



ПРАГМАТИКА И ДИСКУРС-АНАЛИЗ PRAGMATICS AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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THE EXPRESSION OF POLITENESS IN A BILINGUAL SETTING: EXPLORING THE CASE OF MALTESE ENGLISH

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Abstract. Single-moment studies have traditionally been carried out with the aim of investigating the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic skills of non-native speakers compared to those of native speakers of a particular language. The present study aims to investigate the parallel skills in expressing politeness of Maltese bilingual speakers rather than differences between native and non-native speakers in this respect. Since the variety of English spoken in Malta has often been characterised as distinct from British English, we used a small-scale spoken discourse completion task to examine the extent to which British English and Maltese affect the expression of politeness in Maltese English, in the context of requests and apologies. To this end, we compared the responses provided by three distinct groups of participants in terms of the use of particular politeness strategies, as well as the frequency and intonation of politeness markers. The results obtained remain largely inconclusive partly due to certain limitations arising from use of the discourse completion task methodology. They nevertheless do provide preliminary evidence, which is, to our mind, worth exploring further, of a close similarity between Maltese English and Maltese in terms of the intonation that accompanies markers of politeness.

Keywords: *Maltese English, politeness, bilingualism, discourse completion task, requests, apologies, intonation, hedges/mitigators*

1. INTRODUCTION

For most people, politeness tends to be equivalent to manners and behaviour, but its conception varies across cultures; what is considered polite in one culture may be perceived as rude in another. As such, politeness can be realised through different means, with one of the most common of these being the use of language. According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 36), in the particular contexts of language contact and language learning, it is often the case that a speaker employs his L1 ‘interpretive strategies’ while using L2, which may sometimes lead to confusion, or even complete breakdown in communication. And while a fair amount of research has focused on how EFL learners use politeness in English when compared to native speakers of English (see, for example, Salgado 2011), the way in which politeness is expressed in a bilingual setting has received much more limited attention. In this paper, we focus on the linguistic realisation

of politeness in the unique bilingual setting of Malta, which has two official languages: Maltese and English¹. The two languages are quite distinct from each other, Maltese being a language with a Semitic base, upon which borrowings from Romance (particularly Sicilian and Tuscan Italian), as well as from English, are superimposed, English being a Germanic language altogether (see Mifsud 1995). And yet, both languages are spoken fluently — albeit to different degrees — by the majority of the Maltese people. Still, the English spoken in Malta is different from other varieties of English, including the standard British English that was originally introduced to the islands, and has been found to be influenced by the native tongue in several respects. Vella (2012) provides an overview of research on the characteristics of Maltese English which distinguish it from other varieties at various levels of grammar and meaning, as well as pronunciation. In the latter case, there is already a fair amount of research which shows that stress, rhythm and — of particular relevance to this paper — intonation, are especially marked.

However, the linguistic realisation of politeness in the Maltese context has not yet been studied (but see Caruana, forthcoming), so the present paper can be seen as a modest beginning in that direction. Having witnessed several occasions when a Maltese English speaker was misinterpreted as being impolite, we decided to conduct a pilot study with a view to investigating the extent to which the linguistic expression of politeness in Maltese English can be seen to be influenced by British English on the one hand and by Maltese on the other². To this end, we used a spoken discourse completion task, and focused our analysis on the strategies employed by our participants to express politeness, as well as on their use of politeness markers and of the intonation accompanying such markers. In this respect, the present paper is organised in the following manner. We begin by providing the general background to this research with a view to motivating our eventual choice of the aspects of politeness that our analysis focuses on. We then present the task used in our pilot study as well as the procedure we followed in analysing the data collected. Finally, we present the results of this study and conclude the paper with some remarks on possible ways in which the topic could be investigated further.

2. BACKGROUND

Politeness used to be regarded as an area of research that is of interest only to linguists specialising in pragmatics. Culpeper (2011:391) even describes it as a former “esoteric topic” which has now become central to other fields, such as psychology, sociology and anthropology, to name but a few. Needless to say, this area has an interesting history. Various scholars have conducted research and come up with definitions that elaborate different views on politeness from different standpoints. As Watts (2003) dis-

¹ To be more precise, a bill declaring that Maltese Sign Language is also an official language of Malta was approved on 16 March 2016, but, given the focus of our research, we have not touched on Maltese Sign Language in the present study.

² Clearly, one important caveat that needs to be made is that the co-existence of Maltese and English in bilingual Malta has been noted to also result in instances of what some have referred to as the ‘Englishisation of Maltese’ (see, for example, Brincat Massa 1986; Camilleri and Borg 1992). This suggests that it cannot be taken for granted that the direction of influence will always be from the Maltese to the English of Maltese speakers: such influence can also go in the other direction.

cusses, there are various perceptions of politeness, which are normally tied to what is considered to be socially acceptable, a behaviour which reflects one's educational status, an individual's generosity and kindness towards others or willingness to put others first ('self-effacing'), and a reflection of a condescending or artificial behaviour. When it comes to linguistic politeness, he notes that it is a term employed, most of the time, to refer to the use of appropriate titles when addressing someone, as well as to the use of certain politeness markers like 'please' and 'thank you', or to the avoidance of being direct in speech.

Against this backdrop, several linguists have managed to offer insightful descriptions of what politeness actually consists of. Culpeper (2011) notes a number of such definitions:

Politeness is a tool used "to maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place". (Leech 1983:82)

Politeness, like formal diplomatic protocol (for which it must surely be the model), presupposes that potential for aggression as it seeks to disarm it, and makes possible communication between potentially aggressive parties. (Brown and Levinson 1987:1)

Politeness can be defined as a means of minimizing confrontation in discourse — both the possibility of confrontation occurring at all, and the possibility that a confrontation will be perceived as threatening. (Lakoff 1989:102)

What all these definitions have in common is that they seem to equate politeness with the avoidance of friction in communication. However, as Watts (2003:13) argues, "to use a lay concept in one language as a universal scientific concept for all languages and cultures is particularly inappropriate," since the term politeness differs from one language and culture to another. One of the many examples he uses to illustrate this point is Sifianou's (1992) study on the perception of politeness in Greek and English, which showed that, when it comes to evaluating politeness, Greeks tend to prioritise 'warmth and friendliness' towards others while the English place more emphasis on other principles, such as formality, 'a discrete maintenance of distance', the aim being to avoid imposing any ideas on the addressee, and to appear humble and selfless.

This example reveals one of the major ongoing debates in the field of politeness research. On the one hand, there are researchers like Lakoff, Leech, Brown and Levinson who adopt a universalist position, according to which, politeness is an attitude that can be systematically studied independently of the particular culture or language in which it manifests itself. On the other, its apparent diversity across cultures is considered by many as an obstacle that makes it impossible to define politeness as a single universally-applicable concept. While this is not a debate that we plan to go into for the purposes of this paper, it reveals an issue that one needs to always consider when carrying out research on politeness: people's intuitions about what is (im)polite, or what Watts (2003:4) calls "folk" or "lay interpretations" related to "first-order (im)politeness," can easily be confused with technical discussions of what a polite attitude, or what Watts correspondingly calls "second-order politeness", actually is. So, keeping in mind that it is almost inevitable for those who try to construct a technical interpretation of politeness

to be influenced by their first-order experience of it, we have attempted to study the phenomenon and its linguistic realisation in Maltese by setting up a spoken discourse completion task and analysing the data collected by focusing on aspects that can, in principle, be objectively quantified and qualified.

2.1. Politeness strategies

The first aspect of politeness that we focus on in this paper is what Brown and Levinson famously called politeness strategies. In their highly influential Politeness Theory (Brown and Levinson 1987), the two researchers developed a model which attempts to explain how politeness works across different cultures, on the basis of the assumption that interactants' behaviour is directly influenced by two universal qualities: 'face' and 'rationality'. Face, a term coined by Goffman (1967) after the colloquial English expression 'to lose face' is used to refer to an awkward, humiliating situation one may find oneself in and relates to the need of every individual to make — and maintain — a good impression of themselves on the people around them. Brown and Levinson built on this notion by identifying two types of face: positive and negative. The former refers to the desire to be liked by others and therefore feel welcome and approved by them, while the latter refers to the avoidance of any imposition that might be put forward by the use of some communicative stimulus. As one would expect, face can be flattened, improved or preserved and it is these possibilities that make speakers look out for their own face as well as that of their addressees. This is due to the fact that the particular way in which one treats the other in conversation can make or break one's reputation. The term 'rationality', on the other hand, is related to logical thinking, in the sense of Aristotle's practical reasoning, which essentially refers to the ability to derive a conclusion from a set of premises. It is in this context that, according to Brown and Levinson, rationality allows an interlocutor to choose the strategy which is best for their needs and which will cause them the least trouble to achieve their wanted goals.

Assuming that all individuals are aware that everyone has these two qualities, it is normally in their interest, when engaging in a conversation, to protect both their and their interlocutors' face. Yet, any utterance could potentially threaten face (un)intentionally and become a Face Threatening Act (henceforth FTA) targeting a hearer's positive or negative face wants (or even both). For example, one could threaten a hearer's positive face by vilifying, criticising, ridiculing and contradicting them, or by expressing lack of interest in the hearer's feelings and interrupting them or by starting a heated discussion which may cause emotional distress to them. Negative face can be threatened when the hearer is put under pressure to carry out a task, as in the case of being requested to do something or being given advice that they have not asked for. Even though it is the hearer that is usually the main receiver of an FTA, the speaker's face can also be threatened at the same time, as, for example, in the case of expressing gratitude, when the speaker is taking on 'debt' or when giving excuses in an attempt to justify a mistake, to give but a few examples.

Of course, as Brown and Levinson note, speakers can always choose to not perform the FTA, which would save them from all this trouble, but when they choose to perform it, they will perform it after selecting the appropriate politeness strategy most likely

to offset the threat posed by it. And this choice of strategy usually depends on the FTA's weight, which, according to Brown and Levinson, is determined by three parameters: the relative power that the speaker and the addressee have over each other (e.g. a mother and a daughter as opposed to a student and a professor), the distance between them, which is also linked to the frequency of their communication (e.g. a boss and an employee versus two siblings), and the ranking of the face-threatening imposition, which depends on the culture and the particular situation at hand (e.g. asking to borrow a pencil versus asking to borrow money). It is against this background that Brown and Levinson list four politeness strategies from which speakers have to choose in order to ease the effect of an FTA when they choose to perform it:

- ◆ On record, baldly
- ◆ On record, with positive politeness redress
- ◆ On record, with negative politeness redress
- ◆ Off record

The list starts off with what Brown and Levinson consider to be the least polite strategy and ends with the most polite one. Uttering something on record, baldly is a straightforward strategy which does not spare the hearer's face in any way, as a speaker's intention is to be direct and clear. There are various situations in which the speaker may have to save the time of redressing an FTA, such as in a case of emergency where a speaker could shout something like '*Call an ambulance now!*', but the bald-on-record strategy is predominantly used when two people are very close to each other, as in the case of a husband and wife or close friends. The second strategy is to aim at addressing a hearer's positive face wants, i.e. their need to feel welcome and approved of by a speaker, and usually involves being friendly with someone, as in the case of calling someone '*mate*' and the like. The third strategy relates to negative politeness, which the speaker uses to offset a potential imposition. In this case, Brown and Levinson again identify various ways of materialising this strategy, such as using questions or hedges like '*perhaps*' (example 1), being pessimistic in assuming that a hearer will reject some task (example 2) or avoiding the use of the first and second person pronouns (example 3):

1. *I was thinking perhaps we could go grab lunch together sometime?*
2. *I don't suppose you're free tomorrow to help me with my science project?*
3. *I was hoping the dishes could be done by the time Grandma visits tomorrow.*

All three strategies described so far are dubbed as 'on record' strategies as they all hold an element of directness. Conversely, the last strategy identified by Brown and Levinson is to go 'off record', in the sense of being completely indirect. Brown and Levinson's theory identifies several such types of strategy. So, giving hints, using tautologies or metaphors, and being ambiguous, are all examples of off record politeness strategies. This can be illustrated by the utterance in (4), when considered in a context where a student is trying to carry seven books along with her laptop, phone and purse, and directs it to a friend playing a game on his mobile phone with the intention of getting him to help her:

4. *Wow! These are heavier than I thought!*

Still, Brown and Levinson's model has been criticised on a number of grounds, with the most prominent such criticism being that it is not applicable in cultures where

collective interests are prioritised over those of the individual (see Gu 1990; Mao 1994; Lim 1994 — for counterarguments see Leech and Larina 2014; Assimakopoulos 2014). Even so, we think that, regardless of the degree of politeness they may be taken to communicate, the strategies this model identifies can be used as an unambiguous criterion in the comparison of the responses provided by different groups of participants on the same task. And that is why we have decided to include them as one of the criteria we are focusing on in our present analysis.

2.2. The use and intonation of politeness markers

The second element of politeness that we have looked at for the purposes of the present analysis is that of politeness markers, broadly construed. Generally speaking, one of the most prominent ways of expressing politeness is through the use of particular words and phrases, which are often taught to children as soon as they start producing speech. Amongst these one finds direct politeness markers, such as *'please'* and *'thank you'*, as well as hedges and mitigators, which are words or phrases that can indirectly communicate a polite attitude, such as *'perhaps'*, which, in (5) softens the confining sense of the request by implying that the hearer has the option to refuse, or the modal verb *'could'* which is also used in the same example in the place of its more common counterpart *'can'*, as it is considered to be more polite than it:

5. *Perhaps you could help me out with these boxes?*

Much like English, Maltese has equivalent markers, like *'jekk jogħġbok'* (= please) and *'grazzi'* (= thank you), and also uses similar hedges and mitigators to express politeness.

Turning to intonation, research in the area (see, for example, Loveday 1981; Camras 1984; Laplante and Ambady 2003) has shown that, amongst other nonverbal cues (such as body language), it plays a crucial role in expressing politeness. This seems natural, since, as Bolinger (1989) argues, intonation changes according to the type of utterance and context and plays a central role in revealing the intention behind the message one wants to convey. Since there is again, to the best of our knowledge, no work on Maltese politeness markers in terms of their prosodic nature, we will, at this point, have to rely on a preliminary investigation of some intonational tendencies in Maltese conducted by Vella (2009) through the use of examples collected from a corpus of spoken Maltese constructed as a part of MalToBI project by Vella and Farrugia (2006).

When it comes to British English, Wichmann (2004) identifies two different tones in *'please'* utterances. When the marker has an initial position in the utterance, it tends to start out with a high level tone (indicated in the examples below by means of $\bar{\ }^{\ }^{\ }$) contouring into a high falling one (indicated by means of \backslash), as in (6):

6. $\bar{\ }^{\ }^{\ }$ *Please, \ sign here as well.*

Yet, when *'please'* occurs in final position, it can either have an accented rise (indicated by means of $/$) or an unaccented fall, as in (7) and (8) respectively

7. *Could you move a little bit to the left, / please?*

8. *Could you move a little bit to the / left, \ please?*

Then, if an utterance is meant to deliver some sort of disapproval or a mock request, the speaker tends to use a high falling tone:

9. $\bar{\ }^{\ }^{\ }$ *Please, \ shut up.*

Turning to yes/no questions, requests and offers, three different tonal contours are possible: a rising tone, a falling tone and a fall-rise. The falling tone is used to give an order and, according to Cruttenden (2001), can be interpreted as quite blunt. For example:

10. *Get me a \ cupcake.*

Maltese similarly tends to use a falling tone when it comes to imperatives, except that this tends to be placed on the verb rather than on its complement which may be assigned a low falling tone (indicated below by means of a \backslash^3):

11. *eħe \dur ma' dar \Millenia*
 yeah turn-IMP-2SG with house Millenia
 ‘yeah turn at Millenia house’

(Vella 2009:59)

In British English, a rising tone can sound more friendly as, once again, it leaves the addressee the choice to answer as they please, as for example in (12):

12. *Would you like some / tea?*

A similar effect can be brought about in Maltese questions where an early rising tone, as on ‘*ħobb*’ (= do you like) in the example in (13), is followed, on ‘*issiefer*’ (= travelling) by a low rise from the syllable before the stressed one (indicated here by means of a \cdot) stepping up to a level-high tone (also indicated by means of $\bar{\cdot}$):

13. */ħobb \is-siefer?*
 you-2SG-like you-2SG-travel
 ‘Do you like travelling?’

(Vella 2009:56)

Finally, the fall-rise tone in British English can be used to indicate politeness when the request put forward involves something which puts the speaker at some kind of advantage, as in (14):

14. *May I borrow \ your / book for just a second?*

A tone similar to this fall-rise also appears to be found occasionally in Maltese when asking questions, although, as far as we know, its use for the specific purpose of indicating politeness has not been documented in any published study. An example taken from the data collected for the purposes of this study is shown in (15) below:

15. *\Aħmil-li pja / ċir^A...*
 do-IMP-2SG-me favour
 ‘Do me a favour’

³ Vella (2009)’s notation has been adapted here to a tonetic stress mark notation system in line with that used in Wichmann (2004) for easier comparison even though her work is couched within an Autosegmental-Metrical framework of Intonational Phonology following Pierrehumbert (1980) and Ladd (1996).

⁴ The fall in this case is associated with the left edge of the word rather than with the stressed syllable. Such “early” peak falls have been documented to occur in the context of a number of structures in Maltese which include vocatives and imperatives (see Vella 1995) as well as question word interrogatives (see, for example, Vella 2009).

Interestingly, in the above example, although ‘*jekk jogħġbok*’ (= please) could have been added to enhance the effect of politeness, this meaning is in fact expressed perfectly adequately by means of the intonation accompanying the utterance.

At first sight, the comparison of British English and Maltese in terms of the use and intonation of politeness markers appears to promise similarity. However, the presented instances in Maltese do not all occur in the context of politeness, which on its own warrants further investigation. Furthermore, it seems to us that an investigation of the use of politeness markers, or lack thereof, as well as of their intonational form in three datasets with corresponding responses to the same prompts could again be used as an objective indicator of how speakers of the language varieties we are interested in express politeness.

3. METHODOLOGY

There are several approaches one could take towards single-moment studies, with the most prominent ones being role-plays and questionnaires. Role-plays are probably the nearest to natural talk that a researcher can get when eliciting speech, especially if they are spontaneous and open. In the context of conducting a comparative study of linguistic politeness across different languages, however, they might not be the most optimal route to follow, as they leave very little control over how the conversation will unfold, and ultimately, do not provide any guarantee that comparable expressions of politeness will be yielded. With regard to questionnaires, Kasper and Rose (2002) identify three types: multiple choice tests, ranked response tests and discourse completion tasks (henceforth DCTs). While the first two types of task focus mainly on the participants’ interpretation of utterances, the last one can be used to elicit speech from participants and was therefore the obvious choice for us. The DCT method was first used by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Patterns project and was devised by Blum-Kulka (1982) herself. More specifically, a DCT gives participants a situation (sometimes including the start of a dialogue) to which they have to respond by writing what their reaction at that stage of the interaction would be. The end result is the production of a speech act, which should in principle fit the category expected to be produced in this particular context.

While the DCT method is very efficient and gives the researcher control over contextual variables such as age, sex or the participants’ relative distance with respect to their imaginary interlocutors, it may lead to less natural data in comparison to role-playing because it is unlikely that participants will be spontaneous with their responses, especially since they are given time to think before writing these down. What is more, the DCT method also carries the risk of participant answers being too short, since writing an utterance requires much more effort than simply uttering it. In an attempt to offset these limitations, we decided to administer a spoken version of a DCT, where participants would utter their responses out loud, rather than write them down, and be recorded in real time as they did so. The purpose was to minimise the participants’ tendency to provide too short responses. Given our interest in intonation as a marker of politeness, longer responses would also have the added benefit of allowing us to investigate the supraseg-

mental features that come into play in the expression of politeness. All in all, this method gave the participants freedom to react to each DCT item as they saw fit, although the risk of their response not being of the speech act type we expected remained.

The DCT that we designed for this study consisted of twelve items in total, six in which a request was to be elicited and another six prompting an apology. Both requests and apologies have been widely researched across languages and, since this study is the first to investigate politeness in the Maltese context, we could not think of a better place to start than these two speech acts, which are after all amongst the most frequently used in everyday speech. In our DCT, each elicitation item described a situation ending in a prompt to make a request or apologise, while in devising our items we also controlled for formality, by counterbalancing situations in formal and informal contexts. Here are two examples of the situations used (for the full list of items, see Appendix):

16. Request:

You've just spent a fortune on your new phone. On a night out, your friend accidentally knocks it out of your hand while drunk and shatters the display. When you meet with him the following day you remind him what he did and ask him to pay for the repair charges. You show him the broken phone and say:

17. Apology:

You are at a restaurant sitting at a table. You excuse yourself to go to the bathroom. On your way, you bump into a waiter who is carrying a tray full of glasses and a bottle of wine. Needless to say, the wine is now all over the floor along with the remains of the bottle and the glasses and the waiter is looking at you all flustered. You look at him and say:

In the request scenario above, the situation is an informal one as the addressee is someone of the same status as the speaker in terms of social distance and power. By contrast, the apology scenario puts the speakers in a different position, as the addressee is now someone that they do not know — not to mention also that a waiter is someone providing the speaker a service, so the variable of power differs in this respect too.

A total of 30 participants were recruited for this pilot study: 10 native British English speakers and 20 Maltese bilingual participants, each of whom did the task in one language only. So, 10 of the Maltese participants completed the 12 tasks in Maltese (henceforth the Maltese group), and 10 others completed them in English (henceforth the Maltese English group). At the time of recording, all participants were over 18 years of age and most of them were university students, while each group consisted of five females and five males, except for the British English group which was made up of six females and four males, due to the limited sources available to us. The within-group balance was intended as a precaution to avoid any bias in the results that could have arisen if one sex considerably outweighed the other. Participants undertook the task individually by silently reading each item and then responding to the situation described as they saw fit. Their responses were recorded in a continuous stream that was then segmented into excerpts matching the items provided in the DCT.

Following the recording, all participant data were transcribed orthographically and then organised according to the language variety to which they belonged. Then, each item elicited was analysed in terms of the politeness strategy it made use of by two

independent coders, who, given the straightforward nature of the scenarios used, were in complete agreement in their classifications. At the same time, we took note of the direct (e.g. *‘please’*, *‘sorry’*, etc) and indirect (e.g. *‘is it alright if’*, *‘possibly’*, etc.) politeness markers that each item contained, as well as their intonational contour. The pitch extraction analysis provided in PRAAT (Boersma and Weenink 2017) served as a useful aid in the analysis. Following Cruttenden’s (1997:3) recommendation, the pitch settings in PRAAT were adjusted according to the gender of the participant involved, as males have a pitch range of 60—180 Hz while females have a pitch range of 180—400 Hz. PRAAT was therefore set at 50—250 Hz for male participants (some of the participants had high pitched instances at times) and at 50—400 Hz for females — it became evident during the analysis that the Maltese females in this study had lower pitched voices when compared to the British English female speakers).

All utterances in which the sought after speech act was realised were uploaded into PRAAT and analysed using an adapted version of the Rapid Prosodic Transcription method (Cole and Shattuck-Hufnagel 2016) which marks boundaries separating one tone unit from another and the pitch accent in each tone unit. The relevant units, which we will refer to here as intonational phrases, following Nespor and Vogel’s (2007) classic work on prosodic phonology, were then labelled following classification into a number of simple global shape categories that was adapted from O’Connor and Arnold (1973: 7—30), with the addition of two further categories that were identified in order to describe particular intonational patterns found in the Maltese and Maltese English data. Since the relevant categories for Maltese and Maltese English have not yet been established in the literature, we introduced the categories *‘stylised rise’* and *‘stylised fall’*, following Ladd (1978, 1996). As we will show in the next section, what characterises these categories is that, in contrast to other forms, the rise / fall involves a kind of stepping up or stepping down rather than a smooth rising or falling movement.

Table 1

List of intonational categories used in our analysis

HF	High Fall
LF	Low Fall
RF	Rise Fall
SF	Stylised Fall
L	Level
HR	High Rise
LR	Low Rise
FR	Fall Rise
SR	Stylised Rise

After determining the intonational categories we would use, the relevant phrases were analysed in terms of the relevant intonational phrases and tonal sequences.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Starting off with an examination of the politeness strategies used in each of the three language varieties examined, the most popular strategy for requests (see Table 2) was, quite expectedly, negative politeness redress both in formal and informal scenarios. Interestingly, participants in the Maltese English group used the most bald on-record forms.

Table 2

Politeness strategies used in requests

Strategy	British English	Maltese English	Maltese
Negative politeness redress	52	45	49
Positive politeness redress	3	4	2
Off-record	/	1	2
Bald, on-record	5	10	7

Turning to apologies, the same pattern emerged, with negative politeness redress being the preferred strategy again in both formal and informal scenarios (see Table 3). However, in this setting, there were also some instances in which no apology was actually made (marked as N/A in Table 3), especially in the case of responses in Maltese, with participants opting to merely express their dismay at the situation or avoid taking responsibility altogether for whatever it was they were being blamed for in the relevant scenario.

Table 3

Politeness strategies used in apologies

Strategy	British English	Maltese English	Maltese
Negative politeness redress	45	45	37
Positive politeness redress	1	1	/
Off-record	2	1	/
Bald, on-record	/	/	/
N/A	12	13	23

Our analysis of politeness strategies did not provide us with any reliable leads as to whether the expression of politeness in Maltese English is closer to that in Maltese or that in British English. This can, however, be explained by the fact that patterns in the use of politeness strategies are bound to depend more on an individual's socio-cultural background than on the particular language that they speak. If this is true, our participants' backgrounds should be comparable, since all the groups comprised predominantly young university students from two countries with Western European values.

In an attempt at identifying which language variety Maltese English approximates more to the linguistic realisation of politeness, we will now turn to a discussion of the use of politeness markers in our elicited data.

As far as requests are concerned, Maltese tends to use more politeness markers than British English does in formal scenarios, while this pattern is reversed in informal ones. As Table 4 shows, Maltese English lies in the middle, being closer to British English in both formal and informal scenarios.

Table 4

Frequency of politeness markers used in requests

	British English	Maltese English	Maltese
Formal scenarios	59	58	87
Informal scenarios	46	48	52
Total	105	106	139

At face value, this suggests that Maltese English is generally more influenced by British English when it comes to the use of politeness markers. However, closer inspection of our data revealed that this result was actually skewed by a particular characteristic of the Maltese dataset. While direct markers of politeness, such as ‘*jekk jogħġbok*’, ‘*grazzi*’ (= excuse me) and ‘*skużani*’ (= sorry), were used to a comparable extent across all three datasets, the Maltese dataset also included 29 instances of politeness mitigators that do not exist in English. These mitigators belong to the category of what could be called ‘softening devices’, such as ‘*waħda*’ [= one (f.sg)], ‘*fit*’ [= a few], ‘*daqsxajn*’ [= a little] and ‘*naqra*’ [= a bit], among many others. The use of these devices appears to minimise the pressure exerted by the request itself, as the following examples demonstrate:

18. *Inti jimporta thallas naqra* you-2SG int then imbagħad
 you-2SG do-you-2SG-mind you-2SG-pay a little
in-ħalls=ek wara jien?
 I-pay=you-2SG after I
 ‘*Do you mind paying a little yourself and then I’ll pay you back later?’
19. *Jimporta s-sellif=ni waħda biro jekk jogħġb=ok għax*
 do-you-2SG-mind you-2SG-lend=me one pen if please=you-2SG because
in-sejt=hom I-forgot=them wara-jja? after-me
 ‘*Do you mind lending me one a pen please because I forgot to bring them with me?’
20. *M’ għand-ek-x daqsxajn ta’ biro?*
 NEG you-2SG-have-NEG a little of pen
 ‘*You don’t have a little of a pen?’
21. *Hu paċenzja bi-ja kemm is-sellif=ni daqsxajn biro*
 You-2SG-take patience with-me just you-2SG-lend=me a little pen
għax mingħali-ja li ġibt=ha u m’ għand-i xejn.
 because thought-I that I-brought=it and NEG have-I nothing
 *Be patient with me, just lend me a little of a pen because I thought I brought it with me but I don’t have anything.

As the accompanying literal translation of examples (18) to (21) into English shows, these Maltese mitigators would not really be acceptable in English; hence, they could not have been used by the Maltese English group.

Turning to apologies, the marker that was used most times in all three datasets was, not unexpectedly, ‘*sorry*’/‘*skużani*’⁵. As Table 6 indicates, however, a similar situation as that noted in the case of requests (when one disregards the use of mitigators specific to Maltese alone therein). The use of politeness markers even in this context is comparable across all three datasets, with Maltese English being slightly closer to Maltese than it is to British English this time.

⁵ In the Maltese bilingual context, English ‘*sorry*’ is a ready alternative to Maltese ‘*skużani*’, albeit possibly with a different range of uses.

Frequency of politeness markers used in apologies

	British English	Maltese English	Maltese
Formal scenarios	46	49	54
Informal scenarios	30	37	30
Total	76	86	84

Therefore, much like our analysis of the politeness strategies used across our datasets, our investigation into the use of politeness markers remains inconclusive as to which of the two competing language varieties influences the expression of politeness in Maltese English the most. A possible explanation for this, however, could be the effect that schooling might have on the use of politeness markers in situations like the ones presented in the particular context of a DCT. As Caruana (forthcoming) discusses, since we are all taught from a very young age to use our ‘*please*’s and ‘*thank you*’s when performing speech acts like the ones elicited in our task, we cannot help but include them in our responses when we are asked to produce relevant utterances. This seems to be particularly pertinent when one takes into account the artificial setting of a DCT study, where participants inevitably feel that they need to be on their best linguistic behaviour, as they are being observed by a researcher.

Against this backdrop, what remains to be seen is whether the factor of intonation can offer us any more reliable insights regarding which of the two language varieties under consideration, British English or Maltese, has the most noteworthy influence on Maltese English when it comes to the expression of politeness.

All the intonational categories used in the annotation of the data and listed in Table 1 above were found to accompany the politeness markers in all three language varieties, albeit with different tendencies. Thus, for example, in the case of the responses collected to both the request and apology prompts, the low rise seems to be preferred in British English whilst the high rise is more likely in Maltese English, as it is in Maltese (see also Vella 1995). By contrast, in the case of apologies, British English seems to favour falls, particularly the low fall, whereas apologies in Maltese and Maltese English were accompanied by a wider variety of intonational contours. In what follows, the discussion focuses more closely on the rising forms found in our data, partly because results on the phenomenon of one specific form we report on, the ‘stylised rise’, are especially striking — particularly in the case of requests.

Let us begin by examining the difference between the low and high rise categories, examples of which can be seen in Figures 1 and 2a/3 below⁶. These examples involve use of the mitigator ‘[*do*] *you mind?*’. The former is a rendering by a female British English speaker (BR_1_11), the latter is produced by a female Maltese English speaker (MaltE_1_12) and involves a commonly-used feature of Maltese English, the dropping of the operator ‘*do*’.

⁶ In these figures, the text is shown in tier 1 with the stressed syllable which serves as the anchoring point for the intonational contour *in capitals*; intonational phrase boundaries are indicated by means of a *b* in tier 2, which also contains the abbreviation for the intonational category/ies involved as shown in Table 1. Capitals are also used to indicate the relevant stressed syllables in the examples in the text of the captions to the figures in this section.

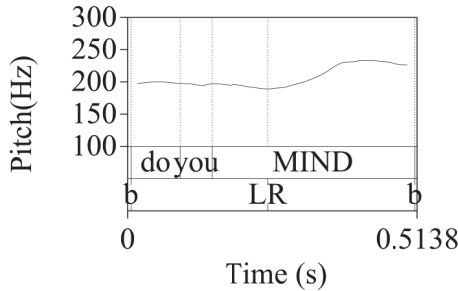


Figure 1. Use of a low rise with the mitigator ‘do you MIND?’ by a female British English speaker (BR_1_11)

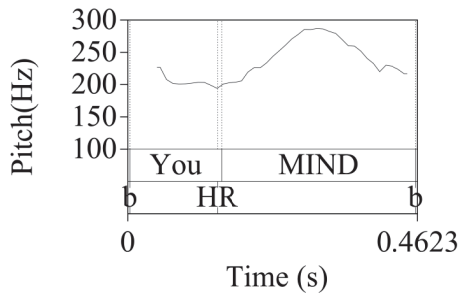


Figure 2a. Use of a high rise with the mitigator ‘You MIND...?’ with missing operator by a female Maltese English speaker (MaltE_1_12)

Although a rise occurs on ‘mind’ in both cases, the high point in the rise in the latter case (that involving the Maltese English speaker) has a higher pitch than the former (that was produced by the British English speaker). In cases involving use of a plain (as opposed to ‘stylised’ — more on which below) rise in the Maltese data, high rises consisting of movement from relatively low to relatively high pitch on the stressed syllable also seemed to be the preferred choice. An example of this can be seen in Figure 3 below.

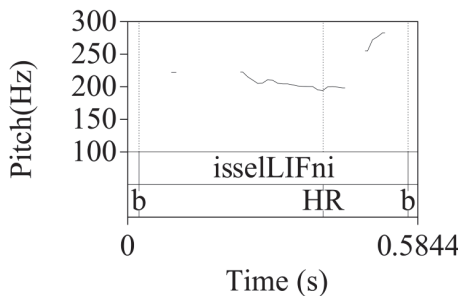


Figure 3. Use of a high rise with ‘issellIFni’ (= will you lend me) produced by a female speaker (Malt_11_33)

An in depth comparison of the intonational forms used by speakers in the different language variety groups is not possible on the basis of these data, as they give little scope for direct comparability. An element of interest which does emerge from the analysis, however, is that involving use of two forms, one falling, the other rising, designated as ‘stylised’, henceforth SF and SR. As mentioned earlier, these forms differ from the forms

involving a fall of some sort (HF/LF/RF) or some sort of rise (HR/LR/FR) in that they involve a kind of stepping down or stepping up in pitch rather than a smoother falling or rising movement. Once the stepping down or up has taken place, pitch stays level for a while.

The two ‘stylised’ forms noted in these data seem more typical of Maltese and Maltese English than of British English, with the rising variant, SR, appearing to occur particularly frequently as a politeness marker, when, for example, it accompanies mitigators in both Maltese English and Maltese. Our claim, albeit tentative, is that use of this type of the ‘stylised’ form/s in Maltese English is quite likely to be a direct result of influence from Maltese. As mentioned above, the discussion of the stylised phenomena identified focuses on the rising variant which occurs particularly frequently in these data, particularly in the case of requests. To start with, we attempt to demonstrate how the SR differs from its non-stylised counterparts by comparing it specifically to the high rise.

Let us revert to a fuller version of the response the first part of which is illustrated in Figure 2a. The intonational contour of the female Maltese English speaker’s fuller response: ‘*You mind | lending me some money?*’ is shown in Figure 2b below.

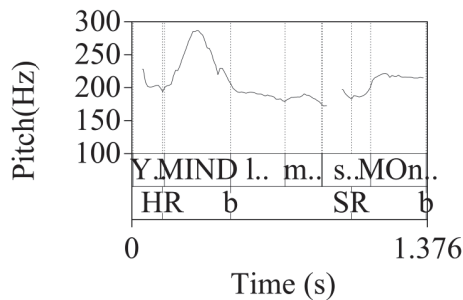


Figure 2b. Comparison of high and ‘stylised’ rises in ‘*You MIND | lending me some MOney?*’ by a female Maltese English speaker (MaltE_1_12)

The high rise in the first part of this response (‘*You mind*’) is followed by a sharp dip on ‘*lending*’. Pitch continues to fall on ‘*me some*’ but then steps up again on the stressed (first) syllable of ‘*money*’, staying high level to the end. It is this stepping up movement which characterises the form we are referring to as the ‘stylised rise’ and which we claim is distinct from the other rising movements present in these data.

Let us now move on to examining some examples of this intonational form in Maltese. The example shown in Figure 4 involves the two parts shown in bold of the longer response shown below:

22. *Skuzani | jimPORta | t-għid=li f' liem KAMra | r-rid imMUR |*
 sorry do-you-2SG-mind you-2SG-tell=me in which room I-want to go
kif n-asal HEMM |
 how I-arrive there

‘**I’m sorry** do you mind telling me which room **I need to go to when I get there?**’

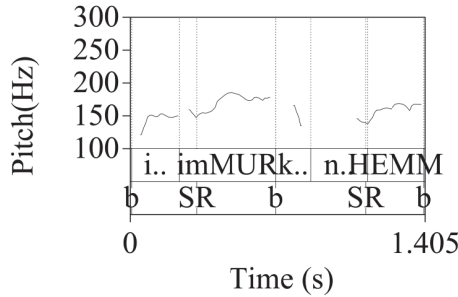


Figure 4. Use of the ‘stylised’ rise with ‘*irrid imMUR*’ and ‘*kif nasal HEMM*’ by a female speaker (Malt_5_30)

Two SRs have been noted in this case, the first starting low before the stressed syllable of ‘*immur*’ and stepping up to a high (relatively level) pitch, the second with a low before the stressed syllable on ‘*hemm*’ which is again characterised by high level pitch. The excerpt below from the first part of this same response shows an even clearer example of the stepping up SR on ‘*jimporta*’, one of the most used Maltese equivalents of the English mitigator ‘*do you mind*’⁷.

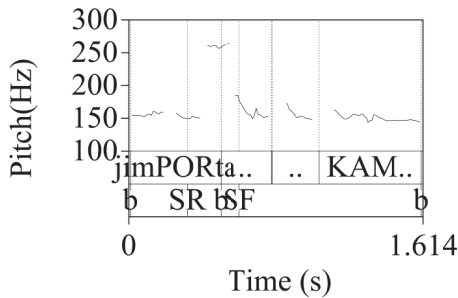


Figure 5. Use of the ‘stylised’ rise in ‘*jimPORTa tghidli*’ and ‘*f’liem KAMra*’ by a female speaker (Malt_5_30)

What the above shows is that, particularly in the case of requests, the SR form described above is common in both Maltese and Maltese English. It often accompanies mitigators, such as ‘*jimporta*’ (= *do you mind*), and equivalent Maltese English renderings of ‘*do you mind*’ or ‘*would you mind*’, but can also accompany other elements.

One final observation can be made at this stage. This relates to the tendency for echoed use of intonational forms, such as the SR. This tendency is particularly prevalent in the polite responses examined here. Two instances of the repeated use of the SR described above, one from the Maltese dataset, the other from the Maltese English dataset, are illustrated in (23) and (24) below:

23.

INti	jimPORTa	jekk issellIFni	tletin EUro	kemm inhallsu dal-KONT	imbagħad intimhomlok WAra?
HF	SR	SR	SR	SR	SR

(Malt_11_33)

⁷ Incidentally, this example also includes an example of the intonational form we analysed as a stylised fall on ‘*kamra*’ in the example shown in Figure 4.

24.

You MIND	lending me some MONey	to PAY	for the BILL	and then I'll give them to you	LAter	when I get HOME?
HR		SR	SR		SR	SR

(MaltE_1_12)

What is interesting in view also of the discussion earlier in this section is that, although the analysis does not actually throw light on any significant differences between the three language varieties in terms of their use of politeness markers, the preliminary investigation of the intonation used by the speakers to express politeness may be seen to differ in three main respects:

- ◆ Maltese and Maltese English both show a strong tendency for use of at least one, but possibly two, stylised forms which perform a function in expressing politeness. In this respect, Maltese English appears to be more similar to Maltese than to British English.
- ◆ These intonational forms in Maltese and Maltese English can accompany politeness markers such as the mitigator '*jimporta*' (= do you mind), but are very often also used with other elements. So, intonation alone can also express politeness in the absence of politeness markers of other sorts.
- ◆ Both Maltese and Maltese English are able to pile on politeness markers in various ways: whilst intonation can be the only politeness marker accompanying elements which are devoid of any such marking, politeness can be further enhanced through the use of echoing of forms such as the SR, as well as by the use of such forms on elements, such as mitigators already marked for politeness.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

By looking at the frequency and intonation of politeness markers as well as the politeness strategies used in the responses collected by means of our spoken DCT, we were able to identify some differences and similarities between Maltese and British English, and assess how and to what extent they influence Maltese English in the expression of politeness. As discussed in the previous section, although it was revealed through our investigation that Maltese has a pronounced influence on Maltese English as far as intonation is concerned, the results regarding the employment of politeness strategies and use of politeness markers across the three datasets were largely inconclusive; and while the former can be explained in terms of the cultural proximity of our participant groups, the latter was quite surprising for us. Our everyday encounters had given us the impression that, like Maltese speakers, Maltese English ones use far fewer politeness markers than the British, and rely to a far greater extent on intonation to express politeness. In retrospect, we believe that our results were affected by the method used to collect our data, since in a DCT, participants are fully aware that they are being recorded, which may on its own render their responses more artificial than they would be in real life situations. In other words, we believe that the very nature of the DCT could have conditioned the participants to provide the answers that they were expected to provide, rather than the ones they would spontaneously use if actually faced with the same situation in their everyday life. This, in combination with the fact that children in Malta

(and the UK) are taught from a very young age to use politeness markers in the presence of an unfamiliar observer, might have had an impact on the results obtained concerning the use of politeness markers.

Bearing these limitations in mind, it seems to us that study should be carried out on a larger scale in order to obtain more reliable results, especially when it comes to answering the question of which language affects the expression of politeness in Maltese English the most. Obviously, a different methodology or DCT set up would need to be adopted in order to obtain spontaneous data that would be closer to the real-life use of politeness markers in the local setting, and further speech act types, like, for example, complaints (see Gallaher 2014) or invitations (see Schelchkova 2013), as well as further linguistic devices that communicate a polite attitude (for an overview of various such devices, see Gazizov 2014), could be included in order to get a better view of the influence patterns overall. Independently of politeness, a further element that emerges from this analysis as a promising avenue for further study is the use of the two ‘stylised’ forms, SF and SR. Whilst a more in-depth analysis of these forms is clearly necessary in order to determine with certainty the status of these entities as distinct categories in the different language varieties, an interesting observation that can already be made at this point is that in both the Maltese and the Maltese English data, the use of the SR is not limited to politeness markers such as mitigators; rather, the SR can be repeated or echoed on subsequent elements, serving in this way to enhance the degree of politeness expressed. Given our present modest aims, however, we hope to have at least helped showcase that the investigation of linguistic politeness in the unique context of Malta is an interesting and worthwhile venture.

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APPENDIX — DCT ELICITATION ITEMS

Requests

1. You're at a fast food restaurant with a close friend. You order your food and the server gives you the bill. You fish for your wallet in your back pocket only to realise that you've forgotten to bring it with you. You now have to ask your friend to lend you some money. You turn to her and say:
2. You are in a professor's office to discuss an assignment. You take out your notebook to take down a few notes. You realise that you've forgotten your pen and decide to ask your professor if she could lend you one of hers. You turn to her and say:
3. You are running late for a job interview. You enter the building and head to the reception to ask for directions to the room you need to go to, only to find out that there is no one there. You see a smart dressed lady walking towards your direction. Even though she seems to be an executive, you decide to ask her for directions. You approach her and say:
4. You've just spent a fortune on your new phone. On a night out, your friend accidentally knocks it out of your hand while drunk and shatters the display. When you meet with him the following day you remind him what he did and ask him to pay for the repair charges. You show him the broken phone and say:
5. You are planning to go to a charity event with your colleagues. You managed to get a discount for being a group of 15 people, but one day before the event, one of your colleagues drops out. Since this is bound to make the price go higher, you decide to ask you boss to join you. You go to his office and say:
6. You really want to go out tonight with your secondary school friends whom you haven't seen for a long time. Your car is at the mechanic's so getting back will be an issue, so you have to ask your sister to lend you her car. You go to her room and say:

Apologies

1. You promised your roommate that you'll do the dishes this time, but, as you're sipping coffee in the kitchen, you realise that you are late for a doctor's appointment and you're not going to manage to do the washing up. Your roommate walks in looks at the pile of dirty dishes and then at you. You look at him and say:
2. You are at a restaurant sitting at a table. You excuse yourself to go to the bathroom. On your way, you bump into a waiter who is carrying a tray full of glasses

and a bottle of wine. Needless to say, the wine is now all over the floor along with the remains of the bottle and the glasses and the waiter is looking at you all flustered. You look at him and say:

3. You have to prepare a presentation with a classmate. You are all set to go meet him but while you are preparing to leave the house, you suddenly start feeling very sick. Making it on time or even in a decent state is out of the question. You call him and say:
4. After a night out, you wake up all hungover and head to the kitchen for some coffee and an aspirin. You suddenly hear an urgent knock on the door. It's your elderly neighbour holding the pieces of a broken car side-view mirror. You remember that he was in the car when you tripped and fell on it the night before. You look at him and say:
5. It's your sister's birthday and you have plans to go to her birthday dinner with the rest of the family. A few hours before the dinner you start to feel really unwell so you opt to stay at home to try and preserve your health for the exam you have the following day. You call your sister and say:
6. It's Christmas season. You work in a toyshop and your job for the day is to give out treats outside the store dressed as an elf. It's almost closing time and you're out of your last pack of sweets. As you turn round to head back in, a tiny, shy 4 year old holding on to his mother's hand asks you for a treat. You kneel down beside him and say:

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ВЫРАЖЕНИЕ ВЕЖЛИВОСТИ В УСЛОВИЯХ БИЛИНГВИЗМА НА ПРИМЕРЕ МАЛЬТИЙСКОГО ВАРИАНТА АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

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Традиционно целью исследований является анализ прагмалингвистических и социалингвистических навыков носителей того или иного языка по сравнению с его носителями. Данная статья нацелена не столько на рассмотрение различий между носителями и неносителями языка, сколько на выявление параллельных навыков выражения вежливости мальтийскими билингвами. Поскольку разновидность английского языка, распространенная на Мальте, часто характеризуется как отличная от британского английского, мы посчитали целесообразным провести небольшой эксперимент в виде анкетирования в области дискурса для определения степени влияния мальтийского и британского английского языков на выражение вежливости в мальтийском варианте английского языка. Объектом исследования послужили речевые акты просьбы и извинения. Для достижения поставленной цели мы сравнили ответы представителей трех различных групп участников эксперимента на предмет использования определенных стратегий вежливости, а также частотности употребления маркеров вежливости, в том числе интонационных. Полученные результаты не позволяют сделать окончательные выводы из-за ограничений, возникающих в процессе выявления дискурсивных практик методом анкетирования. Тем не менее, полученные нами предварительные данные, на наш взгляд, заслуживают дальнейшего изучения и свидетельствуют о сходстве между мальтийским языком и мальтийским английским в области интонационных моделей, сопровождающих маркеры вежливости.

Ключевые слова: мальтийский английский, вежливость, билингвизм, задание по использованию дискурсивных моделей, просьбы, извинения, интонация, ограничение/смягчение

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