



Politeness strategies

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Annotation: *The interest in politeness as social norms goes back to the times of ancient rhetoric. Each era had its norms of politeness. And each norm had its specific features in different communities. Various accounts of the so-called linguistic “politeness phenomenon” have been presented. Early studies tended to claim, implicitly or explicitly, the universality of the principles underlying politeness phenomenon (Lakoff: 1973a & 1973b, 1975, Grice: 1975, Brown and Levinson: 1978, 1987, Leech: 1983, Fraser: 1990). In the following years, however, scholars from various cultural backgrounds challenged this universal view with what they claim to be evidence from their own languages.*

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Brown and Levinson develop four politeness super-strategies (bold on record, positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record) which are seen as a classification to the way the FTAs (Face Threatening Acts) are realized. The super-strategies are subdivided into what they call: “higher strategies”. The final choice of linguistic means to express these strategies is referred to as “out-put strategies”.

The strategies are formed in hierarchies: from super-strategies to the “higher strategies” that emanate from them and finally the “out-put” strategies which are the final choice of linguistic means [1, 93].

1. Bald On Record Strategies This strategy is mainly based on the Grecian Maxims. These kinds of strategies are used when the speaker wants to do the FTAs with the most efficiency and does not attempt to minimize the threat to the hearer’s face. Direct imperatives are a good example of this strategy. E.g. **“Come home right now!”** This strategy is usually used when Speaker wants to do the FTAs with maximum efficiency more than to satisfy the Hearer’s. There are two classes of FTAs in bald on record: the class where the face threat is not minimized and the one in which Speaker tries to minimize the threat on the Hearer’s face by using implications. (Brown and Levinson 1987: 96-101)

1.1- Examples of non-minimization of the face threat

- Urgent imperatives like: **Help! Watch out! Give me just one more week (to pay the rent).**
- Another example is found in the case of channel noise, where communication difficulties put pressure on the Speaker to make him speak with maximum efficiency e.g. Speaker is calling from a long distance: **Come home right now!**
- Orientation and instructions like in: **Add three cups of flour.**
- In the case of socially acceptable rudeness e.g. joking or teasing where Speaker wants to be rude and does not care about Hearer’s face [2, 1250].
- Another example is when the FTA is done primarily in Hearer’s interest e.g. **Careful! He’s a dangerous man.**
- Comforting advice: **Do not be sad**



- The use of imperatives in actions which are directly in Hearer's interest like the cliché farewell formulae: *take care, have fun, enjoy your trip*. Brown and Levinson pointed out that there are three areas where one would expect bald on record strategies to occur in all languages and these are:
- Welcoming (or post greetings), where Speaker insists that Hearer may impose on his negative face;
- Farewells, where Speaker insists that Hearer may transgress on his positive face by taking his leave;
- Offers where Speaker insists that Hearer may impose on Speaker's negative face.

Here are some examples to make it clear, let's cite some examples of greetings, farewells and offers from Brown and Levinson (1987:100-102)

- *Sit down* □ *Come in* □ *Please come in (sir)* □ *You must have some more cake.*
- *Do not bother, I'll clean it up.* □ *Leave it to me.* □ *I'm staying, you go*

These three functional categories are all potential FTAs; because of the risk that H may not wish to receive such invitations [3, 39].

2. Positive Politeness Strategies This strategy attempts to minimize the threat to the hearer's positive face. It is oriented toward the positive face of Hearer, the positive self-image that he claims for himself. Positive politeness utterances are used as a kind of metaphorical extension of intimacy, to imply common ground or sharing of wants to a limited extent even between strangers who perceive themselves, for the purpose of the interaction, as somehow similar. For the same reason, positive politeness techniques are reusable not only for FTA redress, but in general as a kind of social accelerator, where Speaker, in using them, indicates that he wants to come closer to Hearer. (Brown and Levinson, 1987:103). Brown and Levinson state that the strategies of positive politeness include three broad mechanisms:

a. Claim common ground

The first one involves Speaker claiming „common ground“ with Hearer, which means that both Speaker and Hearer have in common and share specific wants, goals and values [4, 59]. There are three ways to make this claim:

(1) Convey that Hearer's want or goal is admirable and interesting to Speaker or (2) claim that both Speaker and Hearer belong to a group of people who share the same wants. Finally (3) claim that both Speaker and Hearer are cooperative without necessarily belonging to a membership group.

Jokes are a basic positive politeness technique to make Hearer feel comfortable because it is known that jokes are based on mutual and shared background knowledge and values [5, 129]. The second broad mechanism in positive politeness is:

b. Conveying that Speaker and Hearer are Cooperative

Because if they are cooperatively involved in an activity this means that they share same goals and wants in a given domain and consequently this serves Hearer's positive face. The seven out-put strategies which follow indicate the means Speaker uses to convey his cooperation with Hearer

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