



## Request strategies and politeness in Lithuanian and British English

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Politeness is an area of interactional pragmatics which has experienced an explosion of interest over the past decades and in which empirical studies have proliferated (Hickey, Stewart, 2005). There is a large number of contrastive studies on the realization patterns of requests in different languages (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Marquez-Reiter, 2000; Fukushima, 2000; Rue, Zhang, 2008 to name but a few).

Although requests in different varieties of English have received a significant attention, this paper is the very first attempt to explore requests strategies in Lithuanian. The research methodology adapted principles used by the Cross-Cultural Speech Act realization Project (Blum-Kulka et al, 1989). It is based on an assumption that there are three main universal directness levels in requests as well as on a distinction between positive (solidarity) and negative (deference) politeness systems (Brown, Levinson, 1978). The data has been collected by the means of a Discourse Completion Test, an open-ended questionnaire with 12 socially divergent situations prompting requests. It was filled in by 100 Lithuanian and 100 English university undergraduates.

The findings demonstrate that while both groups mostly opted for conventionally indirect requests (e.g. indirect questions), the Lithuanian responses spread much wider along the directness-indirectness continuum, the respondents employing notably more of direct (e.g. imperatives, explicit performatives) as well as non-conventionally indirect strategies (hints). Since such linguistic behavior is commonly associated with the positive politeness system, this reveals the Lithuanians being more positive politeness oriented.

Culture-specific communicative strategies dictate a different choice of linguistic means in identical situations (Larina, 2008), but even equivalent forms in the same contexts might carry different socio-pragmatic meanings. Indirect structures do not necessarily convey politeness, just as “blunt” requests per se are not impolite. No linguistic group of people can be legitimately considered as more or less polite than the other, but rather polite in their own socio-culturally acceptable way.

### References:

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