



Politeness In Literary Works: An Overview

Ruziyeva Nilufar Xafizovna

An assistant teacher of Bukhara State university, Uzbekistan
nilufar87@gmail.com
 contact number: +998906141607

Xolova Madina Boboqulovna

A master student, Bukhara State University, Uzbekistan
nilufar87@gmail.com
 contact number: +914107501

ABSTRACT

For quite a long time the examination of literary works was the domain of literary critics. In the last four decades, however, researchers and linguists began to examine literary texts using pragmatic theories and in so doing, there was a shift in the way in which such texts were analyzed. One of the more prevalent pragmatic theories used in the analysis of literary works is that of politeness theory. Among the many theories on politeness, Brown and Levinson's theory (1978, 1987) is used most often in examining literary texts such as plays, short stories, and novels. One possible reason for its choice as both a theoretical framework and accompanying analytical tool could be that Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness incorporates the perspectives of other theoretical approaches to politeness (e.g., Lakoff, 1973; Fraser and Nolen, 1981; Leech, 1983), as well as findings from empirical studies in the area of politeness (e.g., Shimanoff, 1977; Blum-Kulka, 1987). The primary objective of this chapter is to present an overview of the use of politeness theory, in general, and Brown and Levinson's, in particular, as an analytical tool in examining literary discourse and modifications made to it by more recent works in the field. Moreover, the chapter focuses on the application of politeness theory in analysing fictional characters' verbal interactions and the ways in which politeness in these interactions are read as linguistic or verbal manifestations of their character.

Keywords:

Politeness Theory, Literary Texts, Linguistic Politeness, Sociological Variables

I. Introduction

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness is the action, linguistic or otherwise, that redresses the speaker's and the hearer's 'face' in situations whereby 'face' is threatened. They further add that attending to 'face' will either minimize or avoid conflict during interaction. Yet, "politeness should also be regarded as being aggressive and enhancing power where domination and manipulation occur" (Ermida, 2006, p. 848). Culpeper (1998) and Watts et al. (2005) believe that both

politeness and impoliteness constitute the continuum of social interaction. A real picture of verbal interaction necessitates the inclusion of the strategies of impoliteness in addition to those of politeness (Rudanko, 2006).

Unlike Brown and Levinson, who emphasize the aspect of 'face', other scholars approach the topic differently. Leech (1983), for instance, accounts for politeness in terms of maxims and he proposes six maxims to account for the ways in which language is constrained by social factors. Similarly, Lakoff (1973) and

Gu (1990) propose a conversational maxim approach. Such maxims have been a rich explanatory source of conducting cross-cultural pragmatic studies (Spencer-Oatey and Jiang, 2003). The ultimate aim of politeness is to make all participants in a conversation as relaxed and as comfortable with each other as possible (Hei, 2008, p. 121). At the same time, politeness plays a part in maintaining order in communication by adhering to the socio-cultural norms of relating communication to social order (Pillai, 2008, p. 3). This goes hand in hand with "the concept of politeness as governed by socio-culturally specific norms of linguistic behaviour" (Bharuthram, 2003; Blum-Kulka, 1990; Kitamura, 2000). Politeness theory also relies on the assumption that speakers in any given language not only convey information through their language but they use it to do things, such as achieving self-esteem, approval and appreciation by others, gaining power via language, etc.

II. Literature review

Brown & Levinson's Theory of Politeness: Some central concepts

Among the different theories of politeness, Brown and Levinson's theory (1987) seems to retain its appeal since, in addition to other traditional theories, it has provided the terminology for talking and even thinking about politeness phenomena (Terkourafi, 2005). Besides, Brown and Levinson (1987) provided a theoretical and analytical framework that is applicable not only to naturally occurring conversation, but to literary discourse as well as will be discussed in the next section.

The core concepts of the theory of politeness, as originally proposed (1978) and revised (1987) by Brown and Levinson, are still, and by large, held to be operationally valid. In spite of the considerable amount of criticism, today's large body of research on politeness continues to find its inspiration in Brown and Levinson's pioneering work which has been proven to be immensely influential (Ermida, 2006). Among the valid concepts is the concept of 'face' that is the main component

of their theory. To them, 'face' is the key motivating force for politeness and 'face' can be maintained, enhanced or even lost with its use.

Face

The concept of face can be discussed in relation to three points, namely facework, positive and negative face and face threatening acts (FTAs).

Face work

The most central component to Brown and Levinson's theory (1987) is the concept of 'face'. It is derived from a term employed by Goffman (1967) and from the English folk term which tied 'face' up with some notions of being embarrassed, humiliated or 'losing face'. Face is defined as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself" (Goffman, 1967, p. 15). It is something that is emotionally invested and can be lost, maintained or enhanced and must be constantly attended to in interaction in order to achieve social harmony. Moreover, each one of us has two aspects of 'face', i.e. positive face and negative face. Essentially, the actions by means of which people cooperate in maintaining face are called 'face-work' (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 60).

Positive and Negative Face

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the 'public self-image' that a person wants to project is of two types: 'positive face' and 'negative face'. 'Positive face' usually refers to the positive 'self-image' a participant claims for himself including the desire to be liked, ratified, understood, admired, appreciated and approved of. 'Negative face', on the other hand, refers to the speaker's right not to be imposed upon. In other words, it is the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-intrusion i.e., to freedom of action and freedom from imposition.

Universality of such concepts has also been subject to criticism. O'Driscoll (1996, p. 14), in addressing the criticism, reconstructs Brown and Levinson's 'face' by suggesting three kinds of 'face', namely positive face and negative face being universal and culture-specific face being a product of cultures. Watts, Ide and Ehlich (2005) have raised doubt about the presence of a positive face and a negative

face, i.e., how the negative face is to be understood in a culture that considers an individual's possessions as the possessions of the community. In the same vein, Spencer-Oatey (2002) suggests the incorporation of a social identity component to remove the impression of the negative face being too individually focused.

Face Threatening Acts (FTAs)

In social interactions, some acts intrinsically threaten face and they, in Brown and Levinson's (1987, p. 65) words, "run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker". Such face-threatening acts (FTAs) can endanger either the hearer's or speaker's positive or negative face. For example, asking someone for a lift contains an imposition on the hearer, a threat to his 'negative face', i.e. his desire to be free from imposition. Insults, terms of abuse, criticism, disapproval and disagreement, and other similar acts usually pose a different threat, i.e. a threat to the 'positive face'.

Yet, other studies have concluded that "acts listed as inherently threatening by Brown and Levinson are clearly not seen as such" by other cultures (O'Driscoll, 1996, p. 18). In addition, Brown and Levinson's theory doesn't show "how FTAs ... interact sequentially with other acts in large segments of extended discourse" (Buck, 1997, p. 88).

Strategies for Performing FTAs

Generally speaking, speakers who want to achieve their goals in interaction cannot do without FTAs. As human communication is awash with face-threatening situations, Brown and Levinson "postulate the existence of strategies to minimize them and, therefore, to protect the mutual vulnerability of face" (Ermida, 2006, p. 848). Bearing in mind the scope of this chapter, the researcher will provide a brief account of such strategies that can be found elaborated in detail in Brown and Levinson (1987). In the presence of face-threatening situations, speakers can, of course, refrain from doing the FTA (avoiding any FTA would ultimately honour face, but this by itself would severely inhibit the process of interaction). But in case they decide to go ahead and carry out the FTA, they have two options: (a) to do so off-record, i.e., to provide indirect hints for the hearer by using linguistic strategies such as metaphor and irony, rhetorical questions, understatement, tautologies and other kinds of indirect hints as to what a speaker wants or means to communicate or (b) to do so on record. In short, to carry out an FTA, a speaker may select one of the following strategies that are ordered from the most to the least threatening to 'face' (Figure 1 below)

Circumstances determining Choice of strategy:

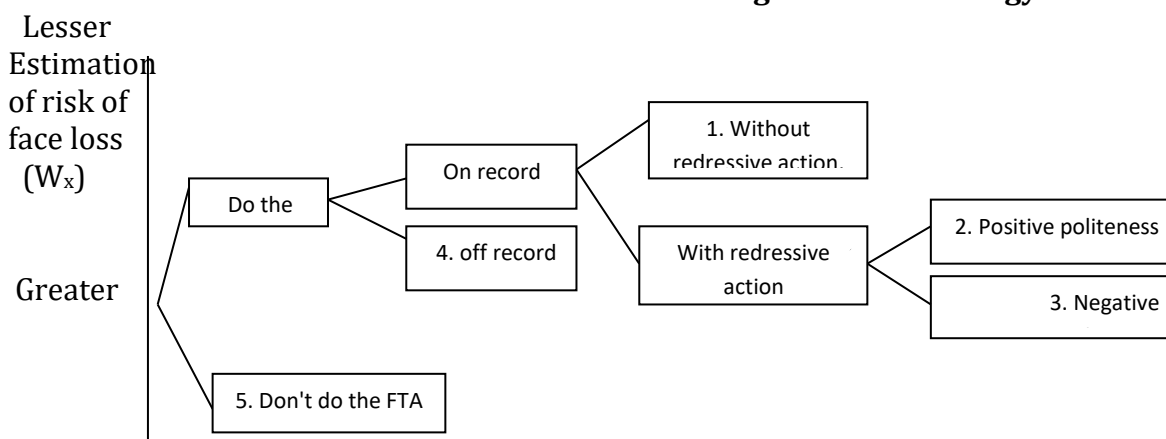


Figure 1. Brown & Levinson's Politeness Super-Strategies (1987, p. 60).

If we follow the rank of politeness strategies, we can say that not doing the FTA is the most polite. The face protection afforded by off-record strategies makes it the next most polite strategy. Negative redress articulates the FTA, so it is less polite than going off record. Positive redress is 'riskier' than negative redress because it presumes solidarity. Bald-on-record is the least polite since it makes no attempt to soften face threat. Suleiman (2004, p. 133) calls attention to the 'mutual exclusivity' nature of positive-politeness, negative-politeness and off-record strategies, i.e., the presence of markers characteristic of one strategy in another strategy.

III. Analysis

Factors Influencing the Choice of Politeness Strategies

Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that the choice of a particular strategy is constrained by three important socio-cultural or contextual factors, namely the relative social power of the hearer over the speaker (P), the social distance between speaker and hearer (D), and the ranking of the imposition of the act itself (R_x), for instance, asking for the time is less imposing than asking for a loan (Goody, 1996, p. 76). Such factors, which are the universal determinants of politeness levels, specify the particular verbal strategy required to accomplish the repair work of politeness. The speaker's choice of strategy is a function of the threat implied by the intended act (termed its 'weightiness'). Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 76) suggest the following formula to account for the weightiness of the FTA:

$$W_x = D(S, H) + P(H, S) + R_x$$

where W_x refers to the weightiness of the FTA, $D(S, H)$ to the distance between speaker and hearer, $P(H, S)$ to the power of the hearer over the speaker, and R_x to the degree of imposition of the act. It should be noted that this formula has some problems. Chun and Yun (2010) argue that $P(H, S)$ should read as $P(H \leftrightarrow S)$ since it is the power the speaker has over the hearer as well. Spencer-Oatey (1993) states that apart from social distance that is measured by the degree of familiarity between S and H, D should

also take into account companionship, utility, self-disclosure and affection.

There have been many attempts in the last two decades to criticize and expand Brown and Levinson's politeness model by proposing additional rules/ maxims/ principles or by redefining their basic terms (Terkourafi, 2005, p. 240). Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness is intended to cover all aspects of language use that serve to establish, maintain or modify interpersonal relationships. Yet, some aspects such as impolite behaviour and that of social roles, rights and obligations are not explicitly elaborated on.

IV. Discussion

The Application of Politeness Theory to Literary Works

The remaining part of the chapter will discuss the role that politeness theory can play in analyzing fictional characters' verbal interactions and the ways in which politeness in these interactions are read as linguistic or verbal manifestations of characters' personality traits and lives.

In their evaluation of the role of politeness in Shakespeare's four major tragedies, namely *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*, Brown and Gilman (1989), using a modified version of Brown and Levinson's theory (1987), attempt to determine whether Brown and Levinson's claim holds for Shakespeare's Early Modern English in the four tragedies. To do so, they search for minimally contrasting dyads where the dimensions of contrast are P, D and R. Two speeches involving the same two characters are matched with respect to one of the three variables while the other variables remain constant. The results of power and extremity are those predicted by the theory because politeness in Shakespeare's tragedies increases with the power of hearer over the speaker and increases with the extremity of the face threat, but the results for D are not, i.e., they contradict the theory.

Brown and Gilman (1989, p. 199) found that their results called for a reformulation of the parameter D whereby it is substituted by two components of D, i.e. interactive closeness

and affect. According to them, what matters is the 'affect' component since politeness decreases with the withdrawal of affection and increases with an increase of affection.

In his study, Bouchara applies Brown and Gilman's method of analysis to 46 contrasts in the four plays. He finds that "37 of the contrasts are congruent with the theory against six and three weakly contradictory ones" (2009, p. 30). The findings from Brown and Gilman (1989) and Bouchara (2009) illustrate that Brown and Levinson's theory can be applied to Shakespeare's Early Modern English.

In another study, Rossen-Knill (2011) analyses the dialogue in Juliana Barnes's *Arthur & George*, drawing on both relevance theory and politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Lakoff, 1977; Leech, 1983; Spencer-Oatey 2002). This study is intended to show how language use can shape the main characters' divergent social identities, i.e., how Arthur's heightened sensitivity to language's creative possibilities leads to exceptional social success, and how George's inability to recover interpersonal messages leads to social disaster such as being maligned and wrongly imprisoned and to being labelled 'odd'. Rossen-Knill believes that "a close look at the dialogue reveals how the reader comes to view Arthur and George as opposites, the one vibrant and charismatic, and the other painfully 'odd' (p.45).

In other words, reading the introduction of the paper, readers would expect some elaboration on the concept of face, politeness strategies, face threatening acts and other related issues, but the analyses seem to focus on intended and unintended meaning rather than on the linguistic strategies of politeness. Linguistic strategies of politeness, and in particular redressive strategies of negative politeness, are elaborated on by Simpson (1989, p. 71) who states that politeness may be seen as a departure from 'maximally efficient' conversation in the use of hints and indirectness. He examines such redressive strategies as hedges, indicate pessimism, minimize the imposition, indicate deference,

apologize, impersonalize and acknowledge the debt in three extracts from Ionesco's *The Lesson*. The analysis shows that negative politeness strategies are linguistically realized by hedges and apologies at the beginning when the eighteen-year-pupil is in a strong position, i.e., the pupil is the more powerful of the two interactants.

In another study, Chun and Yun (2010) examine the apology strategies between social unequals in the Chinese novel *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. They expand Brown and Levinson's three variables into four by proposing that there are four variables that determine one's choice of apology, namely the social distance between the apologizer and the apologizee, their power relationship, the seriousness of the offence, and the degree of the right the apologizer is assumed to have in apologizing (p. 264). The general assumption made is that the higher one's status is and the more power one has the more privilege one then has in committing an offence without being judged as having committed an offence. Based on this assumption, family member to family member apologies and servant to master apologies are observed and evaluated taking into consideration both the apologizer's apologies and the apologizee's responses, and also their verbal behaviour and their body language. In another pragmatic study, Chikogu (2009) investigates the linguistic aspect of politeness and change in social relations of power in Wole Soyinka's *The Beautification of Area Boy*. Chikogu (2009) argues that "Because human relations and communications are conveyed principally by linguistic vehicles, much of the struggle for power is also expressed through language", and he adds that "the complex nature of most societies implies that the conditions and implications of language use must be adapted to the divergent and conflicting goals and needs of language users in any given social situation" (p. 70).

To analyze the mechanism underlying the verbal exchanges, Chikogu adopts Brown and Levinson's (1987, p. 61) model "which is in the main conceives of politeness as a

management of 'face wants' and 'obligations'. Sanda, the king of the area boys, from the beginning of his conversation, tends to enhance Big Man Shopper's positive face when he asks him "Has that boy been annoying you, sir?". He also addresses Big Man Shopper using the vocative 'sir' which acknowledges not only the distance between the two, but also the influence and the power of Big Man Shopper. Sanda's interrogative structure makes the interaction more polite as it leaves Big Man Shopper room to say 'no' without upsetting the social atmosphere. In other situations, Sanda tends to threaten both positive and negative face. The character also uses hints, first- person plural pronouns, and other markers to mitigate the threat to both aspects of 'face'.

Politeness has also been studied in relation to conversational implicature by Chen (1996) when he analyzes conversational implicature and characterization in Reginald Rose's *Twelve Angry Men*. This study is intended to show that there is a glaring absence of politeness in the characters' linguistic behaviour, especially the characters that are identified as jurors Three, Seven and Ten. Besides, the violation of the maxims of quality and relation suggest the personalities of the characters. For example, Juror Three's opinionated nature and other personality traits are clearly seen in his frequent violations of the maxim of quality and the motivations for such violations.

The other interesting point discussed by Culpeper is that of 'intention'. He states that the "key difference between politeness and impoliteness is a matter of (the hearer's understanding of) intention: whether it is the speaker's intention to support face (politeness) or to attack it (impoliteness)" (1998, p. 86). In one of the plays analyzed by Culpeper (1996), impolite behaviour is not treated as a reflection of a character's personality and this is observed in the character Charlie's conduct at the end of the play. The role relationship between Charlie and the blind Colonel is that of 'carer' and 'cared for', and accordingly, Charlie is supposed to be more powerful. But the Colonel seems to be more powerful in the way that he keeps

issuing FTAs that attack both positive and negative face via 'calling names' and 'using imperatives', respectively. Charlie's 'extended positive face' is also attacked when the Colonel attacks Charlie's parents. At the end, Charlie turns out to be more powerful in his use of verbal and non-verbal impoliteness strategies specifically by shouting and getting the gun from the Colonel in an attempt to stop him from committing suicide. This, of course, does not mean that the more powerful is the more impolite and vice versa.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter, studies that have applied politeness theory to analyses of literary discourse have been reviewed. Most of the studies found and reviewed, both past and current, have relied on Brown and Levinson's Politeness Model (either in whole or in part) to analyze fictional characters' verbal interaction. In essence, the studies focus on the way in which politeness in these interactions are read as linguistic or verbal manifestations of the characters' weighing of sociological variables invoked in a particular social interaction. While the bulk of previous studies tend to concentrate on politeness and Brown and Levinson's model, attention has gradually shifted to that of impoliteness since Culpeper's (1996) introduction of an impoliteness framework. Other studies have also addressed the shortcomings inherent in Brown and Levinson's model by re-defining the sociological variables, namely that of social distance (D) and the rank of imposition (R_x) or by including pragmatic concepts relevant to politeness such as implicatures and maxims of conversation. It is believed that future research into politeness in literary works will continue in the same directions and in so doing, will enrich the field of politeness research.

References:

1. Bennison, N. (1993). Discourse analysis, pragmatics and the dramatic 'character': Tom Stoppard's *Professional Foul*. *Language and Literature*, 2(2), 79-99.

2. Bouchara, A. (2009). *Politeness in Shakespeare: Applying Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory to Shakespeare's Comedies*. Burger: Diplomatica Verlag.
3. Brown, P & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Rabiyeva, M. . (2022). THE PROBLEM OF EQUIVALENCE OF EUPHEMISMS. Eurasian Journal of Academic Research, 2(2), 354-358.
5. Рабиева, М. (2021). Дихотомия эвфемизма и фразеологизма: Дихотомия эвфемизма и фразеологизма. ЦЕНТР НАУЧНЫХ ПУБЛИКАЦИЙ (buxdu.Uz), 7(7).
6. Ruziyeva Nilufar Hafizovna (2021).The category of politeness in different linguocultural traditions. ACADEMICIA: AN INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH JOURNAL 11 (2), 1667-1675
7. Imamkulova, SA Imamkulova. "INTENSITY OF WORD MEANINGS AND LINGUA-CULTUROLOGY." Eurasian Journal of Academic Research 2.2 (2022): 344-348
8. Bakhtiyorovna, I. F. . (2021). Translation of linguocultural peculiarities in hafiza kochkarova's translations. Middle European Scientific Bulletin, 12, 247-249.
9. Haydarova, N. (2021). Badiiy diskursda inson fiziologiyasi bilan bog'liq til birliklarining lingvomadaniy tahlili. ЦЕНТР НАУЧНЫХ ПУБЛИКАЦИЙ (buxdu.Uz), 6(6).
10. Kasimova, N. F. (2017). Communicative functions of the interrogative sentences in English. InПриоритетные направления развития науки(pp. 59-62). www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=29929516
11. Ruzieva, N. X., & Yuldasheva, F. E. (2017). The use of mingles in the communicative way of teaching. Міжнародний науковий журнал Інтернаука, 1(1), 138-139.
12. Zokirova N.S (2020) TRANSLATOLOGY AND THE ANALYSIS OF ITS LINGUISTIC MECHANISM. European Journal of Humanities and Educational Advancements, 1(4), 8-10.
13. Nafisa K. Cognition and Communication in the Light of the New Paradigm //EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF INNOVATION IN NONFORMAL EDUCATION. – 2021. – T. 1. – №. 2. – С. 214-217.
14. Fayziyeva Aziza Anvarovna. (2022). CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR UNIVERSALS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK. JournalNX - A Multidisciplinary Peer Reviewed Journal, 8(04), 54-57.
15. Hafizovna, R. N. . (2022). Discourse Analysis of Politeness Strategies in Literary Work: Speech Acts and Politeness Strategies. Spanish Journal of Innovation and Integrity, 5, 123-133.
16. Nafisa, K. . (2021). Semantics and Pragmatics of a Literary Text. Middle European Scientific Bulletin, 12, 374-378.