Linguistic Strategy and Leadership
A study of how politeness in management affects subordinates’ motivation

Celina Young
English C/Special Project
Tutor: Monika Mondor
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Abstract
Communication in professional settings is essential to arriving at end results. Managers use speech acts to delegate, instruct, and in other ways get subordinates to perform everyday tasks. The present study aims to investigate how speech acts are performed using different politeness strategies, how these politeness strategies affect the motivation in subordinates, and how politeness can be used strategically in specific situations. The results indicate that politeness strategies used by managers are important for the motivation of subordinates and that different situations and different individuals call for different politeness strategies. Thus it is necessary for managers to make conscious and strategic linguistic choices adapted to specific situations and individuals.

Key words: Politeness strategies, linguistic strategies, strategic leadership, management, motivation.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background
In most professions and work places, a manager is required to have a certain level of academic knowledge and work experience in order to be considered for a position. These levels are, of course, set by each individual organization. However, academic knowledge and work experience do not alone make a good manager. Does a manager’s personal management style, whether such a style is a conscious choice or an unconscious personal characteristic, determine how successful a manager becomes in leading his or her subordinates? Can a manager’s linguistic choices make or break a successful team? Can flaws in communication be a way in which motivation in subordinates is affected – and if so, how seriously? We have probably all heard various relationship experts proclaim that communication is the key to successful relationships – is it also a key to successful professional relationships?

A vast amount of research has been carried out within the field of management and leadership styles, and in this paper I will introduce some of these to use as a base of my study. However, in order to manage and lead subordinates, you must use communication, and this is the focus of my study. In directing, guiding, ordering, and in various ways telling subordinates how to perform their work, what needs to be done in a day or in a year, communicating guidelines, and performing conflict management, the manager will use language (whether spoken, written or signed) as a tool in leading subordinates successfully. Thus, it becomes necessary, I believe, to take a closer look at how language can be used strategically in an everyday work environment. In the present study, I will focus on politeness as a linguistic strategy and investigate if and how it affects the motivation in subordinates.

1.2 Aim
The main aim of my study is to investigate if managers’ linguistic strategies affect the motivation of subordinates. The study has two subordinate aims: firstly to identify linguistic patterns, more specifically speech acts from a politeness perspective, used by managers and how or if it affects their subordinates. I am specifically interested in investigating Assertive and Directive speech acts (Searle 1975) that are commonly used in everyday work situations and study what politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson...
1987) are chosen by managers for the speech acts in different situations. Secondly, I am hoping that the findings may enable a more conscious choice of linguistic strategy by managers in the organization of the study and that such a strategy may be used as a tool to improve motivation in subordinates.

1.3 Method
The study will be performed in two steps; the first step is a survey study where a questionnaire will be distributed to 5 managers (Appendix 1) and another questionnaire to 44 subordinates (Appendix 2). The second step will be carried out through interviews (see Appendix 3 for the interview guide) with 5 subordinates where motivation will be discussed in greater detail. The managers and subordinates participating in the study will not be informed about the aim of the study, as it may affect their answers.

In this section, I will first go into more detail about the quantitative method of data collection, i.e. the questionnaires. Secondly, I will discuss the method of qualitative research method, i.e. the interviews, which is the last step in the data collection of this investigation. Finally, I will describe the organization used for the study.

1.3.1 Quantitative Research Method – The Questionnaires
The first step in the study will be conducted by means of questionnaires. The questionnaires will study the same linguistic features from two perspectives: managers will be asked about their choices of linguistic strategies and subordinates will be asked how the same linguistic strategies affect them. Subordinates will be presented with the same speech acts and situations, and will be asked how different politeness strategies affect their work motivation.

The informant test contains 6 different questions, each representing a speech act. I have chosen to use assertives and directives as they are common in everyday work environments (see section 4.3.1. for descriptions of speech acts). The different levels of politeness of the answers are based on Brown & Levinson’s (1978) seminal work on politeness. The informants are given three sets of choices and one option marked Other where they are free to fill in an open-ended answer.

Example (1) represents an Assertive speech act:
1) A subordinate's work is not up to standard. In fact he/she is performing very poorly, and this needs to be addressed. Your own manager is letting you know that unless your subordinate’s work improves, he/she will be fired. What do you say to bring this up with him/her?

a) Your performance is not good enough. Unless something changes, I’m going to have to let you go.

b) I’m afraid we need to take a look at how you have been performing at work lately. We are going to have to make sure that your performance improves, otherwise I risk having to let you go.

c) I’m sorry to have to be the one to bring this up. I know you have been really pressured lately, and I fully understand that it affects your work. But I’m being directed to ask you to perform better at work, as I will otherwise be forced by management to let you go.

d) Other: 

Answer (a) represents the most direct way and answer (c) the most indirect.

1.3.2 Qualitative Research Method – The Interviews
The second step of the study will be performed through interviews. After the quantitative data is compiled, five randomly chosen subordinates will be interviewed for more details about the relation between linguistic strategy and motivation. The aim is to extract a more detailed and in-depth investigation of motivation in subordinates. Subordinates will be asked to develop their ideas on how some linguistic strategies used by managers affect their motivation in their everyday work. See Appendix 3 for interview guide.

Kvale (1997) describes the qualitative research interview as half structured as it is neither an open conversation nor a strictly structured questionnaire. The qualitative research interview has an interview guide which works to keep the interview on track.
However, follow-up questions that are not included in the guide may be asked, and the interviewer thus adapts to each unique interview and the information provide during it. The guide does not dictate a certain order in which the questions must be asked, but instead it works as a support as it helps the interviewer to stay focused throughout the interview. It also allows for comparison with each of the interviews performed in the study. Kvale (1997) points out the importance of the interviewer having an open mind and is attentive in order to ask follow-up questions. Through different interview techniques, the interviewer may try to dig deeper into the mind of the person being interviewed and seek to extract details of experiences and opinions. This possibility is not available in a quantitative survey study, and as my study is partly investigating motivation, it becomes essential to look into details such as the ones described above. It also allows for asking further questions that may have arisen when reviewing the answers of the initial questionnaires.

1.3.3 Shasta College - Organization Used for the Study
Shasta College is part of the California Community College system, which is the largest system of higher education in the world, with 107 colleges organized into 72 districts, serving nearly 1.4 million students. The college has articulation agreements to facilitate transfer to the University of California and California State University systems, and many private college campuses.

   The department of Shasta College that is the object of this study is Administrative Services, more specifically the Physical Plant division of the Administrative Services. Administrative Services has five divisions: Capital and Special Projects, Food Services, Business, Security, and Physical Plant. See Appendix 4 for organizational chart for Administrative Services. Physical Plant is the largest of the divisions, and consists of five Support Services Departments: Transportation, Maintenance, Custodial, Grounds, and Print Shop. See Appendix 5 for organizational chart of the Physical Plant division. As the organizational chart shows, there are currently four Supervisor vacancies within the Physical Plant division. There are a total of 55 positions within the department of Physical Plant, but there are currently five vacancies – four Supervisor positions and one Custodian position. Not counting vacant positions, there are currently a total of 50 people
working in the department, including the Director. There are six managerial and supervising positions within the organization, one Director, two Supervisors and three Forepersons (Electrical, HVAC and Grounds). Additionally, there are in the department 44 individuals (not counting the vacant Custodian position) working in support staff functions, including the Senior Staff Secretary, the Staff Secretary and the Lead person for Grounds. The Director (who is also the Transportation Supervisor), the Custodial Department Supervisor, and the three Forepersons answered the questionnaire for Managers. 14 people out of 44 in support staff functions answered the questionnaire for subordinates. 5 support staff members participated in the interviews.
2. Background

In this chapter I will first, in section 2.1, discuss definitions of management and leadership as this terminology is central to this essay. Secondly, in 2.2, I will go into detail about leadership theories. Thirdly, in 2.3, I will discuss definitions and theories relating to linguistic strategies, primarily speech acts and politeness, that this study is investigating. Finally, in 2.4, I will summarize the sections on leadership and linguistic strategies and discuss how it can be used strategically to affect motivation in subordinates.

2.1 Definitions Relating to Management and Leadership

Since this essay deals with the linguistic strategies of managers, the term manager must be defined. I will, in this essay, use the term manager as meaning an individual in a professional role formally assigned to him or her, and whose job as a manager is to lead one or more individuals who are in a subordinate professional position in their work and to be ultimately responsible for the results, the efficiency, and the everyday work of these subordinates.

I want to point out that a manager and a leader is not necessarily the same. Bosse Angelöw and Thom Jonsson (1990) have this way of defining a leader, “Every group has some form of leadership, i.e. that someone in the group has the task of leading the activities of the group” (my translation of Angelöw et al 1990: 140). Their claim is, then, that in every group there is always someone who acts as the leader, but that it can be a formal or an informal leader. The informal leader is not formally assigned the role as a leader, whereas the formal leader is assigned the leadership of the group’s activities. Thus, they refer to all groups, not necessarily only groups in a professional work setting. In this essay, I will use the terms manager and leader interchangeably, as I am only discussing formally assigned managers and not informal leaders and the linguistic strategies they use to lead.

2.2 Leadership Theories

Angelöw et al (1990: 140-142) group leadership research into three main categories, one group focuses on the personal qualities of the leader, another focuses on leadership style, and a third group of researchers focuses on situation-based and strategic leadership. As
the present study aims to highlight linguistic strategies as a conscious choice, and is not concerned with whether some people are natural born leaders or not, this section will discuss leadership style and situation-based and strategic leadership.

2.2.1 Leadership Style
Leadership style researchers study the different styles a leader can use, i.e. a leader can more or less consciously use a number of different styles when leading and managing a group. Lewin, Lippitt and White (1960 in Angelöw et al 1990: 141) - identified three types of leaders after conducting a study of ten-year-old boys. They assigned one adult leader to each group, each adult being an authoritarian leader, a democratic leader, or a laissez-faire leader:

*Authoritarian* - this leader is aloof and uses orders without consultation in directing the group activities. All communication goes from the leader and down to the subordinates. This leader does not trust that subordinates can be competent, but instead assumes that they have insufficient knowledge and that they lack ambition, and will thus not work more than absolutely necessary. The leader will with this view see it essential to give orders and be strictly controlling to prevent passiveness in the subordinates.

*Democratic* - this leader offers guidance and encouragement and they participate in the group themselves. Their participation means a division of the power and the influence. A democratic leader is open to new ideas from the subordinates and wants the group he or she leads to participate in making decisions. A democratic leader encourages subordinates to take responsibility and to be involved. The leader’s role is mostly to coordinate all the creative ideas within the group and to delegate work.

*Laissez-faire* - (or “hands-off”) this manager gives knowledge, but does not become involved and generally participate little in the group's activities. This leader is afraid of becoming authoritarian and risks the subordinates to almost take over leadership. This leader avoids initiating change and decision making, and he or she has a tendency to avoid problem solving by putting off decisions and being vague with information. Responsibility is generally transferred over to the subordinates, which may cause confusion and insecurity among them.
2.2.2 Situation Based and Strategic Leadership
This group of researchers views the leader as flexible enough to adapt their leadership according to the demands and needs of a specific situation (Angelöw et al 1990: 142). Thus the leader can choose to be authoritarian if the situation calls for it, but he or she can in other situations choose to be democratic or use a laissez-faire attitude when the situation allows for it. Thus, even if the leader is always affected by his or her own personality, background, knowledge and experience, the leader adapts his or her leadership style in a strategic way depending on what the situation demands; what kind of task needs to be performed, and the constellation of the group (Tannenbaum, Wechsler & Massarik 1961). According to theories that deal with leadership styles, a leader’s qualities and characteristics affect subordinates’ way of performing their work. Theories that deal with strategic and situation based leadership claim that the situation in which the leader works affect the leadership style, which in turn affects efficiency. The object of study is thus the character of the situation to understand how it is decisive for leadership style in relation to efficiency. Different situations demand different leadership styles, and researchers are striving to determine what leadership style is best for the different situations. A certain situation might need a manager with a different style, or alternatively a manager who has the ability to adopt different styles for different situations.

2.3 Theories and Definitions Relating to Linguistic Strategies
In this section, I will look into the linguistic theories related to my study. Firstly, I will account for Speech Act Theory and relating definitions. Secondly, I will discuss Politeness Theory and also how politeness in cross-cultural managerial circumstances can create difficult and confusing situations.

2.3.1 Speech Act: A Historical Overview
In his lecture series The William James Lectures, which he gave at Harvard University in 1955, and which was later published (Austin 1967), Austin wanted to prove that words and sentences are not merely statements of facts, but that we actually do things with words – our utterances are not just sayings, but they are doings. In his lectures, Austin attempted to find ways to distinguish between saying something as in merely making a
statement, and doing something through the action of saying it. He called the first a *constative* and the second a *performat* i ve. The next step then became to identify how many ways there are to do something through the action of speaking; “to say something *is* to do something, or *in* saying something we do something, and even *by* saying something we do something” (Austin 1967: 94).

Austin continued by naming the act of saying something a *locutionary act* – something that he was not interested in studying, but only to identify in order to distinguish it from other acts, the acts of *illocutions*, which he was primarily concerned with. Further, Austin explains that the main feature of an illocutionary act is that the performance of an act is *in* saying something, and not merely a “performance of an act of saying something” (Austin 1967: 99).

The third act performed in saying something (and thereby performing a locutionary act, in which an illocutionary act is carried out), Austin names *perlocutionary* (Austin 1967: 101). A perlocutionary act may be carried out if in saying something, an effect is produced in another person’s feelings, thoughts or actions. However, it was illocutionary acts that were his main focus, and he identified five more general classes of illocutionary acts: *verdictives*, *exercitives*, *commissives*, *behabitives*, and *expositives*.

John R. Searle picked up Austin’s research in his 1969 essay *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Searle described five main categories of illocutionary speech acts somewhat differently than Austin. He named them *assertives*, *directives*, *commissives*, *expressives*, and *declarations*:

We tell people how things are (Assertives), we try to get them to do things (Directives), we commit ourselves to doing things (Commissives), we express our feelings and attitudes (Expressives), and we bring about changes in the world through our utterances (Declarations). (Searle 1975: viii)

Since the present study focuses on assertives and directives, these are the two illocutionary speech acts that I will discuss here.

*Assertives* – an illocutionary speech act that has the main point or purpose to commit the speaker to the truth of an utterance. An assertive is thus a statement which can be viewed as either true or false. In other words, when a speaker performs an assertive illocutionary speech act, the speaker is stating something he or she believes to be true, whereas hearers may judge the utterance to be either true or false. An assertive
Illocutionary speech act is a statement or a reflection of how something is. It can be an utterance to describe, brag, complain, suggest, state, or hypothesize (Searle 1975). Examples of assertives are “What a beautiful day,” “I got an A on my assignment,” “My back is killing me,” “You should listen to your mother,” “He is probably guilty,” and “How you phrase a request will affect the outcome of the answer.”

Directives – an illocutionary speech act that has the purpose of the speaker getting a listener to do something. The attempt can be carefully expressed as an invitation or a suggestion, but it can also be forcefully expressed as an order. It also includes begging someone or permitting them to do something (Searle 1975). Examples of directives are “You can put the knife down on the table,” “Why don’t you put the knife down,” “Put the knife down now,” “Please put the knife down,” and “It’s OK if you put the knife down now.”

In the second essay, Indirect Speech Acts, Searle discusses indirect speech acts – speech acts where “one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another” (Searle 1975: 31). In order for such an indirect speech act to be understood by the hearer, he or she must share knowledge of background information “both linguistic and nonlinguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer” (Searle 1975: 32). This common shared knowledge described by Searle is also discussed by Grice (in Finegan 2004: 299-300). Grice names this the cooperative principle, a principle that states that speakers should “[m]ake [their] conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (in Finegan 2004: 300). The principle describes how people interact with one another and states that the participants in a conversation assume that a speaker is being cooperative. For example, Searle notes, if a speaker asks “can you pass me the salt?” the aim is not, as if taken literally, to retrieve a “yes” or “no” answer, but instead to cause the hearer to actually pass the salt. The indirectness in such a speech act thus lies in the background knowledge of a non-linguistic content, or an indirect speech act. The utterance is, consequently, partly a question, and partly a directive, as it is intended as an attempt to get the hearer to do something, i.e. pass the salt to the speaker. Indirect speech acts, thus, can be used as a way of making a request for an action without being too direct and thus
be perceived as impolite. This brings me to the next section of this essay, namely politeness theories.

2.3.2 Politeness Theories
What originally inspired Brown and Levinson (Brown and Levinson 1987) to develop their politeness theory was the “Gricean observation that what is ‘said’ is typically only part of what is ‘meant’, the proposition expressed by the former providing a basis for the calculation of the latter” (Brown and Levinson 1987: 49). They asked themselves why the phenomenon of meaning more than one says exists at all. The question motivated the design of the politeness theory as they attempted to find the answer. According to Brown and Levinson, politeness is the motive for what Searle calls indirect speech acts (described in 4.3.1. above).

The basis for the Brown and Levinson theory is Goffman’s description of the notion of ‘face’ (in Brown and Levinson 1987: 61), and how it is directly related to “being embarrassed or humiliated, or ‘losing face’. Thus ‘face’ is something that is emotionally invested, and can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction” (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61). Two different ‘face wants’ are assumed; negative face is “the want of every ‘competent adult member’ that his actions be unimpeded by others”, and positive face is “the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others” (Brown and Levinson 1987: 62). Negative face wants require negative politeness and positive face wants require positive politeness. Brown and Levinson describe negative politeness as “non-imposition” with various levels of showing distance and indirectness. Positive face wants, instead, requires inclusion, ratification, understanding, approval and other strategies that result in less distance. When communicating and exchanging utterances, speakers must evaluate the level of threat to hearers’ negative and positive face wants (‘face threatening act’ or FTA) and adjust their politeness strategy accordingly. They describe this evaluation process in the diagram shown below:
Circumstances determining choice of strategy:

(Brown and Levinson 1987: 60)

If an act entails a high level of threat to a hearer’s face, the speaker is more likely to choose a politeness strategy with a high number, as outlined in the above diagram. Consequently, if the level of threat to face is low, a more direct strategy, shown above with lower numbers, may be chosen. For example, if a person (A) is cold and wants to ask another person (B) to close the window, an on-record act would include the direct request for the window to be closed, whereas an off-record act would in other ways imply that it is the underlying wish of A that B closes the window. According to the diagram, then, if A decides that the request has too high a level of threat to B’s face, A will not say anything, but instead continue to be cold. If A decides that the threat is low enough, A will proceed with the FTA. Then follows the evaluation of what strategy to use; on record or off record. An off-record strategy could be “It is a little chilly in here.” An on-record strategy can be ‘without redressive action’, baldly’, and A may say “Close the window.” If A finds that this would be too great a threat to B’s face, A may choose to use an on-record strategy that has redressive action (i.e. it “gives face” to the hearer), either with

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1 Redressive action is a linguistic addition or modification that a speaker can use in an utterance to soften the effect and lessen the threat to a hearer’s face wants (such as not wanting to be told what to do). For example, ‘please,’ ‘would you mind,’ and ‘if it’s not too much trouble,’ make an utterance such as ‘close the window’ less threatening and less direct, and thus constitute redressive actions.
positive politeness or negative politeness. Positive politeness could be “Would you be a sweetheart and close the window?” Negative politeness could be “If it is not too much trouble, and if you are not too warm, would you mind closing the window?” The positive politeness strategy works to make B feel included, treated like a friend who is known and liked, whereas the negative politeness strategy works to show a higher level of distance. This distance can be related to relative power (P) between the speaker and the hearer, the social distance (D) between them, and the ranking of the imposition (R) involved in doing the FTA (Brown and Levinson 1987: 74). The higher the distance, the more ‘negative’ the politeness strategy will be.

The Brown and Levinson politeness theory has been criticized for a number of reasons. Watts (2003) critiques Brown and Levinson’s use of Goffman’s notion of face, claiming that their “understanding of face is significantly different from Goffman’s and leads to different conclusions with respect to sets of strategies for constructing, regulating and reproducing forms of cooperative social interaction than would a revised version of Goffman’s term” (Richard Watts 2003: 267). Watts also presents the problem of the terminology ‘polite’ and ‘politeness’ as universal notions, and constructing a model around this terminology; partly a problem because the English language is not necessarily applicable to non-English speaking cultures as there may be a different range of terminology that goes into the same notion; and partly a problem because the understanding of what is polite may vary greatly in different cultures (Watts 2003: 12-17). He is also careful to distinguish between the difference of polite behavior and polite language, and to note that even though research tend to focus on politeness instead of impoliteness, it is generally impolite behavior and language that is noted and in a sense works to bring forth the opposite, namely politeness (Watts 2003: 8-12).

Another problem with the Brown and Levinson model of politeness is pointed out by Mills (2003). She says that the model assumes “that politeness is necessarily ‘a good thing’, and that politeness is akin to being nice, considerate, and thoughtful. However, this positive view of politeness may be drawn upon by speakers and used in a manipulative, strategic way” (Mills 2003: 59). In other words, politeness may be used in a manipulative way if the speaker uses politeness in a sarcastic or insincere manner. Sarcasm, insincerity and commitment in politeness use are difficult to measure when using the Brown and Levinson model for data collection. Mills also questions the notion
of FTAs and criticizes the Brown and Levinson view on politeness as something used merely to avoid FTAs. She brings up the often-used example of an FTA “asking a stranger to pass you the salt at dinner” (Mills 2003: 60) and questions if this really can be seen as an act that threatens the hearer’s face. She argues that in most societies, since:

asking someone to pass something constitutes what are considered as ‘free gifts’ and therefore does not threaten face, or risk involving them in further conversation, we might ask what the treat to face in this act consists of: asking someone to do something which has the potential for refusal? (Mills 2003: 60)

She points out that such a view entails a particularly negative view on society. Mills (2003) also brings up that the Brown and Levinson model focuses on individual politeness strategies, but that it fails to take into consideration that certain politeness strategies are expected in some communities of practice (Mills 2003: 66). As an example, she uses the situations of lectures where students generally do not interrupt a lecturer. The assumption that a student should not speak during the lecture, she says, is not a specific regulation, but it is “an assumption which is constructed at the level of the community of practice that it is in everyone’s interests if students do not talk” (Mills 2003: 117 footnote 9). Mills also uses examples such as ‘thank you’ and ‘please’ and claims that these are not a result of a conscious politeness strategy, but rather a result of phrases frequently used in the community of practice (Mills 2003:66-67). Analyzing uses of such community-expected phrases, then, would instead be a question of impoliteness if they are not used and not of what politeness strategy is being chosen.

The problem of different understandings in different cultures of what is polite and what is impolite is brought to attention by Morand (1995). In his essay, he specifically investigates how managers are unprepared for cross-cultural communication problems in their work, and proposes specific managerial training to “overcome [the] handicap” (Morand 1995: 69) of being “culturally illiterate” (Morand 1995: 69). He notes that “a large percentage of expatriate managers on foreign assignments terminate their assignments early due to their inability to adjust to foreign cultures” (Morand 1995: 52). For organizations this means high costs, and Morand advises in his essay that the problem may be solved by investing in managerial training that aims to educate and prepare managers for various cross-cultural managerial situations. He exemplifies cross-
cultural communication by the use of politeness as a universal variable, explaining that there is great “cultural variations in politeness norms” (Morand 1995: 53). Some examples that Morand includes (Morand 1995: 58-59) are Olshtain and Cohen (1983) who found Chinese more polite than English, and English more polite than Hebrew when they compared expressions of apology; Deutsch (1983) and Rowland (1985) found that Americans in comparison with Japanese were considered rude and brusque in negotiations; Adler (1991) noted that “that will be very difficult” meant different things in negotiations between Japanese and Norwegian businessmen – to the Japanese it meant “no”, whereas to the Norwegians, it meant that there were still problems that needed to be resolved. Morand (1995: 62-66) proposes four different applications of politeness to managerial training programs; 1) conceptual transmission, 2) role playing, 3) interaction training for second language learners, and 4) diversity training:

1) Conceptual transmission “entails transmission of information regarding politeness at a conceptual level, using lectures or a similar format to present information” (Morand 1995: 62).
2) Role playing entails “role play techniques, simulations, or other experiential techniques” (Morand 1995: 63).
3) Second language learning, Morand explains, is not in itself sufficient to master cultural norms, and thus, he notes, second language speakers (e.g. American managers who master the Japanese language fluently) “should receive additional instruction and practice in host country norms for the employment of that language, specifically with respect to politeness norms” (Morand 1995: 65). Similarly, American managers who meet foreign employees who speak English well “should not make the mistake of assuming that these individuals have mastered the pragmatic nuances of American English” (Morand 1995: 65). The training Morand recommends for situations like these is interaction training where trainees interact with native speakers of the language in question.
4) Diversity training targets the understanding that people within the same country can come from various sub-cultural backgrounds with different norms for politeness (Morand 1995: 66), and he notes Kochman’s (1981) work that showed different “styles of interaction among black and White Americans” (Morand 1995: 66) when it came to handling interpersonal conflicts. The research suggested that whites viewed black discourse as “more direct, aggressive, and confrontive” and that blacks viewed white
discourse as “highly impersonal, devoid of affect, or of any dynamic expression of a point of view”. In his conclusion, Morand notes that:

it is worth reemphasizing that politeness is value-free. In everyday language, politeness may carry a positive connotation and hence an implication that less politeness tends towards “rudeness” and is thus undesirable. Yet, in contrast, the model of politeness discussed here shows the cultural relativity of normative levels of politeness. Hence, one culture’s standards are no better or worse than another’s. When one culture is more or less polite than another, it is entirely inappropriate to draw any judgmental conclusions based on this. (Morand 1995: 68)

2.4 Leadership, Politeness, and Motivation

If leadership communication is viewed from the perspective of leadership style research, it can be said that a leader communicates through a specific leadership style, which may differ from the leader’s personality on a private level. However, if leadership communication is seen as a conscious and strategic choice, a manager’s linguistic choices should be possible to adapt to specific situations in order to be as efficient a leader as possible in each individual situation.

The present study investigates managers’ linguistic strategies, specifically politeness. However, whether a manager uses communication strategically or if it is a subconscious choice which reflects a personal leadership style is difficult to determine. I believe that there is a link between managers’ leadership style, i.e. Authoritarian, Democratic, and Laissez-faire, and choice of politeness strategy. An Authoritarian leader, I believe, is more likely to use an on-record, without redressive action, and bald politeness strategy, a Democratic leader is more likely to choose an on-record, with redressive action, positive politeness strategy, and a Laissez-faire leader is more likely to use either an on-record, with redressive action, negative politeness strategy or an off-record politeness strategy. A speech act uttered by a manager may affect a subordinate depending on what politeness strategy the manager uses, whether the politeness strategy is a conscious and strategic choice, or a subconscious choice that reflects leadership style, i.e. there is a perlocutionary effect of the speech act. It is the aim of this study to investigate the perlocutionary affect on the motivation of subordinates. The other aim, as mentioned in section 1.2 of this essay, is that the findings of how motivation is affected will show that it is possible for communication style and level of politeness to become a
conscious choice, and not simply a result of personality and leadership style. Thus, communication can be seen and used as a tool through which motivation in subordinates may be improved.
3. Results, Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter, I will first present the results from the surveys directly followed by a brief analysis of the results question by question. Secondly, I will present the results from the interviews. Finally, I will discuss the implications of the results.

3.1 Results Questionnaires

For each of the six questions, the results for managers and subordinates will be presented together so that managers’ and subordinates’ replies for each situation are easier to compare. All five managers are male. Of the subordinates, 11 are males and 3 are female.

In situation 1, the assertive is presented in a) an on record, without redressive action, and bald way, in b) an on record, with redressive action, with positive politeness, and in c) an on record, with redressive action, with negative politeness. All of the managers have chosen alternative b). A clear majority of the subordinates has chosen alternative b), followed by alternative c). One person has chosen alternative a).

1) A subordinate’s work is not up to standard. In fact he/she is performing very poorly, and this needs to be addressed. Your supervisor is letting you know that unless your subordinate’s work improves, he/she will be fired. What do you say to bring this up with him/her?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives</th>
<th>Distribution of replies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) “Your performance is not good enough. Unless something changes, I’m going to have to let you go.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) “I’m afraid we need to take a look at how you have been performing at work lately. We are going to have to make sure that your performance improves, otherwise I risk having to let you go.”</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) “I’m sorry to have to be the one to bring this up. I know you have been really pressured lately, and I fully understand that it affects your work. But I’m being directed to ask you to perform better at work, as I will otherwise be forced by management to let you go.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) Your work has not up to standard lately. Your manager is letting you know that unless your work improves, you will be fired. Which of the below alternatives of your manager’s communication with you would motivate you most to improve your efforts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives</th>
<th>Distribution of replies</th>
<th>Males (11 total)</th>
<th>Females (3 total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) “Your performance is not good enough. Unless something changes, I’m going to have to let you go.”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) “I’m afraid we need to take a look at how you have been performing at work lately. We are going to have to make sure that your performance improves, otherwise I risk having to let you go.”</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) “I’m sorry to have to be the one to bring this up. I know you have been really pressured lately, and I fully understand that it affects your work. But I’m being directed to ask you to perform better at work, as I will otherwise be forced by management to let you go.”</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The situation presented to the informants is one of a sensitive nature as it includes the risk of the subordinate being fired. For a delicate situation like this, a greater emphasis on positive politeness seems to be of great importance. Alternative b) uses “we” to show that the manager and the subordinate are part of a team and need to address the problem together. This alternative is clearly preferred by the informants on both the manager side and the subordinate side. Four subordinates chose the more indirect alternative c) with negative politeness and a higher degree of redressive action. As the risk of being fired is involved, a higher level of excuses and assurances of the manager’s understanding of the pressure felt by the subordinate seems appropriate. In addition, the relationship between manager and subordinate is not being threatened as the manager refers to higher management as the party to enforce a possible termination of employment. Somewhat surprising is the fact that one subordinate prefers alternative a). The same subordinate has chosen alternative c), the least direct politeness strategy, for each directive presented in situations 2, 3 and 4. I can only see it as this individual prefers a very direct politeness strategy when something as important as his job is at stake, and that it may serve as a very real incentive to improve his work. The results indicate that when an assertive speech act makes a subordinate feel a high degree of threat to his or her positive face wants (remaining in the work group), a manager will most likely motivate a change in the subordinate’s work behavior if choosing an on record, positive politeness strategy with some redressive action. For some individuals, however, an on record, negative politeness strategy with redressive action will serve the purpose of motivating subordinates better, and for even fewer subordinates, a direct, on record, bold politeness strategy without redressive action would work better. In other words, it is up to the manager to really know each individual to be able to determine which politeness strategy to choose.

The replies for the directive speech act in situation 2 vary. Two of the managers chose b), which represents an on record, with redressive action and positive politeness strategy. Two managers chose c), which represents an on record, with redressive action and negative politeness strategy. One manager wanted to include the reasoning behind the directive, that there is a need for certain information. The subordinates show a clear preference for alternative c), which suggests that a directive of this kind is accepted the best if it is embedded with negative politeness. Two subordinates chose alternative b), which uses positive politeness (the informal phrasing “do me a favor”) and less distance...
than alternative c). One subordinate chose the most direct alternative, and one subordinate chose d) Other with a direct approach, but including when the directive has to be completed. This suggests a preference for direct communication, but with information about a possible deadline to give the subordinate the opportunity to evaluate the level of importance of the task.

2) You want your subordinate to make a phone call for you to get some information for you. How do you express to your subordinate that you want him/her to do this?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives</th>
<th>Distribution of replies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) “Call and find out if...!”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) “Could you do me a favor and call to find out if...”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) “When you get a chance, would you mind calling to find out...”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Other: “We need information on X. Could you call xxx and research this please?”</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) Your manager wants you to make a phone call for him/her to get some information. Which of the below alternatives of your manager’s communication with you would motivate you most to get the phone call made and the information retrieved?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives</th>
<th>Distribution of replies</th>
<th>Males (11 total)</th>
<th>Females (3 total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) “Call and find out if...!”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) “Could do me a favor and call to find out if...”</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) “When you get a chance, would you mind calling to find out...”</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Other: &quot;Would you please call and find out if...&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Other: &quot;I need for you to make this phone call for me. Please get information on...I'll need this information by date__.”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results indicate that these subordinates have a high need for independency and are not motivated by direct orders. When a directive like this threatens negative face, a higher degree of negative politeness is the best strategy to motivate subordinates best. However, in this particular case, alternative c) did not present a very high level of redressive action. Such a situation will be discussed more specifically for situation 4.

In situation 3, a directive is presented which may be perceived as very threatening to negative face wants. It is threatening on two different levels, partly because the subordinate is being reprimanded for something he or she decided to do in the absence of the manager, and partly because of the negative nature of the directive of not repeating the same mistake. None of the managers chose the direct alternative a), three chose alternative b), and two chose the alternative with the greatest distance and with the reassurance that they realize that the subordinate did what they thought was best. Not surprisingly, none of the subordinates chose alternative a). The majority of the
subordinates chose alternative c) followed by three subordinates choosing alternative b). Two subordinates added their own wording, one circled both b) and c), and one wanted alternative c), but without the phrase “However, the decision was not yours to make”, which may be perceived as too threatening to negative face wants.

3) A subordinate has made a decision he/she was not authorized to make. How do you tell him/her to not do this again?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives</th>
<th>Distribution of replies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) “Don’t ever do that again!”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) “I must ask you to check with me first next time.”</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) “I understand you did what you thought was best. However, the decision was not yours to make. Please come to me next time you find yourself facing decisions like this, and I’ll make the decision.”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) In a particular situation, you made a decision you were not authorized to make. Your manager is telling you not to do this again. Which of the below alternatives of your manager’s communication with you would motivate you most to not make another decision you are not authorized to make?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives</th>
<th>Distribution of replies</th>
<th>Males (11 total)</th>
<th>Females (3 total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) “Don’t ever do that again!”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) “I must ask you to check with me first next time.”</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) “I understand you did what you thought was best. However, the decision was not yours to make. Please come to me next time you find yourself facing decisions like this, and I’ll make the decision.”</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Other: Alternative &quot;C&quot;, but without &quot;However, the decision was not your to make.&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Circled “B” and “C”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results are very similar to the results in situation 2. In this specific situation, subordinates primarily chose the alternative where the manager expressed an understanding of why the subordinate did what he or she did. This indicates that in communicating respectfully and expressing trust that the subordinate did the best he or she could, a manager will be most successful in motivating subordinates.

Situation 4 describes a directive speech act similar to situation 2, and again, subordinates show a preference for the less direct and negative politeness strategy that includes regard for negative face wants by using excuses and by covering up the order of making copies with great distance. In this situation, however, alternative b) follows more closely than in situation 2. The managers answered similar to question 2, with a slight preference to the more direct approach in alternative b) that in alternative c). One subordinate chose the most direct answer a).
4) You need a subordinate to make a large amount of copies. How do you express to your subordinate what you want him/her to do?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives</th>
<th>Distribution of replies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Copy this right away!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) I need these to be copied as soon as possible.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) I know you are really busy right now, and I’m sorry to have to interrupt what you are doing, but I really need these to be copied for a meeting today, and I would really appreciate if you could get the copies to me as soon as possible.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) Your manager needs a large amount of copies. Which of the below alternatives of your manager’s communication with you would motivate you most to get the copies made fast?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives</th>
<th>Distribution of replies</th>
<th>Males (11 total)</th>
<th>Females (3 total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Copy this right away!</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) I need these to be copied as soon as possible.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) I know you are really busy right now, and I’m sorry to have to interrupt what you are doing, but I really need these to be copied for a meeting today, and I would really appreciate if you could get the copies to me as soon as possible.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results show that even though the most indirect politeness strategy is preferred by subordinates, too much redressive action may not be the best approach. This is suggested by the fact that more subordinates chose alternative b) for this situation (compared to situation 2) when faced with a high degree of negative politeness as used in alternative c).

Situation 5 represents assertive speech acts. Managers lean towards alternative a), which has a high level of positive politeness as it includes the word “our” and encourages subordinates’ participation by contributing with ideas. One manager states in his answer d) that he wants to use alternative c), but without the use of the word productivity. An overwhelming majority of subordinates chose alternative a), which shows a desire for inclusion through positive politeness strategies. Only one subordinate chose a different alternative, one with a high level of distance, but also one that includes the words “shows proof of hard work” which is a more direct strategy pointing to the reason for the positive results is hard work. “Hard work” may suggest more effort from subordinates than “good work” as phrased in alternative a) and b).
5) Results show that productivity in your group has gone up lately and in a meeting with the entire group, you are informing your subordinates. You also praise their hard work and note that you want to keep the positive trend going. What do you say?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives</th>
<th>Distribution of replies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) “Our productivity has gone up. Good job everyone! What do you think we can do to keep increasing productivity? Any ideas?”</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) “The latest statistics show that productivity has increased. Keep up the good work. I would like to see productivity increase even more.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) “This group has increased its productivity. This is very positive and shows proof of hard work. I would like to see the group work even harder, and increase productivity even more.”</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Other: I would use &quot;C&quot;, but not mention increasing productivity as something other than mentioning productivity is usually needed to increase productivity.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5) Results show that productivity in your group has gone up lately and in a meeting with the entire group, your manager is informing you of this. He/she also praises your group’s hard work and notes that he/she wants to keep the positive trend going. Which of the below alternatives of your manager’s communication with you would motivate you most to work even harder?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives</th>
<th>Distribution of replies</th>
<th>Males (11 total)</th>
<th>Females (3 total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) “Our productivity has gone up. Good job everyone! What do you think we can do to keep increasing productivity? Any ideas?”</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) “The latest statistics show that productivity has increased. Keep up the good work. I would like to see productivity increase even more.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) “This group has increased its productivity. This is very positive and shows proof of hard work. I would like to see the group work even harder, and increase productivity even more.”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results suggest that utterances expressing inclusion and the wish for input, and that use inclusive words such as ‘our’ and ‘we’, are most successful in motivating subordinates. Subordinates seem to appreciate being asked for ideas and that the manager identifies him or herself as a part of the group.

Just like the assertive in situation 5, the assertive in situation 6 shows an overwhelming preference for the positive politeness strategy of alternative a). One manager wanted to fill the subordinate in on what has happened at work during the absence, and this was also the wish of one subordinate who chose alternative d) Other. Two subordinates wanted a more direct strategy from the manager and chose alternative b).
6) How do you greet a subordinate that has returned to work after some time away?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives</th>
<th>Distribution of replies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) “It’s good to have you back! We’ve missed you! How have you been?”</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) “Welcome back. Are you ready to get to work?”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) “Hello.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Other: Hello, good morning, good afternoon (which ever the case may be). Discuss a little on the trip the subordinate went on (if not personal). Discuss what went on while he/she was absent and what the plan is that day + the near future.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6) You have been away from work for some time. Which of the below alternatives of your manager’s communication with you would motivate you most to start working again? (One person did not answer this question.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives</th>
<th>Distribution of replies</th>
<th>Males (10 total)</th>
<th>Females (3 total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) “It’s good to have you back! We’ve missed you! How have you been?”</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) “Welcome back. Are you ready to get to work?”</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) “Hello.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Other: “It’s good to have you back! We’ve missed you! Let's get together to bring you up to date on what's been happening.”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results indicate that it is important and that it motivates subordinates that their manager expresses that he or she cares and is interested in how the subordinate is doing, and that the subordinate is an important and needed part of the work group.

3.2 Results Interviews

In each of the five interviews with subordinates, an interview guide (Appendix 3) was used to keep the interview on track (see section 1.3.2 above). The questions were not necessarily asked in the same order for each interview. However, when presenting and comparing the results, I will present answers from all five informants and discuss them one question at the time.

In the first part of the interview, the answers in the questionnaire were revisited. When discussing all the different answers with each of the five individuals, there were some words that were consistently brought up as reasons for why they chose specific answers. The key words were respect and respectfully, trust and faith, involvement and input, and reason (as in knowing the reason behind something). Three of the individuals said that they appreciated a more direct communication style from their manager, and two put more emphasis on that they wanted their manager to be nice, gentle, and personable.
However, even if a direct communication style was preferred, all five individuals agreed that ‘barking orders’ was not appreciated. One individual noted that in certain situations, if a manager is under a great deal of pressure, it would be understandable and forgivable if the manager ‘barked orders,’ and it would not affect the specific subordinate’s work motivation. The three individuals who preferred a more direct communication strategy from their manager all stated that too extensive carefulness, i.e. a too high level of negative politeness, would not be motivating. Some of the reasons given were “it shows no back bone and does not inspire respect,” “too wordy,” “too much fluff,” “an administrator never apologizes,” and “maybe with a coworker, but not with a subordinate.” However, even if they stated in the interviews that they preferred a more direct politeness strategy, none of them had in the questionnaire chosen the most direct alternatives as their answers. Interesting to note is that in their questionnaires, they had all chosen not only alternative b), but also alternative c), i.e. the least direct politeness strategy that represents greater distance and indirect communication style. They described as reasons for their choices of alternative c) that the manager expressed understanding of the situation, that the manager included information about the reason it was asked, and that the manager knows this is something the subordinate does not normally do.

The individuals who stated that they preferred a more personable and gentle communication style chose overall the same answers in their questionnaires as the three individuals who said they preferred a direct communication style. Interestingly enough, all five informants described the reasoning behind their choices of answers similarly. Some examples given by the two informants who said they wanted personable and gentle communication were “I know he is my boss, and I will do what he asks me, but I’ll be more motivated if he asks me nicely,” “it’s OK to be formal, but he’ll get better results if he asks nicely.”

In situations 5 and 6, only one person had in one situation chosen a different alternative than a), which was the politeness strategy that at the highest degree worked to include subordinates through positive politeness. The subordinate in question had answered d) Other for situation 6, and exchanged the more private tone used in a) to a more work related tone. The subordinate still chose a highly inclusive approach with a positive politeness strategy. The comments the informants gave choosing a) in situation 5
were e.g. “it would make me feel a part of the team,” “my ideas seem to be valued,” “he is asking for your opinion,” “he showed that he wanted my input,” and “he showed respect for his group.” In situation 6, the comments were “he is showing interest,” “he shows concern,” and “I feel important.”

In the second part of the interviews, motivation in relation to politeness, what was said and how it was said, was discussed in more detail with the informants. When asked about their greatest motivator in their work, the following answers were given by the informants: “Team work and end results,” “Making my own decisions,” “Feeling that I have my manager’s trust,” “Satisfaction of knowing I’m doing a good job,” and “Personal pride in quality and my own accomplishments.” The answers indicate that work motivation is highly related to accomplishment, independence, and that motivation increases a feeling that the manager trusts the capabilities of the subordinates.

Answers to what would motivate the informants the most in how others speak to them to work harder and perform even better in your everyday work were: “To hear that I am appreciated,” “Respect, smiles and compliments,” “Respect in the communication and being treated as an equal,” “Communicating that they appreciate you and treat you humanly,” “Each situation determines what kind of communication would motivate me the most.” Clearly, communication from manager to subordinate makes a difference in the motivation subordinates feel. Appreciation and respect are mentioned more than once. The last quote suggests that this subordinate would like politeness level and communication style to be adjusted to fit unique situations. A manager would consequently have to be able to evaluate individual situations and adapt his or her politeness strategy accordingly.

In the discussions around what factors in how others communicate would lessen motivation, some answers were: “Body language and attitude that show a demeaning attitude,” “Lack of communication,” “Barking orders,” “People talking down to you,” “Rudeness, sarcastic remarks and complaints,” and “Word choice and how things are said affect motivation.” All of the comments regard impoliteness rather than politeness (see section 2.3.2, pages 17-18, critique on Brown and Levinson), as it names impoliteness as a main perpetrator in lessening motivation. Consequently, it must be assumed that the opposite, namely politeness on some level, is necessary to ensure that subordinates’ motivation is not lessened.
When discussing what levels of directness work as the best motivators, more politeness or more direct styles of communication, some of the answers were: “Don’t beat around the bush, just come out and say it,” “As long as there is some communication and response to what I say. It is frustrating not being heard. It wouldn’t hurt to throw in a little politeness,” “I know he is my boss, and I’ll do what I’m asked to do. But if I’m asked more politely and more friendly, I’ll do it with greater motivation,” “Saying ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ is paramount. I feel like I’m being recognized. That doesn’t mean you have to weigh every single word you say,” “Give us more input and respect,” and “Give me the reason behind why you are asking me to do this.” In the comments, a few different aspects can be detected; the subordinates feel that a manager should be direct in his or her communication, but remember to use politeness strategies that ensure subordinates’ motivation, i.e. be friendly and say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’. However, too much negative politeness may not always be the correct strategy. A manager should also communicate with subordinates to make sure they are informed and updated on aspects of their work, ask for subordinates input and ideas, and listen and respond to communication from subordinates to managers. This is considered polite behavior by subordinates.²

When asked directly if the manager’s level of politeness affects their motivation at work, the answers were all stating that it does. Here are some examples: “Yes, most definitely,” “Oh, absolutely,” “Sure it does,” and “Yes.”

² It is worth noting that the Physical Plants Department currently has three Supervisor vacancies and one Custodian vacancy, something that is resulting in a higher work load and consequently more pressure and stress on people within the department. More pressure and higher stress levels on support staff may require a greater need for negative politeness strategies from managers. But the same pressure and stress is also present at manager level, which may lead to less focus on politeness strategies by managers.
4. Summary and Conclusion

The main aim of this essay was to investigate if managers’ linguistic strategies affect the motivation of subordinates. The investigation had two subordinate aims; firstly to identify and investigate how politeness strategies are used by managers when performing assertive and directive speech acts and the effect the politeness strategies have on subordinates’ motivation; secondly to enable a more conscious choice of linguistic strategy by managers and that such a strategy may be used as a tool to improve motivation in subordinates. The investigation was performed in two steps. First, a survey with one questionnaire distributed to managers and another to subordinates was carried out. Second, five randomly chosen subordinates were interviewed to discuss motivation in greater detail.

In the survey, three situations presented assertives (situations 1, 5 and 6) and three situations presented directives (situations 2, 3 and 4). The informants’ replies in situation 1 called for a positive politeness strategy as it presented a situation where a subordinate was being threatened with being fired. The results show that when subjecting a subordinate to a situation with such a high degree of threat, a manager will be most successful if choosing an on record, positive politeness strategy with some redressive action. Situations 5 and 6 presented situations where subordinates received praise (situation 5) and where subordinates were being welcomed back to work. Both situations showed overwhelming evidence that subordinates’ motivation is best affected if managers choose positive politeness strategies that include subordinates in the work group and invite them to participate actively in improving productivity.

In all three situations where directives were given, subordinates stated that a negative politeness strategy would motivate them the most to get their work done. This suggests that subordinates in general have a high level of independency and are not motivated as much if a manager chooses a more direct, on record and bold politeness strategy without redressive action. In situation 4, however, more subordinates chose alternative b) than in situation 2 and 3, which suggests that a too high level of negative politeness is less desirable. Still, negative politeness strategies are preferred to positive politeness strategies when directive speech acts are used.

In the situations where a greater threat is present, subordinates tend to desire a higher degree of negative politeness than managers are providing. In other words,
subordinates are better motivated in situations that are perceived as threatening to negative face wants if managers choose politeness strategies that are less direct and observes a greater distance. In more positive situations, managers seem to use and subordinates seem to want the same politeness strategies, especially in situation 6. As situation 5 suggests, however, subordinates tend to want more participation in developing ideas than managers are providing. One manager is wary of using the word productivity since it may be counter productive, whereas subordinates seem to be more focused on being acknowledged as contributing members of the department and work group.

The results from the interviews emphasize the importance of communication and that managers’ politeness strategies do affect motivation in subordinates. They also underline results from the questionnaires, namely that feeling respected, involved, and trusted is imperative to subordinates’ motivation. Additionally, the interviews revealed that even if some informants said that they preferred direct communication and others said they wanted more personable communication with gentleness and more politeness, all interviewed informants turned out to have answered very similarly in the questionnaires.

In this study, informants were placed before six different situations where speech acts were performed with various levels of positive politeness, negative politeness, and direct communication without any redressive action. Even if the different situations showed a primary preference for certain alternatives, the combined results clearly show that different situations and different individuals need different politeness strategies to create the highest level of motivation in subordinates. Thus it becomes imperative for a manager to truly know the individuals who are part of his or her team. If managers know their subordinates and what motivates them best in different situations, they can extract better results from the group as a whole through using linguistic strategy as a tool. To accomplish such a conscious use of language as a tool, management training, much like the training described by Morand for cross-cultural communication training for managers (see 2.3.2, pages 18-19), with special attention to individual differences in how linguistic strategies motivate or fail to do so, may be necessary. High academic education, years of management experience, or years of experience in the industry in question do not alone guarantee the ability to adapt and adjust to individual needs and motivation factors in subordinates.
Appendix 1

Questionnaire - Managers

Thank you for taking part of this brief survey that deals with communication between managers and subordinates. The questions below describe situations you may have dealt with as a manager in this organization. Please read through the descriptions of the different situations and choose the answer for each situation that most resemble your actual style of communicating. If you feel that none of the three alternatives reflect your communication style, choose alternative d) and word your own answer.

It is important for the study that your answer reflects how you actually communicate, and not how you think you should communicate.

The questionnaire is anonymous. I do ask that you fill out some basic information to help with the analysis of the collected results.

Work title:__________________________________________________________

Male / Female_______ How long have you worked for the organization?__________

1) A subordinate’s work is not up to standard. In fact he/she is performing very poorly, and this needs to be addressed. Your supervisor is letting you know that unless your subordinate’s work improves, he/she will be fired. What do you say to bring this up with him/her?

   a) “Your performance is not good enough. Unless something changes, I’m going to have to let you go.”
   b) “I’m afraid we need to take a look at how you have been performing at work lately. We are going to have to make sure that your performance improves, otherwise I risk having to let you go.”
   c) “I’m sorry to have to be the one to bring this up. I know you have been really pressured lately, and I fully understand that it affects your work. But I’m being directed to ask you to perform better at work, as I will otherwise be forced by management to let you go.”
   d) Other:__________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
2) You want your subordinate to make a phone call for you to get some information for you. How do express to your subordinate that you want him/her to do this?
   a) “Call and find out if ...!”
   b) “Could do me a favor and call to find out if…”
   c) “When you get a chance, would you mind calling to find out...”
   d) Other: ________________________________________________________________
       ______________________________________________________________________
       ______________________________________________________________________
       ______________________________________________________________________
       ______________________________________________________________________
       ______________________________________________________________________

3) A subordinate has made a decision he/she was not authorized to make. How do you tell him/her to not do this again?
   a) “Don’t ever do that again!”
   b) “I must ask you to check with me first next time.”
   c) “I understand you did what you thought was best. However, the decision was not yours to make. Please come to me next time you find yourself facing decisions like this, and I’ll make the decision.”
   d) Other: ________________________________________________________________
       ______________________________________________________________________
       ______________________________________________________________________
       ______________________________________________________________________
       ______________________________________________________________________
       ______________________________________________________________________
4) You need a subordinate to make a large amount of copies. How do you express to your subordinate what you want him/her to do?
   
a) Copy this right away!

b) I need these to be copied as soon as possible.

c) I know you are really busy right now, and I’m sorry to have to interrupt what you are doing, but I really need these to be copied for a meeting today, and I would really appreciate if you could get the copies to me as soon as possible.

d) Other: ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________

5) Results show that productivity in your group has gone up lately and in a meeting with the entire group, you are informing your subordinates. You also praise their hard work and note that you want to keep the positive trend going. What do you say?

   a) “Our productivity has gone up. Good job everyone! What do you think we can do to keep increasing productivity? Any ideas?”

   b) “The latest statistics show that productivity has increased. Keep up the good work. I would like to see productivity increase even more.”

   c) “This group has increased its productivity. This is very positive and shows proof of hard work. I would like to see the group work even harder, and increase productivity even more.”

   d) Other: ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________
6) How do you greet a subordinate that has returned to work after some time away?
   a) “It’s good to have you back! We’ve missed you! How have you been?”
   b) “Welcome back. Are you ready to get to work?”
   c) “Hello.”
   d) Other: ____________________________________________
       ____________________________________________
       ____________________________________________
       ____________________________________________
       ____________________________________________
       ____________________________________________
       ____________________________________________
Appendix 2

Questionnaire - subordinates

Thank you for taking part of this brief survey that deals with communication between managers and subordinates.

The questions in the first section below describe six situations you may or may not have encountered with your manager. Please read through the descriptions of the different situations and choose the answer that you would prefer your manager to use when talking with you.

If you feel that none of the three alternatives reflect the communication style you would wish your manager to have in his/her communication with you, choose alternative d) and word your own answer.

The questionnaire is anonymous. I do ask that you fill out some basic information to help with the analysis of the collected results.

Work title:________________________________________________________

Male / Female______ How long have you worked for the organization?__________

1) Your work has not been up to standard lately. Your manager is letting you know that unless your work improves, you will be fired. Which of the below alternatives of your manager’s communication with you would motivate you most to improve your efforts?

a) “Your performance is not good enough. Unless something changes, I’m going to have to let you go.”

b) “I’m afraid we need to take a look at how you have been performing at work lately. We are going to have to make sure that your performance improves, otherwise I risk having to let you go.”

c) “I’m sorry to have to be the one to bring this up. I know you have been really pressured lately, and I fully understand that it affects your work. But I’m being directed to ask you to perform better at work, as I will otherwise be forced by management to let you go.”

d) Other:__________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
2) Your manager wants you to make a phone call for him/her to get some information. Which of the below alternatives of your manager’s communication with you would motivate you most to get the phone call made and the information retrieved?
   a) “Call and find out if ...!”
   b) “Could do me a favor and call to find out if…”
   c) “When you get a chance, would you mind calling to find out...”
   d) Other: ______________________________________________________
                   ______________________________________________________
                   ______________________________________________________
                   ______________________________________________________

3) In a particular situation, you made a decision you were not authorized to make. Your manager is telling you not to do this again. Which of the below alternatives of your manager’s communication with you would motivate you most to not make another decision you are not authorized to make?
   a) “Don’t ever do that again!”
   b) “I must ask you to check with me first next time.”
   c) “I understand you did what you thought was best. However, the decision was not yours to make. Please come to me next time you find yourself facing decisions like this, and I’ll make the decision.”
   d) Other: ______________________________________________________
4) Your manager needs a large amount of copies. Which of the below alternatives of your manager’s communication with you would motivate you most to get the copies made fast?

a) Copy this right away!

b) I need these to be copied as soon as possible.

c) I know you are really busy right now, and I’m sorry to have to interrupt what you are doing, but I really need these to be copied for a meeting today, and I would really appreciate if you could get the copies to me as soon as possible.

d) Other: ____________________________________________

_______________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________

5) Results show that productivity in your group has gone up lately and in a meeting with the entire group, your manager is informing you of this. He/she also praises your group’s hard work and notes that he/she wants to keep the positive trend going. Which of the below alternatives of your manager’s communication with you would motivate you most to work even harder?

a) “Our productivity has gone up. Good job everyone! What do you think we can do to keep increasing productivity? Any ideas?”

b) “The latest statistics show that productivity has increased. Keep up the good work. I would like to see productivity increase even more.”

c) “This group has increased its productivity. This is very positive and shows proof of hard work. I would like to see the group work even harder, and increase productivity even more.”

d) Other: ____________________________________________

_______________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________
6) You have been away from work for some time. Which of the below alternatives of your manager’s communication with you would **motivate you most** to start working again?

   a) “It’s good to have you back! We’ve missed you! How have you been?”
   
   b) “Welcome back. Are you ready to get to work?”
   
   c) “Hello.”
   
   d) Other:

In the second step of my study, I will be interviewing 3 – 5 people regarding their view on motivation. The discussions and answers brought up during these interviews will also be anonymous. Only the combined results will be shared with management.

Would you be interested in participating in an interview?

If so, please indicate here where/when I can contact you to set up an interview at your convenience.
Appendix 3

Interview Guide

• First, let us go over your answers in the questionnaire one at the time and discuss why you answered the way you did.
  o (For each of the six questions) Could you expand a bit on your thoughts concerning question 1 etc…
  o Did any other answers appeal to you at all. Why/why not?

• What is presently the greatest motivator in your work?

• What would motivate you the most in how others speak to you to work harder and perform even better in your everyday work?

• What would you say are some factors in how others speak to you that would lessen your motivation in your everyday work?

• What is the most important thing your manager could do in terms of how he/she speaks to you to help improve your motivation at work? More politeness, less politeness (is he/she being too indirect or too direct – would you like a more direct/less direct communication style)?

• Is there anything else you feel is important to add that regards motivation at work?

• Would you say that your boss’s level of politeness affects your motivation at work?
Appendix 4

Organizational Chart Administrative Services

SHASTA-TEHAMA-TRINITY JOINT COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT
Administrative Services
October, 2007

[Diagram of organizational chart with key positions and departments]
Appendix 5

Organizational Chart Physical Plant Department

Physical Plant Division Organizational Chart '07-'08

- Physical Plant
  - Interim Director
  - Sr. Staff Secretary 8 Hr./12 Mo.
  - Staff Secretary 8 Hr./12 Mo.

- Maintenance Dept.
  - VACANT
    - Carpenter 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Electrical Foreperson 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - HVAC Foreperson 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Painter 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Plumber 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Plant Mechanic/Technician 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Utility 8 Hr./12 Mo.

- Grounds Dept.
  - VACANT
    - Carpenter 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Electrical Foreperson 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - HVAC Technician 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Painter 8 Hr./6 Mo.
    - Plumber 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Plant Mechanic/Technician 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Utility 4/8 Hr./10/12 Mo.
    - Groundskeeper 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Groundskeeper 8 Hr./11 Mo.
    - Groundskeeper 8 Hr./11 Mo.
    - Groundskeeper / Utility 16/24 Hr./6/12 Mo.

- Custodial Dept.
  - Supervisor
    - Custodian 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Custodian 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Custodian 9 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Custodian 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Custodian 16 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Custodian 5 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Custodian 5 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Custodian 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Custodian 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Custodian 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Custodian VACANT 8 Hr./12 Mo.

- Transportation Dept.
  - Supervisor
    - Custodian 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Custodian 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Custodian 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Custodian 8 Hr./12 Mo.
    - Custodian 8 Hr./12 Mo.

- Printing Services
  - VACANT
    - Driver/Red Bluff 4 Hr./9.5 Mo.
    - Driver/Red Bluff 4 Hr./10 Mo.
    - Div. Veh. Maintenance 4 Hr./9.5 Mo./10 Mo.
    - Div. Veh. Maintenance 8 Hr./10 Mo.

- Warehousing
  - VACANT
    - Alien Print Svc's Tech. 39.5 Hr./12 Mo.

Support Services Departments
- Director
- Supervisors
- Forepersons
- Lead person
- Supplier Staff
- Support Staff Total
Bibliography


