

## POLITENESS: LINGUISTIC STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

*This study is an endeavor to shed light on some relevant linguistic aspects of politeness which reveal the importance of politeness in social interaction. At a more specific level, this current study is dedicated to reveal the most relevant concepts in the study of linguistic politeness, and also the fields to which the theories of politeness are related to. It also discusses the most frequent and favorite politeness forms. Also, it throws light on relevant approaches that reflect significant aspects related to politeness. Many studies have focused on the role of politeness in social interaction and conversation, so the speaker, to be polite, adopts specific strategies to cope with the hearer's face wants during any social interaction. Some strategies reflect the relationship between politeness and indirectness. Choosing appropriate strategies is determined by some factors that affect on how and what is said in an interaction since they are associated with social distance and closeness. This study also clarifies whether all cultures are similar or different in the way they follow to show politeness.*

*Key words: politeness; social interaction; strategies; indirectness; factors*

### INTRODUCTION

Crystal (1997: 297) believes that politeness, in Sociolinguistics and Pragmatics, is a term that signifies linguistic features associated with norms of social behavior, in relation to notions like courtesy, rapport, deference and distance. Such features involve the usage of specific discourse markers (please), suitable tones of voice, and tolerable forms of address (e.g. The choice of intimate v. distant pronouns, or of first v. last names).

Eelen (2001: 1) clarifies that politeness, according to the Anglo-Saxon scientific tradition, is investigated from the pragmatic and sociolinguistic perspective. It is agreed that theories of politeness are involved in what belongs to either of these linguistic subfields for politeness is specifically concerned with language use that is connected with pragmatics-and it is a phenomenon that represents a link between language and the social world.

Scovel (1998: 38) manifests that pragmatics represents the study of what people mean when they use language in normal social interaction; while sociolinguistics refers to the study of why we say, what to whom, when, and where.

Eelen (2001: 1) confirms that although the pragmatic and the sociolinguistic perspectives are different from one another, they unify the field of politeness theory, in that politeness seems to be a phenomenon that is associated with the relationship between language and social reality. Anyhow, such agreement can be hardly found beyond this general level as each theory has its own definition of politeness.

Watts (2003: 85) states that the first theory of linguistic politeness made by Brown and Levinson appeared in 1978 and is referred to as the 'face-saving' theory of politeness. Brown has already produced an article entitled 'Women and Politeness: a new perspective on Language and Society' in review in *Anthropology* in 1976. Brown and Levinson's model seems to be an endeavor to formulate a theory that reflects individuals' way of producing linguistic politeness, i.e., a production model. In their model, they focus on the speaker rather than hearer.

Eelen (2001:3) claims that the names 'Brown' and 'Levinson' are considered as synonymous with the word 'politeness'. As stated by one researcher, "it is impossible to talk about politeness without referring to Brown and Levinson's theory" (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1997: 11).

Yule (1996:60) believes that politeness can be treated as a fixed concept, as in the idea of 'polite social behavior', or etiquette, within a culture. For being polite in social interaction within a particular culture, some of general principles can be determined such as being tactful, generous, modest, and sympathetic toward others.

For Leech (1983: 81), politeness principle suggests that one has to 'maximize the expression of polite beliefs, minimize the expression of impolite beliefs'. He divides them into six maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, sympathy.

Yule (1996: 60) states that politeness, Within an interaction, is defined as the means employed to show awareness of another person's face

Gleason & Ratner (1998:286) perceive that politeness means acting so as to take care of the feelings of others and involves both those actions associated with positive face (the wish to be approved of) and negative face (the wish to be free from the imposition, unimpeded, or left alone).

Eelen (2001: 2) admits that Robin Lakoff has been considered as the mother of modern politeness theory since she was prior to study it from a pragmatic perspective. Lakoff (1990: 34) defines politeness as "a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange".

Yule (2010: 135) reports that politeness is defined as showing awareness and consideration of another person's face.

Watts (2003: 13) supposes that politeness is a lexeme in the English language whose meaning is subject to negotiation by the participants interacting in English. The meaning of politeness is reproduced and renegotiated whenever and wherever it is utilized in verbal interaction.

Politeness has been defined by different linguists, yet their definitions show that all of them agree that "face" is the most relevant concept in the study of linguistic politeness.

## **POLITENESS FORMS**

Gleason & Ratner (1998: 286) suppose that polite forms of speech are lengthened and require more time and effort than direct forms do. Deese (1984:41) reports that speakers usually use wordy and unnecessary forms in the interest of politeness and face-saving in real public speech at city hall meeting or on radio talk shows (for example, "I feel that you believe that we understand your concern."). Many people conceive that politeness and face saving are necessary effort. Matthews (2007:308) states that polite form is used to express deference to an addressee.

Gleason & Ratner (1998:374-375) argue that children acquire grammatical forms which show deference, politeness, and other social properties early not because they are syntactically or cognitively less complex, but because they are socially necessary. Children acquire various polite forms as a result of explicit teaching on the part of adults (Snow, Gleason, & Perlmann, 1990). It looks clear that children's acquisition of different polite forms occurs in conjunction with both their increasing cognitive capacities and their willing to be polite and socially acceptable members. According to a study of eight families at dinner (Berko Gleason, Perlmann, and Grief), it is found that every family uses and teaches their children some politeness routines and indirect requests such as "thank you" and "May I please be excused?"

An Indirect request can be made by negative questions, e.g., (Ervin-Tripp 1976:38):

[Motorist to gas station attendant]

You don't happen to have any change for the phone do you?

Palmer (1981:62) observes that the polite form, in many European languages, can be either the second person plural form or a third person form. For example, in French, Greek and Russian, the plural forms are used; while in Italian and Spanish the third person forms are used.

Crystal (1995: 224) believes that using the past tense, such as "Did you want to go?", is more polite than using the more direct or the present tense (Do you want to go?).

Yule (1996:56) assures that typical patterns starting with models such as ("Can you?", "Could you?") or ("will you?", "Would you?") or ("Will you?", "Would you?") are normally used to make a polite request.

Saeed (2009:246) adds that the more polite form seems to be inappropriate when it is used for addressing a familiar peer as a non-peer since it looks to be cold and distancing, e.g.:

[Young file clerks who have worked together for four months]

I got the applications done finally

- a. Could you take these back to Emma, please?

Or

- b. Take these with you.

Where a is felt to be less appropriate than b.

## APPROACHES RELATED TO POLITENESS

Yule (1996: 62) maintains that there is a relationship between the politeness concepts and language use that can be explained by taking a single speech event. For example, when you discover that you do not have anything to write with at an important lecture, so you try to get solution offered by someone beside you. Within this situation, you represent "self", and the person near you represents "other". At the first moment, you decide to say nothing, so you rummage in your pockets and your bag, go back into your pockets, with the hope that your trouble will be realized. This approach is called "say nothing" that may work because the other offers and not because the self asks. When this approach works and the problem is realized, it seems clear that more has been communicated than is said. It is obvious that people prefer that their needs can be recognized without expressing those needs in language, as in the following example:

Self: (looks in the bag)

Other: (offers pen) Here, use this.

Another approach is called "Say Something: Off and On Record" that may be followed when "self and other" approach does not work, you can produce a statement as the following, (ibid: 63):

- a. Uh, I forgot my pen.
- b. Hmm, I wonder where I put my pen.

These statements are not directly addressed to the other and the other may ignore the speaker's need, these statements are called "off record". They can be also called 'hints' in casual descriptions. These off record statements may or may not work (as a way of getting a pen), but again if they succeed, it will be since more has been communicated than was said. The speaker can directly express his needs to the other. In contrast to off record statements, these direct statements are called "on record". They are called bald on record when the other person is directly asked for something by using the imperative forms, for example, Give me a pen. These bald on record forms can be softened by adding expressions such as 'please' and 'would you?'. They are called mitigating devices.

## TYPES OF POLITENESS

Yule (2010: 139-140) believes that cultures are different in the way they identify a polite behavior. According to Lakoff(1990), there are three types of politeness: distance politeness, deference politeness and camaraderie politeness.

1. Distance politeness refers to one of the civilized human strategies which are similar to those of other animals. Animals make physical boundary markers to indicate their fellows: my turf, stay out. The humans usually use symbols to create symbolic fences. The distance politeness shows equality between the participants. It is typical in the middle and upper classes in most of Europe for a very long time.
2. Deferential Politeness may be adopted by a culture that avoids the danger of conflict. Conflict can be avoided if a participant consider that whatever is said and whatever it is to mean in a conversation is up to the other person. Deference politeness assumes debasing one of the participants in a conversation or both. This type of politeness is characteristic of many Asian societies. In the majority of societies. It is the preferred model of interaction for women, especially when talking to men.
3. Camaraderie is the third type that shows that interaction and connection are socially positive ideas and the openness is the most significant sign of courtesy. According to a camaraderie system, to be open and nice is to be desirable and adorable.

## POLITENESS AND THE CONCEPT OF FACE

Saeed (2009: 246) clarifies that the sociologist Erving Goffman's studies (1967, 1971, 1981) shed useful light on the social construction of the self and the notion of face (roughly, the public image an individual seeks to project). His study has influenced a number of linguistic studies that are associated with politeness, such as Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), Leech (1983) and Tannen (1984, 1986). Face, according to Brown and Levinson (1978:66), is 'the public self-image that every member of society wants to claim for himself'.

Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) clarify that they derive their notion of 'face' from that of Goffman (1967) and from the English folk term. Anyhow, face refers to something which may be lost, conserved, or optimized, and should be constantly present in an interaction. Generally speaking, people collaborate in conserving face in interaction, and such collaboration is due to the mutual vulnerability of face.

Yule (1996: 60) emphasizes that there is a specific type of politeness at work within an interaction. To describe it, it is necessary to use the concept of face which, as a technical term, means the public self-image of person and reflect that emotional and social sense of self that each person has and expects everyone else to realize. Politeness is perceived in situations of social distance or closeness. Respect and deference are used to show awareness for another person's face when that other looks socially distant. Solidarity, camaraderie, or friendliness can be expressed to show awareness for another person's face when the other seems socially close. The first type may be clarified in a student's question to his teacher as in (a), and the second type in a student's question to his friend, as in (b).

- a. Excuse me, Mr. Buckingham, but can I talk to you for a minute?
- b. Hey, John, got a minute?

For Gleason & Ratner (1998: 286), "face" is the image which speakers want to present of themselves to others, a powerful emotional possession which can be lost, maintained, or enhanced in social interaction.

Yule (1996: 61) suggests that the participants usually should specify, as they speak within an interaction, the relative social distance between them, and hence their 'face wants'. Let's suppose that the context, in which the participants are living, has established rigidly constant social relationships. People expect that their public self-image, or their face want will be respected when they behave within their everyday social interactions. When an individual faces something that represents a threat to his self-image, this is called a face threatening act. Anyhow, the speaker can lessen the possible threat by saying something that express regret. This is named a face saving act. Both acts are clarified in the following example where one of an older couple proposes a face threatening act and the other suggests a face saving act, while their young neighbor is playing his music very loudly.

Him: I'm going to tell him to stop that awful noise right now!

Her: Perhaps you could just ask him if he is going to stop soon because it's getting a bit late and people need to get to sleep.

## **NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE FACE**

Saeed (2009: 246-247) admits that face, according to Brown and Levinson (1978:66), has two components: Positive face is associated with a participant's desire to be liked and approved by others and his/her need to be connected and to be a member of the same group; and negative face is associated with a member's need to be independent and not to be imposed on by others.

Yule (1996:61-62) clarifies that when the speaker tries to save other people's face, he has to care for their negative face wants and their positive face wants. The word 'negative' doesn't have bad

meaning, but it shows the opposite pole from 'positive'. When one needs to be free of action, and not to be imposed on by others, but independent, he has negative face. When a participant needs to be liked and accepted by others, to be treated as a member of the same group, and to recognize that his or her wants are shared by others, he has a positive face. Simply, positive face reflects the need to be connected, and the negative face reflects the need to be independent.

Saeed (2009: 246-47) asserts that face, in many verbal interaction, may be threatened. Threatening negative face, which represents damaging participant's autonomy, involves orders, requests, suggestions and advice. Threatening positive face, that decreases an individual's self and social discretion, involves expressions of disapproval, disagreements, accusations and interruptions. Anyhow, by using expressions of apologies and confessions, speakers may threaten their own face. Yule (1996: 61) indicates that there are many various methods of performing face save acts, since every person generally tries to respect the face wants of others.

Yule (2010: 135) clarifies that a face-saving act emphasizing person's negative face reflects concern about imposition (I am sorry to bother you..; I know you are busy, but...). A face-saving act emphasizing a person's positive face reflects solidarity and shows a common goal (Let's do this together...; You and I have the same problem, so...)

Yule (1996: 62) states that deference, emphasizing the importance of the other's time or concerns, and an apology for the imposition or interruption, are associated with a face saving act that is concerned with the person's negative face. This is called negative politeness. On the other hand, when there is a tendency to show solidarity, emphasize that both speakers want the same thing, and that they have a common goal, a face saving act is oriented to the person's positive face. This is called positive politeness.

Matthews (2007:135) supposes that diminishing the threat to an addressee's 'negative face' and optimizing their 'positive face' can be accomplished by following the basic strategy of politeness.

## THE STRATEGIES OF POLITENESS

Watts (2003: 85-86) emphasizes that politeness strategies aim at supporting the hearer's positive face and at averting transcending of the hearer's freedom of action and freedom from imposition. The participant should choose appropriate strategies to minimize any face threats occurring in any social activities. On this basis, Brown and Levinson assume a list of five possibilities to avoid or to minimize the possible face-threatening act, ranging from the best case (strategy 5 'Don't do the face threatening act [FTA]') to the worst (strategy 1 'Do the FTA and go on record as doing so baldly and without any redressive action') (cf. Figure 1). The speaker can soften the possible threat by two types of redressive action (a) by selecting (strategy 2) that represents 'positive politeness' to enhance the hearer's positive face or (b) by choosing (strategy 3) that is referred to as 'negative politeness' to soothe the transgressing on the hearer's freedom of action or freedom from imposition.

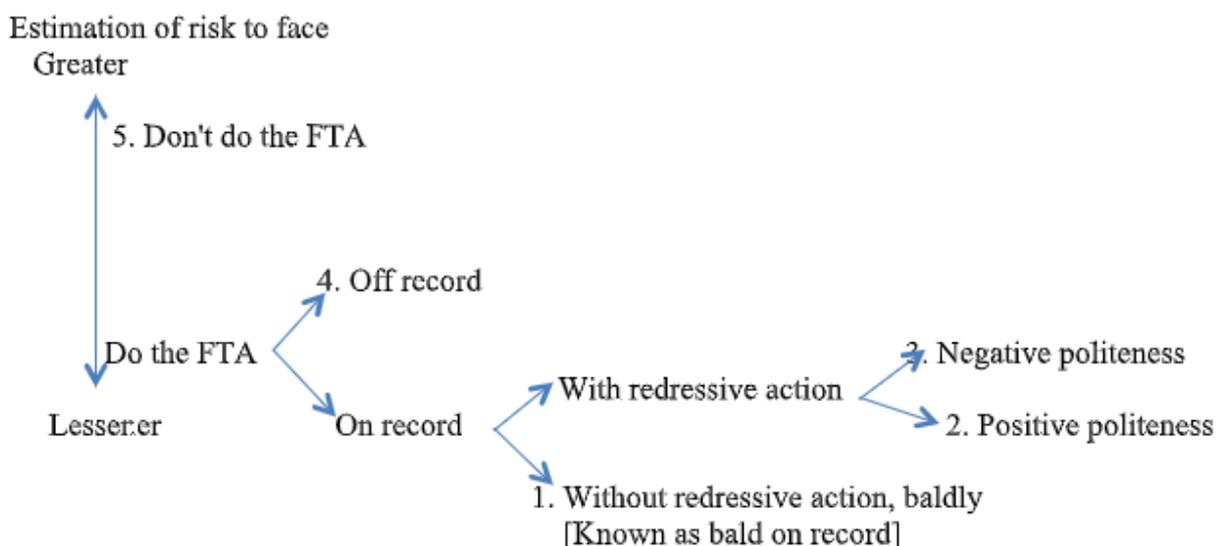


Figure (1) FTA Strategies (Adapted from Brown and Levinson, 1987: 60)

Eelen (2001: 4) demonstrates that either the speaker's or the hearer's face, according to Brown and Levinson's theory, is threatened by most speech acts, so the politeness aims at redressing those face-threats by three main strategies: positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record politeness (e.g., hinting instead of a direct request).

Yule (1996:64) believes that avoiding a face threatening act can be recognized by applying face saving acts that can be achieved by using positive or negative politeness strategies. According to positive politeness strategy, the speaker uses on record expressions that show a common goal and friendship as the examples below:

- A. How about letting me use your pen?
- B. Hey, buddy, I'd appreciate it if you'd let me use your pen.

A negative politeness is established in most English-speaking contexts, to perform a face saving act by using a question starting with a modal verb, apology for imposition, extended talk, often with hesitations, which reflects more elaborate negative politeness, as in the following examples:

- a. Could you lend me a pen?
- b. I'm sorry to bother you, but can I ask you for a pen or something?
- c. I know you are busy, but might I ask you if- em - if you happen to have an extra pen that I could, you know-eh-maybe borrow?

Watts (2003: 86) adds that positive politeness, according to Brown and Levinson, is addressed to the hearer's positive face and negative politeness is addressed to the hearer's negative face.

Yule (1996: 65-66) reports that it is worth noting that positive politeness is typically associated with the solidarity strategy that expresses closeness between speaker and hearer and that represents the principal operating strategy among a whole group or it can be used, as an option, on a specific occasion by a speaker. Such strategy is marked via personal information, nicknames, occasionally abusive terms (especially among males), and common dialect or colloquial expressions. Linguistically, a solidarity strategy involves inclusive terms like "we" and "let's", e.g., "Come on, let's go to the party. Everyone will be there. We'll have fun". The strategy that is associated with negative politeness is called a deference strategy. According to this strategy, the speaker uses

negative politeness forms that emphasize the hearer's right and freedom. It can be considered the typical strategy of a whole group or it can represent an option that the speaker can use on a particular occasion. It is included in what is called 'formal politeness'. It may contain expressions which refer to neither the speaker nor the hearer (for example, "customers may not smoke here, sir"), so it is impersonal and nothing is common. The deference strategy is expressed in a language that reflects the speaker's and the hearer's independence since there is an absence of personal claims, e.g., "There's going to be a party, if you can make it. It will be fun".

## POLITENESS AND INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS

Yule (2010:134) states that each syntactic structure is used to perform a certain function as listed in the following table:

Structure	Function
Did you eat the pizza?	Interrogative Question
Eat the pizza (please)!	Imperative Command (Request)
You eat the pizza.	Declarative statement

Archer, Aijmer and Wichmann (2012: 41-42) state that the direct speech act refers to a conventional relationship between sentence type and speech act such as the relationship between an interrogative and a question.

Yule (2010: 134) demonstrates that it is possible to use one of the structures in the set above to perform a function that is different from the one listed beside it in the same line. For example, the utterance "Can you pass the salt?" is not used to ask a question about someone's ability, but it is associated with a request. In this case, the result is called an indirect speech act.

Crystal (1997: 194) manifests that the term "indirect", in the classification of speech acts, refers to an utterance when there is no direct relationship between its linguistic form and its communicative purpose, for example, the declarative "I'm feeling cold" is used as a request for someone to close a door.

Archer, Aijmer and Wichmann (2012: 41) argue that indirectness reflects the fact that what we say literally doesn't always express what we mean.

Yule (1996: 55-56) confirms that it is clear that an interrogative structure is one of the most common forms that can be used to make an indirect speech act since it can be used not only to give answers, but also to perform an action. It is just the indirect speech acts that are associated with politeness. To comprehend the reason, we should look at a bigger picture and break any restrictions that associate a single utterance with a single speech act, e.g.:

Could you pass the salt?	(Request)
Would you open this?	(Request)

Gleason & Ratner (1998: 285-286) conceive that sometimes listeners misunderstand the intended function of an utterance, even if they realize all the words uttered as well as their syntactic form. When a lawyer, during the testimony, says "I am sorry?" to the witness, he does not intend to apologize to him, but to command that witness to explicate his previous statement that was unclear for the lawyer to understand. Anyhow, it is laughable to respond to the literal meaning of such

indirect speech acts. If the witness does not understand the intended meaning of the lawyer, he may say " I accept your apology " instead of providing additional information".

Saeed (2009: 245)emphasizes that Ervin-Tripp, who emphasized the social impact of indirect requests and orders in American English, deduced that speakers count issues of politeness and social power in constructing speech acts. She reflected the advantage of using indirect interrogative requests by which the hearer may find a suitable chance by expressing certain condition according to which the compliance would be impossible, as in the following example (Ervin-Tripp, 1976:38):

[Daughter to father]

You ready?

Not yet.

In every social interaction, politeness can be useful in decreasing potential threats. That is, speakers, trying to weaken face-threatening acts, use a series of strategies that can be involved in what is called "politeness" or "tact". Again, these speech acts, following the distinction between positive and negative face, include two components: negative indirectness and positive indirectness. Negative indirectness is a good way to decrease the threat of orders and requests by giving an explanation for a request rather than the request itself, e.g., saying "It's very hot in here" instead of "please open the window"; or querying a preparatory condition for the request, e.g., "Could you open the window?". Positive indirectness helps to diminish the threat of disagreements, interruptions, etc., by introducing them with apologies or explanation, e.g., "I'm sorry, but you 're wrong" instead of merely "You 're wrong", or "I haveto say that I don't agree" instead of "I don't agree".(Saeed, 2009: 247)

Yule (2010: 135) believes that indirect speech acts are necessary in many societies since actions such as requests, presented in an indirect way, seems to be more gentle or more polite than direct speech acts (open the door for me).

## **INDIRECTNESS AND GENDER**

Gleason & Ratner (1998: 286) state that, according to Deborah Tannen (1990), there is a relationship between gender and speech act that reflects the desirability of applying direct versus indirect speech acts to manage someone else's actions. Boys and men prefer to use the direct speech act, i.e., they tend to command each other directly such as "Get the stethoscope.". On the contrary, women and girls prefer to use indirect forms such as " Let's play doctor and use the stethoscope.", or " Let's take out the garbage.". Tannen realizes that when the women use indirect forms with men, this strategy usually backfires because men perceive that women don't follow the right way to ask them to do something, and feel manipulated by such a devious strategy.

## **POLITENESS AND RELEVANT FACTORS**

Yule (1996: 59) manifests that language in use cannot be illustrated without referring to some aspects related to society. A great deal of what we say, and much of what we communicate, is

identified by our social relationships. A linguistic interaction is basically related to a social interaction.

Gleason & Ratner (1998:286) assure that politeness is governed by the power relations between members, the social distance between them, and the degree of imposition which may be included.

Eelen (2001: 4) elucidates that The type and the quantity of politeness used in a certain speech act is determined by the weightiness of the speech act that is calculated from three social variables: P(the perceived powerdifference between participants), D (the social distance between them), and R (the cultural ranking of the speech act- How dangerous it is realized to be within a specific culture).

Yule (1996: 59-60) reports that various factors that are associated with social distance and closeness must be considered to make sense of what is said in an interaction. Some of these factors are largely external factors and prior to an interaction. These factors typically include the relative status of the participants, based on social values related to such things as age and power. For example, in English- speaking contexts, speakers of lower status tend to use address forms which involve a title and a last name (for example, Mrs Clinton, Mr John, Dr Smith) to express the social distance between themselves and higher status speakers. Other factors are internal to the interaction, such as amount of imposition or degree of friendliness, that are often negotiated during an interaction. The initial social distance may change to be less or more during its course. This may lead participants to move from a title-plus-last name to a first-name basis during the talk. These external and internal factors have an influence on both what we say and how we are interpreted. The speaker may be misunderstood by the hearer that goes beyond the speaker's intention and evaluates him as 'rude' and 'inconsiderate', or 'considered' and 'thoughtful'. Such evaluations lead to a clear idea that more is being communicated than is said. The investigation of the impact of such interpretation is achieved in terms of politeness.

Palmer (1981: 62-63) notices that the speaker, During the conversation, has the ability not only to identify the person to whom he is speaking, but also to show precisely the social relations between himself and the person whom he is speaking to. According to French forms, the familiar and the polite forms are called the T and V forms. These forms are used by depending on two factors that are named POWER and SOLIDARITY (Brown&Gilman 1960). Power includes the asymmetric relations such as "older than", "parent of", "employer of", "richer than", "stronger than" and "nobler than" where T is used by the most powerful person to speak to the less powerful one that uses V in his reply; whereas solidarity includes symmetric relations such as "attend the same school", "have the same parents", " practise the same profession "where the T form is applied. The speaker may use both T and V forms when he is in a position of both power and solidarity like an elder brother in relation to a younger one, or there may be a hierarchy of relations within a profession.

Yule (2010: 135)explains that when the speaker uses a direct speech act to get someone to do something (Give me that paper), he shows that he has more social power than the other person. Thus, If the speaker acts in a way that shows a threat to another person's self- image, he is using a face-threatening act. When the assumption of social power is removed, the speaker uses an indirect speech act to ask someone to do something, i.e., he uses an interrogative structure instead of imperative one to make a request (Could you pass me that paper?). That form makes the request more polite and lessens the possible threat to another's face.

## POLITENESS AND CULTURES

Saeed (2009: 247) emphasizes that while emphasizing the value of the notion of politeness for studying indirect speech acts, one important issue raised is cross-cultural variation. The notion of politeness has been applied by many researchers to a number of different languages. The researchers have declared that the tally of politeness strategies, involving the use of indirect speech acts, related to European and North American cultural norms.

Yule (2010: 134-136) observes that a person's indirect speech act is occasionally not recognized well by others, for example, the following dialogue between a visitor, carrying his luggage, looking lost, and a passer-by.

Visitor: Excuse me. Do you know where the Ambassador Hotel is?

Passer-by: Oh sure, I know where it is. (and walk away)

In this scene, the visitor uses interrogative structure to make a request, i.e., indirect speech act, but the passer-by acts as if the utterance was a direct speech act. Ideas about the suitable language to show politeness differ from one culture to another. If a person of a culture where directness is a good way to show solidarity uses direct speech acts (Give me that chair) to a person whose culture is oriented to indirectness and avoiding direct imposition, he will be regarded impolite. In turn, there will be misunderstanding of an utterance such as (Are you using this chair?), whether they really want something or just asking about it.

Saeed (2009: 248) reveals that both speech acts such as thanks, apologies, compliments, invitation, etc., and indirectness differ from one culture to another. During studying indirectness, requests have been studied and compared in some languages such as English and German (House and Kasper 1981) and also English and Russian (Thomas 1983). Such studies reveal consistent differences as well as a greater use of indirectness in English than the other two languages.

Gleason & Ratner (1998: 286) point out that Brown and Levinson (1978) started their study with an article which was an attempt to present a universal model of how speakers try to "save face" by adopting diverse forms of politeness to listeners. Politeness has had controversially universal interest, yet it is different traditionally from one culture to another (Brown, 1987).

Saeed (2009: 247) adds that the notion of face, for Brown and Levinson, is universal: every language community has a system of politeness, but the details associated with that system will vary since face is associated with the most essential cultural ideas concerning the nature of the social persona, honour and virtue, shame and redemption, and thus to religious concepts'. (Brown and Levinson, 1987:13)

Gleason & Ratner (1998: 286-288) report that Chinese notion of face does not focus on the self (Mao, 1994). Mao confirms that Chinese face reflects a reputable image that individuals try to appear with during their communication with other members of their community. One part of Chinese notions of "face" is "mianzi" which can be perceived in terms of negative face, yet it has to be comprehended as one's claim to the respect prestige of the society. Another Chinese notion of "face" is "lian" which is very similar to positive face. If a member loses "lian", his conduct, behavior will be regarded absolutely disagreeable or even indecent. When an American woman and a Chinese diplomat began crossing a busy street in China, the woman fearfully observed that a truck was barreling down the street right at them. In fact, she was surprised at the diplomat's instructions:

"Don't even look at him. Let him avoid us!". She admitted that it is an ideal Chinese interest, yet she found such life-threatening preoccupation with negative face-saving almost incomprehensible.

Saeed (2009: 247-248) manifests that comparison between requests in English and Greek has been shown in Sifianou's (1992) study, which has revealed the complexity and difficulty of such comparison. Her conclusion is that positive face strategies are the most predominant in the Greek politeness system, whereas negative face strategies are what the (British) English system of politeness is more oriented towards. This leads to different expectations of what conversational politeness is. Individual speech acts and the strategies related to politeness vary from culture to another. This is what the researchers have discovered by a number of studies that include implicit and explicit comparison with English, involving Blum-Kulka (1983, 1987) on Hebrew, Wierzbicka (1985) on Polish, Matsumoto (1988, 1989) on Japanese, Hwang (1990) on Korean, Gu (1990) on Chinese and Sifianou (1992) on Greek. These studies are useful since it helps us to have insights into the politeness systems of other languages, but the general conclusion about a universal system is unobvious: Some researchers have successfully made a general system to specific languages, while others, such as Matsumoto (1988) and GU (1990), have believed that Brown and Levinson's system doesn't precisely show conversational practices in the greatly deferential communities they investigate.

## CONCLUSION

Unlimited things, such as requesting, ordering, warning and so on, can be accomplished by using the language. Consequently, politeness is essentially associated with language use. Politeness has been given different definitions by different linguists, yet what unifies their definitions is the concept 'face' which is agreed to be the most relevant concept in the study of politeness. This is related to the fact that all human social interaction involves facework of one kind or another. There is a relationship between 'face' and 'indirectness' since indirectness involves negative and positive indirectness to cope with negative and positive politeness. On this basis, there is a close relationship between politeness and indirectness, so indirect forms are more polite than direct one. Politeness represents a link between language and the social world, so it is very necessary to minimize potential conflict and also to enhance individual's social relations. In some cases, using the polite forms may be misunderstood and unappreciated, especially among close friends, and may bring different evaluations like "uncharity" and "altruist" and so on. Thus, more is being communicated than is said. It is clear that the speaker may get his request recognized by different ways: saying nothing, making off record statements (hints), and making on record statements that may be done baldly or indirectly. Anyhow, to reach a satisfying degree of politeness, an individual must use one of the following strategies: making off record statements; making on record statements with redressive action to include the positive and negative face. The choice of such strategies is determined by specific social factors. After all, it becomes clear that what is considered as polite in one culture may be considered as impolite in another culture since politeness strategies vary across cultures. It is concluded that every language has a system of politeness, but the linguists have failed to formulate a universal system of politeness.

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