THESIS

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Computer-Mediated Discourse:
Applying and Revising Brown and Levinson's
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MITIGATING DISAGREEMENTS IN SECOND-LANGUAGE
COMPUTER-MEDIATED DISCOURSE:
APPLYING AND REVISING BROWN AND LEVINSON'S THEORIES OF FACE

By

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ABSTRACT

MITIGATING DISAGREEMENTS IN SECOND-LANGUAGE
COMPUTER-MEDIATED DISCOURSE:
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Tehsuan Liou

In this dissertation I examine situated language use by English as a Second Language (ESL) students in class discussions through electronic mail (e-mail). There were three purposes in this study: (1) to understand from an ethnographic standpoint how linguistic usages are linked with social relationships in an emerging speech event, (2) to examine the politeness strategies used by ESL students to mitigate their disagreements in e-mail discussion, and (3) to evaluate the applicability of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness to these e-mail data.

The e-mail discussions and interviews of fifteen ESL students from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds were collected and analyzed for the ways politeness strategies were employed to mitigate disagreements. Definitions of politeness strategies were drawn from Brown and Levinson's influential theories regarding "negative face" and "positive face."

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The participants' e-mail discourse was characterized by conversational strategies; there was an abundance of data on disagreement and associated ways of mitigating the disagreement. Of special interest were mitigation strategies which arose from the character of the event. For instance, the multiparty format and pre-determined turn-taking system in e-mail allowed the participants to manipulate both participant frameworks and participation frameworks to provide mitigation of disagreement.

Brown and Levinson's concept of "face" as dichotomous--either "positive" or "negative"--caused problems in interpreting many of the politeness acts in the data. I argue that, instead of a dichotomy, there is a continuum between positive and negative face and the associated politeness strategies.

This study provides unique data on an important speech event, electronic mail, which has emerged with great rapidity in recent years as the potential of computer-mediated communication has been recognized. The analysis documents politeness strategies of a particularly important nature: those used to mitigate disagreement. Such discourse strategies are essential to successful use of a second language. Finally, this study suggests the necessity for significant modification of Brown and Levinson's influential theories of politeness and face.

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CHAPTER ONE

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF AN EMERGING SPEECH EVENT

1.1 Introduction

This study investigates certain crucial aspects of
politeness in a speech event of very recent invention, class
discussions through electronic mail (e-mail). There are
three purposes in this study: (1) to understand from an
ethnographic standpoint how linguistic usages are linked
with social relationships in an emerging speech event, (2)
to examine the politeness strategies used by English as a
Second Language students to mitigate their disagreements in
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Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness to these
e-mail data.

Brown and Levinson point out that patterns of message
construction are "part of the very stuff that social
relationships are made of" (1987:55). The study of language
usage in e-mail, a particular form of computer-mediated
communication (Kiesler et al. 1984), can provide us with a
crucial direction leading to the understanding of how the
principles of social relationships are realized in a new
form of language. Computer-mediated communication is an
electronic world in which participants lack the full range

of paralinguistic cues and have to develop new approaches to serve the same purposes. Computer-mediated communication has with great rapidity become an inseparable part of both intranational and international communication. Naturally, there is a need for analysis of this important new form of language and understanding of its relationships to previously-existing forms of written and oral language.

1.2 Computer-Mediated Discourse as Emerging Speech Events

In pre-literate societies, human linguistic interaction is solely limited to communication based on physical contact. The communication of any individual with others is constrained to those who are visually and/or aurally reachable. The invention and use of writing systems liberates people from the limitations of aural contact when communicating. New language events, such as letter writing/reading, then emerge as the result of this innovative technology.

In modern industrial societies a complex array of language events serve as resources for the writer. However, the asynchronous nature of written language in communication minimizes the possibilities of immediate and efficient feedback, as can be seen in letters and books. When used for communication demanding immediacy, written language turns out to be quite inefficient and insufficient. Oral exchanges still remain as the most practical and popular way of conducting human linguistic interaction in every literate

society, in part because oral language allows spontaneous creation and immediate feedback from the other parties involved. For example, personal and business letter-writing have given way to long-distance telephone calls as telephone service has become affordable and convenient.

While the telephone solves the problem of overcoming distance and provides immediate feedback capabilities, it ties the people communicating with one another to the present time and space. The most recent invention of e-mail and networked communication systems not only overcomes distance but also provides flexibility of timing. E-mail also is particularly efficient and effective for new language events in which indefinite numbers of participants communicate, emancipated from previous physical constraints. It is no wonder that computer-mediated communication has rapidly grown in popularity, especially among people in the scholarly and business communities. As the result of the availability and popularity of computer-mediated communication, written interactions among people have dramatically increased since this technology came to life. New language varieties, such as Interactive Written Discourse (IWD) (Ferrara et al. 1991), are being addressed, and new language events are emerging. We begin to see class-based electronic conferences, discussions via e-mail in an academic setting, and even conversations and chats via Internet Relay Chat involving numerous students, professors, language teachers, businessmen, professionals, computer

programmers, and others, known or unknown to one another. As various types of delayed or simultaneous linguistic exchanges via computers among users are emerging, the need to study these new speech events has also begun to emerge.

1.3 Effects of Communication Media on Linguistic Behaviors

My interest in studying language usage in computer-mediated communication is based on speculation about the possible influences of the communication medium on linguistic choices in a communicational interchange. Will computers as the new communication medium affect the linguistic selections of the users in terms of the strategies used for establishing and maintaining social relationships? How can one express polite behavior in an environment where meaning transmission depends primarily on texts? Since e-mail communication, for example, is mostly asynchronous and exclusively text-based, we might assume that the ways to achieve politeness in a language activity will be different from those in face-to-face communication because none or a minimum of prosody, paralinguistic vocalizations, and kinesics are available in e-mail. How the specific nature of e-mail as a medium of communication affects the ways people establish and maintain relationships with others is just beginning to be studied.

The understanding of the influences of this communication medium on language use is a question worthy of scholarly investigation.

There are special communication problems for second language speakers as they try to apply their previous knowledge and experiences concerning an intended language act in their native language to a target language situation. Lörscher and Schulze (1988) demonstrate that little attention to politeness is paid in foreign language classrooms, which is often dominated by discourse that primarily focuses on transmission of information. The focus on transactional discourse (Brown and Yule 1983; Lakoff 1989) in second or foreign language classroom communication offers little help to students in terms of politeness when they attempt to communicate with the native speakers of the target languages. Studies of oral politeness strategies across cultures and languages, such as apologies (Cohen and Olshtain 1981, 1985; Olshtain and Cohen 1983; Garcia 1989a), and responding to compliments (Chen 1993), show the deviation or inadequacy of speech acts of second language learners. This lack of sociocultural rules of appropriateness of the target language, combined with the demands of newly-emerging language events in computer-mediated communication, may cause an even greater problem for second language speakers. These issues not only attract scholarly interest but are also very important to the study of pedagogical aspects of language use. For second language speakers to be able to really achieve "communicative competence" (Hymes 1964), learning how to achieve sociocultural as well as linguistic appropriateness

in a situation in which situated language use is carried out through computers has become compelling.

1.3.1 Modes of Computer-Mediated Communication

Computer-mediated communication actually includes various modes, such as *chat, computer messages, electronic mail, computer conferencing, forums, and bulletin boards*. These modes have different degrees of potential for immediate interaction. *Chat* is a multi-user communication facility that transmits one's typing directly to the monitor of another person or group of people. Because of its capability of fast transmission of messages among multiple users who log on to the system simultaneously, *chat*, as suggested by its name, is often used for casual talks. Murray gives clear explanation to the other modes. She defines *computer messages* as the interchanges of "one-line messages between two or more participants simultaneously logged on to computer terminals" (Murray 1991:18). The length of a *computer message* is limited to two lines of text. *Electronic mail* refers to "extended text that is sent and received via the computer" (Murray 1991:26). E-mail messages are stored in each user's file for later access, so e-mail requires no simultaneous log-on. *Computer conferencing* refers to "a facility in which more than two people can communicate with E-messages, E-mail and documents, usually for a specific purpose" (Murray 1991:28). Users of *computer conferencing* are usually required to log

on to the facility simultaneously. *Forums* refer to "E-mail-type files (usually on one technical topic) with a wide distribution list to which a recipient can append another piece of information" (Murray 1991:28). They are very similar to *computer conferencing*, except users are not required to log on simultaneously. *Bulletin boards* are "similar to fora except that the topics under discussion are often more general and the organization less structured" (Murray 1991:28).

Some communication modes, such as *chat, computer conferencing* and *computer messages*, allow people to interact in real time, while others are more static in terms of the response time. The present study will focus on the situated uses of language in e-mail messages by English as a Second Language (ESL) students in an academic discussion setting. Although e-mail may be comparatively more static in nature than such modes of computer communication as *chats*, and therefore less like oral conversation than they are, politeness was a significant factor influencing the construction of the participants' e-mail discourse.

1.3.2 Communication Modalities and Linguistic Changes

During the late 1970s and early 1980s the first studies concerning the effects on language and social behavior changes brought about by the use of different human communication modalities were conducted. Face-to-face talk was compared to telephone communication (Reid 1977), and to

computer conferencing (Hiltz and Turoff 1978; Hiltz et al. 1980; Hiltz 1984). These studies did find significant differences in participants' linguistic, attitudinal, and social behavior. For example, computer conferencing is believed to be able to nourish the use of a more organized and homogeneous conversational style (Hiltz and Turoff 1978). It also produces a great number of arguments and "flaming," a language use with a lot of profanity and insults, possibly in part due to the reduction or elimination of the influence of the concern for face (Hiltz and Turoff 1978; Hiltz et al. 1980; Hiltz 1984). In her studies of the use of the computer as a linguistic medium, Baron predicts the possibility of linguistic and social change driven by technology as well as cross-modal linguistic influences. She claims that "norms characteristic of computer mediated communication may change generally accepted standards for spoken or traditional written language" (Baron 1984:123). Therefore, the study of a particular linguistic modality "becomes important not only in its own right, but with regard to the influence it can have on the language more generally" (Baron 1984:123).

1.3.3 Interpersonal Relationships in Computer-Mediated Communication

Despite the significance of linguistic change in computer-mediated communication, research on this linguistic interaction has received little attention. As Baron points

out, "most analyses of linguistic interaction are based on the paradigm of two people speaking with one another face-to-face" (1984:120). Especially, very little research has been done on the written interaction, either in computer-mediated communication in general or e-mail in particular, in terms of how politeness phenomena may apply in a non-face-to-face environment where participants actively interact with one another through written texts. Part of the reason for the lack of research on politeness phenomena in computer-mediated communication may be due to the basic assumption that computer-mediated communication may, as described by Rice and Love, "transmit less of natural richness and interaction of interpersonal communication than face-to-face interaction"(1987:87). Therefore, fewer "natural" (i.e., oral-like) communication behaviors are exhibited. The typical conclusion from studies comparing various media with face-to-face interaction (Fowler and Wackerbarth 1980; Hiltz and Turoff 1978) is that as available channels decrease from face-to-face to computer conference interaction, "the media are seen to be satisfactory for more simple communication tasks, such as information exchange, but less satisfactory for more complex, more interpersonally involving communication tasks, such as getting to know someone or managing conflict" (Hiemstra 1982:880).

However, the view of computer-mediated communication lacking appropriate capability for interpersonal

relationships has been challenged by other researchers who suggest that computer-mediated communication is not necessarily completely unemotional (Chesebro 1985; Hiemstra 1982; Meyers 1985; Philips 1982; Reid 1993). For example, Hiemstra's study (1982) shows that computer-mediated communication shares much of the same "face-saving" content with face-to-face communication although there is a shift in politeness strategies. Reid (1993) also asserts that Internet Relay Chat, a multi-user synchronous communication facility that transmits one's typing directly to the monitor of another person or group of people, has significant potential for social interaction.

The present study will contribute to this debate by examining politeness strategies in computer-mediated communication as compared with those used in oral language (Brown and Levinson 1987).

1.4 Previous Research on Politeness in Written Interaction and Computer-Mediated Communication

We know that language users attempt to establish and maintain harmony in social relationships in face-to-face synchronous situations. This study assumes that they will do the same in an e-mail environment in which full ranges of paralinguistic and extralinguistic cues as well as synchronous interactions are not readily available. To meet the need for harmonious social relationships, the language users will have to either borrow linguistic strategies used

in other communication modes, such as face-to-face conversations, or design their own innovative strategies in their e-mail texts. That is, polite behaviors are expected to be displayed in the interactions among e-mail users in a way that shows both similarity and individuality of this unique communication medium in relation to the politeness strategies found in other communication modes.

As mentioned above, research on linguistic interaction in written language concerning politeness phenomena has been very rare. Most of the studies on politeness have concerned oral conversations. Myers (1989) points out that a decade after the publication of Brown and Levinson's classic essay on the pragmatics of politeness (1978), none of the many studies on the topic of politeness mentioned in the introduction of the new edition of their book (Brown and Levinson 1987) deals with written texts. However, the few researchers who studied linguistic interaction in written language did find politeness phenomena in their studies. Analyzing scientific articles, Myers (1989) argues that the framework of Brown and Levinson's politeness (1978) can be extended to written texts. For instance, the use of "we" as a positive politeness strategy to indicate the discipline as a whole in scientific articles is found to achieve solidarity while personal attribution can be used as a hedge on one's claims (Myers 1989). Hagge and Kostelnick's (1989) study of professional writing shows negative politeness strategies were used by auditors to meet the complex demands

of potentially threatening interactional situations. Studying 51 peer-review texts written in an academic setting, Johnson finds that "writers use complimenting discourse strategies to establish and maintain rapport and to mitigate both global and specific face-threatening acts" (1992:51). Hiemstra's study (1982) of politeness strategies in teleconferencing indicates that concern for face, "the kernel element in folk notions of politeness" (Brown and Levinson 1987:62), was strongly evident in the language of conference although there was a shift to negative politeness and "bold on record" in computer-mediated communication.

These studies give either quantitative or qualitative data supporting Brown and Levinson's claim that politeness is universal. Whether Brown and Levinson's (1987) "face" concept is satisfactory for the explanation of the polite behaviors found in this study is one of the main focuses of the study.

1.5 Politeness and Interaction Friction

Kasper (1990) argues that people need to maintain relationships and avoid conflicts. People attempt to maintain "face" in nearly all interactions (Wilson, Kim, and Meischke 1992). Lakoff (1973), Brown and Levinson (1987), and Leech (1983) suggest that the maintenance of interpersonal relationships and harmony can be achieved by the use of rule-governed and rational politeness strategies.

"Politeness" has been conceptualized as strategic avoidance of social interaction friction (Brown and Levinson 1987; Lakoff 1973; Leech 1983). For example, Lakoff sees politeness as something "developed in societies in order to reduce friction in personal interaction" (1975:64). Brown and Levinson assert that "politeness, like formal diplomatic protocol, presupposes that potential for aggression as it seeks to disarm it, and makes possible communication between potentially aggressive parties" (1987:1). Leech also points out that politeness is required to "mitigate the intrinsic discourtesy"(1983:105) of some acts as ordering, asking, demanding, and begging, etc.

1.6 Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory

1.6.1 The Concepts of Politeness and Face

A crucial concept in the study of politeness is "face." The most influential attempt to develop this concept appears in the work of Brown and Levinson (1987). They claim that the concept of face is derived from Goffman's (1967) "facework" - tactics designed to avoid embarrassment or humiliation that may be caused by communicative acts.

Goffman defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes" (1967:5). He claims that people have "self-respect" and "just as the member of any group is expected to

have self-respect, so also he is expected to sustain a standard of considerateness: he is expected to go to certain lengths to save the feelings and the face of others present..." (Goffman 1967:10). As a result of this considerateness, he further claims, "the person tends to conduct himself during an encounter so as to maintain both his own face and the face of other participants" (Goffman 1967:11).

Building on a Model Person (MP) who is assumed to possess rationality and face, Brown and Levinson (1987) construct a pan-cultural politeness theory that is claimed to derive from Goffman's (1967) concept of "face" and from the English folk term. They assume that all competent adult members of a society have "face," the public self-image one wants to claim for himself, and are mutually aware of others' similar face wants. This public self-image has two related aspects of "face" that are desired by every competent adult: negative face and positive face.

> (a) negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction - i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition

> (b) positive face: the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants (Brown and Levinson 1987:61)

Brown and Levinson (1987) assert that face requires constant attention in interaction because it is "something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost,

maintained, or enhanced" (1987:61). Since face is vulnerable and easily subject to loss and damage and everyone has mutual knowledge of each other's face wants, it is in everyone's best interest to cooperate in order to mutually maintain each other's faces. For instance, if one's face is threatened, one will be expected to defend one's own face and this defense will in turn threaten the face of others. In other words, every member of a society understands the desirability and vulnerability of face and wants to attend to and maintain others' face wants in order to maintain his or her own.

Furthermore, every competent adult human being of a society is assumed to be a rational agent, who is capable of applying a specific mode of reasoning, "which guarantees inferences from ends or goals to means that will satisfy those ends"(1987:64). Hence, linguistic or non-linguistic devices will normally be warranted in a communicative interaction where there is a face want needed to be taken care of. Basically "face" is conceptualized as basic human wants, which are known to every other member and are satisfied by others' rational acts. In short, the two aspects of face are characterized as (1) negative face: a person's want of actions being unimpeded by others and (2) positive face: a person's want of being desirable to at least some others.

1.6.2 Face-threatening Act (FTA)

Brown and Levinson (1987) claim that there are certain kinds of communicative acts that intrinsically threaten face, "namely those acts that by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker"(1987:65). Almost all acts are seen as "face-threatening acts" (FTAs) that may either threaten the positive or negative face wants of the addressees or speakers. Some apparently innocuous communicative acts are viewed as face-threatening. For instance, offers, promises, compliments, and expressions of admiration are seen as acts that threaten the addressee's (H's) negative-face want while criticism, disagreements, insults, and challenges threaten the positive-face want of H. Expressions of thanks, acceptance of H's thanks or apologies are seen as acts that threaten the negative face of speaker while apologies, or acceptance of a compliment may damage S's positive face.

Brown and Levinson assume that there are three sociological variables that affect the assessment of the seriousness of an FTA in many and perhaps all cultures: the social distance (D) of speaker and addressee, the relative power (P) of speaker and addressee, and the absolute ranking (R) of impositions in the particular culture. The actors in a society have mutual knowledge of the assumed values of these variables. Actor will draw upon mutual understanding of the sociological variables to assess the seriousness of an FTA. In general, the face threat of a communicative act

becomes greater in situations where (1) there is greater social distance between a speaker and an addressee, (2) greater power or status of the addressee relative to the speaker, and (3) greater imposition posed. These three variables are context-dependent and have to be allowed for contextual reclassification to adjust the assignments in certain circumstance (1987:78). The weightiness of an FTA can be calculated by summing up these three variables regardless of whether it is the speaker's or addressee's face that is threatened.

1.6.3 Strategies for Doing FTAs

Because of the vulnerability of face, "any rational agent will seek to avoid these face-threatening acts, or will employ certain strategies to minimize the threat"(Brown and Levinson 1987:68). In doing an act, a person will have to consider the weightings of three wants:

> (a) the want to communicate the content of FTA x,
> (b) the want to be efficient or urgent, and (c)
> the want to maintain H's face to any degree.
> Unless (b) is greater than (c), S will want to
> minimize the threat of his FTA (1987:68).

There are several possible strategies for doing FTAs (see Figure 1). There are five sets of strategies for doing FTAs, whose seriousness determines the choice of strategies. The uses of higher-numbered strategies will generally be associated with FTAs that are more serious in nature. Brown and Levinson further assert that the assumptions described above are mutually known to all MPs. MPs "will not choose a

Circumstances determining
choice of strategy:
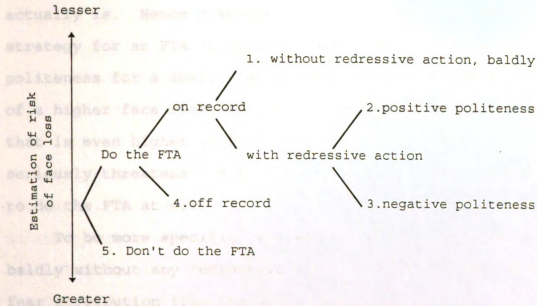
Figure 1: Possible strategies for doing FTAs
            (Brown and Levinson 1987:60)

strategy less risky than necessary, as this may be seen as an indication that the FTA is more threatening than it actually is" (Brown and Levinson 1987:60). In other words, people will not use a mitigation appropriate for a higher-numbered strategy for an FTA of lesser face risk so that the FTA will not be misunderstood as more threatening than it actually is. Hence a speaker may use a bald on-record strategy for an FTA of minimum face risk, a positive politeness for a small FTA, a negative politeness for an FTA of a higher face risk, and an off-record strategy for one that is even higher in face risk. Finally, if an act seriously threatens the face of H, a speaker may decide not to do the FTA at all.

To be more specific, a speaker can choose to do an FTA baldly without any redressive action if the speaker does not fear retribution from the addressee when doing an FTA. For example, a speaker who wants someone to close the window may simply give that addressee a directive: "Close the window!".

Although bald on record leads to communicative efficiency, politeness is assumed to be the major source of deviation from such rational efficiency (Brown and Levinson 1987). They point out that bald on record strategies are in conformity with Grice's Maxims (Grice 1975). Grice has noticed that conversation is based on assumptions, or maxims, about the willingness of cooperation and rationality of others in conversation. These Maxims are conversational

principles serving for guidelines for achieving maximally
efficient communication. They can be outlined as follow:

Maxim of Quality: Be non-spurious (speak the
truth, be sincere).

Maxims of Quantity: (a) Don't say less than is
required.

(b) Don't say more than is
required.

Maxim of Relevance: Be relevant.

Maxim of Manner: Be perspicuous; avoid ambiguity
and obscurity.

These Maxims together constitute the "co-operative
principle," which underlines every conversational exchange.
Interactants will depend on the maxims to convey and infer
each other's communicative intents. In daily conversation,
interactants routinely violate the maxims and yet are able
to communicate successfully. When a violation of a specific
maxim occurs, their assumption of others' co-operative
intents leads them to search for meaning that is beyond what
is said and hence extra meaning can be derived from that
violation. The attention to the facework by the
interactants is believed to be the major source of the
violation of Grice's Maxims (Brown and Levinson 1987).
People will often sacrifice communication efficiency in
order to maintain each other's "face."

To be polite, a speaker may want to employ extra
efforts for any communicative acts that threaten H's face.

He can select to do an FTA with redressive actions, which
attend to the two aspects of face wants of the addressee.
Redressive action, by Brown and Levinson, means the action
that:

> attempts to counteract the potential face damage
> of the FTA by doing it in such a way, or with such
> modifications or additions, that indicate clearly
> that no such face threat is intended or desired,
> and that S in general recognizes H's face wants
> and himself wants them to be achieved." (1987:69-
> 70).

There are two forms of redressive actions: those stress
positive or negative face wants. Brown and Levinson define
that "positive politeness is oriented toward the positive
face of H, the positive self-image that he claims for
himself," and "negative politeness, on the other hand, is
oriented mainly toward partially satisfying (redressing) H's
negative face, his basic want to maintain claims of
territory and self-determination" (1987:70). In other
words, positive politeness is the redressive action that
satisfies H's want of his want being "ratified, understood,
approved of, liked or admired" (1987:62) and negative
politeness is one that satisfies H's want of his freedom of
action being unimpeded. Negative politeness is, as Brown
and Levinson point out:

> essentially avoidance-based, and realizations of
> negative-politeness strategies consist in
> assurances that the speaker recognizes and
> respects the addressee's negative-face wants and
> will not ... interfere with the addressee's
> freedom of action (1987:70).

The linguistic or non-linguistic strategies constructed to satisfy H's positive face want are therefore termed as positive politeness strategies and those for H's negative face want negative politeness strategies. A speaker may use positive politeness strategies that display familiarity, attentiveness, or affiliation to satisfy the positive-face wants of H in order to either soften an FTA or to simply show friendliness and warmth to H. A speaker may also choose to use negative politeness strategies that display respect, distance, self-effacement, formality and restraint to satisfy the negative-face wants of H in order to reduce the illocutionary force of an FTA. Therefore, a speaker who wants the window closed may choose to satisfy H's positive-face want by saying: "Hey buddy, shut the window for me, will ya?" or turn to H's negative-face want by saying: "Will it be possible to trouble you to close the window for me? Thank you!"

A speaker can further go "off record" when doing an FTA of very high face risk. Doing an FTA off record is to do it in such a way that more than one single unambiguous intention can be attributed to the act so that the actor of that act can't be held responsible to one particular intent. For example, a speaker who wants the addressee sitting beside the window to close it may choose to give the addressee a hint rather than an on-record request in order not to be seen too imposing. Therefore, utterance like "It's kind of chilly here, isn't it?" will serve the goal.

By leaving the freedom of the interpretation of the utterance to the addressee, the speaker will not be held responsible for the imposition and may at the same time lessen the risk to damage the faces of both interlocutors. If the off-record request is picked up and granted by the addressee, he will be given credit for being generous or helpful. It may serve as a safety device to save the positive face of the speaker if the addressee chooses to ignore the request.

Finally if an FTA is too strong, a speaker may choose not to do it at all to avoid the face risk. Thus a speaker who wants the window shut may choose to say nothing to the addressee or he may chooses to close it by himself.

In short, the choice of a particular strategy is determined by the seriousness of an FTA, whose assessment is closely related to the three sociological variables: D, P, and R. A simple request to have a window shut may be done by a positive politeness strategy between friends because the face risk is considered to be small. The same request may be regarded as more threatening and hence is delivered off-record when the two interactants have great social distance or there is greater power or status of the addressee relative to the speaker.

1.6.4 Hierarchical Structures of Politeness Strategies

In their framework of politeness, Brown and Levinson construct hierarchies of strategies with the highest level

of strategies representing the wants or ends of a speaker, the lower level strategies as the more specific wants and the lowest level strategies the means that would achieve the ends. Those strategies at the highest level were referred to as "super-strategies" (bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off record, and avoid doing FTA) and the linguistic means to realize the highest ends as "output strategies."

The politeness strategies are hierarchically constructed and demonstrated with the relational reasoning and detailed examples of "output strategies" elaborated by Brown and Levinson (1987). Positive politeness output strategies can be realized, for example, by S's notice, attention to H (e.g., "Goodness, you cut your hair!"); S's use of in-group identity markers ("Come here, buddy."); being optimistic ("You'll loan me 20 bucks for the movie, won't you?"); including both S and H in the activity ("Let's turn on the TV, eh?"), and giving or asking for reasons ("Why don't we go to the seashore!"). The negative politeness strategies are realized, for instance, by being conventionally indirect (e.g., "Can you please pass the salt?"); hedges ("I guess that Harry is coming."); being pessimistic ("You wouldn't by any chance be able to do that for me, would you?"); minimizing the imposition ("I just want to ask you if I can borrow a little paper."); giving deference ("Excuse me, sir, but would you mind if I close the window?"); apologizing ("I'm sorry to bother you."); or

impersonalizing S and H ("It is regretted that it happened."). Off record strategies may be realized, for example, by giving hint (e.g., "It's cold in here."); understatement ("That's somewhat amazing."); overstatement ("You never do the washing up."); using rhetorical questions ("How was I to know?"), or being vague ("Looks like someone may have had too much to drink.").

Table 1 lists all the output strategies mentioned by Brown and Levinson (1987) with constructed examples (see Table 1).

1.7 Criticisms of Face Theory

1.7.1 Functional and Instrumental View of Politeness

As described above, it is very clear that Brown and Levinson's politeness theory is centered around the concept of desire to protect and enhance face and actions that satisfy those wants. In other words, "face" want is the most fundamental element of their theory. Since "face want" implies some needs to meet, being polite is to be able to meet the face want of the addressee. Such a view of face and politeness is basically functional and instrumental, as Gu (1990) argues, because it holds a means-to-end relation between face and politeness strategy. It is understandable that most of Brown and Levinson's discussion of politeness is about politeness being realized by the construction of linguistic strategies as means to satisfy the desire to enhance face.

Table 1: Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, and Off Record Strategies

---

Positive politeness strategies

1. Notice, attend to H: "What a beautiful dress you have!"
2. Exaggerate: "Is this your drawing? How absolutely marvelous!"
3. Intensify interest to H: Use vivid present tense or exaggerate
4. Use in-group identity markers: "There you go, honey."
5. Seek agreement: Talk about safe topics
6. Avoid disagreement: "I agree with you, but I also think ..."
7. Presuppose/raise/assert common ground, gossip, small talk: "I have been struggling with this problem for a while, you know."
8. Joke: "My doctor told me to avoid cakes unless they are delicious." (S is on a diet.)
9. Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants: "I know you don't care for comedies, but this one is different."
10. Offer, promise: "I'll stop by soon, I promise."
11. Be optimistic: "You'll call us, won't you?"
12. Include both S and H in the activity (inclusive we): "Let's begin the demonstration."
13. Give (or ask for) reasons: "Why don't we do it now?"
14. Assume or assert reciprocity: "I will wash the dishes if you take the garbage out for me."
15. Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)

Negative politeness strategies

1. Be conventionally indirect: "Can you pass the salad, please?"
2. Question (tag), hedge: "I think the store's closed."
3. Be pessimistic: "I don't suppose there'd be any chance you have $50 with you now."
4. Minimize the imposition: "Can I borrow your pen for a minute?"
5. Give deference: "I am a little slow. Can you show me how to do that again?
6. Apologize: "I'm sorry to bother you with this."
7. Impersonalize S and H: "It would be appreciated if the seat belt is fastened at this moment."
8. State the FTA as a general rule: "Drinking alcohol beyond this line is prohibited."
9. Nominalize: "It is our regret that we cannot permit your application this time."
10.Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H: "I'd be eternally grateful if you would help me with this."

Table 1 (cont'd)

Off record strategies

1. Give hints: "Kind of chilly here, isn't it?" (Close the window!)
2. Give association clues: "Are you going home now?" (Give me a ride?)
3. Presuppose: "I mowed the lawn again today." (You were supposed to do it this time.)
4. Understate: "It looks quite interesting." (It's nothing special.)
5. Overstate: "There are hundreds of traffic lights." (Sorry for being late.)
6. Use tautologies: "Business is business." (Can't give you discount.)
7. Use contradictions: "I'm OK and not OK." (I'm not quite all right in some way.)
8. Be ironic: "He's a real smart guy." (He's so stupid.)
9. Use metaphors: "He's a real fish." (He swims like a fish.)
10. Use rhetorical questions: "What can I say?" (Nothing to say.)
11. Be ambiguous: "He's a giant." (He's tall and fat.)
12. Be vague: "Someone is hungry." (The little kid is hungry.)
13. Over-generalize: "Men sometimes cook." (I cook.)
14. Displace H: S talks as if H is not the target for his FTA.
15. Be incomplete, use ellipsis: "Well, if you insist..." (I will do it if you insist.)

Note: Strategies derived from Brown and Levinson (1987) with constructed examples

However, such a goal-oriented politeness concept has been under serious challenge and criticism from scholars of the non-western world. Gu (1990) argues that Brown and Levinson's politeness theory fails to explain why inviting, offering, and promising in Chinese, "under ordinary circumstances, will not be considered as threatening H's negative face, i.e. impeding H's freedom" (1990:242). The failure to see the normative aspect of politeness, Gu points out, will be a serious oversight for Brown and Levinson's construction of politeness theory because "politeness is a phenomenon belonging to the level of society, which endorses its normative constraints on each individual" (1990:242). Gu further argues that "in Chinese context, politeness exercises its normative function in constraining individual speech acts as well as the sequence of talk exchanges" (1990:242). It is clear that politeness is conceptualized differently by people from different cultures.

Brown and Levinson's notion of politeness as face maintenance is also under criticism from Japanese scholars such as Ide (1989) and Matsumoto (1989), who suggest the need to incorporate 'discernment'(Hill et al. 1986), "the speaker's use of polite expressions according to social conventions rather than interactional strategy" (Ide, 1989:223), in the attempt to establish a politeness theory. These views of politeness as a concept beyond the level of individual face want by the non-western scholars provide alternatives to Brown and Levinson's theory as the universal

framework for politeness phenomena. For example, honorifics in Japanese are used where no face want is involved. The use of honorifics "can be simply socio-pragmatic concord, which operates just as automatically as grammatical concord, independent of the speaker's rational intention" (Matsumoto, 1989:242). Matsumoto further emphasizes that "no utterance in Japanese can be neutral with respect to the social context" (1989:208). Unless every single utterance is counted as intrinsically face-threatening, Brown and Levinson's theory can't explain, Matsumoto argues, why honorifics are required to be used by strangers in a simple utterance like "Today is Saturday" in Japanese. Politeness in Japanese is rooted in the understanding of "the situation and of the relation among the conversational participants and must indicate that understanding by the choice of appropriate honorifics and speech level" (1989:218).

These Chinese and Japanese scholars provide another angle viewing politeness phenomena. I believe that the politeness phenomena observed by Gu (1990), Ide (1989), Matsumoto (1989), and Hill et al. (1986) in Asian societies would not be completely exclusive to prevent the people in those society from the use of face-based politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Although the normative aspects of politeness were observed in the study, Gu's critique will only be used to differentiate the instrumental mitigating strategies from the normative application of politeness. This study will focus on the

so-called functional and instrumental aspects of politeness phenomena.

1.7.2 Multifunctionality and Ambiguity of Politeness Strategy

Brown and Levinson's dichotomous construction of politeness also raises some doubts from Craig, Tracy, and Spisak (1986), who found that the identification of politeness strategies in messages was extremely difficult. Not only can different strategies co-occur in the same message, but they also can be realized simultaneously in the same language. The potential for multifunctionality and the ambiguity of output strategies contribute to both the richness of discourse and possibilities for misunderstanding. Craig et al. (1986) demonstrated that no strict classificatory system can be established for output strategies by an analysis because the output strategies "are not mutually exclusive and exhaustive, but instead are open-ended lists with considerable overlap in meaning among the members of each list and even to some extent, between list" (1986:446). For example, "I was wondering" can be counted as verbal hedge (negative politeness strategy 2), as conventional indirectness (negative politeness strategy 1), as point-of-view distancing (negative politeness strategy 7), and perhaps as hedging of opinions (positive politeness strategy 6). The phrase "do me a favor" further provides another vivid illustration of multifunctionality in

requests. While "do me a favor" suggests the use of
negative politeness strategy 6 (to apologize by admitting
the impingement), it may also function as positive
politeness, to suggest a friendly relationship between S and
H such that reciprocal favors might be expected. Therefore,
friends may use "do me a favor" as a kind of apology that is
appropriate to their symmetrical relationships, which are
characterized by the reciprocal doing of favors.

Brown and Levinson make two kinds of distinction of
FTAs. They first make a distinction "between acts that
threaten negative face and those that threaten positive
face....Secondly, we may distinguish between acts that
primarily threaten H's face ... and those that threaten
primarily S's face" (1987:65). Although Brown and Levinson
(1987) did realize their ways of classifying FTAs "give rise
to a four-way grid which offers the possibility of cross-
classifying" at least some of the FTAs they mentioned
(1987:68), their focus is mainly on the dichotomous aspect
of politeness. Other than saying "such a cross-
clarification has a complex relation to the ways in which
FTAs are handled" (1987:68) and that "many FTAs fit into
more than one category, so that redressive action may be
addressed to any potential aspect of the face threat, not
necessarily just the most relevant one(s)" (1987:286), Brown
and Levinson did not elaborate on the cross-classification
phenomena of politeness. Brown and Levinson's (1987) focus
on the dichotomous perspectives of politeness seems to be

responsible for their failure to give enough emphasis on and satisfactory explanation of the cross-classification and ambiguity of politeness observed by Craig et al. (1986).

Brown and Levinson (1987) assert that the overlap in the classification of FTAs occurs because some FTAs intrinsically threaten both negative and positive face (e.g., complaints, interruptions, threats, requests for personal information, etc.). Actually many, perhaps most, FTAs can threaten both face wants. For instance, directives are found to threaten both the positive and negative face wants of the addressee (Baxter 1984; Wilson et al. 1991). Many of the FTAs found in my study can be categorized to more than one single classification. The following two excerpts will illustrate this point.

> Excerpt 1 (Kenji disagreed with the rest of the group on Prohibition) [Emphasis is indicated by underlining]
>
> First of all, let's <u>talk frankly not</u> those "too mush drinking would cause bad effect to all of us," nor "Alocoholic is major problem among teens." Let's <u>stop those bullshit superficial conversation</u>. Sure I'm doing this, of course, to get a good grade, but using this opportunity, I believe, we can talk something more serious or fun.

Here, Kenji is the only one in his group who is against Prohibition while the rest agree on it. After receiving several related e-mail discussions on this issue, Kenji gave a pretty sharp criticism to what he perceived as hypocritical arguments from his teammates. The FTAs "talk frankly not..." and "stop those bullshit superficial conversation" threaten both the "negative" face and the

"positive" face of his teammates simultaneously because they were displayed both as directives and criticisms. While directives primarily threaten the negative face of H, criticisms would threaten the positive face.

> Excerpt 2 (Kenji, complaining about his make-up assignment)

> This time I'll respond to the topic for this week, and also I'd like to introduce myself. I kniow that it must be boring to you, but <u>forgive me for christ sake</u>, I've gotta do this to make up my E-mail conversation I missed before mid-term exam. Thank you!

In Excerpt 2, Kenji's apology carried an overtone of indirect complaint/criticism to the instructor's insistence on Kenji's doing make-up assignment. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), this apology would be an act that threatened Kenji's own "positive" face if it was a genuine one. However, Kenji's skillful manipulation of a redressive action (apology) as an FTA (complaint/criticism) has made it an act threatening both the instructor's "positive" face and his teammates' "negative" face while he at the same time appeared to have threatened his own "positive" face. This kind of FTA threatens both "positive" and "negative" face of all three different parties.

As demonstrated above, many FTAs in the data in this study intrinsically threaten both negative and positive face. Not only may an FTA threaten both faces, a linguistic realization of politeness may also often be oriented toward more than one type of face want. Brown and Levinson (1987)

talked very little about this complicated cross-classification politeness phenomena. For example, their illustrative examples and systematic introduction of their hierarchical structures are devoted to the verification of the dichotomous view of politeness rather than the cross-classifying nature of politeness.

At the end of their introduction of various politeness strategies, Brown and Levinson (1987) did admit that there is a hybrid strategy somewhere in between positive and negative politeness, which is produced as the mixture of elements from both strategies in a given utterance; however, they gave very few examples and no accounts at all of why the hybrid strategy may exist in contrast to their dichotomized conceptualization of politeness. They claim:

> The mixture of elements deriving from positive- and negative-politeness strategies in a given utterance may simply produce a kind of hybrid strategy somewhere in between the two. When token tag questions are tacked on to a presumptuous positively polite request, for example, or when hedges (*e.g. like, sort of*) are used to render more vague the expression of an extreme positive-politeness opinion, the results are basically still positive-politeness strategies, even though they make use of essentially negative-politeness techniques to soften the presumption. (1987:230)

As can be seen, Brown and Levinson give no explanation of why a token tag question or hedge has to be regarded as negative-politeness techniques even though they are viewed basically as positive-politeness strategies. Brown and Levinson's basic assumption of the dichotomous nature of

politeness as redressive actions giving "face" to the
addressees still remains (cf. Section 5.2 for details).

1.8 Politeness and Mitigation

Since the publication of Brown and Levinson's (1978)
formulation of their theory of politeness, we begin to see
an increasing interest in the study of politeness phenomena
or strategies in relation to the inquiry of politeness
universals (Ide 1989; Janney and Arndt 1993; Matsumoto 1989;
Nwoye 1992), medical encounters (Aronsson and
Sätterlund-Larsson 1987), cross-cultural contrast (Chen
1993; Garcia 1989a, 1989b; Nash 1983; Sifianou 1993), gender
issues (Holmes 1989; Johnstone and Katheleen 1992), second
language discourse (Johnson 1989; Scarcella and Brunak
1989), cultures other than Western ones (Gu 1990; Mills
1992), written text (Johnson 1989; 1992; Johnstone and
Katheleen 1992; Maier 1992; Myers 1989), and religion
(Pearson 1987; 1988).

Politeness phenomena have often been studied with a
focus on mitigation. However, these studies have not
distinguished between politeness and mitigation (Aronsson
and Sätterlund-Larsson 1987; Brown 1993; Pearson 1987;
Johnstone 1992; House and Kasper 1981; Craig et al. 1986).
These researchers appear to regard the concept of politeness
as the same as or similar to the strategic linguistic usages
for the purpose of reducing interaction friction. They do
not distinguish between a cultural phenomenon (politeness)

and an intentional and functional construction (mitigation).
I suggest that the reason for this lack of differentiation
is closely related to the basic "face" notion proposed by
Goffman (1967), and Brown and Levinson (1987). Since
"face," the basic human wants, is vulnerable to almost all
communicative acts, any attempt to reduce the potential
damage to "face" is considered as polite. The conception of
"face" as wants, "which every member knows every other
member desires, and which in general it is in the interests
of every member to partially satisfy" (Brown and Levinson
1987:62) suggests that politeness contains optional
individual values that may or may not be subscribed to by
members of a society, according to their individual goals in
the interactions. In other words, whether one is polite or
not depends mostly on whether one intends to satisfy the
"face" wants of the addressee in an FTA rather than to
follow a particular social norm. For example, in American
society whether and how someone would address a new
acquaintance with a polite address term in an ordinary
encounter depends on his discourse goal at the moment of
interaction. The availability of options in address terms
provides a speaker with strategic linguistic resources to
satisfy the "face" wants of the addressee in any potentially
face-threatening interaction. If the speaker wants to be
polite in order to soften an FTA, he may select a particular
address term (e.g., first name or respectful address term)
to satisfy either the positive or negative "face" wants of

the addressee. In Chinese society, the address term to others is more or less pre-determined as a social norm and hence loses its strategic power. The view of individual "face" as basic human wants needed to be satisfied in a communicative interaction would naturally follow that politeness is mostly acts that mitigate the threats to "face."

When Brown and Levinson's framework of politeness is applied to the data collected from non-western societies, where society members' behaviors are heavily constrained and regulated by the societal norms, their theory may fail to entirely interpret the polite behaviors exhibited. In non-western societies the role of societal constraints and optional individual values may differ from their role in western societies. As Gu (1990) suggests, politeness phenomena can consist of societally-prescribed behavior which is not the same as an individual's attempts at mitigation.

Mitigation, Fraser (1980) indicates, can't be treated conceptually the same as politeness. He argues:

> While mitigation involves a reduction in the unwelcome effect of what is done, politeness, on the other hand, depends on the extent to which the speaker has acted appropriately in that context (1980:343).

Mitigation involves the use of intentional linguistic or non-linguistic actions for the purpose of reducing or softening the unwelcome effects caused by the speaker in order to achieve a certain goal (e.g., expressing

disagreements, or asking for a loan). It is goal-oriented because the use of mitigation depends on an individual's intentional designs of an action for a particular purpose. It is also hearer-oriented since there would be no need for the speaker to mitigate his or her own actions to achieve a goal when the speaker is the only participant in the event.

Mitigation differs from politeness in that the former can often be conceptualized as goal-oriented and functional while the latter often incorporates the functional, or instrumental, dimensions with its normative ones. On the one hand, being polite is not equal to simply mitigating a speech act. On the other hand, mitigating a speech act usually involves the expression of being polite. Since all FTAs threaten the face of the participants and cause unwelcome effects in a face-oriented culture, it is only natural for many scholars from such a culture to perceive mitigating strategies as politeness strategies and see mitigation as politeness.

One goal of the present study is to examine how participants establish and maintain their social relationships with politeness in an electronic environment where they can't face one another and yet often become involved in arguments and disagreements. In Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, disagreement is counted as an intrinsic face-threatening act that threaten the addressee's positive face want because the speaker indicates that he thinks hearer is "wrong or misguided or unreasonable about

some issue, such wrongness being associated with disapproval" (1987:66). The use of linguistic devices for the establishment and maintenance of social relationships among participants when disagreeing seems to inevitably fall into Brown and Levinson's category of politeness principles. However, mitigation on disagreement can't be regarded as exactly equivalent to being polite because there may be societal groups, or situated uses of language, in which disagreement is expected and is not perceived as an FTA. It would be quite possible for a speaker, then, to disagree with others and still be perceived as being polite. Researchers investigating politeness in disagreement may need to go beyond the face-want scope of Brown and Levinson's theory and carefully distinguish what may count as mitigating strategies--the intentional, means-to-end linguistic constructions--from what may count as polite behaviors.

1.9 Ethnographic Study of the Emerging Speech Event

Although tens of thousands of people use e-mail for their daily communication, surprisingly there has not been any study of written interactions in e-mail concerning the polite behaviors of the users. While there may be differences between the ways people interact with one another using different linguistic channels, the interactions in written languages are no less complicated than those in the oral language. For example, in the speech

event this study investigates, language participants need to
analyze the limitations of computers as the medium of
communication. They further need to analyze, even when
being unable to see their co-participants face-to-face, the
social order, the sequence of speaking turn, and the
backgrounds of the interlocutors before interactions, speech
activities, or genres can be constructed appropriately in
the speech event. Participants in written interactions will
have to assess what the conversational analysts describe as
the orderliness of talk displayed in the sequential
conversational organization. For the interactions, whether
in face-to-face situations or not, to be successfully
coordinated in a way that is meaningful to the participants,
language users have to go beyond the isolated linguistic
sentences to make sense from the continuous sequences of
talk embedded within a context. In other words, the
successful linguistic interactions, whether oral or written,
suggest the recognition and understanding of the
"orderliness" in the sequential organization of a discourse
(Schegloff 1973). How participants interpret the prior talk
can be scrutinized in their subsequent utterances because
the sequential organization of conversation "is a systematic
consequence of the turn-taking organization of conversation
that it obliges its participants to display to each other,
in a turn's talk, their understanding of other turns' talk"
(Sacks et al. 1974:728).

Other than the sequential organization of the
discourse, the participant will have to consider language
use within a specific context in reaching an interpretation
of the speech event. As Heritage points out:

> A speaker's action is context-shaped in that its
> contribution to an on-going sequence of actions
> cannot adequately be understood except by
> reference to the context--including, especially,
> the immediately preceding configuration of
> actions--in which it participates. This
> contextualization of utterances is a major, and
> unavoidable, procedure which hearers use and rely
> on to interpret conversational contributions and
> it is also something which speakers pervasively
> attend to in the design of what they say
> (1984:242).

The written interactions of the e-mail users are also
subject to these dynamic contextual changes, even though the
immediacy in the preceding configuration of actions is not
readily available. However, the exclusion of other
important contextual factors, such as role relationships,
social group membership, formality of the situation, and the
like, is where the criticism arises (Pearson 1987).

Duranti argues that language users "display a concern
for constructing a universe of discourse that would be
linked to other domains of interaction, through other media
(e.g., face-to-face interaction), and to other aspects of
the social identity of the parties involved" (1986:64). If
we give exclusive attention to the sequential organization
of the discourse, we cannot explain how language users
achieve their "discourse continuity," which very often
involves the domain of social relationships as well as that

of the informational exchanges. The situated language use among participants in e-mail discussions needs to be investigated in a broad context, in which the immediate prior and subsequent talks of a particular interaction, the sequential relationships between successive e-mails among participants and by one particular person, the role relationships in the speech event, group organization, familiarity among the participants, and formality of the situation are all significant factors for scrutiny. Therefore, there is a need for an ethnographic study of the speech event under inquiry because such a standpoint would provide richness of analytic context.

It is a fundamental end of ethnographic methodology that the data should be naturally occurring. The data collected in the present study occurred naturally; they were part of students' assignment in their ESL reading class. Students would have generated the e-mail communications whether or not the research took place. These data contribute to the study of the situated uses of language in discussions among students. With the help of actual observations of classroom activities and the interviews of the participants, as detailed in chapter two and three, this study will be able to examine the various small language activities as part of a larger one of disagreement.

This study in general investigates the emerging speech event of students' discussion through electronic mail and in particular examines the linguistic devices people employ to

maintain their relationships when arguments and disagreements are exhibited. In particular, the present study examines the unique realization of mitigation in computer-mediated communication. These analyses are conducted within a theory of politeness that is informed by cross-cultural sociolinguistic study.

In this chapter, I have introduced the purposes and reasons for studying politeness in e-mail discourse as an emerging language event. Communication media are believed to have effects on people's linguistic behaviors. As computer-mediated communication becomes popular, written interactions have rapidly increased. Studying politeness in written language becomes feasible. Some researchers argue that computer-mediated communication is capable of carrying interpersonal relationships while others hold the contradictory claims. The present study will examine politeness strategies in e-mail discourse and contribute to this debate.

This chapter further discussed Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory and the criticisms to their theory. Distinction between politeness and mitigation was made in order to interpret some of the politeness phenomena occurring in the data. This study will analyze politeness in e-mail discourse employing Brown and Levinson's politeness theory and framework as the basis to verify and challenge their work. Finally the significance of ethnographic methodology in the study was pointed out.

Chapter two will discuss research methodology, the backgrounds of the participants, and the procedures of data collection.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Data Collection

Chapter two specifies the participant structure of the
group discussions. It also explains how interviews and
tape-recordings were used to help interpret the data. The
data collected for this study include 186 e-mail messages,
42 hours of participant observation and 32 audio tape-
recorded interviews with participants. All data were
collected at the campus of a large Midwestern university in
the United States.

2.1.1 E-mail Discussion and the Class

In the Spring of 1994, I attended an English as a
Second Language (Reading 400A) class as a participant
observer at a large Midwestern university in the United
States. One of the primary goals of Reading 400A was to
enhance and develop students' comprehension ability by
small-group discussions in which the course materials,
students' own understanding of the materials, and their
interactions with other group members were integrated and
presented in written language. Small group discussions took
place both in classroom and, through e-mail, outside of the

classroom. While students were randomly grouped for in-classroom discussions, they were assigned to a particular group of students for the out-of-classroom discussions. The basic purpose of choosing e-mail as the medium for group discussions outside the classroom was to provide students with maximum opportunities to actually read. Students had to read both the assigned reading materials, and also every message from members of their group in order to be able to fully participate in the e-mail discussions. In other words, this class aimed to improve the reading ability of the students by assigning tasks that depended on actual reading.

This class met for 80 minutes, twice weekly, for 16 weeks. Outside of class, each student was required to contribute to the e-mail discussion by writing down his/her own thoughts, the understanding of the reading materials and other group members' responses to the discussion at least once each week using e-mail as the medium. Each student was assigned a particular day of the week.

The assigned readings and most of the discussion topics were determined and scheduled by the instructor. However, in some weeks students were given options to decide the topics that were most desirable for their own interest in their group discussion. Usually the discussion topics were closely related to the students' current reading schedules. Those topics varied, ranging from highly controversial ones, such as abortion and euthanasia, to less controversial ones,

such as recycling problems or ways to improve reading
ability.

2.1.2 The Participants

Fifteen international students from six different
countries or areas participated in the study. Six of the
participants were female and nine of them were male; four
were graduate students and eleven were undergraduates.
Students' ages ranged from late teens to late twenties at
the time the study was conducted. Many of the students were
taking one or more additional English for Academic Purposes
(EAP) courses in speaking, listening, writing, or grammar.
Some students were acquainted with one another before
entering Reading 400A. According to the instructor of the
course, students' TOEFL score equivalents ranged from 515 to
550. The majors of the participants cover several fields of
study: business, social science, medicine, food science,
computer science, mechanical engineering, mathematics,
nursing, and English. Most of the students were also taking
one or more academic courses concurrently with Reading 400A.

While most of the participants (73% or 11 out of 15)
had used a computer before the study, only one third (5) of
the participants had the experience of using e-mail. These
five students had used computers for a short period (three
to five months) before the study. So, the participant body
of the study as a whole was relatively inexperienced in
e-mail as a medium for communication.

2.1.3 Authorization for the Study

Since my study involved human subjects, I filed an application for approval of my project to the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) several weeks before the study began. The project was proposed with attachment of a copy of consent form (see Appendix A) and forms detailing how the rights and welfare of the participants in the study would be protected. The consent form was signed and dated by each participant and the approval of my study was obtained from UCRIHS (IRB#: 94-006) before the study was conducted.

The participation in this study was entirely voluntary. The participants were fully aware that their e-mails and responses would be used for presentations and educational publications. Confidentiality was promised and therefore pseudonyms were used throughout the study to protect the confidentiality of the participants and the institutions involved. Each participant was also adequately informed of the types of activities (e.g., tape-recorded classroom discussions, and interviews), and the approximate time involved in each activity in the study at the beginning of and during the project. The project was finished within the time limit approved by UCRIHS.

2.1.4 Formation of the E-mail Groups

At the beginning of the term, the participants were assigned to three small e-mail discussion groups with each

group having 5 student members as the main body of discussion. Students were assigned to a group in such a way as to provide diversity of cultural backgrounds, languages, and gender. Table 2 provides the background information of the participants (see Table 2).

In the beginning of the study, each participant was designated as either a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday person. A discussion topic was assigned to the group each week. The e-mail discussion procedures were well-organized, providing structure that required reading and writing.

The Monday person was required to use e-mail to write his/her thoughts or comments on the assigned topic and to post the comments to the whole group, using a mailing list with the five group members' e-mail addressees on it for simultaneous transmission of the same text to many addressees. The Tuesday person would then have to read and respond to the writing of the Monday person, together with providing his/her own response to the assigned topic. The Wednesday person would have to read and respond to the writing of Monday and Tuesday persons and make his/her own response to the assigned topic. The Thursday person would have to read and respond to the writing of Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday persons and make his/her own response to the assigned topic. Friday person would have to read and

Table

Group

Group

Group

Group

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par

Table 2: Background Information on Participants

Group	Date	Name*	Country	Language	Gender
Group 1	Monday	Yenmin	Taiwan	Mandarin	female
	Tuesday	Adil	Kuwait	Arabic	male
	Wednesday	David	Hong Kong	Cantonese	male
	Thursday	Kenji	Japan	Japanese	male
	Friday	Lim	Korea	Korean	male
Group 2	Monday	John	Taiwan	Mandarin	male
	Tuesday	Mitsuha	Japan	Japanese	male
	Wednesday	Cindy	Hong Kong	Cantonese	female
	Thursday	Tatyana	Russia	Russian	female
	Friday	Wang	Taiwan	Mandarin	female
Group 3	Monday	Fang-chih	Taiwan	Mandarin	female
	Tuesday	Akira	Japan	Japanese	male
	Wednesday	Li-yuh	Taiwan	Mandarin	female
	Thursday	Dong	Korea	Korean	male
	Friday	Eddie	Hong Kong	Cantonese	male

* Pseudonyms are used to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

respo...
thursd...
assign...
have b...
Wednes...
week,...
topic...

       a...
resea...
their...
instr...
discu...
nessa...
for y...
clari...
throu...
in th...
intro...
excha...

by th...
part...
where...
part...
distr...
group...
data o...

respond to the writing of Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and
Thursday persons and make his/her own response to the
assigned topic. On the next Monday, Monday person would
have to read and comment on the writing of Monday, Tuesday,
Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday persons of the previous
week, and would initiate a new response to the assigned
topic of the new week.

Since the participants had heard discussion of the
research and had signed consent forms, they were aware that
their e-mail would be read by the researcher. The
instructor and I did not participate in the e-mail group
discussion; however we did receive a copy of each e-mail
message. While the instructor occasionally gave guidelines
for the assigned discussions to the groups or asked for
clarifications of the e-mail writings of individual students
through e-mail, the researcher did not intervene in any way
in the discussion. The purpose was to keep the potential
intrusion and influence of the researcher from the e-mail
exchanges of the students to a minimum degree.

The validity of the data of this study was established
by the efforts from the researcher to exclude the
participants' involvement in setting up the group lists
where the researcher's e-mail address was included. Each
participant was given a group e-mail address which would
distribute any e-mail sent by a participant of a particular
group to everyone that was listed in the same group. The
data collection was performed with the help of the mailing

system that operated behind the scenes. Since the data of the study were collected without the presence of the researcher or some visible recording devices, the way the data were collected was less intrusive than other traditional devices such as audio or video tape-recorders.

The participants were able to choose to write and send their e-mails at home or in a computer lab, early in the morning or late in the night on the assigned day. The flexibility of the physical aspect of composing e-mails helped reduce participants' sensibility of the researcher as an outside reader monitoring their composition of e-mails. Although I was in the class as a researcher, I was as unobtrusive as anyone possible could be at the moment of composition. The presence of the researcher at the time the text was composed was completely invisible. When asked about the feelings of his e-mails being read by the researcher, Mitsuha, the Tuesday person in his group, answered "No difference. I don't care. I am just talking to my group and I want to finish it as soon as possible." Such a statement indicated that Mitsuha did not feel he was being observed when writing e-mails. In addition, the fact that the data collection and participant observation were conducted over a long period of time may help de-sensitize the participants' feelings of being monitored or studied. Therefore, the intrusion of the researcher was not made to a great degree in the compositions and exchanges of the participants' e-mail messages.

The e-mail transmissions within groups were collected
and became the primary data for this study. Since this
structure of e-mail discussion was modeled upon one in use
in a large lower-division undergraduate class at the same
university primarily involving native language students, the
data so gathered may thus be seen as "materials collected
from naturally occurring occasions of everyday interaction"
(Atkinson and Heritage 1984:2). The data are transcribed by
reproducing students' own words and spellings with
supplementary underscorings and typefaces from me for
particular meanings (cf. Section 3.4).

In a period of fourteen weeks, I gathered 186 e-mail
messages. Excluding the introductory and test part of the
e-mail messages during the first two weeks, there were a
total of 162 messages that focused on the discussions that
were related to the students' assigned reading. The e-mail
messages total over 300 pages of data ranging from one to
four pages per message in length. These are the primary
corpus of the data of this study.

In order for me to be able to grasp the contexts of the
study, I did participant observation in every class
throughout the term, field trip and library trips. There
were 28 classes I sat in on, one field trip (searching for
extensive outside reading materials in a large local
bookstore), and two library trips (searching for assigned
discussion materials). I observed and audio and video tape-
recorded as feasible a sample of the classes and conducted

tape-recorded interviews with each student at least once. For tape-recording the group discussions in classroom I used one camcorder and two tape recorders. Students were informed of the tape-recording one week before the actual recording and permissions were granted by the instructor and the students. The camcorder was set up in the left front corner of the classroom in order to be able to tape the whole class. The audio recorders were put close to the student groups when the class was divided in several small discussion groups. This proved adequate because the video tape helped to identify the speakers who participated in the small group discussions. A small audio tape recorder was used when interviews were conducted. The first-stage interviews were finished near the end of the semester. In these interviews the participants' country of origin, previous experience with computer, possibility of future use of e-mail, and English language proficiency, and especially the portions of the e-mail messages that caused confusion and questions were discussed (See Appendix B). I selected those students whose works were particularly interesting for further tape-recorded interviews. A total of 20 hours of audio tapes and 6 hours of video tapes was collected. The major interest of the interviews was focused on the understanding of the intentions of the participants and the contexts for using a particular strategy.

2.2 Interview as One Basis for Interpretation of Data

The interviews became very important and helpful in understanding the contexts of the interactions and supporting or disconfirming my hypotheses about particular strategies since the data collected were completely textual transmission in a non-face-to-face situation. Paralinguistic and/or extralinguistic features were not available for interpreting a particular interaction. For example, sometimes it was difficult to tell whether a question in e-mail was intended to be a real question or just a rhetorical question, since e-mail is composed as a whole chunk of message in which a question is easily buried or minimized, by the number of following propositions. Because the question is followed by more utterances, the question looks like a question without the intention to wait for an answer, i.e., not necessarily a true question. By contrast, in oral language a pause, together with other paralinguistic features such as intonation, following an interrogative usually indicates to the interlocutors that it is intended as a real question. The following excerpts illustrate such a difficulty.

> Excerpt 3 (Mitsuha's argument on conviction record)
> [Emphasis is indicated by underlining.]
>
> ... Ten or twenty decades ago, most criminals had to
> die. They had no choice. <u>But, what about now?</u> They
> should be happy because they can return and get usual
> life again. I really want to say to criminals who are
> still complaining even though they got life, "Shut up!"
> <u>Did I say too much and strongly?</u>"

Anyway, I believe that person's conviction and arrest
records should be kept..."
[Ellipsis (...) indicates my omission of text.]

In discussing whether a conviction record should

be destroyed after a person is out of jail, Mitsuha tried to

compare the ways criminals were treated a couple of hundred

years ago and the way they are treated now, in order to make

his point that conviction records should be kept and the

criminals should feel lucky about being able to leave the

jail alive. The two questions asked by Mitsuha are

ambiguous because it is almost equally possible to interpret

them as real or rhetorical questions if no clarification

from the speaker himself can be obtained. As Ilie argues,

the pragmatic constraints are the fundamental factors that

determine the rhetorical nature of a question: "the

rhetorical interpretation of questions is based on

idiosyncratic characteristics, depending to a large extent

on the addresser and the addressee's cognitive background,

as well as on the addresser's intentions and the addressee's

expectations" (1994:7). While part of the pragmatic factors

in this case are clear, such as the overall contextual

configuration, other factors are not known to the addressee.

For example, the addressees may not know whether Mitsuha

tends to be cautious in using emotional criticisms or what

his discourse goal of the moment is. One way of assessing

the intention of the addresser is to ask about it in an

interview. The fact that Mitsuha indicated that he did not

think what he said was too much and strong in the interview

proved that they were actually rhetorical questions.

Another example appears in Kenji's discussion in the

following excerpt.

Excerpt 4 (Kenji's argument for abortion)

Pretend, you conceive a baby. <u>What would you do?</u> It is not just "I'll have a baby, because I think abortion is wrong." <u>What are you going to do about school?</u> <u>Who is going to pay and feed your baby?</u> There are lots of problem around.

In arguing for the abortion right, Kenji requested the

readers in his group to pretend that they were the ones who

were facing the unwanted pregnancy. He then proceeded to

ask three questions that were ambiguous in intention. These

questions were ambiguous in discourse function, in that they

could be interpreted either as real questions whose answers

were expected for further arguments or as rhetorical

questions whose answers were implied in the contexts. Due

to the structure of e-mail discourse, a question often seems

to function as a rhetorical question since no immediate

answer can be expected. The three questions Kenji asked

turned out to be real questions as he admitted in the

interview that they were actually directed toward Yenmin,

who was the only person who disagreed with abortion in the

group. Those questions were not functioning as rhetorical

questions, whose answers were implied and expected in the

contexts. Instead, they served as leading questions to

provide Kenji with progressive argumentation points to

challenge Yenmin to provide answers to the problems one might face in real life if there is no choice for abortion.

As can be seen, Excerpts 3 and 4 illustrate the importance of interviews, which will be heavily used to provide the basis for the understanding of particular politeness strategies.

In this chapter I have briefly described the participant structure of the group discussions and how data were collected. I further emphasized the importance of interviews as the basis for interpreting the data. The next chapter will give the readers an overall sense of the language event under inquiry. Part of the data collected and the mitigating strategies used will be presented.

CHAPTER THREE

OVERALL VIEW OF THE LANGUAGE EVENT

Chapter three will give an overall sense of the language event in the study. Basically, there will be two major goals: (1) to discuss the language event as a whole, and (2) to present the mitigating strategies I want to point out later.

3.1 Overall View about the Language Activity

The participants were interviewed for their overall view about using e-mail for academic discussions. Most of them (12 out of 15 or 80%) think e-mail is a congenial and effective medium for communication. The reasons included faster transmitting speed, easiness in usage or file management, convenience, economy, and multiple transmission capability. For those who held opposite views, language barrier was the most serious factor. Most of the participants (14 out of 15) expressed that they would continue to use e-mail as the medium for communication in activities other than course requirement even if other options of communication media, such as telephones, were available. In general, the students either liked or thought e-mail acceptable as the medium for class discussions, but

most of those who approved the use of e-mail for discussions preferred to use e-mail for non-serious or informal discussions. The easiness of topics affected the acceptance of e-mail for academic discussions. As one of the participants, John, indicated, "I think it's not bad to use e-mail for discussion. However, I think the topics we used in class were too difficult. Some of the topics were not suitable for e-mail discussions. It's a little bit boring. I think e-mail should be used for interesting topics, not so formal. We don't necessarily need to discuss such serious topics by e-mail." John's attitude towards e-mail for academic discussions represented those of most of the participants in the study. It might be that the lack of immediate feedback from other interactants was attributed to the lack of enthusiasm using e-mail for discussing serious topics in this study.

3.2 Defining Disagreement

Since this study focuses on the ways disagreement gets mitigated, the delimitation of disagreement needs clarification in the first place. What counts as disagreement? According to Brown and Levinson (1987), disagreement is a face-threatening act (FTA) that threatens the positive face want of the addressee because it shows that the addresser does not care for the addressee's feelings and wants. When disagreeing, the addresser indicates that the addressee is wrong, or misguided or

unreasonable about some issue. Therefore, the addressee's

beliefs, values, or opinions are not valued by the addresser

and the addressee's positive face is damaged.

While disagreement is seen as a threat to the positive

face want of the addressee, the conception of disagreement

as an act may cause confusion. Disagreement is not always

presented as a direct single act as the following excerpt.

> Excerpt 5 (Adil, disagreeing with Yenmin on the issue
> of conviction record) [Emphasis is indicated by
> underlining.]

> OK, Yenmin, I <u>do not agree</u> with you here for the
> following reasons.

Very often disagreements were displayed not as a

separate act but as contrasting beliefs that may be spread

over several utterances without even displaying direct

conflict words. For example:

> Excerpt 6 (Yenmin, disagreeing with Adil on his
> complaint)

> Hi! I can tell your anger about EL. In fact, a lot of
> international students complain its policies and exam,
> but most people seem just endure this situation because
> it's no use to argue with the EL staffs. <u>Since it's one
> of school policy for people who fail the exam must take
> English classes, we just can recognize that our
> English really needs to improve. Actually, after
> studying in EL, I can feel my progress in English,
> especially in writing.</u>

After showing her understanding and sympathy toward

Adil's complaint to EL, Yenmin disagreed with Adil on that

his English ability was proficient enough for him to stay

out of EL. Her disagreement with Adil on the English

proficiency issue resulted from the open criticism on

Yenmin's grammatical and spelling mistakes by Adil in his

previous e-mail. There were no noticeable words or acts indicating direct disagreement in Yenmin's utterances. Her disagreement with Adil's complaint was shown in her account of why they need to stay in EL to improve their English and her confirmation of the improvement in her own writing. Disagreements can't always be identified by simply looking for actual disagreeing words. The way Selfe and Meyer (1991) coded agreement or disagreement in their study of gender and power relationships on on-line conferences would not be applicable for my study. For example, they asserted that:

> Statements in which participants explicitly indicated agreement or disagreement with what someone had said on the conference (for example, "I agree with what - said yesterday" or "I would like to argue against the idea that...") were coded accordingly as agreement or disagreement statements (Selfe and Meyer 1991:174-5).

Using Selfe and Meyer's definition of agreement and disagreement to find an easy identification and coding for analysis would probably result in misleading or incomplete findings.

3.2.1 Speech Act Theory and Disagreement

Speech act theory is not able to offer much help in locating disagreements. Austin (1962) attempted to categorize disagreeing but was not able to decide the exact nature of it. Of Austin's (1962) five categories of illocutionary acts, "commissives" and "expositives" are somehow related to disagreements. He states that "the

commissive is an assuming of an obligation or declaring of an intention" (1962:163) and that expositives "are used in acts of exposition involving the expounding of views, the conducting of arguments and the clarifying of usages and references" (1962:161). In the comparison of commissives with expositives, Austin further gives examples to explain that "calling, defining, analyzing, and assuming form one group, and supporting, agreeing, disagreeing, maintaining, and defending form another group of illocutions which seem to be both expositive and commissive" (1962:160). Others view disagreements as part of a larger class, such as "representative" (Searle 1976; Fraser 1983) or "constatives" (Bach and Harnish 1984). As Searle indicates, "the point or purpose of the members of the representative class is to commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to something's being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition" (1976:10). Bach and Harnish explain that "constatives express the speaker's belief and his intention or desire that the hearer have or form a like belief" (1984:41). The purpose of disagreements in this study is to display the belief of the speaker and at the same time to try to persuade the hearer to accept his/her arguments. According to the definitions of "representatives" and "constatives," disagreements can loosely fit into these two illocutionary classes. However, they are not readily viewed as a separate class of illocutionary act.

3.2.2 Disagreement as an Expressed Belief

During the interview, I found that many disagreements in the study were not expressed due to time constraints, the personality of the speaker, language barriers, and other factors. Although an intention to disagree by the speaker may or may not be recognized by other interactants, it is impossible to talk with every possible recipient of an utterance to check for the recognition of a disagreement. Disagreements can be directed either toward the content of the talk (e.g., "I don't agree with your viewpoints.") or the talk itself as a speech act or activity (e.g., "You don't need to apologize to him." or "I don't think what you said is relevant to our discussion.") This study will hence regard disagreement as a belief expressed in opposition to others' (1) belief on a certain proposition, or (2) speech acts or activities. In other words, a disagreement will be defined as an expressed commitment to the truth of the speaker's proposition or belief opposing other individuals' beliefs on the same proposition (e.g., "I don't agree with you on what you said.") It will also be defined as rejecting other individuals' speech acts or activities (e.g., "I don't agree with you on what you did.") Other individuals may include other interlocutors, a third party that is not within the immediate interaction, or a hypothetical person. As long as the intention to disagree is expressed through a stretch of talk or text, it will be counted as a disagreement, whether it is recognized by the

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intended recipient of the talk, the researcher, or any other person at the moment of interaction or later. A disagreement may be realized linguistically (e.g., "You shouldn't have done that!"), or meta-linguistically (e.g., "I disagree with you on this issue."); with or without explicit contradictory texts (e.g., "You shouldn't support abortion." vs. "I think we have to respect each new life - born or unborn"); within a short utterance or over long stretches of talk (e.g., "You shouldn't give up recycling." vs. "I can tell you seem not to be confident about improving the earth's recycling problems. In fact, it is really hard to do it perfect. However, if we don't try our best to keep going. Can you imagine the environment our new generations are going to have?"); and by a variety of linguistic structures (e.g., "I don't think abortion is fair to the baby."; "Is abortion fair to the baby?"; "If you think abortion is the answer to the problem of overpopulation, you are wrong." etc.) It can't be given a specific definition in terms of morphemic, syntactic, semantic constructions.

3.2.3 Identifying Disagreements in Interview

As discussed above, disagreement is seen as a declaration of intention or belief rather than an act. The declaration of intention or belief may be done either explicitly or implicitly. When possible, the best way to identify a disagreement is to actually confirm it with the speaker through an interview. For instance:

Excerpt 7 (Li-yuh, responding to Fang-chih on how to learn to read) [Relevant previous e-mail message is italicized.]

Fang-chih (Monday person):
    In my opinion, first of all, the attitude is one of the concerns that show how concentrated you are. so, a good attitude is to read carefully and grasp the main idea of the aritcle you read. Secondly, it would take time to practice reading a article effectively, it has to be many times of practice process, and each time for different purpose. For example, first time for general idea; second time for finding out the vocaburaly, then connect those key words to its belonging sentences more carefully in order to get familar to their useages, and what the meanings indicate.

Li-yuh (Wednesday person):
...
2) More reading practice-
        The more you read, the better you do.
        Try to find some articles attracting and not too difficult or too easy to you. Then fellow the way you have learned and keep going. And probably you can follow whate Fang-chih said.
However , I'm sometimes confused that what we learned is a good way for every kinds of reading?
[Ellipsis (...) indicates my omission of text.]

Here, Li-yuh, the Wednesday person in her group, was in the middle of her discussion of the good ways to improve reading ability. Li-yuh's advice on more reading practice was related to Fang-chih, the Monday person, whose ideas about how to learn to read were similar to what was taught in the class they took. There is no obvious disagreement with Fang-chih or anyone else on the issue since Li-yuh's advice seemed to help her group members to follow Fang-chih's suggestion. However, the word "probably" also gives a hint of the possibility that she finds Fang-chih's suggestion impractical. There would be uncertainty in the

determination of the real intention of Li-yuh if the e-mail message provided the only source of data.

In the same message, there is another ambiguity in determining whether what Li-yuh expressed was a disagreement. Li-yuh's underlined utterance was constructed as a statement with a question mark. Actually, Li-yuh indicated it was meant to be a question. However, the interrogative used by Li-yuh was ambiguous because the context surrounding it was not clear enough to determine the nature of it. It could either be seen as a rhetorical or true question. In the interview, Li-yuh clearly indicated she didn't believe that what was recommended by Fang-chih and the instructor was good for every kind of reading. The utterance turned out to be, then, actually a disagreement on the ways suggested for improving reading ability. Li-yuh's advice for selecting an interesting and suitable book for reading before following the ways one learns in class and Fang-chih's suggestion functioned as part of a developing disagreement.

3.3 The Language Event under Inquiry

This study examines the situated language use in relation to politeness in an emerging language event, class discussions via computers. The data collected actually include speech activities other than "discussion." Because of the seamless nature of the e-mail discourse event, very often several speech activities, such as chats, and

clarifications, were integrated into a larger language activity termed "discussion." Some of the most intriguing politeness phenomena were displayed in these speech activities. A general term "discussion" will be used to cover all the speech activities that occurred in this study without further distinction.

The following section will discuss how the language event under inquiry was formatted in a new discourse community in order to give an overall sense of the language event.

3.3.1 The Evolution of a New Language Event in a Discourse Community

"A speech event is a recognized activity centered in discourse, which is known to and often labeled by members of a speech community" (Ferrara 1994). Is there a speech community in the classroom under study? The participants in this study are like most other people who "do not receive either formal or informal instruction in an etiquette of electronic communication" (Kiesler et al. 1984). However, the data indicate that they did develop a sense of a "discourse community" (Bizzell 1982) in the very early stage of the study. I suggest that this discourse community was constituted not just by participants who happened to attend the class and were randomly assigned to a particular discussion group but by their construction and recognition of the appropriate norms for the emerging language event and

their willingness and capability to follow them and perform
their linguistic behaviors accordingly. In addition to
other norms of a discourse community, successful
participation in the language event under inquiry, class
discussions via computers, requires the participants to be
able at least to (1) display sustained arguments, (2) on
relevant topics, (3) in a pre-determined order, (4) via a
computer. A deviation from these aspects might be rejected
as an inappropriate language activity by members of the
discourse community.

Among the discourse community under study, the
instructor is probably the most influential single speech
community member that regulates the linguistic behaviors of
the other members, since the performances of the student
participants in such a language event were directly related
to their grades. However, other group members would be
equally significant in the establishment of this discourse
community. The following excerpt shows an example of a
rejection of a language activity which deviated from the
norms of the new language event:

> Excerpt 8 (Yenmin, disagreeing with Adil's previous
> language activity)
>
> ... Except this, I'm curious about the messages from
> Adil. Although I've received your response, they are
> not related to last week's topic. You just talked about
> your personal opinions, but you didn't respond "matter
> recycling" which Douglas has assigned to us. Thus I
> concern if you have any misunderstanding or not. I
> think you can talk about your ideas in the beginning.
> After that, you still need to discuss our topic. I hope
> you can understand what I'm talking...

In the prior week, "matter recycling" was the topic assigned for the participants to discuss. Everyone in Yenmin's group expressed some opinions on the recycling situations in his/her own countries, except for Adil, who chose a different topic to discuss and sent a message criticizing the spelling and grammatical errors of Yenmin instead. Here, Yenmin acknowledges the receipt of Adil's e-mail but rejects his discussion of grammatical and spelling errors. Yenmin implies that to be a legitimate example of the new language activity, a response must not only be on e-mail, but also must argue about something relevant to the topic previously assigned by the instructor or decided and agreed on by the whole group.

While any violation of the four norms mentioned above may pose a threat to the validity of the language activity under inquiry, topic relevance was the only item that really caused problems. Other deviations from the norms of the language event that often occurred include the failure of students to respond to the current topics within the expected time frame; responses in an unscheduled order; and insufficient length of the argumentation. Usually a casual violation of the speech norms, such as delay in response by a particular person, would not pose serious problems for the proceeding of the language event. However, such violations were often recognized and acknowledged by the speakers themselves. Apologies or excuses usually accompanied the acknowledgement. For example:

Excerpt 9 (David, apologizing for his lateness on assignment.)

Group1 members,
        Hello, How was everyone ?
        I'm sorry I was late for this week discussion.
It is because the computer is not working before I finish the discussion.

Excerpt 10 (Lim, making an excuse for his shortened argument on euthanasia)

... This is my opinion about Involuntory euthanosian and mercy killing and voluntory. Even though this writing looks little than other times, I tell the my opinion and I think it is enough. I believe the purpose of this E-mail is about reading but amount of writing.
                                        Thanks,
                        Lim

Excerpt 11 (Akira, explaining his unscheduled response.)

        Hello, I'm supossed to write this on Tuesday but I'm going to be busy soon so I respond a little bit earlier.

As can be seen above, the violation of the norms of the language event is usually self-conscious. In Excerpt 9, David apologized for his delayed response to the topic with an excuse and in Excerpt 10, Lim argued for his shortened discussion with an emphasis on the quality of his discussion. Excerpt 11 illustrates the awareness of a pre-determined order as part of the language event.

These excerpts are evidence for the existence of a "discourse community" in the classroom under study, whose constitution is established through the recognition of the language event by all the community members. The norms of the language event are under construction and at the same

time are often monitored and enforced by those who
participate in the language event.

3.3.2 Discourse Types in the Language Event

There are two distinguishable types of discourse in the
present study. As Kasper (1990) points out, discourse types
can vary on a continuum of politeness investment ranging
from lack of politeness in transactional discourse, as
illustrated by Holmqvist and Andersen's (1987) study of
linguistic interactions in a car repair shop, to total
domination of politeness in the prototypically interactional
discourse. The interactional type of discourse is defined
here as the discourse in which interlocutors are engaged in
speech acts that mainly lead to the establishment and
maintenance of social relationships. By contrast,
transactional mode of discourse is defined as one in which
participants are primarily engaged in optimally efficient
exchanges of information (Brown and Yule 1983; Lakoff 1989).
In transactional discourse, the Cooperative Principle (cf.
Section 1.6.3 in Chapter One) will be closely observed,
while in interactional discourse, "the Cooperative Principle
is regularly overridden by the Politeness Principle in order
to ensure that participants' face-wants are taken care of"
(Kasper 1990). In the present study, these two types of
discourse, though distinguishable, are mixed together most
of the time. Since most participants responded not only to
the assigned topic but to their group members' discussions

and participation in the language event as well, it is not easy to separate interactional from transactional discourse. More often, the transactional and interactional discourse types are mixed and constantly changing in a single e-mail message.

While most students displayed maximally transactional exchanges in the first week of their e-mails, most of them began to demonstrate interactional interests in others' participation and the use of politeness formulae and strategies noticeably increased in later weeks' assignments. The following excerpts show the shift from a predominantly transactional response to an interactional one.

Excerpt 12 (Yenmin's second e-mail assignment)

Answer to question 1 :
I agree conviction records should be destroyed after a person is released from jail. When a person is convicted of a crime, he will be punished by his society...
Answer to question 2 :
I disagree that arrest records are kept because people sometimes are arrested on suspicion or for investigation...

Excerpt 13 (Yenmin's third e-mail assignment)

Happy Valentine's Day! I'm the monday person--Yenmin. Today I opened my E-Mail and found I've only got one response from David. I know there are four persons in our group. I wonder if the other three persons have responsed to me or not. At the same time, would you please tell me if you received my response?

Response to the preceding topic :

My response is to David whom is the only person I got the response from. After reading your response, I am so happy that you have totally different thinking with me because that mean I can discuss and challenge with you...

Excerpt 12 and 13 demonstrate the contrasting discourse types of the same person. Excerpt 12 is an example of the transactional discourse, which represents the typical style in most of the e-mails in the first couple of weeks of e-mail discussion. The reason why transactional discourse predominated in Yenmin's e-mail message in the initial stage of the language event could be that there was nothing to respond to by Yenmin in the beginning since she was the Monday person. However, most of the participants who were assigned to other days of the week did not display interactional discourse, even when they had some e-mail messages to respond to. For example:

Excerpt 14 (Cindy after receiving Mitsuha's message)

From cindy@machine.school.edu Sun Feb 27 18:13:15 1994
Date: Wed, 9 Feb 1994 13:33:37 -0500 (EST)
From: Cindy <cindy@machine.school.edu>
To: group2@machine.college.school.edu
Subject: #1 homework assignment

I think it is really difficult to say that the conviction should/should not be distroyed after a person is released from jail because I think it is depend on what they do. I also believe that the society should give a chance to people if they change. I think the police shouldn't keep the conviction records till the person die.
In my opinion, I think the if the convictor did something by accident, then the conviction record should only keep 2 years after the person get out from jail...
<u>Since we have to write opinion about other person in the same group, I saw the opinion about Mitsuha.</u> I personally don't agree that keep the records of the convictor or arrestor forever. I don't believe the police should see their records see what they did before and judge them this time. Base on the negative effect theorm, bad thing always weighted heavier than goop thing, so if the police see the records of the person, they will more like to think that person

convict in the crime more than he/ she is a good
person.
Well that's all I can say about conviction and
arrest records.
Cindy

In Excerpt 14, Cindy, the Wednesday person of group
two, was discussing her viewpoints about whether conviction
and arrest records should be destroyed after someone is
released from a jail. Notice that her subject line of the
e-mail headings suggested a transactional prediction in her
coming message. There were no personal interactions
involved with any of her group members throughout her e-mail
Even when Cindy explicitly indicated that she was going to
respond to Mitsuha, the Tuesday person in the group, there
were no explicit comments from her to Mitsuha's viewpoints
on the issue. Basically, her response was done in a
transactional mode rather than a person-to-person
interaction. Her last utterance ("Well that's all I can
say about conviction and arrest records."), though
displaying oral language features, focused more on her own
isolated comment than interaction.

A possible explanation is that the participants in this
study were new to this language event and communication
medium and had not established among themselves the "rules"
for what could be counted as proper in terms of genres.
They were testing and exploring different discourse styles
and tried to develop and reach a consensus in discourse
types as they moved forward. The want for establishing and
maintaining social relationships eventually prevailed even

in a non-face-to-face interaction in e-mail as the communication moved on. The students in the same group began to use a discourse type that involved more personal interactions and abandoned the more transactional discourse. The concerns for face in the interactions began to emerge and various politeness strategies were developed as the interactions increased and social relationships established in e-mails and other contexts (e.g., weekly meetings or private encounters).

As seen above, the participants of the study were very sensitive to the need for constructing a "discourse universe" in which meaningfulness is achieved by the incorporation of social relationships, emotions as well as the exchanges of information (Duranti 1986). The majority of the students in e-mail discussions were actively engaged in the construction of their social world with this new medium by the third week of the 15-week semester of their communication. There is only one exception (1 in 15), who displayed a consistent tendency toward transactional preference in e-mails throughout the whole study. This person used no first names, or pre-determined address terms (e.g., Tuesday person) to address her teammates in her e-mail. Once in a while when she responded to the viewpoints of her teammates, she would take the whole group as the addressees to avoid direct one-to-one interaction. Most of the time she would simply concentrate on developing her own arguments rather than showing approval of or disagreement

with the writings of her group. When it came to politeness, her writings were characterized by avoidance or distance to the arguments of her teammates. When asked about her lack of interaction with her group in the interview, she indicated that it was her personality style to interact with others that way. Even when there were disagreements between her and the other group members, she would deliberately avoid direct or open disagreements with others and would not want too much involvement in group events. This attitude toward the social relationships did show up in her participation in the language event in the study. Even so, there still were traces of awareness of and sensitivity to demands of establishment and maintenance of social relationships in her basically transactional discourse, such as "good luck" in her advice of how to improve reading, and "I'm sorry" for a geography mistake she made.

3.3.3 E-mail Message Structures

As described above, several language activities were integrated into a larger language event in the study. Those speech activities are often framed and organized by the uses with several linguistic devices. A typical e-mail message of this study usually contains three distinguishable structures: (1) opening, (2) body of main language activity, and (3) ending. The openings and the endings are optional and often constitute the interactional discourse in the messages and the body of the main language activity usually

mixes up the transactional discourse with interactional one. The openings of the e-mails contain the subject lines, and optional greetings, opening address forms, or chats. The main body of discussion could often be distinguished by some discourse markers, such as okay., now, right now, here, etc. The endings may contain brief greetings (e.g., "Thank you all and have a good day"), slogans (e.g., "LIFE IS REALLY VALUABLE!!!"), or chats (e.g., "Guys, let's go to warm area in this spring break and have fun...."). The following section will give part of the data to illustrate the e-mail discourse structure and the main mitigating strategies used. In order to include all the important mitigating strategies discussed in the latter chapters, the data displayed here will include (1) a portion of topic two, and (2) a two-week consecutive discussion of abortion (topic 4 and 5) from the same group.

3.4 Mitigating Strategies in the Data

The data here will be highlighted with five different type faces to indicate disagreements and four strategies used to mitigate disagreement. These strategies will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

<u>Underline - Disagreement</u>
<u>Bold and underline - Minimize disagreement</u>
<u>Italic and underline - Impersonalize Speaker and Hearer in disagreement</u>
<u>Bold, Italic, and underline - Hedges in disagreement</u>
<u>Double underline - Apology in disagreement</u>
* Pseudonyms are used to protect the confidentiality of the institutions and the participants.

TOPIC 2 (SCHOOL a good place for winter?)

From Yenmin@machine.school.edu Sun Feb 27 18:10:48 1994
Date: Mon, 14 Feb 1994 17:31:56 -0500 (EST)
From: Yenmin <Yenmin@machine.school.edu>
To: group1@machine.college.school.edu
Subject: Response to the preceding topic & initiate the new
topic

Happy Valentine's Day! I'm the monday person--Yenmin. Today
I opened my E-Mail and found I've only got one response from
David. I know there are four persons in our group. I wonder
if the other three persons have responsed to me or not. At
the same time, would you please tell me if you received my
response?

Response to the preceding topic :

My response is to David whom is the only person I got the
response from. After reading your response, I am so happy
that you have totally different thinking with me because
that mean I can discuss and challenge with you. You agree
conviction records and arrest records should be kept for a
period of time after a person is released or aquitted. I'll
tell you the truth that's my original thinking. Basically,
keeping all the criminals' records are to protect the people
in the society and to help the police detect some new crimes
when they find a new crime is related to an ex-criminal. In
fact, most of the country keep people's conviction and
arrest records. However, as the result of keeping their
records, it causes a lot of tragedies. For example, a person
has to endure some other people's judge or insult because of
his preceding fault. Since most people look down at him, he
probably hates this society and changes his personality to
be more cold and cruel. To make his life, he just can return
to crime because nobody want to hire him. In your response,
you talked about " After a person is released from jail,
some police agencies should observe their behavior before
they destroy their records." I'm sorry to tell you that it's
definitly against human's right because he is not a criminal
anymore after jail. We should respect his basic right and
give him an opportunity to face his new life. Welcome to
discuss more with me. Thank you!

Initiate this week's topic :

"Is (SCHOOL) a good place for international students to
spent the winter?"
        Have you ever thought about this question? If you have
a car, you have to scrape your windows and endure the frozen
weather which is below 20 degrees. Or you have to get up
early for eight o'clock class under snow storm or blizzard.

Your answer is probably "NO!" For me, I have both negative and positive answers.

When the temperature is below 10 degrees, the wind chill is below 20 degrees or the ground is icy, I hate to be here because I must wear a lot of heavy clothes and cover all my face and body that make me have restricted movement. I probably slide down on the icy ground and break my arms or legs. Therefore, sometimes it's kind of dangerous to stay here. However, I feel (SCHOOL's) winter is beautiful.

When the snow covers on the trees, on the houses, on the roof and on the ground, the earth becomes a silver world. It seems to be pure and peaceful. If I look at the snow which covers on the tree, I can see many special patterns shining under the sun. Sometimes I can see some icicles hanging from the roof. They just look like colorful crystals. If it's sunny and not very cold, I enjoy walking in the snow. It's romantic for me.

(SCHOOL's) winter is also interesting because of winter sports and activities. They include hockey, ice skating, skiing, sledding, snow mobiling, broom ball and ice fishing. Actually, two weeks ago, I just went sledding. I enjoyed sliding down the hill and let the snow fly on my face. It was so fun that I couldn't forget it. Right now, I'm thinking about learning ice skating even though I'm a little scared.

In conclusion, I feel more fun than bored to spend the winter at (SCHOOL). Except its frozen weather and icy ground, I think it's not bad to spend the winter here. Enjoy your winter at (SCHOOL).
Yenmin

Topic 4 (Abortion #1)

From Yenmin@machine.school.edu Thu Mar 24 16:07:30 1994
Date: Mon, 28 Feb 1994 18:07:33 -0500 (EST)
From: Yenmin <Yenmin@machine.school.edu>
To: group1@machine.college.school.edu
Subject: Recycling / Abortion

Hi! How is everybody? Spring break is coming. Are you excited? Nice to talk to you again! This week, I've received the discussions of "matter recycling" from David & Lim, a warning message and a response from Adil, but no response from Eddie. I concerned if Eddie had any difficulties, so you couldn't join our discussion. Except this, I'm curious about the messages from Adil. Although I've received your response, they are not related to last week's topic. You just talked about your personal opinions, but you didn't respond "matter recycling" which Douglas has assigned to us. Thus I concern if you have any misunderstanding or not. I think you can talk about your ideas in the beginning. After that, you still need to discuss our topic. I hope you can

understand what I'm talking. If you have any problems,
please talk to me in class. Thank you very much!

O.K. Right now I'd like to respond to last week's topic
about "matter recycling." I appreciate that David talked
about the recycling problems in Hong Kong and Lim talked
about those in Korea. I've learned a lot. Thank you! It
seems both of you agree that Americans do much more matter
recycling than your own countries. I've already said, last
week, that my country has done less about that, compared to
the US. From the discussion of David, I can tell you seem
not to be cofident about improving the earth's recycling
problems. In fact, it is really hard to do it perfect.
However, *if we don't try our best to keep going*. Can you
imagine what kind of environment we will give it to our new
generations? More and more people have already had some
recycling notions, they're just lacking in acting. If we can
ask ourselves to do first, and then try to influence the
other people, I think our enviroment won't be worse and
worse. We're lucky to be here because we've learned some new
recycling notions from Americans. Since we all agree the US
has done much better, we should learn his merits and bring
them back to our countries, especially for some specific
methods in matter recycling. If all the countries in the
world try their best to improve the environment and save &
reuse the resources, we still can help not only ourselves
but also our new generations have a high quality life.
Therefore, don't discourage and keep going in matter
recycling!

After finishing last week's topic, I'd like to initiate this
week's new topic "Are you for or against abortion? Why or
why not?" Since we all agreed this topic, we won't argue
that Monday person always decides the topic, right? O.K.
Come back to our new topic. If you want me to say just "for"
or "against" abortion, it's really hard for me to answer.
Basically, I disagree abortion, but I agree it under some
certain cases. For example, if a woman is pregnant because
of being raped. Or when a mother borns a baby and that will
threaten the mother's life. I agree they should abort.
Although some people say that women should have the right to
choose abortions or not, *I think* that had better under
controlled in some special rules or laws. Anyway, abortion
is relates to kill a life, we should not make it become a
very easy thing to do, especially for teenager girls. If we
regard abortion as a normal operation, it maybe will
encourage more and more people to indulge themselves in
having sex and not care about the result. I think people
have the responsibility to behave themselves. If they are
pregnant under this situation, compared to kill a life, they
had better face the fact and keep the babies. Even though
more and more people stand by "pro choice", I still believe
that each life is potential and precious and we should

respect each new life. However, since everything in this world is not perfect, we should permit some certain abortion cases but not completely. Those are my opinions. How about yours? I expect to share your opinions. Thank you very much! Yenmin

From david@machine.school.edu Thu Mar 24 16:07:35 1994
Date: Wed, 2 Mar 1994 16:35:21 -0500 (EST)
From: David <david@machine.school.edu>
To: group1@machine.college.school.edu
Subject: week5 discussion

 Group one members,
        How is everyone today?? Are you all ready for spring break?
     This week question is " Are you for or against abortion? Why? or Why not? "

        First, I would like to respone monday person answer. She is one the For side of the abortion from what she write. She said that people should have their responsible for the unborn baby and their behavior in sex. **But I think that the women should have their choice to choose what they want to do. I think that in some case, the accident happen to the women that don't want the baby yet ,So what should they do ? If the abortion is illegeal, they may give it away after the baby was born. So, you think how the baby feel after they grow up . that may cause more to the baby than you abort it before.**

        If the abortion is illegal, the affect of the new born baby will be greater. It is becasue Right now in our society, the scientist or inventor try to produce a lot of different product to prevent the pegeance. But how many of them are safe to the user and How do we know there may or may not have an affection to the unborn baby. For an example, the pills that prevent pegenance, these pills may work for some women, so some many still being pegena after use it. So, What can they do with the baby, or they shouldn't have sex until they want the baby??? Go back to my point, the pills if it is working but do you know the chemical inside these pills will or will not affect the baby? Like some people was saying some chemical with cause different diseases or some other things. you may find out after baby is born. I think that the abortion should be legeal. But I doesn't mean they should go ahead to do whatever they what about sex. They also should be careful about it too.

        the abortion , I think , is the parent choice. Refering to the text book. They talk about the religious and other people that against the abortion I think they don't know

how the person's feeling, they just think that killing the fetus is just like to murder a baby. They never think of the thing that could happen after. Like what I said about, Who is going to take care the child after they are born. Nobody! they migth put the baby into some voluteer organization or institution. They could affect more to the baby. So, I think that to deteriment the abortion legeal or not. It should not be deteriment by those people. And If the abortion is legeal that could also help the growth population. So that, Legeal abortion should help to solve a lot of problem on the parents and the population!
That is!
Wish you all have a nice spring break!!have fun!!
From David

From Kenji@machine.school.edu Thu Mar 24 16:07:42 1994
Date: Thu, 3 Mar 1994 12:37:22 -0500 (EST)
From: Kenji <Kenji@machine.school.edu>
To: group1@machine.college.school.edu
Subject: abortion

What's going on fellows? Sorry I missed this, last week.
I was kind of surprised that everybody is , seemed like, so serious about the topic and creating such a nice arguments here on E-mail. Today, I will respond to the topic and Monday-person, and also David,s idea about "abortion."

First of all, I was so impressed on how everyone is conscious about abortion. To tell the truth, *I didn't think you have definite opinion to the topic, abortion. Ithink David's idea about abortion is so reasonable and persuasive. I am also on the pro-choice side.* In philisophical and moral point, it is obviously a killing. Although, I believe it is impossible to judge. In fact, when you really think about abortion, and face the reality, it is not just what is right or wrong, I strongly beleive. We all have to have a responsibility for the baby and think about the baby's future and also our's.

Pretend, you conceive a baby. What would you do? It is not just "I 'll have a baby, because I think abortion is wrong." What are you going to do about school? Who is going to pay and feed yopur baby? There are lots of problem around.

Nowadays, students' abortion is not just a problem that we think we would never ever experience. It actually happens around us so often. Last year, a freiend of mine, who is 20 years old and go to college, just had a miscarriage. Her boy friend was and still is one of my best friend too. They once told me that they thought about getting marriage because of the pregnancy. In this case it ended as miscarriage.

Fortunately she was physically fine and he also was working and had enough money to manage the case. My roommate's best friend just had an abortion too. It just is hard to realize how serious and related to us.

On the other hand, we often are so careless about contraception. We all should be more responsible for whatever we do. That is only thing I really can say, I guess.

If I or my girl friend conceive a baby, I'll have an abortion even though I beleive it is not a right thing to do. I will of course talk about it with my girl friend and decide it together. I won't be able to ignore our relatives also. I will think of it as taking my responsibility, feeling guilty.

That is basically why I support pro-choice. It is impossible that somebody's right to live belonging to someone else, but if we decide it unreasonably, it would belong to his/her parents. Because this is not just abortion is right or wrong.

I hope you can see what I'm saying here. The issue is also full of conflict just like it is in life, I believe. Here is one thing we can do, wherever you go you'ld have fantastic time during spring break, bring your condomes too!
    At least we can do.....
    You all have a great one!
    Kenji,

From Lim@machine.school.edu Thu Mar 24 16:07:54 1994
Date: Wed, 16 Mar 1994 14:43:43 -0500 (EST)
From: Lim <Lim@machine.school.edu>
To: group1@machine.college.school.edu
Subject: Abortion discussion

    Hi, how was everything going guys?
    I am sorry about replying about this topic, but I left very early to New York City at the spring break. How was you guys break? you had great fun? I know some of you went to other state and visit friends. I went New York, and had a great fun. I met my friend and visited a lot of places. If you have not been there, I strongly recommend you to visit. There are absolutely different from (CITY).

    Any heaths week's discussion topic is about "abortion". I already read you guys opinion and they were very interesting. _I think_ I agree with Yenmin about abortion. I, of caurse, think that abortion is very crue act and it must not happen to everybody. However, the abortion exist in the world and the problem is very serious today. Life is the

<u>most important thing in the world and even premature. But</u>
<u>something can happen by accident like mistake or rape.</u>
<u>   In that case, if the baby is born, there is also big</u>
<u>problem after they born. The parents will like them even</u>
<u>though they do not want that baby? The person will happy</u>
<u>when he grow up and know about his birht? I strongly say</u>
<u>"NO". Those are the big reasons why I agree with abortion.</u>

Some people think that the cristians are the people who
strongly insist to disagree about abortion. Even though I am
cristian, I am con about abotion. I also understand why they
do not want abortion and I agree with them. Life is given by
God, so it is very important and people can not take out the
life by their wish. <u>But think about this, if they are born,</u>
<u>who will take a responsibility about them? It is their</u>
<u>parents! Why the parents want to abort their baby? Because</u>
<u>they do not want them by several reasons which are extremly</u>
<u>important to them. If so they will be happy and want to take</u>
<u>a responsibility after the baby born? *I guess not*. And they</u>
<u>decide to abort their baby easily? *I do not think so*. If</u>
<u>they have baby even though they do not want, they will raise</u>
<u>their kids with love?</u>

The abortion is not other people's problem, but the
parents themselves. Again, abortion is not good act, so we
must be careful not to make a mistake..

                                        kim

Topic 5 (Abortion #2)

From Yenmin@machine.school.edu Thu Mar 24 16:07:48 1994
Date: Mon, 14 Mar 1994 13:21:29 -0500 (EST)
From: Yenmin <Yenmin@machine.school.edu>
To: group1@machine.college.school.edu
Subject: Abortion(2)

Welcome back! I had a wonderful time in San Francisco during
spring break. How about you? Did you also have an
unforgettable vacation? Break is over. We have to study hard
again. Anyway, nice to talk to you in the computer.

This week, we will continue last week's topic and expand it.
Since we read two more articles which were found from the
main library, we should have more thinking about abortion.
One article talks about some anti-abortion groups block
access to abortion clinics because a Supreme Court decision
allowed the Federal racketeering law to be used. The other
article talks about "when a federal appeals a court ruled
that a Pennsylvania law restricting abortions could take
effect without further hearings on its impact on women,
abortion rights advocates received a major setback." From

these two articles, we can see anti-abortion groups fight with pro-choice groups. Both of them have strong opinions to support. Abortion is really a conflict topic to discuss. After reading your responses, it seems most of you agree with pro-choice. *In my opinion, I think* the world become more and more chaos because *people* care too much about *human being's needs. People* always have a lot of excuses when they want to support their benefits, and they often ignore some other innocent things or lifes. For example, when people shoot animals for sports, they think it's not only a fun thing to do but also a wonderful exercise. If you blame them for killing animals, they will argue with you,"these specices of animals are too many, we kill them is to control their quantities. However, nowadays there are a lot of endangered animals because ancient people ignore their quantities and kill them for food or for fun. Even though our natural science is predominant, nobody can promise any kind of animals won't disappeare in the world. Most people don't think it's a right thing to do, but some people still enjoy that because shooting animals can make them feel satisfied but not guilty. Don't you think that notion come from *people's* selfishness? Compared to abortion, *some people* think it's a way to control the world population. Since we have some other ways to do contraception, why do we choose abortion to kill an innocent and potential life? Actually, most of you don't think abortion is a right thing to do, just because people need it, so we should allow it to be legal. *I think* this notion will cause more disasters for people because human being's desires are endless. When we achive our purpose, we probably will ask for more desires. We shouldn't just care about *people's* desires, especially for something bad, and ignore the truth and the moral. I think we should ask ourselves to discipline our sexual life and try our best to do contraception. Right here, I'd like to say that I'm pro-life except when the life of the mother is threatened or when there has been rape or incest. I want to emphasize that I'm not totally anti-abortion, but *I think people should not regard abortion as a normal thing to do*. We had better control it under some specific laws. By this way, our world won't be more and more chaos.
Yenmin

From david@machine.school.edu Thu Mar 24 16:08:00 1994
Date: Wed, 16 Mar 1994 16:02:41 -0500 (EST)
From: David <david@machine.school.edu>
To: group1@machine.college.school.edu
Subject: question about topic

 Dear group members,
        Hello everyone ! Is everyone have a nice spring break!

Today, I'm not going to write the disscusion because
we already talk about that and I couldn't think of anythink
else to write.
        I'm sorry but *I think* we should change to another
topic . talk about it tomorrow in class.

                David

From Kenji@machine.school.edu Thu Mar 24 16:08:04 1994
Date: Fri, 18 Mar 1994 15:46:56 -0500 (EST)
From: Kenji <Kenji@machine.school.edu>
To: group1@machine.college.school.edu
Subject: abortion dicussion

Hey, Sorry to be late.
I,m here. I'm glad that everyone sound like you guys had
pretty good spring break. I ,of course, had a great one. I
went to Toront, Niagla, N.Y. passing through Buffalo, &
Washington D.C. It was fantastic! I've always been
interested in American history, and D.C. was one of my dream
city to visit. There are a lot to see there and things that
we should know as international student studying in the
U.S.A. Hope you get to go sometime.
        Anyway, I was surprised that half our group members are
christian, whom we always see in social protests. I am
christian too, I would say. In the article, the
anti-abortion leaders are all christians, saying "this is an
effort to intimidate the rank and file so they won't
associate with us. And for some people, that may work. But
we're going to see who's brave and who listens to God, not
to man."
        Social protest and religion are almost always related
somehow. That was my first impression after reading the
article. And anti-abortion side people, unfortunately,
sounded *a* *little* weak and unconvincing. Because, to people
who doesn't have religion knows nothing like religious
philosophy, knowledge, or belief. Perhaps they know things
bad doesn't have faith in it.
        I don't think it is persuasive saying "'cause God told
me so, its in the Bible." I also think I'm on pro-choice
side not becuase its on the Bible, but that how I believe.

        As Yenmin said, most of pro-side people knows that
abortion is not things that we should always do or support.
This is something that we sometimes have to do, knowing and
feeling guilty somehow.
        I agree with Yenmin and Lim, this is something that we
suold be more careful in everyday life.

Because, afterall, this is so complexed and
controversial issue, which also is full of conflict.

See you in class,
Kenji.

From Lim@machine.school.edu Thu Mar 24 16:08:09 1994
Date: Sun, 20 Mar 1994 16:41:59 -0500 (EST)
From: Lim <Lim@machine.school.edu>
To: group1@machine.college.school.edu
Subject: abortion

Hi, guys. How was weedend going with you guys?

Last night, I and friends of mine went out of (CITY).
After I came to (STATE), I did not go out from (CITY) very
often. But in this week, I got a great fun with friends.,.
Any way, we have to talk about abortion again. I am not
pretty sure what I can do now. David was also confused about
that. And I agree with him... I also got the massages from
Yenmin and Canjo (sorry I am not sure your name. I promise
that I will check your name after this massage.)

Like I wote down last time, I am for about abortion. And
1 knew that some of you guys agree with me. Once again, the
abrtion is importane problem today.
Although I agree with abrtion, I insist that the people
who want to abort must think that many times before doing
that. Life is one of the most important things in the world.

Have a nice weekend and see you guys in the class.

Lim

From Adil@machine.school.edu Tue Mar 29 10:49:06 1994
Date: Wed, 23 Mar 1994 20:23:15 -0500 (EST)
From: Adil <Adil@machine.school.edu>
To: group1@machine.college.school.edu
Subject: ABORTION

ABORTION
From: Adil
To: group 1.
Abortion is one of the hottest topic discussed in the
United States. It is really important to have a low to
control abortion not only in such big country like the
United States but also in the rest of the world. However,
some countries may reject abortion for religion reasons. For
example, Islamic-world nations agree that abortion is
against Islam. Women can't get red of their unborn babes

unless they form a serious risk on the mothers' life.
Although abortion is forbidden in Islamic nations, some
doctors do abortion operations secretively to women who have
become pregnant. Such operation like that can be found in
Egypt a lot where women pay hundreds of dollars to those
doctors who became really rich of doing something like that.
Before I say my opinion in abortion, I would like to explain
the Islamic point of view in inhibiting abortion.

It is mentioned in the Holy Quern that children and
money are the most interesting things in our life. As a
result, Moslem do respect unborn babes.

However, country like Egypt which has a large numbers
of population deals with controlling the problem by teaching
people how to control their sexual activities. The
government there often offer TV. programs, special
discourses in public areas and classes in high schools and
universities. They also provide people with low price
condoms, anti-pregnant peals and tablets and certain
operation for either men or women. Nevertheless, whenever
women get pregnant, they have to give born to their babies.

On the other hand, abortion is something should not
exist in those nations because they have a strike society
where unmarried relation ships between men and women are
forbidden. Moreover, If a women became pregnant by accident,
and she isn't marred that would be completely undercover
until she gives born.

Although Islam rejects abortion, I feel that abortion
is something has to be up to women. Issue like abortion
effect women body, so they are the only one's who decide to
have the baby or not.

Thank you for your reading. This is Adil.

3.5 Clarification of Mitigating Strategies

As argued in Chapter One, there is a distinction

between politeness and mitigation. The latter can often be

conceptualized as goal-oriented and functional while the

former often incorporates the functional, or instrumental,

dimensions with its normative ones. However, the use of

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework as the

basis for the analysis of this study would inevitably

involve the use of their terms, such as positive or negative

politeness strategies. In order not to confuse the readers,

I would use "politeness strategies" to indicate strategies whose functions are actually to mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs). That is, all the politeness strategies mentioned in the chapters are mitigating strategies, which are goal-oriented and functional in nature.

In this chapter, I described the overall view of the participants about the language event. I further attempted to delimit disagreement by a definition that is based on speech theory. An example of interview on disagreement was given to show how disagreement could be determined. I also discussed the evolution of a discourse community, discourse types, and e-mail message structures to give the readers an overall sense of the language event under inquiry. Finally, part of the e-mail data was quoted with different type faces indicating disagreement and particular mitigating strategies for later discussion.

As these examples make clear, the e-mail generated by the ESL students is rich in data on disagreement and associated mitigation strategies. Before considering issues related to these strategies, in the next chapter we will examine the role of larger-order discourse structures-- participation frameworks and participant frameworks--in mitigating disagreement.

CHAPTER FOUR

PARTICIPANT AND PARTICIPATION FRAMEWORKS FOR MITIGATION

This chapter will be devoted to the role of participant frameworks and participation frameworks in constructing mitigation and disagreement.

4.1 Global Politeness Strategies in a New Language Event

As described in Chapter Two, the e-mail discussions proceeded in a multiparty situation where five students participated as the major interlocutors on assigned topics in a pre-determined turn in each group. The multiparty discussions together with the pre-determined turn-taking system of the language event under inquiry provided the students with an environment in which participation frameworks (Goffman 1974) were often exploited for their communicative goals at the moment. The exploitation of participation frameworks was closely related to redressive actions to face threatening acts, i.e. politeness. The following section will describe the ways multiparty participation framework was employed to achieve politeness.

4.1.1 Participation Framework and Participant Framework

There are two slightly different and yet intertwined phenomena: participant framework and participation framework. The former describes the positions of the participants aligned toward one another by activities and the latter emphasizes the positions taken by the depiction or animation of the participants as figures or characters within talk. Goodwin (1990) used the term "participant framework" as a gloss to cover both types of processes. I will make a distinction between these two processes, since each has its own role in the construction of the social world in which politeness is addressed.

Goffman mentions that "when a word is spoken, all those who happen to be in perceptual range of the event will have some sort of participation status relative to it" (1981:3). Several different participation statuses are created as the result of the utterance in relation to those who perceive it. For example, in a talk, there will be an "animator," who "is a talking machine, a body engaged in acoustic activity, or... an individual active in the role of utterance production" (Goffman 1981:144). Whoever does the physical production of the utterance is the "animator" of it. In the present study, this "animator" was the person who sat in front of a terminal and did the actual typing of the e-mail messages. There will also be an "author," "who has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded" (Goffman 1981:144).

An "author" is responsible for the content of talk while an "animator" is responsible for the production of it. In some cases, the author and the animator may not necessarily be the same. Authors may create the content of talk and ask others as animators to utter or type it for them. A "figure" is "that aspect of self displayed through talk" (Schiffrin 1990:242). In many utterances, Goffman indicates, a speaker represents himself or herself as a figure, who

> serves as the agent, a protagonist in a described
> scene, a 'character' in an anecdote, someone,
> after all, who belongs to the world that is spoken
> about, not the world in which the speaking occurs
> (1981:147).

That is, a "figure" is the character depicted by a speaker with a particular image through talk. Finally, there will be a "principal" involved in a talk. A principal is "someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken, someone whose beliefs have been told, someone who is committed to what the words say" (Goffman 1981:144). In general, the "animator" produces the actual talk, the "author" creates the content of the talk, the "figure" is created through talk, and the "principal" tells his commitments in the talk. A participant may occupy several different positions (Goffman 1974, 1981) in any utterance.

On the one hand, a participation framework is "comprised of a set of positions which individuals within perceptual range of an utterance may take in relation to what is said" (Schiffrin 1990:241). On the other hand, a

participant framework is comprised of a set of positions which align individuals toward one another within an activity. It refers to the framework that positions each participant in an utterance. That is, participation framework emphasizes the relations between talk and people and participant framework emphasizes the relations created by talk among people.

Both frameworks were employed in e-mail messages by participants to create particular politeness strategies that are characteristic to the language event and electronic medium in inquiry. For discussion's sake, these two frameworks are separated in the analysis. Actually they are mutually intertwined and not easily separable.

Politeness was achieved by the manipulation of both the participant framework and participation framework in the e-mail discourse by many of the participants in the present study. The participants were skillfully manipulating the frames in the e-mail messages as a global politeness strategy although most of them were new to the language event and the medium.

The manipulation includes (1) constructing frameworks in a particular way to address the face wants of the addressees, and (2) switching frameworks to attend to the face wants of the addressees.

4.1.2 Constructing Participant Frameworks as a Way to Be Polite

There has been little analysis of politeness in multiparty participant frameworks. In a group discussion situation, a speaker may have various options to construct the participant framework according to his discourse goal. He can construct a participant framework based on various combinations of the people involved in the talk. If he wants to get involved in close interaction with his addressees, he may choose a direct one-to-one interaction for such a goal. If he intends not to get too close to his addressees or tries to be formal, he may choose to address his addressees by a one-to-many interaction. He can even create and incorporate hypothetical persons in the frames for certain purposes. The flexibility to select particular addressees in a multiparty communication provides speakers with strategic resources that they can employ in a variety of ways.

For example, if a speaker wants to deliver some private information to a particular person in a multiparty conversation, he or she may whisper in the ear of that person and exclude the rest of the parties from the participant framework. In other words, the private chat between two people in a multiparty situation would align them as the addresser and addressee and put them in frame while the rest of the group would be out of frame in regard to the possibility to hear the talk. The manipulation of

participant framework could be used for a particular
discourse goal of the moment in terms of social
relationships. If a speaker intends to embarrass someone in
public and attempts to avoid being accused of doing so, he
may so construct his participant framework that he positions
himself as the speaker addressing something embarrassing to
a particular person as the focal addresser while implicitly
inviting the rest of parties as overhearers in the frame.
By doing so, the speaker may argue for his innocence when
accused of trying to embarrass the addressee in public. In
other words, the participant framework and the participation
framework can be used as strategic resources to serve the
discourse goal for a speaker.

Disagreements or criticisms, the acts threatening the
addressee's modesty face wants, were often avoided or
softened by the use of strategic construction of multiparty
participant frameworks. As I will argue in Chapter Six, the
strategies oriented toward addressee's want of his self-
image, values, and opinions not being rejected or disagreed
with are "modesty politeness" strategies. One of these
modesty politeness strategies was realized through the
global construction of participant framework. It is
basically done by intentionally avoiding construction of a
participant framework that positions a particular person as
the focal recipient of the face threatening act (FTA) in a
multiparty communication. Exposing the addressee as the
focal recipient of the disagreement in a multiparty

communication would put forward the addressee and damage his modesty face. Therefore, strategic avoidance of allocating the addressee as the focal recipient of the disagreement may satisfy the modesty face want of the addressee to some degree and hence becomes polite. There are two ways to manipulate a participant framework for such a purpose: (1) avoid publicly disagreeing with a particular party, (2) avoid explicit identification of the party being disagreed with as the focal recipient of the FTA while addressing the disagreement or criticism to the whole group. The former involves the actual change of the size of participant body and the latter appeals to the participants' positions aligned by the linguistic activity.

The first method to manipulate participant frameworks is to avoid doing FTAs in front of the whole group by directing the disagreements/criticisms only to the addressees that are directly related to the FTAs. Such is the strategy often used by the instructor asking for clarifications from the students. Since asking a particular student in public for clarifications indicates the points that student was trying to make were not clear enough to be understood and hence implies that his abilities to express himself in English were not as good as those of other group members who didn't need to clarify themselves, it may damage the face of the student. Therefore, it would be more polite to ask for a clarification by sending a private e-mail to the particular student rather than a public one to the whole

group. Basically it is an excluding strategy that is used to exclude the irrelevant participants from the interaction framework so that the damage to the addressee's face may be minimized. Since students were required to send their e-mail discussions to the whole group, it is a strategy not used as often by students as by the instructor. However, the participants did realize the polite aspect of participant framework in face threatening acts. For example:

> Excerpt 15 (Yenmin to Adil in a private e-mail concerning his criticism of her grammatical and spelling errors.) [Emphasis is indicated by underlining.]
>
> Hi, Adil! Thank you for caring about our grammar and spelling mistakes. <u>However, I don't understand why you say,"...a mistake from the first student can be transferred to all of us..." Would you please explain this more clear?</u> I think that the function of E-Mail is a bridge for communication. We should care more about our ideas but not grammar or mechanical errors. Yenmin

Here, Yenmin was responding to Adil's criticism about her grammatical and spelling mistakes with mitigated disagreement. This disagreement is displayed by what Pomerantz (1975, 1984) calls "repair initiators/insertion" and a challenge. Pomerantz points out that "in the course of producing a disagreement, a recipient may request clarification with 'what?' 'Hm?' questioning repeats, and the like" (1984:71). According to Pomerantz, Yenmin's request for clarification is counted as a disagreement, since "absences of forthcoming agreements or disagreements by recipients with gaps, requests for clarification, and the

like are interpretable as instances of unstated, or as-yet-unstated, disagreements" (1984:65). However, the confirmation of Yenmin's disagreement in this instance does not just come from the data itself. In the interview, Yenmin explicitly expressed her disagreement with Adil's implied accusation of her making many mistakes. She didn't think she made more grammatical or spelling mistakes than any of her group members and thought Adil was only trying to be picky.

Yenmin's mitigation of her disagreement (i.e., repair initiator/insertion) and challenge (request for further clarification from Adil) was performed globally as well as locally. Her global politeness strategy was done through the manipulation of participant framework, in which everyone in the group except Adil was excluded in the frame. In other words, Yenmin intentionally avoided embarrassing Adil by sending him her locally mitigated disagreement and challenge in private rather than to the whole group. By so doing, Yenmin was attending Adil's modesty face want and displaying her disagreement at the same time.

While avoiding doing FTAs before the whole group is in some way polite, the violation of it is often clearly aware and regarded as impolite. It often causes resentment from the relevant addressee. For instance, in the same incidence, Yenmin indicated that she was upset by Adil's lack of sensitivity and doubted his intention in criticizing her English ability in public when he, she emphasized, could

have done it through private e-mail with her. The damage of Yenmin's modesty face came not just from Adil's criticisms of her mistakes, but also from his unwelcome way of constructing his participant framework in the discourse.

4.1.2.1 Avoiding Explicit Identification of Addressee in Disagreements

The second way to manipulate participant frameworks in disagreement is to avoid explicitly identifying the particular party being disagreed with in a multiparty communication. By avoiding an explicit identification of the addressee in a disagreement, the speaker indicates that he or she acknowledges and cares about the addressee's modesty face want to such a degree that he or she would rather sacrifice communicative clarity than damage the modesty face want. It is a distancing strategy that keeps the addressee from being related to the FTAs, so that the criticism or disagreement is not seen as something directly pointing to the addressee.

As the following examples show, this type of strategy can be employed in two ways: (1) incorporating the intended recipient of FTAs into the general audience, and (2) disagreeing with the intended addressee by agreeing with others.

4.1.2.2 Incorporating the Intended Recipient into the General Audience

A speaker may address his/her disagreement to the whole group without explicit identification of the intended party being disagreed with so that FTAs can be minimized and the modesty face want of the party may be preserved. For example:

> Excerpt 16 (Kenji, arguing for abortion)
>
> What's going on fellows? Sorry I missed this, last week.
> I was kind of surprised that everybody is, seemed like , so serious about the topic and creating such a nice arguments here on E-mail. Today, <u>I will respond to the topic and Monday-person, and also David's idea about "abortion."</u>
> First of all, I was so impressed on how everyone is conscious about abortion. To tell the truth, I didn't think you have definite opinion to the topic, abortion. <u>I think David's idea about abortion is so reasonable and persuasive</u>. I am also on the pro-choice side. In philisophical and moral point, it is obviously a killing. Although, I believe it is impossible to judge. In fact, when you really think about abortion, and face the reality, it is not just what is right or wrong, I strongly beleive. We all have to have a responsibility for the baby and think about the baby's future and also our's.
> Pretend, you conceive a baby. <u>What would you do? It is not just "I 'll have a baby, because I think abortion is wrong." What are you going to do about school? Who is going to pay and feed yopur baby?</u> There are lots of problem around.

Here, Kenji disagrees with Yenmin's pro-life position in the abortion issue without explicitly identifying her as the focal recipient of his disagreement. Since Yenmin was the only person in the group who argued against abortion from a moral standpoint, it is a reasonable assumption that Kenji's hypothetical narrative and the questions were

actually directed towards Yenmin to indicate his
disagreement with Yenmin's position in the abortion issue.
When asked if Yenmin was the person Kenji had in mind for
the narrative and questions, he replied, "Yes, I was
thinking about Yenmin's idea. Not because exactly Yenmin
said uh abortion is something that we shouldn't do. Not
just because of that. Because last semester I was in same
class with Yenmin and we discussed about abortion? And in
my mind strongly I have an impression Yenmin, uh, not
because she is a Christian but her position and idea to the
topic of abortion so it's, you can't just say I will have a
baby because it's wrong." When asked to confirm if he
didn't agree with Yenmin's moral appeal on the issue, Kenji
answered rapidly without hesitation: "No, I don't, no, I
don't." Kenji further confirmed that he pretended to be
Yenmin uttering the constructed speech ("I'll have a baby,
because I think abortion is wrong") although he was trying
to explain that the constructed speech was not meant to be
serious. The interview proved that Yenmin was really the
person Kenji disagreed with and the narrative and questions
were indeed directed to Yenmin as disagreements. By re-
addressing the similar arguments and questions in the old
issue, Kenji believed that the paraphrases were obvious
enough for Yenmin to realize that his disagreement was
actually directed toward her. There were two positions
created by Kenji: himself as the addresser, and the rest of
his group as the ratified participants (Goffman 1981).

A ratified participant is regarded as someone who officially and jointly engages in talk in a social encounter (Goffman 1981). Since the participants were positioned in this way, Yenmin was in a sense blended into the group as one of the general recipients of Kenji's message rather than being someone who was picked up from the group to be explicitly disagreed with. In other words, the participant framework in this message was so constructed by Kenji that Yenmin was not particularly identified as the focal recipient of the disagreeing message so that her modesty face was saved.

In contrast to Excerpt 16, the following excerpt displays a participant framework that has less polite force as discussed in the above.

> Excerpt 17 (John disagreeing with two of his group members on euthanasia issue.)
>
> <u>Cindy and Wang</u>:
>   After read your e-mail of euthanasia, I have one openion different from yours.

Here, John's response on the issue of euthanasia was mailed to the whole group with his disagreement directed to two group members clearly identified. By arranging his response this way, John was able to, at the moment of interaction, create three distinguishable positions in the participant framework: himself as the addresser, the two identified group members as the focal addressees of his message, and the rest of the group as the unaddressed participants (Goffman 1981). While John's identification of the two group members may help clarify his arguments, it may

be considered less polite to construct a participant framework in which specific individuals are explicitly identified as the intended recipients rather than general audiences of disagreements.

4.1.2.3 Disagreeing with the Intended Addressee by Agreeing with Others

Another way to issue a disagreement with redressive action in a multiparty communication is to align the participants in such a way that the person being disagreed with is explicitly located and implicitly substantiated by the comparison with others. Usually the strategy to avoid displaying explicit or direct disagreement toward a person with one particular opinion is done by nominating several people with opposing opinions and showing agreement with them. In such a case, the participant framework is composed of positions taken as addresser, ratified addressee, and cited addressee. A ratified addressee is someone who is given an official status as the recipient of talk in a social encounter. I define a cited addressee as a ratified addressee who, due to particular causes, receives special attention by being explicitly referred to by the speaker in the frame. Those recipients who are mentioned in particular in an utterance become cited addressees while the others stay as ratified addressees. I make a distinction between a cited addressee and a focal addressee. The creation of a focal addressee in a multiparty communication makes the rest

of the parties unaddressed participants while the creation

of a cited addressee treats every party as a ratified

participant. In a multiparty communication, two or more

participants are sometimes differentiated from the rest of

the participants to serve special discourse goals.

In the present study, the cited addressees were often

used for the implication of disagreement. In other words,

the addresser's indirect disagreement with a cited addressee

is implied by his agreement with other cited addressees who

hold contrary viewpoints to those of that particular

addressee. By doing so, the speaker violates Grice's Maxim

of quantity ("Don't say more than you need to") and thus

"conversational implicature" can be incurred. The

implication is arrived at by saying what is beyond the

necessary "conversational contribution such as is required"

(Grice 1975:45). For example:

> Excerpt 18 (Dong, disagreeing with Fang-chih on
> euthanasia.)
>
> I read Akira and Fang-chih's e-mail. actually, I
> agree with Akira. according to Akira, if brain died,
> euthanasia is admitted. ...

Here, Dong's disagreement with Fang-chih's position on

the issue of euthanasia was implied in his agreement with

Akira's viewpoints. Since Akira held contrary viewpoints to

those of Fang-chih on the issue, agreeing with Akira may

imply disagreement with Fang-chih.

One might argue that Dong's utterance may also be

explained as agreeing with Akira without the intention to

disagree with Fang-chih, or as letting the instructor know he had been, as a diligent student, reading everybody's e-mail messages as required. However, the implication of disagreement with Fang-chih was made stronger when the two parties holding contrary positions were clearly identified and mentioned together for comparison. Dong could have simply indicated his agreement with Akira without mentioning Fang-chih at all if he had no intention to imply more than his agreement with Akira. In that case he would not have violated Grice's Maxim of quantity. If we assume that Dong follows the Gricean maxim, we will infer that Dong is implying disagreement with Fang-chih in his utterance.

When asked in the interview why he constructed his utterance this way in this excerpt, Dong replied, "I think Akira is right. I agree with him. Brain is the most important to our life. If brain is dead, we are dead. Then we can use euthanasia....Her idea is strange. I don't think she make sense but I don't want to say it so clearly. It's too much if I say so." Dong's statement first indicated his agreement with Akira but then exhibited his reluctance to openly oppose Fang-chih. It seems there were multiple discourse goals co-existing in Dong's utterance: arguing his own viewpoints on the issue, agreeing with Akira, and disagreeing with Fang-chih. Dong's utterance may probably best be read as "I read Akira and Fang-chih's e-mail. actually, I agree with Akira (and I don't agree with Fang-chih)." By not commenting on Fang-chih, Dong in effect

displayed his disagreement with her viewpoint. The purpose for the implication in this utterance was not to achieve communicative clarity but to attend to the modesty face want of Fang-chih.

Another example is seen in the above-mentioned Excerpt 16 where Kenji used the same strategy to avoid explicit disagreement with Yenmin. Although Kenji mentioned that he would respond to the "monday person" (Yenmin) in the beginning of his e-mail, he never explicitly responded to her in any way. What could be accounted for as his responses to Yenmin would be those contrasting viewpoints implicitly directed toward her. His response to Yenmin was made so implicit that his care for Yenmin's modesty face want could not have been easily identified if he had not been questioned on the relevant issues in the interview. In other words, Kenji's politeness was achieved at the expense of communicative clarity.

4.1.2.4 Explicitly Locating Participants for Politeness Purpose

One the one hand, politeness was achieved by avoiding explicitly locating the cited addressee in disagreement/criticism. On the other hand, politeness was facilitated by explicitly locating a particular participant in acts that are oriented toward the face wants of the addressee. For example:

Excerpt 19 (Yenmin)

I appreciate that <u>David</u> talked about the recycling problems in Hong Kong and <u>Lim</u> talked about those in Korea. I've learned a lot. Thank you!

In this excerpt, two of Yenmin's group members were explicitly identified for compliments. While the lack of paralinguistic and extralinguistic features in discourse using e-mail as medium usually put extra demands on the speaker to clarify the context by explicit identification of the interactants, the explicitness in identifying interactants is actually optional. There are other ways to indicate the compliments in this case. For example, the speaker may say: "two people in our group talked about recycling problems in Hong Kong and Korea. I've learned a lot." Or "the recycling problems in Hong Kong and Korea were discussed. I've learned a lot." Instead Yenmin manipulated the participant framework in such a way to align David and Lim as the addressed recipients and others in the group as unaddressed recipients of the compliment, increasing the satisfaction of the solidarity face want of the addressees.

Such is also the case in Excerpt 20, in which each individual fellow group member was incorporated, one by one, into a participant framework that provided a direct and close interactional relationship between the addresser and each addressee. The construction of frame in this way helps increase the solidarity between the interactants. It is obviously more polite to construct consecutive small

one-to-one participant frameworks for appreciation (i.e.,

"Thank you, Adil, Lim, David and Kenji.") than to construct

a generic one that would not explicitly identify each

participant (e.g., "Thank you all!").

> Excerpt 20 (Yenmin in the last e-mail assignment of the
> course at the very end of the term.)
>
> During this semester, I really enjoy discussing with
> you guys... Right here, I would like to give my thanks
> to you again. Thank you, <u>Adil, Lim, David and Kenji</u>.

The same strategy could be used in situations where

FTAs occur and the addressee's modesty face wants need to be

satisfied. For example:

> Excerpt 21 (David, apologizing to Yenmin for potential
> offense.)
>
> one of the point that monday person point out, Her
> mother have cancer and she was dead later, I feel sorry
> for <u>you</u> and if i say some offensive, please forgive
> me,...
> [Ellipsis (...) indicates my omission of text.]

In Excerpt 21, David's apology to the potential damage

to Yenmin's face was carried out in a participant framework

that particularly aligned Yenmin as the addressed recipient

so that his apology would be seen as sincere. The strength

of David's apology came not just from his words, but also

from the way he constructed the frame at the moment of

interaction with Yenmin.

As well as using construction of participant framework

as a strategy for being polite, speakers also switched

participant framework from one particular frame to another

as an attempt to address the hearers' face wants.

4.1.3 Participant Framework Shift

The participant frameworks in an e-mail message are usually dynamic and exist only in the moment of an action. Very often, a single e-mail message may contain various participant frameworks, which are in constant shift to meet the discourse goals of the speaker at the moment. Excerpt 22 demonstrates such participant framework shifts.

Excerpt 22 (Yenmin's e-mail)

Hi! This is Yenmin. I'm so happy this week because everyone in our group seems know how to use E-MAIL. I've already received a lot of response from David, Adil, Lim and Eddie. Thank you, everybody! I called this topic to be "Happy Union" because we're just like a family to learn and communicate together. Even though we don't have too many opportunities to talk in class, we can understand each other by the computer.

Right now, I'd like to discuss about last week's topic. First, I want to talk about (STATE'S) winter. It was the topic I chose last week and I've got response from my group members except Adil who chose another topic," Is ESL a good place to learn English?" I think it's maybe a little confused to Adil. Nevertheless, I'm glad to response both questions.

It seems most of you think (SCHOOL) is too cold to stay. One of you think it depends individually...

Response to Adil:
Hi! I can tell your anger about EL. In fact, a lot of international students complain its policies and exam, but most people seem just endure this situation because it's no use to argue with the ESL staffs. Since it's one of school policy for people who fail the exam must take English classes, we just can recognize that our English really needs to improve. Actually, after studying in EL, I can feel my progress in English, especially in writing. However, what I can't understand is I can't show it on the test. I think it was unfair to caculate our score by 20% & 80% when I studied at 300 level. The score of the final exam is 80% and the score of the teachers is only 20%. That means most of our scores are depended on the final exam. If you have a bad grades on the final, you will fail even though your teachers have given you a very high grades. In 400

level, I think it seems to be more fair because the
score caculating is 50% to 50%. Therefore, <u>I hope
teachers can give the students who really study hard
and have a not bad English ability a high scores to
help them pass the nightmare.</u> After all, we're not
native speakers. Teacher can't expect our English to be
perfect and then we can study for academic classes. In
fact, when we stay here with native speakers or study
for academic classes, we've already had a lot of
opportunities to improve our English abilities.

This week's new topic :
"Which type of society do you believe predominately
exist in the US, in (CITY)?" In my observation, "Matter
recycling" society exists in the US, in (CITY)...

In the language event under inquiry the receiving end

of an e-mail message included a group of message recipients

who were often treated as different individuals as well as a

unitary audience. To some degree, the speaker has the

freedom to define the relationships between the addressees

and himself or herself. The speaker's freedom to manipulate

the participant framework gives him or her flexible

strategic resources to meet his or her discourse goals of

the moment. Shifting the participant framework is one way

to achieve the goals. In the excerpt above, there are

several switches of participant frameworks involved in a

single e-mail message. Shifts of participant frameworks can

be depicted either explicitly or implicitly depending on the

discourse goals of the speaker. A speaker may explicitly

indicate the switch of a particular participant framework

for an on-record purpose or he or she may switch the

participant framework without any explicit indication.

Here, first Yenmin constructed a participant framework

that positioned herself as the addresser and everyone else

in the group as the addressees for the general message. Then the participant framework was shifted to ones that involved only those who contributed to the discussion of relevant topics.

For example, the way Yenmin responded to David and Lim on the winter explicitly aligned them as the addressed recipients and positioned Adil, who chose a different topic, as the unaddressed recipient. This shift helped clarify the context of Yenmin's response.

In her response to Adil, Yenmin once again switched the participant framework to align him as the focal recipient of the message, and positioned the rest of the group as unaddressed recipients by an explicit description of the change of framework "Response to Adil." As the focus of topic changed, the participant framework changed. In the same paragraph, Yenmin further shifted the participant framework from one that animated Adil as the focal addressee to one that positioned everyone as the addressed recipients for her opinions about the grading system of the EL.

Finally the participant framework was shifted to one that positioned the instructor, who was usually placed as an unaddressed recipient of the discussions, with other unratified participants (other teachers in the EL) as the focal addressees. The purpose of Yenmin's shift of participant framework to one that involved the instructor of the course *and other instructors of the same institution* was for her to request a fairer grading system. This shift of

frame without explicit indication gave Yenmin the chance to be able to do her FTA without directly damaging the instructor's autonomy face want.

Another example of shifting participant framework, which had a strong indication of politeness, is illustrated in Excerpt 23.

Excerpt 23 (David's argument on euthanasia)

First of all, I would like to clear about my side of this topic. I don't really know what is the voluterary or involunterary euthanasia or mercy killing. But I think every people have their rigth to control their life and so people shouldn't decide what is right or what is wrong. It just like abortion, Who can decide should have or shouldn't have abortion and should they legeal or shouldn't they?? one of the point that monday person point out, Her mother have cancer and she was dead later, I feel sorry for you and if i say some offensive, please forgive me , and the monday person said that her mother suffer some pain during the end of her life but I think that there may be have some people that don't want to see one of their family member suffer these pain and they would like to see them die peacefully. But on the other hand, Every body would like to stay with their family as long as they could, like monday person mother. So I think It is kind of hard to decide which should be right and I think that is depend on the family.

Here, David began to construct his participant framework in such a way that he positioned himself as the addresser, Yenmin as a cited addressee and the rest of the group as the addressed recipients. The frame was constructed for David to be able to address to the whole group without too much involvement in interpersonal interactions.

Later, when a disagreement of a sensitive nature was directed to Yenmin, David was very cautious about the

seriousness of a potential offense in his disagreement and thus issued an apology to mitigate the FTA. However, an apology issued in the original participant framework was probably not felt by David to be strong enough to be able to mitigate the serious threat to Yenmin's modesty face want. David eventually shifted his participant framework from one that positioned Yenmin as a cited recipient to one that particularly positioned her as the focal recipient of the apology. By positioning Yenmin as the focal recipient of the apology, David was able to intensify his redressive action (apology) in an exclusive speaker-addressee relation and hence became more polite.

Once David's discourse goal of the moment was achieved, he switched back to the original participant framework to invite the rest of the group once again as addressed recipients in order to get them involved in his arguments. This case provides evidence for the effect of concern for face on the shift of participant frameworks. The shift of participant framework itself may or may not constitute a redressive action, but it surely can intensify a redress or an FTA.

4.1.4 Participation Framework

As stated above, participation framework consists of a set of positions individuals may take in relation to talk. The concern for face wants has significant effects on the way someone is depicted in a talk. Because of the

pre-determined turn-taking system in the language event in this study, a speaker was able to utilize the turn-taking system to create address terms in a way that is closely related to the face concerns of the participants. For example, participants were animated as particular figures that displayed fewer personal attributes in FTAs. Since every participant in the study was assigned a particular day for him/her to do the e-mail assignment, a functional address term, such as Monday person or Tuesday person, was often interchanged with other identification of the participant. For instance, one may be identified in e-mail by first name, Monday person, or even more general terms such as "someone" or "some people." A semantically neutral expression, such as "Monday person," can become face-laden and function as an addressee distancer in the talk. It was often observed that a particular participant was animated in such a way as to indicate care for face wants of the participants. That is, the purpose is to keep the addressee distant from the FTAs so that the threats to his face may be minimized.

The example can be seen in Excerpt 16 in which Yenmin was animated as the Monday person, a functional address term, to reduce her identification in the message. In fact, Kenji never addressed any group member except for Yenmin by functional address terms. The fact that Kenji was an old acquaintance of Yenmin and he always addressed Yenmin or any of the group member by their first names in every occasion

makes it a strong indication that his use of the functional
address term was for polite purpose. In other words,
Kenji's addressing Yenmin as "the monday person" is
primarily to reduce the unwelcome effects of direct
disagreement toward her. In contrast, the following excerpt
illustrates Kenji's effort in constructing a participation
framework for agreement, which involved figures that were
clearly identified by their personal names rather than
functional address terms.

> Excerpt 24 (Kenji's continued discussion on abortion
> issue)
>
> As Yenmin said, most of pro-side people knows
> that abortion is not things that we should always do or
> support. This is something that we sometimes have to
> do, knowing and feeling guilty somehow.
> I agree with Yenmin and Lim, this is something that we
> suold be more careful in everyday life. Because,
> afterall, this is so complexed and controversial issue,
> which also is full of conflict.
> See you in class,
> Kenji.

The use of personal names by Kenji in this excerpt was
the normal usage when he mentioned someone in his group.
Since there was no need to be concerned about damage of the
addressee's face in agreement, Kenji did not bother to
create a figure that had fewer personal attributes.

Another example of the manipulation of participation
framework can be seen in Excerpt 25.

> Excerpt 25 (Adil, complaining about Yenmin's English
> errors.)
>
> Hello every body.
> This is Adil. Actually I 'm really enjoying the
> E-mail discussions, and I think they're going to be
> helpful to all of us. However, we have had a lot of

> grammar and spelling mistakes since we got started. <u>It
> is natural result because we are dealing with language
> that is second to us, and we are not native speakers.</u>
>   As a result, a mistake from <u>the first student</u> can
> be transferred to all of us with out knowing if we are
> doing it or not...

Here Adil was complaining about the grammatical and

spelling errors Yenmin made in her previous e-mails. As

Goodwin points out, "speaker does not simply cite addressee

in his talk but simultaneously comments on the cited

character and formulates him in a particular way" (1990:80).

The way Adil cited and animated Yenmin indicated his concern

for Yenmin's modesty face want. It was done by animating

her as someone who shared common attributes with other group

members. First Yenmin was depicted as a second language

learner so that "it is natural result" to make the mistakes.

Later Yenmin was addressed as a student just like every

other member in the group. What identified Yenmin as the

responsible party for the English mistakes was the order of

the speaking turn in the current language event (first

student) rather than her personal identity (Yenmin). The

follow-up e-mail message discussing the same event by Adil

himself (See Excerpt 27) and the interview with Adil

revealed that his complaint about language errors was

directed toward Yenmin. By animating a figure in this way,

Adil was able to indicate his concern for Yenmin's modesty

face want to some degree while issuing his criticism.

4.1.4.1 Hypothetical Participants in Participation Framework

Very often a speaker would create figures that were not ratified participants in the utterances. The creation of hypothetical figures in a particular participation framework was observed to serve the function of politeness strategies in situations in which damages to the face wants of the addressees were expected. For example:

Excerpt 26 (Yenmin, arguing against abortion.)

After reading your responses, It seems most of you agree with pro-choice. In my opinion, I think the world become more and more chaos because people care too much about human being's needs. People always have a lot of excuses when they want to support their benefits, and they often ignore some other innocent things or lifes. For example, when people shoot animals for sports, they think it's not only a fun thing to do but also a wonderful exercise. If you blame them for killing animals, they will argue with you."these specices of animals are too many, we kill them is to control their quantities. However, nowadays there are a lot of endangered animals because ancient people ignore their quantities and kill them for food or for fun. Even though our natural science is predominant, nobody can promise any kind of animals won't disappeare in the world. Most people don't think it's a right thing to do, but some people still enjoy that because shooting animals can make them feel satisfied but not quilty. Don't you think that notion come from people's selfishness? Compared to abortion, some people think it's a way to control the world population. Since we have some other ways to do contraception, why do we choose abortion to kill an innocent and potential life? Actually, most of you don't think abortion is a right thing to do, just because people need it, so we should allow it to be legal. I think this notion will cause more disasters for people because human being's desires are endless. When we achive our purpose, we probably will ask for more desires. We shouldn't just care about people's desires, especially for something bad, and ignore the truth and the moral.
I think we should ask ourselves to discipline our sexual life and try our best to do contraception.

Here, Yenmin was arguing against abortion by giving a comparison between animal hunting and abortion. The motive, Yenmin argues, for killing animals was people's selfishness. By then comparing people who selected to do abortion with animal killers, Yenmin implies that the two groups have the same motive. Since all her group members supported abortion, criticizing people doing abortion for selfishness in the real world might transgress the face of her addressees.

Narratives show "how individuals recount their histories - what they emphasize and omit, their stance as protagonists or victims, the relationship the story establishes between teller and audience - all shape what individuals can claim of their own lives." (Rosenwald and Ochberg 1992:1). They do not only reveal who the narrator is, but also tell how he or she sees the world. As Riessman points out, in a narrative, a speaker "takes a listener into a past time or 'world' and recapitulates what happened then to make a point, often a moral one" (1993:3). The narrative Yenmin created is a hypothetical narrative. Hypothetical narratives are those "which depict events that did not happen" (Riessman 1993:18). In addition to making a point, Yenmin's creation of a hypothetical narrative allows her to address face concerns. The people in the hypothetical narrative were created and animated through the constructed excuse as very selfish people who deserved the blame of wrong doing. By adding the hypothetical people into the

frame and further animating her addressees as people who
were willing to blame the selfishness of those hypothetical
people ("If you blame them for killing animals"), Yenmin was
able to minimize the differences between her addressees and
herself before she approached the more sensitive abortion
issue. The creation of the hypothetical participants in
this message served as an example for people's selfishness
and also gave Yenmin an opportunity to assume her group
members were not as selfish as those she criticized and
therefore implied that her criticism was not directed toward
her group.

4.1.5 Participation Framework Shift

The shifts of the participation frameworks created by
the functional address terms further provide the speaker
with strategic resources for a particular discourse goal of
the moment of interaction. This discourse goal may be
politeness-related. For example:

> Excerpt 27 (Adil, responding to Yenmin's request for
> clarification on the criticism of her grammatical and
> spelling mistakes.) [Relevant previous e-mail message
> is italicized.]
>
> *Yenmin:*
> *Hi, Adil! Thank you for caring about our grammar and*
> *spelling mistakes. However, I don't understand why you*
> *say,"...a mistake from the first student can be*
> *transferred to all of us..." Would you please explain*
> *this more clear? I think that the function of E-Mail is*
> *a bridge for communication. We should care more about*
> *our ideas but not grammar or mechanical errors.*
> *Yenmin*

Adil:
   Hi, Yenmin,
       This is Adil, first thing I would like to thank you
   for your respond. What I wanted to say is whatever
   Grammar or spelling mistakes from the Monday person can
   be transferred to the Tuesday person and the same will
   happen to all of us. Because we are using the same
   language, and sharing the same topic, mistakes like
   those could be made by any one in our group...

Here, Adil responded to Yenmin's request for

clarification by addressing Yenmin as the focal recipient,

the rest of the group members as unaddressed participants

and himself as the speaker in the beginning. Throughout the

message, the participant framework was held constant but the

positions of both Yenmin and Adil animated in the

participation framework were undergoing changes.

First Yenmin and Adil were animated as figures that

acted as specific individuals interacting with each other.

Second, both the speaker and the addressee were animated as

figures that acted not as two specific individuals but as

two general positions assigned by a pre-determined turn-

taking system when it came to the criticism of spelling and

grammar mistakes. That is, the participation framework was

changed from Adil vs. Yenmin to Tuesday person vs. Monday

person when the criticism was mentioned.

This switch of participation positions was functionally

critical to the maintenance of the relationships between the

two of them because Yenmin was the Monday person, who was

responsible for transferring the mistakes to the group while

Adil himself was the Tuesday person, who was supposed to be

the first victim by the mistakes. The switch to a

participation framework that focused on functional attributes of the participants reduced the strength of the criticism in a confrontational situation.

Later, both were animated by the first person plural pronoun "we" as figures that shared commonality in the target language and topic and were equally vulnerable to be victimized by the mistakes made "by any one" in the group as well. By switching the participation positions of the two main characters in the same participant framework, Adil was able to avoid harsh and direct criticism of Yenmin and to show his care of her modesty and solidarity face wants. In general, the participation framework was shifted from one that animated Yenmin and Adil as two different protagonists in a one-to-one interaction to one that depicted them as people sharing common characteristics generated by the pre-determined functional address terms and eventually to one that animated both as unitary recipients subject to the same language mistakes. Politeness was thus achieved by the shifts of participation frameworks proceeding in the direction that gradually decreased the differentiation between the two main characters in the event.

Adil's manipulation of both the participation framework and participant framework in this case displayed the complexity of e-mail discourse. Adil was attempting to show his care for Yenmin's modesty and solidarity face wants in his manipulation of participation framework shifts. In addition, Adil created a participant framework that invited

the rest of the group as the unaddressed participants after Yenmin's private challenge of clarification suggested his intention to criticize or even embarrass Yenmin on her errors in public. The selection of the participant framework and the participation framework provided Adil with strategic resources to achieve his discourse goal of the moment (criticizing Yenmin) while maintaining politeness on the surface level at the same time. In the interview, it was pointed out by Yenmin, who was apparently annoyed by this strategic use of participant framework, that Adil's criticism of her linguistic mistakes and his answer to her request for clarification "should have been sent as private mails. It should have been sent to me directly. He shouldn't have send it to everybody to read. Didn't others receive this mail too? Isn't it weird, right? I feel it is very weird. Isn't it embarrassing?" If Adil was indeed trying to be polite, he could have just sent his criticism to her privately to save her from public embarrassment.

Another example of participation framework shift with politeness function can be observed in Excerpt 26. As described above, the debate on abortion was pursued by two opposing sides of the group: Yenmin vs. the rest of the group. By the shifts of participation frameworks in her e-mail message, Yenmin was able to demonstrate her concern for the face wants of her group members. First, Yenmin and the rest of the group members were described in the frame as figures who had contrary viewpoints from each other in the

issue of abortion (e.g., "it seems most of you agree with
pro-choice."). Later, they were animated as figures who
would hold the same position on the issue of hunting animals
(e.g., "If you blame them for killing animals,...") when the
hypothetical participants were introduced. As Yenmin's
arguments developed, the participation framework was once
again shifted to one in which Yenmin herself was animated as
someone who was included in the opposition group by the use
of first person plural pronoun "we" or "us" (e.g., "why do
we choose abortion to kill an innocent and potential
life?"). The shifts in the participation frameworks
advanced in a direction in which the same logical thinking
process and viewpoints of the speaker and the addressees
were presumed, thus mitigating the disagreements and
criticisms generated by the speaker.

4.2 Flexibility of E-mail in Multiparty Participant Framework and Politeness

While how to construct both participant and
participation frameworks may depend on the speaker's
discourse intention, e-mail communication provides the
speaker with a more flexible and convenient way to construct
interactional environments than face-to-face interaction.
As introduced in Chapter One, computer-mediated
communication provides users with a non-face-to-face
interactional environment in which unique language features
are developed. Since e-mail interaction is asynchronous,

users are often relieved from the immediate interactional pressure that people often face in face-to-face interaction. E-mail users are left ample time to meditate upon how to construct and edit their discourse to meet their communicative goals before actually sending out their final linguistic productions. The time to reflect upon and edit what one has in mind before actual linguistic production in e-mail may be attributable to the features of written language. However, written features are not the only features seen in computer-mediated communication. Interactive Written Discourse shows "heavy involvement... traditionally associated with oral language and face-to-face interaction" (Ferrara et al. 1991:22). The study of Ferrara et al. claims that "computer-mediated human-to-human written discourse, an emerging hybrid variety of language, displays features of both oral and written language" (1991:23). The participants in computer-mediated communication are actually given more flexibility in their expressions than those in face-to-face communication in terms of the choice of oral/written discourse styles.

Furthermore, e-mail communication provides the user with an extra interface that may serve as a strategic resource for communication. On the one hand, a speaker who prefers to have person-to-person interaction in e-mail may choose to engage in interactional discourse by ignoring the interface between him and the addressees. Such is what was

displayed in Excerpt 28 in which the speaker attempts to have close interpersonal relationships with the addressees.

Excerpt 28 (Kenji)

What's up, evrybody!? I'm so sorry again that I 'm about a week late, and also that I had so many misspelling on the last E-mail discussion. I'v must been ****ed up. One more thing, thanks a lot for this telnet conversation. You guys have been so great, I sure will miss E-mail disscussion, believe it or not.

On the other hand, a speaker who wants to keep distance from his interlocutors or to avoid the unwelcome effects of FTAs may select to engage in a transactional discourse by focusing himself on person-to-computer interaction. Knowing that no immediate feedback and interaction could be obtained through e-mail, a speaker may act as if he is primarily involved with a computer or the e-mail mailing system rather than his interlocutors because what he faces physically is a computer terminal and the e-mail interface. At times it may be preferable to engage with a terminal, thus eliminating the immediate pressure for attending to the face wants of the participants in a person-to-person environment.

For instance, a speaker may not need to worry as much in a human-to-computer interaction about the face wants related to interruptions, or questions, that often occur in face-to-face discussions. By becoming involved in human-to-computer interaction, a speaker may display disinterest in interpersonal interaction or intentional distance from FTAs. Such is the discourse style Fang-chih typically used to

indicate her detachment in most of her e-mail messages. For
example:

Excerpt 29 (Fang-chih)

From: Fang-chih
To: group3@machine.school.edu
Subject: e-mail exercise

Topic: Environment crisis

Environment crisis can range from air, water,
soil pollution, the over exploit of natural resources
such as lands, mine and the increasing population of
human being, greenhouse effect ect. ...

Here, it looks as if the primary function of Fang-
chih's message was to fulfil the e-mail requirement by
filling up the blank spaces and screens on the e-mail system
with her opinions rather than talking to her group members
as persons. By focusing on the transactional discussion of
the topic, Fang-chih was able to keep distance from her
group members in a way that would seem awkward, if not
impossible, in face-to-face classroom discussions. In the
interview, Fang-chih indicated that even if she wanted to do
the same as what she did in her e-mail messages, it would be
hard for her to keep so much distance from her group in
face-to-face discussion with ease. She said: "Sometimes I
disagree with others, but I won't say anything. It's just
my personal characteristics. I don't like to argue with
others. I just focus on my viewpoints. In e-mail, it's
easy to do so. But in face-to-face group discussion, I
can't just continue to present my viewpoints without
considering others' reactions." Fang-chih's deliberate

concentration on transactional discourse was in part a way showing her reluctance of transgressing the face of her addressees.

Discussions via e-mail are characterized by the ease of switching interactional environments where the choice of oral/written language features, discourse styles, involvement in the event, and participant and participation frameworks are all affected. The hybrid features of language used in e-mail allow the users more freedom to switch to different discourse styles in a single language event. Users of e-mail are also allowed more choices in pursuing interpersonal interaction. The mass communication capability and the structure of e-mail discussions further allows users more flexibility in constructing various combinations of participant frameworks in a single speaking turn than oral discussions.

The study shows that computer-mediated communication is capable of transmitting natural richness and interactions of interpersonal communication, which are not determined by the medium, but rather by the discourse goals of the speakers. These participants in the present study, inexperienced in e-mail in general, are quite capable of manipulating their language to match the unique characteristics of the communication medium and this speech event. E-mail provides a more flexible environment for language users to exploit this new medium and the language activity for their communicative goals.

In this chapter, I distinguished two slightly different and yet intertwined phenomena: participant frameworks and participation frameworks. I described how innovative users of e-mail were capable of manipulating these frames to mitigate disagreements and criticisms at a global level. The next chapter will be devoted to the discussion of Brown and Levinson's dichotomous face and politeness concept. Further discussions will focus on the inadequacy of their theory to deal with the fuzziness and ambiguity of politeness strategies that were often found in the data.

CHAPTER FIVE

AMBIGUITY OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES

This chapter will be devoted to the analysis of
the problematic and controversial aspects of Brown and
Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies used in this study
at the speech act level. It will point out the inadequacy
of adopting Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework of
politeness to categorize particular linguistic features or
constructions into either positive or negative politeness.
It will argue instead that the politeness strategies found
in the study are ambiguous in terms of Brown and Levinson's
classification. Five types of mitigating strategies
discussed by Brown and Levinson (positive politeness
strategy 6: avoid disagreement; negative politeness strategy
2: hedges; negative politeness strategy 4: minimize the
imposition; negative politeness strategy 6: apology;
negative politeness strategy 7: impersonalize S and H) will
be particularly discussed (cf. Table One).

5.1 Introduction

The e-mail discourse in the current study is
particularly characterized by avoidance of direct
disagreement at both speech act level and discourse level.

Participants not only skillfully manipulated the participant framework (Goffman 1974) to soften the unwelcome effects of disagreements at global level (see Chapter Four), they also used mitigating strategies locally, such as hedges, apology, impersonalizing speaker (S) and hearer (H), or distancing H from face-threatening acts (FTAs), for the same purpose. However, many of the politeness strategies used at local levels are ambiguous in nature when Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework of politeness is used as the interpretive basis (cf. Section 1.7.2). For example, the "minimizing imposition" technique used to reduce face damage by disagreement is found to have little to do with either a redressive attempt to respond to H's want not to be coerced (negative politeness) or to respond to H's want of his or her self-image or want to be desirable (positive politeness). This causes confusion in determining the precise nature of a politeness strategy if Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework is used as the only basis for interpretation. Researchers doing quantitative analysis on politeness need to re-think the significance of their findings if Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness is used as the framework for their research.

The ambiguity of politeness strategies found in the study points out a need to modify and thereby advance Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. Finally this study attempts to provide, in the next chapter, an alternative

interpretation of the politeness behavior found in the study and suggests a continuum model of face wants and politeness.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) complicated interpretive framework and numerous detailed examples provide a coherent theory of politeness. However, their theory is not able to satisfactorily interpret many of the polite behaviors in this study when it is tested against the data found in the discourse of group discussion on e-mail, as will be illustrated and discussed in the next section. This study will not only employ but also challenge Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory with abundant empirical instances. This study attempts to argue that Brown and Levinson's (1987) dichotomous "face" framework does not account for the ambiguous and non-mutually exclusive speech activities in the study.

5.2 Brown and Levinson's Dichotomous View of Face and Politeness

Brown and Levinson (1987) assert that all on-record politeness strategies that aim to "give face" to the addressee can be categorized either as positive or negative politeness. That is, all the on-record redressive actions are dichotomized. This dichotomous view of politeness is derived from the assumptions of two basic human face wants (cf. Section 1.6.1 for details). Any "face" that one wants to claim for oneself has to fall into one of the dichotomized categories. As a result, the politeness

strategies are dichotomized as well to redress either side of the two categories of face wants. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate their dichotomous view of face and politeness.

In section 1.6.3, I discussed Brown and Levinson's strategies for doing FTAs in detail. Brown and Levinson claim that politeness strategies are determined by the estimation of risk of face loss. As Brown and Levinson's five superstrategies for doing FTAs are listed in a linear fashion corresponding to the seriousness of face risk (see Figure 1), there is a continuum in politeness strategies in terms of the seriousness of FTAs. For example, they assert that positive politeness strategies are used for less serious FTAs and negative politeness strategies are for more serious ones. However, they never conceptualized politeness strategies as redressive actions towards a continuum of face wants. Rather, those redressive actions are dichotomized. In other words, Brown and Levinson believe that there are continuous relationships between positive and negative politeness in terms of redress degrees, but there are no continuous relationships between them in terms of face redress.

On the one hand, Brown and Levinson (1987) point out that there may be various degrees of face risk. On the other hand, I argue that there may also be various degrees of one's wants being desirable or one's actions being unimpeded. Though Brown and Levinson see no gradations between H's "positive" and "negative" face wants, actually

Basic Human face wants

Negative face	**Positive face**
claim of territory; self-determination; action being unimpeded	wants (or actions, acquisitions, values resulting from them) being desirable

－ ＋

Politeness

Negative Politeness	**Positive politeness**
redressive actions oriented toward H's negative face (S indicates that he recognizes H's negative-face want and will not, or will only minimally, interfere with H's freedom of action.)	redressive actions oriented toward H's positive face (S indicates that he, in some respects, wants H's wants.)

－ ＋

Figure 2: Brown and Levinson's View of Face Wants

there may be grey areas between these two face wants and the politeness strategies addressing them. In other words, Brown and Levinson's framework postulates that no continuation between positive and negative categories may exist. Every face want and redressive action has to belong to one of the two categories of this dichotomous system. Actually, the want of not being rejected may lie on a continuum between the want of being liked and the want of actions being unimpeded. Detailed discussion on the view of face and politeness as a continuum will be presented in Chapter Six.

As can be seen in Figure 3, Brown and Levinson's notion of "face" and the "face-preserving" act is basically conceptualized as a coin with two distinct faces. No continuity between the two categories may exist. Every FTA and redressive action has to belong to one of the two categories (positive or negative) of this dichotomous system. This dichotomous framework for a universal politeness theory is inadequate and simply too broad to be capable of interpreting some of the politeness phenomena found in the study. There are at least two potential problems that can't be satisfactorily dealt with by the dichotomous view of politeness: (1) the implication of mutual exclusiveness of politeness strategies, and (2) the fuzziness and ambiguity of politeness strategies. The following sections will illustrate these problems.

Negative   Positive
face, and   face, and
politeness   politeness
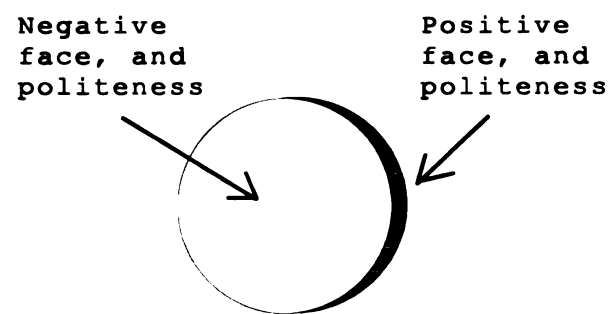
Figure 3: Brown and Levinson's Concept of
Face and on-record Politeness

5.3 Mutual Exclusiveness of Politeness Strategies

Although Brown and Levinson (1987) did not explicitly claim that the output politeness strategies are mutually exclusive, as Aronsson and Sätterlund-Larsson (1987) point out, their systematic and detailed presentation of output strategies may indirectly suggest a strict hierarchical ordering which would prohibit the operation of politeness strategies across classifications. The dichotomous view basically suggests the mutually exclusive nature of their "face" concept and politeness strategies. For instance, what is considered as a "negative" politeness strategy can't co-exist as a strategy of other categories. However, many of the politeness strategies used in the study are so ambiguous in nature that no clear categorical boundary (cf. Section 1.7.2 for detailed discussion) can be drawn. The data in this study also suggest the difficulty of categorizing participants' output politeness strategies as if they belong to one single clear classification.

5.4 Fuzziness and Ambiguity of Politeness Strategies

In the discourse of argument in these e-mail discussions, politeness strategies were widely employed by participants. Those strategies range from redressive actions that are mainly oriented towards the "positive" face of H (e.g., "It's nice to see you guys' opinions no matter they are for or against mine.") to ones that are mainly oriented towards the "negative" face of H (e.g., "I'm sorry

but I think we should change to another topic.") Not all
FTAs threaten only one single face, so not all politeness
strategies can be clearly categorized as either "positive"
or "negative." Actually, the output politeness strategies
derived from Brown and Levinson's (1987) dichotomous "face"
concept are often characterized by fuzziness and ambiguity
rather than clearness, in the discourse of class discussions
in e-mail studied here. The ambiguity of disagreement and
several so-called "negative-politeness" strategies used in
disagreement: minimizing the imposition, distancing, hedge,
and apology will be examined in what follows.

5.4.1 Avoid Disagreement

Disagreements are extremely common speech moves in the
discourse of class discussion in this study. According to
Brown and Levinson (1987), disagreement is an intrinsic FTA
that threatens the positive face want of the addressee. It
is an act that damages H's positive face, because it shows
that the speaker indicates that he thinks H is "wrong or
misguided or unreasonable about some issue" and that the
speaker does not care about the addressee's feelings and
wants and in some important respect he doesn't want H's
wants (1987:66). Remember that redressive action means
action that attempts to counteract the potential face damage
of the FTA by indicating that no such face threat is
intended and that S in general recognizes H's face wants and
wants them to be achieved (Brown and Levinson 1987:69-70).

In the discourse of arguments, a redressive action qualifying as a "positive politeness" strategy may be one that addresses H's want of his argument being agreed with. That is, if a speaker would like to be positively polite in argument, he may indicate that he has no intention of disagreeing with H or that he wants to agree with H's arguments. One of the positive politeness strategies mentioned by Brown and Levinson (1987) in disagreement is positive strategy 6: avoid disagreement.

In communicative interaction, people usually tend to avoid disagreement with their interlocutors in order to maintain a smooth social relationship. Sacks (1973) notices that speakers would often twist in a remarkable degree their utterances to appear to agree with their interlocutors or to hide their disagreement. It is not surprising that Brown and Levinson's (1987) positive strategy 6: avoiding disagreement is a very common strategy used among all "positive" politeness strategies in arguments in the study. Token agreement, the mechanisms for pretending to agree with H, is in turn the strategy used commonly under avoiding disagreement.

Brown and Levinson illustrate that avoiding disagreements may be achieved by using token agreement, pseudo-agreement, or white lies to pretend to agree with the addressee. It may also be achieved by hiding disagreements or hedging one's opinions, "so as not to be seen to disagree" (1987:116). These strategies are classified under

the same general strategy (politeness strategy 6) by them
and are regarded as "positive" politeness strategies, the
redressive actions oriented toward H's wants of being
desirable. However, there are differences in degree in
terms of "positive" politeness between strategies used to
pretend to agree and those used to avoid to disagree or to
hide disagreements. When a speaker pretends to agree with
an addressee, what he or she attempts to satisfy may
primarily be the addressee's want being desirable. When a
speaker hides the disagreement or avoids disagreeing with an
addressee, what he or she attempts to satisfy may be a face
want other than just the want being desirable (cf. Section
6.1.2 for detailed discussion). The following examples
Brown and Levinson used for their positive politeness
strategy 6 illustrate the differences in degree in one's
attempt to satisfy the addressee's want being desirable.

Example 1

A: And they haven't heard a word, huh?
B: Not a word. Not at all. Except Mrs. H. maybe.

Example 2

A: Yuh comin down early?
B: Well I got a lot of things to do. I don't know. It
won't be too early.
(Brown and Levinson 1987:114)

Although the strategies used by B in both examples are
classified by Brown and Levinson as strategies oriented
toward H's "positive" face want, they can't be seen as the
same. While the strategy B uses in Example 1 is primarily
to let A know that B attempts to agree with A, the strategy

used in Example 2 is to let A know B's hesitation or reluctance to disagree. If B really wants to indicate his or her attempt to satisfy A's want being desirable in Example 2, B might answer "Of course, I'm coming down early if I can finish the things I need to do in time," instead. On the one hand, one can avoid disagreement by pretending to agree with others. On the other hand, one doesn't need to pretend to agree in order to avoid disagreement with others. While to pretend to agree and to avoid disagreeing may be distinguished as two types of strategies, the distinction between these two strategies is fuzzy. The nature of Brown and Levinson's "positive" politeness strategy 6: avoiding disagreement is also ambiguous because it includes strategies that are not closely related to the satisfaction of H's want being desired.

There are several types of actions by students in this study that were used to redress disagreement, including strategies of both positive and negative politeness. Strategies that were found in the data and related to the concept of Brown and Levinson's (1987) positive politeness strategy 6 include token agreement, minimal agreement, acknowledgement, hiding disagreement, and minimizing disagreement. The strategies used to avoid disagreement varied, ranging from primarily appearing to agree to basically hiding disagreement with fuzzy boundaries between nearby strategies.

Besides the distinction between the attempts to pretend to agree and those to avoid to disagree, there are actually various degrees in pretending to agree too. For example, one may appear to agree with others completely or one may pretend to agree with reservation before actual disagreement is voiced later. The data indicate that there are gradations of politeness strategies whose functions are either to pretend to agree or to avoid direct, unmitigated disagreement with others. These gradations suggest that face may not contain dichotomous values as Brown and Levinson (1987) propose. The following excerpts illustrate such gradations. The ambiguity of these strategies will be discussed.

> Excerpt 30 (Dong, disagreeing with Li-yuh on abortion
> issue) [Emphasis is indicated by underlining.]
>
> Anyway, <u>I agree to li-yuh's thought.</u> I mean, I'm
> against the abortion bascially. Because fetus is
> living thing but if a woman is pregnant that she
> doesn't want to be, what can she do?

In Excerpt 30, Dong pretends to agree with Li-yuh on the issue of abortion before he states his actual disagreement. The strategy Dong used is what Brown and Levinson (1987) refer to as "token agreement" or Pomerantz's (1984) "prefaced disagreement." The purpose of "token" agreement is to appear to agree with H so that S's disagreement can be softened. According to Brown and Levinson, Dong's strategy would be seen as a redressive

action oriented toward Li-yuh's "positive" face want and therefore qualify as a "positive" politeness strategy.

> Excerpt 31 (Lim, disagreeing with Yenmin's argument referring to the hypothesis of Koreans' prejudice against Japanese) [Relevant previous e-mail message is italicized.]
>
> *Yenmin: However, this hypothesis was not accurate. Since the majority of Koreans alive today never experienced the era of Japanese colonial rule, this should be not the main reason.*
>
> Lim: Since I did not live that time, I do not know the pain of that time. But old people who lived that time never forget that.

In Excerpt 31, Lim, who is Korean, disagreed with Yenmin's argument referring to the hypothesis of Koreans' prejudice against Japanese in her previous mail. It is difficult to determine whether Lim's repeating part of Yenmin's idea was to partially agree with her, or to appear to agree with her. Unlike a conversation, e-mail discussion often needs to construct the discourse context by specifying relevant texts from previous messages in order for the readers to be able to grasp the meaning. Therefore, a "token" disagreement (e.g., "yes, but old people who lived that time never forget that.") in face-to-face conversation may turn out to be long or repetitive (e.g., "Since I did not live that time. I do not know the pain of that time. But old people who lived that time never forget that.") since repeating some of the texts are necessary for the construction of contexts. The use of partial repetition by Lim may serve the purpose of pretending to agree and hence satisfy Yenmin's "positive" face want.

Excerpt 32 (Lim, disagreeing with Yenmin on her previous e-mail opposing unconditional abortion)

I think I agree with Yenmin about abortion. I, of caurse, think that abortion is very crue act and it must not happen to everybody. However, the abortion exist in the world and the problem is very serious today. Life is the most important thing in the world and even premature. But something can happen by accident like mistake or rape.

In that case, if the baby is born, there is also big problem after they born. The parents will like them even though they do not want that baby? The person will happy when he grow up and know about his birht? I strongly say "NO". Those are the big reasons why I agree with abortion.

Here, Lim also resorts to "token" agreement. He displays an effort to appear to agree with Yenmin before his actual disagreement with her on the issue of abortion. However, Lim's use of the hedge "I think" indicates a reservation on his agreement with Yenmin. There is a gradation of attempts to counteract the potential "positive" face damage done by disagreement between this excerpt and the previous two.

Excerpt 33 (Tatyana, arguing against the legalization of Euthanasia) [Ellipsis (...) indicates my omission of text.]

Actually I even don't know what to say about it. I somehow agree with all of you. I can anderstand why Wang and Cindy think that voluntary euthanatia should be legalized... May be some situation will change my attitude too, but now I don't think that euthanatia should be legal. At this point I agree with John saying that people can make mistakes and even person who has chosen voluntary euthanasia can regret about it at the last moment of his or her life. And it happens only because we don't know, I mean even now, we can't realise the real value of our life.

In Excerpt 33, Tatyana expressed her disagreement with two of her group members (Wang and Cindy) on the issue of

the legalization of euthanasia. Her disagreement was mitigated by hesitation of showing her own viewpoint on the issue and a minimal agreement with everyone in the group. Although Tatyana turned out to oppose the legalization of euthanasia, she displayed her attempts to avoid face damage from direct disagreement. However, to what degree the "positive" face wants of Wang and Cindy were satisfied remains controversial since Tatyana's appearance of agreeing with them contradicted her agreement with all the group members' opinions, which included John's opinions opposing those of Wang and Cindy. As does Excerpt 32, this excerpt illustrates a decrease in degree in the speaker's attempt to pretend to agree with the addressees.

> Excerpt 34 (Yenmin, disapproving of Adil's resistance to discussing the topic chosen by the group)
>
> Except this, I'm curious about the messages from Adil. Although I've received your response, they are not related to last week's topic... <u>I think you can talk about your ideas in the beginning. After that, you still need to discuss our topic.</u>

In Excerpt 34, Yenmin disagrees with Adil's resistance to discussing the topic chosen by the group. To be able to avoid direct disagreement, Yenmin displays her approval of Adil's irrelevant talk and yet includes a hedge to indicate her unwilling support. This strategy seems to appeal less to the appearance to agree with Adil than to the avoidance of total disagreement with what Adil did in his e-mail.

The strategies used in Excerpts 30 to 34 are what Brown and Levinson (1987) term "avoid disagreement." They are

considered to be positively polite because they all appeal to H's positive face want. Another type of attempt to avoid disagreement is illustrated in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 35 (Dong, avoiding direct disagreement with Fang-chih)

I read Akira and Fang-chih's e-mail. actually, <u>I agree with Akira</u>. according to Akira, if brain died, euthanasia is admitted.

Here, Dong, the Thursday person in his group, is responding to two of his group members, Fang-chih, the Monday person, and Akira, the Tuesday person, on the topic concerning the legalization of euthanasia. By indicating support for one of the two teammates who disagree with each other, Dong is able to avoid disagreement with anyone in the group. However, Dong's redressive action (to hide direct disagreement with Fang-chih) to his FTA (disagreement with Fang-chih) differs from those politeness strategies in the above excerpts in that Dong shows no effort to appear to agree with Fang-chih at all. What Dong does is avoid directly disagreeing with Fang-chih by focusing his argument on supporting Fang-chih's opponent, Akira.

As can be seen in Excerpts 30 to 35, the strategies used had different degrees in S's desires to pretend to agree or avoid to disagree with H. The gradations of strategies found in the data suggest a continuum view of "face" and "politeness." While some of these strategies (e.g., those in Excerpts 30 to 33) may be classified as the same category because they all address H's want of his

arguments being desirable, others become ambiguous in
nature. For instance, in Excerpt 35, Dong's politeness act
appealing to Fang-chih's want of her argument's points being
desired was probably overshadowed by her want of her
argument's points not being confronted or rejected in
public. It is disputable whether we may regard these two
wants as the same.

The ambiguity of the politeness strategies found in
this study also occurred in categories that are regarded as
"negative" politeness. The data in the study showed that
some of the politeness strategies that are described and
identified by Brown and Levinson as "negative" politeness
strategies were not redressive actions directed to the
addressee's negative face wants.

The following will be dedicated to the discussion of
these ambiguous strategies.

5.4.2 Minimize Disagreement

Excerpt 36 (David, disagreeing with Yenmin on
euthanasia)

I read two messege from my group and I think this topic
is really interesting. The monday person said that
people should let the people die naturelly and don't
waate the time and money to save the person who is
unconscious. And the tusday person use the religious to
talk about the euthanasia. But I have different idea
about this topic and _little disagree about the idea on
monday person_.

Example 3 (constructed example)

Can I borrow _a little sugar_ from you?

In Example 3, Brown and Levinson's negative politeness strategy 4: minimize the imposition, is used. This strategy is considered to be negatively polite because by claiming the imposition is small S implies that the coercion is small and therefore at least part of H's negative-face want, his freedom of action being unimpeded, may be satisfied. In Excerpt 36, the strategy David used involves no attempt to unhinder H's freedom of action or unimpede his attention. If the minimizing technique is viewed as a negative politeness strategy, it will cause a problem when used in disagreement. It may not be adequate to categorize minimization of disagreement as a negative politeness strategy because there is no impingement of freedom of action involved. Unless the act of disagreement is viewed as an imposition and therefore would damage H's negative face, disagreement itself, based on Brown and Levinson's assertion (1987), will only be seen as an act threatening H's positive face. Since there is no imposition involved in disagreement, there is no way to redress that imposition caused by disagreement.

That is, if disagreement is an FTA threatening only H's positive face, as preferred by Brown and Levinson (1987), minimizing that FTA (disagreement) will be a redressive action directed to H's positive face want. If disagreement is an FTA threatening both H's positive face (disagreeing with H) and negative face (imposing disagreement on H), minimizing that FTA will be a redressive action of both

faces. No matter how disagreement is seen in terms of face threat, minimizing disagreement can't be a negative politeness strategy alone.

As described above, the minimization of disagreement in Excerpt 36 should be counted as a positive strategy since minimization of positive-face threats (David's disagreement with Yenmin) is in effect. However, a positive politeness is, by definition of Brown and Levinson's theory, the redressive action oriented toward H's positive face, his want being desirable at least to some others. This is similar to what Dong displays concerning Fang-chih's argument in Excerpt 35. David shows no support of Yenmin's want or idea (at least superficially) in Excerpt 36 except the use of "little" to indicate partial acceptance of her points. Although one may argue that "a little disagreement" may suggest that David tries to imply he agrees with Yenmin mostly and therefore serves as an indication of his attempt to satisfy her positive-face want, it still fails to explain why David wouldn't simply select a strategy that emphasized his want of Yenmin's opinions being accepted (e.g., "I agree with you except one little point.") While the avoiding disagreement strategies in Excerpts 30 to 34 may be claimed to fit in "positive" politeness because of their superficially common support of H's points, the one in Excerpt 36 is ambiguous and can't fit in either one of the politeness categories Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed.

What we have seen here in Excerpt 36 may be a redressive action that is oriented toward a different human want that is between the so-called "positive-face" and "negative-face" wants. I would argue that what David recognized is Yenmin's want of her values, personality, and opinions being un-rejected, even though they are not being desired. Hence the strategy used in Excerpt 36 can't be readily categorized as positive politeness either because the strategy used by David is not a redressive action directed toward the positive public self-image of Yenmin but rather one that is directed to the recognition of Yenmin's want of her points to be un-rejected in the discourse of argument.

5.4.3 Impersonalize S and H in Disagreement

> Excerpt 37 (Yenmin, disagreeing with her group members on abortion)
>
> After reading your responses, it seems most of you agree with pro-choice. In my opinion, I think the world become more and more chaos because <u>people</u> care too much about <u>human being's</u> needs. <u>People</u> always have a lot of excuses when <u>they</u> want to support their benefits, and they often ignore some other innocent things or lifes. For example, when people shoot animals for sports, they think it's not only a fun thing to do but also a wonderful exercise. If you blame them for killing animals, they will argue with you,"these specices of animals are too many, we kill them is to control their quantities. However, nowadays there are a lot of endangered animals because ancient people ignore their quantities and kill them for food or for fun. Even though our natural scienceis predominant, nobody can promise any kind of animals won't disappeare in the world. <u>Most people don't think it's a right thing to do</u>, but some people still enjoy that because shooting animals can make them feel satisfied but not quilty. <u>Don't you think that notion come from people's</u>

selfishness? Compared to abortion, some people think it's a way to control the world population. Since we have some other ways to do contraception, why do we choose abortion to kill an innocent and potential life? Actually, most of you don't think abortion is a right thing to do, just because people need it, so we should allow it to be legal. I think this notion will cause more disasters for people because human being's desires are endless.

Another strategy frequently used by participants in their attempts to reduce the unwelcome effects of the disagreements is what Brown and Levinson (1987) called negative strategy 7: impersonalize S and H. This strategy is to implicitly indicate that it is not S's "own wish to impose on H but someone else's, or that it is not on H in particular but on some people in general that this imposition must be made" (Brown and Levinson 1987:187). By dissociating himself or H from the FTA, S may implicate his reluctance to impinge. There are two ways to achieve the dissociation by this strategy: (1) "making it unclear or generalizing who the agent of the FTA actually is," or (2) "being vague or non-designatory about who H is" (Brown and Levinson 1987:187). Once again, this strategy is ambiguous and it is hard to determine the category it belongs to when used in disagreements.

For instance, the distancing strategy used in Excerpt 37 appears to be a "negative" politeness strategy, but it is not oriented toward "partially satisfying (redressing) H's negative face, his basic want to maintain claims of territory and self-determination" (Brown and Levinson 1987:70).

The issue of abortion has been extended as the discussion topic for two consecutive weeks as Yenmin expressed her criticism/disagreement in Excerpt 37. In the previous week, Yenmin was the only one who took the stand against abortion in her group. Here, Yenmin was trying to make her point with some criticisms directed toward her teammates in a polite way by dissociating them from the FTA (criticisms).

Notice that there is a parallelism between the two utterances: "Most people don't think it's a right thing to do" and "most of you don't think abortion is a right thing to do." This parallelism suggests that Yenmin was attempting to compare, if not to equate, "you" in the abortion issue to "people" in the hunting example. It was confirmed later in the interview that Yenmin was trying to be polite while at the same time criticizing her group's stand on the abortion issue with those utterances. She described that "it's a hint to my group members and people who do abortion just to avoid their responsibility. It's more polite and indirect to criticize the people who hunt than to criticize people who do or agree with abortion because I am not directly criticizing them. I think they will understand what I'm really trying to say." By criticizing the selfishness of the people who realize hunting is bad and yet still keep doing it, Yenmin was hoping to get her criticism across to her teammates and those who agree on abortion in an indirect way. Her effort

to keep some distance between her criticisms and the target indicated her reluctance to damage her group's face want.

According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) dichotomy of face, the group's face want Yenmin was trying to attend to falls into the positive face category because by doing the criticism Yenmin indicates that she doesn't like or want her group's beliefs or values. However, Yenmin's distancing her group from her criticism is really not related to the redressive action that is oriented toward H's positive-face want either, since what Yenmin did is not indicating her desire of accepting her group's viewpoints on the abortion issue at all. Rather she was trying to indicate that she was not willing to give direct criticism to her group. The fact that Yenmin showed no interest in pretending to agree with the viewpoints of her group on the abortion issue indicates that what she wanted to achieve was not the positive self-image or personality of her group.

A better interpretation would be that Yenmin recognized her teammates' want of their standpoints on abortion not being rejected or criticized rather than being desired. Brown and Levinson (1987) have been very affirmative on viewing criticism as an intrinsic FTA threatening the positive face of H. Unless doing criticism is viewed as an imposition which may damage H's freedom of action, it is doubtful that the strategy used in this example would contain a "negative" attribute in politeness. Unlike the strategy used in the utterance "One shouldn't sit on a

dining table," Yenmin's distancing her group from her

criticism has little to do with the redressive action that

is oriented toward her group's basic want to maintain claims

of territory and self-determination. While viewing

impersonalizing S and H as an exclusive negative strategy is

not plausible in the discourse of criticism/disagreement,

assigning the strategy Yenmin used in Excerpt 37 to either

one of Brown and Levinson's (1987) dichotomy of politeness

would also distort its true nature. Their dichotomous

system of face and politeness is once again too broad and

unable to provide a satisfactory interpretation of why

several strategies originally categorized in a particular

class can be shared by different classes.

5.4.4 Hedges in Disagreement

Hedges are the most common strategies used by the

participants. Lakoff (1972) proposes the term "hedges" to

indicate those words that are able to modify the force of a

speech act. She mentions:

> For me, some of the most interesting questions are
> raised by the study of words whose meanings
> implicitly involve fuzziness - words whose job is
> to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy. I will
> refer to such words as 'hedges' (1972: 195).

Brown and Levinson state that "a 'hedge' is a particle,

word, or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a

predicate or noun phrase in a set; it says of that

membership that it is partial, or true only in certain

respects, or that it is more true and complete than perhaps
might be expected." (1987:145)

Hedges are considered by Brown and Levinson as mostly
negative strategies and sometimes positive ones (e.g.,
hedging opinions). I would argue that most hedges found in
the data were not used either as negative strategies or as
positive strategies. For example:

> Excerpt 38 (Yenmin, disagreeing with the rest of her
> group on abortion)
>
> After reading your responses, _it seems_ most of you
> agree with pro-choice. _In my opinion, I think_ the world
> become more and more chaos because people care too much
> about human being's needs. People always have a lot of
> excuses when they want to support their benefits, and
> they often ignore some other innocent things or lifes.

Here, Yenmin, the Monday person in her group, was
responding to the previous week's e-mail messages on
abortion by her group members, who were all holding opposite
viewpoints on the issue. Yenmin used hedges to emphasize
that what she said ("the world become more and more chaos
because people care too much about human being's needs") was
an opinion rather than truth. Since opinions are subjective
and would not always be true, the statements of Yenmin's
group members may not necessarily be wrong. By doing so,
Yenmin was able to reduce the face damage of her group
members. However, what type of face want Yenmin wanted to
redress here is disputable.

Brown and Levinson (1987) are particularly ambiguous on
defining the nature of criticism and disagreement that
threaten the "positive face" want of H and that of hedges.

Two points are at issue here: the nature of hedge strategies, and the imposition force in disagreement.

Brown and Levinson pointed out that "normally hedges are a feature of negative politeness,... but some hedges can have this positive-politeness function as well, most notably (in English): *sort of, kind of, like, in a way*" (1987:116). Brown and Levinson's claim of hedges as normally a feature of negative politeness does not find support in this study.

The hedges Yenmin used in Excerpt 38 ("In my opinion, I think") are what Brown and Levinson call "Quality hedges" (1987:164), a negative politeness strategy. "Quality hedges" have straightforward politeness applications because those that "weaken S's commitment may redress advice or criticisms" (Brown and Levinson 1987:171).

According to Brown and Levinson, a hedge for negative politeness strategy usage is one derived from the motivation "not to presume and the want not to coerce H" (1987:145). By "carefully avoiding presuming or assuming that anything involved in the FTA is desired or believed by H," (1987:144) S will be able to give redress to H's negative face. Hedging is basically regarded as an avoidance strategy. Using hedges means avoiding presumptions about H and his wants. When S uses hedges to keep ritual distance from H, the hedges he or she uses would minimize the imposition force of an FTA.

If the hedges Yenmin used ("In my opinion, I think") in Excerpt 38 are considered as a negative politeness strategy,

what Yenmin attempted to do then would be to avoid presuming that the criticism/disagreement involved in the FTA was desired by her group. Her use of hedges would be to reduce the strength of imposition of her criticism/disagreement. This assertion of imposition force in disagreement/criticism would be seriously contradictory to Brown and Levinson's previous view of disagreement as an FTA threatening only the positive face of H and therefore is unsatisfactory to the integrity of their theory.

If Yenmin's use of hedges is considered as a positive politeness strategy, these hedges failed to address H's positive face want of their argument points being desirable. What was accomplished by these hedges was the fuzziness of Yenmin's criticism and disagreement rather than the appreciation of her opponents' viewpoints. The purpose of producing fuzziness by hedges in this case is not to indicate Yenmin's desire to her group members' abortion position but to indicate her understanding of their want of not being criticized or disagreed with. It would be inadequate to equate the attempt of lessening criticism or disagreement to that of desiring H's arguments. To be positively polite to her group members, Yenmin would have expressed that the opinions of her group members were liked or agreed with. Here then Brown and Levinson's dichotomous view of face prohibits them from seeing hedges in disagreements or criticisms as redressive actions oriented

toward partially satisfying something other than the "positive" face want of H.

Schiffrin (1990) points out that presentations of opinions are often marked by what is generally termed as hedges, which may contain linguistic features such as meta-linguistic cues ("my opinion is"), the use of verbs ("I think," "it seems"), or hedged modals ("should," "could," "would"). Schiffrin defines an opinion as "an individual's internal, evaluative position about a circumstance" (1990:244). Opinions "shift a speaker's participation status that they can be used to negotiate truth and sincerity in argument" (1990:245). In other words, "opinions free the speaker (as author) from a claim to truth, by emphasizing the speaker's claim (as participant) to sincerity" (1990:245). "This footing change creates a partial sacrifice of claims to truth for claims to sincerity: the facts presented by the author cannot remain undisputed, but the principal's stance toward that proposition cannot be disputed" (1990:248-9).

That is, as Schiffrin suggests, opinions increase the negotiability of truth in argument while decreasing the disputability of one's stand toward that preposition. Therefore, the hedges Yenmin uses ("In my opinion, I think") in Excerpt 38 are to indicate that her claim to truth is disputable and subjective. By showing that her disagreement/criticism is based on a disputable and subjective claim to truth, Yenmin will be able to indicate

that her disagreement/criticism is not necessarily valid and hence partially satisfy H's face want of not being criticized or proved to be wrong. The use of a hedge is more closely related to S's want not to disagree with H rather than S's want to agree with H's on his point because the increased negotiability of truth by opinions does not necessarily mean the acceptability of each other's opinions. There is still some difference in degree between these two face wants and those differences may be qualified to be further distinguished in order to interpret the politeness phenomena that occurred in this study.

As described above, the use of hedges in disagreement often involves the increase of S's claim to sincerity and decrease of S's claim to truth. The willingness of S to increase the negotiability of truth by hedges allows the speaker to indicate that he or she has no desire to absolutely reject H's points. Hedges used in disagreement to express opinions are not what Brown and Levinson suggest as a feature of negative politeness. They are not used to indicate S's intention to want H's want either.

5.4.5 Apology in Disagreement

Disagreement violates the basic "positive" face want of the addressee and may cause friction with the addressee during a communicative interaction. The friction caused by disagreements may need what Goffman (Goffman 1971) called "remedial work" to reduce the offense. Goffman claims that

the function of "remedial work" is "to change the meaning
that otherwise might be given to an act, transforming what
could be seen as offensive into what can be seen as
acceptable" (1971:109). He points out that accounts,
requests for permission to infract, and apologies are the
three main devices to achieve remediation.

Fraser (1981) also argues that four assumptions must be
true in order for an apology to be valid. The addresser of
an apology must:

1. believe that some act has been done before the time of
speaking,

2. believe that the act is personally offensive to the
addressee,

3. believe he was at least partly responsible for the
offensive act,

4. genuinely feel regret for the offensive act he committed.

While both Goffman and Fraser assumed that apology was
a device for remediation, Brown and Levinson emphasized
apology as a negative politeness strategy, which "performs
the function of minimizing the particular imposition that
the FTA unavoidably effects" (1987:129). They claimed that
"by apologizing for doing an FTA, the speaker can indicate
his reluctance to impinge on H's negative face and thereby
partially redress that impingement" (Brown and Levinson
1987:187). However, all these assumptions of the functions

of apologies are incomplete in explaining the way apologies
as a mitigating device were employed in the data of this
study.

While apology can be a remedial device for people to
reduce the offense, it is not exclusively used for remedial
purposes. An apology may serve as a mitigating device for
an offensive act about to occur as well as a remedial device
for an offense already occurred. Actually most of the
apologies in the discourse of argument in this study were
used to mitigate anticipated or accompanying offenses which
resulted from disagreement or criticism.

The following excerpts illustrate the mitigating force
of apology for an expected offense:

> Excerpt 39 (David, requesting forgiveness for the
> offense)
>
> David: one of the point that monday person point out,
> Her mother have cancer and she was dead later, <u>I feel
> sorry</u> for you and if i say some offensive, <u>please
> forgive me</u>,...and the monday person said that her
> mother suffer some pain during the end of her life but
> I think that there may be have some people that don't
> want to see one of their family member suffer these
> pain and they would like to see them die peacefully.

In Excerpt 39, David was afraid that his following
disagreement with the way a terminal cancer patient should
be treated at the end of her life would be offensive to
Yenmin since the disagreement involved the reference of the
death of an immediate family of Yenmin. The topic became
highly personal and sensitive and David's apology for his
potential offense is understandable.

Although apology was defined by Brown and Levinson (1987) as a negative politeness strategy, in my data it was often seen to be used as a redressive action that was not oriented toward the negative face of H.

> Excerpt 40 (Yenmin, disagreeing with David on conviction record issue)
>
> <u>I'm sorry</u> to tell you that it's definitly against human's right because he is not a criminal anymore after jail.

For example, in Excerpt 40, Yenmin disagreed with David on the issue "should conviction record be destroyed after a person is released from jail?" The strategy she used was to express her regret for the accompanied offense. By apologizing right before her disagreement, Yenmin was able to mitigate the potential unpleasant feelings caused by her refusal of the face want of her addressee, David. The apology used was for a mitigating purpose instead of a remedial one since no offense had been made before the apology occurred. As the two excerpts show above, the apology employed here was functioning as a mitigating strategy for the potential unwelcome effects caused by later disagreement.

The reason why apology is categorized as a negative politeness strategy by Brown and Levinson is because it "involves recognizing the impingement and making amends for it" (1987:187). So, a request for forgiveness such as "I'm sorry to bother you..." acknowledges the impingement and implies S's reluctance to impinge on H's negative face.

While many apologies are used for the indication of S's reluctance to impinge on H's negative face, some can be used for S's reluctance to impinge on H's positive face. For instance, Yenmin's apology may be multi-functional. It may be used to indicate her reluctance to impinge multiple faces of David. It may be used to redress the damage to David's positive face want caused by the FTA as a disagreement ("you are wrong on this issue"), an accusation ("your assertion violates human rights"), and that to his negative face want as an imposition ("sorry to make you listen to my disagreement and accusation"). The apology Yenmin issued might have been used as a mitigating strategy aiming at mitigating the offensive acts that impinge both the positive and negative face wants of David.

> Excerpt 41 (Adil, misunderstanding David and disagreeing with him on who has the right to decide the use of euthanasia.) [Relevant previous e-mail message is italicized.]
>
> *David: First of all, I would like to clear about my side of this topic. I don't really know what is the voluterary or involunterary euthanasia or mercy killing. But I think every people have their rigth to control their life and some ...*
>
> Adil: sorry for interrupting you. I really did not get your point of view here. What do you mean by people have their rigth to control their life. ... It is all up to the patient himself. Nobody forces the patient to choose being killed.
>
> *David: people ...*
> [Ellipsis (...) indicates my omission of text.]

The apology Adil offered here is functioning as remedial work, which helped to ease the potential infraction caused by the abrupt interruption. Adil's interruption was

done by inserting his own opposing utterances in the middle
of David's message. Although the interruption was not
synchronous and was done in a way that was not able to
interfere with or interrupt David's speech, Adil treated it
as if it were an interruption in a real-time conversation
and offered an apology for the interruption. Furthermore,
Adil's apology might have served as a redress to his
disagreement. Adil chose to use a linguistic strategy to
minimize the potential unpleasant effects in a friction
caused by both the imposition of the interruption act and
the disagreement. If there was no disagreement, Adil would
not need to interrupt and needed no apology.

These excerpts thus illustrate that imposition may
simultaneously co-exist with acts threatening positive face
want such as Adil's interruption and Yenmin's way of
expressing of disagreement. However, it may not always be
so. For example:

> Excerpt 42 (Mitsuha, apologizing for his disagreement
> on recycling issue)
>
> Hey, this is Mitsuha. How are you doing? I recived the
> letter from Monday person, and I am going to response
> his opinion and about environmental crisis. So, if you
> guys do not understand what I am saying, or if you guys
> think that what I am talking about when you guys
> finished reading, please forget it, and forgive me. I
> hope you guys understand what I feel and say when I am
> writing about this.

In Excerpt 42, Mitsuha was trying to argue against the
empty ideas of recycling to save the environment. He did
not only differ from the rest of his group in viewpoint, he
actually severely criticized those who simply shouted empty

slogans on this issue. His request for forgiveness was derived from his understanding and worry about his disagreement and criticism and was confirmed in the interview. When asked why "please forget it, and forgive me" was used, Mitsuha revealed that "I think my ideas not so great for others. Others might disagree with me and my idea may hurt them. So, I apologize." His apology was to mitigate the illocutionary force of his criticism and disagreement rather than the imposition of them on his group members. In other words, Mitsuha didn't apologize for having his group members listen to his talk, but he did worry about the potential face damage incurred by the content of his talk and tried to mitigate the force of his disagreement and criticism.

Once again, the fact that apology as a negative politeness strategy is often used for positive face redress evidences the ambiguity of Brown and Levinson's (1987) dichotomous politeness framework. Why would a basically negative politeness technique be used to function as a positive politeness strategy? An utterance like "I beg to differ" involves an act that threatens primarily the positive face of H and very little on H's negative face since disagreement has little, if any, imposition force on H's behavior or attention. Even if we take it to the extreme and assert that every single speech act including assertions contains imposition to some degree, we are still incapable of explaining why a speaker wants to choose to

minimize the secondary threat force instead of the primary threat to H's positive face in disagreement.

Although Brown and Levinson did realize that politeness may be addressed to "any potential aspect of the FTA, not necessarily just to the most relevant one(s)" (1987:286), they did not attempt to explain why people would consistently select a particular aspect of FTA over the most relevant ones to be addressed. No satisfactory account can be derived from their positive vs. negative viewpoint of face and politeness strategies.

As has been demonstrated above, many of the negative politeness strategies (e.g., negative politeness strategy 2: hedges, negative politeness strategy 4: minimize the imposition, negative politeness strategy 6: apology, negative politeness strategy 7: impersonalize S and H) found in this study are used as positive ones. An explanation of the frequent use of negative politeness techniques for redressing H's positive face wants may be made by arguing that the FTAs (disagreements, criticisms, interruptions, and challenges) demonstrated in the study acquire the strength of imposition to some degree and therefore threaten both the positive and negative face wants of H. However, other acts that threaten "positive" face wants of H can't be easily redressed by negative politeness techniques. For example, it would be very rare in a normal conversation that did not involve disagreement, if not strange, to say: "I'm sorry I didn't call you honey" in a situation where the addresser

just remembered that he or she forgot to address the
addressee intimately as expected. A negative politeness
technique would seem awkward in a situation like this. A
proper politeness may be shown by simply doing what the
addressee expects, such as saying "Honey." Similarly,
utterances like "I notice your fantastic garden a little
bit"; "Someone always does the dishes! I'll do them this
time," or "your viewpoint is a little interesting, I have
learned something from someone." are uncommon ways of
displaying politeness. On the other hand, an expression
like "I have a little disagreement with you" sounds
definitely polite, if not common. As discussed above, in
the excerpts where "negative politeness" techniques were
used as "positive politeness" strategies, the "positive
face" wants of H that S wishes to address are addressed not
by S's attending to or desiring what H wants for his self-
image or personality, but by what H does not want. Brown
and Levinson's (1987) definition of "face" and "politeness"
is simply too broad to capture the meaning of all the
politeness behaviors displayed in this study. In other
words, there is a need for further distinction between
"positive face" wants to account for the minimization and
avoidance strategies used by the participants to achieve in
disagreements a particular politeness which is
distinguishable from the dichotomized politeness system
proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987).

Therefore, it seems that assigning two single values to cover all the human wants that are related to "face" is at best too broad and unsatisfactory and in fact it may misinterpret the politeness phenomena in a particular "ethos." Brown and Levinson claim that "the linguistic realizations of positive- and negative- politeness strategies may serve as a social accelerator and a social brake, respectively" (1987:258). Researchers who did quantitative analysis following Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework of politeness may have misinterpreted the polite phenomena in their studies when trying to propose a statistically significant dominance of a particular type of politeness being found in the studies. For instance, some of the politeness strategies that were originally categorized as "positive politeness" might turn out to be communicative attempts of avoidance of transgressing H's wants of his wants being un-rejected rather than attempts of accelerating social relationships. Some of the "negative politeness" strategies might turn out to be redressive actions that aim to satisfy H's wants of being un-rejected rather than putting a social brake on the social relationships between interactants.

In this chapter, I have discussed the dichotomous nature of Brown and Levinson's face concept and the problematic aspects of the politeness strategies oriented toward the satisfaction of these two face wants. I pointed out that there is no clear line that can be drawn between

the dichotomous faces. Rather, there are grey areas between the two faces and the associated politeness strategies of Brown and Levinson's theory. The ambiguity of face wants and politeness was discussed with the focus on five politeness strategies used in the study (positive politeness strategy 6: avoid disagreement; negative politeness strategy 2: hedges, negative politeness strategy 4: minimize the imposition, negative politeness strategy 6: apology, negative politeness strategy 7: impersonalize S and H). Arguments were made favoring a continuum view of face and politeness. The next chapter will provide an alternative theory concerning the nature of this particular "face" want and politeness.

CHAPTER SIX

ALTERNATIVE POLITENESS THEORY

6.1 Alternative Politeness Theory

The study supports Craig, Tracy, and Spisak's (1986) suggestion that there are politeness strategies which cannot be classified as either negative or positive politeness. In fact, as was shown in the previous chapter, a lot of so-called "positive" or "negative" politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson can actually be termed either alternatively or in another way. A simple categorization and generalization of linguistic features at the face value will miss the complicated nature of language. One of the weak points of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory is that their framework was constructed on a simplified and unverified assumption of basic human want of self-image. Since each of the two face wants proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) has a unidimensional value, other human wants that may be related to one's public self-image were inadequately categorized.

6.1.1 Basic Assumptions of the Alternative Theory

In this chapter, I will attempt to address the difficulties of applying Brown and Levinson's theory to my

data. I propose an approach which incorporates Brown and
Levinson's theory but modifies and extends it in significant
ways.

Specifically, my approach assumes the following: (1)
people have self-defense mechanisms, which come along with
other wants; (2) Brown and Levinson's (1987) "positive" face
can be further distinguished into two different wants:
solidarity want and modesty want; (3) negative face want and
modesty face want share common characteristics; and (4) face
wants occur along a continuum instead of categories with
clear boundaries.

There are at least two ways in which people satisfy
face wants: passively or actively. A person's face may be
satisfied by either actively seeking the desirability of his
public self-image or 'personality' claimed by himself or by
passively avoiding being rejected/disapproved or being
imposed on. That is, every adult in a society would not
only have the want that his desires be admired and accepted,
he would also have the want to avoid his personality being
damaged or his self-image being humiliated by others'
rejection or imposition.

In this new view, Brown and Levinson's (1987)
"positive" face wants can contain two values: active vs.
passive. The two polarized face concepts of their
politeness theory (i.e., "positive" vs. "negative" face) are
bridged by various degrees of efforts to actively or
passively seek the satisfaction of face wants. We may see

solidarity face want as the active want of being accepted, liked, or desired and modesty face want as the passive want of not being rejected, or disliked. A person's solidarity face wants can be satisfied by others' recognition and attention to his or her wants while the modesty face wants can be satisfied by other's recognition and avoidance of transgressing his or her wants. In this sense, solidarity face wants contain active face attributes. One's autonomous face wants, the wants of actions being unimpeded, share with modesty face wants the passive face attributes.

Rathus (1984) points out that the famous psychologist Henry Murray's (1938) study of the needs of humanity indicates that many of the learned human needs are independent and consist largely of social motives. "Like physiological drives and stimulus motives, social motives prompt goal-directed behavior" (Rathus 1984). Among Murray's classic list of motives (1938), there are some that are close to what Brown and Levinson (1987) assert about the "positive" and "negative" face wants and yet there are others that are close to the concept of passive avoidance of being rejected or humiliated (see Table 3).

Out of twenty human social motives identified by Henry Murray (1938), the motives of "affiliation," "autonomy," "avoidance," "defendance," and "infavoidance" contain concepts that are very close to the positive and negative face wants of Brown and Levinson (1987). While Brown and Levinson's (1987) definitions of basic human face wants are

Table 3:   Partial List of Motives Compiled by Henry Murray

Motives	Definition
Affiliation:	To form friendships and associations. To greet, join, and live with others. To co-operate and converse sociably with others. To love. To join group.
Autonomy:	To resist influence or coercion. To delay an authority or seek freedom in a new place. To strive for independence.
Avoidance:	To avoid blame, ostracism or punishment by inhibiting asocial or unconventional impulses.
Defendance:	To defend oneself against blame or belittlement. To justify one's actions. To offer extenuations, explanations and excuses. To resist 'probing'
Infavoidance:	To avoid failure, shame, humiliation, ridicule. To refrain from attempting to do something that is beyond one's power. To conceal a disfigurement. (Rathus 1984:275)

in some degree agreeable with some of Murray's (1938) social
motives such as "affiliation" and "autonomy," they mention
nothing about another characteristic human beings are likely
to have in dealing with one's public self-image: the
avoidance tendency and defensive mechanism. Murray (1938)
believed that people would avoid blame, criticism,
humiliation, and defend themselves against blame or
belittlement. While people may have the active desire of
being liked or admired, they may also have the passive want
of avoiding being criticized, rejected, disagreed with or
imposed on. A person's concern to avoid criticism can't be
misinterpreted as the want for desirability, for the former
refers to the passive desire of defending his or her self-
image and the latter refers to the active desire of seeking
other person's approval of the self-image. It may cause
ambiguity or even misinterpretation of a polite behavior if
no specific distinction of the basic face wants is made.
For instance:

> Excerpt 43 (Adil, the Tuesday person, complaining about
> the grammatical and spelling mistakes in Monday
> person's previous e-mails) [Emphasis is indicated by
> underlining.]

> Hello every body.
>   This is Adil. Actually I 'm really enjoying the
> E-mail discussions, and I think they're going to be
> helpful to all of us. However, we have had a lot of
> grammar and spelling mistakes since we got started. It
> is natural result because we are dealing with language
> that is second to us, and we are not native speakers.

In Excerpt 43, Adil was trying to mitigate the strength
of his face threatening act (FTA), a criticism to Yenmin's

English errors, by making excuses for her while criticizing her at the same time. The strategy Adil used may be identified in Brown and Levinson's politeness framework as "positive politeness strategy 9: Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants," which indicates Adil spoke as if he were Yenmin and therefore understood what Yenmin would argue (1987:125). By doing so, Adil indicated that his knowledge was equal to Yenmin's knowledge and he was familiar with Yenmin to such a degree that he could assert what Yenmin might argue for herself.

Brown and Levinson assert that "positive-politeness techniques are usable not only for FTA redress, but in general as a kind of social accelerator, where S, in using them, indicates that he wants to 'come closer' to H" (1987:103). If Adil's mitigating strategy is interpreted as "positively" polite, it would imply the desire of Adil to be socially closer to Yenmin when actually what Adil did was to satisfy Yenmin's want of self-defense. If Adil were attempting to get close to Yenmin, he could have chosen other strategies that might indicate stronger affiliation or solidarity with Yenmin, such as paying attention to Yenmin's arguments. For example, Adil might have said, "your viewpoints are so interesting and excellent although there are some mistakes in your spelling and grammar," if solidarity was all that he had in mind. Another example can be seen in Excerpt 36, David's use of minimization of disagreement: "a little disagreement on the idea of monday

person." David was trying to primarily satisfy Yenmin's infavoidance motive; her want of avoidance of the embarrassment caused by disagreement, rather than to be socially closer to Yenmin or to attend to her want of freedom of unimpeded action. Avoiding embarrassing Yenmin would allow David to avoid increasing the social distance from her, however; David could have used strategies that indicated stronger concerns for Yenmin's solidarity face wants, such as first name or pre-faced agreement, if getting closer to her was really David's primary discourse goal. For example, he could have said: "I agree with Yenmin mostly, but...."

This view of basic human wants may give us not just a new view of Brown and Levinson's (1987) assumptions of politeness, but may provide a base for the modification of their dichotomous framework of politeness.

6.1.2 Alternative Face Wants and Politeness

Adopting a vague face definition in the beginning of their theory of politeness, Brown and Levinson (1987), elaborate their framework into something that covers an even broader range of politeness phenomena that do not strictly adhere to their original definition of politeness. Some of the concepts of face wants and output politeness strategies demonstrated in their examples actually go beyond their strict definition of the two face wants. In other words, they define face want in such a broad and vague way that the

specific nature of some particular politeness is obscured under an ambiguous application of the definition of politeness.

Table 4 illustrates the alternative view of basic human face wants and politeness.

The fundamental differences between Brown and Levinson's assumptions of human face wants and the ones listed in Figure 4 is the attitudes a person possesses in his claim of public self-image. Brown and Levinson assume that people will either actively pursue positive evaluation of their self-images or passively request that their freedom of action be unimpeded. Actually there may be further distinguishable levels of "faces" or public self-images.

For instance, a person may wish others at least not to openly disagree with or criticize his or her opinions, values, or evaluations, even if they are not appreciated or desired by others. When someone does not agree with another on a certain issue and does not want to pretend to agree superficially, he or she may still have ways to minimize the disagreement in order to pay attention to addressee's want of defense of his or her self-image.

Another reason why there is a need to further distinguish a particular face want in Brown and Levinson's framework is that they assume that "positive politeness" strategies are used as a social accelerator and "negative politeness" strategies function as a social brake (1987). A unidimensional view of the value of "face" implies that all

Table 4: Alternative View of Face and Politeness

Basic human face wants

Self-determination	**Modesty want**	**Solidarity want**
Freedom of action not impeded	personality, value, opinion not rejected	personality, value, opinion, wants being accepted, desired, or identified with by at least some others

Politeness

Autonomy politeness	**Modesty politeness**	**Solidarity politeness**
redressive actions oriented toward the impingement of freedom of action	redressive actions oriented toward the avoidance of rejection of personality, value, opinion	redressive actions oriented toward the desired personality value, opinion wants

redressive actions towards H's face wants are capable of serving the same functions when actually there are to some degree differences in the capability of doing so. For example:

> **Example 4**
> A: "Like my painting?"
> B: "That's an absolutely marvelous painting you have, buddy."
>
> **Example 5**
> C: "Like my painting?"
> D: "It looks interesting."

B in Example 4 uses a "positive politeness" strategy, which may serve as a social accelerator while the strategy D uses in Example 5 may not function to bring social distance any closer. What D is trying to do is to indicate his recognition of C's desire not being rejected or criticized and show his willingness to satisfy C's need.

In the modified theory of human face wants, it is assumed that adults in a society have the public self-image that they want to claim for themselves. Such a self-image can be distinguished in three related aspects:

(a) Solidarity face want: the want of 'competent adult members' that their self-images be accepted, and their wants be desirable to at least some others

(b) Modesty face want: the want of every member that damage to the integrity of his or her self-image be avoided or defended

(c) Autonomous face want: the want of every member that the freedom of his or her actions be respected by others (i.e., freedom from imposition)

This notion of 'face' is derived from that of Brown and Levinson (1987) and primarily agrees with their basic arguments: (1) All people have face wants and are rational agents, (2) all people would maintain each other's face because of the mutual vulnerability of face, (3) some acts intrinsically threaten face (FTAs), and (4) S will want to minimize an FTA unless the efficiency of an FTA by S is greater than S's want to preserve H's face. In other words, each competent person is rational enough to recognize the face wants of others and realize that it is in everybody's best interest to maintain each other's face in interaction.

Solidarity face want is narrower in scope than Brown and Levinson's (1987) "positive face." It is the want of every member of a society that he will at the moment of interaction be positively associated with at least some others who will ratify, approve, like or admire his self-image, personality, thoughts or desires. This face want differs with Brown and Levinson's (1987) "positive-face want" in that the range of solidarity face want is limited to the want that S's self-image be positively accepted, while Brown and Levinson's "positive face want" includes both the wants that S's positive self-image be desired and that it not be rejected.

Modesty face want means the want of every member that his self-image will at the moment of interaction not be openly challenged, denied, rejected, or opposed even if it is not approved, or admired by at least some others. Solidarity want differs from modesty want in that the former can be satisfied by giving what H wants and the latter can be satisfied by avoiding or minimizing doing what H does not want. Hence, an utterance like "Hey, you look wonderful in that pretty dress!" is a strategy attending to the solidarity want of H while something like "I have a little disagreement with you on that issue" is a strategy focusing on H's want of not being disagreed with or confronted.

Autonomous face want is what Brown and Levinson (1987) originally called "negative face." It is members' want that their freedom of action not be suppressed or impeded. What differentiates autonomous face want from modesty face want is that the former is primarily directed to one's action and the latter is primarily directed to one's belief and desire. These two wants also share something in common. Both face wants may be met with passive choices. That is, those two wants may be satisfied by not doing what H doesn't like rather than doing what H likes.

As can be seen, the wants of solidarity are characterized by the preference of self-image being identified or accepted while those of modesty and autonomy are characterized by the preference of self-image being not confronted. When doing an FTA, a speaker can select

redressive actions that address H's preference of his
self-image being desired, or his want of self-image being
un-damaged. The redressive actions that are primarily
oriented toward H's solidarity face wants are called
solidarity politeness. Solidarity politeness can best be
achieved by actively and openly satisfying H's solidarity
face wants (e.g., "You guys have been so great.")
Solidarity politeness strategies are not necessarily used to
soften an FTA. It can be used solely to function as "social
accelerator" without redressive purpose.

Those redressive actions that are oriented toward the
modesty face wants of H are called "modesty politeness"
(e.g., "I think there is a little difference between our
opinions."). Unlike solidarity politeness, modesty
politeness is basically characterized by avoidance acts.
However, a speaker who resorts to modesty politeness does
not necessarily intend to keep social distance from H.
Instead, what modesty politeness does is to avoid the
increase of social distance. Unlike autonomy politeness,
modesty politeness is constrained to redress H's
personality, self-image, desire, opinions, and wants rather
than impingement of his actions. However, modesty
politeness does not attempt to decrease the social distance
to H either. There is a difference in degree between
reducing social distance and avoiding its increase. Finally
autonomy politeness is redressive actions oriented toward
H's autonomous or "negative" face wants. Autonomy

politeness is also characterized by avoidance behavior and the purpose of it is to reasonably keep social distance in order not to transgress H's freedom of action (e.g., "Would it be possible for you to gift-wrap this for me, Sir?").

6.1.3 The Continuum of Politeness

In contrast to Brown and Levinson's (1987) dichotomous view of politeness, the alternative politeness assumptions view "face" wants and politeness as a continuum with no clear boundaries. The relationship among these three may be diagrammed as follows (see Figure 4).

As shown in Figure 4, politeness can be conceptualized as a continuum of acts aiming at acquiring smooth social relationships among interactants in a communicative interaction. The stronger S's desire to identify with H, the more tendency S has leaning toward the solidarity politeness end. The weaker S's desire to identify with H, the more tendency S has leaning toward the autonomy politeness end. The desire of S to identify with H functions as what Brown and Levinson refer as "social distancing" (1987:130). Social distance can be reduced or increased by the appeal to the polar ends of the continuum of politeness to indicate the degree S wants to identify with H.

Modesty politeness, which locates itself in the middle of the continuum, has probably the least effect on social distance and therefore is distinguishable from the other two

Concern for H's
self- image, desire

AUTONOMY   MODESTY   SOLIDARITY
POLITENESS POLITENESS POLITENESS

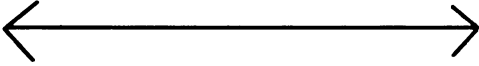Avoiding impingement on H

Identifying with H
weaker ⟵—————————⟶ stronger

Figure 4: Relationships of Politeness in
the Alternative Model

types of politeness. It further provides a foundation for interpreting why many of the mitigating strategies found in the discourse of argument are hybrid in nature. In other words, the reason why a lot of the politeness strategies in the study are realized by the use of what Brown and Levinson called "negative politeness" techniques to address the "positive" face wants of H is that S's concern of H's self-image overlaps S's avoidance of impingement on H.

Furthermore, I conclude that each two adjacent types of politeness share a boundary that is fuzzy and ambiguous because politeness is conceptualized as a continuum rather than a dichotomous system. For instance:

> Excerpt 44 (Yenmin, responding to Adil's complaint about the EL)
>
> Response to Adil:
>
> Hi! I can tell your anger about EL. In fact, a lot of international students complain its policies and exam, but most people seem just endure this situation because it's no use to argue with the EL staffs. Since it's one of school policy for people who fail the exam must take English classes, we just can recognize that our English really needs to improve. Actually, after studying in EL, I can feel my progress in English, especially in writing. ...

Here, Yenmin was responding to Adil's complaint about the EL with an e-mail that began with her attention to Adil's emotion. Actually Yenmin revealed in the interview that she disliked Adil's constant complaints about everything and didn't really want to agree with him although she herself did not like some of the policies of the institution either. The fact that Yenmin showed limited

implicit support of Adil's anger indicates an ambiguity in her attention in terms of politeness. While her attention to Adil's emotion can be explained as a strategy directed toward solidarity politeness, it can also be explained as one that was oriented toward Adil's modesty face want. The boundary between solidarity and modesty politeness in this case is not clearly drawn.

Excerpt 45 (Yenmin)

Happy Valentine's Day! I'm the monday person--Yenmin. Today I opened my E-Mail and found I've only got one response from David. I know there are four persons in our group. <u>I wonder if</u> the other three persons have responsed to me or not. At the same time, would you please tell me if you received my response?

In Excerpt 45, Yenmin was trying to mitigate her FTA by the hedge "I wonder." The FTA contains an act that threatens two face wants of Yenmin's teammates who did not respond to the assignment as required: the autonomy face and the modesty face. Yenmin admitted that she really thought the reason why she did not receive responses from those three persons was because of their laziness. The hedge "I wonder" was used here to soften her imposition of requesting her teammates' participation on the discussion on time and to mitigate her indirect disagreement with their laziness. When serving to address the want of freedom of action, "I wonder" is viewed as an autonomy politeness. However, it may also serve as a politeness strategy that addresses the want of H's self-image not being criticized or disagreed with, and hence becomes a modesty politeness. Yenmin

indicated that it would be very impolite to express what she really thought of her group members without the redressive pretense of possible e-mail system failure (i.e., "would you please tell me if you received my response?"). Once again, the boundary between autonomy and modesty politeness can be blurred.

6.2 Conclusion

This chapter provides an alternative view of Brown and Levinson's (1987) face and politeness concepts. It argues that Brown and Levinson's (1987) dichotomous definition of politeness is too broad. Their definition fails to interpret many of the observations of politeness acts employed in this study. I propose an alternative framework, adopting Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework as the basis and viewing politeness as a continuum which varies in degree, in terms of S's concern for H's self-image and freedom of action. Three distinguishable face want and politeness categories were identified with fuzzy boundaries. The majority of Brown and Levinson's (1987) examples are related to request and mitigation of request. This study suggests that Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness needs to be modified and advanced in order to interpret politeness beyond the dichotomous view.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Summary

This study uses an ethnographic perspective to
investigate situated language uses among English as Second
Language (ESL) students in class discussions through
electronic mail (e-mail), in order to understand how social
relationships are established and maintained in this new
language event.

For a long time, language researchers have been
focusing on the study of oral discourse interchanges within
dyads and paying comparatively less attention to written
discourse. As the result of the invention and the
availability of computers and electronic communication
systems, written interaction has been rapidly increasing
especially among people in the business and scholarly
communities. New language events are developing and
beginning to be applied in our daily life for practical
purposes. For example, we begin to see the incorporation of
e-mail as part of the academic curriculum in both first and
second language classrooms. Linguistic researchers are now
able to get various types of abundant written interaction

for all sorts of studies that were unlikely to be conducted before computer-mediated communication existed.

There have been arguments about whether computer-mediated-communication generates less natural richness and interpersonal interaction than face-to-face interaction. The present study examined politeness strategies in e-mail communication and contributed to this debate. It demonstrated that concerns for politeness played a major role in participants' construction of their discourse. Not only is e-mail capable of transmitting natural richness and interactions of interpersonal communication, it actually contributes to shape up the unique realization of politeness. The participants in this study, inexperienced in e-mail discussion, were quite capable of manipulating the unique characteristics of the communication medium to achieve particular politeness concerns in this new language event. E-mail provides the users a more flexible environment for them to exploit the characteristics of this new medium and the speech activity for their communicative goals.

In this study, Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework of politeness was used as the base for the investigation of concerns of social relationships. The focus of the study was on how people mitigate their disagreements and criticisms in class discussions where opposing viewpoints are likely expected and experienced. Brown and Levinson's

theory of politeness, especially face as the core element, was discussed.

An important distinction between mitigation and politeness was made. Politeness is conceptualized differently by people from various cultures. For example, Gu (1990) argues that politeness can be normative rather than goal-oriented or functional in Chinese society. Following the norms that are subscribed by the whole society will be considered polite while violating the norms will be impolite in Chinese society. This study focused on the ways redressive actions were used to soften face threatening acts (FTAs). It dealt only with the functional face-based mitigation at the individual level rather than what Gu (1990) called the normative aspect of politeness at the level of society since the majority of politeness found in this study was functional mitigation.

The study emphasized the importance of using naturally occurring discourse with the help of in-classroom observation and interviews to understand the situated uses of language in discussions among students. The interviews helped greatly in obtaining participants' overall view of the language event and clarifying confusion about the nature of a particular e-mail message. In general, the majority of participants either liked e-mail or thought e-mail was an acceptable medium for class discussions, although they preferred using e-mail for non-serious or informal discussions.

Since the focus of this study was on mitigating strategies in disagreement, I attempted to define disagreement for later analysis. The study found that disagreement is a very complicated phenomenon that is beyond the level of the speech act. Instead of seeing disagreement as a speech act, Searle (1976) and Fraser (1983) view it as part of a larger class, such as "representative," and Bach and Harnish (1984) as "constatives." I rejected the use of concrete disagreeing words, such as "disagree," "not agree," as the only criterion for the identification of disagreement. During the interviews, I found out that many disagreements in the study were not expressed due to various factors. Hence, this study has regarded disagreement as a belief expressed in opposition to others' belief on a certain proposition. It has also been defined as a position rejecting the appropriateness of other individuals' speech acts or activities. Since a belief may be expressed either explicitly or implicitly, disagreement, as a belief, may not be readily identified. Whenever possible, a disagreement has been identified by the confirmation from the speaker through an interview.

The study indicated that a new "discourse community" (Bizzell 1982) was developed in the very early stage of the study. The data suggested that this discourse community was constituted not just by participants who happened to attend the class and were randomly assigned to a particular discussion group but by their construction and recognition

of the appropriate norms for the newly-developed language event and their willingness and capability to follow them and perform their linguistic behaviors accordingly.

The participants in the study were very sensitive to the need for constructing a "discourse universe" in which meaningfulness is achieved by the incorporation of social relationships, emotions as well as the exchanges of information (Duranti 1986). As a result, their e-mail discourses were characterized by predominant interactional discourse mixing up with transactional discourse.

Politeness was achieved at global as well as local levels in this new language event. The global politeness strategies were realized by the manipulation of participation frameworks (Goffman 1974). Participants were very skillful in using the multiparty discussions and the pre-determined turn-taking system of the language event as strategic resources for their communicative goals at the moment. The exploitation of participation frameworks was found to be closely related to mitigation.

I made a distinction between two slightly different and yet intertwined phenomena to address the politeness found in the study: participant framework and participation framework. Participant framework describes the positions of the participants aligned toward one another by activities and participation framework emphasizes the positions taken by the depiction or animation of the participants as figures or characters within talk. It was found that both the

participant framework and participation framework were
skillfully manipulated by many of the participants to
achieve politeness. The manipulation included (1) the
construction of frameworks, and (2) shifts of frameworks.

FTAs in the data were often mitigated by strategically
constructing the participant frameworks in a way that would
avoid explicit disagreements or criticisms. Mitigation of
disagreements and criticisms is basically done by
intentionally avoiding construction of a participant
framework that positions a particular person as the focal
recipient of the FTA in a multiparty communication since
exposing the addressee as the focal recipient of the FTAs in
a multiparty communication would put forward the addressee
and damage his modesty face.

Politeness was further realized by constructing
participation frameworks in such a way that depicted the
participants as figures that possessed fewer personal
attributes or shared common attributes with the speakers or
other parties when an FTA was issued and directed toward the
addressees.

The shifts of participant frameworks allow the speaker
to implicitly incorporate addressees into the frame for an
FTA (e.g., a request), or explicitly locate the addressee to
indicate the speaker's sincerity in mitigating an FTA or
satisfy the face wants of the addressees. Politeness was
further achieved by the shifts of participation frameworks
proceeding in the direction that gradually decreased the

differentiation or increased the common attributes between the main characters in a confrontational situation. Hypothetical narrative events were sometimes used to indicate the speaker's presumption of the solidarity between the speaker and the addressees to soften FTAs.

Participants not only skillfully manipulated the participant framework (Goffman 1974) to soften the unwelcome effects of disagreements at the global level, they also used lots of mitigating strategies locally, such as hedges, apology, impersonalizing speaker and hearer, or distancing addressee (H) from face-threatening acts, for the same purpose. When Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework of politeness was examined against the new speech event, it was found that their theory failed to provide adequate interpretation for those politeness strategies.

Brown and Levinson posited a dichotomous face concept which further resulted in a dichotomous view of on-record redressive actions. Their politeness theory implied the mutual exclusiveness of politeness strategies, and failed to capture and address the fuzziness and ambiguity of politeness strategies that were often found in the study. It was found that strategies with "negative" techniques were actually oriented toward satisfying a face want other than the "negative" face want of hearers. There were no clear categorical boundaries between the two types of on-record politeness. Ambiguity was found to exist in various types of politeness strategies discussed in Chapter Five.

Finally, arguments were made favoring a continuum view of face and politeness. This alternative approach assumes that there is a basic face want of self-defense other than the "positive" and "negative" face wants. A person may either actively seek the desirability of his public self-image or 'personality' claimed by himself or passively avoid the rejection/disapproval of his wants. The active want of a person's self-image being desirable is the "solidarity" face want and the passive want of his or her self-image not being rejected or disapproved is the "modesty" face want. The solidarity face want may be satisfied by others' attending to the hearer's want while the modesty face want may be satisfied by the avoidance of transgressing the hearer's want. The want of action not being impeded or not being imposed is called the "autonomous" face want. The redressive actions that are oriented toward satisfying the solidarity, modesty, and autonomous face wants respectively are called solidarity, modesty, and autonomous politeness strategies respectively. The solidarity politeness shares with the modesty politeness the concern for the maintenance of self-image. The modesty politeness shares with the autonomous politeness the passive avoidance of transgressing the hearer's want. Each two adjacent types of politeness share a boundary that is fuzzy and ambiguous because politeness is conceptualized as a continuum rather than a dichotomous system.

7.2 Implications and Conclusion

New speech events deserve to be examined as they emerge, as a contribution to discourse theory. We have an obligation to propose alternatives and modifications to discourse theory that proves inadequate to the data.

ESL discourse of this type is of great interest since it is a snapshot of spontaneous conversation between interlanguage users. The data in this type of new language event have never been gathered before. Compared to the research on oral language study, written interaction has received far less attention. With the help of computers and communication systems, researchers will be able to gather and study a tremendous amount of written interaction from various newly-developing language events.

As described in Chapter One (cf. Section 1.3), foreign language classrooms have been dominated by discourse that primarily focuses on transmission of information (Lörscher and Schulze 1988). If the goal for second language teaching is to help learners to become "communicative competent" (Hymes 1964), the goal and the practice of many second language classes would obviously be contradictory since politeness has been given little attention in the classrooms. Understanding ways of mitigating cross-cultural communication will prove to be critical to the development of good relationships among speakers and to the development of true language competence by ESL users.

Therefore, it is important to study new ESL discourse types between interlanguage users because it may provide ESL teachers with additional chances to uncover ESL students' sociocultural as well as linguistic inappropriateness which might otherwise be ignored in other conventional discourse types. ESL teachers may benefit from understanding what influence the target language, and ESL students' own cultures and languages may bring to their discourse. The target language, English in this case, may have some influence on the politeness strategies employed by ESL students in e-mail communication. For instance, politeness displayed by certain linguistic features specific to a particular language (e.g., honorifics of Japanese and Korean languages, and self-denigration or respectful terms in Chinese) and non-linguistic gestures (e.g., nods, or bows to the interlocutors) may have to be sacrificed by ESL students using the target language in e-mail communication.

However, instances of politeness strategies from the native languages and cultures of the ESL students in this study were sometimes traceable if their discourse was under careful examination. For example, the politeness strategy in the utterance "First, I want to say sorry because I have been very busy for academic classes. I sincerely hope you guys can forget about this. Thank you." by a Japanese student, Kenji, probably derived from the speaker's own culture as a way to humble himself in order to restore group harmony. The utterance, "No wonder he is our teacher

because he knows how to cite the sources," from Yenmin, a female student from Taiwan, may bear more politeness weight and evidence the influence from her own culture since "teacher" may be used as a respectful term in Chinese culture.

The politeness strategies of ESL students may share similarity with those of the native speaker to a large degree if the notion of face, as Brown and Levinson would like to convince us, is indeed proven to be universal. Differences between the politeness strategies of ESL students and those of the native speakers can also be expected because the notion of face in any particular society would be expected "to be the subject of much cultural elaboration" (Brown and Levinson 1987:13). In the future study, comparative data from native speakers and students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds can be collected for analysis to test Brown and Levinson's universality hypothesis in e-mail communication.

Furthermore, future studies of politeness among ESL students may have to look beyond Brown and Levinson's face-based politeness framework to understand how the concepts of politeness from different cultures may affect ESL learning. Proper ways to construct politeness strategies have to be incorporated into ESL pedagogy to give ESL students chances to learn how to adapt themselves to politeness strategies of the target language to be able to communicate as well as to

satisfy their need for establishing adequate social relationships.

Studying politeness in e-mail cross-culturally and cross-linguistically may be an area crucial to ESL and to theories of politeness. Not only will cross-culture and cross-linguistic studies benefit ESL learners, they may help advance the theory of discourse that may in turn help the applications of the theory. For instance, the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic studies (Chen 1993; Cohen and Olshtain 1981, 1985; Garcia 1989a, 1989b; Hill et al. 1986; and Olshtain and Cohen 1983) may contribute to discourse theory in the same way that theoretical proposals, such as Brown and Levinson's framework of politeness (1987), could have been contributing to other studies that are applied. There is a recursive relationship between discourse theory and actual studies. A cross-linguistic study of this sort of e-mail data is planned for Taiwanese, the native language of the researcher, and American English, as a development from the present study. Such a study will feedback into the theory and enrich this recursive relationship between theory and application.

Due to the scope of the study, I did not examine the influence of gender and power as factors in mitigating strategies. It would be very interesting to evaluate how gender and asymmetrical social role would affect the choice and construction of mitigating strategies in e-mail. Once larger samples are collected in the uniformity of a

particular culture, the researchers then would be able to investigate the relation between mitigating strategies and gender or power relationship.

Studying e-mail discourse is particularly interesting and helpful for our understanding of a comprehensive discourse theory. E-mail may be seen as a mixture of oral and written communication. It is written in the sense that it is visual, "edited" (Biber 1986:395), or "self-monitored" (Halliday 1978:69). It exhibits many typical written features identified as "integration" (Chafe 1982).

E-mail is oral because, as I have shown, e-mail is also sensitive to the constraints similar to those found in face-to-face interactions. Since interaction in e-mail discourse is fundamental in this study, the participants need to analyze the social order, the sequence of speaking turn, and the backgrounds of the interlocutors before proper interactions, speech activities, or genres can be constructed in the language event. They also need to assess what the conversational analysts describe as the orderliness of talk displayed in the sequential conversational organization. Most of all, the participants in the study often chose to interact directly with their audience and displayed features that are characterized as "involvement" which is often associated with orality (Chafe, 1982). For example, the three types of involvement Chafe (1985) describes: ego involvement (e.g., "I"), involvement with the hearer (e.g., "you" or "Kenji"), and expressions of the

speaker's interest in the subject matter (e.g., "Guys, let's break this old prejudice!!!!!!!!"), were commonly present in the data.

Since e-mail communication shares a lot of features that are associated with oral discourse, it would be natural to expect to see politeness strategies found in e-mails being used in oral discourse. Many politeness strategies found in written discourse in this study did share the same features with oral discourse. Uses of in-group identity markers, hedges, apology, minimizing the imposition, just to name a few, were commonly used. There might also be politeness strategies that are used exclusively or predominantly for written discourse and can't apply directly to oral discourse. For instance, an e-mail user might use parenthesis to indicate uncertainty or unwillingness to impose, or upper case letters to signify intense attention to H's solidarity face want. The shifts of participant frameworks for politeness purpose (cf. Excerpt 23) which could be done easily in e-mail discussions might not be readily applied to oral discussions.

This study was limited to an analysis of situated uses of politeness strategies that were commonly used by ESL students in e-mails in an academic environment. The new language event in the study occurred as the result of school assignments, which created a specialized context for interactions. The interactions under such a context may be different from those produced in other non-classroom

environments. For instance, "flamings" that are often seen on the Internet might become fewer in a classroom environment because grades may be a concern for interactions. Data from e-mail and oral communication on the same topics can be collected and compared to understand how medium affects the construction of politeness strategies. Furthermore, future research may investigate the politeness strategies used in both oral and e-mail interactions in strictly social vs. academic environments at both local and global levels to enrich discourse theory.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CONSENT TO USE STUDENT RESPONSES FOR RESEARCH

We are studying the ways native speakers of English and speakers of English as a second language use e-mail. For this research, if you agree, we will make copies of the e-mail transmissions produced by your 5-member group in your class.

Sometime during the term, we will interview you for this research. You will not spend more time than required for your course work except for a few minutes answering questions of the interviews. The interview will be audio or video tape-recorded.

With your permission, your responses and your e-mail messages will be analyzed to study how language users of various linguistic, and cultural backgrounds develop ways to co-construct discourse events using e-mail as a medium of communication.

Your name and responses to the questions and the tape-recorded interviews will be kept in strictest confidence. The instructors and Teaching assistants in the course will not have access to the original responses containing your name and student number.

After your responses to the interviews, all identification of you as a respondent will be encoded into alpha-numerical codes so that your identities will not be able to be known except by the investigators. Your name or student number will not be mentioned in any presentation or publication.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may decline to participate or may withdraw from the study without any risk of it affecting your grade.

Please indicate your decision on the use of your responses for research by checking **YES** or **NO** and signing below.

_____ **YES**, I voluntarily give you permission to use my responses for research.

_____ **NO**, I do not wish my responses to be used in research.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student number: _____

Course: _____

Please also indicate whether you have an e-mail account currently.

_____ I presently have an e-mail account named _____.

_____ I do not presently have an e-mail account.

CONSENT TO USE STUDENT RESPONSES FOR PRESENTATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL PUBLICATIONS

With your permission, your responses will be used for presentations and educational publications. Your identifications will not be mentioned in any presentation and publication.

Please indicate your decision on the use of your responses for presentations and educational publications by checking **YES** or **NO** and signing below.

_____ **YES**, I voluntarily give you permission to use my responses for presentations and educational publications.

_____ **NO**, I do not wish my responses to be used in research for presentations and educational publications.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student number: _____

Course: _____

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW   DATE: _____
                                             PLACE: _____

PART I. ETHNOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Name: _____

2. Major and Educational level: _____

3. Gender: _____

4. Age: _____

5. Country: _____

6. Languages: _____

7. Time stayed in U.S.A.: _____

8. How long have you been studying English? _____

9. Experiences with computers:

   a. Do you have a computer? _____ Yes _____ No

   b. What kind of computers do you have?

      _____ PC-compatibles _____ Macintosh _____ others

   c. How long have you been using a computer? _____

   d. You use a computer mainly for:

      _____ word processing   _____ database

      _____ communication   _____ spreadsheet

      _____ recreation   _____ educational purpose

      _____ others

10. Experiences with e-mail:

     a. Have you ever used e-mail before this course?

     _____ yes _____ no

     b. How long have you been using e-mail: _____

     c. Will you continue to use e-mail after this course?

     _____ yes _____ no

PART II. GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Do you think e-mail is a nice and effective medium for communication? Why?

2. Other than required as part of the course requirements, when and why will you choose e-mail as the medium for communication when other options of communication media (such as face-to-face, telephone, letters, etc.) are available?

3. Where and when did you usually write your e-mails? How much time did you usually spend on writing an e-mail?

4. Did you ever wish that you could use features like gestures, facial expressions, smiles, tones, etc. in E-mails when you found it hard to express your ideas or positions on a particular issue? How did you overcome the difficulties (e.g. give personal examples? use questions? try to find the right words? etc.)?

PART III. SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL

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