Activity 4.1

(a) Who has what power in this interaction?
Both participants have power but for different reasons. Abe has power over Matt because Matt is his nephew and so Abe ‘can impose his own plans’ because of family seniority (respect your elders). Also, simply by calling, Abe has summoned Matt to the phone – if Abe had not called, Matt would still have been doing whatever he was doing. On the other hand, Matt has power over Abe because he can refuse to provide the service Abe wants. Because getting a service is the purpose of the call, Matt arguably has the most power overall.

(b) What evidence of power is there? Is it linguistic or non-linguistic?
In order of appearance in the activity, power is evidenced as follows:

Exhibit A: Non-linguistic
Matt is 25. Abe is older. Abe has age on his side.

Exhibit B: Non-linguistic
Abe is Matt’s uncle. Abe has family hierarchy on his side.

Exhibit C: Linguistic
Abe goes through the motions of initial pleasantries. In situations where power is more rigidly defined (say in the marines or the police force), requests (or orders) can (must?) be made more bluntly. Abe’s power is therefore somewhat mitigated (cf. Exhibit D).

Exhibit D: Linguistic
Abe doesn’t straightforwardly ask Matt to record the TV programme. Instead he builds his request with three pre-requests (lines 7, 9, 13), each of which offers Matt a possible reason to justify not doing the favour (they may not have satellite TV; they may not get the CBeebies channel; Matt might not want/be able to do Abe a favour). The request itself is also built in three instalments (lines 15, 17, 19–24) and the first two of these provide further opportunities for Matt to refuse (maybe Matt is busy tonight; maybe he is busy at five to seven).

Exhibit E: Linguistic
In L10, Matt forthrightly tells Abe to ‘Hang on a minute’ – in essence, here he is imposing his own plans on Abe.

Exhibit F: Linguistic
By L12, Matt would realize that Abe wasn’t asking all this just for information, but rather was leading up to a request (that is after all the purpose of pre-requests). And yet in L12 he doesn’t pre-empt Abe with something like ‘Yes we can, do you want us to record something?’. Instead he waits for Abe to go on record as needing help.
Exhibit G: Linguistic
In lines 19–24, Abe makes the request (record Newsround) with an indirect speech act (⇒ 3) ‘could you …’ which deflects the force of the imposition. He then provides an account of why it is important for him (‘I’m interested in the exact wording of …’) and justifies why he can’t do the task himself (‘I keep missing it on terrestrial TV’). Finally Abe makes two more indirect requests (‘Could you write it down for me and call me back with it?’). While you might intuitively think otherwise, the second of these (‘Could you … call me back with it?’) can actually signal subservience because if Abe were to offer to do the calling back, that might mean again imposing on Matt’s free time. If Matt calls, he can decide to do so when it suits him.

Exhibit H: Linguistic
In L25, Matt chooses to say ’No worries’. This signals (even if only in a highly conventionalized form) that Matt recognizes that Abe’s request may have been something that Abe was worried about. In other words, it signals that Abe is subservient to Matt.

Exhibit I: Linguistic
In L26, Abe says ‘Thanks ever so much’. This serves three functions: (i) it fairly explicitly puts his debt on record; (ii) it signals the degree of gratitude is non-trivial (‘ever so much’) and hence (iii) it signals that Abe is subservient to Matt.

(c) In what other possible scenarios might there be a power differential? Why?
Here are some suggestions.
Whenever Matt wants a favour from Abe the roles would be reversed.
If Abe ever delivered a course on communication skills to the Metropolitan Police Service, Abe and Matt would be in a teacher–student relationship and Abe would hold power.
In a legal altercation, Matt would have power over Abe as Matt is an officer of the law.
In any type of physical contest Matt would have power over Abe: Matt used to be an anti-tank commando in the marines, Abe is an academic. Matt is 190cm tall and 87kg of mainly muscle, while Abe is 177cm and 115kg of mainly fat!

Activity 4.2

Line 1
Girl: Here mate c’n ya go to the shop for us please=
(a) Whose face is threatened?
   Adam’s (Hearer’s).
(b) What type of face is threatened?
   Negative face: Girl is imposing on Adam, putting pressure on him to do something for her.
(c) What is it exactly that produces the threat?
   Negative face: (type 1, sub-type a) request.
**Line 2**
Adam: =No.
(a) Whose face is threatened?
Girl’s (Hearer’s).
(b) What type of face is threatened?
Positive face: Adam suggests that he doesn’t care about Girl’s wants.
(c) What is it exactly that produces the threat?
Positive face: (type 2.e) blatant non-cooperation.

**Line 3**
Girl: Why?
(a) Whose face is threatened?
Adam’s (Hearer’s).
(b) What type of face is threatened?
Negative face: Girl is putting pressure on Adam to respond with an account for his non-cooperation (cf. the power of the first parts of adjacency pairs discussed in Chapter 2).
Positive face: Girl suggests that she has a negative opinion of Adam’s action and that she doesn’t care about his feelings.
(c) What is it exactly that produces the threat?
Negative face: (type 1.a) request.
Positive face:
(type 1.a) expression of disapproval, criticism, complaint
(type 1.b) challenge
(type 1.d) raising dangerously divisive topic.

**Line 4**
Adam: Because if you want me to go, it’s for something illegal.
(a) Whose face is threatened?
Girl’s (Hearer’s).
(b) What type of face is threatened?
Positive face: Adam suggests that he has a negative opinion of Girl.
(c) What is it exactly that produces the threat?
Positive face: (type 1.a) expression of disapproval, criticism, reprimand, accusation.

**Line 5**
Girl: It’s only for a packet of FAGS!!
(a) Whose face is threatened?
Adam’s (Hearer’s)
Girl’s (Speaker’s).
(b) What type of face is threatened?
Adam’s (H’s) negative face: Girl’s anger may put pressure on Adam to protect himself.
Adam’s (H’s) positive face: Girl suggests that she has a negative opinion of Adam’s action and that she doesn’t care about his feelings.
Girl’s (S’s) negative face.
Girl’s (S’s) positive face.

(c) What is it exactly that produces the threat?
Adam’s (H’s) negative face: (type 3.b) expression of strong negative emotion (anger).
Adam’s (H’s) positive face:
(type 1.a) expression of disapproval, criticism, ridicule, complaint
(type 1.b) challenge
(type 2.a) expression of violent emotion (cf. emphasis and volume).
Girl’s (S’s) negative face: (type c) excuse (Adam has just criticized Girl who has consequently been pressured into providing a good reason for her initial request).
Girl’s (S’s) positive face: (type f) emotion leakage.

Activity 4.3

(a) Which option do you think Arthur chose?
In fact, he chose the final option: he did not mention the event in any way whatsoever.

(b) Why?
Although James was a neighbour, he was a relatively new one. They were, therefore, essentially strangers. In other words, the social distance between them, D, was quite high (say 8 out of 9).

Similarly, James had potentially a lot of power over Arthur. He was certainly in a position to refuse Arthur’s ‘request’. He would also have been in a position to wreak some form of revenge (say by scratching Arthur’s car, by making nuisance phone calls, or even by depositing undesirable material through his letterbox)! In other words, P was also high (say 8 out of 9).

Finally, telling anyone that their child’s behaviour is undesirable is a double-edged (and thus doubly-dangerous) sword: not only is the child insulted, but also, indirectly, is the parent for it is they, after all, who have been responsible for the upbringing of their offspring. Insulting someone’s child risks getting verbal and possibly even physical abuse in return. In other words, R was very high (possibly even 9 out of 9).

Adding these values for D, P and R together yields a \( W \times \) score of 25/27 – clearly in the upper range of weightiness values. Consequently, it is perhaps not so surprising that FTA avoidance was the chosen option.

(c) What possible consequences might Arthur’s choice have had?

The best consequence of his (rationally chosen) option was continued neighbourly social relations (as James and his family were never actually offended). Hence there was no reason for a scratched car, verbal/physical abuse, or even nasty letterbox surprises. Indeed, avoiding the issue was so the right choice, as this type of anti-social teenage behaviour was never repeated thus proving that sometimes it is indeed best to hold back.

(d) What possible consequences might each of the other four choices have had?

Any of the first three options would almost certainly have led to some (though admittedly varying) degree of ill-feeling and possibly even concomitant revengeful acts.

The fourth option (of doing the FTA off-record) could have had two possible outcomes. On the one hand, the FTA might not have been recognized for what it was (request/complaint) which would thus have made it ineffective. This is always a possibility with implicit acts (\( \Rightarrow 3 \)). On the other hand, assuming the
illocutionary force of the off-record act was recognized (as a request/complaint), if the response had been obviously hostile, Arthur could have legitimately denied the offending implicature. It is this deniability (cancellation) of implicatures that makes them so very useful in social interaction.

Activity 4.4

(a) All these requests are explicit. All redressive actions are therefore ‘on-record’. Below each utterance we pair linguistic items with corresponding (+/-) politeness strategies (noted in parentheses).

1) Get me a Coke.
   This is simply a bald on-record request (in the syntactic form of an imperative order).
   Total number of strategies: 0 positive; 0 negative.

2) Get me a Coke, Andy!
   Andy (+4).
   Total number of strategies: 1 positive; 0 negative.

3) You’ll be a pal and get us a Coke won’t you Andy?
   You’ll be … won’t you? (+11); a pal (+4); us (+4); won’t you (+3)/(-2); Andy (+4).
   Total number of strategies: 5 positive; 1 negative.

4) Could you possibly get me a Coke from the machine please, Andy? I’ll go next week.
   Could you (-1)/(-2); possibly (-3); please (-1)/(-10); Andy (+4); I’ll go next week (+14).
   Total number of strategies: 2 positive; 5 negative.

5) If you’re going to the machine, could you possibly get me a Coke while you’re there please?
   If you’re going to the machine (-4); could you (-1)/(-2); possibly (-3); while you’re there (-4); please (-1)/(-10).
   Total number of strategies: 0 positive; 7 negative.

6) If you’re going to the machine, would you possibly be so kind as to get me a Coke while you’re there please?
   If you’re going to the machine (-4); would you (-1)/(-2); possibly (-3); be so kind (+15)/(-5); while you’re there (-4); please (-1)/(-10).
   Total number of strategies: 1 positive; 8 negative.

7) I’m really sorry to ask, but if you’re going to the machine, I’d be ever so grateful if you would possibly be so kind as to get me a Coke while you’re there please. I’m really sorry to ask (-6); if you’re going to the machine (-4); I’d be ever so grateful (-10); if you would (-1)/(-2)/(-3); possibly (-3); be so kind(+15)/(-5); while you’re there (-4); please (-1)/(-10).
   Total number of strategies: 1 positive; 11 negative.

(b) These results point to several basic observations about linguistic politeness in British culture:

(i) It is entirely possible to use both positive and negative strategies within the same utterance – even though B&L’s broad categorization often seems to be interpreted as implying a clear-cut, ‘either/or’ distinction.
(ii) Up to a point, the more polite utterances use more strategies (but too many may result in implied sarcasm).
(iii) Positive politeness tends to decrease in more polite utterances.
(iv) Negative politeness tends to increase in more polite utterances.
(v) Where utterances have equal amounts of linguistic politeness (as in (4) and (5) with seven strategies in each), it is the one with more negative strategies which is likely to be considered more polite overall.
(vi) At a more simplistic level, it is often longer utterances which appear more polite.

These observations are represented in Figures 4.2 and 4.3:

Figure 4.2 Number of politeness strategies in the seven possible Coke utterances

Figure 4.3 Number of words in the seven possible Coke utterances