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‘Coffee is not coffee at twelve o’clock at night’:
Exploring the motivations for speaking indirectly

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THESIS SUMMARY

This thesis presents a detailed theoretical and empirical discussion of indirect speech acts with a focus on off-record indirectness (*ORI*), a linguistic strategy through which a speaker deliberately conveys to the addressee two related meanings – a literal, direct meaning and an indirect meaning. Due to the pragmatic ambiguity of the ORI utterance, the indirect meaning can be plausibly denied in favour of a literal interpretation, if necessary. This thesis focuses on *strategic* uses of ORI – instances in which a speaker intentionally uses an ambiguous off-record utterance.

Several theoretical accounts have been proposed to explain strategic uses of off-record indirectness, each of which attributes different motivations to ORI and assumes different functional, contextual, or interpersonal conditions under which ORI is optimal. This thesis explores strategic motivations for ORI by closely examining a number of compelling and, at times, competing theoretical accounts. In Chapter 2, several accounts of ORI are summarised, contextualised, and scrutinised and a novel theoretical categorisation is proposed.

Chapters 3 through 7 focus on three theories of ORI – Politeness Theory (PT), the Strategic Speaker approach (SS), and the Intimacy accounts. Theoretical predictions associated with each of these theories are tested empirically through a series of experiments that explore the use of ORI amongst native English speakers. The experiments use a range of methodologies, including production-based activities and judgement tasks, and focus on several facets of ORI use, with the aim of providing a broad, empirically-based account of ORI.

Key empirical findings include a discrepancy between the participants' intuitions about the role of politeness in the use of ORI and their production of ORI in experimental conditions; the widespread use of ORI in some SS scenarios and near absence in others; the addition of politeness markers to SS ORI utterances; and the dispreference for Intimacy-based uses of ORI.

In Chapter 8, the experiments are reviewed and analysed comparatively with an emphasis on theoretical implications. Trends and discrepancies are discussed, a 'moderate' SS is proposed to accommodate the use of politeness markers alongside ORI, the categorisation presented in Chapter 2 is updated, and future research directions are suggested

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	i
Thesis Summary	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: A review of the existing proposals on the use of off-record indirectness	7
1 Introduction	7
2 (Indirect) speech acts	7
2.1 Following convention	9
2.2 Off-record indirectness	10
2.3 Off-record indirectness: A Relevance Theory view	13
2.4 A matter of degree	14
3 Politeness Theory	17
3.1 Positive and negative face	17
3.2 Calculating face threat: power, distance, and imposition	18
3.3 Politeness strategies	20
3.4 Going off-record	20
3.5 Criticisms of Politeness Theory: Cross-cultural variation and (im)politeness	21
4 The Strategic Speaker approach	25
4.1 Plausible deniability	27
<i>Table 1: Payoff matrix, police bribe scenario</i>	27
4.2 Relationship negotiation	29
<i>Table 2: Payoff matrix, maître d' bribe scenario</i>	32
4.3 Language as a digital medium	34
4.4 Comments and criticisms: The Strategic Speaker approach	35
<i>Table 3: Amended payoff matrix, maître d' bribe scenario</i>	38
5 Misdirection and ORI	39
6 Impoliteness and ORI	41
7 Alerts and ORI	44
8 Children and ORI	46
9 The Intimacy accounts of ORI	48
9.1 Cross-cultural variation and the Intimacy accounts	51
9.2 Comments and criticisms: The Intimacy accounts	52
10 Enabling	52
<i>Figure 1: Enabling uses of ORI</i>	53
10.1 Enabling uses of ORI vs 'strategic' uses of ORI: Is the distinction valid?	53

11 Other aspects of ORI: Speech acts, scenarios, and correlates of use	54
11.1 Other speech acts and scenarios	55
11.2 Other correlates of ORI use	56
12 Conclusion: A typology of the accounts for ORI use	56
<i>Figure 2: A new typology of strategic motivations for ORI</i>	57
Chapter 3: Participants' intuitions about off-record indirectness	63
1 Introduction	63
2 Research questions	63
3 Methodology	64
3.1 Design	64
<i>Table 1: Scenarios and example utterances</i>	65
3.2 Participants	66
4 Coding: Part 1	66
4.1 Politeness Theory	67
4.2 The Strategic Speaker approach	68
4.3 Multiple interpretations	69
4.4 Other	70
5 Results: Part 1	71
<i>Table 2: Reported use of ORI</i>	72
6 Coding: Part 2	73
6.1 Context and speech act type	74
6.2 Motivations for ORI	75
7 Results: Part 2	76
<i>Table 3: Context and speech act type</i>	77
<i>Table 4: Motivation for ORI</i>	77
8 Discussion	77
9 Conclusion	79
Chapter 4: An empirical study on the use of off-record indirectness in bribes, propositions, and favours	81
1 Introduction	81
2 Lee and Pinker (2010)	82
3 Research questions	87
4 Methodology	88
4.1 Participants	88
4.2 Scenario design	89
<i>Table 1: Scenario and manipulations</i>	92
4.3 Questions	93

<i>Figure 1: Scalar ratings of P, D, and R</i>	93
5 Predictions	95
5.1 The use of ORI in bribes, propositions, and favours	95
5.2 Categorical distinctions between high-risk and low-risk acts	96
5.3 The role of power, distance, and imposition	96
5.4 The role of politeness	97
6 Identifying off-record indirectness and coding open-ended responses	97
6.1 ORI or not ORI?	98
6.2 Understanding ambiguity and plausible deniability	99
7 Beyond ORI: Additional coding	103
7.1 Supplementary speech acts	104
7.2 Discourse features	105
7.3 Politeness	106
8 Results: Tying the findings to the predictions	108
8.1 Mean use of ORI	109
<i>Table 2: Mean use of ORI</i>	109
8.2 Ratings of power, distance, and imposition	110
<i>Table 3: Mean ratings of P, D, and R per scenario</i>	110
<i>Table 4: Mean ratings of P, D, and R</i>	111
<i>Table 5: Mean weight</i>	112
8.3 Rates of ORI and correlations with P, D, and R	112
<i>Table 6: Pearson correlations (ORI and ratings and P, D, and R)</i>	113
8.4 Politeness	113
<i>Table 7: Mean use of politeness in ORI utterances</i>	114
<i>Table 8: Mean use of negative and positive politeness in ORI bribes</i>	115
<i>Table 9: Negative vs positive politeness in ORI bribes</i>	115
<i>Table 10: Mean use of negative and positive politeness in ORI propositions</i>	115
<i>Table 11: Negative vs positive politeness in ORI propositions</i>	116
9 Discussion	116
<i>Figure 2: Range of ORI choices in three speech acts</i>	118
<i>Figure 3: Weight</i>	118
10 Additional analyses	119
10.1 Benefit	120
<i>Table 12: Mean benefit responses, bribe and favour scenarios</i>	120
<i>Table 13: Mean benefit responses in +R and -R settings of proposition</i>	121
10.2 Gender	122
<i>Table 14: Mean use of ORI and politeness by gender</i>	123
11 Conclusion	124

Chapter 5: Re-testing the bribe, proposition, and favour scenarios	127
1 Introduction	127
2 Accounting for categorical distinctions: Social acceptability	127
3 Testing social acceptability: Experiments 3a and 3b	128
3.1 Experiment 3a: Research question	129
3.2 Experiment 3a: Predictions	129
3.3 Experiment 3a: Participants	129
3.4 Experiment 3a: Design	129
<i>Figure 1: Acceptability ratings, Experiment 3a</i>	130
3.5 Experiment 3a: Results	131
<i>Table 1: Social acceptability ratings, Experiment 3a</i>	131
3.6 Experiment 3b: Research questions	132
3.7 Experiment 3b: Predictions	132
3.8 Experiment 3b: Participants	132
3.9 Experiment 3b: Design	132
<i>Figure 2: Acceptability ratings, Experiment 3b</i>	134
3.10 Experiment 3b: Results	134
<i>Table 2: Social acceptability ratings, Experiment 3b</i>	134
3.11 Discussion: ORI and social acceptability	135
4 Experiment 4: Motivations for ORI	136
4.1 Research questions	137
4.2 Predictions	137
4.3 Participants	137
4.4 Design	138
4.5 Coding the data	139
4.6 Results	140
<i>Table 3: Motivations for ORI</i>	140
4.7 Discussion	141
5 Reconsidering categorical distinctions	142
5.1 Bribe	142
5.2 Proposition	142
<i>Table 4: Payoff ratios in the proposition scenario</i>	144
5.3 Favour	145
<i>Table 5: Payoff ratios in the favour scenario</i>	145
6 Standardisation	147
7 Conclusion	150
Chapter 6: A series of empirical tests on relationship change	153
1 Introduction	153

2 Experimental motivations: Understanding and applying relationship negotiation	153
3 Testing relationship change: An overview	155
3.1 Research question	157
3.2 Predictions	157
4 Experiment 5: Lending and selling	157
4.1 Experiment 5: Scenarios and design	157
4.2 Experiment 5: Predictions	159
4.3 Experiment 5: Participants	160
4.4 Experiment 5: Results	160
<i>Table 1: Mean use of ORI and appropriateness ratings in Experiment 5</i>	160
4.5 Experiment 5: Discussion of ORI data	161
4.6 Experiment 5a: Measuring relationship change	162
<i>Figure 1: Ratings of typicality and awkwardness</i>	164
<i>Table 2: Mean ratings of typicality and awkwardness in Experiment 5a</i>	165
5 A request for reimbursement: (Re)testing communality and reciprocity	166
5.1 Experiment 6: Scenarios and design	166
<i>Table 3: Experiment 5 payoff ratio</i>	167
<i>Figure 2: Ratings of certainty</i>	168
5.2 Experiment 6: Research question	169
5.3 Experiment 6: Prediction	169
5.4 Experiment 6: Participants	169
5.5 Experiment 6: Results	169
<i>Table 4: Mean use of ORI and rating scales in Experiment 6</i>	170
5.6 Retesting the request for reimbursement: Data and discussion	170
<i>Table 5: Multiple choice responses and ratings in Experiment 6a</i>	172
6 Experiment 7: Dominance and communality	173
6.1 Experiment 7: Scenarios and design	173
<i>Table 6: Experimental scenarios</i>	176
6.2 Experiment 7: Research questions	177
6.3 Experiment 7: Predictions	177
6.4 Experiment 7: Participants	178
6.5 Experiment 7: Pre-test data	178
<i>Table 7: Mean naturalness ratings, date and work scenarios</i>	179
6.6 Experiment 7: Results	179
<i>Table 8: Multiple choice responses and awkwardness ratings in data scenarios</i>	180
<i>Table 9: Multiple choice responses and ratings in work scenarios</i>	180
6.7 Experiment 7: Motivations for ORI	181
<i>Table 10: Motivations for the use of ORI in date scenarios</i>	183
6.8 Experiment 7: Discussion	183

7 Conclusion	184
Chapter 7: An empirical study of Politeness Theory and the Intimacy accounts of off-record indirectness	187
1 Introduction	187
2 Returning to favours: Requesting a ride	188
2.1 Theoretical implications	189
3 Experimental design and pre-tests	190
3.1 Manipulations to P, D, and R	191
<i>Table 1: Settings of P, D, and R</i>	192
3.2 Ratings of P, D, and R	192
<i>Figure 1: Scalar ratings of P, D, and R</i>	193
<i>Table 2: Mean ratings of P, D, and R</i>	193
3.3 Multiple choice utterances	194
3.4 Naturalness ratings	196
<i>Table 3: Naturalness ratings</i>	196
4 Experiment 8	197
4.1 Design	197
4.2 Participants	197
4.3 Research questions	198
4.4 Predictions	198
4.5 Results: Multiple choice responses	199
<i>Table 4: Multiple choice responses</i>	199
<i>Table 5: Comparison of intimate and non-intimate scenarios</i>	199
<i>Table 6: Mean use of ORI per setting of P, D, and R</i>	200
4.6 Results: Open-ended question	200
<i>Table 7: Open-ended responses</i>	202
5 Retesting the Intimacy accounts	202
5.1 An alternative off-record utterance	203
5.2 Testing the new utterance	204
5.3 Results	205
<i>Table 8: Mean use of ORI in Experiment 8a</i>	205
6 Discussion	205
<i>Table 9: Mean use of negative and positive politeness per settings of P, D, and R</i>	207
7 (Re)considering the data in light of the Strategic Speaker approach	208
<i>Table 10: Payoff ratios in non-intimate ride scenarios</i>	210
8 Cross-cultural considerations	210
9 Conclusion	212

Chapter 8: Conclusion	215
1 Introduction	215
2 A review of the experiments: Linking empirical data to theoretical predictions	215
2.1 A comparative view of the empirical data	228
<i>Table 1: Do the empirical data support the theoretical predictions?</i>	229
3 Identifying trends	230
4 Understanding discrepancies	231
5 Considering unexpected uses of ORI	233
6 The Moderate Strategic Speaker approach	234
7 Returning to the novel categorisation of strategic motivations for ORI	237
<i>Figure 1: An updated typology of strategic motivations for ORI</i>	239
8 Future research directions	240
8.1 Culture, gender, and the use of ORI	240
8.2 The role of relationship change on the use of ORI	243
8.3 New methodologies and non-binary distinctions	245
Bibliography	249
Appendix A	255
Appendix B	256

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis presents a detailed theoretical and empirical discussion of indirect speech acts. It focuses on off-record indirectness (henceforth ORI), a linguistic strategy through which a speaker intentionally conveys to the addressee two related meanings – a literal, direct meaning and an indirect meaning. It is through the indirect meaning that the speaker expresses the illocutionary force of the utterance – a request, an invitation, a bribe, or a threat, for example. This meaning arises via implicature through the aid of contextual clues, common ground, and world knowledge. In order for a speech act to be considered ORI, it must be phrased ‘in such a way that it is not possible to attribute only one clear communicative intention to the act’ (Brown and Levinson 1987: 211). In other words, the act must be pragmatically ambiguous, communicating two plausible interpretations – a literal meaning and an implicated meaning. Due to the ambiguity of the ORI utterance, the implicated meaning can be plausibly denied in favour of a literal interpretation, should the need arise. Plausible deniability is accessible to both the speaker, who can explicitly cancel the implicated meaning, and the hearer, who can feign ignorance of the implicated proposition. Because of this pragmatic ambiguity, there is a risk that the hearer may be unable to recognise the intended meaning. Likewise, the complexity of the act may require considerable planning on behalf of the speaker.

In which situations, then, do speakers prefer ORI over more explicit options? Several theoretical accounts have been proposed to address this question, each of which attributes different motivations to ORI and assumes different functional, contextual, or interpersonal conditions under which ORI is ideal. This thesis explores the motivations for ORI by closely examining a number of theoretical accounts. The predictions that are associated with these theories are tested empirically through a series of experiments that explore the use of ORI amongst native English speakers. The experiments draw on a variety of methodologies, including both production-based activities and judgement tasks, and focus on several facets of ORI use, with the aim of providing a broad, empirically-based account of ORI.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review, a theoretical backdrop against which the eight subsequent experiments on the use of ORI are evaluated. The chapter begins with an overview of the key concepts that guide the thesis, including indirect speech acts, off-record indirectness, and pragmatic ambiguity (Austin 1962; Carston 2002, 2004; Grice 1975, 1989; Levinson 1983, 2000; Morgan 1978; Searle 1969, 1975, 1976, 1979). These notions are

defined and contextualised, with an explanation of how the complex concepts are simplified for the purposes of empirical application. Several theories are presented with the aim of identifying strategic motivations for the use of ORI, the overarching theme of the thesis. The theories explore when, why, and with whom speakers use ORI, information which forms the basis for the theoretical predictions discussed in each of the empirical chapters and for the scenarios and speech acts that are used in the experiments. Two theories of ORI serve as the primary inspiration for the empirical research – Politeness Theory or ‘PT’ (Brown and Levinson 1987) and the Strategic Speaker approach or ‘SS’ (Pinker 2007; Pinker, Nowak and Lee 2008; Lee and Pinker 2010), respectively a very well-known theory and a newly emerged theory. These theories are discussed in-depth and criticisms of each are raised. Additional focus is given to a group of related theories collectively referred to as ‘the Intimacy accounts’ (Sifianou 1992, 1993, 1997; Soltys, Terkourafi, and Katsos 2014; Terkourafi 2011a, 2011b, 2013, 2014). The Intimacy accounts are also tested empirically, with comparisons drawn to PT and SS. Chapter 2 includes a discussion about the use of ORI in different speech act types and summaries of the theories of ORI which are beyond the scope of the empirical research, including the use of ORI for the purposes of misdirection (Asher and Lascarides 2013), impoliteness (Culpeper 2005, 2011; Haugh 2015; Zajdman 1995), and alerts (Soltys, Terkourafi, and Katsos 2014), as well as the use of ORI by young children (Ervin-Tripp 1976, 1977) and the enabling account of ORI (Terkourafi 2014). Cross-cultural variation is also discussed, with a focus on the differences in the use and perception of ORI between speakers of English and other languages (Blum-Kulka 1987; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984; Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989; Grainger and Mills 2016; Leech 2014; Sifianou 1992, 1993, 1997, Thomas 1983, among others). A novel categorisation is proposed to differentiate the theories of ORI between those accounts in which plausible deniability is a motivating factor in the decision to speaker off-record and those in which plausible deniability is not a motivating factor.

Chapters 3 through 7 focus on the empirical elements of the thesis. A series of eight experiments are described in detail, with emphasis on the development of the studies and on the theoretical implications of the findings. Results are discussed both quantitatively and qualitatively, with the aim of identifying not only *when* speakers use ORI, but also *how* and *why*. The chapters frequently cite ORI utterances produced by the participants, in order to paint a tangible and representative picture of ORI use. All of the experiments were offline questionnaires hosted on Qualtrics. Participants were native English speakers, recruited through either the University of Cambridge or Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). For each

experiment, the ethical procedures stipulated by the University of Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee were followed in the recruitment of participants, who gave informed consent, and in the storage and analysis of the data (see Appendix A). Key components of each of the questionnaires, including instructions, scenario texts, and elicitation questions, are included in each chapter. Full-text PDF versions of all experimental materials are available at <https://oriquestionnaires.wordpress.com/>.

Chapter 3 focuses on Experiment 1, an empirical study about the factors that motivate native English speakers to use ORI in their everyday lives. Participants are asked to describe their first-hand experiences with indirect speech. The experiment examines not only the participants' use of ORI, but also their intuitions about how, why, when, and with whom it is used. The responses are analysed in relation to theory, with emphasis on PT and SS as well as theories about ORI and intimacy, impoliteness, and misdirection. Novel explanations are proposed for uses of ORI that are not related to any of the theories under consideration. The data show that ORI is most often used for reasons related to PT while uses related to the SS and, indeed, the other theories of ORI, are much rarer. Experiment 1 is an impetus for an additional line of inquiry – the difference between participants' intuitions about ORI (what they say they do) and their production of ORI (what they actually do). ORI production is explored in relation to PT and SS in Experiments 2 through 7 and in relation to the Intimacy accounts and PT in Experiment 8.

Chapter 4 focuses on Experiment 2, an empirical study that is inspired by Lee and Pinker's 2010 multiple choice experiment and explores the use of ORI in bribes and sexual propositions, which are prototypical SS speech acts, and favours, an act for which PT, but not the SS, predicts ORI. The chapter begins with a summary and criticism of Lee and Pinker's study and is followed by a detailed description of Experiment 2, which improves on the original study by changing two methodological components. Firstly, the speech act data is elicited through an open-ended format rather than multiple choice, which allows for additional analyses not captured by Lee and Pinker's study, including a discussion of the role of politeness markers and a description of the discourse features with which the utterances are produced. Secondly, manipulations to power, distance, and imposition are applied to the scenarios depicting each of the three speech acts. This change allows for a direct comparison between SS and PT assumptions with regards to the influence of P, D, and R. The use of ORI is discussed in relation to a series of theoretical predictions associated with both PT and SS. In Experiment 2, participants produced ORI utterances in 78% of the bribe scenarios, 92% of

the propositions, and only 3% of the favours, the use of which was not correlated with P, D, or R. Markers of both negative and positive politeness were embedded within a majority of the ORI utterances. The data support SS with regards to the use of ORI and the effect of P, D, and R, but challenge SS assumptions on politeness, specifically SS's prediction that politeness is excluded from ORI. A moderate version of SS is proposed in Chapter 8 in response to Experiment 2. When the data from experiments 1 and 2 are compared, an unexpected discrepancy between intuition and elicited production arises. The use of ORI in bribes, propositions, and favours is further explored in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 focuses on a series of three related experiments, each designed to follow-up on Experiment 2 by identifying factors that explain the statistically significant differences between the use of ORI in the bribes (78%) and propositions (92%), collectively referred to henceforth as 'high-risk acts', and the favours (3%), comparatively a 'low-risk act'. Experiments 3a and 3b are scalar rating tasks that elicit the participants' judgements about the social acceptability of the bribes, propositions, and favours under varying contextual conditions. In both experiments, the high-risk bribes were rated as socially unacceptable and low-risk favours were rated as socially acceptable while, contrary to predictions, the high-risk propositions were also rated as socially acceptable. Experiment 4 is an open-ended task about strategic motivations for the use of ORI in which participants are asked to infer the reasons for which a speaker would use ORI in each of the high-risk and low-risk acts. Participants primarily attributed SS-based motivations to the bribes and propositions and PT-based motivations to the favour. The findings are discussed critically with relation to both PT and SS and standardisation is proposed a possible explanation for the unexpected discrepancy between the ratings of social acceptability and the use of ORI in the proposition.

Chapter 6 focuses on the use of ORI in the process of relationship negotiation. Pinker and colleagues frame their discussion of relationship negotiation on Fiske's relational models theory (Fiske 1991, 1992). They explain that the relationship between the speaker and hearer determines which types of speech acts are permissible and argue that ORI is ideal for situations in which the intended act does not fit within the existing relationship and, as such, potentially poses social and emotional risks to the interlocutors. The studies discussed in this chapter, Experiments 5, 5a, 6, 6a, and 7, explore the use of ORI in the process of relationship negotiation, using novel scenarios that involve different speech acts and different types of relationships. The experiments use both multiple choice and open-ended questions to elicit

speech act data. Scalar rating questions are used to measure factors potentially related to relationship negotiation, including social acceptability, awkwardness, and typicality. The studies are aimed at determining whether SS principles are generalisable beyond the specific scenarios Pinker and colleagues discuss. Two trends emerge, both of which challenge SS assumptions: many of the scenarios which are presumed to be relationship changing are not perceived as such by the participants and the potential for relationship itself is not a reliable predictor for the use of ORI. When ORI is used in potentially relationship-changing scenarios, the speakers' preferences can be attributed to contextual factors not related to relationship negotiation.

Chapter 7 reports Experiment 8, the final empirical study presented in this thesis. Experiment 8 explores the use of ORI in a favour scenario which was inspired by the participants' reported uses of ORI in Experiment 1 (Chapter 3) – a request for a car ride to or from the speaker's place of work. Experiment 8 was devised to independently test two theories related to the use of ORI in low-risk scenarios, PT and the Intimacy accounts, and included scalar ratings of naturalness and P, D, and R, as well as both open-ended and multiple choice speech act data. Two sets of predictions on the use of ORI are proposed, reflecting the principles of PT and Intimacy, respectively. Experiment 8 showed that the use of ORI was rare in scenarios involving intimate relationships, but was frequent in scenarios involving formal or distinct relationships, with the preference for ORI in the latter case increasing when the settings of P, D, and R were raised. Theoretical implications are raised for both PT and the Intimacy accounts. The data are also discussed in relation to SS and with regards to cross-cultural considerations.

Chapter 8 is the conclusion, a summary of the theoretical notions outlined in Chapter 2 and of the empirical research discussed in Chapters 3 through 7. The key findings of Experiments 1 through 8 are reviewed, with an emphasis on the trends that emerge and on the implications of the conclusions on Politeness Theory, the Strategic Speaker approach, the Intimacy accounts, and the other theories of ORI under consideration. Comparisons are drawn between the evidence that supports each of the theories and the data that challenges it (for example, the prevalence of SS uses of ORI in Experiment 2 and the lack of ORI in the relationship changing scenarios in Experiments 5 through 7; the significant effect of P, D, and R on the use of ORI in Experiment 8 and the absence of effect of P, D, and R in Experiment 2). Discrepancies are discussed as well, including the differences between the participants' intuitions about ORI (Experiment 1) and their production of ORI under experimental conditions (Experiments 2 through 8). In response to the unexpected use of politeness

markers within ORI bribes and propositions (Experiment 2), a Moderate Strategic Speaker approach is proposed. The moderate view incorporates the facets of SS that were upheld by the experimental findings – namely, the game-theoretic logic and the lack of sensitivity to P, D, and R – with the face-based politeness principles associated with PT. The novel categorisation of theories of ORI that was introduced in Chapter 2 is updated to accommodate the experimental findings. Suggestions for further research are proposed, in keeping with the overarching theme to explore strategic motivations for the use of ORI. Suggestions include the use of different experimental methodologies, empirical research on the theories of ORI that were beyond the scope of this thesis, such as the use of ORI for the purposes of impoliteness, and an inquiry into cross-cultural and gender-based differences in the use of ORI.

This thesis presents a nuanced evaluation of the phenomenon of off-record indirectness, with focus on the range of strategic motivations that compel speakers to use ORI and with the support of both broad-reaching theoretical accounts and innovative empirical research.

CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF EXISTING PROPOSALS ON THE USE OF OFF-RECORD INDIRECTNESS

1 Introduction

This thesis puts forth a theoretical and empirical exploration of indirect speech acts, with a focus on the strategic motivations for the use of off-record indirectness (ORI). This chapter presents the theoretical backdrop against which the empirical research reported in Chapters 3 through 7 is based. The chapter begins with a discussion of theoretical concepts related to indirect speech (Austin 1962; Carston 2002, 2004; Grice 1975, 1989; Levinson 1983, 2000; Morgan 1978; Searle 1969, 1975, 1976, 1979). Key terms are then operationalised for the purposes of empirical research. Several theoretical accounts of strategic uses of ORI are summarised, each of which attributes different motivations to ORI and assumes different functional, contextual, or interpersonal conditions under which ORI is optimal. Chapter 2 concludes with a proposal for a novel typology to disentangle and categorise the strategic motivations for the use of ORI described within the chapter.

The theories discussed in this chapter include Politeness Theory (Brown and Levinson 1978, 1987), the Strategic Speaker approach (Pinker 2007; Pinker, Nowak and Lee 2008; Lee and Pinker 2010), the use of ORI for the purposes of misdirection (Asher and Lascarides 2013), impoliteness (Culpeper 2005, 2011; Haugh 2015; Zajdman 1995), and alerts (Soltys, Terkourafi, and Katsos 2014), the use of ORI by young children (Ervin-Tripp 1976, 1977), the Intimacy accounts of ORI (Sifianou 1992, 1993, 1997; Soltys et al 2014; Terkourafi 2011a, 2011b, 2013, 2014), and the enabling account of ORI (Terkourafi 2014). Each of the theories is scrutinised, with emphasis on both strengths and weaknesses. Among the primary criticisms is the cross-culturally applicability of strategic accounts of ORI (Blum-Kulka 1987; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984; Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989; Grainger and Mills 2016; Leech 2014; Sifianou 1992, 1993, 1997; Thomas 1983, among others).

2 (Indirect) speech acts

In this thesis, indirect speech is viewed through the lens of the speech act, a functional use of language in which ‘the uttering of the sentence is [...] the doing of an action’ (Austin 1962: 5). A speaker who says to a hearer, ‘I request that you pass the salt’, for example, is not only

uttering a string of words, but is *performing* the act of requesting (the illocutionary force of the utterance) with the aim of provoking a subsequent action (the fulfilment of the request) on the part of the hearer. A given speech act type may be associated with a performative verb (e.g. ‘apologise’, ‘inform’, ‘promise’, ‘request’, ‘suggest’, ‘warn’, etc.) or with a particular grammatical form (e.g. the use of the English imperative sentence mood in issuing commands).

Searle (1969, 1975, 1976, 1979) builds upon Austin’s theory to include *indirect speech acts*, instances in which ‘one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another’ (Searle 1975: 60). In example (1), the intended illocutionary meaning – a request – is performed by means of a polar question.

(1) Can you reach the salt?

Asher and Lascarides explain that ‘many [indirect speech acts] behave linguistically as if they’re ‘two speech acts in one’ (2001: 184). The utterance in example (1) is, as they propose, ‘neither simply a question nor simply a request’ (2001: 186). The utterance encodes two related meanings – a polar question about the hearer’s ability and a directive to perform an action in accordance with that ability. Example (1) can be considered to be equivalent to ‘Can you reach the salt and, if so, pass it to me?’

In this thesis, the speech act is taken to be the primary unit of analysis for two methodological reasons. Firstly, it narrows the focus from communicative interaction in general to situations in which the speaker intends for the hearer to (either actively or passively) do something. The narrowed focus allows for theoretical and empirical consideration of two related features – the speakers’ aims and the hearers’ reactions. Secondly, the focus on the speech act permits a comparison in the use of ORI between and within speech act types while also allowing for the systematic grouping of speech act types (including the distinction between high-risk and low-risk acts, see Chapter 4, Section 1). While focusing on the speech act as the primary unit of analysis has methodological benefits, it may not fully reflect ‘real-life’ uses of indirect speech, in which indirect speech acts may be used within a larger, multi-turn discourse. The role of indirect speech within a larger discourse is discussed at two points in the thesis – the use of supportive and supplementary speech acts alongside indirect acts in the qualitative analysis of open-ended data (see Chapter 4, Section 7) and the suggestions for future research (see Chapter 8, Section 8).

2.1 Following convention

Utterances such ‘Can you reach the salt?’ are considered *conventionally indirect*. Morgan (1977) explains that in most dialects of English, forms such as ‘can you...’, ‘could you...’, and ‘would you...’ are widely used, and readily recognised, as a means of issuing requests. A competent English speaker possesses knowledge of both the conventions of the language itself – word meanings and grammatical rules – and the conventions about the ways in which the language is commonly used by its speakers. Morgan (1977: 22–23) explains:

[...] in using ‘can you pass the salt’ to make a request [...] one is following a convention about language use; the convention being, roughly, to request someone to do such-and-such indirectly, say the sentence ‘can you (do such-and-such)? [...] Thus speakers know not only that ‘can you ...’ has a certain literal meaning [...], they know also that using ‘can you...’ is a standard way of indirectly making a request (a convention about language).

Conventional indirectness is a matter of form. Modals such as ‘can’, ‘could’, and ‘would’ behave linguistically like requests and, like direct requests, can be modified, e.g. with ‘please’ or ‘if you don’t mind’ (Levinson 1983). Likewise, the requestive ‘can you...’ and other conventional forms can be used felicitously in all instances in which the speaker wishes the hearer to perform a stated action, regardless of the content or context in which it is uttered. In contrast, paraphrases rarely retain the requestive force of their conventionally indirect counterparts and in most contexts, are interpreted for their literal meaning only. Thus, while ‘Can you play the piano (please)?’ is a felicitous request, ‘Do you have the ability to play the piano?’ is not. Form-based conventions are language-specific. Wierzbicka (1985) explains that while in English, ‘Would you like a beer?’ and ‘Would you like to go to the cinema with me?’ are conventionally indirect offers and invitations, respectively, their literal translations into Polish would be interpreted only as genuine polar questions (1985: 148–149). In other words, the illocutionary force of ‘would you like (to)...’ is different in English and Polish – in English the form is conventionalised for making offers and invitations, in Polish it is not.

In the case of conventionally indirect speech acts, the indirect illocutionary force is often more salient, or more accessible, than the literal one. As Searle (1979) explains, ‘for a sentence like “Can you reach the salt?” or “I would appreciate it if you would get off my foot”, it takes some ingenuity to imagine a situation in which their utterances would not be requests’ (1979: 31). Due to both the conventionality of form and the overt references to

action that are common in such requests (e.g. ‘reach the salt’, ‘get off my foot’), a speaker may be hard pressed to convince a competent hearer that the utterance was not intended as a request. In other words, conventionally indirect speech acts are not typically plausibly deniable.

Throughout this thesis, utterances of the type ‘Can you reach the salt?’ are referred to as ‘conventionally indirect speech acts’ or, following Brown and Levinson (1987), ‘negatively polite on-record speech acts’ (see Section 3.3). For the purposes of this thesis, and with the aim of maintaining a sharp focus on off-record indirectness, binary distinctions are drawn between the two types of indirectness. In the empirical sections of this thesis, conventionally indirect speech acts are excluded from the analysis of indirect speech acts (see Section 2.3 for a further discussion of this distinction).

2.2 Off-record indirectness

This thesis focuses on off-record indirectness (ORI). Like conventionally indirect speech acts, ORI acts express the speaker’s intended message under the guise of a different illocutionary act. Unlike conventionally indirect acts, however, the intended meaning of an ORI act is communicated through the *content* of the utterance, not through the use of conventionalised phrases or grammatical forms.

With ORI speech acts, the intended illocutionary force of the utterance – for example, a request – arises via implicature (see below). In order for the utterance to function as the speaker intends, it must be performed within a conducive context. Due to the context-dependent nature of ORI speech acts, they can be considered to be functional uses of particularised conversational implicatures. Levinson (2000) explains ‘an implicature *i* from utterance *U* is *particularised* iff *U* implicates *i* only by virtue of specific contextual assumptions that would not invariably or even normally obtain’ (Levinson 2000: 16).¹ In example (2), Y’s response to X is an implicated ORI refusal (Searle 1979: 33).

(2) Student X: Let’s go to the movies tonight.

Student Y: I have to study for an exam.

¹ In contrast, ‘an implicature *i* is *generalised* iff *U* implicates *i* *unless* there are unusual specific contextual assumptions that defeat it’ (Levinson 2000: 16). Scalar implicatures, for example, are generalised. Barring unusual contexts, ‘Some of my friends are linguists’ implicates ‘Some, but not all, of my friends are linguists’. However, the particularised implicature that ‘Therefore, I have interesting friends’ would be communicated only in specific contexts of use.

At the literal level, Y's utterance is a declarative statement about his future plans. As Searle explains, 'statements of this form do not, in general, constitute rejections of proposals, even in cases in which they are made in response to a proposal' (Searle 1979: 33). If the form of the utterance stayed consistent, but the content changed, then the illocutionary function of the act would change as well. Searle adds, 'thus, if Y had said "I have to eat popcorn tonight" or "I have to tie my shoes" in a normal context, neither of these utterances would have been a rejection of the proposal' (ibid). Likewise, if Y's utterance were offered in response to a different proposal, such as 'Do you want to go to the library tonight?', the utterance could function as an indirect acceptance of the proposal rather than a refusal thereof.

In example (2), Y's utterance, 'I have to study for an exam', implicates 'I can't (or don't want to) go to the movies tonight'. From a Gricean perspective (1975, 1989), the conversational implicature is triggered by an apparent violation of the Maxim of Relevance. Student X can interpret Y's behaviour (and, consequently, the meaning of the utterance) in one of two ways. If Y is being uncooperative, then his utterance can be taken at the literal level only – in which case, Y has failed to felicitously respond to X's proposal. On the other hand, X can assume that Y is following the Cooperative Principle, which states that a speaker should 'make [his] contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which [he is] engaged' (Grice 1989: 26). If X believes that Y is cooperative and Y's utterance is relevant, then X can conclude '[...] that the literal meaning and/or literal force is conversationally inadequate in the context and must be "repaired" by some inference' (Levinson 1983: 270). X draws on his world knowledge and/or his familiarity with Y in order to make Y's utterance relevant to the context and, therefore, infer that Y's utterance is a refusal, on the presupposed assumption that studying for an exam is incompatible with going to the movies.

ORI speech acts, such as Y's utterance in example (2), are *pragmatically ambiguous*. They allow for two plausible interpretations – a literal meaning (in this case, a statement about Y's plans for the evening) and an implicated meaning (here, a refusal of X's proposal). Due to the ambiguity of the utterance, the implicated meaning can be *plausibly denied* in favour of a literal interpretation. Although the speaker who uses ORI wants the hearer to recognise the implicated meaning, there may be cases in which the speaker has compelling reasons to subsequently deny the intended meaning. Issuing the speech act off-record allows the speaker to balance two aims – bringing the intended act to fruition and (if necessary) shielding himself for accountability for it. He deliberately phrases the act in such a way that is relevant

enough to generate the intended implicature and, if the hearer is amenable to the act, achieves the desired effect. At the same time, the ambiguity of the ORI act provides the speaker with the plausible deniability necessary to achieve the latter aim. Brown and Levinson explain (1987: 211):

[The speaker] cannot be held to have committed himself to just one particular interpretation of his act. Thus if a speaker wants to do an [act], but wants to avoid the responsibility for doing it, he can do it off-record and leave it up to the addressee to decide how to interpret it.

‘Would you like to come up and see my etchings?’ is an ORI romantic proposition (Pinker 2007: 437). If the hearer were to object to the implicated message, the speaker could plausibly deny that the utterance was intended as a proposition, as in the constructed dialogue in example (3).

(3) A: Would you like to come up and see my etchings?

B: Are you coming on to me?

A: No, I just know that you’re such a big fan of artwork.

Pragmatic ambiguity can be achieved through the use of euphemistic references to the speaker’s aims or through hints, innuendo, and insinuation. These strategies can be applied to a variety of grammatical constructions. As Blum-Kulka explains, ORI speech acts are ‘by definition open-ended both in terms of propositional content and linguistic form, as well as of pragmatic force. Thus, there are no formal limitations [...] neither on the kinds of hints one might use [...] nor on the range of pragmatic forces that might be carried by any [off-record] indirect utterance’ (1987: 141). ORI strategies can also be used for many different types of speech acts – an ORI proposition can be delivered euphemistically (as in example (3)) and bribes, request, suggestions, threats, and warnings can all be expressed indirectly through the use of hints. As Searle explains, ‘[...] “hint” and “insinuation” [...] do not name types of illocutionary acts, but rather the style or manner in which a rather large range of types can be performed’ (1979: ix). Hints can include both novel, contextually-relevant clues and standardised practices², such a child requesting a coveted toy from her parents by ostensibly complimenting a friend’s toy (Weizman 1989) or the well-established pattern of inviting the

² Standardisation refers to the content of the speech act, while conventionalisation refers to grammatical form. See Chapter 5, Section 6 for a discussion of standardised ORI speech acts.

hearer to the speaker's flat without explicitly stating that it is for romantic purposes (as in example (3)).

A given ORI speech act may not only be ambiguous between the literal and the implicated meaning, but may also be ambiguous with regards to *which* of the contextually viable implicatures was intended. Bachman (1990) explains, 'A sentence such as "It's cold in here," for example, may function as an assertion about the physical atmosphere in the room, as a warning not to bring the baby in, or as a request to turn on the heater' (1990: 90). Likewise, the utterance in example (4), from the 1984 film *Amadeus*, is pragmatically ambiguous between two (very different) implicated illocutionary acts. On the literal level, it is declarative statement. At the implicature level, it is either an ORI compliment or an ORI insult.

(4) Mozart to rival Salieri: 'I never knew that music like that was possible'.³

2.3 Off-record indirectness: A Relevance Theory view

In this thesis, off-record indirectness is conceptualised from a Gricean perspective, with distinctions drawn between 'what is said' (the literal, direct, or semantic meaning) and 'what is implicated' (the indirect or pragmatic meaning). Relevance Theory (Carston 2002, 2004; Sperber and Wilson 1986) approaches indirectness differently, differentiating instead between 'explicatures' (linguistically decoded meaning as well as pragmatic inferencing) and implicatures (which are wholly pragmatic). Under Relevance Theory (RT), certain aspects of utterance interpretation – such as disambiguation or reference assignment – are considered to be pragmatically enriched features of the explicit meaning rather than separate implicated meanings. In an utterance such as 'He drank several beers and drove home', for example, the disambiguation of the referent, the interpretation of "beers" to 'units (e.g. pints) of beer' rather than 'kinds of beer' and the sequential reading of the conjunction is taken to be a pragmatically-derived part of the explicature (Carston 2002). In Gricean terms however, the enriched meaning of 'and' would be considered to be a generalised conversational implicature. RT can also be used to explain ORI speech acts, as in example (5) (Carston 2004: 640):

(5) A: Let's go to a movie. I've heard "Sense and Sensibility" is good. Are you interested in seeing it?

B: Costume dramas are usually boring.

³ Thank you to Dr Billy Clark for bringing this example to my attention.

Following Carston, the interpretative process is as follows: A assumes that B's utterance is optimally relevant and, in order to make a relevant connection between her offer and B's response, assumes that "Sense and Sensibility" is a costume drama (the implicated premise). A then concludes that "Sense and Sensibility" will probably be boring and, further, that B does not want to see "Sense and Sensibility" (the implicated conclusions). In Gricean terms, B's utterance is particularised conversational implicature or, as it is described in this thesis, an ORI refusal.

In relation to example (5), Carston (2004) explains, '[...] the overall picture is one of a non-demonstrative inference process, driven by the search for an optimally relevant interpretation [...] As far as I can see, there is no disagreement here between relevance-theorists and Griceans; both those communicated assumptions described here as implicated premises and those described as implicated conclusions would qualify as (particularised) implicatures for Grice (2004: 641). She then specifies, 'Where disagreement does arise is over certain cases treated by relevance-theorists as instances of pragmatic inference contributing to explicature and by Griceans as (generalised) implicatures' (ibid). In other words, while RT and Gricean theories may differ with regards to certain aspects of the pragmatics/semantics divide, they do not differ with regards to ORI in particular – both theories view ORI speech acts as pragmatically-derived implicatures that are fully dependent on the context of the conversation. For the purposes of this thesis, Gricean terminology is used. Due to the similarity in approaches to ORI however, 'literal meaning' can be considered as roughly equivalent of the RT 'explicit meaning' while 'indirect meaning' and 'intended meaning' are equal to 'implicit meaning'.

2.4 A matter of degree

In this thesis, binary distinctions are drawn between direct and indirect speech acts and, further, between conventionally indirect and off-record speech acts. Such distinctions have been challenged both theoretically and in practice. As Carston (2004) notes 'It is widely accepted that there is a distinction to be made between the explicit content and the implicit import of an utterance. There is much less agreement about the precise nature of this distinction, how it is to be drawn, and whether any such two-way distinction can do justice to the levels and kinds of meaning involved in utterance interpretation' (2004: 633).

In addition to the distinctions between directness and indirectness in general, and conventional indirectness and off-record indirectness in particular, distinctions can also be drawn between different *degrees* of off-record indirectness. Lee and Pinker (2010) tested two types of off-record utterances in their multiple choice study, though the responses were later collapsed in the analysis. Their proposition scenario, for instance, included examples (6) and (7), which were intended to represent ‘somewhat indirect’ and ‘very indirect’ utterances, respectively (Private email correspondence, 13 February 2012).

(6) You know, I have a really terrific view from my balcony. You can see the whole city, the lights, the ocean ... would you like to come over and look at it with me?

(7) Oh, I remember now. My friend just emailed me those pictures from our trip to Europe that I was telling you about. Do you want to come over and have a look?

Likewise, the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns project, which analysed the use of indirectness in requests and apologies across a variety of languages differentiated between ‘strong hints’ and ‘mild hints’ (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984, Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989). Distinctions were drawn in the descriptive analysis, as follows: ‘strong hints [are] utterances containing partial reference to the object or element needed for the implementation of the act (“You have left the kitchen in a right mess”). Mild hints [are] utterances that make no reference to the request proper (or any of its elements) but are interpretable as requests by context (“I am a nun” in response to a persistent hassler)’ (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989: 18). In quantitative analysis, no such distinctions were made, with results reported as either ‘hints’ or ‘non-conventional indirectness’.

Empirical attempts to compare different degrees of off-record indirectness have thus far been fruitless. In a discussion about coding speech acts by degrees of (in)directness, Stadler (2011) explains, ‘while such definitions are generally clear, precise and easily comprehensible when presented in connection with carefully chosen examples, when it comes to applying such categories to real-life-data, their application can feel somewhat arbitrary. Naturally occurring data rarely fits into these pre-formed categories neatly’ (2011: 37). Even in the case of constructed utterances, such as examples (6) and (7) from Lee and Pinker’s 2010 study, there may be disagreement. Intuitions vary, of course, and there is little structural or content-specific difference in examples (6) and (7) other than the object to be viewed (the ocean or photographs) and the fact that (6) introduced new information while (7) refers to previously mentioned information.

In order to effectively and meaningfully distinguish between degrees of off-record indirectness, a systematic approach would be needed. Blum-Kulka and colleagues' distinction between strong hints and mild hints could (potentially) be adapted. Examples (8) and (9) are from Experiment 2 and were used in a scenario in which participants were asked to bribe a police officer in order to avoid a traffic fine (see Chapter 4, Section 6.2). Following Blum-Kulka and colleagues, example (8) is a strong hint since it makes an overt reference to money, while example (9) is a mild hint since it makes no such reference.

(8) The fine is about £50. Why don't I pay you £50 now and save us the trouble?

(9) Sorry, officer. Won't happen again.

While this system is more nuanced than the distinction between direct and indirect speech, the categorisation of 'strong' and 'mild' hints is also problematic as it introduces a new binary system within the off-record category (in addition to the binary distinction between off-record and not off-record). This approach fails to capture uses of ORI such as example (10), used in the same bribe scenario. While example (10) does not include an overt reference to money like the strong hint in example (8), the reference to 'a new football' alludes to payment in a way that the mild hint in example (9) does not.

(10) I'm sorry I was speeding [...] I could make it up to you though, isn't there a new football you wanted?

For the purposes of this thesis, a binary distinction is assumed between ORI speech acts and non-ORI speech acts (a category which includes both blunt, direct acts and conventionally indirect acts). This distinction serves both practical purposes – in particular, by facilitating the development of consistent and more-or-less reliable coding scheme – and theoretical purposes. The aim of this thesis is to explore motivations for the use of ORI. None of the theoretical accounts of ORI discussed in this thesis differentiates between degrees of ORI with regards to strategic motivations or speaker intentions. In other words, no account suggests, for example, that mild hints are motivated by factor X while strong hints are motivated by factor Y. While binary distinctions are drawn in the quantitative analysis of the empirical data, differences among ORI utterances such as (8), (9), and (10) are discussed qualitatively. Future research directions are proposed with the aim of developing a systematically fine-grained approach to understanding (in)directness and plausible deniability.

3 Politeness Theory

Brown and Levinson (1987) propose a sociologically-based account of the use of politeness strategies, including ORI.⁴ Under Politeness Theory (henceforth *PT*) ORI is considered the most polite option from amongst a range of linguistic strategies aimed at balancing the speaker's desire to express the intended communicative act with his commitment to respecting the addressee's face wants. The decision to use ORI is based on the speaker's assessment of three sociological factors – the differences in power (P) and social distance (D) between the interlocutors and the degree of imposition placed on the hearer (R), with the likelihood of ORI use increasing as the settings of P, D, and R, collectively known as 'face threat', increase. This section outlines the principles of PT, with emphasis on predictions related to ORI. Criticisms of the PT account of ORI are also considered.

3.1 Positive and negative face

Politeness Theory is built upon Goffman's (1967) notion of *face*, 'the public self-image that every member [of a society] wants to claim for himself [...]' (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61). Face wants are divided into two categories: negative face, 'the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, right to non-distraction – i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition' and 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' (ibid). Brown and Levinson explain that face can be lost, maintained, or enhanced and, as such, must be constantly attended to in interaction. Face is mutually vulnerable and in a given communicative interaction, each interlocutor has a vested interest in maintaining both his own face and the face of his partner. Speakers and hearers generally cooperate, and assume one another's cooperation, in this process. Brown and Levinson's account of politeness strategies is based on the 'model person' or 'MP', 'a willful fluent speaker of a natural language [...] endowed with [...] rationality and face' (1987: 58). He is aware of face wants – both his own and those of his interlocutor – and actively and appropriately uses the linguistic strategies available to him to address these wants. Cooperation can be assumed only in cases in which both the speaker and the hearer are MPs. One may assume that there exist interlocutors who are not MPs – either because they are

⁴ An early version of Brown and Levinson's theory was published as a chapter in an edited manuscript in 1978. Their 1987 book is their best known and most cited work on Politeness Theory and, therefore, serves as the basis for all discussions on PT in this thesis.

unaware of or insensitive to face wants or because they do not have the rational means to address these wants. In such cases, full cooperation cannot be assumed.⁵

Face wants can be challenged, however, during certain types of interaction. Speech acts that jeopardise face are referred to face-threatening acts (FTAs). The particularities of the act determine which type of face, positive or negative, is primarily threatened. A request, for example, threatens the hearer's negative face by pressuring him to perform an action dictated by the speaker and, therefore, impinging upon his freedom of action. A complaint or criticism, on the other hand, may damage a hearer's positive face, by threatening his desire to be approved of and appreciated. FTAs may simultaneously threaten both the speaker and the hearer's face. An invitation or an offer, for example, may impede upon the hearer (and thus, threaten his negative face wants) while revealing the speaker's vulnerabilities and exposing him to positive face threats. When engaged in face-threatening acts, speakers and hearers must balance their commitment to respect one another's face with their desire to express the intended speech act. Speakers rely on linguistic strategies 'as a *means* of satisfying [both] communicative and face-oriented *ends*' (Brown and Levinson 1987: 58). In other words, speakers make strategic linguistic choices in order to maintain face while simultaneously carrying out an FTA. Each of the politeness strategies incorporates varying degrees and types of redressive action. The choice of strategy, or facework, is dependent upon the speaker's assessment of face threat.

3.2 Calculating face threat: Power, distance, and imposition

In assessing the face threat of a given act, and consequently, the degree of politeness required, speakers calculate the value of three sociological factors: relative power (P), social distance (D), and the absolute ranking of impositions (R) in the culture to which the interlocutors belong.⁶ Relative power is an asymmetrical relationship, characterised by differences in power and social standing between interlocutors. Power differences can be real or perceived and are most apparent in contexts in which either the speaker or the hearer is in a socially-recognised authoritative position. Social distance is a symmetrical relationship

⁵ For the purposes of the empirical elements of this thesis (Chapters 3 through 7), it will be assumed that participants are MPs.

⁶ Throughout this thesis, the following abbreviations are used: +P refers to cases in which the hearer (H) is in a position of relative power over the speaker (S), -P refers to cases in which S and H have equal power relative to one another, +D refers to relationships in which S and H are socially distant, -D refers to relationships in which S and H are socially close, +R refers to a high ranking of imposition, and -R refers to a low ranking of imposition.

between a speaker and hearer, as defined by the form, frequency, and familiarity of their interactions with one another. Strangers are traditionally located at the most distant end of the social scale, with good friends and family considered socially closer to the speaker. Imposition refers to the degree to which compliance with the action or item at stake imposes upon the hearer's negative or positive face wants. A speaker's assessment of the level of imposition posed by a given act may be dependent on cultural and contextual factors, including the degree to which certain goods and traits are valued within the society to which he or she belongs.

In PT, the choice of politeness strategy is determined by the *weight* (W) of the FTA, a measure based on the speaker's assessment of power, distance, and imposition, as calculated by the following formula $W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x$ (1987: 76). Politeness strategies are proposed in accordance with the level of face-threat, as determined by the weight of the act. If the hearer has more power than the speaker, the social distance between the interlocutors is great, and/or imposition is high, then polite redress is required to minimise face threat. The higher the threat level, the more redress is required. While Brown and Levinson propose that all three factors (usually) contribute equally to the weight of a given speech act, they acknowledge that one or two of the factors may occasionally play the lead role(s) in determining the weight of a face threatening act. They explain, 'the threshold value of risk which triggers the choice of strategy is a constant, independent of the way in which the value is composed and assessed' (1987: 78). For example, an act for which imposition is high, such as a request for a very large sum of money, may yield a significant enough degree of face-threat to warrant the use of high-ranking politeness strategies between individuals in a –P and/or –D relationship.

Brown and Levinson explain that redress should not be used unless dictated by the settings of P, D, and/or R, not only because 'redressive action takes time, foresight, and effort', but also because 'if an actor uses a strategy appropriate to a high risk for an FTA of less risk, others will assume that the FTA was greater than in fact it was' (1987: 74). In other words, a speaker should be neither less polite, nor more polite, than required. Just as being overly blunt in a delicate, highly face-threatening situation would be perceived as inappropriate, so would using a high-ranking strategy for a less threatening act. While Brown & Levinson argue that ORI is ideal when face-threat high, they maintain that this strategy is not suited to all situations. A speaker who requests £1.00 from a friend may seem disingenuous or loquacious were he or she to say 'I'm terribly sorry to bother you, but is it all possible to borrow £1.00?'

3.3 Politeness strategies

Brown and Levinson list five politeness strategies, ranked in increasing order in accordance with face threat. The options range from opting out and avoiding the face-threatening act altogether to expressing the act with differing levels of directness. The first three verbal strategies involve performing the FTA on-record, ensuring that the act is stated in such a way that the communicative intention is unambiguous and easily identifiable. When face-threat is very low, the on-record act can be performed baldly, without any redressive action. When the FTA poses a threat to the speaker or hearer's face, two on-record redressive options are available, depending upon both the type and degree of face threat.

Positively polite redress is used when the FTA challenges one or both of the interlocutors' positive face wants. Amongst the strategies employed in positive politeness are the use of in-group language and address forms, humour, displays of interest and appreciation for the hearer, and the establishment of common ground between the speaker and hearer. Positive politeness strategies may be used between -D interlocutors or in situations in which the speaker and hearer have equal power. Negatively polite redress is used when the FTA threatens the speaker or hearer's negative face wants. Displays of negative politeness include the use of deference and formal address terms, hedging, polite pessimism, minimisation of imposition, and apologies. Conventional indirectness, of the type 'Would you mind...', is also typical of negatively polite redress. Negatively polite strategies may be employed in +D and +P situations or when the act imposes heavily upon the hearer. Brown and Levinson argue that 'positive politeness precedes negative politeness in the continuum of FTA "danger"' (1987: 73). In cases in which an FTA poses a threat to both the positive and negative face of the hearer, the speaker should orient his act to negatively polite strategies '[...] as it is safer to assume that [the hearer] prefers his peace and self-determination than that he prefers your expressions of regard [...]' (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 74).

3.4 Going off-record

The final option available to the speaker is to go off-record. Given the assumption that negative face wants outweigh positive face, Brown and Levinson propose that ORI is optimal in situations posing the greatest risks – those that most threaten the hearer's negative face. They explain that by speaking off-record, a speaker 'can satisfy negative face to a degree greater than that afforded by the negative politeness strategy' (1987: 73). They cite example

(3) (1987:69). While the utterance in example (11) is literally a statement of fact, when used in a conducive context – for example, when the waiter brings the bill at end of a meal –it functions as an indirect request for money.

(11) Damn, I'm out of cash, I forgot to go to the bank today.

Brown and Levinson do not describe the interpersonal context under which the utterance in example (3) could be used felicitously nor do they specify the degree of imposition involved (in this case, the amount of money requested). According to their account, ORI is used in cases in which the weight of the FTA is high and the act threatens the hearer's negative face. Given the use of the informal 'damn', one may assume that this act is used with a –D –P hearer. As such, the imposition alone may be enough to push the speaker to use the ORI strategy.

By phrasing the FTA ambiguously, the speaker avoids committing to a single communicative intention, thereby providing both the hearer and himself an *out*, should the need arise. In so doing, the speaker avoids imposing upon the hearer's personal sphere and freedom of action and, therefore, succeeds in fulfilling his desire to respect the hearer's negative face. If the hearer takes the out, he can either respond to the literal comment (by, perhaps, expressing sympathy) or ignore the utterance altogether. In such cases, the threat to the speaker's face is also averted since the hearer cannot be held to committing a (positive face-threatening) refusal of the request. When the hearer takes the out, the speech acts fails at the perlocutionary level, but succeeds in the process of face maintenance. The off-record utterance also provides the hearer with the opportunity to offer assistance, should he wish to comply, thereby enhancing his positive face. In this case, the speaker achieves the desired perlocutionary effect. Finally, the ORI utterance affords the speaker an out. If the hearer were to challenge the request for money or to directly refuse to comply, then the speaker could explicitly deny the implicated intention and insist upon a literal interpretation instead.

3.5 Criticisms of Politeness Theory: Cross-cultural variation and (im)politeness

Amongst the commonly levelled criticisms against Politeness Theory is the assumption that the ranking of politeness strategies and, specifically the use of ORI, is universal. A number of studies have criticised the cross-cultural applicability of Brown and Levinson's model with regards to the association between politeness and indirectness and the prioritisation of negatively polite facework over other communicative aims. Brown and Levinson's focus on

power, distance, and imposition, and the formula through which they calculate face-threat, are also subject to criticism.

Blum-Kulka (1987) conducted an empirical study in which native speakers of both English and Hebrew were asked to rate a series of requests with regards to their perceptions of both directness and politeness. Both sets of speakers considered the blunt on-record option to be both the least polite and the most direct. ORI requests were recognised by both groups as the most indirect, though their perceptions with regards to politeness diverged. English speakers considered ORI to be the second most polite option, after conventionally indirect negative politeness, while the Israeli participants considered the ORI requests to be significantly less polite. Blum-Kulka attributes the difference in perception to cultural preferences. She argues that English speakers are oriented to negative politeness and, as such, consider ORI requests to be polite because they allow the speaker to avoid imposing upon the hearer. Hebrew speakers, on the other hand, are oriented to positive politeness. They view ORI less favourably because the lack of pragmatic clarity, and the associated burden of interpretation, undermine the solidarity between the speaker and hearer. Following Leech (1983), Blum-Kulka suggests that Grice's Manner Maxim be expanded to include not only surface level clarity, but also pragmatic clarity. She proposes the following submaxim, which may account for the Israeli speakers' dispreference for ORI as well as the American English speakers' affinity for it (Blum-Kulka 1987: 144):

Do not obscure your illocutionary point beyond reasonable limits, or more than necessary by face-saving constraints [...] weight the imposition involved in being coercive against the imposition involved in cognitively burdening the hearer and making it difficult for him or her to guess your meaning.

Differences in the use and perception of ORI were also attested in comparisons between English and several other languages, including Greek (Sifianou 1992, 1993, 1997), Korean (Holtgraves and Yang 1990, Holtgraves 1997), Japanese (Rinnert and Kobayashi 1999), Polish (Ogiermann 2015a, 2015b, Wierzbicka, 1985, 2003), and Spanish (Felix-Brasdefer 2005, Gutierrez-Rivas 2008, Marquez-Reiter 2000, Ruzickova 2007). The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns project investigated the use of indirectness in requests and apologies in languages including American and Australian English, Argentine Spanish, British English, Canadian French, Danish, German, Hebrew, and Russian (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984, Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989).

The cross-cultural applicability of Brown and Levinson's conceptualisation of face has also been criticised. Leech explains that their 'focus on the individual, however appropriate to the West, is quite inappropriate to the collectivism or group orientation of Eastern cultures [...]' (2014: 81). The purportedly universal link between ORI and negative politeness has also been criticised, with Sifianou (1992, 1993, 1997) arguing that while English speakers may use ORI for the purposes of negatively polite facework, speakers of Greek use ORI in the process of positive politeness (see Section 9.1). Grainger and Mills similarly criticise Brown and Levinson's assumptions regarding universality, explaining '[their] assumption appears to be based on the politeness norms of elite groups of English speakers and turns out to be problematic when one looks at the way directness is used, evaluated, and understood by interactants in other communities, cultures, and contexts' (2016: 2).

Thomas (1983) explains that cross-cultural differences in the use of ORI can lead to pragmatic failure – instances in which the hearer fails to grasp the intended pragmatic force of the speaker's utterance. Cross-cultural pragmatic failure occurs when the speaker and hearer do not share the same L1 and/or its associated politeness and other social norms. Although the hearer may be highly proficient in their L2 grammar and vocabulary, she may be unfamiliar with the L2's pragmatics (such as English the use of ORI hints as a mean of making polite requests). Thomas cites example (12), based on an authentic exchange. She explains 'in this case, *B* interprets *A*'s utterance as a genuine request for information rather than, as *A* intended, a complaint (Gloss: As usual, you've forgotten to sugar it!), the intended effect of which was to elicit an apology and an offer to fetch the sugar' (Thomas 1983: 93).

(12) *A* Is this coffee sugared?

B I don't think so. Does it taste as if it is?

Additional criticisms include the fact that, under certain circumstances, a purportedly polite ORI utterance may actually be perceived by the hearer as impolite, as in example (13), which Brown and Levinson cite as a polite request for salt (1987: 215).

(13) This soup's a bit bland.

Under PT, the ORI request in example (13) would be used in the process of negative facework when power, distance, and /or imposition were high. The implicated meaning – the request to pass the salt – does not impose upon the hearer and, thus, respects his negative face wants. At the same time, however, the literal meaning – an on-record statement about the poor quality of the soup – may threaten the hearer's positive face, especially if he prepared or

served the soup himself. Likewise, the utterance may fail in the secondary aim of PT – the promotion of the speaker’s positive face – as the speaker himself may be perceived poorly by the hearer. Brown and Levinson would likely counter these criticisms by restating their assumption that negative face wants outweigh positive face wants. If their ordering of face wants is correct, then it is appropriate for the speaker to place a stronger emphasis on appeals to the hearer’s negative face wants than on concerns for his positive face wants.

The ordering of face wants itself is subject to criticism. Perhaps the following caveat should be added to PT with regards to the use of ORI: “the speaker should use the off-record politeness strategy to respect the hearer’s negative face wants when the settings of P, D, and/or R are suitably high *unless* doing so directly threatens the hearer’s positive face wants”. Instead of using utterance (13), for example, the speaker could use an on-record negatively polite utterance such as ‘Would you mind passing the salt?’ This utterance succeeds in showing deference to the hearer and avoiding a direct imposition upon him while simultaneously avoiding the face-threatening criticism expressed in utterance (13).

The cross-cultural studies on the use of ORI and the potential for a purportedly polite ORI act to be interpreted as impolite, along with newer theoretical discussions on indirectness both within and across cultures (Haugh 2015; Grainger and Mills 2016) suggest that, contrary to Brown and Levinson’s assumptions, the link between indirectness and politeness is not universal.

One may also criticise Brown and Levinson’s formula for the calculation of face-threat. Blum-Kulka and House (1989), for example, argue that additional sociological factors, such as the speaker’s degree of right in issuing the speech act and the hearer’s degree of obligation in carrying out the act, may correlate with the use of ORI. They explain ‘the greater the right of the speaker to ask and the greater the obligation of the hearer to comply, the less motivation [there is] for the use of indirectness [...] On the other hand, where obligation is low, and the right questionable [...], levels of indirectness [are likely to be] at the highest’ (Blum-Kulka and House 1989: 145–146). They suggest that when there is a mismatch between the speaker’s rights and the hearer’s obligation, the degree of obligation overrides the rights in determining the need for indirectness.

The assessment of P, D, and R and the summative value of weight can also be criticised. Brown and Levinson state ‘we assume that each of these values can be measured on a scale of 1 to n , where n is some small number’ (1987: 76). They explain that this calculation

determines the threshold value of risk, which subsequently determines which politeness strategy is appropriate. They do not, however, define the threshold, nor do they explain at which point the weight of an FTA should trigger a move from one strategy type to another. If face-threat is measured along a scale, then we can assume that there is a range of weights associated with each strategy type. If 1 to n , for example, corresponds to the weight of the lowest ranking verbal strategy (the bald on-record option), then the next strategy (the positively polite on-record option) must begin at point $n+1$ (given an integer scale), and so on for the negatively polite and off-record strategies. If we are to apply this model systematically, then we must define the permitted weight range for each politeness strategy and identify the relevant threshold points for each strategy choice.

4 The Strategic Speaker approach

Under the Strategic Speaker approach (henceforth *SS*), ORI is a game-theoretic means of balancing the risks and rewards – legal, financial, social, and/or emotional – associated with potentially conflictual acts such as bribes and sexual propositions; acts which, according to Pinker and colleagues, are not governed by politeness.⁷ This section presents a detailed discussion of the three primary components of the *SS* – plausible deniability, relationship negotiation, and the role of language as digital medium (Pinker 2007; Pinker, Nowak, and Lee 2008; Lee and Pinker 2010; Pinker 2011). Comparisons are drawn between *PT* and *SS*, the two accounts of ORI against which many of the empirical studies discussed in this thesis are evaluated. The Strategic Speaker approach was designed to explain the use of ORI in situations that do not accord with the predictions of Politeness Theory. *SS* builds on many of the assumptions of *PT*, primarily by stressing the value of plausible deniability. *SS* diverges from *PT*, however, in both the interpersonal motivations ascribed to the use of ORI and the domains over which ORI is strategically employed.

Pinker and colleagues' description of the advantages of plausible deniability resemble the benefits of the 'out' highlighted by Brown and Levinson in *PT*. The two concepts function similarly, allowing the interlocutors to draw on the ambiguity of the ORI utterance to cancel the implicated meaning and address the literal content instead. *PT* and *SS* differ in one regard – the interlocutor for whose sake ORI is strategically applied and, consequently,

⁷ The Strategic Speaker approach is discussed in four separate journal articles – two theoretical papers authored by Pinker, a theoretical paper by Pinker and his collaborators, and an empirical paper by Pinker and a collaborator. When discussing to *SS* theory in general, I refer to 'Pinker and colleagues'. The empirical study is referred to as 'Lee and Pinker' and quotations are cited accordingly.

plausible deniability is primarily afforded. While in PT, the out is hearer-oriented, in SS deniability serves the speaker's needs. The speakers' interests are prioritised – the aim is to achieve the best possible outcome and to deny a potentially damaging implicated meaning when socially necessary. Thus, although the nature of ORI allows either interlocutor to reap the benefits of plausible deniability, SS differs from PT with regards to the intended (primary) beneficiary of the deniability. While the focus of SS is on the speaker's need, the hearer can benefit secondarily. An ORI bribe, for example, considered a prototypical case of SS-based ORI, provides an out to the hearer, as he or she can feign innocence of the implicated act and respond, instead, to the literal content, if desired.

Accordingly, Pinker and colleagues stress that while PT is contingent on cooperation, SS deals with conflict. In PT, the speaker and hearer each abide by social and communicative norms to ensure that face is mutually respected and Gricean maxims are fairly observed. In other words, while the interlocutors' needs and perspectives may be different, they share an underlying goal and work jointly to observe it. In SS, the speaker and hearer may have very different goals. The speaker's interest is, primarily, self-serving. He goes off-record in order to advance his own aims, which may be contradictory to the hearer's. SS builds upon PT to account for the use of ORI in domains of conflict and controversy. Pinker, Nowak, and Lee explain, 'the complex, coded communiqués that characterise human language bespeak a mixture of cooperation *and* conflict [...] most of the practical applications of indirect speech (diplomacy, extortion, bribery, and sexual harassment) take place in arenas of conflict' (2008: 833). Two potentially conflictual acts – a bribe and a sexual proposition – are explored in-depth by Pinker and colleagues, serving as a basis for their theoretical arguments and providing a backdrop for empirical research.

Pinker and colleagues espouse a game theoretic approach to ORI. They argue that the decision to use ORI is strategic, based on a rational calculation of the risks and rewards associated with an off-record utterance given the situational and interpersonal constraints under which the utterance will, potentially, be used. The payoffs associated with ORI are compared with those of the alternatives – expressing the proposition on-record and opting out altogether. In accordance with the game theoretic model, the speaker selects the option which affords him the best outcome, minimising risk and maximising reward. The Strategic Speaker approach is presented through three successive tenets: the logic of plausible deniability in scenarios posing concrete risks and rewards, the process of relationship negotiation in scenarios with intangible payoffs, and finally, the role of language as a digital

medium in scenarios in which deniability, on the surface, is neither plausible nor necessary. Each of the tenets is summarised and discussed critically in the sections below.

4.1 Plausible deniability

In SS, plausible deniability functions primarily for the benefit of the speaker, as it allows him to balance the risks related to the performance of a conflict-laden speech act with the rewards associated with the completion of the act.

Pinker and colleagues elaborate on the following scenario, which they label a paradigm case for the Strategic Speaker approach to ORI: a speeding driver is stopped and ticketed by a traffic officer. The driver has a long record of traffic infractions and if he accepts the ticket, he would incur a fine and face the suspension of his driving licence. He considers bribing the officer, a potentially beneficial option to the speaker given that a bribe, when tendered to a corrupt and willing officer, would amount to fewer financial and legal costs than those associated with a traffic ticket. The bribe, however, is not without risk. If proffered to an honest officer unwilling to accommodate the request, the act could lead to increased costs to the speaker, including arrest for attempted bribery. As the driver is unfamiliar with the officer, he cannot accurately anticipate the hearer's response and, subsequently, his own payoff. The driver faces a dilemma – to bribe, or not to bribe. He applies a game-theoretic logic, weighing the risks and rewards associated with willing and unwilling officers. He considers three options for each type of officer – opting out and accepting the ticket without offering a bribe, offering an on-record bribe, and phrasing his bribe off-record. In the latter case, the driver may state, for example, utterance (14) (Lee and Pinker 2010: 790). The potential payoff structure in the bribe scenario is represented in Table 1, as depicted by Lee and Pinker (ibid).

(14) So maybe the best thing would be to take care of that here.

Table 1: Payoff matrix, police bribe scenario

	Dishonest officer	Honest officer
Don't bribe	Traffic ticket	Traffic ticket
Direct bribe	Go free	Arrest for bribery
Indirect bribe	Go free	Traffic ticket

Opting out, for obvious reasons, results in the same outcome for the driver, regardless of the type of police officer he encounters. The other options, however, present the driver with very different outcomes, depending on which type of officer he addresses. The dishonest officer, for whom the bribe provides a financial benefit, responds in the same manner whether the bribe is offered directly or indirectly. The driver achieves his desired outcome – the bribe is accepted and the ticket is rescinded. As the transaction involves only the speaker and the hearer, and both are keen for the bribe to succeed, there is no compelling reason for the officer to alter his response in accordance with the level of directness used by the driver. The honest officer, on the other hand, responds very differently to the direct and indirect bribes. If the bribe is issued directly, he upholds his professional obligations to condemn bribery and arrests the driver for attempted bribery. If the bribe is phrased indirectly, however, the driver faces the original penalty – the traffic ticket is issued and no additional sanctions are incurred.

The outcomes included in Table 1 represent the best and worst case scenarios for the driver. While an honest officer can justifiably arrest the driver for attempted bribery, he can also resort to less punitive measures. For example, the officer could explicitly refuse the bribe or forcefully warn the driver against future attempts at bribery. In such a case, the officer would, likely, also issue the traffic ticket. In other words, directly bribing an honest officer would still present the least favourable outcome for the driver. Since the driver cannot anticipate which type of officer he will encounter, or how strongly the honest officer will respond, he considers the worst case scenario when evaluating his options.

The off-record bribe is ambiguous. While one driver may state ‘So maybe the best thing would be to take care of that here’ with malicious intent, another driver may produce the same utterance with innocent intentions. For example, the innocent driver may wish to pay the fine promptly, avoiding complications such as court appearances or postal payments. The driver who *intends* to bribe, exploits the innocent interpretation through plausible deniability. While both types of officers may be convinced of the driver’s intent to bribe, the ambiguity of the bribe means that neither officer can be 100% certain of this interpretation. According to Pinker and colleagues, the honest officer has a greater burden of proof than the dishonest one. He responds less assuredly to the indirect bribe due to the penalties, such as a lawsuit for wrongful arrest, associated with a misinterpretation of the speaker’s utterance. The strategic speaker evaluates the response threshold for both types of officers and plans his utterance accordingly.

Pinker and colleagues explain that the penalties for a dishonest officer include arrest for accepting a bribe. The penalties are associated with the acceptance of a (correctly interpreted) implicated bribe. The penalties for the honest officer, on the other, assume an incorrect (or at least, difficult to prove) interpretation of the speaker's utterance. It is also possible that a dishonest officer could misinterpret an innocent remark as bribe, a mistake for which consequences range from embarrassment to prosecution, should the driver report the officer's actions to authorities. A speaker abiding by SS should ensure that his utterance is sufficiently indirect so as to afford him plausible deniability while, simultaneously, direct enough to inspire a willing hearer to confidently act upon it. Lee and Pinker explain (2010: 790-791):

Suppose that a corrupt officer must meet a threshold of certainty (say 80%) that a driver's utterance is an attempted bribe before he will remove the cash from a proffered wallet and send the driver on his way [...] an honest officer must meet an even higher threshold (say 99%) before he will arrest the driver for bribery, a rational driver should pitch his utterance at a directness level intended to induce a level of certainty in the hearer somewhere between 80% and 99%.

According to the payoff ratio, the off-record bribe is the optimal option when the driver is uncertain about which type of hearer he will encounter. In a game theoretical logic, ORI affords greater rewards, and fewer risks, than either opting out or offering the bribe directly.

4.2 Relationship negotiation

The second tenet of the Strategic Speaker approach, relationship negotiation, applies the game theoretic model to scenarios in which there are no tangible legal or financial payoffs. Risks and rewards are interpersonal, reflected in social and emotional implications on the relationship between the speaker and hearer. Pinker and colleagues cite two cases – a bribe between a diner and a maître d' and a sexual proposition between colleagues. Each exemplifies a different type of relationship negotiation, as will be discussed in detail below.

Pinker and colleagues ground their discussion of relationship negotiation on Fiske's relational models theory (Fiske 1991, 1992, 2000), which identifies different relationship types that govern human interaction, including cooperation and communication. The SS account of ORI focuses on three relationship types. At any period in time, they assert, a given pair of interlocutors can operate within only one of the three relationship types. The relationships are summarised below.

- Dominance, also known as authority ranking, is a hierarchical relationship characterised by qualitative and socially recognised differences in power. Within the bounds of this relationship, the dominant individual has the right to control resources at will.
- Communality, also known as communal sharing, is a relationship between intimates, including relatives and close friends. Resources are shared freely, without formal regard for equity balances. Interests often overlap and solidarity is valued.
- Reciprocity, also known as equality matching, is a relationship common amongst acquaintances and colleagues. The distribution of resources is equitable and often negotiated explicitly. Fiske's fourth category, 'market sharing', is subsumed within reciprocity in SS and includes financial transactions between buyers, lenders, borrowers, and sellers.

The relationship type between a speaker and hearer dictates which speech acts are permissible. Pinker, Nowak, and Lee explain, 'The assumed relationship type among a pair of individuals has dramatic effects on the behaviour that is acceptable between them [...] Behaviour that is acceptable in one relationship type can thus be anomalous in another' (2008: 835). In a dominance-based relationship, for example, the higher ranking individual may issue direct commands within the relevant domain. A boss may instruct his employee to carry out a work-related task without an expectation of reciprocity or a need for redress. The same act may be considered inappropriate within a communal or reciprocal relationship and, likewise, acts common to either of those relationship types may be unsuitable within a dominance-based relationship.

When a speaker issues a speech act that is befitting of the existing relationship, he and the hearer cooperate both on the communicative level and on a social level. As such, the act presents no interpersonal risks and can be performed openly. Though the act can be performed openly, redress, such as conventional indirectness, may be used for politeness purposes. As the act is appropriate within the relationship type, redress is not used to deny or soften an attempt at relationship change. On the contrary, the use of redress may actually reinforce the fact that the speaker is operating within the appropriate relationship. Polite phrasing can indicate, for example, that an act is a request (which is permitted in reciprocal relationships) and not a command (which is restricted to dominance-based relationships).

When the speaker utters a speech act that is not appropriate within the existing relationship type, on the other hand, he incurs risks that, according to Lee and Pinker, are tantamount to the tangible costs associated with bribing a police officer. They explain, ‘When one party breaches the relational model currently in force, the result is one of the “self-conscious emotions” such as awkwardness, embarrassment, or shame [...] When the violation of a relational model is not accidental or transient but deliberate and protracted, the actions are not just embarrassing but are stigmatised by taboo’ (2010: 794).

Pinker and colleagues predict that a speaker will resort to ORI when he is uncertain of the hearer’s values, namely whether or not the hearer is amenable to entering into a different relationship type. ORI affords the speaker plausible deniability – if the hearer opposes the change, the speaker can deny the *intention* of the speech act, thereby denying the fact that he attempted an act not fitting with the existing relationship type. In turn, he (ostensibly) avoids violating the relationship model and skirts the potential emotional costs of a breach. If, on the other hand, the hearer is amenable to the change, he can respond, as the speaker desired, to the implicated message. As Pinker, Nowak, and Lee explain, ‘The literal form of a sentence is consistent with the *safest* relationship between speaker and hearer. At the same time, by implicating a meaning between the lines, the speaker counts on the listener to infer its real intent, which may initiate a different relationship’ (2008: 835).

Pinker and colleagues discuss two scenarios in which the potential for relationship change is the primary motivation for the use of ORI. They begin by describing a bribe scenario in which there are no legal repercussions for either interlocutor, relating an anecdote about a restaurant reviewer who was tasked with bribing a maître d’ at an upscale restaurant by offering cash in exchange for immediate seating. The writer reported that he opted for indirect bribes, such as (15) (Lee and Pinker 2010: 795).

(15) Is there any way to shorten my wait?

Pinker and colleagues attribute the writer’s use of ORI to a strategic decision akin to that of the speeding driver. The writer is unsure of which type of maître d’ he will encounter – an honest one or a dishonest one. As with the police officers, the honest maître d’ has a higher threshold for action than his dishonest counterpart. Whereas the driver risked legal repercussions, the writer is faced with emotional ones. Pinker and colleagues explain that the maître d’ holds a

Table 2: Payoff matrix, maître d' bribe scenario

	Dishonest maître d'	Honest maître d'
Don't bribe	Long wait (Authority/Authority)	Long wait (Authority/Authority)
Direct bribe	Instant seating (Equality/Equality)	Awkwardness (Equality/Authority)
Indirect bribe	Instant seating (Equality/Equality)	Long wait (Authority/Authority)

position of dominance over the writer, retaining the ability to seat the writer and other diners as and when he sees fit. By offering a bribe, the writer proposes a change into reciprocal relationship in which a formal transaction is made – cash is exchanged for expedited seating – and equity is reached through mutual benefit. The maître d' may be unwilling to cede dominance and may challenge the attempted relationship change, resulting in awkwardness or shame on the part of the writer. Table 2 shows the potential outcomes for the diner. (Lee and Pinker 2010: 795).

The bracketed information refers to the relationship model (ostensibly) assumed by the speaker and hearer, respectively. When the speaker opts out, the interlocutors remain in the existing dominance-based relationship. When the bribe is offered directly, the speaker initiates a change into a subset of a reciprocity-based relationship. If the hearer is amenable, the change proceeds and the transaction is completed. If he is not, the speaker and hearer are at odds and awkwardness ensues. By going off-record, the speaker retains the benefits associated with bribing a dishonest maître d' while avoiding the costs of bribing an honest maître d', as plausible deniability affords both interlocutors the pretence of an unchanged, and unchallenged, relationship.

Pinker and colleagues explain that relationship negotiation may be a secondary motivation for the use of ORI in cases, such as the bribe, in which there are emotional costs in addition to any potential concrete legal and financial costs. In an empirical study, Lee and Pinker found that participants opted for indirect bribes in cases in which they were assured that 100% of police officers were corrupt – a condition in which neither uncertainty nor legal consequences were present. They attribute this finding to the emotional costs associated with the encounter which they, in turn, relate to the process of relationship negotiation. They explain, 'A police officer wields a very strong dominance relationship over a detainee [...] The emotional costs of impugning this relationship may have been enough to discourage some participants from

endorsing the blatant offer of a bribe even in the conditions [favouring] directness' (2010: 795).

Each of the bribe scenarios – the interaction between a diner and a maître d' and the one between a driver and a police officer – involves a concrete, and easily demarcated, change between two relationship types – authority and equality. Pinker and colleagues also discuss a complementary case in which the proffered speech act, a sexual proposition, introduces a qualitative change *within* an existing relationship type. Lee and Pinker explain, 'relational models are not assigned to dyads across the board but may be differentiated according to the resource [...] platonic opposite-sex friends may obey communal sharing for most resources other than sexuality' (2010: 794). When a sexual proposition is made between friends, then, it initiates a change from a platonic communal relationship to a sexual communal relationship. Sexual propositions are listed amongst the potentially conflictual situations in which off-record speech is often used. This scenario is discussed in further detail in regards to the final tenet of the Strategic Speaker approach and, along with the bribe between the driver and the police officer, is tested empirically (see Chapter 4).

There is a degree of overlap between relationship type and the settings of power, distance, and imposition. The communal relationships described by Pinker and colleagues, for example, would be assessed as –P and –D according to Brown and Levinson's scheme. The accounts differ with regards to the ways in which the social roles influence the speaker's decision to use ORI. In SS, the speaker uses ORI because he determines that the act poses a challenge to the existing relationship type. In PT, the speaker uses ORI because he concludes that the act poses a threat to the hearer's face. The speaker would use ORI to address the maître d', for example, in order to avoid imposing upon a hearer in a +P and +D position. If, in an exceptional case, the speaker and maître d' were in a –P and –D relationship, then the accounts would diverge in their predictions regarding the use of ORI. Under an SS interpretation, the diner should strategically resort to ORI when engaging in a potential conflictual act such as a bribe, regardless of contextual settings such as P, D, and R (unless, of course the settings changed the nature of the relationship between the interlocutors and, thus, the types of acts that are permissible between them). In PT, ORI would be unnecessary because the act would pose less risk to the hearer's negative face and, as such, lower ranking politeness strategies would be preferable.

4.3 Language as a digital medium

The final tenet of SS addresses the use of ORI in situations in which deniability is neither necessary nor plausible, either because the speaker is certain that the hearer will respond favourably to the proffered act or because the ORI utterance is ‘so pro forma or transparent as to leave little doubt about the speaker’s intent’ (Lee and Pinker 2010: 795).

Pinker and colleagues suggest that, in such cases, ORI is used to avoid the perceived indisputability and context-independence of on-record direct speech. Pinker, Nowak, and Lee explain, ‘people implicitly perceive direct speech as being capable of expressing intentions unambiguously, losslessly, and recursively – each a feature of digital transmission’ (2010: 795). In other words, direct speech is perceived as 100% certain, while ORI, by virtue of ambiguity, is less so. As long as there is at least a shadow of a doubt about the speaker’s intention, the ORI utterance affords the speaker three distinct benefits: deniability of a failed attempt at relationship change, deniability to third parties, and the avoidance of (overt) common knowledge. To explain each of the three facets, Pinker and colleagues return to the example of the ORI sexual proposition.

They begin by introducing the game-theoretic concept of coordination games, which predicts that when two individuals are presented with a range of options, it is mutually beneficial to agree upon one of them. They will often settle upon a landmark – the point at which both parties agree that a decision has been finalised. Individuals negotiating a financial transaction, for example, may settle on a price halfway between the buyer’s lowest offer and the seller’s highest request. In coordination games between a speaker and a hearer, direct speech may serve as a symbolic landmark, denoting certainty and signalling to each interlocutor that relationship change has occurred. Indirect speech, on the other hand, provides both interlocutors with the benefit of the doubt. Certainty is avoided and neither the speaker nor the hearer is forced to acknowledge the attempted relationship change. In other words, the ORI sexual proposition, even when phrased in such a way that the speaker’s intention is seemingly obvious, falls just short of the landmark point. Certainty is less than 100%, providing just enough deniability to avoid the damaging interpersonal effects of a failed attempt at relationship change.

Pinker and colleagues further explain that, with ORI, deniability is extended to third parties. The interpretation of the implicature is highly context-dependent and when an ORI utterance is reported, whether informally through the chains of gossip or formally in a courtroom

setting, deniability persists. In the case of thinly veiled propositions, deniability may be strengthened by the absence of the contextual cues present in the original discourse.

Finally, they discuss the fact that direct speech generates common knowledge, a condition under which each party has recursive representations about the other's state of knowledge regarding a given proposition. Lee and Pinker explain (2010: 796):

Two agents A and B have common knowledge of the proposition x when A knows x , B knows x , A knows that B knows x , B knows that A knows x , and so on [...] Direct language is an effective shared basis for common knowledge and that common knowledge is an effective way of proposing a change to a relational model. Common knowledge may even *inevitably* ratify such a proposal, overriding any intentions to the contrary [...] no matter how strong the motive to pretend that they have not noticed the obvious – a state of common knowledge does not permit [the agents] this pretence without surrendering their tacit claims to rationality and honesty.

With regards to the sexual proposition, the implicated meaning (and the corresponding attempt at relationship change) enters common knowledge only in the case that both the speaker and the hearer are 100% certain that the act was both intended and interpreted as a sexual proposition. When the act is delivered off-record, the speaker and hearer may be confident of the implicated meaning, but cannot be assured of either the nature of the speaker's intent or of the accuracy of the hearer's interpretation of it. In other words, they may each have shared individual knowledge – each knows that the speech act is a sexual proposition – but no recursive representation about the other's knowledge. The hearer can respond to the literal content of the utterance without committing herself to a refusal of the implicated sexual proposition. The speaker knows that the act was intended as a proposition, but does *not know* if the hearer interpreted it as such. Likewise, the hearer does not know *if the speaker knows* that she interpreted the utterance as intended, and so on. Without the presence of common knowledge, the speaker and hearer can maintain the pretence that no relationship change was attempted and return, with fewer emotional costs, to the existing relationship, however 'obvious' the utterance may be.

4.4 Comments and criticisms: The Strategic Speaker approach

Given the recentness of the Strategic Speaker approach, there have been few scholarly attempts, with the notable exception of Terkourafi (2011a, 2011b), to either support or

criticise the account. In this section, I discuss criticisms with a focus on two elements of SS – relationship change and payoff ratios. The criticisms of relationship change are addressed empirically in Chapters 5 and 6.

Terkourafi criticises Pinker and colleagues' assertion that, when dealing with high-risk and potentially conflictual speech acts like bribes, threats, and sexual propositions, cooperation between speakers and hearers cannot be assumed. She explains that while the speaker and hearer may have conflicting aims, they cooperate on the locutionary level. She states, 'While their extra-linguistic goals (enforcing the law vs. breaking the law) are at odds, speaker and listener still share an intra-linguistic goal (understanding and being understood); if they did not share this goal, then the listener would fail to identify the speaker's utterance as a bribe' (Terkourafi 2011a: 2863). Pinker concurs and writes in response to Terkourafi 'I agree [...] that indirect speech must involve some degree of cooperation; if that were lacking, people would not communicate at all, as we see in the idiom "to be on speaking terms" [...] the distinction between locutionary and perlocutionary cooperation is a helpful way of capturing those aspects of conversation that are cooperative and those that are potentially conflictual' (Pinker 2011: 2866-2867).

With regards to relationship negotiation, Pinker and colleagues do not offer distinct predictions in terms of either the direction or type of relationship change. For example, they do not differentiate between an attempted change from reciprocity to dominance and, comparatively, a change from either dominance to reciprocity or from reciprocity to communality. In their account, each potential change poses the same emotional and interpersonal risks and, as such, prompts the speaker to use ORI.

Furthermore, Pinker and colleagues do not address the effect of the power imbalance within dominance-based relationships. In communal and reciprocal relationships, the speaker and hearer have equal power relative to one another. If a given speech act is permissible within either of these relationship types, then both individuals have the right to issue said act without compromising the existing relationship type. Dominance-based relationships, on the other hand, are characterised by defined differences in power. While the dominant individual in the relationship (for example, a boss) has the right to issue direct commands, her counterpart (the employee) does not. Similarly, the less dominant individual may be socially or contractually obligated to obey the command while the dominant individual is not. Pinker and colleagues do not make the distinction between the contrasting rights of the dominant and non-dominant individuals in dominance-based relationships. In their theoretical discussions, they assume

that the speaker occupies the dominant position in the relationship and do not consider cases in which the hearer is in a dominant role.⁸

Additionally, Pinker and colleagues may over-attribute the use of ORI to the influence of relationship change. For example, they argue that the speaker's use of ORI in maître d' bribe scenario is due to the fact that the bribe represents a potential change from a dominance-based relationship to reciprocal one. While bribes are indeed reciprocal, due to the quid-pro-quo nature in which function, one may be hard-pressed to identify reciprocal relationships in which bribes are regularly performed and socially accepted. A shopkeeper and customer, for example, are in a recognised reciprocal relationship and regularly engage in formal reciprocal transactions. Nonetheless, in such a relationship, a bribe is likely to present just as many consequences – social, emotional, and otherwise – as in the situations involving relationship change. A speaker who opts to bribe in such a case, may choose ORI.

There are two possible interpretations for the use of ORI bribes in an existing reciprocal relationship. On the one hand, bribery may be permissible in only a subset of reciprocal relationships. Just as the transition from a friendly communal relationship to a sexual communal relationship represents a change within a relationship type, so too may a change from a reciprocal relationship in which bribery is prohibited to one in which it is permitted. On the other hand, the use of ORI in bribes, in general, may be attributed to factors other than relationship change, including a societal perception that bribes are immoral and unethical.

One may also criticise Pinker and colleagues with regards to the manner in which they present the payoff ratios. In Tables 1 and 2, Lee and Pinker do not code risks and rewards on a consistent basis. The emotional effects, namely relationship change, are included only in the cell representing the direct bribe to an unamenable hearer. Each of the other cells includes only the perlocutionary effect of the speaker's strategy choice. In the case of the bribe with the maître d' for example, these effects are listed as 'long wait' and 'instant seating' respectively. The social and emotional costs – whether absent or present – are not mentioned. Likewise, the cell which lists the emotional effect does not include the perlocutionary effect, though presumably the speaker's utterance would also result in either of the aforementioned conditions. In other words, the tables present an unbalanced and unrepresentative view of the potential outcomes faced by the speaker.

⁸ In Lee & Pinker (2010), the power manipulations in the favour scenario included a hearer in the dominant position. The favour is a low-risk act, however, and is not pertinent to SS predictions on ORI and relationship negotiation.

In Table 3, I suggest an amended format with which to present the risks and rewards for the speaker. For each of the strategies – opting out, speaking directly, and speaking indirectly – both perlocutionary effects and risks and rewards are presented according to the type of hearer that the speaker encounters. While in Table 3, the risks and rewards are social and emotional, in cases such as the bribe between the speeding driver and the arresting officer, the consequences may be legal or financial. In the remainder of the thesis, I used a modified version of Table 3. For the sake of both clarity and emphasis, perlocutionary effects, and risks and rewards, respectively are included only in the two critical cells – speaking directly to unamenable hearer and speaking indirectly to unamenable hearer. Consequences are excluded from each of the cells in which the speaker addresses an amenable hearer as the risks and rewards in these cells are identical to one another and, thus, do not influence the speaker’s decision. Likewise, risks and rewards are excluded from the opting out cells as there is a null effect in these cases.

Table 3: Amended payoff matrix, maître d’ bribe scenario

		Dishonest maître d’ (amenable hearer)	Honest maître d’ (unamenable hearer)
Don’t bribe	Perlocutionary effects	Long wait	Long wait
	Risks and rewards	No relationship negotiation	No relationship negotiation
Bribe directly	Perlocutionary effects	Instant seating	Long wait
	Risks and rewards	Mutually advantageous relationship negotiation	Awkwardness due to overt relationship negotiation
Bribe indirectly	Perlocutionary effects	Instant seating	Long wait
	Risks and rewards	Mutually advantageous relationship negotiation	Awkwardness alleviated by plausible deniability

5 Misdirection and ORI

Asher and Lascarides (2013) discuss the use of ORI in cases of misdirection (referred to herein as the Misdirection account). They adapt a game-theoretic approach and focus on scenarios in which the speaker's and hearer's motives do not align – specifically, instances in which the hearer is seeking information which the speaker wishes to conceal. They cite two examples, a criminal court case and a conversation between a couple. In the former case, misdirection is used to avoid an admission of guilt and the resulting legal repercussions. In the latter case, the aims and consequences are interpersonal. In the both examples, the speaker uses ORI in response to a query from the hearer. In other words, the account shows that ORI can be used strategically to initiate an interaction between the interlocutors (by making a request, for example) or to respond to an ongoing exchange.

The couple scenario explains that a jealous boyfriend is questioning his girlfriend about whether or not she has recently seen her ex-boyfriend, Valentino. For personal reasons, the girlfriend wishes to conceal the fact that she has seen him. She has three options available to her. She can respond with an explicit 'yes' or 'no' – both of which can be potentially damaging – or she can go off-record, as in example (16) (Asher and Lascarides 2013: 2)

- (16) Justin: Have you been seeing Valentino this past week?
Janet: Valentino has mononucleosis.

Janet's response appears to be cooperative with regards to Gricean maxims. Justin may assume not only that Janet is being truthful and informative, but also that she is being relevant. He draws on world knowledge – namely, the notion that one does not normally visit those with communicable diseases – and interprets Janet's remarks as an assertion that she has not seen Valentino. It is exactly this interpretation that Janet expects. Asher and Lascarides explain that, given Justin's jealous temperament, he may be suspicious of Janet's intention and assume she is being untruthful. Nonetheless, he still draws the same implicature. They state, 'not believing or being wary of the indirect answer is a matter of credibility and belief about the information imparted; it's not a matter of what information is imparted by the response' (2013: 8).

Asher and Lascarides contrast Gricean cooperativity with rhetorical cooperativity. The latter may be employed strategically in instances in which the speaker's and hearer's motives do not align. They explain, 'A rhetorically cooperative move is a speech act one would expect from a speaker who fully cooperates with his interlocutor. Rhetorical cooperativity makes a

speaker *appear* to be Gricean cooperative although he may not actually be so' (2013: 3). In contrast, Janet could also use ORI if she wished to be truthful, rather than to mislead. For example, she could respond to Justin's query with 'Valentino had a party last week.' In this case, the utterance is likely to generate the implicature 'yes, I have seen him.' Such cases do not involve deliberate misleading and are cooperative on the Gricean level.

In other words, the speaker who uses ORI to mislead and conceal cooperates on the rhetorical level only. He responds to the hearer's query with an ORI utterance which generates a relevant (and intentionally counterfactual) implicature. The response ostensibly satisfies the hearer's need, as a relevant and seemingly cooperative answer is provided. The speaker succeeds in concealing the truth, without the added consequences of directly evading the answer. The speaker also evades responsibility for the interpretation of the utterance. Given the fact that the literal content of the utterance is true, the speaker is not guilty of lying. Since the interpretation of the utterance lies with the hearer, the speaker cannot be held accountable for it. If Justin were to find out that Janet had seen Valentino and to subsequently accuse her of being untruthful, she could reasonably respond as follows: 'I never (explicitly) said that I hadn't seen him' and 'I never gave you (sound) reason to conclude that I haven't seen him'.

In the Misdirection account, the speaker uses ORI in order to *conceal* information from the hearer. She hopes that the hearer will respond passively to the implicated message by accepting the response as a valid answer without further questioning. If confronted by the hearer, the speaker uses plausible deniability to deny her intention to mislead. She does *not* use plausible deniability to cancel the implicated meaning itself. In example (16), for instance, the speaker does not deny the implicature 'I have not seen him'. If she were to do so, she would confirm that she had in fact seen him – the very point she is trying to conceal. Instead, she denies that, in stating 'Valentino has mononucleosis' she *intended* to convey the counterfactual proposition 'I have not seen him.' In other words, she avoids responsibility for the implicature, thereby denying any malicious intent to deceive the hearer.

The Misdirection account can be contrasted with other theories of ORI, including PT and SS. In these accounts, the speaker uses ORI in order to *reveal* information to the hearer in a way that is plausibly deniable. He hopes that the hearer will respond actively to the implicated message by reacting to do it in the desired manner. If confronted by the hearer, the speaker uses plausible deniability to cancel the implicated meaning (and, by extension, denies his intention to perform the attempted speech act). A speaker who offers a bribe, for example, by

staying ‘Is there any way to shorten my wait?’, denies *both* the implicated meaning ‘Will you give me a table now if I give you money?’ and the underlying intention to bribe.

6 Impoliteness and ORI

In addition to research on politeness and ORI, recent studies have focused on seemingly opposite approach – the use of ORI for the purposes of impoliteness (Culpeper 2005, 2011; Haugh 2015; Zajdman 1995).

Culpeper discusses non-conventional impoliteness – the use of ORI in face-attacking speech acts, including insinuated criticisms and snide remarks. He presents three types of data in support of this account – intentionally impolite utterances used for the purposes of entertainment in a comedy quiz show, impoliteness rankings for direct and indirect commands, and first person reports about instances in which participants were the recipients of face attacks.

With regards the quiz show data, Culpeper defines off-record impoliteness as instances in which ‘the FTA is performed by means of an implicature but in such a way that one attributable intention clearly outweighs any others’ (2005: 44). In this way, Culpeper’s account of impolite ORI contrasts with Brown and Levinson’s view of polite ORI, which focuses on the notion that ‘[...] it is not possible to attribute only one clear communicative intention to the act’ (Brown and Levinson 1987: 211).

In the cases of impoliteness Culpeper describes, ORI is not motivated by plausible deniability. The speaker intends that *only* the impolite meaning is recognised by the hearer. Indirectness is used for rhetorical purposes and, rather than softening the face attack, the ORI may instead strengthen the attack. Culpeper explains, ‘These more indirect forms of impoliteness, such as off-record impoliteness, should not be considered any less impolite than more direct forms. In fact [...] there are theoretical grounds for believing it to work in the opposite direction, namely, that more indirect forms of impoliteness are more offensive’ (2005: 44). He cites example (17), used in the quiz show as a means of insulting a contestant (2005: 50).

(17) Did you go to school?

This example may be a case of standardisation, following Bach (1998), as the content of the implicated impolite meaning is regularly used, and easily understood, for the purposes of

insulting the hearer's intelligence, particularly after the hearer has made a foolish comment. The utterance is nonetheless considered ORI as it is ambiguous between a literal and non-literal interpretation and, as such, is plausibly deniable.⁹ The standardisation view supports Culpeper's definition, as the availability of the implicated meaning clearly outweighs that of the literal one. Given that the speaker intends to insult the hearer, and intends that both the hearer himself and the third parties observing the encounter recognise the insult, she has no practical or social need to draw on plausible deniability. Such uses of impolite ORI can be referred to as 'unmitigated face attacks'.

In another study, Culpeper tested participants' perceptions of direct on-record, conventionally indirect, and ORI commands. He tested three scenarios types, each involving binary manipulations to the settings of P, such that either the speaker or the hearer was in a position of relative power over the other interlocutor. In all cases, the speaker asked the hearer to be quiet. The direct, conventionally indirect, and ORI commands were phrased, respectively, as follows: 'You be quiet', 'Could you be quiet?', 'You aren't being quiet' (Culpeper 2011: 187). Across all cases, the direct on-record command was rated as the most impolite, followed closely by the ORI command. There was a significant effect of power on all of the ratings, with commands issued by a lower-ranking speaker to a superior considered to be more impolite than the other way around.

While these findings can be taken to challenge Brown and Levinson's assumptions that ORI acts are perceived as more polite than on-record alternatives, it is also possible that the participants' assessment of the ORI command is related to the content of the utterance rather than the level of (in)directness. As Culpeper explains, the ORI utterance 'is perhaps not the best exemplar of this category' as 'it orients to a preparatory condition of the request to be quiet, namely, that one is not being quiet in the first place [...]' (2011: 261). In other words, the ORI command used in the experiment does not match prototypical ORI utterances, such as 'it's very loud in here', with regards to pragmatic ambiguity and the resulting plausible deniability. Culpeper argues that the phrasing he used was necessary in order to manipulate the directness of the utterance without changing its propositional content. Just as Brown and Levinson's purportedly polite request 'this soup's a bit bland' can be interpreted as insult to the hearer, Culpeper's ORI command may communicate to the hearer disapproval or reprimand rather than (just) a directive. In other words, the perception that 'you aren't being quiet' is impolite may be more related to the patronising connotations of the utterance than to

⁹ See Chapter 5 for a discussion on standardisation and ORI.

the fact that is off-record. If the command had been phrased differently, the participants' perception may have differed.

Culpeper also discusses self-reports from addressees. Participants were asked to describe instances in which utterances used towards them made them feel hurt, offended, embarrassed, or threatened. Of the 100 reported instances, 59 were considered examples of off-record impoliteness (2011: 155). While the data provides anecdotal evidence of the ways in which impolite ORI is used, the results rely on the hearers' perception of the (potentially) impolite utterance. In some of the examples, the speaker's intent seems indisputable. One participant, for example, explains that a housemate stated to her 'Uh, I'm always tidying this fucking room' (Culpeper 2011: 158). Like example (9) used in the quiz show, this ORI utterance can be considered an unmitigated face attack – an instance in which the use of ORI was not motivated by plausible deniability.

Without insight from the speakers, one cannot know if all of the reported uses of impoliteness were intentional face attacks or, instead, the result of a misinterpretation on the part of the hearer. Another participant, for example, stated 'As I walked over to the table to collect the glasses, Sarah said to Tim "come on Tim let's go outside", implying she didn't want me there' (Culpeper 2011: 160). The participant took offence at the utterance, though it is possible that she incorrectly assumed an (impolite) implicated meaning when none was intended by the speaker.

In addition to the unmitigated face attacks described by Culpeper, and the cases of misunderstanding, there may also be instances in which ORI impoliteness *is* motivated by plausible deniability. In such cases, the speaker may be able to counter the hearer's claims of offence by insisting that none was intended. In such cases, which can be comparatively referred to as 'mitigated face attacks', the use of ORI may allow the speaker to communicate an impolite message subtly and without the burden of being held accountable for it.

Mitigated face attacks may also be used in humorous interactions. Zajdman explains 'An off-record, humorous FTA seems to be a case in which [the hearer] feels insulted by [the speaker's] words, whereas [the speaker] insists that he was "only joking"' (1995: 330). She cites as an example the following interaction (Zajdman 1995: 331):

A couple of years ago, Teddy Kollek, the near-eternal mayor of Jerusalem, known also for his quick temper, was annoyed by one of his citizens to the point that he shouted at the man, loud and clear, and in the presence of other people: ‘You can kiss my ass!’ The insulted citizen sued him. In court, Teddy claimed, as his defence: ‘I only gave him a suggestion, he didn't have to do it!’

Haugh (2015) discusses ‘mock politeness’, a phenomenon which entails the deliberate use of sarcasm or irony as a means of implicating an impolite message. He explains ‘a mock politeness implicature is similar in many ways to an impoliteness implicature. However, the mock politeness arises through the occurrence of an ostensibly “polite” (non-) linguistic form or practice (i.e. that would in other circumstances be associated with a polite attitude), in a situated context with which it is somehow incongruous [...]’ (Haugh 2015: 4). He cites as an example the following scripted exchange from the film ‘The Social Network’. In example (18) Erica’s response can be considered ‘mock politeness’ (Haugh 2015: 2):

(18) Mark: [...] If I get in I’ll be taking you to the events, and the gatherings, and you’ll be meeting a lot of people you wouldn’t normally get to meet.

Erica: You would do that for me?

Haugh explains that mock politeness has the added interpersonal effect of leaving the hearer without adequate defence against the implicated impolite message: ‘One feature of mock politeness implicatures that appears to mark them as somewhat distinct from (genuine) impoliteness implicatures [...] is that the target of the mock polite attitude is often positioned in such a way that it is difficult to respond without appearing churlish, or inadvertently putting “on record” that which has been left “off record” [...]’ (2015: 4).

Research on impolite uses of ORI – whether for the purposes of humour or for either unmitigated or mitigated face attacks – provides insight into the diverse and multifaceted motivations that inform strategic uses of ORI.

7 Alerts and ORI

Soltys, Terkourafi, and Katsos (2014) discuss the use of ORI under conditions of immediacy, cases in which indirectness is used in the spur of the moment, thereby eliminating the elements of strategy and planning that are associated with the accounts presented thus far.

The immediacy account focuses on alerts, ‘off-the-cuff calls to action that concretely benefit the hearer, either by promoting a positive occurrence or preventing a negative one’ (2014: 47). Alerts are used to notify the hearer of a current or impending state of affairs, providing sufficient and relevant information upon which the hearer can (choose to) act. Example (19) is a constructed prototypical alert (2014: 48).

(19) You dropped your wallet.

In issuing the alert, the speaker’s primary goal is to raise the hearer’s awareness, with the expectation that the hearer will appropriately decide which, if any, action to take. In contexts such as example (19), the speaker may anticipate which action the hearer is likely to take, though it is not necessarily the case that the speaker intends the hearer to follow a specific course of action. In these cases, direct on-record alternatives, such ‘pick up your wallet’, are available to the speaker. The ORI utterance, however, bypasses a commitment to a singular interpretation.

Other alerts may inform the hearer of a situation for which multiple actions, or no uptake at all, are equally viable options. In such cases, there does not exist a distinct on-record alternative. The speaker must simply impart enough information to raise the hearer’s awareness, thereby allowing him or her to decide which course of action to take. For example, a speaker may state to an unknown passerby, ‘there’s a cat on the road’. Depending on the hearer’s preferences, she can move to the other side of the street to avoid the cat, stop to pet it, or carry on walking past it. The speaker may be unable to predict the hearer’s action and, further, may not care if and how she chooses to respond to the ORI utterance, so long as she fulfils her aim to be informative. The implicated meaning of example (19), and by extension, ORI alerts in general, may be summarised as follows: *Do something about it, if you want, according to what is reasonable.*

Alerts differ from the ORI directives discussed in both Politeness Theory and the Strategic Speaker approach in several ways. Firstly, the use of ORI is not a function of strategic design. In other words, the decision to use ORI is not related to either facework for the hearer’s sake or potential payoffs for the speaker’s sake. The use of implicit, rather than explicit, phrasing, however, is intentional. By using ORI, the speaker provides enough information to the hearer to prompt him to act (if he so desires), without restricting him to specific course of action.

As a related measure, the use of alerts is not subject to situational or interpersonal restraints. Alerts may be used in a variety of contexts and amongst different types of speakers and hearers regardless of the speaker’s assessment of P, D, or R. The off-record utterance may be

embedded within additional politeness markers when deemed appropriate. Soltys, Terkourafi, and Katsos explain: ‘an employee may address his or her boss by stating, “Excuse me, sir. You dropped your wallet” and alert a peer with “Hey, mate. You dropped your wallet”. In these cases, power and distance are acknowledged via the choice of deferential or in-group address terms, respectively. Notably, the (off-record) phrasing of the alert remains unchanged’ (2014: 52-53).

While Soltys, Terkourafi, and Katsos consider the alerts described herein to be examples of ORI, in Brown and Levinson’s categorisation, alerts (also termed ‘sympathetic advice or warning’) are considered instances of bald on-record speech. As an example, they cite the utterance ‘Your slip is showing’, which is similar to ‘you dropped your wallet’ (Brown and Levinson 1987: 98).

Brown and Levinson explain that when efficiency is required and the alert benefits the hearer, ‘then in doing the FTA, the speaker conveys that he does care about the hearer (and therefore about the hearer’s positive face), so that no redress is required’ (1987: 98). Soltys, Terkourafi, and Katsos challenge their categorisation of alerts, explaining (2014: 48):

On a pure Searlean (1975) account of indirectness, whereby an indirect speech act is one in which the speaker performs a primary (implicated) act by means of a secondary (surface) one, such examples *do* constitute instances of off-record indirect speech. In other words, while the acts may at first glance appear on-record, due to their brevity and apparent lack of redress, the fact that the directive meaning is veiled in an implicature qualifies these utterances as examples of off-record speech.

Furthermore, Soltys, Terkourafi, and Katsos classify alerts as a ‘hybrid’ type of speech act, combining elements of both commissives, by virtue of benefitting the hearer, and directives, by guiding the hearer towards taking (voluntary) action.

8 Children and ORI

Ervin-Tripp (1976, 1977) reviews a series of studies on the production of off-record requests, also referred to as ‘directive hints’, in children under the age of five years. In the empirical studies, ORI was rare in the children’s interaction with peers, but did feature in directives

aimed at adults. In child-adult interaction, ORI directives centred on appeals for assistance or requests in relieving aversive conditions. Ervin-Tripp identifies two ways in which children use ORI directives with adults.

Very young children may opt for hints in situations in which they are aware of a need but lack the understanding of how to address it. She explains, ‘Children are likely to refer to the beginning states or preconditions of need, simply out of their own failure to specify for themselves what is wanted – as when they say “I’m thirsty” rather than “I want juice”. And then adults, being nurturant, do the rest of the work for them’ (1977: 172). In this way, the early childhood use of ORI is similar to the adult use of most ORI alerts. As with alerts, the child trusts that the hearer will recognise the implicated content – ‘Do something about it’ – and respond favourably to it. In the case of alerts, the response is beneficial to the hearer and, aside from empathetic concerns, the speaker has no vested interest in the perlocutionary effects. With child-produced ORI directives, however, the speaker is the primary beneficiary. His reliance on the hearer is two-fold. The adult must first determine which course of action is beneficial and then carry out said action for the sake of the child. In contrast to alerts, on the other hand, the use of ORI is not intentional. The child uses a hint, such as ‘I’m thirsty’, because an alternative on-record request is not readily available to him. In other words, ORI is his only option. The use of ORI by very young children, then, is not strategic (see Section 10.1).

By the age of four years, children begin to produce (almost) adult-like ORI directives, which Ervin-Tripp considers ‘a more sophisticated form of the baby’s “I’m hungry”’ (1977: 176). She cites examples (20) and (21), which were used to ask for assistance cleaning a bedroom and to request sweets, respectively. With regards to the latter case, she explains that, when young children hint, they may be less ambiguous than their adult counterparts. ‘Even in cases where there is complete structural masking of the directive intent, the desired object is typically mentioned’ (1977: 176).

(20) I’m sorry. My room’s too messed up.

(21) We haven’t had any candy for a long time.

Like the hints produced by younger children, both utterances allude to a need or want on the part of the child which the adult is (likely) known to be capable of remedying. In the latter case especially, however, it is evident that the child *does* have a specific intention in mind when uttering the request. As such, a direct alternative, such as ‘Can you buy us some

candy?’ is available to him. One may assume, then, that by age four, the child uses ORI strategically, having learnt from experience that adults will understand his directive hints and respond to them favourably.

9 The Intimacy accounts of ORI

The term ‘Intimacy accounts’ refers collectively to several proposals about the use of ORI between individuals in intimate relationships, which are characterised by a low setting of D and include self-identified in-group members, such as family, spouses or partners, and close friends (Sifianou 1992, 1993, 1997; Soltys et al 2014; Terkourafi 2011a, 2011b, 2013, 2014). While the theories overlap with regards to both the interpersonal relationship between the speaker and hearer, and types of speech acts which are used, they differ in terms of the primary motivation for the use of ORI and, specifically, whether positive politeness is the underlying goal or a by-product of other aims. Sifianou argues that ORI is strategically employed as means of promoting positive facework and establishing solidarity between the speaker and the hearer. Terkourafi, on the other hand, asserts that ORI is not strategic, but is chosen because it is efficient and economical. In Terkourafi’s view, positive politeness is a bonus supported by the primary use of ORI.

In support of her view, Terkourafi discusses an ORI exchange between a husband and wife, as shown in example (22) (2013, p. 201):

(22) I have to work late tonight.

The single off-record utterance, she explains, may be used in place of a range of related acts, each communicating different propositions, such as ‘Don’t wait for me’, ‘Don’t make dinner for me’, and ‘Don’t worry that something bad happened to me’ (ibid). In such situations, ORI functions as a communicative shortcut. The ORI utterance, literally an informative statement, prompts to hearer to interpret the relevant directive messages intended by the speaker by relying not only on world knowledge but also on the common ground provided by the intimate relationship between the speaker and hearer.

When ORI is used as a communicative shortcut between intimates, indirectness has the added effect of establishing solidarity, thereby enhancing the positive face wants of the speaker and hearer. Terkourafi explains, ‘when interlocutors share a substantial amount of background

knowledge about each other, directness or explicitness is deemed unnecessary [...] by pointing the listener towards that knowledge and marking it as common knowledge, off-record indirectness has the additional bonus of re-affirming closeness with the speaker' (2011a: 2864).

The efficiency-based view of Intimacy argues that while ORI may serve as a marker of emotional closeness by indexing the intimate relationship between the interlocutors, the speaker's primary motivation is not a face-saving one: re-affirming solidarity is merely a by-product (Soltys, Terkourafi, and Katsos 2013).

ORI can also be used for the sake of efficiency in instances in which the speaker does not have a specific perlocutionary goal in mind. In other words, instead of communicating a string of related propositions (each of which the speaker anticipates that the hearer will infer), the ORI utterance can simply prompt the hearer to reach *an* interpretation.

Terkourafi (2011a: 2864) cites example (23) as a prototypical case in which ORI is used, between intimates, without a single perlocutionary goal in mind. In example (23), translated from the original Greek, a mother is addressing her adult daughter and referencing the daughter's own child:

(23) Zina, the baby is going to the other room.

In example (23), the speaker uses ORI to inform the hearer of a state of affairs. Unlike the alerts, however, the speaker has a vested (emotional) interest in the hearer's uptake. Due to the common ground afforded to the speaker and hearer by their intimate relationship, both interlocutors can be confident that the uptake will be prompt and appropriate. While the mother gives the daughter enough information upon which to act, and relies on past interaction to know that she will indeed act, she leaves it up to the daughter to decide *how* precisely to act.

In a discussion with Terkourafi, Pinker draws a link between the use of ORI with intimates and the process of relationship negotiation, explaining that the ORI can be used to affirm, rather than challenge, the existing relationship between the speaker and hearer. In response to example (16), he states 'I suggest that if the mother were being indirect, it would be to reaffirm that she was treating the daughter as an equal despite the fact that at that moment she had knowledge that the daughter lacked and had good reason to direct the daughter into action' (Pinker 2011: 2867).

The Intimacy accounts also describe the use of ORI in situations in which the speaker *does* have a single perlocutionary goal in mind, as in example (24), intended by the speaker as an indirect request for an aspirin (Sifianou 1997: 165):

(24) I've got a splitting headache.

In example (24), ORI is used primarily for the purposes of facework. In contrast to Brown and Levinson's account of facework, the emphasis is on positive, rather than negative, face. From a PT perspective, ORI is used as a redressive measure to minimise imposition. Under the Intimacy accounts, however, 'off-record requests are not used in order to minimise the imposition on the addressee's freedom, but rather, to provide him or her with the opportunity to express generosity and solicitude by offering to perform a certain act before being directly requested' (Sifianou 1997: 168). She explains that within intimate relationships, 'individuals do not really need to rely on overt expression of their needs and desires because members of the same in-group are expected to sense them' (Sifianou 1997: 167). In other words, ORI can function as a type of midpoint for making requests with intimates – the speaker gives the hearer just enough information to help him 'sense' a need without being explicitly stating that need. Tannen (1981) highlights an additional speaker-based interpersonal benefit for the use of ORI in situations similar to example (24), namely 'the satisfaction of being understood without explaining oneself, of getting what one wants without asking for it (1981: 223).

In addition to requests (acts which, at least to some degree, impose on the hearer), ORI can be also used amongst intimates in face-affirming acts such as compliments and offers. Instead of explicitly praising the hearer on her style and physical appearance, for instance, the speaker could use an ORI compliment, as in example (25) (Sifianou 1997: 164).

(25) You must work in a fashion agency.

In the Intimacy accounts, ORI is used for the sake of economy and for the enhancement of positive face. The closeness between the speaker and the hearer minimises the need for redress, especially with regards to imposition. Soltys, Terkourafi, and Katsos explain, 'the need for deniability is eliminated by the respective rights and responsibilities of the speaker and hearer within the particular intimate relationship. So long as it is within their shared routine and respective roles to care for one another, or to assist or advise one another, there may be [no] need for deniability' (2014: 51). Thus, while deniability is plausible, it is not a motivating factor in the speaker's decision to use ORI, as it is in the speaker's interest that

both the implicated message and the display of solidarity are readily understood by the hearer.

9.1 Cross-cultural variation and the Intimacy accounts

Amongst the most common criticisms of Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory is the assumption that the association between ORI and politeness is universal. Critics of PT have noted that strategies other than ORI may be preferred in highly face-threatening situations and, further, that ORI may be perceived negatively within cultures that value frankness (see Section 3.5). Similar criticisms can be levelled against the Intimacy accounts, to the extent that it makes any universal claims at all. Like PT, these accounts associate the use of ORI with a particular type of interpersonal relationship. While in PT, ORI is predicted in +P and/or +D relationships, in the Intimacy accounts, the use of ORI is associated with individuals in -D (and presumably, -P) relationships. Additionally, while ORI is related to negative politeness in PT, in the Intimacy accounts it is a function of positive politeness – either as the primary motivation for ORI or as a 'bonus' measure.

Interesting, both facets of the Intimacy accounts – Sifianou's focus on positively polite facework and Terkourafi's discussion of ORI as a communicative shortcut – are based on evidence from Greek. Sifianou attributes the use of ORI between intimates to culture-specific politeness preferences, explaining that within Greek-speaking communities, solidarity-building activities are highly esteemed. She contrasts this behaviour with that of groups for whom negative politeness is generally prioritised, explaining 'the English seem to place a higher value on privacy and individuality, i.e. the negative aspect of face, whereas Greeks seem to emphasise involvement and in-group relations, i.e. the positive aspect' (Sifianou 1992: 41). In this view, ORI is used within the context that is most valued by the majority of speakers in that culture, situations calling for negative politeness in English and those related to positive politeness in Greek. With regards to the politeness element of the Intimacy accounts, the use of ORI may be a function of culture rather than a universal trend (see Chapters 7 and 8 for more discussion on the role of culture in the Intimacy accounts).

9.2 Comments and criticisms: The Intimacy accounts

In addition to the potentially culturally variable constraints of the Intimacy accounts, the assumed association between intimates and the use of ORI for positive politeness can also be contested. Negative politeness concerns may also play an important role within intimate relationships. If the imposition involved in the act is significant, or if there is a culture-specific preference for deference or the avoidance of imposition, then ORI may be used with intimates as a means of respecting the hearer's negative face.

One may also criticise the scope of the efficiency and economy element of the Intimacy account. While there may be cases in which the use of ORI communicates multiple propositions, there may also be instances in which ORI is used between intimates with the purpose of communicating a single and unambiguous proposition. In such cases, the use of ORI cannot be explained by either efficiency or economy (though positive politeness may still play a role). Likewise, there are also instances in which the interpretation of the utterance can be achieved through world knowledge alone. While the interpretation of the utterance in example (15) may require extensive familiarity with the speaker's habits and preferences, examples such as (17) would likely be interpreted as intended by any competent hearer, regardless of his or her familiarity with the speaker. In these cases, interpretation depends on world knowledge rather than common ground and ORI does not have the added effect of affirming solidarity or signalling the intimate nature of the relationship between the interlocutors.

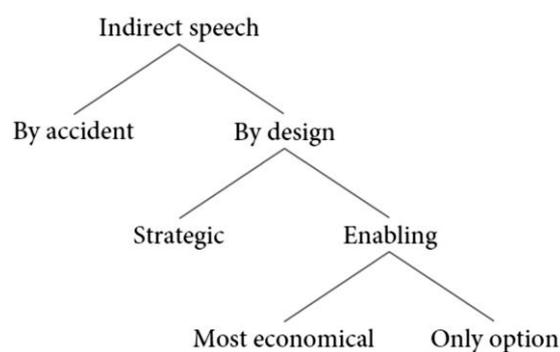
10 Enabling

The term 'enabling' was coined by Terkourafi (2014) and encompasses the Intimacy accounts, alerts, early childhood hints, and other instances in which the hearer is responsible for 'amplifying' the meaning of the ORI utterance. She explains that each of these uses of ORI challenge two notions of off-record speech – the assumption that there is always a direct alternative and the belief that the use of ORI is, therefore, strategic. With regards to the former point, Terkourafi explains 'There is no reason to assume that the speaker starts out from a direct alternative that she then modifies to meet the exigencies of the situation. Rather, indirect speech results from the speaker saying no more than is required for the listener to figure out how to respond' (2014: 48). The enabling category includes two cases in which,

according to Terkourafi, there is no direct alternative for the ORI utterance. On the one hand, are the instances in which the ORI is used as a shortcut to express multiple propositions. In such cases, ORI is the most economical option. On the other hand, are the cases such as child language and alerts, in which ORI is the only option because the speaker does not have a definitive communicative intention in mind.

Terkourafi proposes the following schema to distinguish different types of ORI: on the one hand, are ‘accidental’ uses of ORI, in which the hearer reaches an interpretation that is inconsistent with the speaker’s intention. This category includes instances in which a speaker uses an utterance (such as ‘it’s cold in here’) intending to communicate only literal meaning (in this case, a statement about the temperature) while the hearer assumes that an implicated meaning (like ‘shut the window’) was intended. On the other hand, are cases of ORI ‘by design’, in which the hearer amplifies the meaning of the utterance in the direction intended by the speaker. In other words, the speaker intends to implicate a particular meaning (or set of meanings) and the hearer correctly recognises this. The ‘by design’ category includes Terkourafi’s definition of ‘strategic uses of ORI’ – cases in which the speaker deliberately rejects a direct alternative and chooses ORI for purposes such as politeness and plausible deniability – and enabling uses – cases in which the use of ORI was not ‘strategic’. The latter category includes instances in which ORI is used because it is the most economical option as well as cases in which ORI is the only option. Terkourafi’s scheme is presented in Figure 1 (2014: 66).

Figure 1: Enabling uses of ORI



10.1 Enabling uses of ORI vs ‘strategic’ uses of ORI: Is the distinction valid?

The enabling category can be criticised on two counts – the assumption that there are no on-record alternatives to ORI in any of the enabling cases and, consequently, the assertion that the use of ORI is not strategic. In child language and alerts there may, indeed, be no direct

alternatives. In such cases, ORI is, as Terkourafi argues, the only option (aside, of course, from opting out). In these circumstances, the use of ORI is *not* strategic.

With regards to the use of ORI for the purposes of economy and efficiency, however, there may be on-record options available. In examples such as (26), as discussed in Section 9, the speaker communicates a series of related propositions with a single ORI utterance.

(26) I have to work late tonight.

Alternatively, the speaker could spell out each of the propositions sequentially, though doing so would be cumbersome. In such cases, the use of ORI may indeed be considered strategic. The speaker deliberately phrases the act in such a way that it implicates multiple propositions in order to avoid explicitly stating each of the propositions. Furthermore, the speaker's choice depends upon her assessment of the relationship between her and the hearer. She uses ORI only with hearers with whom she shares substantial common ground. If the speaker wished to communicate the same series of propositions to a hearer with whom she was less familiar, more explicit phrasing would be necessary. In other words, the speaker *strategically* uses ORI within particular interpersonal relationships and situational contexts with the (mutually beneficial) aim of achieving efficiency and economy.

Terkourafi states that when used as a communicative shortcut between intimates, ORI has the 'additional bonus' of reaffirming the closeness between the speaker and hearer (2011a: 2864). She argues that the affirmation of solidarity is not strategic. However, the fact the positively polite facework is an unplanned by-product of other aims (efficiency and economy) does not discount the fact that the primary aims are themselves strategic.

11 Other aspects of ORI: Speech acts, scenarios, and correlates of use

This thesis focuses on motivations for the strategic use of ORI. In other words, it investigates the *reasons* why speakers use ORI. The eight empirical studies explore strategic motivations for ORI, with a focus on three theoretical accounts of strategic ORI use – the Strategic Speaker approach, Politeness Theory, and the Intimacy accounts. This chapter discusses additional motivations, including the use of ORI for the purposes of impoliteness and misdirection, the use of ORI as a communicative shortcut, and the use of ORI as means of 'enabling' the hearer when direct alternatives are not readily available to the speaker. This

section briefly reviews other factors related to ORI – including specific speech act types and speaker traits – that are beyond the scope of this thesis.

11.1 Other speech acts and scenarios

Much of the empirical literature on indirect speech focuses on requests (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984; Blum-Kulka 1987; Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989; Brown and Levinson 1987; Ervin-Tripp 1976, 1977; Felix-Brasdefer 2005; Holtgraves and Yang 1990; Lee and Pinker 2010; Marquez-Reiter 2000; Ogiermann 2015a, 2015b; Rinnert and Kobayashi 1999; Ruzickova 2007; Sifianou 1992, 1993, 1997; Tannen 1994; Terkourafi 2011a, 2011b, 2013, 2014; Weizman 1989, among others). Pinker and colleagues focus on high-risk acts such as bribes, threats, and sexual propositions (Lee and Pinker 2010; Pinker 2007; Pinker, Nowak, and Lee 2008). Other speech acts discussed in this chapter include insults and criticisms (Culpeper 2005, 2011), alerts (Soltys et al 2014), and declaratives used to conceal information and mislead hearers (Asher and Lascarides 2013).

Wajnryb (1998) and Stewart (2005) explored the strategic use of ORI in written feedback between lecturers and students in Australian and British contexts, respectively. Wajnryb explains two reasons why an academic supervisor may wish to couch their feedback in off-record speech, both of which can be attributed to the principles of Politeness Theory, as the use of ORI is motivated by the desire to protect the hearer's and speaker's face wants.

A key [motivation] is the 'clash of goals' explanation: the need to say something face-risky but at the same time the need to minimise risk to face. The conflict that supervisors feel in relation to their roles (helper/assessor) is palpably evident at times of giving criticism where there is the tension between supporting morale and enabling better instruction. Going off-record by clothing criticisms ambivalently allows both goals to be pursued [...] Another explanation is the need for an 'out': where the speaker, uncertain of the terrain he or she is traversing, is apprehensive about the reaction an intended utterance might provoke. Ambivalence enables 'deniability' and therefore ensures an 'out' if this is what turns out to be required [...] (Wajnryb 1998: 534).

Studies have also documented the use of ORI for speech acts such as apologies (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984; Blum-Kulka 1987; Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989); compliments (Maiz-Arevalo 2012; Sifianou 1997), offers (Brown and Levinson 1987), and ostensible

invitations (Isaacs and Clark 1990). In each of these cases, ORI is used primarily for the purposes of positive face maintenance, protecting the speaker from outwardly exposing his or her own vulnerabilities while simultaneously enhancing the hearer's positive face.

11.2 Other correlates of ORI use

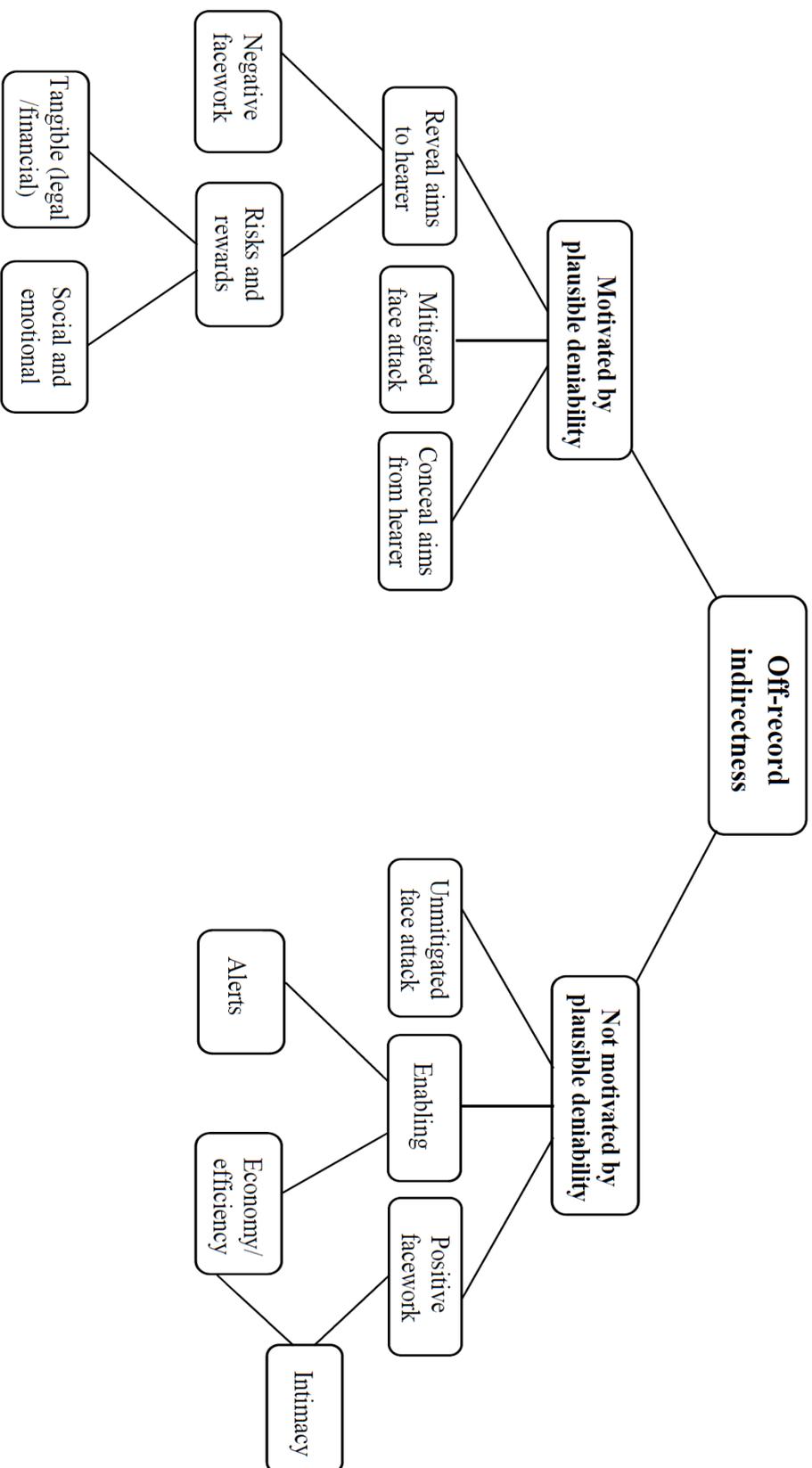
Research suggests that speakers of Greek and Spanish, for example, use ORI in the process of positive politeness, specifically with the intention of establishing solidarity with the hearer. It follows that in conversations where positive politeness is appropriate, speakers of these languages will produce more utterances with ORI than speakers of languages which do not use ORI for positive politeness. Cultural-linguistic differences of this kind may therefore lead to differences in the rate of use of ORI. Gender is another such correlate of use of ORI. In a discussion of gender and indirectness, Tannen (1994: 1) proposes that 'Women and men are both indirect, but [...] they tend to be indirect in different situations and in different ways'. It may therefore be the case that male and female speakers within the same speech community vary systematically with regards to their production and perceptions of ORI.

In this thesis, motivation is construed as a decision that is affected by settings of the dynamic context of conversation rather than a static aspect of the context, such as cultural identity or gender. While these factors are discussed briefly in relation to empirical findings, they are not investigated in their own right as they are beyond the scope of this thesis.

12 Conclusion: A typology of the accounts for ORI use

The theoretical accounts introduced thus far describe the use of ORI under a variety of conditions. In the sections above, the accounts were discussed in detail, with information about the types of speech acts that are delivered off-record, the interpersonal and situational contexts in which the speech acts are employed, and the underlying motivations for the use of ORI. In this section, I propose a novel means of categorising the strategic motivations for the use of ORI, as presented in Figure 2. The categorisation incorporates Terkourafi's enabling classification, but otherwise departs from her scheme, particularly with regards to the grouping and division of the accounts (see Figure 1).

Figure 2: A new typology of strategic motivations for ORI



Unlike Terkourafi, I do not separate enabling uses of ORI from ‘strategic’ uses, but instead consider the enabling uses to be a subset of strategic uses of ORI (see Section 10.1).

The categorisation I propose focuses on motivations for the strategic use of ORI – instances in which a speaker deliberately phrases an utterance off-record with the *intention* of expressing an illocutionary function other than (just) the one communicated by the literal proposition. The motivations are separated by aim – the speaker’s underlying social, functional, or concrete goal in choosing to use ORI.

The motivations are first divided into two subheadings – strategic uses of ORI that are motivated by the speaker’s desire for plausible deniability and strategic uses of ORI that are not motivated by plausible deniability. All ORI utterances are, by definition, plausibly deniable. What differs between the motivations is not the presence of plausible deniability but the importance of it in the speaker’s decision to use ORI. In both Politeness Theory and the Strategic Speaker approach, for example, the advantages associated with plausible deniability are among the primary factors that motivate the speaker to use of ORI (though the desire for plausible deniability stems from very different aims, which is why the motivations are separated from one another in the categorisation). In the Intimacy accounts, on the other hand, while the speaker’s motives are strategic – whether for the purposes of efficiency or positively polite facework – plausible deniability is not a motivating factor in the decision to use ORI.

Teasing apart the two strands highlights the fact that pragmatic ambiguity (the means) can be motivated by very different aims (the ends). A speaker may opt for ORI because it allows her to deny the implicated message or because the ambiguity achieves a desired effect on the hearer that is unrelated to plausible deniability (and which, as in the case of positive politeness, the speaker has no social or functional need to deny).

The new typology I propose is presented in Figure 3. The strategic motivations that are driven by the desire for plausible deniability are depicted on the left side of the figure, under the heading ‘motivated by plausible deniability’ while the right side of the figure shows the strategic uses of ORI that are ‘not motivated by plausible deniability’.

The subheading ‘motivated by plausible deniability’ includes three motivations for ORI, referred to as ‘reveal aims to hearer’, ‘mitigated face attack’, and ‘conceal aims from the hearer’.

The first category includes two instances in which the speaker uses ORI in order to reveal information to the hearer. She hopes that the hearer will respond actively to the implicated message and, if necessary, uses plausible deniability to cancel the implicated meaning. The ‘reveal’ category includes motivations related to two theoretical accounts – Politeness Theory (Section 3) which is referred to, based on its primary aim, as ‘negative facework’ and the Strategic Speaker approach (Section 4), which is referred to as ‘risks and rewards’ in keeping with its game-theoretic focus. This category is further divided into two types of risks and rewards – ‘tangible (legal/financial)’ and intangible ‘social and emotional’. The former subcategory explains the use of ORI in situations with concrete consequences, such as legal sanctions or monetary losses and gains. The latter category describes the use of ORI in situations that challenge the existing relationship between the speaker and hearer in accordance with Fiske’s relational models theory (Fiske 1991, 1992, 2000). Example (27) shows the use of ORI for the purposes of ‘negative facework’. Examples (28) and (29) reflect the use of ORI in the ‘risks and rewards’ subcategories – ‘tangible (legal/financial)’ and ‘social and emotional’, respectively.

(27) Damn, I’m out of cash, I forgot to go to the bank today. [as a non-imposing request for money]

(28) So maybe the best thing would be to take care of that here. [as a bribe to an officer]

(29) Would you like to come up and see my etchings? [as a romantic proposition]

The ‘mitigated face attack’ category includes instances in which impolite uses of ORI are motivated by the speaker’s desire for plausibly deniability (Section 6). In these cases, the speaker communicates an impolite message off-record with the option of denying an impolite intent and thereby avoiding the burden of being held accountable for attacking the hearer’s face, as in example (30)

(30) You would do that for me? [sarcastically, in response to a patronising offer]

Finally, the ‘conceal aims from the hearer’ category includes cases in which the speaker uses ORI in order to conceal information from the hearer. She hopes that the hearer will respond passively to the implicated message by accepting the response as a valid answer without further questioning and, if necessary, uses plausible deniability to deny her intention to mislead the hearer. This motivation is derived from the Misdirection account (Section 5), as in example (31).

(31) Justin: Have you been seeing Valentino this past week?

Janet: Valentino has mononucleosis. [to implicate ‘no’ when the truth is ‘yes’]

The subheading ‘not motivated by plausible deniability’ also includes three motivations for the use of ORI – ‘unmitigated face attack’, ‘enabling’, and ‘positive facework’.

The first category, ‘unmitigated face attack’, refers to instances in which a speaker strategically uses ORI with the aim of attacking the hearer’s face. Indirectness is used for rhetorical purposes and is not motivated by plausible deniability as the speaker intends that *only* the impolite meaning is recognised by the hearer (Section 6), as in example (32).

(32) Did you go to school? [to insult the hearer’s intelligence]

The enabling category, as explained by Terkourafi, includes all instances in which the hearer is responsible for amplifying the meaning of the ORI utterance (Section 10). This category is further divided into two types of motivation – ‘alerts’ and ‘economy/efficiency’ (the ‘only option’ category used in Terkourafi’s enabling account (Section 10) is excluded from the typology because it not a strategic use of ORI). ‘Alerts’ are used to raise the hearer’s awareness by notifying him of a current or impending state of (potentially detrimental) affairs (Section 7). The speaker depends on the hearer to assist her in appropriately interpreting the ORI message, to the express benefit of the hearer herself and, as such, has no social or functional need for plausible deniability, as in example (33)

(33) You dropped your wallet. [to inform the hearer so that he can react as he sees fit]

The ‘positive facework’ category is based on Sifianou’s account of ORI among intimates and, more generally, within cultures oriented towards positive politeness. It describes instances in which ORI is strategically employed as means of promoting positive facework and establishing solidarity between the speaker and the hearer (Section 9). Given that the primary aim of the utterance is to enhance the hearer’s positive face, and to generate a sense of camaraderie and intimacy between the interlocutors, the speaker has no social need for plausible deniability, as show in example (34).

(34) You must work in a fashion agency [as a compliment about the hearer’s appearance]

The ‘economy/efficiency’ category describes Terkourafi’s account of ORI amongst intimates, in which ORI is used as communicative shortcut in order to succinctly communicate either a

complex message or a series of several related propositions (Section 9). This category is linked to ‘positive facework’ under the heading ‘intimacy’ to show that within intimate relationships, the reliance on common ground in the use of ORI for ‘economy/efficiency’ has the added effect of reaffirming the closeness between the interlocutors. Example (35) reflects this view of ORI.

(35) I have to work late tonight. [as a shortcut between a husband and wife to implicate a series of related propositions that are specific to their relationship with one another]

The typology I have proposed is a novel approach to understanding, and disentangling, the strategic motivations for the use of ORI. The typology can be amended to accommodate additional uses of ORI or nuanced perspectives on the existing accounts. An updated version of the categorisation, which incorporates the empirical findings that are presented in Chapters 3 through 7, is presented in Chapter 8 (Section 7).

CHAPTER 3

PARTICIPANTS' INTUITIONS ABOUT OFF-RECORD INDIRECTNESS

1 Introduction

Chapter 3 focuses on Experiment 1, an empirical study about the factors that motivate native English speakers to use ORI in their everyday lives. In an open-ended production task, participants are asked to describe their first-hand experiences with indirect speech. The experiment examines not only the participants' use of ORI, but also their intuitions about how, why, when, and with whom it is used. The responses are analysed in accordance with which theory or theories of ORI they best fit, with emphasis on Politeness Theory (PT) and the Strategic Speaker approach (SS), the two contrasting accounts of ORI that were incorporated into the experimental design of the study. The responses are also discussed in relation to ORI theories about intimacy, impoliteness, and misdirection. Novel explanations are proposed for uses of ORI that are not related to any of the theories under consideration.

The data show that ORI is most often used for reasons related to Politeness while uses related to the Strategic Speaker approach and, indeed, the other theories of ORI, are much rarer. The chapter concludes with a discussion of theoretical and empirical implications pertinent to some of the issues raised in the previous chapter and also to the remainder of the thesis. Experiment 1 is an impetus for two additional lines of inquiry – the differences between participants' intuitions about ORI (what they say they do) and their production of ORI (what they actually do), which is explored in Experiments 2 through 7 and the use of ORI between-intimates, which is the topic of Experiment 8. By focusing on the participants' own understanding of ORI, this chapter serves as a bridge between the literature review, which summarises several theoretical accounts of ORI, and the remaining chapters, which describe the use of ORI under experimental conditions.

2 Research questions

Experiment 1 addresses the following questions:

RQ1. Which uses of off-record speech do participants most often report?

RQ2. Can the participants' first-hand experiences with ORI, and their understanding of how and why ORI is used, be explained by the theoretical accounts of indirect speech?

RQ3. Do the participants' responses suggest unanticipated uses of off-record speech?

3 Methodology

Experiment 1 was an offline questionnaire hosted on Qualtrics. The questionnaire was divided into two parts in order to elicit data about both the participants' actual experiences with ORI and their assumptions about the situations in which a speaker could potentially use ORI, respectively. In Part 1, participants were asked to recount their own experiences in detail, with emphasis on what was said, what the context was, and why indirect speech was used. In Part 2, the participants listed additional uses for indirect speech.

3.1 Design

Five versions of the questionnaire were distributed, each of which included a different introduction to the questionnaire. The following text was included in each version.

In some situations, we prefer to say things indirectly.

We may use hints or innuendo to imply what we want instead of stating it explicitly.

Version A, the neutral version of the questionnaire, included no additional explanatory or contextual information. In the remaining versions of the questionnaire, the introductory text was supported by an illustrative example. Each example was explained from a first person point of view and included an off-record utterance relevant to the depicted scenario. An on-record alternative was provided to highlight the differences in directness and to underscore the intended meaning of the ORI utterance. No indication was given as to the speaker's motivation for using ORI. The ORI utterances were formulated to be naturalistic and were modelled after utterances observed in experimental data or cited in theoretical literature. The direct utterances were explicit and, though perhaps less naturalistic, served the instructional purposes explained above. Versions B and C depicted uses of ORI predicted by the Strategic Speaker approach – a bribe between a police officer and a speeding driver and a romantic overture. Versions D and E, in contrast, included examples related to Politeness Theory,

depicting a request for assistance with a work assignment and a request to shut an open window, respectively.

The examples were included to facilitate the participants' understanding of the concept of ORI and focused on PT and SS for three reasons. Firstly, these two accounts are examined in-depth throughout the thesis. The theories are discussed in detail in the literature review section and three of the scenarios examined in this experiment are tested empirically in other parts of the thesis – the scenarios from versions B and D are used in Experiment 2 (Chapter 4) and the scenario in version C is tested in Experiment 7 (Chapter 6). Secondly, both PT and SS were devised with native English speakers in mind and as such, examples related to these theories are likely to be accessible and familiar to the participants. While Brown and Levinson propose a universal theory of politeness, several of their examples are in English and include references to either British or American cultural norms. Pinker and colleagues include only English examples, along with American cultural and situational references.¹ Finally, the use of examples allowed for a comparison between the responses in the PT and SS versions of the questionnaire, respectively. The comparisons could then be used to determine if the participants' intuitions about ORI were influenced by the type of examples they were shown. The text below was used in version B. The scenarios, direct utterances, and off-record utterances used in versions C, D, and E are shown in Table 1.

For example, imagine that I am stopped for speeding and decide to bribe the police officer to avoid a ticket. Instead of directly saying 'Take the money and don't give me a ticket', I might use an indirect statement like 'Perhaps there's some way we could settle this on the spot'.

Table 1: Scenarios and example utterances

	Scenario	Direct utterance	Off-record utterance
C	I want to ask a co-worker on a date.	Will you go on a date with me?	I've heard there's a fantastic new restaurant opening nearby this weekend.
D	I have an impending deadline for a difficult assignment and want to ask a co-worker (who's an expert at spreadsheets) for help.	Can you help me with this assignment?	I'll never finish on time if I don't figure out these spreadsheets.
E	I am having lunch at a friend's house. She's left a window open and I'd like her to close it.	Shut the window.	It's a bit chilly in here.

¹ Other accounts of ORI may be less familiar to English speakers. The intimacy theories (Sifianou, Terkourafi, Sifianou), for example, were derived in relation to native Greek speakers.

In part 1, participants were asked to recount, in detail, their first-hand experiences with ORI. The following text was used to elicit a response and separate fields were provided for each of the three facets of the question.

Can you think of any occasions when you, or one of your friends, spoke in an indirect way? Please describe the situation – what happened, what you said, and why. You can provide one, two, or three examples. If you've never spoken in an indirect way, write 'N/A' in the boxes.

What was the situation? What did you say? Why were you indirect?

In part 2, participants were asked to provide up to three examples of other situations in which they or someone else might speak indirectly. Due to the hypothetical nature of the question, participants were not asked to describe the context or to explain the motivations for the use of ORI.

3.2 Participants

Experiment 1 was completed by a total of 94 participants (64 females), all of whom were native speakers of American English residing in the United States. Participants were recruited via Mechanical Turk and were rewarded a small fee, via Amazon payments, for completing the task they were assigned. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 73 years, with a mean age of 38 years. The five versions of questionnaire were completed by roughly the same number of participants: 18 did Version A, 20 did Version B, 19 did Version C, 19 did Version D, and 18 did Version E.

4 Coding: Part 1

In Part 1, participants were asked to recount, in detail, situations in which they, or someone they know, have used indirect speech. They were instructed to describe the use of ORI in full, with emphasis on what was said, what the context was, and why indirect speech was used. In the first round of coding, non-ORI responses were excluded from the analysis. Excluded responses included blunt on-record utterances, white lies (such as stating 'I'm full' to refuse an unappealing meal without offending the host), and other strategic uses of language such as nicknames, code words, and euphemisms.² In total, 85 ORI responses were

² Twenty-five responses were excluded from the neutral version of the questionnaire, a total of 27 responses were excluded from the two SS versions, and a total of 32 responses were excluded from the two PT versions.

analysed: 38 in the PT scenarios, 40 in the SS scenarios, and 8 in the neutral version. In the latter case, the low number of ORI responses was presumably due to the absence of an explanatory example.

The responses were then coded according to which set of theoretical predictions they best fit – ‘Politeness Theory only’ or ‘the Strategic Speaker approach only’. Responses were coded as ‘multiple interpretations possible’ if they described uses of ORI which could be explained by two or more of the relevant theories, including not only PT and SS, but also accounts such as the intimacy theories and were coded as ‘other’ if the uses of ORI were not related to PT or SS. During the coding process, the three required fields – the context, the utterance, and the motivation – were considered in combination. The context described situational features, including the relationship between the interlocutors, the settings, and other relevant background. The utterance, depending on the participants’ response, comprised either a direct quote or reported speech. In addition to confirming the use of ORI, the utterance revealed which sources of ambiguity the participants drew upon and which speech acts they performed indirectly. Finally, the motivation explained why, in the participants’ mind, they opted for ORI. The latter question was included with the expectation that participants could both identify and verbalise their motivations for using ORI. While this was often the case, there were also instances in which participants did not offer a clear motivation, but simply stated that they did not want to speak directly. In these cases, the responses to the other two facets of the question were used to identify a theoretical interpretation for the participants’ use of ORI, whether ‘PT only’, ‘SS only’, ‘multiple interpretations possible’, or ‘other’.

The examples cited in the sections below include responses to the context, utterance, and motivations fields, respectively. Each of the responses is reproduced as written by the participant. Minor spelling and punctuation errors have been corrected for clarity, but no changes were made to the content of the responses.

4.1 Politeness Theory

Responses coded under the heading ‘Politeness Theory only’ frequently cited motivations associated with displays of negative politeness, as in example (1) in which the speaker uses ORI to engage in facework. The ORI request avoids a direct imposition on the hearer and affords her the opportunity to either offer assistance or opt out by feigning ignorance of the request. Participants also used ORI because they perceived on-record alternatives to be rude, as in example (2) or because they wished to engage in positively polite facework. In

example (3), for instance, the speaker uses ORI to establish camaraderie with the hearer, by implying that her needs are valued and similar to the speaker's own.

(1) My babysitter cancelled on me last minute and I needed someone to watch my kids so I could go out to dinner at a new restaurant. / "I'm so bummed I have to cancel these dinner reservations that we have had for 2 months." / I didn't want to inconvenience my friend.

(2) Hinting for a Christmas gift / "You know, those blue tooth earphones are really cool." / Because saying, 'buy me that' is just rude.

(3) My friend's dog was bothering me. / "I wonder if Fluff needs to go out?" / She loves her dog and I did not want to tell her I don't like dogs.

4.2 The Strategic Speaker approach

The responses in the 'Strategic Speaker approach' category described the use of two of the speech acts to which Lee and Pinker (2010) devote considerable empirical and theoretical attention – a sexual proposition and a bribe.

Examples (4) and (5) refer to a proposition and a bribe, respectively. In example (4), the participant describes the use of the off-record act in a situation characterised by relationship change. He suggests that the use of ORI was strategic, as it was deliberately chosen over an on-record alternative.. In example (5), the participant mentions a strategic motivation central to the SS approach – uncertainty regarding the hearer's values and his or her subsequent response to the proffered act.

(4) Wanting to hook-up with a woman / "Why don't you come over and have a few drinks and we can talk"/ I didn't want to come out and say 'come over so we can sleep together tonight'.

(5) I was trying to bribe my professor for an A. / "Wouldn't it be nice if I could just buy a better grade, since I'm doing so badly?" / I wasn't sure if she would take the bait and she didn't.

4.3 Multiple interpretations

The responses in this category fell into two camps. In the first, were those responses in which there was too little information provided about the context and/or the motivation to determine which of the relevant theories accounted for the participant's use of ORI. In example (6), the participant does not specify either whom he addressed or why he opted for ORI. While his response would likely fit with Politeness Theory motivations, such an interpretation cannot be assumed unless additional information were supplied.

(6) Help with a work assignment. / "I really wish I had more time to get this done." / Because I didn't directly ask for help or more time.

In the other camp, were responses for which multiple theoretical interpretations were possible. Amongst the most common responses in this category were those that described interactions between family members and financial matters, respectively. Response (7) is an example of the former while examples (8) and (9) depict the latter subcategory.

Example (7) can be interpreted from either an Intimacy theory perspective or a Politeness Theory one.³ In the former case, the speaker resorts to ORI as a communicative shortcut, relying on the common ground between him and his mother to ensure that the message is acted upon appropriately. In the latter case, the speaker uses ORI so as to avoid directly imposing upon the hearer's freedom of action.

(7) Driving with my mom / "These drivers really seem to be dangerous today." / I was trying to hint to my mother to slow down her driving.

Examples (8) and (9) are similarly interpretable from two perspectives. Politeness Theory explains the use of ORI through facework, namely the desire to avoid a direct imposition upon the hearer. The Strategic Speaker approach suggests that ORI is used when the situation poses a threat to the existing relationship type between the speaker and hearer, resulting in awkwardness, bringing to mind the popular saying 'don't mix business with pleasure' (Lee and Pinker 2010: 794). Requesting money off-record allows the speaker to operate within the existing the communal or dominance-based relationship without openly initiating a move into a reciprocal relationship characterised by financial transactions.

³ In Part 1, there were no responses which were clearly, and solely, associated with the Intimacy account and, as such, this account was not included as a coding category in its own right.

(8) A friend needed a loan to avoid losing her TV to a pawn shop. / She sighed that she guessed she was going to lose the TV. / She was indirect because she knew I could likely help but didn't want to outright ask for the money.

(9) I needed to borrow money. / "I wish I could afford to go on the ski trip with you." / I was uncomfortable about asking to borrow money.

4.4 Other

The 'other' category included responses that did not fit neatly within any of the proposed theories of indirect speech, as in example (10), as well as responses that were one of only a few instances in which participants described a particular use of ORI. The latter cases can be interpreted through either existing theories of indirect speech or novel proposals for the use of ORI.

(10) I wanted ranch dressing for my sandwich but was too lazy to get up myself. / I said to my boyfriend, "I wish my sandwich wasn't so dry." / I felt if I said it directly it would sound lazy.

Example (11) shows the use of ORI for the purposes of impoliteness (Culpeper 2005, 2011; Haugh 2015). In Example (11) the speaker uses ORI with the intention of attacking the hearer's face. The request for a blanket functions as both a literal request for the mentioned item, as well as an indirect criticism of the speaker's roommate. The speaker uses ORI in order to prompt the hearer to heed an additional request – turning on the heater – through both the literal request and the implicated criticism.

(11) It was very chilly in the living room and I wanted my roommate to turn the heater on. / I asked my roommate to pass me a blanket because I was so cold. / I was a little mad that she was being so picky about turning the heater on, so I wanted to make her feel bad about making me cold.

Examples (12) and (13) describe two uses of ORI for which novel theoretical interpretations emerge. In example (12) indirectness is used in order to conceal the speaker's underlying intention while in example (13), ORI is used as training tool to help hearers recognise implicated messages. These two uses may be referred to as 'ORI for the purposes of concealing intention' and 'ORI for the purposes of edification', respectively.

Under the ‘concealment of intention’ interpretation, participants use ORI to glean information about the hearer and to covertly gauge his or her interest or availability in a (potentially) upcoming event. In example (12), it is the underlying motive – the decision about which gift to buy the hearer for his birthday – that is plausibly deniable. Whereas the success of other off-record acts relies on the hearer appropriately interpreting the implicated message, these acts exploit the hearer’s ignorance of the underlying motive. Once the information is supplied, the speaker can act on it accordingly, with the hearer none the wiser. If the hearer does recognise the intent, the speaker can plausibly deny the interpretation in an attempt to (re)conceal her motives.

(12) My sister wanted to find out what my brother wanted for his birthday. / “This sweater is nice. What do you think, Steve?” / We wanted his opinion without finding out why we needed to know.

The ‘edification’ interpretation explains that a speaker deliberately uses ORI as a training tool to sharpen the hearers’ attention to indirect speech by prompting them to respond actively (and accurately) to implicated messages. In Example (13), the speaker, a classroom teacher, uses ORI in order to train the hearers, her students, to recognise hints and interpret them appropriately. Though the use of ORI is intentional, it is not motivated by plausible deniability. The speaker wants the hearers to recognise her intent, both for the immediate purpose of preparing them for the quiz and for the long-term goal of teaching them to notice and interpret off-record speech.

(13) Warning my class of an upcoming quiz. / “It wouldn’t surprise me if this information turned out to be important.” / So they will learn to take cues from future bosses.

5 Results: Part 1

Table 2 shows the mean responses in each theoretical category. The field labelled ‘all versions’ includes the neutral version of the questionnaire, as well as the versions which used examples related to Politeness Theory and the Strategic Speaker approach.⁴

⁴ In Table 2, and in the remainder of the thesis, all means have been rounded to the nearest hundredth.

Table 2: Reported use of ORI

	Politeness Theory	Strategic Speaker	Multiple interpret.	Other
PT scenarios	0.55	0	0.29	0.16
SS scenarios	0.50	0.13	0.15	0.22
All scenarios	0.51	0.07	0.22	0.20

The use of ORI was most frequently attributed to motivations related to PT only. There were no significant differences between the frequencies with which politeness motivations were cited in the PT scenarios (55%) and the SS scenarios (50%), ($t(37) = 0.83, p = 0.41$), respectively. Motivations related to SS were not mentioned in either the PT scenarios or the neutral version of the questionnaire. The difference in SS uses between the PT and SS scenarios was statistically significant ($t(37) = -2.37, p < 0.05$). Across all versions, there was a statistically significant difference between the frequency of PT-based and SS-based uses of ORI ($t(84) = 6.41, p < 0.001$). There were no significant differences between the PT scenarios and SS scenario with regards to the frequencies with which responses were coded as either ‘multiple interpretations possible’ ($t(37) = 1.71, p = 0.10$) or ‘other’ ($t(37) = -1.00, p = 0.32$).

Each of the responses in the ‘PT only’ category was further divided into one of two subcategories, representing negative and positive politeness, respectively. Negative politeness predominated in the PT-based ORI utterances, representing 67% of the PT responses across all versions of the questionnaire. The data were also coded for speech act type, with 72% of the reported uses of off-record speech were coded as requests, a speech act category which includes both requests for action and requests for information. Amongst the other speech acts described were advice, bribes, offers, sexual propositions, and suggestions.

A subset of 18 British participants completed Experiment 1. The participants were comprised of 10 males and 8 females and ranged in age from 22 to 60 years, with a mean age of 34 years. Nine participants each completed the SS-based version B, which depicted a bribe and the PT-based version E, which depicted a favour. The patterns in the data were similar to that of the American participants. In Part 1, PT motivations were most common (76%) across both versions while SS uses accounted for only 5% of the responses (compared to 51% and 7%, respectively from the American participants). The sole SS response comprised a sexual proposition and was provided in response to the SS scenario. Other motivations were mentioned in 14% of the responses, while the multiple interpretations category comprised 5% of the responses (compared to 22% and 14%, respectively). As the order of most frequent

motivations is identical, these rates do not give grounds to suggest that there are significant differences between the British and American participants. However, the difference between the rates of PT motivations across both versions (76% for the British compared to 51% for the Americans) was significant ($t(20) = 2.65, p = 0.016$), suggesting that ORI is used more prominently for politeness-related motivations by British participants.

6 Coding: Part 2

In Part 2, the participants were encouraged to propose up to three additional situations in which a speaker might use ORI. Given the hypothetical nature of the question, they were not required to provide information about the context or motivations for ORI. The data in Part 2 were coded separately to the data in Part 1 since different types of responses were provided in each. Participants approached the question differently. Some participants specified situational or interpersonal contexts in which they would use ORI while others mentioned particular speech acts. Several participants described motivations or explained strategic uses of ORI. The data were coded in accordance with the type of response given. Responses that specified contexts or speech acts were coded using a range of categories related to these two areas. The responses that mentioned motivations were, likewise, coded accordingly. As the responses were generally brief and focused, they rarely mentioned more than one motivation or context and, as such, each response was coded to a single category only. If a response overlapped between two categories, the coding decision was based on the most salient feature. A request from a family member, for example, would be coded under the ‘familial context’ category, while a request that either does not specify a hearer or is used with a variety of hearers would be coded under the ‘directives’ category. Across the five versions of the questionnaire, a total of 180 responses were analysed in Part 2.⁵ An explanation and illustrative example, reproduced as written by the participant, is provided for each of the coding categories.

⁵ A total of 270 responses were provided, 90 of which were excluded from the final analysis because they were not ORI. As with Part 1, the excluded responses included white lies and the use of code words, nicknames, and euphemisms. Recourse to intuitive judgement was required to ascertain that the participants were, indeed, referring to off-record speech.

6.1 Context and speech act type

Several subcategories were coded under the heading ‘Context and speech act type’.

The ‘Familial or spousal contexts’ category described the use of ORI between immediate family members or spouses, with no (explicit) indication of theoretical motivations, as in example (19).

(14) When asking your significant other to clean something or run an errand.

In the ‘Gift-related uses’ category, participants explained that they would use ORI when indicating an interest in a specific gift item, as in example (15) b.:

(15) It’s someone’s birthday and they’re implying they want gifts without directly asking for them.

The ‘Directives and requests’ category included instances (other than those specified in familial or workplace contexts) in which participants used ORI to direct the hearers to action or to request goods or services from them. Directives to children were also included in this category, as in example (16).

(16) When giving direction to children about appropriate behaviour choices.

The responses in the ‘Romantic contexts’ category referred to a range of romantic contexts, including sexual propositions, requests for dates, and flirtations, as in examples (17), (18), and (19), respectively.

(17) When talking about sex or asking for sex.

(18) Asking someone out on a date.

(19) Hinting around to be asked out.

The responses in the ‘Suggestions’ category included instances in which the speaker indirectly proposed an event or activity to the hearer in the hopes that both interlocutors would participate together, as in example (20).

(20) Someone who is really hungry might say, “Did you know that the new restaurant opened up on 4th street?” if they wanted someone to go with them.

The 'Work-related contexts' category included all responses involving bosses, colleagues, or professional tasks. The responses alluded to a range of speech acts, interpersonal relationships, and, likely, theoretical motivations, as in examples (21), (22), and (23).

(21) Boss says I'm going to clean my desk' when he wants employees to clean their desks.

(22) I drop hints at work that I need to leave early instead of just asking to leave early.

(23) When trying to convince a co-worker to complete one of your tasks.

The final section in the speech acts and context category, referred to as 'Other acts and contexts', included a range of responses, each describing additional uses of ORI, as in (24) and (25).

(24) Excuses as to why I didn't want to do dishes.

(25) If you want to cancel/alter plans you have made with someone.

6.2 Motivations for ORI

Likewise, several subcategories were coded under the heading 'Motivations for ORI'. Some of the motivations can be interpreted in accordance with either PT or SS. The avoidance of offence motivation, for example, is related to PT while the use of ORI in taboo situations is similar to SS. Some motivations, such as saving the speaker's face or avoiding confrontation and controversy, can be interpreted from either a PT or an SS perspective while others, such as keeping secrets, do not relate to either theory.

The responses in the 'Avoiding confrontation and controversy' category explained that indirectness was used in order to avoid a potential confrontation between the speaker and hearer and to avert a potentially combative situation, as in example (26).

(26) Anytime used to avoid hostility or confrontation.

The responses in the 'Avoiding offence and showing sensitivity' category focused on the participants' desires to avoid offending the hearers and to show sensitivity and politeness to them, as in (27).

(27) Any situation in which you are trying to be sensitive or in which you don't want to offend the person.

The responses in the ‘Saving the speaker’s face’ category stressed the benefits of ORI with regards to saving face, as explained in examples (28) and (29).

(28) If you were afraid of rejection.

(29) People tend to do this when they are afraid or embarrassed to ask a direct question.

The responses in the ‘Keeping secrets from third parties’ category noted that indirect speech permits speakers to discuss topics openly without third parties understanding, as in (30).

(30) Around children. Trying to imply something and speaking indirectly in way the child will not understand.

The ‘Taboos and wrongdoings’ category included veiled discussions about, and discreet performances of, crimes and other taboo behaviour as in example (31).

(31) To avoid looking suspicious or guilty in front of police or other authorities.

The final classification in the motivations category, ‘Other motivations’, included a range of explanations for ORI, as shown in examples (32) – (25). Examples (32) and (33) describe uses of ORI explained by Asher and Lascarides (2013) and Culpeper (2005, 2011), respectively.

(32). If they were initially trying to deceive someone by manipulating the communication.

(33) When they want to insult someone, but not have to own up to it. (ex: if some people would do their work!)

(34) When they are mad (i.e., being passive aggressive).

(35) Sometimes we speak indirectly to elicit praise or compliments without having to ask for them.

7 Results: Part 2

The data from part 2 are presented in two tables. Table 3 shows the means from amongst the 93 responses coded according to context or speech act type. Table 4 lists the means from amongst the 87 responses coded by motivation. Each table presents the overall means across all five versions of the questionnaire.

Table 3: Context and speech act type

Family	Gifts	Requests	Romance	Suggestions	Work	Other
0.14	0.05	0.30	0.10	0.08	0.17	0.16

Table 4: Motivation for ORI

Confront.	Offence	Save face	Secret	Taboo	Other
0.16	0.23	0.15	0.13	0.10	0.24

8 Discussion

In Part 1, the majority of reported uses of ORI (51% overall) could be explained by the predictions of Politeness Theory. The data suggest that PT-based uses of ORI are the most accessible to native English speakers, characterising both their patterns of use and their intuitions about why they speak off-record. The assertion that speakers' typical understanding of ORI is defined by the principles of this theory is supported by the high frequency of PT-based uses in both the neutral scenario and the scenarios biasing SS interpretations. The association between politeness and ORI is also evident in the varied interpersonal and situational contexts under which the participants described PT-based motivations for their use of ORI.

Brown and Levinson suggest that ORI is ideal in situations demanding a high degree of negative politeness, namely scenarios in which power (P), distance (D), and/or imposition (R) are set to high levels. While this view was supported by the data, participants also reported uses of ORI that extend PT beyond its original scope. This was evidenced, partly, in the use of ORI in situations in which the participants aimed to respect the hearer's positive face. Polite uses of ORI were also employed amongst family members and romantic partners, an interpersonal setting in which distance and, sometimes, power, were likely low. The use of ORI in these instances could not be explained by the intimacy theories. ORI was not used as a communicative shortcut or as an opportunity for the hearer to fill in a succession of implicated meanings, given that in each relevant case, the speaker had a distinct and easily communicable idea in mind. A direct, on-record alternative was available and, in most cases, interpretation was dependent on world knowledge rather than interpersonal common ground. ORI was most often used within familial relationships to request assistance with a chore or an errand or to suggest an outing, scenarios for which imposition is also (presumably) low. When they recounted the use, participants stressed a desire not to impose upon the hearer or

to presume his or her willingness to comply, concerns associated with negative politeness, high imposition, and distant relationships. In other words, ORI was used to respect the negative face wants of individuals with whom the participants share relationships defined by social closeness and equal power. This finding contradicts both Brown and Levinson's assumptions about the interpersonal contexts in which negative politeness is employed and Sifianou's and Terkourafi's emphases on the use of ORI for positive politeness and efficiency within intimate relationships.

SS interpretations, on the other hand, were less readily accessible. Participants cited SS-based uses of ORI only when prompted by SS examples and, even then, rarely. The low occurrence of SS-based uses of ORI suggests that the principles of the Strategic Speaker approach are unlikely to shape native English speakers' prototypical understanding of ORI. Several of the responses (22% in total) were coded under the category 'multiple interpretations', suggesting an overlap between the predicted *uses* of ORI. While the motivations for ORI may differ across the theories, many of the situations in which ORI is used – requesting money, for example – feature in both theoretical accounts. PT and SS offer complementary, and occasionally competing, explanations for the use of ORI in these cases. Little robust evidence was obtained for other theories of ORI, such as impoliteness, intimacy, or misdirection.

The format of the responses in Part 2 did not allow a clear-cut theoretical interpretation of the data. The responses were coded, instead, with regards to context, types of speech acts, and the motivations described by the participants. The data included responses that could be interpreted in line with either Politeness Theory or the Strategic Speaker approach, as well as responses that described uses of ORI not related to either PT or SS. The dataset included one instance each of ORI for the purposes of impoliteness and misdirection.

Two additional motivations were attested that constituted novel categories that did not fit with any of the existing theories. These included the use of ORI for the purposes of concealing the speaker's intention and the use of ORI for the purposes of edification. Each of these motivations was attested in no more than a handful of cases at most, which suggests that they are not prototypical instances of the use of ORI. However, they do serve to highlight the point that the use of ORI is not reserved for a small class of purposes but can vary extensively.

9 Conclusion

In Experiment 1, participants recounted their own experiences with, and intuitions about, indirect speech, indicating trends in the use of ORI amongst native English speakers – the most salient of which was the predominance of politeness-based uses of ORI. Experiment 1 establishes a basis upon which to compare the remaining empirical studies. Experiment 2 investigates whether, notwithstanding the fact that native speakers of English did not report Strategic Speaker considerations as their main motivations for the use of ORI in Experiment 1, they will nevertheless produce ORI utterances in all and only the conditions predicted by the Strategic Speaker approach.

CHAPTER 4
AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE USE OF OFF-RECORD INDIRECTNESS
IN BRIBES, PROPOSITIONS, AND FAVOURS

1 Introduction

Chapter 4 focuses on Experiment 2, an empirical study that is inspired by Lee and Pinker's 2010 multiple choice study on the use of ORI in bribes, threats, sexual propositions, and favours. The former three are prototypical SS scenarios while the favour is a scenario for which Politeness Theory, but not the Strategic Speaker approach, predicts ORI under suitably high settings of power, distance, and/or imposition. Experiment 2 is an improved version of Lee and Pinker's study and uses an open-ended format, instead of multiple choice, to elicit three of the four acts they tested – bribes, propositions, and favours. The data, which include scalar ratings and a series of utterance production tasks, are analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively, with the latter analysis focused on the linguistic and discoursal features used to produce off-record utterances and on the inclusion of politeness makers within ORI utterances. The use of ORI is discussed in relation to theoretical predictions associated with both PT and SS. In Experiment 2, participants produced ORI utterances in 78% of the bribe scenarios, 92% of the propositions, and only 3% of the favours. The use of ORI was not correlated with P, D, or R. Markers of both negative and positive politeness were embedded within a majority of the ORI utterances.

The chapter begins with a criticism of Lee and Pinker, the experiment that inspired Experiment 2. In the sections that follow, the methodology is outlined and theoretical predictions are posited. Data are discussed both quantitatively and qualitatively, with a focus on the implications for two pertinent theories of ORI – PT and SS. Throughout the thesis, the subset of speech acts described in SS are referred to as 'high-risk' speech acts, a term that is derived from Pinker and colleagues' view that these acts pose calculable legal, financial, social and/or emotional risks to the speaker. 'High-risk' is used to refer collectively to bribes, propositions, threats, and all other acts for which ORI is used to offset risks and to balance the payoff ratio for the speaker. For the sake of comparison, speech acts which do not fit within the scope of SS, including potentially face-threatening acts such as favours, will be referred to as 'low-risk' acts.

2 Lee and Pinker (2010)

Experiment 2 was inspired by Lee and Pinker's 2010 study, an experiment which was intended to provide empirical support for their earlier theoretical assertions on the use of off-record indirect speech (Pinker 2007; Pinker, Nowak, and Lee 2008). Experiment 2 uses an improved version of Lee and Pinker's materials in order to address the shortcomings of the original study and to determine, through a more appropriate design, whether the theoretical assumptions of the Strategic Speaker theory are, indeed, supported by empirical evidence.

In the 2010 study, Lee and Pinker showed participants scenarios depicting four speech act types – a bribe, a threat, a sexual proposition, and a favour. The former three are high-risk speech acts and typify the scenarios upon which Pinker and colleagues build their account of ORI. The favour, on the other hand, is a low-risk speech act for which PT, but not SS, predicts ORI under suitably high settings of P, D, and/or R. Participants were shown one version each of the bribe, threat, and proposition and eight versions of the favour, with the latter including two-way manipulations to the settings of power (P), distance (D), and imposition (R). After each of the four scenarios, participants were shown five multiple choice options and asked to rate the utterances for likelihood of use and, ultimately, to select the utterance most likely to be chosen by the depicted speaker. The options were intended to reflect differences in directness and politeness and the included utterances were formulated to be blunt, positively polite, negatively polite, somewhat indirect, and very indirect, respectively. They explain, 'The blunt speech act employed a bare minimum of politeness. The blunt and polite speech acts were all unambiguous regarding the nature of the speaker's request. In contrast, the two off-record indirect speech acts did not literally amount to requests' (Lee and Pinker 2010: 788). The first three options, all of which are on-record, are based on the politeness strategies described in Politeness Theory (Brown and Levinson 1987). The two indirect utterances can be subsumed under the off-record indirectness strategy. In Lee and Pinker's analysis, the two indirect utterances were collapsed into a single category. Neither they, nor Brown and Levinson, distinguish between somewhat and very indirect utterances in their discussions of the motivations for the use of ORI. The utterances below are from the proposition scenario and the intended level of directness or politeness is stated in brackets (Private email correspondence, 13 February 2012).

(1) Let's go to my place and have sex. [Blunt on-record]

(2) I hope you're enjoying tonight as much as I am. I think we could make this a perfect evening if we head over to my place to have sex. [Positively polite]

(3) I realize this is a big thing to ask, and I really am sorry about that, but I just can't help it because I find you so attractive. Do you think that maybe you could have sex with me tonight? [Negatively polite].

(4) You know, I have a really terrific view from my balcony. You can see the whole city, the lights, the ocean ... would you like to come over and look at it with me? [Somewhat indirect]

(5) Oh, I remember now. My friend just emailed me those pictures from our trip to Europe that I was telling you about. Do you want to come over and have a look? [Very indirect]

Lee and Pinker found that ORI responses were chosen by the majority of participants for each of the high-risk acts: 91% of participants choose an indirect option in the proposition scenario (either utterance (4) or utterance (5)), as did 58% of the participants in the bribe scenario, and 86% in the threat scenario. The use of ORI ranged from 21% to 34% across the eight versions of the favour. Scalar ratings of P, D, and R were collected for each of the eleven scenarios. In the three SS scenarios, the ratings of P, D, and R were either comparable to or lower than the respective ratings in the most face-threatening version of the favour. In other words, the participants' decisions to use ORI did not follow the predictions set out by Brown and Levinson. Lee and Pinker conclude, 'the preference for indirect speech in the seduction, bribe, and threat scenarios was not just a consequence of [...] face threat' (2010: 789). Thus, Lee and Pinker argue, Politeness Theory alone does not adequately explain either the participants' relative lack of ORI in the favour or, more importantly, their much higher preference for ORI in bribes, propositions, and threats. They attribute their findings instead to the motivations outlined in the Strategic Speaker account, namely, relationship change and uncertainty.

While it is clear from Lee and Pinker's findings that motivations other than P, D, and R contribute to the use of ORI in the high-risk scenarios, one must not discount the impact of P, D, and R entirely. In the favour scenario – the only of the four speech acts to which manipulations to P, D, and R were applied – the participants shifted their preferences from the blunt on-record

option to the negatively polite option as the weight of the act increased (Lee and Pinker 2010: 789). Although the increase in weight did not lead to ORI in the favour, the data do suggest an effect of P, D, and R on the participants' choice of strategy, as predicted by Brown and Levinson. Since no manipulations were applied to the bribes, propositions, or threats, it is impossible to determine whether the high-risk acts are similarly sensitive to the settings of P, D, and R. In other words, one cannot determine whether it is the *act itself*, or the particular settings of the P, D, and R employed in the sole example of the act, that influence the participants' use of ORI. In order to establish how much influence these factors hold, additional testing is needed, along with the use of experimental materials that include manipulations to P, D, and R in the high-risk acts. Such an analysis would determine whether qualitative changes to the settings of P, D, and R significantly affect the frequency with which participants opt for ORI utterances in the high-risk acts and, as a related measure, would reveal whether there are conditions under which participants prefer blunt on-record, positively polite, or negatively polite utterances for the high-risk acts.

The use of five prefabricated choices in Lee and Pinker's study is potentially problematic as well. While each of the utterances appropriately conveys the intended levels of directness and politeness, some of the utterances may be perceived by the participants as being more or less felicitous than others. As such, one cannot assuredly determine whether off-record utterances were chosen with higher frequency than other utterances due to a true preference for ORI or a dispreference for the remaining options which was not related to the level of directness but to the specific wording used¹. In order to assess the felicity of Lee and Pinker's multiple choice options, I asked 15 native speakers of American English to rate the naturalness of each utterance. Participants were recruited via MTurk and comprised nine males and six females, ranging in age from 20 to 56 years, with a mean age of 30 years. All of the utterances associated with a particular speech act type were displayed in succession, though both the order in which the utterances appeared, and the order in which the speech act types were shown, was randomised. Ratings were collected on a seven point scale, where 1 was equal to 'not natural at all' and 7 was 'very natural'. The ratings were compared between the critical items – the two indirect

¹ Lee and Pinker (2010: 788) note that their participants were asked to choose multiple choice responses with 'the option of rephrasing the closest selection in their own words if desired [...] to ensure that the selection would not be overly affected by the specific wordings that we chose'. They give no additional detail, however, with regards to whether, how, and how many of the responses were rephrased.

utterances – and each of the three on-record utterances to determine whether the differences in felicity account for the high use of ORI in the bribes and propositions and the low use of ORI in the favours. In both the bribe and favour scenarios, all five utterances were rated above ‘4’, the midpoint on the naturalness scale and equivalent of ‘somewhat natural’. As such, all five utterances in both scenario sets were considered felicitous. I therefore consider it unlikely that felicity conditions account for the high use of ORI in the bribe and the low use of ORI in the favour.

The ratings in the bribe were as follows: blunt ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.98$), positively polite ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.80$), negatively polite ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 1.42$), somewhat indirect ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.92$), very indirect ($M = 5.13$, $SD = 1.64$). The difference in ratings between the somewhat indirect and very indirect bribes was not statistically significant ($t(14) = -1.21$, $p = 0.25$). There were no significant differences in the naturalness ratings between the somewhat indirect bribe and the blunt on-record bribe ($t(14) = 0.25$, $p = 0.80$), the positively polite bribe ($t(14) = 0.15$, $p = 0.89$), and the negatively polite bribe ($t(14) = -0.86$, $p = 0.41$), respectively. Likewise, there were no statistically significant differences between the very indirect bribe and the blunt on-record bribe ($t(14) = 1.28$, $p = 0.22$), the positively polite bribe ($t(14) = 1.04$, $p = 0.32$), and the negatively polite bribe ($t(14) = 0.47$, $p = 0.65$), respectively.

The naturalness ratings in the favour scenario were as follows: blunt ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.71$), positively polite ($M = 5.07$, $SD = 1.44$), negatively polite ($M = 6.00$, $SD = 1.13$), somewhat indirect ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.67$), very indirect ($M = 5.47$, $SD = 1.60$). There were statistically significant differences between the somewhat indirect favour and the very indirect favour ($t(14) = -2.88$, $d = 0.74$) and between the somewhat indirect favour and the negatively polite favour ($t(14) = -3.39$, $p = 0.004$, $d = 0.88$). There were no statistically significant differences between the somewhat indirect favour and blunt on-record favour ($t(14) = -1.30$, $p = 0.22$) or the positively polite favour ($t(14) = -1.67$, $p = 0.12$). There were no statistically significant differences between the very indirect favour and the blunt on-record favour ($t(14) = 1.28$, $p = 0.22$), the positively polite favour ($t(14) = 1.04$, $p = 0.32$), and the negatively polite favour ($t(14) = 0.47$, $p = 0.65$).

In the proposition, on the other hand – the speech act for which ORI was selected with the highest frequency (91%) – there were statistically significant differences between the naturalness ratings of the off-record and on-record utterances. The ratings for the proposition are as follows:

blunt ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 2.08$), positively polite ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 1.85$), negatively polite ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 1.51$), somewhat indirect ($M = 5.33$, $SD = 1.80$), very indirect ($M = 5.73$, $SD = 1.71$). There were statistically significant differences in the naturalness ratings between the somewhat indirect proposition and each of the on-record propositions, as follows: blunt ($t(14) = 3.30$, $p = 0.005$, $d = 0.85$), positively polite ($t(14) = 3.51$, $p = 0.003$, $d = 0.91$), negatively polite ($t(14) = 3.82$, $p = 0.002$, $d = 0.99$). The differences between the very indirect proposition and the on-record propositions were also statistically significant, as follows: blunt ($t(14) = 3.75$, $p = 0.002$, $d = 0.97$), positively polite ($t(14) = 5.12$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 1.32$), and negatively polite ($t(14) = 4.98$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 1.28$). The difference in ratings between the somewhat indirect proposition and the very indirect proposition was not statistically significant ($t(14) = 0.95$, $p = 0.36$). With regards to the proposition then, the frequency with which the off-record options were chosen may be a function of felicity. I have considered two approaches to interpreting the data:

Interpretation 1: ORI was chosen because directness itself, whether blunt, positively polite, or negatively polite, is considered by participants to be inappropriate for the act of propositioning. Under this interpretation, ORI utterances should be consistently preferred over direct alternatives regardless of the wording of the on-record options.

Interpretation 2: ORI was chosen because the wording and/or content of the direct options provided by Lee and Pinker were perceived as unnatural by the participants. ORI may have been chosen with lower frequency had the blunt, positively polite, and negatively polite options been phrased differently.

The format of Lee and Pinker's study does not provide a means of evaluating felicity, nor does it ensure that the rates of ORI would persist if different multiple choice utterances were used in place of the current materials. In order to determine whether differences in the use of ORI between the high-risk and low-risk acts are reliable, the experiment should be replicated using an open-ended format in which participants are free from restrictions in phrasing and content and felicity conditions are not a prejudicial factor.

3 Research questions

The following research questions informed the initial development of the study:

RQ1. (How frequently) do participants employ off-record utterances in scenarios depicting bribes, favours, and propositions, respectively?

RQ2. Do the rates with which ORI is used for each of the three acts suggest a categorical distinction in the use of ORI between high-risk acts (bribes and propositions) on the one hand and low-risk acts (favours) on the other?

RQ3. (How) does the use of off-record indirectness correlate with the settings of power, distance, and imposition in scenarios depicting bribes, favours, and propositions, respectively?

RQ4. Which grammatical, discoursal, and content-specific features do participants draw upon in order to produce novel off-record utterances in scenarios depicting bribes, favours, and propositions, respectively?

RQ5. Do the theories proposed by either (or both) Brown and Levinson and Pinker and colleagues explain (a) the frequency with which off-record indirectness is used, (b) the correlations between the settings of power, distance, and imposition and the use of off-record indirectness, and (c) the linguistic features used in the production of off-record utterances in scenarios depicting bribes, favours, and propositions, respectively?

Upon review of the data, the following questions were added:

RQ6. (How) do participants use politeness in off-record indirect utterances in scenarios depicting bribes, favours, and propositions?

RQ7. (How) does the use of politeness correlate with the settings of power, distance, and imposition in scenarios depicting bribes, favours, and propositions?

RQ8. Do the theories proposed by either (or both) Brown and Levinson and Pinker and colleagues explain (a) the use of politeness in off-record indirect utterances (b) and correlations between the use of politeness and the settings of power, distance, and imposition, for the scenarios depicting bribes, favours, and propositions?

4 Methodology

Experiment 2 comprised three separate offline questionnaires, each of which focused on one of the speech acts featured in Lee and Pinker (2010) – a bribe, a proposition, and a favour. In the bribe scenario, a speeding driver is tasked with bribing a traffic officer in order to avoid a ticket and a hefty fine. In the proposition scenario, the speaker and hearer are co-workers. The speaker makes a sexual overture towards the hearer while giving the hearer a ride home after dinner. In the favour scenario, the speaker and hearer are colleagues. The speaker needs the hearer's assistance to finish an important work assignment by an approaching deadline. Each questionnaire included 7-point Likert rating scales and open-ended responses. The rating scales were used to measure the participants' sensitivity to the manipulations to P, D, and R while the open-ended questions were used to elicit the targeted speech acts. All of the questionnaires were hosted on Qualtrics, a survey-design programme that was chosen due to the advanced options offered and for the ease of use and accessibility to participants. All participants gave informed consent prior to completing the testing phase of the questionnaire.

4.1 Participants

All participants were recruited, via email, from within the University of Cambridge. A total of 110 participants (77 females) completed the questionnaire. Thirty-five participants did the bribe scenario, 34 did the favour, and 41 did the proposition². The participants ranged in age from 18 to 63, with a mean age of 23 years, and all were university students: 68 were enrolled in a Bachelor's degree at the time of the study, 19 were doing a Masters, and 23 were doing a PhD; 69 of the participants were pursuing an arts and humanities degree and 41 were in maths and

² In total, 127 questionnaires were collected. One favour questionnaire, and eight questionnaires each in the bribe and proposition scenarios, were eliminated from analysis due to either misunderstandings or errors on the part of the participants or an explicit refusal by the participants to produce the elicited speech act.

sciences. All participants were native English speakers and were asked to self-identify their native variety of English. Results were collapsed as follows: 90 participants were native speakers of a variety British or Irish English, 17 were North American, and 3 were from Australia or New Zealand. All participants were given the opportunity to enter a £50 drawing as reimbursement for their cooperation in the study.

4.2 Scenario design

Three of the four scenarios used by Lee and Pinker were included in Experiment 2 – a bribe, a favour, and a proposition. The favour scenario was reproduced exactly as written, with slight changes in spelling and lexicon made to adapt the scenario for a British audience. All eight versions of the scenario, reflecting binary changes to power, distance, and imposition in a 2x2x2 design, were included in Experiment 2. The bribe and proposition texts were reproduced and expanded upon to incorporate manipulations to power, distance, and impositions. These manipulations were modelled on the ones used by Lee and Pinker in the favour scenario. Each version of the scenario showed a different combined setting of P, D, and R and used different first names, or titles and surnames, to refer to the speaker and hearer. As with the favours, the bribes and propositions were adapted for a British audience, with changes to spelling, lexicon, and locality. These changes situated the act in a context familiar to the participants without affecting either the content or nature of the original materials. Lee and Pinker’s study included an additional high-risk act, depicting a university professor threatening a student with the loss of a scholarship. The threat was excluded from Experiment 2 as the situational and interpersonal details were not conducive to manipulations to P, D, and R.

The power manipulation was set to two conditions: one in which the speaker and hearer were equals and one in which the hearer occupied a socially recognised position of authority over the speaker. In the favour and proposition scenarios, the manipulation to power was achieved by changing the social position of the hearer while maintaining the position of speaker. For both speech acts, the hearer was either the speaker’s professional superior (+P) or a colleague on the same level as the speaker (–P) or was the speaker’s superior (+P). In the bribe scenario, the power manipulation was applied in the opposite direction, such that the social position of the speaker was changed while the position of the hearer remained intact. This was due to the fixed role of the hearer, as a police officer, in the bribe scenario. The speaker was depicted as either a

university student (+P) a local politician (-P). In keeping with the model used by Lee and Pinker, Experiment 2 did not include scenarios in which the speaker was in the dominant position.

The distance manipulation was set such that the hearer and speaker either had an existing amicable social relationship or had recently met and not yet established a relationship of any form. In the cases in which the speaker and hearer had a close social relationship, the interlocutors had not previously partaken in the speech act in question. Thus, although the speaker and hearer were familiar with one another, they did not share an established routine for bribing, propositioning, or requesting a favour from one another. In the favour scenario, the speaker and hearer had either just met at work (+D) or were college roommates (-D) while in the proposition scenario, the speaker and hearer had either just started working together (+D) or frequently collaborated on professional projects (-D). In the bribe scenario, the speaker and hearer were either meeting for the first time during the traffic stop (+D) or were teammates in an amateur sporting league (-D).

The imposition manipulations were set to reflect the external pressure upon the hearer and his or her subsequent willingness or hesitancy to partake in the act attempted by the speaker. In the case of the favour, imposition was measured by the time commitment required from the hearer, either three hours (+R) or fifteen minutes (-R). In the case of the bribe, imposition was measured by the time commitment required from the hearer. As a low-risk act, neither the speaker's performance of the favour, nor the acceptance or denial of it by the hearer, poses any financial or legal consequences. Following Pinker and colleagues, it can also be assumed that the favour presents few social or emotional risks to either interlocutor.³

In the bribe scenario, the police officer was obliged to either enforce speed regulations and ticket speeding drivers (+R) or to focus on alcohol-related issues while being more lenient with other incidents (-R). Both scenarios specify that the departmental pressures are public knowledge and the driver is aware of which policy is in operation. In both instances, if the police officer accepts the bribe, he or she commits an offence. In the former case, the officer commits an additional infraction by failing to abide by departmental obligations and, as such, the acceptance of the

³ One could argue that, if the hearer refused to comply with the request, the speaker would be at risk of losing his or her job. This risk, however, is related to content-specific details. If the hearer does not help the speaker, then the speaker cannot complete the assignment on time and may be punished for failing to meet the deadline. The performance of the speech act *itself*, however, does not pose a risk.

bribe poses an even greater imposition than it does in the latter case. In the proposition scenario, imposition was based upon the hearer's attitude towards the company's ban on workplace relationships. In the scenario depicting greater imposition, the hearer is known to adhere strictly to office policy (+R) while in the complementary scenario, the hearer is known for frequent socialisation with colleagues and a lax interpretation of the ban (-R). The hearer is either open to the proposition and willing to take on the risks it entails – social, emotional, and potentially legal (in the sense of workplace policy violations) – or is firmly unwilling on both counts. In both the bribe and the proposition, the imposition manipulations may be considered parallel to Lee and Pinker's concept of certainty, the speaker's assessment of how likely the hearer is to respond to the proffered act in either a cooperative or antagonistic manner. Certainty may be more pronounced in the case of the proposition as the imposition manipulation directly reveals the hearer's own attitude, from which the speaker can more easily predict his or her likely behaviour. The (-) imposition setting, for example, may be considered to be a case in which the speaker has a high degree of certainty that the hearer will respond favourably. Certainty may be less straightforward in the bribe scenario. While the speaker is well-aware of the external pressures on the officer, he or she does not know the hearer's values and cannot reliably predict whether the officer will abide by the departmental obligations or ignore them. In other words, in the high-risk acts, the difference in imposition may (either favourably or adversely) affect not only the hearer, but also the speaker. The latter may face greater social, emotional, legal, or financial consequences in the (+) imposition conditions than in the complementary cases.

While the speech act itself was never explicitly named in any of the questionnaire materials, a note within the scenario text specified the speaker's intention to ensure that participants understood the scenario fully and produced the intended speech act type. Participants viewed all eight versions of the scenarios, each of which incorporated manipulations to P, D and R. Each setting of power, distance, and imposition was presented four times.⁴ The order in which each scenario appeared was randomised, and differences were highlighted, to avoid any potential effects of order and to ensure that manipulations were noticed (see Appendix B). Table 1 shows the speaker's intention and summarises the content of the scenarios and the manipulations to power, distance, and imposition.

⁴ The +P setting, for example, appeared in the following four scenarios: +P +D +R scenario, +P +D -R scenario, +P -D +R scenario, +P -D -R scenario.

Table 1: Scenarios and manipulations

	Bribe	Favour	Proposition
Scenario	A speeding driver [S] is stopped by a police officer [H]. If ticketed, [S] will face elevated insurance fees and a suspended license.	An employee [S] has an important statistical report to do, but is struggling and needs help from a colleague [H] to finish on time.	[S] and [H] are colleagues. [S] has a romantic interest in [H] and, after treating him/her to dinner, wants to take the relationship further.
Intention	[S] wants [H] to accept the £50 note in lieu of issuing a speeding ticket.	[S] wants [H] to assist him/her in preparing the report.	[S] wants [H] to visit his/her apartment for a ‘romantic encounter.’
+P	[S] is an undergraduate student	[H] is a co-founder and division head	[H] is a high-level partner supervises [S]
-P	[S] is a local politician	[H] is also a new hire	[S] and [H] are co-workers on the same project
+D	[S] and [H] have never met.	[S] is new to the job and barely knows [H].	[S] recently moved to a new department; has just met [H]
-D	[S] and [H] are on the same amateur sports team, but have not interacted in an officer-citizen capacity.	[S] and [H] were flatmates for three years while at university, but have not previously worked together.	[S] and [H] are friends. They talk daily and collaborate on work, but have not been involved romantically.
+R	[H] is under departmental pressure to enforce speed regulations and ticket speeding drivers.	[S] has no relevant statistical knowledge and needs 3 hours of the [H]’s time to finish the report.	[H] is known to adhere firmly to office policies and strictly avoid the ban on intra-office relationships.
-R	[H] is under departmental pressure to focus on alcohol-related incidents and to be lenient on other offences.	[S] needs to refresh his/her statistical knowledge and needs 10-15 minutes of the [H]’s time to finish the report.	[H] is known to have a relaxed and liberal interpretation of office policies and to socialise with colleagues.

4.4 Questions

Three types of questions were included in Experiment 2: Likert rating scales, multiple choice questions, and open-ended responses. Each of the closed responses was accompanied by an optional comment box so that participants could explain their answers if they wished.

In the first instance, the Likert rating scales were used to measure the participants' sensitivity to the manipulations to P, D, and R in order to affirm the validity of the manipulations. In the analysis phase, the scalar ratings were used to calculate weight, in accordance with Brown and Levinson, and to determine whether the participants' own ratings correlated with their use of ORI. Identical scalar questions accompanied each of the eight versions of the speech act. The questions were formulated to avoid jargon and to be easily understood by a non-specialist participant. Scalar questions, for P, D and R respectively are in Figure 1 below. In the questionnaires, first names or titles were used in place of [Hearer].

Figure 1: Scalar ratings of P, D, and R

If you wish, you may add comments or explanations in the space below the scale.

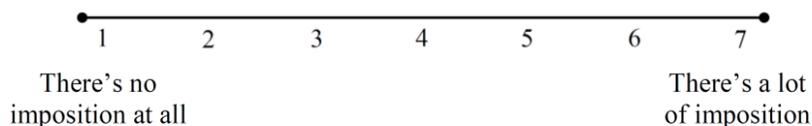
Consider [Hearer]'s role relative to you in society. Is she in a position of authority over you?



Reflect on your relationship with [Hearer]. Consider your familiarity with one another, the frequency with which you see one another, and how well you get on with one another. How close are you?



Think about your intention. How much of an imposition are you placing on [Hearer]?



Participants were also asked to complete a multiple choice question about benefit in order to evaluate if, and to what degree, their use of (in)directness varied depending upon which of the interlocutors – the speaker, the hearer, neither, or both – would benefit most from the intended realisation of the speech act. Like the scalar questions, this question was presented for each of the eight versions of the scenario. Within each version, the multiple choice question and each of the scalar questions were presented independently from one another. The order of the questions was randomised.

Finally, and with the aim of overcoming the shortcomings arising from the use of multiple choice utterances in the Lee and Pinker experiment, the targeted speech acts were elicited from participants using an open-ended question. For the sake of consistency, the open-ended question always appeared after the scalar and multiple choice questions and identical text was used for the open-ended question in each of the eight versions of the scenario. A note included within the scenario text specified the speaker's intention to ask a favour, bribe, or proposition the hearer. Participants were instructed to express this intention as if they were the depicted speaker. The question text was designed so as to elicit natural responses from the participants and to ensure rich and meaningful data for analysis. Male participants were shown scenarios in which male protagonists featured as the speakers and, likewise, females were given scenarios with female speakers. This was done both to enhance the ease and naturalness with which the participants took on the role of the speaker and to allow for comparisons between the uses of ORI and politeness by male and female participants. The elicitation question, with the characters' names redacted, is below.

Imagine yourself in [Speaker]'s shoes. Express your intention to [Hearer], as though you were participating in a real-life exchange.

Feel free to express yourself. You may use as many or as few words as you'd like and may phrase your response however you choose. You may repeat previous responses if you wish.

5 Predictions

The theoretical predictions discussed herein were developed with the two aims: to expressly address the research questions (see Section 3) and to comparatively scrutinise the accounts of off-record indirectness upon which Experiment 2 was built, Politeness Theory (Brown and Levinson 1987) and the Strategic Speaker approach (Pinker 2007; Pinker, Nowak, and Lee 2008; Lee and Pinker 2010; Pinker 2011). The predictions are intended to reflect the theoretical perspectives both sets of authors are likely to espouse and address four facets of the accounts: the use of ORI with bribes, propositions, and favours; categorical distinctions between types of speech acts; the role of power, distance, and imposition; and the integration of politeness and ORI. The data from Experiment 2 can be viewed in light of the predictions to determine which predictions hold and, by extension, which account(s) best explain the use of off-record speech in scenarios depicting bribes, favours, and propositions.

An earlier version of some of these predictions appeared in Soltys, Terkourafi, and Katsos (2014). The article did not include predictions related to politeness or any predictions expressly related to categorical distinctions. Instead, categorical distinctions were discussed in a separate section of the article and the assumption that these distinctions hold was incorporated into the phrasing of the predictions related to the use of ORI. These predictions are included in Section 5.3 below and, except for slight changes in wording, are reproduced as they appear in the article and are cited as such. Predictions related to the influence of P, D, and R in Politeness Theory and the Strategic Speaker approach were included in the article, but the version below is an updated and refined form of these predictions. Aside from the instances explained above, all of the predictions below are presented for the first time in this thesis.

5.1 The use of ORI in bribes, propositions and favours

Strategic Speaker approach

- Off-record indirect speech will always be the most preferred option, and chosen over on-record alternatives by a majority of speakers, for high-risk speech acts. Off-record indirect speech will never be the preferred option for low-risk speech acts (Soltys et al 2014: 43).

Politeness Theory

- Off-record indirectness will be the preferred option for any and all acts for which power, distance, and/or imposition are set to levels equalling a significant weight on the scale of face threat (Soltys et al 2014: 45).

5.2 Categorical distinctions between high-risk and low-risk acts

Strategic Speaker approach

- There is a categorical distinction between high-risk speech acts and low-risk speech acts. The categorical distinction is fixed and is not influenced by the setting of power, distance, and/or imposition. That is, no matter how high or low the setting of power, distance, and/or imposition may be, a high-risk speech act will not become low-risk, nor the other way around.

Politeness Theory

- There are no categorical distinctions between speech acts. A given speech act will fall somewhere along a face-threat spectrum depending upon the weight of the act, a calculation of the settings of power, distance, and/or imposition. As the settings of power, distance, and/or imposition change, the speech act may move forward or backward along the face-threat spectrum.

5.3 The role of power, distance, and imposition

Strategic Speaker approach

- A speaker's decision to go off-record is motivated exclusively by strategic game-theoretic interests and conflict-based concerns. The decision is not influenced by the speaker's assessment of power, distance, and/or imposition.

Politeness Theory

A speaker's decision to go off-record is motivated by facework. The decision is based upon the speaker's assessment of power, distance, and/or imposition.

5.4 The role of politeness

Strategic Speaker approach

- Off-record indirectness and politeness are separate phenomena and the use of each is driven by distinct motivations. Politeness is motivated by facework, especially concern for the hearer's face, which is incompatible with the potentially conflicting goals of the speaker and hearer in high-risk acts. In the case of high-risk speech acts, then, politeness markers and other displays of facework will not be used alongside off-record utterances.⁵

Politeness Theory

- Off-record indirectness is the most polite of the linguistic strategies used in facework. Off-record indirectness will be used, along with other politeness markers, if the weight of a speech act, as measured by the speaker's assessment of power, distance, and or/imposition, requires maximum levels of politeness.

6 Identifying off-record indirectness and coding open-ended responses

Lee and Pinker's (2010) multiple choice questionnaire afforded the authors a clear-cut coding scheme. A response was deemed ORI if the participant chose either of two indirect options from amongst the provided list of utterances. The open-ended data in Experiment 2, however, which comprised 847 responses across the three speech act types, required a more systematic approach to coding. For the purposes of Experiment 2, a binary distinction was assumed between off-record and on-record speech acts and, accordingly, responses were coded as either 'ORI' or 'not ORI'. The binary scheme permits a calculation of the overall frequency in the use of ORI for

⁵ Lee and Pinker (2010: 786) state 'emotionally fraught and potentially conflictual propositions, such as bribes, threats, and sexual come-ons [...] may be highly indirect, but they are unlikely to be clad in the kinds of constructions that protect the hearer's face in other requests, such as *Please, Do you think you might, or I'm sorry to have to ask but*'.

each speech act type and, additionally, for the various settings of P, D, and R. Stylistic differences amongst the ORI utterances in the dataset are analysed qualitatively, with emphasis on the participants' decisions regarding contextually relevant sources of ambiguity and the inclusion of politeness markers. At the qualitative level, the coding scheme is a means of answering the latter research questions, as it process provides detailed descriptions of the grammatical, discursal, and content-specific features that the participants used to produce novel off-record bribes, propositions, and favours.

A second rater viewed a sampling of 40 out of 847 utterances, comprised of 15 bribes, 15 propositions, and 10 favours. Each speech act type included some ORI responses and some non-ORI responses, but utterances were otherwise chosen at random. The second rater was a fluent English speaker with a PhD in linguistics. I explained my coding scheme to him so that he could apply it himself, but did not inform him in advance of my coding decisions on the 40 utterances. Cohen's kappa was applied to the results to determine inter-rater reliability. For all acts combined, $K = 0.845$, indicating almost perfect agreement between me and the second rater. Inter-rater agreement was near perfect for each of the critical speech acts, the bribe ($K = 0.842$) and the proposition ($K = 0.815$). For the favour, the act which featured almost no ORI, $K = 0.615$, indicating substantial agreement. In light of the high degree of inter-rater reliability across the board, I am confident in the reliability of the coding scheme.

6.1 ORI or not ORI?

The primary aim of the coding scheme was to determine, systematically, whether or not a given utterance was ORI. For the purposes of this experiment, the classification of ORI was done on a binary basis – a response either was ORI or it was not. I acknowledge that the distinction between off-record and on-record speech may not be a binary one, but indeed, there may be a scale of indirectness. For practical reasons, however, I take a binary perspective on ORI, in line with how indirectness is operationalised by Pinker and colleagues, who initiated experimental work in this issue. While I maintain that this perspective is necessary, I recognise that it is to some extent an unsatisfactory treatment of the phenomenon of ORI. While distinctions are not drawn between different degrees of indirectness, the features described in the coding scheme –

namely domains of ambiguity and sources of plausible deniability – give insight into the diversity and complexity of off-record indirectness.

A response was coded as ‘not ORI’ if it expressed a single, unambiguous, and context-independent proposition and, consequently, was not plausibly deniable. The ‘not ORI’ category included both blunt on-record responses and conventionally indirect (negatively polite) on-record responses. Examples (6) and (7) were coded as ‘not ORI’ and were used in the bribe and favour scenarios, respectively.

(6) Good evening officer, this is quite embarrassing but would you please accept this £50 instead of issuing me with a ticket?

(7) Can you quickly help me with some concepts for my analysis please?

6.2 Understanding ambiguity and plausible deniability

A response was considered ‘ORI’ if the targeted speech act was pragmatically ambiguous. In other words, the act was ‘ORI’ if two interpretations were available – a literal interpretation and an implicated context-dependent (and plausibly deniable) interpretation. In order to systematically evaluate the presence of ambiguity, I first determined which elements of each speech act could be expressed ambiguously, taking into account both scenario specific criteria and the interactional features of the speech act itself. All utterances were considered to be genuine attempts at the targeted speech act, on the assumption that the participants were cooperating with the instructions rather than either opting out or performing a different act all together.

An ORI bribe must be ambiguous with regards to at least one of the two components of a bribe: (a) an offer of a payment, gift, or favour and (b) the request that a specific action, favourable to the speaker, be performed in exchange for accepting the offer. One of the elements may be expressed explicitly, for as long as at least one element is ambiguous, the requisite reciprocal relationship between the offer and the request is likewise ambiguous. Bearing this in mind, a bribe was coded as ORI if it included any of the following combinations: an ambiguous offer and ambiguous request; an explicit offer and an ambiguous request; an ambiguous offer and an explicit request.

Generally, both an offer of money and a request for a reciprocal action are required to constitute a bribe. For the purposes of this experiment, utterances which included no verbal offer, ambiguous or explicit, were also classified as ORI bribes. The bribe scenario used in Experiment 2 included a gesture which, in itself, could be interpreted as an offer. The questionnaire was based on Lee and Pinker (2010) and included the following line, adapted from their study, '[Speaker's name] slowly gets out his wallet and holds it out to the officer. The corner of a fifty pound note is protruding from his wallet ever so slightly'. Lee and Pinker imply that the visible cash is intentional, not accidental. Thus, by presenting the wallet to officer, and ensuring that the cash is seen by him, the driver may be making a (deliberate) non-verbal offer. Since the cash offer is already communicated by the gesture, an additional verbal offer may be unnecessary and, indeed, redundant. This view is supported by participant observations regarding the communicative significance of the gesture, as evidenced by the inclusion of bracketed comments such as 'subtly slip £50 note out a bit more'. Examples (8) and (9) show two types of ORI bribes respectively, one in which the reciprocal action is ambiguous and the offer is expressed through gesture, as indicated by the participant in brackets, and one in which the offer is signalled solely via gesture, without an obvious request for action. In example (9), the gesture, combined with the apology and promise, may be considered enough 'encouragement' for the officer to appropriately interpret the speaker's intention. The officer can assume that the money is offered for a reason and, given the context, can infer that the driver intends to use the money as a bribe.

(8) Can't we come to some other arrangement if I promise not to speed again?
(beckon to £50)

(9) Sorry, officer. Won't happen again.

The proposition scenario includes two mutually optional elements: an invitation to the speaker's apartment and a sexual overture. An ORI proposition can be comprised entirely of an explicit invitation to visit the speaker's apartment, as in example (10), in which off-record indirectness is achieved through the *absence* of an overt sexual proposition. The speaker deliberately leaves something unsaid with the expectation that the hearer will recognise the intentionality of the omission and appropriately fill in the blanks. Alternatively, the speaker can perform the latter element of the proposition off-record by implicating the sexual overture through euphemistic references or pretences, as in examples (11) and (12).

(10) Do you want to come back to my place?

(11) It would be really cool if you came over for a bit. We could get to know each other better.

(12) You could stop by for a bit if you like? I've got a bottle of wine I've been meaning to open.

A favour is a request that the hearer perform a particular action, typically for the speaker's benefit and without expectation of reciprocity. In the favour scenario used in Experiment 2, an ORI favour can be produced by either making the entire request off-record⁶ (a strategy which was not used by the participants in Experiment 2) or by directly requesting assistance from the hearer without (explicitly) indicating who should provide the assistance. Example (13) depicts an ORI favour. Emphasis is added to highlight the ambiguity.

(13) Hi Jane. How are you? I'm really struggling to complete this report [...] Do you know of *anyone* who may be able to help me with it? The deadline's looming!

In addition to highlighting which elements of the speech acts were ambiguous, I also noted which sources of plausible deniability the participants exploited, with the aim of identifying qualitative trends in the participants' production of ORI utterances. Examples (14) and (15) are ORI bribes with ambiguous references to money, each alluding to the £50 offer specified in the scenario. While the same element is ambiguous, each of the participants draws on different sources of plausible deniability. In example (14), plausible deniability is achieved through the pretence of a genuine (legal and timely) attempt to pay the fine. In example (15) the monetary element is also ambiguous, offered indirectly through the veil of a goodwill gesture, along with an on-record (and informally phrased) request to waive the ticket.

(14) The fine is about £50. Why don't I pay you £50 now and save us the trouble?

(15) I'm ever so sorry! [...] Is there any way you could let it slide? [...] Why don't you get yourself a hot drink or something, it's a chilly night...

⁶ Lee and Pinker include this type of ORI favour in their multiple choice questionnaire with the indirect utterance, 'Oh, I can't believe this. I'm probably going to miss the deadline because of this problem' (2010: 788).

For every utterance coded as ORI, I constructed completions to plausibly cancel the implicatures arising from each element. My aim was to argue against the implicature, using the type of language a speaker could reasonably use were an antagonistic hearer to challenge the speaker's intentions. The argument was as follows: *I wasn't bribing you/requesting a favour from you/propositioning you, I was doing X*, where 'doing X' was derived from the literal content of the utterance. For each ORI response, 'doing X' varied and with it, the source of plausible deniability. Examples (16), (17), and (18) are from the bribe proposition, and favour, respectively. The completions are in italics below, along with an explanation of why the utterance is plausibly deniable.

(16) I'm sorry I was speeding Liz [...] I could make it up to you though, isn't there a new football you wanted?

I wasn't bribing you, I was offering a gift as an apology for any inconvenience I've caused.

Gifts are generally given with no expectation of reciprocity. The absence of a request to waive the ticket, combined with the nature of gift-giving, make the reciprocal relationship ambiguous. As such, the bribe is plausibly deniable.

(17) Thank you for a lovely evening! Would you like to come in for a cuppa? I can show you round my place.

I wasn't propositioning you, I was inviting you to join me for a cup of tea.

Within friendly (platonic) relationships, visiting one another's homes and chatting over tea are typically common practice. The sexual proposition – and thus, the attempt at a qualitative relationship change – is plausibly deniable.

(18) Hi Jane. How are you? I'm really struggling to complete this report [...] Do you know of anyone who may be able to help me with it? The deadline's looming!

I wasn't requesting a favour from you, I was asking if you could recommend someone in the office who might be able to help me with the report.

In addition to benefiting the speaker, the off-record utterance above also affords the hearer an out, an element central to Brown and Levinson's rationale for polite ORI. If the hearer were unwilling or unable to help, she could reasonably react in one of two ways. She could respond to the implicated meaning (here, the request for assistance) by politely or otherwise declining to help. She could also reply to the literal meaning (a request for information) by sharing the names of suitable officemates. As such, plausible deniability aids both interlocutors.

Both coding measures – the identification of ambiguous elements and the test of plausible deniability – contribute positively to my research aims. To begin with, they establish a systematic means of determining whether or not a given utterance is ORI and thereby ensure consistent analysis within and across speech acts. Additionally, the coding results reveal trends with regards to the production of ORI for each of the three acts – bribes, propositions, and favours. ORI utterances within a speech act type can be compared to one another to identify areas of similarity and difference. Finally, by classifying the utterances with such detail, I am able to better understand *how* the participants use off-record speech, specifically which element(s) they express ambiguously and which source(s) of plausibly deniability they draw upon. Here, I depart significantly from the constraints of Lee and Pinker's (2010) multiple choice study. Their data were limited to the pre-fabricated responses they constructed and did not permit analysis beyond frequency of use. The data from Experiment 2, on the other hand, reflect the nuances of ORI and demonstrate the many different ways in which the same phenomena can be achieved when no restraints are imposed. While the data are still limited to the specifics of the scenario at play and as such are not generalisable to other speech acts or, indeed to the same speech acts in different contexts, the diversity of responses hints at the complexity and originality of 'real life' ORI, a benefit not captured by Lee and Pinker's study.

7 Beyond ORI: Additional coding

In Experiment 2, no restrictions were placed on the length, form, or content of the responses and many of the responses included additional content aside from the targeted speech acts. The bribes, for example, spanned an average length of 30 words and 81% of the responses contained multiple utterances each. The favours had an average of 51 words each and 95% of responses included multiple utterances, while the propositions had an average of 16 words each, with 36%

of responses comprised of multiple utterances. The additional coding process focused on adjuncts and supplementary speech acts, discourse features, and politeness markers.

7.1 Supplementary speech acts

Additional content appeared both prior to and after the primary speech act and included supplementary speech acts and adjuncts, phrases which ‘serve only to strengthen or support an act realised by other verbal means’ (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984: 200). The additional content included scenario-specific references to power, distance, and imposition, details which helped to set the scene by outlining the conditions under which the primary speech act was relevant and, in the case of bribes and propositions, justifying the appropriateness of the otherwise controversial act. In the bribe scenario, participants often provided justifications for pre-bribe behaviour as well, explaining that they were speeding (presumably, in this instance only) because the roads were empty and/or because they were in a hurry for an important event. The bribes, propositions, and favours were also accompanied by independent speech acts which performed illocutionary functions in their own right, including: admissions of guilt or wrongdoing, apologies, compliments, excuses, expressions of gratitude and appreciation, expressions of shame or embarrassment, greetings, introductions, offers of reciprocity, offers of repair, praise, and promises. In examples (19) and (20), extensive supplementary content is included alongside the ORI bribes. Utterances were classified as additional content if they were used alongside an independently occurring bribe, favour, or proposition. Thus, in example (21), the first two utterances are considered a supplementary apology and a promise, respectively while in example (9) the same utterances were considered to constitute the bribe itself.

(19) Oh, Steve, it’s you! Haven’t seen you for a couple of weeks, not since I gave you a lift home from footy practice last time. Listen, I’m sorry I was going over the limit, but I’m in a real rush and there’s no one else on the road. Any chance you could help me out mate? My wife’s Mum’s in hospital and we need the car to go and visit her and get the kids to school in the morning. Maybe we can sort this out between us...?

(20) Er, look, Officer, I'm really sorry about this – I know it was stupid of me to drive so fast especially considering the crackdown and what not but I've been in such a rush I must have just lost track of my speed. I don't suppose there's any way you could just let me off this once? I promise I'll slow down, you'd be helping me out loads and, you know, I could thank you for it...

(21) Sorry, officer. It won't happen again. Just give me a warning and we can forget this ever happened.

7.2 Discourse features

The additional coding process also highlighted the use of specific discourse features within the bribe, favour, and proposition utterances themselves. Like the supplementary content described above, the discourse features contributed to the overall indirect “feel” of the utterance. These features enhanced the communicative effect of the ORI speech acts by signalling deliberate hesitation or imprecision on the part of the speaker or indicating upcoming innuendo. The features are typical of spoken communication, and in the case of the written questionnaire, were represented by punctuation or other typed symbols. Among the most commonly used features were ellipsis, in which the participants hinted at their intention by deliberately leaving something unsaid; emphasis, in which the participants stressed a particular word or series of words in order to highlight the intended ambiguity; and pause, through which participants indicated (a pretence of) hesitancy. Lexical hedges and question intonation were also regularly employed, ostensibly making the bribe suggestive rather than requestive. The discourse features, like many of the other aspects considered in the coding process, point to the complexity and nuance of off-record indirectness – an element of analysis that was not captured by Lee and Pinker’s multiple choice study. The systematic use of ellipsis, emphasis, pause, and question intonation shows that participants capably draw on a range of features beyond word choice and grammatical structure when producing novel ORI utterances. Examples (22) and (23), both from the bribe scenario, show ellipsis and pause, respectively. Example (24), from the proposition, indicates question intonation while example (25) uses both pause and emphasis.

(22) I realise you're under pressure, officer, but there's no-one around, and it can't be worth your time to deal with this, when there's lots of paperwork and, well...

(23) Mate, I'm going to have to ask you for... a favour [...]

(24) Seeing as we live so close to each other, perhaps you'd like to drop round for a visit some time?

(25) Would you like to come back to my place for....“a cup of coffee”?

7.3 Politeness

In order to address the research question on the use of politeness in off-record bribes, propositions, and favours, the data were coded for the inclusion of both positive and negative politeness markers. The dataset included cases of in which positive and negative politeness were used together within a single response, as well as cases in which participants relied on only negative or positive politeness, respectively.

Positive politeness describes instances in which a speaker expresses appreciation for the hearer and affirms the desirability and relatability of his or her wants and needs, thereby establishing empathy, solidarity, and common ground. Solidarity was established by the choice of in-group address terms such as ‘mate’ and through the use of informal and, occasionally otherwise inappropriate, language. The language places the speaker and hearer on equal, friendly footing, as in example (26), used in the favour scenario as part of an on-record request.

(26) Ryan! Am I glad to see you?! Having a bloody nightmare with this data analysis [...]
You've got to help me out on this one mate...my balls are on the line here!

In addition to in-group address terms, first names were often used to establish solidarity and to suggest a friendly (rather than formal) relationship between the speaker and hearer. The use of first names was prevalent in the –D versions of the bribe scenario, in which the speakers and hearers knew one another in a casual, social context but were operating under a formal, official context. In the bribe scenario, no first names were provided for the hearer – he or she was referred to by the title ‘Officer’ and a surname. In order to circumvent this, participants either invented a name for the hearer or stated that they would use the officer’s first name, as in example (27), suggesting that the use of the hearer’s first name played an important role for several participants in the process of positively polite facework.

(27) *First name*, I'm so sorry to put you on the spot like this, I didn't realise I was going so fast [...]

Examples (28) and (29) are also from the bribe scenario. In example (28), the speaker claims common ground with the hearer by stressing that his own wants and values are similar to the hearer's. He refers to an existing friendly relationship, thereby (re)establishing in-group membership. In example (29), the speaker expresses empathy with the hearer by actively recognising his wants and attending to his needs. In example (29), empathy is unlikely to be genuine. The utterance is primarily self-serving – it is the means by which the speaker convinces the hearer to waive the traffic ticket for the speaker's sake. While the participant's expression of empathy may be insincere, it still encodes features of positively politeness and can be used strategically to meet the hearer's positive face wants.

(28) Now, this is a bit of a different situation we normally find ourselves in...We both know the issues of speeding and the hassles of it, but since it's late what do you think about not pursuing this matter further?

(29) Take all you need from there. I know you're under all this unjustified pressure to come down hard, but maybe you could make it just a warning for me given that it's so quiet.

Negative politeness encompasses a range of strategies aimed at respecting the hearer's negative face wants, particularly the desire for freedom of action, including polite pessimism, hedging, minimising the imposition of the face-threatening act, giving deference, apologising, admitting the impingement, and indicating reluctance. Conventionally indirect phrasing such as 'would', 'could', and 'would you mind' and lexical items such as 'please' are also considered negatively polite.

Examples (30) and (31) show the use of negative politeness in the bribe scenario. In example (30), the speaker employs the deferential address term 'sir' and uses lexical hedges and polite pessimism. He shows respect for the hearer and assures the hearer that he is not assuming compliance, thereby avoiding a direct impingement on his freedom of action. In example (31), the speaker admits to, and apologises for, imposing upon the hearer. He uses lexical hedges and polite pessimism and, by stressing 'just this once', minimises the imposition on the hearer.

(30) Sir, there is no possibility that you might be able to help me, is there?

(31) [...] I'm really sorry to have to ask this but I don't suppose you'd be able to let me off just this once, would you? [...]

In example (32), from the proposition scenario, the speaker employs both negative and positive politeness, complimenting the hearer and using informal language, while also using lexical hedges and polite pessimism.

(32) I've really enjoyed this evening, Lucy. I don't suppose you're busy after this, you could come back to mine and chill for a bit?

During the coding process, Brown and Levinson's descriptions of positive and negative politeness served as a baseline for determining whether a given response was polite. A response was coded as polite if it incorporated any of the aforementioned features, including lexical markings and thematic elements related to positive and/or negative politeness. Responses not coded as polite were not necessarily impolite, but lacked classifiable politeness markers. Politeness and indirectness were coded independently from one another. When the two coding schemes are viewed together, the following response types are possible: ORI and polite, ORI and not polite, not ORI and polite, not ORI and not polite.

8 Results: Tying the findings to the predictions

The data discussed in this section are drawn from the two primary elements of Experiment 2: the scalar ratings of power, distance, and imposition and the open-ended responses, coded for both the use of off-record indirectness and for the incorporation of politeness markers. All participants completed the rating questions in their entirety: three questions, one each on power, distance, and imposition, for all eight scenarios. The ratings presented in this section are based on 280 observations in the bribe questionnaire, 328 observations in the proposition, and 272 in the favour. Each participant provided a response for the eight open-ended questions as well. Several responses, however, were deemed unanalysable and were excluded from the coding process. The excluded responses included instances in which a participant stated a variation of 'same response as previous scenario' instead of producing an utterance. Since the scenarios were

randomised to control for order effects, it was impossible to determine which of the other seven scenarios the participant was referring to when using the term ‘previous’. Only the unanalysable responses were excluded and the participants’ remaining responses were coded. The ORI data discussed in this chapter is based on 264 observations in the bribe, 321 observations in the proposition, and 272 observations in the favour.

8.1 Mean use of ORI

Table 2 shows the mean the use of ORI across all eight versions of the bribe, proposition, and favour scenarios. Overall means per speech act, and across all three speech acts, are also included⁷.

Table 2: Mean use of ORI

	+P+D+R	+P+D-R	+P-D+R	+P-D-R	-P+D+R	-P+D-R	-P-D+R	-P-D-R	Total
Bribe	0.79	0.82	0.77	0.77	0.76	0.79	0.67	0.83	0.78
Propos.	0.98	0.93	0.88	0.95	0.90	0.95	0.90	0.90	0.92
Favour	0.03	0.03	0	0	0.06	0	0.06	0.06	0.03
All acts	0.64	0.61	0.58	0.58	0.60	0.60	0.56	0.63	0.60

ORI was used with the highest frequency, 92% in total, in the proposition scenario, followed by the bribe scenario, with 78% of the total responses coded as off-record. ORI was rare in the favour, used in only 3% of the responses. There were statistically significant differences in the use of ORI between the proposition and the bribe ($t(263) = 4.747, p < 0.001$), the proposition and the favour ($t(261) = 41.942, p < 0.001$), and the bribe and the favour ($t(261) = 27.567, p < 0.001$). Across the eight versions of the bribe, for example, the use of ORI ranged from 67% to 83%, a relatively low variation from the mean in either direction. The data are similar for the proposition, with range of 88% to 98% and the favour, with a range of 0% to 6%.

⁷ Cohen’s *d*, an indication of effect size, was not calculated for these and other comparisons, because it relies on the calculation of standard deviation, which is not an appropriate measure for data obtained through binary choice.

8.2 Ratings of power, distance, and imposition

Table 3 shows the mean ratings of power, distance, and imposition for each of the eight settings in the bribe, proposition, and favour, respectively. Overall means per speech act, and across all three speech acts, are also included.

Table 3: Mean ratings of P,D, and R per scenario (standard deviations)

	+P +D +R	+P +D -R	+P -D +R	+P -D -R	-P +D +R	-P +D -R	-P -D +R	-P -D -R	Total	
Bribe	P	6.26 (0.96)	6.24 (0.96)	5.74 (1.17)	5.88 (1.21)	5.52 (1.25)	5.50 (1.19)	5.17 (1.21)	5.10 (1.30)	5.68 (1.22)
	D	6.69 (0.72)	6.69 (0.64)	4.05 (1.15)	3.98 (1.09)	6.55 (0.86)	6.36 (0.88)	3.90 (1.14)	3.98 (1.18)	5.27 (1.62)
	R	5.00 (1.89)	4.79 (1.87)	5.40 (1.48)	5.26 (1.61)	4.93 (1.83)	4.74 (1.80)	5.55 (1.53)	5.31 (1.52)	5.12 (1.70)
Proposition	P	5.49 (1.59)	5.37 (1.50)	4.91 (1.70)	4.98 (1.47)	2.35 (1.53)	2.21 (1.42)	1.56 (0.88)	1.49 (0.86)	3.54 (2.18)
	D	5.42 (1.18)	5.40 (0.90)	3.23 (1.00)	2.93 (1.03)	4.95 (1.19)	4.37 (1.36)	2.79 (0.91)	2.40 (0.90)	3.94 (1.57)
	R	4.77 (1.76)	3.42 (1.50)	4.60 (1.48)	3.42 (1.55)	4.07 (1.58)	2.86 (1.41)	3.77 (1.51)	2.58 (1.24)	3.69 (1.66)
Favour	P	5.65 (1.54)	5.47 (1.54)	4.79 (1.43)	4.50 (1.81)	2.21 (1.63)	2.15 (1.28)	2.15 (1.10)	1.82 (1.09)	3.59 (2.11)
	D	5.85 (1.21)	5.88 (0.84)	1.85 (0.86)	1.94 (1.07)	5.68 (1.27)	5.47 (1.21)	1.85 (1.23)	1.85 (1.16)	3.80 (2.22)
	R	6.12 (0.88)	4.26 (1.19)	5.59 (1.10)	3.26 (1.11)	6.15 (0.93)	3.68 (1.04)	5.41 (1.31)	2.91 (1.24)	4.67 (1.64)
All acts	P	5.81 (1.42)	5.71 (1.39)	5.17 (1.50)	5.16 (1.59)	3.43 (2.13)	3.35 (2.05)	3.00 (1.94)	2.86 (1.99)	4.31 (2.13)
	D	5.99 (1.18)	5.99 (0.97)	3.13 (1.34)	3.02 (1.33)	5.72 (1.29)	5.39 (1.43)	2.92 (1.36)	2.80 (1.40)	4.37 (1.92)
	R	5.24 (1.70)	4.14 (1.66)	5.17 (1.44)	4.03 (1.71)	4.97 (1.73)	3.76 (1.66)	4.87 (1.67)	3.64 (1.83)	4.47 (1.78)

Table 4 shows the participants' sensitivity to the manipulations to power, distance, and imposition. The mean ratings for each setting of power, distance, and imposition are calculated from the ratings provided, by all participants, for each of the four scenarios in which the particular setting occurred.⁸ In all cases, participants gave reliably higher ratings of P, D, and R in those conditions which were manipulated to +P and +D and +R settings. In other words,

⁸ The effect size was calculated using Cohen's d. Accordingly, an effect size of 0.20 to 0.49 is classified as 'small', an effect size of 0.50 to 0.79 is 'medium', and an effect size of 0.80 or above is considered 'large'.

participants were sensitive to the manipulations, noticing the differences in power, distance, and imposition and varying their ratings of each of these factors in the intended direction.

Table 4: Mean ratings of P, D, and R

	+P	-P	+D	-D	+R	-R
Bribe	6.14 (0.95)	5.36 (1.17)	6.62 (0.69)	3.83 (1.06)	5.19 (1.74)	4.92 (1.74)
	t (139) = 7.60, p < 0.001, d = 0.64		t (139) = 28.80, p < 0.001, d = 2.43		t (139) = 2.68, p < 0.01, d = 0.23	
Propos.	5.18 (1.60)	1.90 (1.28)	5.05 (1.23)	2.78 (0.97)	4.32 (1.59)	3.07 (1.46)
	t (163) = 21.38, p < 0.001, d = 1.67		t (163) = 21.89, p < 0.001, d = 1.71		t (163) = 10.52, p < 0.001, d = 0.82	
Favour	5.09 (1.63)	2.12 (1.31)	5.71 (1.15)	1.90 (1.07)	5.80 (1.10)	3.51 (1.24)
	t (135) = 20.82, p < 0.001, d = 1.79		t (135) = 27.70, p < 0.001, d = 2.38		t (135) = 19.45, p < 0.001, d = 1.67	
All acts	5.46 (1.51)	3.07 (2.01)	5.76 (1.24)	2.84 (1.28)	5.05 (1.63)	3.80 (1.69)
	t (439) = 25.12, p < 0.001, d = 1.20		t (439) = 40.53, p < 0.001, d = 1.93		t (439) = 16.64, p < 0.001, d = 0.79	

Table 5 provides an additional perspective on the participants' sensitivity to power, distance, and imposition. Here, ratings are shown as *weight*, calculated by the sum of P, D, and R in accordance with the following formula (Brown and Levinson 1987: 76): $W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x$. While Brown and Levinson propose that all three factors (usually) contribute equally to the weight of a given speech act, they acknowledge that one or two of the factors may occasionally play the lead role(s) in determining the weight of a face threatening act. Following Brown and Levinson, all three factors are considered equally in the calculation of weight. For each speech act, the mean weight is calculated three times: once each for scenarios set to the highest and lowest face threat, +P +D + R and -P -D -R, respectively, and once as an overall average from across the eight scenarios. In all cases, the weight is calculated using the seven point ratings assigned to P, D, and R by the participants. As such, the lowest possible weight for any scenario is 3 and the highest is 21.

Table 5: Mean weight

Bribe			Proposition			Favour		
+P+D+R	-P-D-R	Total	+P+D+R	-P-D-R	Total	+P+D+R	-P-D-R	Total
18.14 (2.29)	14.06 (2.44)	16.03 (2.70)	15.76 (3.43)	6.34 (2.04)	11.16 (3.90)	17.62 (2.51)	6.65 (2.24)	12.07 (4.04)
t (34) = 10.43, p < 0.001, d = 1.76			t (40) = 14.21, p < 0.001, d = 2.22			t (33) = 20.39, p < 0.001, d = 3.50		

In all cases, the mean weight was higher in the most face-threatening version of the scenario than in the least threatening version. The difference in weight between the two versions was statistically significant for each of the speech acts, though the difference between versions was much smaller in the bribe than in either the proposition or the favour. The overall weight is highest in the case of the bribe (16.03), followed by the favour (12.07), and the proposition (11.16). The differences in mean weight were statistically significant between the bribe and favour ($t(271) = 15.92$, $p < 0.0001$, $d = -1.16$), the bribe and the proposition ($t(279) = 15.78$, $p < 0.001$, $d = -1.43$), and the favour and the proposition ($t(271) = 2.40$, $p = 0.017$, $d = 0.23$).

Tables 3, 4, and 5 suggest that the scenarios worked as intended. Participants noticed the manipulations to P, D, and R in the bribes, favours, and propositions and rated them as expected – the manipulations designed to depict high settings of P, D, and R were consistently rated higher than those set to lower levels. The difference in weight between the polar scenarios, +P + D +R and -P -D -R, was significant for all three speech acts. We can, therefore, be confident not only in the suitability of the experimental materials, but in the reliability of the ratings of P, D, and R in relation to theory-critical analyses.

8.3 Rates of ORI and correlations with P, D, and R

Table 6 shows correlations between the participants' production of off-record indirect utterances and their ratings of power, distance, imposition, and weight (as calculated from the sum of the ratings of P, D, and R), respectively. The favour is excluded from analysis due to the very low use of ORI (3%) in this scenario.

Table 6: Pearson correlations (ORI and P, D, R)

	P	D	R	Weight
Bribe	$r = 0.19, p < 0.006$	$r = -0.10, p = 0.11$	$r = -0.05, p = 0.46$	$r = -0.01, p = 0.92$
Proposition	$r = 0.08, p = 0.17$	$r = 0.05, p = 0.35$	$r = 0.10, p = 0.08$	$r = 0.10, p = 0.06$

When the Bonferroni correction for eight comparisons is applied (lowering the significance threshold to 0.006), only one correlation is significant – the P ratings in the bribe scenario. This particular correlation supports Brown and Levinson’s argument. As the rating of P increases, a reflection of a broadening in the difference in relative power between the interlocutors, the use of ORI likewise increases. Aside from this case, there were no significant correlations between the participants’ use of ORI and their ratings of P, D, and/or R. In other words, none of the three factors was consistently associated with ORI in both bribes and propositions. Likewise, there was no correlation between weight, a variable which takes into account all three factors, and the use of ORI in any of the speech act categories. This widespread lack of correlation speaks against Brown and Levinson’s account. In the proposition scenarios, the settings of R may be considered an indication of certainty. It follows, then, that, contrary to Pinker and colleagues’ predictions, there was no significant influence of certainty on the use of ORI in this scenario.

8.4 Politeness

Table 7 shows the use of politeness in the bribe and proposition scenarios, the acts for which the majority of responses, 78% and 92% respectively, were coded ORI. The favours were excluded from the analysis for two reasons. Firstly, there were very few instances of ORI in the favour scenario, precluding a meaningful consideration of polite ORI responses. Secondly, every favour response, ORI or otherwise, included at least one politeness marker (for an overall mean of 100%), rendering an analysis of the influence of P, D, and R futile. In the first stage of coding, any ORI utterance that included at least one politeness marker was coded as polite. During this stage, the overall use of politeness was calculated. Polite responses were then coded as either negatively or positively polite, respectively depending upon the inclusion of one or more features associated with the relevant type of politeness. If a single response included aspects of both positive and negative politeness, it was coded for each of these categories individually and, additionally, for a category titled ‘both negative and positive politeness’. The figures in Table 7 reflect the use of politeness in the ORI responses only. In other words, the means represent the

number of responses that were considered to be both ORI and polite⁹. This amounts to a total of 205 observations in the bribe and 296 observations in the proposition.

Table 7: Mean use of politeness in ORI utterances

	Politeness overall	Negative politeness	Positive politeness	Both negative and positive
Bribe	0.92	0.77	0.49	0.34
Proposition	0.66	0.44	0.29	0.07

Politeness, in one capacity or another, was incorporated into the majority of ORI responses in both the bribe and the proposition. Use was more frequent in the bribe, with nearly all of the ORI responses including some form of politeness. In both speech acts, negative politeness was used more often than positive politeness. There were statistically significant differences between the bribe and the proposition with regards to the overall use of politeness ($t(204) = 5.95, p < 0.001$), the use of negative politeness ($t(204) = 7.42, p < 0.001$), the use of positive politeness ($t(204) = 3.89, p < 0.001$), and the combined use of negative and positive politeness strategies ($t(204) = 6.97, p < 0.001$).

Tables 8 and 9 compare the mean uses of negative and positive politeness in the bribe scenario with the settings of P, D, and R. Table 8 shows the differences between the use of both negative and positive politeness markers in the +P and -P, +D and -D, and +R and -R conditions, respectively. Table 9 shows the difference between the use of negative and positive politeness within each of the binary settings of P, D, and R.

⁹ The non-ORI responses were excluded from a more detailed analysis of politeness features in order to retain a focus on off-record indirectness. In the bribe scenario, there were 59 non-ORI responses, 83% of which included at least one marker of negative and/or positive politeness. In the proposition, there were 25 non-ORI responses, 32% of which incorporated politeness markers.

Table 8: Mean use of negative and positive politeness in ORI bribes

	+P	-P	+D	-D	+R	-R
Neg.	0.79	0.75	0.79	0.75	0.84	0.70
	t(100) = 0.51, p = 0.62		t(98) = 0.537, p = 0.59		t(99) = 2.20, p = 0.30	
Pos.	0.45	0.53	0.33	0.67	0.46	0.52
	t(100) = -1.07, p = 0.29		t(98) = -4.55, p < 0.001		t(99) = -0.69, p = 0.50	

Table 9: Negative vs positive politeness in ORI bribes

	+P	-P	+D	-D	+R	-R
Neg.	0.79	0.75	0.79	0.75	0.84	0.70
Pos.	0.45	0.53	0.33	0.67	0.46	0.52
	t(103) = 4.77, p < 0.001	t(100) = 3.06, p < 0.01	t(105) = 7.16, p < 0.001	t(98) = 1.11, p = 0.27	t(99) = 5.48, p < 0.001	t(104) = 2.54, p < 0.05

In the bribe scenarios, the use of negative politeness is not affected by the settings of power, distance, or imposition. There is no significant difference between the frequencies with which negatively polite features are used in the +P and -P scenarios or in the +D and -D and +R and -R scenarios. Likewise, positive politeness is not affected by the settings of P and R. There is, however, a statistically significant effect of D. Positive politeness is used much more frequently in the -D scenarios than in the +D scenarios. Negative politeness is consistently employed more often than positive politeness. The preference for negative politeness is statistically significant in all cases except for -D scenarios, in which positive and negative politeness are used with similar frequency.

Tables 10 and 11 compare the mean uses of negative and positive politeness in the proposition scenario with the settings of P, D, and R. Table 10 shows the differences between the use of both negative and positive politeness markers in the +P and -P, +D and -D, and +R and -R conditions, respectively. Table 11 shows the difference between the use of negative and positive politeness within each of the binary settings of P, D, and R.

Table 10: Mean use of negative and positive politeness in ORI propositions

	+P	-P	+D	-D	+R	-R
Neg.	0.46	0.42	0.48	0.40	0.48	0.40
	t(145) = 0.71, p = 0.48		t(145) = 1.45, p = 0.15		t(147) = 1.51, p = 0.13	
Pos.	0.26	0.32	0.27	0.30	0.32	0.26
	t(145) = -1.02, p = 0.31		t(145) = -0.51, p = 0.61		t(147) = 1.19, p = 0.23	

Table 11: Negative vs positive politeness in ORI propositions

	+P	-P	+D	-D	+R	-R
Neg.	0.46	0.42	0.48	0.40	0.48	0.40
Pos.	0.26	0.32	0.27	0.30	0.32	0.26
	t(150) = 3.30, p < 0.01	t(145) = 1.74, p = 0.08	t(150) = 3.40, p < 0.01	t(145) = 1.64, p = 0.10	t(148) = 2.59, p < 0.05	t(147) = 2.43, p < 0.05

In the proposition scenarios, neither negative nor positive politeness is affected by the settings of power, distance, or imposition. There is no significant difference between the rates with which negatively and positively polite features are used in the +P and -P scenarios or in the +D and -D and +R and -R scenarios. Negative politeness is used more frequently than positive politeness across all settings of P, D, and R. The preference for negative politeness is statistically significant in all cases except for the -P scenarios and the -D scenarios.

9 Discussion

There were three overarching research aims in Experiment 2. The first aim was to determine whether Lee and Pinker's findings on the rates of ORI were replicable when an improved methodology was used to collect speech act data for three of the scenario types examined in their 2010 multiple choice study – bribes, propositions, and favours. The second aim was to explore elements of ORI use that were not captured in the 2010 study, including the influence of the settings of power, distance, and imposition on all three acts, the role of politeness in high-risk acts, the use of contextual features such as situationally-relevant sources of plausible deniability, and the use of discoursal features such as ellipsis, emphasis, and pause. Finally, the third aim was to systematically test the data against a set of predictions associated with the Strategic Speaker approach and Politeness Theory, respectively in order to determine which of the two theories best explains the use ORI in bribes, propositions, and favours.

The data support a categorical distinction in the use of ORI between high-risk acts, for which ORI was used by the majority of participants across all eight versions of the scenarios (78% of the bribes and 92% of the propositions) and low-risk acts, for which ORI was rarely used (3% of the favours). When participants were free to construct their own utterances, they drew on a variety of discoursal and contextual features, including references to scenario-specific details.

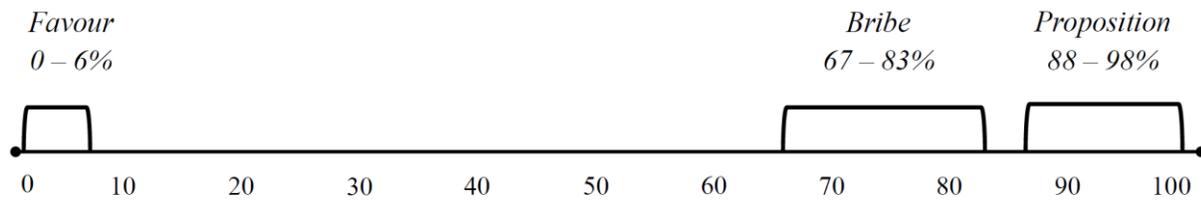
Such references were particularly common in the bribe scenario, in which participants alluded to the existing friendly relationship between the speaker and hearer in the –D versions and mentioned favourable road conditions in an attempt to excuse their speed. Supplementary speech acts, such as apologies and compliments, were also used (see Section 7.1). The participants also made varied use of the domains of ambiguity afforded by each of the speech acts. In the proposition, for example, the participants produced ORI utterances by making the invitation to the apartment and/or the sexual overture ambiguous. In the bribe, participants were ambiguous with regards to either (or both) the offer of money and the request to waive the ticket. The sources of plausible deniability varied too – money was offered off-record through the pretence of legal attempts to pay the traffic fine and offers of gifts, among other means (see Section 6.2). Additionally, participants drew on discourse features such as emphasis, ellipsis, pause, and question intonation to produce off-record utterances. These features added to the indirect feel of the act by communicating hesitation, signalling innuendo, or deliberately leaving something unsaid (see Section 7.2). The wide variety of strategies used to produce off-record bribes and propositions (and, rarely, favours) points to the nuance and complexity of off-record indirectness, a feature not captured by Lee and Pinker’s 2010 study.

When the data from Experiment 2 are compared to Lee and Pinker’s 2010 study (in which ORI was selected for 91% of the propositions and 58% of the bribes, as compared to 21% to 34% of the favours), a consistent pattern emerges: ORI is preferred for high-risk acts, and dispreferred for low-risk acts, regardless of the means through which the data are collected. In a follow up study, there were statistically significant differences between the naturalness ratings of the off-record and on-record utterances used in Lee and Pinker’s proposition scenario (see Section 2). The on-record options were considered infelicitous, a factor which could potentially explain why so few participants selected these options. The fact that 92% of the propositions were produced off-record in Experiment 2, however, suggests that the preference for ORI in high-risk acts is genuine and not an effect of experimental design or the felicity of the competing multiple choice expressions.

Figure 2 is a visual representation of the categorical distinction between the high-risk speech acts and the low-risk speech acts. The bribes and propositions cluster together towards one end of the scale while the favours are positioned at the other end. Within each speech act, the frequency with which ORI was used varies slightly, though this variation does not affect the categorical

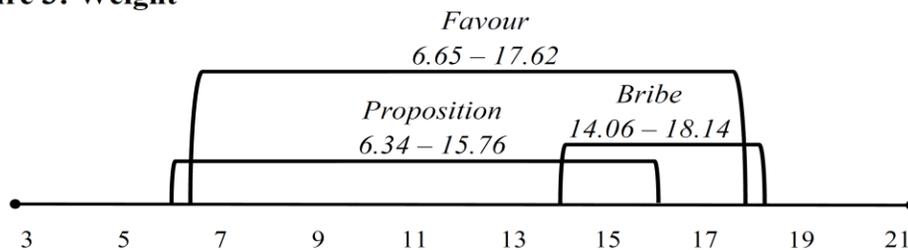
distinction. Regardless of the settings of power, distance, or imposition, the low-risk speech act never approaches the high-risk acts with regards to the frequency with which ORI is used. Likewise, the high-risk acts never fall below 50% threshold.

Figure 2: Range of ORI choices in three speech acts



Contrary to the Politeness Theory prediction, the distinction between high-risk speech acts and low-risk speech acts is not a function of weight. Figure 3 shows the respective weights in the +P +D +R and -P -D -R versions of the bribe, propositions, and favour. The scale ranges from 3, the lowest possible weight for any scenario, to 21, the highest possible weight. The clustering pattern in the weight scale and the categorical distinction scale are clearly different. With regards to +P +D +R scenario, the favour approaches the bribe, and passes the proposition, in weight, yet never nears either in terms of the frequency with which ORI is used. Likewise, the proposition and favour cluster closely together in terms of weight in the -P -D -R scenario, but differ significantly with regards to the use of ORI.

Figure 3: Weight



In Experiment 2, participants were sensitive to the manipulations to power, distance, and imposition, as evidenced by the statistically significant differences in their ratings of P, D, and R in the (+) and the (-) conditions. Despite this awareness, participants did not consistently modify their use of ORI to accommodate the settings of P, D, and R. As shown in Table 6, with the

exception of the ratings of P in the bribe scenario, there was no significant correlation between the participants' choice to use ORI and their own ratings of P, D, and R. As indicated by Figure 3, there was also no correlation between the weight of the speech acts – a calculation of the sum of P, D, and R – and the use of ORI. P, D, and R alone, then, are not reliable predictors of ORI with regards to the three examined acts – bribes, propositions, and favours. This finding directly counters Brown and Levinson's claims on the effect of P, D, and R on the use of ORI. Likewise, the findings support the SS assumption that the strategic use of ORI.

Politeness markers were frequently used within ORI utterances: 92% of the bribes were coded as both ORI and polite, as were 66% of the propositions. Participants regularly incorporated features of both negative and positive politeness in their ORI responses, including lexical terms such as 'please', hedges, both deferential and solidarity-based terms of address, expressions of empathy and solidarity, displays of deference, apologies for and minimisations of imposition, and conventionally indirect constructions, among other means. Overall, negatively polite strategies were used more often than positively polite options. The use of negative politeness was not affected by the settings of power, distance, or imposition in either the bribe or the proposition scenarios. With the exception of the –D scenarios in the bribe, in which positive politeness was used twice as often as negative politeness, the use of positive politeness was not affected by the settings of P, D, or R in the high-risk speech acts.

In light of the failure of either set of predictions to accommodate the politeness data, I propose a modification to the Strategic Speaker approach which affords a place for facework within high-risk ORI acts. This proposal is discussed in detail in Chapter 8 rather than in the present chapter, because Chapter 8 allows for a comprehensive evaluation of all the relevant evidence, some of which is reported in the next chapters.

10 Additional analyses

The sections above focused on the primary research aims of Experiment 2. Bribes, propositions, and favours were discussed in relation to PT and SS-based predictions about the use of ORI; the categorical distinctions between high-risk and low-risk acts; the roles of power, distance, and imposition; and the use of politeness markers. In this section, two additional questions are

considered. Firstly, the data from a multiple choice question on benefit (see Section 4.4) is discussed. Next, the ORI data is reconsidered in relation to the gender of the participants.

10.1 Benefit

In addition to the scalar ratings of power, distance, and imposition, and the open-ended response, participants were also asked to complete a multiple choice question for each of the eight versions of the bribe, proposition, and favour scenarios, respectively. The question text is reproduced below with the names of protagonists redacted.

Who would benefit the most if the intended action were to take place?

- (a) [Hearer's name]*
- (b) [Speaker's name]*
- (c) Both [hearer's name] and [speaker's name]*
- (d) Neither [hearer's name] nor speaker's name]*

The objective in asking this question was two-fold. To begin with, it was used to determine whether the choice of the primary beneficiary varied as a function of either (or both) the speech act type or the settings of P, D, and R. Additionally, and in order to establish a more comprehensive picture of the use of off-record speech, the question was used to test whether benefit was a reliable predictor of ORI. In the bribe and favour scenarios, there was little variation in the responses across the settings of P, D, and R. The results are collapsed as follows:

Table 12: Mean benefit responses, bribe and favour scenarios

	Hearer	Speaker	Both	Neither
Bribe	0.04	0.83	0.07	0.06
Favour	0	0.83	0.16	0.01

In both the bribe and the favour, the speaker was selected as the primary beneficiary by the majority of participants for each of the settings of P, D, and R. The use of ORI varied significantly between these two speech acts, 78% in the bribes and 3% in the favours. The finding suggests that benefit alone, at least in the sense that it was framed in the question above,

is not a reliable predictor of ORI. Additionally, while these speech acts may be said to differ categorically in terms of both the use of ORI and the degree to which they pose a calculable risk to speaker, they do not differ with regards to whom the act primarily benefits.

In the proposition, the participants' choice of primary beneficiary varied in accordance with the setting of R:

Table 13: Mean benefit responses in +R and –R settings of proposition

	Hearer	Speaker	Both	Neither
+R	0.04	0.46	0.24	0.26
–R	0.09	0.29	0.51	0.12
	t(163) = -1.96 p = 0.052	t(163) = 4.34 p < 0.001	t(163) = -7.10 p < 0.001	t(163) = 4.48 p < 0.001

The difference between the choice of primary beneficiary in the +R and –R settings was statistically significant in the ‘speaker’, ‘both’, and ‘neither’ categories and approached statistical significance in the ‘hearer’ category. In the +R scenarios, the speaker was most frequently chosen as the primary beneficiary. In the –R scenarios, more than half of the participants selected the ‘both’ option. This finding is not surprising, as the –R setting featured a keen and amenable hearer who, presumably, would reap the same benefits as the speaker.

Of course, asking participants to select the primary beneficiary of the speech act is not ideal. To begin with, the acts are designed in such a way that the speaker, whether alone or with the hearer, should always benefit. The speaker opts to perform the bribe, proposition, or favour precisely *because of* the benefits – material, social or otherwise – it affords. The participants recognise this attribute, reliably selecting either the speaker or ‘both’ as the primary beneficiary and rarely choosing the hearer or (with the exception of the proposition) the ‘neither’ option.

In the case of the proposition, the frequent selection of ‘both’ and the higher rate with which the ‘neither’ option was chosen may be due to the participants’ difficulty in determining what, exactly, benefit entails. In the bribe and the favour, benefit is calculable – the waived traffic ticket and the resulting financial and legal effects and the satisfactory completion of a work assignment, respectively. In the proposition, benefit may be physical, social, emotional and, due to the workplace context, professional as well. As such, the designation of a primary beneficiary

may be more complex. In the optional comments section, some of the participants explained their difficulty in assigning benefit, as in examples (33) and (34).

(33) Depending on the definition of benefit (sexual gratification being classed as benefit?) both may benefit. [The speaker] may also benefit in that as [the hearer] is in a position of greater power at work he may favour her and this could lead to career benefits [...]

(34) The immediate benefit would probably be to [the speaker], as this would be against [the hearer]'s principles, although in the longer term there could be a range of consequences which mean [the hearer] could also benefit, or that neither of them would.

In future work, the questionnaire used in Experiment 2 could be modified by excluding the multiple choice question on benefit in favour of a question devoted to payoff ratios, a fundamental strategic component of the Strategic Speaker approach that better captures not only benefit, but risks as well. Such a question would focus exclusively on the speaker as it is he or she who chooses if, and how, to perform the high-risk speech act. A question on certainty could also be included, to capture another key element of the Strategic Speaker approach and to measure the (potential) differences in the use of ORI in situations in which the hearer's willingness to comply is unknown and situations in which the hearer is known to be either amenable or antagonistic to the speaker's offer.

10.2 Gender

In Experiment 2, the participants were asked to provide utterances in scenarios depicting protagonists of their own gender. The aim was two-fold – to increase the naturalness and ease with which participants adopted the roles of the protagonists and to examine if, and to what degree, the use of ORI varied as a function of gender.

Table 14 shows the mean uses of ORI and politeness in the bribes and propositions, the two scenarios for which ORI was most frequently used. Favours are excluded as very little ORI (3% in total) was used in this speech act. In the case of the bribes, female participants provided a

total of 156 ORI utterances and males, 108. In the propositions, female participants comprised a larger portion of the total respondents and, as such, provided 245 total responses while male participants provided 76 utterances. The use of politeness within ORI utterances is also included in Table 14. The total number of responses here are fewer, as they include only those utterances which were coded ORI. This accounts for 113 female and 92 male responses in the bribe and 226 female and 70 male responses in the proposition. Pearson's Chi-square was applied to determine whether there was an association between gender and the use of ORI and/or gender and the use of politeness within ORI responses.

Table 14: Mean use of ORI and politeness by gender

	Bribe		Proposition	
	F	M	F	M
ORI	0.72	0.85	0.92	0.92
	X ² (1) = 5.98 p < 0.05		X ² (1) = 0.01 p = 0.94	
Polite ORI	0.97	0.92	0.70	0.51
	X ² (1) = 2.68 p = 0.10		X ² (1) = 8.08 p < 0.01	

In the case of the bribe, there was a statistically significant effect of gender on the use of ORI. The mean use of ORI was higher among male participants than female. There was no significant effect of gender on the use of politeness within ORI responses. In the propositions, there was no significant effect of gender on the use of ORI. There was a statistically significant effect of gender on the use of politeness within ORI responses, with more female participants incorporating politeness markers into their ORI responses than their male counterparts.

In a discussion of gender and indirectness, Tannen (1994: 1) explains, 'Women and men are both indirect, but [...] they tend to be indirect in different situations and in different ways'. Her latter point, on the manner of indirectness, is reflected in the rates with which male and female participants incorporate politeness markers into ORI propositions. A closer examination of the qualitative data may yield similar results. One could determine, for example, whether male and female participants varied systematically with regards to either (or both) the domain of ambiguity or the sources of plausible deniability in their production of ORI responses (see Section 6.2). Tannen also explains that men and women are indirect in different situations.

While this assertion suggests that there are scenarios for which one gender is typically indirect while the other is not, it does not exclude the possibility that there are also situations in which both genders regularly employ indirect speech. Bribes and propositions may be amongst these. If one adopts the perspective of the Strategic Speaker approach, bribes and propositions can be classified as categorically distinct, high-risk acts. They are regulated by their own rules regarding the use of ORI and, as such, may not be as susceptible to the effects of gender as other speech acts. To confirm this hypothesis, one could compare the effect of the gender on the use of ORI in high-risk speech acts and low-risk speech acts. Such a comparison was not possible in Experiment 2 given the very low use of ORI in the favours.

11 Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed discussion of Experiment 2, an empirical study of the use of off-record indirectness in bribes, favours, and propositions. The development of the study was explained, beginning with an overview of Lee and Pinker (2010) and a criticism of the shortcomings of their work. A coding scheme designed for the open-ended methodology was described at length, with special attention given to the unique discourse features and contextual references used by the participants in the production of novel ORI utterances. Theoretical predictions associated with both Politeness Theory and the Strategic Speaker approach were put forth to address four areas of interest – the use of ORI bribes, propositions, and favours; the categorical distinction between high-risk and low-risk acts with regards to ORI; the effects of power, distance, and imposition on the choice of ORI; and the use of politeness markers within ORI utterances.

For three of the four predictions, the findings provided solid evidence in support of SS, while challenging the assumptions of PT. As predicted by SS, ORI was preferred in the majority of the cases for the two high-risk acts – the bribe (78%) and the proposition (92%) and rarely used in the favour (3%), the low-risk act for which PT, but not SS, predicts ORI. With one exception – the settings of P in the bribe scenario – there was no effect of P, D, or R on the use of ORI in either of the high-risk acts. In sum, these findings support the SS assumption on the categorical distinction between high-risk and low-risk acts.

While the use of ORI in Experiment 2 strongly supports the predictions of the Strategic Speaker approach, the wide-spread use of negative and positive politeness within ORI bribes and propositions challenges an important assumption of the theory, namely the belief that ‘[...] politeness and indirectness do not reside on the same scale but are rather distinct mechanisms elicited by different types of social encounters’ (Lee and Pinker 2010: 787). The data from Experiment 2 show that these mechanisms can indeed be used within a single encounter, albeit for different ends. While ORI affords plausible deniability, politeness markers allow the interlocutors to reap (at least ostensibly) the social benefits of facework. In light of these findings, an updated version of SS will be proposed (in Chapter 8) to accommodate the use of politeness markers alongside strategic uses of ORI in high-risk acts.

When the data from experiments 1 and 2 are compared, an unexpected discrepancy between intuition and elicited production arises. In Experiment 1, participants rarely recounted SS-based uses of ORI, even when prompted by prototypical SS examples. In Experiment 2, however, participants frequently produced ORI utterances, of their own accord, in the two scenarios for which SS predicts ORI – the bribe and the sexual proposition. Similarly, PT-based uses of ORI predominated in Experiment 1, yet were virtually absent from the favour in Experiment 2. A number of factors can account for this discrepancy – ranging from the social stigma attached to reporting first-hand experience with SS-based uses of ORI to the familiarity and accessibility of polite uses of ORI amongst native English speakers (English (Blum-Kulka 1987; Sifianou 1992).

A series of experiments presented in Chapter 5 further explore the use of ORI in bribes, propositions, and favours by seeking alternative explanations for the categorical distinction between the high-risk and low-risk acts with the aim of identifying not only how, but *why*, these acts differ.

CHAPTER 5

RE-TESTING THE BRIBE, PROPOSITION, AND FAVOUR SCENARIOS

1 Introduction

Chapter 5 focuses on a series of three related experiments – Experiment 3a, Experiment 3b, and Experiment 4 – each designed to identify factors that explain the statistically significant differences between the use of ORI in the high-risk bribes (78%) and propositions (92%) and the low-risk favours (3%). The experiments follow up on Experiment 2, re-examining the bribe, proposition, and favour scenarios by posing different research questions and employing different methodologies. Experiments 3a and 3b are scalar rating tasks that elicit the participants' judgements about the social acceptability of performing the bribes, propositions, and favours under varying contextual conditions. Experiment 4 is an open-ended task focused on strategic motivations for the use of ORI. Participants are shown three ORI utterances used in Experiment 2 for bribes, propositions, and favours, respectively and are asked to infer the reasons for which the speaker chose to use ORI for each of the acts.

Experiments 3a and 3b show that social acceptability alone does not explain the categorical distinction between high-risk and low-risk acts – while the high-risk bribes are generally rated as socially unacceptable and low-risk favours are rated as socially acceptable, the high-risk propositions are also rated as socially acceptable. Experiment 4 confirms that the high-risk and low-risk acts differ not only with regards to the frequency with which ORI is used, but also in terms of the reasons for which speakers are presumed to use ORI. The findings from all three experiments are discussed in relation to the primary tenets of the Strategic Speaker approach. At the end of the chapter, a new explanation for the use of ORI in the propositions is offered, along with the argument that a subset of ORI propositions have become standardised.

2 Accounting for categorical differences: Social acceptability

In Experiment 2, the predicted categorical distinction between high-risk and low-risk speech acts was confirmed by the use of ORI. Off-record responses accounted for 78% and 92% of the bribes and propositions, respectively while only 3% of the favours were produced off-record. As

anticipated by SS, there were (almost) no correlations between the use of ORI and the settings of power, distance, or imposition either within, or across, speech act types. In other words, none of the three factors was consistently associated with ORI.

While the categorical distinction was confirmed, the *source* of the distinction was not determined. Two questions remained: Firstly, if the settings of P, D, and R cannot account for the use of ORI in the bribes and propositions, then which factors can? And secondly, can these factors reliably explain the categorical distinction between the high-risk bribes and propositions and the low-risk favours?

To address these questions, I first turned to the concept of social acceptability, a measure of how appropriate it is to perform the act *itself* without consideration of external factors such as power, distance, or imposition. By focusing on social acceptability, I depart from Politeness Theory and concentrate instead on the principles of the Strategic Speaker approach. Social acceptability was chosen to capture two assumptions of the account, the emphasis on conflict-laden acts and the role of relationship negotiation in the use of ORI.

Lee and Pinker describe the speech acts upon which they focus their account as ‘emotionally fraught and potentially conflictual’ (2010: 786). Each of the acts they discuss – bribes, threats, and propositions – involve relationship negotiation, an inherently social interaction. The former two are illegal in most instances and there are contexts in which all three may be perceived as either immoral or unethical. If the bribes and propositions are, indeed, determined to be socially unacceptable and, additionally, the favours are rated as significantly more socially acceptable than the other two acts, I will have identified a factor which accounts for the categorical distinction between the high-risk and low-risk acts. In the sections below, I discuss two empirical measures of social acceptability.

3 Testing social acceptability: Experiments 3a and 3b

Experiments 3a and 3b each measure social acceptability using Likert rating scales. Cambridge University students were recruited for both experiments to mirror the demographics of the participants in Experiment 2 (Chapter 4), the results of which were the impetus for the experiments discussed in this chapter. In Experiment 3a, participants were asked to rate one

version each of the bribe, proposition, and favour scenarios used in Experiment 2. In Experiment 3b, they were presented with two contrasting versions of each scenario.

3.1 Experiment 3a: Research question

Experiment 3a addresses the following research question.

RQ1. Do the ratings of social acceptability explain the categorical distinction in the use of off-record indirectness between high-risk acts (e.g. bribes and propositions) and low-risk acts (e.g. favours)?

3.2 Experiment 3a: Predictions

With regards to the ratings of social acceptability, the following predictions were made.

P1. Bribes and propositions, the acts for which off-record indirectness was frequently employed in Experiment 2, will be rated as socially unacceptable.

P2. Favours, the act for which off-record indirectness was rarely employed in Experiment 2, will be rated as socially acceptable.

3.3 Experiment 3a: Participants

Experiment 3a was completed by 93 participants (67 females), ranging in age from 18 to 37 years, with a mean age of 21 years.

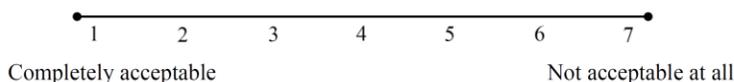
3.4 Experiment 3a: Design

Experiment 3a was conducted on Qualtrics. The questionnaire consisted of three Likert rating questions which asked participants to rate social acceptability for each of the three speech acts examined in Experiment 2 – a bribe, a proposition, and a favour. The order in which the speech acts were presented was randomised. Participants were asked to rate each act individually and were not encouraged to compare the acts for their acceptability relative to one another.

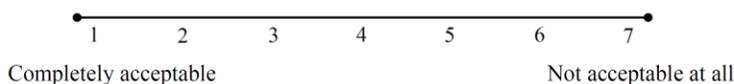
All manipulations to power (P), distance (D), and imposition (R) were removed and each act was condensed to a one sentence summary in which scenario specific details were retained. The removal of these factors ensured an exclusive focus on Strategic Speaker motivations. Manipulations to P, D, and R are noticeably absent from the critical scenarios tested by Lee and Pinker (2010) – the bribe and the proposition – though manipulations were applied to the favour scenario. Lee and Pinker’s data supports the same categorical distinctions between bribes and propositions on the one hand, and favours on the other, as the data in Experiment 2.¹ In other words, the pattern of categorical distinction was the same, whether P, D, and R were manipulated or not. If social acceptability is, indeed, a reliable predictor of categorical distinction, then the ratings of social acceptability should not be dependent upon the settings of P, D, and R. Finally, removing the manipulations to P, D, and R ensured that the participants’ ratings of social acceptability were based upon the nature of act *itself*, rather than the acceptability of the act with regards to a specific setting of P, D, and R. Figure 1 shows the rating questions used in Experiment 3a.

Figure 1: Acceptability ratings, Experiment 3a

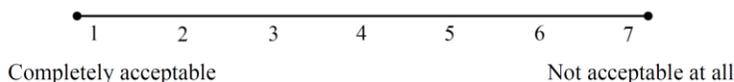
How socially acceptable is it to bribe a police officer to avoid paying the fine for a traffic ticket?



How socially acceptable is it to proposition a co-worker for romantic relations after you had dinner together?



How socially acceptable is it to ask a favour of a co-worker in terms of help with an important report?



¹ Lee and Pinker also tested a scenario depicting a threat. ORI was used in 86% of the responses. The threat was categorised with the bribe and proposition, due to both the frequency with which ORI was used and the conflictual nature the authors attribute to the act.

3.5 Experiment 3a: Results

Table 1 shows the means ratings of social acceptability in Experiment 3a.

Table 1: Social acceptability ratings, Experiment 3a

Bribe	Proposition	Favour
6.44 (0.98)	3.90 (1.60)	2.32 (1.29)

The bribe was the least acceptable of the three acts. It was rated 6.44, which is closest to the highly unacceptable part of the scale. The proposition was rated 3.90, which is close to 4, which stands for acceptable. The favour was the most acceptable of the three acts. It was rated 2.32, which is closest to the highly acceptable part of the scale. There were statistically significant differences in the ratings of social acceptability between the bribe and both the proposition ($t(92) = 14.26, p < 0.001, d = 1.45$) and the favour ($t(92) = 26.82, p < 0.001, d = 2.66$). The difference in rating between the proposition and the favour was also statistically significant ($t(92) = 9.63, p < 0.001, d = 0.99$).

The predictions are partially satisfied. The low-risk act was rated towards the highly acceptable end of the scale, while one of the high-risk acts, the bribe, was rated near the highly unacceptable end of the scale. Contrary to predictions, however, the other high-risk act did not align with the bribe. The proposition was instead rated near the acceptable part of the scale. The ratings of social acceptability, then, do not explain the categorical distinctions in the use of ORI between the bribes and propositions on the one hand, and the favours on the other.

Experiment 3b was developed to investigate this discrepancy. In Experiment 3b, the ratings of social acceptability are collected for two versions of each speech act, +R and -R, respectively, to evaluate whether the settings of imposition are a reliable predictor of social acceptability in high-risk and low-risk acts, respectively.

3.6 Experiment 3b: Research questions

Experiment 3b addresses the following questions:

RQ1. Are the ratings of social acceptability affected by the settings of imposition in scenarios depicting bribes, propositions, and favours, respectively?

RQ2. With regards to the ratings of social acceptability, does susceptibility to imposition explain the categorical distinction in the use of off-record indirectness between high-risk acts (e.g. bribes and propositions) and low-risk acts (e.g. favours)?

3.7 Experiment 3b: Predictions

With regards to the ratings of social acceptability and the settings of imposition, the following predictions were made:

P1. The ratings of social acceptability will not be affected by the settings of imposition in high-risk scenarios depicting bribes and propositions, respectively.

P2. The ratings of social acceptability will be affected by the settings of imposition in low-risk scenarios depicting favours.

3.8 Experiment 3b: Participants

Experiment 3b was completed by twenty participants (13 female), ranging in age from 22 to 46 years, with a mean age of 29 years.

3.9 Experiment 3b: Design

In Experiment 3b, participants were presented with two full text versions of each of the scenarios used in Experiment 2, one in which the imposition manipulation was set to a high level (+R) and one which is it was set to low level (-R). Distance and power were set to low levels (-D and -P, respectively) across all scenarios to ensure consistency and to remove social barriers which may otherwise influence the participants' evaluations of the acceptability of the act itself. The

questions on social acceptability included an indication of the speaker's intention, using the same wording cited in Experiment 2. Participants were instructed to take into account the differences in imposition. The words 'in your experience' were added to encourage participants to answer based on realistic, rather than idealised, assessments of social acceptability.

In Experiment 3a, the manipulations to power, distance, and imposition were removed on the assumption that, just as the use of ORI is not affected by the settings of P, D, and R, the ratings of social acceptability (which may account for the categorical distinction in the use of ORI) should likewise be unaffected by P, D, and R. Experiment 3b takes a different perspective, by reconsidering the ways in which these factors can potentially explain the categorical distinction between high-risk and low-risk acts. In Lee and Pinker's study the favour was considered a counterpoint to the Strategic Speaker approach – an act for which Politeness Theory, but not SS, predicts ORI.² In line with Politeness Theory, the favour should be susceptible to manipulations to P, D, and R. In other words, the use of ORI (and other politeness strategies) should be affected by the settings of these factors. Susceptibility to P, D, and R then, may explain the categorical distinction between the high-risk and low-risk acts. Rather than focusing on the influence of these factors on the use of ORI, this section tests the influence on the ratings of social acceptability. In Experiment 3b, the factor R was chosen, over both P and D, because manipulations to R impact the act itself (the focus of this experiment) whereas the manipulations to P and D shape the interpersonal relationships between the interlocutors. If the SS assumption holds, then there should be no significant influence of R in the ratings of social acceptability in either the bribe or the proposition. The ratings in the favour, on the other hand, should be influenced by R. Figure 2 shows the rating questions used in Experiment 3b.

² In Experiment 2, there were too few instances of ORI in the low-risk favour to meaningfully test the impact of these P, D, and R on the use of ORI. See Chapter 7 for an empirical study on the role of power, distance, and imposition on the use ORI in favour scenarios.

Figure 2: Acceptability ratings, Experiment 3b

[Speaker] would like Officer [hearer's surname] to accept the £50 note, and in return, to discard the ticket and fine. In your experience, how socially acceptable is it for [speaker] to issue such a bribe?



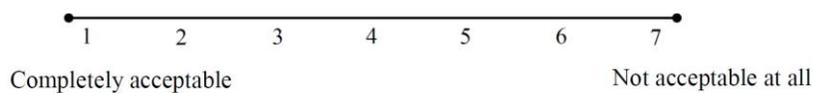
[Speaker] would like [hearer] to join [him/her], in [his/her] apartment, for a romantic 'encounter'.

In your experience, how socially acceptable is it for [speaker] to make such a proposition?



[Speaker] would like [hearer] to help [him/her] to complete the report on time.

In your experience, how socially acceptable is it for [speaker] to ask such a favour?



3.10 Experiment 3b: Results

Table 2 shows the mean ratings of social acceptability for +R and -R versions of each of the three speech acts.

Table 2: Social acceptability ratings, Experiment 3b

Bribes		Propositions		Favours	
+R	-R	+R	-R	+R	-R
6.75	6.70	3.35	2.55	3.35	1.30
(0.64)	(0.66)	(1.81)	(1.43)	(1.66)	(0.57)
t (19) = 1.00, p = 0.33		t (19) = 2.63, p < 0.05, d = 0.59		t (19) = 5.83, p < 0.001, d = 1.30	

In the bribe scenarios, the difference in ratings between the +R and -R scenarios was not statistically significant ($t(19) = 1.00, p = 0.33$). The differences in rating in +R and -R settings were statistically significant for both the proposition ($t(19) = 2.63, p = 0.017, d = 0.59$) and the favour ($t(19) = 5.83, p < 0.001, d = 1.30$). In the latter cases, the direction of the difference supports the predictions of Politeness Theory, as the more face-threatening +R scenarios were

rated as less socially acceptable than the –R scenarios. As in Experiment 3a, the bribe was the least socially acceptable of the three acts. The +R and –R versions of the bribe were rated as less socially acceptable than the respective versions of both the proposition and the favour. Additionally, the –R version of the bribe was rated as less socially acceptable than the +R versions of either the proposition ($t(19) = 7.46, p < 0.001, d = 1.67$) or the favour ($t(19) = 8.84, p < 0.001, d = 1.98$). The +R proposition and +R favour were rated identically to one another, with mean ratings of 3.35 on a 7 point scale. The –R proposition was rated as less socially acceptable than the –R favour ($t(19) = 4.08, p = 0.001, d = 0.91$).

Again, the predictions are partially satisfied. The ratings of social acceptability in the low-risk act were significantly affected by the settings of R, while the ratings in one of the high-risk acts, the bribe, were not affected by the settings of R. The ratings in the proposition, contrary to expectations, were indeed affected by the settings of R.³ The susceptibility to R in ratings of social acceptability, then, does not explain the categorical distinctions in the use of ORI between the high-risk bribes and propositions on the one hand, and the low-risk favours on the other.

3.11 Discussion: ORI and social acceptability

In Experiment 3a, ratings of social acceptability were collected using condensed versions of the three scenarios depicted in Experiment 2, bribes, propositions, and favours, with manipulations to power, distance, and imposition removed. Ratings were compared across the three speech act types. In Experiment 3b, two versions of each scenario were tested, representing +R and –R settings, respectively. The ratings of social acceptability were compared both within, and across, speech acts, with additional attention on the susceptibility of these ratings to changes in the setting of R.

In each experiment, the ratings of social acceptability were predicted to mirror the categorical distinction found in Experiment 2. In other words, bribes and propositions, the high-risk acts for

³ One possible interpretation for this finding is the fact that the scope of the imposition varied between the bribe and proposition. In the proposition scenario, the –R hearer was open to pursuing a romantic relationship with a co-worker, a setting which, due to the social nature of the interaction, may have made the proposition considerably more socially acceptable in the –R version than the +R version. In the bribe, on the other hand, imposition was related to external factors which affected the hearer. These settings may have influenced the likelihood that the hearer cooperate with speaker, but may not have altered the appropriateness of the bribe itself.

which ORI was frequently used in Experiment 2, were predicted to group together with regards to both social acceptability itself and the susceptibility of the latter to the settings of imposition. Favours, the low-risk act for which ORI was rarely used, was predicted to be categorically distinct from the high-risk acts with regards to both the ratings of social acceptability and the susceptibility of R.

The predictions were partially satisfied in both experiments. In Experiment 3a, the bribe was rated near the highly unacceptable end of the scale, while the favour was rated near the socially acceptable end. In Experiment 3b, there were no significant differences in the ratings of social acceptability between the +R and -R versions of the bribe scenario. The difference in ratings of social acceptability was significant in the favour scenarios. The categorical distinction between bribes and favours is supported by three factors: the frequency with which ORI is used (Experiment 2), the ratings of social acceptability, and the susceptibility of these ratings to the settings of R.

The propositions, however, present an interesting dilemma. In Experiment 2, the bribes and propositions behaved similarly to one another with regards to both the frequency with which ORI was used and the fact that the use of ORI was not correlated with P, D, or R. In terms of social acceptability and susceptibility to R, however, the propositions align more closely with the favours than with the bribes. In other words, the propositions present a 'mismatch' with regards to categorical distinction.

The data suggest that social acceptability, then, is only part of the picture. Additional explanations for the categorical distinction between high-risk and low-risk speech acts are considered in the remainder of this chapter. Experiment 4 uses a new methodology to explore the ways in which the high-risk and low-risk acts differ from one another. The discussion section considers two theoretical perspectives on the difference, based on the game-theoretical principles of SS and the concept of standardisation, respectively.

4 Experiment 4: Motivations for ORI

Experiments 3a and 3b used Likert rating scales, focusing on a specific question without room for elaboration. In Experiment 4, a new methodology was introduced. Participants were

presented with three off-record utterances, depicting a bribe, proposition, and favour, respectively and were asked to infer the reasons for which the speaker chose to use ORI for each of the speech acts. The open-ended format used to elicit the responses broadened the focus beyond social acceptability in order to evaluate a wider, more diverse range of factors that could potentially explain the categorical distinction between high-risk and low-risk acts.

4.1 Research questions

Experiment 4 addressed the following research questions.

RQ1. Do the motivations attributed to the use of off-record indirectness in bribes, propositions, and favours, respectively, correspond to principles of either (or both) Politeness Theory or the Strategic Speaker approach?

RQ2. Do the motivations attributed to the use of off-record indirectness in bribes, propositions, and favours, respectively, account for the categorical distinction between high-risk and low-risk speech acts?

4.2 Predictions

The following predictions were made.

P1. In scenarios depicting both bribes and propositions, participants will attribute the use of off-record indirectness to motivations related, primarily, to the Strategic Speaker approach.

P2. In scenarios depicting favours, participants will attribute the use of off-record indirectness to motivations related, primarily, to Politeness Theory.

4.3 Participants

Experiment 4 was completed by the same set of participants as Experiment 3b, twenty native English speakers (13 females) recruited from the University of Cambridge, ranging in age from 22 to 46 years, with a mean age of 29 years.

4.4 Design

Experiments 3b and 4 were incorporated into a single questionnaire and were completed in the same sitting. In Experiment 3b, participants saw two full text versions of the three speech acts, a bribe, a proposition, and a favour, each depicting a –P –D +R setting and a –P –D –R setting, respectively. The scenarios appeared in randomised order and each included a description of the protagonist’s intention. For each speech act type, participants were shown two ratings scales and, upon completion of scalar questions, were presented with an open-ended question related to the same speech act. The question text explained that the protagonist decided to follow through with his or her intention and perform the relevant speech act. An utterance attributed to the protagonist was provided and participants were asked to infer why it was used. The question probed the participants to consider their own experience so as to capture ‘real life’ uses of ORI, but was otherwise deliberately open-ended, without explicit reference to the indirectness of the utterance. The text used in the bribe is below.

[Speaker’s name] decides to go ahead and issue the bribe after all. She says:

*“Officer, I’m really sorry. I didn’t mean to go so fast.
Perhaps we can reach some sort of arrangement.”*

*Based on your experience, why do you think that [Speaker’s name]
has decided to phrase the bribe in this way?*

Each of the ORI utterances was drawn from the dataset in Experiment 2. The utterances were crafted by participants and, although produced within an experimental context, may be considered naturalistic. In Experiment 2, the participants were free to produce the elicited the speech acts however they wished, without limitations or specifications on content or directness. Their responses, then, are more representative of real-life uses of ORI than pre-fabricated or constructed examples. The chosen utterances were prototypical examples of the ORI utterances used for each speech act. The following utterances were used in the proposition and favour scenarios, respectively:

“Fancy coming back to mine for a drink?”

“I’m really struggling to complete this report.

Do you know of anyone who may be able to help me with it?”

4.5 Coding the data

The responses were coded following the criteria used in Experiment 1 (Chapter 3), with the participants' responses categorised as reflecting 'Politeness Theory only', 'the Strategic Speaker approach only', 'multiple interpretation,' or 'other'.

The 'Politeness Theory only' responses focused on both the speaker's desire to avoid imposing upon the hearer and on the fact that indirectness affords the hearer an out. The responses also mentioned the avoidance of perceived impoliteness. Examples (1) and (2) are from the favour.

(1) This avoids the obtrusiveness of asking directly for the favour, which could be seen as an affront as it puts the other person under pressure. It also allows the other person to deflect the question if they wish to do so.

(2) Because it would seem rude to ask directly.

The 'Strategic Speaker approach only' responses mentioned key tenets of the account, including plausible deniability awkwardness, the potential for relationship change, and the balance between risks and rewards. Examples (3) and (4) were provided in the bribe scenario and examples (5) and (6) were used in the proposition.

(3) Because it is intentionally vague. If the officer retorts 'are you trying to bribe me?' (either out of alarm or hesitancy) [the speaker] can reply that that is not what she intended by her statement at all – rather, she was proposing that she merely be issued with a warning, or some other sanction less than a fine or penalty.

(4) So that if the police officer is honest, [the speaker] will not get into additional trouble for bribery.

(5) [...] it is 'safer' than an outright proposition as it's seen that either party can more easily back out of it by saving face and without, seemingly, the repercussions that might follow an open sexual proposition.

(6) It prevents awkwardness should her colleague not wish to engage in this 'encounter' [...] An open proposition might jeopardise their working relationship and apply pressure.

The ‘multiple interpretations possible’ category included responses that could be explained by the predictions of either theory, such as examples (7) and (8) from the bribe scenario, in which the participants recognise the strategic value of ambiguity but do not elaborate further on why the ambiguity is desirable for the speaker and/or hearer.

(7) To allow for ambiguity.

(8) This way he isn’t just downright bribing the officer, it’s assumed.

The ‘other’ responses included explanations that were not aligned with either theoretical account, as in example (9). The example was used in the proposition scenario and focuses on practical motivations for the content of the proposition rather than on theoretical motivations for the indirectness of the utterance. Additional examples from the ‘other’ category are discussed, from a different perspective, in Section 5.3.

(9) Puts the ball in his court –coming back to hers gives him the option to leave whenever, versus inviting herself to his.

4.6 Results

Table 3 below shows the mean responses in each category for bribes, propositions, and favours.

Table 3: Motivations for ORI

	Politeness Theory	Strategic Speaker	Multiple interpret.	Other
Bribe	0	0.70	0.25	0.05
Proposition	0.05	0.65	0.15	0.15
Favour	0.60	0.05	0.15	0.20

Participants primarily cited motivations related to the Strategic Speaker approach in both the bribe and the proposition, with responses in this category representing 70% and 65% of the total, respectively. There was no significant difference between the bribe and the proposition ($t(19) = 0.33, p = 0.75$) with regards to the frequency with which SS motivations were cited. In the favour, only 5% of the responses cited Strategic Speaker motivations, a rate that was significantly lower than either the bribe ($t(19) = -4.95, p < 0.001$) or the proposition ($t(19) = -4.49, p < 0.001$). In the favour, the majority of participants, 60%, cited motivations related

exclusively to Politeness Theory. PT only responses were virtually absent from the two high-risk scenarios, with no mentions in the bribe and only one instance in the proposition.⁴ There were statistically significant differences between the favour and both the bribe ($t(19) = 5.34$, $p < 0.001$) and the proposition ($t(19) = 4.82$, $p < 0.001$) with regards to the frequency with which PT motivations were mentioned.

4.7 Discussion

In all cases, there was a clear and significant preference for one motivation over the other. In other words, the data provide support for the primary findings from both Experiment 2 and Lee and Pinker (2010) – with regards to the use of ORI, the high-risk bribes and propositions are similar to one another, and jointly different from the low-risk favours. These differences are reflected not only in the significantly different frequencies with which ORI is used, but also in the interpersonal and strategic reasons associated with the use of ORI. As predicted, participants reliably inferred that ORI was used in both the bribes and the propositions for motivations predominately related to SS while in the favour, the use of ORI was clearly linked with PT. The favour data also support the conclusion that politeness-based uses of ORI are amongst the most familiar and accessible to participants (Experiment 1). While the participants did not frequently opt to produce ORI utterances under experimental conditions in the favour (Experiment 2), they readily recognised PT motivations as the likely impetus for others' use of ORI in the favour scenario. The very different strategic motivations associated with ORI bribes and propositions, on the one hand, and ORI favours on the other, provide further support for the categorical distinction, explaining another way in which the high-risk and low-risk speech acts differ from one another with regards to the use of ORI.

⁴ The tested scenarios used –P and –D settings and, as such, presented a relatively low face threat. If PT motivations were rarely mentioned across all three speech acts, one could argue that the settings biased the participants against PT interpretations. The fact that PT motivations were mentioned frequently in the favour, however, suggests that such an interpretation is not appropriate. A larger scale study could include binary manipulations to P, D, and R to evaluate the relationship between these settings and the motivations attributed to the use of ORI. Such a study, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter, which focuses on SS predictions with the aim of identifying factors other than P, D, and R to explain the use of ORI in bribes, propositions, and favours.

5 Reconsidering categorical distinctions

In light of the data from Experiments 3a, 3b, and 4, two questions remain: Firstly, how can we account for the proposition data? Secondly, how can we explain the low use of ORI in the favours? To address these questions, I reconsider each of the speech acts with regards to the theoretical assumptions of the Strategic Speaker approach.

5.1 Bribe

Lee and Pinker (2010) describe the bribe as a paradigm case for the Strategic Speaker approach, as it is a scenario in which concrete risks and rewards can be easily quantified. The driver who offers a bribe off-record successfully balances the legal and financial costs associated with an arrest for attempted bribery with the benefits of avoiding the traffic ticket and going free. The risks associated with the bribe may be the impetus for the consistently high ratings of social unacceptability. The bribe is legally unacceptable, as it is prohibited by law and subject to prosecution. Within cultures in which such acts are rarely practised, bribing a police officer may also be deemed unacceptable due to perceived moral or ethical implications.

In the SS account, ORI is the optimal strategy in the bribe scenario, as the ambiguity allows the speaker to achieve the most desirable outcome, especially in cases in which the speaker is uncertain as to whether or not the hearer is amenable to the offer. The speaker can enjoy the potential benefits afforded by the bribe while, at the same time, avoiding the potential costs associated with it. Lee and Pinker present the risks and rewards in a payoff table which outlines the possible outcomes associated with opting out, bribing directly, and bribing indirectly in the cases of both amenable and unamenable hearers (see Chapter 2, Section 3.1, Table 1). As a paradigm case, the bribe can be compared with both the proposition and the favour. Similar payoff tables can be constructed in order to determine whether the balance of risks and rewards account for the categorical distinction between the high-risk and low-risk acts.

5.2 Proposition

Lee and Pinker compare the proposition scenario to the bribe, noting that in the former case, ORI is used despite the (seeming) absence of quantifiable risks and rewards. They explain that in

order to apply the SS model to cases where tangible costs are absent, one must identify the intangible costs that define the requisite payoff matrix (2010: 794). The Strategic Speaker approach is built on the assumption that human relationships fall within discrete categories (see Chapter 2, Section 3.2). Each relationship type is defined by interactional norms and restrictions. A given speech act, like a proposition, may be routine and welcome in one relationship type and improper in another. By performing a speech act not aligned with the relationship type, the speaker threatens the existing relationship between him or her and the hearer, thereby initiating a process of relationship negotiation.

In the proposition, the tangible costs associated with the bribe are replaced by emotional costs.⁵ If the process of relationship negotiation goes poorly and the proposition is challenged or rejected outright, then the speaker may experience emotional penalties such as awkwardness or embarrassment. As a result, he or she risks damaging the existing relationship with the hearer, perhaps beyond the point of repair. ORI assuages these costs by providing plausible deniability. Just as the speeding driver can claim innocence by denying the attempt at bribery, the speaker issuing the proposition can likewise deny his or her true intention. The alternative, akin to the traffic ticket in the bribe scenario, is the maintenance of the existing relationship type. If the proposition is not tendered, of course, there is no risk to the relationship and, therefore, no negotiation. When the proposition is delivered off-record, plausible deniability affords both interlocutors the pretence that no relationship change has been attempted and, therefore, the relationship can continue as before. Table 4 presents the payoff ratio in the proposition. The costs are emotional. The benefit, as it was described euphemistically in Experiments 2 and 4, is a ‘romantic encounter.’ Following the model established in Chapter 2, perlocutionary effects are listed in each of the cells, while risks and rewards are included only in the case of direct and indirect propositions to unamenable hearers.

⁵ In Experiment 2, the proposition involved colleagues. While legal or financial costs may be incurred as a result of workplace regulations, these costs are secondary and context-specific. Emotional costs are context-free (and would be equally expected if the workplace restrictions were removed) and are the primary motivation for the use of ORI.

Table 4: Payoff ratios in the proposition scenario

	Amenable hearer	Unamenable hearer
Don't proposition	No romantic 'encounter'	No romantic 'encounter'
Proposition directly	Romantic 'encounter'	No romantic 'encounter', awkwardness due to overt relationship negotiation
Proposition indirectly	Romantic 'encounter'	No romantic 'encounter', awkwardness alleviated by plausible deniability

The proposition is similar to the bribe. When calculable risks and rewards are at stake, and the speaker is uncertain of how the hearer will respond, he or she resorts to off-record speech in order to balance the payoff ratio and ensure the most profitable outcome. The latter is achieved through a reliance on plausible deniability. This parallel supports categorical distinction between high-risk and low-risk acts. ORI is used in both acts with comparable frequency and for similar reasons – the strategic management of (tangible or intangible) risks and rewards.

With regards the differences in the ratings of social acceptability between the two high-risk acts, I propose the following explanation. Propositions are considered socially acceptable because they are essential to the formation of a new relationship type, namely a romantic, communal relationship (see Chapter 2). In the proposition scenario in Experiment 2, the speaker and hearer were on a date, an event which sets the stage for a relationship negotiation. The proposition, then, is used to move forward the transition between relationship types. While propositions are widely practised, their effect is limited in scope to the interlocutors themselves. Additionally, while the proposition carries emotional costs, and may threaten the interpersonal relationship between the speaker and hearer, unlike the bribe, it does not have large scale (and potentially long-lasting) societal implications. In other words, while the proposition may sometimes be *personally* unacceptable (within a certain relationship type or towards a particular hearer), it is not unacceptable at the societal level.

5.3 Favour

The high rates of social acceptability for the favour provide insight into the why ORI was rarely used in the favour scenarios in Experiment 2. The ratings may be interpreted in light of both the Strategic Speaker approach and Politeness Theory.

From an SS perspective, the favour differs from the bribes and propositions due to its lack of inherent, calculable risk. Unlike the bribe, the favour is neither illegal nor unethical. In Experiment 2, the favour involved a request for assistance with a professional assignment, an act within the bounds of a normal workplace relationship. As such, it does not entail the relationship negotiation and resulting awkwardness that characterise the proposition. The distinction is clear when the payoff table is reproduced to depict the favour, as in Table 5.

Table 5: Payoff ratios in the favour scenario

	Amenable hearer	Unamenable hearer
Don't ask the favour	No help with the assignment	No help with the assignment
Ask the favour directly	Help with the assignment	No help with the assignment
Ask the favour indirectly	Help with the assignment	No help with the assignment

When the direct and indirect requests are compared, the risks and rewards are identical. There is no strategic motivation for ORI. In the favour scenario in Experiment 2, the speaker may risk professional and, consequently, financial repercussions if the assignment is not completed. This risk, however, is a consequence of opting out (and therefore not receiving the help necessary to complete the assignment), *not* a consequence of phrasing the request on-record. If the payoffs provide by the direct and indirect requests are comparable, then one may reasonably expect that they would be used with equal frequency.

Politeness Theory can explain why on-record options were preferred in Experiment 2. In Politeness Theory, there are five strategies upon which a speaker can draw: opting out (which is not ideal in the case of favour, as apparent in the payoff table above), issuing the act bluntly without redress, using positive politeness, using negative politeness, or speaking off-record. The choice of strategy is dependent on face-threat, calculated by the speaker's assessment of power

(P), distance (D), and imposition (R). The frequent use of negatively polite on-record strategies in the favour in Experiment 2 suggests that face-threat was assessed at a level lower than the threshold necessary for ORI. The high ratings of social acceptability in Experiment 3a and 3b support this view.

Experiment 4 provides an additional perspective on the dispreference for ORI. While many participants attributed politeness-based motivations to the use of ORI in the favour, others viewed its use less favourably. They deemed indirectness unnecessary and inappropriate for the scenario and considered the use of ORI to reflect poorly on the speaker, as in examples (10), (11), and (12). Each of these examples was provided by a male participant. The data in this experiment are too limited in size and scope to consider a meaningful analysis of the role of gender in the perception of ORI. Nonetheless, the decidedly negative attitude of several male participants towards the ORI favour raises interesting questions about gender and the use and interpretation of ORI. These questions can be an impetus for further research, as discussed in Chapter 8.

(10) Because he's a weasel. He should just ask outright.

(11) Cause he is scared to ask out right and scared to find out that help might not be on the way.

(12) Because he is ashamed and also because he wants to flatter [...] It's also pretty passive aggressive [...]

The analysis of the favour provides additional support for the categorical distinction. High-risk bribes and propositions differ from low-risk favours with regards to three factors: the frequency with which ORI is used; the presence of calculable risks and rewards and the resulting disparity in the payoffs associated with direct and indirect speech; and the impact of facework, and the speaker's assessment of power, distance, and imposition, on the choice of ORI.

6 Standardisation

The proposition was unique in that there was a pattern of uniformity in the ORI data that was not found in either of the other two speech acts. Of the 295 instances of off-record propositions, 67% comprised a drink offer, as shown in the otherwise diverse responses in (13) – (17).

(13) Do you fancy nipping in mine for a coffee?

(14) Hey, how about a post dinner latte [...]?

(15) Charles, would you want to come up for a cup of tea?

(16) [...] I've got a bottle of wine in the fridge, fancy joining me for one last drink?

(17) Come on, let's pop into mine for a nightcap!

I propose that the drink offers are a case of standardisation, as defined by Bach (1998: 713).

A form of words is standardised for a certain use if this use, though regularised, goes beyond literal meaning [...] there is a certain core of linguistic meaning attributable on compositional grounds but a common use that cannot be explained in terms of linguistic meaning alone [...] The inference is compressed by precedent. But were there no such precedent, in which case a more elaborate inference would be required, there would still be enough contextual information available to the hearer for figuring out what is being conveyed.

I use the term “standardisation” rather than “conventionalisation” in order to draw a distinction between linguistic norms related to context-independent grammatical forms such ‘could’ and ‘would’ (Morgan 1977) (“conventionalisation”) and norms related to context-dependent content (“standardisation”). Other authors have applied these terms differently. Haugh (2015), following Davis (1998) refers to standardised uses of language as ‘third-order conventions’ – norms which describe specialised interactional practices, but are not associated with any particular linguistic form. He explains, for example, that requests in English are commonly made by using a declarative sentence to describe a problem that can be solved by doing something, such as stating ‘It’s cold in here’ to implicate the request ‘close the window’ (Haugh 2015: 71). Terkourafi (2015) discusses a ‘habit-based concept of politeness’ and explains that ‘conventionalisation consists precisely in having [a] kind of meta-knowledge about not *what* expressions mean but

how often they mean that. This meta-knowledge is crucial to politeness [...]’ (Terkourafi 2015: 17). In this thesis, I reserve the term “conventionalisation” for non-plausibly deniable conventionally indirect speech acts, while “standardisation” (similarly to third-order conventions’) is used to refer to pragmatically ambiguous ORI acts.

An expression is standardised for a particular use when the non-literal meaning is habitually and consistently used, and easily recognised, by a community of speakers and hearers. Standardisation is related to *content* rather than form. In other words, it is the *offer of a drink*, particularly a drink served in the speaker’s home, that constitutes a standardised proposition – regardless of the grammatical form, choice of lexicon, or register used. Utterances such as ‘Would you like a glass of wine?’ or ‘Fancy a coffee?’ function equally well as sexual propositions, so long as they are delivered in a suitable *context* – namely, one in which the speaker and hearer are engaged in a potentially romantic interaction. When uttered elsewhere, the drink offer (usually) retains its literal meaning only.

The prevalence of drink-related responses is evidence for the burgeoning standardisation of off-record propositions. None of the information provided to participants was intended to elicit this type of utterance over any other direct or indirect response. Additionally, the drink offers were used by males and females alike and by participants from both the US and the UK. Lee and Pinker mention a similar example while explaining the use of ORI in the proposition scenario, noting ‘the common expectation is that a man propositioning a woman after dinner would use an indirect come-on (“Would you like to come up for a cup of coffee?”) rather than a direct one (“Would you like to come up and have sex?”) [...]’ (2010: 794).

A similar proposition is also featured in a 1991 episode of the popular American comedy series “Seinfeld”. In the episode, the character George recounts a recent date to his friends. He relates:

She invites me up, at twelve o’clock at night, for coffee. And I don’t go up. “No thank you, I don’t want coffee, it keeps me up. Too late for me to drink coffee”. I said this to her. People this stupid shouldn’t be allowed to live. I can’t imagine what she must think of me’.

After feedback, and a bit of banter, from his friends, George concludes ‘She invited me up. Coffee’s not coffee. Coffee is sex [...] Coffee’s coffee in the morning, it’s not coffee at twelve o’clock at night’.

The humour of the episode stems from the standardisation of the proposition. The offer for coffee is a code – still ORI because it’s ambiguous and thus plausibly deniable – but standardised enough that the (implicated) intent is easily recognisable to the other characters and, indeed, to the viewing audience. George’s inability to immediately recognise the standardised proposition reflects the ineptness of the character.

The case for standardisation, and the use of ‘coffee as code’, is supported by the data in Experiment 4. When participants were asked to explain the motivation for the off-record utterance, ‘Fancy coming back to mine for a drink?’, 50% cited factors related to standardisation, as in examples (18) – (21).

(18) It is a socially recognised way of being suggestive [...]

(19) The phrase also has a well-established euphemistic meaning, that if someone invites another person in for a drink (only in the context of a romantic/sexual situation!) then they are also being invited for a sexual encounter [...]

(20) It’s an innuendo but also a cliché that most people will understand the meaning of.

(21) Because it is a coded statement that, based on cultural practice, is intended to suggest to [hearer] that [speaker] is inviting him over for more than just a drink [...]

Pinker, Nowak, and Lee stress that the benefits of ORI persists even in cases in which there is little doubt as to speaker’s intention (2008: 837).

[...] overt propositions are perceived as certain and act as focal points, whereas implicatures from indirect speech are perceived as being some measure short of certainty (even 99%). With the lack of a focal point to trigger a change of relationship, the speaker is given “the benefit of the doubt,” and the relationship can remain unchanged. The deniability, then, doesn’t have to be plausible, only possible.

However obvious the speaker’s intent may be, the standardised proposition offers all of the benefits of ORI. By going off-record, the speaker avoids the emotional costs associated with an

overt attempt at relationship negotiation. As an added bonus, the standardised content provides the speaker with a ‘script’ upon which to rely in a potentially awkward situation. The standardisation of the drink offer assures the speaker that the hearer will (almost certainly) interpret the utterance as intended. Finally, the ambiguity of the off-record proposition affords both interlocutors (at least a pretence of) deniability. As the *Seinfeld* episode cleverly suggests, while coffee is often code for sex, sometimes coffee really is “just coffee”.

7 Conclusion

Chapter 5 provided a detailed discussion of a series of three related experiments aimed at identifying factors, beyond P, D, and R, that can reliably explain the statistically significant differences between the use of ORI in the high-risk bribes and propositions and the low-risk favours (Experiment 2).

Experiments 3a and 3b each tested social acceptability using Likert rating scales. In Experiment 3a, the bribe was rated near the highly unacceptable end of the scale, while the favour was rated near the socially acceptable end. In Experiment 3b, there were no significant differences in the ratings of social acceptability between the +R and –R versions of the bribe scenario. The difference in ratings of social acceptability was significant in the favour scenarios. In other words, with regards to the bribes and favours only, the ratings of social acceptability support the categorical distinction between high-risk and low-risk acts. In terms of social acceptability (Experiment 3a) and susceptibility to R (Experiment 3b), however, the high-risk propositions align more closely with the favours than with the bribes. In other words, the propositions present a ‘mismatch’ with regards to categorical distinction. Social acceptability alone, then, was determined not to be a reliable explanation for the distinction.

Experiment 4 was an open-ended task focused on strategic motivations for the use of ORI. Participants are shown three ORI utterances that were used in Experiment 2 for bribes, propositions, and favours, respectively and were asked to infer the reasons for which the speaker chose to use ORI for each of the acts. In response to both of the high-risk acts – the bribe and the proposition, the majority of participants cited motivations related exclusively to SS. In contrast, motivations related to PT were overwhelming cited in the low-risk favour scenario. The different

strategic motivations associated with ORI for the high-risk and low-risk acts provide further support for the categorical distinction, explaining another way in which the acts differ from one another with regards to the use of ORI.

The three speech acts were also discussed in relation to the primary tenet of the Strategic Speaker approach – the game theoretical payoff ratio that explains why ORI is optimal when the speaker is uncertain about the hearer’s amenability. The high-risk bribe and proposition scenarios each presented the speaker with calculable risks and rewards – whether tangible (financial or legal) or intangible (social or emotional). Speaking off-record allowed the speaker to reap the potential rewards while avoiding the repercussions associated with an on-record bribe or proposition. The favour offered no such risk – the payoffs whether the act was issued on-record or off-record.

The following conclusion arises in consideration of the three experiments and the theoretical discussion: High-risk bribes and propositions differ from low-risk favours with regards to three factors: the frequency with which ORI is used; the presence of calculable risks and rewards and the resulting disparity in the payoffs associated with direct and indirect speech; and the impact of facework, and the speaker’s assessment of power, distance, and imposition, on the choice of ORI.

Chapter 5 also included a discussion of standardisation, with a focus on the frequent (yet varied) use of drink offers in the off-record propositions, an act which challenges the existing relationship between the interlocutors and, as such, poses social and emotional risks to the speaker and hearer. Chapter 6 continues with the focus on high-risk acts. Attention is shifted away from bribes, propositions, and favours towards a series of potentially relationship-changing speech acts, with the aim of determining whether the principles of the Strategic Speaker approach apply to communicative exchanges other than those upon which Pinker and colleagues base their theory of ORI.

CHAPTER 6

A SERIES OF EMPIRICAL TESTS ON RELATIONSHIP CHANGE

1 Introduction

Chapter 6 focuses on the use of ORI in a subset of high-risk speech acts which, like the proposition scenario discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, pose (intangible) social and emotional risks to the speaker and hearer. The chapter describes a series of experiments centred on the use of ORI in the process of relationship negotiation, a key component of the Strategic Speaker approach. Experiments 5, 5a, 6, 6a, and 7 explore novel scenarios, involving different speech acts and different types of relationship negotiation, with the aim of determining whether the tenets of the Strategic Speaker approach are generalisable beyond the specific scenarios Pinker and colleagues discuss. The experiments use both multiple choice and open-ended questions to elicit speech act data and include both potentially relationship-changing scenarios and non-relationship-changing scenarios. Scalar rating questions are used to measure social acceptability, awkwardness, and typicality – factors which, I argue, determine whether or not a given scenario has the potential to qualitatively change the nature of the relationship between the interlocutors. The use of ORI was infrequent in all but one of the experiments and was limited to a particular subset of speech acts. Two general trends emerge from experiments 5, 5a, 6, 6a, and 7, both of which challenge SS assumptions. Firstly, many of the scenarios which are presumed to be relationship changing are not perceived as such by the participants. Secondly, the potential for relationship change itself is not a reliable predictor for the use of ORI. In the instances in which ORI is used in potentially relationship-changing scenarios, I argue that the speakers' preferences are motivated by factors other than (just) relationship negotiation. In particular, ORI is associated with speech acts related to romantic interactions and financial transactions.

2 Experimental motivations: Understanding and applying relationship negotiation

Experiments 2, 3a, 3b, and 4 focus exclusively on bribes, sexual propositions, and favours – the three scenarios upon which Pinker and colleagues focus their theory of ORI. The findings from each of the experiments lend support to the assumptions of SS. ORI was rarely used in the favour

scenario, but was produced with high frequency, 78% and 92% of responses, respectively, in the bribe and proposition. Additional analyses confirmed that there were no effects of power, distance, or imposition, the factors Brown and Levinson attribute to the use of ORI, in any of the scenarios. The high-risk bribes and propositions were shown to differ from the low-risk favours with regards to the strategic motivations that participants attribute to the use of ORI, with SS motives, including the potential for relationship change, cited in relation to the high-risk acts.

While the data fit the predictions of the Strategic Speaker approach, evidence is limited to the scenarios upon which the theory was based – the bribes, propositions, and favours that Pinker and colleagues test empirically and explain in-depth in their theoretical arguments. The conclusions, then, cannot be generalised beyond these specific scenarios. Generalisation to novel scenarios that satisfy the underlying motivations for ORI is a necessary step in order to validate the principles of the Strategic Speaker approach. Experiments focused on novel SS scenarios would strengthen the argument in support of the SS account of ORI by providing additional empirical evidence and, in so doing, confirming that the findings thus far were not due to an ad hoc or accidental property of the three scenarios around which the theory was built. Experiments centred on the process of relationship negotiation test the claim that speakers use ORI in order to balance the benefits of pursuing a speech act with the intangible social and emotional risks associated with the on-record performance of the act.

Pinker and colleagues ground their discussion of relationship negotiation on Fiske's relational models theory (Fiske 1991, 1992, 2000), which identifies different relationship types that govern human interaction, including cooperation and communication. They explain, 'The assumed relationship type among a pair of individuals has dramatic effects on the behaviour that is acceptable between them [...] Behaviour that is acceptable in one relationship type can thus be anomalous in another' (2008: 835). The relationship types are summarised below:

- **Dominance:** A relationship characterised by qualitative and socially recognised differences in power. Within the bounds of this relationship, the dominant individual has the right to control resources at will.
- **Communality:** A relationship between intimates, including relatives and close friends. Resources are shared freely and solidarity is valued.

- Reciprocity: A relationship common among acquaintances and colleagues. The distribution of resources is equitable and often negotiated explicitly. A fourth category, ‘market sharing’, is subsumed within reciprocity in the Strategic Speaker approach and includes financial transactions between buyers, lenders, borrowers, and sellers.

The relationship type between a speaker and a hearer dictates which speech acts are permissible. A speaker in a dominance-based relationship, for example, may suitably issue direct commands. Similar acts are likely to be viewed less favourably when issued within the confines of a communal or reciprocal relationship. Pinker, Nowak, and Lee elaborate further on the concepts of language and relationship change (2008: 835):

[...] language serves two purposes: to convey a proposition (e.g., a bribe, a command, an offer) and to negotiate and maintain a relationship. People achieve these dual ends by using language at two levels. The literal form of a sentence is consistent with the *safest* relationship between speaker and hearer. At the same time, by implicating a meaning between the lines, the speaker counts on the listener to infer its real intent, which may initiate a different relationship.

Pinker and colleagues argue that ORI is optimal whenever the performance of the intended speech act has the potential to qualitatively change the nature of the relationship between the interlocutors. If the proffered speech act is rejected or otherwise challenged by the hearer, then the attempted relationship change fails. The result is embarrassment or awkwardness for the speaker in the short term and, potentially, a damaged or terminated relationship in the long term. By going off-record, the speaker can plausibly deny the intention of the act and, consequently, the attempt at relationship change, thereby maintaining the (safe) existing relationship between the interlocutors.

3 Testing relationship change: An overview

Three separate experiments were conducted, each of which included supplementary material in the form of pre-tests and follow-up tests. Experiments 5 and 5a were inspired by a scenario

mentioned by Pinker and colleagues while Experiments 6, 6a, and 7 were developed to identify relationship-changing scenarios other than those explicitly described by the authors. The scenarios differed not only in content, but also in terms of the type of relationship change at play. Each of the experiments included scenarios and speech acts which, according to the Strategic Speaker approach, should elicit a qualitative relationship change.

The experimental materials were prepared in Qualtrics and were accessible online through a link hosted on MTurk. Participants were recruited via MTurk and were rewarded a small sum, via Amazon payments, for completing the task they were assigned. All of the participants were based in the U.S. and were native English speakers. Different participants were recruited for each of the experiments.

In the experiments, participants were presented with complementary scenarios, depicting either varying forms of relationship change or the presence or absence of relationship changing elements, respectively. Relationship change was the critical factor and the parallel scenarios were compared to determine whether relationship change affected the participants' use of ORI. Unless otherwise noted, no independent manipulations were made to the previously tested factors of power (P), distance (D), and imposition (R). An explicit focus on imposition was avoided so as to eliminate any complicating factors which may have led participants to use ORI when they otherwise would not have – in other words, to ensure that the participants' choice of ORI was due to relationship change and not (only) to face-threat. Manipulations to distance and power, except where mentioned, were excluded to avoid a conflation with relationship change.

When the targeted speech acts were elicited through an open-ended format, responses were coded following a binary distinction and utterances were assessed as either ORI or not ORI using the same scheme developed for Experiment 2 (see Chapter 4). For two of the experiments, a multiple choice format was adopted, with responses formulated to be blunt, negatively polite, positively polite, and ORI. Scalar questions were included in the experiments to capture the participants' awareness and judgements of a variety of issues related to relationship change and supplementary open-ended questions were used to inquire about the participants' choice of response and to address other factors related to relationship change.

3.1 Research question

The following research question informs the overall aim of the experiments discussed in this chapter. Individual he experiments address additional, complementary research questions.

RQ1. (How frequently) do participants employ off-record utterances in scenarios posing qualitative relationship changes?

3.2 Predictions

The following prediction outlines the stance of the Strategic Speaker approach with regards to relationship change. This prediction is tested in each of the experiments. Additional predictions are introduced where relevant.

P1. A speaker will use off-record indirectness in situations in which the speech act he or she intends to perform has the potential to effect a qualitative change in the relationship between the speaker and the hearer.¹

P2. A speaker will not use off-record indirectness in situations in which the speech act he or she intends to perform does not have the potential to effect a qualitative change in the relationship between the speaker and the hearer (barring any other conditions, including legal or financial consequences, which would themselves motivate the speaker to use ORI.)

4 Experiment 5: Lending and selling

Experiment 5 was conducted in two parts, the primary experiment and a follow-up.

4.1 Experiment 5: Scenarios and design

The scenarios used in Experiment 5 portray transactions between two sets of individuals, each representing different relationship types, with regards to a commodity. The scenarios were inspired by the following assertion, which evokes the popular saying, ‘don’t mix business with pleasure’ (Lee and Pinker 2010: 794):

¹ An early version of this prediction appeared in Soltys, Terkourafi, and Katsos. That predication stated that the act must have the potential to effect an ‘unwelcomed’ relationship change (2014: 43). The prediction included here has been updated to more accurately reflect the principles of the Strategic Speaker approach.

The sale of a car or house can feel perfectly comfortable between strangers or acquaintances (equality matching or market pricing), but it becomes awkward if conducted between close friends (a violation of communal sharing).

For the purposes of this experiment, a smartphone was used in place of a house or a car. The item is admittedly smaller scale and its sale likely to be less tense and less complicated. It is for precisely this reason that it was chosen. The experiment was limited to a one-turn, written response. The sale of house, on the other hand, occurs over a series of complex turns and on-going negotiations. Fixed legal and financial terminology is used and a third party often participates in the deliberations. The sale of a smartphone can be completed in fewer turns and with more flexibility in phrasing. Participants are more likely to be experienced with the sale of similar scale items than with larger negotiations. Finally, while a smartphone is not comparable to a house in cost or worth, it is still a valuable commodity, both practically and monetarily.

Two variations were introduced to the experimental scenarios for a 2x2 design – the relationship between the interlocutors and the nature of the transaction. In order to avoid a conflation between distance and relationship type, two aspects of distance were fixed – the frequency with which the interlocutors see one another (in the capacity that they do) and the length of time they have known one another (and presumably, become familiar with one another within the context of their relationship). In other words, while the nature of their relationships varies, the conditions which frame the relationship are set. The friends are ‘closer’ than business associates, then, because they are in a communal relationship, not because they are better acquainted. The relationship conditions were set as follows:

- The speaker and hearer have been friends for 10 years and socialise regularly. Their interaction is amicable and their relationship falls within the communal model.
- The speaker and hearer have been business associates for 10 years and meet regularly. Their interaction is professional and their relationship falls within the reciprocal model.

The transactional aspect was manipulated to depict the speaker’s intention to either sell or lend a valuable smartphone to the hearer. The act of lending fits neatly within the definition of the communal relationship, which ‘conforms to the ethos, “what’s mine is thine; what’s thine is

mine” (Pinker, Nowak, and Lee 2008: 835). As such, lending should be natural within a communal relationship, including the one depicted in the experiment. Selling, on the other hand, is characteristic of a reciprocal relationship. It involves a quid pro quo exchange (in this case, a mobile phone in exchange for money) similar to the types of interactions in which business associates are likely to engage. Two scenarios – selling between friends and lending between business associates – present a mismatch between the relationship type of the interlocutors and the transactional nature of the act they are performing. These scenarios, then, are potentially relationship changing.

Participants were shown each of the four scenarios, in a randomised order, and instructed to produce the target speech act. Additionally, they were asked to rate the appropriateness of the speech act within the context of the depicted relationships. Ratings were on a seven point scale, where 1 was equal to ‘completely appropriate’ and 7 was ‘not appropriate at all’. The open-ended question, along with a sample scenario text, is below. Introductory lines describing the relationship between the speaker and hearer have been removed.

The other day, [speaker] accidentally overheard [hearer] talking to a mutual acquaintance. [Hearer] said that he had lost his smartphone and desperately needed a replacement. [Speaker], coincidentally, recently bought himself a new smartphone. His old smartphone, last year’s model, is in mint condition. To help [hearer] out, [speaker] decides to approach [hearer] and offer to [lend/sell] him the phone.

How should [speaker] phrase his offer? Please provide an example of what [speaker] might appropriately say to [hearer] in this situation.

4.2 Experiment 5: Predictions

The following predictions were made.

P1. Participants will regularly produce off-record utterances in the two scenarios deemed relationship changing – selling between friends and lending between business associates.

P2. Participants will rarely produce off-record utterances in the two scenarios deemed non-relationship changing – lending between friends and selling between business associates.

P3. The two relationship changing scenarios will be rated as significantly less appropriate than the respective non-relationship changing scenarios.

4.3 Experiment 5: Participants

The main experiment was completed by 40 participants (23 males), ranging in age from 15 to 68 years with a mean age of 37 years. Fourteen of the participants had completed a high school degree only and the remaining 26 had a university degree. A follow-up experiment was completed by an additional 15 participants (9 females), ranging in age from 19 to 63 years, with a mean age of 36 years. Six participants had a high school degree and 9 had a university degree.

4.4 Experiment 5: Results

Table 1 shows the use of ORI and the appropriateness ratings for each of the four scenarios. The following abbreviations are used to express relationship change: ‘C = C’ and ‘R = R’ are the non-relationship changing scenarios and refer to communality and reciprocity, respectively. ‘C → R’ stands for a (potential) change from communality to reciprocity while ‘R → C’ is a potential change in the opposite direction, from reciprocity to communality.

Table 1: Mean use of ORI and appropriateness ratings in Experiment 5

	Lending (friends) C = C	Selling (friends) C → R	Lending (associates) R → C	Selling (associates) R = R
ORI	0	0.05	0	0.15
Appropriateness	1.43 (0.75)	2.48 (1.65)	2.23 (1.35)	2.53 (1.72)

The non-relationship changing communality scenario, lending between friends, was rated as the most appropriate of the four scenarios. Each of the scenarios was rated closest to the ‘completely appropriate’ end of the scale. There were statistically significant differences in the ratings of appropriateness between the lending with friends scenario and the selling with friends scenario ($t(39) = -3.76, p = 0.001, d = 0.59$). In other words, as predicted, there was a significant difference in the ratings of appropriateness between the non-relationship changing communality scenario and the scenario in which there was a potential change from communality to reciprocity. The

differences in ratings between the selling with business associates scenario and lending with business associates scenario was not statistically significant ($t(39) = 0.89, p = 0.38$). Contrary to predictions, there was no significant difference in the ratings of appropriateness between the non-relationship changing reciprocity scenario and the scenario in which there was a potential change from reciprocity to communality.

Overall, there were very few instances of ORI. As predicted, one of the non-relationship changing scenarios, lending between friends, yielded no ORI responses. The complementary scenario, selling between friends, included two ORI utterances. The use of ORI was predicted in this condition, though a higher frequency was expected. Contrary to predictions, there was no ORI in the other potentially relationship-changing scenario, lending between business associates, while ORI was used in the non-relationship-changing version, selling between associates.

4.5 Experiment 5: Discussion of ORI data

On-record offers often included both an explicit reference to the nature of the transaction (lending or selling) and a designation of the hearer as the intended beneficiary of the transaction. In the case of selling, price was often specified, as in example (1), which was used in the selling between friends scenario.

(1) Ryan, I will be happy to sell you my old phone for \$50.00 if you are interested

ORI offers, on the other hand, typically excluded the designation of the hearer as beneficiary. Examples (2) and (3) are from the selling between friends and selling between business associates scenarios, respectively and were produced by different participants (emphasis added).

(2) Hey Ryan, I was thinking of selling my old smartphone. There's nothing wrong with it. *Do you know anyone* who is looking for one?

(3) I've been thinking about getting a new phone, *would you happen to know anyone who is interested* in buying a smart phone?

In the ORI examples, the ambiguous reference serves two purposes. Firstly, it avoids a direct imposition upon the hearer by providing him two with options. He can respond to the intended meaning and take up the offer, essentially replying to the implicated question 'Do *you* want to

buy this phone?’ Conversely, he can take advantage of the out, declining the offer by responding instead to the literal request for information.

The off-record responses, then, lend themselves to a Politeness Theory-based interpretation. Brown and Levinson explain, ‘face-threatening acts are redressed with [...] mechanisms that give the addressee an out, a face-saving line of escape, permitting him to feel that his response is not coerced’ (1987: 70). From this perspective, the use of ORI in both of the selling scenarios can be attributed to face-threat, caused by both the imposition inherent in the financial transaction and, in the case of the business associates, the social distance created by their professional roles. More data, including additional ORI utterances and ratings of P, D, and R, are needed to confirm this interpretation. The off-record offers also provide strategic benefits to the speaker. The ambiguity allows him to feign ignorance of the hearer’s predicament and to protect his own face by concealing the fact that he heeded, and acted upon, information that he was not meant to overhear.

Outwardly, the data suggest that the use of ORI is a function of the act of selling, rather than one of relationship change. In other words, ORI is used according to the transaction type – here a reciprocal, financial one – regardless of the relationship between the interlocutors. Interestingly, the data provide insight into another facet of the Strategic Speaker approach – payoff ratios. Lending poses no tangible benefit to the speaker. Selling, on the other hand, does, by affording the speaker financial remuneration. The speaker, then, may have a greater stake in the success of the selling scenarios than in the lending scenarios. ORI may be used strategically to ensure maximum benefit for the speaker, without the risk of imposing too heavily on the hearer. With the current dataset, however, there are too few instances of ORI to confirm or reject any of these suggestions.

4.6 Experiment 5a: Measuring relationship change

In light of the data and, especially, the absence of ORI, three possible interpretations emerge:

Interpretation 1: Two of the scenarios tested – selling between friends and lending between business associates – have the potential to effect a *substantial* qualitative relationship change between the speaker and the hearer. Contrary to Pinker and

colleagues' assertions, the prospect of a substantial relationship change *does not* motivate the speaker to use off-record indirectness.

Interpretation 2: Two of the scenarios tested – selling between friends and lending between business associates – have the potential to effect a *minor* qualitative relationship change between the speaker and the hearer. The prospect of a minor relationship change only is *not sufficient* to motivate the speaker to use off-record indirectness.

Interpretation 3: None of the scenarios tested has the potential to effect any type of qualitative relationship change between the speaker and the hearer. Barring the absence of other complicating factors, the speaker has no motivation to use off-record indirectness for strategic purposes.

Under the first interpretation, the lack of ORI in the relationship changing scenarios is evidence against Pinker and colleagues' claims. In the latter two interpretations, on the other hand, the data does not properly address the issue of relationship change. In order to evaluate the data meaningfully, I needed to determine whether the critical scenarios depicted relationship change. The appropriateness question was initially developed with this intention, under the assumption that, if an act is inappropriate within an existing relationship type, then attempting that act would, by default, amount to an attempted relationship change. On further examination, this question may not fully capture the nature of relationship change. An act may be infrequent or dispreferred within a given relationship type, but still appropriate if used. In other words, there need not be a direct correlation between appropriateness and relationship change.

After the ORI data were collected, two additional scalar questions were developed with the goal of measuring relationship change. One question addresses typicality, the other, awkwardness. The typicality question addresses the legitimacy of the elicited speech act within the confines of the relationship type. If an act is rated as typical within the relationship, then the performance of the act is suitable and unlikely to lead to relationship change. Likewise, an atypical act introduces the potential for relationship change.

The awkwardness question relies on the following assertion: 'When two people perceive that one of [the] relational models applies to their interaction in a given context, each tacitly accepts the designated kinds of transactions as socially legitimate. Transactions appropriate to other models,

in contrast, elicit feelings of awkwardness' (Lee and Pinker 2010: 794). The awkwardness question relates to the breach of relationship type and the subsequent emotional costs to the interlocutors. If a scenario is judged to be awkward, then the speech act is considered potentially relationship changing. Conversely, if the scenario is not deemed awkward, then the act is not considered to be relationship changing.

The following predictions were made with regards to the ratings of typicality and awkwardness.

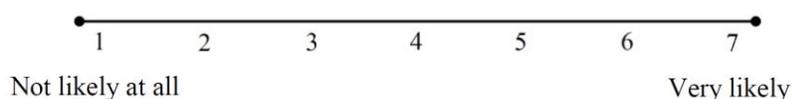
P1. The two relationship-changing scenarios will be rated as significantly less typical than the respective non-relationship-changing scenarios.

P2. The two relationship-changing scenarios will be rated as significantly more awkward than the respective non-relationship-changing scenarios.

The rating questions were presented using seven point Likert scales. New participants were recruited and were shown the same four scenarios used in Experiment 5. The order in which the scenarios appeared was randomised as was the order in which the scalar questions were displayed. Sample questions are displayed in Figure 1. Table 2 shows the mean ratings for typicality and awkwardness for each of the four scenarios.

Figure 1: Ratings of typicality and awkwardness

Consider [speaker]'s typical interactions with [hearer] to date. As friends, are [speaker] and [hearer] likely to sell items to one another on a regular basis?



How awkward is it for [speaker] to offer to sell the phone to his friend [hearer]?

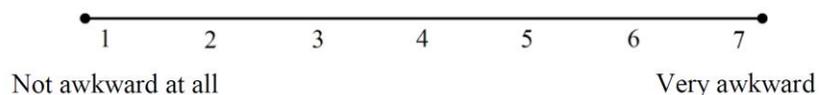


Table 2: Mean ratings of typicality and awkwardness in Experiment 5a

	Lending (friends) C = C	Selling (friends) C → R	Lending (associates) R → C	Selling (associates) R = R
Typicality	5.47 (2.23)	3.93 (2.02)	5.00 (1.65)	4.47 (1.96)
Awkwardness	1.93 (1.44)	3.60 (2.29)	2.60 (1.30)	3.13 (2.03)

The lending between friends scenario was rated close to 7, which stands for ‘very likely’ or, in other words, ‘very typical’. There was a statistically significant difference between the ratings of typicality in the lending between friends scenario and its counterpart, selling between friends ($t(14) = 2.74$, $p = 0.016$, $d = 0.71$). As predicted, the potentially relationship-changing scenario was rated as less typical than the non-relationship-changing counterpart. The difference in typicality between lending and selling was not statistically significant in the scenarios involving business associates ($t(14) = 0.81$, $p = 0.43$). Both acts were rated as (nearly equally) likely to occur within the reciprocal relationship.

There were no significant differences in the ratings of typicality between the lending in the friends scenario and the lending between business associates scenario ($t(14) = 0.71$, $p = 0.49$). Likewise, the difference in ratings between the two selling scenarios was not statistically significant ($t(14) = -0.86$, $p = 0.41$). In other words, neither the act of lending, nor the act of selling, was characteristic of only one relationship type.

Selling between friends was rated as the most awkward act, with a mean rating nearing the midpoint on the awkwardness scale. As with the typicality ratings, the difference between the awkwardness ratings in the lending with friends and selling with friends scenarios was statistically significant ($t(14) = -2.71$, $p = 0.017$, $d = 0.70$). Again, the differences followed predictions, with the non-relationship-changing scenario rated as less awkward than the relationship-changing scenario. The difference in the awkwardness ratings between lending with business associates and selling with business associates scenarios was not significant ($t(14) = -1.05$, $p = 0.31$). There were no significant differences between lending in the friends and business associates scenarios, respectively ($t(14) = -2.00$, $p = 0.07$) nor were significant differences between the two selling scenarios ($t(14) = 1.28$, $p = 0.22$).

The data confirm that the selling between friends scenario *does* involve a qualitative relationship change, as the scenario is significantly more awkward, and less typical, than its non-relationship changing counterpart, lending between friends. Lending between business associates, on the other hand, is *not* relationship-changing according to the standards defined in this experiment. The data suggest that the effect of relationship change is not bidirectional. While the introduction of a reciprocal act into a communal relationship poses the potential for a qualitative change, the reverse is not the case. A communal act can be performed within the confines of a reciprocal relationship without the threat of relationship change. The data also suggest that, at least in terms of the scenarios tested in this experiment, ORI is not a function of relationship change. While ORI was used in the relationship-changing selling between friends scenario, its use was limited to two instances. ORI was also used in a non-relationship-changing scenario, selling between business associates. The findings suggest that the use ORI is related to the financial nature of the transaction, rather than the potential for relationship change. This prediction is explored further in Experiments 6 and 6a.

5 A request for reimbursement: (Re)testing communality and reciprocity

Experiment 6 was a two-part experiment, comprising both an open-ended task and a multiple choice exercise.

5.1 Experiment 6: Scenarios and design

In Experiment 6, an additional type of monetary transaction was introduced, in keeping with the assumption that financial matters are awkward between friends because they foster a move from a communal relationship to reciprocal one. If the transaction goes smoothly, the change may be temporary and the pair may transition back to a communal relationship once the issue is resolved. If the hearer's response is antagonistic, however, the awkwardness may persist and the existing relationship may be damaged.

In Experiment 5, the sale or loan of the smartphone was beneficial to the hearer as it provided him with a needed commodity. The speaker benefited secondarily by virtue of the profit made in the selling scenario, but not in the lending scenario. There was no concrete loss to the speaker,

however, if he decided to opt out or, indeed, if the hearer refused to purchase the phone. To address this shortcoming, I developed a scenario in which the speaker did have a vested interest in the act succeeding as intended. In Experiment 6, the speaker was responsible for collecting the \$50 owed to him by the hearer. This scenario presents a payoff ratio similar to one described by Pinker and colleagues with regards to another relationship changing scenario (2008: 836). Following the pattern established in Chapter 2, each of the cells present the perlocutionary effect of the speaker’s decision. Two of the cells – asking directly and indirectly to an antagonistic hearer – also show the risks and rewards associated with the performance of the act. According to the payoff ratio, asking for the \$50 indirectly is optimal, especially when the speaker cannot reliably anticipate how the hearer will react to the request. If the hearer responds cooperatively, then the speaker’s goal is fulfilled. If the hearer responds antagonistically, the speaker is the same position, financially and (ostensibly) socially, as he was prior to the performance of the relationship changing act.

Table 3: Experiment 5 payoff ratio

	Cooperative hearer	Antagonistic hearer
Don’t ask	Funds are not reimbursed	Funds are not reimbursed
Ask directly	Funds are reimbursed	Funds are not reimbursed, awkwardness due to overt relationship negotiation
Ask indirectly	Funds are reimbursed	Funds are not reimbursed, awkwardness alleviated by plausible deniability

The following conditions were applied and the order in which the scenarios appeared was randomised. The element of forgetfulness was added so that the hearer was not assumed to be malicious or hostile.

- **Relationship change:** The speaker and hearer are close friends and the speaker lent the hearer money, out of pocket, during a social event. \$50 is owed to him personally. There is potential for relationship change because dealing with formal financial transactions is not within the normal scope of a communal relationship.

- No relationship change: The speaker and hearer are course-mates. The speaker volunteered to collect money, on behalf of the department, during an academic event and the hearer has not paid. \$50 is owed to the department. There is no potential for relationship change because dealing with formal financial transactions is within the normal scope of a reciprocal relationship.

Certainty manipulations were added to test another facet of the Strategic Speaker approach, namely, the assumption that speakers opt for ORI when they are uncertain about the hearers' values and amenability to the proffered speech act.

- Certainty: The hearer has a reputation for being forgetful when it comes to returning money. When reminded, he is known to always pay back debts willingly and happily.
- Uncertainty: The hearer has a reputation for being forgetful when it comes to returning money. The speaker does not know how the hearer has reacted to past requests for reimbursement.

The request for \$50 was elicited using an open-ended format and responses were coded following the coding scheme used in Experiment 2 (Chapter 4). Each scenario included the following question on certainty, along with ratings of awkwardness and typicality similar to scales used in the follow-up to Experiment 5. The certainty question is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Ratings of certainty

Can you anticipate how [hearer] will react to your request? How certain are you in this prediction?



5.2 Experiment 6: Research question

In addition to the primary research question noted in Section 3.1, Experiment 6 addressed the following question.

RQ1. (How) does the factor of certainty affect participants' use of off-record utterances in scenarios posing (and, conversely, not posing) qualitative relationship change?

5.3 Experiment 6: Prediction

The following prediction addresses the element of certainty.

P1. A speaker's uncertainty about the hearer's values will prompt the speaker's decision to go off-record, but the addition of certainty will not dissuade the speaker from going off-record (Soltys, Terkourafi, and Katsos 2014: 44).²

In other words, ORI is predicted in all cases in which the speaker is uncertain about the hearer's values. In cases of certainty, the speaker may opt for ORI if other conditions, such as relationship change, prompt him or her to do so.

5.4 Experiment 6: Participants

Experiment 6 was completed by eleven participants (6 males), ranging in age from 23 to 67 years, with a mean age of 43 years. A follow-up experiment, Experiment 6a, was completed by 20 participants (13 females), ranging in age from 24 to 50 years, with a mean age of 37 years.

5.5 Experiment 6: Results

Table 3 shows the mean rates of ORI, as well as the mean ratings of awkwardness, typicality, and certainty, for each of the tested scenarios. 'Relationship change' is abbreviated as 'R.C.'

² This prediction was included in Soltys, Terkourafi, and Katsos (2014) as part of theoretical discussion comparing Politeness Theory and the Strategic Speaker approach. The article did not include data from Experiment 6 or any other empirical study.

Table 4: Mean use of ORI and rating scales in Experiment 6

	Scenario A R.C., certainty	Scenario B R.C., uncertainty	Scenario C No R.C., certainty	Scenario D No R.C., uncertainty
ORI	0	0	0	0
Awkwardness	4.18 (1.72)	4.00 (1.90)	3.82 (2.32)	4.00 (2.00)
Typicality	4.36 (1.69)	3.64 (1.69)	4.55 (1.37)	3.91 (1.51)
Certainty	4.91 (1.58)	4.36 (1.03)	5.27 (1.10)	3.45 (1.29)

ORI was not used in any of the scenarios, regardless of the settings of certainty or relationship type. There were no statistically significant differences in the ratings of either awkwardness or typicality amongst any of the settings. There were statistically significant differences in the ratings of certainty between two sets of conditions: scenarios A and D ($t(10) = 2.59$, $p = 0.027$, $d = 0.78$) and scenarios C and D ($t(10) = 3.50$, $p = 0.006$, $d = 1.06$). The differences in the ratings of certainty between the other contrasting scenarios (A and B, A and C) were not statistically significant.

5.6 Re-testing the request for reimbursement: Data and discussion

A follow-up study was developed in order to address the absence of ORI in Experiment 6. The fact that there were no statistically significant differences in the ratings of either awkwardness or typicality suggests the scenarios used may not have adequately depicted relationship change. In such a case, the absence of ORI can be easily explained: ORI is predicted only in cases of relationship change. If the scenarios did not pose the potential for such a change, then ORI is not expected. In Experiment 6, the addition of uncertainty did not motivate the participants to use of ORI. Due to the overall absence of ORI, however, one cannot surmise that the data provide evidence against the certainty prediction. In Experiment 6a, the factor of certainty was eliminated to avoid conflation with the other settings.

Changes were made to the text of the scenarios with two aims: to depict the difference between the nature of communal and reciprocal relationships more noticeably and to ensure that all details, other than those directly related to relationship type, were constant and, thus, appropriately comparable. In Experiment 6, the speaker in the non-relationship-changing scenario was tasked with collecting funds on behalf of an academic department. While he and the

hearer were social equals, the formal structure under they were operating may be more akin to a dominance-based relationship than a reciprocal one. The fact that the money is owed to the department, and not the speaker himself, distinguishes the non-relationship-changing scenario from the potentially relationship-changing one in two ways – the external pressure upon the hearer and the fact that the speaker is functioning as an intermediary rather than a direct beneficiary.

The new relationships and monetary transactions were described as follows with the aim of meaningfully depicting relationship change.

- Communal relationship: *“A few weeks ago, you met a close friend for dinner at an expensive restaurant. You spent the evening as you usually do together – chatting about your personal lives and reminiscing.”*
- Reciprocal relationship: *“A few weeks ago, you met a business associate for dinner at an expensive restaurant. You spent the evening as you usually do together – discussing business plans and reviewing contracts.”*

The following text, outlining the details of scenario, was identical for both relationship types.

When it was time to pay, [hearer] reached in his pocket and realised he’d forgotten his wallet. You offered to cover his portion of the bill, \$50.00, and he promised to pay you back right away. You’ve run in to [hearer] a few times and so far, he hasn’t paid you back or mentioned the money.

Participants were then asked to select the utterance that was the best fit for the scenario from amongst responses formulated to be blunt, negatively polite, positively polite, and ORI, respectively. The scenarios were presented in a randomised order and American terminology was used in accordance with the demographics of the participants. The utterances are reproduced below and the intended levels of directness and politeness are included in brackets.

- (4) Can you give me the \$50.00 you owe me? [blunt]
- (5) I’m really sorry to have to bring this up, but you wouldn’t happen to have that \$50.00 by any chance, would you? [negatively polite]

(6) Hey buddy. I know you've been busy, but do you have that 50 bucks you owe me?
Thanks. [positively polite]

(7) I've had a lot of extra expenses this month and I'm running short on cash. [ORI]

After selecting their responses, participants were asked to justify their choice and to explain if, and why, the scenario was awkward. The awkwardness question was scored using a binary scale – a scenario either had the potential to be (at least somewhat) awkward or it did not. The results of the multiple choice questionnaire are presented in Table 5. The figures represent the mean frequency with which each response type was chosen.

Table 5: Multiple choice responses and ratings in Experiment 6a

	Communal relationship	Reciprocal relationship
Blunt	0.10	0.05
Negatively polite	0.20	0.25
Positively polite	0.65	0.65
ORI	0.05	0.05
Awkwardness	0.65	0.80

ORI was the least preferred option for both the potentially relationship-changing communal scenario and non-relationship-changing reciprocal scenario, despite the fact that both scenarios were considered awkward by the majority of participants.

The two participants who selected the ORI option justified their choices as shown in example (8), from the communal relationship and example (9) from the reciprocal relationship. Example (8) refers to the awkwardness of the situation in general, without mention of the relationship setting, and shows the participant's recognition of the fact that the request is implicated via hint. Example (9), on the other hand, specifies that the participant was motivated exclusively by politeness concerns. As in Experiment 5, ORI was used within the confines of a (non-relationship-changing) formal and distant relationship, as predicted by Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory.

(8) I do not like to outright ask people for money back. I would hope that by saying this they would get the hint and pay the money back.

(9) I want to be polite about things.

The participants who chose the polite options justified their responses as being polite and friendly while also direct and clear enough to express their intent and to ensure a response. Awkwardness was most often discussed in relation to the financial nature of the transaction, rather than the relationship between the interlocutors. In other words, awkwardness was a measure of imposition rather than relationship change and, while participants were sensitive to the need to address the matter strategically, they did so through means other than ORI.

An alternative interpretation is also possible. The participants may have decided that the desire for reimbursement outweighs any concerns related to relationship change. In other words, the financial consequences of asking indirectly (and having the hearer either misunderstand or opt out) may be considered worse than the social or emotional consequences of asking directly (and potentially threatening the existing relationship). Participants may have opted for polite on-record options, regardless of the relationship type in which they were operating, to ensure clarity and to increase the likelihood that the reimbursement will be granted.

6 Experiment 7: Dominance and communality

Experiment 7 was conducted in two parts, a pre-test and the primary experiment, the latter of which comprised several elements, including multiple choice tasks and open-ended responses.

6.1 Experiment 7: Scenarios and design

Experiment 7 introduces a new relationship type into the experimental equation – dominance. Whereas communality and reciprocity are each characterised by balances of power, dominance is defined by quantifiable, and socially recognised, power differences. The switch between communality and dominance, then, may be more significant than the move from communality to reciprocity and, as such, more likely to yield ORI. Two examples of dominance-based relationships were included in the experiment – one involving team members and another centred on the workplace. The communal relationship comprised a (either budding or existing) romantic partnership between the interlocutors.

The main experiment was divided into five tasks, each depicting a different scenario type and completed by a separate set of participants. There were three relationship-changing scenarios, two representing a potential move from a dominance-based relationship to a communal one and one depicting a move in the other direction, from communality to dominance. The remaining scenarios were non-relationship-changing and featured dominance-based and communal relationships, respectively.

Each of the tasks involving dominance-based relationships included two versions of the scenario – one in which the speaker occupied a socially recognised position of power over the hearer (+P) and one in which hearer was in the dominant role (–P). The scenarios were presented in randomised order. The scenario depicting an existing communal relationship did not include these distinctions, as communality is characterised by a balance of power. The manipulations to P were added for two reasons – to expand upon the relationship types discussed by Pinker and colleagues and to empirically measure a key component of Politeness Theory.

Pinker, Nowak, and Lee explain that dominance-based relationships are ‘governed by the ethos, “Don’t mess with me”’ (2008: 835). Their focus, then, is on the dominant (+P) individual. A speaker in this position has the power to impose upon the hearer and to issue blunt speech acts. In order for an individual to be dominant, of course, there must also be a non-dominant (–P) counterpart. Pinker and colleagues do *not* address the rights and power of the latter individual. He or she is a supporting member of a dominance-based relationship, though his or her role within in it is likely very different to that of the dominant partner. By examining both +P and the –P speakers, I can fully explore the use of ORI within dominance-based relationships.

The distinction between +P and –P speakers is fundamental in Politeness Theory. While Brown and Levinson, like Pinker and colleagues, stress the rights of the +P speaker, they also comment upon the position of the –P speaker. An individual in a –P position, they note, may be motivated to use ORI for politeness reasons and, specifically, for deference. Testing both settings of P, then, is also a means of evaluating predictions related to Politeness Theory.

Each of the scenarios, bar the non-relationship changing workplace task, involves a romantic relationship. The choice to focus on dating was two-fold. Firstly, it is a type of relationship to which Lee and Pinker devote significant attention, both in their empirical work and in their theoretical discussion. Pinker, Nowak, and Lee explain, for example, ‘The ambiguity between

dominance and sex (a kind of communal relationship) is the battleground of sexual harassment conflicts, and the ambiguity between friendship and sex gives rise to the frisson of dating' (2008: 836).

Secondly, the romantic relationships used in Experiment 7 provide an interesting contrast to the proposition scenario examined in detail in Experiment 2 (see Chapter 4). While both scenarios are romantic in nature, the way in which they bring about relationship change varies. In the proposition scenario, the speaker performs the speech act at the conclusion of a date. One may assume that a relationship change (or at least an openness to said change) is already in progress by virtue of the hearer's acceptance of the date. In other words, the speaker has already broken the proverbial ice and the proposition is a means of *confirming*, or perhaps, testing, the changing nature of the relationship. In the date scenario, on the other hand, the speaker must ask the hearer on a first date, thereby *initiating* a hitherto unattempted change in the relationship.

The scenarios used in Experiment 7 are summarised in Table 6. Each of the scenarios used gender neutral names for the protagonists in order to avoid bias. In each of the scenarios, with the exception of the date between the existing couple, the speaker and hearer were in the depicted (non-romantic) relationship for a period of one year. In other words, the relationship was well-established and up-to-date. The existing couple were noted to have been in a romantic relationship for a few months and to have asked one another on dates several times. This ensured that the relationship was stable yet still in the 'dating' stage. In the workplace examples, the scenario text explained the professional roles of the speaker and hearer to ensure that participants understood which job titles referred to the +P and -P settings, respectively. In Table 6, the abbreviations 'S' and 'H' are used to denote 'speaker' and 'hearer' respectively.

A pilot version of this study tested only workplace dating scenarios. In the comments section, participants remarked that romantic relationships between colleagues may violate workplace policy. The teammate scenario was developed as an alternative. It allows for a comparable change from dominance to communality while eliminating the potential legal consequences involved in the workplace scenario. If ORI is used with similar frequency in both scenarios, one may reasonably conclude that the use ORI is due to the change from dominance to communality and not (only) the threat of formal repercussions.

Table 6: Experimental scenarios

Version	Scenario	Act	+P setting	-P setting	Relationship
Workmate date	S and H work together and have recently gotten to know one another better while collaborating on a project. They get along well and S sees the potential for a romantic relationship.	S asks H on a dinner date	S is a department head, H is a project manager	S is a project manager, H is a department head	Potential change from dominance to communality
Teammate date	S and H play football together and have recently gotten to know one another better while training for a match. They get along well and S sees the potential for a romantic relationship.	S asks H on a dinner date	S is a team captain, H is player	S is a player, H is a team captain	Potential change from dominance to communality
Existing couple date	S and H are currently dating and get along well. Neither has made plans for the weekend yet. S would like to have dinner together.	S asks H on a dinner date	N/A	N/A	Existing communal relationship
Workmate job task	S and H work together. S is negotiating a contract with a Greek firm and thinks an interpreter would be useful at an upcoming meeting. H speaks fluent Greek.	S asks H to interpret at a meeting	S is a department head, H is a project manager	S is a project manager, H is a department head	Existing dominance-based relationship
Existing couple job task	S and H work together. S is negotiating a contract with a Greek firm and thinks an interpreter would be useful at an upcoming meeting. H speaks fluent Greek.	S asks H to interpret at a meeting	S is a department head, H is a project manager	S is a project manager, H is a department head	Potential change from communality to dominance.

Each task included multiple choice responses formulated to be blunt, positively polite, negatively polite, and ORI, respectively. The order in which the options appeared was randomised. In the first instance, the utterances were viewed by a native English speaker, with a background in pragmatics, to ensure that they properly reflected the intended levels of politeness and directness. The utterances were then rated for naturalness during the pre-test phase. The utterances used in the date scenarios are below, with the intended level of directness indicated in brackets.

(10) Will you go out on a dinner date with me? [blunt]

(11) Hey Alex! Wanna go out to dinner together this weekend? [positively polite]

(12) I was just wondering if you would like to go out for dinner this weekend. [negatively polite]

(13) I've just heard that a new French restaurant is opening this weekend. The chef is supposed to be fantastic! [ORI]

Participants were instructed to choose the utterance that best fit the scenario and to justify their decision in an open-ended format. Additionally, they were asked to explain if, and why, the scenario was awkward. The awkwardness question was coded using a binary format – a scenario was either awkward or not – and means were calculated.

6.2 Experiment 7: Research questions

Experiment 7 addressed the following questions.

RQ1. (How frequently) do participants employ off-record utterances in scenarios posing qualitative relationship changes?

RQ2. Do the settings of power affect the frequency with which off-record indirectness is used in scenarios depicting qualitative relationship changes to, or from, dominance-based relationships?

RQ3. Do participants cite factors related to the Strategic Speaker approach and/or Politeness Theory in their justification for the use of off-record indirectness in relationship changing scenarios?

6.3 Experiment 7: Predictions

With regards to the first research question, the overarching prediction holds.

P1. A speaker will use off-record indirectness in situations in which the speech act he or she intends to perform has the potential to effect a qualitative change in the relationship between the speaker and the hearer.

The following predictions address the latter two research questions, respectively:

P2. Participants will use off-record indirectness more frequently in the –P versions of the relationship changing scenarios than in the +P versions.

P3. In the +P relationship changing scenarios, participants will cite factors related to the Strategic Speaker approach in their justification for the use of off-record indirectness.

P4. In the –P relationship changing scenarios, participants will cite factors related to *both* the Strategic Speaker approach and Politeness Theory in their justification for the use of off-record indirectness.

6.4 Experiment 7: Participants

The pre-test was completed by 15 participants (4 females), ranging in age from 21 to 48 years, with a mean age of 31 years. Experiment 7 was completed by a total of 83 participants (51 females). Participants ranged in age from 20 to 67 years with a mean age of 36 years. The dating scenarios were completed as follows: 20 participants did the ‘existing couple’ version, 14 did the ‘workmates’ version, and 15 did the ‘teammates’ version. In the workplace scenario, 18 participants did the ‘workmates’ version and 14 did the ‘existing couple’ version.

6.5 Experiment 7: Pre-test data

During the pre-test stage, participants were asked to rate the naturalness of each of the scenarios on a seven point scale, where ‘1’ was equal to ‘not natural at all’ and ‘7’ was ‘very natural’. Contextual clues were removed, so as not to bias the participants or to conflate naturalness with appropriateness for context. The following text was used to elicit naturalness ratings in the date:

The following four sentences are examples are different ways people have asked a colleague on a dinner date. After you read each sentence, think about how natural it sounds. Does this sound like something a native English speaker would say? Please rate how natural each individual sentence sounds. There's no need to compare the sentences – just consider each sentence on its own.

Table 7 shows the mean ratings for the utterances used in the date and workplace scenarios.

Table 7: Mean naturalness ratings, date and work scenarios

	Blunt	Negatively polite	Positively polite	ORI
Date	4.47 (1.30)	6.07 (1.39)	5.67 (1.40)	5.73 (1.39)
Work	4.40 (1.64)	5.40 (1.30)	5.00 (1.31)	5.40 (1.50)

An utterance was considered natural if it was given a mean rating of at least ‘4’ – the midpoint on the scale and the equivalent of a ‘somewhat natural’ response. Each of the utterances, then, passed the naturalness test. The ORI utterances – the critical element of the experiment – were rated close to ‘very natural’ end of the scale. The participants were also instructed to identify the most and least direct of the utterances to ensure that they were sensitive to the intended differences in directness. The ORI utterances were correctly identified as the most indirect of the responses by 93% of the participants in the both date and work scenarios. We can therefore be confident in the suitability of the experimental materials.

6.6 Experiment 7: Results

Tables 8 and 9 show the participants’ multiple choice responses for each of the tested scenarios, as well as their judgements regarding awkwardness. The figures below represent the means in each category. The following abbreviations are used: ‘C = C’ and ‘D = D’ denote the non-relationship-changing scenarios and refer to communality and dominance, respectively. ‘D → C’ stands for a (potential) change from dominance to communality while ‘C → D’ denotes a change in the opposite direction, from communality to dominance. Table 8 includes data from each of the scenarios involving a dinner date. Table 9 shows data from the workplace scenarios.

Table 8: Multiple choice responses and awkwardness ratings in date scenarios

	+P workmates D → C	-P workmates D → C	+P teammates D → C	-P teammates D → C	Existing couple C = C
Blunt	0	0	0	0	0.05
Negatively polite	0.13	0.07	0.06	0.13	0.10
Positively polite	0.33	0.30	0.31	0.25	0.50
ORI	0.53	0.53	0.63	0.63	0.35
Awkwardness	0.67	0.73	0.63	0.63	0.10

ORI was selected by the majority of participants, 53% and 63% respectively, for the two relationship-changing scenarios: the date between work colleagues and the date between teammates. There was no effect of P on the frequency with which ORI was chosen, as rates were identical in the +P and -P conditions.³ In the non-relationship-changing scenario, the positively polite response was the most popular, chosen by half of the participants. ORI was the second most commonly chosen option, with 35% of participants opting for ORI in the scenario depicting a date between partners in an existing romantic relationship. The relationship-changing scenarios were considered to be awkward by the majority of participants, with 63% to 71% noting that situations portrayed were potentially awkward. There was no significant effect of P on the awkwardness of the scenarios. The non-relationship-changing scenario was notably less awkward, with only 10% of the participants describing it as awkward.

Table 9: Multiple choice responses and ratings in work scenarios

	+P workmates D = D	-P workmates D = D	+P couple C → D	-P couple C → D
Blunt	0.13	0.07	0.43	0.29
Negatively polite	0.87	0.87	0.57	0.71
Positively polite	0	0.07	0	0
ORI	0	0	0	0
Awkwardness	0	0.20	0.14	0.21

³ While it was often the case that a given participant selected the ORI response for both settings of P, there were also instances in which participants varied their responses, opting for ORI in one setting and another utterance in the opposite setting.

The ORI response was never selected for the workplace scenarios, regardless of the potential for relationship change. The negatively polite utterance was preferred across all four versions of the scenario. The blunt response was patently chosen with a higher frequency in the relationship-changing scenarios, in which the speaker and hearer were in an existing romantic relationship, than in the potentially non-relationship-changing scenarios. The workplace scenarios were rarely considered to be awkward, with only a few (and in one instance, no) participants deeming them as such.

6.7 Experiment 7: Motivations for ORI

After selecting a multiple choice response, the participants were instructed to explain their choice in their own words. The justifications for the ORI responses were coded to determine which of the proposed theories of ORI best reflects the strategic use of ORI in the dating scenarios. A total of 43 responses were analysed. The responses were grouped into four categories – PT only, SS only, multiple interpretations, and other –and means were calculated. Aside from bracketed information, the comments below are reproduced exactly as written by the participants.

Responses in the ‘SS only’ category referred to factors related to the primary tenets of the Strategic Speaker approach. Amongst the most commonly cited motivations was plausible deniability, as in example (14).

(14) It’s vague enough that he won’t think it is a “date” but if he wants to think of it as a date then... well... that’s ok!

Responses in the ‘PT only’ category were related exclusively to Politeness Theory. Participants explained that ORI provides the hearer with an ‘out’ or, alternatively, allows the hearer to openly suggest a date (rather than merely accept the speaker’s offer), as in example (15).

(15) It’s very open and doesn’t suggest anything too strong. If he wants to get to know me maybe he would suggest we go there together.

The ‘multiple interpretations’ category included two types of responses. On the one hand, were responses which highlighted the ambiguity of the utterance without further elaboration. The participants’ awareness of ambiguity suggests that their choices were strategic and could have been motivated by factors related to either PT or SS, as in examples (16) and (17).

(16) [This response is the] most ambiguous.

(17) It's not a direct comment.

This category also included responses which cited multiple motivations, including factors that were individually attributable to SS or PT. Example (18), for instance, acknowledges the relationship-changing potential of the speech act and explains that the utterance does not impose on the hearer, thereby affording him an out. Pinker and colleagues note that communal relationships include friends, family, and romantic partners. A move from a friendship to romantic partnership, then, may be considered a qualitative change *within* a relationship type.

(18) I chose the low-pressure friendly approach so as to allow [the hearer] plenty of room to accept or back out without making it seem like a potentially friendship-altering decision.

The 'other' category also included two types of responses. In the relationship-changing scenarios, the participants cited non-strategic reasons for their choice of ORI. The responses mentioned context-specific details and individual preferences, as in examples (19) and (20).

(19) It highlights a common interest.

(20) [It] seems like something I would say.

In the non-relationship-changing scenario, the date between the existing couple, the 'other' responses cited strategic motivations not aligned with either the Strategic Speaker account or Politeness Theory. The on-going nature of the relationship, and its implications on the speech act, were stressed, as shown in examples (21), (22), and (23).

(21) You don't need to specify that it is a date at this point [...].

(22) Since they have both asked each other out in the past, you are allowed to be less formal and just ask.

(23) We've already established a relationship.

Table 10 shows the participants' motivations for the use of ORI. The figures represent the means with which each type of motivation was mentioned.

Table 10: Motivations for the use of ORI in date scenarios

	+P workmates D → C	-P workmates D → C	+P teammates D → C	-P teammates D → C	Existing couple C = C	TOTAL
SS only	0.38	0.25	0.20	0.30	0.00	0.23
PT only	0	0.25	0.10	0.20	0.29	0.16
Multiple	0.38	0.13	0.40	0.30	0.00	0.26
Other	0.25	0.38	0.30	0.20	0.71	0.35

While the relationship-changing scenarios were constructed to test SS principles, the factors associated with this account were not, in isolation, the primary motivation for the use of ORI in these scenarios. Instead, participants frequently mentioned motivations that were either related exclusively to Politeness Theory or which reflected a combination of both accounts. Motivations not related to either account were also cited. Contrary to the predictions, the rates with which PT and SS motivations were cited did not vary as a function of the settings of P.

6.8 Experiment 7: Discussion

ORI was the most commonly chosen response, comprising 53% and 63% of the responses, respectively, in the two scenarios depicting a potential change from a dominance-based relationship to communal (and romantic) one: the date between work colleagues and the date between teammates. The choice to use ORI was deliberate, incorporating strategic elements attributable to both the Strategic Speaker approach and Politeness Theory.

ORI was used with less frequency, 35% of the total responses, in the scenarios depicting a date between a couple in on-going romantic relationship. ORI was used strategically in this condition as well, though for different reasons. The participants' responses, as described above, suggest that ORI may be function of intimacy, as explained by Terkourafi (2011a: 2864):

The function of off-record indirectness in such instances is to underline the interlocutors' common ground: when interlocutors share a substantial amount of background knowledge about each other, directness or explicitness is deemed unnecessary. Off-record

indirect speech is enough to carry the message through (the listener has enough knowledge to fill in the blanks).

ORI was not used in either of the work scenarios, despite the potential for relationship change. Feedback from participants suggests that the formality and structure of the workplace may allow the interlocutors to simultaneously engage in two relationships, without conflict or threat of a permanent change. Participants explained their preference for direct alternatives, as shown in examples (24) and (25).

(24) Regardless if we were involved or not, I would still treat [hearer] professional in the office. We are there to work, not for personal matters.

(25) Despite gender and the relationship, it is important to keep things professional

In other words, within the workplace, the speaker functions primarily as a member of a dominance-based relationship, adhering to the principles and norms which typically define the position. While change occurs, it is temporary and context-specific. The speaker can engage in direct speech without threatening the existing communal relationship.

Although not mentioned by the participants, it is also possible that the existing relationship facilitates the use of directness, in accordance with the predictions of Politeness Theory. As the speaker and hearer are in an existing –P and –D relationship, there are fewer social barriers in place, thereby eliminating the needs for formality and redress. Such an interpretation is supported by the prevalence of the blunt utterances in the scenarios depicting the existing couples and work-related requests.

7. Conclusion

Chapter 6 focused on a series of related studies – Experiments 5, 5a, 6, 6a, and 7 – each of which tested the relationship change component of the Strategic Speaker approach with the goal of determining whether the principles of the account were generalisable beyond the bribe, threat, and proposition scenarios explored by Pinker and colleagues.

Experiment 5 explored potential changes from communality to reciprocity and from reciprocity to communality, using scenarios inspired by Lee and Pinker's assertion that 'one should not mix business with pleasure'. ORI was virtually absent and, when used, was determined to be a function of the type financial transaction instead of the presence of relationship change. In a follow-up study, Experiment 5a, scalar ratings of typicality and awkwardness were found to be reliable measures of relationship change. These novel measures were implemented in subsequent experiments.

In Experiments 6 and 6a, two sets of novel scenarios were tested, both of which portrayed monetary exchanges. The scenarios included speakers and hearers in reciprocal relationships (the non-relationship-changing condition) and communal relationships (the potentially relationship-changing condition). ORI was entirely absent from Experiment 6 and was limited to a few instances only in Experiment 6a. The typicality and awkwardness ultimately showed that none of the scenarios were relationship-changing. A separate measure of awkwardness, along with feedback from participants, confirmed the previously proposed conclusion that the financial nature of the transaction, rather than the interpersonal relationship between the interlocutors, determines the participants' choice of politeness strategy. The scenarios can be considered to be (at least somewhat) face-threatening, due to the imposition inherently involved in financial affairs. They were not, however, relationship-changing. Positively polite and negatively polite on-record strategies were used following Brown and Levinson's predictions on weight and the hierarchy of politeness strategies.

Experiment 7 tested several potentially relationship-changing and non-relationship-changing, including transitions from dominance to communality and communality to dominance and existing communal and dominance-based relationships. The settings expanded upon Pinker and colleagues' descriptions of dominance-based scenarios by introducing both +P and -P speakers. In scenarios involving a request for date, the majority of participants selected the off-record utterance from amongst a range of multiple choice options. There was no effect of the setting of P on the use of ORI. When participants were asked to explain their choice of utterance, they cited motivations related exclusively to PT or the SS or to a combination of both accounts. ORI was used with lower frequency in the non-relationship changing date scenario, in which a speaker in an existing partnership performed the target speech act. In these cases, the use of ORI was attributed to factors related to the Intimacy theories, PT, or other motivations. In the workplace scenario, which presented a potential change from communality to dominance, no

ORI utterances were used. Participants stressed that the professional atmosphere made directness appropriate regardless of the existing communal relationship. The preference for direct speech can also be explained by Politeness Theory.

Two trends emerge from the data. To begin with, scalar and open-ended measures of typicality and awkwardness suggest that while some of the scenarios assumed to be relationship-changing are indeed so, others are not. The potential for relationship change is subject to type. Moves from communality to reciprocity and from dominance to communality were deemed relationship-changing more often than moves from reciprocity to communality or from communality to dominance.

Additionally, the use of ORI in the relationship-changing scenarios was determined to be a function of context and transactional type rather than relationship type. ORI was used in relationship-changing scenarios involving financial transactions and romantic interactions. It was also used in the same scenarios with interlocutors for whom the exchange was not relationship-changing. While Strategic Speaker-based rationales were mentioned in relation to the participants' use of ORI, other motivations were cited as well, including factors related to both Intimacy and Politeness Theory.

In sum, ORI is not (only) a function of relationship change, but also of awkwardness. While the emotional costs of a failed attempt at relationship change may lead to awkwardness, so too may a variety of matters dealing with sensitive topics like money or romance. When a speech act is both atypical and awkward, the use of ORI may be attributed to relationship change, following the game theoretical model outlined in Strategic Speaker approach. When typicality is not a factor, awkwardness alone, regardless of the current or pending relationship between the interlocutors, may be a sufficient motivation for the use of off-record indirectness.

CHAPTER 7

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF POLITENESS THEORY AND THE INTIMACY ACCOUNTS OF OFF-RECORD INDIRECTNESS

1 Introduction

Chapter 7 focuses on Experiment 8, the final empirical study reported in this thesis. Experiment 8 explores the use of ORI in a favour, namely, a request for a car ride to or from the speaker's place of work, a scenario which was inspired by the participants' reported uses of ORI in Experiment 1 (Chapter 3). The chapter expands the experimental portfolio by centring on a low-risk act. Experiments 2 through 7 (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) were focused on adjudicating between the Strategic Speaker approach and Politeness Theory. These experiments tested high-risk acts and used scenarios primarily suited to SS interpretations.¹ PT principles were considered in relation to SS scenarios through measures of power, distance, and imposition. Experiment 8 was devised to independently test two theories related to the use of ORI in low-risk scenarios – Politeness Theory (Brown and Levinson) and the Intimacy accounts (Sifianou 1992, 1993, 1997; Soltys, Terkourafi, and Katsos 2014; Terkourafi 2011a, 2011b, 2013, 2014). Binary manipulations are applied to P, D, and R in order to more fairly evaluate their validity under the conditions they were envisioned to address. Attention is also given to the Intimacy accounts, which are equally well-suited to the favour scenarios.

Experiment 8 was conducted in four parts – two pre-tests, which focused on naturalness ratings and ratings of P, D, and R, respectively; the primary experiment, which focused on the use of ORI in the ride scenarios and included both multiple choice and open-ended responses; and a follow-up study, which used multiple choice responses only. Experiment 8 showed that the use of ORI was rare in scenarios involving intimate relationships, but was frequent in scenarios involving formal or distinct relationships. The preference for ORI increased when the settings of P, D, and R were raised. Two sets of predictions are proposed, reflecting PT and Intimacy, respectively and the findings are discussed with regards to the implications for both theories. The data are also addressed in relation to SS and with regards to cross-cultural considerations.

¹ The only exception was the favour scenario (Experiments 2 through 4), for which ORI was virtually absent.

2 Returning to favours: Requesting a ride

A favour was chosen for the final experiment for several reasons. Firstly, favours fit nearly within the framework of both Politeness Theory and the Intimacy accounts. Predictions attributable to each of these accounts can be reliability tested empirically, both independently and in comparison. Importantly, with regards to favours, the focus on these two accounts does not preclude a Strategic Speaker-based analysis.

Secondly, as requests, favours are well-documented in empirical literature on ORI (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984; Blum-Kulka 1987; Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989; Brown and Levinson 1987; Ervin-Tripp 1976, 1977; Felix-Brasdefer 2005; Holtgraves and Yang 1990; Lee and Pinker 2010; Marquez-Reiter 2000; Ogiermann 2015a, 2015b; Rinnert and Kobayashi 1999; Ruzickova 2007 Sifianou 1992, 1993, 1997; Tannen 1994; Terkourafi 2011a, 2011b, 2013, 2014; Weizman 1989, among others). The data collected in this experiment, then, can contribute to, and be contextualised within, a wider research trend. Thirdly, favours were examined, in a different situational and interpersonal context, in Lee and Pinker (2010) and in Experiments 2, 3a, 3b, and 5 (Chapters 4 and 5).² Results can be compared and, should differences arise, proposals can be suggested to account for the variation.

Finally, favours were cited frequently, by both British and American participants, in Experiment 1 (Chapter 3), the questionnaire which elicited the participants' intuitions about the use of ORI and can, as such, be considered prototypical cases of ORI. Amongst the commonly mentioned favours, was a request for a ride. Examples (1), (2), and (3) were provided in response to the second question in Experiment 1, "Can you think of any other situations when you, or someone else, might speak indirectly?" Examples (1) and (2) are from the versions of the questionnaire depicting SS and PT-related uses of ORI, respectively, while example (3) was given in the neutral version.

(1) [When I] need a ride but don't want to seem too needy.

(2) When they want something like money or a ride somewhere.

² In these studies, the favour scenario involved an employee requesting a colleague's assistance with an important assignment. In Lee and Pinker's experiment, the use of off-record indirectness ranged from 21% to 34% across the eight versions of the favour scenario. In Experiment 2, ORI was used, on average, in 3% of the favours.

(3) My mom does it all the time. When she wants a ride somewhere.

The request for a ride, in particular, also featured in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns Project (*CCSARP*, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984; Blum-Kulka 1987; Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989), which included the following scenario: ‘a student asks people living on the same street for a ride home’. ORI requests were used, on average, in 8% of the responses across five languages – Argentine Spanish, Australian English, Canadian French, German, and Hebrew. The highest preference for ORI requests (18.9%) was found in Canadian French (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989: 125). ORI utterances used in the ride scenario included example (4), translated by the authors from the original French (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989: 136).

(4) Excuse me, are you going in the direction of Lawrence Ave?

The *CCSARP* study did not examine the ride scenario under contrasting conditions of power and distance nor did it consider cases in which the imposition on the hearer (namely, the convenience of giving the speaker a ride home) varied. It is conceivable that rates of ORI would have increased if, say, the speaker and hearer did not live on the same street and, thus, the imposition was greater.

2.1 Theoretical implications

This chapter focuses on two theoretical accounts of off-record speech, Politeness Theory and the Intimacy accounts. Each theory offers a compelling argument for the use of ORI in the ride scenarios. The approaches differ significantly, however, on two counts: the interpersonal conditions under which ORI is predicted and the motivations ascribed to the use of indirect speech. The experiment incorporates binary manipulations to power (P), distance (D), and imposition (R) to capture the contrasts between the theories.

In Politeness Theory, ORI is predicted when P, D, and R – either individually or in combination – are set to very high levels. Under these conditions, a requestive act poses a significant threat to the hearer’s negative face by imposing upon his or her freedom of action. The choice to perform the face-threatening act off-record is strategic, as the speaker deliberately chooses ORI over more direct alternatives, including conventional indirectness. Brown and Levinson (1987: 73)

argue that, by going off-record, '[the speaker] can satisfy negative face to a degree greater than that afforded by the negative-politeness strategy'. The speaker avoids imposing directly on the hearer and, by providing him with the opportunity to offer, enhances his positive face as well. The ORI utterance affords plausible deniability to both the speaker and the hearer, as the former can deny his intention if challenged and the latter can take the 'out' if he wishes not to comply.

In the Intimacy accounts, ORI is predicted when the speaker and hearer are intimates. Intimate relationships are characterised by a low setting of D and include self-identified in-group members, such as family, spouses or partners, and close friends. When used among intimates, off-record indirectness is a marker of emotional closeness and affirms the connection between the interlocutors through the reliance on common ground and shared background. Sifianou argues that ORI is consciously employed during the process of positive facework, while Terkourafi asserts that the choice to speak off-record is *not* strategic, as ORI is chosen because it is economical, not because it is ambiguous. Plausible deniability is not a motivating factor in the use of ORI in either faction of the Intimacy accounts, as it is the speaker's interest that both the implicated message and the display of solidarity are readily understood by the hearer.

Politeness Theory and the Intimacy accounts differ in terms of both the conditions under which they prescribe ORI and the motivations they attribute to its use. They are not, however, mutually exclusive. In the ride scenarios, participants may choose ORI in scenarios calling for both polite and intimate uses, respectively. As Sifianou (1992: 38) explains, 'surface similarities may conceal significant differences as regards underlying motivations'. In other words, similar ORI utterances may be used in +D and -D scenarios, but for different reasons. To address this possibility, I have included in the experiment open-questions about motivation. Combined with the speech act data, the results will shed light on both theories, revealing which account(s) best describes the use of ORI in the ride scenarios.

3 Experimental design and pre-tests

Prior to the main experiment, two pre-tests were conducted to confirm the suitability and reliability of the experimental materials. Pre-test 1 tested the settings of power, distance, and imposition that were depicted in each of the scenarios. Pre-test 2 measured the naturalness of the

multiple choice utterances. Different participants were recruited, via MTurk, for each pre-test and for the primary experiment. In the sections below, two elements of the experimental design are discussed – firstly, the construction of the scenarios and the manipulations to P, D, and R and secondly, the formulation of the multiple choice responses. The pre-tests are then explained in relation to these design elements.

3.1 Manipulations to P, D, and R

The ride scenario was inspired by the real-life examples recounted by the participants in Experiment 1. In the scenarios used in Experiment 8, the speaker requests a ride either to or from work, depending on whom she is addressing. The scenarios establish the speaker's need and specify both the relationship between the speaker and hearer (the settings of P and D) and the level of imposition involved. The core version of the scenario is below. The interpersonal details are removed and other identifiers are placed in brackets.

[Speaker]'s car broke down a few days ago and is currently being repaired. Her only way of getting to and from work is to take public transportation. The buses in [Speaker]'s city are unreliable and the journey involves complicated and timely transfers. [Speaker] would like to get a ride [to work this morning/home from work this evening]. The trip will take about [15/45] minutes. She approaches [hearer] as they're both getting ready to leave the [house/office].

The primary aim in constructing the scenarios was to meaningfully incorporate depictions of intimate relationships. The scenarios focus on familial relationships, instead of friendships or romantic partnerships, as they ensure an established (rather than emerging) intimate relationship while also allowing for contextually appropriate manipulations to power (P). Immediate family members (–D), for example, include both parents (+P) and siblings (–P). As such, a single hearer specification, such as ‘mother’, simultaneously references the settings of both P and D. The text in the intimate scenarios suggest that the speaker and hearer live together, affirming the closeness of the familial relationship and allowing the parent to retain (at least the pretence of) authority. Under such conditions, one may reasonably assume that the speaker and hearer share common ground, including a familiarity with one another's interests, needs, behaviour, and communicative style.

The relationships depicted in the +D scenarios were intended to counter the intimate scenarios and, as such, are referred to herein as ‘non-intimate’ relationships. The non-intimate scenarios were centred on the workplace, a setting which allows for relevant manipulations to P and provides a level of formality and distance that contrasts with the familial relationships. The latter scenarios specified that the hearer was a new employee, thereby furthering the social distance. The intimate and non-intimate scenarios differ on two counts with regards to distance – the context in which the hearer and speaker operate and their familiarity with one another within that context. The latter element is connected to common ground.

Table 1 lists the manipulations to power, distance, and imposition. The abbreviations ‘S’ and ‘H’ are used to refer to the speaker and hearer, respectively. The Intimate and non-intimate scenarios are grouped together and imposition is shown separately.

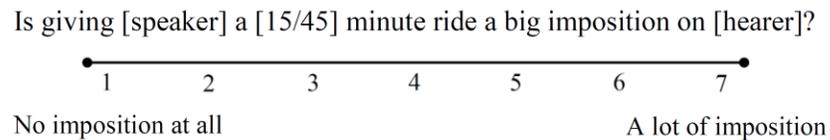
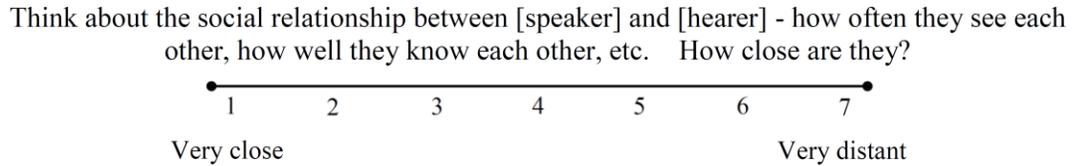
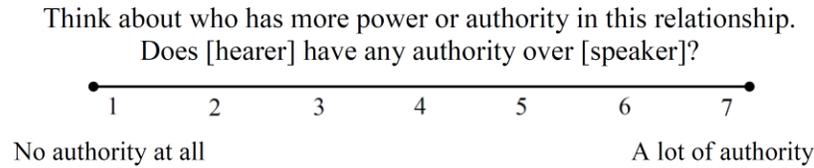
Table 1: Settings of P, D, R

+P –D	–P –D	+P +D	–P +D	+R	–R
H is S’s mother	H is S’s sister	H is S’s new boss	H is S’s new co-worker	45 minute drive	15 minute drive
Intimate relationships		Non-intimate relationships			

3.2 Ratings of P, D, and R

Pre-test 1 was completed by 15 participants (10 females), all native English speakers ranging in age from 18 to 67 years with a mean age of 37 years. At the start of the questionnaire, the participants were informed that they would be presented with eight similar scenarios, with subtle differences highlighted in bold text. Immediately following each scenario, the participants were instructed to rate power, distance, and imposition on a seven-point Likert scale. The order of the scenarios was randomised, as was the order in which in each of the rating questions appeared. The questions in Figure 1 were used to measure distance, power, and imposition, respectively.

Figure 1: Scalar ratings of P, D, and R



Mean ratings of P, D, and R were obtained for each of the eight scenarios. In Table 2, the scores are collapsed into (+) and (-) versions. Each mean is calculated from the ratings in the four scenarios in which the condition appeared.³

Table 2: Mean ratings of P, D, and R

+P	-P	+D	-D	+R	-R
5.23 (1.72)	3.05 (1.75)	4.57 (1.45)	1.68 (0.93)	5.25 (1.50)	3.57 (1.47)
t(59) = 9.40, p < 0.001, d = 1.21		t(59) = 11.89, p < 0.001, d = 1.53		t(59) = 9.59, p < 0.001, d = 1.24	

The differences in ratings between the (+) and (-) conditions were statistically significant for each of the three factors – power, distance, and imposition. The findings suggest that the scenarios worked as intended. Participants noticed the manipulations to P, D, and R and rated them as expected – the scenarios designed to depict (+) settings of P, D, and R were consistently

³ The +P score, for example, was calculated from the P ratings in each of the + P scenarios: +P +D +R; +P +D -R; +P -D +R; +P -D -R

rated higher than the (–) versions. We can therefore be confident in the suitability of the experimental materials and in the reliability of the measures of P, D, and R in relation to theory-critical analyses.

3.3 Multiple choice utterances

In Experiment 8, I decided to use a multiple choice format, rather than an open-ended one, an option that was well-suited to the aims of the experiment. In Experiment 2 (Chapter 4), open-ended questions were used to enable a detailed qualitative analysis of politeness markers, domains of ambiguity and sources of plausible deniability, and other discursual features. The data were coded, using a binary scheme, as either ‘ORI’ or ‘non-ORI’, with limited focus on the non-ORI responses. In Experiment 8, the primary aim was to compare the rates with which ORI was used in intimate and non-intimate scenarios. As a secondary aim, and in order to confirm or reject the principles of PT, I wanted to evaluate the effects of P, D, and R on strategy choice, including not only ORI, but also positive and negative politeness and blunt on-record directness. The multiple choice format facilitated these aims by providing an unambiguous coding scheme with options that represented each of the four PT politeness strategies.

The multiple choice responses were formulated to vary in both directness and politeness in accordance with the standards set by Brown and Levinson (see Chapter 2). Each utterance includes a request for a ride and the phrase ‘my car is at the mechanic’s’, which was added to all responses for the sake of both clarity and consistency. During the pilot version of an unrelated questionnaire, participants stated that some of the multiple choice options were more informative than the others and explained that they selected the more informative utterances due to the inclusion of ‘reasons’ rather than a preference for the levels of politeness and directness conveyed. The phrase ‘my car is at the mechanic’s’ contextualises the request (which may be especially necessary in the non-intimate scenarios) and balances the informativeness of the responses. The utterances in examples (5) – (8) are formulated to be blunt, negatively polite, positively polite, and off-record, respectively. Contractions were used to represent spoken language. With regards to the blunt on-record utterance, the conventionalised form ‘Can you...?’ was used in place of an imperative, such as ‘Give me a ride to work’ to ensure that the utterance

was perceived as a request and not an order. No redress was included to reinforce the bluntness of the utterance and to avoid a conflation with the negatively polite utterance.

(5) Can you give me a ride to work? My car is at the mechanic's today. [blunt]

(6) Is there any chance you'd be able to give me a ride to work? I'm sorry for the hassle, but my car is at the mechanic's today. [negatively polite]

(7) Can I get a lift to work? My car's at the mechanic's today and I'd be super grateful for your help. [positively polite]

(8) I'm trying to figure out the best way to get to work while my car's at the mechanic's. Do you have any suggestions? [ORI]

The off-record utterance, as a critical test item, was perhaps the most important of the responses. It was also the most complicated to construct. In order to satisfy the criteria of off-record indirectness, the utterance needed to reasonably convey two meanings – a literal meaning and a plausibly deniable implicated meaning. The request for a suggestion forces the hearer to respond – she cannot simply ignore the remark. The ambiguity, however, allows the hearer to respond to either meaning. The request for a suggestion, without the explicit request that the hearer herself perform the intended action, mirrors the off-record technique used in favours in Experiment 2 (Chapter 4).⁴ The off-record phrasing benefits both the speaker and the hearer. If necessary, the speaker can feign innocence to avoid being held accountable for requesting a ride. Likewise, the hearer can respond to the literal meaning and offer a relevant, external suggestion without being held accountable for refusing the request.

In theory, the off-record utterance could have been formulated in a number of ways, incorporating a range of discursal and content-specific features and drawing on different sources of plausible deniability. Before conducting the experiment, I wanted to be sure that ORI utterance I constructed did not unduly influence the participants' use of ORI. Three measures were put in place to ensure that the results were due to a genuine preference (or dispreference) for ORI rather than an opinion on the felicity of the off-record utterance itself. To begin with, in pre-test 2, I gathered participants' judgements about the naturalness of each of the multiple

⁴ In the favour scenario in Experiment 2, a participant indirectly requested assistance with an assignment by asking the hearer 'Do you know of *anyone* who may be able to help me with it?'

choice responses. Additionally, in Experiment 8, I included an open-ended question which required participants to justify their multiple choice responses. Finally, in Experiment 8a, I re-tested a subset of scenarios using a different off-record utterance.

3.4 Naturalness ratings

Pre-test 2 was completed by 20 participants (12 females), all native English speakers, ranging in age from 19 to 63 years with a mean age of 35 years. During the pre-test stage, participants were asked to rate the naturalness of each of the four utterances on a seven point scale, where ‘1’ was equal to ‘not natural at all’ and ‘7’ was ‘very natural’. Contextual clues were removed, so as not to bias the participants or to conflate naturalness with appropriateness for context. The instructions were phrased simply in order to ensure that they were easily understood by a non-specialist audience. The following text was used to elicit naturalness ratings:

The following four sentences are examples of different ways people have asked for a ride to work while their cars were at the mechanic's. After you read each sentence, think about how natural it sounds. Does this sound like something a native English speaker would say? Please rate how natural each individual sentence sounds. There's no need to compare the sentences – just consider each sentence on its own.

Table 3 shows the mean naturalness ratings for each of the multiple choice utterances.

Table 3: Naturalness ratings

Blunt	Negatively polite	Positively polite	ORI
6.20 (1.06)	6.15 (0.75)	5.15 (1.76)	4.50 (1.96)

An utterance was considered natural if it was given a mean rating of at least ‘4’ – the midpoint on the scale and the equivalent of a ‘somewhat natural’ response. Each of the utterances, then, including the ORI utterance, passed the naturalness test. The participants were also instructed to identify the most and least direct of the utterances to ensure that they were sensitive to the

intended differences in directness. The ORI utterance was correctly identified as the most indirect option by 95% of the participants while the blunt utterance was selected as the most direct option with the same frequency. We can therefore be confident in the suitability of the experimental materials and in the reliability of the results in relation to theoretical predictions.

4 Experiment 8

Once the pre-tests were completed, and the suitability of the materials was confirmed, the primary experiment was conducted. After the data were reviewed, a brief follow-up study, Experiment 8a, was performed.

4.1 Design

Experiment 8 had both multiple choice tasks and open-ended responses. All participants viewed eight versions of the ride scenario, each depicting different settings of P, D, and R (see Table 1). The order in which the scenarios appeared was randomised and the manipulations to P, D, and R were presented in bold text to ensure that participants noticed the critical differences. For each version, the participants were instructed to select the utterance that the speaker should use to request a ride from the hearer. After completing the multiple choice question for each version, the participants were asked to explain their choice of utterance, as follows:

Please explain your response. You can comment on the sentences themselves, the characters, the situation, or any other points that you think are relevant.

4.2 Participants

Experiment 8 was completed by a separate group of 35 participants (23 females), all of whom were native English speakers ranging in age from 21 to 63 years with a mean age of 35 years. All participants were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk and were paid for their participation.

4.3 Research questions

Experiment 8 was guided by the following research questions.

RQ1. (How frequently) do participants choose off-record speech in favour scenarios depicting intimate and non-intimate relationships, respectively?

RQ2. (How) does the use of off-record indirectness correlate with the settings of power, distance, and imposition in favour scenarios depicting intimate and non-intimate relationships, respectively?

RQ3. How do participants justify their use of off-record speech in favour scenarios depicting intimate and non-intimate relationships, respectively?

RQ4. Do either (or both) of the examined theories of off-record indirectness – Politeness Theory or the Intimacy accounts – explain (a) the scenarios in which off-record indirectness is used, (b) any correlations between the settings of power, distance, and imposition and the use of off-record indirectness, and (c) the participants' justifications for their use of off-record indirectness?

4.4 Predictions

Two sets of predictions were made, based on Politeness Theory and the Intimacy accounts, respectively.

Politeness Theory

- Off-record indirectness will be employed in the scenarios in which power, distance, and/or imposition are set to high levels and, therefore, pose a significant threat to either interlocutor's face wants.
- When justifying their use of off-record indirectness, participants will cite factors related facework, especially negative politeness and displays of deference.

Intimacy accounts

- Off-record indirectness will be employed in the scenarios in which distance is set to a low level and, therefore, establishes intimate relationships between the interlocutors.
- When justifying their use of off-record indirectness, participants will cite factors related to economy and/or to positive politeness and displays of solidarity.

4.5 Results: Multiple choice responses

Table 4 shows the frequency with which participants chose blunt, negatively polite, positively polite, or ORI utterances, respectively for each of the depicted settings of P, D, and R. The figures cited in Table 4 represent the mean use, per scenario, of each utterance type. The –D scenarios are grouped together in the table and are collectively referred to as ‘intimate scenarios’. The +D scenarios, in contrast, are termed ‘non-intimate scenarios’. Table 5 shows the mean rates with which each utterance type was selected in the intimacy and non-intimate scenarios, respectively.

Table 4: Multiple choice responses

		Blunt	Negatively polite	Positively polite	ORI
Intimate scenarios	+P –D +R	0.40	0.40	0.17	0.03
	+P –D –R	0.49	0.17	0.31	0.03
	–P –D +R	0.26	0.29	0.40	0.06
	–P –D –R	0.60	0.11	0.26	0.03
Non-intimate scenarios	+P +D +R	0.09	0.34	0.09	0.49
	+P +D –R	0.03	0.37	0.20	0.40
	–P +D +R	0	0.49	0.17	0.34
	–P +D –R	0.09	0.43	0.34	0.14

Table 5: Comparison of intimate and non-intimate scenarios

	Blunt	Negatively polite	Positively polite	ORI
Intimate	0.44	0.24	0.29	0.04
Non-intimate	0.05	0.41	0.20	0.34
	t(139) = 9.34 p < 0.001	t(139) = -3.14 p < 0.01	t(139) = 1.92 p = 0.06	t(139) = -7.37 p < 0.001

The difference in the use of ORI between the intimate and non-intimate scenarios was statistically significant ($t(139) = -7.37, p < 0.001$). The off-record utterance was the least preferred option in each of the four intimate scenarios, comprising between 3% and 6% of the total responses. In the non-intimate scenarios, ORI was the most preferred option in two of the four scenarios, selected by 40% and 49% of participants, respectively. ORI was the second most commonly chosen option in another of the non-intimate scenarios, with 34% of participants opting for the indirect utterance. The differences in the use of the blunt and the negatively polite utterances were statistically significant as well. The blunt act was used significantly more often in the intimate scenarios than the non-intimate scenarios ($t(139) = 9.34, p < 0.001$). The negatively polite utterance, on the other hand, was used more frequently in the non-intimate scenarios than the intimate scenarios ($t(139) = 3.14, p < 0.01$). The difference in the use of positive politeness approached statistical significance.

Table 6 presents the effects of P, D, and R on the use of ORI, contrasting the mean use of ORI in the +P, +D, and +R scenarios and the -P, -D, -R scenarios, respectively. The data are based on 140 observations per setting.

Table 6: Mean use of ORI per setting of P, D, and R

+P	-P	+D	-D	+R	-R
0.24	0.14	0.34	0.04	0.23	0.15
$t(139) = 2.66, p < 0.01$		$t(139) = 7.37, p < 0.001$		$t(139) = 2.57, p < 0.05$	

The settings of power, distance, and imposition each had a statistically significant effect on the use of ORI. For all three factors, ORI was selected more frequently in the (+) setting than in the (-) setting. Distance – the setting upon which the distinction between the intimate and non-intimate scenarios is based – had the most significant effect ($t(139) = 7.37, p < 0.001$).

4.6 Results: Open-ended question

After selecting a multiple choice response for each scenario, the participants were asked to explain their choice of utterance. The analysis in this section focuses on the responses related to

the use of the ORI utterance. The data comprise 53 open-ended responses. The responses were coded following the criteria used in Experiment 4 (Chapter 5), with the participants' responses categorised as reflecting 'Politeness Theory only', 'the Strategic Speaker approach only', 'multiple interpretations,' or 'other'. Although this chapter does not specifically address the Strategic Speaker approach, the account was included in the coding scheme in response to the factors mentioned by the participants. The Intimacy account was not included in the coding scheme because only one response focused on the intimate relationship between the speaker and hearer. This response is included in the 'other' category and is discussed qualitatively.

The 'PT only' responses fell into two camps. The first made explicit reference to power, distance, or imposition. The second focused on the benefits to the hearer's negative or positive face, highlighting the fact that the ORI utterance gives the hearer the opportunity to either offer, rather than simply oblige the request, or to opt out, as in example (9).

(9) It is best to ask if she has any suggestions so you're not pushing her into making you take her.

The 'SS only' responses mentioned both the process of relationship negotiation and speaker's uncertainty about the hearer's values and amenability to the request, as in example (10).

(10) The characters do not know each other. [Speaker] does not know enough about the boss to know if he will help.

The responses in the 'multiple interpretations' category also fell into two camps. Responses included comments that could be interpreted with regards to either the settings of P and D (and thus, PT) or the relationship status between the speaker and hearer (and SS). The category also included responses that mentioned multiple motivations for the use of ORI, such as example (11), which alludes to both relationship negotiation and imposition.

(11) 45 minutes is a bit out of the way for a new co-worker and you may be jeopardizing that relationship by asking for too much too quickly [...]

The 'other' category included responses in which participants expressed a straightforward preference for the ORI act, without elaborating on motivations, and explanations that were not aligned with the predictions of either theoretical account, as in example (12).

(12) She should not ask her boss directly [...] asking the boss shows weakness.

Only one of the responses hinted at factors related to the Intimacy accounts. The comment focused on the hearer's propensity to meet the speaker's request and suggested that indirect utterance was sufficient encouragement to motivate her to take the desired action. The response in example (13) alludes to the empathetic and solidarity-based nature of the intimate relationship.

(13) I would use this if I were [the speaker]. Any caring mom would take their daughter to work if they ask. I am sure her mom would want to make sure she got to work safely. It wouldn't take much to get mom to take you to work.

Table 7 shows the mean frequency with which each of the four response types were mentioned. No distinctions were made between responses provided in the intimate scenarios and the non-intimate scenarios, as there very few examples of ORI in the former.

Table 7: Open-ended responses

PT only	SS only	Multiple	Other
0.57	0.08	0.17	0.19

The majority of responses, 57%, cited factors related exclusively to Politeness Theory. There were statistically significant differences between the PT only category and each of the remaining coding categories – SS only ($t(52) = 5.59, p < 0.001$), multiple interpretations ($t(52) = 3.76, p < 0.001$), and other ($t(52) = 3.48, p = 0.001$).

5 Retesting the Intimacy accounts

When reviewing the data, and specifically, the low use of ORI in the intimate scenarios, I considered two possible interpretations:

Interpretation 1: The off-record utterance was selected more often in the non-intimate scenarios than the intimate scenarios because indirectness, in general, is considered unsuitable for the intimate scenarios.

Interpretation 2: The off-record utterance was selected more often in the non-intimate scenarios than the intimate scenarios because *the utterance itself* is considered unsuitable for the intimate scenarios.

If the latter interpretation is correct, then a revised utterance should produce different rates of ORI in the intimate scenarios. While the off-record utterance passed the naturalness test (see Section 3.4, Table 3), the phrasing of the utterance may be biased towards politeness-based uses, resulting in both the frequent use of ORI in the non-intimate scenarios and the prevalence of PT-related justifications. In order to address this concern, and to test the two interpretations, I constructed a new version of the off-record utterance. Rather than focusing on the avoidance of imposition and face threat, as the previous utterance did, the new version was tailored to the uses specified by the Intimacy accounts. The act was rephrased to capture two facets of the Intimacy accounts – the use of ORI as a communicative shortcut and the reliance on common ground in the interpretation of the off-record act.

In support of her account, Terkourafi provides the following example, spoken between a wife and her husband: ‘I have to work late tonight’ (2014: 55). She explains the utterance can stand in for a range of related, implicated meanings that are recoverable due only to common ground, including ‘Don’t wait for me’, ‘Go ahead and have dinner without me’, ‘Don’t go worrying that something bad has happened to me’, and ‘I will miss our favourite show on TV’ (2014: 55). Terkourafi adds (*ibid*):

By uttering [‘I have to work late tonight’], the speaker is performing multiple speech acts at once, ‘killing many birds with one stone’ so to speak. The advantages of doing so are several. To begin with, by uttering a mere six words, she is able to set in motion a whole stream of potential inferences [...] that would be much more time-consuming to spell out fully. In this way, expressing herself indirectly is more economical than the direct alternative.

5.1 An alternative off-record utterance

A new ORI utterance, shown in example (14) was constructed to better fit with Terkourafi’s perspective on the use of ORI among intimates.

(14) My car is at the mechanic’s today.

The utterance in example (14) meets the requirements of both off-record speech in general and, more importantly, ORI between intimates. The utterance is ambiguous – it is literally a statement of fact – and economical. While any competent hearer could retrieve the requestive nature, intimate hearers may draw on common ground to infer other relevant details, due to their familiarity with the speaker’s needs and preferences. In Experiment 8a, a communicative shortcut would be unnecessary if the speaker intends to communicate only one proposition – a request for a ride. The utterance ‘My car is at the mechanic’s today’, however, may be used within an intimate relationship if the speaker also wishes to communicate additional propositions such as ‘I won’t need to borrow money for petrol today’ and ‘I won’t be able to run errands for you during my lunch break’. In the latter case, the use of the utterance is similar to Terkourafi’s ‘I have to work late tonight’ example. The ORI utterance used in the primary experiment may be too restrictive to function as a shortcut. Additionally, the new ORI utterance may be considered more relaxed and informal than the previously tested counterpart, ‘I’m trying to figure out the best way to get to work while my car’s at the mechanic’s. Do you have any suggestions?’ As such, the new utterance may be better suited to the intimate scenarios.

The new ORI phrasing was adopted for Experiment 8a. The blunt, negatively polite, and positively polite utterances were also modified. The phrase ‘my car is at the mechanic’s’ was removed from the on-record responses to ensure that participants did not view the revised ORI utterance as a shortened or incomplete version of the other options. The on-record responses otherwise remained unchanged.

5.2 Testing the new utterance

Experiment 8a was completed by 20 participants (11 females), all of whom were native English speakers ranging in age from 18 to 64 years with a mean age of 35 years. None of the participants had completed Experiment 8 or either of the pre-tests.

In Experiment 8a, the four intimate scenarios were re-tested, using a multiple choice format and the alternative utterances. The scenarios were presented in randomised order and neither the open-ended questions, nor the non-intimate scenarios, were included.

5.3 Results

Table 8 shows the mean use of ORI for each the intimate scenarios.

Table 8: Mean use of ORI in Experiment 8a

+P -D +R	+P -D -R	-P -D +R	-P -D -R	All versions
0.10	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.06

One of the intimate scenarios, the version presenting the highest face threat, +P -D +R, elicited two instances of ORI, or 10% of the total responses. In each of the other three scenarios, there was only one instance of ORI, or 5% of the total responses. The data from Experiment 8a were compared with the mean use of ORI in the four intimate scenarios in Experiment 8. There was no significant difference in the mean use of ORI between versions ($t(79) = -1.14, p = 0.26$). In other words, there was no significant effect of phrasing on the frequency with which participants chose ORI responses in the intimate scenarios.

6 Discussion

ORI was virtually absent from the favour scenarios depicting intimate relationships, comprising 3% to 6% of the total responses in Experiment 8. In Experiment 8a, the ORI utterance was reformulated to better suit the uses of ORI predicted by the Intimacy accounts. The use of ORI was similarly limited, with a mean use of 6% across the four versions of the non-intimate scenario. In the non-intimate scenarios, on the other hand, ORI was frequently selected. It was the most preferred strategy in two of the non-intimate scenarios (with a mean use of 49% and 40%, respectively) and the second most preferred strategy in another (34%). In the non-intimate scenarios, the settings of power, distance, and imposition each had a statistically significant effect on the use of ORI. In the intimate scenarios, ORI was used too infrequently to meaningfully evaluate the role of power, distance, or imposition. In the non-intimate scenarios, the majority of responses (57%) cited factors related exclusively to Politeness Theory. Other motivations, including those associated with the Strategic Speaker account, were mentioned as well. Only one of the responses described factors related to the Intimacy accounts. In the intimate scenarios, ORI was used too infrequently to meaningfully evaluate the participants' motivations.

Experiment 8 provides evidence in support of Politeness Theory with regards to three measures: the scenarios in which off-record indirectness is used, the correlations between the settings of power, distance, and imposition and the use of off-record indirectness, and the participants' justifications for their use of off-record indirectness.

To begin with, ORI was used much more frequently in the non-intimate (+D) scenarios than the intimate scenarios (-D). The difference between the two was statistically significant ($t(139) = 7.37, p < 0.001$). The influence of P, D, and R on the use of ORI was evident when the four non-intimate scenarios were viewed in comparison. As predicted by Politeness Theory, ORI was chosen more often in the scenario posing the most face threat (+P +D +R) than in the scenario depicting the least face threat (-P +D -R). The difference in the use of ORI between these two scenarios was statistically significant ($t(34) = 3.76, p = 0.001$).

When the overall means were calculated in the non-intimate scenarios, power, distance, and imposition were each found to have a statistically significant effect on the use of ORI. The ORI utterance was selected more frequently in the (+) settings of P, D, and R than in the (-) settings. D, the factor which establishes the binary distinction between intimate and non-intimate scenarios, had the greatest effect.

ORI was virtually absent in the intimate scenarios, including the scenarios in which P and/or R were set to high levels. I propose that the -D setting is sufficient grounds to preclude the use ORI, regardless of the settings of P and R. Such an interpretation supports Politeness Theory. While Brown and Levinson argue that all three factors contribute to the weight (and consequently, face threat) of an act, they acknowledge that in some contexts, one of the factors may have a greater effect on the choice of politeness strategies than either of the others. In the case of the intimate scenarios, the role of D may be such that, despite the settings of either P or R, the weight of the act never reaches the threshold necessary for the use of ORI.

The qualitative data overwhelmingly support Politeness Theory, with the majority of the participants' responses citing factors exclusively linked to Politeness Theory. A secondary category, comprised of responses related to both Politeness Theory and the Strategic Speaker approach, provides additional support for this prediction.

Politeness Theory was also supported by the patterns with which non-ORI responses were used. The blunt on-record strategy, which is predicted only in cases in which redress is either inexpedient or socially unnecessary, was used sparingly in the face-threatening non-intimate scenarios. The blunt utterance was used frequently in the intimate scenarios, with use in the least face-threatening version (-P -D -R) amounting to 60% of the total responses. The difference between the use of the blunt on-record strategy in the intimate and non-intimate scenarios was statistically significant ($t(139) = 9.34, p < 0.001$). In the former case, the participants' explanations about the choice of the blunt on-record utterance fit with Brown and Levinson's predictions (see Section 8 below).

Table 9 shows the mean uses of both positive and negative politeness across each of the settings of power, distance, and imposition. The data are based on 140 observations.

Table 9: Mean use of negative and positive politeness per settings of P, D, and R

	+P	-P	+D	-D	+R	-R
Negative politeness	0.32	0.33	0.41	0.24	0.38	0.27
	$t(139) = -0.18, p = 0.86$		$t(139) = 3.14, p < 0.01$		$t(139) = 2.59, p < 0.05$	
Positive politeness	0.19	0.29	0.20	0.29	0.21	0.28
	$t(139) = -2.37, p < 0.05$		$t(139) = -1.92, p = 0.06$		$t(139) = -1.68, p = 0.10$	

With regards to the use of the negatively polite utterance, there were statistically significant effects of both D ($t(139) = 3.14, p < 0.01$) and R ($t(139) = 2.59, p < 0.05$). Negative politeness was used more often in +D and +R scenarios than in the -D and -R scenarios, a finding that supports Brown and Levinson's assertion that the negatively polite strategy is employed in situations in which weight and, consequently, face-threat, is high. In the positively polite utterance, there was a significant effect of P ($t(139) = -2.37, p < 0.05$). The effect of D approached significance ($t(139) = -1.92, p = 0.06$). Brown and Levinson explain that in the (-) scenarios, face-threat is lower and less redress is needed. As predicted by Politeness Theory, the lower ranking strategy, positive politeness, was used more often in the -P and -D scenarios than in the +P and +D scenarios.

In sum, the data in Experiment 8 support the predictions of Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory. ORI is used with high frequency in the face-threatening non-intimate scenarios and is

rarely used in the less face-threatening intimate scenarios. The blunt on-record act, on the other hand, is preferred in the intimate scenarios, in which less redress is required, and is used rarely in the redress-heavy non-intimate scenarios. The uses of positive and negative politeness also follow Brown and Levinson's predictions, with the former employed more often in the less face-threatening scenarios and the latter in the more face-threatening scenarios. The data lend credibility to Politeness Theory.

7 (Re)considering the data in light of the Strategic Speaker approach

In the open-ended task, participants occasionally mentioned motivations related to the Strategic Speaker approach while justifying their use of ORI. Due to both the inclusion of these factors, and the prevalence of SS-based analyses throughout the thesis, I consider it worthwhile to acknowledge SS-based interpretations in relation to the present data set. In this section, I briefly discuss the SS approach with respect to Experiment 8, with a specific focus on the difference in the use of ORI between the intimate and non-intimate scenarios. The Strategic Speaker approach was originally developed to explain the use of ORI in high-risk speech acts. In this section, I consider some of the principles associated with SS as an alternative explanation for the use of ORI in a low-risk speech act.

Pinker and colleagues argue that ORI is used in high-risk situations due, in part, to the speaker's uncertainty about the hearer's values. They explain that in the bribe scenario, for example, the speaker uses ORI because he does not know if the hearer is antagonistic and unwilling to accept the bribe or cooperative and amenable to the offer. In the non-intimate ride scenarios, the newness of the relationships with the work colleagues adds to the distance between the interlocutors. Due to lack of familiarity, the speaker may be unable to anticipate how the hearer will respond. In the open-ended response, for example, one participant commented:

(14) The characters do not know each other. [The speaker] does not know enough about the boss to know if he will help [...]

Under an SS-based interpretation, the speaker uses ORI to compensate for his uncertainty about the hearer. The ambiguous utterance allows him to balance the risks associated with an

antagonistic hearer with the rewards afforded by a cooperative hearer. Within the confines of a familial relationship, on the other hand, common ground provides the speaker with the familiarity necessary to reliably predict the hearer's reaction to the request.

Pinker and colleagues also discuss the role of ORI in the process of relationship negotiation (see Chapter 5). On the surface, a request for a ride is not a relationship changing act. It is a relatively benign request and does not carry the emotional baggage associated, for example, with propositions (Chapters 4 and 5) or other romantic interactions (Chapter 6). A request for a ride may occur, under distinct conditions, in each of Fiske's three relationship types, the model used in SS. Within the bounds of a communal relationship, it is part of the free sharing of resources. A speaker may request a ride without the expectation of reciprocity and without formality or redress. In a reciprocal relationship, on the hand, a debt is likely to be accrued and repayment may be explicitly negotiated. In a dominance-based relationship, a hearer may be obligated to provide a ride out of duty to the speaker. In the communal relationship, the request for a ride is a favour. In the latter two cases, the request is akin a contractual agreement or an obligation, respectively.

In the intimate scenarios, the speaker and hearer are operating within the confines of communal relationship and the ride may be appropriately, and directly, requested as a favour. In the workplace scenarios, however, the speakers and hearers are bound by different relationship types. In the +P scenarios, the hearer is the speaker's boss and, as such, the interlocutors are in a dominance-based relationship. In the -P scenarios, the speaker and hearer are colleagues and are operating within a reciprocal relationship. When the ride is requested as a favour, without formality or promises of reciprocity, both of these relationships types are challenged as the speaker moves towards communality. Additionally, the request for a ride, unlike the request for assistance with an assignment (Chapter 4), falls well outside the boundaries of official workplace duties. The off-record request provides the speaker and hearer with plausible deniability. The interlocutors can return to the existing relationship type without the consequences of an (on-record) attempt at relationship change.

The payoff ratio in Table 10 visually represents both the speaker's uncertainty about the hearer and the potential for relationship change. The Strategic Speaker interpretations described herein provide an alternative explanation for the difference in the use of ORI in the intimate and non-intimate scenarios, respectively.

Table 10: Payoff ratios in non-intimate ride scenarios

	Cooperative hearer	Antagonistic hearer
Don't ask	The speaker does not get a ride to her destination	The speaker does not get a ride to her destination
Ask directly	The speaker gets a ride to her destination	The speaker does not get a ride to her destination, awkwardness due to overt relationship negotiation
Ask indirectly	The speaker gets a ride to her destination	The speaker does not get a ride to her destination, awkwardness alleviated by plausible deniability

8 Cross-cultural considerations

ORI was used rarely in the intimate scenarios in either Experiment 8 or Experiment 8a. While the data do not support the Intimacy accounts, it is premature to discount the theory entirely. Both Sifianou's and Terkourafi's accounts were developed, primarily, in relation to Greek and the examples they cite are from Greek speakers. It is possible, then, that the use of ORI between intimates is a function of culture.

While the Intimacy accounts have not been yet been studied in-depth from a cross-cultural perspective, politeness-based uses of ORI have been subjected to cross-cultural analysis (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5). While ORI may be linked to politeness within a particular cultural context, the association is not universal. The link between ORI and intimacy may also be culturally variable. Sifianou describes the different applications of ORI, which she refers to as 'pragmatic indirectness', in England and Greece (1992: 121):

The English use pragmatic indirectness as a strategy which enables speakers to give options to addressees to interpret the utterance in the way they wish, and yet reserve the right to deny the addressee's interpretation if that endangers their own face. In other words, it protects both the speaker's and the addressee's negative face. By contrast, Greeks use pragmatic indirectness as a strategy by which the speaker expresses rapport with the addressee, a rapport which recognises each other's needs and the desire to satisfy them. In other words, it enhances both the speaker's and the addressee's positive face.

The contrasting uses of ORI in English and Greek lend themselves to two interpretations⁵:

Interpretation 1: A preference for positive politeness in Greek culture versus a preference for negative politeness in English culture

Interpretation 2: An association between indirectness and solidarity in Greek culture versus an association between *directness* and solidarity in English culture

Sifianou (1992: 41) subscribes to the first interpretation. In this view, ORI is used within the context that is most valued by the majority of speakers in that culture, situations calling for negative politeness in English and those related to positive politeness in Greek.

The second interpretation does not preclude an emphasis on solidarity and positive face maintenance within English-speaking cultures. Instead, it suggests that positive face work is handled differently in English and in Greek. While Greek speakers may rely on ORI to affirm solidarity, English speakers may do so through direct speech.

In Experiment 8, the blunt option was amongst the most frequently chosen responses in the intimate scenarios. Across the four versions of the intimate scenario, the blunt speech act was selected in between 26% to 60% of the responses. In the non-intimate scenarios, on the other hand, the use of the blunt act ranged from between 0% to 9% (see Table 4).

In order to understand the preference for the blunt utterance in the intimate scenarios, I analysed the responses to the open-ended task. There were sixty-one instances of the blunt speech act across the four versions of the intimate scenario. 64% of the analysed responses mentioned the intimate relationship between interlocutors and noted that direct and informal speech was appropriate amongst in-group members. The responses cited in examples (16–19) reflect a trend amongst the participants:

(16) She doesn't need to include a lot of niceties since she is asking her mom. It is casual and direct, as the relationship calls for.

(17) She can be direct with her sister. No need to hint or over-explain to family.

⁵ In this section, I refer broadly to English speakers, without distinction between national or regional varieties. The preference for negative politeness, and the use of ORI in the maintenance of negative face, has been attributed to both American speakers (Blum-Kulka, 1987) and British speakers (Sifianou, 1992).

(18) [Speaker] is already very familiar with her sister, and can ask her directly for a favour without breaching any sort of social stigmas [...]

(19) The two characters know each other. [Speaker] knows she will not insult her mother if she asks directly.

The participants also explained that, in the intimate scenarios, the hearer was likely to oblige, as family members are often willing and ready to help one another. In the intimate scenarios then, there was no need for redress. If ORI is associated primarily with negative politeness, and the avoidance of imposition, then ORI is not necessary in the intimate scenarios. Indeed, the off-record utterance may be considered too formal, and too distant, to be used meaningfully within an intimate context. In order to fully evaluate the role of culture on the use of ORI between intimates, further research is necessary (see Chapter 8 for further discussion).

9 Conclusion

Chapter 7 provided a detailed discussion of a four-part study of the use of ORI in intimate and non-intimate scenarios. In the primary experiment, participants viewed a series of scenarios in which a speaker requests a ride to or from work. In the intimate versions, the speaker addresses her mother or sister, while in the non-intimate versions she makes the request to a new boss or a new co-worker. The participants were asked to choose from amongst four multiple choice utterances – formulated to be blunt, negatively polite, positively polite, and off-record, respectively – and to explain their choice of response. Following the predictions of Politeness Theory, ORI was preferred in the non-intimate scenarios – instances in which the speech act posed a threat to the hearer's negative face wants. The use of ORI was higher when the settings of P, D, and R were increased. When explaining their choice of ORI in these scenarios, participants cited motivational factors related to PT. In the intimate scenarios, however, the use of ORI was rare, comprising only 3% to 6% of the total responses. The intimate scenarios were re-tested using a different ORI utterance that was more suited to Intimacy-based uses, but participants did not shift their preferences towards ORI speech. Participants instead favoured more direct options in the intimate scenarios, with several explaining their choice of the blunt speech act, for example, by stating that formality and indirectness were unnecessary within

intimate relationships. The dispreference for ORI in the intimate scenarios speaks against the Intimacy accounts. SS provides an alternative explanation of the difference in ORI use between the intimate and non-intimate scenarios, suggesting that in the latter case, speakers may rely on ORI due to both their uncertainty about the hearers' willingness to comply and the potential for the request to challenge the existing relationship between the interlocutors. In defence of the Intimacy accounts – which were developed in relation to the positive politeness-oriented Greek community – it was suggested that the use of ORI with intimates may be a function of culture. This proposal merits further study.

Experiment 8 added to the experimental portfolio in several ways. Firstly, the experiment created a direct, empirical link between participants' first-hand experiences with and intuition about ORI and their use of ORI under experimental conditions, since the ride scenario was inspired by the responses given in Experiment 1 (Chapter 3). Secondly, the focus on the low-risk favour counterbalances the emphasis on high-risk acts in Experiments 2 through 7 (Chapters 4, 5, and 6). Finally, Experiment 8 enables a wider exploration of theoretical motivations for ORI by focusing on two compelling theories which offer contrasting predictions about the use of ORI in favours – Politeness Theory and the Intimacy accounts.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis was to present a detailed theoretical and empirical discussion of off-record indirectness, with a focus on the strategic motivations that drive the use of ORI under a variety of situational and interpersonal contexts. In this chapter, the empirical data from the eight experiments are reviewed with emphasis on the implications for the three theoretical accounts of ORI which inspired the empirical investigation – Politeness Theory, the Strategic Speaker approach, and the Intimacy accounts. The data are first reviewed systematically on a chapter-by-chapter basis. The results are then discussed comparatively in relation to the theoretical predictions derived from each of the theories, with a focus on trends, discrepancies, and unexpected findings. A ‘moderate’ version of the Strategic Speaker approach is proposed to accommodate the face-based use of politeness markers alongside the game-theoretical use of ORI. The categorisation of strategic motivations that was introduced in Chapter 2 is updated in accordance with the experimental results. Finally, future research directions are suggested in order to meaningfully expand the exploration of strategic motivations for ORI beyond the scope of thesis.

2 A review of the experiments: Linking empirical data to theoretical predictions

This section is a review of the 8 experiments (and the pre-tests and follow-ups that support the experiments) that comprise the empirical element of the thesis. The experiments are summarised on a chapter-by-chapter basis. Each chapter summary includes an overview of the aims and content of the experiments and a review of the findings, as well as a discussion of the relationship between the empirical data and the pertinent theoretical predictions. The theoretical discussion centres on the three accounts of ORI that inspired the empirical research – Politeness Theory, the Strategic Speaker approach, and the Intimacy accounts.

Chapter 3 focused on Experiment 1, an empirical study about the factors that motivate native English speakers to use ORI in their everyday lives. Participants were asked to describe their

first-hand experiences with indirect speech, with the aim of understanding not only their patterns of ORI use, but also their intuitions about how, why, when, and with whom it is used. The responses were collected using an open-ended format and five different versions of a questionnaire were distributed – a neutral version that explained indirect speech, but did not include any examples and two versions each that depicted uses of ORI related to PT and SS, respectively. In Part 1, participants were asked to recount situations in which they used indirect speech. They were instructed to describe the use of ORI in full, with emphasis on what was said, what the context was, and why indirect speech was used. The responses were coded with regards to which theoretical construct they fit best – ‘PT only’, ‘SS only’, ‘multiple interpretations’ (a category which included uses of ORI that could be explained by two or more theories), and ‘other’ (a category which described non-PT or SS-based uses of ORI, including uses that related to other theories and uses that did not fit with any of the theories under consideration). In Part 2, the participants were encouraged to propose up to three additional situations in which a speaker might use ORI. The data were coded into two categories – ‘context and speech act type’ and ‘motivations for ORI’, depending on the format of the responses.

The results of Experiment 1 were as follows: In Part 1, the use of ORI was most frequently attributed to motivations related to PT only. The preference for PT uses was consistent, as reflected in the majority of responses in the PT versions of the questionnaire (55%), the SS versions of the questionnaire (50%) and across all five versions of the questionnaire (51%). Motivations related to SS were not mentioned in either the PT scenarios or the neutral version of the questionnaire and represented only 13% of the total responses in the SS versions of the questionnaire. Across all versions, there was a statistically significant difference between the frequency of PT-based and SS-based uses of ORI ($t(84) = 6.41, p < 0.001$). Negative politeness predominated in the PT-based ORI utterances, representing 67% of the PT responses across all versions of the questionnaire. Two additional motivations were attested that constituted novel categories that did not fit with any of the existing theories. These included the use of ORI for the purposes of concealing the speaker’s intention and the use of ORI for the purposes of edification (see Section 6). The dataset also included one instance each of ORI for the purposes of impoliteness and misdirection. In Part 2, requests (30%) were the most commonly cited uses of ORI amongst the responses for which a context or a speech act was specified. The most commonly mentioned context was the workplace (17%) followed by familial (14%) and

romantic (10%) contexts. The most commonly cited motivation from amongst the responses coded by motive was the avoidance of offence (23%). Other frequently mentioned motivations included avoiding confrontation (16%) and saving face (15%). The format of the responses in Part 2 did not allow a clear-cut theoretical interpretation of the data.

The theoretical implications of Experiment 1 are as follows: In Experiment 1, politeness-based uses of ORI were the most commonly mentioned, regardless of whether participants viewed examples that depicted SS or PT uses of ORI. The responses ranged from discussions of etiquette – including the desire to be polite and to avoid rudeness – to the description of face-saving concerns. The uses of polite ORI extended beyond those predicted by PT, by including the use of negative politeness with intimates and in situations with low imposition as well the use of ORI as a means of addressing positive face. The data suggest that for native English speakers, politeness-based uses of ORI are the most intuitive and easily accessible. Motivations attributable to SS were rarely mentioned, even in scenarios in which participants were given examples depicting SS. The data suggest that SS-based uses of ORI are less accessible and are unlikely to shape either the participants' prototypical ORI or their intuitions about the reasons for which ORI is used (see Section 4 for a comparative discussion of Experiments 1 and 2 with regards to PT and SS predictions). ORI were also used amongst family members and romantic partners, an interpersonal setting in which distance and, sometimes, power, were likely low. The use of ORI in these instances could not be explained by the Intimacy accounts, as the examples were motivated by neither economy and efficiency nor positively polite facework. ORI was frequently used with intimates in cases in which the speaker had a distinct and easily communicable goal in mind, such as request for assistance with a chore, and as such ORI was not used as a communicative shortcut or as an opportunity for the hearer to fill in a succession of implicated meanings. Additionally, interpretation of the implicated act was often dependent on world knowledge rather than interpersonal common ground. When the participants explained their use of ORI, they stressed a desire not to impose upon the hearer or to presume his or her willingness to comply, concerns typically associated with high imposition and distant or unequal relationships. In other words, ORI was used with intimates for the purposes of negative politeness, rather than positive politeness. Several of the responses (22% in total) were coded under the category 'multiple interpretations', suggesting an overlap between the predicted *uses* of ORI. While the motivations for ORI may differ across the theories, many of the situations in which ORI is used – requesting money, for example or communicating with intimates (in cases

in which motivation was not specified) – are associated with several theories. PT, SS, and Intimacy offer complementary, and occasionally competing, explanations for the use of ORI in these cases.

Chapter 4 focused on Experiment 2, an empirical study that is inspired by Lee and Pinker's 2010 multiple choice experiment on the use of ORI in bribes and propositions (high-risk acts for which SS predicts ORI) and favours (a comparatively low-risk act for which PT, but not SS, predicts ORI under suitably high settings of P, D, and R). Three scenarios were used – a bribe between a speeding driver and a traffic officer, a sexual proposition between co-workers, and a work-related favour between colleagues. Although the scenarios were derived from Lee and Pinker, Experiment 2 departed from their study in two important ways. Firstly, the speech act data was elicited through an open-ended format rather than multiple choice, resulting in an utterance production task. The improved methodology allowed for additional analyses that were not captured by Lee and Pinker's study, including a discussion of the role of politeness markers and a description of the discourse features with which the utterances were produced. Secondly, while Lee and Pinker's study included binary manipulations to P, D, and R in the favour scenario only, in Experiment 2 similar manipulations were applied to the bribe and proposition scenarios as well. This change permitted a direct comparison between SS and PT assumptions with regards to the influence of P, D, and R. For each of the eight versions of the three speech acts, scalar ratings were collected to measure the participants' sensitivity to the manipulations. The ratings were later used to calculate the correlation between the settings of each of these factors and the participants' use of ORI. The speech act data were coded using a binary scheme – a response was either ORI or not ORI – and analysed qualitatively with regards to the use of politeness markers, contextual sources of ambiguity and plausible deniability, and other discoursal features.

The results of Experiment 2 were as follows: There were statistically significant differences in the ratings of P, D, and R in the bribe, proposition, and favour scenarios. For all acts, participants gave reliably higher ratings of P, D, and R in those conditions which were manipulated to +P and +D and +R settings. ORI was used with the highest frequency, 92% in overall, in the proposition scenario, followed by the bribe scenario, with 78% of the total responses coded as off-record. ORI was rare in the favour, used in only 3% of the responses across all eight versions. The difference in the use of ORI between the proposition and the bribe was significant ($t(263) = 4.75, p < 0.001$). Additionally, there were statistically significant differences in the use of ORI

between the low-risk favour and the two high-risk acts, the bribe ($t(261) = -27.57, p < 0.001$) and the proposition ($t(261) = 41.94, p < 0.001$), respectively. With one exception – the increase in the use of ORI in the +P settings of the bribe – there were no significant correlations between the participants' ratings of P, D, and R and their use of ORI. Politeness markers were frequently used within ORI utterances: 92% of the bribes were coded as both ORI and polite, as were 66% of the propositions. In producing ORI utterances, the participants also made varied use of the domains of ambiguity afforded by each of the speech acts and drew on discourse features such as emphasis, ellipsis, pause, and question intonation (see Section 5).

The theoretical implications of Experiment 2 are as follows: In Experiment 2, theoretical predictions associated with both Politeness Theory and the Strategic Speaker approach were proposed to address four areas of interest – the use of ORI bribes, propositions, and favours; the categorical distinction between high-risk and low-risk acts with regards to ORI; the effects of power, distance, and imposition on the choice of ORI; and the use of politeness markers within ORI utterances. For three of the four predictions, the data provide robust evidence in support of SS, while challenging the assumptions of PT. As predicted by SS, ORI was preferred in the majority of the cases for the two high-risk acts, the bribe and the proposition, and rarely used in the favour, the low-risk act for which PT, but not SS, predicts ORI. With one exception, the settings of P in the bribe scenario, there were no significant effects of P, D, or R on the use of ORI in either of the high-risk acts. Jointly, these findings support the SS prediction regarding the categorical distinctions. The predictions, backed by the data in Experiment 2, are re-stated below (as excerpted from multiple predictions in Chapter 4):

- There is a categorical distinction between high-risk speech acts and low-risk speech acts [which is] fixed and is not influenced by setting of power, distance, and/or imposition. Off-record indirect speech will always be the most preferred option, and chosen over on-record alternatives by a majority of speakers, for high-risk speech acts. Off-record indirect speech will never be the preferred option for low-risk speech acts. A speaker's decision to go off-record [...] is not influenced by the speaker's assessment of power, distance, and/or imposition.

While several facets of the use of ORI in Experiment 2 strongly support the predictions of the Strategic Speaker approach, the wide-spread use of negative and positive politeness within ORI bribes and propositions challenges an important principle of the theory – the assumption that

politeness and indirectness are separate phenomena which are used (asynchronously) in different types of social encounters. In Section 8 (below) a Moderate Strategic Speaker approach is proposed to accommodate the findings from Experiment 2. The modified version of SS incorporates the use of politeness markers (for purposes independent from the game-theoretic foundations of SS) along with the facets of SS that were upheld by the experimental findings – including the categorical distinctions in the use of ORI between high-risk and low-risk speech acts, the game-theoretic logic which motivates the use of ORI, and the lack of sensitivity to P, D, and R. An alternate view of the favour data, which explains how the near-absence of ORI can be explained by PT predictions, is proposed in Section 5.

Chapter 5 focused on a series of three related experiments, Experiment 3a, Experiment 3b, and Experiment 4. The experiments were developed to follow-up on the results of Experiment 2 by identifying factors that could explain the statistically significant differences between the use of ORI in the high-risk bribes (78%) and propositions (92%) and the low-risk favours (3%). In Experiments 3a and 3b, participants provided scalar ratings of social acceptability for the three speech acts examined in Experiment 2. Social acceptability was chosen to capture two assumptions of SS, the emphasis on conflict-laden acts and the role of relationship negotiation in the use of ORI. In Experiment 3a, each scenario was condensed to a one-sentence summary with manipulations to P, D, and R removed while in Experiment 3b, two full-text versions of each scenario were used, depicting +P +D +R and –P –D –R conditions, respectively. Experiment 3a tested whether the bribes and propositions differ from the favour with regards to the ratings of social acceptability and Experiment 3b tested whether the acts differ with regards to the susceptibility of the ratings of social acceptability to the settings of R. Experiment 4 is an open-ended task focused on strategic motivations for the use of ORI. Participants are shown three ORI utterances used in Experiment 2 for bribes, propositions, and favours, respectively and are asked to infer the reasons for which the speaker chose to use ORI for each of the acts. An open-ended format was used to broaden the focus beyond social acceptability in order to evaluate a wider, more diverse range of factors that could potentially explain the categorical distinction between high-risk and low-risk acts. The responses were coded according to which theory they best fit, with the participants' responses categorised as reflecting 'PT only', 'SS only', 'multiple interpretations,' or 'other'.

The results of Experiments 3a, 3b, and 4 were as follows: In Experiment 3a, the bribe was rated near the highly unacceptable end of the scale (6.44 on a seven-point scale), while the favour was rated near the socially acceptable end (2.32). In Experiment 3b, there were no significant differences in the ratings of social acceptability between the +R and -R versions of the bribe scenario ($t(19) = 1.00, p = 0.33$). The difference in ratings of social acceptability was significant in the favour scenarios ($t(19) = 5.83, p < 0.001, d = 1.30$). The propositions align more closely with the favours than with the bribes in both experiments. In Experiment 3a, the proposition was rated 3.90 (which is close to 4, which stands for acceptable). In Experiment 3b, the differences in rating in +R and -R settings were statistically significant for the proposition ($t(19) = 2.63, p = 0.017, d = 0.59$). In Experiment 4, participants primarily inferred SS motivations in both the bribe (70% of the total responses) and the proposition (65%). In the favour, only 5% of the responses cited SS motivations, a rate that was significantly lower than either the bribe ($t(19) = -4.95, p < 0.001$) or the proposition ($t(19) = -4.49, p < 0.001$). In the favour, the majority of participants (60%) cited motivations related exclusively to PT. In the bribe, no participants inferred PT motivations while in the proposition, only one response was related to PT only. There were statistically significant differences between the favour and both the bribe ($t(19) = 5.34, p < 0.001$) and the proposition ($t(19) = 4.82, p < 0.001$) with regards to the frequency with which PT motivations were mentioned.

The theoretical implications of Experiments 3a, 3b, and 4 are as follows: Experiments 3a and 3b provide partial support for the proposed categorical distinction between the high-risk bribes and propositions and the low-risk favour. The bribe ratings in Experiment 3a support the SS assumption that the high-risk acts are conflictual and emotionally fraught while the ratings for the same act in Experiment 3b confirm the SS prediction that categorical distinctions are fixed and thus, not susceptible to the influence of sociological factors such as imposition. The categorical distinction between bribes and favours, then, is supported by three factors: the frequency with which ORI is used (Experiment 2), the ratings of social acceptability, and the susceptibility of these ratings to the settings of R. The proposition data, however, challenge the categorical distinction – aligning more closely with the favours than the bribes in both Experiments 3a and 3b. The data suggest that the participants' perceptions of social acceptability are not reliably associated with their use of ORI. The statistically significant differences in the use of ORI between the high-risk and low-risk acts, then, must be due to factors other (or at least, in addition to) social acceptability. In Experiment 4, there was a clear and significant pattern in

the participants' responses – motivations related to SS were reliably inferred for the use of ORI in the bribes and propositions, while PT-based reasons were inferred in the favour. The data confirm that the high-risk bribes and propositions are similar to one another, and jointly different from the low-risk favours with regards to not only the frequency with which ORI is used (Experiment 2), but also in terms of the interpersonal and strategic motivations associated with the use of ORI. While the participants did not frequently produce ORI utterances under experimental conditions in the favour (Experiment 2), they readily recognised PT motivations as the likely impetus for others' use of ORI in the favour scenario (see Section 5 for further analysis on the use of ORI in the favour). The different strategic motivations associated with ORI bribes and propositions, on the one hand, and ORI favours on the other, provide further support for the categorical distinction, explaining another way in which the high-risk and low-risk speech acts differ from one another with regards to the use of ORI. These differences also support the novel categorisation of ORI motivations (an updated version of which appears in Figure 1, below). The data suggest that the distinction between PT and SS motivations in 'motivated by plausible deniability' category is valid and meaningful.

Chapter 6 focused on Experiments 5, 5a, 6, 6a, and 7, each of which was designed to test the use of ORI in scenarios depicting relationship negotiation, a central tenet of SS. Pinker and colleagues frame their discussion of relationship negotiation on Fiske's relational models theory (Fiske 1991, 1992, 2000) and explain that the relationship between the speaker and hearer determines which types of speech acts are permissible. They predict that ORI will be used if the intended act does not fit within the existing relationship and, as such, potentially poses social and emotional risks to the interlocutors. The aim of the experiments in Chapter 6 was to determine whether relationship change was a reliable predictor of ORI and, in turn, whether SS predictions can be generalised beyond the specific scenarios examined in Lee and Pinker (2010). Experiment 5 used an open-ended format and tested the use of ORI in scenarios depicting the acts of lending and selling between both friends and business associates. Experiment 5a examined these scenarios from a different perspective, using scalar ratings of awkwardness and typicality to measure the potential for relationship change in each version of the scenario. Experiments 6a and 6b also featured a financial transaction, depicting a request for reimbursement between individuals in reciprocal and communal relationships. Experiment 6 used an open-ended format and measured awkwardness and typicality while Experiment 6a used a multiple choice format

and included an open-ended question about awkwardness. Experiment 7 tested several scenarios, including potential changes from dominance to communality (a request for a date between colleagues) and from communality to dominance (a work-related request between romantic partners), as well as ongoing dominance-based relationships (a work-related request between colleagues) and ongoing communal relationships (a request for a date between romantic partners). The dominance-based scenarios included speakers in both +P and -P positions. A multiple choice format was used, depicting blunt on-record, negatively polite, positively polite, and off-record utterances for both the date scenario and the workplace scenario, respectively. After selecting their responses, participants were asked to justify their choice and to explain if the scenario was awkward.

The results of Experiments 5, 5a, 6, 6a, and 7 were as follows: In Experiment 5, there were very few instances of ORI. One of the potentially relationship-changing scenarios, selling between friends, elicited just two ORI utterances (5% of the total responses in this category). ORI was also used in the selling between business associates scenario (15%). There was no ORI in either of the lending scenarios. In Experiment 5a, scalar ratings of awkwardness and typicality suggested that while the selling between friends scenario *does* involve a qualitative relationship change, the lending between business associates scenario (which was assumed to effect change from reciprocity to communality) is *not* relationship-changing. In Experiment 6, ORI was not used in any of the scenarios. In Experiment 6a, ORI was rare, selected in only 5% of both the potentially relationship-changing and the non-relationship changing scenarios, respectively. In Experiment 7, the majority of participants selected ORI utterances for the relationship-changing scenarios involving a request for a date (a change from dominance to communality) in both the scenario involving workmates (53% of responses) and the scenario involving teammates (63% of responses). There was no effect of the settings of P on the use of ORI and all of the scenarios were considered to be awkward. The participants attributed their use of ORI not only to factors related to SS, but also to motivations related to PT, multiple interpretations, and other, respectively. ORI was also used in 35% of the non-relationship changing date scenarios. This scenario was considerably less awkward and participants explained their choice of ORI by citing factors primarily related to the Intimacy accounts. There was no ORI used in any of the scenarios depicting a work-related request.

The theoretical implications of Experiments 5, 5a, 6, 6a, and 7 are as follows: Experiments 5, 5a, 6, and 6a each challenge the relationship negotiation component of SS. Lee and Pinker (2010)

contend that the use of ORI in the proposition scenario can be explained by the potential of the speech act to effect a qualitative change in the nature of the relationship between the speaker and the hearer. They use Fiske's relational models theory (Fiske 1991, 1992, 2000) to argue that the relationship type operating between a speaker and hearer dictates which speech acts are permissible between them. When a speaker in a reciprocal or dominance-based relationship with the hearer makes a sexual proposition, he or she initiates a process of relationship negotiation and initiates a potential change to a communal relationship. Lee and Pinker do not explore the use of ORI in other potentially relationship-changing scenarios, though they do suggest that the game-theoretic logic they attribute to the use of ORI in the proposition scenario, can be applied to other acts involving relationship negotiation, including those which involve 'mixing business with pleasure'. In their discussion of ORI use, Lee and Pinker do not distinguish between types and directions of relationship change, nor do they explain how to determine whether an act is, indeed, relationship changing. In Experiments 5a and 6, novel measures of typicality and awkwardness were used to assess the potential of an act to effect a qualitative change in the relationship between the interlocutors. The findings suggest that some of the acts which are assumed to be relationship-changing under an SS model are not perceived as such by the participants. Further, the effects of relationship change are not bidirectional, nor are they consistent across speech act types. While a move from communality to reciprocity, for example, may evoke feelings of awkwardness for a particular speech act type (and thus, fit with Lee and Pinker's predictions about ORI use), a complementary move from reciprocity to communality may not pose emotional and social risks to the interlocutors. Likewise, there may be speech acts for which a shift from a reciprocal relationship to a communal one does pose risks. In other words, while the SS principle of relationship change may be straightforward and convincing on paper, it is much more complex in real-life (and, by extension, under experimental conditions). In Experiments 5, 5a, 6, and 6a, ORI was rare and its use – which included both relationship-changing scenarios and non-relationship changing scenarios – further challenged SS predictions. In Experiment 7, ORI was used in the majority of cases involving a change from a dominance-based workplace or team relationship to a romantic, communal relationship (53% and 63%, respectively). Contrary to PT predictions, there was no effect of P on the use of ORI in situations involving dominance – ORI was used with the same frequency regardless of whether it was the speaker or the hearer who occupied the dominant position in the relationship. ORI was also used in one of the non-relationship changing scenarios – the request for a date between individuals in

an existing communal, romantic relationship. When asked to explain their choice of ORI, participants described motivations related to the Intimacy accounts, including a reliance on common ground, an affirmation of shared interest, and a belief that explicitness was unnecessary. The use of ORI in these situations provides support for the Intimacy accounts. The findings from Experiment 7 partially support SS – while ORI was used frequently in one type of relationship-changing scenario, it was absent from the complementary scenario (which involved a potential change from a romantic, communal relationship to a dominance-based workplace relationship). Interestingly, the one scenario in which ORI was frequently used – the request for a date – is similar to Pinker and colleagues' (Pinker 2007; Pinker, Nowak, and Lee 2008; Lee and Pinker 2010) paradigm relationship-changing scenario – the sexual proposition. Both scenarios involve (potentially) romantic interactions. In Experiments 5 and 6a, ORI was used, regardless of relationship type, in situations involving financial transactions. In sum, the data from Experiments 5, 5a, 6, 6a, and 7 suggest that ORI is not (only) a function of relationship change, but also of awkwardness. While the emotional costs of a failed attempt at relationship change may lead to awkwardness, so too may a variety of matters dealing with sensitive topics like money or romance (see Section 4). When a speech act is both atypical and awkward, the use of ORI may be attributed to relationship change. But when typicality is not a factor, awkwardness alone, regardless of the current or pending relationship between the interlocutors, may be a sufficient motivation for the use of off-record indirectness.

Chapter 7 focused on Experiments 8 and 8a, the final empirical study reported in this thesis. Experiment 8 explored the use of ORI in a favour scenario which was inspired by the participants' reported uses of ORI in Experiment 1 – a request for a car ride to or from the speaker's place of work – and was devised to independently test two theories related to the use of ORI in low-risk scenarios – PT and the Intimacy accounts. Binary manipulations are applied to P, D, and R in order to more fairly evaluate their validity under the conditions they were envisioned to address. Eight versions of the ride scenario were constructed, including four scenarios which portrayed intimate relationships (the hearer was the speaker's mother or sister) and four scenarios involving non-intimate relationships (the hearer was the speaker's new boss or co-worker). Experiment 8 was conducted in three parts – two pre-tests, which focused on naturalness ratings and ratings of P, D, and R, respectively and the primary experiment, which focused on the use of ORI in the ride scenarios. The primary experiment used a multiple choice format and included utterances that were formulated to be blunt, positively polite, negatively

polite, and off-record, respectively. After selecting a multiple choice response for each scenario, an open-ended question prompted participants to explain their choice of utterance. The responses were coded according to which theory they best fit, with the participants' responses categorised as reflecting 'PT only', 'SS only', 'multiple interpretations,' or 'other'. Experiment 8a was a follow-up to Experiment 8. The intimate scenarios were re-tested with a multiple choice format that featured a new ORI utterance and updated versions of the blunt, positively polite, and negatively polite utterances.

The results of Experiments 8 and 8a were as follows: In Experiment 8, the ORI utterance was rarely selected in the four intimate scenarios (3% to 6% of responses). In the non-intimate scenarios, ORI was frequently selected (49% of the responses in the +P+D+R condition, 40% in +P+D-R, 34% in -P+D+R, 14% in -P+D-R). The difference in the use of ORI between the intimate and non-intimate scenarios was statistically significant ($t(139) = -7.37, p < 0.001$). The settings of P, D, and R each had a statistically significant effect on the use of ORI. For all three factors, ORI was selected more frequently in the (+) setting than in the (-) setting. Distance – the setting upon which the distinction between the intimate and non-intimate scenarios is based – had the most significant effect ($t(139) = 7.37, p < 0.001$). In the non-intimate scenarios, the majority of responses, 57%, cited factors related exclusively to PT when explaining their use of ORI. There were also significant differences between the intimate and non-intimate scenarios with regards to the use of the other politeness strategies – the blunt act was used significantly more often in the intimate scenarios than the non-intimate scenarios ($t(139) = 9.34, p < 0.001$) and the negatively polite utterance was used more frequently in the non-intimate scenarios than the intimate scenarios ($t(139) = 3.14, p < 0.01$). The difference in the use of positive politeness approached statistical significance, with use slightly more common in the intimate scenarios ($t(139) = 1.92, p = 0.06$). In Experiment 8a, ORI use was also limited. One of the intimate scenarios, the version presenting the highest face threat, +P -D +R, had two instances of ORI (10% of the total responses) while in each of the other three scenarios, there was only one instance of ORI (5%). When the data from Experiment 8a were compared with the mean use of ORI in the four intimate scenarios in Experiment 8, there was no significant difference in the mean use of ORI between versions ($t(79) = -1.14, p = 0.26$).

The theoretical implications of Experiments 8 and 8a are as follows: In Experiment 8, the multiple choice study that compared requests for a ride in intimate and non-intimate scenarios,

the participants' use of ORI (and, indeed, other politeness strategies) provides robust support for Politeness Theory. To begin with, ORI was used significantly more often in the non-intimate scenarios than in the intimate scenarios. Both the prevalence of ORI in the former cases and the lack of ORI in the latter cases follow PT predictions. In the non-intimate scenarios, the use of ORI was a function of face-threat. As the settings of P, D, and R increased, the use of ORI increased as well, ranging from 49% in the most face-threatening version (+P +D +R) to 14% in the least threatening version (-P -D -R). ORI was used more often in the two +P scenarios than in either of the -P scenarios and further, within in the +P and -P cases, respectively, the use of ORI was more common in the +R versions than in the -R versions. Under PT, high settings of P, D and/or R require greater attention to the hearer's negative face wants. When face-threat is at its highest, the strongest politeness strategy, ORI, is required. When face-threat is slightly lower, but still significant, negatively polite on-record strategies are warranted. In the non-intimate scenarios in which ORI was used less often, as predicted, preference was given to the negatively polite utterance. In the non-intimate scenarios, ORI was rarely used, an expected finding from a PT perspective, given that face-threat was considerably lower in these cases (as measured by the participants' ratings of P, D, and R). The blunt-on record speech act was used significantly more often in the intimate scenario than the non-intimate scenarios, a finding which, along with the participants' explanations that formal redress was deemed unnecessary in the intimate scenarios, provides further support for PT predictions. SS offers an alternative interpretation of the difference in the use of ORI between the intimate and non-intimate scenarios, explaining that in the latter cases, the preference for ORI can be attributed to factors such as relationship change and uncertainty. The lack of ORI in the intimate scenarios, including those tested in Experiment 8a, challenges the assumptions of the Intimacy accounts. The participants' responses in Experiment 1, which inspired the ride scenario used in Experiments 8 and 8a, also challenge the Intimacy-based view of ORI. While participants reported using ORI with intimates, their preferences were based on factors associated with PT, such as a desire to avoid imposition. Motivations related to either communicative shortcuts or to displays of solidarity and empathy were not mentioned. It is premature to discount the predictions associated with the Intimacy accounts however, as the use of ORI in these cases may be culturally variable (see Section 9).

2.1 A comparative view of the empirical data

Table 1 shows the relationship between the experiments and the theoretical predictions they test. Each of the experiments is explicitly related to ORI *use* – whether through first-hand reports, open-ended production tasks, or multiple choice questionnaires. Scalar ratings of social acceptability are excluded from the table. The experiments are summarised in relation to the three theoretical accounts on which most of the empirical analysis is based – Politeness Theory, the Strategic Speaker approach, and the Intimacy accounts. Empirical data are rated based on whether they strongly support or strongly challenge theoretical predictions or, alternatively, lend partial, but not robust, support to the predictions. An experiment can be considered to ‘strongly’ support a theory, even if it does not ‘fully’ support it. In Experiment 2, for example, the data overwhelmingly support SS, with the sole exception of the use of politeness within ORI bribes and propositions (a finding that is accommodated by the Moderate SS account proposed in this chapter).

Table 1: Do the empirical data support the theoretical predictions?

	STRATEGIC SPEAKER		POLITENESS THEORY		INTIMACY	
	Support	Challenge	Support	Challenge	Support	Challenge
Exp. 1	?	• SS uses of ORI mentioned, but rarely	✓	• 51% of all responses describe PT-based uses	?	• Uses with intimates, but usually for PT reasons
Exp. 2	✓	• Majority of bribes (78%), propositions (92%) ORI • No influence of P, D, R • <i>But</i> , politeness with ORI	✗	• No influence of P, D, R • (Almost) no ORI in favour	--	-- N/A
Exp. 4	✓	• SS motivations inferred for bribe and proposition	✓	• PT motivations inferred for favour	--	-- N/A
Exp. 5		✗ • (Almost) no ORI in SS-inspired scenario	--	N/A	--	-- N/A
Exp. 5a		✗ • Acts assumed relationship-changing are not actually	--	N/A	--	-- N/A
Exp. 6		✗ • No ORI with uncertainty or relationship change	--	N/A	--	-- N/A
Exp. 6a		✗ • (Almost) no ORI with relationship change	--	N/A	--	-- N/A
Exp. 7	?	• Majority ORI responses in relationship-change date • SS motivations cited for use of ORI in date • But, no ORI in work-based relationship-change	✗	• No effect of the settings of P on the use of ORI	✓	• ORI used in 35% of date requests with existing couple • Intimacy motivations cited for this use of ORI (solidarity, shortcut)
Exp. 8	?	• Relationship change and certainty can (also) explain differences in ORI use	✓	• ORI frequent with non-intimates (up to 49%) • Significant effects: P, D, R • Majority PT motives cited		✗ • (Almost) no ORI in intimate scenarios
Exp. 8a	--	N/A	--	N/A		✗ • No increase in ORI use with new ORI utterance

Tick marks (✓) and crosses (✗) indicate strong empirical support of, or strong challenges to, theoretical predictions, while question marks (?) indicate partial, but not robust, support thereof.

3 Identifying trends

In addition to the main findings that were summarised in the previous section, the empirical data may have also shed light onto other lines of inquiry, including trends in the use of ORI. Among the most interesting trends was the association between the use of ORI and the performance of speech acts related to financial transactions. In Experiments 5 and 6a (Chapter 6), the use of ORI in the relationship-changing scenarios was determined to be related to context and transactional type rather than relationship type. ORI was used in relationship-changing scenarios involving financial transactions, but it was also used in the same scenarios with interlocutors for whom the exchange was not relationship-changing. The use of ORI was considered a function of the awkwardness involved in money-related matters, as suggested by the response in example (1), in which a participant explains his use of ORI in Experiment 6a.

(1) I do not like to outright ask people for money back. I would hope that by saying this they would get the hint and pay the money back.

Financial issues were also raised in Experiment 1, when participants reported their own experiences with, and intuitions about, ORI. Examples (2) and (3) were provided in Part 1 of the questionnaire, while example (4) was mentioned in Part 2.

(2) A friend needed a loan to avoid losing her TV to a pawn shop. / She sighed that she guessed she was going to lose the TV. / She was indirect because she knew I could likely help but didn't want to outright ask for the money.

(3) I needed to borrow money. / "I wish I could afford to go on the ski trip with you." / I was uncomfortable about asking to borrow money.

(4) When they want something like money or a ride somewhere.

Money also features in the bribe scenario, the paradigm case for ORI under the Strategic Speaker approach. The majority of participants produced ORI responses for this scenario (78%, Experiment 2), often by ensuring that the financial element of the bribe was plausibly deniable, and the act was reliably rated as socially unacceptable, regardless of the settings of R (Experiments 3a and 3b). The unacceptability of this act (and likely, the use of ORI) is not related to money alone – the bribe scenario used in Lee and Pinker (2010) and in Experiment 2

involved tangible legal consequences. For other bribes, however, the awkwardness of the financial element may be the primary motive for the use of ORI. Lee and Pinker discuss an anecdote about a restaurant reviewer who was tasked with bribing a *maître d'* at an upscale restaurant by offering cash in exchange for immediate seating. The reviewer reported that he opted for ORI bribes, such as 'Is there any way to shorten my wait?', even though there were no legal repercussions (Lee and Pinker 2010: 795). While Lee and Pinker attribute his decision to relationship negotiation (an attempted change from a dominance-based relationship to a reciprocal one), money may also play a role. The use of ORI in scenarios involving financial matters may be, among other factors, a product of the taboo associated with open discussions of money, costs, and personal finances, particularly in cultures such as the UK and US.

4 Understanding discrepancies

When the data from Experiments 1 and 2 are compared, an unexpected discrepancy between intuition and elicited production arises. In Experiment 1, participants rarely recounted SS-based uses of ORI, even when prompted by prototypical SS examples. In Experiment 2, however, participants frequently produced ORI utterances, of their own accord, in the two scenarios for which SS predicts ORI – the bribe and the sexual proposition. Similarly, PT-based uses of ORI predominated in Experiment 1, yet were virtually absent from the favour in Experiment 2. On the surface, the findings challenge both theoretical accounts, as neither correctly predicts both the participants' intuition and their production. SS fails to impact the participants' intuition, either in terms of the game-theoretic logic that motivates the use of ORI or the conflictual scenarios upon which the theory is focused. With regards to production, both theories fall short, though in different ways. Although, as predicted by SS, ORI is used frequently in both the bribes and the propositions and is infrequent in favours, the widespread and strategic use of politeness markers within these utterances contradicts a key assumption of the theory (see Section 6). The near absence of ORI in the favours, even in the scenarios for which P, D, and/or R are set to comparably high levels, seemingly speaks against the predictions of PT. When reconsidered in a different light, however, the data also provide support for both PT and SS.

In Experiment 2, each of the settings of P, D, and R may have been evaluated at a level below the threshold necessary for ORI. This conclusion is supported by the high frequency of negatively polite on-record responses, a strategy ranked by PT as reflecting a level of politeness

below that afforded by ORI. In Experiment 2, the mean weight (the sum of P, D, and R) was calculated for the most face-threatening (+P +D +R) versions of each of the three speech acts. The highest possible weight was 21 and results were as follows: bribe (18.14), proposition (15.76), favour (17.62). For all three speech acts, the mean weight in the most face-threatening version was significantly higher than that of the least face-threatening version. However, it was determined that, in the case of the bribes and the propositions, the use of ORI was not a function of weight. In other words, the ORI threshold proposed in PT is not applicable to the bribes and propositions and, as such, the weight of these acts cannot be used as a comparative measure for the weight required for ORI in the favour. It may be the case that to warrant the use of ORI, the favour must reach the maximum possible weight (here, 21). Since none of the scenarios met that requirement, the use of a lower-ranked negative politeness strategy may be justified by PT. ORI, in such a case, may be perceived as unnecessary or gratuitous. Brown and Levinson explain that a speaker should be neither less polite nor more polite than strategically necessary for the purposes of facework. They argue that while ORI is ideal when face-threat high, it is not suited to all situations ‘[...] because the choice of the least risky strategy may indicate to [hearer] that the [act] is more threatening than it actually is, since it would imply an excessively high rating of P or D or R’ (1987: 83). The use of a strategy that is inappropriate for the weight of the speech act may have a negative effect on the hearer or, indeed on a third party, as evidenced in examples (5) and (6) from Experiment 4.

(5) Because he’s a weasel. He should just ask outright.

(6) Because he is ashamed and also because he wants to flatter [...] It’s also pretty passive aggressive [...]

In other words, the use of ORI in the favour may be perceived just as poorly as the use of a blunt on-record act such as ‘Let’s go to my place and have sex’ in the proposition.¹ Given that the aim of PT is to have a favourable effect on the hearer – in terms of both respecting his face wants and encouraging him to respond as desired – it is understandable that the speaker would avoid using a strategy that is ill-suited to the weight of the act.

¹ This utterance was used as the blunt on-record option in Lee and Pinker (2010). In a naturalness rating test, where 1 was equal to ‘not natural at all’ and 7 was ‘very natural’, the mean rating for the blunt on-record utterance was 3.20 (SD = 2.08). In comparison, the two ORI utterances were rated as significantly more natural, with mean ratings 5.33 (SD = 1.80) and 5.73 (SD = 1.71), respectively (see Chapter 4).

The discrepancy between intuition and production may be related to the nature of self-reporting. The prevalence of polite uses of ORI in Experiment 1 can be explained by the participants' affinity towards negativity politeness, a preference that has been attributed to users of both American and British English (Blum-Kulka 1987; Sifianou 1992). The culturally-situated desirability of presenting oneself as negatively polite may encourage self-reports of polite uses of ORI. Likewise, the social stigma attached to acts such as bribes, threats, and propositions may hamper the participants' willingness to self-report their engagement with these acts. It is also possible that SS-based uses of ORI are more limited in scope than PT-based uses and perhaps less likely to be experienced on a regular basis. These conclusions support Pinker and colleagues' argument that SS speech acts are categorically distinct from others, due to their conflictual nature and to the tangible and intangible costs and rewards associated with them (Pinker 2007; Pinker, Nowak, and Lee 2008; Lee and Pinker 2010). As predicted by SS, participants draw on ORI when faced with these acts under experimental conditions, regardless of intuition or first-hand experience.

5 Considering unexpected uses of ORI

While many of the experiments lend support to the theories of ORI under consideration (or, alternatively, present challenges to them), some of the experiments also provided insight into uses of ORI that are beyond the scope of the theories.

In Experiment 1, participants were asked to recount their own experiences with ORI. Amongst their responses were evidence of two unanticipated uses of ORI – edification and the concealment of intention, respectively. The 'edification' interpretation explains that a speaker uses ORI as a training tool to sharpen the hearers' attention to indirect speech. In example (7), the speaker, a classroom teacher, uses ORI to prompt her students to notice hints and interpret implicated meanings. Though the use of ORI is deliberate (and strategic), it is not motivated by plausible deniability – the speaker wants the hearers to recognise her intent, both for the immediate purpose of preparing them for the quiz and for the long-term goal of teaching them to engage with off-record speech. Under the 'concealment of intention' interpretation, participants use ORI to glean information about the hearer and to covertly gauge his or her interest or availability, as in example (8). Whereas the success of other ORI acts relies on the hearer interpreting the implicated message, these acts exploit the hearer's ignorance of the underlying

motive. Once the information is supplied, the speaker can act on it accordingly, with the hearer none the wiser. If the hearer does recognise the intent, the speaker can plausibly deny the interpretation in attempt to (re)conceal her motives.

(7) Warning my class of an upcoming quiz. / “It wouldn't surprise me if this information turned out to be important.” / So they will learn to take cues from future bosses.

(8) My sister wanted to find out what my brother wanted for his birthday. / “This sweater is nice. What do you think, Steve?” / We wanted his opinion without finding out why we needed to know.

Each of these motivations was attested in only a few instances, which suggests that they are not prototypical examples of the use of ORI. Nonetheless, they illustrate the breadth of strategic uses of ORI and provide further support for the proposed categorisation, which differentiates between uses of ORI that are motivated by plausible deniability (concealment of intention) and uses that are not motivated by plausible deniability (edification).

6 The Moderate Strategic Speaker approach

While both the frequency of use of ORI in Experiment 2 and the strategic motivations attributed to the use of ORI in Experiment 4 strongly support the predictions of the Strategic Speaker approach, the wide-spread use of negative and positive politeness within ORI bribes and propositions challenges an assumption of the theory. The politeness data run counter to Pinker and colleagues' claims, especially the assertion that high-risk acts ‘may be highly indirect, but they are unlikely to be clad in the kinds of constructions that protect the hearer's face in other requests, such as “Please”, “Do you think you might”, or “I'm sorry to have to ask but”’ (Lee and Pinker 2010: 786). Lee and Pinker further argue that ‘[...] politeness and indirectness do not reside on the same scale but are rather distinct mechanisms elicited by different types of social encounters’ (Lee and Pinker 2010: 787). In other words, they challenge Brown and Levinson's (1987) weighting of politeness strategies by separating indirectness (considered in PT as the

most polite option) from the polite on-record alternatives. They assume an ‘all or nothing’ approach to the two scales – an utterance can be either (only) ORI or (only) polite.²

In Experiment 2, however, participants regularly used *both* politeness and off-record indirectness in a single response, incorporating markers of negative and/or positive politeness into 92% of the ORI bribes and 66% of the ORI propositions, as in examples (9), (10), and (11).

(9) Now, this is a bit of a different situation we normally find ourselves in...We both know the issues of speeding and the hassles of it, but since it’s late what do you think about not pursuing this matter further?

(10) [...] I’m really sorry to have to ask this but I don’t suppose you’d be able to let me off just this once, would you? [...]

(11) I’ve really enjoyed this evening, Lucy. I don’t suppose you’re busy after this, you could come back to mine and chill for a bit?

The data from Experiment 2, then, confirm that the two mechanisms – politeness and indirectness – can indeed be used within a single encounter, albeit for different ends. While ORI affords plausible deniability, politeness markers allow the interlocutors to reap (at least ostensibly) the social benefits of facework. In light of these findings, I propose an updated version of Pinker and colleagues’ theory (Pinker 2007; Pinker, Nowak, and Lee 2008; Lee and Pinker 2010), henceforth referred to as the ‘Moderate Strategic Speaker approach’ (Moderate SS). This view incorporates the facets of Pinker and colleagues’ theory that were upheld by the experimental findings – namely, the game-theoretic logic and the lack of sensitivity to P, D, and R – with the face-based politeness principles associated with Brown and Levinson’s Politeness Theory (1987).

Under the Moderate Strategic Speaker approach, ORI and politeness are separate phenomena and, with regards to high-risk acts such as bribes and propositions, the use of each is motivated by different factors. ORI and politeness can be used synchronously within a single exchange. ORI is motivated by the strategic interests outlined in SS – specifically, the desire to balance risks and rewards in the speaker’s favour when tangible or intangible assets are at stake – and is

² Some of the examples they cite, however, incorporate negatively or positively polite markers, as in the following ORI bribe: ‘Gee, officer. I was thinking that maybe the best thing would be to take care of the ticket here, without going through a lot of paperwork’ (Lee and Pinker 2010: 785). This feels strongly like a contradiction of their own assertion.

not influenced by the settings of power, distance, and imposition. The use of negative and positive politeness is motivated by facework. The choice of politeness markers, as well as the contextual sources of plausible deniability upon which the speaker draws, may be influenced by the speaker's assessment of P, D, and R. The commitments of the Moderate SS approach do not preclude the use of ORI for different motivations in scenarios not fitting with the Strategic Speaker approach. The Moderate SS approach, for example, allows for the use of ORI for the purposes of politeness, as predicted by Brown and Levinson (1987), in low-risk situations. Overall, the Moderate SS approach allows politeness-based considerations to influence the content of the speech act as a function of P, D and R, but not the decision to use ORI itself in high-risk speech acts. The predictions associated with PT and SS are summarised below (as explained in Chapter 4) with regards to the effects of P, D, and R and the role of politeness, respectively. A Moderate Strategic Speaker approach is proposed, with commitments related to P, D, and R and politeness.

Politeness Theory

- A speaker's decision to go off-record is motivated by facework. The decision is based upon the speaker's assessment of power, distance, and/or imposition.
- Off-record indirectness is the most polite of the linguistic strategies used in facework. Off-record indirectness will be used, along with other politeness markers, if the weight of a speech act, as measured by the speaker's assessment of power, distance, and or/imposition, requires maximum levels of politeness.

Strategic Speaker approach

- A speaker's decision to go off-record is motivated exclusively by strategic game-theoretic interests and conflict-based concerns. The decision is not influenced by the speaker's assessment of power, distance, and/or imposition.
- Off-record indirectness and politeness are separate phenomena and the use of each is driven by distinct motivations. Politeness is motivated by facework, especially concern for the hearer's face, which is incompatible with the potentially conflicting goals of the

speaker and hearer in high-risk acts. In the case of high-risk speech acts, then, politeness markers and other displays of facework will not be used alongside off-record utterances.

Moderate Strategic Speaker approach

- Off-record indirectness and politeness are separate phenomena and the use of each is driven by distinct motivations.
- With regards to high-risk acts, a speaker's decision to go off-record is motivated exclusively by strategic game-theoretic interests and conflict-based concerns. The decision is not influenced by the speaker's assessment of power, distance, and/or imposition.
- With regards to high-risk acts, the use of politeness markers is motivated by facework, independently of the speaker's decision to go off-record. The choice of politeness markers, as well as the contextual sources of plausible deniability upon which the speaker draws, are based on the speaker's assessment of P, D, and R.

The Moderate SS upholds the notion that 'there is no faceless communication' (Scollon and Scollon 2001: 48). Politeness concerns are pervasive and all ORI interactions, regardless of whether the use ORI is motivated by politeness or by other unrelated factors, involve intricate facework.

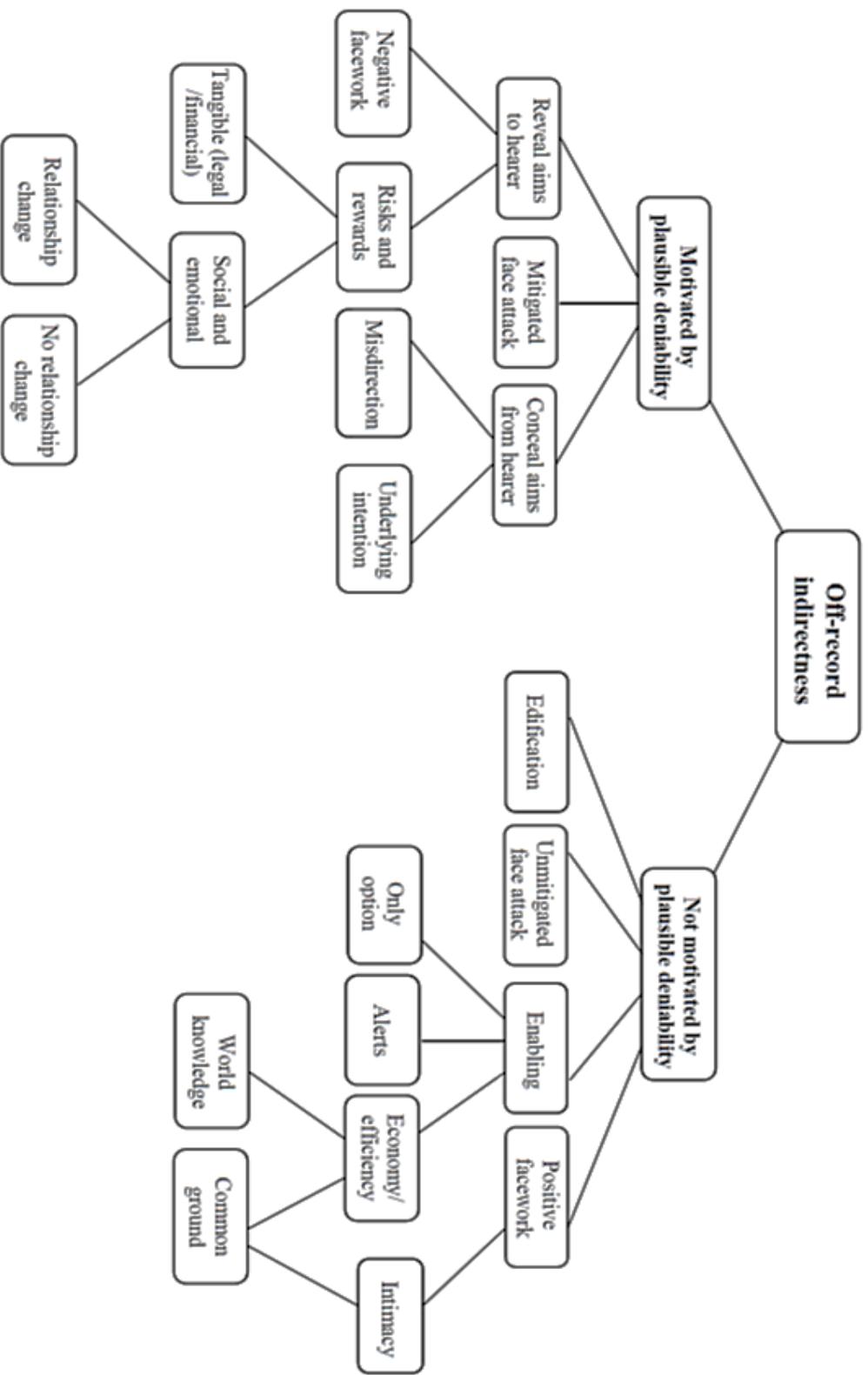
7 Returning to the novel categorisation of strategic motivations for ORI

In Chapter 2 (Section 11, Figure 3), a novel typology was presented, with the strategic motivations for the use of ORI separated into two categories. On the one hand, were uses of ORI in which the potential for plausible deniability was among the leading factors that influenced the speaker's decision to go off-record. On the other hand, were strategic uses of ORI for which for the speaker's decision was *not* related to the presence of plausible deniability. The findings from Experiments 1 through 8 suggest that the typology is appropriate. To begin with, each of the experiments that questions the participants' motivations for using ORI confirms that the choice was strategic (and not simply incidental). The participants were able to identify the reasons why

they deliberately used ORI – whether the purposes of plausible deniability (as part facework or game-theoretic motives) or for purposes unrelated to plausible deniability (including the intimacy-based motivations cited in the ‘existing couple’ date scenario in Experiment 7). The typology also supports standardised uses of ORI (such as the drinks offers in the proposition scenario), so long as the use is driven by one or more strategic motivations.

The proposed typology can be adapted to accommodate additional motivations for ORI, including both unexpected uses and nuanced accounts of the existing theories. In Figure 1 below, two uses of ORI that were described in Experiment 1 have added been to the diagram. The use of ORI for the purposes of concealing the speaker’s underlying intention is placed within the ‘motivated by plausible deniability’ category. This use of ORI is subset of a larger category, ‘conceal aims from the hearer’, which includes the misdirection account and contrasts with the ‘reveal aims to the hearer’ category. Another use, ORI for the purposes of edification, is included in the ‘not motivated by plausible deniability’ category. In light of the findings from Experiments 5, 6, and 7, the ‘risks and rewards’ category, which refers to SS-based game-theoretic motivates, has been expanded. The subcategory ‘social and emotional’ is further divided into two types of intangible costs – those involving ‘relationship change’ and those in which there is ‘no relationship change’. The proposed typology can be further adapted in response to new research or to accommodate cross-cultural variations in the use of ORI.

Figure 1: An updated typology of strategic motivations for ORI



8 Future research directions

The aim of this thesis was to provide an in-depth and critical discussion of the strategic motivations for the use of ORI. With the exception of Experiment 1 (which reported the participants' own experiences with and intuitions about ORI), the empirical research centred on three theoretical accounts – Politeness Theory, the Strategic Speaker approach, and the Intimacy accounts – and focused on the use of ORI amongst native English speakers. In this section, future research directions are proposed to expand the inquiry to beyond the scope of this thesis. The suggestions for further research focus on three areas – the influence of culture and gender on the use of ORI, the role of relationship change in the use of ORI, and new empirical methodologies to evaluate non-binary views of ORI.

8.1 Culture, gender, and the use of ORI

This thesis focuses on motivations related to dynamic contexts of conversation, rather than static aspects of the context, such as cultural identity and gender. These factors are discussed briefly in relation to empirical findings, particularly with regards to the role of culture in intimacy-based uses of ORI. In this section, further research directions are suggested, with a focus on culture and gender.

Sifianou (1992, 1993, 1997) and, to a lesser extent, Terkourafi (2011a, 2011b, 2013, 2014) frame their discussions of Intimacy-based uses of ORI in relation to evidence from native Greek speakers. While Terkourafi does not comment on the role of culture in the uses of ORI she describes, Sifianou suggests that Intimacy-based uses of ORI are, indeed, a function of culture. She contrasts the strategic uses of ORI between English and Greek speakers, with the former motivated by negatively polite facework and the avoidance of imposition and latter motivated by positively polite facework and the enhancement of solidarity (see Chapter 2, Section 8.1 and Chapter 7, Section 8). The empirical data discussed in this thesis support Sifianou's assumptions. The near absence of ORI in the intimate scenarios in Experiments 8 and 8a, and the emphasis on negatively polite motivations for the use of ORI with intimates in Experiment 1, may be attributed to the fact that all participants were native English speakers. Although the Intimacy accounts have not been studied empirically with regards to cross-cultural variation, there is robust empirical evidence to suggest that the use of ORI is sensitive to cultural preferences,

particularly with regards to Politeness Theory (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5). Future research could determine whether the use of ORI with intimates is similarly susceptible to cultural influences.

To begin with, Experiment 8 could be adapted into Greek and compared with the English data. A larger scale study, encompassing a variety of intimate relationships and a range of speech acts, would provide additional empirical evidence. Open-ended questions could be used in place of multiple choice responses to avoid the awkwardness of word-for-word translation and to allow for a qualitative coding scheme similar to the one used in Experiment 2 (Chapter 4). Scenarios should include both acts expressing singular propositions, for which ORI is predicted to be used solely for the purposes of positive politeness, as well as speech acts for which ORI is used as communicative shorthand for multiple propositions. Additionally, the scenarios should include both instances in which the interpretation of the implicated act is reliant on the hearer's familiarity and shared experiences with the speaker (and hence, serves to reaffirm the solidarity between interlocutors) and situations in which interpretation is dependent on world knowledge only. Participants should be asked to explain why they choose to use ORI (or alternatively, opted for an on-record act) in order to determine which strategic factors influence their decision. The patterns with which ORI is used, and the participants' justifications for its use, should be compared cross-linguistically to identify areas of similarity and difference. If significant differences are found in intimacy-based uses of ORI between English and Greek speakers, the experiments can be expanded to include speakers of other languages.

Empirical research could also examine the role of culture amongst other demographic groups and for other strategic uses of ORI. Future studies could explore the impact of cultural norms amongst speakers of the same language by focusing, for example, on the use of ORI by native speakers of different regional and national varieties of English. Research into impolite uses of ORI, following Culpeper (2005, 2011) and Haugh (2015), would be a natural extension to existing (and proposed) studies on culture, face, and ORI, expanding the research portfolio to include the use of ORI for negatively polite facework (PT), positively polite facework (Intimacy), and face attacks. Empirical research into the differences in the use and perception of ORI between cultures may also assist in identifying discrete causes of cross-cultural miscommunication, which can ultimately impact research into language learning and interlanguage pragmatics.

The Strategic Speaker approach is also well suited to cross-cultural research. Unlike PT and the Intimacy accounts, SS makes no mention of specific cultural norms with regards to the choice of ORI. One may assume, then, that Pinker and colleagues consider SS to be universally applicable, rather than a function of cultural preferences. The game-theoretical model they employ is based on cost/benefit calculations and draws on assumptions about rational human behaviour. A proponent of SS may argue, then, that the decision to use ORI in a high-risk situation should be the same regardless of the cultural setting in which the interlocutors find themselves. Lee and Pinker (2010) did a questionnaire in which participants, all of whom were English speakers, ‘were asked to imagine themselves on a road trip through a fictitious former republic of the Soviet Union’ (2010: 791). They were tasked with choosing a bribe, from a list of options varying in directness, to offer to a police officer in order to avoid a traffic ticket. Lee and Pinker did not discuss the fact the encounter between the driver and the officer would involve cross-cultural communication, with interlocutors who are accustomed to different social norms and may have different perceptions about the social effects of (in)directness, nor did they discuss the fact that the drivers would be addressing non-native English speakers who may not have the common ground or linguistic knowledge to correctly interpret the implicated messages. In other words, they (perhaps naively) assume a seamless transition between SS-based uses of ORI rooted in American English and North American cultural norms to overseas encounters.

While the game theory model may itself be universal, the situations which require cost/benefit calculations may vary as a function of culture. The bribery scenario on which Pinker and colleagues focus much of their theoretical and empirical work works well in its original American setting – a cultural background in which bribes to police officer are illegal and widely frowned upon and in which legal sanctions are enforced against citizens and officers who partake in bribes. In other countries, police are openly bribed. A speeding driver might not only be permitted to bribe an officer, but actively expected to do so. In such cases, SS motivations for ORI are simply irrelevant – there is no need to veil the attempt or to later deny it. In other words, the SS account should assume a universal link between bribery and the use of ORI, but rather, between the designation of an act as high-risk within a particular culture and the strategic use of ORI. There may also be situations in which the culture-specific disadvantages of ORI may outweigh the game-theoretic benefits of its use. In a culture in which bribery is deemed a high-risk act, but ORI is considered impolite for reasons of pragmatic clarity, a speaker may prioritise

the avoidance of offence and the desire for clarity over the appeal of plausible deniability. These differences may be particularly relevant in comparison to English-speaking cultures in which there is generally a positive, or at least neutral, view of ORI (perhaps because of its cultural link to politeness). In English-speaking cultures, the use of ORI in its own right does usually constitute a threat. In other words, there are no competing influences which would discourage a speaker from using ORI in an SS situation when it is otherwise beneficial. Cross-cultural research on SS can determine whether the game-theoretic principles hold when the types of high-risk acts vary and, further, whether the preference for ORI is maintained for high-risk acts in cultures which ORI is generally perceived poorly.

In addition to examining cross-cultural differences, future research could also explore the role of gender in the use of ORI. Comparisons between female and male speakers of the same language can identify gender-based trends in the use of ORI and highlight areas of divergence, with emphasis on strategic motivations, situational and interpersonal contexts, and speech act types. Qualitative analysis could evaluate differences in discursive techniques, politeness markers, and content-specific preferences. Attitudes towards ORI, including negative assessments on the part of hearers and third parties, can also be compared between genders (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3). The role of gender in the use of politeness and ORI was discussed briefly in relation to Experiment 2 (see Chapter 4, Section 10.2). In general, however, the experiments discussed in this thesis were not suitable to gender-based analysis due to the randomised selection of participants and the resulting unequal distributions of females and males both within and across experiments. While the current dataset could be revisited as a pilot study, new research is needed in order to adequately evaluate the role of gender on the use of ORI. Future studies should recruit equal numbers of female and male participants and, as in Experiment 2, should ensure that the participants' own gender identities match those of the protagonists. The gender of the hearer should also be taken into consideration, to determine whether there are differences in how males and females are addressed generally, as well as differences in how speakers address hearers of the same or opposite gender.

8.2 The role of relationship change on the use of ORI

Pinker and colleagues propose that the potential for relationship change is a motivating factor for the use of ORI in the high-risk scenarios for which there are no legal or financial consequences.

(Pinker 2007; Pinker, Nowak, and Lee 2008; Lee and Pinker 2010). Their categorisation of relationship changing acts is based upon their intuitions about the types of scenarios that are associated with each of Fiske's relationship types – communality, dominance, and reciprocity (Fiske 1991, 1992, 2000). Pinker and colleagues do not propose a means of measuring whether or not a given speech act actually poses a potential for relationship change nor do they distinguish between types and directions of relationship change with regards to the use of ORI. One could criticise their relationship change account as a 'catch all' for uses of ORI that have no tangible consequences but are too controversial or conflictual to be motivated by altruistic aims.

Relationship change was examined empirically in Experiments 5, 6, and 7, with the aim of determining whether it is a reliable predictor of ORI and, further, whether the notion of relationship change is generalisable beyond the specific examples discussed by Pinker and colleagues (Pinker 2007; Pinker, Nowak, and Lee 2008; Lee and Pinker 2010). Ratings of typicality and awkwardness were proposed as novel measures of relationship change. The former rating confirms whether the act is, indeed, a departure from the existing relationship while the latter captures the emotional and interpersonal effect of the act on the interlocutors. The ratings can be considered a reliable first step in measuring the potential of a speech act to qualitatively change the nature of the relationship between the speaker and hearer.

The experiments confirmed that some scenarios, while potentially relationship changing on paper, are not perceived as such by the interlocutors themselves. The studies also showed that ORI is not always the most preferred option in relationship changing scenarios, as participants often opted for positive or negative politeness in scenarios that were deemed relationship changing, as measured by the ratings of typicality and awkwardness. One possible interpretation is that, similar to Brown and Levinson's (1987) account of the strategies for addressing face-threat, there is a scale for relationship changing scenarios. In some cases, on-record politeness may be sufficient to address the awkwardness of the attempted change, while in others, ORI, and resulting plausible deniability, may be necessary.

While ORI was mostly absent from the relationship-change experiments, there were notable cases in which it was used. ORI was preferred by the majority of participants for scenarios involving a transition into a romantic communal relationship, a finding that was evidenced by the frequent use of ORI in sexual propositions in both Lee and Pinker (2010) and in Experiment 2

(Chapter 4) as well as the use of ORI in date invitations in Experiment 7 (Chapter 6). The findings suggest that ORI may be preferred for only a subset of relationship changing scenarios. The subset may include acts that are considered taboo (such as bribing) or highly emotional (such as the romantic interactions). There were also instances in which the use of ORI may have been misattributed to relationship change when other factors were involved. While ORI was used in relationship changing scenarios involving financial transactions, it was also used in the same scenarios with interlocutors for whom the exchange was not relationship changing. These scenarios were considered by the participants to be awkward, a rating that may be the result of societal taboos surrounding frank discussions of money. In these cases, the use of ORI may have been a function of transaction type, rather relationship change.

Further research is needed to evaluate the validity of the relationship-change motivation for ORI. The first step in researching the role of relationship change is to identify a sample of relationship-changing scenarios. The scenarios should include transitions between different types of relationships and in different directions of change. The relationship-changing potential of the scenario should be verified by ratings of typicality and awkwardness, as well as other measures, including social appropriateness, the emotional investment on the part of the speaker, and the impact of rejection on the speaker. Scenarios involving romantic interactions and financial transactions – the two scenario types that elicited the highest use of ORI in the aforementioned studies – should also be investigated further. These scenarios could be tested under both relationship-changing and non-relationship-changing conditions, as well as under different settings of P, D, and R, to determine whether love and money are ‘special’ uses of ORI with strategic motivations in their own right. Further research on the role of relationship change will either reinforce or challenge the reliability and generalisability of the Strategic Speaker approach which, in combination with the novel predictions attributed to the Moderate Strategic Speaker approach, will refine Pinker and colleagues’ recently proposed account of off-record indirectness.

8.3 New methodologies and non-binary distinctions

For the purposes of this thesis, a binary distinction was assumed between ORI and non-ORI speech acts. This distinction facilitated the coding of open-ended data and allowed for a focus on ORI in particular, rather than on a range of politeness strategies in general, for the multiple

choice data. As the qualitative analysis revealed, however, the reality of ORI is not as black and white as the binary coding system might suggest. The open-ended data showed that ORI was achieved through the use of specialised discourse techniques (including ellipsis, emphasis, and pause) and was supported by a variety of contextually-relevant sources of plausible deniability, supplementary speech acts, and politeness markers.

Future research can narrow the distinction from binary to scalar, focusing on the differing levels of indirectness and politeness. As a starting point, the open-ended data from Experiment 2 can be repackaged for a non-binary analysis. Likert rating scales can be used to compare contextually and grammatically different ORI utterances within a single speech act type. In addition to traditional scalar questions about the perceived politeness and indirectness of the act, participants could also be questioned about the varying degrees of plausible deniability afforded by the utterance. The same study could also elicit plausibly deniable rebuttals from the participants, the strength of which could be confirmed in later rounds of research. Questions on plausible deniability could be phrased using language that is accessible to the participants, as in the constructed example below:

Faye was pulled over for speeding. She doesn't want another traffic ticket on her record, so when the officer asks for her licence she says 'The fine is about £50. Why don't I pay you £50 now and save us the trouble?'

How likely is it that Faye will be able to 'backtrack' on her attempt to bribe the officer? What could Faye say to convince the officer that she didn't mean to bribe him?

The elicitation tasks recognises the fact that, in every day speech, ORI acts usually occur as part of an on-going dialogue rather than as single, isolated turns. In future studies, tasks can be expanded, perhaps amongst multiple participants, to reflect a real-time communicative negotiation. Multi-person, multi-turn tasks could take the form of role-play, replacing written questionnaires with oral communication and exploring the role of factors such as intonation and gesture in the strategic use of ORI.

The scalar ratings of directness, politeness, and plausible deniability can be compared with the presence of particular discourse markers, contextual cues, grammatical forms, and politeness markers to determine whether there is a stable relationship between the features of the ORI utterance and how (in)direct the utterance is perceived to be. The ratings can also be compared to the settings of P, D, and R. Although there were no correlations between the use of ORI and P, D, and R when binary distinctions were used, subtle differences may arise when the settings of P, D, and R are tested against the scalar ratings. The ORI utterances used in +D scenarios, for example, may be comparatively more indirect than the ORI utterances used in –D scenarios.

The aims of this thesis were to present a nuanced, critical discussion of off-record indirectness, along with an empirical exploration of the phenomenon, with focus on the diverse strategic motivations that compel speakers to use ORI in a variety of situational and interpersonal contexts. Future research can broaden and enrich these aims by exploring the strategic uses of ORI that were beyond the scope of this thesis.

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ETHICS FORM

You have agreed to participate in a linguistic study run by Jessica Soltys, a PhD student in the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics (DTAL) at the University of Cambridge.

Please read each of the following statements. If you wish to proceed with the study, please tick each of the boxes below.

If you have any questions, please contact Jessica Soltys at jms256@cam.ac.uk

Thank you.

- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without my rights being affected.
- I understand that the data collected for this research project will be kept confidential; all data will be identified by a random code that is not linked back to me and will be kept in a secure location.
- I understand that these data may be presented at professional conferences or in academic manuscripts. These results will be written up based on group data. If, in rare instances, individual data might be used, then no identifying information will allow others to trace my responses back to me.
- I have the name and email address of the researcher.
- I agree to take part in the study.

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(1) Original bribe (Lee and Pinker 2010: 804)

Kyle is in a hurry to drive from San Francisco to Los Angeles. Since it is late at night and there are hardly any cars on Interstate 5, Kyle floors it and starts making great time. Before too long, however, Kyle is pulled over by a Highway Patrol officer. The officer comes up beside Kyle's window and shines a bright flashlight on Kyle's face. The officer says, "Hey, buddy. Did you know that the speed limit here is seventy miles per hour? You were doing over ninety." Kyle says, "I didn't realize I was going so fast." The officer says, "Well, you were. Please show me your driver's license." Kyle has a history of moving violations, so he is worried that another ticket will boost his insurance costs and result in the suspension of his license. He slowly gets out his wallet and holds it out to the officer. The corner of a 50 dollar bill is protruding from his wallet ever so slightly.

(2) +P +D +R bribe¹

Kyle, a first year undergrad, is in a hurry to drive from Cambridge to London. Since it is late at night and there are hardly any cars on the M11, Kyle speeds up and starts making great time. Before too long, however, Kyle is pulled over by a traffic officer. Officer Smith comes up beside Kyle's window. He shines a bright flashlight on Kyle's face. Kyle has been pulled over for speeding various times, but he's never been stopped by Officer Smith. This is the first encounter between the two men. Kyle follows the local news reports very closely. He's recently read an article about the marked increase in speed-related accidents in the region. As a result, local police are under public pressure to strongly enforce speed limits and penalise offenders. Officer Smith says, "Good evening, sir. Did you know that the speed limit here is seventy miles per hour? You were doing over ninety." Kyle says, "I didn't realise I was going so fast." The officer says, "I'll need to see your driver's licence." Kyle has a history of traffic violations, so he is worried that another ticket will boost his insurance costs and result in the suspension of his licence. He slowly gets out his wallet and holds it out to the officer. The corner of a fifty pound note is protruding from his wallet ever so slightly.

Intention: Kyle wants Officer Smith to accept the £50 note in lieu of issuing a speeding ticket.

¹ All manipulations to power, distance, and imposition are underlined.

(3) –P –D –R bribe

William, a high-ranking city council member, is in a hurry to drive from Cambridge to London. Since it is late at night and there are hardly any cars on the M11, William speeds up and starts making great time. Before too long, however, William is pulled over by a traffic officer. Officer Collins comes up beside William's window. He shines a bright flashlight on William's face. William has been pulled over for speeding various times, but he's never been stopped by Officer Collins. The two men know one another, however, as they play in the same amateur sports league on the weekends. As a frequent commuter, William is very familiar with the policies and practices of area police. In recent months, he noticed that the traffic officers have focused all their efforts on curtailing drink driving. As a result, police have become more lenient in their enforcement of other offences. Officer Collins says, "Good evening, William. Did you know that the speed limit here is seventy miles per hour? You were doing over ninety." William says, "I didn't realise I was going so fast." The officer says, "I'll need to see your driver's licence." William has a history of traffic violations, so he is worried that another ticket will boost his insurance costs and result in the suspension of his licence. He slowly gets out his wallet and holds it out to the officer. The corner of a fifty pound note is protruding from his wallet ever so slightly.

Intention: William wants Officer Collins to accept the £50 note in lieu of issuing a speeding ticket.

(4) Original proposition (Lee and Pinker 2010: 804)

Michael and Lisa are co-workers and fairly good friends. Michael finds Lisa very attractive, but he has no idea whether she has any romantic feelings toward him. One day Michael asks Lisa if she wants to have dinner with him. Lisa agrees. Michael picks up Lisa at eight and drives her to a local restaurant. The food and wine are excellent, and the two of them have a great conversation. Michael picks up the check. At ten-thirty Michael starts driving Lisa back to her apartment. He slows down while driving past his own apartment building and remarks that he lives only ten minutes away from her.

(5) +P +D +R proposition

Michael and Lisa work for a big and busy consulting firm in the City. Lisa is a partner at the firm, responsible for developing business plans, overseeing operations, handling clients, and supervising all employees within the marketing department, including Michael. Michael was transferred to

marketing last week and so far, has been busy setting up his office, learning the job, and making acquaintances. Lisa's work ethic is well-known. She adheres closely to all official firm policies, carefully monitoring her breaks, limiting her online activities, and strictly observing the ban on intra-office romance. One day Michael asks Lisa if she wants to have dinner with him. Lisa agrees. Michael picks up Lisa at eight and they drive together to a local restaurant. The food and wine are excellent, and the two of them have a great conversation. Michael pays the bill. At ten-thirty Michael starts driving Lisa back to her apartment. He slows down while driving past his own apartment building and remarks that he lives only ten minutes away from her.

Intention: Michael wants Lisa to visit his apartment for a 'romantic encounter'.

(6) –P –D –R proposition

Charles and Megan work for a big and busy consulting firm in the City. Charles and Megan are co-workers, sharing matching workloads and comparable responsibilities within the agency's popular marketing department. They talk daily and often collaborate on projects, and have become fairly good friends. Megan's relaxed attitude is known throughout the firm – she's easy-going, sociable and quite liberal in her interpretation of intra-office policies. She enjoys fraternising with workmates. One day Charles asks Megan if she wants to have dinner with him. Megan agrees. Charles picks up Megan at eight and they drive together to a local restaurant. The food and wine are excellent, and the two of them have a great conversation. Charles pays the bill. At ten-thirty Charles starts driving Megan back to her apartment. He slows down while driving past his own apartment building and remarks that he lives only ten minutes away from her.

Intention: Charles wants Megan to visit his apartment for a 'romantic encounter'.

(7) Original favour, +P +D +R (Lee and Pinker 2010: 804-805)

Will has just started his high-pressure job as a financial analyst. One of his first tasks is to analyze data from the last few quarters and write up his findings in a report. Will comes to work very early on the day that his report is due. At about 7 a.m. it dawns on him that a proper analysis of this time-series data requires expertise with stochastic processes. Will was enrolled in his college's course on stochastic processes for a single day; after staring blankly at the professor's mathematical scribbling for the entire class period, he promptly dropped the course. Will steps outside his office to see who else might be at work this early. He finds that Brian is occupied with

some task in his own office. Will is a newcomer, so he barely knows Brian. Although Brian is not that much older than Will, Brian has a Ph.D in statistics and is currently the head of the company's research division. He was one of the company's three founders. If Will does not finish his report in the next few hours, he will be in a world of trouble. The only way that he can finish the report is to ask Brian to go over the analysis together with him. Will knows that this would take around three hours. Brian would have to clear his morning to help Will, even though the report would not benefit Brian's own division. Will catches Brian on his way to the bathroom, gives him a friendly greeting, and quickly explains the situation.

(8) –P –D –R favour (Lee and Pinker, Private email correspondence, 13 February 2012)²

Adam has just started his high-pressure job as a financial analyst. One of his first tasks is to analyse data from the last few quarters and write up his findings in a report. Adam comes to work very early on the day that his report is due. At about 7.00 am it dawns on him that a proper analysis of this time-series data requires expertise with stochastic processes. Adam took his university's course on stochastic processes, but he struggled and received a 2:2. Adam looks up the relevant concepts online to refresh his memory, but realises that he needs a much more accessible source to be sure that he can analyse his data correctly. Adam steps outside his office to see who else might be at work this early. He finds that Nick is occupied with some task in his own office. Adam and Nick know each other well; they were roommates for three years at university, and have spent weekends at each other's homes. Adam and Nick are both new hires at the firm; previously, Adam was working at a hedge fund, while Nick was earning his PhD in statistics. If Adam does not finish his report in the next few hours, he will be in a world of trouble. The only way that he can finish it without the risk of making a major mistake is to ask Nick to explain some of the necessary concepts and procedures. Since Adam only has to fill in a few gaps in his knowledge, he knows that this would take around ten or fifteen minutes. Adam catches Nick on his way to the bathroom, gives him a friendly greeting, and quickly explains the situation.

Intention: Adam wants Nick to assist him in preparing the report.

² This version of the –P –D –R favour has been updated from Lee and Pinker's version to use British spelling and academic terminology and to include the intention note.