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Politeness Strategies Used in the Correspondence of L1 and L2 User Interpol Police Officers

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ABSTRACT

The dynamic world of international policing necessitates seamless communication between officers from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Interpol, the world's largest international police organization, exemplifies this environment. Understanding how politeness strategies are employed within this context is crucial for fostering effective collaboration and information exchange. Due to this significance, the present study investigated the politeness strategies used in emails of L1 and L2 user English-speaking police officers of Interpol. To this end, 100 emails composed by L1 and L2 police officers were obtained from the Interpol office in Tehran, Iran, and the frequency of politeness strategies was calculated by two professional raters. The Chi-square test did not reveal a statistically significant difference in the overall application of politeness strategies between L1 and L2 officers. However, the analysis of individual strategies highlighted some clear variations in usage patterns: L1 user officers employed more politeness strategies than their L2 user counterparts. In addition, the findings revealed that both groups used negative politeness strategies more often than positive strategies. The findings of this study can help police training centers develop a better scope on what structures to focus on in their lesson plans to make their cadets ready to work in the international arena.

KEYWORDS: Politeness strategies; Police; Interpol; L1 user; L2 user

1. Introduction

In our fast-paced, interconnected world, communication is the lifeblood of daily interaction. Effective communication skills are no longer just a plus; they are a cornerstone of success, enabling us to forge deeper understanding and maintain vital connections with those around us. This is particularly true for police officers, where clear and concise communication between them across the globe can be the razor's edge between apprehending a suspect and losing a critical lead. Therefore, the dynamic world of international policing necessitates seamless communication between officers from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Interpol, the world's largest international police organization, exemplifies this environment. The lack of effective police communication in an international context could culminate in failure and poor performance. For example, Mekonnen (2018) investigated the challenges Ethiopian police officers encountered in their peacekeeping operations in the United Nations due to their poor English language ability. The study reported that the main reason for the failure and poor performance of the Ethiopian police officers was the lack of ability to communicate successfully the English language. Therefore, it seems that effective communication skill of police officers is one of the key factors to their success in their organizational activity. One of the ways through which police officers

communicate with each other is by writing emails. In this regard, understanding how politeness strategies are employed within this context is crucial for fostering effective collaboration and information exchange.

Politeness theory has been extensively studied in intercultural communication, and scholars like Brown and Levinson (1987) have proposed the seminal positive politeness and negative politeness frameworks. Positive politeness strategies focus on building rapport and maintaining social harmony, while negative politeness strategies aim to minimize imposition and respect the addressee's autonomy (Mugford, 2022). Drawing upon Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies, several studies (e.g., Jansen & Janssen, 2010; Mohammad Hosseinpour & Mosavy, 2021; Shehadeh, 2017; Spencer-Oatey, 2023) probed the different facets of politeness phenomenon in different contexts and languages. Recent contributions by Ahmadi and Weisi (2023) have further expanded our understanding of politeness in different cultural contexts, emphasizing the role of cultural norms and dynamics in shaping communication styles and interpreting the concept of politeness. Additionally, Brown and Kim (2025) provide valuable insights into the nuances of politeness in cross-cultural interactions, highlighting the importance of adapting strategies to specific contexts.

Regardless of their fruitful findings, it seems that some areas, in which politeness strategies play a key role, have gone unnoticed. For instance, the situation of politeness phenomenon in the police genre is quite unknown, and most of the studies done in the field of written products have probed the application of politeness strategies in business letters. Therefore, this study is an attempt to shed some light on the status of politeness strategies in police correspondence and add a piece to the yet incomplete puzzle of politeness application in written communication across cultures.

2. Literature Review

2.1. What is politeness

What is politeness in sociolinguistics and conversation analysis? This is the question that many scholars have tried to answer for many years. In the view of Leech (1980), politeness was “strategic conflict avoidance” which “can be measured in terms of the degree of effort put into the avoidance of a conflict situation” (p. 19). Leech considers politeness a kind of behavior that allows people to engage in a social interaction within a relative harmony (Rasmussen, 2010). Watts (2003) believed that politeness is a form of “human interaction” in which “forms of linguistic usage in any language community could be observed and analyzed as helping to construct and reproduce politeness” (p. 49). Richards and Schmidt (2013) believed that politeness can be defined in two ways, first as a way to “express the social distance between speakers” and second as a means for establishing, maintaining, and saving face among the speakers of a community (Richard & Schmidt, 2013, p. 442). Building on these foundational definitions, Brown and Kim (2025) argue that politeness is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a socio-cognitive process influenced by power dynamics, cultural values, and contextual factors. Their work underscores the fact that the negotiation of language choice is closely linked to the inherently contested nature of im/politeness in intercultural settings.

2.2. Theories of linguistic politeness

Brown and Levinson (1987) considered politeness in the area of conflict avoidance, but their concepts were quite different from those of Lakoff (1975). They mostly focused on “rationality” and “face”, which were believed to be two universal features. While rationality was seen as the means-end reasoning or logic, face was considered to consist of two subcategories: Positive face and Negative face. By the positive face, they meant that people should be approved by others, and by the negative face, they claimed that everyone's actions and thoughts must be unimpeded by others (Wanger, 2004). In their argumentations, Brown and Levinson believed that in most speech acts, the facial wants of either the speaker or hearer are threatened. Thus, to avoid those face threats, or at least to mitigate them, people tend to use some strategies that can be defined under an umbrella term called “politeness”.

Brown and Levinson (1987) believed that there are two main choices in human communication –in which Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) are inevitable: Either to do the FTA or not to do the FTA. If you don't do the FTA, it is obvious that there wouldn't be any harm to the hearer's face. But if you intend to do the FTA, you need to do it in such a way that a minimum amount of threat is posed in the hearer's face. Then, you will have two more options ahead: Whether to pronounce your FTA or to apply it. Based on this, Brown and Levinson defined four face-saving strategies: *Bald on-record*, *positive politeness*, *negative politeness*, and *off-record politeness*. The following figure outlines a vivid picture of Brown and Levinson's face-saving strategies:

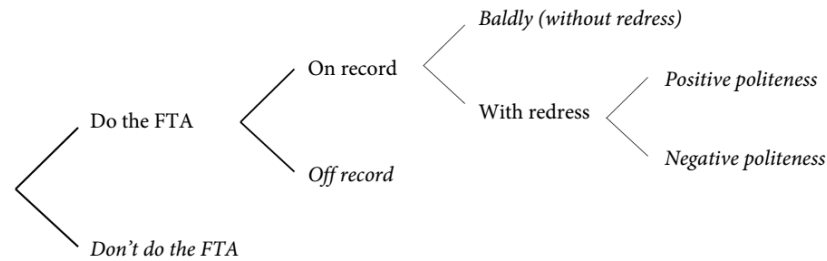


Figure 1. Communicative choices (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 60)

In the situation of using bald on-record politeness strategies, the speaker does not try to lower the threats to the hearer's face, rather, like giving advice in an unbiased way, s/he tries to minimize the face-threatening acts implicitly (Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000). Although this type of politeness strategy may cause some kind of embarrassment or shock on the side of the hearer, it is mostly used among those who have a close relationship with each other. The situations where this strategy is used can be in urgent situations (e.g., Watch out!) or task-oriented situations (e.g., Pass me that spanner).

By positive politeness, they meant those actions that speakers take to attend to the positive face wants of the hearer, which results in the hearer feeling good about themselves, their interests, or their possessions. Examples can be using in-group markers, being optimistic, being inclusive, avoiding disagreement, etc. They regarded negative politeness as those actions that speakers take to attend to the negative face wants of the hearer and to avoid imposition on the hearer so the hearer can remain autonomous. Examples can be using hedges and questions, being indirect, being pessimistic, using plural pronouns, etc. The last politeness strategy which was outlined by Brown and Levinson is off-record politeness. In this strategy, people tend to insinuate a request instead of stating that directly so that the speaker avoids any explicit imposition.

Despite the claims against Brown and Levinson's politeness theory being controversial and problematic, many researchers believe that it is still the most reliable means to compare politeness patterns in different cultures. Janney and Arndt (1993), for example, state that "with respect to the issue of empirical testability, it is important to realize that Brown and Levinson's framework ultimately represents, analyzes and accounts for highly reduced, idealized, *models* of speech activities" (Janney & Arndt, 1993: 19) (italics in original). Kasper (1994) asserts that the politeness theory meets the required criteria like explicitness, parsimony, and predictiveness for empirical theories. Moreover, Whaley and Samter (2007, P. 257) advocate Brown and Levinson's politeness theory and assert that "most scholars agree there are many strengths that make it worthwhile to know the theory and to continue to study the concepts and phenomena addressed in the theory". Finally, drawing upon the literature on politeness research, Goudarzi et al. (2015) conclude that Brown and Levinson's politeness theory is "a widely applied" and "the most influential" framework for studying linguistic politeness.

Therefore, considering the prominence and popularity of this framework and due to the comparative nature of this study, it was employed in this study. Brown and Levinson's politeness theory consists of 15 positive politeness strategies and 10 negative politeness strategies. However, to make the task of data analysis more manageable, the researchers of the current study delimited themselves just to the most frequently observed politeness strategies in the emails of the police officers, and they conducted the study with the following eight positive and negative politeness strategies that will be elaborated upon in the following section:

Negative politeness strategies

- (1) Apologize
 - a. Admit the impingement
 - b. Give overwhelming reasons
- (2) Go on record as incurring a debt
- (3) Be pessimistic
- (4) Be indirect
- (5) Give deference

Positive politeness strategies

- (1) Show interest
- (2) Offer a contribution or a benefit
- (3) Be optimistic

When the interlocutors have no other way to do the FTA, the speaker may *apologize* to show his unwillingness to offend the hearer's negative face. There are four ways to apologize, among which we focus on two of them here: *Admit the impingement* and *Give overwhelming reasons*. In the former, the speaker admits that s/he is going to impinge on the hearer's face. (Note: all the examples have been taken from the police officers' emails)

- *We know that your judiciary system was waiting for our answer but ...*
- *We are aware of your organizational limitations, however, ...*

In the latter, the speaker, due to compelling reasons, may be forced to do the FTA. To redress the negative face of the hearer, s/he may provide overwhelming reasons or explanations:

- *The trainers' schedule is very busy as they travel around the world, so...*
- *As we are examining resources available to accommodate the various requests,*

Another negative politeness strategy, in which the speaker tries to redress an FTA is *going on record as incurring a debt*. In this case, the speaker claims his/her indebtedness usually through expressions of gratitude to the hearer.

- *[NATIONALITY] police appreciate your cooperation in this case and ...*
- *We would be highly thankful if you could possibly arrange another time to ...*

In the third negative politeness strategy, i.e., *to be pessimistic*, the speaker expresses his/her doubtfulness about the appropriateness of doing the FTA.

- *This might be against your regulations, but*
- *Although this can lead to longer hearing sessions, ...*

Concerning the fourth strategy in this subcategory, namely *being indirect*, the speaker uses conventional indirectness to convey his FTA indirectly.

- *Is there any other opportunity to arrange the meeting?*
- *Please let us know about your decision on the meeting time ...*

Finally, *in giving deference*, the speaker acts in a way that shows the hearer is of higher social status. This can be achieved by two means, either the speaker can humble and belittle himself, or he can pay the hearer a positive face and raise him to show that the hearer's wants are more important than those of the speaker. The best way to give deference is by using honorifics. The speakers of English prefer to show deference by using the words like *sir* in their conversations.

- *Sir, you are cordially requested to...*
- *I cannot find the right words to apologize, but you are kindly asked to ...*

Three positive politeness strategies were observed more frequently than other strategies in the correspondence of the L1 and L2 user Interpol police officers: *Show interest*, *offer a contribution or a benefit*, and *be optimistic*. In *showing interest*, the speaker should notice the conditions of the hearer. Generally, this can be done by paying attention to the recognizable changes in the hearer, new possessions of the hearer, or anything that the hearer would like to be recognized by the speaker (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

- *It was a pleasure to meet you at the recent Interpol Conference...*
- *It is very useful for airport police who are required to make quick identity assessments of arrivals ...*

To mitigate the inherent threat of FTAs, the speaker may *offer a contribution or a benefit* to the hearer. By doing so, the speaker can help the hearer with whatever he/she wants. In this strategy, the speaker tries to show his/her "good intentions in satisfying Hearer's positive-face wants" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 125).

- *[NATIONALITY] Police offer to extradite future criminals to your country.*
- *This may also provide an opportunity to follow up on the agreed outcomes of your upcoming visit to [COUNTRY] next week.*

The last positive politeness strategy, in which the speaker shows his/her willingness that the hearer will cooperate with him/her, is called *be optimistic*. In this strategy, the expression of FTA is done presumptuously or optimistically to emphasize their shared interests. (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In this strategy, optimistic statements show that the speaker feels sure to be successful.

- *I believe our situation may have improved by that time.*

- *I hope we can continue a similarly productive working relationship.*

Recent developments in the field, as discussed by Andersson (2024), emphasize the need to integrate newer perspectives, such as Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, into traditional frameworks. This integration allows for a richer analysis of politeness in professional genres, including police correspondence. Furthermore, articles published in some leading journals on politeness such as the *Journal of Politeness Research* over the past few years have highlighted the growing importance of examining politeness in digital and institutional contexts, providing valuable methodological tools for future research.

2.3. Linguistic politeness in written materials

Considering the significance and popularity of Brown and Levinson's positive and negative politeness strategies, many researchers (e.g., AlAfnan, 2014; Goudarzi et al., 2015; Jansen & Janssen, 2010; Maier, 1992; Mohammad Hosseinpur & Mosavy, 2019) have drawn upon this framework as a base for their studies to probe the different facets of politeness phenomenon in different contexts and languages.

Among the others, Maier (1992) was the first scholar who focused on the usage of Brown and Levinson's politeness strategy in business letters. In her study, Maier considered 18 participants, 8 L1 users and 10 L2 users, who were asked to write a mail to the manager of a hypothetical company and, in addition to explaining to them why he/she missed the interview session, persuade them to give him/her a second chance. Then, the researcher compared the L1 user data with the L2 user data to find similarities or differences between the two sets of data. Also, to make the task of data analysis more manageable, she limited herself to some of the politeness strategies that were originally proposed by Brown and Levinson. The reason behind this selection, however, was that these strategies "appeared most frequently in the letters" (Maier, 1992; p. 194). The results revealed that negative politeness strategies were used more by L1 users. On the contrary, L2 users applied more risky politeness strategies and regarding the use of these strategies, they were generally more informal and direct.

Few studies have explored the application of politeness strategies by police officers. Farinde et al. (2015) targeted the interrogation discourse in police-suspect interrogation in Nigeria. They found that positive politeness strategies had more frequency than negative politeness strategies in the discourse of interrogator-suspect. They reported that the police officers used frightening and coercive language. In this case, social order and the manner of discourse between interrogator and suspect should be considered. These kinds of discourses are straightforward and the interrogators generally want to imply their higher social order to the suspect. In another study, drawing upon Scollon's discourse approach, Rattanapian (2015) examined police officers' language in Thailand and explored the politeness strategies they employed in their encounters with foreign tourists. The results of the study revealed that a combination of independence politeness strategies, involvement politeness strategies, and bald-on-record strategies were the main politeness strategies that the participant police officers took advantage of in their encounters with foreign tourists.

Farinde et al. (2015) and O'Driscoll and Haugh (2024) conducted a review of politeness strategies in institutional communication, identifying key trends and gaps in the literature. Their findings suggest that while much attention has been paid to business and educational settings, the domain of law enforcement remains relatively underexplored. They call for greater attention to the role of politeness in fostering trust and cooperation in international organizations such as Interpol.

It seems that the investigation of politeness strategies in some contexts such as the correspondence of police officers is an under-explored area that needs further attention. Thus, the following research question was used as a guide throughout this study:

Is there any significant difference between the application of politeness strategies in the emails composed by L1 and L2 user Interpol police officers?

3. Methodology

Since the current study intended to accurately and systematically describe a phenomenon and shed light on the frequency of the occurrence of the politeness strategies used in the correspondence of L1 and L2 user Interpol police officers, it could be regarded as a descriptive study. In this study, the researchers tried to understand and investigate the existence and frequency of the occurrence of politeness strategies in a corpus of police letters. These letters were the natural written product of L1 and L2 user Interpol police officers. Due to the fact that the composers of letters were unaware of being observed, the behaviors exhibited are more credible because they occurred in a real, typical context. In addition, mathematical methods and frequency analyses were employed to explore the emails to find answers to the research questions. Therefore, this study is quantitative and corpus-based in nature as well.

The present study was done on the final product of police officers. Since the researchers obtained the letters from a web database, there was not much access to the identity, gender, and background of the police officers who composed the letters. Thus, the composers are quite unknown to the researchers.

3.1. Materials and Instruments

Interpol branches around the world are connected by a web-based secure system called I-24/7. Every message sent or received from any Interpol office around the world is stored in a network-based data center in the heart of the I-24/7 communication system. The materials used in this study were the letters sent/received from English and non-English-speaking countries to the NCB Tehran (National Central Bureau of Interpol in Tehran) between January 2018 and January 2019. Due to some limitations, the researchers had only access to the Australian letters as L1 user samples and Italian, Chinese, French, and Iranian letters as L2 user ones. Namely, 50 letters from an L1 user country (i.e., Australia) and 50 letters from L2 user countries (Italy, China, France as well as Iran) were used in this study. The L1 corpus consisted of 4631 words, and the corpus of the L2 users comprised 4322 words. Due to security reasons, some key or confidential pieces of information (such as names, dates, places...) were removed from the body of the letters, and the researchers are not allowed to reveal any information on the content of the emails.

The following negative and positive politeness strategies were the most frequently observed strategies in the data. They were used to analyze the application of politeness strategies in the emails. Each of these strategies was compared for the L1 and L2 user emails.

Negative politeness strategies

- (1) Apologize.
 - a. Admit the impingement.
 - b. Give overwhelming reasons.
- (2) Go on record as incurring a debt.
- (3) Be pessimistic.
- (4) Be indirect
- (5) Give deference.

Positive politeness strategies

- (1) Show interest.
- (2) Offer a contribution or a benefit.
- (3) Be optimistic.

Brown and Levinson (1987)

3.2. Data collection procedure

In the first step, to determine the frequency of the aforementioned strategies among L1 and L2 user emails, they were read and analyzed line by line. To ensure the reliability of the data, the letters were read and analyzed by two professional raters. Then, to find the answer to the first and second research questions, the frequency of each politeness strategy and also the total frequency of each group (L1 and L2 users) were calculated by the use of descriptive statistics. Finally, the results of the two groups were compared to find answers to the third research question.

To analyze the status of the application of politeness strategies in the two groups, all the emails obtained from the Interpol office in Tehran (received/sent between 2018 and 2019) were read and rated line by line by the authors. Then, the total relative frequency of each strategy was calculated, and the results were tabulated. By the use of bar charts, the relative frequencies of negative and positive politeness strategies were compared between the two groups. Also, to ensure the reliability of the ratings, two sets of results were compared with each other, and inter-rater reliability was calculated. The inter-rater reliability yielded an acceptable agreement level between the ratings, ($r = .88$) and ($r = .77$) for L2 and L1 user groups, respectively. Then, the total frequency of each strategy in L1 and L2 user groups was calculated. Finally, to explore the difference between the two groups, a Chi-square test was run.

4. Results

After examining the letters by the two raters, the results were sorted into two tables for each L1 and L2 user group. The results of each group were classified into negative and positive politeness strategies. Table 1 shows the total frequency of negative and positive politeness strategies in the L1 user group.

Table 1. Total frequency of politeness strategies in L1 user group

Strategy	Frequency
Negative politeness strategies	

admit impingement	6
give overwhelming reasons	9
go on record as incurring debt	2
be pessimistic	22
indirectness	5
give deference	33
Positive politeness strategies	
show interest	16
offer contribution	17
be optimistic	17

Also, Table 2 demonstrates the total frequency of negative and positive politeness strategies in the L2 user group.

Table 2. Total frequency of politeness strategies in L2 user group

Strategy	Frequency
Negative politeness strategies	
admit impingement	1
give overwhelming reasons	2
go on record as incurring debt	0
be pessimistic	13
indirectness	18
give deference	22
Positive politeness strategies	
show interest	9
offer contribution	11
be optimistic	20

In addition, Figure 2 illustrates the compared frequency of negative politeness strategies between L1 and L2 user groups.

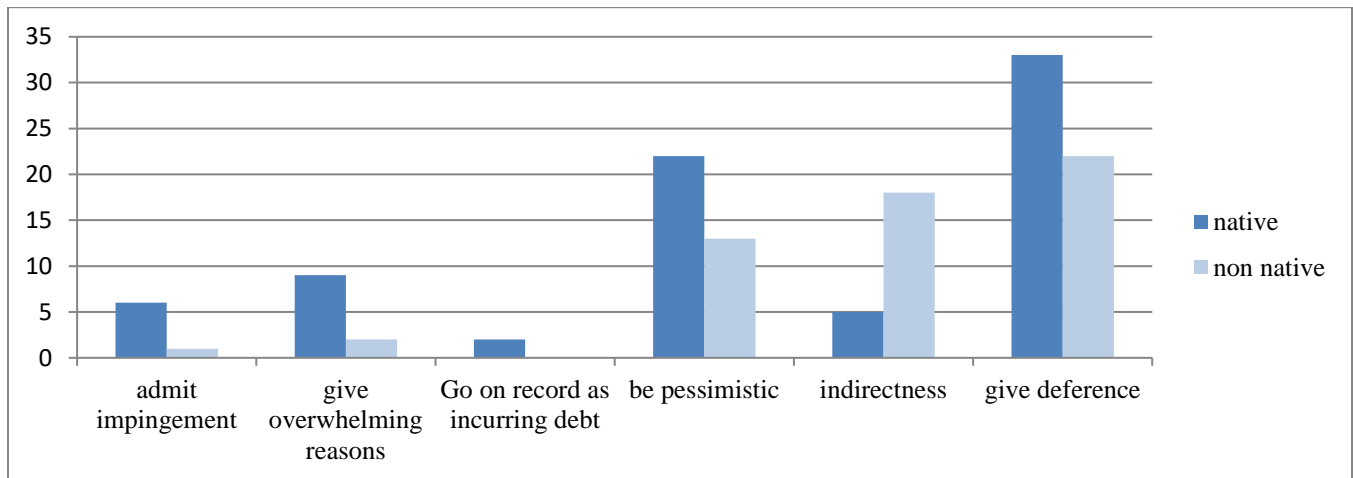


Figure 2. Frequency of negative politeness strategies between L1 and L2 user groups

As can be seen, both L1 and L2 user police officers employed the strategy *give deference* more than other negative politeness strategies, however, L2 user police officers took advantage of this strategy less than their L1 user colleagues. It can also be perceived from the above figure that L2 user police officers used the negative strategy *indirectness* much more than L1 user police officers. Besides, in their emails, L2 user police officers didn't use the negative politeness strategy *Go on record as incurring debt*, in contrast with the L1 user police officers who used it twice in their correspondence. Considering the frequency of negative politeness strategies, *give deference*, *be pessimistic*, and *give overwhelming reasons* were respectively the most frequent strategies utilized by the L1 user police officers. This pattern, however, is not the same for L2 users. They took advantage of *give deference*, *indirectness*, and *be pessimistic* strategies, respectively, more than other negative strategies. Figure

3 depicts the compared frequency of positive politeness strategies between L1 and L2 user groups.

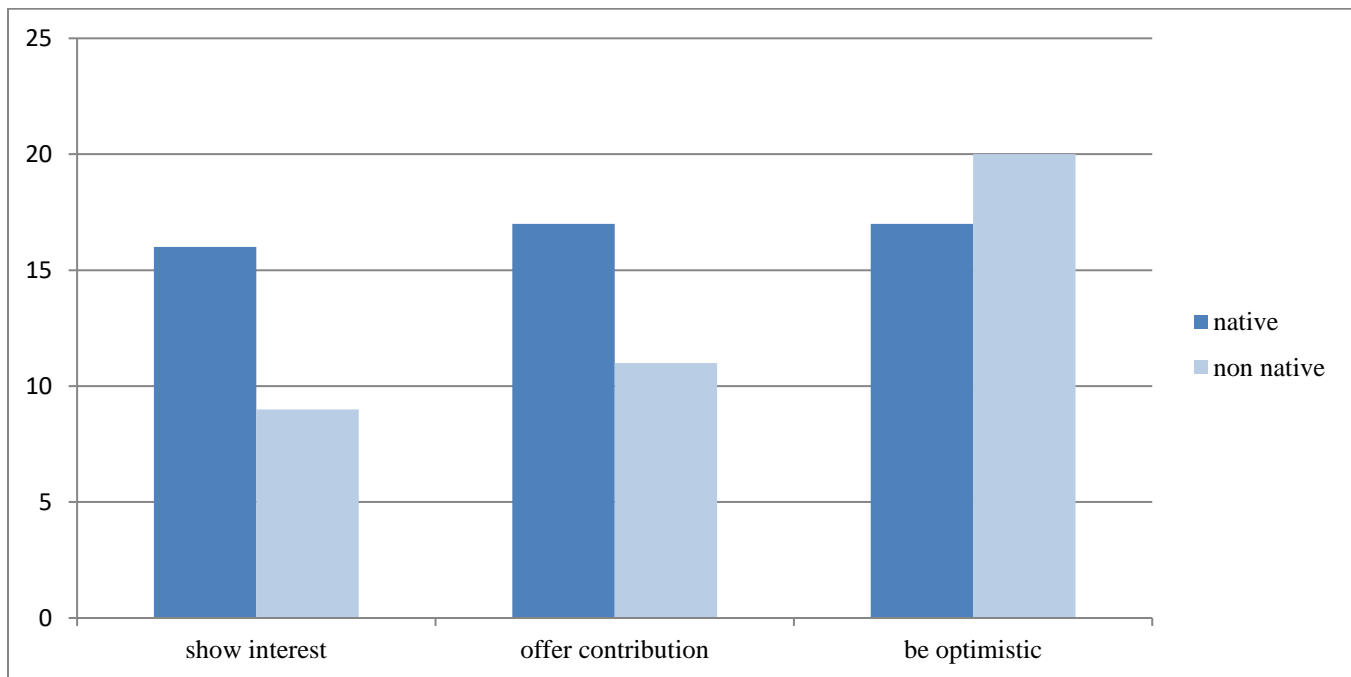


Figure 3. Frequency of positive politeness strategies between L1 and L2 user groups

Based on the information illustrated in Figure 3, the most frequent positive politeness strategy among both groups was *be optimistic*. In this regard, L2 user police officers utilized this strategy more than L1 user police officers. In contrast, L1 user police officers employed the other two positive politeness strategies (i.e., *show interest* and *offer contribution*) more than the L2 user police officers.

Concerning the frequency of the positive politeness strategies, *offer contribution*, *be optimistic*, and *show interest* were somehow equally employed by the L1 user police officers. This pattern does not hold for their L2 user counterparts: They were inclined to *be optimistic*, *offer contribution*, and *show interest* patterns.

In addition, as mentioned earlier, the ratings of the authors on the use of politeness strategies were compared with each other and the results of the inter-rater reliability demonstrated a satisfactory agreement index between the ratings. Table 3 demonstrates the results of the inter-rater reliability:

Table 3. Inter-rater reliability index

	Percent Agreement	Scott's Pi	Cohen's Kappa	Krippendorff's Alpha
L2 users (rater 1 & 2)	88.88	0.87	0.87	0.88
L1 users (rater 1 & 2)	77.77	0.74	0.75	0.76

The results of the above table show that the ratings were, to a large extent, homogeneous, and thus the results of the first rating by the researcher can be regarded as reliable.

Finally, a Chi-square test was run to investigate the differences between the two groups. Table 4 shows the results of the Chi-square test about the frequency of negative and positive politeness strategies in L1 and L2 user groups.

Table 4. Chi-square test results for L1 and L2 user groups

	Positive politeness	Negative politeness	Marginal Row Totals	Positive politeness
L1 users	50 (51.26) [0.03]	77 (75.74) [0.02]	127	L1 users
L2 users	40 (38.74) [0.04]	56 (57.26) [0.03]	96	L2 users
Marginal Column Totals	90	133	223 (Grand Total)	Marginal Column Totals

$$\chi^2 = 0.120, \quad df = 1, \quad \chi^2/df = 0.12, \quad p\text{-value} (\chi^2 > 0.120) = 0.7293$$

Based on the above table, the Chi-square statistic is 0.120 and the *p*-value is about 0.73. The Chi-square test did not reveal a statistically significant difference in the overall application of politeness strategies between L1 and L2 officers. However, the analysis of individual strategies suggests that even though their overall politeness is similar, their specific ways of being polite are slightly different: while both L1 and L2 officers are overall polite, they tend to favour different politeness tactics.

5. Discussion

The present study was done to investigate the employment of politeness strategies by L1 and L2 user police officers of the Interpol organization in their correspondence. To this end, a set of politeness strategies, observed frequently in the data, was selected to be considered in this study. In an attempt, the frequency of politeness strategies used by the two groups was calculated and compared.

A Chi-square test was run to compare the data obtained from L1 and L2 user police officers. The results revealed that there was not a significant difference in the use of politeness strategies between L1 and L2 speakers of the English language. However, the analysis of individual strategies highlights some clear variations in usage patterns. These findings suggest that L1 and L2 officers, while maintaining a similar level of overall politeness, exhibit subtle preference differences in the specific politeness strategies they employ. This finding is not in line with Maier (1992) who claimed there were some differences between L1 and L2 users in terms of using politeness strategies.

In light of the theoretical contributions by Ahmadi and Weisi (2023) and Brown and Kim (2025), the current findings underscore the importance of considering both linguistic competence and cultural awareness in training programs for international police officers. Furthermore, the results align with recent trends identified in the *studies conducted on politeness* (e.g., Brown & Kim, 2025; Cao, 2024; Hodeib, 2024), which emphasize the need for adaptive strategies in multilingual and multicultural environments. Future research should explore the impact of these strategies on interpersonal relationships and organizational effectiveness in global policing networks.

Comparing the frequency of the use of the same strategy, the results indicated that sometimes L1 user police officers employed some strategies more frequently than L2 user police officers, and sometimes L2 users surpassed the L1 users in utilizing a strategy. In addition, the results of this study demonstrated that both L1 and L2 officers utilized *give deference* as the most frequent negative politeness strategy.

The following examples illustrate some of these uses:

L1 user: *Yes, sir. It's my pleasure to inform you that I have discussed this matter with the Ambassador, and we propose to reconsider the training for later in (YEAR).*

L2 user: *Would you please give me your suggestion for the meeting time, sir?*

This finding aligns with expectations in intercultural communication, where deference is essential for maintaining respectful interactions (Kaur, 2023). However, L2 officers exhibited a lower usage of *give deference* compared to their L1 counterparts. This might suggest that L2 officers feel slightly less confident in asserting their opinions or requests due to potential language limitations. Another reason could be the notion of hierarchy in police organization, which has been dominated by the behavior of police staff. Since the composers of the emails didn't know the rank and the identity of the receivers, and because they didn't want to threaten the face of the reader, giving deference and presuming the other person as higher might be an unintentional choice which was reflected in the written behavior of police officers in both groups.

Being pessimistic was also among the most frequent negative politeness strategies of the two groups. It was the second most frequent negative politeness strategy among L1 users and the third most frequent negative politeness strategy among L2 users.

L1 user: *This might be against your regulations, but I would appreciate it if you could provide a brief CV or biography of Brigadier [NAME].*

L2 user: *Although this can lead to longer hearing sessions, it can clarify many things.*

This phenomenon can also reflect the mind of police officers who consider the right of decision for their superiors. So, when they presume the other person is higher, they would relay the right of decision to their reader. They might think that their reader can reject their request and therefore they express their wants in a pessimistic manner.

Also, Maier (1992) contended that L2 speakers of English were not inclined to use some politeness strategies in their correspondence which was parallel to the findings of this study: In the L2 user group, nobody used the strategy *Go on record*

as incurring debt which can suggest strategy avoidance. This strategy avoidance could be traced back to two reasons: It could be arisen from cultural differences or it could be the result of unawareness about such a strategy. It is worth mentioning here that, this strategy was used only 2 times by L1 user police officers, which is the least frequent politeness strategy among other strategies.

L1 user: [NATIONALITY] police highly appreciate your cooperation in this case and ...

L1 user: I will be very grateful if you arrange a time to meet you at the recent Interpol conference with my colleague Mr. [NAME].

In both groups, negative politeness strategies were more frequent than positive politeness strategies. This finding supports the results of Pilegaard (1997) and Nickerson (1999) who claimed the writers of business letters mostly used negative politeness strategies. In addition, this study revealed that similar to the L1 user police officers, L2 user police officers used negative politeness strategies more often than positive ones which supports the findings of Shams (1997). This phenomenon could show that the English language relies on negative politeness strategies as the major politeness device. However, this is in contrast with Farinde et al. (2015) who investigated the use of politeness strategies in police interrogations in Nigeria. They found that positive politeness strategies had more frequency than negative politeness strategies in the discourse of interrogator-suspect. In this case, social order and the manner of discourse between interrogator and suspect should be considered. These kinds of discourses are straightforward and the interrogators generally want to imply their higher social order to the suspect. Therefore, the contradiction of findings of Farinde, et al. (2015) with the current study is logical.

In contrast with the findings of Guodong and Jing (2005) who compared the use of politeness strategies between American and Chinese students, the data in this study revealed that L1 speakers used more politeness strategies (127 times) than L2 speakers (96 times). However, in another study, Goudarzi et al. (2015) found that the frequency of strategies used by L2 user participants was more than that of L1 users.

6. Conclusion

This study was done to add a piece to the yet incomplete puzzle of the application of politeness strategies in written communication. In this regard, the use of politeness strategies in police written communication was compared between L1 and L2 user police officers of the Interpol organization.

The research highlights the nuanced use of politeness strategies by L1 and L2 officers. L2 officers favored indirectness more, suggesting a potential cultural influence on communication styles. This reinforces the importance of considering language background when interpreting politeness in intercultural interactions.

The findings suggest a need for training programs that equip officers with an understanding of how politeness strategies can vary across cultures. This can help improve communication clarity and cooperation in international police collaborations. L2 officers may benefit from language instruction that emphasizes not just grammatical accuracy but also culturally appropriate expressions of politeness within professional contexts.

Also, regarding the analysis of the results of this study, it can be said that the notion of hierarchy in police organizations can be traced in the written production of police officers. Police officers in both groups used the *give deference* strategy more often than other strategies. By using this politeness strategy, both groups assumed the reader to have a higher social or occupation position. Also, both groups used the *be pessimistic* strategy to grant the right of decision to their reader (which was considered their superior).

Future research directions include expanding the scope of analysis to include spoken interactions, incorporating insights from newer theoretical frameworks, and exploring the role of digital communication technologies in shaping politeness practices. Additionally, given the increasing globalization of law enforcement, further studies should investigate the applicability of these findings to other varieties of English and non-English-speaking contexts.

While the study provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge limitations such as sample size and focus on written communication. Future research could explore these dynamics in spoken interactions and with larger, more diverse samples. Furthermore, the level of language proficiency, age, gender, and rank of police officers were unknown to the researchers in this study. Another study can be done in a controlled situation to see if the results are consistent or not. Finally, it should be noted that the findings of this study represent the tendencies typical only for Australian variety of English and cannot be generalized to all other varieties. Other interested researchers can consider other varieties of English in their study.

7. References

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