Politeness Strategies in Everyday English Discourse

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ABSTRACT

Conversation strategies are an important element of any modern English language learning program. Business English classes place great emphasis on teaching these strategies. Politeness strategies are an important component of business conversation strategies. Understanding linguistic politeness as a strategy of speech behavior allows interlocutors to maintain a successful communication model and avoid conflicts. This study focuses on politeness strategies used in business English speech. As part of the study, a corpus of precedents was subjected to a comparative analysis, during which their general pragmatic effect on the interlocutor was determined. Emphasis has been placed on the statistical analysis of the distribution of four politeness strategies and their respective substrates in English-speaking business communication. The study includes comparative statistics showing the manifestation of various politeness strategies in modern business English and describes the most frequent cases of their implementation. Increasing awareness of politeness strategies and acquiring practical skills will help both the speaker and the listener to understand the meanings expressed in different communication situations and adapt speech behavior to achieve communication goals, which will ensure business success.

| **Keywords:** | politeness theory, politeness strategies, business communication, conversational strategies, face, positive face, negative face |

Politeness is showing respect for other people. In today's society, a person is considered polite if he has a meek behavior and good manners, but their presence does not mean at all that they cannot be combined with low goals and lack of respect for one's interlocutor. In other words, the external side of such a phenomenon is autonomous, and therefore you should not rely on it, thereby finding out the true intentions of the sender or addressee. It is not for nothing that the term "politeness" in English has two lexical expressions: polite – "polite" and courteous – "polite, courteous" - since the first analogue denotes the external aspect of behavior, and the second - a combination of external manifestation and internal kind-hearted disposition towards a person. [1, p. 1]

Politeness as a subject of linguistic research has repeatedly attracted the attention of many linguists, among them T. Larina, B. Kasper, E. Goffman. A huge contribution to such an interesting science was made by the famous linguists Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, based on the provisions formulated by E. Goffmann related to the communicative relations between individuals. That is why, before moving on to a detailed analysis of politeness strategies, it is necessary to consider the ideas that gave rise to their development.

Thanks to the ideas and methods first proposed by the scientist Erving Goffman, extensive research has been conducted on the problems of interpersonal communication.

E. Goffman especially noted the insignificant, everyday acts of interaction in which we find ourselves involved almost

constantly. He defined face-to-face interaction as "the mutual influence of individuals on each other's actions in the direct physical presence of all participants."

According to Goffmann's theory, everything we manifest ourselves is a product of not only social processes that occur at the level of social institutions (family, work, etc.), but also social processes that occur at the level of everyday situations of communication. These micro-level processes help organize our daily behavior in some way, make it meaningful, help us feel like a person. Various techniques in everyday behavior are used to "construct our idea of ourselves and those with whom this interaction is carried out" [2, p. 29].

A well-known linguist designated "self" (I) as a social construct, using the concept of face (trans. "face"), as "a positive social value that everyone affirms in the process of communication with others and which is accepted by the rest." Thus, the existence of "self" and "face" is built into the circle of social interaction and the mutual complement of "I" and another element.

There are several methods of maintaining "face", the most important of which Hoffman calls interpersonal rituals (interpersonal rituals) [3, p.37]. The author identifies two types:

• presentational rituals (presentational rituals) - these are actions through which the individual makes it clear to the recipients how he treats them;

• rituals of avoidance (avoidance rituals) - forms of expression of a respectful attitude, with the help of which the individual can distance himself from the recipient.

Thus, people use language, skillfully balancing between these two aspects of the concept of "face". This balancing causes the masking of speech acts.

Sometimes a direct request addressed to the interlocutor can create a threat to his "face", because in order to fulfill the request, he will most likely need to change his original plans. Therefore, it is better to use not a sentence in the imperative mood ("Open the door"), but a sentence with an imperative of the

1st person, plural, indicating the general interest of both the addresser and the addressee:

⬜ *Let's open the door.*

Other versions are also acceptable, indicating that the sender does not want to impose any obligations on the recipient, but here it is worth using the conditional mood. For example:

⬜*Excuse me, would you mind to close the door?*

According to Goffmann, acts of social interaction contain a symbolic detail, with the help of which "the individual depicts the extent to which he deserves respectful treatment or to what extent, in his opinion, others deserve it" [3, p. 28].

Despite some implemented ideas of Hoffmann, the most extensive information about the category of politeness was provided by linguists P. Brown and S. Stevenson. Developing Hoffmann's theory of the "social face", they developed the theory of "linguistic politeness", which is directly related to the term "face". In their 1987 monograph, they explain that politeness is the ability to apply the right strategies in the process of communication so that communicants feel comfortable or appropriate.

P. Brown and S. Levinson introduce the concepts of "positive face" and "negative face". By "positive face" is meant a personality demanded by the interlocutor or filled with positive content (i.e. this type of "face" shows the communicant's desire to be positively accepted and appreciated by his communication companion) [3, p. 68]. The "negative face" refers to freedom of action, the right to be oneself, to be independent and the right not to be pressured by others, not to take on undesirable obligations. [1, p. 3]

Unfortunately, in the process of communication, situations inevitably arise, including actions that threaten the "face" of the other. In English, this situation is called "face-threatening-activity" (FTAs).

Based on the above material, we come to the conclusion that politeness is nothing more than a "disguise of speech acts" that threaten the "positive" and "negative face" of the

interlocutor. Hence, there are two types of politeness: positive and negative.

I. Positive politeness. The purpose of "positive politeness" is to hide the threat of "positive face" [4, p. 216]. Here the sender uses special means, thereby respecting the desire of the recipient to have his own "positive face". At least he accepts only a fraction of the requirements of the interlocutor. The strategies themselves of "positive politeness" or in other words, rapprochement reflect friendly feelings, solidarity, goodwill, mutual cooperation (reciprocity).

In total, positive politeness has 15 strategies. Let's name some of them:

1. Expression of need, request. - *Why are you so sad? Could I help you?*

2. Group solidarity. (Use special markers inside it) - *"Honey, can you give me the salt?";*

3. Optimism. - *"You'll lend me your car for the weekend, I hope";*

4. Inclusion of the speaker and the listener in joint activities.

- *"Let's have a break!" Let's have a cup of tea!";*

5. Offers and promises. - *"I'll do it next week!";*

6. Exaggerated interest in the addressee or in his interests. - *What a nice picture! Do you look awesome?*

7. Sympathy, understanding or participation. - *"I'm so sorry to hear it."*

All of these strategies are aimed at making a person feel respected from the outside: the addresser takes care of the interests of the addressee.

II. Negative politeness is focused on the negative face of the listener [3, p.74]. It takes into account the desire of the interlocutor to be independent, to have the right to freedom of action. In turn, negative politeness strategies or, as they are called in another way, distancing strategies usually emphasize the absence of pressure on him. This is clearly demonstrated in the following list:

1. Evasive conversation. - *"You couldn't possibly tell me the time please?";*

2. Modality of opportunity, please. - *"Will you pass me the mustard?";*

3. Expression of pessimism (regarding their interests). - *"You don't have any plants, do you by any chance?";*

4. Downplaying the inconvenience and obligation. - *"I just want to ask if I can borrow your pan."*

In addition to positive and negative politeness, performing incompatible communicative actions, there are other levels of politeness according to the stylistic principle - high, medium and low levels or, more appropriately, formal, neutral and informal politeness. The most frequently used is precisely the average level of politeness characteristic of the neutral style, which is described as a manner of speech fixed by social tradition in neutral living conditions.

Neutral politeness does not have a special coloring - neither familiarity nor bookishness is present in it. Formal politeness (high level) is used in official and rather distant communication with an accentuated formality of relations. Informal politeness is characteristic of communication in a close circle, since it indicates a significant level of intimacy and solidarity, which is typical for a colloquial style of speech.

Through positive and negative politeness, a person is able to reveal the whole essence of human communication, based on the opposition of actions performed in the process of verbal communication. In other words, this process is a kind of balance rod in human communication, due to the observance of measures and balance in the dialogue between people. Both of these types are firmly connected in oral speech, and it is on their interaction that the linguocultural tradition is formed not only of the English language, but of other currently existing languages.

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