

Politeness in Digital Communication

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Annotation: Politeness in digital communication is crucial for fostering positive interactions. This includes using respectful language, acknowledging others' contributions, avoiding offensive remarks, and expressing gratitude when appropriate. Additionally, being mindful of tone and context helps maintain a friendly and professional atmosphere, enhancing the overall communication experience.

Keywords: Digital communication, positive interactions, respectful language, mindful of tone, channel, digital spaces.

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Politeness is an essential norm of digital communication, and should be demonstrated regardless of the platform, situation, or channel. Here are some tips for being polite in digital communication:

Be respectful: Use courteous and friendly language, such as greetings, salutations, please, thank you, and apologies.

Be clear: Be concise and avoid rambling.

Be considerate: Maintain a respectful and considerate tone.

Be empathetic: Choose words that convey your message clearly while being polite and empathetic.

Be mindful of tone and context: Avoid overly informal language, which can increase the risk of being perceived negatively.

Respect opinions: Respect opinions that differ from yours.

Take responsibility: Take responsibility for errors and don't blame other people.

Preserve harsh criticism: Preserve harsh criticism for one-on-one and in situ exchanges whenever possible.

The role of politeness in digital communication is multifaceted. It helps to:

Build and Maintain Relationships: Politeness fosters trust and respect, making it easier to build and maintain relationships with others online.

Enhance Understanding: Polite communication reduces misunderstandings and conflicts, as it encourages clear and respectful exchanges of ideas.

Promote Collaboration: Politeness encourages cooperation and collaboration in digital spaces, leading to more productive interactions and outcomes.

Support Diversity and Inclusion: Being polite creates an inclusive environment where people from diverse backgrounds feel valued and respected, contributing to a more inclusive online community.

Preserve Professionalism: Politeness is essential in professional digital communication settings, helping to maintain a professional image and reputation.

Minimize Negative Effects: Politeness can mitigate the negative effects of digital communication, such as cyberbullying or online harassment, by promoting kindness and empathy.

The Politeness Maxims, proposed by linguist Geoffrey Leech, outline principles for maintaining politeness in communication. These maxims are:

Tact: Avoiding saying things that could hurt others' feelings.

Generosity: Making your contribution informative, relevant, and complete.

Approbation: Seeking to make others feel good about themselves and their contributions.

Modesty: Avoiding boasting or appearing to be seeking undue attention.

Agreement: Seeking common ground and avoiding unnecessary disagreement.

In digital communication, these maxims are essential for several reasons:

Building Trust: By adhering to the maxims, individuals can build trust and rapport with others, which is particularly important in digital spaces where face-to-face interaction is limited.

Reducing Misunderstandings: Following the maxims helps to ensure that messages are clear, respectful, and considerate, thereby reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings or conflicts.

Fostering Positive Relationships: Politeness maxims contribute to the creation of positive relationships online by promoting mutual respect and understanding.

Maintaining Professionalism: Adhering to the maxims helps individuals maintain a professional demeanor in digital communication, which is crucial in many professional settings.

Promoting Inclusivity: Politeness maxims encourage inclusive communication practices, making digital spaces more welcoming and accommodating to individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Similarly to politeness in the real world, politeness in digital communication also adheres to a set of maxims that regulate the form of behavior in language, both linguistic and extralinguistic behavior. Leech (1983) points out that to realize language politeness it is necessary to pay attention to the principle of politeness which includes maxims of wisdom, generosity, praise, humility, agreement, and sympathy” (1983, p. 132). In addition, the communicators, communicants use modalities such as emoticons and language means, such as words, sentences and punctuation. Face-to-face communication involves verbal, nonverbal gestures, facial expressions, spontaneity, involving feedback, interaction, and personal coherence. In digital communication, the use of a single emoji represents many meanings ranging from facial expressions, attitudes, or emotions through illustrations, icons, or sets of characters clicked on the keyboard. The use of this emoji is more diverse and more appropriate in expressing oneself (Kejriwal et al., 2021; Pfeifer et al., 2022). Therefore, emojis make interactions shorter and denser.

In the context of social media, emojis have to do with politeness and social status of users. The use of emojis can express emotions and expressions that cannot be expressed through the written word, but emojis can help clarify the message being sent. In the context of politeness, the use of emojis can help clarify the intention, tone of the message, so as to avoid misunderstandings or even conflicts between users (Derks et al., 2007). For example, the use of the “shaking hands” emoji can indicate that the message is meant formal communication, reconciliation, congratulation, and empathy. Conversely, the use of the wide-eyed emoji can ruin impressions and trigger conflicts in communication.

Overall, the Politeness Maxims serve as guiding principles for maintaining respectful and effective communication in digital environments, ultimately enhancing the quality of interactions and relationships online. Politeness plays a vital role in fostering positive, respectful, and effective communication in digital spaces.

Based on the disciplines of pragmatics and sociology about the concepts of politeness, power and status in the discussion in the previous section, judging from the sociological approach, it was found that the concepts of politeness, power, and status refer to norms that regulate social interaction. Judging from pragmatics, politeness, power, and status are ethics based on the context and purpose of communication. Therefore, the definition proposed today is politeness in power and status is a standard of positive and dignified communication behavior, respect for privacy, respect for the ethics, rights, and obligations of others, related to the position or position held by a person in the digital environment.

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