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The Role of Politeness in Communication

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Annotatsiya: *Linguistic politeness has occupied a central place in the social study of language; even it has been the subject of intensive debate in sociolinguistics and pragmatics. A lot of linguistic scholars have carried out studies on linguistic politeness in a wide range of cultures. As a result, several theories have been proposed on linguistic politeness and have been established as scholarly concept. The major aim of this paper is to review the literature on linguistic politeness as a technical term. It will present some of the most widely used models of linguistic politeness in literature. It also tries to gloss the basic tenets of different theoretical approaches, the distinctive features of one theory versus another. There are some concepts of politeness that will become the subject of discussion of this article. These concepts are proposed by Robin Lakoff, Penelope Brown and Steven Levinson Geoffrey Leech.*

Kalit so'zlar: *linguistic politeness, universalist, contrastivist, Conversational Implicature, intentional indirectness, interpretable indirectness, social contexts, Cooperative Principle, sociolinguistics, pragmalinguistics*

If we agree that politeness is an appropriate concern of linguistics, another question arises: how did politeness become part of linguistics? To understand that, it is useful to recall some history. For generations linguists have set up an impermeable barrier between the universal grammarians who believe that the interesting things about language are the properties that all languages share, a commonality based on the similarities among all human minds, which shape and recognize the processes humans use to communicate with one another; and the contrastive or comparative grammarians, who feel that the most interesting aspect of language is its diversity, the fact that the same ideas are expressed in different languages in very different forms.

The latter position was first articulated in modern linguistics by the American Structuralists led by Leonard Bloomfield.

Linguists who entered the field via the social sciences were apt to embrace the contrastivist position; those whose interests centered in mathematics or philosophy, the universalist .That argument, though the amount of attention given it waxes and wanes, has never really subsided nor has it been resolved to anyone's satisfaction. As so often when dealing with the human mind and its products, both sides are right: we must agree to disagree, or agree that languages share many universal components, but also differ in surprising and unpredictable ways.

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A full analysis of any phenomenon must go both deep and wide. That is equally true of politeness studies. Scholars have noticed that all cultures recognize a set of behaviors and attitudes as "polite"; and yet that the particular sorts of behavior so identified may differ from culture to culture; different manifestations of polite behavior are expected by members of different cultures under similar circumstances; and in general, when, how, and to whom to be polite may differ considerably from one culture to another.

So politeness can profitably be studied from both universalist and contrastivist perspectives, and indeed has been studied in both ways. Either universalists or comparativists had reasons to bring politeness into linguistics.

GS wanted to incorporate assumptions and presuppositions – for instance, speakers' positive or negative attitudes toward propositions, represented in the choice of some versus any; or the recognition that the existence of a choice among:

1)Go home! 2)Would you mind going home? 3) Isn't that your mother calling you? meant that syntactic form depended at least in part on speakers' judgments about the interpersonal context in which their utterances were located. This information, according to GS, was present at the deepest level of syntactic analysis.

One path toward a solution was offered by the theories and analyses of ordinary language philosophers, in particular J. L. Austin (1962) and H. P. Grice (1975). Their aim was to provide a rigorous (if informal) treatment of "ordinary" (that is, non-logical) language: to show that, even though on the surface utterances seemed to lack cohesion or clarity, with the use of a few assumptions (the Performative Hypothesis; Illocutionary Force; Conversational Implicature), a clear, succinct and informative intention could be discovered.

Ordinary language philosophy, like EST and GS, is universalizing: it assumes that the structures it hypothesizes exist in all languages because they represent the working of all human minds. In this respect, they dovetail neatly with

Chomskyan Deep Structure and even better with GS Underlying Structure.

Politeness might be a good test case for the utility of the Cooperative Principle. Unlike other functions of Conversational Implicature, it involves rigorously predictable (and often even grammaticalized) relationships. It seems to occur in somewhat similar fashion across languages and cultures, and yet to work differently across linguistic and societal boundaries (and when faux pas occurred in cross-cultural conversations, they could be explained as violations of rules or principles, which could then be learned like other linguistic rules). Interestingly, while Grice's system seems (at least on some readings8) to view utterances based directly on the Maxims as unmarked, with Implicatures marked and requiring explanation, in many types of discourse politeness-based implicature supersedes clarity-based Maxim-adherence. That is, in daily intercourse, when faced with a choice between clarity and politeness, people normally opt in favor of the latter. That suggests that politeness is not just a superficial addition to a grammar in which directness (i.e., non-politeness) is basic.

Rather, the behavior that a culture calls "polite" is an intrinsic and sometimes unmarked part of a communicative system. The choice of polite forms then plays a significant role in linguistic behavior, at least if there is a rough equivalence between "language" and "communication." And the fact that speakers can tell intuitively whether an utterance is polite, rude, or something in between suggests (by

the same logic Chomsky used to argue for transformational rules) that the system is rule-governed. Therefore, it is the business of linguists to determine the systematics of politeness.

The system proposed in Lakoff (1973) was an attempt to incorporate politeness into the core grammar, not to provide a complete and universal systematics of politeness cross-culturally, or a means of computing the explicit form an utterance might take under different contextual conditions. It was a first demonstration of the interfaces between language, psychology and society – that is, syntax, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics; and an examination of the role of the individual in creating and using a grammar (pragmatics) and the role of the social context in which individuals are necessarily situated (sociolinguistics).

Borrowing from pragmatics, politeness theory makes use of ideas such as:
– systematic rules or principles;
– speech acts (or utterances) as basic to language;
– speech as world-changing;
– indirectness as intentional and interpretable;
– the multiplicity of ways to express the same idea.
From sociolinguistics, politeness theory incorporates:
– the universality of the phenomena of politeness across languages and cultures;
– the typological differences in the realizations of "politeness" in different cultures;
– the different forms and functions of politeness across social contexts and discourse genres within a culture.

And these connections lead to other questions: can we frame a universal theory of politeness? Or should we understand the politeness of different cultures in different terms

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