

How Politeness Is Controlled in Invitations, Their Acceptances and Refusals in English: A Case Study in the U.K.

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Abstract

This research paper attempts to examine (1) how an English speech act of *inviting* is performed formally and informally, and (2) how invitations are responded formally and informally in both positive and negative ways. The linguistic data for this study was provided by four informants who speak English as their native language, living in Cambridge, the U.K., in August 2014. This research has the following two main purposes: (a) the linguistic study of *invitations* and the replies to them from the viewpoints of pragmatics, and (b) the application of the research results to ELT (English language teaching) for the cultivation of the learners' pragmatic ability. The four examinees at the first stage made utterances to invite their bosses/supervisors and then their close friends. At the second stage they replied to invitations from their superiors and their close friends. After the data collection they collaborated with the researcher to transcribe the spoken data in order to retrospect their remarks to provide the researcher with the background information about the utterances. The present study attempts to reveal how native speakers of English control politeness and appropriateness in inviting others and replying to invitations, utilizing various types of lexical, grammatical, discourse and politeness strategies.

1. Introduction

This study⁽¹⁾ is one part of the author's current research project that

investigates (1) how formal and informal invitations in English are performed by examinees living in Cambridge, the U.K., (2) how they reply to invitations formally and informally in both positive and negative ways, (3) how their spoken and written responses are evaluated by assessors living in London. This first report in the whole project presents the findings about (1) and (2) as the starting point of analyses and discussions from the pragmatics perspectives. The current study scrutinizes the linguistic data provided by four informants living in Cambridge, as well as their reflections on the utterances they produced in order to discover what elements make invitations and their replies formal and informal.

The author has been engaged in the study of English speech acts and related lexicogrammatical, discourse, and politeness strategies for the linguistic and pedagogical purposes. His earlier publication about *inviting* (Suzuki, 2009; 2012) succeeded in sketching out general linguistic strategies about this speech act through analyses of the data obtained from DCTs (discourse completion tests) completed by over 160 American university undergraduate students in 2006 and 2007. Based on this achievement, the present research endeavors to investigate in more detail how linguistic politeness is controlled by native speakers of English when they perform *inviting* formally and informally.

The data collection was carried out in Cambridge, the U.K., in August 2014. The four informants who participated in this research produced utterances to invite (a) their bosses in the workplace and (b) their close friends. Their utterances were then transcribed into written data for retrospective interviews to investigate how they managed formality and casualness in their remarks with their linguistic strategies.

This study confirmed that there were sharp contrasts observed between formal and informal utterances while there were some cases where they

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were quite similar at the surface level. It also demonstrates that there are common and individual linguistic strategies that are applied to control the degrees of “politeness” and “appropriateness”.

The research results of this study are also expected to make a contribution to ELT for the purpose of cultivating the EFL (English as a foreign language) learners’ pragmatic competence (Kasper, 1997; Rose & Kasper, 2001) by revealing what linguistic strategies could and should be employed to invite others, accept and refuse invitations with proper degrees of politeness and appropriateness in EFL.

2. The researcher’s previous studies about *inviting*

In the author’s earlier works about *inviting*, Suzuki (2007, 2009) confirmed that this speech act has two dimensions. On the one hand it can be categorized into Searle’s EXPRESSIVE (1975: 15) and Leech’s CONVIVIAL (1983: 104) because of its FEA (face enhancing act) nature (cf. Kerbat-Orecchioni, 1997: 14). Leech (2014: 180) states that this speech act can be recognized as a type of “offer” as it is supposed to be basically an act carried out for the benefit of *H* (e.g. *You can come...*). In this respect it can be regarded as a speech act belonging to EXPRESSIVE and CONVIVIAL.

On the other hand it is also performed as Searle’s (*ibid.*) DIRECTIVE or Leech’s (*ibid.*) COMPETITIVE domains, which are mainly concerned with Brown & Levinson’s (1987) FTA (face-threatening act) framework. The researcher maintains this as he has observed in his earlier research results that many head acts of inviting resemble those of requesting (e.g. *Can you come ...? / I was wondering if you ...*) when *S* (= speaker) would like to ask if *H* (= hearer) will/can accept his/her invitation and to show a sense of politeness by showing his/her tentativeness by the use of such indirect expressions.

3. Research procedures

The data collection in this study was carried out with four informants

living in Cambridge, the U.K., in August 2014. They all speak English as their native language. Their background information is summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 *The informants' background information*

	Age group	Gender	Education
I-1	31-40	Female	Univ. postgraduate
I-2	51 or higher	Female	Univ. postgraduate
I-3	51 or higher	Female	Univ. postgraduate
I-4	51 or higher	Male	Other

The informants were asked to produce utterances orally to (1) invite others to a party and (2) accept and reject invitations from others. They were requested to address (a) their bosses (i.e. a person of higher social status) and (b) their friends (i.e. a person of the same social status) for both (1) and (2) above so that the researcher can investigate how lexicogrammatical and discourse strategies change according to the statuses of the addressees. After this stage they were requested to write down their utterances on the questionnaire so that they can remember what they said in order to investigate why and how they chose to use specific vocabulary, grammatical structures, discourse and politeness strategies in the retrospective interview. The following are the guidelines and instructions given to the informants, prior to the data collection.

Guidelines

- (1) Perform the target speech act orally in two different ways (A&B).
- (2) Transcribe the spoken data (1).
- (3) Respond to the speech act (A&B) in both positive and negative ways orally (A-P, A-N, B-P, B-N).
- (4) Transcribe the spoken data (3).
- (5) Provide some background information about (1) and (3).

Instructions for producing utterances

[A] Suppose you would like to invite your boss or supervisor to a party you are hosting at your place next month. What would you say to him/her?

[A-P] How would you reply to an invitation like [A] in a **positive** way if you were invited by your boss or supervisor?

[A-N] How would you reply to an invitation like [A] in a **negative** way if you were invited by your boss or supervisor?

[B] Suppose you would like to invite one of your close friends to a party you are hosting at your place next month. What would you say to him/her?

[B-P] How would you reply to an invitation like [A] in a **positive** way if you were invited by one of your close friends?

[B-N] How would you reply to an invitation like [A] in a **negative** way if you were invited by one of your close friends?

4. Results of data analysis

This section examines how similar and/or different the informants' utterances were when they talked to someone in a higher position and to someone of equal social status.

First, we study about the utterances for inviting the informants' bosses and friends. Then we are going to observe their positive and negative replies for both.

4.1 [A] - [B] comparisons

Instructions for producing utterances for invitations ([A] & [B])

[A] Suppose you would like to invite your boss or supervisor to a party you are hosting at your place next month. What would you say to him/her?

[B] Suppose you would like to invite one of your close friends to a party you are hosting at your place next month. What would you say to him/her?

Informant 01	
[A]	Hi Cally, I'm having a dinner party on Friday evening. I'd love it if you could come, it's gonna be from about 7 p.m., hope you can make it.
[B]	Hey, we're having a party next week. I hope you can come, just come any time after seven and bring a bottle of wine.

There are some distinctive differences in the lexicogrammatical and discourse strategies between [A] (addressed towards a boss) and [B] (towards a friend). The noticeable shifts from [A] to [B] are shown in Table 4.1.1.

Table 4.1.1 Summary of the differences between [A] & [B] (Informant 01)

	[A]	[B]
1	Hi Cally,	Hey,
2	a dinner party on Friday evening	a party next week
3	I'd love it if you could come	I hope you can come
4		just come
5	it's gonna be from about 7 p.m.	any time after seven
6	hope you can make it	
7		bring a bottle of wine

Regarding [A-1] and [B-1], I would like to refer to the meanings of *hi* and *hey* defined by *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* as follows.

- *hi*: (interjection informal) *hello*
- *hey*: 1) (interjection) a shout used to get someone's attention or to show surprise, interest, or annoyance; 2) (informal) *hello*

Judging from these explanations, there is little difference between these two lexical items. However, [A-1] sounds more intimate as it includes an address term (*Cally*). It is difficult to tell if it is an indication of polite intention, but it is suspected that [A-1] is showing higher-level consideration than [B-1] as the latter is not followed by the addressee's name.

[A-2] is providing more specific information (*on Friday evening*) about the party than [B-2] (*next week*) and therefore the former looks more attentive.

[A-3] employs the past subjunctive mood (*I'd love ... could ...*) to show more indirectness than [B-3], which is a plain present declarative sentence (*I hope ... can ...*). We can confirm that this informant tried to show a greater degree of politeness in [A-3] by showing more tentativeness with the use of the subjunctive from the perspective of linguistic politeness.

[B-4] presents a good example of friendliness shown by the imperative mood (*just come*). Leech & Svartvik (2002 [1975]: 175) offers the following note about "commands":

... it is <not impolite> to use a command when you are telling someone to do something for his or her own good:

Have another chocolate. *Make yourself at home.*

Just leave everything to me. *Do come in.*

These are in effect offers or invitations rather than commands.

It is worth noting that this informant did not opt to use this structure (i.e. the imperative mood) when she invited her boss in [A].

[A-5] is supplying more specific information about the party (*from about 7 p.m.*) than [B-5], although it includes an informal expression *gonna*. In contrast [B-5] represents more casualness, openness and friendliness by allowing the addressee to choose when to come (*any time after seven*).

[A-6] is a discourse element that does not appear in [B]. It is likely that this informant is expressing her polite intention by stating her genuine hope that the addressee can attend the party.

[B-7] is similar to [B-4] in that it is a command in a friendly way. An utterance in an invitation such as this one is thought to appear only when S is addressing his/her friend.

In the retrospective interview with the researcher this examinee said that she expressed slightly more formality in [A] with such expressions as *dinner, Friday evening, hope you can make it*. On the other hand she said that

she showed informality in [B] by the expressions *Hey* and *just come + any time*. She also pointed out that the phrase *bring a bottle of wine* is a conventional expression in an invitation that lets *H* know what kind of party s/he is invited to.

Informant 02	
[A]	Hello, I'd like to invite you and your wife to an informal gathering that we are having on Thursday this week, it's at 7 o'clock at my house and it would be lovely if you could come if you are free.
[B]	Are you free on Thursday evening this week? I'm having a party at my house, can you come?

As can be confirmed fairly easily, these two utterances are quite different. While [A] is very rich in its contents and linguistic strategies, [B] sounds simpler and more casual. Table 4.1.2 shows the components of these two utterances.

Table 4.1.2 *Discourse components of [A] & [B] (Informant 02)*

[A]	(1) <Greetings> + (2) <Head act (the declarative with an IFID ⁽²⁾)> + (3) <Supporting move 1 (explanation of the event)> + (4) <Supportive move 2 (S's desire to have H at the party)> + (5) <Supportive move 3 (giving options = consideration for H)>
[B]	(1) <Supportive move 1 (query on H's availability)> + (2) <Supportive move 2 (explanation of the event)> + (3) <Head act (the interrogative)>

It is assumed that this informant opted to provide more detailed descriptions (i.e. *an informal gathering / at 7 o'clock*) and use linguistic items to show politeness (i.e. *I'd like to / it would be lovely if you could come / if you are free*) when inviting a person of higher social status. It is also notable that she used the IFID, *invite*, in this invitation supposedly to show formality/politeness.

(2) IFID = illocutionary force identification device (*invite*, in this case)

On the contrary [B] consists merely of the combination of three basic strategies which were frequently observed in the data obtained from university undergraduate students in the U.S. in the researcher's earlier study (Suzuki, *ibid.*). This should be an appropriate invitation to a friend as too much politeness ought to lead to unnaturalness.

In the retrospective interview, this person said that [A] was longer and provided more details. Also she was "pessimistic" about her invitation to show a sense of reservation. This attitude was represented by the strategy "give options" (cf. Brown & Levinson's "negative politeness" (*ibid.*)) in the part *it would be lovely if you are free*. She added that this could invite *H* to reply with a "white lie" to let him/her refuse the invitation easily.

On the contrary she made [B] shorter, expecting the friend's question about details. She also said that she used *can you come?* as a simpler phrase for her friend.

Informant 03	
[A]	Hi Dave. John and I are having a party next month one Saturday evening. We'll be starting about 7:30. Would you like to come along?
[B]	Hi Jacky, we're having a party at our place next month, Saturday, 7:30. Would you and Graham like to come along?

Unlike the previous two cases, this informant's two utterances are quite similar. Nevertheless, there are two noticeable differences as can be observed in Table 4.1.3.

Table 4.1.3 Differences in [A] & [B] (Informant 03)

	[A]	[B]
1	John and I	we
2	We'll be starting about	

Although the difference between [A-1] and [B-1] seems insignificant on the surface, the researcher's interpretation is that this informant presupposed

that *H* would clearly understand when s/he heard the word “we”. This hypothesis can be supported by the fact that the word *we* is followed by “our place”, which is not included in [A]. This may be suggesting that social schemas function more efficiently between intimate friends in a friendly conversation.

[A-2] is contributing to more formality as it provides a full sentence, not ellipsis that is observed in [B].

In the retrospective interview, this person told the researcher that “Dave” (her boss/supervisor) is a friendly person, not intimidating. This description lets us understand why [A] and [B] are similar, compared with other informants’ invitations. She also said that she treated “Dave” as an individual because it is not a casual but a working situation while in [B] she invited “Jacky” as a couple.

Informant 04	
[A]	Hello Gary, how are you today? Glad you’ve been busy over the last few days. Next weekend we are having a bit of our party with a few friends Saturday evening. Wonder if you would like to come along we’re having a few drinks, a few bites to eat, couple of beers a few friends around. How about you coming round? All right?
[B]	Hi Martin, how are you? We are having a bit of a session on Saturday night. A few beers, a bit of a barbecue. What are you doing? Can you come round?

As can be seen, [A] is much lengthier than [B] and has more linguistic components. I would like to focus on the following distinctive features of each summarized in Table 4.1.4.

Table 4.1.4 *Differences in [A] & [B] (Informant 04)*

	[A]	[B]
1	Glad you’ve been busy over the last few days.	
2	Next weekend	
3	party	session
4	Wonder if you would like to come along	

5		What are you doing?
6	How about you coming round?	Can you come round?

[A-1] can be regarded as an utterance to care about *H*. [A-2] provides more concrete information about on which date the party is to be held. Regarding the word *session* in [B-3], *Oxford Dictionary of English* explains it as follows: <<informal>> *a period of heavy or sustained drinking*. This evidences that this informant produced these two utterances towards a person to whom formality should be shown and the one who expects informality, friendliness and casualness. Regarding the combinations [A-4] + [A-6] and [B-5] + [B-6], they are presenting an interesting contrast. The former expresses more hesitation by the use of *wonder if you would like to* and *how about and* is therefore thought to be appropriate as an invitation towards a person for whom a high degree of politeness is necessary. On the other hand, the latter combination is a basic pattern in *inviting* found in the researcher's data collected from the U.S. university undergraduates (Suzuki, *ibid.*). This is also supposed to be appropriate as the language use towards a friend.

In the interview with the researcher for retrospection of these two remarks, this informant said he meant to make [A] more formal and more open about what he was going to do in a friendly way. On the other hand he said he made [B] shorter as *H* might know more what they were going to do and it was unnecessary to explain the details about the party.

4.2 [A-P] - [B-P] comparisons

Instructions for producing utterances for invitations ([A-P] & [B-P])

[A-P] How would you reply to an invitation like [A] in a **positive** way if you were invited by your boss or supervisor?

[B-P] How would you reply to an invitation like [A] in a **positive** way if you were invited by one of your close friends?

This section explores how the four informants produced their utterances

when they accepted invitations from their supervisors and those from their close friends.

Informant 01

[A-P]	Oh, thank you. Yes. I'd love to come. I'm really looking forward to it.
[B-P]	Oh, yes. That would be fantastic. I'd love to come. I'm really excited!

The differences between the two utterances are summarized in Table 4.2.1.

Table 4.2.1 Differences in [A-P] & [B-P] (Informant 01)

	[A-P]	[B-P]
1	thank you	
2		That would be fantastic.
3	I'm really looking forward to it.	I'm really excited!

One notable thing is that this informer expressed gratitude [A-P-1] while she showed her excitement [B-P-2, B-P-3] instead of thanking. She also exhibited her pleasure about the invitation from her boss/supervisor in [A-P-3]. In this sense this part is thought to be showing more reservation and a polite attitude.

She indeed mentioned the points above in the retrospective interview. She said she had used *thank you* as a polite expression while she showed friendliness with the word *fantastic* and the phrase *I'm really excited*. According to her explanation these friendly phrases show enthusiasm and stronger emotion towards her friend.

One suggestion for pedagogy of this speech act is to show more emotion when replying to an invitation from a friend in a positive way.

Informant 02

[A-P]	I'd love to attend your party. Thank you very much for inviting me and I'll be looking forward to seeing you on Thursday evening.
[B-P]	Yes, I can come. What time?

The difference between these two remarks is very obvious. As can be seen, [B-P] is very plain, without expressions of gratitude or pleasure about the invitation which are observed in [A-P]. On top of that, [B-P] ends with a query about the time of the party. This indicates that this informant anticipates having more verbal exchanges with her friend, which seems to be usually the case with her and her friend (maybe to enjoy their conversation). On the other hand, [A-P] displays sophisticated lexicogrammatical and discourse strategies: the use of the subjunctive mood, the expression of gratitude and pleasure about the invitation.

In the interview for retrospection, this informant told that [A-P] is longer and more polite. In contrast [B-P] consists of basic language as she expected “ping pong conversation” with *H* and anticipated that this conversation would continue.

Informant 03

[A-P]	Hi Dave, thanks for the invitation to the party next month. John and I will be really pleased to come along.
[B-P]	Hi Jacky, thanks for the invitation to the party. We'll be really happy to come, see you there.

These two remarks are quite similar, except for the following two points: (1) [A-P] *John and I* vs. [B-P] *we*; (2) [A-P] *will be really pleased to* vs. [B-P] *'ll be really happy to*. The first point can be explained by an earlier discussion related to the function of social schemata in a friendly conversation. The main point of the second difference is the use of *pleased* and *happy*. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, *pleased* (with infinitive) means “willing or glad to do something”, whereas *happy* (with infinitive) means “willing to do

something”. Therefore there is very little meaning difference between these two lexical items. Still, this informant used *be pleased to* as a more formal expression as she explained in her retrospection of her remarks presented below.

She indicated that thanking and *pleased* are the linguistic devices to show politeness in [A-P] in the interview for reflection on her utterances. She also pointed out that she had used *happy* as a slightly more emphatic word than *pleased* and that “see you there” is an overfriendly/familiar phrase for a boss.

Informant 04	
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[A-P]	Hi Gary, I hear you are having a bit of a party on Saturday night. Thank you very much for inviting us. We'd love to come along. I will bring Sue as well if that's OK. About 8 o'clock see you then.
[B-P]	Hi Martin, hear you're having a bit of a do on Saturday. What time do you want us round then?

This informant's utterances are also rather different, especially in volume: [B-P] is much shorter than [A-P]. His [B-P] consists of (1) what he heard about the party, and (2) a query about the time of the party. In this sense it is similar to that of Informant 02 discussed earlier. In contrast, [A-P] represents his polite intention through expressions of gratitude, his pleasure to join the party, and the confirmation of his attendance at the right time. Another difference can be confirmed by the words *party* in [A-P] and *do* in [B-P]. This *do* is defined as “<<Brit.>> <<informal>> a party or other social event” by the *Oxford Dictionary of English*. Therefore this evidences that *S* is speaking in an informal way in [B-P], which is similar to his utterance for [B] discussed earlier.

He told the researcher in the retrospective interview that he showed his polite intention in [A-P] by making it more formal, including thanking, and explaining that he would bring someone else. He then pointed out that the specific question “what time” was one distinctive feature of [B-P].

4.3 [A-N] - [B-N] comparisons

Instructions for producing utterances for invitations ([A-N] & [B-N])

[A-N] How would you reply to an invitation like [A] in a **negative** way if you were invited by your boss or supervisor?

[B-N] How would you reply to an invitation like [A] in a **negative** way if you were invited by one of your close friends?

There is one noticeable tendency among all the four informants' remarks about their negative replies. [B-N] responses provide specific reasons why they cannot accept the invitation while the ones for [A-N] are more ambiguous about the reasons for their refusals. Being ambiguous about the reason for declining an invitation is hence thought to be a discourse strategy to show consideration towards a person of higher social status. In contrast being specific about the reason(s) for refusing an invitation can be taken as a proper linguistic strategy for a close friend.

Informant 01

[A-N]	Oh, I'm really sorry. I'm busy that day, but thank you for inviting me.
[B-N]	Oh, I'm really sorry. I've got plans that day. I hope you can have fun, um, and I hope we can meet up another time.

This examinee used a little more specific expression *'ve got plans* in [B-N] instead of a more vague phrase *'m busy* in [A-N]. Furthermore it is notable that she used the phrase *I hope* twice to make *H* feel less uncomfortable about her refusal. This type of remedial expression is supposed to be important in maintaining a good relation with a close friend.

She said in the interview later that she had said *I'm really sorry* to indicate that she was really apologetic and expressed her gratitude with thanking at the end in [A-N]. She also said she had made [A-N] short to wait for the boss's reply. On the other hand she pointed out that she had showed more emotion, more sadness, and dissatisfaction in [B-N]. The last part pro-

viding a positive future plan, *I hope we can meet up another time*, was offered to maintain “emotional connection” with *H*, according to her clarification.

Informant 02	
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[A-N]	Thank you very much for inviting me to your party but unfortunately I will be out of Cambridge on that day so I'm sorry I will not be able to attend.
[B-N]	Oh no, sorry I can't make it on Thursday. I'm going to the cinema with Naomi – maybe next time?

As summarized earlier, this person's [A-N] is a little more ambiguous about the reason why she is unavailable (*I will be out of Cambridge*) than [B-N] (*I'm going to the cinema with Naomi*). While both contain apologies, [A-N] has an expression of gratitude towards *H* and can thus be taken as more polite for its inclusion. It also ends with the suggestion of a future gathering—something positive to offer *H* to maintain the friendship with him/her.

In the retrospection she told the researcher that she made [A-N] polite by providing a reason, apologizing, thanking, and the word *unfortunately*. As for [B-N], it was made more emotional (i.e. *oh no, sorry*) and she offered a future plan (*maybe next time?*).

Informant 03	
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[A-N]	Hi Dave, thanks for the invitation to the party next month, but we've got a previous engagement and won't be able to make it.
[B-N]	Hi Jacky, thanks for the invitation next month, but it's Rachel's birthday that day, so we'll be out that evening celebrating her birthday instead.

This informant used a *previous engagement* for [A-N] and *Rachel's birthday* in [B-N]. Once again [B-N] provides a more specific reason for her refusal while [A-N] is more ambiguous and sounds more formal.

She said in the interview that she had used “we've got a previous engagement” to show formality in [A-N]. She also pointed out that she had not meant to chat along with the supervisor as it is not appropriate in the working environment. On the other hand in [B-N], she gave a concrete and

specific reason to make it clear that she did not mean she did not like *H* and intended to chat along with the addressee.

Informant 04

[A-N]	Hi Gary, I hear you are having a bit of party on Saturday night. Thanks very much for the invite, but I'm really sorry we won't be able to come. We've already got something else we've got to do. Thanks anyway.
[B-N]	Hi Martin, hear you're having a bit of a do on Saturday night. Unfortunately we are already going out to the pictures, we made the booking some time ago. Sorry can't make it this time.

In the similar way, this examinee explained that he and his wife were “going out to the pictures” in [B-N] while he just said “We’ve already got something else we’ve got to do” in [A-N]. Moreover [A-N] contains thanking besides apologizing.

In the retrospective interview this informant told that he had thanked more in [A-N] as it must be embarrassing for *H* to receive a refusal.

5. Discussions

As can be seen from the analysis of the research results of this study, the four informants skillfully employed various types of lexicogrammatical, discourse and politeness strategies to differentiate their invitations for their bosses and those for their close friends.

The retrospective interviews were successful in clarifying these informants’ intentions and their observations about what sort of linguistic components and strategies they used when they produced the two types of utterances.

With regard to “politeness”, the research results seem to suggest that what the linguists in this field should address is not just whether the language uses of “lay people” are “polite or impolite”, nor whether they are “formal or informal” (cf. Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003). What should be focused on is in what ways *S*’s consideration is represented differently towards superiors

and companions, in connection with politeness and formality.

These people in Cambridge opted to prioritize “formality” when addressing their superiors. At the same time it was a little surprising to have found out that they chose not to specify the reason for their refusals to their bosses’ invitations clearly as the researcher had hypothesized the opposite. On the contrary they were more specific about why they could not accept invitations when they were addressing their close friends, mainly to maintain their friendship.

6. Conclusion and future directions

This study has succeeded in demonstrating the lexicogrammatical, discourse and politeness strategies employed by the four informants to control the degrees of politeness in the performance of the target speech act, *inviting*, as well as those for acceptance and refusals of invitations.

The research results are linguistically valuable in that they have revealed how politeness levels are controlled by various strategies for the performance of *inviting* from the viewpoints of pragmatics. They are also meaningful in the education of English as a foreign language as they have clarified what sort of linguistic strategies could and should be utilized for the successful performance of this and related speech acts.

The next stage of this ongoing research project is to analyze how these Cambridge informants’ utterances were evaluated in terms of the levels of politeness by the evaluators living in London. Furthermore, it would be beneficial if the next study could incorporate in-depth analysis of prosodic features that might have affected the assessment of the degrees of politeness of these utterances.

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