Pragmatic skills and awareness in bilinguals: Children's directives in school contexts

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1996:10
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Introduction

Bearing in mind the vast amount of research within the field of second language learning (see McLaughlin, 1985 for a review), surprisingly little attention has been given to the pragmatic development of young L2 learners. As pragmatic skills constitute an important part of a person’s communicative competence, this is somewhat unfortunate.

The present work is an attempt to investigate pragmatic aspects of young bilinguals’ communicative behavior. The following sections are merely intended to give the reader a brief introduction to the concepts used and perspectives considered in the study at hand, they do not provide an extensive overview of the field of research.

Types of speech acts

What distinguishes speech acts from other types of utterances is that speech acts are not merely used to say things. They are used to, quite actively, do things, i.e. to perform certain actions. According to Searle (1976), five basic categories of speech acts can be identified:

- representatives
- directives
- commissives
- expressives
- declaratives

During the past decade, this typology has been criticized for its insufficiency in covering the broad range of acts that may be executed in speech (see Levinson, 1983). I am not sure whether such a typology is attainable at all, or whether it is to
be seen as the ‘higher goal’ of classic pragmatics. For the present purpose it will be enough to focus on a single type of utterances, provided that they are relatively frequent in every-day speech of children.

A number of researchers have reported that a considerable part of children’s speech consists of utterances which aim at controlling (in one way or another) the actions of other people. These types of utterances are referred to as control acts (e.g. Ervin-Tripp, et al., 1990) and can be seen as a general category of speech acts, comprised of several subcategories such as:

directives
prohibitions
permissions
invitations
offers
claims
intention statements

In a study of children’s politeness, Ervin-Tripp, et al. (1990) identified directives as the single most frequent speech-act in family conversations (nearly 65% of all utterances). Other researchers report similar findings (e.g. Ellis, 1992; Mitchell-Kernan & Kernan, 1977). Bearing these findings in mind, as well as the fact that this project does not allow for an extensive collection of data, I will restrict my analysis to this type of utterances.

Since one of the criticisms frequently raised against speech act theory (SAT) is that single utterances are studied out of context (e.g. Linell & Markova, 1993), it may be pointed out here that all conversations in the present investigation were studied in real life situations. Furthermore, the context in which these conversations took place, is of central concern to the analyses. In fact, it guided a considerable part of the analyses.

Nevertheless, this is a study based on children’s directives, a term coined by SAT. By no means does this result in its being based on single utterances; a directive, as
I use the term, is not necessarily a single utterance. In fact it seldom is, in real life discourse. I will return to this matter in the discussion of contexts.

**Aspects of control acts**

Naturally, every language allows the speaker to use a variety of linguistic forms in issuing a control act. One important distinction can be made between *direct* and *indirect* acts. The terms refer to how clearly the illocutionary force of the utterance is represented by its surface structure (e.g., "close the door!" vs. "it's snowing in"). The directness/indirectness distinction can thus be seen as an aspect of any control act, or indeed of any speech act at all. In discourse, control acts are manipulated across this dimension, to avoid face threats or to reach other kinds of social goals.

Another, although related, pragmatic aspect of considerable importance for the present study is linguistic *politeness*. Politeness can be seen as a certain kind of social strategy which is often employed in situations characterized by asymmetrical relations between the persons involved, that is when the speaker is (and feels) somehow inferior to the addressee(s), e.g. in terms of rank, social distance, etc. Also, politeness can be used strategically in control acts, e.g. when asking somebody a favor, so as to gain the other person's compliance. In terms of Brown & Levinson (1987), politeness can be seen as a remedy for the face threats of certain social acts, where the degree of politeness can be 'calculated' from power and social distance between the interactants and the 'cost' of the act involved.

**Structures of polite utterances**

Naturally, the ways of expressing politeness verbally can vary, depending on the structure of the language spoken in a given situation. Variations in the use of politeness features have also been documented between cultures (e.g. Tannen, 1984; Pavlidou, 1994), as well as between speech-communities such as families (see Blum-Kulka, 1990) and classrooms (Ellis, 1992).
A number of researchers have investigated how politeness can be expressed in English (e.g. Becker, 1986; Blum-Kulka, 1990; Ervin-Tripp, 1990, 1977, 1976; Tannen, 1984; and Youssef, 1991) which, among other things, has resulted in slightly different classification systems. For the sake of simplicity I will distinguish three primary categories:

(i) **indirectness** ("could you possibly mind my headache?" = 'stop yelling') (e.g. Brown & Levinson, 1978);
(ii) different types of other **mitigating devices**, such as politeness markers (please, titles, nicknames etc.), syntactic (internal) modifications (conditional verb form), or external modifications such as preceding 'preparing' phrases or succeeding explanations (e.g. Blum-Kulka, 1990);
(iii) **prosodic aspects**, such as intonation, pace or tone of voice (e.g. Tannen, 1984).

It should be pointed out here that although politeness can be expressed through indirect forms, the two concepts should be kept apart; they are conceptually distinct aspects of speech acts. Not all indirect utterances are polite ("would you please drop dead"), nor are all polite utterances indirect ("please Sugarplum, I want you to stop that").

**Structures of directives and contexts**

I have defined directives as a sort of speech acts that aim at changing or, more properly, directing the behavior of the addressee in one way or another, i.e. an utterance that results from the intention to make the other person carry out a certain action. It seems obvious that this intention can be expressed using a variety of linguistic forms. In a comparative study of children's and adult's directives Ervin-Tripp (1977) have used the following classification scheme:

(i) **need statements** ("I want to play with the blocks")
(ii) **imperatives** ("give me those blocks")
(iii) **embedded imperatives** ("would you let me have the blocks?")
(iv) **permission directives** ("may I have the blocks?"
(v) **question directives** ("do you need all the blocks?")
(vi) **hints** ("I haven't played with the blocks/that looks fun")
The first four categories represent direct forms, since the presence of the actor, verb and object of the act facilitates the hearer's understanding of what is being asked of her/him. The information needed is there. Question directives and hints, on the other side, are indirect forms, as the desired act (and often even the agent of the act) are omitted, making inferences more complicated than in direct forms.

Now, how is one to know which form should be used in a given situation?
- 'Depends on the situation, doesn't it?' Indeed it does, or at least it depends on what one perceives to be the situation. One would probably not use a hint, when addressing a three year old brat. Similarly, it seems unlikely that one would use an imperative or even a need statement when requesting an audience with the king. The fact that the linguistic structure of an utterance is, at least in part, dependent on who is listening is obvious. The addressee is part of the 'situation' or the social context, in which the interaction is taking place.

However, the social context is a complicated concept. Other factors that constitute the social context are for instance the nature of the relation between the interactants, their relative knowledge of the language used and various social/cultural norms that affect the choice of linguistic expression. A comprehensive model of contexts, designed for studies of social communication, is presented by Linell (1995):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pertaining to things talked about</th>
<th>Pertaining to interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immediate</strong></td>
<td>Concrete setting (immediate perceptual environment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior discourse (co-text)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediate (abstract)</td>
<td>General and specific background knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 1. A model of immediate and abstract contexts (from Linell, 1995, p. 63).
According to this model, the immediate context comprises the concrete setting in which interaction takes place and the prior utterances made by both interactants in the particular situation. The abstract context comprises factors that are not publicly manifest, which nevertheless influence the course of interaction. This dimension includes the interactants' knowledge of the topics covered in the conversation, their (at least partially) shared communicative intentions, their general assumptions about the world (at least partially shared in a culture) as well as their specific background knowledge of the nature of their relation and their (also more or less shared) understanding of the current activity type.

As Linell (1995) points out, it is possible to discern two perspectives in theoretical accounts of contexts. According to the first view, which is sometimes adopted in linguistic semantics, contexts are seen as a "more or less stable outside environment" (p. 63). Researchers in the conversation analytic tradition (C.A.) as well as some cultural anthropologists tend to view contexts as "deeply embedded within discursive activities and as emergent with discourse itself" (p. 63). According to this view, one may say that the context of an interactive sequence, say a conversation, comprises those contextual factors that seem relevant for the interactants in that particular situation. Also, the context is continually updated throughout the interaction. The empirical implications of this perspective on contexts will be covered in a forthcoming section; for now it will suffice to recognize the influence of various contextual factors on the utterances produced by interactants, or, more specifically, the pragmatic aspects of the utterances.

**Pragmatic competence**

Pragmatic competence can be roughly defined as the ability to express verbally an intention, as well as to understand the intention of others, with respect to significant contextual factors, or simply put: to understand and to use language (for various purposes) in a variety of situations. According to Bialystok (1993) pragmatic competence can be divided into three main types of abilities:

(i) the ability to use language for different purposes, i.e. to differentiate and to produce and understand different speech acts;
(ii) the ability to vary the linguistic form, or surface structure, (within one type of speech act) depending on the social context (cf. various directive forms in the previous section), as well as the ability to interpret different linguistic forms, in accordance with contextual cues.

(iii) the ability to participate in conversation, that is to possess knowledge of how utterances are used to create discourse, e.g. Turn-taking, cohesion, etc.

All these three aspects are involved in all verbal use of language (maybe except for monologues), but some utterances may demand a higher level of pragmatic skill than others. Indirect 'utterances such as hints, for example, may be harder to interpret than imperatives, because hints demand consideration of contextual information (especially of the mediate kind, cf. previous section) to a higher degree than do imperatives. To put it another way: the information necessary for an adequate interpretation is spelled out more directly in an imperative request than in a hint.

If we accept this division of pragmatic competence into the three components, then pragmatic development should entail (i) a growing body of knowledge of different speech acts; (ii) increased knowledge of different ways of expressing a certain speech-act (e.g. an imperative vs. embedded request) and their social markers (e.g. impolite-polite); and (iii) increased knowledge of certain (culturally defined) conventions for participation in conversation.

**Aim of the study**

The study at hand is concerned with the pragmatic skills of bilingual children in early school age. It is based on the children's use of the politeness systems of their two languages. One of the main questions concerns the linguistic repertoire of the children: to what extent do they know the politeness systems of both their languages and to what extent do they actually use a wide range of politeness forms in their directives. How do they adapt the politeness features to various contexts? To address these questions, two substantially different methods will be employed: (i) a controlled study of the children's knowledge of politeness systems of the two languages, and (ii) participating observations of the children's use of the politeness
systems in real life discourse. The observation data will be used to study the contextual variation of the politeness forms.

Another main question asked is whether the children are aware of the pragmatic choices they make, that is whether they are able to reflect upon their own knowledge and use of pragmatic devices. Using Bialystok's terminology the question would be: to what extent do they realize the relation between pragmatic intention and the context of the discourse. Interesting as it may be, this question also poses one of the greater methodological problems. In most cases it is hard to tell whether an utterance is the effect of a deliberate choice of expression, informed by the speaker's 'pragmatic analysis' of the situation or a more algorithmic choice based on limited formal linguistic knowledge. The last phenomenon is called 'formulaic language use', and is believed to be common among second language learners, frequently leading to pragmatic 'errors' (see e.g. Jaworski, 1985). In the case of young children, further, the choice may be based on a less flexible pragmatic repertoire, than in the case of adult L2-speakers (Bialystok, 1993).

The contextual variation analysis may give us a picture of how the participants vary their directives with respect to different contextual features. However, the greatest shortcoming of the method, namely that it reduces contexts to one or a few analytic categories will make that picture somewhat blurred. Even if one was to accept the roughness of the method (or better yet, use some more sophisticated categorization scheme), in most cases one could still not tell whether the utterances were comprised of 'unanalyzed wholes' or created of analyzed linguistic components, chosen on the basis of a pragmatic analysis of the context.

One way of investigating the influence of children's pragmatic awareness on discourse is to focus on strategic communication, as for example in those discourse sequences when the children need vary the politeness form within one directive act, for instance in order to make the addressee comply (persuasion acts). Thereby, it might be possible to see how children consciously vary the pragmatic aspects to reach a communicative goal. Examples of such communicative strategies are justifications and explanations, mitigations/aggravations, repetitions and prosodic
features. Ervin-Tripp (1990) for example has demonstrated how children of varied age use justifications and other strategies for purposes of persuasion. Among other things, Becker (1986) illustrates children’s sensitivity to prosodic features in directives.

**Method**

**Participants and sampling**

A total of 13 children between the ages of 5;4 and 8;0 participated in the study. The total sample comprises seven 1st graders, one girl and six boys, aged between 5;4 and 6;6 (m=5;9 SD=0;5) and six 2nd graders, one girl and five boys, aged between 6;5 and 8;0 (m=7;2 SD=0;6).

Since the size of the sample would need to be kept relatively small, sampling was done on a non-random basis. Simply, the children who showed most interest in talking to the investigator were chosen to participate in the study. As it were, the boys tended to ‘accept’ (i.e. show interest in interacting with) the male investigator sooner than did the girls. Moreover (with a large number of exceptions, however), the children tended to form separate boys’ or girls’ -groups more often than mixed ones, resulting in a selection bias in favor of the boys. The sampling procedure will thus account for the overrepresentation of boys in the study.

The language background of the children was, to some extent, varied. Six of the children in class 1 (86%) had at least one parent whose first language was English and four (57%) of them had a second parent who was a native speaker of Swedish. In the case of one child, both parents were native speakers of some other language\(^1\). In class 2 five (83%) of the children had at least one parent whose first language was Swedish and four (67%) of them had a second parent who was a native speaker of English. There was one child in class 2 both of whose parents spoke some other language than Swedish or English. According to the children’s own reports, 19 out of 23 parents (83%) addressed their children in their native language. Eleven of the children (85%) reported speaking both languages on a daily basis.

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\(^1\) I refrain from specifying the language in question, as it would reveal the identity of the child.
basis and eight (62%) of them considered themselves good speakers of both languages (i.e. claimed to have 'no problems speaking English and Swedish'), while three children (23%) claimed Swedish to be their 'best' language. The remaining two (15%) children declared that they mostly spoke English and did not consider themselves good speakers of Swedish.

All participants' names have been altered in the present report, so as to conceal their identities.

Language environment in school

The study reported here was conducted in a school, where the official language was English. That is to say that all members of the staff addressed the children in English, in class as well as during out of class activities (e.g. breaks). Obviously, Swedish lessons constituted an exception to this rule. Further, at least one of the teachers in the two classes was capable of helping the children in Swedish, which occurred on a few occasions during the period of the study. Conversely, the children were expected to speak English while addressing the staff. With a few exceptions, this convention was accepted by the children. Conversations among children could be held in either of the two languages, regardless of the setting in which they took place.

Seen as a language environment, the school thus provided a large number of opportunities to speak either Swedish or English, although the latter was generally accepted as the 'formal' language.

Procedures

Participating observations - were carried out over two days in each class (one class every alternate day). During this period the investigator followed the participating children around different locations on schoolgrounds, audio-recording the conversations that took place during various activities, such as working in class, playing outdoors, eating etc. In addition, the investigator was keeping fieldnotes, taking down as much contextual information as possible. On a few occasions the
tape-recorder was left alone close to the participating children, thus reducing any conceivable effects stemming from the presence of the investigator. This procedure, besides being ethically questionable, produced audiotaped material devoid of much of the contextual information needed for further analyses.

It is not clear to what extent the researcher's presence influenced the behavior of the children (that is, apart from the obvious cases where the participants directly interacted with the investigator), but the material collected provides some evidence of the children being, at times, very much aware of the researcher, as illustrated in Excerpt 1 below.

Excerpt 1 /61;3b/ Class 2

(Allan [An] and Bogdan [Bn] are on their way to their seats when Allan notices me standing nearby with the tape-recorder hanging over my shoulder. He comes closer to Bogdan and suggests in a lowered voice that the two of them shout into my microphone.)

1

| An: Bogdan (.) kom igen hallá hallá ba (!) hallá hallá ba (nods at microphone) | An: Bogdan (.) come on hello hello (!) hello hello |
| Bn: nej | Bn: no |

There are four more situations of this kind, where the children are obviously influenced by the presence of either the investigator carrying the tape-recorder and/or taking down notes.

Testing sessions -were carried through with a subset of the children; three 1st graders (two boys and one girl, aged m=6;0 SD=0;2) and four 2nd graders (one girl and three boys, aged m=7;6 SD=0;4). These children were tested individually during working-time, in a playroom. The testing material consisted of a politeness differentiation task presented verbally by the investigator. All children received an
English and a Swedish version of the task. All sessions were audiotaped for further analysis. Each session lasted approximately 15 minutes.

Materials

Eight pairs of directives were employed as presented in Table 1 below. One of the directives in each pair was an unmitigated need statement, while the other directive was either mitigated or, in sentence 2b, aggravated.

Children were informed that they were to engage in a game, in which the investigator would ask for different things, twice for each thing: once in a nice way and once in a bad way, and that their task was to tell the investigator which of the two ways was the nicer one. After a choice has been made, the investigator asked the child to explain why that particular directive was the nicer one of the two, what it was that made that particular sentence 'the nicer way to ask for the thing than the other way'. During the verbal presentation of test directives attention was paid to use the same intonation and tone of voice for all subjects, so as avoid contaminating prosodic effects.

It may be noted that directness can be seen as a continuum of how explicitly the form of an utterance indicates that it is a directive and what it entails, rather than a dichotomized aspect of the sentence's structure. Consequently, 2a is less direct than 2b, while 3a is more direct than 3b etc. For the sake of simplicity, however, the directness aspect has been dichotomized classifying only (what seemed to be) the least direct forms as indirect, i.e. 5b and 7b (a more advanced classification scheme for levels of directness is provided by Ellis, 1992).

A somewhat similar task has been used by Becker (1986) in a study of preschoolers' knowledge of politeness aspects in requests. However, no attempt was made to make the subjects reflect upon the features typical for a nice or a 'bossy' request.
Table 1. Directive pairs in differentiation task.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test directives</th>
<th>Level of directness</th>
<th>Type of mitigation</th>
<th>Type of directive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 a I want that magazine</td>
<td>direct</td>
<td>none (general verb form)</td>
<td>need statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b I would like that magazine</td>
<td>direct</td>
<td>syntactic (modal verb form)</td>
<td>need statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 a I want that stamp</td>
<td>direct</td>
<td>none (general verb form)</td>
<td>need statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b Give me that stamp!</td>
<td>direct</td>
<td>aggravation (imperative)</td>
<td>imperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 a I want that pen</td>
<td>direct</td>
<td>none (general verb form)</td>
<td>need statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b May I have that pen?</td>
<td>direct</td>
<td>syntactic + semantic (question + permission)</td>
<td>need statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 a I want that book</td>
<td>direct</td>
<td>none (general verb form)</td>
<td>need statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b Would you give me that book?</td>
<td>direct</td>
<td>syntactic (embedded imp.)</td>
<td>embedded imp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 a I want that key</td>
<td>direct</td>
<td>none (general verb form)</td>
<td>need statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b Do you have that key?</td>
<td>indirect</td>
<td>syntactic (question)</td>
<td>quest. directive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 a I want that ruler</td>
<td>direct</td>
<td>none (general verb form)</td>
<td>need statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b Hand me that ruler, please</td>
<td>direct</td>
<td>syntactic (politeness mark.)</td>
<td>embedded imp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 a I want that picture</td>
<td>direct</td>
<td>none (general verb form)</td>
<td>need statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b I really like your picture</td>
<td>indirect</td>
<td>semantic (hint)</td>
<td>hint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 a I want that map</td>
<td>direct</td>
<td>none (general verb form)</td>
<td>need statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b Peter, give me that map</td>
<td>direct</td>
<td>semantic (name)</td>
<td>embedded imp.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first part of the task, to pick out the nicer of the two directives, relates to the children's knowledge of the social markers associated with the linguistic form of the presented directives (i.e. parts of their pragmatic knowledge). To carry through the second part of the task, to explain the choice made, (that is, by pointing out the politeness feature/s/ in the chosen directive relative the other one) the child needs to see which part or feature of the utterance is 'marked' as polite. To accomplish that, the child needs to reflect upon the formal (linguistic) aspects of the directives.

Bearing in mind that although we can speak of culturally accepted politeness markers, the act of being polite is accomplished through the interactant's joint construction of meaning. The directives 1a; 2b; 3a; 4a; 5a; 6a; 7a; and 8a in the present task, need not necessarily be the nicer ones in each pair. To a certain
extent, it depends on the context. The present task is completely blind to these aspects of communication. Rather, it was formed to provide a very rough assessment of each participant's pragmatic knowledge, based on the culturally accepted notions of polite utterances. Furthermore, it was designed to test whether the participants could explain the relation between the formal aspects of the utterances and their social markers, that is, to indicate the children's level of pragmatic awareness.

Analysis of contextual variation

The observation material totaled approximately nine hours of conversation. All sequences including one of the participants producing a directive were transcribed for further analysis (see Appendix 1 for transcription key). Special measures were taken to include as much of the entire conversation as possible, so as to avoid missing relevant co-textual information. This material was analyzed quantitatively by mapping the children's directives into the various contextual aspects. Descriptive statistics were used where needed.

The directives were classified in accordance with the categories used by Ervin-Tripp (1977) and others (see previous sections). Five main categories were used to organize important contextual features in a first rough analysis of the contextual variation of the directives. These categories were:

(i) **Addressee status** (as defined primarily by age)
   - higher than speaker's (e.g. staff or investigator, in some case older child)
   - equal to or lower than the speaker's (other children, mostly regardless of age)

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2 Consider for example the permission directive in 3 b, in a situation where the owner of the pen, say a post-office clerk, asks a confused customer if he may have the government's pen back, smiling in a supercilious way at the same time. The utterance is, by all standards, a directive. However, the politeness feature (or more correctly, what most people would perceive as a polite form in most every-day situations) is ironic, possibly bearing a contrary effect on the utterance (than it would in some other context), such as offending the customer. The point being made here is that, in the end, social meaning is created in discoursive acts, not 'inherent' in the linguistic expressions.
Naturally, the social status of an interactant is not merely a matter of age. The social status of a child, roughly defined as the other's appreciation of her/his 'position' in the complex web of relationships, it is a complicated aspect of her/his social life, and is not easily determined. This is especially true if one considers the present view on discourse as a social activity in and through which the social status of the participants is, at least partly, (re)negotiated. Nevertheless, in a primary analysis of the social distribution of directives, the participant's age will have to account for her/his social status. In a way, the roughness of this category may be defensible as it will not occlude the status gaps between the children the staff, due to the obvious power asymmetries in the school context. To what extent this is also true for the relationships between the children and the investigator is harder to determine, but previous research has showed that unfamiliar adults tend to be treated as high status interactants in child-adult discourse (Blum-Kulka, 1990; Ervin-Tripp, 1990). On the other hand, status differences within the group of children will be greatly obscured.

(ii) Compliance cost (roughly defined as the 'hardships' and/or unpleasantness of carrying out the requested action)

-high/ low

Here the most obvious cases will be assigned to the high/low categories. The intermittent category represents the kind of requests that do not clearly appear as bothering or, on the other end, as 'peanuts'.

(iii) The speaker's right to make a particular request (the system of rights is seen as embedded in the relation between the interactants).

-high/low

Another rough category. Here, three main aspects of the term 'rights' will be considered. The first one has to do with children's rights as granted by the policy or
ideology of the educational system ('institutionalized rights' such as getting help from the teacher), the second aspect relates to children's possessions (higher right to request own property than possessions of others) and the third aspect deals with the 'well being' of the children (the right not to be pushed, hit etc.).

(iv) Activity type
- schoolwork
- play
- miscellaneous activities in school (packing up, running in stairs, eating or destroying lunch etc.)

The type of activity may have an significant impact on discourse, which has been demonstrated by a number of researchers, for example in the field of play e.g. Garvey (1975); Thorell, (1992). Here, the main distinction is made between work and play. Naturally, a detailed description will be provided with potentially interesting episodes primarily classified as 'miscellaneous'.

(v) Directive purpose
- requesting objects
- directing actions

This category partly overlaps the 'right' and 'cost' dimension. Nevertheless the distinction between requests for objects request for actions has been demonstrated by previous research (e.g. Ellis, 1992; Mitchell-Kernan & Kernan, 1977).

The categories were formed to include both immediate and abstract contexts. This analysis of contextual variations of directive forms was followed by a more detailed analysis of various instances of strategic use of linguistic politeness. This part of the analysis was largely guided by the material itself.
Results and discussion

Differentiation of politeness forms

With a few exceptions, there was a general agreement about which of the two directives in each pair represented the nicest way to ask for things, as can be seen in Table 2 below. Furthermore, with the exception for the Swedish item 5, all children made their choices with no obvious hesitation immediately after each pair was presented, indicating that they felt sure of the answer. When asked to explain their choices, most children said that they could not tell why they found a certain directive more nice than the other one, or provided insubstantial explanations like 'because it's nicer than to say xx'. This happened in more than two thirds of the cases.

In three of the cases, however, three children (one 1st grader and two 2nd graders) made different choices than the others. The material does not provide any obvious explanation to these differences. One plausible explanation to the differences in the Swedish pair 5 may be that the children who chose the need statement (5a) did not see the question directive as a request for the cup. Rather, they may have thought of it as a regular question. This explanation is supported by the type of explanations these children provided to the hint in the English pair 7, namely that it was nice to say that one liked the other person's things. It seems likely that, when making their choices, these children did not treat the hint as a directive form, but merely as a nice thing to say. It may then be, that these children did not make the inferences needed to treat the indirect sentences of this task as directives. The fact that the Swedish pair 5 caused several other children to hesitate before they gave their answer, may indicate that the problem of 'decoding' the message of the indirect sentences was greater than can be seen in these results. One may well wonder why this was not the case with the English question directive -does it indicate differences in the children's pragmatic knowledge of the two languages? In any case, the small number of participants makes such conclusions extremely precarious.
Table 2. Number of children choosing each directive as the most nice in each pair (n=3 1st grade; 2nd grade n=4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test directives</th>
<th>1st grade</th>
<th>2nd grade</th>
<th>Test directives</th>
<th>1st grade</th>
<th>2nd grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eng</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Swe</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 a I want that magazine</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 a Jag vill ha den bollen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b I would like that magazine</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>b Jag skulle vilja ha den bollen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 a I want that stamp</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 a Jag vill ha det bandet</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b Give me that stamp!</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>b Ge mig det bandet</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 a I want that pen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3 a Jag vill ha den lappen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b May I have that pen?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>b Kan jag få den lappen?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 a I want that book</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 a Jag vill ha det kortet</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b Would you give me that book?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>b Skulle du kunna ge mig det kortet? /Would you give me../</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 a I want that key</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5 a Jag vill ha den röda koppen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b Do you have that key?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>b Har du den röda koppen? /Do you have that red cup?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 a I want that ruler</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6 a Jag vill ha den klubbann</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b Hand me that ruler, please</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>b Snälla, räck mig den klubbann /Hand me that lollipop please/</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 a I want that picture</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7 a Jag vill ha det märket</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b I really like your picture</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>b Jag tycker verkligen om ditt märke /I really like your sticker/</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 a I want that map</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8 a Jag vill ha den kritan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b Peter, give me that map</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>b Johan, ge mig den kritan /Johan, give me that crayon/</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although no satisfying explanations to the differences in the directive pairs Eng. 8, and Swe. 3 & 5 were provided, some of the children gave interesting explanations to their choices in the other pairs. One child, who choose the permission directive as the nicest one in both versions of the test (pair 3) claimed that it is nicer to ask
before you take something. Similar explanations were provided by the two children in grade 2 that chose the permission directive in the Swedish part. Further, the ‘it’s nicer to ask’-explanation was also given for pair 4 (Swe as well as Eng) by one child in each class. Five children gave as a reason for their choice of the mitigated imperative in 6b (Eng) the politeness marker itself: ‘because you say please’.

To the extent that the children’s explanations per se (that is whether an explanation was given at all or not) can be seen as an indicator of how hard it was to point out the politeness feature in the test sentences, it would seem that the most salient feature is, not surprisingly, the politeness marker please followed by different types of questions, as in the embedded imperatives and question directives of this task.

**Contextual distribution of directives**

The transcribed material consisted of approximately 1500 turns distributed over nearly 200 recorded episodes. Table 3 shows the general distribution of the directives. The single most frequent directive form used by the children is the imperative, almost twice as frequent as the embedded imperative which was the second most common form used. To some extent, this results are consistent with the findings of Mitchell-Kernan & Kernan (1977), the most salient difference between the findings of the two studies being a matter of proportion. In the material of Mitchell-Kernan & Kernan the imperatives constituted close to 80% of all directives. The embedded imperatives accounted for some 7% of the directives and the least common form was the question directive. The present findings show a more even distribution of the different forms. It should be noted, however, that the directives in the study of Mitchell-Kernan and Kernan were collected in a drama-play setting, which makes comparisons with the present study precarious.

Previous investigations have found that imperatives are seldom used by speakers of lower status than the addressee. Most often, the imperative form is used between
Table 3. The total number of directives produced by each child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of directive</th>
<th>Class 1 =&gt;</th>
<th>Class 2 =&gt;</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>Camilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperatives</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need statements</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded imper.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission directives</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question directives</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hints</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

speakers of equal status, or in 'higher to lower' rank interactions (e.g. Ervin-Tripp, 1977; Mitchell-Kernan & Kernan, 1977). This was also the case in the present study. Table 4 shows the distribution of directive forms according to the social status of the addressee.

Table 4. Distribution of directive types over various listeners. Relative figures in ( ).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directive form</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Investigator</td>
<td>Other child</td>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperatives</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7 (18)</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>(56)</td>
<td>91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need statements</td>
<td>2 (17)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded imper.</td>
<td>3 (23)</td>
<td>17 (45)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission directives</td>
<td>3 (23)</td>
<td>4 (11)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question directives</td>
<td>2 (17)</td>
<td>10 (26)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hints</td>
<td>2 (17)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tot. 1st grade</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Grade 2                |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Imperatives            | 4 (40) | 11 (12)| 51     | (71)  | 66    |       |       |       |
| Need statements        | 2 (2)  | 6 (8) | 8      |       |       |       |       |       |
| Embedded imper.        | 1 (10) | 42 (46)| 3      | (4)   | 46    |       |       |       |
| Permission directives  | 3 (30) | 6 (7) | 5      | (7)   | 14    |       |       |       |
| Question directives    | 1 (10) | 27 (29)| 5      | (7)   | 33    |       |       |       |
| Hints                  | 2 (20) | 4 (4) | 2      | (3)   | 8     |       |       |       |
| Tot. 2nd grade         | 10      | 92    | 72     |       | 175   |       |       |       |
| TOTALS                 | 22      | 128   | 222    |       | 375   |       |       |       |

Clearly, the vast majority of imperatives produced by the children were directed to peers (92%). The most frequently used directive form used when addressing an adult was the embedded imperative. Bearing the earlier findings in mind, the frequent occurrence of imperatives in child to child discourse was hardly
surprising. The relatively high frequency of the other directive types was. This is especially true for class 1, where embedded imperatives constituted close to 20% of child to child conversations. In the present study, variations of directive forms within child to child discourse cannot be accounted for by the status of the addressee. The same is true for the varied forms children used to address the adults.

Another important aspect the speaker has to take into consideration when trying to make the addressee carry out some action is the degree of effort it will take to comply with the request. This may be called compliance cost. In the present material, there were also a few cases when the requested favor could be carried out relatively effortlessly, but other factors elevated the 'cost', as illustrated in excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2 /76;3b/ Class 2

(Bogdan [Bn] has asked me [J] if I can go with the group to boy's hut /koja/ during play break. Am=Adam)

1 J: mm men du får fråga fröken om du får gå dit
2 Bn: kan DU göra det?
3 J: nej, det får du göra
4 Bn: ok J: men du kan säga att jag kommer med
5 Am: jag vill följa MEDI
6 J: ja det får du fråga dom
7 Am: [to Bn] Boggy (.) får jag följa med?
8 Bn: ja (3s) då kan väl du fråga va?
9 Am: ja xxx
  (heading for the teacher to ask)

J: mm but you'll need to ask the teacher if you may go
Bn: can YOU do that?
J: no, you'll have to do that
Bn: ok J: but you can tell her I'm coming with you
Am: I wanna COME!
J: well you'll need to ask them
Am: Boggy (.) can I come?
Bn: right (3s) can you go ask, then?
Am: yes xxx

As I later found out, the hut is located on top of the hill next to the school, an area labeled out of bounds by the staff. Consequently, permission was denied. As we can see, Bogdan does not fancy asking the teacher's permission to go to the hut. After a failed attempt to make me go ask the teacher, he gets Adam to do it after promising to let him come with us. Bogdan's attempts to make somebody else talk
to the teacher are typical high cost requests, here embedded imperatives in turns (2) and (8).

The distribution of directive forms according to addressee type and compliance cost is presented in Table 5. Between children, the low cost requests are mostly imperatives (with some variation in class 1). When addressing an adult, the children varied the linguistic form of their directives, using mostly embedded imperatives, question directives and need statements, as well as imperatives. For high cost requests, however, no imperatives were observed. Embedded imperatives were used almost exclusively for this purpose, regardless of the status of the addressee. The tendency seems strong, although it may be noted that the total number of low cost requests exceeds high cost requests by four times.

Table 5. Directive forms distributed according to compliance cost and addressee status. Relative figures in ( ).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directive form</th>
<th>Compliance cost</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>to child</td>
<td>to staff/investig.</td>
<td>to child</td>
<td>to staff/investig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperatives</td>
<td>36 (77)</td>
<td>4 (16)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need statements</td>
<td>3 (6)</td>
<td>1 (9)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded imper.</td>
<td>3 (6)</td>
<td>4 (16)</td>
<td>8 (80)</td>
<td>8 (100)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission directives</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 (16)</td>
<td>1 (10)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question directives</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
<td>10 (40)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hints</td>
<td>4 (9)</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td>1 (10)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tot. 1st grade</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperatives</td>
<td>20 (77)</td>
<td>5 (12)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need statements</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded imper.</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>16 (37)</td>
<td>4 (100)</td>
<td>7 (88)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission directives</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>5 (12)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question directives</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>15 (35)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (12)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hints</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tot. 2nd grade</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Up to this point, the distribution analysis has been focused on two aspects dealing with the addressee, that is her/his status or rank and the trouble the request may cause her/him. Earlier, I have discussed the definition of the first aspect. The second aspect is even more problematic, as the cost of complying with a directive
(or, more correctly, the speaker's appreciation of the listener's perception of how bothersome the current favor may be to carry out) is quite tricky to estimate for an observer. Therefore, only the most obvious cases have been included in the analysis. To what extent the overrepresentation of low cost requests in the analysis is an effect of the investigator's coding procedure is hard to tell without an external coder to compare with. Nevertheless, it seems probable that low cost requests are in fact more common, as the chances of compliance are higher.

Another factor that has been proven to influence speakers' choices of directives is their right to make the request. Ervin-Tripp and Gordon (1986) have shown that children as young as two to three years of age make more polite requests when desiring somebody else's property, compared to requests for their own goods. Using a wider definition of rights in the present analysis (as discussed previously) we see in Table 6 a tendency toward more imperatives in high right requests in child to child discourse, as well as effects of the listener's status (less direct imperatives in child to adult directives).

Table 6. Distribution of directives according to speaker's rights. Relative figures in ()

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directive form</th>
<th>Speaker's rights</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperatives</td>
<td>to child</td>
<td>5 (23)</td>
<td>27 (67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to staff/investig.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need statements</td>
<td>13 (60)</td>
<td>10 (72)</td>
<td>3 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded imper.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission directives</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (14)</td>
<td>3 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question directives</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hints</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperatives</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 (42)</td>
<td>13 (76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need statements</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
<td>2 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded imper.</td>
<td>6 (50)</td>
<td>21 (72)</td>
<td>1 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission directives</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (14)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question directives</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (8)</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hints</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tot. 2nd grade</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23
The following excerpts illustrate two different ways of requesting goods, varying with speaker's rights.

Excerpt 3 /132;6b/ Class 1

(Camilla [Ca] and Veronica [Va] are playing in the hills. Camilla has lost the icicle she has been using as an axe earlier. Unbeknownst to the girls, Jean [Jn] has been looking for it and, finally, found it).

7 Ca: [laughs and howls]
8 Jn: [screams] look Veronica, I found it!
9 Va: found WHAT!
10 Jn: that!
11 Va: found what! (.ge det tillbaka JEAN! (.give it back JEAN!
(tries to take it from Jn)

Excerpt 4 /158; 8a/ Class 1

(Oleg [Og] is in the play-corner, dismantling a huge necklace made of plastic blocks, when Bill [Bl] comes up asking for the toy.)

3 Bl: kan inte jag få göra den?
4 Og: xxx
5 Bl: SNÅLLA (.) snålla Oleg (.)
   snålla Oleg
   Bl: won't you let me do it?
   Og: xxx
   Bl: PLEASE (.) please Oleg (.)
   please Oleg

In Excerpt 3, Veronica demands to have the property of her friend using an imperative (and gets it in the end), while in Excerpt 4 Bill requests a toy, currently occupied by Oleg, by means of an embedded imperative followed by repeated politeness markers (and fails).

Table 6 also shows a high frequency of question directives (approx. 50% in each class) in high right requests in child-adult interactions. These instances of question directives are closely connected to the activity, in which they occur. They are the task-related questions that children ask while working in class, and
represent nearly 60% of all question directives in this material (Table 7 shows the distribution of directives across various activity types).

Considering that class-work is a very specific activity (that is, not resembling any activity the children are likely to engage in outside school), it may be that it affects child discourse in a specific way. Ellis (1992), for example, suggests that classroom discourse is typically formulaic, mainly due to the fairly small set of objects and favors that can be requested, the familiarity of the interactants and the predictability of the outcome. It is hard to comment on Ellis' conclusions from the present material. Firstly, the material is simply too small. Secondly, the presence of the investigator obviously provides an unfamiliar interactant, the absence of whom, according to Ellis is one major contributor to the routinized features of classroom discourse.

Table 7. Directive types according to activity type. Relative figures in ( ).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directive form</th>
<th>schoolwork</th>
<th>Activity type</th>
<th>misc. activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to child</td>
<td>to staff/inv.</td>
<td>to child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperatives</td>
<td>12 (41)</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
<td>57 (59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need statements</td>
<td>6 (21)</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
<td>5 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded imper.</td>
<td>4 (14)</td>
<td>9 (31)</td>
<td>18 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission directives</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 (14)</td>
<td>5 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question directives</td>
<td>4 (14)</td>
<td>9 (31)</td>
<td>7 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hints</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
<td>4 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tot. 1st grade</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded imper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission directives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question directives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tot. 2nd grade</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from these annotations, there are few results in the data presented in Table 7 indicating that child to child conversations in the classroom are more routinized.
than conversations during other kind of activities. On the contrary, if we let the
degree of directive variation indicate the degree of routine in interaction, we find in
class 1 that interaction during classwork is more evenly distributed across directive
types, than is interaction during other types of activity. In class 2, there seems to
be little difference between the activity types in child to child interaction.

Another aspect of directives we need considered in the present analysis is the
purpose of the directive, here split into to the two subcategories requests for objects
and action directives. As can be seen in Table 8, close to 80% of all directives in the
present study were action regulating.

Table 8. Directive types according to purpose.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directive form</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to child</td>
<td>to staff/investig.</td>
<td>to child</td>
<td>to staff/investig.</td>
<td>to child</td>
<td>to staff/investig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperatives</td>
<td>7 (28)</td>
<td>62 (67)</td>
<td>6 (13)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need statements</td>
<td>6 (24)</td>
<td>2 (17)</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded imper.</td>
<td>2 (8)</td>
<td>16 (17)</td>
<td>22 (48)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission directives</td>
<td>3 (12)</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question directives</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (4)</td>
<td>14 (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hints</td>
<td>3 (12)</td>
<td>6 (6)</td>
<td>2 (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tot. 1st grade</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Imperatives             | 3 (38)  | 25 (69) | 8 (19)  |
|Need statements          | 3 (38)  | 4 (11)  | 27 (66) |
|Embedded imper.          |         | 2 (50)  | 3 (7)   |
|Permission directives    | 2 (25)  | 2 (6)   | 2 (5)   |
|Question directives      |         | 5 (14)  |        |
|Hints                    | 2 (20)  | 1 (2)   |        |
|Tot. 2nd grade           | 8       | 36      | 41      |
|TOTALS                   | 33      | 129     | 87      |

The most salient difference between the two types of directive purpose is that action
regulations are more often formed as imperatives. Considering that nearly one third
of the action regulators are aimed at ceasing actions (e.g. 'stop pushing!'), this is
hardly surprising. Another difference worth pointing out is the relatively high
frequency of need statements, which were mostly used to obtain task-related
materials during classwork (Table 7).
Strategic communication

This far, I have attempted to show the distribution of various directive types across different aspects of the context in which they were used. In the following sections I intend to present various strategies the children used in persuasion acts during the period of observation. The aim is to investigate whether the children vary the pragmatic aspects of directives (above the level of directive type) in a strategic way to reach certain goals, and if so how they do this.

As the social goals attempted in discourse may vary, so naturally, may the strategies. In no way do I therefore claim that this analysis should be seen as exhaustive, in that it would capture most of the strategies used by the children. The point here is merely to show how pragmatic devices were manipulated strategically in discourse, a point which is hard to make in the more rigid social distribution analysis. In this presentation I will focus on a limited number of goals that are attempted in conversations, by means of a number of strategies.

Investigating the strategic aspects of interaction is of great interest for questions concerning the children's' pragmatic awareness, since the very concept of strategic use of pragmatic devices, such as e.g. polite forms, implies some degree of reflection upon the speaker's own pragmatic repertoire. Moreover, an investigation of individual strategies in discourse is compatible with the view of discourse as a partly self regulating process, where the participants (re)negotiate certain values (such as status, rights etc. and, some would claim, 'identity') in the current context. To a large extent, this last topic is hard to investigate by the more structurally based distribution analysis (which also has it's merits, as I will point out in a later section).

One type of strategy typically used in control acts, is to explain or justify the purpose of and/or reason underlying the request.
Excerpt 5 /35;2a/ Class 1

(Andreas, Paul, Jean and Simon are about to hide in a game of hide and seek. Andreas just found out he has lost his glove somewhere and wants some help finding it. Andreas [As]; Paul [Pl]; Jean [Jn]; Simon [Sn] and Jakob [J].)

1. Pl: I know where to hide (.) we can hide in xxx's koja
2. As: I don't know where my GLOVE is  Pl: xxx
3. As: I don't know where my glove is (.) [turning to Pl] where is my glove?
   [turning to me] think I must back
4. J: oh-oh
5. As: 'cause my mom will be angry with me if lose it
6. Pl: [to all] wait! (.) where did you (.) where do you see you dropped it first?
   (4s) where did you see you dropped it first?
7. As: yeah (.) I did it nowhere it's not ANYWHERE
8. Pl: [to Sn & Jn] he lost his glove (3s) put on this one
   (nodding at Andreas' other glove)
9. J: we'll have to go back the same way! (.) the same way we came here
10. Pl: right

After Andreas finds out he only has one glove he tries to make the boys aware of his loss, possibly hinting a request for help at the same time. When he does not get the response hoped for, he repeats his statement followed by a direct question specifically addressed to Paul. Furthermore, he announces to the group that he will have to leave the game to search for his glove. This he does by turning to me, not to the other boys, possibly because they have not showed any sign of intention to help. Already, it seemed to me as a very obvious attempt to get help, so I stopped walking toward the hills. Just in case I have not realized the importance of finding the glove, Andreas stresses the case (Turn 6) by explaining that his mother will be angry with him if he comes home without one glove. Now Paul stops the rest of the group (whether this is because he realized that Andreas was asking for help or because of me stopping, is hard to tell) and eventually the search for the glove starts.
It seems that Andreas feels that he needs to give his request more weight, after turns 2 and 3. This he does by revealing his fear about his mother’s reaction, if the glove is not found. The next excerpt provides another instance of justification that is meant to have a supportive function on the control act.

Excerpt 6. /13;1b/ Class1

(Some eight boys are sliding down a small hill, clearly having a good time. Andreas has just arrived, asking me to join in.)

1. As: this is fun! why don't we slide down the hill
2. J: hu hu (.) OK you go ahead

Here, Andreas’ request is preceded by a supporting justification to the directive, namely that I will have fun, if I comply (when he asked me during the previous break, I declined). Maybe the most obvious example of justifications serving as a means of persuasion in this material is presented in the next excerpt.

Excerpt 7 /97;5a/ Class 2

(A fight breaks out between two boys, at first looking quite innocent, like one of those fights that most of the boys engage in during every play-break. Eventually, it becomes serious. Some of the other boys stopped skidding and fighting to watch the scene. One of them, Leon [Ln], rushes in between the fighting boys.)

1. Ln: [to one of the fighters named Mel] Listen! (.) LISTEN! (.) LISTEN!
   (struggles to get the two apart and succeeds. Mel, however, seems to object)
2. Ln: listen (.) listen Mel (.) you're gonna get hurt P: I XXX TOO!
3. Ln: you're my best friend (.) I don't want you to get hurt (3s) you know why?
   (.) 'cause if you fight him you'll get hurt (.) and I don't want you to get hurt (.)
   so STOP FIGHTING!
4. Mi: I don't WANT to (3s) I want (.) I DON'T want to fight (.) but they just
   Ln: that's not the way you xxx
5. Mi: yeah, but they SURPRISED ME
6. Ln: alright (.) yeah
Garvey (1975) found out that children around five years of age use justifications to support their requests twice as often as they use politeness forms. In the present material justifications or explanations were provided with approximately 10% of all directives. Not seldom, they were used as a complement to a politeness form, not instead of it, as in excerpt 6 above, where the directive is mitigated by the use of a ‘we’-form (various types of mitigations will be covered in a further section). No differences in the frequency of occurrence were found between child to child and child to adult situations. However, about half of the justifications and explanations were provided in ‘low right’ request, while another 25% were used with ‘high cost’ directives. It may very well be that in high cost cases the justification/explanation may have a primarily persuasive intention, while in low right directives the speaker may feel a need to explain why (s)he is asking for something (s)he should not be asking for. Both of these explanations would account for Andreas’ explanation about his mother getting angry in the ‘lost glove’ episode: it may be intended to persuade his friends (and me) to give up the hide and seek play and engage in searching for the glove. At the same time, it may be intended to justify such a request, if he feels he has little right to ask that of his friends (which may account for the initial hinting). Maybe the same thing can be said about Leon who’s attempt to stop Mel from fighting the other boy, a direct imperative (Turn 2), is preceded by an explanation (‘you’re gonna get hurt’) and a justification in Turn 3 (‘I’m your best friend and don’t want you to get hurt’).

Another way of expressing politeness is by means of certain mitigating markers, such as e.g. please; nicknames like Annie or sweety, and expressions like OK, right etc., that are tagged onto the directive. Mitigation can also be achieved by structural changes of the directive, such as the participating form (‘we’-form). All these types of mitigation can occur either together with or instead of syntactical embedding. In the previous analysis, I have chosen to treat all cases of mitigation of the kind described above, as embedded directives. With all its weaknesses, this seems to have been a common procedure in the early studies of children’s politeness (c.f. Ervin-Tripp, 1977; Mitchell-Kernan & Kernan, 1977). The simplified procedure may be defensible in the previous analysis, as its main purpose was to give a rough picture of children’s use of linguistic politeness in various contexts.
However, as mitigation markers are fairly common in the present material, accompanying nearly 15% of all directives, a closer examination of them may be useful in the study of persuasion strategies. Consider Bill’s case in excerpt 4, where he amplifies the politeness in his request, an embedded imperative, with repeated please-markers (snälla), after it has been denied in his first try. Approximately half of the mitigation tags used were please/snälla -tags. The second most common tag (35%) used in persuasion acts were nicknames, as illustrated in excerpt 2, where Adam tries to gain Bogdan’s permission to come to the hut, calling him Boggy (Turn 7). It may be noted that nicknames were used more often in the directives that is reported here. In many cases, however, it seemed that they primarily served an attention-getting function. Tags like OK?, right were less common (<5 cases).

Now, using pragmatic features to enhance persuasion does not always imply mitigating (polite) strategies. Pragmatic aspects can be manipulated to have the contrary effect. There are several instances of aggravating strategies, where the speaker changes the politeness features of a directive to make it less polite, as in the following examples:

Excerpt 7 /171:8b/ Class 2

(Peter wants me to help him with a math-task, while I’m busy helping Bogdan. Peter [Pr]; Bogdan [Bn].)

1

Pr: nu får du komma här

Pr: you should come here now

2

J: nej inte nu (.) jag håller på

här (.) jag kommer sen

J: no not now (.) I’m busy here (.) I’ll be with you later

(some two minutes later he comes back; I’m still talking to Bogdan)

3

Pr: nu måste du HJÄLPA mig här

Pr: you must HELP me now
In Turn 1, Peter uses a ‘should’-form indicating that he feels he has the right to request my help with a mathematic task. This can be accounted for by the fact that during the two days in that class, I have been helping the children in their work on numerous occasions. My impression is that most of the children felt that they had a right to request my help during classwork (hence the frequent occurrence of question directives in ‘high rights’ and ‘schoolwork activity’ -directives). The ‘should’-form, as it is used here, is an aggravated form. Moreover, on his second try (Turn 3) Peter aggravates his request even more, using a ‘must’-form and at the same time stressing his need for help by prosodic emphasis on the word ‘help’. By using the ‘must’-form he attempts to make his case stronger, not in the sense that he believes he can really force me to comply, but it would seem that the aggravation somehow implies his right to demand help, at the same time reducing my rights to refuse. Thus, the strategy here seems to be one of renegotiation of our rights, that is his right to ask becomes a right to demand while my right to refuse becomes an obligation to comply.

An interesting phenomenon related to the present discussion occurred (by mistake I might add) a few minutes after that episode when Allan requested my help, while I was engaged in a conversation with some other boys (Excerpt 8).

Excerpt 8 /180;9a/ Class 2

(In the playroom I talk to several children, when Allan [An]comes up wanting help with something in the classroom.)

19   An: du måste komma lite du måste hjälpa mig!
20   An: you must come a ‘second’ you must help ME!
21   J: mmneej det måste jag inte alls
22   An: nej men jag behöver det (.) dej i alla fall
23   An: no but I need it (.) you all the same
24   Boy: LOOK An: du måste hjälpa mig
25   An: you must help me
In Turn 19, the aggravated 'must'-form is probably used to stress the importance of Allan's matter. Possibly, the word 'lite' (swe 'a bit', 'little') represents an attempt to decrease the cost of the request (hence the translation: 'a second'). Turn 19 ends with an iteration of the aggravated form, with prosodic emphasis on the pronoun 'me'. Whether this is to emphasize his need for help or to elevate his right to the request is impossible to say. In my (too spontaneous) reply I decline, breaking the established system of rights and at the same time rejecting the form of his request. In a sense, I simply engage in the process of renegotiation of our rights, that is of his right to request the favor and my right to decline. This results in Allan's instant reparation Turn 21, where he justifies the request, thus switching from an aggravated form to a mitigation strategy. In the next Turn (22) however, he returns to the 'must'-form, this time with a less aggravated intonation. The present material contains over 20 more instances of aggravation strategies.

More instances of persuasion acts are illustrated by the following excerpt, which starts with a group of boys heading for the hills to play.

Excerpt 9 /12;1b/ Class 1

(Outside during playtime Simon [Sn], Andreas [An], Teodor [Tr] and Jean [Jn] are about to play Power Rangers)

1  Jn: nu skall vi leka power rangers vi ska leka power rangers (5s) du [to one of the other kids] vänta ett tag (.) innan vi börjar bråka (.) jag xxx (.) Teodor vi skall leka power rangers Jn: now we're going to play power rangers we're going to play power rangers [ ] wait a second ( .) before we start fighting ( .) I xxx ( .) Teodor were going to play power rangers
2  Tr: I thought we were gonna do xxx
3  Jn: skall vi leka power rangers? Simon ( .) power rangers skall du vara! Jn: are we going to play power rangers? Simon ( .) you're going to be power rangers!
4  Sn: då skall jag va den röda! Sn: then I'm gonna be the red one
5  Jn: å då är jag den vita Jn: and I'm the white one
6  As: och jag den gråa As: and I'm the grey one
7  Jn: OK!
8 Tr: jag är den VITA
Jn: nej jag är den vita för ja sa de
10 Tr: ja är chefen
11 As: nej nej xxx Sn: ska putta
12 Tr: n aej
13 As: är du den gröna? Sn: ska putta
14 Tr: ooh JO ja e den gröne
Jn: ja e den vita han e den röda
16 Sn: OK ska man slå er först?
(attacks Tr who screams and fights back)
ja men du e chefen ju
(all run up the hill chasing each other)
17 As: nej nej han kommer!
18 Tr: [sings] WE ARE POWER RANGERS
19 As: låt bli dom xxx
(all climbing down another side of the hill. Some are pushing each other)
20 Tr: nu får jag vinna Jimmy xxx
(Jean is approaching Tr, As and Sn with a big stick, screaming)
21 Tr: don't have pins, Jimmy
22 As: STICKS Sn: don't have pins (.) sticks
23 As: DON'T HAVE STICKS
24 Tr: don't have sticks
25 Sn: throw it away now (.) Jimmy
(Jean throws his stick away. He, and Teodor walk toward the building, Simon and Andreas remain.)
26 Sn: no one can fight me xxx As: xxx
27 As: Jean! [turning back to Sn] are we going to play robots?
28 Sn: no
[Simon picks up a piece of wood and throws it after the two boys.]
29 As: I'm going to play robots (.) a NICE robot
30 Sn: JA (.) jag TRÄFFA HOMOM!
(the boys run towards the building)
The episode starts with Jean announcing that they are going to play Power Rangers and that he wants to settle something before they start. The repetition of the first statement I saw at the time as an attention getting strategy. However, the other boys (or more correctly, some of them) do not seem to respond to this, so he turns specifically to Teodor and repeats the directive. The directives in Turn 1 do not entail polite forms, which may be accounted for by the fact that the decision to play P/Rs was taken already in the cloakroom, making persuasion unnecessary. In Turn 3 it would seem that Jean is trying out two different ways of starting P/R play, first he mitigates the directive embedding it in a question then, turning right to Simon, aggravates it by issuing a direct order. In Turn 4 Simon starts the preparation for the play, in which different roles (colors) are assigned. In Turn 9 we can see the beginning of a conflict, when Theodor wants to be the white P/R, a role occupied by Jean. Note how Andreas resolves this problem: he assigns the role of the green P/R to Theodor by embedding the directive in a question. In Turn 20 the next conflict blows up, when Jean comes up with a stick. This, I understood later, violates one of the explicit rules for play on the schoolyard, possibly explaining why the other boys demand so strongly that he should throw it away (Turn 22-25). This actually spoils the fun and the group splits. In Turn 27 Andreas makes an attempt to initiate robot play, embedding the directive, which fails.

Concluding discussion

Through the perspective taken in this study, human discourse is seen as partly guided by general cultural values. At the same time, discursive activities allow individuals to ‘stretch’ or even redefine those values, at least on a ‘here and now’ basis. These two aspects of discourse were given different weight, depending on the type of methods used, both in the collection and analysis of the data.

The first aspect was considered in the experimental part of this study, where the children’s knowledge of the relation between linguistic structure and cultural notions of politeness was mapped by the two subtasks. One of the questions raised
here concerned politeness aspects of their pragmatic repertoire. The results from the experimental part of the study indicate that most of the participating children knew the politeness values of various directive forms. Although in most cases the children could not point to what structural feature gave some of the directives their polite marking, some children did provide explanations that would indicate some degree of awareness of the relation between formal linguistic features and general social values. To put it another way; they were able to analyze some of the test directives from a culturally anchored 'politeness perspective'. Two other findings related to this part of the study are worth noting: (i) that the participant's pragmatic knowledge seemed somewhat asymmetrical, in favor of the English politeness system; (ii) that direct forms were easier to analyze in terms of politeness than indirect forms, which called for more complex inferences.

The examination of the contextual distribution of the children's directives, was guided by certain assumptions of which different contextual factors might be important for the study of variations of politeness forms. By investigating children's variations of politeness features across different contextual aspects, it was possible to address the issue of pragmatic skills (c.f. the first two components in Bialystok's, 1993, definition of pragmatic competence, p5). The results clearly showed that the children varied the linguistic form of their directives, using a wide range of pragmatic devices. To some degree, the results corroborate the findings some previous investigators (Blum-Kulka, 1990; Ervin-Tripp, 1977; Mitchell-Kernan & Kernan, 1977). However, the variation was greater in the present material in that the directives were more evenly distributed across the different linguistic forms. Possibly, this may be accounted for by the difference of the contexts, in which these studies were conducted (c.f. for instance the relatively high frequency of question directives in schoolwork settings).

The second aspect of discourse activities, which emphasizes the role of the interactants in shaping the course of the discourse itself, was primarily brought out in the detailed analysis of the children's strategic communicating in persuasion acts. Here, I tried to illustrate how the children attempted persuasion goals by negotiating some of the social factors that governed interaction, such as e.g. social
status, rights, etc. In the present study, this was mainly carried out by means of aggravation strategies. These findings suggest that the children are more aware of the relation between pragmatic intention and social meaning than could be shown in the controlled part of this study.

References


Appendix

Transcription key:

contextual info.  descriptions in parentheses
addressee in brackets []
pauses, several seconds seconds in parentheses (.)
pauses, 1 sec or less
simultaneous speech speakers share turn
prosodic emphasis CAPITALS
uncomprehensible speech xxx
The Department of Child Studies

Linköping University hosts an interdisciplinary Institute of Advanced Study known as the Institute of Tema Research. The Institute of Tema Research is divided into five separate departments, each of which administers its own graduate program, and each of which conducts interdisciplinary research on specific, though broadly defined, problem areas, or "themes" (tema in Swedish, hence the name of the Institute). The five departments which compose the Institute of Tema Research are: the Department of Child Studies (Tema B), the Department of Health and Society (Tema H), the Department of Communication Studies (Tema K), the Department of Technology and Social Change (Tema T), and the Department of Water and Environmental Studies (Tema V).

The Department of Child Studies was founded in 1988 to provide a research and learning environment geared toward the theoretical and empirical study of both children and the social and cultural discourses that define what children are and endow them with specific capacities, problems, and subjectivities. A specific target of research is the processes through which understandings of 'normal' children and a 'normal' childhood are constituted, and the roles that children and others play in reinforcing or contesting those understandings. The various research projects carried out at the department focus on understanding the ways in which children interpret their lives, how they communicate with others, and how they produce and/or understand literature, language, mass media and art. Research also documents and analyses the historical processes and patterns of socialization that structure the ways in which childhood and children can be conceived and enacted in various times, places and contexts.

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