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**Politeness Theory**

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# **Dedication**

To the owner of a fragrant biography and enlightened thought, for he had the first credit in attaining higher education (my beloved father)To those who set me on the path of life, made me calm ,and took care of me until I became old (my mother) .

I dedicate this work to people appreciate the meaning, and the creativity . By the most sincere feelings and the best words emanating from the heart, I give my thanks and gratitude to those who were the reason for the success of my career and those who stood with me in the most demanding circumstances and motivated me. My dear family and my friends expressions of thanks and gratitude from the heart of the respect and appreciation .

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# **Introduction**

The study of what might be labelled linguistic ‘politeness’ and ‘impoliteness’ involves the social dynamics of human interaction. (This is also true for any other politeness-related term, such as ‘respect’, ‘courtesy’ and ‘deference’, and any other impoliteness-related terms, such as ‘rudeness’, ‘discourtesy’ and ‘verbal aggression’.) It relates in particular to how a person’s feelings and sense of self are supported or aggravated in conversation. For example, the social impact of a request or a criticism might be softened by a particular choice of words, and that choice of words might be influenced by the relationship between the participants and the sociocultural context of which they are a part( Watts, Ehlich,1992).

The field of politeness is an interdisciplinary field of study, drawing scholars from linguistics, sociology, social psychology and anthropology. Traditionally, though, it is seen as a sub-field of pragmatics (the study of meanings in interaction), specifically a sub-field of sociopragmatics. It has developed rapidly over the last 30 years, and now has its own dedicated journal, the Journal of Politeness Research.

The scientific examination of politeness largely began as research on ‘face’ and ‘facework’. After some early anthropological and ethnomethodological studies on ‘face’, such as Hu (1944), the first groundbreaking studies on interactional ‘facework’ were done by Goffman (see e.g., Goffman 1955 and 1967). (Goffman ,1967: 213) defined ‘face’ as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself [sic] by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact”, and ‘facework’ is communicative action that orientates to the speaker’s and/or the addressee’s face. The sociopragmatic enquiry into ‘politeness’ began in the 1970s, notably with Robin T. Lakoff’s groundbreaking papers (see Lakoff 1973, 1977). In the 1980s, two key works were published, one written by Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson (1978, 1987) and the other by Geoffrey Leech (1983).

In particular, Brown and Levinson’s monograph proved to be highly influential, and the ‘Brown and Levinsonian’ concepts dominated politeness research for approximately two decades. Since 2001, notably after the publication of Gino Eelen’s (2001) A Critique of Politeness Theories, many of these concepts have been thoroughly criticised and a new ‘school’ has been formed within politeness research: the so-called ‘postmodern’ or ‘discursive’ approach (e.g. Eelen 2001; Locher/Watts 2005; Mills 2003; Watts 2003). Brown/Levin-son’s framework has not been rejected out of hand in today’s scholarship − indeed, to do so would ignore that fact that there is much of value in it − but it is increasingly difficult to adopt it uncritically, without acknowledgement of its limitations or an attempt to rectify them. For this, we have the postmodern/discursive approach to thank( Watts,&. Ehlich, 2005).

# Defination politeness

Crystal (1997: 297) believes that politeness, in Sociolinguistics and Pragmatics, is a term that signifies linguistic features related to norms of social behavior, in relation to notions such as courtesy, good relations, respect and distance. Such features involve using a specific discourse marker (please), an appropriate tone of voice, and a tolerable form of address (e.g. intimate vs. distant pronoun choice, or first vs. last name) (Eelen ,2001: 1).

Politeness is behaving in a respectful and considerate manner towards other people. Every person wants to hear good things and see good behaviors towards themselves. Therefore it’s important to behave in a polite and pleasing way towards others. The politeness does not necessarily mean kind words towards others but also how we deal with the environment and animals around us

 ( Eelen,2003).

Mostly, people show courtesy to senior personnel, this is a dangerous trend in a civilized world. In the world today, we are supposed to appreciate each and every one, and therefore politeness is essential e.g. in a class civility should be shown between students and also to their professor ( Eelen,2003).

Who explains that politeness? according to the Anglo-Saxon scientific tradition, is investigated from a pragmatic and sociolinguistic perspective. It is agreed that politeness theory is involved in what falls under one of these sub-fields of linguistics because politeness is specifically concerned with language use as it relates to pragmatics – and this is a phenomenon that represents the relationship between language and the social world. Scovel (1998: 38) states that pragmatics represents the study of what people mean when they use language in normal social interactions; whereas sociolinguistics refers to the study of why we say, what to whom, when and where. Watts (2003: 85) states that Brown and Levinson's first theory of linguistic politeness emerged in 1978 and is called the 'face-saving' theory of politeness. Brown has produced an article entitled "Women and Politeness: A New Perspective on Language and Society" which was reviewed in Anthropology in 1976. Brown and Levinson's model appears to be an attempt to formulate a theory that reflects the way individuals produce linguistic politeness, that is, a production model. In their model, they focus on the speaker rather than the listener (Yule ,1996: 60).

Who believes that politeness? can be treated as a fixed concept, as in the idea of 'polite social behavior', or etiquette, in a culture. To be polite in social interactions in a particular culture, some general principles can be determined such as being wise, generous, modest, and sympathetic to others. He added that politeness in an interaction is defined as a means used to show awareness of other people's faces (Yule, 2010: 135). Politeness has been defined by different linguists, but their definitions show that they all agree that the "face'' is the most relevant concept in the study of linguistic politeness (Mansoor, 2018: 168).

As a socialization process competent adult members in every society learn how to behave politely, linguistically and otherwise. Hence, politeness has not been born as an instinctive mankind property, but it is a phenomenon which has been constructed through sociocultural and historical processes. Historically, traces of the English term ‘polite’ can be found in the 15th century. Etymologically, however, it derives from late Medieval Latin politus meaning ‘smoothed and accomplished’. The term 'polite' was synonymous with concepts such as ‘refined’, ‘polished’ when people were concerned. In the seventeen century a polite person was defined as ‘one of refined courteous manners’, according to the oxford dictionary of etymology. the historicity of Politeness.

# **Why politeness?**

Politeness reduces stress in oneself and others. By learning that one can talk to you with respect, you’ll be ready to get out of your shell and be willing to mingle with others freely. With free mingling, people can always share their stressful conditions and situations. Politeness will improve productive of a person both at a personal and organizational level as they will feel like valued people. The polite

words in an office may seem unnecessary, but they boost the morale and performance of employers and fellow employees (Janney& Ardnt,1996,P21).

Politeness makes human beings different from other animals. By acting politely to people or the environment, your logical reasoning will always be seen. You will always be accorded the respect you deserve in a society depending on your action and behavior towards others and the environment. The way we deal with our environment makes us look responsible or not. If we are polite, we are more accountable and will take care of the little things we see around us. Therefore, instead of environmental destruction like other animals, we can protect it, everyone should learn the art of politeness; it is core to our daily survivals and communications. It is an important skill if we are to appreciate everyone in our society. Its benefits are also immense and therefore must be observed at all times (Janney& Ardnt,1996,P21).

To see clearly the importance of politeness and smile, let put ourselves at these two different situations :

**1.**You are the richest man in the world and you are a King. You live in a palace with nothing that you don't have in the world. But each and every one of the occupants of the palace are rude to you and greet you with not even a smile. In this kind of situations what do you feel? Of course you will feel sad and misery as though you are living in hell (Fukada, A. & Noriko, 2004)..

**2.**You have no one. Your parents are dead and you have no brothers and sisters.You did some criminals in your country. The authorities repel you to a far away island. In that island you live in a slum with others. But all of them are very nice to you and each and everyone of them always speaks with a smiling face. In this situations, even though you live in the most poor conditions but the hospitality you received will make you feel happy as though you live in heaven (Watts,& 1966).

Or imagine now you are an outcast person from your family and community because you are a hardcore criminal or a bad manners whore because of your upbringing and surroundings. Everyone hates you, everyone scold you, everyone see you with an angry and ugly faces, no one good to you not even a smile. How do you feel? You may feel useless and living has no meaning to you(their manners killed your intentions to change your life but stick to it instead) and you may have intentions to commit suicide(Ehlich, 1969)

On the contrary if you are the same person as mentioned above, but your community receive you wholeheartedly . They treat you the same as others, in fact better. People around you always nice to you with a sincere smiling faces. They believed you are a nice person only circumstances led you to the wrong path and that you could revert back to the straight path and back became a nice person. Everyone greet you with sincere smiling faces and are polite to you. How do you feel? You may feel reborn and worth to change your life and live in this world (Mao,1994).

# **Politeness and face**

Some definitions of face focus on the social context, some on the linguistic, and some on the interpersonal. Despite the variation on focus, there are some commonalities among the definitions. First is the notion that face is socially or interactively based; that is, face exists in response to the presence of others and in interactions with others. Second, face is a specific image we present to another person. We have a desire to be seen in a certain way by certain people. Third, the image we present is affected by the requirements of the situation or context. In the example that started this chapter, the professional context of interacting with your authors evoked a different face from you than that presented to a potential romantic partner. Fourth, our level of consciousness and intent about the face we present varies but becomes particularly acute when something occurs that undermines people believing our face is genuine (a facethreat). Finally, our face is primarily displayed through behaviors—the way we communicate and interact(Elias, 1954:23).

Erving Goffman’s work serves as the foundation for most contemporary face theory, so we’ll begin with his definition. Like George Herbert Mead, Goffman, a sociologist, focuses on the interaction between individuals and the social world.

So his definition emphasizes the way individuals fit society and its institution show a person sees him or herself contributing to a given social context. (Goffman ,1967) defined **face** as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact .” This definition makes more sense when we take it apart a bit. Underlying “positive social value” is the assumption that people want to be seen as having value to others. People lay “claim” to that value by presenting themselves in certain ways to others; for example, a teacher wants to claim an image of an effective educator while a student might claim the image of an “A” student. Goffman explains that a “line” is the pattern of verbal and nonverbal messages (like lines in a play) that people use to express and evaluate situations that is perceived by others as a reflection of the image people claim. People then form impressions of the other person (a vision of the person’s face) on the basis of those lines. So, a teacher lectures (the teacher’s “line”) to the students who see the lecturing as appropriate to someone with the “face” of a teacher. (Domenici and Littlejohn ,2006) explain the physical face we present to others acts as a metaphor for a more conceptual face, sense of self, or identity that we present to others. While similar to Goffman’s notion of social value, Domenici and Littlejohn emphasize the values reflected in the original Chinese use of face when they define face as a “desire to present oneself with dignity and honor .” Dignity and honor are also part of the foundation of politeness theory in the sense that we honor others by being polite and respectful. (Brown and Levinson ,1978) conceptualize face as something that we want or desire from others. They define face as “the want to be unimpeded and the want to be approved of in certain respects .

” They argue that when people interact they recognize each other’s desire to have their faces supported and generally provide such confirmation. Approval is reflected in the way that other people respond to us—showing respect and honor. The importance of respect, of supporting a person’s face, is the theme of some hip-hop and rap songs about not dissing someone, such as a couple of songs both called “Don’t Diss Me.” A couple more straightforward definitions of face are presented by Craig, Tracy, and Spisak (1986): “the self-image they present to others ” and Cupach and Metts (1994): The conception of self that each person displays in particular interactions with others.” Both definitions reflect the application often incorporated in communication scholarship that emphases an interaction of faces and people’s attempts to help each other maintain their faces. Cupach and Metts emphasize that when we present our self-conception, we are seeking confirmation of that conception (Grice, 1975).

# **Positive and negative face**

When interpreted as a reflection of polite intent, distancing (avoidance of intrusion into the addressee’s space) can properly be categorized as a negative politeness strategy—but giving deference is problematic. B&L generally consider deference to be associated with negative politeness, but they also acknowledge that it satisfies an addressee’s positive want to be treated as superior. In fact, when honorifics are not utilized in the way the addressee anticipates, it is arguably the addressee’s positive face that is damaged. Thus, unequivocally associating deference with negative politeness renders their theory contradictory. If distancing indexes negative politeness but showing deference indexes positive politeness, then the use of honorific language necessarily mixes these two strategies. This is why honorifics are problematic in B&L’s theory. If one regards honorifics to be direct manifestations of politeness, as Ide does, B&L’s theory is judged forthrightly inadequate (Werkhofer,2001).

# Politeness maxims

According to Geoffrey Leech, there is a politeness principle with conversational maxims similar to those formulated by Paul Grice. The cooperative principle and the politeness principle have close relationship because they study about the use of language in communication a set of principle or maxim that manages it. Further, Leech proposed six maxims, namely Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim, and Sympathy Maxim. The first and second form a pair, as do the third and the fourth. These maxims vary from culture to culture: what may be considered polite in one culture may be strange or downright rude in another (Brown, Levinson,1992).

## The tact maxim

The tact maxim states: "Minimize the expression of beliefs which imply cost to other; maximize the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to other." The first part of this maxim fits in with Brown and Levinson's negative politeness strategy of minimising the imposition, and the second part reflects the positive politeness strategy of attending to the hearer's interests, wants, and needs. For example:

* Could I interrupt you for a second?
* If I could just clarify this then (Brown ,1987).

## **The generosity maxim**

Leech's generosity maxim states: "Minimize the expression of beliefs that express or imply benefit to self; maximize the expression of beliefs that express or imply cost to self." Unlike the tact maxim, the maxim of generosity focuses on the speaker, and says that others should be put first instead of the self. For example:

* You relax and let me do the dishes.
* You must come and have dinner with us (Watts,1932).

## **The approbation maxim**

The approbation maxim states: "Minimize the expression of beliefs which express dispraise of other; maximize the expression of beliefs which express approval of other." It is preferred to praise others and if this is impossible, to sidestep the issue, to give some sort of minimal response (possibly through the use of euphemisms), or to remain silent. The first part of the maxim avoids disagreement; the second part intends to make other people feel good by showing solidarity. For example:

* I heard you singing at the karaoke last night. It sounded like you were enjoying yourself!
* Gideon, I know you're a genius – would you know how to solve this math

problem here? ( Kadar, 2007)

## **The modesty maxim**

In his PP (politeness principle) meaning to minimize praise or to maximize dispraise of self. The modesty maxim states: "Minimize the expression of praise of self; maximize the expression of dispraise of self." For example:

• Oh, I'm so stupid – I didn't make a note of our lecture! Did you? (Leech

,1983)

## **The agreement maxim**

The agreement maxim runs as follows: "Minimize the expression of disagreement between self and other; maximize the expression of agreement between self and other." It is in line with Brown and Levinson's positive politeness strategies of "seek agreement" and "avoid disagreement", to which they attach great importance. However, it is not being claimed that people totally avoid disagreement. It is simply observed that they are much more direct in expressing agreement, rather than disagreement. For example:

* A: I don't want my daughter to do this, I want her to do that.
* B: Yes, but ma'am, I thought we resolved this already on your last visit

(Ehlich,2003).

## **The sympathy maxim**

The sympathy maxim states: "minimize antipathy between self and other; maximize sympathy between the self and other." This includes a small group of speech acts such as congratulation, commiseration, and expressing condolences – all of which is in accordance with Brown and Levinson's positive politeness strategy of attending to the hearer's interests, wants, and needs.

For example:

 • I am sorry to hear about your father (Wetzel ,2004 ).

# **Conclusion**

The use of polite language is very important and must be emphasized when we speak in formal situations such as in work meetings, asking questions during presentations, delivering speeches in public or simply asking someone we do not know. The use of polite language should be applied by people in everyday conversation because this can bring up an attitude of respect and respect, as well as to build a good impression on ourselves and the people we represent(Wetzel 2004 , Kádár 2007).

Politeness is needed in any particular life. It is about maintaining a good relationship with your listeners or readers. Politeness is important because it shows the listener or reader that we value and respect them, and changing or softening our speech is less compelling. Politeness is also needed in academic purposes so that the teaching and learning process runs well. For example is in academics. When it is practiced in class discussions, or when lecturers carry out affective processes. In teaching and learning Sholihatul Hamidah Daulay, Nabilah Azmi, Tara Pratiwi activities in class, students are required to communicate politely, both with lecturers and with their friends because it is in university that politeness and ethics must be shaped by students(Xie,2003

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