Cultural outsiders’ evaluations of (im)politeness in Finland and in France

Abstract:
Intercultural interaction may be complicated by differing verbal and nonverbal displays of (im)politeness. Yet cultural outsiders’ evaluations of (im)politeness have not been widely examined. To fill this gap, this study investigated perceptions of Finnish politeness among French people living in Finland and perceptions of French politeness among Finns currently or previously living in France. Focus groups were used in order to study culturally shared (im)politeness norms and their variations. Based on a dialogical discourse analysis of five focus group discussions, it is argued that personal space emerges as a salient factor for politeness in Finland, while verbal and nonverbal rapport is more important in France. These overarching themes — personal space and rapport — led to discussions about greetings, silence and holding doors open. Greeting and opening doors appeared more categorical in France, while silence was better tolerated in Finland. In addition to dominant norms, regional and individual variations were reported. Overall, (im)politeness norms appeared to be more vague in Finland than in France. Building upon this study, future research should examine if changes emerge in Finnish (im)politeness norms related to rapport or if space remains more valued.

Keywords: (im)politeness, intercultural, norms, focus groups

1 Introduction
(Im)politeness plays a key role in maintaining interpersonal relationships, but problems may arise in intercultural situations based on differing verbal (e.g., greetings) and nonverbal (e.g., silence) displays of politeness. If (im)politeness is or is not present where it should or should not be (Keckes 2015: 46), intercultural interaction may be impaired. Yet most studies of (im)politeness focus on contrastive or cross-cultural analyses based on data collected separately from within different cultures (Haugh 2010: 139–140).

This study seeks to add a new perspective to (im)politeness by analyzing evaluations of intercultural interaction and concentrating on lesser studied languages and cultures (van der Bom and Grainger 2015: 173): in this case, Finnish and French. Reported differences exist in forms of address (Isosävi 2010; Isosävi and Lappalainen 2015) and in (im)politeness perceptions (Buchart 2010: 100). Most previous (im)politeness studies concentrated on cultural insiders’ (emic) evaluations (Ogiernmann and Suszczyńska 2011; Fukushima and Haugh 2014). This study, however, targets the less-studied cultural outsiders’ (etic) perceptions, uncovering expectations and norms reflecting the concept of (im)politeness in their culture of origin.

More specifically, this study aimed to investigate culturally shared (im)politeness norms and their variations by analyzing how French people living in Finland perceive Finnish politeness and, alternatively, how Finns currently or previously living in France perceive French politeness. Applying the lesser utilized focus group method, this study examined the following questions: 1) Based on which moral grounds do Finns and French people consider realizations or nonrealizations of different acts (im)polite? (2) What are the key verbal and nonverbal acts of (im)politeness discussed by Finns and French people? and 3) How is (im)politeness negotiated in focus group discussions? The first two questions tackle the description of verbal and nonverbal acts as well as the reasons behind their realizations or nonrealizations (cf. Barros Garcia & Terkourafi 2015: 230). The third question concentrates on the focus groups discussions as interactional situations.
In this paper, I argue that the key feature of Finnish politeness focuses on respect for the personal space of the other person, whereas the French understanding of politeness emphasizes verbal or nonverbal rapport with another person. Despite the respective dominant norms, both regional and individual variations were reported. This paper begins by reviewing prior work on Finnish and French (im)politeness. I then discuss the discursive approach to culture and norms in section three, arguing that the sharedness and variability in norms need to be balanced in (im)politeness research. In section four, I describe the focus group method and data. Then, in section five, I present a discussion of three primary themes: greetings, silence and holding doors open. Finally, I discuss the implications of this proposed account of Finnish and French (im)politeness for future research.

2 Finnish and French (im)politeness studies
Little attention has been paid to (im)politeness in interactions between Finnish and French individuals, although several studies have focused separately on each of these languages. Following the classification by Grainger (2011: 169–172), I categorized previous Finnish and French (im)politeness studies into “first-wave Gricean approaches” and “second-wave post-modern approaches / discursive politeness”, based on the theoretical commitment mentioned in those papers.

First-wave studies primarily adopted Brown and Levinson's (1987) model on face-work involving categorizations of avoidance-based negative politeness (e.g., apologies, linguistic and nonlinguistic deference, hedges and impersonalizing mechanisms) and approach-based positive politeness (e.g., similar wants, familiar and joking behavior). The French linguist Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2005a) developed Brown and Levinson’s model by adding the face flattering act (FFA) (e.g., thank you) to positive politeness, and the categories of apoliteness, hyperpoliteness and impoliteness. Her study shows that both positive (e.g., compliments, thanks, good wishes) and negative politeness (e.g., apologies to repair territorial intrusion, indirect requests) are important in the everyday lives of the French (Kerbrat–Orecchioni’s 2005a: 40–42). During interactions in small French shops, politeness is all-pervasive, consisting of thanking, conditional requests and minimizers such as the adjective petit, “small” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2005b). Yet the importance of positive and negative politeness is also attached to informal conversations (Traverso 1996: 229).

In contrast, Finnish politeness is described with respect to the personal space of the other person (Larjavaara 1999; 2007: 472–473), as withdrawing and being indirect and avoiding reference to the listener (Hakulinen 1987: 146; Yli-Vakkuri 2005). According to Larjavaara (1999), formal negative politeness has less value in the modern world, where age and status are losing their value, while positive politeness works better. Both Larjavaara’s and Yli-Vakkuri’s studies are based more on impressions and anecdotal examples rather than on empirical evidence. Thus few empirical first-wave Finnish studies primarily focusing on (im)politeness exist. For example, Tiililä (1992) studied the violation of Gricean maxims in official letters, and Peterson and Vaattovaara (2014) compared the politeness markers kiitos [=“thank you”] and pliis [a loan of “please”]. In other Finnish studies, (im)politeness remains a secondary issue. For instance, Hakulinen (1987) examined avoiding personal reference, Muikku-Werner (1993) focused on imposition in public speech and Peterson (2010) studied requests and forms of address.
Several recent Finnish and French studies adopted the second-wave approach (e.g., Watts 2003). This approach considers meaning as fluid and negotiable, placing interest on a discursive dispute — that is, what politeness means for speakers (first-order politeness). The second-wave discursive approach was developed as a response to critics of the first-wave approach. These critiques argue that the approach decontextualizes speech acts, overly focusing on the speaker’s intention, creating a static view of interactions, and thus ignoring participants’ interpretations and claims of universality (Grainger 2011: 169–170). One second-wave French study by Beeching (2006) argues that stigmatized, post-posed quest functions as a politeness marker in workplace contexts. In her comparative study of French and Japanese apologies and thanks, Claudel (2015) relates personal choices (e.g., formal vs. informal language) to politeness and social obligations (e.g., rank, status) to civility. In comparison, Isosävi (2010: 160) argues that no form of address is inherently (im)polite.

Among second-wave Finnish studies, politeness represents more of a consequence than a starting point. The discursive approach is used to argue that minimalistic linguistic expressions in service encounters in Finnish convenience stores do not reflect impoliteness, as claimed by laypeople. Rather, they are suitable to the situation and are also found in other cultures (Sorjonen, Raevaara and Lappalainen 2009: 113; cf. also Holttinen 2016). Thus Finnish customers appear not to regard these encounters as impolite; on the contrary, it is polite to expect that both the salesperson and the customer fulfill their roles without too many mitigating strategies (Raevaara 2009: 320–312). Authentic service encounters are compared to textbook dialogues by Tanner (2012: 170), who criticizes the latter for presenting politeness as a decontextualized phenomenon. That is, an imperative is considered an impolite form or a conditional polite form, which does not necessarily correspond to reality.

Previous first- and second-wave politeness studies in Finnish and in French have largely focused on speech acts, such as requests and thanking in certain contexts, particularly in service encounters. This study, however, concentrates on cultural norms and their variations, in accordance with the second-wave discursive approach.

3 Discursive approach to culture and norms
Brown and Levinson’s model has been criticized for its claims of universality and generalizations about cultures and language groups (Mills and Kádár 2011: 27–28). In their work, Brown and Levinson (1987: 245–246) distinguish between positive politeness cultures (e.g., U.S.A.) and negative politeness cultures (e.g., Britain) on the basis of the weightiness of face-threatening acts determined by social power, social distance and the imposition of the speech act. This model is rejected by the discursive approach — each cultural group applies both types of politeness to some degree (Mills and Kádár 2011: 27). Subcultural differences are not absent from Brown and Levinson’s (1987: 246) model, but rather are static. Thus dominated groups have positive politeness cultures, while dominating groups feature negative politeness cultures; furthermore, women use more elaborate positive politeness strategies than men. Discursive research has indicated that a dominant group’s norms are held as natural, while other groups’ norms represent deviant behavior leading to conservative evaluations of politeness (Mills and Kádár 2011: 22, 33–40).

The discursive approach underlines the variability of norms. Mills and Kádár (2011: 24) argue that “[w]ithin all cultures, there is not one single set of politeness rules which is uncontested.” In fact, Eelen (2001: 222–224) emphasizes that individuals are free to reject existing norms or to use them creatively. Does this mean that the discursive approach depends on the “minute
by minute description of specific occurrences of politeness and impoliteness” (Kecskes 2017: 18)? Despite any emphasis on variability, Eelen (2001: 233) discusses the sharedness of (im)politeness norms. Furthermore, Mills and Kádár (2011: 24) do not claim that nothing can be said about (im)politeness at the cultural level, but that the variability of norms (based on region, class, gender) must be taken into account.

Nevertheless, the strong emphasis on variability has led discursive researchers to limit themselves to the study of communities of practice which do not exist in a social vacuum (Haugh 2011: 255). Christie (2015: 365) raises a pertinent question: Is a dynamic and local process of meaning-making overemphasized at the expense of the social and shared? I argue that a balance between variability and sharedness is needed in (im)politeness research, and ultimately agree with Mills and Kádár (2011: 21–23) regarding the need to develop new models to examine (im)politeness at the cultural level. That is, methodologies designed to analyze the linguistic behavior of individuals (usually only two) should not be used to study politeness at the social level (Haugh 2010). Therefore, I propose applying the method of focus group discussions. Concentrating on what (im)politeness means for speakers, the dialogical analysis of focus group discussions sheds light on both shared cultural evaluations of (im)politeness and their variations, as emphasized by the discursive approach.

4 Method and data
4.1 Focus groups as a dialogical method
By using focus groups, this study expands upon methods commonly used in (im)politeness research (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich et al. 2010: 701). Focus groups provide the researcher with a better understanding of how people think about an issue (Krueger & Casey 2015: 2). In a focus group, 4 to 12 participants address questions introduced by the researcher, distinguishing them from other discussion groups which are not set up for research purposes (Marková et al. 2006: 33).

One strength associated with focus groups is that they shed light on shared knowledge — that is, normative understandings and social representations. Today, sources of normative influence are complex, yet human behavior remains normative to some extent; a focus group represents a legitimate event for a collective “retrospective introspection” of taken-for-granted beliefs (Bloor et al. 2001: 4). Furthermore, they reveal ambiguities regarding norms and interpretations. A second strength is that focus groups are considered a case of “distributed cognition” where participants think together (Marková et al. 2006: 131). For this reason, no similar data could be obtained through individual interviews or questionnaires. One limitation of focus groups lies in the self-reporting of participants’ perceptions. More specifically, it is possible that participants’ reports do not fully correspond to the reality. Yet, it has been argued that the rich focus group data on group norms correspond to long-term ethnographic fieldwork (Bloor et al. 2001: 5–6).

Despite the abundance of literature on focus groups, they are rarely analyzed as group discussions. That is, interactional and dialogical aspects remain neglected when using content analysis (Wilkinson 1999: 236). This study, however, relies on dialogical discourse analysis, thereby emphasizing interactions between participants, their thoughts and arguments as well as sociocultural traditions.
4.2 Focus group data

In order to recruit participants for focus groups of this study, I used my contacts and established new contacts at an event on cultural differences between France and Finland. Focus group discussions took place in a room at the University of Helsinki library in 2016. Before the discussions, participants completed a background information sheet by answering questions about their age, profession, time spent abroad and region of origin. Table 1 presents the main background information of the focus group participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants (N)</th>
<th>Gender: F (N) / M (N)</th>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Professions</th>
<th>Years of staying in Finland/France</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FG1-France 5</td>
<td>2 / 3</td>
<td>32, 42, 45, 47, 49</td>
<td>curator, researcher, teacher (n = 3)</td>
<td>7, 9, 15, 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG2-France 5</td>
<td>4 / 1</td>
<td>28, 29, 34, 35, 52</td>
<td>account manager, PhD student, teacher (n = 2), public relations manager</td>
<td>0.6, 2.5, 7, 14, 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG3-France 3</td>
<td>2 / 1</td>
<td>26, 51, 55</td>
<td>communications manager, teacher (n = 2)</td>
<td>2.5, 23, 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG1-Finland 5</td>
<td>3 / 2</td>
<td>37, 56, 57, 61, 64</td>
<td>director of legal affairs, teacher (n = 4)</td>
<td>5, 7, 10, 11, 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG2-Finland 4</td>
<td>4 / 0</td>
<td>23, 23, 26, 31</td>
<td>undergraduate student (n = 4)</td>
<td>0.75, 0.8, 1.5, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All groups 22</td>
<td>15 / 7</td>
<td>23–66</td>
<td>teacher (n = 11), undergraduate student (n = 4), others (n = 7)</td>
<td>0.75–33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Background information of focus group participants.

Altogether, there were 22 participants. French participants (n = 13) living in Finland discussed Finnish politeness in three groups (FG1-France, FG2-France and FG3-France); Finnish participants (n = 9) currently or previously residing in France discussed French politeness in two groups (FG1-Finland and FG2-Finland). The French groups consisted of native French-speaking individuals born in France (see note 1). The Finnish groups consisted of native Finnish speakers born in Finland.² All French participants were currently living in Finland. Aside from one participant, Finnish participants had all returned to Finland. Each group consisted of three to five participants. Mini-focus groups provide in-depth insights allowing researchers an understanding of people’s experiences (Krueger and Casey 2015: 82). In total, more women (n = 15) than men (n = 7) participated in the focus groups. Participants ranged in age from 23 to 64 years old. Participants represented highly educated individuals,

¹ Exception: one participant was born in Finland, but had lived for extended periods in French-speaking countries.
² Exception: one participant of FG1-Finland was born in an Eastern-European country, but has lived in Finland for 40 years.
thus limiting this study’s strengths. Nearly half of the participants consisted of teachers (n = 11). They were primarily language (n = 10) or French instructors (n = 8) working mainly at universities (n = 8). One group, FG2-Finland, consisted of students of French (n = 4) who returned from Erasmus exchange programs.

As to the region of origin, not presented in Table 1, French participants originated from different regions in France (e.g., Paris, and eastern, western, central, northern and southern France), whereby the most common region of origin was northern France (n = 5). Finnish participants were primarily from the Helsinki metropolitan area or the surrounding region. French participants lived in the Helsinki metropolitan area or in the surrounding region. Some French participants had also lived in other Finnish towns. In comparison, Finnish participants lived in various parts of France, primarily residing in Paris and the Ile-de-France region.

Turning to the organization of the focus group discussions and their realizations, I acted as the moderator. I presented the theme and explained that my role consisted of asking questions and ensuring that everyone would be allowed to share their views; rather than talking to the moderator, participants were instructed to talk with one another (Krueger & Casey 2015: 118). An assistant moderator — Tuuli Holttinen — took notes during the focus group discussions. These notes served as a basis for the transcriptions of discussions. During the focus group session, I asked ten open-ended questions, allowing participants to determine the direction of their responses:

1. What does politeness evoke in you?
2. What were your first impressions of Finnish / French politeness?
3. What is considered polite in Finland / France?
4. What do you appreciate in Finnish / French politeness?
5. What causes you problems in terms of Finnish / French politeness?
6. What is considered impolite in Finland / France?
7. During your stay, have you noticed changes in Finnish / French politeness?  
8. During your stay, have you noticed changes in your behavior related to politeness?  
9. If you had one minute to describe Finnish / French politeness to a person who will move to that country, what advice would you give?  
10. Is there something related to Finnish / French politeness which has not been discussed?

Unlike in market research focus groups (Puchta and Potter 1999), here the moderator occupied a rather retracted role, primarily intervening if participants needed clarification or forgot the question during a lively discussion. Participants engaged in multiparty conversations through unregulated turn-taking, and it was often difficult for the moderator to intervene with a question. In all groups, some participants knew one another, but in most groups, not everybody knew each other beforehand. Because the participants were not complete strangers, the discussions may have been more lively and easy-going. The discussions lasted from 60 to 105 minutes. All the five focus group discussions (total time = 7.3 hours) were audio- and videotaped, and subsequently transcribed and analyzed.

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3 The French participants discussed Finnish politeness.  
4 The Finnish participants discussed French politeness.  
5 This question lies beyond the scope of this article.  
6 This question will be examined in the article Cultural outsiders’ adaptation to Finnish and French politeness norms.
4.3 Analytical concepts and processes

In my analysis, I adopted the concepts (proto-)thema, theme and topic originating from the theory of social representations (Marková et al. 2006: 134–139; 170–178). In this theory, a proto-thema consists of basic relational categories within a culture, such as (im)polite, which carry potential meaning and often are taken for granted. When we travel to or live in another culture, the proto-thema of (im)polite may become problematic and rise to the level of consciousness. Thus, as Finnish and French participants negotiated the meaning of the proto-thema (im)polite, it became a theme that created topics. A topic, then, represents something participants talk about at least sequentially.

The analytical process was as follows. While transcribing focus group discussions in their entirety, I looked for topical episodes, labeling them with the help of N/Vivo. I searched the transcripts for recurring topics that explained on which moral grounds participants considered (non-)realization of acts (im)polite (see research question 1, section 1). I identified the concept of space versus rapport (section 5.1). Personal space emerged as a salient factor for politeness in Finland, while verbal or nonverbal rapport was more important in France. Then, I looked for the three most frequent topics which appeared in all focus groups. They were identified as primary themes: greetings (section 5.2), silence (section 5.3) and holding doors open (section 5.4). These themes provided the key verbal and nonverbal acts of (im)politeness, as discussed by Finnish and French participants (see research question 2, section 1). The themes arose from the participants, and were not raised by the moderator (see section 4.2).

Following the dialogical approach, the analytical tools used to study how (im)politeness is negotiated in focus group discussions (research question 3) were based on four assumptions (Markova et al. 2006: 59–66). First, focus groups were considered group discussions (section 4.2). Second, the subjects’ heterogeneity was taken into account. That is, dialogues took place not only between participants and virtual (absent) participants, but also with oneself. For example, internal dialogism occurs when speakers detach themselves from their utterances, such as by restricting their own authorship (Bakhtin 1984: 184). Third, focus group discussions represented a circulation of ideas. I considered both addressivity and responsivity (Bakhtin 1986: 91, 95) — that is, every utterance not only addresses somebody, but also functions as a response to the previous utterance by, for example, refuting (disagreement) or affirming (agreement) statements. Fourth, focus groups situate activities by relying on historically and culturally shared social knowledge. Shared knowledge is expressed through the use of primary themes, as discussed above. As a discursive means, for example, a collaborative utterance can be used. In doing so, two or more participants produce one single utterance together (Marková et al. 2006: 180–193).

Various discursive means were used by participants to propose issues upon which they agreed or disagreed. A distinction — X is different from Y — in the data serves as a comparison of (im)politeness between Finland and France. A categorization occurs when a particular stimulus is deprived of its particularity and placed into a general category (e.g., “in France moving towards the other person would be more polite”). In comparison, through a particularization, a stimulus is not regarded as identical to other stimuli (Billig 1996: 161). A particularization is often associated with examples, which are then proposed as typical of the abstract phenomenon of a categorization (Marková et al. 2006: 140) (e.g., “when other children came to the sandbox, the Finnish parents said to their children...”). Examples function as tests of a speaker’s argument, according to the classification put forth by
Wästerfors & Holsanova (2005). Here, specifying and restricting examples limit arguments to certain circumstances. In turn, objectivizing examples aim to make an argument factual — that is, they shift the focus from the speaker to the world beyond. Typifying examples (e.g., like those, that kind) refer to a type of person or thing allowing the speaker to avoid a lengthy explanation. Making a list of examples gives the appearance of selecting from an abundance of items. Questioning examples, by contrast, cast doubt on the argument of the other speaker by referring to a difficult-to-ignore fact. Furthermore, participants express stances. An affective stance conveys attitudes and feelings, whereas an epistemic stance shows degrees of certainty of one’s knowledge (Ochs 1996: 410). Finally, as recipients, participants exercise agency, for instance, by choosing to hold or not hold the producer responsible for an impolite action (Mitchell and Haugh 2015: 231).

5 Analysis of Finnish and French evaluations of (im)politeness
First, in section 5.1, I discuss the concepts of personal space and verbal or nonverbal rapport which provide the moral grounds upon which Finns and French people consider realizations or non-realization of acts (im)polite. Next, I examine the key verbal and nonverbal acts of (im)politeness discussed by Finns and French people, that is greetings (5.2), silence (5.3) and holding doors. While analyzing the excerpts, I study how (im)politeness is negotiated in focus groups. All the excerpts were transcribed using Praat. Transcription conventions for French and Finnish are described in appendices A and B.

5.1 Space versus rapport
Personal space emerged as a salient factor for politeness in Finland, while verbal or nonverbal rapport was more important in France. In excerpt (1), French participants compared concepts of (im)politeness in Finland and France.

(1) (FG1-France: Alice (ALI) age\(^7\) 32, years\(^8\) 9; Marie (MAR) age 47, years 15; Jean (JEA) age 47\(^9\))

| 01 ALI | ne pas entrer dans la bulle de l’autre\(^1\) (1.2) |
| 02 MAR | oui\(^9\) |
| 03 ALI | [respecter une certaine distance physique/ et cetera/ |
| 04 ALI | donc [euh (0.4) |
| 05 JEA | [hm |
| 06 ALI | ne pas EMPIÉTER sur son territoire (0.3) alors qu’en France |
| 07 ALI | ce s’rait plutôt le contraire (0.7) ALLER VERS L’AUTRE |
| 08 ALI | s’rait plus poli/ (0.8) "ici on peut" (0.4) |

\(^7\) Age of the participant.
\(^8\) Years residing in Finland / France.
\(^9\) Jean was born in Finland, but he has lived for extended periods of time in French-speaking countries.
Here, Alice’s categorization of Finnish politeness starts with the concept of *bulle* [“bubble”], which is followed by a recognizable pause of 1.2 seconds. After the pause, Marie quietly utters a *ouais* [“yeah”] of confirmation (Péroz 2009: 128), while Alice’s further categorization, respect for *distance physique* [“physical distance”], overlaps. In line 05, Jean utters a minimal token response *hm*. In line 06, after a shorter pause of 0.4 seconds, Alice continues with *territoire* [“territory”], which must not be encroached. Then, she utters a distinction. That is, in France, moving towards the other person would be more polite. Many pauses demonstrate that she is weighing her words. Marie takes advantage of the pause after Alice’s unfinished utterance with a quiet voice in line 08. Here, she supplements Alice’s abstract categorization with a particularization. Using an objectivizing example, Marie gives a voice to virtual participants, Finnish and French parents in a sand box, created by quoting (Wibeck et al. 2004: 259). These quotes attach an “intensified authenticity” (Wästerfors and Holsanova 2005: 550), yet they are only “demonstrations” rather than an accurate reproduction of what others said (Clark and Gerrig 1990: 802). The original deixis is retained in the direct reported speech of the parents in lines 13 and 15: *ne va pas embêter l’autre* [“do not bother the other person”] and *va jouer avec les autres* [“go play with others”]. Alice’s *hm* overlaps Marie’s final utterance.

Likewise, the participants of FG1-Finland agreed on the distinction between Finland and France concerning the requirement of verbal or nonverbal rapport. When describing France, Daniel utters that *tapakuluttuuri edellytää et toiseen ihmiseen reagoidaan* [“customs require that one reacts to the other person”]. The participants show a shared knowledge through a collaborative utterance. Maria adds a nonverbal act to Daniel’s *jollakin sanalla* [“with some word”]: *elellä* [“with a gesture”]. Daniel makes a distinction — *Suomessahan et tarvitse reagoida* [“in Finland, one doesn’t have to react”] — and gives a specifying example regarding doors: if someone opens it, one may go through it quietly.

### 5.2 Greetings

Greetings emerged as the most frequent primary theme in the focus groups studied. Their discussions suggested that greeting another is more categorical in France than in Finland,
since verbal rapport is important among French people. In extract (3), Finnish participants compared the complexity of greeting cultures in Finland and in France.

(2) (FG1-Finland: Daniel (DAN) age 57, years 18; Laura (LAU) age 64, years 7; Maria (MAR) age 56, years 11; Sofia (SOF) age 37, years 10)

01 SOF  ehhä Suomessa se yksinkertaisesti se (0.3) maybe Finland.INE it simple.ADV it
‘simply maybe in Finland the’

02 tervehdimiskulttuuri esmes on (. ) jotenki must greeting culture for example be:3SG somehow I.ELA
‘greeting culture for example is somehow in my opinion’

03 se on fi jotenni (£) monimutka(h)sempί ku Ranskassa it be:3SG somehow complicated.COMP than France-INE
‘it is somehow more complicated than in France’

04 et Ranskassa (. ) sanot päivää kaikille kun ne that France.INE say:2SG day.PTV all.ALL.PL when they
‘that in France you say hello to everybody when they’

05 tulee sua vastaan [aamulla come:3SG you.PTV across morning-ADE
‘come across you in the morning’

06 LAU  [joo PRT
‘yeah’

07 SOF  >niin så sanot päivää kaikille< then you say:2SG day.PTV all.PL.ALL
‘then you say hello to everybody’

08 Suomes[sa sun pitää miettii] Finland.INE you.GEN have to think.INF
‘in Finland you have to think about it’

09 MAR  [siis työ- työyhteisössä] so work- work community.INE
‘you mean coworkers’

10 mut ei [hississä ei metrossa] but NEG elevator.INE NEG metro.INE
‘but not in the elevator and not in the metro’

11 SOF  [työyhteisössä tai kun så viet] work community.INE or when you take:2SG
‘at work or when you take’

12 MAR  ei ei niinkun (. ) ei [tuntemat]tomat ei; NEG NEG PRT NEG unknown.PL NEG
‘no no I mean not unknown individuals no’

13 SOF  [siis Ranskassa]
Sofia attempts to make a distinction according to which the greeting culture is more complicated in Finland than in France. Her utterance includes a self-dialogism — using a hedge *ehkä* [“maybe”] in line 01 and an epistemic stance marker *must* [“in my opinion”] (Rauniomaa 2007: 222–223) in line 02, thus narrowing the scope of the validity of her own argument. Sofia continues with a particularization. That is, in France, you say hello to everybody when they come across you in the morning. In line 06, Laura’s overlapping *joo* [“yeah”] signifies that Sofia’s utterance is understood (Sorjonen 2001: 167). In their overlapping talk in lines 08 through 11, Maria and Sofia test the boundaries of the shared knowledge. While Sofia makes a distinction to Finland, Maria asks if Sofia’s argument refers to the workplace setting. In lieu of waiting for an answer, Maria provides two questioning examples in line 09 — *ei hississä ei metrossa* [“not in the elevator and not in the metro”] — thereby casting doubt on Sofia’s argument of greeting everybody. Furthermore, Sofia’s talk overlaps Maria’s questioning examples. Here, she agrees with greeting coworkers and begins with a specifying example in line 11 — *tai kun sä viet* [“or when you take”].

In line 12, Maria interrupts Sofia, concluding that unknown individuals are not greeted. Sofia’s precision question overlaps in line 13 — *siis Ranskassa* [“you mean in France”]. But, instead of waiting for an answer, she agrees with Maria that unknown individuals are not greeted. In line 14, Sofia utters *mut öö* [“but uh”], which resembles a trailing off ‘but’ in English, indicating that not everything has been uttered (Mitchell and Haugh 2015: 221). In a collaborative utterance in line 15, Laura completes Sofia’s trailing off *mut öö* [“but uh”] with *rapussa* [“in the stairway”], and the participants begin interactively creating a list of examples of who to greet in France. In line 16, Sofia confirms Laura’s utterance by partly using her wording: *koti talon rapussa* [“in the stairway of your apartment building”]. In line 17, Maria’s acknowledging *joo* [“yeah”] (Helasvu 2001: 144) overlaps her utterance. Following excerpt (3), the participants continue the list. Here, Sofia adds *kouluamatkalla* [“on the way to school”] and provides more precision, whereby the person would not be the parent of a child, but because you see them every day. Others utter their agreement. Daniel lists *bussinkuljetettajalle* [“to the bus driver”]. Finally, Sofia concludes that, in Finland, one has to think about whom to greet.

In excerpt (3), the French participants discuss not greeting in Finland.
(3) (FG2-France: Anne (ANN) age 52, years 33; Colette (COL) age 34, months 7; Julie (JUL) age 29, years 7; Myriam (MYR) age 28, years 2.5; Pierre (PIE) age 35, years 14)

01 ANN  le fait de dire bonjour ou pas bonjour:/ (0.6) moi j` pensais
the thing to say hello or not hello I thought
02 par exemple: à à mes voisins\ (0.3) là où j`habitaïs avant/
for example of of my neighbors where I lived before
03 y a des voisins/ je j`ai des voisins qui
there are neighbors I’ve had neighbors who
04 m` disaient jamais bonjour (0.8) en Finlande/ (.).°c`est okay°
never said hello to me in Finland it’s ok
05 (0.4) c`est [marrant parce que]
it’s funny because
06 PIE    [hein ben oui maintenant]
`huh well yes now`
07 ANN  j`y ai pens- non mais j`ai pensé j`ai pensé s- plusieurs fois/
‘I thou- about it but I thought about it many times’
08 en Finlande:/ ils veulent pas dire bonjour ben
‘in Finland they don’t want to say hello well’
09 tant pis tant pis pour [lui/  
‘too bad too bad for him/her’
10 PIE    [hm
11 ANN  bon il veut pas dire bonjour c`est okay//
‘well s/he doesn’t want to say hello it’s ok’
12 puis je vais EN FRANCE/ (0.8) euh: on interprétera ça//
‘then I go to France uh one will interpret it’
13 sûrement des les voisins/ comment ben on a d` TRÈS
‘surely the neighbors how one has a very’
14 mauvaises relations a`vec les voisins
‘bad relationship with the neighbors’
15 PIE    [hm
16 COL    [oui:;
17 MAR  ils disent pas bonjour oui
they say-3PL NEG hello yes
‘they don’t say hello yes’
18 ALI ils [disent] [pas bonjour]
they say-3PL NEG hello
‘they don’t say hello’
19 MAR    [oui] [pas bonjour] oui
PRT NEG hello PRT
'yes no hello yeah'

Here, Anne introduces the topic of greeting and not greeting. After a pause of 0.6 seconds in line 01, she provides a specifying example from her Finnish neighbors, who never greeted her. After a longer 0.8-second pause in line 04, Anne makes a categorization. She states that, in Finland, not greeting your neighbors is okay ["ok"]. Pierre’s talk overlaps with Anne's, but she does not yield the floor to him. In line 09, Anne expresses her affective stance. That is, if individuals do not want to greet one another, tant pis pour lui ["too bad for him/her"]. Exercising her agency, she chooses not to be offended by the absence of a greeting. Furthermore, in lines 12 through 14, Anne makes a distinction, marking her epistemic stance as certain with sûrement ["certainly"]. Thus, in France, the interpretation will be on a d’très mauvaises relations avec les voisins ["one has very bad relationships with their neighbors"]. In lines 15 and 16, Pierre’s minimal token response hm and Colette’s registering oui (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2001: 99) follow. Then, in line 17, a collaborative utterance appears when Myriam displays her shared knowledge by supplementing Anne’s earlier utterance regarding neighbors, stating ils disent pas bonjour ["they don’t say hello’’]. Anne adheres to Myriam’s utterance by taking it up, while Myriam’s token acknowledgement oui ["yes"] in line 19 overlaps. The rest of the utterance — pas bonjour ["no hello’’] — is spoken simultaneously by Anne and Myriam, who finally adds a confirming oui ["yes’’].

Following excerpt (3), participants continued discussing their experiences regarding the greeting habits of their Finnish neighbors. They agreed that there was no general rule. Julie only knew her fellow apartment building residents to greet others: ça peut être un mouvement de tête ou un micro hei [ “it can be a head movement or a barely audible hei”]. In his specifying example, Pierre presents two extreme cases of neighbors: je dis bonjour il répond pas [“I say hello he doesn’t reply”] and on dit bonjour je parle un peu de finnois avec elle (“we say hello I speak a little Finnish with her”).

Despite extensive greeting habits in France, participants reported regional differences. First, in FG2-Finland composed of students, Stella11 and Anna12 compared their experiences from Toulouse (southern France) and Paris during various stages of their time in France. In her specifying example of extensive French greeting habits, Stella mentions a hostel in Toulouse during her internship: kaikki vaan oli vähän silleen bonjour kaikki asiakkaat [“all of the clients said bonjour”]. Anna provides a questioning example from her internship in a lobby in Paris, casting doubt on the argument of extensive French greeting habits. Although she greeted every single individual, greetings were not always reciprocated: ei sielkään niinku vältämät tuu aina takas sitä bonjourii [“everyone will not necessarily greet you back”]. Anna’s justification for regional differences in greeting habits assumes that people are much busier in Paris. Stella, however, questions this by uttering that that notion is a stereotype. Second, in FG1-France, the participants disagree as to whether bus drivers are greeted more in Finland or in France. When Bruno says le bonjour (...) au chauffeur de bus (...) ça se fait très très peu en France (“hello...to a bus driver... it’s done very very little in France”), Alice disagrees: je ne suis pas d’accord là (“I don’t agree”). Jean suggests that there are regional differences: c’est des différences entre villes (“there are differences between towns”).

10 Hello in Finnish.
11 Stella is 26 years old and has lived in France for 3 years.
12 Anna is 23 years old and has lived in France for 1.5 years.
In addition, Finnish participants reported regional variation in Finnish greeting habits. In FG1-Finland, Laura and Maria shared opposing experiences of greeting hikers in forests. According to Laura, in the Helsinki metropolitan area, *suomalainen pelästyy* (“a Finn...becomes scared if they are greeted”), while Maria’s questioning example comes from western Finland: *tervehdin jokaista vastaantulijaa ja jokainen sanoi iloisesti hei* [“I greeted every passerby and everyone happily said hello”]. Maria also described extensive greeting habits in eastern Finland using a typifying example: *kreikkalaista se touhu* [“the activity is like in Greece”].

Although greetings appear to be more categorical in France, participants in FG1-France agreed on a situation where greetings are more frequent in Finland, namely, in supermarkets: *systématiquement la caissière va dire bonjour (...) dans mon expérience c’est pas vrai en France* [“systematically the cashier will say hello...in my experience it’s not true in France”].

5.3 Silence
The overarching concern for personal space among Finns and verbal rapport among the French was reflected in discussions about silence. The discussions focused on silence being better tolerated in Finland than in France.

In focus groups, stories — both generalized or personal — are used to argue a position (Marková et al. 2006: 151–154). The excerpt below relates to a specific story. In Bruno’s personal story, he arrived at a table where Finns silently ate their lunch. The Finns did not even respond to him, which he found impolite. It took for him to understand that silence was not related to evaluations of his own behavior. The discussion below in excerpt (4) followed Bruno’s story.

(4) (FG1-France: Alice (ALI) age 32, years 9; Bruno (BRU) age 45, years 7; Jean (JEA) age 4713; Marc (MAR) age 49, years 19)

01 JEA c’est vrai que (0.4) on supporte très bien le silence
‘it’s true that one tolerates silence very well’
02 en Finlande/ on le supporte ex[trêmement mal en [France]
‘in Finland one tolerates it extremely badly in France’
03 ALI [hm
04 MAR [hm
05 JEA j` veux dire une discussion ou: être assis comme ça à table
‘I intend to have a discussion or to sit like that at a table’
06 le à: cinq six euh: (0.3) euh (. ) si rien se [dit
‘of five six uh uh if nothing is said’
07 MAR ‘((rire))
08 JEA ça fait bi[zarde c’est c’est [puis: ç- çà
‘it’s weird it’s it’s then i- it’
09 ALI [hm

13 Jean was born in Finland, but he has lived for extended periods of time in French-speaking countries.
According to Jean’s distinction, silence is very well tolerated in Finland, but viewed quite badly in France. Alice and Marc’s minimal token responses *hm* in lines 03 and 04 overlap Jean’s utterance. Referring to Bruno’s story, Jean expresses his affective stance in line 08 — that is, sitting silently at a table of five or six people is *bizarre* [“weird”]. In lines 09 and 10, Alice’s *hm* and Bruno’s laughter overlap Jean’s stance. Here, participants demonstrate shared knowledge by expressing negative affective stances towards silence at a table. In lines 11 and 12, Jean’s *ça pèse* [“it weighs”], and Alice’s *ça met mal à l’aise* [“it makes you feel uncomfortable”] overlap. Furthermore, in line 14, Jean repeats his stance. After a hesitation, Jean utters a categorization. To his mind, in Finland, silence is not embarrassing nor does it mean anything. In line 18, Bruno utters a confirmation marker *voilà* [“that’s it”] (Col et al. 2016: 19), followed by *oui* [“yes”]. Finally, he returns to the question of politeness rules, discussed earlier in the group. Those rules are necessary in order to interpret behavior.
Although Finns seem to tolerate silence better than the French, silence remains a complex phenomenon. In FG1-Finland, participants described the difficulties related to Finnish silence as follows: *oletusarvo et ollaan hiljaa mut ei kuitenkaan liian hiljaa* ["the starting point that one is quiet but not too quiet however"] (Sofia) — *ja milloin ollaan* ["and when one is [silent]] ([Laura]). How much silence is tolerated and in which situations are not straightforward questions to answer. In extract (4), Bruno shared an experience whereby Finns were eating silently and not talking to him. In FG1-Finland, Sofia expressed her positive affective stance towards silence while eating: *ei mulle oo kiusallista jos [...] mun perheen kanssa syödään syödään hiljaa* ["it’s not awkward to me if I’m eating quietly with my family"]). In studies by Tulviste et al. (2003) and Tryggvason (2006), during family meal interactions, Finns — along with Estonians — were indeed more silent than Swedes. Other situations where silence was not awkward for participants of FG1-Finland included being in a car with a friend or in a sauna.

Tolerating silence may also represent an individual preference. In FG1-Finland, when Daniel utters a categorization where for Finns silence can be *rauhallinen ja semmonen lempeä* ["calm and gentle"], Maria replies with a conditional *joillekin* ["for some"]. Daniel agrees by narrowing the scope of the validity of his categorization and qualifies his statement with *joillekin ainakin* ["for some at least"].

Silence can be evaluated either negatively by indicating anger or positively when associated with respect (Tannen 1985: 94–95). In many Western cultures, silence bears a negative connotation (Sifianou 1995: 95). This is illustrated by Philippe (FG3-France) who expressed a negative stance: *une pause ou un silence (...) pour moi c’est une forme d’agressivité* ["a pause or a silence …for me it’s a form of aggression"]). Due to its ambiguity, the interpretation of silence represents a common source of misunderstanding (Nakane 2007: 198–199, 206).

Pierre (FG2-France) expresses a source of this difficulty: *ne pas savoir ce que l’autre pense parce qu’il ne va pas l’exprimer* ["not knowing what the other person thinks because they won’t say it"]). According to Sofia (FG1-Finland), learning a culture of silence is more difficult: *pystyy opettelemaan helpommin kun se oletusarvo on se että reagoidaan (...) kuin opetella sit sellainen hiljaisuuden kulttuuri* ["it’s easier to learn when the default value is to react...than to learn such a culture of silence"].

Olbertz–Siitonen and Siitonen (2015: 323–324) regard the “silent Finn” as an academic myth: they rightly criticize many communication studies for their lack of empirical evidence and point out the overreliance on the same reprinted studies. In linguistic studies, a more nuanced picture is presented. Based on their study of lingua franca business English discourse, Louhiala–Salminen et al. (2005: 413) explain that the perception of Finns as “few worded” relates more to the nature of their talk than the actual number of words spoken. Thus, there is a “tendency towards issue orientation, a relatively low level of interpersonal orientation, and relative scarcity of metadiscourse, queries and questions”. Clearly, more empirical research is needed to uncover what specifically underlies this perception of Finns as more oriented towards silence than, for instance, the French.

The exaggeration of Finnish silence can render participants overly cautious during intercultural interactions (Olbertz–Siitonen and Siitonen 2015: 328–329) and lead to faulty
generalizations ignoring that a Finn may be the most active speaker in a multicultural business meeting (Poncini 2004: 282). Furthermore, the concept of silence — like any (im)politeness norm — may be changing. Indeed, participants of FG1-Finland suggest that the internet, mobile phones and travelling affect notions of silence (cf. Wilkins and Isotalus 2009: 6–7). Tulviste et al. (2003: 262) argued that Finno-Ugric speech communities may change, as Sweden has, because of the influence of more talk-oriented cultures.

5.4 Holding doors open
The concern with personal space among Finns and verbal or nonverbal rapport among the French also contributed to discussions of the third major theme, namely, holding a door open for another person. The topic discussed situated holding a door open as categorical in France, but not in Finland. In excerpt (5), participants discussed the deviant case of holding doors open in Finland — in particular, among young men.

(5) (FG3-France: Marguerite (MAR) age 51, years 24; Philippe (PHI) age 55, years 23; Rebecca (REB) age 26, years 2.5)

01 PHI   la porte je n` sais pas encore\ je je n` sais pas très bien
            ‘the door I don’t know yet I don’t know very well’
02       si il faut (0.8) LAISSER PASSER une femme par exemple (0.8)
            ‘if one must let a woman pass for example’
03       euh:: systématiquement par   [politesse c` que moi
            ‘uh systematically as a courtesy which I’
04 MAR    [hm
05 PHI    je f` rai toujours/
            ‘I will always do’
06 MAR    ils le font dans mon immeuble [((toux))] les jeunes mecs (0.3)
            ‘they do it in my apartment building ((cough)) the young men’
07 PHI    [ouais]
            ‘yeah’
08 MAR    et j` pense pas [qu`ils m` prennent pour une vieille
            ‘and I don’t think they see me as an old lady’
09 REB    [mais les JEUNES les jeunes le font (. ) le font
            ‘but the young do it’
10 beaucoup plus je   [j’ai remarqué
            ‘a lot more I have noticed’
11 PHI    [peut-être
            ‘maybe’
12 REB    ça fait
            ‘since’
13 PHI    peut-être   [qu’ils voyagent plus
            ‘maybe they travel more’
14 REB    [peut-être quelq-] (. ) quelques: depuis qu`
            ‘maybe som-some since’
j` suis revenue/ j’ai: j’ai l’impression que
‘I came back I’ve had the impression that’
tous les les les hommes JEUNES
‘all the the young men’
maintenant le maintenant le font
‘now do it’
oui moi j’ai l’impression aussi]
‘yes I I have that impression too’
[euh systématiquement]
‘systematically’
enfin jeunes trente trente-cinq quoi
‘that is young thirty thirty-five you know’

Regarding doors in Finland, Philippe does not know if one must systematically, for example, let a woman pass as a courtesy, something he states that he always does. Marguerite replies with a particularization — in her apartment building, young men hold doors open. Philippe’s overlapping ouais [“yeah”] marks Marguerite’s utterance as heard (Péroz 2009: 132). In lines 08 and 09, Marguerite and Rebecca’s utterances overlap — that is, Marguerite does not think that young men see her as an old lady, while Rebecca recounts that she too has noticed young men holding doors open, at least more often than they used to do. In line 13, Philippe offers a reason for why young men hold doors open using the hedge peut-être qu’ [“perhaps”] to narrow the scope of validity of his utterance ils voyagent plus [“they travel more”]. Rebecca attempts a categorization of young men involving a self-dialogism. In line 15, j’ai l’impression que [“I have the impression that”], which takes into account that everybody does not necessarily adhere to her categorization, according to which all young men hold doors open nowadays. Marguerite agrees by saying that she also has the same impression, adding a precision related to the age of these young men, namely, that they are 30 to 35 years old.

In excerpt (6), French participants expressed their stances towards holding doors open, and discussed what happens when doors are not held open in Finland.

(6) (FG3-France: Marguerite (MAR) age 51, years 24; Philippe (PHI) age 55, years 23; Rebecca (REB) age 26, years 2.5)

je n’arrive pas à (. “ne pas tenir la porte” c’est: (0.5)
‘I am not able to not hold the door it’s’
c’est impos[ssible c’est c’est trop
‘it’s impossible it’s it’s too’
PHI
[ouais
‘yeah’
ben oui c’[est difficile ça
‘well yes it’s difficult that’
too engrained’
HM
(44) REB (. ) mais eh:: voilà j'ai a- j'ai a- j'ai appris à
‘but uh that is I have l- I have l- I have learned to’
me prendre des <(en souriant)> portes dans la face parce que
‘take doors in my face because’
<((en souriant))> je m’attendais à: à [ce que à ce que]
‘I waited for for’
(47) PHI [ouais ouais]
‘yeah yeah’
(48) REB la porte: reste ouverte/
‘the door to stay open’
(49) PHI [tu il faut que tu apprennes à ah: tu sais à
‘you have to learn to ah you know to’
(50) [mais euh::
‘but uh’
(51) PHI à GLISSER [entre deux portes
‘to slip through two doors’
(52) MAR [oui oui
‘yes yes’

Here, French participants’ affective stances demonstrate a shared knowledge — that is, holding doors open is important to them. For Rebecca, in line 39, not holding doors open is impossible [“impossible”]. In line 40, Philippe’s ouais [“yeah”] serves as confirmation (Péroz 2009: 128) overlapping Rebecca’s stance. In line 41, Philippe adds c’est difficile [“it’s difficult”], which overlaps Rebecca’s trop ancré [“too engrained”]. Rebecca smilingly states that she has learned to take doors in her face, because she waited for them to remain open. Philippe’s emphatic ouais ouais of confirmation overlaps Rebecca’s talk. It seems that young Finnish men holding doors open, as discussed in excerpt (6), represents a deviant case (Wästerfors and Holsanova 2005: 549–550). Philippe offers a solution to Rebecca — that is, she must learn to slip through doors. In line 51, Marguerite’s oui oui [“yes yes”] emphasizes her agreement (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2001: 107).

In Finland, holding doors open is not necessarily interpreted as an act of politeness — as is the case in France — but neither is it an act of impoliteness. As for negative reactions, Laura’s (FG1-Finland) objectivizing example provided a reply from a Finnish women when Laura’s husband opened a door for her: mitä sä kuvittelet tekeväs [“what do you think you are doing”]. Yet it does not seem to be a gender issue. Anna (FG2-Finland) shared a reply she received from a Finnish man in his 80s when she held a door open for him: on se vähän raskas mut kyl mä saan sen itteki auki [“it’s a little bit heavy but I can open it myself”]. Maria in FG1-Finland suggested that not holding doors open is not related to impoliteness. She suggested ne elää siin omassa kuplas ne et oo epäkohteliaita (...) niille ei tuu mieleenkää (...) et joku voi tulla takaa [“they live in their own bubble they are not impolite...it doesn’t occur to them...that somebody might come behind”].
6 Conclusions
In this article, I examined the lesser studied cultural outsiders’ evaluations of (im)politeness, concentrating on Finland and France. To do so, I adopted focus groups — a rarely used method in (im)politeness research — in order to study culturally shared (im)politeness norms and their variations applying the discursive approach. During the focus groups, French people living in Finland talked about Finnish politeness; by contrast, Finns currently or previously living in France discussed French politeness. All participants in this study completed at least a university-level education, representing one limitation to this study. I adopted a dialogical discourse analysis in order to examine the focus group discussions.

(Im)politeness was negotiated by the participants with the help of various discursive means, including distinctions, categorizations, particularizations and examples, stances, expressions of agency and collaborative utterances. I found that personal space emerged as a salient factor for politeness in Finland, while verbal and nonverbal rapport are more important in France. Greetings and holding doors open — actions implying a rapport with the other person — were identified as less categorical in Finland where value is placed upon the space of the other individual. Furthermore, silence appears to be better tolerated by Finns than by the French, who emphasize rapport with others. Participants reported that different perceptions of (im)politeness caused them problems during intercultural interactions, but they also learned how to interpret interactions.

It is well documented that variation exists vis-à-vis (im)politeness norms across regions, classes and gender as emphasized by the discursive approach. Participants from both countries reported regional variation. Despite the importance of greeting in France, it appears to be more common in southern France than in Paris. Similarly, in Finland, greeting was reported as more common in smaller towns than in the Helsinki metropolitan area. It was also suggested that greeting bus drivers in France is subject to regional differences. Furthermore, individuals can value or interpret dominant (im)politeness norms differently, leading to individual variation in (im)politeness norms. For example, in Finland, some neighbors may value space more, while others will value rapport more, as illustrated by frequent greetings. Similarly, some Finns may be eager to hold doors open for others. Thus, too rigid generalizations should be avoided when discussing (im)politeness norms: in certain situations, such as the case of supermarket cashiers, Finns appear to greet more than their French colleagues.

Yet, (im)politeness norms appear to be more explicit in France than in Finland, where there seems to be less clarity regarding whom to greet, how individuals react to holding doors open and what kinds of silence are acceptable and in which situations. This lack of explicit norms has contributed to the recent publication of numerous newspaper articles and opinion columns, all of which share a concern: Because Finns greet less frequently than individuals from central Europe, do others consider us impolite? Furthermore, (im)politeness norms are not stable — they constantly evolve. The question then becomes: Will Finnish (im)politeness norms evolve due to foreign influences? Perhaps the current ambiguity in norms leaves room for change, whereby globalization represents only one source of influence (Sifianou 2013). If the space of the other person remains highly valued, (im)politeness norms in Finland are less likely to evolve towards norms more typical for the French.

Some themes discussed during the focus groups fell beyond the scope of this article. For example, participants’ adaptation to the (im)politeness norms of the target culture were not discussed. With respect to the methodological limitations, focus group participants reported
their own perceptions of (im)politeness, which did not necessarily fully correspond to the complex reality. Therefore, a study of authentic intercultural interactions is necessary in order to more deeply explore Finnish and French (im)politeness. For this purpose, about 12 hours of authentic interactions in French between Finnish and French individuals have been videotaped in Helsinki, Lyon and Paris in 2017 both in workplace (e.g. meetings) and home settings (e.g. family meals). In future, analyzing these recordings will contribute to a more complete picture of intercultural (im)politeness. First, analyzing authentic interactions will allow for example a further study of silence. Second, since the participants were only informed that authentic intercultural interactions between Finnish and French people would be examined, the study of authentic interactions can show if and when the question of (im)politeness is explicitly raised and discussed by the interactants themselves. Finally, in order to know which instances involve cultural or only situation-specific norms, extracts of these recordings will be shown to native Finnish and French informants who will evaluate (im)politeness by completing a survey instrument or an interview (cf. Chang and Haugh 2011)

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**Appendix A: Transcription conventions for French**

The French speech was transcribed according to the orthographic conventions developed for French language by the ICOR group (ICAR laboratory, Lyon). For a full version see [http://icar.univ-lyon2.fr/projets/corinte/documents/2013_Conv_ICOR_250313.pdf](http://icar.univ-lyon2.fr/projets/corinte/documents/2013_Conv_ICOR_250313.pdf).

/\ rising or falling intonation of the preceding segment

. short pause (<0.2 seconds)

(1.2) timed pause in seconds and tenths of seconds

[ ] beginning and end of overlap

EMPIÉTER emphasis

°ouais° low volume

: stretching of prior syllable

- cut-off

((rire)) transcriber's comments

. non-standard elision

^ optional liaison
Appendix B: Transcription conventions for Finnish

The Finnish speech was transcribed according to conventions commonly used in conversation analysis.

; slightly falling pitch at the end of a prosodic unit
päivää prominent stress
>niin sä sanot< accelerated speech rate
rapussa: lengthened vowel
monimutka(h)sempi word produced laughingly
jotenki word produced smilingly
[ overlap of speech begins
] overlap of speech ends
(.) micropause (duration of less than 0.2 seconds)
(0.3) pause (duration measured in seconds)

Appendix C: Symbols used in glossing

2sg second-person singular ending
3sg third-person singular ending
ADE adessive (“at,” “on”)
ADV adverbial
ALL allative (“to”)
COMP comparative
ELA elative (“out of,” “from”)
GEN genitive
INE inessive (“in”)
NEG negation
PL plural
PRT particle
PTV partitive (“part of”)

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Bionotes
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