

A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF POLITENESS IN ENGLISH.

Jawgasharova Amina

a doctoral student of NSPI.

Abstract: Politeness is an important aspect of pragmatic competence that influences how speakers communicate, maintain social relationships, and express respect in different communicative situations. This article examines politeness in English from a pragmatic perspective, focusing on the linguistic strategies speakers use to achieve communicative goals while considering the needs and expectations of others. The article demonstrates that politeness in English cannot be understood solely through linguistic forms instead it requires consideration of the pragmatic conditions under which expressions are used and interpreted. The findings contribute to a broader understanding of politeness as a context-dependent communicative phenomenon.

Key words: politeness, pragmatics, English language, speech acts, politeness strategies, principles of politeness, communicative context.

Introduction: In contemporary linguistic research, politeness is examined from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives, with pragmatics occupying a central position. As politeness is closely related to speakers' communicative intentions and the contextual conditions of interaction, a pragmatic approach provides an effective framework for examining how polite meanings are expressed, interpreted, and negotiated in communication. Particular attention is given to the relationship between linguistic forms and their communicative functions, while taking into consideration such factors as social distance, power relations, interpersonal relationships, and culturally established norms. From this perspective, politeness can be understood not merely as a set of linguistic expressions, but as a context-dependent pragmatic phenomenon that contributes to the successful management of interpersonal communication.

Politeness is a fundamental feature of human communication and has attracted considerable attention from scholars working in various fields, including sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and intercultural communication. Early approaches to politeness primarily focused on explaining how politeness is conceptualized and realized within particular cultural contexts, while subsequent research increasingly emphasized the comparison of politeness forms and practices across different languages and cultures. Such cross-cultural perspectives have demonstrated that the interpretation and realization of politeness may vary according to social relationships, communicative contexts, and culturally established norms.

Methodology. The methodology involves a qualitative, descriptive analysis of selected examples discussed in published scholarly literature, interpreted through relevant politeness theories. Particular attention is given to face management, indirectness, requests, apologies, and other linguistic strategies that contribute to polite communication. The discussion highlights the role of context, social distance, power relations, and communicative intentions in interpreting polite expressions.

Literature review. The analysis of pragmatic approaches shows that politeness is a complex communicative phenomenon that regulates interpersonal interaction and helps achieve

communicative goals. Despite the differences in their theoretical views, Austin, Lakoff, Leech, Brown, and Levinson all emphasize the importance of context, the speaker's intention, and social relations in realizing politeness. Therefore, politeness can be viewed as a system of communicative strategies and linguistic tools that ensure effective communication and maintain harmonious relationships between interlocutors. Nevertheless, politeness is determined not only by pragmatic factors, but also by cultural values and social norms. Consequently, the concept of politeness must be examined from a linguacultural perspective.

Results and discussion.

The discussion of established approaches to politeness highlights the importance of linguistic strategies such as indirectness, appropriate forms of address, requests, apologies, and expressions of consideration. These strategies enable speakers to communicate their intentions while taking into account the feelings, social positions, and communicative needs of others. Furthermore, the pragmatic interpretation of polite expressions depends not only on their linguistic form but also on the circumstances in which they are used and the relationship between the interlocutors.

The analysis also emphasizes that politeness is not a fixed set of linguistic rules applicable to every situation. An expression considered polite in one communicative context may be interpreted differently in another, depending on the speakers' intentions and the social conditions of the interaction. Therefore, understanding politeness in English requires an integrated consideration of language, context, and interpersonal relationships.

According to Levinson, pragmatics is concerned with the study of the relationship between language and context. It encompasses various aspects of language use, including speech acts, deixis, presupposition, implicature, and politeness. Pragmatic competence, that is, the ability to use language appropriately in social situations and interpret communicative meanings correctly, is particularly important for effective communication in multicultural environments, where cultural norms and expectations may differ [3].

Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) developed Speech Act Theory, which explains how utterances perform different communicative functions. Speech acts may include apologizing, requesting, promising, thanking, and complimenting. From a pragmatic perspective, understanding these functions is essential for using language appropriately in different social and cultural contexts [1].

As described in Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, certain speech acts may threaten the face of either the speaker or the hearer and are therefore considered face-threatening acts (FTAs). To minimize such threats, speakers may employ different politeness strategies depending on the communicative context. Brown and Levinson identify four main strategies: bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies:

1. Bald on-record communication involves expressing an intention directly and clearly. For example:

-Close the window.

2. Positive politeness emphasizes solidarity, friendliness, and shared social identity, while negative politeness shows deference and attempts to respect the hearer's freedom of action:

-If you don't mind, could you close the window?

3. Negative politeness: Expressing deference and communicating politely:

-If you don't mind, could you close the window?

4. Off-record strategies, in contrast, allow speakers to communicate indirectly by giving hints rather than expressing their intentions explicitly:

-It's a bit cold in here.

The choice of these strategies is influenced by contextual factors such as social distance, relative power, and the degree of imposition associated with the speech act [2].

Leech considers politeness an important area of socio pragmatics because it contributes to the explanation of communicative behavior in social contexts. From his perspective, pragmatic analysis should focus on what speakers intend to communicate through their utterances and how this meaning is interpreted by hearers. In this respect, politeness should not be understood merely as a general social concept or as an abstract notion of "face" or "culture"; rather, it can be examined through the pragmatic choices speakers make in particular communicative situations. Leech introduced the Politeness Principle (PP) as a framework for explaining various pragmatic phenomena related to politeness. His approach therefore provides a useful basis for examining how speakers select linguistic forms to achieve particular communicative goals while maintaining appropriate interpersonal relationships [4].

As discussed in the pragmatic studies reviewed above, politeness is closely connected with speech acts. Speech acts such as questioning, requesting, offering, refusing, expressing gratitude, and apologizing can be performed through different politeness strategies depending on the communicative situation. The choice of these strategies is influenced by various social factors, including the age, rank, social status, social distance, and relationship between the interlocutors. Therefore, the appropriate use of politeness strategies requires speakers to consider not only what they want to communicate but also how their utterances may be interpreted within a particular social and cultural context.

Leech's Politeness Principle consists of six maxims: the Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim, and Sympathy Maxim. These maxims describe different ways in which speakers can maintain politeness and promote harmonious interaction. Their primary function is to encourage consideration for the interlocutor, show respect, reduce potential disagreement, and minimize conflict in communication. Thus, Leech's framework demonstrates how politeness can be realized through specific pragmatic choices in interaction [5]. These maxims describe different ways in which speakers can show consideration for others, maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships, and reduce potential conflict in communication:

1. The Tact Maxim encourages speakers to minimize the cost to the hearer and maximize the benefit to the hearer:

-Could you possibly help me with this?

2. The Generosity Maxim encourages speakers to minimize the benefit to themselves and maximize the cost to themselves:

-Please take my seat.

3. The Approbation Maxim encourages speakers to minimize criticism of others and maximize praise of others:

- Your presentation was really impressive.

4. The Modesty Maxim encourages speakers to minimize praise of themselves and maximize self-criticism:

- I'm glad you liked it, but it was really a team effort.

5. The Agreement Maxim encourages speakers to minimize disagreement and maximize agreement with others.

- I see your point. I agree that this could be useful.

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6. The Sympathy Maxim encourages speakers to minimize antipathy and maximize sympathy toward others:

- *I'm sorry to hear that. I hope things get better soon.*

The examples above demonstrate that Leech's Politeness Principle can be applied to English language. Factors such as social status, age, degree of familiarity, and the relationship between interlocutors can influence the choice of politeness strategies. Therefore, examining these maxims can reveal the ways of politeness which can be linguistically and culturally expressed.

Conclusion. In conclusion, politeness represents an essential component of pragmatic competence in English, playing a significant role in shaping interpersonal communication and maintaining social relationships. The theoretical analysis presented in this article demonstrates that politeness cannot be understood merely as the use of respectful words or conventional expressions. Rather, it is a context-dependent phenomenon influenced by communicative intentions, social distance, power relations, and the expectations of the participants involved in interaction. Overall, the study contributes to a theoretical understanding of politeness as a dynamic pragmatic phenomenon and highlights its importance in effective intercultural communication. A pragmatic approach to politeness provides a valuable framework for interpreting speakers' intentions, understanding the functions of linguistic choices, and developing communicative competence in English.

References.

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