *ought to* generally involve moral obligation, *have to* may involve an obligation stemming from a source outside the speaker, while *must* often expresses obligation imposed by the speaker. In German, this difference is marked by the opposition between “*sollen*” and “*müssen*”: *sollen* expresses a duty imposed by an external entity, whereas “*müssen*” refers to a “moral” internal duty, or by a necessity given by the state of things. In Italian, these differences are not visible in the verb “*dovere*”.

5. Scope stating

As we have seen in the previous chapter, one of the conditions for the issuing of a request, exactly as for the issuing of whatever speech act, is sincerity. When it comes after requests, the sincerity condition prescribes that the requester truly hopes that the speaker will do what he is asked to. That is why it should not be surprising that one of the ways to realize a request is that of expressing one's own wish, hope or expectation about the requested action taking place. The peculiar trait of this mode of realisation of requests is the perspective, which is necessarily speaker-oriented: the speaker's desires are assumed as the focal point of the interaction. For this reason, the request becomes automatically more direct in its demand. There are basically two types of scope stating requests. One is represented by the so called "want statements", which are basically statements that start with "I need" or "I want", often softened by mitigating devices as "please" that give them at the same time the character of pleading. The other way is to express politely a wish, using for example conditional forms of the verb or another circumlocution, as in the example "I would like to have some more coffee".

1.8.4 On record strategies: Conventionally indirect requests

The most peculiar trait of conventionally indirect requests is that they realise the request by questioning the subsistence of those premises that Searle had indicated as the "preparatory conditions" for the issuing of a speech act.

6. Language specific suggestory formulas

This particular type of formulation does not test any specific condition on the part of the hearer, but it is rather aimed at finding out if there is any obstacle that may prevent the hearer's compliance of the action specified in the proposition. By and large, we could state that this kind of formulation of requests is aimed at sounding out the hearer towards the eventuality of performing the action suggested. Suggestory formulas are realised through various structures, the majority of which are very language-specific.

7. Reference to preparatory conditions

Utterances in which the requester investigates into the “preparatory conditions” for the performance of the speech act are by far the most widely used strategies for the issuing of a request. If we try and single out the reasons why conventionally indirect formulations seem to be the most appreciated strategies, not only within the borders of some linguistic communities but also cross-linguistically, we should highlight the fact that this kind of requests are by their very nature hearer-oriented. In fact, by questioning the hearer's intent to do something, by inquiring into his ability to do it, or by simply asking if he has just done it we are putting the hearer at the centre of our utterance, implying that *he* is in a position of control that allows him to decide whether or not to comply with the request. Therefore, as also the theory of personal deixis advocates, hearer-oriented sentences are most of times perceived as more polite than requests formulated on speaker-based conditions. Politeness, in turns, lowers the risk of a face threat which is implicit in requests and at the same time decreases the probabilities for the requester to lose face him/herself. Among Searle's five “preparatory conditions” that have been outlined in chapter 1.2, only three of them, and more precisely the 5.b, the 5.c and the 5.d, are involved in the issuing of a conventionally indirect request.

- **Ability condition (5.b).** This is a question concerning the hearer's ability to carry out the task (e.g. “Can you reach the salt?”). This yes/no question is literally to be taken as the intent of the speaker to ascertain whether the hearer is able to perform the action that he wants him to do. It is interesting to notice that the greater impression of politeness this kind of requests conveys is given precisely by the delicacy of not wanting to ask something that would be impossible or difficult to perform for the hearer. The natural, implicit second step expected from the speaker would be that of actually ask the requestee to perform the action; nevertheless, this is usually not necessary since the hearer has normally already inferred the intent by the speaker to issue a request²¹.
- **“Future act” condition (5.d).** Utterances as “Will you do the shopping today?” or “Won't you give me a hand?”, which are represented in Italian and in German respectively by sentences as “Mi fai un favore?” or “Nehmen Sie mich mit?”, are ways to ask if the hearer is favourably disposed towards the eventuality of doing the expected action. In particular, these utterances seem to be requests of information about the immediate future acts of the hearer, as the English future construction “will you” may

²¹ The mechanisms of functioning, and in particular the psychological mechanisms on which indirect requests rely on have been illustrated in ch. 1.3.

demonstrate. According to this view, for instance, in a question as “Will you give me a lift?” it is as if the speaker is asking “Are you going to give me a lift, since I've asked you”?

- **Willingness condition** (5.e). These kinds of requests sound the hearer's willingness to perform the desired act (e.g. *Would you lend me a copy of your book?*). In this case the speaker shows great concern for the hearer whereby not giving compliance for granted. This category embraces also the expressions of appreciation for the hearer in the eventuality that he performs the requested act (e.g. “I'd appreciate if you'd help me just this once”, “It would be a big help if you passed me the keys”), or expressions of hope that the hearer will perform the requested act (“I hope you wouldn't mind giving me a hand”). The pre-condition of willingness could be further sounded by lexical devices, as for example in the questions “*Would you like* to make a contribution to our charity?” and “*Would you mind* helping me to move this table?”). In this category fall the requests for permission as well, which tend to be directed upward in rank (Ervin-Tripp 1976; Trosborg 1995).

Another point it could be worth mentioning is that, again, convention plays a vital role in the determination of what seems to be a “proper” and accepted way to make a request. For example, checking the existence of condition n° 5.a (therefore asking for instance “*Hai preparato la tavola?*”/ “Did you set the table?”) is not considered a conventionally indirect way to make a request, but would rather be numbered among the non-conventionally indirect strategies²². This formulation may actually sound, at least in Italian, as a partial reproach and be perceived as slightly impolite.

1.8.5 Off record strategies: Non conventionally indirect requests

8. Strong hints

9. Mild hints

Sometimes the speaker may not want to state clearly his intent, maybe because he fears not to have the right to ask for it, because he is afraid of the hearer's reaction, or because he wants to save the hearer the embarrassment of possibly having to refuse. The requester has generally two

²² See below.

options: he can choose to omit the desired action altogether and give therefore a “mild hint”, or to partially mention his wishes (strong hints), even if the reference will never be plain and direct but still easy to detect.

Examples of the first type of requests are sentences as “It's so cold in here”, “I'm so thirsty”, or “The kitchen is in a total mess”, in which the speaker cannot be said to be asking something to someone, but simply to be making an observation about himself, his needs or the context of the conversation. Consequently, this kind of utterances is opaque not only as far as the illocutionary force is concerned, but also as regards the propositional content.

On the other hand, sentences as “The dishes need to be done” or “I'm to be at the airport in half an hour, and my car has just broken down” more clearly hint at the desired action, but the hearer still has to infer that the speaker would like him to take on the role of agent.

Interpreting hints, and in particular mild hints, can be extremely difficult. It is often necessary to possess intimate knowledge of the other person in order to correctly disambiguate the content and the force of the utterance.

1.8.6 Internal modification: Downgraders and up-graders

The choice of the directness level is a choice of the utmost importance when issuing a request, but it is not the only one. Other tools are available to “refine” the tone of the request and therefore also its impact on the hearer. The so-called “modality markers” (cf. House-Kasper 1981) are devices which modify the head act internally, so that the request will be either softened in its force (downgraders) or on the contrary sharpened and strengthened in its demanding tone (upgraders).

A speaker who wants to show lower expectations towards the fulfillment of his request has access to two types of downgraders: syntactic (which modify the structure of the utterance) or lexical/phrasal (single vocabulary choices). Since downgraders internally mitigate the impositive force of the request, they are commonly thought to add politeness to the request.

If downgraders are employed to soften the impact the utterance is likely to have on the hearer, upgraders have the opposite effect, namely that of increasing it. Upgraders can make the utterance more or less polite according to the element which is intensified (if the stressed element is a phrase expressing the requester's positive attitude towards the possible fulfillment of the request it is obviously more polite). Nonetheless, in order to allow a more immediate comparison, in Venuti

(2013) I chose to take into consideration only the upgraders that accentuate the imposition on the hearer and therefore somehow decrease politeness. For a detailed classification of downgraders see Blum-Kulka, House, Kasper (1989), Trosborg (1995) and Venuti (2013).

1.8.7 External modification: Alerters, mitigating supportive moves and aggravating supportive moves

If there is something we can take for granted at this point of our exposition, it certainly is the fact that a request is an act with which a speaker potentially imposes his will upon the freedom of the hearer. As a matter of fact, only in case of little favours, when it is obvious that the request will be satisfied, or with friends, who the requester knows will be pleased to help him, can requests be presented right away. In all the other cases, speakers feel the need either to “prepare the ground” so that the request appears plausible and justifiable, or to support the request with other communicative moves. This is the main objective alerters, which alert the hearer's attention to the ensuing speech act, and supportive moves pursue, that is to say utterances external to the head act occurring either before or after it.

Alerters are vocative elements referring to the hearer as the title, the surname, the first name, the nickname, an endearment or an offensive term, a pronoun, or simply an attention getter as “Hey!/ Hi! / Excuse me!”.

Like internal modifiers, supportive moves can also be mitigating or aggravating, according to whether they try to make the request more “acceptable” for the hearer or, on the other hand, to convince/force him, thus adding impositive force. For a thorough exposition of supportive moves, see again Blum-Kulka, House, Kasper (1989) and Trosborg (1995) and Venuti (2013).

2. A comparison of the realization of requestive speech acts in Italian and in German

In this chapter, I lay the foundation of the present study. In the first part, I illustrate the literature on the matter. In the second part, I report the strengths and weaknesses of the Discourse Completion Test, which was the most widely used mean of collection of data. In the third part, I summarize the results of Venuti (2013), which sparked the question of my present research.

2.1 Review of literature

2.1.1 The Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project

Originally devised by Shoshana Blum-Kulka and Edite Ohlstein in 1982, the Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) was set up in 1984 to investigate cross cultural and intra-lingual variation (situational, individual) in two speech acts: requests and apologies. These two speech acts were chosen because they both constitute face-threatening acts *par excellence*, since they both concern events that are costly to the hearer, even if in markedly different ways. In fact, the request is a pre-event requiring a future effort from the interlocutor while the apology is a post-event (Leech, 1980) whereby the speaker tries to make up for some previous action that interfered with the hearer's interests. The main goal of the project was to establish patterns of realization of these two speech acts under different social constraints across a number of languages and cultures. The study was designed in order to allow reliable comparability both along the situational (sociopragmatic), cultural and native/non-native axes. The language and the scholars involved in the project were:

1. Australian English – Eija Ventola;
2. American English – Nessa Wolfson and Ellen Rintell;
3. British English – Jenny Thomas;
4. Canadian French – Elda Weizman;
5. Danish – Claus Faerch and Gabriele Kasper;
6. German – Juliane House-Edmondson and Helmut Vollmer;

7. Hebrew – Shoshana Blum-Kulka and Elite Ohlstein;
8. Russian – Janny Thomas.

The group of respondents varied for each language and comprised an equal number of male and female university students in their second and third years of study in any subject but linguistics. Half of the informants were native speakers and half non-native. Blum-Kulka and his colleagues were perfectly conscious of the fact that the best methodology to do sociolinguistic research is to collect data from “natural” conditions and that their goal should be that of observing “the way that people use language when they are not being observed” (Labov, 1972, p. 209). Nevertheless, the CCSARP aimed at getting a large sample of responses and this would have been virtually impossible in those circumstances. For this reason, they prepared a discourse completion test (DCT) in English, and administered it to a group of fifty native English speakers at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. After this pilot test they made some more adjustments and improvements, and finally translated and distributed the final version of the questionnaire among the members of the research group. The test consisted of 16 scripted dialogues that represented socially differentiated situations, half of which were designed to elicit requests, the other half apologies. All dialogues contained a response²³ to the missing turn, which signaled illocutionary uptake. In terms of content, the proposed dialogues reflected everyday pragmatic situations that students might come across. Every dialogue was preceded by a short description of the setting, the role relationship between the participants, and provided the necessary context for the realization of the speech act.

The situations planned to elicit requests were:

- S1. A student asks his roommate to clean up the kitchen the latter had left in a mess the night before;
- S3. A young woman wants to get rid of a man pestering her on the street;
- S5. A student asks another student to lend her some lecture notes;
- S7. A student asks people living on the same street for a ride home;
- S9. An applicant calls for information on a job advertised in a paper;
- S11. A policeman asks a driver to move her car;
- S13. A student asks a teacher for an extension on a seminar paper;
- S15. A university professor asks a student to give his lecture a week earlier than scheduled.

All the so collected data were analyzed by native speakers in the respective countries. The process of developing a coding scheme with its major categories and sub-classifications represented the greatest challenge for this research. Originally, the categories were defined on the basis of

²³ This choice quickly revealed its drawbacks, to such an extent that some scholars, in particular Ellen M. Rintell and Candace J. Mitchell, chose to eliminate the line of dialogue given after the blank line, in the – in my opinion – justified fear that it could influence the subject’s response rather than clarify what was expected.

general theoretical considerations and previous research by members of the team, and further modified and refined so that it could fit the data gathered in the different languages. This joint attempt to systematize the huge amount of utterances elicited resulted in the CCSARP Coding Manual, a guide presenting all the steps to take, the perspectives through which to observe the utterances and the coding categories to apply when handling speech acts realizations.

The scheme of analysis of the CCSARP is exactly the same I applied in my research. Requests are classified into a nine-point scale of mutually exclusive categories ranging from the most direct (almost imperative) to the most indirect (mild hints). Scholars also considered the choice of perspective as an important source of variation in requests as well as the internal and the external modifications.

The results of this study revealed that it is possible to detect distinct cultural codes of requestive behaviour, which in turn indicate the existence of different interactional styles. The findings point to interesting cross-cultural differences in directness levels: from among the five languages examined, Argentinian Spanish speakers were found to be the most direct, followed by speakers of Hebrew. The least direct were Australian English speakers. Speakers of Canadian French and German were placed in the middle of the continuum of directness. Speakers of German, on the other hand, were found to employ more request modifications than all other languages. The results also showed that cultural factors interact strongly with situational ones. For example, Ohlstein's investigation on apologies indicated that apologies strategies in Hebrew, Australian English, Canadian French and German followed common trends across different situations²⁴.

The CCSARP also took into consideration interlanguage realizations. From this point of view, the CCASRP confirmed the by now established belief according to which even the communicative acts of advanced learners regularly contain pragmatic errors. Furthermore, they often fail to convey or comprehend the intended illocutionary point or the politeness value. The CCSARP analysis on interlanguage pragmatic phenomena revealed that not only learners' groups deviate systematically from native use, but they also deviate from each other in the pragmatic errors they commit, according to the language they study and their mother tongue. For instance, Blum Kulka and Ohlstein (1984) found out that learners requests are often longer than native speakers' ones. Verbosity characterizes Hebrew learner's oral production since they tend to embed their request in lengthy explanations and justifications. House and Kasper also discovered that non-natives generally opt for major levels of directness and Danish learners use more lexical mitigation than British native speakers.

²⁴ The same conclusions could be drawn, as we will see, from the present study.

Over and above the specific results the CCSARP yielded, its huge merit has been that of shedding light on important issues of contrastive pragmatics, above all on the question of universality. In other words, the hamletic doubt underlying this type of research has always been whether it is possible to find basic pragmatic features for given speech acts expected to be manifested in all natural languages²⁵. Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) admit that, since their study is a particular ambitious undertaking, a certain degree of caution is to be called for before drawing any type of conclusion. Nevertheless, we can reasonably conclude that the idea of the presence of universal features in all languages is for some aspects validated, since it was possible to create and employ a unique empirical framework, which proved to be valid also in my study.

On the other hand, and this is perhaps the most important outcome, it has become evident that interactional styles form part of a cultural ethos and thus the meanings attached to particular speech acts or communicative moves are attached to culture-specific values. All things considered, the CCSARP demonstrated that notions of politeness are culturally relativized and similar choices on the directness levels may carry differentiated meanings for the eight cultures examined.

2.1.2 Selected review on other contrastive studies concerning requests

The directive speech act constitutes a key “move” in communication not only for its massive use, but also because its intrinsic reason of being (demanding something from the hearer) makes it one of the most (negative) face threatening acts speakers and learners of a language are likely to perform in their everyday life. For this reason it is not surprising that several research studies have been conducted with the aim of shedding light on this topic. More specifically, scholars’ attention has developed towards two areas of concern: interlanguage pragmatics and contrastive pragmatics.

Interlanguage pragmatic studies flourished since the early 80s with the aim of investigating how foreign and second language learners select and realize speech acts in comparison to native speakers. Walters (1981), Fraser and Nolen (1981), Blum-Kulka (1982), (1983), Blum-Kulka and Levenson (1987), Takahashi and Dufon (1989), Eslamirasekh (1993), Takezawa (1995), Cenoz and Valencia (1996), and more recently Majeed Al-Tayib Umar (2004), Takezawa (2005) and Tatton (2008) provided valuable insights into important factors intervening in learners’ failures to use or comprehend the speech act of requests, as overgeneralization, simplification and reduction. Thomas (1983) has theorized these phenomena introducing the concept of *sociopragmatic*- (interpretation of

²⁵ As we will see in the conclusions, my research revealed the presence of some universal trends across Italian, German and Austrian German.

the relevant situational factors on the basis of learners' native sociopragmatic norms) and *pragmalinguistic transfer* (in which native procedures and linguistic means of speech act performance are transferred to interlanguage communication). Likewise, the role of the *waffle phenomenon*, according to which students' present pragmatic behaviour that is different from both the L1 and the L2 and seems to be characteristic to interlanguage, has been highlighted.

However, investigating the obstacles a learner can face in the path from the pragmatic competence of his native language to the pragmatic competence of the second/foreign language is possible only after the differences between the two pragmatic systems have been highlighted. It is also for this reason that I decided to carry out my study in this domain, and for this reason I will outline the main works pertaining to this field²⁶ and focusing on the speech act of requests.

In German, the most important work on requests was carried out by House and Vollmer (1988), in coordination with the CCSARP. They found out that the heterogeneity of pragmatic behaviour observed in their data and the predominant role played by the situational context suggest that simple frequency counts need to be supplemented by an investigation of how situational features such as participants' relationship influence the realization of requests and apologies. House later compared his data with Kasper's (1981) data and found out that social norms in phrasing requests could be different in German with respect to English.

Single results yielded from English, German, French, Hebrew and Spanish within the context of the CCSARP were also compared by Blum-Kulka and House who ascertained that maximal levels of directness are displayed by speakers of Argentinian Spanish and Hebrew, Canadian French and German speakers occupy the mid-points in the scale of indirectness, whereas English speakers figure in the last position. The results concerning German given by House (1979) and House and Kasper (1981), at the same time, confirmed previous findings which have shown German speakers to opt for higher levels of directness in their requestive behaviours than speakers of (British) English.

As far as Italian is concerned, the only investigation concerning requests was provided by Gudrun Held (1995), who compared, by means of a questionnaire, modalities of realization of requests by French and Italian students. By proposing situations which were intentionally differentiated according to their social weightiness, she wanted to pinpoint politeness strategies and their correlation with the imposition involved in the speech act. Her data, though analysed in a different framework as that of the CCSARP, revealed a marked preference for supportive acts (disarmers, grounders), or modality markers (as minimizers, polite past tense, or relativizing

²⁶ A detailed review of the most interesting studies in interlanguage pragmatics can be found in Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989). Furthermore, a recent cornerstone of this line of research can be traced in Trosborg (1995).

adverbs) as elements in the utterance elicited to be responsible for a politeness effect. Moreover, also emphasisers and maximizers (in my study the so called “upgraders”) are often used in order to strengthen personal involvement and credibility of statements that would otherwise sound too “chilling” to the Italian ear. Not surprisingly, in the contribution Held wrote in the volume “Politeness in Western Europe”, entitled “Politeness in Italy: the Art of Self-Representation in Requests”, she goes to such lengths as to state that

“combining *garbo* and *virtuosità*, Italians are absolute artists of the effective verbal *compiacimento*, the character of which constitutes a great deal of the proverbial *dolce vita* and associated forms of happiness and warmth” (Held 1993, in Hickey and Stewart 2005, p. 295).

In the same volume, phenomena of politeness in German are examined by House in the article “Politeness in Germany. Politeness in Germany?”. Even if the scope of her analysis does not coincide primarily with the speech act of requests, but concerns rather a whole set of discourse structures, it could be worth noticing that she observes a widespread tendency towards content oriented strategies, e.g. introducing the topic and expanding it, but a reduced use of interpersonally active strategies, such as anticipatory moves, availability checks, moves seeking pre-commitment or disarming moves²⁷. In her conclusions, she gives precious insights into the historical and cultural roots of German speech community, which appears to prefer directness, explicitness, detailed references, avoidance of “small talk” and routine formulations over “serious” talk and *ad-hoc* utterances as markers of politeness.

Differences in requestive strategies in English and Polish are studied by Wierzbicka (1985). Analysing pragmatic behaviour of the two languages, she understood that while English speakers make extensive use of interrogative and conditional forms, Polish ones rather rely on imperatives to convey a request, since the interrogative is often associated with hostility and alienation. The researcher realized that features of English, which have been claimed to be due to universal principles of politeness by influential theories of speech acts, are in reality language-specific and culture specific, and they are also shown to be due to aspects of culture rather than mere norms of politeness. On these solid assumptions she developed a strong criticism towards anglo-centric theories of politeness which led her to further develop the topic of the interaction between cultural values and language in the volume “Cross-cultural pragmatics. The semantics of human interaction”²⁸ (1991), which is also a crucial work for anybody who wants to approach the theme of contrastive pragmatics.

²⁷ As we will see below, this finding will be confirmed in my investigation.

²⁸ For more insights into this work see section 1.7.

Polish requests have also been investigated by Eva Ogiermann (2009) who, investigating English, German, Polish and Russian requests, discovered that the preference for direct vs. conventionally indirect strategies across languages follows a distributional pattern which seems to be in accordance with the geographical position of the countries where the data were collected. In fact, the use of imperative constructions rises considerably from West to East. This results convinced her of Wierzbicka's assumption that viewing pragmatic clarity and directness as a lack of concern for the hearer's face is an interpretation reflecting Anglo-Saxon cultural values.

Other contrastive studies concerning requests are: El-Shazly (1993) for American English and Egyptian Arabic, Kim (1995) for American English and Korean, Fukushima (1996) for British and Japanese, Li-Li (2008) for Chinese and English. Interlanguage pragmatics studies are countless, but the most relevant for German is still today the work of House (1988, 1994, 1996), Schauer (2009) and Meyer (2007). As far as the Italian language is concerned, an important study on the acquisition of requests, apologies and complaints of Italian as L2 is Nuzzo (2007), who in turn refers to Trosborg (1995). The reception of the apology in the turns of speech has also been investigated by Sbisà (1999). A cross-cultural study involving Italian is Held (1995), who compares, by means of a questionnaire, modalities of realization of requests by French and Italian students, though analysing them in a different framework as that of the CCSARP. Bettoni and Rubino (2006) deal with a cross-cultural comparison of the speech act "complaint" in Italian and Australian English, and are currently carrying out a project of contrastive analysis of the realization of some speech acts in these two linguistic communities.

From a survey of the above mentioned literature it is clear how speech acts are essentially governed by a systematic set of community-specific rules. The aforementioned studies demonstrate scholars' awareness of the fact that violation or ignorance of these rules are bound to create some serious communication problems, which in the end may confirm stereotypes and result in racism, discrimination and hatred between nations. Intercultural and cross-cultural pragmatics represent the first step towards the avoidance of these misunderstandings.

2.2. Some theoretical considerations. Strengths and weaknesses of the Discourse Completion Test

When a scholar faces the challenge of a pragmatic research, the first decision he is confronted with is how to collect linguistic data which he would like to be authentic and accurate enough to represent as truly as possible the natural performance of linguistic action. In short, he

must find a reliable data collection instrument. In this section, I will introduce the main arguments which have been presented by scholars trying to sustain their being in favour or against the technique of data collection known as Discourse Completion Test.

Among all the linguistic data elicitation methods (interviews, field notes, audio and video recording, role plays, stimulated recall, direct observation), the majority of scholars reckons that the most suitable way to collect a large sample of data in a relatively short time and in controlled and stable circumstances is the Discourse Completion Test. Indeed, starting from Blum-Kulka (1982), DCT has been extensively used as a way to gather linguistic data in a lot of speech act studies, including: Olshtein and Cohen (1983), Kasper (1989), House (1989), Linnel et al. (1992), Bergman and Kasper (1993) for apologies; Eisenstein and Bodman (1986) for expressions of gratitude; Bardovi-Harlig and Hartfold (1991) for refusals, Hinkel (1997) for advice; House and Kasper (1987), Blum-Kulka and House (1989), Faerch and Kasper (1989), De Kadt (1992) for requests.

DCT can be defined as a written questionnaire containing a set of briefly described situations designed to elicit a particular speech act. Subjects are supposed to read the situation and to answer to a prompt. A typical example would be:

“You missed class and need to borrow a friend’s note. What would you say?” (Rose 1992).

According to the purposes and the theoretical background of the different speech act research projects, at least five types of DCT have been designed up to now. The most recent type of DCT, which we could define “improved open item verbal response” and is the one my research takes inspiration from, was developed by Billmeyer and Varghese (2000)²⁹, on the base of the open item verbal response. The new version is characterized by a new way to present situational background, with much more information and details.

Nurani (2009) illustrates the advantages and disadvantages of using such a method of eliciting data. The manifold benefits that DCT brings are almost intuitively grasped and fully justify its big popularity among researchers. DCT allows the collection of large amount of data in a limited amount of time; it reveals a society’s stereotypical response for a specific situation. Still, it can be administered to a large number of people at the same time, and it can be applied to many participants coming from different cultural background.

Notwithstanding its appeal, DCT’s reliability in gathering appropriate data has been increasingly questioned and tested through validation studies, and the drawbacks of its use have also gradually been highlighted. In particular, scholars have concentrated their criticism on two aspects: the authenticity of responses and the possibility for DCT to faithfully depict the complexity of human interactions.

²⁹ See below.

As far as the truthfulness of responses is concerned, it has been suggested that the “hypothetical nature” of the situation in which a person carries out the speech acts in a DCT may interfere with the authenticity of the response. What is more, it has also been hypothesized that the simple description of the situations in a DCT cannot fully represent the complexity of interactions in everyday conversation: in fact, the extended negotiations which commonly occur in a real discourse are almost completely missing in the dialogue contraction of a DCT. Finally, what people claim they would say in a particular situation does not necessarily correspond to what they really say in that particular circumstance.

The main advocates of the theory according to which natural data (data elicited from spontaneous speeches) and data collected by DCT differ significantly base their argumentation on the fact that the hypothetical situation of a DCT has no real consequences for both speaker and hearer (the most important of them being the risk of negatively affecting the relationship), therefore it would not bring out the same psychological dynamics that are at play in an interaction between members of a group. In particular, Beebe and Cummings (1996) maintain that what is outstandingly missing in a typical DCT (or, at least, in the DCT as it had until then been conceived) is the situational and social contextualization, that is to say, detailed information on the on-going event, on the psychological state of the speaker, and on the role relationship of speaker and hearer³⁰.

On the other hand, Beebe and Cummings’ investigation, which compared refusals gathered through DCTs and formulas elicited from spontaneous discourse, found out that they were not so different, thus confirming the hypothesis according to which both methods could give almost similar results. The only difference they found was in the length of talk and in the range of formula used to perform the speech act, including avoidance strategies and frequency of repetition typical of human interaction.

Furthermore, if on the one hand we cannot ignore that the “round” situation of a real conversation would doubtlessly be more authentic, Beebe and Cummings themselves stress the fact that natural data collection methods have a lot of disadvantages as well, their time-consuming nature being just the most outstanding one. Other two important drawbacks of natural data are the fact that they are not systematic (age, ethnic group, socioeconomic status are not known) and the possibility that, in spite of all the solicitations of the researcher, participants do not perform the requested speech act. Finally, the use of recording devices such as video or tape recorder, which natural data collection methods require, may also jeopardize the authenticity of data since participants could feel uncomfortable and not at ease, knowing that they are observed.

³⁰ These drawbacks of the use of DCT, which have been highlighted by Beebe and Cummings, are to be paid particular attention since my model of DCT was created precisely taking into consideration, and trying to find a “remedy”, to these weaknesses.

Another advocator of DCT as a privileged way to collect data is Kwon (2004). He notes that the main difference between natural data collection and DCT is that DCT is likely to trigger mental prototype of that particular response in the given situation, thus revealing which strategic and linguistic choice would fit pragmatic norms in a specific situation according to a linguistic community. On the contrary, in natural data collection procedures people surely give more original and personal responses, but, because of embarrassment, they are also bound to give unpredictable or uncommon formulas.

Another point in favor of DCT that Kwon makes is the fact that this data elicitation method is controlled and controllable, that is to say that it can be tailored as to comprise situations in which the difference of status between speaker and hearer varies accordingly. In this way, the researcher is able to spot which strategy is used by the group of participants when they have to do with an interlocutor of lower, equal or higher status.

By considering Chomsky's theory about competence and performance, it could be argued that DCT sheds lights on speakers' competence, but not on their actual performance. However, if by "competence" we mean the awareness of which linguistic choices would fit pragmatic norms, regardless of whether the same participants use them or not in normal speech, then DCT seems to be most proper choice because in a speech acts comparison study it would be better to focus on what an entire community would perceive as "appropriate" in some circumstances (also because cross-cultural pragmatic research does not only concentrate on the emission of the speech act, but also on its perception) rather than on what the single speakers happen to say.

All things considered, it can be concluded that, after having carefully weighed up the pros and cons of DCT, a researcher must first and foremost consider the purpose of his study. Being the goal of my study that of comparing the construction of requests between two speech communities, I needed to collect a large amount of data and to be able to draw generalizations on the base of the comparison. For this reason, DCT was confidently adopted as a reliable tool of collection of linguistic data.

2.3 The Master Thesis research

2.3.1 Questions of the study

The purpose of Venuti (2013) was to compare request realization patterns between Italian and German speakers. More specifically, three research questions were posited:

1. To what extent do members of the Italian and German language communities agree on the level of directness with which to formulate requests?
2. Can we detect similar patterns in the two groups of respondents' requestive behaviour as far as the situational variation is concerned?
3. Finally, does the perception of politeness displayed by the linguistic choices of Italian and German speakers coincide with the Western theory of politeness?

2.3.2 Method. The sample

The sample of the study consisted of eighty subjects. Forty of them were Italian students enrolled at the University of Udine and at the University Ca' Foscari in Venice. The other group was composed of forty students attending the University of Wuppertal and the Humboldt University of Berlin.

2.3.3 The collection procedure

Data were elicited by means of a Discourse Completion Test (DCT), which was submitted to students in 2012. The DCT had been developed adopting the "improved open item verbal response" format of Billmyer and Varghese (2000). They introduced a consistent enrichment of the contextual content of the prompts with a lot of details and information on the "scene" in a Hymesian sense.

In the following, the four situations that I devised for my DCT will be listed, three of which coincide with the ones used in the original CCSARP (some of the results are therefore comparable).

- Sit. 1 (Window): a doctor asks a nurse to open the window;
- Sit. 2 (Notes): a student asks another student to lend him/her the last lecture's notes;
- Sit. 3 (Ride): an employee asks a colleague for a ride to the main office;
- Sit. 4 (Extension): a student asks a University lecturer for an extension on a term paper.

Please note that I wanted the situations to soar in their level of risk of a face loss, in order to see if the degree of indirectness rose accordingly. This objective was pursued combining and tailoring the variables that, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), increase the seriousness or weightiness of a face threatening act, namely the power (or status) difference between speaker and hearer, the social distance between the speaker and the addressee, and the rate of imposition.

2.3.4 The data analysis

The scheme of analysis prescribed by the CSARP's coding manual and illustrated at page 31 is exactly the same I applied in my research. Requests are classified into a nine-point scale of mutually exclusive categories ranging from the most direct (almost imperative) to the most indirect (mild hints). As we have seen in Table 4, the classification displays three major levels of directness:

- the direct strategies, which consist in syntactically marked requests;
- the conventionally indirect strategies, that realize the speech act by ascertaining the existence of preparatory conditions necessary for its performance;
- the non-conventionally indirect strategies, through which the speaker opaquely hints at the requested acts or give some clues that make the request inferable thanks to the context.

The analysis was both quantitative and qualitative.

2.3.5 Results

	CATEGORY NUMBER	STUDENTS' NUMBER		STUDENTS' PERCENTAGE		STUDENTS' NUMBER		STUDENTS' PERCENTAGE	
		IT	GE	IT	GE	IT	GE	IT	GE
DIRECT STRATEGIES	1	12	8	7,59%	5,16%	33	25	20,89%	16,13%
	2	0	3	0,00%	1,94%				
	3	17	10	10,76%	6,45%				
	4	0	1	0,00%	0,65%				
	5	4	3	2,53%	1,94%				
CONVENTIONALLY INDIRECT STRATEGIES	6	0	1	0,00%	0,65%	118	123	74,68%	79,35%
	7	118	122	74,68%	78,71%				
NON-CONVENTIONALLY INDIRECT STRATEGIES	8	7	6	4,43%	3,87%	7	7	4,43%	4,52%
	9	0	1	0,00%	0,65%				
	Total employable answers	158	155	100%	100%	158	155	100%	100%

Table 5. Recapitulatory chart: request strategies.

	RECAPITULATORY CHART. SITUATIONAL AND CULTURAL VARIATION									
	SYNTACTIC DOWNGRADERS		LEXICAL AND PHRASAL DOWNGRADERS		ALERTERS		SUPPORTIVE MOVES		UPGRADERS	
	IT	GE	IT	GE	IT	GE	IT	GE	IT	GE
S1 WINDOW	45	41	32	34	30	20	39	24	19	11
S2 NOTES	66	64	16	34	32	13	62	52	13	8
S3 RIDE	74	82	26	35	33	30	73	49	18	10
S4 EXTENSION	75	77	21	35	29	14	74	77	14	22
TOT	260	264	95	138	124	77	248	202	64	51

Table 6. Internal and external modification. Cross cultural and situational variation

The main outcomes of my comparison of German and Italian speakers' realization of requests can be summarized as follows.

- Both groups proved to be perfectly aware of the difference between the four sociopragmatic situations that were proposed; in fact, they modulated the perspective, the degree of directness, and the level of internal and external modification according to the context in which the request was embedded.
- Italian participants favoured constructions in which either the hearer or the speaker was mentioned, whereas for the German respondents it proved to be a good solution alluding to the role played by external circumstances.
- Germans selected higher levels of indirectness in comparison to Italians. Nevertheless, if we look at table n°8 we realize that the difference, on the whole, is not so big. As a matter of fact, conventionally indirect strategies in German findings occurred “only” 5% more often than in the Italian data. The divergence is minimal in the window situation and is maximal in the notes and in the extension situation. In the latter situation, the scenario is reversed and we notice that German requests suddenly become much more direct than the Italian ones.
- Both Italian and German speakers tended to realize the majority of their requests in all four situations at the level “Preparatory” (7), although with some differences in the selection of the particular preparatory condition which is referred to.

On the whole, category 7 (with respect to the ability of the hearer) was considered by both languages the most appropriate strategy.

Skimming through German data it emerges that more than the half of the total 155 elicited requests was formulated in this way (52,90%). Reference to the ability of the hearer to perform the requested act occurred as the main strategy in three of the four situations, precisely the window, the notes and the ride situation; whereas in the extension situation German

respondents thought 7 (with reference to the possibility of the hearer to carry out the task) was the best level to use. Therefore it can be argued that the formula “Kannst du", or rather “Könntest du....“ is heavily routinized in German request behaviour and is perceived as appropriate also in very different contexts.

- In parallel with a higher level of indirectness, German speakers selected with a higher frequency also syntactic downgraders and lexical and phrasal downgraders. This is an interesting outcome which, if it were confirmed by a larger sample, could be interpreted as an indication of this group's tendency to „play it doubly safe“, particularly in the situations in which the face threat was rated bigger (S3 and S4).
- Italian data point to a less stable preference for category 7 (ability)³¹, selected in 39,24% of the total requests. A significant preference is also manifested for category 7 (with respect to a future action of the hearer), employed in 18,99% of cases. This category appeared to play a key role in the note and in the ride situation, where it probably seemed a clear, spontaneous but at the same time polite way of expressing the directive force of the utterance, in particular thanks to the conditional downtowner (used in high percentages in all 4 situations).
- If Italian speakers preferred slightly lower level of indirectness, they evidently compensated with consistently larger use of alerters (in particular in the form of „scusa“), supportive moves and upgraders.
- It could be intriguing to notice that if on the one hand German speakers tended to be pretty unanimous in using the same request strategies in a lot of different circumstances, on the other they are also the ones who explore all the 13 strategies which were taken as categories, whereas Italians use just 9 of them. This could stem from the fact that German may present some constructions which are similar to the English ones, on the basis of which the CCSARP coding model was constructed. Some of these ways of issuing a request could be very rare in Italian, or perhaps marked with a peculiar connotation. For example, level 2, which occurred in German data 3 times in the extension situation, could sound too „straight to the point“, almost abrupt in a lot of situations. A formulation as: „Le chiedo una proroga di due settimane“ (tr. „I ask you

³¹ I think we should open here a short parenthesis. In Italian, the formulation of the “Can you...” type (“Puoi...”) does not entail the meaning of “ability” it carries in English or in German. In Italian a request as “Puoi passarmi il sale?” does not seem to question the speaker's physical ability to pass the salt, but rather his/her having the possibility to do it or not, because the circumstances allow him/her to choose. As a matter of fact, in Italian the verb that expresses ability is “sapere” (“I can swim” → “So nuotare”; “Ich kann Englisch” → “So l'inglese”). This substantial diversity in the literal meaning of the “Can you...” formulation could validate Morgan's hypothesis that this type of utterances is so routinized in every day's speech that they became almost idiomatic expressions, whose illocutionary force is immediately perceived.

an extension of two weeks“) seems to lack that dimension of tentativeness which sometimes belongs to the Italian perception of politeness³², whereas it seems to work in German. At the same time, Italians explored a larger variety of supportive moves.

2.3.6 Possible interpretations of the findings

In analysing the relation between internal modification and external modification, scholars (Faerch and Kasper, in Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989, p. 241) have suggested two theories, the compensation hypothesis and the combination hypothesis. The first one claims that if modification is absent on the one dimension, it is employed in the other dimension, in agreement with the conversational principle of achieving maximal efficiency with a minimum amount of effort. The second one states that modification on the one dimension triggers modification on the other level, in line with the principle of consistency, according to which a certain redundancy is necessary, given the evanescent character of oral input.

To my mind, the same considerations can be applied also to the connection between indirectness and internal modifiers on the one hand, and external modifiers on the other, and the outcomes of my study provide evidence for both. The following figures may help the reader to see the point suggested here.

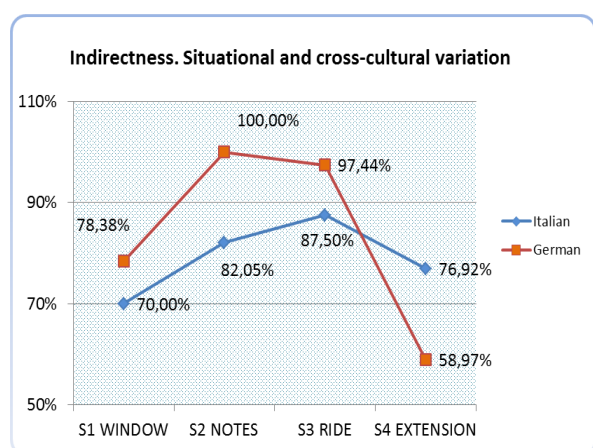


Fig. 2. Indirectness.

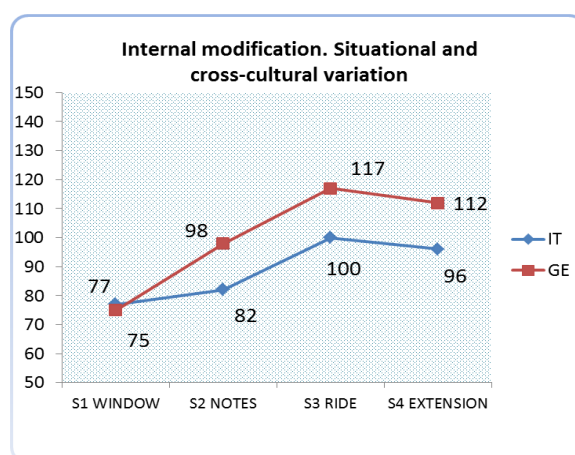


Fig. 3. Internal modification

³² The dimension of tentativeness would be pursued, in this case, by saying rather “Le chiederai, se fosse possibile, di concedermi altre due settimane” (tr. “I would ask you, if it’s possible, to grant me other two weeks”).

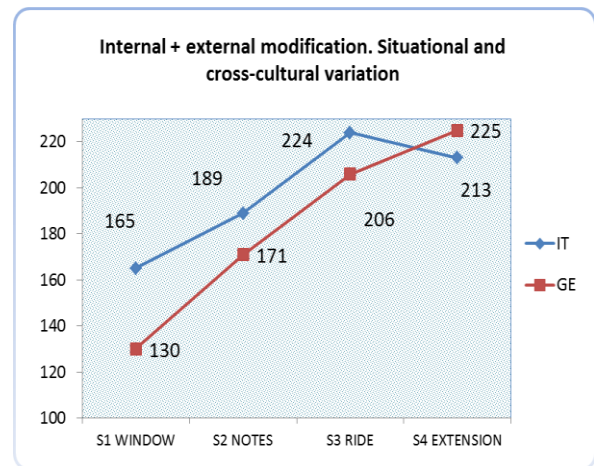
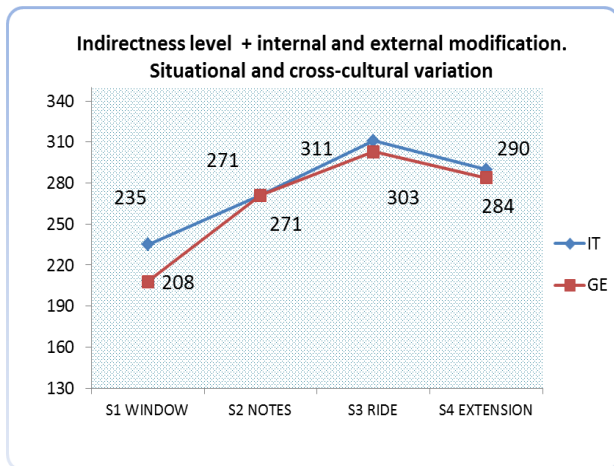


Fig. 4 Indirectness level + internal and external modification **Fig. 5. Internal + external modification**

Figure 3. shows the trend of the total number of internal modifiers, which undoubtedly mitigated (otherwise we should have included also some of the upgraders) the force of the request, obtained from the sum of data contained in the first two columns in the „capitulatory table“. The comparison between Fig. 2 and 3 makes clear how an evidence for the combination hypothesis is offered by German speakers‘ higher level of indirectness and frequency of syntactic and lexical/phrasal downgraders. At the same time, their requestive behaviour seems to be governed also by the compensation rule in the extension situation (compare graphs 2 and 4.), when they decrease the level of indirectness and the percentage of syntactic downgraders but enhance the number of alerters and supportive moves.

Italian behaviour apparently works in accordance with the compensation hypothesis, since it displays a slightly lower directness level but a higher general amount of supportive moves, alerters (see graph 4), and of internal-external modification in general. Nevertheless, also the combination hypothesis seems to be confirmed since both the general indirect level and the amount of external and internal modification drops together from S3 to S4.

Having all the elements of a request quantified in tables, I tried to find an ultimate, personal answer to the question which has often been discussed throughout this paper, namely „Does indirectness increase politeness?“. I added therefore the total number of internal and external modifiers per situation with the numerical values obtained from the percentages of indirect strategies used by Italian and German speakers per situation (e.g. S1 IT: 165 + 70). In this way, I treated indirectness as a politeness increaser. The fact that in this way results follow a upward trend and the outcomes of both languages almost coincide could make us opt for a positive answer to the question.

Nonetheless, the fact that the assumed „general level of politeness“ drops in situation 4 constitutes in my opinion the mathematical evidence that summing indirectness to other politeness

modifiers is sometimes wrong. Clarity and sincerity in expressing intentions may represent an equally important expression of politeness both in the Italian and in the German culture, particularly when the risk of a face threat is considered high.

2.3.7 Questions left unsolved

At the end of my research, there were three aspects on which I perceived that further investigation was needed. These points have become the questions of my present study.

In the first place, it had been found that Italian speakers perform the speech act request in a general more direct way than their German counterparts, but they also seemed to “compensate” with a generally larger use of internal and external modification. This could support the theory according to which indirectness is a way to increase politeness, for both the Italian and the German culture. The fact that both groups’ general level of indirectness dropped in the fourth situation, where in contrast it was expected to raise, could be explained in two ways.

The first possible explanation was that indirectness in the formulation of requests is not always considered the best strategy in order to achieve politeness. In this regard, a deeper knowledge of the way in which Italian and German speakers perceive indirectness in requests and of the extent to which they relate it with politeness should be pursued.

The second possible interpretation concerned my assumptions about the face-threatening character of the situations proposed, which could be wrong. In particular, if we stick to Wolfson’s “bulge theory”, the extension situation could in fact be less risky in terms of face-threat than it has been supposed to, since the relationship with the interlocutor is perceived as more fixed and established than in the ride situation. The second direction of research should then focus on the perception of the different social parameters (social distance, rate of imposition, relative power difference) that constitute the face threat of a request for Italian and German speakers.

Finally, it had been observed that both groups of respondents used a lot of the forms that Brown and Levinson (1987) had identified as positive and negative politeness strategies, as, for instance, in creating common ground or in avoiding coerciveness. It could be interesting to further investigate the two cultures’ preference for the one or the other type of politeness (see chapter 6). A sociologic or ethnographic approach could then account for the cultural reasons and values beyond the preference of some expressions of verbal politeness in spite of others, as the organisation of the society in an egalitarian or in a hierarchical structure, the conception of relationships or the way in which the self relates with the community (chapter 8).

In the next chapter, I illustrate two studies concerning the perception of indirectness and politeness and face threat in Italian and in German, something which allowed me to revise the results illustrated here and reach a more accurate perspective on the topic.

Chapter 3. Indirectness, politeness and face threat in Italian and German

As anticipated in the previous chapter, the first study I carried out in order to have a clearer view of the phenomenon at issue was on the perception of indirectness, politeness and on the face threat of the four situations proposed.

3.1 The aim of the study

The main questions of the study were:

- 9) Does the directness of the 9 request strategies pinpointed by Brown and Levinson for the English language apply correctly to Italian and German? Is maybe the directness of the 9 request strategies not perceived in the same way in the two languages at issue?
- 10) Are directness and politeness linked in the same way in the two language communities at issue?
- 11) Was the face threat of the four situations rated correctly?
- 12) Was the priority of respondents that of being polite or that of being effective?

3.2 Methodology. Data collection

Data were gathered by means of an assessment questionnaire, with multiple choice questions (see Appendix). The sample consisted in 31 Italian students enrolled at the Don Bosco Secondary school in Pordenone and 74 German students enrolled at the University Humboldt in Berlin. The analysis of data is qualitative and quantitative.

3.3 The perception of indirectness

As we saw before, in the Western world politeness is usually associated with indirectness, as application of Lakoff's rule 1 and 2, Leech's tact maxim, and Brown and Levinson's concept of negative face. Deference is expressed, as Brown and Levinson point out, through a voluntary violation of Gricean Maxims, thus inviting conversational implicatures, that allow the sender not to

make assumptions about the hearer, not to coerce him, and in general, to minimize every kind of “face threat”³³.

The universality of this framework has been more and more criticized and different studies dealing with speech acts have underlined the culture-specificity of speech acts behavior. What is more, before trying to grasp the connection between indirectness and politeness in the two cultures at issue, an attempt had to be made to fully grasp the perception of indirectness by Italian and German speakers. In this way, a more authentic view of the situational and cross-cultural variation in the use of indirect requests will be given.

3.3.1 The perception of indirectness in Italian

The following table summarizes the Italian perception of indirectness of the request strategies pinpointed by Brown and Levinson (1987).

Esempio	Strategia di richiesta	Molto esplicita	Esplicita	Né implicita né esplicita	Implicita	Molto implicita	Total
Aiutami!	1. MOOD DERIVABLE	25	5		1		31
Ti chiederei di aiutarmi..	2. EXPLICIT PERFORMATIVE	5	13	11	2		31
Ti posso chiedere di aiutarmi?	3. HEDGED PERFORMATIVE	15	12		3	1	31
Mi dovresti aiutare..	4. LOCUTION DERIVABLE	5	12	11	3		31
Mi faresti un piacere se mi aiutassi..	5. SCOPE STATING	8	14	3	6		31
Che ne diresti di aiutarmi?	6. LANGUAGE SPECIFIC SUGGESTORY FORMULA	6	13	8	4		31
Puoi aiutarmi?	7. REFERENCE TO PREPARATORY CONDITION (ability)	15	11	1	3	1	31
Mi aiuti?	7. REFERENCE TO PREPARATORY CONDITION (future)	16	11		4		31
Se solo mi aiutassi...	8. STRONG HINT	2	9	10	8	2	31
Che pesante questo tavolo...	9. MILD HINT			5	12	14	31

Table 7. The perception of indirectness in Italian

³³ For a definition of the term, see below.

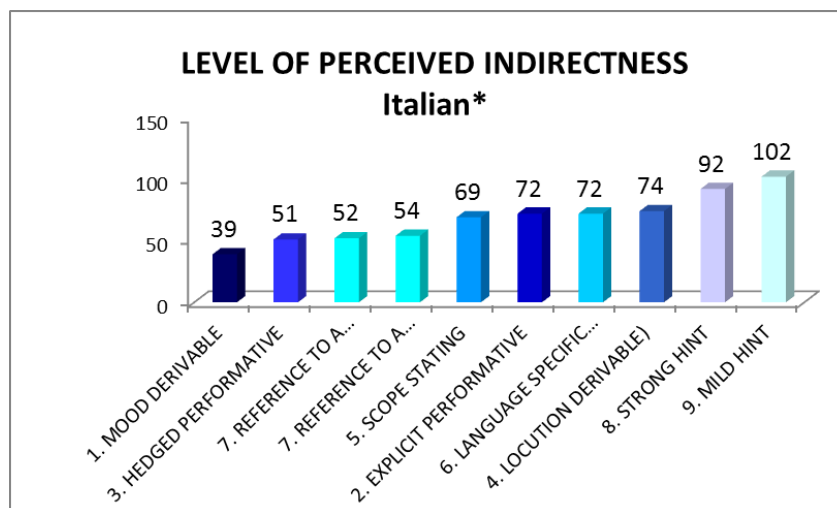


Fig. 6. Level of perceived indirectness. Italian

Giving to every answer “Molto esplicita”: 1 point, “Esplicita”: 2 points, “Né implicita né esplicita” 3 points, “Implicita”: 4 points, “Molto implicita”: 5 points, the following results were elicited.

Strategy n° 1 and 3 (mood derivable and hedged performative) are placed among the most direct strategies and therefore confirm Brown and Levinson (1987) classification.

Interestingly enough, request strategies of n° 7 type (both subcategory «future act» and «ability») appear to be perceived as rather direct strategies, occupying respectively the third and the fourth position in terms of directness.

According to this result category n° 7 should be included among the first 5 strategies, classified by Brown and Levinson (1987) as direct, and not among the «conventionally indirect» ones. In other words, these results could validate Morgan’s (1977) hypothesis that this type of utterances is so routinized in every day’s speech that they became almost idiomatic expressions, being their requestive force immediately perceived.

The strategy «explicit performative», (2), which was considered direct by Brown and Levinson, appears to be perceived as rather indirect in my data: this is probably due to my choice of mitigate the performative with the device of the conditional mood. This data question the validity of the analysis of requests of Venuti (2013), since I classified these strategies among the direct ones, whereas these respondents seem to perceive it as rather indirect.

3.3.2 The perception of indirectness in German

In the following table we can see the German perception of indirectness of the request strategies pinpointed by Brown and Levinson (1987).

Beispiel	Aufforderungsstrategie	Sehr explizit	Explizit	Weder explizit noch implizit	Implizit	Sehr implizit	Antwortet nicht	Total
Hilf mir mit dem Tisch!	1. MOOD DERIVABLE	44	8	10	6	5	1	74
Ich bitte dich, mir mit dem Tisch zu helfen.	2. EXPLICIT PERFORMATIVE	33	29	8	4			74
Ich möchte dich bitten, mir mit dem Tisch zu helfen.	3. HEDGED PERFORMATIVE	30	35	5	4			74
Du könntest mir helfen, den Tisch umzustellen!	4. LOCUTION DERIVABLE	23	36	10	2		3	74
Du würdest mir einen Gefallen tun, wenn du mir mit dem Tisch hilfst	5. SCOPE STATING	13	32	18	10	1		74
Was hältst du davon, mir mit dem Tisch zu helfen?	6. LANGUAGE SPECIFIC SUGGESTORY FORMULA	3	39	20	10	1	1	74
Kannst du mir mit dem Tisch helfen?	7a. REFERENCE TO PREPARATORY CONDITION (ability)	31	27	8	5	3		74
Hilfst du mir dabei, den Tisch umzustellen?	7b. REFERENCE TO PREPARATORY CONDITION (future)	48	20	5	1			74
Wenn du mir mit dem Tisch helfen würdest!	8. STRONG HINT	3	27	23	16	3	2	74
Ach, ist dieser Tisch schwer!	9. MILD HINT	1	3	6	36	27	1	74

Table 8. The perception of indirectness in German

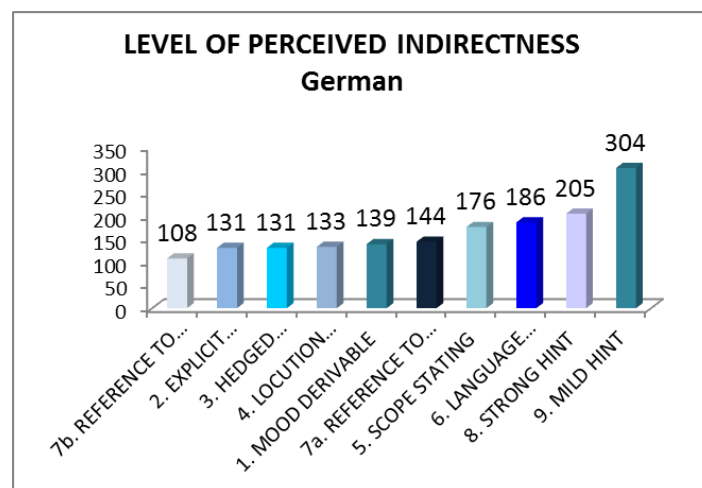


Fig. 7. Level of perceived indirectness. German

As for Italian, I assigned to every answer “Molto esplicita”: 1 point, “Esplicita”: 2 points, “Né implicita né esplicita” 3 points, “Implicita”: 4 points, “Molto implicita”: 5 points.

As we can see from this chart, the two strategies which have been judged most indirect by German speakers are strategy n° 9 and 8. This result confirms the classification of directness that was put forward by Brown and Levinson (1987). A striking result concerns the language specific suggestory formula, which has been classified as rather indirect, by both German and Italian respondents. This type of formulation is generally aimed at sounding out the hearer towards the eventuality of performing the action, as in the request “How about cleaning up the kitchen?”. This result may confirm Venuti’s (2013) view, according to which this type of formulation is more routinized in the English language and could sound rather ambiguous or even ironic in Italian and in German.

On the other extreme of the scale of indirectness, we can find that strategy “7b– reference to a future fact” (e.g. “Hilfst du mir dabei, den Tisch umzustellen?”) has been judged the most direct one. According to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) classification, these utterances would fall under the category “7 – reference to a preparatory condition”, but they seem to be so routinized in Italian and German speech act behavior, that they deserved a category on their own already in Venuti (2013). These utterances seem to have to be understood as at least in their literal, “first” meaning, as requests of information about the immediate future acts of the hearer, as the English future construction “will you” may demonstrate. According to this view, for instance, in a question as “Will you give me a lift?” it is as if the speaker is asking “Are you going to give me a lift, since I've asked you”? Nevertheless, both in Italian (e.g. “Prepari la tavola?”), in German (“Nehmen Sie mich mit”?) and in English this type of questions, uttered with a certain tone of voice, are unequivocally understood as requests.

This result confirms the feeling, already expressed in Venuti (2013), that requests of this type should be considered as rather direct, even if the traditional CCSARP classifies them as conventionally indirect strategies.

Right after the reference to a future condition, the hedged performative, the explicit performative and the locution derivable have been rated direct by German respondents. This result was quite foreseeable, since all three formulas contain an explicit invite to perform the requested action. The most striking result is the position of category 1, the mood derivable strategy, i.e. the request expressed in the imperative mood. This request has been considered explicit by only 70% of German respondents, whereas almost the totality of Italian speakers had rated it direct. This could be due to the fact that German respondents have considered an utterance as “Help me with the table” less explicit of a request as “I ask you to help me moving the table” because the second sentence clearly explains what the hearer is asked to do.

The “reference to a preparatory condition” of the classic type (“Can you...?”) is at the sixth place in the classification of indirectness of German respondents, in line with Brown and Levinson classification which listed it among the “conventionally indirect” strategies. It has to be noted at this point that this strategy was considered rather direct by Italian respondents; therefore it will be a major source of difference in the analysis of the speech act behavior of the two language communities.

3.4 The perception of politeness

3.4.1 The perception of politeness in Italian

The following table summarizes the Italian perception of politeness of the nine request strategies.

Esempio	Strategia di richiesta	Molto cortese	Cortese	Abbastanza cortese	Poco cortese	Per niente cortese	Totale
Pulisci la tua camera!	1. MOOD DERIVABLE				5	26	31
Ti prego di pulire la tua camera.	2. EXPLICIT PERFORMATIVE	6	14	7	3	1	31
Ti posso chiedere di pulire la tua camera?	3. HEDGED PERFORMATIVE	14	8	6	2	1	31
Dovresti pulire la tua camera	4. LOCUTION DERIVABLE		7	9	13	2	31
Spero che tu pulisca la tua camera..	5. SCOPE STATING		8	8	13	2	31
Che ne dici, pulisci la tua camera?	6. LANGUAGE SPECIFIC SUGGESTORY FORMULA	1	9	7	13	1	31
Puoi pulire la tua camera?	7. REFERENCE TO PREPARATORY CONDITION	5	10	9	6	1	31
Vuoi che ti porti la scopa e la paletta?	8. STRONG HINT	5	5	7	7	7	31
Ma che disordine abbiamo qui..	9. MILD HINT			4	13	14	31

Table 9. The perception of politeness in Italian

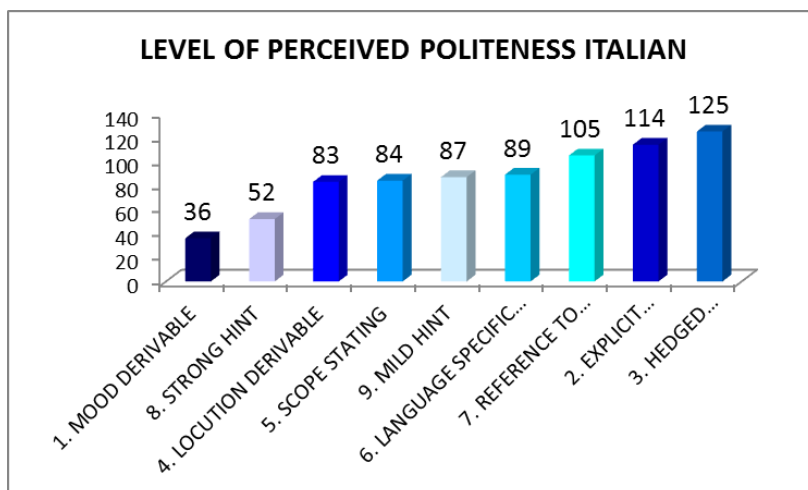


Fig. 8. Level of perceived politeness in Italian

As for indirectness, I assigned to every answer “per niente cortese”: 1 point, “poco cortese”: 2 points, “abbastanza cortese” 3 points, “cortese”: 4 points, “Molto cortese”: 5 points.

Strategy n° 1 and 8, the most direct and almost the most indirect strategy, are considered to be very impolite. These results provide confirmatory evidence of the fact that imperative could sound rather offensive, probably because it directly signals that the request is an order and carries therefore an aura of authority. The interpretation of politeness of strategy 8 (mild hints, non-conventionally indirect strategy) is more controversial, since on the one hand it enhances the degree of optionality for the hearer to refuse (Leech 1983), but on the other, as Blum-Kulka (1987) points out, it also lengthens the inferential path for the hearer, thus increasing the imposition and being impolite. My results confirm this last hypothesis, thus confirming the conclusion of my previous study that indirectness enhances politeness, but only up to a certain point.

The most striking results concern the first three positions in the podium of politeness, namely the hedged performative (judged the politest one by 70% of respondents), the explicit performative (not mitigated by any device, judged polite by 65% of respondents) and the reference to a preparatory condition (judged polite by 48% of respondents). This result, if validated by further research, would confirm the general impression drawn from the data yielded in Venuti (2013), which showed a marked Italian preference for more direct strategies, with respect to the German counterpart.

On the basis of this evidence it seems fair to believe that in Italian, politeness in requests is expressed through directness. In other words, doing the FTA baldly on record would minimize the face threat itself avoiding prolixity, resulting in a waste of time for the hearer and obscurity, resulting in extra work of interpretation for the hearer, and last but not least taking full

responsibility for the performance of the FTA, without burdening the hearer with the doubt of whether or not it has been performed (Ogiermann 2005; Wierzbicka 1985.)

If we consider that the request strategy «reference to a preparatory condition» was rated rather direct by my informants, this conclusion is further corroborated.

3.4.2 The perception of politeness in German

The following table illustrates the German perception of politeness of the nine request strategies.

Beispiel	Aufforderungsstrategie	Sehr höflich	höflich	Ziemlich höflich	Nicht höflich	Überhaupt nicht höflich	Antwortet nicht	Total
Räum dein Zimmer auf!	1. MOOD DERIVABLE	1	2	0	22	49	0	74
Ich bitte dich, dein Zimmer aufzuräumen	2. EXPLICIT PERFORMATIVE	30	35	7	2	0	0	74
Ich möchte dich bitten, dein Zimmer aufzuräumen	3. HEDGED PERFORMATIVE	48	15	10	1	0	0	74
Du könntest dein Zimmer aufräumen	4. LOCUTION DERIVABLE	2	15	34	21	1	1	74
Ich hoffe, dass du bald dein Zimmer aufräumst	5. SCOPE STATING	6	16	25	22	2	3	74
Was hältst du davon, dein Zimmer aufzuräumen?	6. LANGUAGE SPECIFIC SUGGESTORY FORMULA	14	27	10	22	1	0	74
Könntest du dein Zimmer aufräumen?	7. REFERENCE TO PREPARATORY CONDITION	19	25	21	6	0	3	74
Soll ich dir Schaufel und Besen bringen?	8. STRONG HINT	1	6	3	25	39	0	74
Was gibt es denn hier für eine Unordnung!	9. MILD HINT	0	1	1	26	46	0	74

Table 10. The perception of politeness in German

In this table we can already see how the two formulas which have been considered most polite are the explicit performative and the hedged performative one. On the other hand, the “mood derivable” formulation and the “mild hint”, respectively the most direct and the less direct type of requests, are the ones which have been considered less polite. The following chart could provide a clearer view of the result.

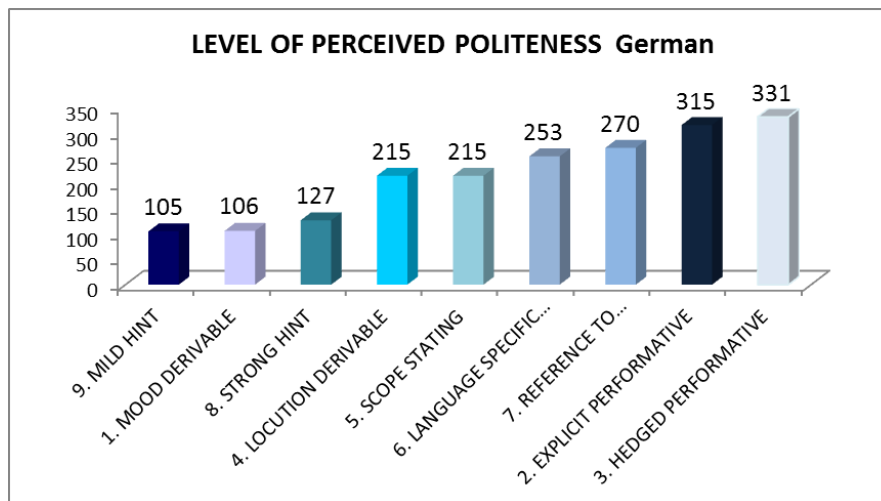


Fig. 9. Level of perceived politeness in German

As for Italian, I assigned to every answer “überhaupt nich höflich”: 1 point, “nicht höflich”: 2 points, “ziemlich höflich” 3 points, “höflich”: 4 points, “sehr höflich”: 5 points.

Strategies n° 1 and 9, i.e. the most direct and almost the most indirect strategy, are according to German respondents very impolite. This result partially confirms Italian data, according to which strategies 1 and 8 were the most impolite ones. These outcomes may provide confirmatory evidence of the fact that the imperative mood could sound rather offensive, probably because it directly signals that the request is an order and carries therefore an aura of authority. The interpretation of politeness of non-conventionally indirect strategies is more controversial, since on the one hand they seem to enhance the degree of optionality for the hearer to refuse (Leech 1983), but on the other, as Blum-Kulka (1987) points out, they also lengthen the inferential path for the hearer. In particular, if strategy 8, which contains a mild reference to the object of the request, may still be considered polite by some people, strategy 9 and its completely obscure point seem to be unequivocally judged very impolite by both groups of respondents. These results endorse the conclusion of my previous study, i.e. that indirectness generally enhances politeness, but only up to a certain point.

The most striking results concern the first three positions in the podium of politeness, namely the hedged performative (judged polite by 85,1% of respondents), the explicit performative (not mitigated by any device, judged polite by 87,8 % of respondents) and the reference to a preparatory condition (judged polite by 59% of respondents). These results are particularly interesting for two reasons. In the first place, they completely replicate Italian responses as far as the scale of politeness is concerned: also Italians had judged these three categories to be the most

polite ones. Secondly, my data fully contradict the theories according to which the “more indirect an illocution is, the more diminished and tentative its force tend to be”, thus increasing politeness.

This result, if validated by the data concerning the perception of directness for Germans, would confirm the general conclusions of Venuti (2013), that directness can actually be in both language communities a way to increase politeness, especially in potentially face threatening situations. Doing the FTA baldly on record would probably minimize the face threat itself whereby avoiding prolixity, which results in a waste of time for the hearer and obscurity, which means extra work of interpretation for the hearer. The speaker also takes full responsibility for the performance of the FTA, without burdening the hearer with the doubt of whether or not it has been performed (Ogiermann 2005; Wierzbicka 1985.) If we consider that the request strategy «reference to a preparatory condition» was rated rather direct by both Italian and German informants, this conclusion is further corroborated.

3.5 The perception of face threat

3.5.1 The perception of face threat in Italian

Respondents were also asked to declare how they would feel in having to formulate the requests solicited by the four situations of my questionnaire. The following table shows the results for Italian.

	Molto tranquillo	Abbastanza tranquillo	Un po' ansioso	Molto ansioso
S1 Window: a doctor asks a nurse to open the window.	14	17		
S2 Notes: a student asks another student to lend him/her the last lecture's notes.	9	14	8	0
S3 Ride: an employee asks a colleague for a ride to the main office.		7	17	7
S4 Extension: a student asks a University lecturer for an extension on a term paper.		2	9	20

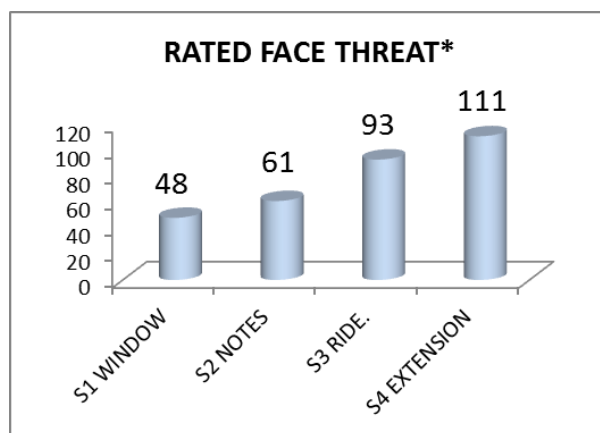


Table 11. The perception of face threat in Italian

Fig. 10. The perception of face threat in Italian

The face threat of the requestive speech act throughout the four situations for the Italian linguistic community was rated correctly in my previous study. Brown and Levinson (1987) formula to compute the face threat seems to have been applied correctly:

$$W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x$$

Weight of the FTA x = Distance (between speaker and hearer) + Power (that the hearer has over the speaker) + Rate of the imposition (of the act x).

The hypothesis which explains a larger use of more direct strategies in the extension situation through a perceived minor risk of a face loss is excluded for the Italian linguistic community. The hypothesis is confirmed that

«In dieser Situation ist der Druck für den Studenten effektiv und erfolgreich zu sein besonders groß. Es ist daher besonders wichtig, dass sich der Student klar und deutlich ausdrückt ohne es an der gebotenen Höflichkeit dem Professor gegenüber fehlen zu lassen. Gerade aus diesem Grund, haben beide Sprechergruppen direktere und einfacher formulierte Bitten produziert und diese Wahl durch die stärkere Verwendung von unterstützenden Äußerungen ausgeglichen³⁴.

3.5.2 The perception of face threat in German

The following table shows the perception of face threat by German respondents.

	Sehr ruhig	Ziemlich ruhig	Ein bisschen besorgt	Sehr besorgt
S1 Window: a doctor asks a nurse to open the window.	29	39	6	
S2 Notes: a student asks another student to lend him/her the last lecture's notes.	18	35	21	
S3 Ride: an employee asks a colleague for a ride to the main office.	1	17	47	9
S4 Extension: a student asks a University lecturer for an extension on a term paper.	1	5	27	41

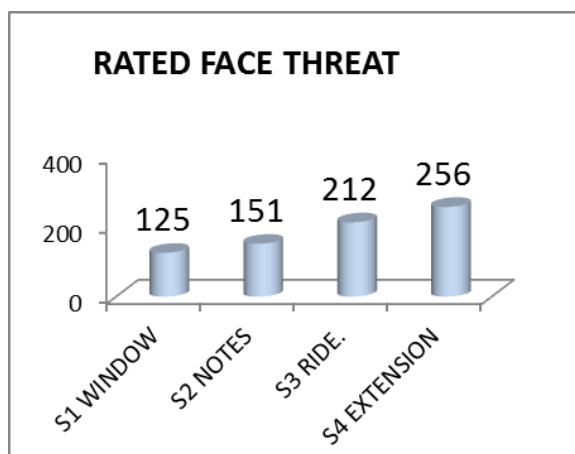


Table 12. The perception of face threat in German

Fig. 11 The perception of face threat in German

³⁴ Ilaria Venuti, Roland Hinterholz (2019)

As results show, Brown and Levinson (1987) formula to compute the face threat seems to have been applied correctly for German respondents as well.

Interestingly enough, the classification of the four situations according to their face threatening character is the same Italian respondents gave. This demonstrates that the hypothesis which explains a larger use of more direct strategies in the extension situation through a perceived minor risk of a face loss is excluded for both linguistic communities. These results provide convincing evidence that Wolfson's «bulge theory», according to which the certainty and fixity of relationships at the extremes of social distance (intimates or status unequals) account for very similar speech act behavior, does not apply to my data.

3.5.3 Polite or effective? That is the question!

My questionnaire also asked respondents to declare whether their priority would have been that of being polite or effective in the four situations proposed. The following figures illustrate their answers.

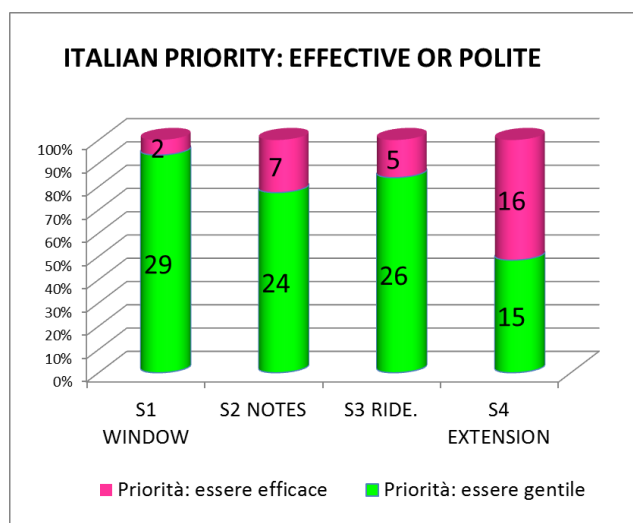


Fig. 12. Italian priority: effective or polite

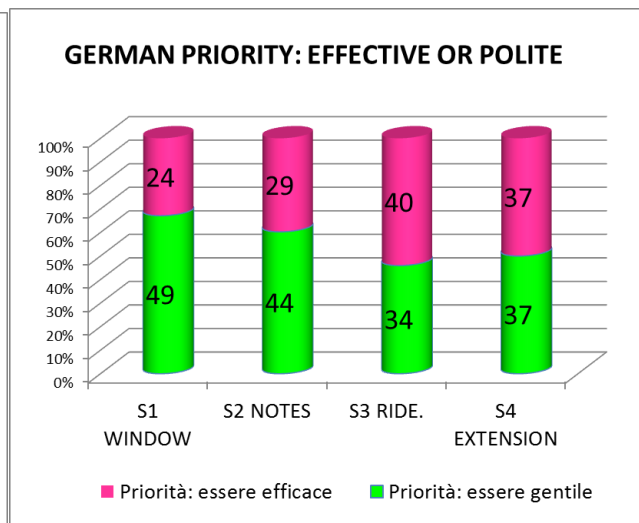


Fig. 13. German priority: effective or polite

The hypothesis which explained the sudden drop in the level of indirectness both in Italian and in German through an enhanced need to be particularly effective in the Extension situation is confirmed.

The chart shows how, all in all, the majority of participants (55,4 %) declared that in formulating the requests throughout the four situations their priority would have been that of being polite. More specifically, the desire of being polite seems to diminish according to the enhanced potential face threat of the situation. The turning point in this trend is, as always, the third and the fourth

situations, in which the need to be effective seems to be perceived more urgently. In particular, 54% of participants declared that they would be more interested in being effective than in being polite when asking for a ride. This judgement is probably due to the fact that the situation was so described, that participants felt the urgency of the necessity of finding a lift to the main office. The fact that they probably felt the pressure of the working environment, in which the situation is set, also played an important role.

The same urgency may have been perceived in the last situation, in which an inferior number of people declared that their priority was that of being effective, and which on the other hand shows a perfect balance between the two necessities of being polite and of being effective. Interestingly enough, also Italian speaker's responses had expressed a constantly growing need to be effective throughout the four situations.

Taking everything into consideration, we can reasonably conclude that according to both Italian and German data two contrasting factors seem to be at play every time we issue a request: the desire to save the face, thus the need to be polite and the desire to have the requested action completed, thus the need to be effective. The linguistic choices of Italian and German respondents, together with most of data collected in similar studies in line with the CCSARP, have always been considered as if the only underlying drive was the one of being polite to face one's own face and the face of the interlocutor. Nonetheless, the answers of my sample reveal that a new perspective is needed in order to fully understand the reasons why the two language communities at issue choose to utter a request in a direct or indirect way.

In the next chapter, the results of Venuti (2013) are reconsidered and re-examined in the light of the results obtained in the assessment questionnaires concerning request strategies and their perception of politeness and indirectness.

Chapter 3.6. Italian and German requests: revisited results

3.6.1 Revision of the classification of request strategies

The chart shows a new classification of the nine request strategies according to the perception of indirectness of Italian and German respondents, which has been illustrated in the previous pages. As the table makes clear, both classifications considerably differ from the one of Brown and Levinson, which had been taken into account in my previous study (2013).

Traditional classification	Italian classification	German classification
Direct strategies		
0. Elliptical phrases. "Two coffee, please".	1. Mood derivable. "Aiutami!"	7. Reference to preparatory conditions (Future) "Hilfst du mir dabei, den Tisch umzustellen?"
1. Mood derivable "Clean up the kitchen!"	3. Hedged performative "Ti posso chiedere di aiutarmi?"	3. Hedged performative „Ich möchte dich bitten, mir mit dem Tisch zu helfen“
2. Explicit performative "I am asking you to move your car"	7. Reference to preparatory conditions (Possibility, condition, permission, ability) "Puoi aiutarmi?"	2. Explicit performative „Ich bitte dich, mir mit dem Tisch zu helfen.“
3. Hedged performative "I have to ask you to clean up the kitchen."	7. Reference to preparatory conditions (Future) "Mi aiuti?"	4. Locution derivable Locution derivable „Du könntest mir helfen, den Tisch umzustellen!“
4. Locution derivable "You'll have to move your car"	5. Scope stating "Mi faresti un piacere se mi aiutassi"	1. Mood derivable „Hilf mir mit dem Tisch!“
5. Scope stating "I'd like to borrow your notes."	2. Explicit performative "Ti chiederei di aiutarmi.."	7. Reference to preparatory conditions (Possibility, condition, permission, ability) „Kannst du mir mit dem Tisch helfen?“
Conventionally indirect strategies		
6. Language specific	6. Language specific	5. Scope stating „Du

suggestory formula “How about cleaning up the kitchen?”	suggestory formula “Che ne diresti di aiutarmi?”	würdest mir einen Gefallen tun, wenn du mir mit dem Tisch hilfst“
7. Reference to preparatory conditions “I was wondering if you could give me a lift.”	4. Locution derivable “Mì dovresti aiutare”	6. Language specific suggestory formula „Was hältst du davon, mir mit dem Tisch zu helfen?“
Conventionally indirect strategies		
8. Strong hints “Will you be going home now?”	8. Strong hints “Se solo mi aiutassi..”	8. Strong hints „Wenn du mir mit dem Tisch helfen würdest!“
9. Mild hints “You have been busy here, haven’t you?”	9. Mild hints “Che pesante questo tavolo”	9. Mild hints „Ach, ist dieser Tisch schwer!“

Table 13. Revision of the classification of request strategies

First of all, request strategies of n° 7 type appear to be perceived as rather direct, occupying respectively the third and the fourth position in terms of directness in Italian and the first and the fifth in German. Sticking to these results, this category should be included among the first 5 strategies, classified by Brown and Levinson (1987) as direct, and not among the «conventionally indirect» ones, where the Cross Cultural Speech Act Coding Manual put them. This would confirm and reinforce Morgan’s (1977) view, which questioned their very nature of “indirect” speech acts and suggested that they are rather to be considered pure formulaic expressions, which directly carry the meaning and the force of a request, without the need for the hearer to take any inferential path.

What is more, the request strategy of the “will you” type seems to be perceived as extremely direct in the two languages at issue. These utterances are in their literal meaning requests of information about the immediate future acts of the hearer, as the English future construction “will you” may demonstrate. In a question as “Will you give me a lift?” it is as if the speaker is asking “Are you going to give me a lift, since I’ve asked you”? Nevertheless, both in Italian (e.g. “Prepari la tavola?”, in German (“Nehmen Sie mich mit”?) and in English this type of questions, uttered with a certain tone of voice, are unequivocally understood as requests and are so routinized in conversation, that they deserved a category on their own already in Venuti (2013).

Beside the reference to a preparatory condition, the explicit performative, the hedged performative and the mood derivable (imperative) were classified among the direct strategies by

Italian and German speakers in accordance. This result was foreseeable, since all three formulas contain an explicit invite to perform the requested action. The two groups of respondents disagree about the position of strategy 4 (locution derivable), 5 (scope stating) and 6 (language specific suggestory formula).

The most striking position is the one of category 1, the mood derivable strategy, i.e. the request expressed in the imperative mood. This request has been considered very explicit by only 70% of German respondents, whereas almost the totality of Italian speakers had rated it direct. This could be due to the fact that German respondents have considered an utterance as “Help me with the table” less explicit of a request as “I ask you to help me moving the table” because the second sentence clearly explains what the hearer is asked to do.

Last but not least, the two strategies which have been judged most indirect by German speakers are strategy n° 9 and 8. This result confirms the classification of directness which has been put forward by Brown and Levinson (1987).

All things considered, all these data question the validity of the analysis of requests of Venuti (2013), and another interpretation of results in the light of these new findings is required.

3.6.2 Indirectness: revisited results

In the light of the new classification of request strategies, data of Venuti (2013) have been reanalysed. The two following tables represent Italian and German choices of request strategies, with a new distinction between direct and indirect strategies. As explained in the previous chapter, according to Italian and German responses the first 5 categories (category 7 has two variants) should be labelled as “direct”, whereas the last four indirect.

Nevertheless, the distinction among direct, indirect and unconventionally indirect strategy is too arbitrary to be taken as an absolute criterion of interpretation of data. The only fact we can be sure about is that Italian and German perception of indirectness steadily increases in the above-mentioned order, which is different for both groups. For this reason, it has been tried to calculate an “total indirectness score”, assigning to every answer a score from 1 to 10, depending on the position of that strategy in the scale of indirectness for that language. The sum of the so obtained scores was then divided for the number of available answers, giving therefore an “index of indirectness” for that language in that specific situation.

INDIRECTNESS INDEXES ITALIAN													
SITUATIONS	DIRECT STRATEGIES						CONVENTIONALLY AND NON CONVENTIONALLY INDIRECT STRATEGIES				TOTAL INDIRECTNESS SCORE	TOTAL EMPLOYABLE ANSWERS	INDIRECTNESS INDEX
	1 (1)	3 (2)	7 PO+CO +AB (3)	7 FU (4)	5 (5)	2 (6)	6 (7)	4 (8)	8 (9)	9 (10)			
S1 WINDOW	12		24	3					1		105	40	2,62
S2 NOTES		6	20	12	1						125	39	3,2
S3 RIDE		5	18	13					4		152	40	3,8
S4 EXTENSION		6	26	2	3				2		131	39	3,35

Table 14. Indirectness indexes Italian

INDIRECTNESS INDEXES GERMAN													
	DIRECT STRATEGIES						CONVENTIONALLY AND NON CONVENTIONALLY INDIRECT STRATEGIES				TOTAL INDIRECTNESS SCORE	TOTAL EMPLOYABLE ANSWERS	INDIRECTNESS INDEX
	7 FU (1)	3 (2)	2 (3)	4 (4)	1 (5)	7 PO+CO +AB (6)	5 (7)	6 (8)	8 (9)	9 (10)			
S1 WINDOW	5				8	21		1	1	1	198	37	5,3
S2 NOTES						40					240	40	6
S3 RIDE	5			1		29			4		219	39	5,6
S4 EXTENSION	1	10	3			21	3		1		186	39	4,76

Table 15. Indirectness indexes German

The two tables represent the classification of Italian and German choices according to their perception of indirectness. As explained in the previous chapter, the first 5 categories (category 7 has two variants) should be labelled as “direct”, whereas the last four indirect. More specifically, the seventh and eighth have been considered conventionally indirect, whereas the ninth and the tenth unconventionally indirect. According to this classification, request strategies 1, 3, 7 (with reference to possibility, ability, permission and condition), 7 “future” (the one in which the requester asks if the interlocutor is going to do the requested action) 5 and 2 are perceived by Italian speakers as rather direct, whereas categories 6, 4 as conventionally indirect and 8 and 9 as unconventionally indirect. Likewise, we can reasonably claim that categories n° 7 “future”), 3, 2, 4, 1 and 7 (possibility, ability, permission and to a condition) are perceived by German speakers as direct, whereas strategies 5, 6, 8 and 9 as rather indirect.

After this analysis of data, the new indirectness trend would be as in Fig.14.

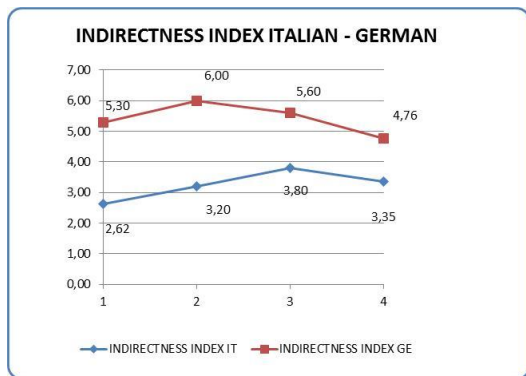


Fig. 14. Indirectness index Italian – German

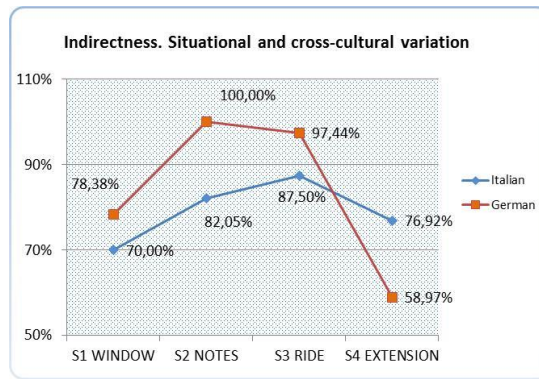


Fig. 15. Indirectness. Situational and cross-cultural variation

If we compare Fig. 14, which illustrates the last results, and Fig. 15, in which the conclusions of Venuti (2013) are represented, we can spot both similarities and important differences.

First of all, the overall tendency of both Italian and German respondents seems to be conserved, with the situations being ordered, in terms of increasing indirectness: 4 (extension), 1 (window), 3 (lift) and 2 (notes) for Germans and 1 (window), 4 (extension), 2 (notes) and 3 (lift) for Italians. This result seems to confirm Wolfson (1986, 1988) hypothesis, according to which the speech act behaviour displayed among intimates (1) is very similar to the one used among strangers and status unequals (4), whereas status equal friends, co-workers and acquaintances account for equivalent speech act behaviour. According to Wolfson, the explanation for this pattern is that the social relationships at the two extremes (for example intimates on the one side and status unequals on the other) are fixed, closed, and are therefore much less likely to change. As a consequence, people feel much less worried of doing social damage to each other and are, therefore, more direct. It is in relationships which are not so defined that the potential exists, for example, for a friendship to emerge, and it is in these “still open” relationships, therefore, which the greatest need for care and negotiation in interaction will be perceived, also through indirectness.

Secondly, the chart seems to confirm the general assumption, driven in Venuti (2013) that German speakers tend to be more indirect than their Italian counterpart. The graph unequivocally shows that German indexes of indirectness are superior to Italian indexes throughout the four situations. The already existing difference, which had been explained in Venuti (2013) through the extensive use of strategy 7 by German speakers, is intensified here by the fact that Italian respondents considered strategy 7 to be much more direct (3rd place in the scale of indirectness) than the German counterpart. The only difference between the two graphs lies in the fourth situation: if in my first results German speech act behaviour seemed to become much more direct than the Italian one, in my last results the index of indirectness remains steadily higher than the Italian index. This could be explained through the fact that both Italian and German respondents

selected with a higher frequency strategy 7, which was considered more indirect by German speakers, 5 and 9, which additionally scored 30 points in the total “indirectness”.

3.7 Conclusions

Taking everything into consideration, we can conclude that:

- Italian and German speakers do not perceive indirectness in the same way, and, most importantly, their perception of indirectness in the various request strategies differs considerably from the classification provided by Brown and Levinson (1987).
- As hypothesised in Venuti (2013), strategy 7 is so routinized in German and Italian request behaviour that it is perceived as appropriate in very different contexts and rather direct.
- The interpretation of results given in Venuti (2013) proved to be quite truthful, since it already highlighted some important aspects. In the first place, it has been confirmed that Italian speakers perform requests in a general more direct way than their German counterparts, “compensating” with a generally larger use of internal and external modification. Secondly, the new results confirm that Germans become more indirect in the following order: 4 (extension), 1 (window), 3 (lift) and 2 (notes) and 1 (window), 4 (extension), 2 (notes) and 3 (lift) for Italians. Wolfson’s theory (1986, 1988), according to which the certainty and fixity of relationships at the extremes of social distance (intimates or status unequals) account for very similar speech act behaviour, seems to be supported.
- The new interpretation of data sanctions the fact that both groups’ general level of indirectness drops in the fourth situation, where in contrast it was expected to raise.

This may be an evidence of the fact that indirectness in the formulation of requests is not always considered the best strategy in order to achieve politeness. In this regard, further light will be shed in the following chapters in the comparison of Italian and German responses concerning their perception of politeness, face threat and their need to be efficacious vs. polite in the pragmatic situations observed.

4. A comparison of interruptions, discourse patterns and reliance upon the context in Italian, German and Austrian German

In this section, I will further investigate the perception of politeness in the two cultures at issue, by trying to shed light on three other aspects of the communication modes of Italian and German speakers. First of all, the study attempts to shed light on some of the differences existing between the Italian and the German communication modes in terms of the perception of interruptions in conversation (by means of *Zwischenfragen*). Secondly, the position of the most important point in discourse (topic-comment or comment-topic) is investigated and, finally, the communicative style is examined with reference to the categories of “low-context” vs “high-context” societies. The first part of this section is devoted to the terminological clarification of these three concepts, whereas in the second part the empirical study is presented.

For this research project I initially chose Austrian speakers of German both for logistical reasons and for a personal interest for the Austrian culture. Only afterwards I added the data of German speakers, whose responses can now be compared to Austrian German in order to have a deeper insight into these cultures. 16 Italian speakers, 16 Austrian speakers of German and 18 German speakers were asked to complete a questionnaire (see Appendix) containing three sections, which invited them respectively to judge two conversations in which interruptions took place, to rate two patterns of discourse (inductive or deductive) in terms of clarity and to declare their own agreement to 8 statements concerning their communicative styles.

4.1 Preliminary theoretical considerations

4.1.1 Turn taking and interruptions

As Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) note, an ideal conversation is organized so that no interruptions occur. The coordination between the speaker and listener is perfect in that the speaker sends the right signals—verbal and/or nonverbal—to the listener when a turn change is due. The listener understands and takes the signals for a turn change. Nonetheless, as we all know, real conversations are far more different than this. Understanding when it is the right moment to make a

comment, ask a question or even change the subject is the product of a complex but quick decision, based on interpersonal and cultural clues.

An interpersonal way to signal the end of a turn of speaking could be a change in *tempo*, intonation, the completion of syntactic units and most of all, taking pauses. With these and others gestural clues the speaker shows the listener that he is finishing a point and expects the listener to respond in some way, either giving feedback (back channeling) or take the floor. According to Scollon and Scollon (1995), there are at least four kinds of pauses: the “cognitive” ones, which are taken to think, the “backchannel” ones, which are taken for the other speaker to give feedback, the “interactive” ones, which are taken to let the other person take the floor, and the “accidental” (my definition) ones, caused by external factors such as a cough or sudden noises.

The cultural clues indicating that the other person has the possibility to step in the conversation are usually given by the common ground, as for instance if a conversation is understood in that culture as something co-created by two interlocutors, in a constant shift and sometimes mix of voices, or rather as an ordered interchange of different opinions (Balboni 1999).

If the second speaker reads the interpersonal and cultural clues correctly, everything progresses smoothly. Problems arise when either he does not respond, and the first speaker is left holding the conversational bag, or he does not interpret the pauses in the right way and takes the floor at an inappropriate moment. If someone stops to look for the right word and the other speaker takes the floor, a cognitive pause has been transmuted into an interactive one. In the same way, if two conversationalists belonging to distinct cultures differ in their expectations about the appropriate length of pauses or the frequency of turn exchanges, the consequences could be disastrous. The person with a slower pace could namely see his attempts to step into the conversation unattended and quickly develop hostility towards the interlocutor.

The main issue concerning pauses in conversation is that in various scholars’ opinion (Ferguson 1977, Jacob 1974; Mishler & Waxler 1968) their disrespect, which results in the speech move of interrupting, is commonly considered a power device, imposed on the interruptee by the interrupter. Likewise, Zimmerman & West (1975), Hawkins (1995) and Rogers & Jones (1975) confirm this idea in asserting that all interruptions are, without exception, considered power displays, and conversation is a constant battle for control over the floor between interlocutors. Similarly, Schmidt (1990) numbers the move of interrupting among the speech moves leading to a position “up”, since it could be used to prevaricate the interlocutor.

In spite of this, the position equating interruption to power, control, or dominance has gradually been criticized by many scholars (Beattie 1982; Goldberg 1990; Meltzer, Morris,

& Hayes, 1971; Murray, 1987), who in turn have proposed a more balanced view of interruption. Tannen (1981), for instance, observed that in some situations frequent interruptions can create high involvement among the conversational partners, promoting feelings of mutual interest, enthusiasm, and solidarity. Murata (1994) on the other hand put forward a distinction between an intrusive (or power related) and cooperative (or non-power related) type of interruption. The former ones are used to seize control of the process and/or content of the conversation, whereas the second ones are aimed at promoting or rescuing the speaker or clarify the content of the conversation.

Unfortunately, being the intention (in the Gricean meaning) of an utterance rarely so unmistakable, the perception of an interruption as intrusive or cooperative varies greatly according to the culture.

4.1.2 Different cultures, different languages, different discourse patterns

Research in discourse systems has highlighted how the order in which the main point of a discourse and the background to that point are placed is far from being fixed across cultures. According to scholars' opinion, there are basically two types of organization of discourse, namely the "topic-comment" organization and the "comment-topic" one. It is necessary to note here that the term "topic" (which could also be called "theme") does not indicate the part of a clause, but rather the part of a general discourse in which the theme is explained and the "common ground" is built. The word "comment" (also referred to as "rheme" or "focus"), in the same way, designates the point of a discourse in which the speaker gives his/her personal contribute to the topic, adding something to the common ground. Scollon and Scollon (1995) point out that a lot of confusion and misunderstanding in intercultural encounters arise precisely from the failure to recognize the order in which these two points are normally placed in a culture.

In the "topic-comment" type of discourse the main point, or, better said, the personal contribute to the conversation is placed only after a sufficient amount of backgrounding to the topic has been done. The best way to summarize this structure of discourse is:

"Because of Y (topic, background, or reasons) → X (comment, main point, or action suggested)"

An example of this construction of discourse might be the following speech, hypothetically given by a Chinese businessperson during a business meeting with Anglo-American businessmen.

"Because most of our production is done in China now, and, uh, it's not really certain how the government will react in the run-up to 1997, and since I think a certain amount of caution in committing to TV advertisement is necessary because of the expense. So, I suggest that we delay making our decision until after Legco makes its decision". (Scollon and Scollon 1995, p. 1)

Another way to organize the same speech could be the so called “comment – topic” one. In this frame, the speaker declares his/her opinion and makes his/her point explicit straight away, and only afterwards he/she develops arguments in support of what he/she has just said. The formula of this type of discourse would be:

“X (commitment, main point, or action suggested) because of Y (topic, background, and reasons)”.

In other words, if someone gave the same speech according to this pattern of discourse he/she would probably say something like:

“I suggest that we delay making our decision until Legco makes his decision. That’s because I think a certain amount of caution in committing to TV advertisement is necessary because of the expense. In addition to that, most of our production is done in China now, and it’s not really certain how the government will react in the run up to 1997”. (Scollon and Scollon, 1995)

According to John Gumperz (1977, 1982, 1992) every successful message carries in itself a second meta-message which tells the listener how to interpret the basic message; and the clearest meta-message is precisely the point in which the message occurs in a conversation. If we stick to this idea, it goes without saying that members of a culture in which the prevalent communication mode is “comment-topic” will focus on the opening stages of a discourse. If the first sentences/utterances do not entail the crucial point, they will end up thinking that the speaker is “inscrutable”, “confused” or, worse, that he/she is trying to “beat around the bush”.

Likewise, a hearer belonging to a “topic-comment” community will perceive as rude, arrogant and too frank someone who opens a discourse with a straightforward statement. The sensation he will have is that the speaker has such a high consideration of his own opinions to think it is enough to utter them out of the blue, without the need to subtly “persuade” him.

4.1.3 High context vs. low context communication

The third aspect I took into consideration in spotting some differences between Italian and Austrian German is the extent to which a specific culture relies to the context in order to create and exchange meaning. The “context” refers to the framework, background and shared knowledge in which a speech event takes place. The reason why this aspect catches the attention of intercultural communication sciences is that it might well be that in a culture the context determines the meaning

of utterances or even of silences, and in another the only information that counts is exchanged “on record”, i.e. it is openly pronounced.

Hall (1976) provides a scientific description of the phenomenon as he talks about “high context” vs. “low context” societies. In his opinion, high context societies are those in which much of the meaning exchanged in a context is done without or with very few words. As a matter of fact, the part of the message which is explicitly stated is perhaps the less important one: the most important part is either in the physical setting or initialized in the person. Therefore, messages tend to be indirect, implicit or subtle, and it is often non-verbal communication which makes the message clear. High context communication can often be found in traditional societies, as for instance many countries of the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and South America, but also Italy, Spain, France and Greece.

Low context cultures, conversely, are those in which detailed verbal messages are favored and paid attention to. Individuals from these cultures share less background information about one another – or assume to – and consequently rely less on non-verbal cues. The messages conveyed in those cultures tend to be direct, verbose and repetitive and people who “speak up” and “say what’s on their mind” (Samovar et al. 2013) are appreciated. These societies are typically less traditional and include North American, German and Scandinavian cultures.

Differences in this sense may lead to a problematic type of communication; in particular as far as the perception of the credibility of the interlocutor is concerned. In front of a high-context Japanese individual, in fact, the talkativeness of a low context German might be interpreted as off-putting or even meaningless, and thus untrustworthy. In the same way, the low context German might find the Japanese silence to be an indication that the speaker is hiding something and thus is being dishonest. Similarly, a French business man can feel insulted in his intelligence by a German colleague who will tend to explain the obvious, whereas Germans can think that French managers provide no direction.

It goes without saying that we cannot univocally rank a cultural context as “high” or “low” in an absolute sense, because each message can be presented on a continuum from high to low. Moreover, discrepancies in this sense are not to be found only across different cultures but also in people belonging to the same cultural background. In teaching education sciences, for instances, teachers are suggested to pay attention to whether their students manage to tolerate ambiguities or not. The “ambiguities-tolerant” student manages to accept the fact not to understand or know everything from the beginning, and to accept to focus only on a part (of a text, of a rule), something which can be found in high-context cultures. On the other hand, the “ambiguities-intolerant”

individual wants to understand and be told everything; otherwise he/she is simply not able to proceed. This feature can be connected to low context cultures.

The interesting assumption beyond this framework is that the way in which people communicate is assumed to designate a whole culture, provided that the two variables are seen as deeply interdependent. Hall (1976) claims that the reason why in high context cultures much of the message is left unsaid is that these societies actually present a lower racial diversity, so people share an important part of the common ground. What is more, they present a strong sense of tradition and history, and tend to change little over time. They expect small, close-knit groups, and reliance on the group, which lays the foundations of identity. Professional and personal lives are often intertwined, and how things get done depends on relationships with people. Roles in those societies are more defined and hierarchical. Relationships are built slowly and tend to be stable and long-term.

A low context type of communication, on the other hand, can be explained through the necessity to accommodate individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds. In other words, the fact that interlocutors have a heterogeneous provenience forces them to be extremely precise, straightforward and clear, and to intend words literally, in the attempt to minimize the risk of misunderstandings. For the same reasons, agreements are always concluded with written contracts, which spell out every detail explicitly. Decisions are taken on the basis of facts, following strict procedures and looking at the goal rather than at the people involved. Relationships tend to begin and end quickly, and identity is rooted in oneself and in one's own accomplishments.

4.2 Correspondences according to the tradition and proposal for new ones

It could be interesting to understand whether some parallelisms can be traced among the investigated dimensions, and whether some specific profiles can emerge for the two language communities at issue. Scollon & Scollon (1995) and Gudykunst (1988) can help us in this process, since they traced some parallelisms among the aspects we analyzed so far. In this paragraph, I'll illustrate them, building a dichotomic frame, which will allow me to formulate some hypotheses on the conversational behaviours of the two languages at issue. Once the conversational profiles of the two languages are complete, we will be able to better interpret directness, knowing, for instance, whether to see it as an attempt to be polite or simply successful. As a matter of fact, a preliminary

consideration is necessary for the thematic structure of discourse, a category for which I suggest some changes and adjustments to the existing theory.

4.2.1 A controversial case: the relation between the thematic structure of discourse and involvement vs. deference politeness

It is commonly assumed among intercultural communication scholars that the “comment – topic” organization of discourse is typical of Western societies, and corresponds to a deductive line of argument. The underlying idea to this style, which in Scollon and Scollon’s (1995) view is favoured among American and other Western societies, is to put the topic into the conversational floor right away, so that the hearers knows the direction in which the speaker is moving. Details can be worked out later, also as the result of the hearers’ questions. As a consequence, this communicative pattern should display shorter interturn pauses and more frequent interruptions (2). The message this type of conversational pattern conveys is this: “I have the right to occupy the conversational floor as much as you do”; but also “I have the right to put forward my idea right away on the ground that you will equally have the right to disagree and advance yours”. For this reason, scholars have tended to see this communicative style as an involvement politeness strategy (Brown and Levinson 1987): meaning seems to be constructed together, as the result of the exchange of ideas.

On the other hand, the “topic – comment” organization of discourse could easily be identified with an inductive rhetorical strategy and according to ethnographic studies it is prevalent of Asian and East cultures. At a closer view, this process was nothing but the one Aristoteles recommended in one of his main works, namely the “Rhetoric”. In the Philosopher’s view, the best way to organize a speech that had to convince an audience or exhort it to action was to present all the argumentations moving through logical steps and progressively lead the listener to the conclusion, which at that point sounds obvious. Scollon and Scollon (1995) stress that this strategy works best when the speaker assumes the listener will resist his own conclusion, or, in conversation, if it is not clear who has the right to declare his own opinion first. In sum, the speaker shows respect in assuming that the hearer will not automatically agree with his position and therefore trying to subtly and gently convince him. For these reasons, this strategy is considered by the two scholars independence politeness oriented.

Nonetheless, if we look at it in another way, there are a lot of arguments that can be advanced to support a different view of the question. First of all, we should consider that the “politeness behavior” should be observed as a flow coming from the speaker and directed towards the hearer. In requests, for instance, the perspective with which politeness is usually evaluated is the one of the speaker (e.g. the requester) towards the hearer (e.g. requestee). Consequently, if we stick to the idea that “time is money” and whenever we speak we are occupying the conversational ground, we could conclude that every speech act is a sort of imposition on the hearer. In this perspective, a topic-comment construction of discourse is far from respecting the hearer’s freedom of action; intending for “freedom of action” the freedom to decide whether or not to listen to a “long story” before getting to the point³⁵. A comment-topic discourse would much more easily grant the freedom of the hearer, providing that in this way the speaker immediately goes to the point, giving him the possibility to choose whether or not to listen to a long argumentation, and the ability to eventually interrupt and ask for clarification.

Compare these two requests:

- “Ich habe mir ein sehr komplexes Thema für die Seminararbeit gewählt, welches auch kein Teil ihres Kurses war. Dies tat ich, weil mich dieses Thema sehr interessiert und auch zum Kurs past. Jedoch ist daher der Zeitaufwand so enorm, dass ich ziemlich nicht mit dem Abgabetermin fertig bin. Könnte ich daher ausnahmsweise eine Verlängerung der Frist erhalten, bitte?“
- „Prof, posso avere una settimana in più per la tesi, perchè ho avuto difficoltà con la ricerca del materiale“.

In the former case, the construction of discourse is “topic-comment”: before coming to the point, the student tries to motivate, as minutely as possible, his request. The longish explanation may convince the hearer, but it can also very well irritate or confuse him, since it occupies a considerable part of the conversational floor. The freedom of the Professor to decide how much time to devote to the student is reduced. On the contrary, the latter request immediately goes to the point. The Professor decides whether to engage in a long discussion with the student or to immediately grant the exception. This possibility of choice guarantees his freedom, thus protecting his negative face.

At the same time, in a topic – comment construction of discourse the speaker takes the hearer by hand and conducts him through his argumentation. The speaker shows and assumes full

³⁵ This position is similar to the one maintained by Wierzbicka, who claimed that directness in requests is a way of showing respect for the time of the hearer.

cooperation on the part of the hearer; that is why he conducts his speech unhurriedly. This behavior can be interpreted as a sign of positive politeness, because the aspect of the relationship is predominant, but also as a lack of negative politeness towards the hearer, since his freedom is somehow diminished.

This argument may be brought to such lengths as to state that, at a closer look, the same amount of positive and negative politeness is equally present in both constructions of discourse, the only difference being the direction of it. We have seen how, in the comment – topic construction of discourse, the speaker leaves the hearer the freedom to decide whether to engage in a long conversation, showing in this way consideration for his negative face. At the same time, the hearer displays involvement and commitment whereby interrupting often the speaker, giving immediate feedback and constructing meaning together with him: in other words, he pays a tribute for the positive face of the interlocutor. Likewise, in a topic – comment communicative exchange, the speaker expresses positive politeness towards the interlocutor, by wanting to take him step by step in his reasoning, and the hearer shows negative politeness towards the speaker, by letting him speak without interrupting. The following chart may help us in further clarifying this point.

	COMMENT – TOPIC CONSTRUCTION OF DISCOURSE	TOPIC – COMMENT CONSTRUCTION OF DISCOURSE
Speaker → Hearer	Negative politeness	Positive politeness
Hearer → Speaker	Positive politeness	Negative politeness

Table 16. Positive and negative politeness in the construction of discourse

In conclusion, as illustrated in the table, I reasonably concluded that a topic – comment construction of discourse should be associated with positive politeness, whereas a comment-topic construction of discourse should be associated with negative politeness.

4.2.2 Other parallelisms: a framework of analysis and hypothesis

Ref. N°	DICHOTOMIES		Reference
	PROFILE 1	PROFILE 2	
1	Topic – comment (inductive rhetorical strategy)	Comment – topic (deductive rhetorical strategy)	Gudykunst (1984)
2	No interruptions	A lot of interruptions	Gudykunst (1984)
3	In discourse-organization: Positive face	In discourse organization: Negative face	My proposal
4	In requests and impositives: Negative face	In requests and impositives: Positive face	Scollon & Scollon (1995)
5	Other-oriented face saving strategies	Self-oriented face saving strategies	Ting—Toomey & Kurogi (1998)
6	Relational oriented conflict management strategies	Outcome-oriented conflict strategies	Ting—Toomey & Kurogi (1998)
7	High context communication	Low context communication	(Hall 1976)
8	Indirectness	Directness	Ting—Toomey & Kurogi (1998)
9	Politeness (in the traditional sense)	Efficacy	My proposal
10	Überredung (feelings/persuasion)	Überzeugung (reason/convincement)	My proposal
11	Collectivistic	Individualistic	Kim (1995)

Table 17. Dichotomies

Even if the categories of positive and negative politeness had to be relocated as far as the thematic structure of discourse is concerned, I am inclined to believe that in requests the distribution of deference vs involvement politeness (4) coincides with the one hypothesized by Scollon & Scollon (1995). In particular, negative politeness should be more likely to appear in profile 1, the

chief expression of which is indirectness, according to the tradition³⁶. From this viewpoint, an indirect requestive speech act gives the hearer more options to refuse and therefore enhances politeness.

All in all, the categories of positive and negative politeness appear to be too subtle to be definitively associated with one profile or the other. Interestingly enough, Ting – Toomey and Kurogi (1998) draw a distinction between other-oriented face saving strategies and self-oriented face-saving strategies (5), which seem to be more suitable for a neat classification into the two profiles. In particular, they argue that members of collectivistic cultures (11) use other-oriented face-saving (both negative and positive) strategies more often than members of individualistic cultures. This statement is one of the 32 propositions they developed in their so called “Face negotiation theory” (1985), which traces some correspondences among dimensions of cultural variability. Kim (1993) supports this theory when he talks about two types of constraints in conversation: social relational and task oriented. In a social-relational oriented culture, the focus in conversation is on avoiding hurting the hearer’s feelings and minimizing imposition on them. On the contrary, task oriented cultures give great importance to clarity, explicitness and the pursuit of one owns goals. The same consideration can be made, according to Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998), for conflict management strategies (6). Collectivistic cultures use relational process-oriented conflict strategies whereas members of individualistic cultures tend to use outcome-oriented conflict strategies.

Low and high-context cultures (7) are present in every culture, but one form, as Hall (1976) points out, tends to predominate. More specifically, Hall maintains that members of individualistic cultures are more inclined to use low-context communication and communicate in a more direct fashion (8), since they value indirect communication as ineffective. Members of collectivistic cultures, in contrast, will rely on high context, and therefore indirect messages, when trying to maintain in-group harmony.

As the previous paragraph made clear, the topic-comment construction (1-7) of discourse should be more typical of high context cultures. Despite the fact that high context communication is explained to be much more concise than the low context one, what is considered here is the promptness with which the illocutionary point is revealed, the level of clarity and transparency with which the speaker shows “where he is going”. Therefore, a communicative move in which the illocutionary point is revealed only at the end is to be considered high context, and the fact that some time is devoted to the description of the “context” is not a chance. A low context society, on the contrary, considers clarity, transparency and directness of the utmost importance, and should

³⁶ For a more thorough consideration of indirectness from the traditional and modern perspective, cf. chapter 1.

therefore display a preference for a comment-topic kind of discourse, i.e. one in which the aim of the speaker is immediately stated.

High context cultures prefer verbally indirect face work strategies (8) (for instance indirect questions) whereas members of low context cultures favour direct strategies. This position is further corroborated by Burgoon (1992), who argues that members of collectivistic cultures expect greater verbal indirectness, politeness and non-immediacy than members of individualistic cultures. Kim (1995) further clarifies this point, when he suggests that individuals belonging to a collectivistic society activate the so called “interdependent construals”, i.e. they consider not hurting other people’s feelings more important than achieving their goals.

If we consider the distinction between efficacy and politeness which has been put forward in ch. 3, we could generally state that in a high context, topic-comment, collectivistic type of culture the main aim in communication is to be polite and socially appropriate, whereas in low context, comment-topic, individualistic type of culture the key concern of the speaker is to be effective (9).

Another point concerns the difference between the categories of *Überzeugung* and *Überredung* (10). In a high context type of culture, speaking is considered a sort of art, namely the art of persuading the interlocutor. Therefore, we should assume that strategies of persuasion (*Überredung*) will be more easily found in high context cultures. In these societies, the speaker conducts a long, unhurried talk and tries to slowly persuade the hearer of the truthfulness of his position or to move him to do something, both in the interest of himself or of the community. It is not a coincidence that, according to Aristoteles, one of the key competences a talented orator had to master was the art of arousing pathos, i.e. feelings, in the interlocutor. In Athens of the IV century B.C. this was taught in “rhetorical schools”, in which politicians learnt how to structure a talk, so that it include both logical and emotional aspects, but reach his peak of efficacy in the last part, the so-called “peroratio³⁷”. Conversely, in low context societies the main concern of the speaker is to logically demonstrate that his point i.e. his “comment” is valid or his request justifiable and therefore we suppose to find a higher amount of *Überzeugung* strategies, which are grounded on logical argumentations.

A final consideration should be made on the categories of collectivism vs individualism (11), i.e. one of the most important dimensions in cultural variability, which I chose not to investigate since it pertains to the domain of anthropology and it has less visible (at least immediate) linguistic consequences. In a collectivistic society, “people belong to in-groups or collectivities which are supposed to look after them in exchange for loyalty”. This strong

³⁷ The peroration was the last part of a rhetorical discourse, in which the speaker tries to touch the feelings of the audience to incline them to agreement.

connection with the group implies, in communication, a marked concern not to hurt the hearer's feelings and not to impose on him. On the other hand, in individualistic cultures "people are supposed to look after themselves and their immediate family only" (Hofstede & Bond, 1984, p. 419). Members of these cultures will put greater emphasis on clarity and will perceive direct requests as the most effective strategies to accomplish their goals (Kim and Wilson, 1994).

In conclusion, my hypothesis is that the data I will gather for the above highlighted categories of cultural variability will distribute coherently along the correspondences we have traced so far, allowing me to determine whether the Italian and the German linguistic culture can be at least partially associated with profile 1 or 2. If this is the case, the overview I get will allow me to interpret the data concerning politeness in a more reliable way.

4.3. The study

4.3.1 Questions of the study

The purpose of this pilot-study is to provide a first insight into the differences in the communication habits of the Italian, the German and the Austrian speech communities, with respect to three aspects investigated so far, which are considered relevant in intercultural communication studies. More specifically, my research questions were:

1. Are interruptions (and in particular "Zwischenfragen"³⁸) perceived differently in the Italian and in the German speech communities? To what extent do members of the three speech communities agree on the perception of their politeness?
2. Can we detect similar patterns in the two languages as far as the position of the most important point in discourse is concerned?
3. Considering Hall (1976) distinction between low context and high context cultures, with which model are the Italian, the German and the Austrian communicative styles more connected to?

³⁸ The term "Zwischenfragen" stands in German for the questions that are asked interrupting the speaker, usually in order to clarify a point.

4.3.2 Methodology. The sample

The group of informants totals 50, and comprises 16 Austrian, 16 North-Italian and 18 German native speakers. They are students within the age of 23 to 30 approximately. Unfortunately, in order to protect the full anonymity of respondents, the questionnaire did not ask informants to declare their gender, so we cannot indicate the precise number of males and females involved in the survey. However, the researcher tried to keep the number of respondents balanced in this regard.

4.3.3 The collection procedure

The present analysis is based on 720 responses elicited by means of a written questionnaire. The questionnaire³⁹ was created and administered through the platform “Google form” to Italian and Austrian students in the period comprised between the 20th of December 2015 and the 15th of January 2016 approximately. Subsequently, it was administered to German speakers in the period of November-December 2019, through the platform “Survio”, to 18 students enrolled at the University of Koblenz Landau. The questionnaire contains three sections, which are organized as follows.

The first section is devoted to the analysis of the perception of interruptions. Two conversations⁴⁰ are reported in which the listener interrupts the speaker by reformulating what he has just said. The only difference between the two dialogues is that in the first one the listener seems to catch the speaker’s point, whereas in the second he seems to misunderstand it completely. For both conversations, respondents are asked first of all to judge the interrupter’s interjection, choosing among the following options: a. Very polite, b. Polite c. Not particularly polite, d. Neutral e. Impolite, f. Very impolite, g. I do not know. Secondly, they are asked to guess what the intention of the interrupter was, choosing among these options: a. Help the speaker A to better clarify his opinion; b. Check to have understood speaker A’s opinion correctly; c. Show interest for the speaker A; d. Prevent the speaker A from fully expressing his opinion; e. Lead the speaker A to a certain declaration f. Speed up the speech g. Other response (indicate).

1. The second section presents two short speeches that are structured according to the “topic-comment” and the “comment-topic” discourse structure. Participants are asked to declare which of the two speeches they consider clearer.

³⁹ See Appendix.

⁴⁰ Excerpts of conversations used to devise this questionnaire were taken from the debate “Ist der Euro noch zu retten?” (“Do we still have to save the Euro?”) broadcasted on the radio program “Deutschlandfunk – Kontrovers” on 29th November 2010.

2. In the third and last section respondents declare their agreement to eight statements concerning their communicative styles. This allows the researcher to explore their preference for a high context vs. a low context type of communication. Statements are aimed at investigating only the aspects concerning verbal communication, in a variety of different situations and speech acts.

4.3.4 Interruptions. Data analysis

Conversation 1

The first item of the questionnaire required respondents to read the following conversation, to judge B's interjection in terms of politeness and to try to figure out what the intention of B's utterance was.

	Italian	German
Conversation 1	<p>“A. Quelli che hanno approfittato della situazione sono state appunto le grandi imprese (la Siemens, ecc.) e in effetti le banche, che hanno /.../ →→ B. Lei ha l'impressione che siano le persone semplici a pagare la crisi. A. Le persone semplici stanno pagando la crisi!![...]“</p>	<p>„A. Die jenen, die von der ganzen Geschichte profitiert haben, das waren eben die großen Unternehmen (Siemens, etcetera) und tatsächlich die Banken, und sie haben /.../ →→ B. Sie haben das Gefühl, dass die kleinen Leute die Krise zahlen müssen. A. Die kleinen Leute zahlen die Krise! [...]“</p>

Before having an insight look into the findings, we should probably note that the speaker B takes possession of the conversational floor even if the speaker A has not taken any pause. Therefore what is portrayed here is a blunt interruption. Nonetheless, the speaker B asks a sort of “Zwischenfrage”, in the sense that he reformulates the thought expressed by the speaker A, seeming to ask for confirmation. The speaker A confirms the interpretation of the speaker A, repeating his words to give more emphasis. The results are as follows.

Conversation 1. How would you describe speaker B's comment?						
Description	ITALIANS		AUSTRIANS		GERMANS	
	N° Responses	Percentage	N° Responses	Percentage	N° Responses	Percentage
a. Very polite	0	0,00%	1	6,25%	0	0,00%
b. Polite	3	18,75%	4	25,00%	5	22,73%
c. Not particularly polite	3	18,75%	3	18,75%	6	27,27%
e. Impolite	2	12,50%	0	0,00%	5	22,73%
f. Very impolite	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	1	4,55%
g. Neutral	8	50,00%	8	50,00%	5	22,73%
g. I don't know	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
TOTAL	16	100%	16	100%	22	100%

Table 18. Conversation 1. The perception of politeness in interruption

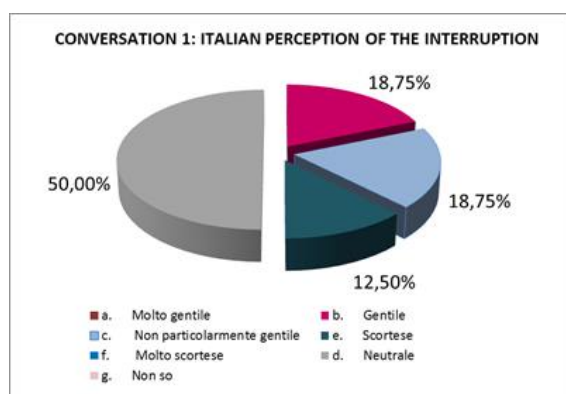


Fig. 16. 1: The Italian perception of interruption

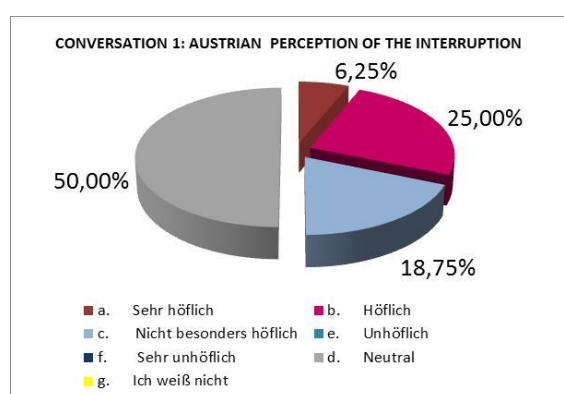


Fig. 17. 1: The Austrian perception of interruption

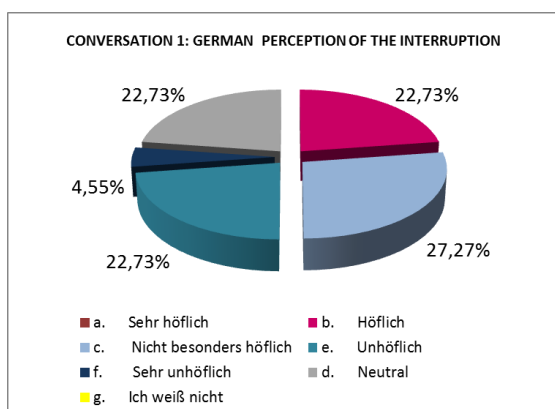


Fig. 18. 1: The German perception of interruption

If we have a look at the chart and then at the two graphs, we immediately notice that, interestingly enough, the great majority of IT and AU groups of respondents (50%) judged the comment of the speaker B “neutral”, thus not linking his interruption with the category of politeness at all. The reason behind this choice could be that both in Italians’ and Austrians’ opinion the

interruption was simply necessary and effective at that point in conversation. German participants, on the other hand, have a clearer perception of the interruption and only 22,73% declare to be neutral towards this aspect.

If there does not seem to be any outstanding difference in the amount of participants who considered the interruption polite (3 Italians and 4 Austrians and 5 Germans), there is an overwhelming evidence for the fact that German perceive it as strongly impolite, since 54,55% of German respondents judged it negatively.

In sum, we can state that, among the three language communities at issue, the greater part of Austrians (31,25 %) considered the interruption “polite” and none of them judged it as blatantly impolite. Conversely, a greater amount of Italians (31,25%) viewed it as rather impolite. Finally, the majority of German respondents felt that the interruption was impolite. The following tables, which display the deductions of participants as regards the intentions of the speaker B, may shed light on this result.

CONVERSATION 1. Through his comment the speaker B in your opinion aims at						
LABEL	ITALIANS		AUSTRIANS		GERMANS	
	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
a. Helping the speaker A to better clarify his opinion;	4	18,18%	7	25,00%	7	25,00%
b. Checking to have understood speaker A's opinion correctly	1	4,55%	11	39,29%	3	10,71%
c. Showing interest for the speaker A	0	0,00%	3	10,71%	2	7,14%
d. Preventing the speaker A from fully expressing his opinion	0	0,00%	1	3,57%	3	10,71%
e. Leading the speaker A to a certain declaration	11	50,00%	5	17,86%	5	17,86%
f. Solicit A. to come to the point	5	22,73%	1	3,57%	8	28,57%
g. Other response	1	4,55%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
TOTALE	22	100%	28	100%	28	100%

Table 19. Conversation 1. The perception of the aim of interruption

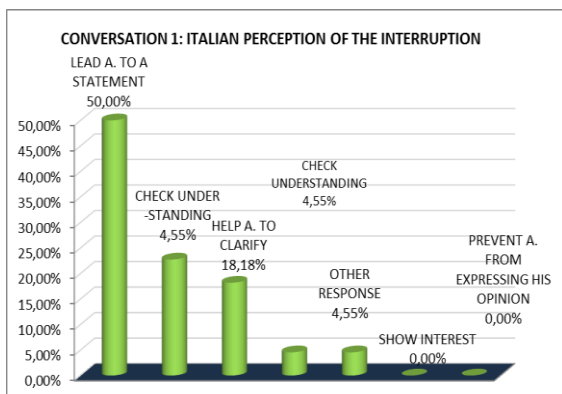


Fig. 19. 1: The aim of interruption according to Italians



Fig. 20. 1: The aim of interruption according to Austrian

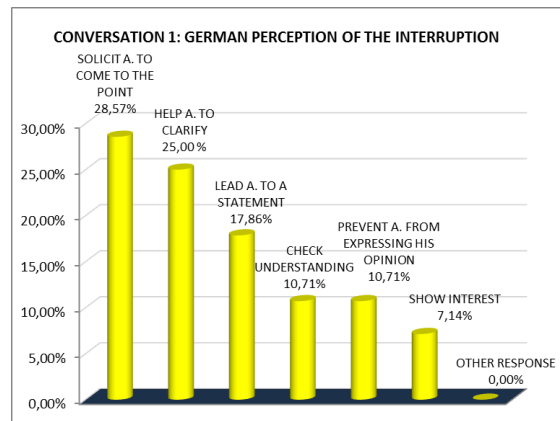


Fig. 21. 1: The aim of interruption according to Germans

These graphs provide us with some more certain information concerning the perception of the interruption in Italian, German and Austrian respondents. It should be noted that more than one answer was possible here. The first remark that springs to mind is that within the Italian group up to 50% of respondents thought that speaker B's comment was aimed at diverting the speaker A from his speech, leading him to a specific statement. Another rather "negative" impression of the comment, i.e. that the speaker B wanted to solicit the speaker A to come rapidly to the point, was admitted in other 22,73% of Italian responses. Even if these two interpretations of the comment are also present in the Austrian counterparts, we can confidently state that the majority of this group perceived it positively, namely as a way to be sure to correctly understand the speaker A (39,29%) or to help him clarifying his point (25%). Unlike Italians who did not choose these categories at all, 3 Austrians also valued the comment as a way to express interest towards the interlocutor, but 1 of them also as an attempt to prevent the speaker A to fully express his opinion. Finally, 1 Italian also read the comment as a "way to express disagreement". In line with the previous result, 28,57% of German respondents declared that in their opinion the interruption was meant at solicit the speaker to come to the point, another 17,86 of them felt that it had a manipulatory intent in trying to lead him to a statement, and 10,71 % thought it was a way to hinder his free expression. Only 42,85% of respondents spotted a cooperative intent, thinking it was a way to help the speaker to rapidly come to the point, to better understand it or to show interest.

Conversation 2

The second item of the questionnaire presented participants with the following conversation:

	Italian	German
Conversation 2	<p>“A. Io mi chiedo: “Cosa deve succedere ancora in Europa, prima che questi politici si sveglino, e capiscano ciò non solo gli italiani, ma anche tutti gli europei si debbano /.../”</p> <p>→ → B. Lei sta dicendo chiaramente che non dovremmo metterci a disposizione dell'Irlanda, in questo caso.</p> <p>A. No! Sto dicendo qualcosa di completamente diverso! Il caso dell'Irlanda dimostra che la soluzione di una valuta per 16 stati, e presto saranno 28, è pura follia, un attentato alla nostra democrazia.[...]"</p>	<p>“A. [.....] Ich frage mich, was muss eigentlich in Europa noch geschehen, damit diese Politiker aufwachen, und begreifen, was hier nicht nur den Deutschen, sondern allen Europäern /.../”</p> <p>→ → B. Das heißt Sie würden ganz klar sagen, im Fall Irlands, nein, wir stehen nicht zur Verfügung, hier in die Bresche zu springen.</p> <p>A. Nein, ich sage was ganz anderes! Der Fall Irlands beweist, dass der ganze Weg, eine Währung für 16 Staaten, und demnächst 28 Euro-Staaten, schlichte Wahnsinn ist, denn es ist ein Attentat auf unsere Demokratie [...]"</p>

As in conversation 1, the speaker B invades the conversational floor of the speaker A, even if the latter has not taken any pause, with the only difference being that this time he seems to have completely misunderstood speaker A's opinion. Results were as follows:

Conversation 2. How would you describe speaker B's comment?						
Description	ITALIANS		AUSTRIANS		GERMANS	
	N° Responses	Percentage	N° Responses	Percentage	N° Responses	Percentage
a. Very polite	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
b. Polite	0	0,00%	2	12,50%	3	15,79%
c. Not particularly polite	9	56,25%	6	37,50%	4	21,05%
e. Impolite	2	12,50%	1	6,25%	5	26,32%
f. Very impolite	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	1	5,26%
g. Neutral	5	31,25%	7	43,75%	5	26,32%
g. I don't know	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	1	5,26%
TOTAL	16	100,00%	16	100,00%	19	100,00%

Table 20. Conversation 2. The perception of politeness in interruption

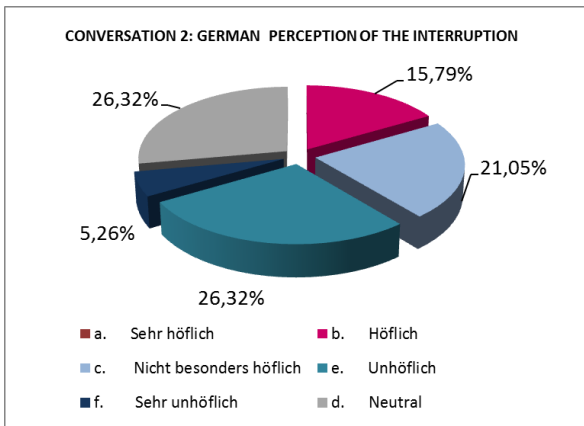


Fig. 22. 2: The Italian perception of interruption

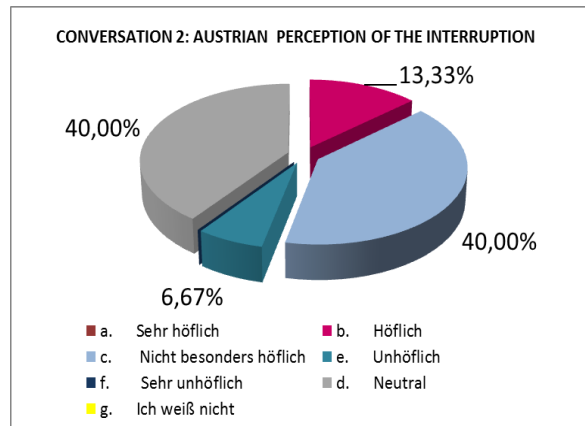


Fig. 23. 2: The Austrian perception of interruption

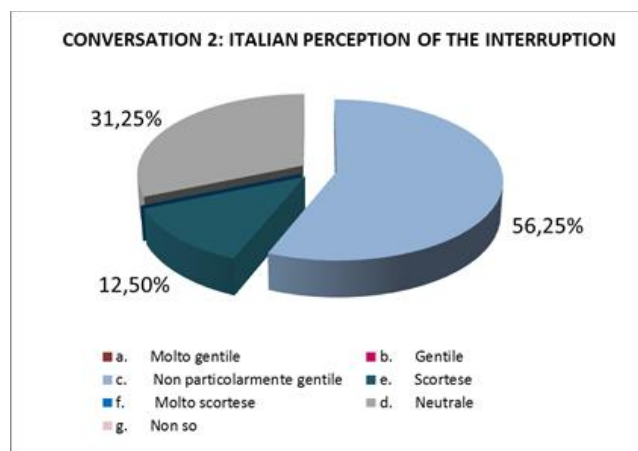


Fig. 24. 2: The German perception of interruption

Similarly to the first conversation, in this case as well we immediately notice that there is not any outstanding difference between the Italian and the Austrian results, since in both cases the great majority of participants selected either the answer “neutral” or “not particularly polite” to describe speaker B’s comment. Once again, the Austrian data point to a perception of the interruption as less intrusive than in the two other cultures at issue, with 2 respondents declaring that in their opinion the comment was polite. This idea is shared by 3 of the Germans interviewed, but this element acquires a totally different meaning if we notice that other 10 German responses mark the comment as rather impolite. A consistent part of the subjects investigated declares itself neutral, both in the Italian (31,25) and in the Austrian group (40%), whereas only a small amount of Germans (26,32%) could not take a stand.

CONVERSATION 2. Through his comment the speaker B in your opinion aims at:						
LABEL	ITALIANS		AUSTRIANS		GERMANS	
	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE	N° Responses	Percentage
a. Helping the speaker A to better clarify his opinion;	1	4,76%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
b. Checking to have understood speaker A's opinion correctly	5	23,81%	6	28,57%	8	30,77%
c. Showing interest for the speaker A	1	4,76%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
d. Preventing the speaker A from fully expressing his opinion	2	9,52%	1	4,76%	4	15,38%
e. Leading the speaker A to a certain declaration	7	33,33%	10	47,62%	9	34,62%
f. Speeding up the speech	3	14,29%	4	19,05%	5	19,23%
g. Other response	2	4,55%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
TOTALE	21	100,00%	21	100,00%	26	100,00%

Table 21. Conversation 2. The perception of the aim of interruption

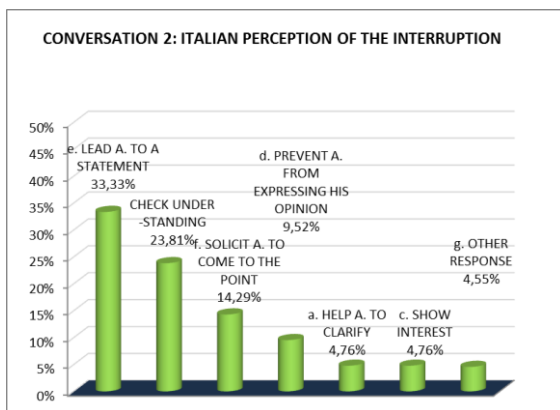


Fig. 25. 2: The aim of interruption according to Italians

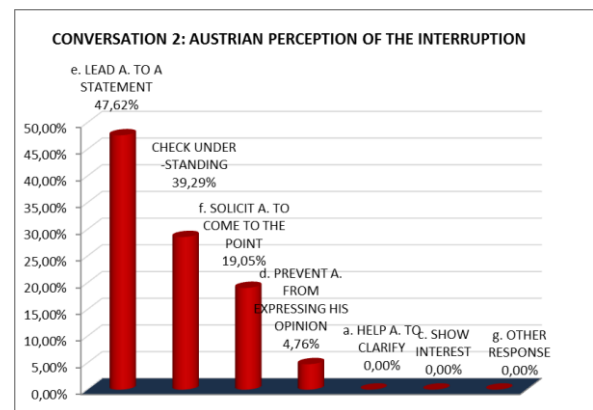


Fig. 26. 2: The aim of interruption according to Austrians

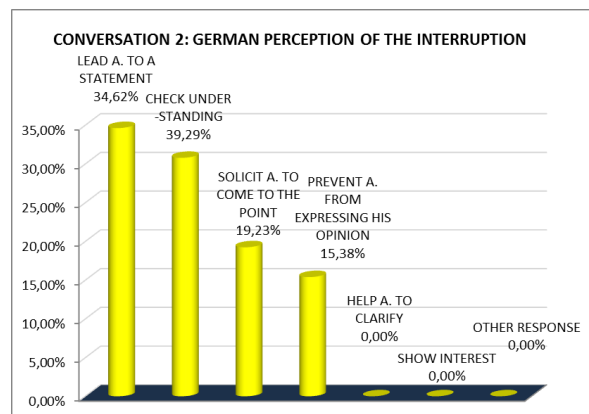


Fig. 27. 2: The aim of interruption according to Germans

The charts may help us interpret the previous results. The three graphs show that Italians greatly disagree in their interpretations of B's comment. As a matter of fact, they selected all the answers suggested, while Austrians and Germans only four of them. Nevertheless, the majority of both Italian (33,33%), Austrian (47,62%) and German (34,62%) respondents agree on the fact that B's comment could be read as an attempt to lead the speaker B to a specific statement. At the same

time, when we compare these data with the judgment on the politeness of the utterance, we would have to assume that Austrians do not necessarily see impoliteness in this behaviour, and perhaps connect it with the necessity, for the moderator in a public debate, to “lead” participants to clear and recognisable stands. However, it is again the Austrian and the German group who expresses more extensively the idea according to which the comment was aimed at checking understanding. Another common feeling among the three cultures at issue was that the comment was aimed at preventing the speaker from fully expressing his opinion and to lead him to a certain point. Other responses provided by Italian respondents were “make the speaker A change his mind” and “interpreting speaker A’s thought”.

4.3.5 Discourse patterns. Data analysis

In this second section of the questionnaire, respondents were invited to declare which of the following speeches was clearer to them, and try to explain the reasons.

	Italian	German
Comment – topic discourse pattern	<p>SIGNOR BIANCHI:</p> <p>- Qual è la Sua opinione, signor Bianchi?</p> <p>- La mia opinione è questa. Ciò che ha detto il prof. Rossi è giustissimo. Sono profondamente convinto del fatto che, se si fosse lasciata agli italiani la scelta “euro o lira”, e se si avesse dato loro la possibilità di scegliere obiettivamente, senza l’influsso delle banche, sono convinto che mai e poi mai avrebbero scelto l’euro. Si sarebbe rimasti alla lira e ci sarebbe stata comprensione per la nostra decisione. [...] L’euro di per sè un bell’ideale, ma questo ideale lentamente crollerà, se si va avanti così.</p>	<p>HERR BRETT:</p> <p>- Was ist Ihre Meinung, Herr Brett?</p> <p>- Ich möchte folgendes bemerken. Was der Herr prof. Hankel gesagt hat ist vollkommen richtig. Ich bin der festen Überzeugung, hätte man den deutschen Bürgern insgesamt die Wahl gelassen, Euro oder DM - ja? - unter Wahrung der Objektivität, also nicht nur aus Seiten der Banken die ganze Geschichte zu betrachten, dann bin ich der festen Überzeugung, hätte das deutsche Volk garantiert niemals den Euro gewählt. Es hätte bei der DM geblieben, es hätte auch Verständnis dafür gehabt. [...] Der Euro an sich ist eine schöne fixe Idee; diese fixe Idee wird langsam zu Ende kommen, wenn’s so weiter geht.</p>

	SIGNORA FIORI	FRAU PAUS
Topic – comment discourse pattern	<p>-Signora Fiori, secondo Lei è giusto dare aiuti economici all'Irlanda? Non si può semplicemente lasciare che un Paese vada in bancarotta?</p> <p>-È una questione che ha a che fare ancora con la solidarietà europea. E ha a che fare con la questione: "vogliamo o non vogliamo l'euro?". Se vogliamo il futuro dell'euro dobbiamo aiutare l'Irlanda; per questo esiste un pacchetto di salvataggio dell'euro, per questo era stato pensato e proprio per questo ora viene adottato. [...] Anche per l'Irlanda vale il discorso, che se le facciamo pervenire gli aiuti, non salviamo solo o soprattutto l'Irlanda, salviamo allo stesso tempo le banche italiane, le banche francesi, le banche tedesche. Per questi motivi, credo che sia giusto aiutarla.</p>	<p>-Frau Paus, ist das richtig zu helfen? Kann man ein Land einfach mal pleitengehen lassen?</p> <p>-Es ist eine Frage tatsächlich auch wieder um die europäische Solidarität. Und es geht wieder um die Frage: „wollen wir den Euro oder wollen wir ihn nicht“? Wenn wir die Zukunft des Euro wollen dann müssen wir Irland helfen, dafür gibt es ein Eurorettungsschirm, dafür war er gedacht, und genau dafür wurde er jetzt eingesetzt. [...] Auch bei Irland ist es so, dass wir ja nicht vorallem oder gar nur Irland retten, wenn wir ihm den Rettungsschirm zukommen lassen, sondern wir retten gleichzeitig deutsche Banken, wir retten gleichzeitig französische Banken, wir retten gleichzeitig britische Banken [...] Deswegen finde ich, es ist schon richtig zu helfen.</p>

The two speeches (taken from the same radio-debate, see footnote 3) are constructed according to the pattern “comment-topic” in the case of Mr Bianchi and “topic-comment” for Ms. Fiori. The results, which are portrayed in the two graphs below, show that Italian and Austrian respondents provide exactly the same answers, whereas German participants show a discernible preference for the speech of Frau Paus.

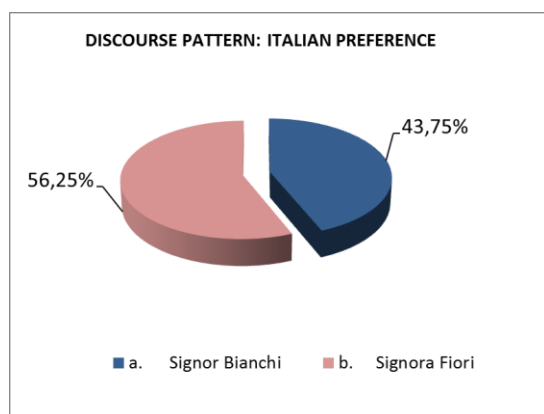


Fig. 28. Discourse patterns. Italian preference

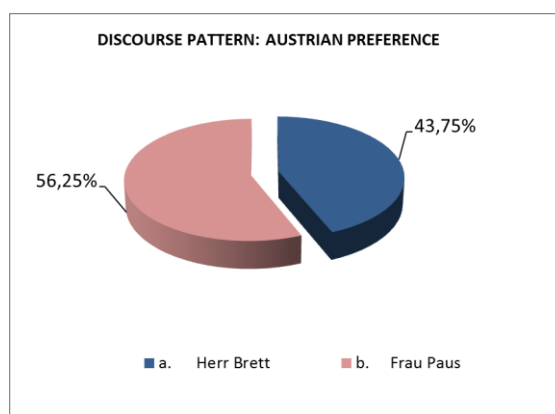


Fig. 29. Discourse patterns. Austrian preference

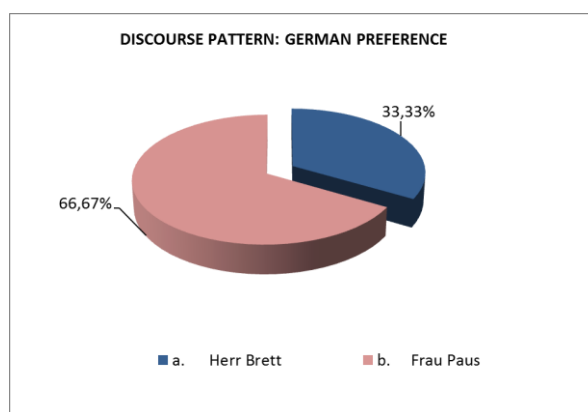


Fig. 30. Discourse patterns. German preference

Analyzing the reasons given by the two groups of respondents, we can actually notice the huge number of linguistic variables the three speakers display: the richness of arguments presented, the length and the grammaticality of utterances, and in some cases, to the detriment of our intent, even their position in favor or against the euro. However, we can still notice that the aspects Austrians underlined and appreciated in Frau Paus' argumentation are "objectivity", "clarity", "pragmatism", whereas Italians stressed the "richness of arguments in support of her theory" and her linear articulation of several points. German participants appreciated in Frau Paus the "logical structure of her speech, which has an introduction, argumentation and then a conclusion", her "objectivity", "diplomacy", with respect to Herr Brett, who seem to express just a personal opinion and sensation. On the other hand, Herr Brett gained some consensus in the three language communities at issue for his "clarity" and his "directness" in stating his opinion, and his way of expressing his opinion without "going around in circles". In conclusion, we could state that my data suggest that Italian, German and Austrian students favour the topic-comment construction of discourse, even though for different reasons: Italian appreciate the "richness in argumentation", Austrians the "clarity" and pragmatism, whereas German stress the "objectivity" as the major value to pursue.

4.3.6 Low context vs. high context communication. Data analysis

In this third and last section, participants were asked to declare whether they agreed, disagreed or if they defined themselves neutral with respect some statements. The purpose of this part of the study

was to gain a first impression on the preference for high context vs a low context communication in the three speech communities, limiting the scope of analysis to the verbal aspect. Therefore, I selected the items in the survey of Gary Oddou & C. Brooklyn Derr. (1999) which referred to communication and I partially modified them to fit my purposes. The following table specifies how an agreement to the statement was assumed to be a sign of high context culture or low context culture, whereas in the subsequent table I report the results.

STATEMENT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
AGREEMENT	low context	high context	low context	low context	low context	high context	high context	high context
DISAGREEMENT	high context	low context	high context	high context	high context	low context	low context	low context

Table 22. Agreement to statements: Low context vs. high context interpretation

STATEMENT	ITALIAN			AUSTRIAN			GERMAN		
	High context	Low context	Neutral	High context	Low context	Neutral	High context	Low context	Neutral
1. When someone is correcting me, I would rather the person just to tell me what he or she doesn't like and not make "suggestions".	3	12	1	6	8	2	7	6	5
2. In some circumstances I might modify or back out of an agreement.	6	6	4	15	1	0	12	2	4
3. I feel comfortable talking about subjects like my future, my family, and so on, with most people, even if I have only known them for a short while.	6	6	4	7	5	4	5	10	3
4. I prefer having things completely spelled out from the beginning than to start operating without a detailed view of the situation.	0	13	3	2	11	3	5	10	3
5. I would feel more comfortable having a contract that lists every detail pertaining to the agreement than to have some "grey" areas which could require negotiating later on.	0	12	4	4	11	1	1	15	2
6. Changing plans—even at the last minute—is not a problem for me.	5	4	7	6	5	5	3	11	4
7. I prefer trying to guess which present my partner would like to get for Christmas than asking her/him directly.	9	2	5	11	4	1	12	4	2
8. If my boss or teacher were wrong, I would be more likely to suggest there might be another answer than to simply tell him/her they are wrong.	11	2	3	8	5	3	13	2	3
TOTAL	40	57	31	59	50	19	58	60	26
Total number of responses	128			128			144		
Percentage on the number of effective responses	31,25%	44,53%	24,22%	46,09%	39,06%	14,84%	40,28%	41,67%	18,06%

Table 23. Agreement to statements: responses

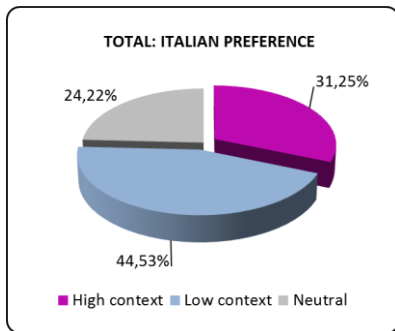


Fig. 31. Italian results

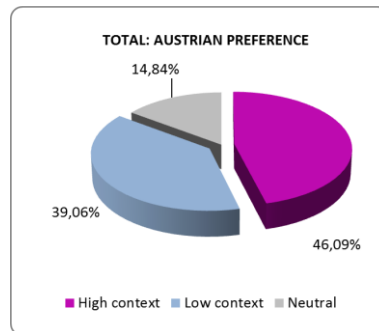


Fig. 32. Austrian results

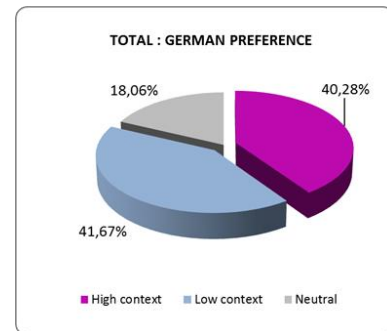


Fig. 33. German results

The first attempt to give an interpretation to the data has been made whereby separating the amount of respondents who strongly agreed or tended to agree with the various statements, and the ones who disagreed. The former group was counted in situation 2, 6, 7, 8, as a sign of high context oriented society, whereas in situation 1, 3, 4, 5 as a sign of low context communication.

If we look at the total results, we immediately notice that in none of the language communities there is a strong and neat preference for one or the other communication mode. This result may indicate that the three language communities a certain balance between the two modes is present. Surprisingly, Austrian (46,9%) is the language which seems to account for a tendency towards a high-context type of communication, followed by German (40,28%) and Italian (31,25%). A low context oriented communication, on the other hand, seem to be privileged in Italian (44,53%), followed by German (41,67%) and Austrian (39,06%).

If we have a look at the specific results for each statement, we can draw the following conclusions:

- All groups of participants displayed a marked preference for a low context type of communication in questions n° 4 and 5, which both concern the sphere of work and business transactions. Italians, Germans and Austrians declared that they prefer to be acquainted with every detail before signing an agreement or start operating, rather than having the “freedom” to work out some aspects later on. Nonetheless, the formulation of statement 4 may have partially influenced the response towards the answer “I agree”.
- Italian and Austrian respondents diverge in a more marked way in questions 1 and 8, which are also specular: question 1 investigates in fact the attitude towards criticism expressed by others, whereas question 8 looks at the criticising behaviour towards the others. Interestingly enough, the majority of Italians (75%) would prefer to be told directly and honestly what they are doing wrong, but they admit they would hardly openly contradict an interlocutor in an “up” position (69%). A more coherent, even if more balanced, situation is shown by Austrian data: the majority of Austrians expects to be criticised frankly by other people (50%), but the very same 50% also claims to be ready to disagree a teacher or a boss.

Germans, on the other hand, strongly disagree as regards statement one, with which almost half of the participants disagree and the other half agree. The German group becomes much more cohesive in situation 8, where 72,22% of participants admit they would criticize someone in an up position rather indirectly. This result confirms the impression gained by Venuti (2013), that Italian speakers are generally more sensitive to authority when it comes to face-threatening speech act behaviour. Conversely, it also contradicts the impression, drawn from Venuti (2013) that German speakers would approach a senior colleague or a teacher in a direct modality. This tendency may be true for requests but may totally be subverted for other speech acts.

- Another surprising divergence between the three groups of respondents could be represented by statement n° 2. Almost the totality of Austrians (93,75%) and Germans (66,67) declared to feel free to back out of an agreement in “some circumstances”, thus showing a flexibility which is not usually associated with Germanic countries, at least in the popular belief. Conversely, only 37,50% Italians displayed this “relaxed” attitude, while other 37,50% of them expressed disagreement.
- Last but not least, the large amount of both Italian and Austrian respondents who selected the answer “neutral” partially compromise the results, limiting the actual number of responses which can be taken into account.

For this last reason, and for the partial limitedness of a statistical analysis, which grouped together the answers at the two extremes of agreement and disagreement, I decided to try to analyse the data in another way. My aim was to obtain a more detailed view of the Italian, German and Austrian preference for high context vs low context communication modes in the various situations. The revisited results are portrayed in the next section.

4.3.7 Revisited results: a new method of analysis

First of all, I chose the perspective from which to observe the data. I chose to look for “high contextness” in the three language communities at issue, and to deduce any conclusions on the opposite category as in contrast with the presence of former one. Hence, I decided to score every different answer in a certain way, according to the different statements. In particular, I assigned a minimum of 1 (completely disagree) to 5 points (“I totally agree”) in “high context” situations, namely the 2nd, the 6th, 7th, and 8th, and I inverted the scoring system in “low context situations” such as the 1st, the 3rd, 4th and 5th, giving 5 points for total disagreement to 1 point for total

agreement. The following charts, which show the obtained results and their legend, should clarify the point.

HIGH CONTEXTNESS RATE ITALIAN						
	COMPLETELY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	TOTALLY AGREE	TOTAL RATE
SIT 1		12	3	18	3	36
SIT 2	1	10	12	20	5	48
SIT 3	5	20	12	10	1	48
SIT 4	0	0	9	12	7	28
SIT 5	0	0	12	14	5	31
SIT 6	1	6	21	16	5	49
SIT 7	0	4	15	8	35	62
SIT 8	1	2	9	32	15	59

Fig. 34. High contextness rate Italian

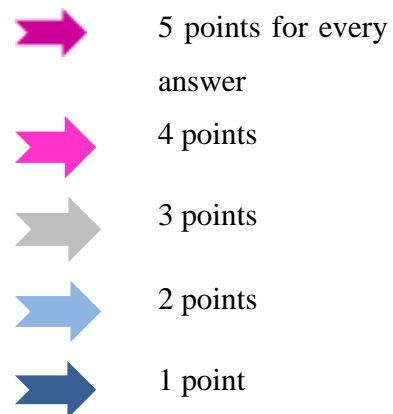
RATE OF HIGH CONTEXTNESS AUSTRIAN						
	COMPLETELY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	TOTALLY AGREE	TOTAL RATE
SIT 1		24	6	14	1	45
SIT 2		2	0	60		62
SIT 3		20	12	8	3	43
SIT 4		8	9	10	6	33
SIT 5	5	12	3	12	5	37
SIT 6	1	8	15	12	15	51
SIT 7	1	6	3	20	30	60
SIT 8	1	8	9	16	20	54

Fig. 35. High contextness rate Austrian

Legend: scoring system

HIGH CONTEXTNESS RATE GERMAN						
	COMPLETELY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	TOTALLY AGREE	TOTAL RATE
SIT 1	5	24	15	10	1	55
SIT 2	1	2	12	32	20	67
SIT 3	5	16	9	10	5	45
SIT 4	5	16	9	8	6	44
SIT 5	0	4	6	10	10	30
SIT 6	2	18	12	4	10	46
SIT 7	1	6	6	24	30	67
SIT 8	1	2	9	24	35	71

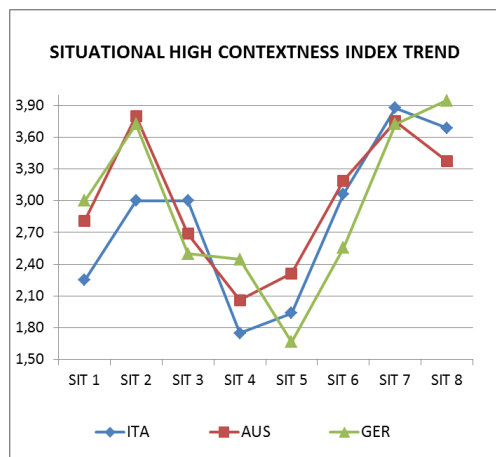
Fig. 36. High contextness rate German



This system of analysis allowed me to obtain a total “high contextness rate”, as portrayed in the following chart, and, considering the different numbers of responses in each language, a “high contextness index”, which has been calculated in its situational variation.

HIGH CONTEXTNESS RATE									
	SIT 1	SIT 2	SIT 3	SIT 4	SIT 5	SIT 6	SIT 7	SIT 8	TOTAL RATE
ITA	36	48	48	28	31	49	62	59	361
AUS	45	62	43	33	37	51	60	54	385
GER	55	67	45	44	30	46	67	71	425
HIGH CONTEXTNESS INDEX									
ITA	361 (total high contextness rate) : [16 (respondents) x 8 (statements)] = 2,82								
AUS	385 (total high contextness rate) : [16 (respondents) x 8 (statements)] = 3,00								
GER	425 (total high contextness rate) : [18 (respondents) x 8 (statements)] = 2,95								

Table 24. High contextness rate for the three languages



SITUATIONAL HIGH CONTEXTNESS INDEXES			
	ITA	AUS	GER
SIT 1	2,25	2,81	3,00
SIT 2	3,00	3,80	3,72
SIT 3	3,00	2,69	2,50
SIT 4	1,75	2,06	2,44
SIT 5	1,94	2,31	1,67
SIT 6	3,06	3,19	2,56
SIT 7	3,88	3,75	3,72
SIT 8	3,69	3,38	3,94

Fig. 37. Situational high contextness index trend Table 25. Situational high contextness indexes

The graph in Fig. 37 shows a rather similar trend in the three language communities at issue, with a peak towards low context communication on situations 4 and 5 (linked with work environment) and two peaks in “high contextness” in situations 2 and 7, linked with agreements and criticism.

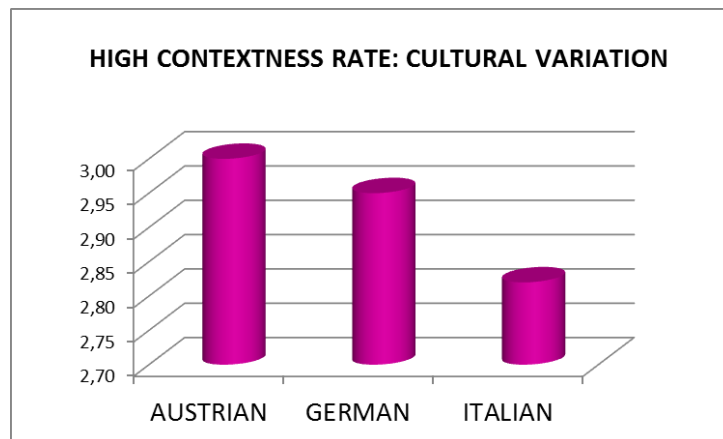


Fig. 38. Final high contextness rate. Cultural variation

The new method succeeded in providing a more accurate view of the differences existing among the three languages communities. We can now state with a considerable certainty that my findings point to a preference for a high context type of communication in the Austrian group (index: 3). Both German and Italian participants clearly preferred low context oriented behaviours, but the Italian data indicate a striking inclination towards a much more low context communication mode (index 2,82).

4.3.8 Summary of the results and conclusions

In the light of the findings obtained, I will now try to answer the questions of the study (see section 2.1).

- On the whole, Germans seem to perceive interruptions – in the form of “Zwischenfragen” – as “impolite” more frequently than Austrians and Italians. Both when the interrupter seems to get the point and when he misses it, Italians and Germans are rather unanimous in judging him “not particularly polite” or “impolite”. A consistent number of Austrians valued the interrupting comment as “polite” or even “very polite”. It should be also noted that a large number of Italians and Austrians and Germans saw the comment as “neutral”. This could confirm the general impression drawn from my previous study (Venuti 2013), which pointed out that the category of politeness is difficult to analyse for the researcher, since participants constantly consider other communicative purposes, e.g. efficiency.
- What is more, if we stick to Murata’s (1994) distinction between intrusive and cooperative interruptions, and we consider intentions (see graph..) a., b. and c. “cooperative” and d., e., and f. “intrusive”, we can generally state that both in the first and in the second conversation

Austrians perceived the interruption in a more cooperative way with respect to Italians and Germans. This result, if confirmed by further research, would contradict Balboni's (1999) view according to which the Italian culture allows more frequent interruptions than the one of Germanic countries.

- As for the investigation on the privileged discourse pattern among Italians and Austrians, a slight preference for the "topic-comment" type was favoured. Nonetheless, this result should not be considered completely reliable, because of the great number of variables the two speeches contained. Some clues on the fact that Italians appreciate the richness of argumentation while Austrians valued "clarity" and Germans "objectivity" can nevertheless be drawn.
- As far as the reliance upon the context in communication is concerned, we can conclude that my results contradict the expectations according to which German speakers should display a preference for a low context type of communication, while Italians would show a high-context type of behaviour. As a matter of fact, 44,53% of Italian speakers appear to adopt a low-context type of communication, while only 41,67 % and 39,06% of their German and Austrian counterparts respectively opt for a low-context verbal behaviour. The "high-contextness" index confirms this trend.

Taking everything into consideration, it can be concluded that my results both confirm and differ in interesting ways from general expectations. The linguistic behaviour of German speaking countries seems to differ consistently in the three aspects observed. German speakers, in fact, manifest low tolerance for the invasion in the conversational floor, whereas Austrian speakers of German seem to tolerate, even more than Italians, interruptions, and to see them in a cooperative way. Another striking observation emerges from Austrian and German data: they disprove the idea according to which central European countries should display a preference for a low context communication. On the contrary, Austrian data reveal a marked predilection for a high context type of communication, and German data a balance between the two dimensions. Italy, which is commonly listed among high context cultures, according to my results is the country in which low reference to the context is the ideal communication mode.

Last but not least, it must be considered that my findings are based on a limited number of questionnaire items and responses, therefore the results from such analysis should be treated with the utmost caution.

5. Politeness and efficacy: the role of external modification.

Überzeugungs- und Überredungsmittel

In this section, written in German, I analyse the external modification obtained in Venuti (2013) in the framework of Drinkmann et al. (1989), who make a distinction between persuading strategies and convincing strategies. The former focus on the relationship and on emotions, whereas the latter act on the objective observation or reality and on rationality. The results will allow me to gain more elements of interpretation of the pragmatic behaviour of the two linguistic communities at issue.

5.1 Externe Modifikatoren

Externe Modifizierung kann dazu dienen, die Aufmerksamkeit oder eine Vorabverpflichtung des Hörers zu gewinnen oder Anerkennung auszudrücken. Es scheint, dass italienische Sprecher ihre direkteren Überzeugungsversuche durch eine verstärkte Verwendung von Aufmerksamkeitssignalen, Begründungen und mildernden Äußerungen ausgleichen (372 IT vs. 279 DE). Daraus folgt also, dass die Sprechhandlung von italienischen Sprechern in diesem Fall von der Kompensationshypothese geregelt wird.

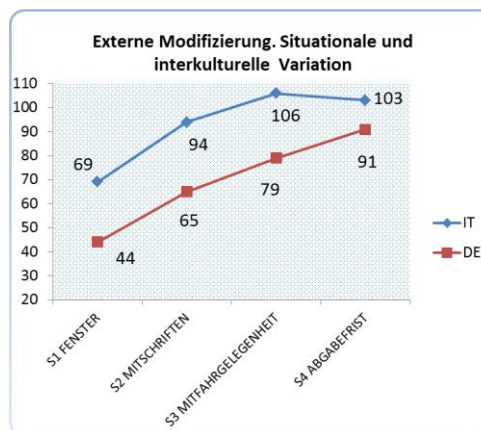


Tabelle 26: Externe Modifizierung

Diese Vermutung bestätigt sich, wenn wir die Daten der letzten Situation beobachten: in diesem Fall sind es die deutschen Sprecher, die direktere Formulierungen bevorzugen, aber gleichzeitig auch eine verstärkte Verwendung von mildernden Äußerungen produzieren. Externe Modifizierer lassen sich zwei verschiedenen Gruppen von persuasiven Strategien zuschreiben. Sie können entweder auf subjektive personenbezogene Überredungsmittel oder auf objektive rationalbezogene Überzeugungsmittel gegründet sein. In diesem Zusammenhang haben wir die Frage untersucht, ob

es in der Verwendung von Überredungs- und Überzeugungsmittel kulturspezifische Unterschiede gibt.

5.2 Der Gebrauch von Überredungs- und Überzeugungsmittel

Zu diesem Zweck haben wir die externen Modifikatoren, im Englischen supportive moves genannt, die wir in den elizitierten Bitten vorgefunden haben, nach folgenden Kriterien als Überzeugungs- oder Überredungsmittel kategorisiert. Wie Drinkmann et al. (1989) ausführen, impliziert der Akt des Überzeugens, dass der Sprecher den Hörer durch rationale Argumentation, das heißt, durch das Anführen von allgemein akzeptierten Gründen dazu motiviert, seiner Aufforderung nachzukommen, während Strategien des Überredens daraufsetzen, den Hörer durch das Erzeugen positiver Emotionen oder eines Gemeinschaftsgefühls, dazu zu bringen, die nachgefragte Handlung auszuführen. Aus diesen Überlegungen ergeben sich die Kategorisierungen in (27).

PERSUASIONSSTRATEGIE	MILDERNDE ÄÜBERUNGEN (Supportive Moves)	BEISPIEL
ÜBERZEUGUNG	PREPARATOR	Kann ich Sie etwas fragen?
	GROUNDER	Ich war gestern nicht in der Vorlesung. Könnte ich mir deine Notizen ausleihen?
	PROMISE OF A REWARD	Kannst du mich mitnehmen? Ich geb dir auch was fürs Benzin.
	COST MINIMIZER	Kannst du mich mitnehmen? Aber nur wenn du in meine Richtung fährst.
ÜBERREDUNG	GETTING A PRECOMMITMENT	Kannst du mir einen Gefallen tun?
	DISARMER	Ich will dich nicht stören, aber...
	SWEETENER	Deine Bücher sind wirklich interessant!

	APPRECIATION CLAUSE	Es wäre toll, wenn ich deine Notizen leihen könnte.
	NEGATIVE APPRECIATION CLAUSE	Öffnen Sie doch bitte das Fenster, sonst kollapsieren wir hier noch.

Tabelle 27: Kategorisierungen der Überzeugung und der Überredung

Gemäß dieser Kategorisierung haben wir die externen Modifikationen in den vier Situationen für beide Sprachen analysiert und sind zu den in (9) dargestellten Ergebnissen gekommen.

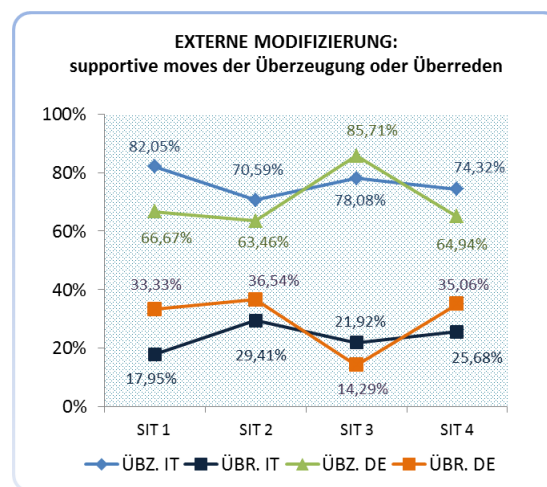


Fig. 39: Supportive moves der Überzeugung und der Überredung

Die Zahlen machen deutlich, dass beide Gruppen in ihren externen Modifikationen eindeutig Überzeugungsstrategien bevorzugen. Das ergibt sich hauptsächlich aus der Tatsache, dass die am häufigsten verwendete Modifikation die des Grounders ist, also eine Erklärung des Beweggrundes der Aufforderung. Der Grounder ist wahrscheinlich deshalb eine so erfolgreiche und deshalb so häufig benutzte Strategie, da er Common Ground (cf. Grice 1975, Lewis 1979, Levinson 1983) zwischen Sprecher und Hörer erzeugt und sich dadurch die Kooperationsbereitschaft des Hörers, die Bitte zu erfüllen, erhöht. Die Graphik in (40) verdeutlicht nochmals Situation für Situation die relative Verwendung von Überzeugungs- und Überredungsmittel in beiden Sprachgruppen.

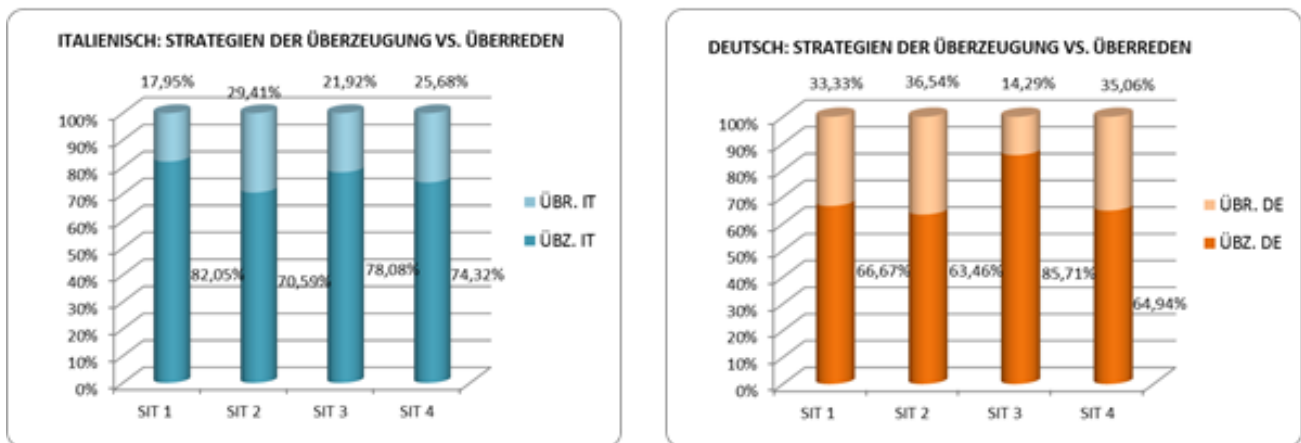


Fig. 40: Strategien der Überzeugung und der Überredung im Italienischen und im Deutschen

Die Tatsache, dass italienische Sprecher mit größerer Frequenz als deutsche Sprecher Überzeugungsmittel verwenden ist darauf zurückzuführen, dass die Italiener eine starke Präferenz für kostenreduzierende Phrasen (sogenannte cost minimizers wie „Se per te non è un problema“, „Se non hai fretta“), die wir den Überzeugungsmitteln zugeschrieben haben, während deutsche Sprecher verstärkt auf appreciation clauses wie „Wärst du so nett...“ setzen, die wir den Überredungsmitteln zugeschrieben haben.

Die Unterteilung von externen Modifikatoren in Mittel, die auf objektive Argumentation und in Mittel, die auf die Hervorrufung von positiven Gefühlen setzen, erlaubt es zu interessanten Schlussfolgerungen zu kommen, was die Sprechaktrealisierungen in den Situationen 3 und 4 anbetrifft, da hier die vorherrschenden Trends bei italienischen und deutschen Sprechern umgekehrt werden. Es ist auffallend, dass in der dritten Situation die deutschen Sprecher mehr Überzeugungsmittel als die italienischen Sprecher einsetzen.

Dieses Verhalten kann plausibler Weise auf den spezifischen Kontext der Situation 3 zurückgeführt werden: Die Tatsache, dass der Bittende nicht so vertraut mit seinem Kollegen war und letzterer gerade dabei war, mit seinem Auto wegzufahren, hat deutsche Sprecher dazu veranlasst, relativ knappe und direkte Sprechakte zu formulieren, die sofort zum Punkt kommen und maximal mit einem Begründungssatz modifiziert waren. Es ist sicherlich auch kein Zufall, dass die Deutschsprecher gerade in dieser Situation verstärkt auf die Verwendung interner Modifikatoren wie „bitte“, „vielleicht“, „wohl“, „zufällig“ zurückgriffen, um die relative Direktheit ihrer Bitte abzumildern. Im Gegensatz dazu griffen italienische Sprecher in dieser Situation, obwohl oder gerade weil sie ebenso wie deutsche Sprecher relativ direkte Sprechakte formulierten, zu einer Bandbreite von unterstützenden Mitteln wie preparators, disarmers, appreciation clauses, die den Überredungsmitteln zuzuordnen sind.

Aus dem gerade skizzierten Zusammenspiel von internen und externen Modifikatoren ergibt sich nun eine sehr plausible Interpretation des unerwartet großen Direktheitsgrades in der vierten Kommunikationssituation. In dieser Situation ist der Druck für den Studenten effektiv und erfolgreich zu sein besonders groß. Es ist daher besonders wichtig, dass sich der Student klar und deutlich ausdrückt, ohne es an der gebotenen Höflichkeit dem Professor gegenüber fehlen zu lassen. Gerade aus diesem Grund haben beide Sprechergruppen direktere und einfacher formulierte Bitten produziert und diese Wahl durch die stärkere Verwendung von unterstützenden Äußerungen ausgeglichen. Dabei macht es Sinn, dass deutsche Sprecher in dieser Situation zum Ausgleich gezielt auf die stärkere Verwendung von Überredungsmitteln setzen, da diese mit ihrem Fokus auf die persönliche Beziehung und durch das Erzeugen positiver Gefühle unmittelbar mit Höflichkeit in Beziehung gesetzt werden können (*positive politeness*). Im Gegensatz dazu verfolgen italienische Sprecher, die in größerem Ausmaß indirektere und höflichere Bitten formuliert haben, den kommunikativen Zweck, ihren Sprechakt klar und prägnant auszudrücken, mit der verstärkten Verwendung von Überzeugungsmitteln, die die schwierige Lage des Studenten klar machen.

5.3 Zusammenfassung

Zusammenfassend lässt sich nun folgendes feststellen. Wenn auch die Realisierungen von höflichen Bitten durch italienische und deutsche Sprecher in den verschiedenen Kommunikationssituationen große Unterschiede aufweisen, zeigt sich, dass durch das Zusammenspiel sowohl von internen und externen Modifikatoren als auch von Überredungs- und Überzeugungsmitteln, die durch die Verbform ausgedrückte Basisgrad von Direktheit und Effizienz so verändert werden kann, dass die resultierenden konkreten Äußerungen bezüglich der kommunikativen Ziele, so höflich wie möglich und so effizient/klar wie geboten zu sein, konvergieren.

Daraus ergibt sich die Einsicht, dass die Form illokutiver Äußerungen in ihrer Diskursangemessenheit nicht nur einer Maxime, wie der der Höflichkeit geschuldet ist – auch wenn eingestanden werden muss, dass Höflichkeit ein zentraler Faktor in der Realisierung von Aufforderungen und Bitten ist – sondern sich in komplexer Weise aus der Interaktion verschiedener Maxime ergibt, deren Gewicht je nach Diskurssituation variiert und sich in ihrer Realisierung zusätzlicher Mittel wie interner und externer Modifikatoren bedienen.

6. Positive and negative politeness in Italian and German requests

6.1 Brown and Levinson's "principles of politeness"

"The human personality is a sacred thing; one dare not violate it nor infringe its bounds, while at the same time the greatest good is in communion with others" (Durkheim 1915, p. 299).

Durkheim's quotation is particularly interesting for two reasons. To begin with, it stresses the fact that every form of human interaction is a ritual, not so far from ceremonies and cults towards supernatural entities. Secondly, it stresses how all types of communication imply a potentially paradoxical situation, of the "two-side-of-the-coin" kind. From the one side, we need to maintain some degree of independence (rule 1 and 2 in Lakoff's framework) and show the other participants that we respect it. From the other, we have the need to be involved with other participants and to show them our involvement (Lakoff's rule 3). Goffman (1967) fully adopted this idea and developed a theory accounting for all the little rituals that are carried out during conversation, the main purpose of which is to preserve "face".

Brown and Levinson (1987) followed up this idea developing the concepts of positive face and negative face (taking inspiration from the positive pole of a magnet, which attracts, and the negative, which repulses) that they consider as "basic wants". Respect and consideration for these two aspects of personality is described respectively as "positive politeness" and "negative politeness". Positive politeness (also defined solidarity politeness) satisfies the need everyone has to be recognised, accepted and appreciated by his/her peers. Negative politeness is shown guaranteeing people's right to be free from imposition and to see their own preferences, autonomy and freedom of movement respected.

Deborah Tannen in *"You just don't understand: women and men in conversation"* (1992) provides a brilliant and, I would dare say, funny example of these two aspects of face and politeness dealing with the differences in communication between men and women, which she considers to fall under the domain of cross-cultural pragmatics. She tries to answer the question women have been asking themselves for ages: "Why don't men ever stop to ask for directions?" According to Tannen, women see social life as a network of connections, and communication as a way to seek and give confirmation and support. Life for them is a struggle to preserve intimacy and to avoid isolation: in one word, they want to protect their positive face. That is why for them it is quite logic to stop and ask for cooperation in finding the way. Men's frame of mind, according to Tannen, presents another *scenario*: they see themselves as individuals in a hierarchical order, and

communication as a series of negotiations in which people try to achieve and maintain the upper-hand, or simply to protect their negative face. From this perspective, finding the way on their own is an essential part of the independence that men perceive to be a prerequisite for self-respect.

Tannen's example is clearly a radicalisation in the vision of the separation between negative and positive face. In every culture, in every individual the need is perceived to project involvement and independence simultaneously in any form of communication. Politeness is patently a delicate equilibrium between the two, so that we can say "*There is no faceless communication*".

In "Politeness: some universals in language usage" Brown and Levinson put forward a classification of the positive and negative politeness strategies that a speaker may adopt in trying to redress a FTA, which are still the best framework of analysis for these subtle aspects of communication. By and large, I have adopted their framework, and adapted it when I perceived that some strategies were associable in one unique category. For instance, Brown and Levinson refer to the strategies of creating common ground and asserting common ground, and I decided to put them together in the category of "reference to common ground". At the same time, I will suggest some changes in their interpretation of the strategies as being a sign of positive vs negative politeness. In the following tables, these categories have been marked in a darker color.

In the following, I will briefly summarize my framework of analysis, giving some examples taken from the DCT I gathered in the research project "A comparison of the realization of requestive speech acts in Italian and in German" (2013).

6.2 Strategies of positive politeness

If positive face represents the need everyone has to be recognized, accepted and appreciated by his peers, positive politeness is redress directed to the addressee's positive face. Through its countless strategies, the speaker communicates to the hearer that his values, wants, actions and thoughts are similar to his own, that they are on the same wavelength, or if this cannot be the case, at least that he cares for his positive face. In sum, with these strategies the speaker communicates to the hearer that he appreciates and values him.

In the following, I will briefly list and summarize the strategies that according to Brown & Levinson or in my opinion are aimed at expressing positive politeness.

Among them, I have chosen not to mention directness since I treat it as a category on its own throughout this work. However, the two scholars mention it at the beginning of their chapter

concerning positive politeness strategies. To their way of thinking, expressing the FTA bald on record may be an expression of this type of politeness, if we consider that directness is commonly accepted when the social distance between speaker and hearer is minimal. Therefore, coming directly to the point may imply that the speaker feels so close (or wants to come closer) to the hearer that he does not feel any need to “beat around the bush”⁴¹. An example of this choice is one of the Italian responses: “Laura, per favore mi presti gli appunti di ieri?” or “Le chiedo se è possibile prorogare di un'altra settimana” (Sit.4). A direct German response is “(.) ich frage dich jetzt direkt, ob du da warst und ob du deine Mitschrift kurz leihen koenntest.” Let us now turn to the analysis of positive politeness strategies, that I have tried to spot both in the requestive act and in the supportive moves.

Name of the strategy	Description
Create common ground	The fastest way to create common ground is to show interest for the hearer (his passions, wants, needs, goods). Claiming common ground means also to indicate that S and H belong to the same set of persons who share specific wants, goals and values. To take notice of the hearer's change in condition or possessions is one of the easiest ways to do so. For instance, if the interlocutor has a running nose, a positively polite reaction is to offer him/her a tissue.
Assert common ground / seek agreement /avoid disagreement	Here the speaker gives common ground for granted, and in referring to it, he takes care for the positive face of the interlocutor. This is often achieved through expressions as the Italian expression “Come Lei sa ⁴² ” or the German expression “Wie Sie wissen”. Interestingly enough, the “common ground” does not entail only objective information, but also habits, desires, tastes, values, on which the speaker shows or seeks agreement with the interlocutor. The desire to agree with the hearer can also lead to the mechanism of pretending to agree. In requests, a typical way to do so is to “disarm” the hearer, i.e. to anticipate a possible objection on the part of the requestee and reply to it.
Repetition	By “repetition” Brown and Levinson intended the fact of repeating part or all of what the speaker said in a conversation. I've chosen to include in this category also the repetition of the request, as happens when the requester uses adverbs as “per favore” or “bitte”.
Small talk	The speaker shows that he gives value in spending some time with the hearer, talking for a while about unrelated topics. In some cultures, the face-threatening act of making a request not only can but must be preceded by small talk on safe topics. In this way, the requestee is reassured on the fact that the requester did not come simply to exploit

⁴¹ See page 9 for the reasons why directness may also be an expression of negative politeness.

⁴² “As you know”.

	him but that he also has an interest in maintaining a good relationship with him.
Make a good story	The speaker tries to intensify the hearer's interest for the events told by putting him in the middle of the conversation and using the historical present, picturesque language or direct quotes.
Switch in deixis	<p>Another way to put the addressee in the centre of discourse, showing interest and care for him, is to switch all the adverbs and pronouns and parts of the discourse which refer to the time, place and the subject of discourse as if the speaker took the role of the hearer.. It goes without saying that this procedure reduces the distance between speaker and hearer. In requests, this strategy has often the purpose of conveying the sensation that speaker and hearer are co-operators and that they are both involved in the relevant activity.</p> <p>Another important switch in deixis concerns the use of proximal instead of distal demonstrative, as for instance "here" instead of "there", "now" instead of "then". Also the use of verbs of movement which indicates approximation instead of separation (take vs bring) plays an important role in these "positive politeness adjustments". An invite as "Do you want to come with me to the movies?" rather than "Do you want to go with me to the movies?" is for instance used to convey complicity.</p>
Exaggerate (interest, opinions, approval or sympathy)	The speaker satisfies the positive face of the hearer whereby giving gifts, which can be tangible (see strategy "promise of a reward"), but also symbolical, as compliments or signs of admiration, understanding, or sympathy. Expressions of these feelings are often uttered with an exaggerated stress, intonation and other aspects of prosodics. The speaker can also violate the quantity maxim by saying more than is required, or exaggerating or choosing a point on a scale which is higher than the actual state of affairs. The exaggeration conveys an emotional involvement for the events told and aims therefore at arousing empathy.
Use in-group identity markers	Using in-group address forms and dialects is also a way to claim that speaker and hearer belong to the same group (sometimes a code switching is possible).
Ellipsis and contraction	Since reference to shared mutual knowledge is possible only if speaker and hearer belong to the same group, ellipsis and contraction could also be seen as a sign of positive politeness. Even if indirect requests are usually seen as a sign of negative politeness, if ellipsis occurs, they turn into positive politeness.
Jokes	The category of jokes is very close to the previous strategy, but still very distinct, given their potential but also their riskiness. Jokes are based on mutual shared knowledge and values and are therefore widely used as a basic positive politeness technique. In requests, they can be used to minimize a face threat. After a faux pas of the hearer,

	they can also be used to get him out of embarrassment.
Knowledge of the hearer	The speaker indicates that speaker and hearer are co-operators whereby asserting knowledge of the hearer's wants and showing willingness to fit in with them. In this way, the hearer is encouraged to co-operate with the speaker, complying with his request.
Deference	According to Brown and Levinson, there are two types of honorifics, which in their classification fall under the domain of negative politeness. Between the two, address-forms as Doctor, Professor, Mr. President, or just the name of the interlocutor are in my opinion an expression of positive politeness, since they make the hearer feel acknowledged by the speaker.
Promise of a reward/ redress other wants / assert reciprocity⁴³	The speaker offers or promises something to the hearer in order to show that he cares for his desires and wants. Promises may also not be respected; nevertheless, they show the speaker's intent to satisfy the hearer's positive face. The existence of cooperation between speaker and hearer may also be claimed by hinting at reciprocal rights or obligations occurring between them. The speaker, in particular, may say or imply "I'll do x for you if you do y for me" or "I did x for you last week so you do y for me this week". This strategy may sound childish or selfish and for this reason is not commonly used among adults.
Be optimistic	The speaker shows optimism in assuming that the hearer will help him satisfy his desires. An example of this attitude may be the utterance "Wait a minute, you haven't brushed your hair", said to a child, in order to ask him/her to do it.
Express indebtedness and gratitude	The speaker can also redress the face-threatening act by explicitly proclaiming his indebtedness to H, expressing his/her gratefulness in case the hearer fulfils his wants. This strategy is interpreted by Brown and Levinson as a sign of negative politeness; but given the focus on the relationship, I decided to read gratitude as positive politeness oriented. In addition to this, saying "Thank you" before the interlocutor accepts to comply with the request (as happens in my written questionnaires) diminishes negative politeness, since it gives compliance for granted.
Cost maximizer	The speaker emphasises appreciation towards the hearer by maximizing the rate of imposition of the requested act. In this way, the cooperation of the hearer is stressed.
Referring to emotions	I decided to add this category because I have found many references to emotions in my questionnaires. It seems to me that talking about feelings has the purpose of raising empathy in the interlocutor. Consequently, I have classified it among the strategies of positive

⁴³ This category was split in three different strategies in Brown and Levinson's classification. I have grouped them together because, to my way of thinking, they all share an element of "reward" for the interlocutor, if he fulfils the request.

	politeness.
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Table 28. Strategies of positive politeness

6.3 Strategies of negative politeness

We have seen how negative politeness lies at the heart of respecting behaviour, just as positive politeness is the bedrock of familiarity and warmth. Through its strategies, the speaker conveys to the hearer that his freedom of action will be unhindered and his intentions unimpeded. When the speaker predicates an act of the hearer, for instance through a request or an offer, the negative face of the interlocutor is compromised. Negative face-redress is then carried out in order to give him a way out and letting the option of not doing the requested act. We should remember, nonetheless, that the desire to redress the face threat is not the only motivation to use negative politeness. In particular, the speaker may also be driven by the desire to put a distance between him and the interlocutor.

According to Brown and Levinson, however, conventional indirectness is the main way to convey negative politeness, as the expression of the wish to leave the hearer a way out of the face threatening act. The aspect of conventionality assures for the immediate perception of the illocutionary act been performed, whereas the aspect of indirectness accounts for the expression of negative politeness. In short, according to this view, conventionally indirect speech act solve the clash between the desire to go on record and the necessity to give the hearer a way out of the performed act. Nonetheless, the two scholars do not neglect to mention that bald on record strategies can be considered negative politeness strategies as well, since if the speaker rapidly comes to the point the hearer spares time and feels therefore less impended.

In this case as in the previous paragraph, I have chosen not to consider here indirectness since I explore it specifically in chapter 3 and a clearer position on the relation between indirectness and politeness will be taken in the conclusion, in the light of the obtained results.

6.3.1 Negative politeness: on record strategies

Name of the strategy	Description
Question	The simplest way to show temptativeness and therefore to increase

	<p>negative politeness is to formulate a question. This strategy appears to be rather universal or at least independently developed in many languages. Questions usually concern the felicity conditions of speech acts identified the by Searle (1969, 1975), but also preconditions for the success of the speech act (e.g. that the things requested exist, that the requested action has not already been done or will not automatically be done and so on). Requests can range on their level of directness, but the fact of posing a question to the hearer in a certain way respects his negative face (even if only apparently), since he can always give a negative answer.</p>
Give reasons	<p>With this strategy, the speaker motivates his speech act, showing his reasonableness. This behavior is considered by Brown and Levinson positive politeness oriented, since it is a way to gain the hearer's empathy. Nonetheless, if the speaker supports a request with reasons and logical motivations he is proposing its compliance not as a sign of friendship but as an inevitable logical conclusion. Consequently, I am inclined to believe that reasons may very well be an expression of negative politeness.</p>
Be pessimistic	<p>By being pessimistic, the speaker assumes that the hearer is unlikely to be willing to do any acts predicated of him. The simplest way to do so is to insert a negative probability operator in the assertion or questioning on the felicity condition of the request. The negative aspect can be associated with an indirect formulation, as in the example "You haven't brought any money, have you?", uttered to ask for a loan. As clearly visible in this example, an essential role in pessimistic assertions is played by question tags.</p>
Hedge / cost minimizer	<p>A hedge is a particle, word or a phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or a noun to a set. By hedging his request, the speaker shows tentativeness and respect for the point of view of the interlocutor. Hedges are usually oriented to the four rules of communication formulated by Grice. Adverbs as "maybe", "perhaps", or expressions as "I wonder", "I guess" call the sincerity rule into question. Quantity hedges very often used to mitigate complaints or requests. For this reason, I associate this strategy with the one of minimizing the rate of the imposition, that occurs when the speaker tries to show that the requested action is not particularly serious. A wide variety of expressions, as for instance "a tiny little bit", "a little", "a bit", or "sort of, kind of, in a way, I wonder, I hope" help to pursue this goal.</p>
Give deference	<p>Deference paying phenomena - in one word "honorifics" - probably represent the most important case of intrusion of social factors into the grammar and vocabulary of a language. Nonetheless, there is still no universal survey of honorific phenomena in languages throughout the world. The most common honorific expression is the use of plural</p>

	pronouns to singular addressees, something we can see in German (“Sie”) and in the south regions of Italy (“voi”), whereas in North Italy we use the third person singular.
Not impinge	Another way to show respect for the hearer's negative face is to communicate that the speaker is reluctant to impose in any way on the hearer. Moreover, the speaker can try to dissociate himself or the hearer or both of them from the face-threatening act. In other words, the speaker communicates that it is not his own wish to impose on the hearer, but someone else's one, or that the imposition is not directed on the hearer in particular but rather on some people in general. As a matter of fact, this can be achieved in a variety of ways: by making it unclear who the agent of the face threatening act actually is, by being deliberately vague about who the act is addressed to, for instance by formulating the act as a general rule and not as an act of volition of the speaker. The speaker can try to show that he is reluctant to impinge on the hearer by means of expression such as: “I normally wouldn't ask you to do so, but...”, “I don't want to interrupt you, but...”.
	Inside the previous category I decided to include question tags as for instance “Ok?” which according to Brown and Levinson fell under the domain of positive politeness. In my opinion, in fact, they soften the presumptuousness of an order, or check willingness on the part of the hearer, if they follow a request.
Apologize	By apologizing for doing the FTA, the speaker indicates his reluctance to impinge on the hearer's negative face. We have to keep in mind that in some cultures words the explicit performative of this verb (“ <i>Verzeihung</i> ” or “ <i>Scusa</i> ”) does not exist; instead, a self-humbling remark about the guilt (“I'm sorry”) constitutes the apology. Hence, in in this category are included expressions in which the speaker shows that he is conscious of the impingement his doing on this on the hearer (e.g. “I know I'm asking you a big favour”), or self-humbling remarks, followed by the admission of guilt.
Distance	Deictic anchorage plays a significant role not only in positive politeness strategies, but also in negative politeness. The manipulation of time reference, in particular from the present to the past, has the effect of projecting the speaker into the future, and therefore distancing himself from the FTA. The transformation of deictic forms, making them from close to distant plays a similar role. Another subtle way of conveying negative politeness is to avoid quotations and reporting speech giving already an interpretation of them. In this way, the speaker shows not to have any presumptuousness about having common ground with the hearer that would allow them to interpret the utterance in the same way.
Nominalization	Ross (1973) suggests that nominalization runs hand in hand with negative politeness. Nominalization is realized when verb phrases are

	<p>substituted by noun phrases. For instance, a sentence as (a.) “You performed well on the examinations and we were favorably impressed” becomes (b.) “Your good performance on the examinations impressed us favorably”. We immediately notice that version b. seems much more formal than version a., which sounds like a spoken sentence. In the same way, passives assume an equally important role in enhancing the formality. The reason behind this phenomenon may lie, again, in the desire of the speaker to distance him from the feeling or the condition predicated. He passes therefore from being an actor of the face threat to being an attribute of it, which becomes an independent entity.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Non-verbal tentativeness</p>	<p>I am suggesting this category because for some of my respondents communicating hesitation also non-verbally was so important that they decided to mention it, even if the questionnaire was written. As a matter of fact, most of the verbal address can be greatly emphasized by prosodic and kinetic means of indicating tentativeness or emphasis. The raised eyebrow, the earnest frown, the “ehm” and hesitations are often the most important signs of the presence of a face-threatening act.</p>

Table 29. Strategies of negative politeness

6.3.2 Negative politeness: off record strategies

If we consider the desire of the speaker to show consideration for the negative face of the interlocutor, off record strategies seem to be the best choice. A face-threatening act is done off-record if it is not clear whether it has been performed or not. In other words, the actor leaves himself a “way out”, whereby formulating the utterance is such a way that it is not possible to attribute him one clear communicative intention. In this way, the speaker avoids taking up responsibility for doing the FTA, whereas the hearer decides how to interpret what has been said, choosing whether to make an inference or not. Off record strategies may also be an expression of positive politeness, for instance if they imply mutual knowledge.

The success of an off-record FTA depends on two elements: a trigger, which serves notice to the addressee that some inference must be made, and the process of inference of the interlocutor. The trigger very often consists of a violation of a Gricean Maxim. It can mean therefore saying less than is required, saying something not true (ironically implying what is actually meant), saying something apparently not relevant, and finally saying something apparently obscure and vague.

Brown and Levinson (1987) describe many strategies which can serve this purpose, but I will report here only the ones which have been used by my respondents. In particular, I have chosen to group together the following categories: Hints, association clues, understate, vagueness, incompleteness, since they all imply an element of vagueness and ambiguity, which has the precise purpose of leaving the hearer “a way out” of the request without losing face.

Hints	The speaker apparently violates the Gricean Maxim of quantity, and says something that has to do with the context, but apparently is unrequired and unnecessary. Prosodics and kinesics leave the hearer asking him/herself “Why did S say that that way?”. The hearer makes therefore an inference, and decides if he wants to accept the Face Threatening Act and eventually respond to it, or to “play dumb”.
Understatement	If the speaker says less than is required, an understatement takes place. Expressing an opinion can be risky, therefore the speaker may choose to understate a compliment, but also to understate criticism, thus avoiding the two extremes of a scale but remaining in the middle. In the case of a request, the speaker “understates” it if he asks less than he actually wants.
Association clue	If the speaker and hearer share some previous experience, hints can be made whereby mentioning something usually associated with the required act, either in the common imaginary or in the common ground of interlocutors. Needless to say, this mode can be particularly risky if the relation with the interlocutor is not very intimate. In the same way, this mode may be socially acceptable in some languages, and too indirect in others. Euphemisms are probably derived from implicatures of this kind. Commonly accepted associations are used in order to tackle taboo subjects.
Vagueness	The speaker may go off record by violating the Manner Maxim in such a way that the communicative intent remains undefined. Ambiguity can be reached for instance through metaphors, since it is not always clear which of the connotations of a metaphor are intended to be invoked. Vagueness may safeguard the positive face of the interlocutor as well, if it is not clear who the object of the FTA is.
Incompleteness	With elliptical phrases, the speaker leaves the FTA half-undone, hanging in the air. The hearer can decide whether to complete the sentence, thus dealing with the FTA, or not.

Table 30. Negative politeness: off record strategies

6.3.3 Other negative politeness strategies

The following off-record strategies were not elicited in my questionnaires. Nonetheless, I will briefly illustrate them so that to offer to the reader a complete classification of negative and positive politeness strategies.

Name of the strategy	Description
State the FTA as a general rule	Another important way to mitigate the impingement on the negative face of the interlocutor is to formulate the FTA as if the sender of the message was someone other than the speaker or at least not only him. In other words, the FTA (very often a command or a request) is formulated so that it seems a general rule. In many languages, impersonal verbs and the passive form, accompanied by agent deletion, are the strategies par excellence in avoiding a clear definition of the agent and of the addressee of the FTA.
Presuppose	If the speaker says something which presupposes something else, he does not take full responsibility for what he is saying but at the same time may quite clearly express criticism or a request. For this reason, this strategy may be extremely risky.
Use tautology	If the speaker expresses a tautology and the hearer presupposes respect for the quantity maxim, he is invited to look for an informative element even out of a patent and necessary truth. Again, tautologies can be used to express disapproval or approval.
Use contradictions	Contradictions consist of an apparent violation of the Quality Maxim, which prescribes to speak the truth. By overtly stating two contradictory things, the speaker invites the hearer to interpret the utterance in a way that reconciles the two opposite dimensions. In this way, the FTA (for instance, criticism) is performed and the face of both interlocutors is preserved.
Be ironic	In ironic statements the speakers says something opposite to what he actually means, again violating the quality maxim. Prosodics, kinesics or simply the context help the hearer decoding the message.
Use metaphors	Metaphors represent a further violation of the Quality Maxim, since they are literally false utterances. Their symbolical meaning hints at the embarrassing truth, without threatening the face of interlocutors.
Use rhetorical questions	Asking a question without having the real expectation of receiving an answer violates the sincerity condition on questions, namely that the speaker wants the hearer to provide him with information. Again, the Relation Maxim makes the hearer presuppose that the speaker wants to achieve something, for instance to perform an excuse or criticism.
Displace the hearer	In this extremely indirect strategy, the speaker addresses the FTA to a

	bystander in the hearing of the intended target of it, in the hope that the real target of the message receives it.
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Table 31. Other negative politeness strategies (not present in my questionnaires)

6.4 Results and analysis

6.4.1 Positive politeness strategies: cross-cultural analysis

To begin with, Italian speakers appear to use a remarkably more extensive use of positive politeness strategies, with respect to Germans. In fact, Italians used a total amount of 319 positive politeness strategies whereas Germans only 253. The second result that springs to mind is that the situational Italian behaviour appears much more stable and homogenous with respect to the German one. The use of positive politeness strategies among German respondents, in fact, reaches two peaks in the note (64) and in the extension situation (92) whereas it remains quite low in the window and in the ride situations. Most strikingly, the expression of positive politeness remains weaker for German speakers in the first three situations but it noticeably surpasses the Italian one in the extension situation, where we know German requests became suddenly much more direct.

However, before going any further into the reasons behind the choices observed, let us have a look at the following table, where we can observe in detail which strategies have been used more frequently in the two language communities at issue.

POSITIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES: SITUATIONAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL VARIATION					
	S1 Window	S2 Notes	S3 Ride	S4 Extension	Total
POSITIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES ITALIAN	84	84	78	73	319
TOTAL POSITIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES GERMAN	55	64	42	92	253

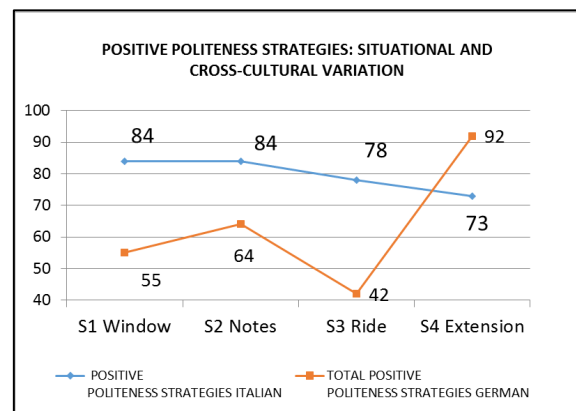


Table 32 and Fig. 41. Positive politeness strategies. Situational and cross-cultural variation

POSITIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES ITALIAN					
	S1 Window: a doctor asks a nurse to open the window	S2 Notes: a student asks another student to lend him/her the last lecture's notes	S3 Ride: an employee asks a colleague for a ride to the main office	S4 Extension: a student asks a University lecturer for an extension on a term paper	TOTAL
Create common ground	14	1	1	2	18
Assert common ground / seek agreement / avoid disagreement				2	2
Repetition	16	11	9	9	45
Small talk		4	5		9
Make a good story		6	12	8	26
Switch in deixis	5				5
Exaggerate (interest, opinions, approval or sympathy)	15	14	6	4	39
Use in-group identity markers	1	3	15		19
Ellypsis, contraction	2				2
Jokes		1	1		2
Knowledge of the hearer				11	11
Deference	22	28	22	16	88
Promise of a reward/ redress other wants / assert reciprocity		4		2	6
Be optimistic	1	4		8	13
Express indeptedness and gratitude	6	4	4	2	16
Cost maximizer	1	2	2	1	6
Referring to emotions	1	2	1	8	12
TOTAL POSITIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES	84	84	78	73	319

Table 33. Positive politeness strategies Italian

POSITIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES GERMAN					
	S1 Window: a doctor asks a nurse to open the window	S2 Notes: a student asks another student to lend him/her the last lecture's notes	S3 Ride: an employee asks a colleague for a ride to the main office	S4 Extension: a student asks a University lecturer for an extension on a term paper	TOTAL
Create common ground	9	6	5	8	28
Assert common ground / seek agreement / avoid disagreement	1	2	1	5	9
Repetition	19	16		4	39
Small talk	1	5	7		13
Make a good story		4	5	24	33
Switch in deixis					
Exaggerate (approval, interest, opinions)	10	13	6	4	33
Use in-group identity markers		4	4		8
Ellypsis and contraction					
Jokes					
Knowledge of the hearer				16	16
Deference	10	11	11	9	41
Promise of a reward/ redress other wants / assert reciprocity		1		1	2
Be optimistic	1	1	1	10	13
Express indeptedness and gratitude	4	1	1	2	8
Cost maximizer					
Referring to emotions			1	9	10
TOTAL POSITIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES	55	64	42	92	253

Table 34. Positive politeness strategies German

Firstly, the most frequently used strategy in the two language communities is the deference strategy. In particular, what is meant here is the utterance, on the part of the speaker, of the name of the interlocutor, in situation 1, 2, 3 and of “Professor” in situation 4. A German participant, for example, formulated the request in situation 2 in this way “**Schwester** Therese, ich weiß nicht, wie es Ihnen geht, aber ich muss mich jetzt kurz besinnen”, and in situation 4 “**Herr Professor**, ich habe nicht ökonomisch gearbeitet”. In all cases, the aim is that of making the hearer feel acknowledged and therefore paying a tribute to his positive face. If we compare these data with the German ones, we crucially notice that German respondents used the same strategy less than half the time in comparison to Italians. What is more, the difference in the linguistic behaviour of the two language communities is not limited to a single situation, but is spread among the four prompts.

Secondly, Italian participants display an extensive use of repetition as well and in this case they almost agree with the German counterpart (45 IT- 39 GE). In particular, in this strategy I included expressions as “per favore” in Italian and “bitte” in German, but also question tags and real repetitions of the request. Throughout the four situations, the situation in which this strategy is used most extensively is the window situation. This may have happened because requests in this situation tended to be rather direct, so participants felt they could partially redress them with simple politeness markers as “gentilmente”, “per cortesia” or “bitte”.

Another finding on which Italians and Germans seem to agree is the category of “exaggerating approval” towards the hearer (39 IT – 33 GE). I decided to include in this strategy both adverbial and lexical intensifiers, which abound both in Italian and in German requests. An Italian respondent chooses, for example, to define the notes he is asking for, in situation 1, as a “piece of art”: “Se per te non è un problema, e non sei troppo gelosa delle tue **opere d’arte**, li fotocopierei e te li restituirei domattina..”⁴⁴. Another Italian speaker wrote “Laura ma come fai a stare **sempre** al passo con le spiegazioni del Prof.? Ti **invidio**..”⁴⁵. A German respondent, in the same situation, specifies “Du schreibst immer so **gewissenhaft** mit”.

The careful reader will have already noticed at this point that this strategy has something in common with the one of „making a good story”⁴⁶. Also in this case involvement and interest are emphasised, but they concern the events told, in the attempt of awakening the empathy of the hearer. Surprisingly, German respondents account for a more intense use of these devices, which

⁴⁴ “If it isn’t a problem for you, and you are not too jealous of your piece of art, I would photocopy them and give them back to you tomorrow morning”.

⁴⁵ “Laura, how do you manage to keep up with the explanations of the Professor? I envy you so much...”

⁴⁶ It may be important to stress that elements of the discourse which fall under this category were often embedded inside a negative politeness strategy, namely that of reasons. When this happened, I scored them in both categories.

they use 33 times (26 IT). Examples of these types of strategies are found more often in situation 3 and 4 of my DCT questionnaires, where we read formulations of this kind “**Proprio** oggi non passa l’autobus, non è che potresti darmi un passaggio?” “Dovevo tornare in ufficio in autobus ma ho **appena** letto che ci sarà uno sciopero per l’intera giornata!⁴⁷”. Or, in situation 4, “Professore credo di aver fatto il **passo più lungo della gamba** scegliendo quell’argomento per la tesina. Tuttavia non voglio **arrendermi**...⁴⁸ (Sit 4). In German, a typical formulation of this kind could be “Ich **interessiere mich sehr** für dieses Thema, brauche aber mehr Zeit um das Material detailliert überprüfen und sammeln“.

A special remark should be made for the category of creating common ground, which has the function of building an epistemological bridge with the interlocutor, i.e. a cornerstone of positive politeness. The German data reveal a consistent preference for this strategy (28 GE – 18 IT). This linguistic behaviour points to the likelihood that it is essential for German speakers to establish a connection from a rational point of view with the interlocutor. This is usually realized through a “preparatory” sentence or question, which has both the function of introducing the topic, letting the hearer know that he is about to receive a request and getting a pre-commitment. Similarly, German speakers account for a more consistent use of strategies aiming at asserting common ground (giving it for granted), seeking agreement and avoiding disagreement (9 GE, 2 IT). A German example of this kind of sentence could be “Hey, **du arbeitest im Sekretariat oder?** Ich hab meinen Bus verpasst und bin schon verspätet . Könnte ich mit dir zur Arbeit fahren?”(Situation 3). In Italian responses, an example of this kind of strategy would be “Michele, scusa, **lavori anche tu all’università vero?** Ti posso chiedere un passaggio?”⁴⁹ (Sit. 3).

A similar trend can be detected in the category of asserting common ground (9 GE, 2 IT). A key role in the determination of this result has been probably played by the particle “ja”, as in the example: “Da ich **ja** ein sehr zeitintensives Thema habe, möchte ich Sie bitten, mein Frist zu verlängern” (sit. 4). Nonetheless, other expressions hinting at the agreement of the interlocutor are equally present, especially in the German group (9 GE – 2 IT), as in the sentence „**Wie Sie wissen**, habe ich mir ein etwas abweichendes Thema für meine Hausarbeit ausgesucht“ are just two examples from German respondents. An Italian example could be „**Come sa**, ho scelto di affrontare questo tema un po’ particolare perchè mi interessa molto, ma ho avuto molte difficoltà⁵⁰ [...]“.

⁴⁷ “Just today the bus is not coming. Won’t you give me a lift? I have to go back to the main office and I’ve just found out that there will be a strike for the whole day!”

⁴⁸ “Professor, I think I’ve beaten more than I could chew, when I chose that topic. But I don’t want to give up [...]”.

⁴⁹ “Michele, excuse me, you work at university, don’t you? May I ask you for a lift?”.

⁵⁰ “As you know, I’ve chosen this topic because I was very interested in it, but I had a lot of problems [...]”

“Disarmers”⁵¹ pertain to this category, in the sense that they prevent and avoid disagreement with the interlocutor. In particular, in the extension situation, a German respondent chooses to precede his request with the utterance “**Ich möchte nicht den Eindruck erwecken**, säumig mit Terminen umzugehen“.

A possible explanation for this finding may be linked with scholars’ impression that the Italian perception of politeness seems to allow a more overt disagreement with respect to German. In the latter linguistic community, in fact, it is generally advisable to stress the aspects on which interlocutors agree and only after the ones on which they disagree. In Italian, on the contrary, it is quite common to openly and directly disagree, and start the utterance with a blatant no, even if the speaker actually partially agrees.

Another significant finding concerns the use of in-group identity markers (19 IT – 8 GE): This approach is typical, in my questionnaires, of the note and the ride situation, in which a certain level of acquaintance together with a minimal relative power between interlocutors occurs. In Italian, we find expressions as “Mi daresti **uno strappo** in ufficio?”⁵² (sit. 3) or, “Posso **scroccarti** un passaggio fino all’Ateneo?”⁵³ (Sit. 3), or, still in the notes situation, “Non c’ero all’ultima lezione e oggi non ho capito un tubo⁵⁴ ..”.

It is also crucial to note that both Italian and German speakers used the strategy “knowledge of the hearer” exclusively in situation 4 (16 GE – 11 IT), where can find sentences as “**So che normalmente** non concede questo tipo di eccezioni⁵⁵,” and “**Ich weiß, dass Sie sehr viel Wert** auf eine pünktliche Abgabe und ein gutes persönliches Zeitmanagement legen”. In these sentences, the student shows knowledge of the Professor’s policy, disarming him of possible objections and at the same time putting him at the centre of the discourse.

A considerable amount of German (13) and Italian (13) speakers demonstrated an optimistic attitude, whereby phrasing the request giving compliance for granted. In my data, examples of this strategy are represented by the use of the “scope stating” directness strategy. An utterance as “**Desidererei** prorogare la consegna” can be on the one hand considered vague and therefore negative polite, but on the other it displays an optimistic attitude, since the speaker does not feel necessary to further specify his request. In the same way, another indirect formulation as “**Sag mal, fährst du Richtung Hauptgebäude?**”, used as a requestive speech act itself and not as a preparatory move, can be interpreted as a sign of optimism.

51 In Venuti 2013, I labelled as “disarmers” the supportive moves, usually preceding the real request, which name possible objections that the hearer can make and show understanding for them.

52 “Would you give me a lift home?”

53 “May I scrounge you a lift home?”

54 “I wasn’t here at the last lecture and I didn’t understand a straw”.

55 “I know that you do not normally grant this type of exceptions”.

The fascinating strategy “promise of a reward/redress other wants/assert reciprocity” appear seldom in my data (6 IT, 2 GE) and only in the note and in the extension situations. An example among German responses is “Du hast auch **Einer gut** bei mir!”; whereas an Italian respondents wrote „Naturalmente hai una **bevuta pagata** stasera!“. The aspect of reciprocity is represented very rarely in my data. An Italian respondent, nevertheless, wrote in the note situation “Grazie mille, se hai bisogno di **appunti chiedi pure**”.

Finally, the poor condition of the requester seems to work only in Italian as a major source of irony, as in the comment “Ci sono **gli scienziati** dei bus che scioperano”. In conclusion, both Italian and German speakers also thought it could be useful to refer to emotions in their requests (12 IT, 10 GE), particularly in situation 4. A German respondent, for instance, wrote “Sie werden es nicht bereuen!”.

6.4.2 Negative politeness strategies: cross-cultural analysis

NEGATIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES: SITUATIONAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL VARIATION					
	S1 Window	S2 Notes	S3 Ride	S4 Extension	Total
NEGATIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES ITALIAN	65	98	117	115	395
NEGATIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES GERMAN	51	79	112	89	331

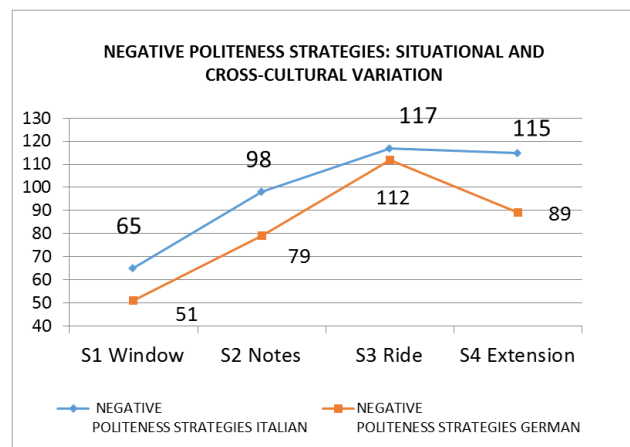


Table 35 and Fig. 42. Negative politeness strategies. Situational and cross-cultural variation

The first remark that springs to mind at a first observation of table 35, is that both Italian and German respondents display a more consistent use of negatively politeness oriented strategies with respect to positively oriented strategies. What is more, the quantitative difference between the two types of politeness is rather similar in the two languages at issue (+76 IT, + 78 GE). Secondly, the general trend of negative politeness oriented strategies follows an almost steady rise in the Italian results (with situations 3 and 4 showing similar scores) whereas in German it reaches a peak

in the ride situation in order to drop again in the extension situation. This trend is very similar to the one concerning indirectness in the German data.

But before going any further into a comparative analysis of the results, I will outline the main deductions we can draw from the following tables.

NEGATIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES ITALIAN					
	S1 Window: a doctor asks a nurse to open the window	S2 Notes: a student asks another student to lend him/her the last lecture's notes	S3 Ride: an employee asks a colleague for a ride to the main office	S4 Extension: a student asks a University lecturer for an extension on a term paper	TOTAL
Question	25	41	51	21	138
Give reasons	7	11	19	23	60
Be pessimistic		1	4		5
Hedge/cost minimizer	2	8	10	10	30
Give deference (personal pronoun honorific)	17		1	28	46
Not impinge	2	13	17	2	34
Apologize	8	19	13	9	49
Distance	1	2		7	10
Nominalization					
Non verbal temptativeness				2	2
Hints/association clue/understate/vagueness/incompleteness	3	3	2	13	21
TOTAL NEGATIVE STRATEGIES ITALIAN	65	98	117	115	395

Table 36. Negative politeness strategies Italian

NEGATIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES GERMAN					
	S1 Window: a doctor asks a nurse to open the window	S2 Notes: a student asks another student to lend him/her the last lecture's notes	S3 Ride: an employee asks a colleague for a ride to the main office	S4 Extension: a student asks a University lecturer for an extension on a term paper	TOTAL
Question	25	34	41	18	118
Give reasons	2	19	19	16	56
Be pessimistic		2	6	1	9
Hedge/cost minimizer	3	17	18	9	47
Give deference (personal pronoun honorific)	18	1	6	25	50
Not impinge		4	15	1	20
Apologize	1	1	6		8
Distance		1		2	3
Nominalization			1	4	5
Non verbal temptativeness					
Hints/Association clue/understate/vagueness/incompleteness	2			13	15
TOTAL NEGATIVE STRATEGIES GERMAN	51	79	112	89	331

Table 37. Negative politeness strategies German

To begin with, the most frequently used negative politeness strategy for both languages is the “question” (138 IT, 118 GE). It must be specified that I counted here every question mark that appeared in responses, and therefore a single response can have scored more than one point. Questions imply freedom of choice on the part of the hearer and therefore they increase negative politeness.

Another strategy that has been used quite extensively is the one of “giving reason” (60 IT - 56 GE). This result needs to be interpreted with caution if we consider that, in Brown and Levinson’s classification, reasons were considered a positive politeness oriented strategy. However, examples of this kind of strategy are found very often in both Italian and German responses, throughout all the four situations. The so called “grounder” supportive move ranges from very simple explanations as for instance „**Da ich** letztes mal nicht da war“ (Sit 1) to articulated explanations as "Mit meinem Thema zu ihrem Kurs habe ich eines gewählt, dessen

Materialsammlung sich als schwieriger erweist, nicht zuletzt, da wir dieses Gebiet nicht im Seminar behandelt haben“.

The reason for the overriding frequency of reasons may be the fact that it is psychologically most plausible to obtain compliance if we make the addressee understand the reason of a request. At the same time, the speaker presents compliance as natural consequence of the events told and not as something that has to do with the relationship existing between him and the hearer.

As far as the strategy of deference is concerned, it appears quite often both in the German and in the Italian findings (50 GE - 46 IT). In particular, I decided to look for the strategy in the requestive act itself, and not in the supportive moves. In this case, the personal pronoun “Sie” was always visible in German data, whereas it was implicit in the Italian ones and had to be spotted whereby looking at the verb.

Another striking result is the one concerning apologies. 49 Italian speakers judged the move of apology useful, whereas only 8 Germans begged the interlocutor for forgiveness. By and large, apologies are meant to demonstrate that the case is exceptional and that in normal circumstances the requester would not even dream of infringing the negative face of the interlocutor. Examples of this kind of strategy vary greatly both in Italian and in German, and range from expressions as “**Entschuldigen Sie bitte**, fahren Sie jetzt ins Büro?” to “Laura, **scusa se ti rompo le scatole**, (..)”.

More specifically, if we compare this result with Venuti (2013), pag. 117, we can have a deeper insight into the nature of these apologies. Venuti (2013) investigated the internal and external modification of the same data, and classified apologies among “alerters”, i.e. attention getters that precede a request. Expressions as “scusa, scusi” used as alerters appeared 33 times in Italian and 8 times in German. This finding suggests us that German speakers apologize rarely in requests, and if they do, it is only with the aim of getting attention from the hearer. Italian respondents, on the contrary, revealed a massive use of real and sincere apologies (16), beside apologies used as alerters.

On the other hand, hedges and cost minimizers appeared with a neatly greater frequency in German than in Italian (30 it – 47 GE). As mentioned before, hedges may be focused on each of the four rules underlying communication according to Grice. A request as “Könntest du mir **vielleicht** die Unterlagen von letzter Woche geben?“ concentrates on the quality rule, since “vielleicht” calls the sincerity into question. Quantity hedges represent the hedges par excellence, as in the example “Ti dispiace se faccio **un paio** di fotocopie ai tuoi appunti?⁵⁶”, or “Gigliola, potrebbe essere così gentile da aprire **un po’** le finestre, per far rinfrescare l’aria?⁵⁷”. If-clauses pertain to the strategy of

⁵⁶ “Do you mind if I make a couple of photocopies of your notes?”

⁵⁷ “Gigliola, would you be so kind as to open a little bit the window?”

cost minimizer, and have the effect of let the hearer a way out of the request, as in the example “Kannst du mich mitnehmen? Aber natürlich nur **wenn du in meine Richtung fährst.**”

Another way in which both Italian and German speakers tried to communicate awareness of the face threatening character of their request is the strategy of “not impinge” (34 IT – 20 GE). Through this strategy respondents tried to convey reluctance to impose in any way on the hearer. The Italian response “Potrebbe concedermi per caso una proroga di due settimane? Mi scuso per questa richiesta e **spero che non la metta in difficoltà**⁵⁸” is a typical example. Other examples for German are „**Das ist mir jetzt sehr unangenehm** und ich weiß auch, dass Sie sonst keine Ausnahme machen“.

Precisely as in the previous case, also hints, association clues and incomplete sentences appear more often in Italian data than in German data (21 IT – 15 GE). What is more, Italians used them throughout the four situations, whereas Germans only in the window and in the extension situation. Hints can be formulated by raising the issue of some desired act, for instance naming a reason to do it, as in the case of “**Ganz schön heiß hier**”. The speaker may also “naively” ask the reason why the hearer has not already done the requested act. This formulation is extremely risky, since a certain level of criticism is in this way communicated. An Italian speaker, for instance, formulates his request in the window situation just by saying “**Perchè le finestre sono chiuse?**⁵⁹”. An example of vagueness may be the Italian response “Mi scusi ma causa eventi inaspettati **sono impossibilitato** a consegnare il lavoro per la data prefissata”⁶⁰, and in German ““Etwas mehr Zeit würde mir sehr helfen. **Was raten Sie mir**, Herr Professor?”.

Italian speakers revealed a more marked preference for distancing strategies (10 IT- 3 GE) with respect to Germans. The request “**Volevo** chiederle se poteva concedermi un po’ di tempo di proroga sulla consegna dell’elaborato”, for instance, displays the use of the past tense, which has the effect of projecting the speaker into the future, and therefore distancing him from the FTA. Last but not least, German speakers used slightly more often negatively formulated sentences (9 GE – 5 IT) with respect to Italians, especially in the ride situation, as in the example “Würdest du mich **nicht** mitnehmen?”.

⁵⁸ “Could you give me an extension of two weeks? I apologize for this request and I hope it does not get you into troubles”.

⁵⁹ “Why are the windows closed?”

⁶⁰ I’m sorry but I am unable to give in my term paper for the deadline”.

6.4.3 Total politeness strategies: situational and cross-cultural variation

Taking everything into consideration, I will now try to draw some conclusions on the behaviour displayed by Italian and German speakers as far as positive and negative politeness is concerned.

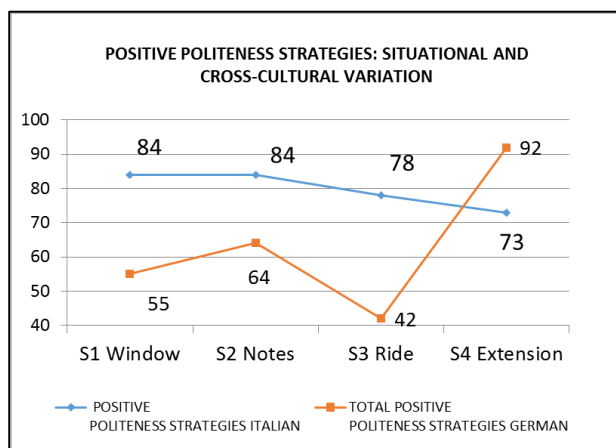


Fig. 42. Positive politeness strategies

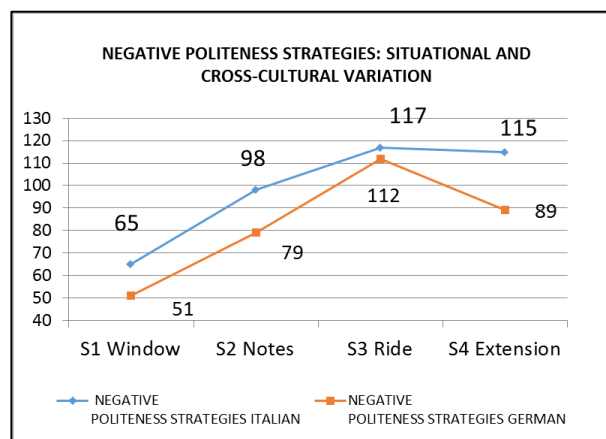


Fig. 43. Negative politeness strategies

Both groups proved to be perfectly aware of the difference between the four sociopragmatic situations that were proposed; in fact they modulated the use of positive and negative strategies according to the context in which the request was embedded.

The first consideration that springs to mind is that the positive and negative trends for both Italians and Germans appear to be somehow specular and counterbalanced. For instance, if positive politeness strategies decrease in German in the Ride situation and increase in the Extension situation, they simultaneously zoom in the Ride situation and drop in the Extension situation. A similar phenomenon can be observed in Italian data: the positive politeness trend declines gently from sit. 2 to situation 4, at the same time the negative politeness trend gently rises in the same points. In my opinion, this result provides good probability that the new classification of positive and negative politeness strategies, which I put forward in paragraph 6.2 and 6.3, was correct.

Another striking result concerns the trend of positive and negative politeness displayed by German findings. As a matter of fact, German data show a peak in positive politeness precisely in the situation which was rated the most face threatening one, namely the Extension situation. This behaviour appear to be even more surprising if we consider that positive politeness strategies drop – as expected – in the ride situation, which was considered by our respondents (cf. chapter 3) considerably face –threatening.

At a closer view, we notice that in the 4th situation, a key role in the total computation of positive oriented strategies has been played by the strategy of “making a good story”, and the one of “showing knowledge of the hearer”. This result, if confirmed by further research, may point to the fact that German speakers tend to compensate face threat in requests with grounders, enriched with interesting details, which capture the attention and awaken the empathy of the hearer. Moreover, they also seem to appreciate evidences of knowledge of the hearer and reassurances on the eventual exceptional character of the request.

At the same time, the strategy “question” has perhaps the greater responsibility in the determination of the peak in negative politeness scores for both the German and the Italian group. This finding may be due to the fact that in the fourth situation 40% of Germans formulated their requests in a rather direct way, using the so called explicit or hedged performatives or the so called “scope stating” strategy (cf. Venuti 2013, page 101). On the contrary, in the ride situation, the dimension of inquiry was considerably present. In fact, almost the totalities of both German and Italian requests were not only formulated in an interrogative way, but they were also preceded by pre-requests, which checked feasibility of compliance, thereby overcoming possible grounds for refusals.

What is more, in Italian data the sudden drop of questions (-30) from the 3rd to the 4th situation is somehow compensated by the improved amount of deference devices (+27). This may explain the milder tendency of Italian results.

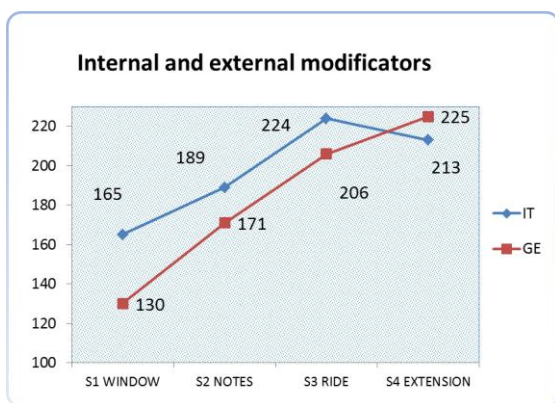


Fig. 44. Internal and external modification

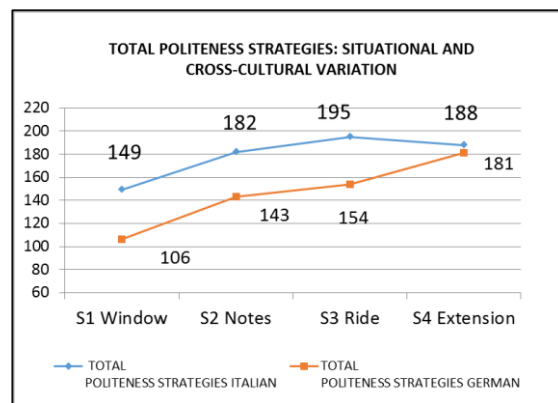


Fig. 45. Total politeness strategies

	RECAPITULATORY CHART. SITUATIONAL AND CULTURAL VARIATION									
	SYNTACTIC DOWNGRADERS		LEXICAL AND PHRASAL DOWNGRADERS		ALERTERS		SUPPORTIVE MOVES		UPGRADERS	
	IT	GE	IT	GE	IT	GE	IT	GE	IT	GE
S1 WINDOW	45	41	32	34	30	20	39	24	19	11
S2 NOTES	66	64	16	34	32	13	62	52	13	8
S3 RIDE	74	82	26	35	33	30	73	49	18	10
S4 EXTENSION	75	77	21	35	29	14	74	77	14	22
TOT	260	264	95	138	124	77	248	202	64	51

Table 38. Recapitulatory chart. Internal and external modification

As for the general amount of both involvement and deference strategies, the figures immediately show that Italian speakers used a considerably larger amount of politeness strategies with respect to Germans. Actually, the total amount of politeness strategies used by Italian speakers surpasses the German one of 130 units. There are several possible explanations for this result. To explain them, we need to compare these results with the ones concerning internal and external modification gathered from the same population by Venuti (2013).

If we compare the graphs above, we easily see that they have a lot in common. More specifically, in both Fig. 44 and Fig. 45 Italian politeness rises steadily from sit. 1 to sit 3 and has a sweet decline in sit. 4. Likewise, both graphs also reveal a constant intensification, in German findings, of both politeness devices and internal and external modification.

The justification for this phenomenon may be very simple. The fact of the matter is that, even if positive and negative politeness strategies are different from internal and external modification⁶¹, we must admit that the former are often located in the latter. Venuti (2013) highlighted how Italian requests were much longer than the German ones throughout the four situations. In particular, as highlighted in table 38, Italian respondents formulated 248 supportive moves, whereas Germans “only” 202. If we keep these data into consideration, we can reasonably argue that German requests account for poorer politeness strategies simply because they were shorter than the Italia ones, and had therefore fewer opportunities to contain them.

⁶¹ For internal modifiers it is meant those syntactic (which modify the structure of the utterance) or lexical/phrasal (single vocabulary choices) devices which modify the internal structure of a request. They can mitigate or strengthen the force of the utterance. Supportive moves, conversely, modify the force of the request from an external point of view.

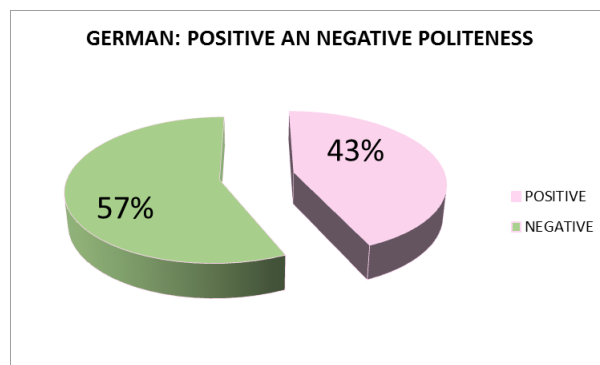
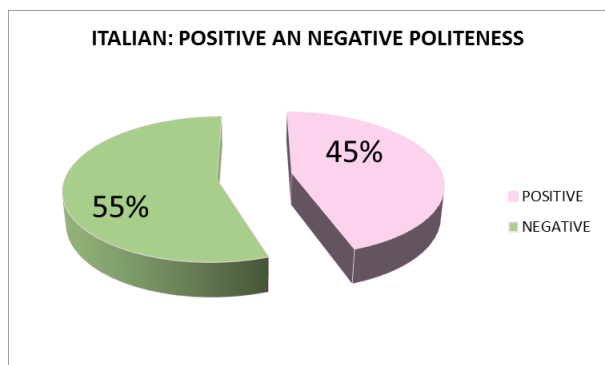


Fig. 46. Italian: positive and negative politeness

Fig. 47. German: positive and negative politeness

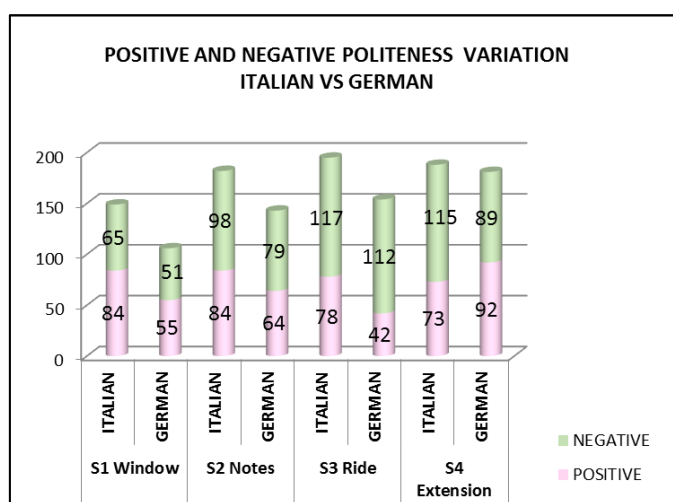


Fig. 48. Positive and negative politeness variation. Italian vs. German

	S1 Window		S2 Notes		S3 Ride		S4 Extension	
	ITALIAN	GERMAN	ITALIAN	GERMAN	ITALIAN	GERMAN	ITALIAN	GERMAN
POSITIVE	84	55	84	64	78	42	73	92
NEGATIVE	65	51	98	79	117	112	115	89

Table 39. Positive and negative politeness variation. Italian vs. German

In conclusion, we can reasonably state that my results suggest that both Italian and German cultures are negative-politeness oriented. Nonetheless, the linguistic behaviour of the two language communities present marked differences which are worth investigating, especially in the use of positive politeness strategies in the situation which was considered to be the most face threatening one.

All in all, the necessity is given to compare these results with the ones we have gathered on indirectness, on interruptions, on reliance upon the context and on persuasive vs convincing strategies. A comparison of all the linguistic behaviours observed may give us a final, enlightening perspective on the key question of my research, namely the relationship between indirectness, politeness and efficacy. The next and conclusive chapter will be devoted to this analysis.

Chapter 7. Summary of the results and answers to the questions of the study

In this final chapter, I will try to give an overview of the obtained results, link them together and verify whether my original hypothesis has been validated. More specifically, in the first part of the chapter I will use the numerical evidences I have gathered throughout my research to trace a detailed profile of the two languages at issue, offering to the reader a linguistic perspective that winks at the anthropological one. In the second part of the chapter, I will try to finally answer the questions of the study, and most importantly to the question “What is the relationship between indirectness and politeness in German and in Italian requests?”. In so doing, I will put forward a “Maxim of assertiveness”, which in my opinion governs the requestive behaviour of both linguistic communities at issue. In the third place, I will highlight an unexpected, yet stunning result, which, if confirmed by further research, would completely change the way in which we normally look at cultures and languages. Finally, I will outline the limits of my study and suggestions for further research.

7.1 Italian and German: a socio-linguistic profile

In this section, I will summarize the main outcomes of the different studies I carried out in these years, which can lead us to trace a detailed socio-linguistic description of the two languages at issue. The following table reports, in an extremely simplified and schematic way, the tendencies displayed by the two languages at issue in the various studies. The text boxes marked with a darker colour signify that both languages at issue showed a preference for that interactional style. Nonetheless, in order to trace even the slightest differences between the two languages, I positioned the language in the category it was closer to, with respect to the other language.

	DICHOTOMIES		
Reference	PROFILE 1	PROFILE 2	Analysed in chapter
Gudykunst (1984)	Topic – comment (inductive rhetorical strategy) + GE	Comment – topic (deductive rhetorical strategy) + IT	4
Gudykunst (1984)	Less interruptions + GE	More interruptions + IT	4

(Hall 1976)	High context communication + GE	Low context communication + IT	4
My proposal	Überredung (feelings/persuasion) + GE	Überzeugung (reason/convincement) + IT	5
Ting— Toomey & Kurogi (1998)	Indirectness + GE	Directness + IT	2
My proposal	Politeness + IT (declared)	Efficacy + GE (declared)	2
My proposal	Negative face (in requests) + IT	Positive face (in requests) Generally: + IT, 4th situation: + GE	6

Table 40. Dichotomies. Final results

If we look at the table, we can draw the following conclusions.

To begin with, my findings seem to demonstrate that the frame of parallelisms adopted at the beginning of the research, and my hypothesis concerning the connection between the presence of positive vs negative politeness strategies and the one of *Überredung* vs *Überzeugung* strategies was correct. Moreover, my data provide additional evidence also of the parallelisms reported and supported by Gudikunst (1984).

As far as the German language is concerned, my results seem to suggest that German speakers prefer a topic-comment construction of discourse, that is to say a deductive line of argument. This is also the case for Italian speakers, but the preference of German ones is much neater. Nonetheless, it is plausible that the prompt given for this aspect has influenced the obtained results. Further investigation is needed to thoroughly estimate the favoured construction of discourse in German and in Italian. The fact that a large number of respondents declared that they perceived the interruption as “neutral” provided additional support to the impression that (Venuti 2013) the category of politeness is extremely difficult to control, since speakers constantly consider other communicative purposes, as for instance efficacy.

In general, the study concerning interruptions proved that German respondents tended to consider disruption of discourse as rather impolite, and saw it as an attempt to divert the speaker’s meaning or to lead him to a certain statement. Italian participants, on the contrary, seemed to perceive them in a less intrusive way, and expressed the idea according to which they were a way to show cooperation or check understanding.

My research on high context vs low context orientation indicates that a low context type of communication characterizes the Italian, German and Austrian linguistic communities.

These values correlate favourably with the theory according to which a low context type of communication often characterizes western societies, since they accommodate individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds. Nonetheless, my results seem to suggest that the German culture (40,28%) is slightly more oriented towards a high context type of communication, than the Italian culture (31,25%). A double analysis of data, which calculated the “indexes of high contextness” for each culture, confirmed this trend. This result contradicts most of the literature on the topic (Hall 1976), nonetheless, it corroborates the parallelisms hypothesised in paragraph 4.2.2. Also the visibly more marked length of Italian requests points towards a low context modality. However, the limited amount of prompts (8) may be a source of uncertainty of these data.

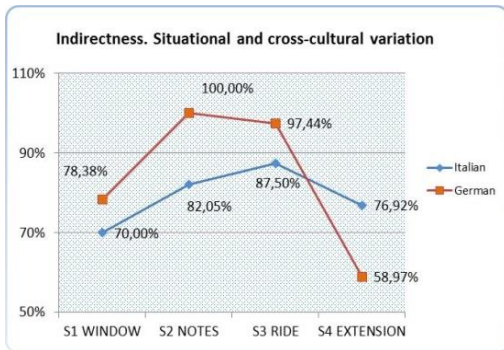
Taking everything into consideration, we can reasonably state that the first three studies concerning construction of discourse, the role of interruptions and the predominance of a high context vs low context communication in Italian and German widen our understanding of the two languages and provide us with a solid tool of interpretation of the subsequent and most important results.

7.2 Directness and indirectness fight for the bone, and efficacy runs away with it. Formulation of the “Maxim of Assertiveness”

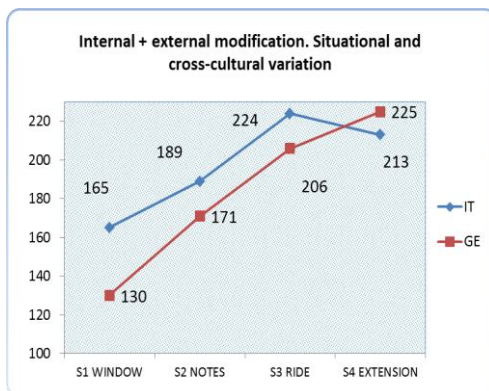
In the following, I will use all the findings I have at hand re-examine the relationship between indirectness and politeness as regards German and Italian requests. In so doing, I will argue that this extensively investigated dichotomy needs to be extended by a dimension (which seems to have been ignored by similar studies on this topic), namely the speaker’s need to be efficacious in obtaining compliance on the part of the hearer. I will designate this dimension “The maxim of assertiveness”.

My conclusions, step by step...

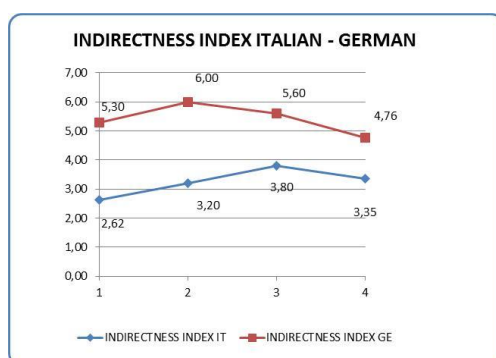
The original research project, carried out in 2013, was undertaken in order to find out to what extent request strategies used by Italian and German speakers overlap or diverge.



Venuti (2013) had indicated how German speakers generally use more indirect request strategies than their Italian counterparts. The most interesting outcome was that both groups' general level of indirectness dropped in the situation in which the face threat was arguably the highest. Wolfson (1986, 1988) hypothesis, (cf. page 29) that explains similar speech act behaviour between intimates and status unequals, seemed to be the best most reasonable explanation. Another possible interpretation coincided with Wierzbicka (1991) alternative view on verbal politeness, i.e. that directness is a way to increase politeness for the two languages at issues. In other words, it could be the case that both considered clarity in expression an alternative way to express concern for the hearer.

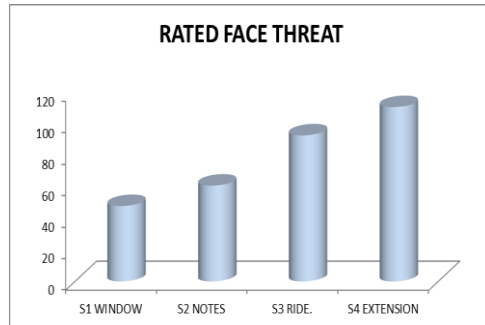


Nonetheless, I already had a strong evidence of the contrary. If Italian requests were unequivocally more direct than the German ones, they conversely abounded in external modification, alerters and upgraders. This gave me the impression that they tried to “compensate” their directness, which was therefore not perceived as a polite device. The high amount of modification (especially internal) in German requests in the last situation, which is specular to the indirectness drop, corroborated this idea also for the German culture.

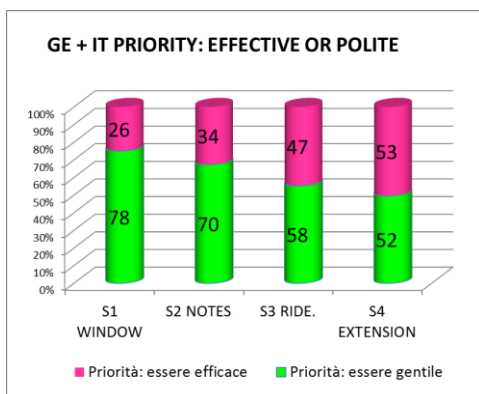


To find a satisfactory answer to the question, I had to clear the ground of all possible mistakes in the framework of analysis. The first step was establishing whether the classification of the 9 requests strategies adopted from the CCSARP apply correctly for German and Italian. After an assessment study, they were correctly classified according to the perception of directness in each linguistic community and results were re-calculated. The resulting graph confirmed that German speakers generally select a more indirect communication mode than Italians. Most importantly, the new interpretation of data sanctioned the

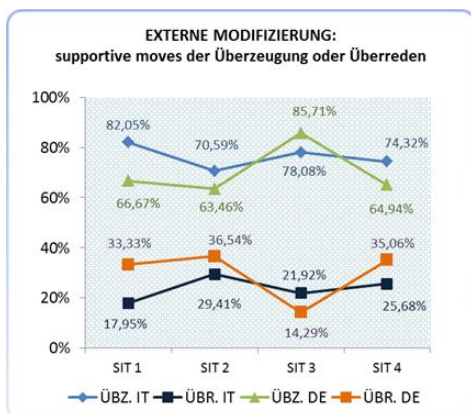
fact that both groups level of indirectness drops in the extension situation, where on the contrary it is expected to rise.



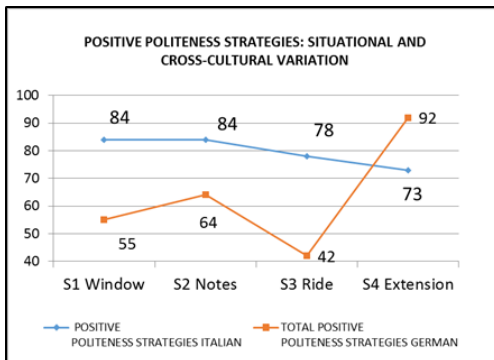
At this point, it was important to establish whether Italian and German speakers rated the different social parameters (social distance, rate of imposition, relative power difference) constituting the face threatening character of the four situations in the same way. Another assessment study confirmed that the two linguistic communities equally perceived an escalation in face threat from situation 1 to situation 4. After having abandoned both Wierzbicka and Wolfson's theory, I started asking myself if politeness was the only important dimension at play when issuing a request. Consequently, I wanted to shed further light on the pressure, which was probably felt in the ride and in the extension situation, to be successful and obtain compliance.



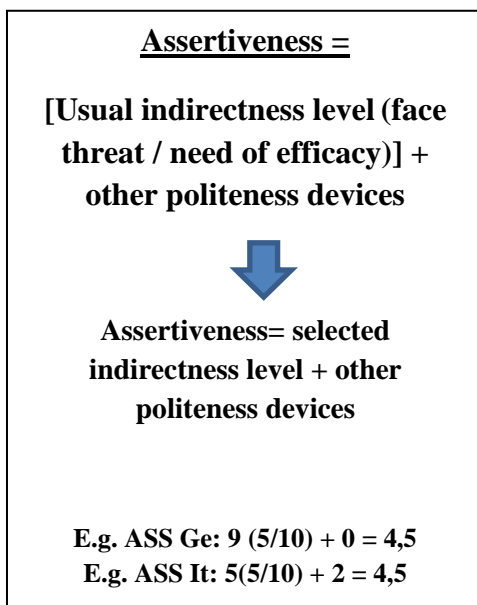
To begin with, I investigated into the perceived need of respondents to be polite or effective throughout the four situations. Results of both German and Italian speakers revealed that both groups' of respondents perceived more strongly the need to be polite throughout the four situations. In the ride and the extension situation, nonetheless, a considerable amount of respondents acknowledged they felt the urgency to get compliance, and therefore aimed at being effective.



Secondly, I further examined this tension towards efficacy whereby looking at the inner nature of the strategies of *Überzeugung* und *Überredung* (Drinkmann et al. 1989). I classified the supportive moves identified by the CCSARP according to their appeal for the emotional (*Überredung*) vs a rational (*Überzeugung*) side of the interlocutor and further analysed my data. Interestingly enough, both Italian and German speakers revealed a preference for strategies of *Überzeugung*, probably because, across the four situations, the most often used supportive moves was the grounder. Nonetheless, it was crucial to note that in the extension situation, namely the one in which both German respondents suddenly became much more direct, their *Überredung* strategies rose and outran the Italian ones.



Another factor that I wanted to take into consideration was the role played by positive and negative politeness, which are commonly expressed in requestive behaviours of the two cultures at issue. To pursue this goal, I re-examined my data looking for all possible traces of the two politeness modes. The neat predominance, in the Italian language, of both types of politeness provided additional support to the theory that directness had to be somehow “compensated”. With this in mind, the Germans’ neatly distinguishable rise in positive politeness in the extension situation gave me overwhelming evidence to advocate my final thesis and conclusion.



My work confirms the Western traditional interpretation of politeness, which in the findings of both languages is expressed through indirectness. The point is that politeness is rarely the speakers’ priority when it comes to important requested acts. A new approach is needed that takes into account, beside the speaker’s concern for the face threat and his need to respect the Maxim of Politeness, also the speaker’s need to be efficacious in obtaining compliance on the part of the hearer. I will designate this dimension, the “Maxim of Assertiveness”. The formula of assertiveness in requests would be as follows. The request is formulated in carefully selected (in)directness level and is enriched with other politeness devices, which satisfy the negative or the positive face of the interlocutor. The level of selected indirectness results from the typical indirectness level of that language, increased by the face threat of the situation proposed, but diminished by need of efficacy.

In the application of this formula, German and Italian differ in their choices of the usual indirectness level and of the additional politeness strategies. Italian speakers, whose requests are generally more direct, generally rely on *Überzeugung* supportive moves and negative politeness strategies, thus focusing on the intention not to impinge on the interlocutor and to rationally appeal to a cooperative behaviour. German speakers, whose requests are generally more indirect, rely on internal modification and *Überzeugung* supportive moves as well, even if in a minor percentage. When the need is perceived to be particularly successful and, at the same time, polite, German speakers become much more direct. Simultaneously, they balance their “explicitness” with

Überredung supportive moves that create positive feelings in the interlocutor and positive politeness strategies, which create common ground and focus on the relationship.

7.3 A final remark. Traces of pragmatic universals

In this chapter, I have summarized the main differences in the linguistic behaviour of the two linguistic communities, since this is the inner scope of contrastive pragmatics. Nevertheless, I cannot ignore the countless, unexpected similarities I have noticed in these years of research. They peeped out throughout the different aspects I analysed, throughout the various graphs that resulted from mathematical data, and positively surprised me, every time I saw the Italian trend almost coinciding with the German one. These figures are just two examples of this phenomenon.

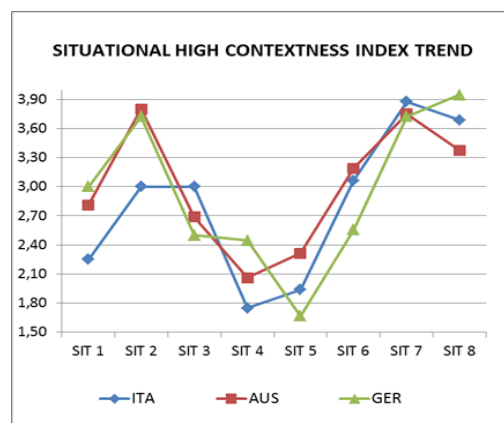
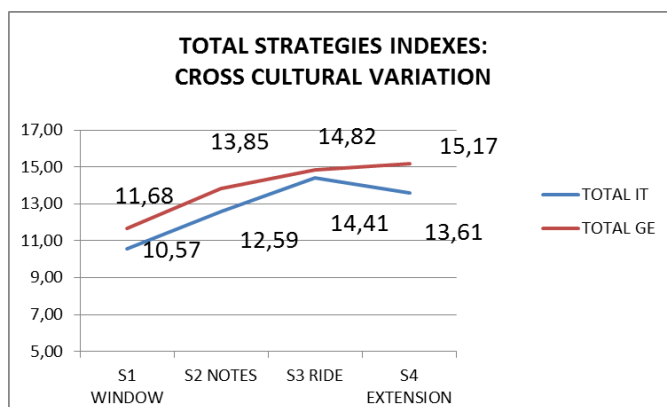


Fig. 49. Total strategies index. Cross-cultural variation

Fig. 50. Situational high contextness index trend

Fig. 49, for instance, pinpoints the indexes of the total strategies (indirectness, supportive moves, positive and negative politeness strategies, divided for the available answers) for each language. Fig. 50 illustrates the trend in high context communication oriented choice in the corresponding study. The discovery of the concordance the two languages manifest in so many aspects of their pragmatic behaviour offered me perhaps the most fascinating finding of this work. In spite of our “different ways of speaking”, despite all the possible misunderstanding, if we look – also scientifically – beyond the surface, the Italian and the German linguistic communities are extraordinarily similar in their attempt of “doing good things with good words”.

7.4 Limits of the study and suggestions for further research

As Blum-Kulka and House highlight, implicit rules of social etiquette that advise members on what to wear, what to say and not to say, and what to do on specific occasions, determine also the amount and type of elaboration expected in a request, as in a tacit agreement that, in Goffman's words, "determine a framework of appearance that must be maintained" (Goffman 1959, p. 230).

The above discussion has illustrated the variety of levels at which this „framework of appearance“ concerning the formulation of requests in Italian and in German coincide or diverge. In sum, there are three aspects which captured my attention and on which further research is needed.

In the first place, it has been found that Italian speakers perform the requestive speech act in a generally more direct way than the German counterparts do, but they also seem to "compensate" with a generally larger use of internal and external modification. Focusing on the fact that both groups of respondents declared their pressure towards efficacy in the last situation, the soft drop towards directness of Italian speakers has been interpreted in this sense. Nonetheless, at a closer look we can notice how in the last situation all the so called "politeness devices" (indirectness, internal modification, external modification, positive and negative strategies) drop for the Italian languages: the compensation hypothesis seems not to hold anymore. A possible explanation, on which further research is needed, could be the fact that for the Italian linguistic community directness is actually a way to increase politeness, in line with Wierbicka's view. In this sense, Italian respondents may have expressed politeness through their explicit, straight to the point requests, and cared for efficacy whereby slightly strengthening their *Überredung* strategies. For this reason, further research needs to be carried out on directness and politeness in the Italian language, investigating other speech acts as the one of apology and complaint.

Another fundamental path for future research, which constitutes also the main limitation of my study, is the investigation of the role played by prosody in the realization of requestive speech acts. Prosody may change completely the illocutionary force of an utterance; therefore, investigation on this topic would give us precious insights into the expression of politeness and effectiveness by the two language communities at issue.

Last but not least, my findings may have important implications for the teaching of German as a foreign language to Italian students. Hence, future studies could lead to develop strategy-based instructional material to promote intercultural pragmatics awareness in Italian learners of German, with particular attention to the requestive behaviour. Guideline for its formulation could be represented by Bardovi-Harlig K. & Mahan-Taylor R. (2003), Tatsuki and Houck (eds.) (2010) for

the teaching of speech acts in English and the work already done for English learners of German (cf. House 1994 and 1996).

Finally, any conclusion drawn from this study should be taken with caution as the sample size was limited. Further testing of a larger and more diverse (in terms of age and level of education) sample of speakers would be necessary in order to confirm the findings of the present study.

Chapter 8. Developing requestive pragmatic awareness⁶² in Italian students of German

In the first part of this chapter, I briefly illustrate the possible applications of contrastive pragmatic studies in the area of Foreign Language Acquisition Theory and Interlanguage Pragmatics. In the second part, I will suggest a little example of instructional material (3 teaching units) aimed at raising Italian learners' of German intercultural pragmatics awareness in general and their competence in the realization of requestive speech acts in particular.

8.1 The role of pragmatics in language education

“Perhaps the fascination that the study of cross-cultural pragmatics holds for language teachers, researchers, and students of linguistics in general stems from the serious trouble to which pragmatic failure can lead. No “error” of grammar can make a speaker seem so incompetent, so inappropriate, so foreign as the kind of trouble a learner gets into when he or she doesn’t understand or otherwise disregards a language’s rule of use”. (Rintell-Mitchell 1989, p. 248)

This statement perfectly pinpoints one of the reasons why one of the best answer to the question “Which linguistic abilities school-education in a foreign or second should promote?” seems to be, besides teaching students how to express themselves fully and correctly in the foreign language, to provide them with the tools that make them feel confident in whatever social situation they can come across. These tools are part of a knowledge of cultural-based specific norms underlying communication and interpersonal relationships (in native speakers very often subconscious and not necessarily alike) involving awareness about speech acts, conversational structure, implicatures and management, discourse organization, and sociolinguistic aspects of language use. These areas of pragmatic use of language have been ignored by the language teaching curricula for a long time, and, even if attention has increasingly been paid to the pragmatic aspects of language (thus not forgetting the role of the place of the utterance within the discourse, the attitude of the speakers, their relationships, their beliefs and intentions), the ways in which students

⁶² I will adopt the term “awareness” in the same sense it is understood by the movement of Language Awareness, thus referring to an in depth consciousness of the pragmatic aspects of language, of their patterns and their inner reasons for being. I have chosen not to adopt the term “metapragmatic ability” since I mean it as the ability to express oneself in the correct and appropriate way but not being able to explain why. I preferred not to use the term “metapragmatic awareness” as it seems to me redundant, being “all awareness necessarily ‘meta’ from the point of view of the observer” (Gilliéron 1984).

can acquire a native-like confidence in the performance of what Austin defined “illocutionary acts” are still to be explored fully.

In other words, if we refer to the model of communicative competence elaborated by Balboni (2008) we could state that in school programmes great emphasis has been laid on “how to make language” (mastering the linguistic abilities) and on “knowing the language” (the morpho-syntactic, textual, phonological grammars of a language), whereas little space has been given to “knowing how to act with language” (which includes the social, pragmatic and cultural dimension) and to “knowing the extra linguistics codices” (kinesics, proxemics, vestemics and objectemics).

The fact that foreign or second language learners nevertheless feel the need to be instructed in these aspects as well, if not primarily, is perfectly represented by the anecdote, reported by Kathleen Bardovi-Harlig and Rebecca Mahan-Taylor (2003) of a student asking them if they could teach him “the secrets of English”. Even if the expression “secrets” referred to a language system may sound somewhat naïve or exaggerated, the student in question is not wrong in perceiving the existence of a whole set of implicit rules of linguistic behaviour, the disregard of which can have multiple, sometimes not foreseeable, consequences, that range from prevented understanding to making the speaker appear abrupt, brusque, or rude and uncaring.

In particular, Scollon and Scollon (1995) report that many language learners come away from an exchange with native speakers certain that they have used the “right words”, but their intentions have been misunderstood. Native speakers, as well, may come away from such exchanges with the impression that the non-natives are “rude” or “slow” or even “impolite”. The fact that violations of speech acts patterns reflect badly on the learner as a person was perfectly singled out by Thomas, who wrote:

“If a non-native speaker appears to speak fluently, (i.e. is grammatically competent), a native speaker is likely to attribute his/her apparent impoliteness or unfriendliness, not to any linguistic deficiency, but to boorishness or ill-will. While grammatical error may reveal a speaker to be a less than proficient language-user, pragmatic failure reflects badly on him/her as a person....Pragmatic failure, then, is an important source of cross-cultural communication breakdown” (Thomas, 1983)

On the other hand, contact with the target language and native speakers in and out of the classroom does not prove to be sufficient for learners to acquire the pragmatics of the target language on their own: what is essential is a specific input, that is to say chunks of language available for observation, discussion on the possible interpretations and exercise to make the performance of the required speech act as fluent and automatic as possible.

This is exactly the aim instructional techniques about speech acts pursue: to instil within learners appropriate language behaviour, in particular, speech act behaviour. In this regard, in his paper “Pragmatics – the third linguistic dimension” (1973), Werner Hüllen argued that foreign

language teaching must enable students not only to make propositional statements but also to attach to such statements certain communicative values, i.e. to perform through their utterances propositional and illocutionary acts. Moreover, it seems to be advisable for teachers to include in the language teaching curricula specific activities concerning the interpretation and the use of politeness in utterances.

Nevertheless, the chief goal of pragmatics instruction must not be that of imposing native norms on the learner. As Thomas (1983) pointed out: “It is the teacher’s job to equip the student with the tools to express her/him in exactly the way s/he chooses to do so – rudely, tactfully, or in an elaborate polite manner. What we want to prevent is her/his being unintentionally rude or subservient (p. 96)”. These reasons lead Kondo to advocate in Giles, Coupland, and Coupland (1991) that “successful communication is a matter of optimal rather than total convergence”. What the author refers to as “optimal convergence” seems to be at the same time a more realistic and honest way to look at the process of pragmatic development and an innovatively negotiable, dynamic concept than accounts for the fact that the rules of use of the target language must not be in contrast with the learner’s subjectivity. In this perspective, the principal aim of pragmatic instruction should not be that of imposing on students a sort of linguistic etiquette, but rather that of providing them with the tools that allow them to make conscious choices about the way in which they want to express themselves in the target language. In short, the final decision about whether or not to follow the target culture rules should be left to students.

8.2 The development of pragmatic awareness

As we saw in the previous paragraph, interlanguage research has widely demonstrated that even learners who can rely on a solid command of the target language very often fail to convey the intended illocutionary points or to attach to the speech acts they come across the correct pragmatic or politeness values (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989). Kasper (1981) suggested that even students who regularly mark their utterances with politeness often underuse politeness markers in the target language. What is more, studies on pragmatic transfer found out that even students who display a high sensitivity to context-external factors tend to perform speech acts following the socio-pragmatic norms of their L1 (Kasper 1992), or under-differentiate context variables as social distance and social power (Fukushima 1990, Tanaka 1988).

Research undertaken by the CARLA (Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, University of Minnesota) has demonstrated that it is unrealistic to believe that

pragmatic competence will autonomously develop together with learners' language proficiency or that it will appear as a natural consequence of contact with native speakers of the target language. What is more, Bardovi-Harlig, Hartford, Mahan-Taylor, Morgan & Reynolds (1991) pointed out that even if textbook writers may be able to explain what one "should say" in specific situations in the target language, they still are unlikely to have an accurate, comprehensive or objective picture of how people actually interact. Therefore, the speech act behaviour that learners acquire from textbooks may be generally correct but still inauthentic or insufficient when they have to cope with the unpredictability and articulateness of a real conversation with native speakers. For instance, in textbooks a typical example-phrase used by a teenager to greet his friend would be "Hello, Harvey. How was the flight?", when in reality he could say something like "Hey, man – what's happening? I like your bag. It's awesome!". The textbooks' shortcoming in providing authentic speech acts material is explained by Wolfson (1989), according to whom native speakers' intuitions about language usage are notoriously poor, being socio – and pragma-linguistic rules not amenable to introspection.

On the other hand, as Kasper (1992) notes, extended residence in the speech community does not in and of itself make pragmatic transfer go away. The first reason is provided by Anton (1998), who observes that in everyday encounters we do not normally attend to speech, but we routinely go straight for the meaning so intended. It is only in moments of communicative breakdowns or dysfunctions that the speakers' attention is diverted from the content to the form of language. The second reason is that pragmatic transfer is sometimes used by non-native speakers as a mean of dis-identification from the L2 community. This means that L2 learners constantly decide how far to go in conforming themselves to the L2 pragmatic norms, and, if they perceive a specific speech act realization as particularly awkward or alien to their personality, they may also decide not to follow it at all. An example of such a norm of use of language that could seem so bizarre to a non-native to be completely refused is the episode described by Tyler (1995) reported in Oatey-Franklin (2009), of an interaction between a Korean tutor and an American student, in which the former was helping the latter to write a program to keep scores in the game of bowling. The tutor had been living in the United States for over two years and his English was generally good. Nevertheless, when the girl asked him whether he was knowledgeable with the game, he answered with a vague "Yeah, approximately", despite - or because of - the fact that he was quite familiar with bowling. This apparently small mismatch of communication style (explicitness in asserting one's own competence) caused the breakdown of the tutorial. To the tutor sensibility, asserting clearly and directly one's own expertise in an area is simply arrogant, as it puts the hearer in an embarrassing and in a "down" position (cf. Schmidt's 1990 concept of "communicative move").

Hence, even if he was probably aware of American generally direct style of speech, he refused to adopt it since his need to perceive himself as “polite” was stronger.

All the above mentioned reasons provide us with a clear needs assessment: the development of a pragmatic competence on the part of a learner should be triggered and nourished through pragmatically relevant input. Having said this, the question arises of which is the best way to bring pragmatics and pedagogy together (quoting the title of a milestone in this line of research, Bardovi-Harlig 1996). It is a fact that when scholars have dealt with the topic of pragmatic instruction they have done it in terms of correctness, proper usage, the right way to say and write words and to formulate and pronounce specific speech acts. In other word, their first aim seemed to be that of instilling within learners an “appropriate speech act behaviour” in the L2. Despite the fact that this is surely the final goal to achieve if we want students to be able to communicate successfully in the L2, these discussions are not so far from debates on of how to dress, eat, or behave. What is more, the “linguistic etiquette approaches” seem to ignore the fact that coming to terms with the L2 pragmatic conventions implies a complex and constant process of mediation on the part of the learner, that has to partially set aside his/her “cultural self” in order to make space for another “cultural self” (McConachy 2013).

Taking everything into consideration, I am inclined to believe that the best way to fill the gap between conventional language instruction and real interaction with native speakers of the target language is to pursue a development of a sort of “intercultural pragmatics expectancy grammar” concerning the differences in the uses of language. If Schmidt’s (1990) “noticing hypothesis” asserted that learners cannot acquire a grammar rule unless they notice it, it is quite sensible to believe that noticing a pragmatic rule is the first, ineludible step towards acquisition of it.

8.3 Teaching how to do things with words – an example

In the light of the above-mentioned considerations and of the results of the research I will suggest, in the following, a sample of instructional material aimed at promoting intercultural pragmatics awareness in Italian students of German. Guideline for the formulation of the syllabus has been the instructional material developed by Bardovi-Harlig K. & Mahan-Taylor R. (2003) and Tatsuki and Houck (eds.) (2010) for the teaching of speech acts in English. Also the work already done for English learners of German (cf. House 1994 and 1996) and the directions given by Balboni (1999) as regards the Italian L1 linguistic education in an intercultural perspective have been taken

into consideration. In particular, House (1996) sees some methods as particularly suitable to promote intercultural pragmatics awareness, namely:

- closed and open role-plays between native speakers and learners;
- interviews or field notes on critic intercultural experiences;
- observations and analysis of authentic conversations in movies, radio programs and plays. Tatsuki and Houck (2010) suggest active listening of native conversation and discussions, introspective feedback, students' collection of linguistic data outside of the classroom and the comparison of the different ways to convey an illocutionary force. As Bardovi-Harlig (2003) argues, L1 language samples can also serve to introduce learners to ideas in pragmatics in a context in which they have native control of the language. Therefore, awareness raising activities in which students are lead to reflect about their own (often unconscious) pragmatic choices will play an important role.

A lot of studies have already provided evidence for the dramatic effects of explicit pragmatic instruction. Bouton (1994), for instance, found out that students who had received only 6 hours of tutoring on implicatures surpassed learners who had been students at university for 3 years. For this reason, in the following section I will illustrate an example of a teaching unit of 3 hours of tutoring on intercultural pragmatics, which could be the beginning of a larger project on the speech act request.

But over and above the aim of enhancing their productive and receptive ability, it is my firm belief that raising their awareness of alternatives in speech act behaviour will not only prevent the fear of the unfamiliar which breed hostility and preclude learning, but first and foremost make their contact with native speakers richer, more interesting and more fun.

8.3.1 Description of the specific context

1° Class of 21 students in the “Scuola secondaria di II grado XY a Pordenone:

- 13 girls;
- 10 boys;
- 2 girls are **Japanese**; they are bilingual since they were born in Italy and attended an Italian Primary School, at home they speak only Japanese.

- 2 boys are from **Marocco**; they are brothers, they came in Italy only two years ago, at home they try to speak Italian with their mother but only Arabic with their father.

The other 17 are Italian and speak Italian as L1.

The general level of German is A2.

8.3.2 Main goals of the project:

Primary goals:

- To raise pupils awareness on the fact that “speaking is doing”, to think about their own use of language and to compare it with the one of the target language;
- to find out - and to make the students aware of - what they already know and encourage them to use their transferable L1 pragmatic knowledge into L2 contexts;
- to not only teach pupils the right words, but also the situations in which those words are uttered and the appropriate moments in which to utter them;
- to provide enough linguistic practice so that the performance of some basic speech acts would result in the end spontaneous;
- to help pupils in “bridging the gap” that can easily arise between the “intended illocutionary force”¹ and the actual perlocutionary effect that particular speech act can have on the hearer, especially if the hearer belongs to a different culture;
- to investigate into students’ misconceptions and misinterpretations on the use of certain speech acts in the target language and culture.

Secondary goals:

- To discover similarities and differences in the performance of different speech acts between the Arabic, Japanese, Italian and German cultures;
- to improve, through various class activities such as role plays, games etc., students’ linguistic skills as well;

- to equip students' with the tools and motivation necessary to promote their further and autonomous learning about the social use of language outside the classroom, in a LLP perspective.

8.3.3 Activities

1) **“Was ist das Problem?”: an insight into the consequences of pragmatic mistakes**

GOALS: to make students aware of the existence of some, rather implicit, rules (in Grice's words, “maxims”) underlying conversation which, if flouted, can seriously affect communication, with consequences that range from making the communicative event cease to, at worst, jeopardise the relationship forever.

MATERIALS: “role cards” with different speech situations in which two speakers are concerned. In half of the role cards (1 per couple) there is a further “hint” (but no one should know at this stage): the pupil is told to play his/her role but speaking and behaving in a “strange” way, i.e. breaking one of the rules that, according to Grice, are implied in every normal conversation (quantity, quality, relation, manner). Examples of the awkward behaviours are provided.

EXAMPLE OF ROLE CARDS:

Student A. (Normal role card) You are a German Erasmus student and arrived in Rome only 2 days ago. You still do not know anyone, but, since the old woman living next door seems very kind, you decide to knock on her door and ask for some information and advices. Ask her (remember politeness!!) things like where you could find a supermarket or the nearest post-office, where you could get information concerning public transport, if there are any other students leaving in the building, entertainment possibilities, etc.

Student B. (Problem role card) You are 80 years old. You live alone but you feel you still have a lot to give to the world. You are very happy to be able to help this student because you have been living in this neighbourhood for 40 years now. **“PROBLEM”:** You love talking to people and telling them your interesting life, **so answer your partner’s questions but try to maintain the conversation as long as you can. Add so many details as possible**, for example telling them episodes that happened to you or to people you know. **Ignore your partner’s attempts to leave.** REMEMBER: DO NOT TELL YOUR PARTNER THAT YOU HAVE THIS “EXTRA” TASK UNTIL THE CONVERSATION IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE.

ACTIVITY: Students split into pairs and are told to perform the role play related to their cards. By seeing the partner surprised or puzzled about their own pragmatic errors, pupils not only amuse themselves, but also realize the seriousness of these mistakes. Once every pair is done, three or more pairs are asked to perform the dialogue in front of the class. Students are asked to observe and spot “what’s the problem”, i.e. which pragmatic misuse of language is being represented (other examples of “problem tasks” can be: talking about things that don’t relate with the topic; being extremely concise, almost to rudeness, interrupting the partner, not respecting the turns-taking). A class discussion follows, in which the pragmatic errors are elicited.

RATIONALE: The teacher can lead the discussion so far as to find out if there are any slight difference between the students’ mother tongues and German concerning these fundamental rules. For instance, the teacher can explain that in cultures as the Italian one the linguistic move of interrupting can be (even if not in any situation) more accepted, since the communicative event is meant to be something cooperative, and both speakers are supposed to contribute (if not completely, almost at the same time) to the exchange of information. On the contrary, pupils should be aware of the fact that in German the move of interrupting can be perceived as very rude and should be therefore avoided. Alternative moves can be discussed with students.

2) “Wollte nur mal Hallo sagen!” how to greet people, run short conversations and take leave gracefully

GOALS: To make pupils familiarize with social expressions that they already know, such as ways to greet people formally and informally; to provide a funny way to repeat common phrases so that they could be recalled instantaneously when needed; to make students learn from each other by

having different partners; to practice strategies of turn taking, back-channelling and “face saving strategies” in running short conversations.

MATERIALS: nothing in particular, if students want to they can have a notebook to take notes of their favourite expressions.

ACTIVITY: After having discussed with students common expressions used to run short conversations, students dispose in two circles, one inside the other. Every person of the outer circle must face a person of the inner circle, therefore an equal number of students is needed on both circles, i.e. 10 on the inside and 10 on the outside (with an odd number of students the teacher can participate as well. The teacher holds a whistle or a jingle bell, when she/he first “rings” it, students greet each other and start talking to each other as if they had met in the street or in whatever other place. Particular attention is paid to turn taking, back-channelling and German expressions creating common ground. When the teacher rings/blows the whistle again, students of the outer circle must gracefully signal that they have to leave now (for example by looking at their watch and saying: “Es wird spät, ich muss jetzt leider gehen! Es war schön, dich zu sehen! Mach’s gut! Tschao!”. After 10 seconds there will be another “beep”: at that point students of the outer circle (students of the inner circle remain still) move a step on their right (i.e. anticlockwise) and start the conversation with a new partner. The game can go on until each student of the “outer circle” has talked at least one time with each classmate of the inner circle.

After that, students can take 10 minutes to write down the expressions they heard or that they used to greet people, to break the ice, to make small talks, or to signal that they had to leave.

As a conclusion, some volunteers (3 or more pairs) can perform a small talk in front of the class and classmates decide which is the “best encounter”.

3) **“Wie lautet das Zauberwort?”**. How to appropriately ask for information and make small requests.

GOALS: to teach students how to select the appropriate request strategy and an appropriate level of directness according to the interlocutor, the situation and the favour asked; to make them practice how to ask for information, formally and informally; to make them aware of the importance of supportive moves and “downgraders”.

MATERIALS: different role plays cards in which one person is the one that “asks” for something: an information, a favour, whereas the other is the one who “gives”. When the role play implies an exchange of information, the cards must be completed (i.e. answering a question), when it implies a favour then the “asker” should “get” something from the partner to witness that the “speech act” has been performed.

ACTIVITY: Before the activity takes place, the teacher could illustrate in a simplified way the results of my study, for instance highlighting the differences between the Italian and the German typical requestive behaviour. Then, she could also give an overview of the strategies which are commonly used in Italian and in German to “mitigate” a request or to have more chances to get compliance. This could be a good moment to highlight pragmatic differences with other mother tongues, which are present in the class. For instance, it can be the case that the strategy of “paying a compliment” is perceived by Moroccan pupils as rather risky, since in some Arabic cultures compliments are believed to awaken the “evil eye”⁶³.

The class is divided in two. To the one side the teacher gives at random all the role cards of the “askers”, to the other all the cards of the “givers”. The students are let to walk freely around the class to look for their role-play partner. In this way, they have to repeat much more times attention getter-phrases such as “Entschuldigen Sie? Darf ich Sie/dich was fragen?”. Let’s see an example:

EXAMPLE “INFORMATION ROLE CARD”:

Student 1 (“Asker”): You want to enrol to a German course at the Acti-lingua school in Vienna, and need some information. First of all, look for the Secretary in the office (at this stage the student has to go around the class looking for his/her partner, thus asking if he/she is talking to the secretary). Then you have to ask how much the courses cost, how many hours a day are you going to stay at school, what time do the courses start and finish, how many students there are per class, if there are any organised trips or activities in the evening, or anything else if you like.

Student 2 (“Information giver”): You are a secretary at the Acti-lingua Language School. You have to give following information. Language Courses: 1 week: 300 Euro, 1 month: 700 Euro. Classes are in the morning from 9 o’clock until 1 pm or in the afternoon from 2 o’clock until 5.30. The maximum number of students per class is 15. Extra-activities included in the program are visits to art galleries, sight-seeing and parties in the evening. Furthermore, ask your partner about

⁶³ The evil eye is a sort of malediction which is provoked by envy.

his/her age, if he/already studied German and how long is he/she planning to attend the course.

EXAMPLE “REQUEST ROLE CARD”:

Student 1 (“Favour asker”): Ask your classmate to lend you the notes of a recent lesson that you missed. You can choose among the strategies we have seen in class (give reasons, pay a compliment, minimize the effort for your classmate, and so on). Ask for notes that you REALLY need)

Student 2 (This card can be the same for more students) (“Favour Doer”): Accept to do the favour if you are able to, otherwise explain why.

Other examples of the “Favour asker” role card can be: “Ask your classmate to lend you 2 € since you have just noticed that you left the snack for the break at home and you want to take something from the vending machine” or “Ask your partner an advice about how to deal with a problem that you have”.

This kind of activity can be made even more interesting and meaningful for students as long as we let them free to ask their classmates any information what they really need or to ask favours that they really want. Students are given about 30 minutes to find their partners and perform the role play, afterwards every couple can go to the blackboard and write on the one side the useful phrases to get attention or to ask for a favour/information; on the other the common phrases to accept to do the favour (or to refuse).

Appendixes

Questionnaire Venuti (2013). DISCOURSE COMPLETION TEST (Italian)

Gentile studente/essa,

innanzitutto grazie per la tua disponibilità a donarmi 15 minuti del tuo tempo! Le risposte che darai mi aiuteranno a condurre uno studio comparativo su alcune abitudini linguistiche di studenti italiani e tedeschi. Il modo migliore per fornire il tuo contributo è questo: una volta letta e compresa la situazione, scrivi negli spazi appositi la risposta che ti viene in mente al momento, senza pensarci troppo! Ti garantisco che i dati raccolti saranno trattati nel pieno rispetto dell'anonimato e della privacy e solamente ai fini accademici legati alla mia ricerca.

Sesso:

- Maschio
- Femmina

Madrelingua:

- Italiano
- Altra:

1. Sei un Medico di uno studio privato, dove lavori da diversi anni. Sta per finire quella che per te è stata una giornata molto stressante e faticosa. Ti accingi a visitare gli ultimi due malati quando arriva, senza preavviso, un paziente noto che chiede una visita urgente. Lo fai accomodare in un ambulatorio, facendolo passare davanti agli altri due pazienti (a questo punto visibilmente seccati); con te entra l'infermiera Gigliola, la tua assistente. D'un tratto senti che stai morendo di caldo e ti accorgi che le finestre sono tutte chiuse: cosa dici all'infermiera?
2. Sei uno/a studente/essa, si è appena conclusa l'ultima lezione della giornata e tutti stanno riordinando le proprie cose per uscire dall'aula. Sei seduto/a accanto a Laura, una studentessa con cui hai già frequentato altri corsi e con la quale si può dire si sia instaurata una certa amicizia, anche se per ora legata solo all'ambiente universitario. La scorsa lezione sei dovuto/a mancare e ti sei accorto/a dalla spiegazione di oggi che il Docente deve essere andato molto avanti col programma. Avresti proprio bisogno di prendere in prestito degli appunti; avevi già notato che Laura li prende in maniera impeccabile... Cosa le dici?

3. Sei da poco impiegato/a nella Segreteria Studenti di un Ateneo e ti sei appena recato/a all'Inaugurazione dell'Anno Accademico, che si è tenuta in una sede abbastanza distante dalla Sede Centrale dell'Università. Sono le ore 13 e devi tornare in ufficio per completare la tua giornata lavorativa. Quando ti avvicini alla fermata dell'autobus ti accorgi però che vi è stato affisso un cartello che segnala uno sciopero per l'intera giornata. Ti guardi attorno sconsolato/a: a piedi sarebbe proprio lunga e ti dispiacerebbe perdere ore di lavoro così inutilmente. Proprio in quel momento vedi Michele, un collega dell'Ufficio Stampa che conosci solo di vista, avvicinarsi alla sua macchina insieme ad un altro collega. Lui ti saluta e accenna un sorriso: cosa dici per chiedergli un passaggio?

4. Sei uno/a studente/essa che ha appena concluso il corso di Storia della Lingua Italiana. L'esame consiste nella valutazione di una tesina che dovresti consegnare tra una settimana. Purtroppo però non sei che alla metà del lavoro: hai avuto molti problemi con la ricerca di materiale perché hai scelto un argomento che esula un po' dagli argomenti trattati nel corso ma che ti interessava molto. Decidi quindi di chiedere al Professore una proroga per poterla consegnare tra 2 settimane, pur sapendo che di solito non fa questo tipo di eccezioni. Sei al suo orario di ricevimento, nel suo studio: cosa gli dici?

Questionnaire Venuti (2013). DISCOURSE COMPLETION TEST (German)

Liebe Studentin, lieber Student,

vielen Dank, dass Du Dir 15 Minuten Deiner Zeit genommen hast, um bei dieser Umfrage mitzuwirken. Mit diesem Fragebogen möchte ich für meine Masterarbeit herausfinden, wie italienische und deutsche Studenten diverse Sprechhandlungen realisieren. Daher werden hier 4 Situationen beschrieben, in denen Du Dich im realen Alltagsleben wiederfinden könntest. Sobald Du die Frage gelesen und verstanden hast, schreib einfach die erste Antwort, die Dir einfällt, auf. Du würdest damit einen wichtigen Beitrag leisten und mir von großer Hilfe sein!

Der Fragebogen ist selbstverständlich völlig ANONYM und die Ergebnisse dienen nur zur wissenschaftlichen Zwecken.

Geschlecht:

- Männlich
- Weiblich

Muttersprache:

- Deutsch
- Andere:

1. Du bist Arzt und arbeitest seit vielen Jahren in einer Privatpraxis. Ein mühsamer, stressvoller Tag ist fast zu Ende. Du musst nur noch zwei Patienten untersuchen und kannst dann endlich nach Hause gehen. Plötzlich kommt ein langjähriger Patient herein und bittet dich um eine rasche Untersuchung. Während du ihn aufforderst, gleich im Behandlungszimmer Platz zu nehmen, blicken dich die anderen zwei Patienten ziemlich kritisch an. Als du mit Krankenschwester Therese, deiner Assistentin, ins Behandlungszimmer kommst, bemerkst du, dass die Hitze unerträglich ist. Die Fenster sind alle geschlossen: Was sagst du zu deiner Assistentin?
2. Du bist Student/in. Der letzte Kurs des Tages ist gerade zu Ende: Alle räumen ihre Sachen zusammen und gehen zur Ausgangstür. Du sitzt noch neben Laura, mit der du schon andere Kurse besucht hast und mit der eine gewisse Freundschaft entstanden ist, obwohl ihr euch nur an der Universität seht. Du konntest letztes Mal leider nicht zur Uni kommen und hast

aus der heutigen Erklärung bemerkt, dass die Vorlesung, die du versäumt hast, sehr wichtig war. Du musst dir dringend von einem/er Kollegen/in Notizen ausleihen; du hast schon bemerkt, dass Laura immer gut mitschreibt. Was sagst du, um sie um ihre Mitschrift zu bitten?

3. Es ist nicht lange her, seitdem du im Studentensekretariat der Universität angestellt wurdest. Du kommst gerade von der Eröffnung des Akademisches Jahres, die in einem Haus ziemlich weit entfernt vom Hauptgebäude stattfand. Es ist 13 Uhr und du musst wieder in dein Büro, im Hauptgebäude. Als du zu der Bushaltestelle kommst, siehst du ein Plakat, das auf einen Streik der Busfahrer für den Rest des Tages hinweist. Du blickst dich trostlos um: Zu Fuß wäre es sehr weit und dir wäre es wirklich lieber, keine Arbeitszeit auf diese Weise zu verschwenden. Genau zu diesem Zeitpunkt siehst du Michael, einen Kollegen des Presseamtes, den du nur vom Sehen kennst. Er redet gerade mit einem anderen Kollegen, als er in sein Auto steigt und dich grüßt. Was sagst du zu ihm, um ihn um eine Mitfahrgelegenheit zu bitten?

4. Du bist Student/in und hast vor Kurzem den Kurs „Geschichte der Deutschen Sprache“ vollendet. Die Prüfung besteht aus der Abfassung einer Seminararbeit, die du binnen einer Woche abgeben solltest. Nichtsdestoweniger ist nur die Hälfte deiner Arbeit fertig: Du hast Schwierigkeiten mit der Sammlung des Materials gehabt, da du dich auf ein Thema konzentrierst, das im Seminar nicht behandelt wurde, das dich aber sehr interessierte. Daher willst du den Professor um eine Verlängerung von einer Woche der Abgabefrist des Referates bitten, obwohl du weißt, dass er normalerweise keine Ausnahmen macht. Du bist jetzt in seiner Sprechstunde. Was sagst du, um ihn um eine Fristverlängerung zu bitten?

Nochmals vielen Dank für deine Unterstützung und liebe Grüße! ☺

Questionnaire Chapter 3: REVISION OF THE RESULTS (Italian)

Gentile studente/essa,

innanzitutto grazie per la tua disponibilità a donarmi 10 minuti del tuo tempo! Le risposte che darai mi aiuteranno a condurre uno studio comparativo su alcune abitudini linguistiche di studenti italiani e tedeschi. Il modo migliore per fornire il tuo contributo è questo: una volta letto e compreso il quesito, scrivi negli spazi appositi la tua opinione personale: non esiste una risposta giusta o sbagliata! Ti garantisco che i dati raccolti saranno trattati nel pieno rispetto dell'anonimato e della privacy e solamente ai fini accademici legati alla mia ricerca.

Sesso:

- Maschio
- Femmina

1) Indica quanto ti sembrano cortesi le seguenti richieste di pulire la tua camera, facendo una crocetta nella colonna corrispondente:

	Molto cortese	cortese	abbastanza cortese	Poco cortese	Per niente cortese
Che ne dici, pulisci la tua camera?					
Dovresti pulire la tua camera.					
Ma che disordine abbiamo qui..					
Pulisci la tua camera!					
Puoi pulire la tua camera?					
Spero che tu pulisca la tua camera..					
Vuoi che ti porti la scopa e la paletta?					
Ti posso chiedere di pulire la tua camera?					
Ti prego di pulire la tua camera.					

2) Leggi queste situazioni e immagina il tuo stato d'animo all'idea di formulare le seguenti richieste. Poi barra la casella corrispondente.

Sei un Medico di uno studio privato, dove lavori da diversi anni. Sta per finire quella che per te è stata una giornata molto stressante e faticosa. Ti accingi a visitare gli ultimi due malati. D'un tratto senti che stai morendo di caldo e, vedendo che le finestre sono tutte chiuse, chiedi all'infermiera di aprirle.			
<input type="radio"/> Molto tranquillo	<input type="radio"/> Abbastanza tranquillo	<input type="radio"/> Un po' ansioso	<input type="radio"/> Molto ansioso

Sei uno/a studente/essa, si è appena conclusa l'ultima lezione della giornata e tutti stanno riordinando le proprie cose per uscire dall'aula. Sei seduto/a accanto a Laura, una studentessa con cui hai già frequentato altri corsi e con la quale si può dire si sia instaurata una certa amicizia, anche se per ora legata solo all'ambiente universitario. La scorsa lezione sei dovuto/a mancare e ti sei accorto/a dalla spiegazione di oggi che il Docente deve essere

andato molto avanti col programma. Decidi di chiedere gli appunti a Laura.			
<input type="radio"/> Molto tranquillo	<input type="radio"/> Abbastanza tranquillo	<input type="radio"/> Un po' ansioso	<input type="radio"/> Molto ansioso

Sei da poco impiegato/a nella Segreteria Studenti di un Ateneo e ti sei appena recato/a all'Inaugurazione dell'Anno Accademico, che si è tenuta in una sede abbastanza distante dalla Sede Centrale dell'Università. Sono le ore 13 e devi tornare in ufficio per completare la tua giornata lavorativa. Quando ti avvicini alla fermata dell'autobus ti accorgi che c'è uno sciopero per l'intera giornata. Ti guardi attorno sconsolato/a: a piedi sarebbe proprio lunga e ti dispiacerebbe perdere ore di lavoro così inutilmente. Proprio in quel momento vedi Michele, un collega dell'Ufficio Stampa che conosci solo di vista, avvicinarsi alla sua macchina. Pensi che sarebbe meglio andare a chiedergli un passaggio.			
<input type="radio"/> Molto tranquillo	<input type="radio"/> Abbastanza tranquillo	<input type="radio"/> Un po' ansioso	<input type="radio"/> Molto ansioso

Sei uno/a studente/essa che ha appena concluso il corso di Storia della Lingua Italiana. L'esame consiste nella valutazione di una tesina che dovresti consegnare tra una settimana. Purtroppo però non sei che alla metà del lavoro: hai avuto molti problemi con la ricerca di materiale perché hai scelto un argomento che esula un po' dagli argomenti trattati nel corso ma che ti interessava molto. Decidi quindi di chiedere al Professore una proroga per poterla consegnare tra 2 settimane, pur sapendo che di solito non fa questo tipo di eccezioni.			
<input type="radio"/> Molto tranquillo	<input type="radio"/> Abbastanza tranquillo	<input type="radio"/> Un po' ansioso	<input type="radio"/> Molto ansioso

- 3) Indica quanto ti sembrano chiare e esplicite le seguenti richieste di aiuto a spostare un tavolino, facendo una crocetta nella colonna corrispondente.

	Molto esplicita	esplicita	Né esplicita né implicita	implicita	Molto implicita
Se solo mi aiutassi...					
Ti posso chiedere di aiutarmi?					
Ti chiederei di aiutarmi..					
Aiutami!					
Mi faresti un piacere se mi aiutassi..					
Puoi aiutarmi?					
Mi aiuti?					
Che ne diresti di aiutarmi?					
Mi dovresti aiutare..					
Che pesante questo tavolo..					

- 4) Ti chiedo ancora qualche secondo di concentrazione. Rileggi le situazioni descritte nel quesito 2 (appunti, finestra, passaggio in auto, proroga) e indica se, nel formulare quella richiesta, sarebbe prioritario per te essere gentile o essere efficace (ottenere ciò che vuoi)?

1) situazione "appunti"	<input type="radio"/> gentile	<input type="radio"/> efficace
2) situazione "finestra"	<input type="radio"/> gentile	<input type="radio"/> efficace

3) situazione "passaggio"	<input type="radio"/> gentile	<input type="radio"/> efficace
4) situazione "proroga"	<input type="radio"/> gentile	<input type="radio"/> efficace

Grazie infinite per la tua collaborazione! 😊

Questionnaire Chapter 3: REVISION OF THE RESULTS (German)

Liebe/r Student/in,

zunächst mal herzlichen Dank, dass Sie mir 10 Minuten Ihrer Zeit schenken! Ihre Antworten werden mir helfen, eine vergleichende Studie über einige linguistischen Gewohnheiten von italienischen und deutschen Studenten zu führen. Sie können Ihren Beitrag am besten dadurch geben: sobald Sie die Frage gelesen und verstanden haben, antworten Sie so, wie es für Sie persönlich am besten zutrifft: es gibt keine „richtige“ oder „falsche“ Antwort! Der Fragebogen ist selbstverständlich völlig ANONYM und die Ergebnisse dienen nur wissenschaftlichen Zwecken

Geschlecht:

- Männlich
- Weiblich

- 1) Bitte geben Sie an, in wie weit Sie jeden Anspruch, Ihr Zimmer aufzuräumen, als “höflich” beurteilen. Bitte klicken Sie auf der nebenstehenden Skala die Antwort an, die am ehesten Ihrer Einschätzung entspricht.

	Sehr höflich	höflich	Ziemlich höflich	Nicht höflich	Überhau pt nicht höflich
Was hältst du davon, dein Zimmer aufzuräumen?					
Du könntest dein Zimmer aufräumen					
Was gibt es denn hier für eine Unordnung!					
Räum dein Zimmer auf!					
Könntest du dein Zimmer aufräumen?					
Ich hoffe, dass du bald dein Zimmer aufräumst					
Soll ich dir Schaufel und Besen bringen?					
Ich möchte dich bitten, dein Zimmer aufzuräumen					
Ich bitte dich, dein Zimmer aufzuräumen					

- 2) Lesen Sie diese Situationen sorgfältig und stellen Sie sich Ihren Gemützustand vor, mit dem Sie die entsprechenden Ansprüche formulieren.

Du bist Arzt und arbeitest seit vielen Jahren in einer Privatpraxis. Ein mühsamer, stressvoller Tag ist fast zu Ende. Du musst nur noch zwei Patienten untersuchen und kannst dann endlich nach Hause gehen. Plötzlich bemerkst du, dass die Hitze unerträglich ist. Die Fenster sind alle geschlossen. Du bittest Krankenschwester Therese, sie zu öffnen.			
<input type="radio"/> Sehr ruhig	<input type="radio"/> Ziemlich ruhig	<input type="radio"/> Ein bisschen	<input type="radio"/> Sehr besorgt

		besorgt	
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Du bist Student/in. Der letzte Kurs des Tages ist gerade zu Ende: Alle räumen ihre Sachen zusammen und gehen zur Ausgangstür. Du sitzt noch neben Laura, mit der du schon andere Kurse besucht hast und mit der eine gewisse Freundschaft entstanden ist, obwohl ihr euch nur an der Universität seht. Du konntest letztes Mal leider nicht zur Uni kommen und hast aus der heutigen Erklärung bemerkt, dass die Vorlesung, die du versäumt hast, sehr wichtig war. Du musst dir dringend von einem/er Kollegen/in Notizen ausleihen; du hast schon bemerkt, dass Laura immer gut mitschreibt. Du bittest sie um ihre Mitschrift.

<input type="radio"/> Sehr ruhig	<input type="radio"/> Ziemlich ruhig	<input type="radio"/> Ein bisschen besorgt	<input type="radio"/> Sehr besorgt
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Es ist nicht lange her, seitdem du im Studentensekretariat der Universität angestellt wurdest. Du kommst gerade von der Eröffnung des Akademisches Jahres, die in einem Haus ziemlich weit entfernt vom Hauptgebäude stattfand. Es ist 13 Uhr und du musst wieder in dein Büro, im Hauptgebäude. Als du zu der Bushaltestelle kommst, siehst du ein Plakat, das auf einen Streik der Busfahrer für den Rest des Tages hinweist. Du blickst dich trostlos um: Zu Fuß wäre es sehr weit und dir wäre es wirklich lieber, keine Arbeitszeit auf diese Weise zu verschwenden. Genau zu diesem Zeitpunkt siehst du Michael, einen Kollegen des Presseamtes, den du nur vom Sehen kennst. Du denkst, es wäre besser, wenn du ihn um eine Mitfahrgelegenheit bittest.

<input type="radio"/> Sehr ruhig	<input type="radio"/> Ziemlich ruhig	<input type="radio"/> Ein bisschen besorgt	<input type="radio"/> Sehr besorgt
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Du bist Student/in und hast vor Kurzem den Kurs „Geschichte der Deutschen Sprache“ vollendet. Die Prüfung besteht aus der Abfassung einer Seminararbeit, die du binnen einer Woche abgeben solltest. Nichtsdestoweniger ist nur die Hälfte deiner Arbeit fertig: Du hast Schwierigkeiten mit der Sammlung des Materials gehabt, da du dich auf ein Thema konzentrierst, das im Seminar nicht behandelt wurde, das dich aber sehr interessierte. Daher willst du den Professor um eine Verlängerung von einer Woche der Abgabefrist des Referates bitten, obwohl du weißt, dass er normalerweise keine Ausnahmen macht.

<input type="radio"/> Sehr ruhig	<input type="radio"/> Ziemlich ruhig	<input type="radio"/> Ein bisschen besorgt	<input type="radio"/> Sehr besorgt
----------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--	------------------------------------

- 3) Geben Sie bitte an, inwieweit Sie diese Ansprüche, einen Tisch umzustellen, klar und deutlich beurteilen. Bitte klicken Sie auf der nebenstehenden Skala die Antwort an, die am ehesten Ihrer Einschätzung entspricht.

	Sehr explizit	explizit	Weder explizit noch implizit	implizit	Sehr implizit
Hilfst du mir dabei, den Tisch umzustellen?					
Wenn du mit dem Tisch helfen würdest!					
Ach, ist dieser Tisch schwer!					
Du könntest mir helfen, den Tisch umzustellen!					
Hilfst du mir mit dem Tisch?					

Kannst du mir mit dem Tisch helfen?					
Was hältst du davon, mir mit dem Tisch zu helfen?					
Du würdest mir einen Gefallen tun, wenn du mir mit dem Tisch hilfst!					
Hilf mir mit dem Tisch!					
Ich möchte dich bitten, mir mit dem Tisch zu helfen.					
Ich bitte dich, mir mit dem Tisch zu helfen.					

- 5) Ich bitte Sie noch um eine Minute Aufmerksamkeit. Lesen Sie noch einmal die vier Situationen, die Sie im Frage 2 (Notizen, Fenster, Mitfahrgelegenheit, Fristverlängerung) finden. Geben Sie bitte an, ob für Ihnen in Ihrem Anspruch vorrängig wäre, höflich oder erfolgreich zu sein.

5) Situation "Notizen"	<input type="radio"/> Höflich	<input type="radio"/> Erfolgreich
6) Situation "Fenster"	<input type="radio"/> Höflich	<input type="radio"/> Erfolgreich
7) Situation "Mitfahrgelegenheit"	<input type="radio"/> Höflich	<input type="radio"/> Erfolgreich
8) Situation "Fristverlängerung"	<input type="radio"/> Höflich	<input type="radio"/> Erfolgreich

Nochmals vielen Dank für Ihre Unterstützung und viele Grüße!

Questionnaire chapter 4: INTERRUPTIONS (Italian)

Gentile Sign.ra/e,

innanzitutto grazie per la Sua disponibilità a donarmi 10 minuti del Suo tempo! Le risposte che darà mi aiuteranno a condurre uno studio comparativo su alcune abitudini linguistiche di parlanti italiani e tedeschi. Le garantisco che i dati raccolti saranno trattati nel pieno rispetto dell'anonimato e della privacy e solamente ai fini accademici legati alla mia ricerca.

- 1) Legga le conversazioni seguenti, tratte dal dibattito „Dobbiamo ancora salvare l'euro?“ (Controversie, Radio Rai 2010) e risponda alle domande corrispondenti. Attenzione; i simboli /./ seguito da → → segnalano un'interruzione del discorso.

Conversazione 1

A. Quelli che hanno approfittato della situazione sono state appunto le grandi imprese (la Siemens, ecc.) e in effetti le banche, che hanno /.../
→→ B. Lei ha l'impressione che sono le persone semplici che stanno pagando la crisi.
A. Esatto! Le persone semplici stanno pagando la crisi!![...]

- Come descriverebbe l'intervento del parlante B? (può indicare anche più di una risposta)
 - a. Molto gentile
 - b. Gentile
 - c. Non particolarmente gentile
 - d. Neutrale
 - e. Scortese
 - f. Molto scortese
 - g. Non so

- Con il suo intervento secondo Lei il parlante B vuole: (anche qui può indicare più di una risposta)
 - a. Aiutare il parlante A a chiarire meglio la sua opinione
 - b. Accertarsi di aver capito bene la posizione del parlante
 - c. Dimostrare semplicemente interesse
 - d. Impedire al parlante A di esprimere in modo esauriente la sua opinione
 - e. Portare il parlante A a fare una determinata affermazione
 - f. Sollecitare il parlante A ad arrivare velocemente al punto.
 - g. (altro).....

Conversazione 2

A. Io mi chiedo: “Cosa deve succedere ancora in Europa, prima che questi politici si sveglino, e capiscano ciò non solo gli italiani, ma anche tutti gli europei si debbano /.../
→ → B. Lei sta dicendo chiaramente che non dovremmo metterci a disposizione dell'Irlanda, in questo caso.

A. No! Sto dicendo qualcosa di completamente diverso! Il caso dell'Irlanda dimostra che la soluzione di una valuta per 16 stati, e presto saranno 28, è pura follia, un attentato alla nostra democrazia.[...]

- Come descriverebbe l'intervento del parlante B? (può indicare anche più di una risposta)

- h. Molto gentile
- i. Gentile
- j. Non particolarmente gentile
- k. Neutrale
- l. Scortese
- m. Molto scortese
- n. Non so

- Con il suo intervento secondo Lei il parlante B vuole: (anche qui può indicare più di una risposta)

- h. Aiutare il parlante A a chiarire meglio la sua opinione
- i. Accertarsi di aver capito bene la posizione del parlante
- j. Dimostrare semplicemente interesse
- k. Impedire al parlante A di esprimere in modo esauriente la sua opinione
- l. Portare il parlante A a fare una determinata affermazione
- m. Sollecitare il parlante A ad arrivare velocemente al punto.
- n. (altro).....

2) Dallo stesso dibattito legga ora queste due prese di posizione:

SIGNOR BIANCHI:

- Qual è la Sua opinione, signor Bianchi?
- La mia opinione è questa. Ciò che ha detto il prof. Rossi è giustissimo. Sono profondamente convinto del fatto che, se si fosse lasciata agli italiani la scelta “euro o lire”, e se si avesse dato loro la possibilità di scegliere obiettivamente, senza l'influsso delle banche, sono convinto che mai e poi mai avrebbero scelto l'euro. Si sarebbe rimasti alla lira e ci sarebbe stata comprensione per la nostra decisione. [...] L'euro di per sé un bell'ideale, ma questo ideale lentamente crollerà, se si va avanti così.

SIGNORA FIORI

- Signora Fiori, secondo Lei è giusto dare aiuti economici all'Irlanda? Non si può semplicemente lasciare che un Paese vada in bancarotta?
- È una questione che ha a che fare ancora con la solidarietà europea. E ha a che fare con con la questione: "vogliamo o non vogliamo l'euro?". Se vogliamo il futuro dell'euro dobbiamo aiutare l'Irlanda; per questo esiste un pacchetto di salvataggio dell'euro, per questo era stato pensato e proprio per questo ora viene adottato. [...] Anche per l'Irlanda vale il discorso, che se le facciamo pervenire gli aiuti, non salviamo solo o soprattutto l'Irlanda, salviamo allo stesso tempo le banche italiane, le banche francesi, le banche tedesche..Per questi motivi, credo che sia giusto aiutarla.

- Quali dei due parlanti secondo Lei ha espresso più chiaramente la sua opinione?

Signor Bianchi

Signora Fiori

- Sarebbe così gentile da motivare la Sua risposta?

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3) Ora legga le seguenti affermazioni e dichiari in che misura vi si trova d'accordo. Scriva il numero corrispondente alla Sua scelta accanto all'affermazione.

1. Sono molto d'accordo.
2. Sono d'accordo.
3. Sono neutrale.
4. Non sono d'accordo.
5. Non sono per niente d'accordo.

.....Se qualcuno mi fa una critica, preferisco che mi dica chiaramente che cosa non gli/le piace di me, anziché dare dei "suggerimenti".

.....In alcune circostanze posso modificare o venire meno ad un accordo preso.

..... Mi sento a mio agio a parlare di argomenti come il mio futuro, la mia famiglia, ecc. con la maggior parte delle persone, anche se le conosco da poco tempo.

.....Preferisco che mi venga detto tutto esplicitamente all'inizio, piuttosto che iniziare ad operare senza avere una visione dettagliata della situazione.

.....Mi sentirei più tranquilla/o con un contratto che specifica ogni aspetto degli accordi piuttosto che con uno che lascia anche delle aree “grigie” su cui poter negoziare in un secondo momento.

.....Cambiare programmi - anche all'ultimo momento – non è un problema per me.

.....Trovo più divertente cercare di indovinare che regalo piacerebbe al/la mio/a partner per Natale, piuttosto che chiederglielo direttamente.

.....Se notassi un errore fatto dal mio capo o da un/a mio/a insegnante, penso che suggerirei loro che ci potrebbe essere un'altra risposta, invece di dire loro che si sbagliano

Questionnaire chapter 4: INTERRUPTIONS (German)

Liebe Studentin, lieber Student,

vielen Dank, dass Sie Ihnen 10 Minuten Ihrer Zeit genommen haben, um bei dieser Umfrage mitzuwirken. Mit diesem Fragebogen möchte ich für eine Seminararbeit herausfinden, wie italienische und deutsche Sprecher in Bezug auf einige im Kurs analysierten Aspekte kommunizieren. Der Fragebogen ist selbstverständlich völlig ANONYM und die Ergebnisse dienen nur zur wissenschaftlichen Zwecken

- 1) Lesen Sie folgende Konversationen, die aus der Debatte „Ist der Euro noch zu retten?“ (Kontrovers, Deutschlandfunk, 2010) entnommen wurden, und beantworten Sie bitte die entsprechenden Fragen. Passen Sie auf: die Zeichen /.../ und → → signalisieren eine Redeunterbrechung.

Konversation 1

A. Die jenen, die von der ganzen Geschichte profitiert haben, das waren eben die großen Unternehmen (Siemens, etcetera) und tatsächlich die Banken, und sie haben - /.../
→→ B. Sie haben das Gefühl, dass die kleinen Leute die Krise zahlen müssen.
A. Die kleinen Leute zahlen die Krise! [...]

- Wie würden Sie Bs Beitrag beschreiben? (Sie können auch mehr als eine Antwort angeben)
 - o. Sehr höflich
 - p. Höflich
 - q. Nicht besonders höflich
 - r. Neutral
 - s. Unhöflich
 - t. Sehr unhöflich
 - u. Ich weiß nicht

- Durch seinen Redebeitrag will der Sprecher B, Ihrer Meinung nach: (mehr als eine Antwort ist möglich)
 - o. dem Sprecher A helfen, damit er seine Meinung besser verdeutlicht;
 - p. überprüfen, ob er As Sichtweise richtig verstanden hat;
 - q. einfach Interesse zeigen;
 - r. den Sprecher A davon abhalten, seine Meinung ausführlich zu erläutern;
 - s. den Sprecher A auf eine bestimmte Aussage hinlenken;
 - t. dem Sprecher A antreiben, schnell zum Punkt zu kommen.
 - u. (anderes).....

Konversation 2

B. [...] Ich frage mich, was muss eigentlich in Europa noch geschehen, damit diese Politiker aufwachen, und begreifen, was hier nicht nur den Deutschen, sondern allen Europäern /..... /

→ → B. Das heißt Sie würden ganz klar sagen, im Fall Irlands, nein, wir stehen nicht zur Verfügung, hier in die Bresche zu springen..

A. Nein, ich sage was ganz anderes, der Fall Irlands beweist, dass der ganze Weg, eine Währung für 16 Staaten, und demnächst 28 Euro-Staaten, schlichte Wahnsinn ist, denn es ist ein Attentat auf unsere Demokratie [...]

- Wie würden Sie Bs Beitrag beschreiben? (Sie können auch mehr als eine Antwort angeben)
 - v. Sehr höflich
 - w. Höflich
 - x. Nicht besonders höflich
 - y. Neutral
 - z. Unhöflich
 - aa. Sehr unhöflich
 - bb. Ich weiß nicht

- Durch seinen Redebeitrag will der Sprecher B, Ihrer Meinung nach: (mehr als eine Antwort ist möglich)
 - a. dem Sprecher A helfen, damit er seine Meinung besser verdeutlicht;
 - b. überprüfen, ob er As Sichtweise richtig verstanden hat;
 - c. einfach Interesse zeigen;
 - d. den Sprecher A davon abhalten, seine Meinung ausführlich zu erläutern;
 - e. den Sprecher A auf eine bestimmte Aussage hinlenken;
 - f. dem Sprecher A antreiben, schnell zum Punkt zu kommen.
 - g. (anderes).....

2) Aus derselben Debatte lesen Sie bitte die zwei folgenden Stellungnahmen.

HERR BRETT:

- Was ist Ihre Meinung, Herr Brett?
- Ich möchte folgendes bemerken. Was der Herr prof. Hankel gesagt hat ist vollkommen richtig. Ich bin der festen Überzeugung, hätte man den deutschen Bürgern insgesamt die Wahl gelassen, Euro oder DM - ja? - unter Wahrung der Objektivität, also nicht nur aus Seiten der Banken die ganze Geschichte zu betrachten, dann bin ich der festen Überzeugung, hätte das deutsche Volk garantiert niemals den Euro gewählt. Es hätte bei dem DM geblieben, es hätte auch Verständnis dafür gehabt. [...] Der Euro an sich ist eine schöne fixe Idee; diese fixe Idee wird langsam zu Ende kommen, wenn's so weiter geht.

FRAU PAUS

- Frau Paus, ist das richtig zu helfen? Kann man ein Land einfach mal pleitengehen lassen?
- Es ist eine Frage tatsächlich auch wieder um die europäische Solidarität. Und es geht wieder um die Frage: „wollen wir den Euro oder wollen wir ihn nicht“? Wenn wir die Zukunft des Euro wollen dann müssen wir Irland helfen, dafür gibt es ein Eurorettungsschirm, dafür war er gedacht, und genau dafür wurde er jetzt eingesetzt. [...] Auch bei Irland ist es so, dass wir ja nicht vorallem oder gar nur Irland retten, wenn wir ihm den Rettungsschirm zukommen lassen, sondern wir retten gleichzeitig deutsche Banken, wir retten gleichzeitig französische Banken, wir retten gleichzeitig britische Banken [...] Deswegen finde ich, es ist schon richtig zu helfen.

- Welcher der zwei Sprecher hat Ihrer Meinung nach deutlicher seine/ihre Stellungnahme geäußert?

Herr Brett

Frau Paus

- Wären Sie so nett, Ihre Antwort zu motivieren?

.....
.....
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- 3) Lesen Sie bitte die folgenden Aussagen und geben Sie bitte an, in wie weit Sie einverstanden sind. Schreiben Sie die entsprechende Nummer neben die untenstehende Aussagen.

6. Ich bin ganz einverstanden
7. Ich bin einverstanden
8. Ich bin neutral
9. Ich bin nicht einverstanden
10. Ich bin total nicht einverstanden

..... When someone is correcting me, I would rather the person just tell me what he or she doesn't like and not make "suggestions."

.....In some circumstances I might modify or back out of an agreement.

..... I feel comfortable talking about subjects like my future, my family, and so on, with most people, even if I have only know them a short while.

..... I prefer having things completely spelled out from the beginning than to start operating without a detailed view of the situation.

..... I would feel more comfortable having a contract that lists every detail pertaining to the agreement than to have some “grey” areas which could require negotiating later on.

..... Changing plans—even at the last minute—is not a problem for me.

.....I prefer trying to guess which present my partner would like to get for Christmas than asking her/him directly.

..... If my boss or teacher were wrong, I would be more likely to suggest there might be another answer than to simply tell him/her they are wrong.

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