

# Filipino Communication Style as Reflected in Politeness Strategies in Administrative Memoranda in the Philippine Workplace

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## Abstract

This study explores the interplay of language and culture in the cross-cultural interaction of the western-oriented memorandum and its writers' Filipino culture. It uses focused ethnography and content analysis to examine politeness strategies (PS) in 100 memoranda to see how culture is reflected in the choice of PS. In place of Brown & Levinson's (B&L) 'face' is offered a Filipino construct of *tao* (person) with a strong sense of *kapwa* (shared inner identity). An alternative taxonomy of PS is also offered to show how a Filipino perspective addresses positive and negative 'faces' but not necessarily in mutually exclusive categories. The dominant choice of PS suggests that writers of memoranda consider the threat of readers feeling imposed upon more than that of not being admired, and desire to preserve relationships and protect others' self-worth, while also addressing dislike for directness and in-group orientation. Non-prescribed linguistic features are also consistent with Filipino communication styles.

Keywords: Cross-cultural, face, Filipino communication, style, memorandum

## Introduction

In the Philippines, where power dynamics depend on informal power structures that are based on personal relationships, and where employees view organizations as extensions of the family network (Roffey 3), the role of discourse is crucial in that the ways in which it is constructed affect the manner in which an organization functions. Where communication has an interpersonal focus, as in verbal interaction, meanings are easily produced and interpreted because they are “set in real time ... [and] ... embedded in events in progress” (Leckie-Tarry 56) and are aided by the suprasegmentals of speech. Such an orientation is at the core of the social framework within which Filipino communication operates and which provide its Filipino participants with “proper contexts for organizing their ideas ... interpreting their experiences, passing their judgments, and guiding their behavior” (Jocano, Management 36).

What happens, however, when an organization that operates with such an interpersonal orientation is managed via written discourse of a different orientation? The sight of co-workers showing mixed, often-negative reactions to posted memoranda has long fascinated and led this researcher to wonder whether norms of Filipino culture were being violated by the memorandum (memo), and whether there might be differing cultures at play. After all, the memo is an artifact of Western culture, whose inception marks the American corporate “transition from an oral tradition to ... extensive reliance on a disciplined management approach” (Plung & Montgomery 314).

Thus, this study poses the problem: How is Filipino culture reflected in the choice of politeness strategies used in the memoranda? This entails the following sub-problems:

1. What values and norms of politeness in Filipino culture are not observed by the memo?
2. What politeness strategies are used in the administrative memo in the Philippine workplace?

3. What values and norms of politeness in Filipino culture are observed in the strategies used?
4. Is there a distinct Filipino manner of communication indicated in the choice of politeness strategies in the administrative memo used in the Philippine workplace?

This paper also seeks to:

1. examine pragmatic politeness at work in the memo,
2. pinpoint the role of culture in the choice of politeness strategies,
3. show how culture and language interact in administrative memoranda,
4. attempt a taxonomy of Filipino politeness strategies from the perspective of Filipino values, and
5. offer insights on an unexamined cross-cultural context within the paradigm of Filipino worldview.

*Face-Saving View of Politeness.* This study takes off from Brown and Levinson's face-saving view of politeness, arguably the most influential politeness model to date (Sharokhi and Bidabadi 21) and the most frequently cited reference on linguistic politeness (Leech Politeness 2). Brown and Levinson explain that politeness arises through implicatures that minimize or redress face threats (59–60). A "face-threatening act" (FTA) is based on positive and negative face: the former being the want that one's "wants be desirable to others" (62), the latter the want that one's "actions be unimpeded by others" (77). Brown and Levinson propose that a Model Person (MP), who speaks a natural language fluently, is a rational agent, and will act toward the satisfaction of one's own ends and thus try to maintain face by choosing strategies that will minimize threats to face (59–60).

*The Non-Western Paradigm and Politeness in Philippine Culture.* Discourse and Cultural Studies scholar Shi-Xu stresses that one damaging consequence

of the presumption of universally basic discourse structures is the domination of the Western paradigm, since even non-Western scholars have attempted to explain their own cultural discourses within those parameters. As the cultural anthropologist Jocano notes: “[E]ven if previous data on Filipino culture were based on systematic studies, the conceptual frameworks against which the data were analyzed are Western. Unknowingly, their findings reflect the bias of Western logic and meaning ... [and] ... are misinterpretations of the meanings of local beliefs and practices” (Working 18). Jocano points out that there are many Filipino terms that have to do with the act of communicating, each with a particular nuance and mode of behavior not found in the generic English word “communication” (Management 48). In Figure 1 below is illustrated his matrix of Filipino-style information processing:

<b>Communication</b>	<b>Styles</b>	<b>Processes</b>	<b>Techniques</b>
<i>Ninanaís</i> (Objectives)	<i>Pagbibigý-alam</i> (to give/share knowledge)	<i>Pamamaraan ng pagkakakilala</i> (establishing ways to communicate)	<i>Pamamarang pahatiran</i> (communicative techniques)
Step I – to get a positive response to the objectives	<i>Pahiwatig</i> (to hint/to suggest)	<i>Pakikiramdam</i> (feeling each other out)	<i>Pagsasangguni</i> (consultation for insights of positive response)
Step II – to call attention to specifics or close to what one wants	<i>Pabatid</i> (to make conscious)	<i>Pag-uusap</i> (talking things over)	<i>Paghihikayat</i> (to attempt to persuade)
Step III – to reveal finally what one wants or one’s purpose	<i>Pahayag</i> (to state openly what one wants)	<i>Pagbibigayan</i> (giving way to each other)	<i>Pagkakasundo</i> (agreement)
Result – pleasant relations, good rapport ( <i>kapalagayang loob</i> )	<i>Kaalaman</i> (sharing information without hurting)	<i>Pagsasamahan</i> (consensus leading to group cohesiveness)	<i>Pag-uunawa</i> (understanding leading from agreement)

Figure 1. Structure of Filipino Information-Processing (adapted from Jocano, Working with Filipinos 1999)

As such, the go-straight-to-the-point prescribed register of a highly structured text such as the memo raises the red flag (Jocano, Management 88). To take a shortcut and go straight to *pagbibigay-alam* is to violate the norms of Filipino communication. Named the father of Filipino Psychology, Enriquez offers different ways of looking at traditional Filipino values by re-conceptualizing the Filipino value structure, identifying *kapwa* (shared identity) as being the pivotal interpersonal value of Filipinos (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino 56). A major part of Filipino socialization is to be sensitive to non-verbal cues and to be attuned to and concerned with the feelings of others. Such *pakikiramdam* (shared inner perception), an emotional a priori, is a necessary prerequisite to successful communication in Filipino social interaction (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino 57).

*The Office Memorandum as Cultural Artifact and Related Studies.* MIT Sloan School of Management professor Yates describes memo as communication whose contents are usually not open to negotiation, “generally irreversible, open only to minor modifications or clarifications” (Plung & Montgomery 315). After 1880, “systematic management” became the philosophy of American companies, (Litterer 1991 cited in Yates 489), and this included correspondence that “seemed to encourage a terser style and ... the omission of the traditional complimentary closing” (Yates 497). Even the salutation was removed: they were “willing to sacrifice tradition to efficiency and system” (498) because “the absolute essential is clearness. There is also no need of establishing personal relationship, so that courtesy should receive less consideration than directness and completeness” (Gallagher and Moulton qtd. in Yates 503).

*The Brown and Levinson (B&L) Model. Bald-on-Record Strategy, with No Redress.* Here, the S (Speaker) does the FTA by speaking bluntly without

softening or ameliorating the face threat, usually achieved via the imperative form (Brown and Levinson 72) and generally when S does not care about maintaining face, or because S is the powerful one and thus does not worry about H (Hearer) face wants.

*Positive-Politeness On-Record Strategy, with Redress.* These operate by insinuation and establishment of a sense of commonality that address the H's face want to be appreciated and approved of (Brown and Levinson 70).

*Negative-Politeness On-Record Strategy, with Redress.* These address the H's desire for respect and to be unimpeded or imposed upon, and operate through non-infringement and avoidance (Brown and Levinson 132).

*Do the FTA, Off-Record Strategy.* S performs the FTA through ambiguous phrasing so that more than one meaning can be inferred. H cannot be sure what the utterance states, and S can claim that it was not meant to be interpreted as such (Brown and Levinson 211).

*Understanding the Filipino 'Tao' as the Motivation for Politeness.* This study posits that when the Filipino refers to 'face' (*mukha*), it is as a front or cover for the *tao* (person) within, which is made up of *pagka-tao* (self-worth), *pagkamaka-tao* (concern and compassion for others), and *pakikipagkawa-tao* (harmony with others). These cultural values are interdependent, and the choice of PS is a function of S's valuing of the *tao* that is H, combined with the S's own valuing of his/her *tao*. The crucial difference is that whereas Brown and Levinson's face is self-orientated (its wants being directed toward the benefit of self), the Filipino *tao* is other-orientated, its wants directed toward concern for and harmony with others. Even the aspect of *pagkatao*, which is about self-esteem, is defined by how S shows *pagkamakatao* and *pakikipagkapwa-tao*. It is the *halaga* (value) placed by the S on the H's *tao* that motivates the choice of PS.

*Conceptual Framework.* The conceptual framework of this study follows Figure 2 below:

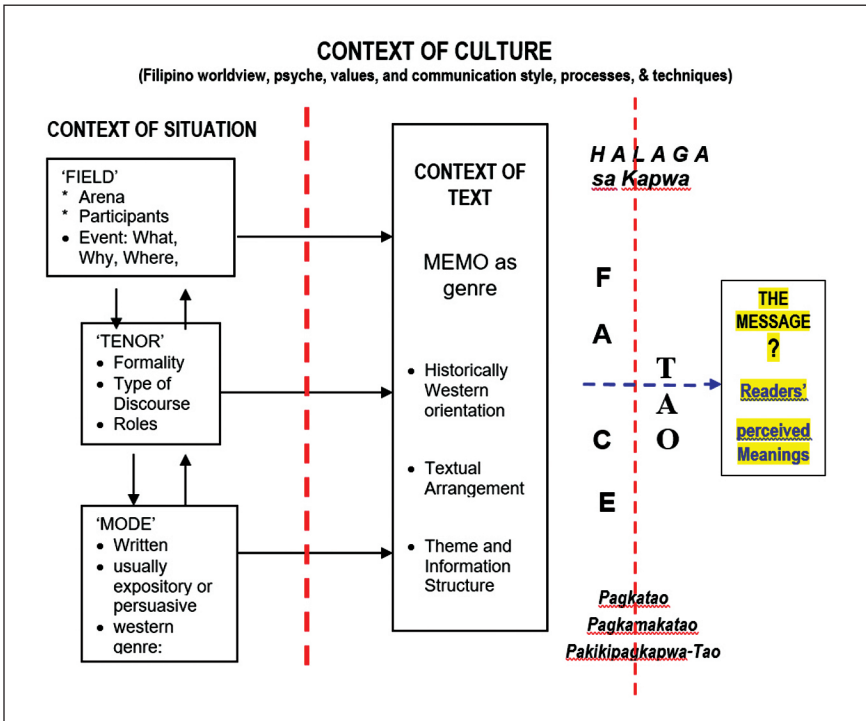


Figure 2. Agnir-Paraan Conceptual Framework

Combined elements from Halliday’s and Leckie-Tarry’s conceptual models of ‘context’ form a construct with a context of text (Leckie-Tarry 26), a context of culture, and a context of situation (Halliday *Spoken* 11), working together to produce ‘meaning potential’. The context of culture becomes the all-encompassing factor that influences the situation and the text. It consists

of the Filipino concept of self, communication style, worldview, norms and values. The broken lines show its influence on the text and the situation and are not solid because culture is fluid and dynamic. The memo as genre reveals a western orientation that is reflected in its prescribed style, structure, and linguistic features. Added are the PS (the focus of the study). 'Face' is central to Brown and Levinson's model and so is situated between the memo and the broken line that separates the text from the 'message'.

There is, however, the *Tao* across the broken red line from 'Face', and above them *Halaga*, the strong motivating force in politeness in Filipino culture. What is being given *halaga* is the value of *kapwa*. At the bottom of the diagram are *Pagkatao*, *Pagkamaka-tao*, and *Pakikipagkapwa-tao*, which make up the construct of the *Tao* that is being protected when a Filipino employs PS. The question mark in 'the Message?' signifies the differing reactions observed among memo recipients, suggesting possibly differing interpretations of the same memo. While it is not the objective here to investigate the recipients' perceptions of the message, it signifies the observation that inspired this study.

## Method

The method is a combination of the qualitative aspect uses a mix of grounded theory and focused ethnography, with postmodern content analysis, while quantitative methods are in the form of frequency tables and the taxonomy. The participants are Roman Catholic and Protestant school heads of colleges and universities, one of them in Muslim territory. They provided ten memos each. They comprise a representative sampling: one each from Northern Luzon, Central Luzon, Southern Luzon, and Central Visayas; and two each from Mindanao, the National Capital Region (Manila), and Western Visayas. Figure 3 below illustrates the Methodology Flowchart:



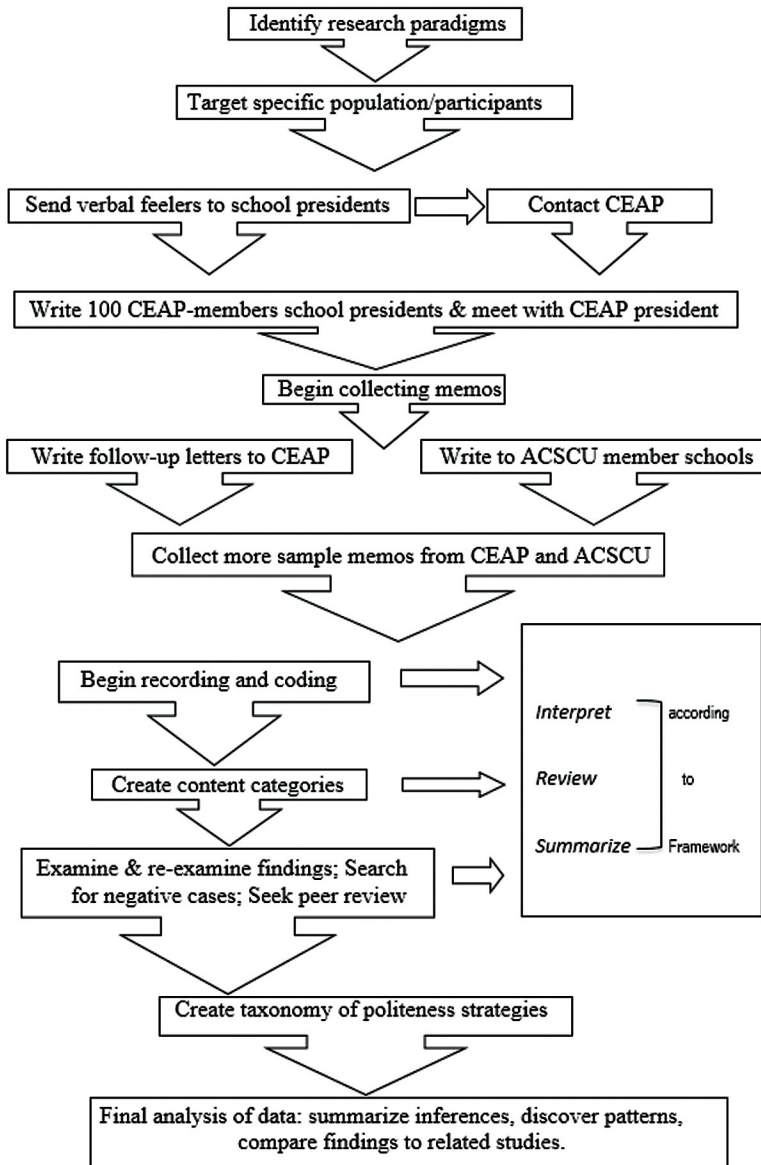


Figure 3. Methodology Flowchart

## Results and discussion

The context of the situation as conceptualized in the framework is confirmed in the participants’ emailed replies, in that they write memos for similar purposes, and that the need for clarity is more important than consideration of personal feelings.

*Filipino Values and Norms of Politeness in the Choice of Strategies.* The table below (Figure 4) shows the tally of Bald-on-Record (BOR) utterances.

Set No., School-Head Participant, & School	BALD-ON-RECORD				Total # of U
	WITH special discourse markers (SDM)	WITHOUT SDM	TOTAL	Percentage over 625 utterances	
1 SMVUIC	2	2	4	0.64	48
2 RFRRCOLSHC	9	2	11	1.76	56
3 RFGBAU	5	0	5	0.80	78
4 DFTDCM	14	0	14	2.24	60
5 DMUTMC	8	4	12	1.92	61
6 DVTDCSLMES	3	3	6	0.96	34
7 FRAANPS	15	18	33	5.28	129
8 DCIANCC	1	4	5	0.80	73
9 SJOSIC	4	0	4	0.64	42
10 RFEPSUSJRC	4	0	4	0.64	44
<b>TOTALS</b>	65	334	98	15.68	625

Figure 4. Bald-on-Record Tally per Participant

Despite the memo writers’ obvious authority that grants them the power to issue strong directives, the number of BOR units in the corpus is small: 98 of 625 PS, or 15.68%, 65 of which contain discourse markers that soften imperatives (i.e., “Please,” and “Kindly”). Only 33 or 5.28%, are thus the type of bald-on-directives described by Brown and Levinson. Softening direct imperatives indicates that the school heads, despite their evident power and authority over the recipients, value the latter’s freedom, desires, and sensibilities.

The next table (Figure 5 below) shows the total numbers and percentages of PS used.

REGION	Set No., School-Head Participant, & School	BALD-ON-RECORD				Politeness Strategies with redress						Total # of U
		WITH special discourse markers (SDM)	WITHOUT SDM	TOTAL	Percentage over 625 utterances	Positive – Politeness Strategies		Negative-Politeness Strategies		Off-Record Politeness Strategies		
						Total #	% over 625 U	Total #	% over 625 U	Total #	% over 625 U	
M (Davao)	1 SMVUIC	2	2	4	0.64	19	3.04	22	3.52	3	0.48	48
CL (N. Ecija)	2 RFRRCOLSHC	9	2	11	1.76	11	1.76	32	5.12	2	0.32	56
NCR (Manila)	3 RFGBAU	5	0	5	0.80	28	4.48	44	7.04	1	0.16	78
M (Marawi)	4 DFTDCM	14	0	14	2.24	1	0.16	42	6.72	3	0.48	60
WV (Maasin)	5 DMUTMC	8	4	12	1.92	7	1.12	42	6.72	0	0.00	61
WV (Miagao)	6 DVTDCSLMES	3	3	6	0.96	16	2.56	10	1.60	2	0.32	34
SL (Naga)	7 FRAANPS	15	18	33	5.28	30	4.80	50	8.00	16	2.56	129
NL (Laoag)	8 DCIANCC	1	4	5	0.80	8	1.28	56	8.96	4	0.64	73
NCR (Manila)	9 SJOSIC	4	0	4	0.64	21	3.36	16	2.56	1	0.16	42
CV (Cebu)	10 RFEPSUSJRC	4	0	4	0.64	13	2.08	27	4.32	0	0.00	44
	<b>TOTALS</b>	65	334	98	15.68	154	25.12	341	54.56	32	5.12	625

Figure 5. Total numbers and percentages of PS used by the 10 participants in 100 memos

The number of negative-PS is more than double that of the positive-PS: 341 of 625, or 54.56%, as opposed to 154, or 25.12% of the latter. This suggests that the Ss are more oriented towards avoidance of imposition on the Hs; they recognize that they will be imposing on their readers' freedom of action, and this bears more weight in their choice of PS than does their recognition of Hs' desire for appreciation and approval of their self-image. Here, the context of text becomes especially significant. The memo is for very precise reasons, and its contents are "generally seen as being irreversible ... [and] ... acceptance of the changes and commitment to the proposed new rules are simply assumed" (Plung and Montgomery 315). The Filipino S recognizes that the threat of feeling imposed is more real than the threat of not being admired and so gives this value. The preponderance of negative PS shows a valuing of the other; and the concern and compassion for others that drives it is elemental in the Filipino's *pagkatao*, as shown by his *pagkamakatao* and *pakikipagkapwa-tao*. The participants' emailed replies to follow-up questions validate this: all ten said that language in memoranda must be polite at all times. Furthermore, they unanimously agreed that consideration of their readers' culture is a consideration when writing their memos.

Even the sheer number of PS—625 in 100 short memoranda—indicates the Filipinos' valuing of smooth interpersonal relationships and harmony with others (Lynch 10).

The next table (Figure 6) shows the types of PS used. In the interest of space, only three will be discussed here. The most popular type is to remove the agent through passive structures (127 units out of 625, or 20.32%). This causes S to distance self from the FTA, which gives H more freedom not to follow the directive because S is hidden; if H does not do as asked because the directive is contrary to H's wants, H feels less imposed upon. The distancing implicates a reluctance on the part of S to impose on H, which is a recognition of H's freedom of choice and action.

STRATEGY USED	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
1 Use passives	127	20.32
2 Bald-on-record with special discourse markers	65	10.4
3 Hedges	55	8.8
4 State the FTA as a rule	50	8.0
5 Nominalization	47	7.52
6 Include both S and H in the activity	46	7.36
7 Giving Reasons	44	7.04
8 Impersonalizing S and H by avoiding use of "I" and "You"	42	6.72
9 Bald-on-record (no redress)	33	5.28
9 Presuppose, raise, assert common ground	29	4.64
10 Be optimistic	21	3.36
11 Question	16	2.56
12 Overgeneralize	10	1.6
13 Use in-group identity markers	10	1.3
14 Presuppose	6	0.96
15 Apologize	3	0.48
16 Give hints	3	0.48
17 Give association cues	3	0.48
18 Exaggerate approval, interest, or sympathy for H	3	0.48
19 Be ironic	2	0.32
20 Be vague	2	0.32
21 Displace H	2	0.32
22 Notice, attend to H	2	0.32
23 Understate	1	0.16
24 Overstate	1	0.16
25 Use contradictions	1	0.16
26 Use rhetorical questions	1	0.16
27 Minimize the imposition	1	0.16
TOTAL	625	100%

Figure 6. Tally and distribution of PS used, in descending order of instances used

This is indicative of the Filipino politeness norms of not being confrontational and of providing opportunities for “face-saving”. Because the agent disappears, there is no imposing, coercing S. The second norm is the bald-on-record with special discourse markers “Please” and “Kindly”. By adding discourse markers to soften the direct imperatives, the S delays their impact, thus mitigating the FTA. This reveals the Filipino S’s desire to ensure harmonious and smooth interpersonal relations (SIR).

The third norm are hedges (55 units, or 8.8%). The hedging distances the speaker from the content of the utterance by making the connection less clear. With criticism, for instance, hedging softens the impact, making it easier for the H to accept (Brown and Levinson 146). This is in keeping with the Filipinos’ dislike for aggression and putting a premium on sensitivity toward others.

*Politeness and Filipino Communication Style in Other Elements of the Memo.* Seven of ten participants deviate from the western prescriptions by including salutations and complimentary closings. This reflects the importance that Filipinos place on SIR (Guthrie 63) and on showing concern for others, which are at the crux of *pakikipagkapwa-tao* and *pagkamaka-tao*, respectively. It is also a way of mitigating the abruptness of the text and not going directly to *pagbibigay-alam*. Also interesting are the uniquely Filipino close: “For strict compliance”, “For immediate attention”, and “For your guidance”. These are not prescribed and unnecessary, since the context of text implicate these: it is a given that directives and information are for the readers’ guidance, attention, and compliance. Why the need to say so? Because the memo is construed to cut across the normative stages of communication in conventional Philippine society, these are seen as the sender’s way of reiterating the finality of the message. It is to state categorically that there are no nuances, and that the message is the end of the communication line. The *pahayag* stage in the *pagbibigay-alam* process is understood as already having taken place, and so there is no *pahiwatig* or additional *pabatid* to be expected. This is because the Filipino S is conscious that s/he employs many non-direct means of conveying information in the process, and so this is a way of ensuring that the message has been delivered.

## Conclusion

These are the answers to the sub-problems posed:

1. As a genre driven by efficiency rather than politeness, the memo's one-way channel, directness, and prescribed brevity are at odds with the Filipinos' interpersonal orientation, preference for face-to-face interaction, and "indirect," multi-process style of communication.
2. 54.56% of PS are negative-PS. B&L would interpret this as S being more orientated towards avoidance of imposition on the H. Bringing the context of text to bear helps us see that, since the message is precise and generally irreversible, the threat of feeling imposed upon is more real than the threat of not being admired and is thus given more *halaga*. This clearly shows the Filipinos 'other-centeredness', a shared inner perception that does not want to impose on the other. Every memo is a potential FTA, so the Filipino S's preference for negative-PS shows the *pagpapahalaga* for others that is crucial to one's *pagkatao*, which define one's *pagkamaka-tao*, and which shape one's *pakikipagkapwa-tao*.
3. The values and norms of politeness in Filipino culture that are observed in the PS are the following:
  - a. Not being confrontational and wanting to provide opportunities for "face-saving" as seen in the popularity of passives;

- b. Desire to ensure harmonious and SIR seen in prefacing BOR imperatives with “Please”, “Kindly”, salutations and complimentary closings.
  - c. Dislike for directness and confrontation, and desire to provide others with the opportunity to protect their *pagkatao* seen in Impersonalizing, Hedging, and Nominalization.
  - d. Valuing the group and belongingness seen in “Include S and H in the activity”, “Give reasons”, “Be optimistic”, and “Raise, assert common ground”.
4. Because the memo’s prescribed directness and brevity do not allow for the Filipino *pakikiramdam*, every memo is a potential FTA. The top PS choices, salutations and closings indicate that the participants recognize this lack of opportunity for *pakikiramdam* and *pahiwatig*, and are making conscious efforts to accomplish *pabatid*, rather than going straight to *pahayag*.

Using the Brown and Levinson framework, the given motivation for negative PS cannot explain why S, as highest authority, would go to such lengths just so H will not feel imposed upon. Against the backdrop of Filipino culture and focusing on the construct of ‘tao’, however, it can be clearly understood. What Brown and Levinson classified according to negative (N) and positive (P) face-wants of H can be viewed differently, in this alternative taxonomy offered (Figure 7 below):



<p><i>Pagkatao</i> motivated by <i>pagkamakatao</i>, showing <i>halaga sa kapwa</i> by removing focus on self and instead letting the other feel good about him/herself and not feel imposed upon— <b>both of B&amp;L's face wants addressed</b></p>		<p>B&amp;L C A T E G O R Y</p>	<p><i>Pagkatao</i> motivated by <i>pakikipagkapwa-tao</i>, showing <i>halaga sa kapwa</i> via utterances of leader wanting to work together with subordinate, thus making H feel good about him/herself and not feel imposed upon— <b>both face wants addressed</b></p>	
STRATEGY	Notes		STRATEGY	Notes
Use of passives	Removes agent/doer Removes focus from S as source of FTA	N		
Hedges	By making the connection 'fuzzy', minimizes the absolute 'truth' of—and ergo the absolute authority of—S's directive	N		
State the FTA as rule	Sis removed from the act, not in the B&L sense of distancing self from the FTA and imposition, but, by stating an a priori removes the spotlight from self as the source of the FTA, and instead puts the focus on what needs to be done	N		
Nominalize	Also removes focus from the self (of S) as source of directive; instead, highlights the act that needs to be done by transforming verbs into nouns	N		
		P	Include S and H in the activity	Leader working WITH subordinate
		P	Give reasons	Leader respecting subordinate enough to want to rationalize the act, giving reasons as shared goals
Impersonalize	Once again, the use of "I" is avoided	N		
		P	Presuppose, raise, assert common ground	Leader makes subordinate feel they are equals
		P	Be optimistic	Leader stating s/he wants & looks forward to H's cooperation (working together)

Figure 7. Agnir-Paraan's Taxonomy of PS understood through the Filipino worldview, with both B&L's face wants satisfied but without B&L's dichotomies

Brown and Levinson's categories remain intact but, seen alongside a Filipino orientation, are no longer limited and limiting, no longer about approach or avoidance, positive or negative. In the Filipino paradigm, the S avoids what may be perceived to be S's ascendancy over the other and highlights S's superiority, causing H's *pagkatao* to be alienated and feel imposed upon. S's own *pagkatao* is tied to showing *pakikipagkapwa-tao* by being *makatao*. Given the *pakikiramdam* of *kapwa*, H feels the same: H's *pagkatao* is tied to how s/he responds to S. There is thus no dichotomy: both "positive and negative face" wants can be satisfied.

Some studies using the Brown and Levinson model contest the claim that the underlying motivations for politeness are universal (Ide 1989, Gu 1990). This study shows how aspects of it can remain valid when viewed within the conceptual framework and offer a different construct—one that is emically constructed. In its offered construct of *tao*, it has helped open up possibilities for the reconfiguration of 'face', equating it with 'self' and 'identity' within the context of one's own culture, as others have suggested (Ting-Tooney in Morand 2003; Mao 1992; Triandis 1995; Markus and Kitayama 1991; and Mascuñana 2007). It has addressed a common criticism of Brown and Levinson's model: that its heavy reliance on speech act theory has caused neglect of context and too much focus on isolated units of utterances (Blum-Kulka 1990; Calvo and Gelaykens 1995).

It has also provided research data for a text genre that has not hitherto been studied within the cross-cultural socio-pragmatic field. In so doing, it points to directions in studying how cultures are constructed in interaction, for example how Filipino culture is reconstructed in the cross-cultural encounter between the western-oriented memo and the Filipino administrator. Another direction is the investigation of how genres evolve over time in reciprocal interactions between institutionalized practices and human action. Other emergent patterns that suggest differences in how participants negotiated the PS—indicating that religious affiliation, gender, and regional differences may be significant—can be pursued. The relationship of the first language to the use of politeness in a second language could also be studied in the context of

Filipino writers of English correspondence. The ambiguity and overlapping in Brown and Levinson's descriptions of their categories, caused mainly by their mixing of behavioral indicators with linguistic indicators, needs to be resolved. Furthermore, the possibility that second-and-foreign-language users assign different meanings—pragmatically—for said indicators, should be pursued.

Also, a study of what politeness means pragmatically to Filipinos is recommended. Perhaps the difference in the classification lie there, and perhaps more accurate descriptions and indicators can be better drawn up to reflect Filipino motivations and language use when choosing politeness strategies. Finally, the question mark in the conceptual framework implicates inquiry into the reception of the message: how do Filipino readers respond to the memo's directness that is perceived to stifle *pakikiramdam* and transgress *damdamin*? What determines the way a message is received?

This study celebrates the distinctly hybrid, multicultural uniqueness of the memo as it has been transformed by Filipinos' use. In such a state, it positions itself and its writers in what Bhaba (1994) famously calls the 'in-between spaces' "that provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity and innovate sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (Peterson par. 39). That Filipinos have taken this western genre and made it theirs is a form of creative resistance, even as the resistance is not a rejection of the genre. Culture is fluid and dynamic, shifting, settling, and centering. Looking at our own constructs that defy the dominant paradigm is a good place to take off from in order to find space and direction—not to stay fixated within the indigenous constructs, but to acknowledge what being Filipino has enabled.

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