

Negative Politeness

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with the scientific importance of a systematic approach to the politeness category and its strategies. The goal of the article is to analyze the use of some models of English speech etiquette, specifically the use of politeness forms typical of the English. Politeness strategy presents itself in various types, as absolute, relative, negative or positive politeness. The type of politeness presupposes a definite form of etiquette speech act. Politeness strategy is analyzed in speech acts of apologies and condolences, through their pragmatic structures.

Key words: *negative politeness, tendency, addressee's want, direct and be indirect clash, higher status*

Introduction.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), negative politeness is “redressive action addressed to the addressee’s negative face” (ibid.: 129). In other words, the key aspect of negative politeness is the addresser’s respect towards the addressee giving him freedom to react in a free way. The chance to disagree or refuse is given to the addressee to enable him or her feel more comfortable in the conversation. Negative politeness is “specific and focused” (Brown & Levinson 1987: 129), uses set expressions and phrases conventionalized in the language of certain cultures. These phrases are therefore the most elaborate and precise. The product of using markers of negative politeness is social distancing (ibid.: 130).

Main part.

Brown and Levinson (1987) offer a detailed categorization within negative politeness dividing it into five suprastrategies – 1. Be direct, 2. Don’t presume/assume, 3. Don’t coerce, 4. Communicate addressee’s want, 5. Redress other wants of addressee’s. Furthermore, based on these five categories, Brown and Levinson (1987) elicit and provide ten negative politeness strategies, emerging from the five suprastrategies, which are representatives of practical polite policy: 1. Be conventionally indirect, 2. Question, hedge, 3. Be pessimistic, 4. Minimize the imposition, 5. Give deference, 6. Apologize, 7. Impersonalise speaker and hearer, 8. State the face-threatening act as a general rule, 9. Nominalize, 10. Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebted hearer (ibid.: 131).

The essential point of the first category titled “Be direct” is a tendency to directness. However, imposition caused by rapid approach to the point is not considered to be polite, “Be direct” is therefore a compromise reached by the use of “hybrid strategy of conventional indirectness” (Brown & Levinson 1987: 130). As the wants of be direct and be indirect clash, the compromise tries to satisfy partially both of them. In everyday discourse, such compromise is expressed by the use of phrases and sentences that “have contextually unambiguous meanings”, which means that “the utterance goes on record, and the speaker indicates his desire to have gone

off record” (Brown & Levinson 1987: 132). The elemental devices which provide conventional indirectness are indirect speech acts. The following sentence may serve as an example: Why are you feeding the cat on cakes and biscuits?, which is at the same time a representative of “Be conventionally indirect” strategy.

The second category suggested by Brown and Levinson (1987) deals with the concept of “Don’t presume/assume” within the theory of negative politeness. The main feature of “Don’t presume/assume” category is diametrically different from the first one, as the main idea is to carefully avoid presuming or assuming anything involving the addressee (Brown & Levinson 1987: 144). Due to this approach, the addresser keeps the necessary distance from the addressee, “avoiding presumptions about the addressee, his wants, what is relevant or interesting or worthy of his attention” (ibid.: 144). This strategy works through the use of questions and hedges.¹

“Don’t coerce” class is based on involving prediction of the addressee’s reaction. This prediction is easily spotted in requesting for help or offering the addressee something. The addressee’s face is, in this case, not threaten, since the addresser is giving him an option not to do the act. This attitude to the addressee produces three politeness strategies. Strategy number three, which “makes it easy for the addressee to opt out” is called “Be pessimistic” (Brown & Levinson 1987: 172). The main point of the third strategy is “expressing doubt that the conditions for the appropriateness of speaker’s speech act obtain” (Brown & Levinson 1987: 173), as in the following example: Could you bring me the book tomorrow?

The fourth strategy – “Minimize the imposition” – may be characterized as using indicators that downgrade the seriousness of the imposition. In English, words such as just in the next sentence achieve this effect: I just wanted to ask you if there is a chance I can stay tonight.

The last strategy within the third class is called “Give deference”. As the title implies, the crucial idea of giving deference is conveying directly the perception of high status to the addressee, making him feel as he has the “rights to relative immunity from imposition” (Brown & Levinson 1987: 178). The recognition of higher status of the addressee is generally achieved by correct use of honorifics.

“Communicate speaker’s want to not impinge on hearer” class emphasizes another way how to satisfy hearer’s negative face demands; that is the addresser’s open demonstration of his awareness of these demands and taking them into account. The two basic ways which accomplish this effect are, firstly, straight-forwardly apology (Strategy 6. Apologize), and secondly, conveying reluctance on the side of the addresser to admit that it is him who needs help by “implication that it is not the addresser’s wish to impose on the addressee but someone else’s, or that is not on hearer in particular but on some people in general that this disposition must be made” (Brown & Levinson 1987: 187). In this way, the addresser separates himself or the addressee from the responsibility and therefore indicates that he is reluctant to impinge².

As Brown and Levinson (1987) state, this idea is practically realized through the further three strategies: 7. Impersonalise speaker and hearer, 8. State the face-threatening act as a general rule,

¹ Nematilloevna, K. N. (2017). FRAZEOLOGIZMLAR VA ULARNING SEMANTIK VA QIYOSIY TAHLILLARI. *Интернаука*, 11(15 Часть 2), 85.

² Nematillokizi, K. N., Nematillokizi, K. N., Khabibulloevna, K. S., & Salimovna, N. G. (2020). PROFESSIONAL PROFICIENCY PROGRESS IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE ON THE EXAMPLE OF STUDENTS OF TOURISM. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 7(6), 1249-1255.

and 9. Nominalize.

The sixth strategy, in a nutshell, devotes attention to apology first and then expresses the actual request. A wide range of clauses are used such as I hope you'll forgive me if ... or I hope this isn't going to bother you too much, but... or I hate to impose, but... etc.

“Impersonalize speaker and hearer” is another useful tool how to denote that the addresser does not want to impinge on the addressee. In practical language it means that we avoid using I and you by introducing performatives (e.g. And that's it.), imperatives (e.g. Come on!), impersonal verbs (e.g. It appears that...), passive voice (e.g. It would be penalized if anybody...), or replacement of the pronouns I and you by indefinites (e.g. OK, guys, let's finish the work first.), as well as pluralization of the you and I pronouns (e.g. We are very sorry to inform you that...), and point-of-view distancing (e.g. I wondered whether I might ask you...).

The eighth strategy, “State the face-threatening act as a general rule”, applies a concept of avoiding pronouns in sentences to “dissociate speaker and hearer from the particular imposition” (Brown & Levinson 1987: 206), as in the following pair of examples where the contrast is being provided evidently: University students are obliged to fulfil at least 15 credits per term to be allowed to continue in their studies. versus You must fulfil 15 credits...

The last strategy recognized within the forth class “Communicate addressee's want” is called “Nominalize”. This strategy focuses on nominalization of the subject, which makes the sentence more formal. Brown and Levinson (1987) bring forward a scale of “degrees of formality corresponding to degrees of nouniness” (ibid.: 208) in an expedient example getting to the core of nominalization:

- (a) ... and that impressed us favourably,
- (b) ... was impressive to us.
- (c) ... made a favourable impression on us.

The very last category titled “Redress other wants of hearer's” draws the attention to “offering partial compensation for the face threat in the FTA³ by redressing some particular other wants of hearer's” (Brown & Levinson 1987: 209). Naturally, two strategies arise from this category: already discussed strategy number 5 – “Give deference”, and the last strategy that will be dealt with in this section – “10. Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebteding hearer”. The addresser, in this case, claims his indebtedness to the addressee, or disclaims any indebtedness of addressee. The means used are generally the following: e.g. I would be eternally grateful if you would... for requests, or It wouldn't be any trouble; I have to go right by there anyway. for offers (ibid.: 210).

Conclusion.

To sum up, the main classes of negative politeness, as Brown and Levinson (1987) categorised them, have been presented in this sarticle. As the area of negative politeness is considerably broad, in has been necessary to focus on one narrower field within the negative politeness – hedging, which introduces a several different categories of politeness markers.

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