

# A Study of Politeness Strategies in Persuasive English Business Letters from the Perspective of Londo's AIDA Formula

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**Abstract**—Based on Leech's Politeness Principle and Brown and Levinson's Face Theory, this paper tends to explore how Politeness Principle and relative politeness strategies are used in persuasive English business letters. Londo's AIDA formula is adopted to help to account for the manifestations of politeness as well to demonstrate the importance of Politeness Principle and the relative strategies we should take in writing English business letters. The study provides a descriptive analysis and finds out that the you-attitude plays a significant role in persuasive letters, for it provides the goodwill and positive involvement necessary for effective communication, if used appropriately. In addition, the AIDA formula serves as a guideline of successful persuasive letters. This paper also shows that the purpose of employing politeness strategies is to establish, maintain, or consolidate social solidarity, which is of particular significance for business letters writings. It is suggested that writers of persuasive business letters should take cultural influences into consideration in multinational corporations and international business activities and it is hoped that this paper can provide some implications for pedagogical application as well.

**Index Terms**—politeness; positive face; negative face; strategies; business letters

## I. INTRODUCTION

With the globalization of world economy, business communication is becoming increasingly important. Business letters, being a major form of communication in the commercial world, play a significant role in administration and operation of a business. Writers of business letters usually write with definite purposes to the specific readers. To reach the intended goal, writers should always remember readers' needs and expectations and write in a polite and tactful way.

As is known to all, businesses are very image-conscious. With an attempt to establish and maintain their images in the business world, and develop longstanding business relationship with their business partners as well, most of the companies try to conduct themselves decently and politely in their business transactions, among which business letters are major manifestations of politeness. The tone of a business letter helps to create the image and impression of a company. A discourteous and tactless business letter makes the writer appear to be indifferent and dominating, while a courteous and friendly business letter gives the impression of being considerate and helpful.

According to Brown and Levinson's distinction (1987) between positive and negative face, business letters can be divided into four categories: routine business letters, good-news business letters, bad-news business letters and persuasive business letters. Individual speech acts and different genres of business letters combined may require different degrees of politeness and various types of politeness strategies.

Since the modern society is a society full of information, in order not to be drowned in the ocean of information, we will have to "sell" ourselves first instead of waiting for the opportunities coming to you. For this reason, persuasive letters are of vital importance nowadays. Persuasive letters are letters that aim to convince the reader to do something not previously considered or something that might be inconvenient. There are three types of persuasive messages: persuasive requests, sales messages, and collection letters. Persuasive business letters are intended to produce some effect through action by the reader, in which negative politeness is important. According to Brown and Levinson's distinction (1987), persuasive business letters are face-threatening to the potential reader's negative face. At the same time, the writer of a persuasive business letter also risks losing his or her own positive face, because the persuasive message he or she seeks to convey may be disliked or turned down by the reader.

Based on Leech's Politeness Principle and Brown and Levinson's Face Theory, this paper tends to explore how Politeness Principle and relative politeness strategies are used in persuasive letters. In addition, Londo's AIDA formula (1982) will be adopted to help to account for the manifestations of politeness in persuasive English business letters as well. However, due to the constraints of length, only two types of persuasive letters—sales letters and application letters are analyzed to demonstrate the importance of Politeness Principle and the relative strategies we should take in writing English business letters.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### A. Literature Review

With the birth of Politeness Principle and Face Theory in 1980s, great progress has been made in various domains such as people's oral communication, texts, mass media including political and economic arenas, personal utterances, etc. In these domains analysts showed us how Politeness Principle and Face Theory are applied in different discourses and most of the researchers focus mainly on the pragmatic use of these theories. Studies on English business letters also abound, most of which mainly study the lexical, syntactic and discoursal characteristics of all kinds of business English letters and their translation strategies (See for example Maierk, 1992; Morten, 1997; Paarlahti, 1998; Si, 2003; Cai, 2006; Peng & Huang, 2006; Li, 2008; Frank & Daniel, 2010; Hou, 2010; Wang, 2011; Liu, 2012; Huang, 2012; Fan, 2012; Lu, 2012; Mohammad, 2014). However, studies focusing on persuasive English business letters from an integrated perspective by applying Londo's AIDA formula are scanty. How do the writers use persuasive language and arrange the structure in these letters to persuade the readers to take action? This may provide room for the present study. Therefore, this paper tends to explore how Politeness Principle and relative politeness strategies are used in persuasive letters by adopting Brown and Levinson's Face Theory and Londo's AIDA formula.

### B. Leech's Politeness Principle

By putting forward his Politeness Principle, Leech establishes himself as a key contributor to the research on politeness. He regards politeness as forms of behavior and a phenomenon existing in all languages aiming to establish and maintain comity and harmony (Leech, 1983, p.104). Leech's Politeness Principle can be demonstrated as follows: other things being equal, minimize the expression of beliefs which are unfavorable to the hearer and at the same time (less important) maximize the expression of beliefs which are favorable to the hearer (Leech, 1983, p.251). Modeling himself after Grice's Cooperative Principle, Leech sums up six maxims of the Politeness Principle as follows (Leech, 1983, p.132):

- 1) Tact Maxim. ①Minimize cost to other;  
②Maximize benefit to other;
- 2) Generosity Maxim. ①Minimize benefit to self;  
②Maximize cost to self;
- 3) Approbation Maxim. ①Minimize praise of self;  
②Maximize praise of other;
- 4) Modesty Maxim. ①Minimize praise of self;  
②Maximize dispraise of self;
- 5) Agreement Maxim. ①Minimize disagreement between self and other;  
②Maximize agreement between self and other;
- 6) Sympathy Maxim. ①Minimize antipathy between self and other;  
②Maximize sympathy between self and other.

On the whole, Leech's six maxims of politeness demonstrate that the most important principle to become polite is to minimize the expression of opinions which are unfavorable to the hearer and simultaneously maximize the expression of beliefs which are favorable to the hearer, i.e., to maximize benefit to others and maximize cost to the self.

### C. Brown and Levinson's Face Theory

The face-saving view of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987) is still one of the most influential works on politeness up till now. According to Brown and Levinson, the face here refers to "public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" and "something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction"(Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.61). A model person who has both a negative face and a positive face thinks strategically and is conscious of his language choice. A negative face is the want to be unimpeded by others, maintaining right of independence, freedom of action within one's own territory, or the right not to be imposed upon while a positive face is the want to be desired or accepted, the concern with being thought of as a normal, contributing member of one's social world or the desire for common ground(Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.61). In order to achieve his own goals in interactions, the model person also assumes that other people are also endowed with positive and negative face and takes other people's face wants into consideration. Usually rational people tend to avoid disagreement and minimize their loss of face. Hence, Brown and Levinson (1987, p.60) argue that both the speaker and the hearer (or the writer and the reader) have an interest in maintaining each other's face, but often have to commit face-threatening acts (FTAs). These FTAs can threaten the independence aspects of the hearer's face, the involvement aspect of the hearer's face and the speaker's own face wants.

The concept of face is the property of the hearer. There are 3 options for the speakers to use when he decides to make an FTA, and the following three options usually form a cline from the most polite to the least polite.

- 1) Speak indirectly or "off-record"—so that if challenged, he can deny it.
- 2) Perform the act explicitly or "on-record" using mitigation.
- 3) Perform the act baldly with no mitigation.

### III. MATERIALS AND METHODS—THE YOU-ATTITUDE AND AIDA FORMULA

#### A. *Persuasive English Business Letters and Materials Collection*

As has been mentioned above, business letters can be divided into four categories: routine business letters, good-news business letters, bad-news business letters and persuasive business letters. Individual speech acts and different genres of business letters combined may require different degrees of politeness and various types of politeness strategies. In accordance with Brown and Levinson's face theory, persuasive business letters inherently threaten the reader's negative face since the writer tries to persuade the reader to take action or to influence the reader's decision. Owing to this specific communicative goal, politeness and the efficiency of information conveying interact to obtain the best possible results in persuasive business letters.

There are three types of persuasive business letters—sales letters, application letters and collection series. In sales letters, AIDA formula is in accordance with Brown and Levinson's negative politeness strategies as well as Leech's Politeness Principle by arousing readers' interest first and then making them come into action without imposing too much on readers' negative face. Application letters follow a similar pattern with AIDA formula in sales letters since the aim of this type of letter is usually to get an interview first and finally convince the readers to employ the writers. Things are relatively complicated in collection series. To keep balance between being polite and achieving maximum efficiency, writers of collection series may use a number of positive or negative politeness strategies to mitigate the FTAs in the initial parts of the series. However, when the efficiency of conveying the message is of high priority, politeness is then decreased to the lowest degree with no mitigating devices at all.

Due to the constraint of length, only sales letters and application letters are carefully analyzed in this paper. To see the world from a grain of sand, these materials serve as the very examples to show the application of theories and strategies of politeness in business correspondence. The sampling sales letter is chosen from a business textbook for Chinese university students while 2 application letters are collected from the Internet of different countries, both of which are samples of instructions and suggestions of job hunting. The selection of samples helps to ensure the varieties and credibility of materials.

#### B. *The You-attitude in Persuasive English Business Letters*

While presenting ideas, two basic viewpoints are to be considered: the writer's and the reader's. The writer's viewpoint is often referred to as the I/we-attitude, which presents the message by saying "here is what I think". The you-attitude approaches communication from the reader's point of view, which presents the message by saying "here is something you should know". The reader receives the primary focus of attention. The you-attitude is particularly useful in business communication (Gibson, etc., 1990, p.103). In other words, the you-attitude is a state of mind emphasizing the benefits to the other person resulting from your suggestion or decision. Besides, emphasizing the reader's viewpoint instead of the writer's viewpoint manifests sincerity. If used properly, the you-attitude can provide the goodwill and positive involvement that are necessary for effective communication. The communicative goal of the you-attitude is in accordance with Leech's Politeness Principle as well as the positive politeness strategy proposed by Brown and Levinson (to notice/attend to the hearer or the reader's wants). Consequently, the politeness considerations require the adoption of the you-attitude in business correspondence. The person whom a business letter is aimed at should be a major influence on the content of the letter as well as the way it is presented. As a matter of fact, whether the person who receives the message will understand it or cooperate with the writer will depend on how well the writer is able to anticipate his or her expectations, attitudes and needs.

No matter whom the audience is, the writer of a business letter will communicate more successfully if he or she paces the reader by seeing the situation from his or her angles and by using positive language to express most of the ideas at the same time. Generally speaking, readers respond better to information presented from their angle instead of from the writer's angle. The you-attitude does not mean that the writer's own concerns are ignored, but simply that the reader's concerns should be of utmost importance. The four steps in persuasive letter writing are as follows:

- 1) Attract attention first.
- 2) Develop genuine interest in whatever is being sold.
- 3) Awaken readers' desire.
- 4) Lead to a "yes" answer, to action.

Obviously, all the four steps are closely related to the reader instead of the writer. The writer develops Attention, interest, belief, desire and decision before writing, and then what he or she has to do is to transfer them to the mind of the possible customer, which is what is meant exactly by the you-attitude in business correspondence. (Old And Sold, 2015)

#### C. *The Four Elements of AIDA Formula*

Being a recommended pattern of writing a sales letter, the AIDA formula includes four steps: attracting the reader's attention, arousing the reader's interest, inflaming the reader's desire and moving the reader to action. In Londo's formulation (Londo, 1982, p.195), the components of the AIDA formula are as follows:

**A—Attention.** Get the reader's attention by appealing to his or her curiosity or self-interest.

**I—Interest.** Once the writer has the reader's attention, the former must get the latter interested in the product or

service the writer is selling.

**D—Desire.** This is the most important part. To inflame the reader's desire, the writer must show a vivid picture of the product as well as the benefits the reader may get from it.

**A—Action.** In this part, the writer may possibly threaten the reader's negative face. The writer tells what action the reader needs to take in order to get what the writer is selling.

As seen from the AIDA formula listed above, the first three elements are designed to meet the reader's needs and expectations. And finally, the writer provides a convenient way for the reader to get the product or service in the last element (action). According to Leech's Tact and Generosity Maxim, the benefit to the reader should be maximized, while the cost to the reader should be minimized. In a sales letter, the benefit is some good product or service and the cost is the price. Therefore, all good things about the product or service should be presented to the reader, while the price should be de-emphasized.

#### IV. CASE STUDIES AND DISCUSSIONS

##### A. *Politeness in Sales Letters*

In order to fully demonstrate the manifestations of politeness in sales letters, the author chooses the following example from a Business English textbook in South China Normal University.

Sample 1(Gu, 2005).

Situation: This sales letter focuses on a business man. The letter seeks to persuade people to buy a stenograph.

*. Promoting the Sale of Stenogram*

*Dear Sirs,*

①*Have you ever thought how much time your typist wastes in taking down your letters? It can be much as a third of the time he spends on correspondence. Why not record your dictation—on our Stenogram—and save this time for other jobs he can be doing while dictation is in progress?*

②*You will be surprised how little it costs. For fifty-two weeks in the year your Stenogram works hard for you, without lunch breaks or holidays. You can't even give it too much to do. And all for less than an average months' salary for a secretary! It will take your dictation at any time, and anywhere—after office hours, at home, or even while you are traveling. It does away with mistranscriptions in short-hand and can even do away altogether with typewriting since recorded messages can be posted.*

③*The Stenogram is efficient, dependable, timesaving and economical and, backed as it is by our international reputation for reliability, is in regular use in thousands of offices all over the country. It gives superb reproduction quality—every syllable as clear as a bell. It is unbelievably simple to use. You just slip in a pre-loaded cassette, press a button, and your Stenogram is ready to record dictation, instructions, interviews, telephone conversations, or what you will. Nothing could be simpler or more efficient either. Our unique after-sale contract ensures lasting operation at the peak of efficiency.*

④*Some of your business friends are sure to be using the Stenogram. Ask them about it before you place an order; or, if you prefer, fill in the enclosed prepaid card and we will arrange for Mr. James Baron our representative for your area, to call and give you a demonstration. Just state a day and time.*

*Yours sincerely;*

Analysis:

First of all, the organization of this polite sales letter appropriately follows the indirect-inductive approach. Second, most of the content of this sales letter follows the AIDA formula. According to the AIDA formula, in the first stage, the writer of a sales letter should always remember that the potential readers may be reluctant to read on. The writer's efforts to send the persuasive message are threatening readers' negative face. Therefore, he or she should be able to draw readers' attention first and make them continue reading without feeling too much imposition. In this letter, the first paragraph serves to attract readers' attention. In fact, readers' curiosity is likely to be aroused by the several questions such as "Have you ever thought how much time your typist wastes in taking down your letters" and "Why not record your dictation—on our Stenogram...". In addition, the major benefit is introduced in the first paragraph so that readers will be able to feel and sense the product while they read on. The sentence "It can be much as a third of the time he spends on correspondence" serves as the very example.

After attracting attention, in accordance with the AIDA formula, the writer should move on to the introduction of the product or service. In this part, the attributes of the product or service that appeals most to readers' needs are described in order to develop readers' desire to own the product or service. As a cost to the readers, prices should be de-emphasized so as to mitigate the face-threatening force. However, if a low price creates beneficial situation for both readers and writers, it should be emphasized. Otherwise, it should be played down. Here in this letter, the price is mentioned quite early to emphasize the benefits brought by the product. By comparing the price with a secretary's month salary, it demonstrates that the product is really worth the money, though the letter does not clearly state out the price. Therefore readers' interest is aroused before the letter goes deep into detail.

In fact, the writer succeeds in leading readers to moving on without too much imposition on their negative face here. While using the you-attitude, the second paragraph or even the whole letter shows the writer's concern for readers.

“You” frequently appears in this part, to show that the writer is ready to take readers’ interests into consideration. Readers’ may get the impression that the writer of this sales letter is considerate and thoughtful. Furthermore, the you-language here helps to put readers into such a situation that they can imagine themselves enjoying all the benefits the product may bring to them. Paragraph ③ highlights the unique characteristics of the product and the convenience for the readers, which helps arouse readers’ desire. Therefore, the central selling point is introduced and repeated to the greatest degree.

The final stage after attracting readers’ attention, developing their interest, arousing their desire for the product is to persuade the readers to take action. This step should be handled tactfully so as to redress the face-threatening act. In the last paragraph, the action is made much easier—“fill in the enclosed prepaid card”. To ensure an order, the writer even proposes to do a special favor to “arrange for Mr. James Baron our representative for your area, to call and give you a demonstration” (Gu, 2005). To offer special favors to readers is a positive politeness strategy to satisfy the readers’ positive face wants.

To sum up, the writer of this sales letter is fully aware of readers’ needs and expectations. It is exactly in accordance with all the aspects that compose a polite sales letter. Before the price is mentioned, all the benefits are fully demonstrated. The writer uses various techniques to emphasize the benefits, such as thinking from the readers’ angles, raising questions at the beginning and so on. Such a polite sales letter, in spite of its face-threatening nature, will very naturally get a favorable response from readers.

## B. *Politeness in Application Letters: A Similar Pattern with Sales Letters*

### a. *A Survey of Application Letters*

The aim of an application letter is to persuade readers to employ the writer without too much imposition and to demonstrate his or her abilities to perform the work the readers need. The key idea is to communicate the benefits an employer will derive from what is suggested in the letter. Most frequently, applicants should not emphasize their own egos; instead, they should show how their qualifications will benefit the company. This is exactly what the you-attitude calls for in persuasive letters.

According to Leech, the benefits to the readers should be maximized. Thus, it will be better to emphasize how the readers will benefit from employing the applicants. The tone of application letters is of great importance. Generally speaking, application letters must sound sincere and polite. The appropriate tone should convey the information that the writers have much to offer the companies, but still have plenty to learn by becoming parts of the companies and growing with them.

The goal of most application letters is to ask for an interview from the readers. As a form of request, this type of letter is highly likely to threaten the reader’s negative face. Three types of interview requests are examined: the take-it-or-leave-it type, the high-pressure type and the weak-hinting type (Golen, etc, 1984, p.241)

Example 1: *An interview will show my ability to meet the job requirement. Between eight and five you can telephone me at....*

This take-it-or-leave-it type of interview request is the least tactful and polite one. It shows that the writer is too arrogant and proud to request the action. It should never be forgotten that readers of the application letters are, more often than not, in a higher social position than the writers. Based on the formula provided by Brown and Levinson, a higher degree of politeness should be used in this situation.

Example 2: *When may I have an interview?*

This high-pressure type of interview request leaves little room for the readers to refuse and allow them only to choose the meeting time. As Lakoff (1973) puts it, the level of politeness depends on writers’ assessment of certain situations. In formal situations, writers should avoid putting any imposition upon readers and choose to give readers more options so as to preserve the negative face of both the writers and the readers.

Example 3: *An interview would be appreciated.*

This weak-hinting type of interview request is an indirect way of asking for an interview. For politeness’ sake, it is less face threatening since the writer does not ask for it directly, without imposing on the reader’s negative face. However, this type may lack conviction and courage, which is not helpful for getting an interview.

From the above analysis, we may conclude that writers can end application letters with friendly, tactful, courteous and direct action words such as “As my interests do lie in the realm of useful and satisfying work in the field of industrial management, may I meet you personally and talk with you? I can make myself available at any date convenient to you”. This approach sets a tone of modest confidence while at the same time avoid too much imposition on readers’ negative face. Since the goals of application letters and sales letters are similar, application letters should also follow the AIDA formula. First of all, bearing readers’ expectation in mind (to find someone who is qualified for the job), writers of application letters should carefully design the opening of the letters so that they may attract readers’ attention. The attention-getter may well be a mention of the way the writers have learned about the jobs. The parts of the letters that develop interest and desire should show evidence that the writers possesses the qualifications required for the jobs. Finally, the writers work towards the move-to-action part that grows out of readers’ desire to employ such persons.

### b. *Case Study of Application Letters*

The following two application letters are collected from the Internet (see references 3 & 21) . How the writers start

the letters and move step by step to achieve their intention are analyzed as follows:

Sample 2 (The Land Economist, 2009):

311 Nestor Street

West Lafayette, IN 47902

June 6, 1998

Ms. Christine Rennick

Engineer

Aerosol Monitoring and Analysis, Inc.

P.O. Box 233

Gulltown, MD 21038

Dear Ms. Rennick:

① Dr. Saul Wilder, a consultant to your firm and my Organizational Management professor, has informed me that Aerosol Monitoring and Analysis is looking for someone with excellent communications skills, organizational experience, and leadership background to train for a management position. I believe that my enclosed resume will demonstrate that I have the characteristics and experience you seek. In addition, I'd like to mention how my work experience last summer makes me a particularly strong candidate for the position.

② As a promoter for Kentech Training at the 1997 Paris Air Show, I discussed Kentech's products with marketers and sales personnel from around the world. I also researched and wrote reports on new product development and compiled information on aircraft industry trends. The knowledge of the aircraft industry I gained from this position would help me analyze how Aerosol products can meet the needs of regular and prospective clients, and the valuable experience I gained in promotion, sales, and marketing would help me use that information effectively.

③ I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these and other qualifications with you. If you are interested, please contact me at (317) 555-0118 any morning before 11:00 a.m., or feel free to leave a message. I look forward to meeting with you to discuss the ways my skills may best serve Aerosol Monitoring and Analysis.

Sincerely yours,

Analysis:

The structure of this application letter follows the AIDA formula in sales letters. Paragraph ① is the attention-getter, in which the writer, at the very beginning, talks about where he got the information about the job vacancy. The writer succeeds in attending to readers' needs and expectations by highlighting the central selling point—his qualifications for the job. Paragraphs ② belongs to the stage where readers' interest and desire to hire the applicant are developed. The participation in Kentech Training at the 1997 Paris Air Show, the researches and written reports on new product development and compiled information on aircraft industry trends, the knowledge of the aircraft industry and the valuable experience gained in promotion, sales, and marketing would qualify the applicant for the job. This central selling point is given full length to develop, therefore the benefits to the reader is maximized. The last paragraph is the stage in which the writer convinces readers to take action. It is worth mentioning that the writer mentions the interview in a tactful and indirect way—"if you are interested, please contact me at..." By stating "please contact me....or feel free to leave a message", the writer succeeds in redressing the inherent face-threatening nature of the request. In addition, as has been mentioned above, the tone of application letters is of great importance. The applicant has used proper tone by saying "I would welcome...." and "I look forward to..." so as to show his sincerity and politeness, without imposing much on the readers. Consequently, this polite application letter is highly likely to leave a favorable impression on the reader and increases the possibility of landing the job.

Sample 3 (European Career Orientation, 2001):

Paula Wiersma

Hopeatie 45 B8

00440 HELSINKI

FINLAND

+ 358 18 208 522

15 July 2001

Maarit Hyyppi ä

Business Manager

NeTel Oy

Kaupunkinkatu 12

00345 HELSINKI

FINLAND

Your advertisement of 12 July - MANAGEMENT ASSISTANT / Ref364B

Dear Ms. Hyyppi ä

① I am pleased to apply for the position of Management Assistant with NeTel Oy.

② My most recent work experience was with Helmond Systems in the Netherlands where I gained experience as a management assistant. The main job task was to assist the manager with all of the branch's operations in the region. From this job I have gained a solid understanding of what is needed in managing a branch in a large company, which

would be useful knowledge to apply to the similar circumstances of NeTel Oy.

③ As well as my work history, I have a strong educational background supporting me. This June I graduated from Mercuria Business School, Vantaa, and the University of Lincolnshire & Humberside, U.K, with both a BBA and BA in European Management. The business theory gained from my studies is very useful, and already I have used this knowledge in my limited career experience. Importantly too, these studies helped me to obtain my work placement abroad, making me more familiar with work in the European context. To complement this, I am able to speak five European languages, which might be very beneficial in the position offered.

④ Being a good Management Assistant takes excellent analytical and communication skills, as well as strong leadership abilities. I possess these and more. I am a fair, diligent, and detail oriented person who also has a good sense of humour to apply to even the most stressful of situations. Working to help the company reach all of its goals is very motivating for me.

⑤ In the attached curriculum vitae you can read more about my skills and experience. I would be very happy to meet you at an interview to further discuss my qualities and qualifications.

Please feel free to contact me by phone at 18 208 522, or by e-mail at writepw @ mailme.fi.

⑥ Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Yours Sincerely

(Signature)

Paula Wiersma

ENC: Curriculum vitae

Analysis:

Similar to Sample 2, the structure of this application letter also follows the AIDA formula in sales letters. However, Paragraph ① is a little bit different, where the writer puts the advertisement of the position before the addressing and the whole paragraph serve as the greeting. Paragraph ① is the attention-getter, in which the writer, at the very beginning, tends to be polite and leave a good impression on readers. Then the writer succeeds in attending to readers' needs and expectations by highlighting the central selling point—his qualifications for the job. Paragraphs ②③④ belong to the stage where readers' interest and desire to hire the applicant are developed. Working as a management assistant with Helmond Systems and having strong educational background are the writer's excellent qualifications. Paragraph ⑤ is the stage where the writer convinces the readers to take action. The writer mentions the interview in a tactful and indirect way—"please feel free to contact me by phone..." By stating this, the writer succeeds in redressing the inherent face-threatening nature of the request. Besides, by offering more detailed curriculum vitae, the writer has clearly demonstrated his sincerity and politeness. In short, this polite application letter probably leaves a favorable impression on the reader and thus increases the possibility of landing the job.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The research in this paper provides a descriptive analysis on the manifestations of politeness in persuasive business letter writing. Generally speaking, effective persuasive English business letters should employ both positive and negative politeness strategies so as to avoid the negative reaction from the readers. In persuasive letters, the you-attitude plays a significant role, for it provides the goodwill and positive involvement necessary for effective communication, if used appropriately. In addition, the AIDA formula serves as a guideline of a successful persuasive letter.

As for sales letters, since writers' efforts to send the persuasive messages are threatening the readers' negative face, they should be able to draw readers' attention (A) first, making them continue reading without feeling too much imposition. Second, writers need to find ways to arouse readers' interest (I), such as raising questions, stating practical facts closely related to their daily life, etc. To inflame readers' desire (D), writers should show the benefits they might get from the products or service sold to them. Finally, though writers will probably threaten readers' negative face, they should have to persuade readers to take action (A) so as to get what the writers are selling. To sum up, writers of sales letters should first meet readers' needs and expectation and then provide convenient ways for readers to get the products or services. According to Leech's Tact and Generosity Maxim (1983), the benefit to the readers should be maximized, while the cost to the readers should be minimized. In a sales letter, the benefit is some good product or service and the cost is the price. Therefore, all good things about the products or service should be presented to readers, while the price should be de-emphasized.

At the same time, the goal of application letters is to persuade readers to employ writers without too much imposition and to demonstrate their abilities to perform the work readers need, which is also threatening readers' negative face. The key idea is to communicate the benefits an employer will derive from what is suggested in the letter. To maximize readers' benefit (Leech, 1983), it will be better to emphasize how readers can benefit from employing the applicants. Since the aim of application letters is similar to that of sales letters, AIDA formula is also applicable in application letters. First, due to readers' expectation to find qualified applicants, writers should design good openings to attract readers' attention (A). Second, to develop readers' interest (I) and desire (D), writers should show evidence that they possess the qualifications required for the jobs. Finally, they should persuade readers to take action (A) in tactful and indirect ways to redress the inherent face-threatening nature of the requests for the possible face-to-face interviews.

Even though there is no reason to assume that business communication is more polite than any other communications, the goal-oriented nature of this communication suggests that the avoidance of impoliteness should be a high priority in business correspondence. The purpose of employing politeness strategies is to establish, maintain, or consolidate social solidarity, which is of particular significance for business letter writings since they represent the company's general image in the business world.

However, this paper has its own limitations, since only one type of business correspondence is chosen for specific analysis and no cultural factors are analyzed. Actually, it is suggested that writers of business correspondence should be able to take the cultural influences into consideration in multinational corporations and international business activities. Nevertheless, it is dangerous for a business writer to take the cultural differences for granted. Therefore, further analysis with cultural factors is needed for future study. It is hoped that this paper can provide some implications for pedagogical application.

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