

Univerzita Pardubice
Fakulta filozofická
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

**Negative Politeness of British English: Modality as a
Means of Politeness and Indirectness in Business
Communication**

Bakalářská práce

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Andrea Velecká

University of Pardubice
Faculty of Arts and Philosophy
Department of English and American Studies

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Bachelor Paper

Author: Andrea Velecká
Supervisor: Mgr. Petra Huschová

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**Negativní Zdvořilost Britské Angličtiny: Modalita
Jako Prostředek Vyjádření Zdvořilosti a Nepřímosti v
Obchodní Komunikaci**

Bakalářská práce

Autor: Andrea Velecká
Vedoucí: Mgr. Petra Huschová

2007

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Abstract

This bachelor paper is concerned with the use of modal auxiliary verbs to express negative politeness in British business communication. The main aim of this paper is to prove that modality and negative politeness are mutually connected. Another main objective is to identify which modal is used the most frequently to convey negative politeness. The practical part is focused on frequency analysis of selected modal verbs in samples of business communication. This paper should serve as contribution to one of the most difficult aspects of English grammar, that is, modality and modal auxiliaries. Also, it may serve as a resource of linguistic realizations of politeness in English to native speakers of other languages.

Abstrakt

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá užitím pomocných modálních sloves k vyjádření negativní zdvořilosti v britské obchodní komunikaci. Hlavním cílem této práce je dokázat souvislost negativní zdvořilosti a modality. Dalším důležitým cílem je zjistit, který modál je uživateli nejčastěji využíván pro komunikování negativní zdvořilosti. Praktická část práce je zaměřena na frekvenční analýzu vybraných modálních sloves ve vzorcích obchodní komunikace. Tato práce by měla posloužit jako přínos k jednomu z nejobtížnějších jevů anglické gramatiky, tj. modalitě a modálním slovesům. Tato práce může také posloužit jako zdroj lingvistických forem vyjádření zdvořilosti mluvčím, pro něž anglický jazyk není rodným jazykem.

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Introduction

This bachelor paper deals with the question of negative politeness expressed by means of modals verbs in the context of business communication. The main goal is to prove that modal auxiliary verbs are a very frequently utilised means of conveying negative politeness via indirectness. This paper is divided into two parts, a theoretical and a practical part. In the theoretical part, the phenomenon of politeness is approached and basic terminology needed to grasp the matter of negative politeness is explained. Readers will be familiarised with various linguists' opinions on the issues in question. Two major theories, which are applied in the practical part of this paper, are then discussed more in detail. Interactional indirectness is dealt with afterwards, pointing out mutual connection of negative politeness and modality. Modality, as a central linguistic focus of this study is then discussed and modal verbs are presented as a very productive means of communicating modality. Individual modal verbs are further recognised linguistically and in their pragmatic usages.

The practical part of the paper then corresponds to this detailed section; modals are separately approached and analysed on samples from business communication. The analysis is based on the assumption that negative politeness is indirectly conveyed by means of modal verbs. Further significant objective of this paper is to determine which modal is employed in such communication the most. The frequency analysis also aims at ascertainment whether the 'past' forms of modal auxiliaries are employed in a greater degree. Last but not least, this study attempts to clarify what modals express most often.

This paper intends to contribute to proper English language acquisition and have a say to one of the most difficult aspects, that is, modality and the modal auxiliaries. Undoubtedly, there is need to elevate awareness of linguistic realizations of politeness in English to native speakers of other languages, in particular of the negative politeness. Applying this knowledge may be useful not only in common, written or spoken situations, but especially in formal, socially embarrassing, 'imposing' circumstances where tact and respect need to be in the first place.

1. Politeness theory

When investigating negative politeness of British English by means of modality, it is necessary to initiate the basic terminology, basic concepts and approaches on which politeness in general and negative politeness works. This chapter then will provide a brief outline of principal theories that this paper will source from.

People may share different points of view concerning the phenomenon of 'politeness'. Watts distinguishes two ways the term politeness may be looked upon. Either the everyday 'folk' or 'lay' politeness which is perceived as a scale of people's behaviour evaluation in society or so called 'second-order' politeness as one of the key terms in sociolinguistics and pragmatics where the predominant focus lays in linguistic examining of polite language in verbal communication (2003: pp. 4, 10). The latter of these is widely referred to as Politeness Theory and will serve the purpose of being pragmatic background to the linguistic subject matter of this paper. Also, number of linguists attempted to define the term itself. Often, (Watts 2003: pp. 12, 13) the conceptualisation of the term was partly solved by suggesting different notions but politeness, for instance 'tact' by Leech (1983: 107), or 'politic behaviour' by Watts (2003: 170) himself. Consequently, from these definitions or conceptualisations emerged the above mentioned theories of which only the most significant ones shall be presented here. The traditional definition of politeness which is considered to be the first linguistic attempt to define this notion is by Lakoff who perceives it as kind of behaviour that has been "developing by societies in order to reduce friction in personal interaction" (in Wilamová 2005: 10), Leech conceptualize it as 'strategic conflict avoidance' (Watts 2003: 50). Urbanová on the other hand defines politeness as speaker's ability to express respect, considerateness and favour to the addressee (2002: 42). Válková suggests a more elaborated linguistic definition of the politeness:

"Linguistic politeness is a partly routinized and partly creative language manifestation of social values, finding its way of reflection at various levels of language representation (phonic, grammatical, lexical, textual, etc.)." (2004: 38)

In summary, politeness is a respectful verbal behaviour communicated to the addressee in order to avoid conflicts. Thomas has underlined the four major theories of politeness as follows: 'the conversational-maxim' view exemplified by Leech, the 'face-

management' view by Brown and Levinson, the 'conversational-contract' view by Fraser and the fourth, the 'pragmatic scales' view proposed by Spencer-Oatey (for more see 1995: pp. 149, 158). Nevertheless, only Brown and Levinson's model of politeness will figure prominently in this paper together with the other major theory, that is, Leech's. Also, following Watts's 'second-order' or 'linguistic politeness', the focus of this work will be shifted towards a linguistic expression of politeness, that is, towards linguistic structures used in polite communication in English language.

2. Politeness principle

In this part, the significance of Leech's approach to politeness will be clarified and examined more in detail. Leech views the Politeness principle as "maintaining the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place" (1983: 82). From this statement it may be thus seen that Leech based his politeness rules, or 'maxims' analogically on Grice's maxims of conversational co-operation (consult Leech 1983). He introduced his paired maxims of politeness principle:

1. Tact Maxim
a. minimize cost to others / b. maximize benefit to other
2. Generosity Maxim
a. minimize benefit to self / b. maximize cost to self
3. Aprobation Maxim
a. minimize dispraise of other / b. maximize praise of other
4. Modesty Maxim
a. minimize praise of self / b. maximize dispraise of self
5. Agreement Maxim
a. minimize disagreement between self and other / b. maximize agreement between self and other
6. Sympathy Maxim
a. minimize antipathy between self and other / b. maximize sympathy between self and other (Leech 1983: 132)

Also, another prospective politeness maxim is suggested by Leech which is the Phatic Maxim the function of which would then be to 'maintain the conversation' or to 'avert silence' (in Hoffmannová 1997: 101). As it may be drawn from the Leech's maxims above, they all aim at minimizing impoliteness conveyed or at maximizing politeness to 'other'.

3. Face-approach to politeness

Alongside the Leech's theory of politeness, there has been another influential theory on politeness worked out. Brown and Levinson (1987) based their 'face-approach to politeness' on Goffman's assumptions and on the speech act theory (consult, for instance, Wales 2001: 307). Their model of politeness presents the most significant and most developed one and is interpreted as a strategy or series of strategies (see below and in appendix 1) "employed by a speaker to achieve a variety of goals" (Thomas 1995: 158). In other words, they "view politeness as a complex system for softening face-threatening acts" (Watts 2003: 50). To grasp the meaning of these statements, the key notions as 'face' and 'face-threatening act' need to be clarified.

The concept of '**face**' is defined by Brown and Levinson as follows: "the public self image that every member wants to claim for himself" (1987: 61). It could be therefore, understood as one's dignity or self-respect, it is the 'other' referred to above. They further infer the two-fold nature of 'face', that is, positive and negative face. Positive face is, however, beyond the scope of this paper for it represents positive politeness, whereas negative face will dominate in this study greatly. **Negative face**, also referred to as 'power-face' by Hudson (1996: 115), is then according to Brown and Levinson, "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, right to non-distraction, for example to freedom of action and freedom from imposition" (1987: 61). Hudson's view is similar: "it is respect as in 'I respect your right to...', which is a 'negative' agreement not to interfere." He also points out that when negative face is threatened, an offence has been made (1996: 115). It is therefore the formal side of one's dignity which implies freedom from derogating one from his/her rights.

Consequently, '**face-threatening act**' (further referred to as FTA as well) is according to Brown and Levinson such act which "intrinsically threaten face, namely those acts that by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker" (1987: 65). They are for example these illocutionary acts: refusals, requests, orders, reservations, criticisms, suggestions, advice, complaints, threats, letters of reminder, expressions of disapproval or strong emotions (see Brown and Levinson 1987: pp. 65-67 or Urbanová, Oakland 2002: 52). In these, an originator is expected to employ maxims of politeness. Aware of the mutual want for maintaining their face in a particular communication, the person is expected to select the strategy that minimizes

the threat to an acceptable degree, depending on circumstances. The interlocutor has a variety of strategies to choose from (see appendix 1: Possible strategies for performing a FTA).

Brown and Levinson define politeness as “a redressive action that is taken to counterbalance the damaging effect of ‘face threatening acts’ ” (in Wilamová 2005: 14). By **redressive action**, Brown and Levinson mean “the action that gives face to the addressee” so that it is put across that no threat is intended (1987: 69). In other words, it is a remedial action in behaviour or in its linguistic realization that softens the final proposition. The redressive action consists of two forms, depending on which side of the face presented is the threat imposed, and that is, positive and negative politeness.

3.1 Negative politeness

Negative politeness then, is a redressive action addressed to negative face. Brown and Levinson claim that negative politeness is addressee’s “want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded” (1987: 129). Or, it is the above mentioned “avoidance of discord” as Leech views it (1983: 133). Brown and Levinson further state that negative politeness is “characterized by self-effacement, formality and restraint” and when applying negative politeness, FTAs are redressed with “softening mechanisms that give the addressee an ‘out’, a face-saving line of escape, permitting him to feel that his response is not coerced.” (1987: 70). The ‘out’ therefore stands for the fact that the addressee is given possibility not to act as requested because the linguistic formulation allows so. At this point, the significance of negative politeness in British English will be demonstrated.

“In our culture, negative politeness is the most elaborate and the most conventionalised set of linguistic strategies for FTA redress; it is the stuff that fills the etiquette books”. (Brown and Levinson 1987: 130)

As the words of Brown and Levinson prove, negative politeness is of great importance in British English.

A set of ten superstrategies used to convey negative politeness is defined by Brown and Levinson (see appendix 2 for chart):

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Be conventionally indirect | 8. State the FTA as a general rule |
| 2. Question, hedge | 9. Nominalize |
| 3. Be pessimistic | 10. Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting hearer |
| 4. Minimize the imposition | |
| 5. Give deference | |
| 6. Apologize | |
| 7. Impersonalize speaker and hearer: Avoid the pronouns 'I' and 'you' | |

(for more on individual strategies, see Brown and Levinson 1987: 131 or Watts 2003)

3.1.1 Negative politeness and indirectness

The most significant and most evolved superstrategy is strategy 1, that is, 'Be conventionally indirect'. By its nature, it creates a core of negative politeness. '**Conventional indirectness**' is, according to Brown and Levinson, a compromise of dual intentions of speaker: the desire to give hearer an 'out' by being indirect (that is, off record, see appendix 1), and the desire to be direct (that is, on record, see appendix 1). This strategy is based on conventionalization that makes phrases and sentences to "have contextually unambiguous meanings different from their literal meanings" (1987: 70, 132). Levinson clarifies these tensions:

"By deviating from the simple and direct, one can then communicate by conversational implicature that these omnipresent considerations of politeness are being taken into account in performing the relevant speech act" (1983: 274).

Consequently, it may be seen from these statements that politeness and the theory of speech acts are interconnected. Urbanová and Oakland verify this by saying that tendency to mitigate insistency of the proposition, to express oneself politely and considerately and not to lose good reputation is displayed in everyday English conversation by means of indirect speech acts (2002: 16). Brown and Levinson add that "indirect speech acts are certainly the most significant form of conventional indirectness" and that they function as "hedges on illocutionary force" (1987: 132). Now, a term 'hedge' needs to be explained for it will figure in this paper prominently. A '**hedge**' is, in words of Brown and Levinson, "a particle, a word, or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or noun phrase in a set" (1987: 273) or from quite different point of view, "a linguistic expression that enables the speaker to avoid being too direct in her/his utterance" (Watts 2003: 274). Notions '**illocutionary force**'

and speech act theory have been mentioned as well. It may be well enough demonstrated on a simple example presented by sentence *Could you tell me the time please?* From the syntactic point of view, it has a structure of question (that is, locution) but from the semantic viewpoint, it has illocutionary force of polite request (see, for instance, Urbanová and Oakland 2002: 23). It may be thus observed that conventional indirectness has been employed in this sentence for the question has been asked indirectly and not in the form of imperative which is structure of direct request. Nevertheless, it is of no doubt that the speaker was indeed requesting. In this manner, a speaker is given a possible ‘out’ so that he may offer a negative reply. As it is proved by the example above, Swan infers that “a common way of making requests less direct is by putting them in the form of *yes/no* questions” (1995: 206, 507, 508). Urbanová and Oakland claim that requests based on model sentence *Would/Will/Could/Can you do something for me?* are considered grammaticalized and idiomatic in current English as they lost its original interrogative character. They may also be denominated as “speech act idioms” (2002: 23, consult also Palmer 1990: 191, 192).

However, one cannot make generalisation that an utterance is strictly either polite or impolite because politeness is related to context. There exists a continuum or degree of politeness which is referred to in linguistics as a ‘scale of politeness’ (see appendix 1). It demonstrates that multiple hedged directive “*There wouldn’t I suppose be any chance of your being able to lend me your car for just a few minutes, would there?*” rates higher in the scale of indirect expression of speech acts than directive “*Lend me your car*” on presupposition that speaker is trying to convey maximally negatively polite order (Brown and Levinson 1987: pp. 142-3). Leech (in Urbanová and Oakland 2002: 23) hence infers the rule: “The more words you use, the more polite you are”.

As it may be seen from the statements above, and will be discussed in greater detail below, modal auxiliaries are a vital means of conveying negative politeness predominantly by virtue of conventionalised indirectness but other substrategies of negative politeness as well.

4. Modality

Having foreshadowed the issues concerning the negative politeness previously, the aim of this chapter is pointed at delimitating modality and modal verbs in terms of tentative, polite and considerate verbal behaviour.

First of all, it is necessary to look at the notion of modality itself and how it is approached by various grammarians. According to Tárnyiková, modality can be overallly characterised as non-obligatory linguistically relevant semantic category which reflects relationship or attitude of the originator of the utterance to the potential realization or reality of the utterance content (1985: 9, 12). Indeed, Palmer views modality as “concerned with the status of the proposition that describes the event” (2001: 1) or more simply, grasping modality as “concerned with the ‘opinion’ and the ‘attitude’ of the speaker” (Lyon in Palmer 1990: 2). In Swan’s words they “add a certain kinds of meaning connected with certainty or with obligation and freedom to act” (1995: 333). On the other hand, Quirk states that “modality may be defined as the manner in which the meaning of a clause is qualified so as to reflect the speaker’s judgment of the likelihood of the proposition it expresses being true” (1985: 219). To sum up, modality expresses the attitude to what has been said or written, to the facts in the utterance and thus modifies these facts. Since it conveys an additional meaning, it is regarded a vital part of interpersonal communication.

Accordingly, linguistic modality may be indicated in the proposition by a choice of language means. As Tárnyiková (1985: 13) remarks, these means are denoted as ‘modal modifiers’. These include for example some adjectives (‘possible’, ‘certain’, ‘sure’), adverbs like ‘possibly’, ‘certainly’, nominalised expressions ‘necessity’, ‘possibility’, ‘certainty’ or also some verbs may convey modality as Kubrychtová (2001: 109) cites, for example, ‘seem’, ‘appear’. In this framework, both Tárnyiková (1985: 13) and Dušková (1988: 185-6) however conclude that in particular and above all, modal verbs are used to convey modality in English unlike it is in Czech where the other, above mentioned means have corresponding meanings. Consequently, this paper will opt for leaving modal modifiers beyond the scope of this paper and dedicate the core of this work to modal auxiliaries only.

4.1 Deontic and epistemic modality

Before moving on to the modal verbs themselves, it is necessary to point out that there are many ways in which modality is seen as such. Briefly, some notions concerning different approaches of modality in the English language shall be mentioned. The traditional distinction is between **deontic** and **epistemic** modality, although sometimes also dynamic modality is distinguished along them, or as a subclass of deontic modality (see Palmer 2001: 8). Different linguists give different notions to the above mentioned two kinds of modality; for instance, Quirk and others differentiate deontic modality and epistemic modality as **intrinsic** and **extrinsic** modality and mention also other widespread terminologies, such as root modality or **modulation** for deontic and **modality** for epistemic modality (1985: 219, 220). For a more comprehensive study of modality in English consult, for instance, Tárnyiková 1985. Nevertheless, as Palmer (1990: 2) as well as other linguists generally agree, the “two most semantically fundamental kinds of modality are **epistemic** and **deontic** modality” therefore also this paper shall consider the traditional distinction.

Accordingly, there are two types of meanings ascribed to modal verbs, the former denoting deontic modality, the latter epistemic modality:

- (i) Those such as ‘permission’, ‘obligation’, and ‘volition’ which involve some kind of intrinsic human control over events and
- (ii) those such as ‘possibility’, ‘necessity’, and ‘prediction’, which typically involve human judgment of what is or is not likely to happen (Quirk and others 1985: 219).

In other words, there are two basic kinds of modalities distinguished, deontic and epistemic. Deontic modality is concerned with the degree of obligation, whereas epistemic modality expresses the degree of the possibility.

Can, may, will, could, might, would, should express both deontic and epistemic modality. On the other hand, *shall* is used to express deontic modality only (Dušková 1988: 186, Palmer 2001: pp. 9, 10). This dual behaviour of the former mentioned modals can be exemplified below using *may*:

*The others were turned down but
John may come tomorrow.*

*Well, John has been asking me about this
event so I suppose that
John may come tomorrow.*

Here, it represents deontic modality because it has the meaning of permission. It may be thus paraphrased as follows: *John is allowed to come tomorrow.*

In this case, it stands for epistemic modality for it has the meaning of possibility. It is paraphrasable by: *It is possible that John will come tomorrow.*

To conclude, it should be noted that although the final clauses in the sentences are in both examples identical, there exists a vital distinction between these two. The proper meaning cannot, however, be identified without the preceding clauses containing further information needed. Hence, context is considered a significant factor interacting with meaning and modality. In this piece of work it will therefore be the matter influencing the analysis where the situation and immediate context is what is aimed at while determining the reasons for using a particular modal.

5. Modal auxiliaries

Having already approached the issue of modality and significance of modal verbs, these should be looked at closer at this stage. In this chapter, it will be made clear how modals belong to the system of verbs and which ones indeed constitute the group. As Tárnyiková (1985: 14) puts it, the status of modals is not uniformly conceived. Quirk and others also express their unfitted character by calling them as “verbs whose status is in some degree intermediate between auxiliaries and main verbs” (1985: 136, for more information on this see also p. 147). Most linguists (see, for example Dušková, 1988, Tárnyiková 1985, Palmer 1990: 3, Quirk and others 1985: 120) agree, however, that they are distinguished as a sublevel of auxiliaries (inferred **secondary auxiliaries** then by Tárnyiková 1985: 14), that is, they are placed among the auxiliary verbs together with the ‘primary’ (also referred to as ‘**helping**’ **auxiliaries** by Quirk and others 1985: 120) *be* and *have* and *do*; or they are considered to form a special set of verbs. Nevertheless, unlike auxiliaries, they convey also some meaning (though only

together with full verb), apart from grammatical function, which on the contrary brings them closer to lexical verbs (see for instance, Alexander 1988: 210 or Tárnyiková 1985: 182).

It has been stated that the modal auxiliaries are those in the centre of attention of this paper. First, however, the modal auxiliaries need to be outlined and itemized. As it has been already mentioned above, there still is an inconsistency in the linguistic circles concerning the modality. This is also true about modal listing: many linguists enumerate different modals in setting the core. Most of them, nevertheless, agree on these: *can*, *may*, *will*, *shall* with their morphological past forms, *must* and *ought to*, some also tend to consider *need*, *dare* and *used to* as their constituents, though marginal. Other often list, for example like Palmer (1990: 4, 5 or 2001: 100) does, also *would rather* and *had better*, *be to* and so on (for a clearer table of modals see, for instance, Quirk and others 1985: 137). This only proves the fact that in general the border in modality and when establishing a group of modal verbs is very unclear as not all modals share the same characteristics as it is summarized below.

Quirk calls them ‘central modals’ and itemizes them as follows: *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *shall*, *should*, *will*, *would*, *must* (1985: 137). This paper will be concerned with Quirk’s conception of central modals, with the exception of *must* which is not relevant to the subject matter of this paper.

5.1 Characteristics of the modals

Since central modal auxiliaries share some criteria with auxiliaries as well as they possess special formal linguistic features of their own, ranging from morphological - syntactic to functionally semantic and pragmatic aspects (see Tárnyiková 1985 or Dušková 1988) they are regarded here as a special category of auxiliary verbs. However, there is not unified set of characteristics of the modal verbs for different linguists itemize different set of features and thus only the common ones shall be mentioned here.

According to Palmer, the above mentioned criteria which are shared with the larger group of auxiliary verbs were first given notion by Huddleston ‘the NICE properties’ - letters of which stand for individual characteristic grammatical features, that is **negation** (*I cannot swim*), **inversion** (*Can I swim?*), ‘**code**’ which Quirk and

others call ‘operator in reduced clause’, that is, repetition of the verb in the whole proposition and it is used in elliptical clauses and question tags (*I can swim so can she*). The last letter is standing for ‘**emphatic affirmation**’ or ‘emphatic positive’ denoted by Quirk and others; affirmative is formed by a verb phrase of a modal preceding the infinitive without *to* of the main lexical verb: *I can swim* (2001: 100, Quirk and others 1985: 137). From these properties, the statement is drawn as follows:

- (i) In these formulas, the do-operator is excluded and modal verbs use operator of their own, therefore they are ‘self-operators’: *Can you swim?* Not **Do you can swim?*

Further, the modal verbs have significant limitation regarding grammatical categories. They are denoted as defective verbs, non-autonomous and dependent (see, for example, Tárnyiková 1985 or Alexander 1988). A defective conjugation is typical of them; this limitation in the tense system is resolved so that the particular modals are substituted with periphrastic constructions. Here is the overall characterization of the modal auxiliaries constituting their special features regarding only those modal verbs that are central to scope of this paper (see above):

- (ii) Secondly, they have no –s forms for their third person singular: *He may know the clue*. Not **He mays* (see, for instance, Quirk 1985 or Alexander 1988: 208-210).
- (iii) Modals are finite verbs therefore they have no non-finite forms: for instance, **to can*, **canned* or **canning*. They are also unique in sense that they are bare infinitives (Quirk 1985, Tárnyiková 1985: pp. 16-19).
- (iv) Importantly, they have no imperatives as exemplified in: **Can be here!* because of their semantic function in the sentence (Dušková 1988).
- (v) Concerning modals central to this paper, morphologically they all have past tense forms (*can/could*, *shall/should*, *may/might*, *will/would*). However, from those forms, only *could* and *would* are used to refer to past time (though all may occur in reported speech); this is called abnormal time reference. Past then, is expressed by a modal verb auxiliary followed by a pattern of *have + past participle*: *You should have told me you were coming*. (see Tárnyiková 1985, Swan 1995, Quirk and others 1985, Dušková 1988)

- (vi) Contracted forms *shan't* is only used in British English, *mayn't* is not used at all nowadays. There are no reduced realizations, except for *will* and *would* ('ll, 'd) of affirmatives with apostrophe in written form: **I'n* although in spoken language they are reduced commonly (Tárnyiková 1985, Swan 1995, Palmer 1990).
- (vii) They do not co-occur, thus no **He may will come* sentence can be formed. This is not, however, true of the simultaneous co-occurrence of the deontic and epistemic modals in the prediction with suitable paraphrase: *He may not be able to arrange it.* (Dušková 1988: 186)

As it has been stated above, these are only attributes common to all modals in question. Where there are some disputes in overall characteristics, this will be dealt with separately in sections of individual modals.

5. 2 Meanings and usage of modal auxiliaries

In this section, the individual modals will be discussed in detail concerning their use in terms of tentativeness, indirectness and negative politeness. Therefore, all uses of modal auxiliaries in question will not be included as these are beyond the scope of this paper.

5. 2. 1 May and might

This pair of morphologically related modal auxiliaries implies several different modal meanings, including both epistemic and deontic modality.

Both of these modals are used when expressing a tentative opinion or admitting a certain degree of possibility, that is to say, whenever what Quirk denotes **tentative possibility** is conveyed. It may carry the 'concessive force' (Quirk and others 1985: pp. 224, 233) which stands for admitting the possibility stated in the proposition:

Of course, I may/might be wrong.

This may along the presence also refer to future. Then this future possibility reads as a prospect idea or wish as Tárnyiková (1985: 39) points out:

(Solicited application) ...I hope I may be granted an interview, when I can explain my qualifications more fully. (B 86)

May is paraphrased in this sense by *it is possible* followed by *that*-clause, or by adverbs *perhaps* or *possibly* (Quirk and others 1985: pp. 223 or Prášek 2005: 9-10) which may co-occur with the modals in question as well. Significantly, it should be noticed that epistemic *may* is used only in statements and not in the questions whereas *might* can be used in both (Dušková 1988: 191, 192 and Tárnyiková 1985: 37). According to Palmer, the ‘past tense form’ *might* is normally used also in **making** ‘quite positive’ **suggestions**:

You might try nagging the Abbey National.

You might have told me.

As it can be seen from the latter example, there is also **conditionality** clearly present in this unfulfilled suggestion into past, referring to past hypothetical events that could have taken place (2001: 74). However, there has to be a further comment made on the two forms, *may/might*. These forms do not differ only in the usage as mentioned above; as Quirk and others remark, “*might* can be used as a somewhat more tentative alternative to *may* and indeed is often preferred to *may* as a modal of epistemic possibility” (1985: 223). Swan indeed observes that *might* is often used as a less definite or more hesitant form of *may*, suggesting a smaller chance – it is used when people think something is possible but not very likely. *May* implies according to him perhaps a 50% chance, whereas *might* approximately 30% (Swan 1995: 323). Tárnyiková indeed denotes *might* as imaginative, hypothetical and less probable than *may* and adds that *might* expressing possibility is termed by some linguists as doubted possibility of *might* (1985: 41, 42) because it is often used in not real, hypothetical situations. Yet, Quirk and others argue that nowadays there is a tendency for *may* and *might* in their tentative or hypothetical possibility uses to become perceived with diminishing difference among speakers (1985: 233, 234, see also Dušková 1988: 193).

The deontic meaning is represented by *may/might* in **tentative permission** in polite requests and questions. As a permission auxiliary, *may* is more formal and less common than *can*, which (except in fixed phrases as *if I may*) can be substituted for it. As it can be seen from the examples below, *may is* used in first person questions (compare with *can/could* in next section; see also Dušková 1988: pp. 188, 191) and constitutes a conventionalised form of **polite request** (Prášek 2005: 14). These polite questions are often ended by particle “please” which is normally used in imperatives. In

this way, the speaker indirectly motions the listener to accord the request stated (Prášek 2005: 15):

May I finish, please?

May I ask whether you are using the typewriter?

Might is a very formal expression, it is used as somewhat more tentative, and therefore polite variant of *may* when asking permission. It is mostly used in indirect interrogative structures in polite requests as:

I wonder whether I might have a word with you.

However, (Quirk 1985: 224) *might* is not very common in questions for it does not sound natural and is considered obsolescent in this usage. Prášek on the other hand argues that in first person question it is also usable as polite request, but expressing greater diffidence of the speaker (2005: 18):

Might I suggest that we continue our discussion after lunch?

5. 2. 2 Can and could

Can and *could* are also used to convey either epistemic and deontic modality. Firstly, **tentative possibility** of epistemic modality will be discussed. *Could* is often utilised when expressing a **tentative inference**. As Quirk and others point out, “*could* is also used to imply some kind of inference, although the present tense form *can* is not used in a similar sense.” Also described as ‘noncommitted necessity’ by Quirk (1985: 227), labelling with this term suggests that the originator of the utterance is not sure whether his statement is true, but having some evidence and/or beliefs, tentatively concludes that it is.

Mary could be at school now.

There could be something wrong with the light switch.

As it can be seen from the examples, the inference may be denominated by a more common word ‘deduction’ or the ‘opinion’ based on oneself’s personal beliefs. According to Swan or Palmer (1995: 109; 2001: 204), it is used for **making suggestions** where again, *could* is only used in this case:

You could ask your father.

Can/could are often employed in **polite directives** and **requests** (Swan 1995: 109) where they suggest a course of action to the addressee (Quirk 1985: 233). The instruction is made more polite by using *could*:

You could help me move these chairs.

You could answer these letters for me.

Quirk further states importantly that when referring to the future, its future or ‘unreal’ meaning stands for hypothetical situation: *Not even a professional could do better than that*. He points out that “this hypothetical use of past modals has become adapted to express tentativeness” (Quirk 1985: 233) *Can* and *could* are often used as a polite way of asking people to do things. By turning the statement (where only *could* is possible in terms of politeness) into a question, the speaker changes the suggestion into a rather polite request: *Can/could you (please) check these figures?*

Can and *could* is also used when **offering** to do things for people (Swan 1995: 109) or when **showing willingness**. It has the form of asking permission to act in a way that is beneficial for the person addressed (Tárnyiková 1985: 30) and not for the person inquiring which is discussed below.

Can I do something for you?

In this sense, *can* is paraphrasable by *it is possible* followed by *to*-clause (Quirk 1985). *Can/could* are also possible to express deontic modality in that they may stand for **tentative permission** in polite requests:

Can we borrow these books from the library?

Could I see your driving license?

Quirk and others confirm that in this sense, *can/could* is less formal than *may* (or *might*), which has been favoured by prescriptive tradition. It is possible to paraphrase *can* in the sense of permission by *be allowed to* (1985: 221, 222). Again, ‘past form’ *could* is generally considered to be more polite and formal or less definite than *can* (Swan 1985: pp. 108, 109, 326). Furthermore, Dušková complements that comparing to *may/might* usage, *can/could* are more polite when they are in the second and third persons in statements, that is, giving a ‘softer’ form of permission (1988: 188-189).

5. 2. 3 Will and would

This pair of modals constitutes a rather problematic area as regards the polite and tentative usages because *will + verb* is mainly used as one of the verbs indicating the future in English (Leech 1991: 542). Therefore, specification of the meaning should be based solely on the context provided.

Therefore, where context proves this, *will* or *would* may express **tentative** volition or **willingness** (Quirk and others 1985: 229). This deontic meaning is common in **requests** or **directives** (Leech 1991: 543) in interrogative structure where it is used with the second person as a subject (see for instance, Dušková 1988: 248, 200-1). In these, the sense of willingness is often expressed less directly, thus more softly and politely by the use of “the past tense form” *would* (Quirk and others 1985: 229; Swan 1995: 515, 516, 519):

Will you help me to address these letters?

Would you lend me a dollar?

Also, it is frequent when showing willingness or volition, in **offers** and **promises** where it is used with the subject in the first person (Leech 1991: 397):

I'll do it, if you like.

In this case, *will* is not a future auxiliary; it means ‘be willing to’ do something (Leech 1991: 543). As mentioned above, these examples are, however difficult to determine as solely **willingness** because they are used in the first person and along the indication of future, they may indicate also intention, or decision at the moment of speaking (Alexander 1988: 182):

(After request)...Oh, just a moment. I'll see if he's in. I'll put you through. (J, A 54)

Because of these overlapping and uncertain meanings, these examples shall be opt out from the analysis in the practical part.

As Dušková points out, *will/would* are useful when making arrangements (1988: 248) and *would* is again used here more tentatively and indirectly:

Would three o'clock suit you? That'd be fine.

The epistemic modality is showed in the specific employment of *would* as a marker of degree of possibility in sentences where **tentative inference** or opinion is conveyed (Dušková 1988: 202):

That would be Miss Parker, I expect.

According to Swan, *will/would* may be used as a form of ‘**distancing**’ by means of language from the reality, displacing it either into the future or into the past. *Will* may be used to mitigate instructions and orders:

That will be 1.65 pounds, please. (Swan 1995: 159).

When displacing into past, the situation is as Swan points out, made ‘unreal’ or less probable using *would*. *Would* is further commonly used before verbs of saying and thinking so that a statement sounds more indirect (Swan 1995: 247, 160), or with *I hope* when it expresses hopes (Alexander 1988: 179):

I thought it would be nice to have a picnic.

...We hope that in view of our long and pleasant business relations you will see your way to granting us this favour. (B 74)

Leech adds that it is also common when giving tentative **advice**:

I'd advise you to see a doctor. (1975: 148)

Swan (1995: 159-160, 246-247) or Dušková (1988: 246-8, 639, 641) explain that there is also distinguished so called hypothetical or **conditional** ‘mixed verb’ *should/would* which is generally used as a past, or less definite form of *shall/will*. For more on this concerning *should*, see next section. Also denominated as a ‘conditional auxiliary’, it functions in the sentence in a way that it expresses a conditioned or hypothetical event dependant on the condition. This could be either explicitly comprised there in the stated condition, or implied in the sentence. Again, the **conditionality** thus involves a great deal of context or the particular situation. It is common in **requests** and **offers**:

I would be grateful for an early reply.

I would give you a hand.

Conditional in combination with *if*: **If** + **will/would** is grammatically correct if it signifies a polite intention. This structure is used in very **polite requests** and **directives** (Alexander 1988: 283):

If you will/would come this way, madam.

Would can be used to make a request even more polite because it is used hypothetically:

We would appreciate it if you would be so kind as to let us have your cheque by return.

There is a construction **would(not) +mind** used for asking permission or when making a polite request:

Would you mind if I opened a window/my opening a window?

I wouldn't mind a drink, if you have one. (Leech 1975: 143, 147)

5. 2. 4 Shall and should

Usage of *shall* and *should* is differentiated into such extent that these forms can be understood as two separate semantic units (Dušková 1988: 186). Palmer adds that *should* never functions as a past form (1990: 43). It may be because of what Palmer says (2001: 204): “formally *should* is the past tense form of *shall*, but it expresses tentative epistemic necessity (deductive) and so is notionally one of the modal-past forms of *must*”. *Shall* is predominantly used as a future modal alternative to *will* in the first persons and in formal language expressing obligation or instruction, thus, with these uses, *shall* belongs among future modals that are difficult to distinguish from other uses (see above). Alexander claims that *shall* is distinguishable from *will* because “*shall* does not contract into ‘ll.” (1988: 178)

One of the main uses is **tentative inference** or probability of *should*:

The mountains should be visible from here. (Quirk 1985: 227)

Quirk (1985: 227) interestingly points out that *should* in this sense implies that the information stated is desirable:

There should be another upturn in sales shortly.

Dušková refers that *should* also appears after evaluating expressions as *it is strange, unfortunate...* or questions *is it possible?,...* Contrastingly to indicative, the information in this formulation is conveyed more **tentatively**, or even as a **theoretical possibility**, referring both to presence and past:

I am surprised that you should take this view. (1988: 197)

However, Palmer (2001: 73, 74), Swan (1995: 249) or Dušková (1988: 641) notice that with *should*, especially in the **if**-clause, the speaker may often admit that there is possibility that the event in question is unlikely, or possible not to take place and thus tentatively refer to future:

If you should run into Peter, tell him he owes me a letter.

Tentative volition of *should* (in polite requests and offers):

After first person (I and we), *should* is also used in British English (when expressing tentative volition) as a variant of mixed ‘conditional auxiliary’ verb *would/should* with the same meaning as *would* in its tentative use:

I should be most grateful if you would spare me a few minutes

I should be glad if someone would hold the door open.

Both *shall* and *should* have also meaning of **tentative obligation** or necessity Alexander (1988: 207) informs that *should* is used in this sense when relating mainly to “escapable obligation or duty” (1988: 207):

You should try to work harder.

What time shall we come and see you?

It is could be, therefore, referred to as a softer form of recommendation In this sense, *should* appears to be a more tentative past tense equivalent of *shall* in offers, suggestions or when asking for instructions and decisions. In Prášek’s words, ..., *shall I/we?* signifies a request for consent and corresponds to Czech question tag (... , *ano?*) (2005: 55): *(After small talk) ...Right, let’s get down to business, shall we? (J, A 34)*

Should I type these letters for you?

According to Prášek, in the second and third persons *shall* expresses modal meanings such as making an assurance or promise. In the first person it is firstly a marker of future tense, however, a modal meaning of promise may be ascribed to *shall* in these as well (2005: 53).

You may be assured that we shall clear the balance outstanding by the end of May. (B 75)

6. Analysis

6. 1 Administrative style and style of business communication

Before moving to the analysis itself, some characteristics of business communication should be mentioned and interconnection of this register with modals should be clarified.

When applying functional stylistics, so called business or commercial style falls into the administrative style according to Knittlová, together with style of legal documents, language of diplomacy and directive style of written instructions. Administrative style is style of official documents, therefore it may be referred to as “official style” (Mistrík in Knittlová 1977: 15) as well. As the main communicative function of this style is directive function, so is business correspondence aimed at directing, or addressing, but on the individual base according to Knittlová. Communicative aims are, therefore, to reach accordance or successful co-operation between two parties, to establish credibility, to inform or persuade. She further underlines the main and typical features: it is factual and explicit; clarity, lucidity and briefness are very characteristic for commercial correspondence (Knittlová 1977: 15). Hausenblas further points out that it is stereotypical in sense that set expressions and formulae are used (in Knittlová 1977: 16). This fact is explained by Knittlová claiming that there is a custom practice in business correspondence to use for example, abbreviations or fixed phraseology that help to make communication faster and more explicit between the writer and the addressee (1977: 25). In view of this, Thomas formulates that “register is a description of the linguistic forms which generally occur in a particular situation” (1977: 154). Accordingly, this subfield of administrative style may be referred to as register of business communication; it is represented mostly by commercial correspondence which includes business letters, applications, inquiries, offers, orders, invoices, claims and complaints, dunning letters and so on.

This paper will distinguish two types of business communication differing in their features when used. There is, on one hand, a need to be brief, to the point and specific, to present facts precisely and accurately in such communicative functions as orders, for instance, are. On the other hand, there are some pieces of information needed to be conveyed where there is a face threatening acts imposing on the negative face of

the customer or the business partner implied. These could be, for example, very frequent requests or so called “dunning letters”. These ones are, on the contrary to the previous letters, very different in usage of the language. A bigger wordiness is typical of them, as well as lengthiness, because they have to be more indirect and hedged in their linguistic realizations. Naturally, they have to be more explaining and justifying than the preceding type of business communication but at the same time, they should maintain positive and cooperating tone through emphasising positives (see analysis) for example. It is therefore understandable, that they should be written in a lot more tactful, polite and respectful language, when conveying a very unpleasant matter or requesting diffidently. These are written or said with a great care, depending on the weightiness of the negative impact and imposition. They should be perfect in their wording to reach the goal aspired. Since business managers are dealing with the whole process of buying or selling a product, they often encounter various unpleasant commercial situations: a product ordered has not been delivered or it has, but damaged, or the receiver found themselves in a bad financial situation and so on. Thus, they should for example, accomplish the payment of the money debt without offending the debtor. Consequently, this paper will deal with the latter group of business communication as it is exactly what represents negative politeness this paper investigates.

6.2 Analysis of modal auxiliaries in business communication

As Thomas emphasises, a lot has been written on the subject of politeness as the sub-discipline within pragmatics, however, comparatively little of these were based on empirical research executed (Thomas 1995: 149). Therefore, I would like to contribute to the field of politeness theory and investigate how politeness works in real interaction.

This practical part will focus on frequency analysis of the modals in question in the negatively polite business communication. Samples analysed are taken from the three sources, Babáková 1999 and Dynda, Dyndová 1995 are both written business correspondence, whereas the third publication; Jones, Alexander 2000 contains mostly spoken English. Text types included in my analysis are therefore interviews, letters or phone calls. Modals have, as it has been already discussed before, numerous meanings or sometimes only ‘colourings’. To reach the certainty when determining the proper

meaning of the modal auxiliary in question, an immediate context is often significant; otherwise it would be hardly possible to determine the correct meaning. Often, context helps to specify the meaning because the written utterance provides other features of tentativeness or softening devices as hedges, polite formulae or even pauses and gap fillers (marked in italics), which all help investigating in the analysis. Where it is considered of some significance, then the pieces of information concerning the context are provided in the brackets. By context, also the relationship between the people involved in communication is meant. However, it greatly depends on the intonation as well. This analysis has got several aims. Its main objectives are to *prove that negative politeness links with modality and indirectness* and to *detect which modal(s) is/are used the most frequently to convey this*. Secondary aims are to prove the facts stated in the theoretical part; *to verify that morphologically 'past' forms of modals are employed in greater degree than their 'present' counterparts*. Also, this paper aims at *ascertainment of communicative functions that modals express*.

The frequency analysis is based on 224 samples of business communication where modals *may, might, can, could, will, would, shall* and *should* has been detected in their polite, indirect or tentative use. The corpus data is attached in the Appendix.

6. 2. 1 May

The modal auxiliary *may* represents the fourth most used modal in my corpus data, amounting to 27 samples which are approximately 12% of all modals analysed (224 samples). I would like to point at the fact that *may* constitutes a rather problematic area regarding its meaning, as it has been already discussed above. Having tentative subtext of uncertainty, it may result in several interpretations. This sentence, for example, may be interpreted as a suggestion, because it is a part of the solicited application and the person wants to be reached, or, it may be considered more simply as tentative possibility that is communicated by the author.

(Solicited application) ...You may reach me by calling (312) 386-1920 at any time after 6 p.m. or by writing to the address given above. (B 85)

Nevertheless, I have divided communicative uses of *may* into requests, separate category of which is asking for permission, tentative possibility and inference meanings.

All **requests** communicated by means of *may* amount to 11 modals and they constitute 40.7% of the whole, hereby request signifies a greatest use of *may*. However, it has been used as a means of expressing request in only 8.4% from all requests (see Figure 4 in Appendix). The content of the proposition asks the party addressed to act somehow by means of using a modal and functions as a request or positive suggestion. For instance, it aims at reminding an unpaying customer of their responsibilities, though in very polite language. Using a structure of verbal asking for permission but without a question mark, puts more emphasis on the urgency of the utterance and at the same time puts the originator into position of the one who should pay their partner a negative face. Tact maxim is observed in these. This is a very useful phrase frequently occurring in the business correspondence.

(Asking for representation) May we ask you for assistance while looking for a suitable representative for our range of fabrics. (D 9)

May we take this opportunity to remind you that our invoice of 26 January for £ 15,610.35 is still unpaid. (B 72)

‘Pure’ **asking for permission** as a form of request appeared in 4 samples only, thus in 14.8 % of *may*. In these utterances, deontic modality is exemplified as a form of very polite requesting for permission. It could be, therefore paraphrasable by *Am I allowed to (do something)?* Widespread conventionalised phrase formula *May I (do something)?* is used in these in the first person only (see theoretical part on *may/might*) and thus constitutes a more polite way of asking a permission than, for example, with the help of *can*. It should be noted as well that because of the unclear boundaries of the modals in general, these samples could be also fitted into the category below on the condition that it requires some further action of the addressee.

Um, by the way, may I use your phone to book a table...er...for lunch? (J, A 50)
(Phone call) May I speak with Tina Castle in marketing, *please?* (J, A 115)

Tentative possibility of *may* has been found in 10 out of all 27 samples of business communication, which is 37 %. The speaker communicates information implying **tentative possibility** because the action taken or the information itself may signify a certain face-threatening act or imposition on the addressee when communicating unfavourable circumstances to him/her. Naturally, this involves not a mere stating the fact, but some hedging device also needs to be employed there. Modal verb *may* used here, attenuates the effect of the final utterance. These examples may,

however, pertain to a more specific category below, depending on the interpretation. The proper one is not always clear without the knowledge of the real attitude of the author of the proposition to the situation or without the precise context.

Please let us know how soon we may expect this shipment to arrive in England. (B 60)

Kindly include any pertinent literature that may be available. (B 17)

It is also possible to express **future tentative possibility** by means of utilizing *may* that refers to future. It occurs in purpose clauses as exemplified below, after *in order that* and *so that*.

We do not know which invoice you are paying, and *should appreciate if you would* send us the invoice number and date *in order that* we may credit your account properly. (B 56)

(Refusing the documents) *Will you please* inform the bank *so that* we may take over the documents and the shipment without further delay. (D 349)

May is also employed when conveying future **wish** represented by only three samples. In this, an originator expresses a tentative hope into future by using a word that underlines this hope, that is *may*, the formula being *hope + may + present infinitive*. This is paraphrasable by *We hope it is possible in the future that we (do business with you)*. There are several negatively polite strategies used (number 5 and 10): ‘Give deference’ or ‘Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting hearer’. Deference is presented via vocabulary that the author uses, “*have an opportunity*”, “*be granted*”, by putting oneself into the lower, subordinate position and maximizing positiveness of the relationship (Sympathy, Agreement maxims; see theoretical part) between the two parts in the tentative wish concerning the future co-operation. Consequently, these may also represent communicative functions of offer and positive suggestion. Also, they refer to the possible future happenings and in the context of application, these could be analysed as a prospect wish (see theoretical part on *may*) with the communicative function of request.

(Letter of appreciation) I *hope* that I may soon have an opportunity to return your kindness. (B 81)

(Solicited application) ...I *hope* I may be granted an interview, when I can explain my qualifications more fully. (B 86)

Or, *may* is utilized when giving an **assurance**:

You may *be assured* that we *shall* clear the balance outstanding by the end of May. (B 75)

(Asking for offers) We regret that we could not verify his statement but we feel that if you meet him half way and offer him a discount of 3 % you may *be sure* to get the order. (D 43)

May is regularly used as a marker of **tentative inference**. This is expressed by 6 examples of *may* in my corpus data, and represents thus 22.2 % of the whole '*may*' data. As it was clarified in the theoretical part, the inference is distinguished when the speaker draws a possibility conclusion based on his/her assumptions as it is illustrated by samples below. The same is done when tentative inference is used as a polite way of complaining in a way that some possible source of the problem is taken into account which is addressed to the face of the business partner. This is however, intrinsically threatening act so the interlocutor is mitigating an event by making the statement modalised. A linguistic realization of this is done in such way that he/she creates the possibility for the statement not being true by making the content of it unsure with the help of *may*. This should be used only when blame is justified and by softening the event, of course, the business partner's negative face is saved. From the viewpoint of pragmatics, it is apparent that the Aprobation maxim is followed and also Sympathy and Agreement maxims are observed.

...*Oh, I'm afraid* Mrs Cox is away. She has the flu and she may not be back in the office till Monday. (J, A 54)

Well, I think there may have been *some...a* misunderstanding about our last order. ... We've just started unloading the truck and the quantity of the goods doesn't *appear* to be Class A1, which is what we ordered. (J, A 115)

6. 2. 2 Might

A modal auxiliary *might* was detected as the least used modal according to the outcomes of my frequency analysis. With its 11 uses, it represents mere 4.9 % of the whole corpus.

Tentative or hypothetical **possibility** is presented by most samples, that is in 4 propositions (36.4 % of *might*; 17.4 % of tentative possibility). It is used when communicating oneself's opinion or when evaluating, turning the situation into the theoretical possibility and thus allowing the freedom from imposition to the addressee. Care is taken not to flout Agreement maxim.

(Applicant speaking) I might be able to *possibly* travel and use my languages...(J, A 179)

(When a product is to be demonstrated) ...*I'd like to* discuss the applications you might have for our equipment. (J, A 46)

Asking permission has been present with its only one sample. It stands for a very polite indirect statement-like **request**. Here, the originator of the letter conveys hedged illocutionary force to the recipient, putting forward the action that is demanded to be taken by the recipient. There is also past tense distancing involved and employs a very polite formula *I wondered*:

(To the superior) ...*I wondered if* I might have next Friday off. (J, A 33)

By 4 modals (36.4 % of *might*; 17.4 % of tentative possibility) **tentative suggestion** is exemplified. It serves as a tool of distancing when the situation is shifted into some hypothetical world which prevents from direct imposing. In this way, suggestion is conveyed indirectly and therefore more politely. It is worth mentioning that co-occurrence of other past tense distancing means and hesitators in italics contribute to negatively polite communication as well.

(Suggesting a meeting) ...*Well, the thing is* I'm...I'm going to be in your area next month and I *thought* I might like to...*um*...call in and see you. (J, A 46)

(Negotiating, contradictory view of the customer) Well, I might be prepared to take...*er*...*let's see, well*, ten on a sale or return basis for each branch...(J, A 190)

Tentative inference of *might* has occurred in only two samples in my data. A certain level of conditionality is implied in the sense that there might be some complications the interlocutor anticipates but does not want, or in this case better cannot, communicate directly. Since *might* is perceived as signalling less probable, doubted or almost theoretical possibility for speaker than *may* that enforces, for instance, usage of *I wonder* which is a 'question-embedded' or 'hypothetical verb' (Urbanová 2002: 22).

...Do you know if it can be unloaded on Saturday? - (Reply:) *I'm afraid* I don't know, it might have to wait till Monday. (J, A 85)

(Response to shortages referred by a customer) ...I therefore *wonder if* the missing titles might not have been overlooked or incorrectly stored in your warehouse, and I *would ask* you to check once more to make sure that this has not happened. (B 66)

6.2. 3 Can

With its only 20 samples, *can* represents the sixth modal regarding the frequency, and constitutes thus 8.9 % of the whole corpus data.

These samples, again in the form of conventionalised *Can I...?* exemplify **requesting for permission** to act (3 samples only, e.g. (J, A 179)). The periphrastic form then could be *Am I allowed to...?* Or, the other samples, retaining only the form of it, represent polite and indirect **requests** (3 samples, e.g. (J, A 54)) or commands and this is also proved by particle *please*, which is often used in directives, added at the end of the sentence. By this reversed structure, a hearer is made to act in accordance with the request stated.

(Interview, when applying a job) Can I just ask you this question? ... (Question following) (J, A 179)

(Noting a message and other info) ...[Repeating] Peter Schulz. And can I take your number, *please*? (J, A 54)

The samples provided below have the formula structure *Can you...?* and are used when conventionally expressing indirect **request**. The most used structures are, *Can you (do something for me)?* or literal formula *Can you tell me...?* (counted as one sample again). Also, *I wonder (if)* plus declarative structure is pronounced often when making a request, as a form of hedge before the face threatening act itself is uttered. To sum up, requests with the help of *can* have been detected in 12 instances in my corpus data, which creates 60 % of all uses of this modal.

...Can you confirm this by return? (D 363)

Er...I wonder if you can tell me what'll happen if one of the trucks arrives later and can't be unloaded on Friday? (J, A 85)

In these examples, the semi-formulaic sentence structure *Can I ...?* has the form usual for asking permission, however, here it functions as **polite offer** to do something for someone or displaying willingness because this permission regards the activity that is somehow advantageous for the addressee. It is a conventionalised form of making an offer, thus its formula could be *Can I do (something for you)?* Moreover, it could be rephrased as *Is there possibility of doing something for you?* Also, a reversed structure carrying communicative function of offer *I can...* (J, A 47 or 60) was found in my data, preceded by another clause. A common occurrence of *Can I help you?* and *What can I do for you?* is again, as mentioned above, typical for administrative style where the

same phrases or formulae are frequently occurring and though found many times, each such formula in frequency analysis will be considered a single sample. In my corpus data, this is a very common sentential formula that occurs abundantly above all in spoken business communication where they usually initialize a phone call after its receiving. It could work as a set phrase having phatic function in telecommunication, showing willingness to help to the calling. Or, they function simply as offers in various situations, for example, when the person wanted is not available. By means of *can*, there are 8 instances of offers communicated. They form 40 % of usage of *can* in polite discourse.

Good morning. Carpenter and Sons, can I help you? (J, A 115)
...Oh, I'm afraid he's still at lunch. *Is there anything I can* do for you? (J, A 47)
Look, *if you'd like to wait just for a few minutes er...I can* get through to my head office and I'll enquire about any special arrangements which we might be able to make for you. (J, A 60)

This sample is on the border, but still may be identified through context as an **offer** or willingness but suggestion as well, though not directly by the person whose help was offered (2 samples only). In the instance (J, A 54), a person requested is not available but the receiver of the phone call gives promptly an alternative possibility which should prevent the caller from the dissatisfaction with the cooperation and thus, imposition is minimised and cooperation boosted.

...Oh, I'm afraid Mrs Cox is away. She has the flu and she may not be back in the office till Monday. *I expect* her assistant, Mr Box, can help. (J, A 54)
(Positive reply to enquiry) He [Mr. Lang, our representative] can give you all the necessary information concerning the prices, conditions and delivery possibilities. (D 51)

6.2. 4 Could

A modal auxiliary *could* ranked as the second in the order of all modals included in this analysis. *Could* has been detected 42 times and create thus 18.8 % of the whole corpus data. It may be hence assumed that *could* is widely utilized in polite discourse although overlapping meanings appear again with this modal so that one modal may have more interpretations.

Could is the most frequent in its use when asking a polite **request**. It is used to express this function by 32 samples and forms 76.2 % of whole *could* data. Also, it

might be interesting to point out that in this use, *could* creates 14.3 % of the whole corpus data and is thus the most utilised modal in communicative function. A form *Could you (do something for me)?* is often accompanied by softening or attenuating devices which are again highlighted in italics, for example, *just* or various gap-fillers and hesitators. This constitutes a conventionalised indirect form of polite requesting and is felt as more polite variant of *can* because it is both less definite and direct.

Geoff, *um... could* you *just* come over here *a minute* and *have a look* at this sketch? (J, A 33)

(Price research)... *Could* you give us your report by 10 June? (D 23)

When it is preceded by another clause, it takes an inversed form but an interrogative structure remains because of the clause added, thus *Do you think you could...?* is used for instance as a pre-requesting phrase.

(Inviting)...*Do you think* you *could* arrange to come to Philadelphia on October 4 to meet the other members of the Board and then spend the weekend as my guest at home? (B 77)

(Inviting)... At any rate, it *would be nice if* you *could* look in on us, and I *will do my best* to adjust my schedule to fit in with yours. (B 77)

...Just one thing, I *wondered if* you *could* perhaps tell me where the...where the gents toilet is while we're about it? (J, A 72)

Could I (do something)? is another formula used repeatedly in polite communication for indirect **asking permission** to act somehow. This was found in 7 samples and create thus 16.7 % of use of *could*, and even 50 % of all requests for permission. Often, by voicing the utterance, the utterance itself loses its purpose because what is asked for becomes fulfilled at the time of speaking: *Could I have a word, please?* Therefore, they could be regarded secondary or additionally as suggestions where context proves this by, for example, stating the suggestion afterwards. These phrases are, however, regularly used as pre-preparatory sentences used before the real imposing act and they serve the purpose of delaying the coming of the real face threatening act by preparing the hearer(s) on this to come. Together with the degree of conventionalisation and other hedging devices, recipients are sure that *could* conveys indeed a tentative way of asking. A politeness of *could* is even enhanced when the auxiliary and the subject have the declarative structure again due to preceding elements as conjunction *if*. Moreover, *If I could* may be considered related closely to similar *if I may* that is a fixed phrase used in requests.

Um...OK, do you think I could get a photocopy of this leaflet done? (J, A 50)
(At quite a formal meeting) *Er...if I could just make a point here...er...in our case we do a lot of dealing on the phone with the States and...er...sending messages to and fro by fax in the afternoon. (J, A 154)*

In here, *could* is apparently used to make **suggestions**. It is represented by 6 examples in my data (14.3 % of *could*, 15 % of all suggestions) It should be noted that again, other means of mitigating are utilised in order to soften the act threatening the negative face of the recipient or hearer. *Maybe* and *perhaps* are used so that they are suggesting a mere opinion or wish of the speaker, although, in the first example it may be interpreted as a very mild form of directing too as it is obviously said by a superior or a more experienced person. On the other hand, the last sample is less pressing because it deals with the invitation and planning the business trip and serves as a pure suggestion.

... I'm not too happy about this border [of a sketch] round here...um... *Maybe* you could try another go at that. (J, A 33)
(Inviting) We could then fly to Washington together. (B 77)

In 4 samples, *could* expresses **tentative possibility**.

(Credit enquiry) ...In particular, we *should like to* know whether, in your opinion, a credit to the extent of approx. £ 20,000 could be *safely* granted. (B 41)
...So *I was wondering*, could we get a 15% discount on an order that size? (J, A 60)

6.2. 5 Will

Usage of *will* constitutes problematic area because it is often used for indicating future tense, volition. More than anywhere, hedges and other softening devices present contribute to distinguishing indirectly polite or tentative usages of modal verb *will* from its other uses. Will occurred 21 times and forms thus 9.4 % of the whole corpus data.

Asking a favour with the help of will has the formula WILL + present inf. + please. It stands for polite **request**, directing or appeal. It is used with the second person subject and could be substituted by *Are you willing to (do something) please?* and is represented by 7 samples.

Will you *please* let us have your cheque for this amount after verification. (B 47)
(Instructing the bank on non-payment of the customer) Also, will you *please* send copies of your future correspondence with us to our representative, Mr Gaubert. (D 373)

Also, another way how to convey indirect request is using declarative structure when expressing hopes or expectations in 8 instances. These displace the situation into the future, because it presents some kind of imposition. One of the most frequent usages is prediction *will* which is used epistemically by the author to express his/her strong belief in the truth of the proposition. Note a very common co-occurrence of ‘question-embedded’ or ‘hypothetical verbs’ (Urbanová 2002: 22) hope/trust/be sure + will which enforce the positive belief in the request and could be paraphrased as, for example, *We hope/trust/are sure that you are willing to...* Moreover, (B 41) employs an important negatively polite strategy as well, that is, strategy 7, “Impersonalize speaker and hearer: Avoid the pronouns ‘I’ and ‘you’”.

(Asking for respite) We hope that you perceive our situation and will *kindly* comply with our suggestion. (D 353)

This information is given without any obligation on our part, and we *trust* that it will be held strictly confidential. (B 41)

Consequently, requests are communicated in 15 examples of *will*. This creates 71.4 % of total *will*. The example below differs from the sentences above in sense that unlike those ones which enquire their partner companies for a business favour, this one requests if the addressee gives the writer an “opportunity” to repay his/her kindness. Thus, this in fact does not represent a request, but a positive **suggestion** or offer. Therefore, it constitutes a perfect example of negatively polite communication for the writer puts him/herself into the position of the one who should thus be given a favour. Writer indeed uses a negative polite strategy number 5, that is, Give Deference (see chapter 3. 1).

(Letter of appreciation for hospitality) ... I do hope you will give me an opportunity to repay your kindness when you visit London next summer. (B 79)

This case has to be differentiated from conditional if-clause because in those, a present tense is usually used. If + will is a polite formula in formal contexts, used to emphasise and refer to willingness of ‘other’ and can therefore be paraphrased as *if you are willing to...* It puts across a **tentative suggestion** as a future event. Nevertheless, it has been detected twice only.

Well, we can keep the goods and...and use them for another order of ours, if you will charge us 20% less for the load and ship us a load of Class A1 right away. (J, A 115)

...If you'll just take a seat, Mr Martin, I'll let him know you're here. (J, A 23)

Additionally, *will* is employed when displaying willingness in **suggestions** or **offers**, assurance or when promising in the first person, *I'll/will (do something for you)*. This first person willingness is widespread when using *will*, however, it is very difficult to unambiguously interpret polite meanings from mere decisions, future time implications and other uses of willingness. Nevertheless, this problem has been discussed already in theoretical part, see 6. 2. 5. This type of suggestion occurred three times. To take into account all suggestions expressed by will, the total is 6 (15 % of suggestions). However, all could be marked as offers as well (figure 2).

Yeah, *I am sorry* about that. *Er...if you like*, I'll just call our other branch to see if they have any. (J, A 115)

... At any rate, it *would* be nice if you *could* look in on us, and I will *do my best* to adjust my schedule to fit in with yours. (B 77)

6. 2. 6 Would

A modal verb *would* has been detected 56 times out of all 224 modals in my frequency analysis and is therefore the most frequently employed modal (25 %) in negatively polite business communication in my corpus data. This may be also due to the fact that *would* has 'willingness' sense (similar to but more tentative than that of *will*) and is used to express hypothetical situations as well.

Would is predominantly used when conveying indirect **requests**. Altogether, 32 requests with this modal have been found out. This is 57.1 % of all *would* data and 24.4 % of all requests. If + would (11 samples) should be distinguished from the *if*-clause because here (similarly as in the previous case with *will*), it constitutes a very polite formula in requests questioning the addressee's willingness to act so. It shifts the content of the proposition into the hypothetical situation and using a conjunction *if*, it suggests a conditionality (see modal auxiliaries and their meanings in theoretical part), leaving it thus up to willingness of the addressee and thus, giving them an 'out' if this is inconvenient. Also, Babáková (1999: 16) underlines that "*We should be glad if you would...* is an example of a special kind of conditional used mainly in British business letters to express a polite request." This is very common and it also occurs in variations, such as '*we should appreciate/be grateful/be obliged if you would*' and similar ones.

Also, this construction could be fragmented into the two parts and used as a classic *if*-conditional, but retaining its negatively polite sense as in the second example.

...*We should* therefore *be grateful* if you *would* act as arbitrator for us in this matter. (B 67)

If you *would* let us have particulars of the types of the machines for which stands are needed and their weights, *we should have pleasure* in quoting for individual applications. (B 14)

These samples are presented here in a form of attenuated or milder directing or **request**, inquiring willingness of the addressee with the ‘past’ or more tentative form *would* (9 samples).

Tony?...*Er...I'd like* to see you *for a minute*, *would* you come into the office? (J, A 32)

(Commodity research) *Would* you *kindly* procure all available information and, *if possible*, find out the customer's response. (D 23)

Would + mind (3 samples) is frequently used in polite directives or **requests**. After this formulaic request structure, a gerund form of verb is used, or it is followed by a minor clause initialized by conjunction *if*. It is very polite to use this, yet when doing so, it is somehow anticipated that the hearer will give positive reply, and thus, he or she wouldn't mind because these are usually utilized in situations where the mutual cooperation is necessary or where refusal would even be understood as impolite (a typical grammar book example being “Would you mind if I opened a window?” presupposing that it is very hot and stuffy in the room). It can be seen that in context of business communication this is very common in usage then. In the second one, putting request into declarative structure, the originator of the proposition expects the addressee to do so even more clearly.

I'm sure it's all right but *would* you *mind* phoning them just to confirm the booking? (J, A 50)

Also, hypothetical *would* is used in polite **request**. It has a formula of *would + positive verb*, demonstrating thus emphasising positives mentioned above as one of the features of business communication and polite expression. It occurred in 7 uses.

We are interested in importing plywood and veneers and *would appreciate* your letting us have a list of reliable sources from which we can obtain the best offers for these products. (B 17)

... At any rate, it *would be nice* if you *could* look in on us, and *I will do my best* to adjust my schedule to fit in with yours. (B 77)

Two samples presents polite reminding with the help of hypothetical *would* having the communicative force of **request**. In the example, it seems it is the first reminding concerning this matter therefore the originator of the letter gives only hints, so that any prolonged delay or neglecting from the side of the supplier may lead to further notices or warnings of withdrawing from the order or even from partnership contract. In business framework where both commercial partners are mutually dependant, this is a very unpleasant situation and needs to be carefully approached, thus a tentative and very polite, yet enquiring and on the agreed terms pressing linguistic realization should be conveyed.

(Reminding supplier of delivery) We would *remind* you that your acknowledgement states that the equipment will be delivered from stock, and *we are wondering* why there is such a long delay. (B 60)

Making a **tentative suggestion** on the matter discussed. It is represented by 15 samples which is 26.8 % of *would* and 37.5 % of all suggestions. This may represent indignation as such declaration opposes the general mood concerning the matter in question and it all happens in a quite formal meeting so that a formal and polite language is taken for granted. In order to mitigate the negative force of such criticism and minimise their imposition on the chairman and other people opposing in the meeting, the interlocutor makes use of a hypothetical clause which includes a modal conditional verb such as *would*, so that the intended criticism comes across as a suggestion.

(Representing the opinions of the department, opposing) They think a change would be dangerous. (J, A 154)
Wouldn't it be...*um*...be best to hear what each member has to say about the proposals...*er*...from the point of view of his or her department? (J, A 154)
(Asking for offers from new suppliers) I assume that a personal meeting would be necessary to discuss all the technicalities involved. (D 37)

Hypothetical *would* is often used as a means expressing **suggestion**, recommendation or advice (5 samples, included above). Distancing strategy is widely made use of by originators of the utterances to allow freedom of act to negative face of the recipients. Consequently, the speaker chooses to convey a face threatening act with redress in the form of modal hedge.

Under these circumstances we would *advise* you to proceed with caution and, *if possible*, to do business on cash terms only. (B 41)

Would is used when expressing **hypothetical possibility** or situation (5 samples). In situations that somehow represent an act imposing on face sensitiveness of the addressee or impinge on addressee's will to act freely, some form of distancing the author from the utterance conveyed is required. At the same time, these hypothetical usages imply a positive evaluation of the theoretical situation so that they include an author's tentative wish. Therefore, a clash of these two wants (of not to impose and of speaker's wants) appears, which is very typical of negative politeness (see 3. 1. 1). The preference is expressed more indirectly by using *would* in front of it, would + prefer.

(Complaint) *Um...I'd prefer a refund.* (J, A 115)

(Interview, when applying a job) *Excuse me...I'd like to know if I get this job with Anglo-European, would I be able to...um...work abroad in one of your overseas branches?* (J, A 179)

Would is employed when the speaker wants to express **tentative possibility** (4 samples) by willingness or uncertain, indirect conveying of the intention. Additionally, the second example follows Agreement maxim.

...My firm would be interested in ten machines. (J, A 60)

...But your neighbours down the hall there, they're willing to give me 15 %. - Well, of course, we'd er...be delighted to do business with you, Mr Brown. (J, A 60)

6. 2. 7 Shall

A modal auxiliary *shall* covers, as it has been stated in the theoretical part, rather problematic area regarding its distinctiveness of meanings. Some of the uses have been exemplified at the modal entry discussed above; here it will be focused on different samples showing a clearer, yet all not 'pure' explicit samples of *shall* expressing negatively polite communication. For these reasons, *shall* is presented here in my corpus data in very few numbers.

Samples of shall + positive verb (*be pleased, be grateful, welcome, appreciate*) have been found in my corpus data, having colouring of politeness and cooperation differing thus from standard shall + verb (see theoretical part). Sympathy and Agreement maxims are apparently observed in these in order to convey an indirect and therefore intrinsically polite **request**. It is used in 61.5 % of *shall* and could be

considered its major usage. However, compared to other modals when expressing this function, it reaches only 6.1 % (8 samples).

We shall welcome enquiries for inch and metric type precision bearings and commercial-grade bearings for industry's non precision requirements. (B 16)

(Asking for information) We shall be grateful for any further information or recommendations you *may* give us. (D 3)

We shall appreciate hearing from you soon. (D 381)

A variation of above already mentioned sentence conditional *We shall be glad if you will...* is also provided here, conjunction *if* being substituted by *to*-infinitive.

We shall be glad to hear that the goods have arrived safely and in good order. (B 47)

These are examples of tentative offers or **suggestions**. There is 5 of them expressed by means of modal auxiliary *shall* and they represent 38.5 percent of their usage and also 12.5 percent of all suggestions expressed by modal verbs. The last example shows willingness from the side of the speaker as a way of redress or reparation. Preceded by a mistake the speaker made and consequent apologize to his/her superior, he/she offers possible actions that can be taken to undone this situation; the tenth strategy is used here, Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting hearer. Often, these suggestions are repeated in the form of question tags: ..., *shall I/we?*, are therefore polite requests for consent (Prášek 2005: 55) which is fully in compliance with negatively polite communication by requiring agreement to act and thus giving the addressee a possible 'out'.

(Being asked for help) *Um...* and shall I deal with the weekly report? (J, A 50)

(After not sending the order correctly) *Oh dear! Jeez, I'm sorry.* I didn't realize the eastern region *had...* had to be done too. *Well,* I'll phone Compass and explain, shall I? (J, A 115)

Here, *shall* is used when asking about time arrangements. Again, *shall* occurs with the first person and implies a suggestion where speaker chooses to convey the content of the proposition less directly than, for example, with more common *Will it suit you?* Or, it may be a suggestion question that precedes or even may serve the purpose of final mutual decision on time of the meeting because it is assumed that the other party agrees.

(Arranging meeting, lower position of the person speaking) Just after lunch for preference. - ...Now, shall we say...*um*...2.15? (J, A 46)

6. 2. 8 Should

A modal verb *should* is the third most common modal I have found on the basis of my frequency analysis. More precisely, 34 samples of *should* create 15.2 % of all modals included.

As it was mentioned already above, *We should be glad if you would...* is a kind of conditional used in business correspondence, mainly British, to convey a very polite **request** (Babáková 1999: 16). In my corpus data this typical phrase occurred 12 times. I have found out that rich variations of these occur, for example, splitting the two parts apart in the sentence and using them similarly to “traditional” if-clause (B 14), or, using just the first part of it as in (B 46). Also, the literal phrase is altered by replacing “*be glad*” with *appreciate* or *be grateful, obliged*.

If you would let us have particulars of the types of the machines for which stands are needed and their weights, we should *have pleasure* in quoting for individual applications. (B 14)

We should therefore *be glad to* receive your packing and marking instructions. (B 46)

It should be pointed out that *should* is used here as a conditional *should/would* in all examples, because the originator of the utterance is found always in the first person in my corpus data. Or, *should* often (8 samples) replaces *would (like)* in business correspondence. Altogether, *should* accounts to 20 samples and request is thus its major usage (58.8 %).

(Credit enquiry) In particular, we should like to know whether, in your opinion, a credit to the extent of approx. £ 20,000 could be safely granted. (B 41)

Should is utilised very efficiently when communicating **tentative inference** or deduction of the author of the proposition on the basis of one’s own beliefs. Illocutionary force of definite statement is made less definite, uncertain or unwarranted by use of hedging device *should* and other means employed that relate to personal inference. Six samples are provided in my frequency analysis, which form 42.9 % of all expressions of tentative inference.

I’m not entirely sure, but...er...as two will be setting off half a day early, they should arrive Thursday. (J, A 85)

(Showing the workplace) ...You’ll meet most of the members of staff there, I should think. (J, A 72)

Also, '*should*' may be employed when expressing a **suggestion**. This was found in 4 samples and this is 10 % of the complete file of *should*.

(At a quite formal meeting) *Maybe* each department should set its own core times. (J, A 154)

This special conditional sentence occurs mainly in formal administrative style and is typical of business correspondence, therefore will be included in this analysis. Formality itself is connected to negative politeness, too. This formula is constructed originally from *if you should...* by omitting *if* and reversing the order of the modal and subject. It occurred in only 3 samples:

Should the situation change in the future, we *shall not fail* to contact you. (D 9)

Referring to **theoretical possibility**, the author may make him/herself understood when putting across tentative opinion; however, it is represented by only one sample as exemplified below. The content of the proposition is conveyed tentatively after the clause *it is surprising that...* (see theoretical part on this modal).

(Reply to complaint on delivery) ...Since you apparently received the pallets unopened, *it is surprising* that any copies should be missing. (B 66)

6. 3 Summary of results

The objective of this study also aimed at communicative functions modal verbs express. Based on the data, it was found out that the main communicative function in business communication is request. It occurred in 131 samples, which is more than half of all usages in corpus, that is, 58.5 % (see figure 2 in the appendix). All modals were used to convey requests, either by questioning, or by more indirect statement. In 24.4 % for each, requests were communicated mostly and equally by means of *would* and *could* (each has had 32 samples, see figure 4). The second major communicative use of modals was in suggestions which were detected in 40 samples and create thus 17.9 % of all samples analysed. Tentative inference was represented by 10.3 % of corpus data and was express by means of *may*, *might* and *should*. Requests for permission and offers gained equally 6.3 % and 14 samples. Hypothetical possibility was expressed by means of *would* only.

7. Conclusion

This bachelor paper is concerned with the use of modal auxiliary verbs in British business communication. The principal aim of this study is to prove and investigate negative politeness realisations by means of modal verbs. This paper consists of two parts, a theoretical part and a practical part.

The theoretical part is initiated with the phenomenon of politeness. The approaches of Leech's politeness principle and a 'face approach' of Brown Levinson are discussed in greater detail, evolving the model of negative politeness, its principles and strategies. Lastly, modality and modal verbs are presented; individual modals are then examined in their indirect and tentative uses. The indirectness implied in expression of negative politeness is therefore conceived as a significant interconnection of modality and negative politeness.

The practical part is focused on a frequency analysis based on samples of business communication. This is represented by business correspondence, text types being letters, and discourse in business environment, text types being interviews. Individual modals are investigated and their communicative functions are presented. The main aim of this paper was to prove that modality and negative politeness are mutually connected. Modality is one of the means of expressing negative politeness because of its nature, which is, changing attitude to facts in the proposition. This is usually done by means of mitigating or attenuating the illocutionary force and thus, the face-threatening act is indirectly conveyed. This indirectness is then intrinsically polite; hence I conclude that the hypothesis stated has been confirmed.

Another main objective was to identify which modal is used the most frequently to convey negative politeness. Frequency analysis has detected that the most employed modal auxiliary in negatively polite business communication is *would*. With its 56 samples out of 224 total, *would* constitutes 25 % of the corpus data.

This analysis also partly confirmed the third objective of this paper. Indeed, morphologically 'past' forms of modals are utilised in greater degree than their 'present' counterparts as it can be read from the chart in the appendix. The exception, however, concerns the modal auxiliary *might*, which has reached the eighth and the last place in

the order of all modals in question. This may be possibly interpreted by argument that *might* is nowadays considered obsolescent or over-formal in most situations.

The fourth aim of this paper was to reveal communicative functions in which modals realize themselves in negatively polite interaction and to determine their greatest usage. The analysis demonstrated that the main communicative function where modal verbs are employed is request. It comprises 58.5 % of all samples in corpus data and was communicated by means of all modals under investigation, but modals *would* and *could* were found out to be the major ones. In 17.9 %, modals conveyed suggestions which represent the second main communicative function according to outcomes of the analysis. 10.3 % and 23 samples were ascribed to tentative possibility, and 6.3 % both to tentative inference and asking for permission. Offers occurred in the same amount and were conveyed predominantly by modal auxiliaries *can* and *will*. However, because of the overlapping meanings, modals represent a very problematic area when it comes to specifying definite meaning or function.

Consequently, it has been substantiated that modals, in particular their morphologically 'past' forms, constitute a very helpful linguistic means when conveying negative politeness. This study may therefore provide accommodation as regards both modality and communicating politeness, in that it encompasses various possible strategies of linguistic behaviour in this context. Furthermore, the conception of this paper may be extended in future by executing a more comprehensive research.

Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá negativní zdvořilostí britské varianty angličtiny. Tématicky je pak zaměřena na vyjadřování negativní zdvořilosti anglického jazyka prostřednictvím modálních sloves jako distinktivního jazykového prostředku modality v obchodní komunikaci. Hlavním cílem a jádrem práce je tedy prokázat širší souvislost mezi významným lingvistickým jevem modality a pragmatickým fenoménem negativní zdvořilosti. Práce je rozdělena do dvou částí, teoretické a praktické.

Teoretická část práce je nejprve zaměřena na teorii zdvořilosti jako ústředního tématu pragmatiky a sociolingvistiky. Přehledným způsobem je zmíněna řada teorií a přístupů k této problematice, je vymezeno pojetí zdvořilosti jako sociálního a jako lingvistického fenoménu uvedením několika definicí lingvistické zdvořilosti. Práce se věnuje zejména dvěma směrům pojetí zdvořilosti: na Leechův zdvořilostní princip a na zdvořilostní přístup Brownové a Levinsona, který je zaměřen na abstraktní termín ‚hodnověrnosti‘ nebo ‚tváře‘ (anglicky ‚face‘). Je vysvětleno, na jakých základech tyto principy fungují a zásadní termíny jako ‚face‘, negativní zdvořilost ‚negative politeness‘ či konvenční nepřímý ‚conventional indirectness‘ jsou vyloženy. Dále je rozebrána negativní zdvořilost jako charakteristický rys britského vyjadřování ve zdvořilé komunikaci a jsou nastíněny podstrategie negativní zdvořilosti. Je prokázáno, že negativní zdvořilost je často vyjadřována nepřímým způsobem, což je hodnoceno jako konvenčně přípustné a nevtíravé (non-imposing) jazykové vyjadřování. Je tedy dokázána propojenost negativní zdvořilosti s teorií nepřímých řečových aktů (anglicky indirect speech acts). Jako jeden z prostředků vyjádření negativní zdvořilosti je předkládána modalita s užším zaměřením na modální slovesa.

Čtvrtá kapitola je konečně věnována významnému lingvistickému a gramatickému jevu, to jest modalitě. Tato je nejprve definována, je nastíněno, že se dá vyjádřit různými slovními druhy, ale především modálními slovesy. Epistemická a deontická modalita je rozlišena a je pozdvihnut význam kontextu jako podstatného faktoru určujícího přesný význam propozice. Pátá kapitola se věnuje přímo modálním slovesům; určuje, které pomocné slovesa se mezi tyto řadí a v další sekci také udává proč. Z celku pomocných modálních sloves jsou pak vyselektována v souvislosti s cílem práce pouze ta slovesa, která mají zdvořilostní, nepřímé nebo tentativní (to jest váhavé)

užití. Jádrem práce jsou tato modální slovesa: *may, might, can, could, will, would* a dvojice *shall, should*. V následující části jsou detailně popsána užití jednotlivých sloves, jejich významy i nuance. Pozornost je zejména věnována zdvořilostním a tentativním užitím, která jsou posléze reflektována v praktické části.

Praktická část nejprve předkládá charakteristiku obchodní korespondence jako součást stylu administrativního. Základní rysy tohoto funkčního stylu jsou rozebrány a orientace je zaměřena na typ obchodní komunikace v předložených vzorcích. Dále jsou stanovena základní fakta analýzy. V této práci byla použita metoda frekvenční analýzy, která se zaměřila na výskyt a určení výše zmíněných modálů v negativně zdvořilé komunikaci obchodní komunikace. Jako primární zdroj posloužily tři publikace orientované na obchodní komunikaci – dvě publikace korespondencí a jedna publikace obsahující mluvené slovo.

Bylo stanoveno několik cílů. Hlavním cílem a ústředním tématem práce bylo prokázat propojenost negativní zdvořilosti a modality. Tento předpoklad byl potvrzen častým výskytem modálních sloves jako prostředků zmírňujících výpovědní sílu výroků. Toto zmírňování je v souladu s jejich modální povahou a navíc je nositelem nepřímého vyjadřování, které je, jak zmíněno výše, jádrem negativní zdvořilosti. Dalším primárním cílem bylo zjistit, které modální sloveso je v negativně zdvořilé komunikaci mluvčími nejčastěji využíváno. Na základě frekvenční analýzy bylo zjištěno, že nejpoužívanějším modálním slovesem s počtem výskytu 56 vzorků je *would*, které tak tvoří 25 % všech vzorků. Dále bylo zjištěno, že morfologicky odvozené minulé tvary modálních sloves jsou skutečně více využívány, s výjimkou *might*, v negativně zdvořilostní komunikaci. Čtvrtým cílem analýzy bylo určit, kterou komunikativní funkci modály nejčastěji vyjadřují. Na základě frekvenční analýzy bylo nalezeno, že nejdůležitější funkci, kterou modály v obchodní komunikaci tvoří, je zdvořilá žádost. Ta byla identifikována na 58.5 % všech vzorků a byla vyjádřena zejména modálními slovesy *would* a *could*. Byly také identifikovány další komunikativní funkce jako zdvořilý návrh, nabídka nebo vyjádření tentativní možnosti. Přestože však byly modální významy určovány v kontextu, modály často naznačovaly vícero možných interpretací.

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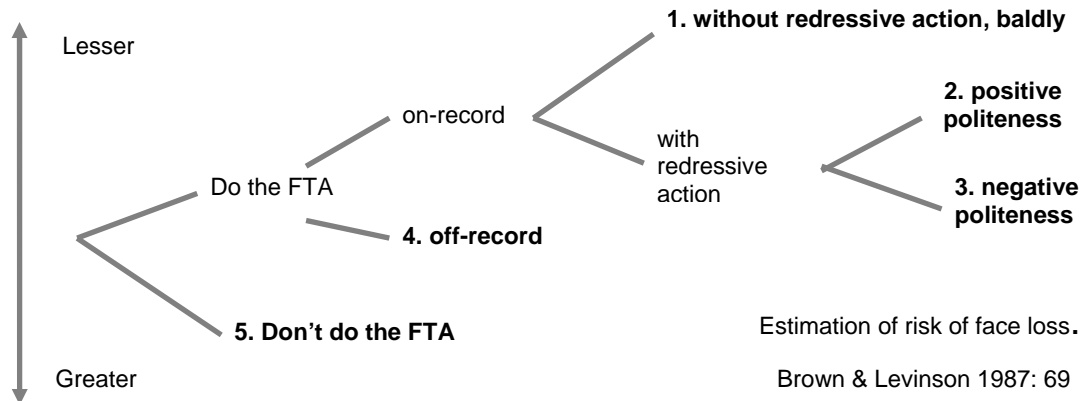
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Appendices

Appendix 1

Possible strategies for performing a FTA:



Off record communicative strategy is carried out when there is no clear communicative intention and the speaker provides a hearer with a range of possible interpretations so that he gives himself an “out” by distancing himself from the FTA and therefore transmits the interpretation and further development on the hearer (Brown and Levinson 1987: 211).

By contrast, **on record** is performed by doing FTA when the interpretation of the communicative intention is clear to participants. However, this can be conceived in two forms, either with or without a redressive action (Brown and Levinson 1987: 68).

The scale of politeness or indirectness:

Extra polite:	I wonder if you'd mind closing the door, please?
Or:	Would you mind closing the door, please?
Unreal past forms:	Could you close the door, please?
Question + explanation:	Can you close the door please? It's rather cold.
Question:	Can you (please) close the door?
Imperative + please:	Please close the door.
Imperative:	Close the door.
Order:	The door!

(Urbanová and Oakland 2002: 23)

Appendix 3

Figure 1: Chart of the usage of modals

Modal auxiliary	Frequency (number)	Frequency (%)
Would	56	25
Could	42	18.8
Should	34	15.2
May	27	12
Will	21	9.4
Can	20	8.9
Shall	13	5.8
Might	11	4.9
Total	224	100

Figure 2: Chart of modals and their communicative functions

TP = tentative possibility

HP = hypothetical possibility

TI = tentative inference

AP = asking for permission, (AP) = numbers included in request

Special use = *should* in conditional

Modal	Request	Suggestion	TP	TI	(AP)	Offer	HP	Special use	Total
May	11		10	6	(4)				27
Might	1	4	4	2					11
Can	12				(3)	8			20
Could	32	6	4		(7)				42
Will	15	6				(6)			21
Would	32	15	4				5		56
Shall	8	5							13
Should	20	4	1	6				3	34
Total	131	40	23	14	(14)	(14) 8+(6) (6.3)	5	3	224
%	58.5	17.9	10.3	6.3	(6.3)	3.6+(2.7)	2.2	1.3	100.1

Figure 3: Chart of the percentual uses of individual modals

Modal	Request	Suggestion	TP	TI	(AP)	Offer	HP	Special use	Total (100%)
May	40.7		37	22.2	(14.8)				
Might	9.1	36.4	36.4	18.2					
Can	60				(15)	40			
Could	76.2	14.3	9.5		(16.7)				
Will	71.4	28.6				(28.6)			
Would	57.1	26.8	7.1				8.9		
Shall	61.5	38.5							
Should	58.8	11.8	2.9	17.6				8.8	

Figure 4: Chart of the percentual usage of modals where 100% is constituted by individual uses

Modal (%)	Request	Suggestion	TP	TI	(AP)	Offer	HP	Special use
May	8.4		43.5	42.9	(28.6)			
Might	0.8	10	17.4	14.3				
Can	9.2				(21.4)	57.1		
Could	24.4	15	17.4		(50)			
Will	11.5	15				(42.9)		
Would	24.4	37.5	17.4				100	
Shall	6.1	12.5						
Should	15.3	10	4.3	42.9				100
Total(100%)								

Appendix 4:

Samples used in analysis of the individual modals

Jones, L., Alexander, R. *New international business English: communication skills in English for business purposes. Teacher's book. Updated ed.* Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Referred to as: (J, A [page])

Babáková, J., Sachs, R. *Anglická obchodní korespondence. Commercial correspondence.* Plzeň: Fraus, 1999.

Referred to as: (B [page])

Dynda, A., Dyndová, E. *Česko-anglická obchodní korespondence.* Praha : Pragoeduca, 1995.

Referred to as: (D [page])

May

Yes, er.. I've arranged to see Mr Shapiro. *I think I may be a bit early...* (J, A 23)

Um, by the way, may I use your phone to book a table...er...for lunch? (J, A 50)

...Oh, I'm afraid Mrs Cox is away. She has the flu and she may not be back in the office till Monday. (J, A 54)

(Phone call) *Er...may I speak to Mrs Cox, please?* (J, A 54)

(After wrongly placed and consequent cancelling of order, written) *...We are very sorry for the inconvenience this may have caused.* (J, A 113)

(After wrongly placed and consequent cancelling of order; written) *...However, we are still very interested in your products. We *do hope* that we may be able to do business with you in future.* (J, A 113)

(Phone call) *May I speak with Tina Castle in marketing, please?* (J, A 115)

Er...it may have slipped your mind, but you told me last week that...you'd send in the orders to Compass International... (and it did not happen so). (J, A 115)

It's about the order for your new packaging. I think you may have forgotten to send us the colour negatives. ... reply: Oh dear, I've just been through my out tray and I've found them here... (J, A 115)

*Well, I think there may have been *some...a* misunderstanding about our last order. ... We've just started unloading the truck and the quantity of the goods doesn't *appear* to be Class A1, which is what we ordered.* (J, A 115)

Kindly include any pertinent literature that may be available. (B 17)

*We do not know which invoice you are paying, and *should appreciate if you would* send us the invoice number and date *in order that* we may credit your account properly.* (B 56)

Please let us know how soon we may expect this shipment to arrive in England. (B 60)

May we take this opportunity to remind you that our invoice of 26 January for £ 15,610.35 is still unpaid. (B 72)

You may be assured that we *shall* clear the balance outstanding by the end of May. (B 75)

(Letter of appreciation) I *hope* that I may soon have an opportunity to return your kindness. (B 81)

(Written, solicited application for a job) ... May I have an interview with you at your convenience? (B 84)

(Solicited application) ... You may reach me by calling (312) 386-1920 at any time after 6 p.m. or by writing to the address given above. (B 85)

(Solicited application) ... I *hope* I may be granted an interview, when I can explain my qualifications more fully. (B 86)

(Asking for representation) May we ask you for assistance while looking for a suitable representative for our range of fabrics. (D 9)

(Commodity research) May we therefore ask you to give us your opinion on the following questions... (D 21)

(Asking for offers) May I point out already now that in view of the seasonal character of the products I shall be insisting on a binding term of delivery not exceeding end of March. (D 41)

(Asking for offers) We regret that we could not verify his statement but we feel that if you meet him half way and offer him a discount of 3% you may be sure to get the order. (D 43)

(Asking for offers) May we hear from you soon? (D 43)

(Negative reply) May we suggest letter of credit which we consider a fair condition to both parties to start with. (D 55)

(Refusing the documents) *Will you please* inform the bank *so that* we may take over the documents and the shipment without further delay. (D 349)

(Warning to the buyer) May we have your confirmation? (D 363)

Might

(To the superior) ... *I wondered if* I might have next Friday off. (J, A 33)

(When a product is to be demonstrated) ... *I'd like to* discuss the applications you might have for our equipment. (J, A 46)

(Suggesting a meeting) ... *Well, the thing is* I'm...I'm going to be in your area next month and I *thought* I might like to...*um*...call in and see you. (J, A 46)

(Arranging a meeting) ...Is that convenient for you? – The next day might be better. (J, A 46)

Look, if you'd like to wait just for a few minutes er...I can get through to my head office and I'll enquire about any special arrangements which we might be able to make for you. (J, A 60)

...Do you know if it can be unloaded on Saturday? - (Reply:) *I'm afraid I don't know*, it might have to wait till Monday. (J, A 85)

(Applicant speaking) I might be able to *possibly* travel and use my languages...(J, A 179)

(Personal interview with applicant for a post) ...Very good, very good, that...that might be very useful. (J, A 179)

(Personal interview with applicant for a post) ... So I'm sure you might... [work abroad in one of our overseas branches] (J, A 179)

(negotiating, contradictory view of the customer) Well, I might be prepared to take...er...let's see, well, ten on a sale or return basis for each branch...(J, A 190)

(Response to shortages referred by a customer) ...I therefore *wonder if* the missing titles might not have been overlooked or incorrectly stored in your warehouse, and I *would ask* you to check once more to make sure that this has not happened. (B 66)

Can

(After the number was given) ...*Oh, um...well, c...can* you connect me back through the switchboard, *please?* (J, A 46)

Er...can I speak to Dr Henderson, *please?* (J, A 46)

...Oh, I'm afraid he's still at lunch. *Is there anything* I can do for you? (J, A 47)

Look, *if you do that*, can you sign the letters for me as well, *please?* (J, A 50)

And also can I send a fax of these proposals to our branch in Canada? (J, A 50)

(Noting a message and other info) ...Peter Schulz. And can I take your number, *please?* (J, A 54)

Look, can I leave a message with you? (J, A 54)

...Oh, I'm afraid Mrs Cox is away. She has the flu and she may not be back in the office till Monday. *I expect* her assistant, Mr Box, can help. (J, A 54)

Oh, I'm very sorry, he's ... er... out at lunch. Can I help you at all? (J, A 54)

I'm very sorry, he's out just now, can I take a message for him? (J, A 54)

I'll enquire about any special arrangements which we might be able to make for you. (J, A 60)

Er...I wonder if you can tell me what'll happen if one of the trucks arrives later and can't be unloaded on Friday? (J, A 85)

And can you tell me the number? (J, A 85)

Look, *if you'd like* to wait *just for a few minutes* er...I can get through to my head office and ... Hi, Mr Wong. What can I do for you? (J, A 115)

Good morning. Carpenter and Sons, can I help you? (J, A 115)

(Interview, when applying a job) Can I *just* ask you this question? ... (Question following) (J, A 179)

(Interview, when applying a job) ... Can I...*d*...I know we're all human beings here and *I'd like to know wh*... what you consider your strengths and weaknesses? (J, A 179)

Now, *I wonder*, can you tell me more about yourself? (J, A 179)

(Positive reply to enquiry) Mr. Lang disposes of a well equipped show-room where you can examine the whole range of our products. He can give you all the necessary information concerning the prices, conditions and delivery possibilities. (D 51)

...Can you confirm this by return? (D 363)

Could

Mrs Lang, could I have a word, *please*? (J, A 33)

... I'm not too happy about this border [of a sketch] round here...um... *Maybe* you could try another go at that. (J, A 33)

Geoff, *um*... could you *just* come over here *a minute* and *have a look* at this sketch? (J, A 33)

(Talking about business) ...Ok, first of all *if we could just* look at erm... (J, A 34)

...So could you tell your people and let me have a list of names by...*um*...*let's say* Wednesday? (J, A 36)

...*Er*, no. Could you ask him to call me back, *please*? My number is...(J, A 47)

...Could you give him a message, *please*? (J, A 47)

Do you think you could help me with a couple of things? (J, A 49)

Oh, then could you get in touch with Sandy in New York after lunch and ask her to call me tomorrow? (J, A 49)

Oh, *well*, look, *at least could* you *just* check my spelling and punctuation in the sales literature if I bring it over to you? (J, A 49)

Well, could you send a copy of it off to Frankfurt for me? (J, A 49)

Um...OK, *do you think I could* get a photocopy of this leaflet done? (J, A 50)

Er...this is Tony Green of Europrint speaking. Could you confirm that you've received our samples? (J, A 51)

...Oh, wonderful, thanks. Could you *please*...*er*...telex or phone me to confirm that this is possible? (J, A 54)

Could you *please* send us 300 kilos of white rice? (J, A 54)

(Reaction to non-presence) Ah. *Um*...could you ask him to call me today, *please*? (J, A 54)

Um...could I speak to Mosieur Fevrier, *please*? (J, A 54)

...Now, if we were interested in making a firm order, how quickly could you deliver the machines? (J, A 60)

...So *I was wondering*, could we get a 15% discount on an order that size? (J, A 60)

...*I was wondering if I could* hand him [new employee] over to you now? (J, A 71)

...Just one thing, *I wondered if you could* perhaps tell me where the...where the gents toilet is while we're about it? (J, A 72)

(Asking for presenting) Philip, *do you think you could* tell us something about the way Biopaints is actually organized? (J, A 76)

(At a presentation) *Well, perhaps you could* say something the departmental structure? (J, A 76)

(Asking for presenting) Jane, *I wonder if you could* tell us what Ricardo Semler is trying to do? (J, A 80)

(Interrupting, but to the point; in a meeting) *If I could* just add a related point there concerning bureaucratic structures. (J, A 80)

Er...could you tell me when we can expect the consignment to arrive in our warehouse? (J, A 85)

Could you tell me whose trucks are delivering the goods? (J, A 85)

Could you let me know how long it will take to unload each truck? (J, A 85)

Could you *just* remind me what his name is again? (J, A 85)

(Wrongly placed order) ...*We do hope* that we *may* be able to do business with you in future. *Perhaps* you could contact us to discuss this soon? (J, A 113)

(At quite a formal meeting) *Um...could* I make a suggestion? (J, A 154)

(At quite a formal meeting) *Er...if I could just* make a point here...*er...*in our case we do a lot of dealing on the phone with the States and...*er...*sending messages to and fro by fax in the afternoon. (J, A 154)

Look, *if I could just* show you, you see, you *just* look through the viewfinder here, press the button and...(J, A 190)

Could you *please* confirm that the maintenance charges commence after the 60-day warranty period has expired and that your company has a target of less than four hours from the notification of a “down” condition of the AP-1500 Printer ... (B 29)

(Credit enquiry) ...In particular, we *should like to* know whether, in your opinion, a credit to the extent of approx. £ 20,000 could be *safely* granted. (B 41)

(Inviting)...*Do you think* you could arrange to come to Philadelphia on October 4 to meet the other members of the Board and then spend the weekend as my guest at home? (B 77)

(Inviting)... At any rate, it *would be nice if* you could look in on us, and I *will do my best* to adjust my schedule to fit in with yours. (B 77)

(Inviting) We could then fly to Washington together. (B 77)

(Asking for information) We *would be very grateful if you could* provide us with some basic information about the distribution system of this kind of products on your market. (D 3)

(Clearing up conditions on agency) *Would you please* let us know your view or your proposal which could serve as basis for further discussions. (D 7)

(Price research) Could you give us your report by 10 June? (D 23)

(Asking for offers) My possible order could then follow within two weeks. (D 41)

Will

...If you'll just take a seat, Mr Martin, I'll let him know you're here. (J, A 23)

Will you tell him I won't be arriving in Melbourne until quite late this Saturday, at 1 am local time. (J, A 54)

Well, we *can* keep the goods *and...*and use them for another order of ours, if you will charge us 20% less for the load and ship us a load of Class A1 right away. (J, A 115)

Yeah, *I am sorry* about that. *Er...if you like*, I'll just call our other branch to see if they have any. (J, A 115)

(After making a wrong order, repairing) Well, I'll phone Compass and explain, *shall I?* (J, A 115)

(Looking for suppliers) We *trust* you that you will be able to help us and thank you in advance for your cooperation. (B 17)

This information is given without any obligation on our part, and we *trust* that it will be held strictly confidential. (B 41)

Will you *please* let us have your cheque for this amount after verification. (B 47)

(Releasing from the contract) We are *sure* you will understand the difficulty of our situation, which is due to circumstances beyond our control. (B 61)
... Unfortunately it is not possible for the Lenham Chemical Company to make use of this delivery, and we hope you will kindly arrange for further samples of Catalysts 106, 216 and 312 to be despatched immediately. (B 65)
... We hope that you will agree to act for us in this matter and come to an understanding with our customer's arbitrator so that reference to an umpire will be unnecessary. (B 68)
... We hope that in view of our long and pleasant business relations you will see your way to granting us this favour. (B 74)
... At any rate, it *would* be nice if you *could* look in on us, and I will do my best to adjust my schedule to fit in with yours. (B 77)
(Letter of appreciation for hospitality) ... I do hope you will give me an opportunity to repay your kindness when you visit London next summer. (B 79)

(Asking for representation) Will you *please* inform us about your arrival a few days ahead of the date. (D 11)
Asking for representation) Will you *please* send us without engagement a detailed report on your previous activities and your curriculum vitae. (D 11)
(Asking for offers) Will you *please* let us know your present delivery possibilities and conditions taking into account the increased aggressiveness of your main competitors. (D 41)
(Refusing the documents) Will you *please* inform the bank so that we may take over the documents and the shipment without further delay. (D 349)
(Asking for respite) We hope that in this exceptional case you will comply with us. (D 351)
(Asking for respite) We hope that you perceive our situation and will kindly comply with our suggestion. (D 353)
(Instructing the bank on non-payment of the customer) Also, will you *please* send copies of your future correspondence with us to our representative, Mr Gaubert. (D 373)

Would

Tony?...*Er...* *I'd like* to see you *for a minute*, would you come into the office? (J, A 32)
(Requesting help with several tasks) Now, let's see, oh, then would you mind arranging accommodation for Mr Berglund, he needs it for Friday night. (J, A 49)
Let me think, no, I think I'd prefer to do that myself because there are some people I've really got to talk to. (J, A 50)
I'm sure it's all right but would you mind phoning them just to confirm the booking? (J, A 50)
(After offering a help) Oh, that would be great, if you're sure it's no trouble. (J, A 50)
... Well, we haven't received them so maybe they've got lost in the post. Would you mind sending us a second set by courier?... (J, A 51)
... My firm would be interested in ten machines. (J, A 60)

...But your neighbours down the hall there, they're willing to give me 15%. - Well, of course, we'd er...be delighted to do business with you, Mr Brown. (J, A 60)
 Yes, of course, *yes, er..*very well, Mr Brown. I'd be *only too* pleased to do all that for you. (J, A 60)
 (After presenting one's idea) Would you agree, Jane? (J, A 80)
*Er...*you'd have to ask our warehouse manager about that. (J, A 85)
*Er...*no, no *I think it'd* be best to send the order by telex, *don't...don't you?* (J, A 115)
 (Complaint; after being asked about a form of compensation) *Um...*I'd prefer a refund. (J, A 115)
 (Representing the opinions of the department, opposing) They think a change would be dangerous. (J, A 154)
 Well, they feel more flexible hours would make it difficult to cover for each other. (J, A 154)
 (After being asked an opinion) Some people would benefit more than others. (J, A 154)
 In fact I'd say that there should be flexible days. (J, A 154)
Wouldn't it be...um...be best to hear what each member has to say about the proposals...er...from the point of view of his or her department? (J, A 154)
 (After being asked an opinion) Yes, I'd go along with that. (J, A 154)
 (Interview, when applying a job) *Excuse me...I'd like to know if* I get this job with Anglo-European, would I be able to...um...work abroad in one of your overseas branches? (J, A 179)

If you would let us have particulars of the types of the machines for which stands are needed and their weights, we should have pleasure in quoting for individual applications. (B 14)
We should be glad if you would bring our company and its products to the attention of those firms among your members who are importers/distributors of large-scale users of bearings. (B 16)
 We understand that these rolls are urgently required and would therefore be obliged if you would send us your offer as quickly as possible. (B 17)
 We are interested in importing plywood and veneers and would appreciate your letting us have a list of reliable sources from which we can obtain the best offers for these products. (B 17)
 In addition, we would advise that these rolls are to be fitted onto a shaft by an SKF oil injection system, and we enclose Sketch No 781 showing the assembly. (B 17)
 We understand that these rolls are urgently required and would therefore be obliged if you would send us your offer as quickly as possible. (B 17)
 Under these circumstances we would advise you to proceed with caution and, *if possible,* to do business on cash terms only. (B 41)
 We have been referred to you by the firm mentioned on the enclosed slip and should be glad if you would give us a detailed information as possible regarding their financial status and business reputation. (B 41)
Perhaps you would also let us know whether measurements, gross weights and net weights are to be stencilled on the cases. (B 46)
 We do not know which invoice you are paying, and should appreciate if you would send us the invoice number and date in order that we may credit your account properly. (B 56)

- (Reminding supplier of delivery) We would *remind* you that your acknowledgement states that the equipment will be delivered from stock, and *we are wondering* why there is such a long delay. (B 60)
- We cannot understand this delay and would *suggest* that you ask the postal authorities to make investigations concerning the missing parcel. (B 61)
- We are *wondering* whether it would not be convenient for you to send the samples to our address, in which case we will ensure that they are immediately forwarded to the Lenham Chemical Company. But we will, of course, leave this entirely on your own discretion. (B 65)
- (Adjustment: claim partly granted) I therefore *wonder if* the missing titles *might* not have been overlooked or incorrectly stored in your warehouse, and I would ask you to check once more to make sure that this has not happened. (B 66)
- ... We should therefore *be grateful if you would* act as arbitrator for us in this matter. (B 67)
- We are sending you a cheque for £ 500 on account and *should be grateful if you would* grant us an extension for the balance until 30 September. (B 73)
- (Request for prolongation of draft) ... This would give us time to meet our obligations without increasing our loan from the bank. (B 74)
- (Request for prolongation of draft)... Under these circumstances *we should be grateful if you would* renew the bill, on which we shall pay interest at 6 per cent, until 1 November. (B 74)
- ... At any rate, it would be nice if you could look in on us, and *I will do my best* to adjust my schedule to fit in with yours. (B 77)
- (Solicited application, positive suggestion, evaluation) If you feel my qualifications fit me for the position advertised, I would appreciate the opportunity of a personal interview. (B 85)
- Also, would you *please* inform us what are the main trade channels leading from the importer to the consumer. (D 3)
- (Asking for information) We would be very grateful if you could provide us with some basic information about the distribution system of this kind of products on your market. (D 3)
- (Asking for information) Should there be other organizations promoting international business contacts we would appreciate obtaining their addresses. (D 3)
- (Clearing up conditions on agency) Would you *please* let us know your view or your proposal which *could* serve as basis for further discussions. (D 7)
- (Asking for representation) ... We should like to ask you whether you would be interested to take on the representation of our company for the territory of Scotland. (D 9)
- (Asking for representation) ... In both cases we would appreciate information about their background in business activities, knowledge and experience. (D 9)
- (Commodity research) Would you *kindly* procure all available information and, *if possible*, find out the customer's response. (D 23)
- (Asking for offers from new suppliers) Would it be interesting for you to get a foothold on this market? (D 37)
- (Asking for offers from new suppliers) I assume that a personal meeting would be necessary to discuss all the technicalities involved. (D 37)

- (Asking for offers) Would you *please* send me your up-dated offer including your latest novelties. (D 41)
- (Asking for offers) Would you *please* send me your up-dated offer including your latest novelties. (D 41)
- (Asking for respite) In the affirmative would you *please* instruct your bank to accept our new promissory note with the extended maturity in exchange for the original one. (D 353)
- (Asking for respite) We *should* therefore *be pleased* if you would agree to a prolongation of the term until 15 June. (D 353)
- (Instructing the bank on non-payment of the customer) Would you *please* present the documents again and keep us informed of further development. (D 373)
- (Payment with reserve) We *should* be much *obliged* if you would give payment instruction to your bank. (D 381)
- (Payment with reserve) ... We have chosen the second alternative and *should be obliged* if you would instruct your bank to remit us this balance outside the scope of the L/C. (D 381)

Shall

- (After small talk) ... Right, let's get down to business, shall we? (J, A 34)
- (Specifying the time of the meeting) Just after lunch for preference. - ... Now, shall we say...um...2.15? (J, A 46)
- (Being asked for help) ... Um...and shall I deal with the weekly report? (J, A 50)
- ... And then, shall I call you a taxi to the airport? (J, A 50)
- (After not sending the order correctly) *Oh dear! Jeez, I'm sorry.* I didn't realize the eastern region *had*... had to be done too. *Well, I'll phone Compass and explain, shall* I? (J, A 115)

We shall welcome enquiries for inch and metric type precision bearings and commercial-grade bearings for industry's non precision requirements. (B 16)

We shall *be glad to hear* that the goods have arrived safely and in good order. (B 47)

- (Asking for information) We shall be grateful for any further information or recommendations you *may* give us. (D 3)
- I shall be pleased to hear from you soon. (D 37)
- In case you wish to place a trial order to convince yourself that my models can be treated easily I shall be pleased to give it priority. (D 51)
- (Answering order) We shall be pleased to book your order. (D 51)
- (Negative reply) As soon as the situation changes we shall be pleased to send you our offer. (D 55)
- We shall appreciate hearing from you soon. (D 381)

Should

He should be back ...*er...any minute*. (J, A 54)

(Showing the workplace) ...You'll meet most of the members of staff there, I should think. (J, A 72)

Yes, *er...*each truck will take about an hour. *Er...I think* you should know that we can't unload more than two trucks at a time. (J, A 85)

Yes, *as far as I know*, the trucks should arrive late Thursday or early Friday, it depends on traffic and weather. (J, A 85)

I'm not entirely sure, but...*er...as* two will be setting off half a day early, they should arrive Thursday. (J, A 85)

They should have arrived by now. (J, A 115)

(At a quite formal meeting) In fact I'd say that there should be flexible days. (J, A 154)

(At a quite formal meeting) Well, staff should be allowed to build up a credit of hours to entitle them to take whole days off, not just few hours on other days. (J, A 154)

(At a quite formal meeting) *Maybe* each department should set its own core times. (J, A 154)

If you would let us have particulars of the types of the machines for which stands are needed and their weights, we should *have pleasure* in quoting for individual applications. (B 14)

We should *be glad if you would* bring our company and its products to the attention of those firms among your members who are importers/distributors of large-scale users of bearings. (B 16)

Should you have any questions regarding the installation of the equipment, Mr Nový *will be pleased* to answer them. (B 23)

We have been referred to you by the firm mentioned on the enclosed slip and should *be glad if you would* give us a detailed information as possible regarding their financial status and business reputation. (B 41)

...In particular, we should like to know whether, in your opinion, a credit to the extent of approx. £ 20,000 could be safely granted. (B 41)

...We should therefore have no hesitation in granting them credit to the extent you mention. (B 41)

We should therefore *be glad to* receive your packing and marking instructions. (B 46)

We do not know which invoice you are paying, and should *appreciate if you would* send us the invoice number and date in order that we may credit your account properly. (B 56)

(Reply to complaint on delivery) ...Since you apparently received the pallets unopened, *it is surprising* that any copies should be missing. (B 66)

...We should therefore *be grateful if you would* act as arbitrator for us in this matter. (B 67)

We are sending you a cheque for £ 500 on account and should *be grateful if you would* grant us an extension for the balance until 30 September. (B 73)

We should be greatly obliged to you for accommodating us in the matter. (B 73)

...Under these circumstances we should *be grateful if you would* renew the bill, on which we shall pay interest at 6 per cent, until 1 November. (B 74)

I should like to obtain a post which would provide opportunities for further experience and promotion in this field. (B 84)

I should be grateful if you would consider my application for the position of foreign-language correspondent as advertised in today's "Daily Telegraph". (B 84)

(Asking for information) ...By using our experience from other markets we should like to organize our sales on a regional basis. (D 3)

(Asking for information) ...By using our experience from other markets we should like to organize our sales on a regional basis. (D 3)

(Asking for information) Should there be other organizations promoting international business contacts *we would appreciate* obtaining their addresses. (D 3)

Should the situation change in the future, we *shall not fail* to contact you. (D 9)

(Asking for representation) ...We should like to ask you whether you would be interested to take on the representation of our company for the territory of Scotland. (D 9)

(Commodity research) We should be grateful to you for providing us with some basic data about our competitors' activities in the market... (D 21)

(Price research) We should be therefore *obliged* for your detailed report on the actual price situation and the foreseeable trend. (D 23)

(Commodity research) We should like to hear more about it. (D 23)

(Price research) As we have noted that there has been recently a considerable fluctuation in exchange rates as well as a rising inflation in your country, we should like to learn what impact this fact already has or will be having on our business. (D 23)

(Asking for respite) This is the reason why I should like to ask you for extension of the term of payment until 28 February. (D 351)

Appendix 2: Negative Politeness Strategy

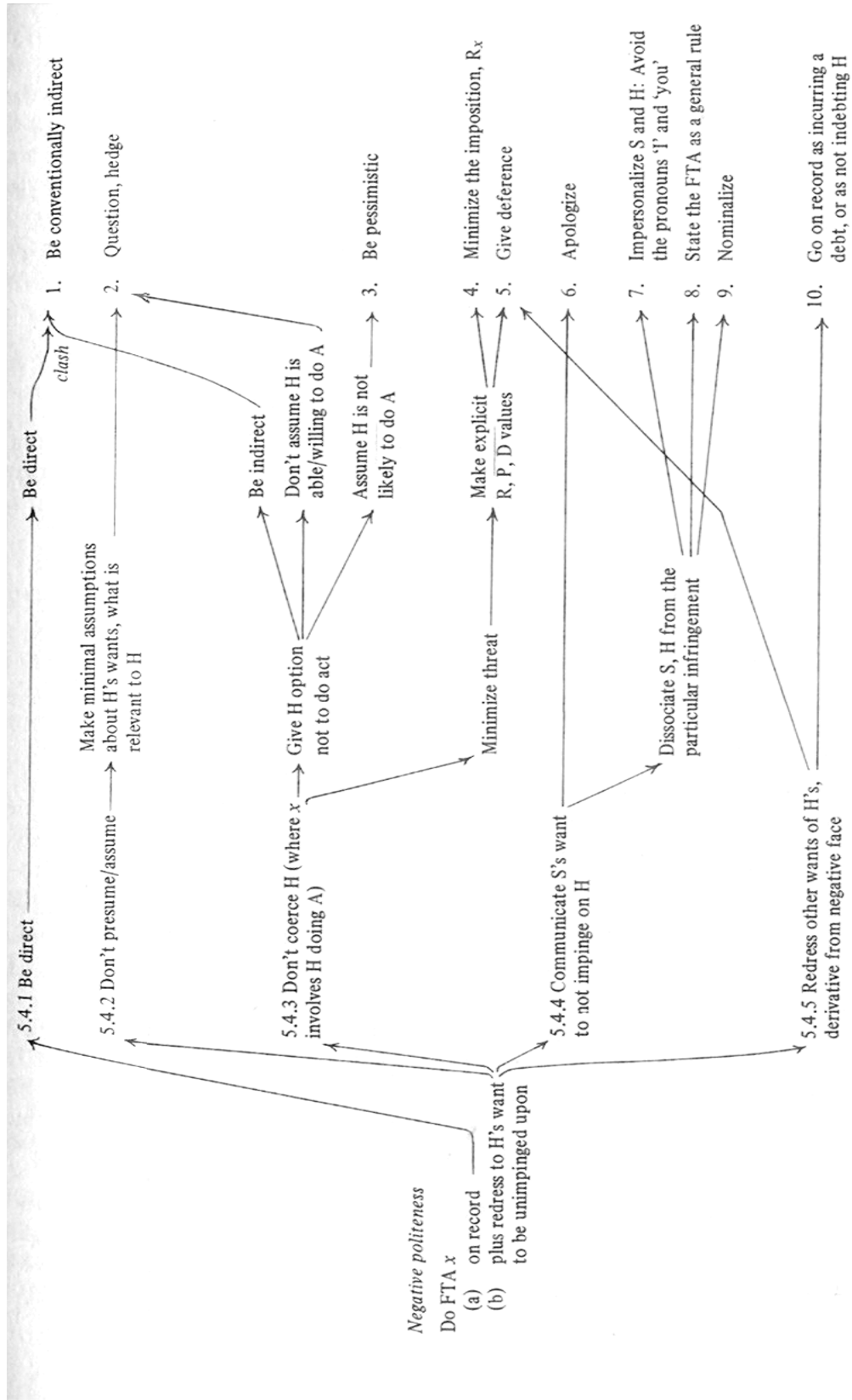


Chart of strategies: Negative politeness

ÚDAJE PRO KNIHOVNICKOU DATABÁZI

Název práce	Negativní Zdvořilost Britské Angličtiny: Modalita Jako Prostředek Vyjádření Zdvořilosti a Nepřímosti v Obchodní Komunikaci
Autor práce	Andrea Velecká
Obor	Anglický jazyk pro hospodářskou praxi
Rok obhajoby	2007
Vedoucí práce	Mgr. Petra Huschová
Anotace	Práce se zaměřuje na negativní zdvořilost typickou pro britskou angličtinu ve spojitosti s modálními slovesy jako distinktivním prostředkem nepřímosti vyjadřování. Praktická část obsahuje frekvenční analýzu vybraných modálních sloves v obchodní komunikaci.
Klíčová slova	Anglický jazyk, lingvistika, analýza, zdvořilost, modalita, modální slovesa, nepřímost, obchodní korespondence