

Politeness Principle: A Theoretical View on Leech Maxims**Researcher: Yosra Sabah Abdukadhum**

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Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics, which is the study of language. Pragmatics study means language that is not directly spoken. It means linguistic and non-linguistic behavior through which people indicate that they take other feelings of how they should be treated into account.

The objective of the research is to shed light on one of the significant theories in pragmatics and a crucial conception in sociolinguistics that is politeness theory, which concentrate on performance by language users of society to express their emotions, attitudes, intentions and to convey information. The current study exposes Leech formulation of a set of maxims that organize and govern conversations, these maxims are tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, agreement maxim and sympathy maxim. Sometimes if you go deeper, you will find more than these principles, such as feeling maxim, declaration, or indirect system.

Keywords: Leech maxims, politeness, expression, social, communication

Introduction:

Communication is the act of conveying thoughts, opinions, attitudes and emotions of people in society, in linguistics it is done by two means: verbal or written styles, to accomplish a communication the speaker will present a meaningful utterance. The meaning of the utterance depends on the intentions and thoughts of the speaker and understanding of the speaker's intention by the hearer depends on the context and situation of the communication, so considering the context and situation is substantial to achieve an appropriate communication. Achieving an appropriate communication means observing some mechanisms in linguistics, one of these mechanisms is politeness. Politeness principle in general is a mechanism that people (speakers) tend to use or perform to express respect, consideration, and awareness of the situation and mental state of the hearers, in addition to be aware of the context that lead to build a peaceful methods in the attempt to deliver a proper and communicative forms and styles in everyday life conversations and chats. This study deals with Leech maxims. Geoffrey Leech was a specialist in English language and Linguistics. He was the author of many books and articles. He published many papers concerning language. He was interested in English grammar, corpus linguists and pragmatics. He formulated his own theory regarding politeness and

presented six maxims, these maxims are: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy.

Politeness is used by people from different cultures around the world, and performed differently by people depending on their intentions, situations, background and different social norms. The notion of politeness is a substantial part in pragmatics study. It is a mechanism that lets people express their consideration and respect toward others. It is a technique performed by people willingly or unwillingly to make the conversation done easily and to express good intentions.

Importance of the Study

The importance of the current study comes from the substantial role that politeness principle shows in societies as a strategy of spoken language.

The current study focuses on Leech's politeness principle and his maxims and their importance in communication. Leech presents a set of maxims that rule everyday communication that speaker and hearer observe, these maxims are: tact maxim, generosity maxim, agreement maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim and sympathy maxim.

The importance of Leech can be recognized in many fields for instance, in politics as speakers use tactful strategies in their attempt to reach their purposes and to achieve political aims and purposes. Furthermore, in economics Leech' principle can do it all the way to achieve economical purposes. Also, in advertising Leech' model can be the perfect choice to achieve the purposes. wanted

Method

The current research is designed in theoretical style, it is an approach of collecting definitions, opinions and articles on politeness as a language strategy widely used by members of societies. It aims at finding the types and forms of the principle based by Geoffrey Leech. The current study demonstrates a general view on the phenomena and positive and negative strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson as a universal. Then there is the main view on Leech's principle and his formulation of special maxims that are truly significant factors bonding speakers and hearers in communication. The current study uses the documentation technique. It reviews theories, statements and definitions made by linguists considering the conception of politeness principle and its role socially and culturally.

The Aim of the study

The major aim of the current study is to demonstrate politeness made by Leech as a principle that is consistently used by speakers of a particular society. Some polite strategies are necessarily needed in a human's daily pursuit to show good character and intent. The result of the study showed

that there are six maxims introduced by Leech as strategies link speakers and hearers or as he called self and other.

1. Politeness Phenomena

Politeness is a part of our social life; a principle of every interaction and we encounter it every day consciously or unconsciously. From a linguistic point of view, it is a process of achieving positivity, peace and respect in communication through using a set of polite linguistic forms. Involving in a conversation requires interlocutors to be clear and logical to achieve the conversation in an almost perfect way.

Politeness as the principle that focuses on avoiding the affronts posed by face-threatening acts to addressees. Moreover, politeness is the expression of the speaker's intention to moderate face threats carried by certain face threatening acts toward another. Face threatening act is any action that is negatively done by the speaker towards the hearer which affects the hearer's social presence or value as part of society.¹

According to politeness is an expression used in sociolinguistics and pragmatics, which identifies linguistic features mediating norms of social behavior, in relation to such notions as courtesy, rapport, deference and distance. Such features include the use of specific discourse markers (please), performing appropriate tones of voice and suitable forms of address (e.g. the choice of intimate, first and last names

Politeness as the intent and aim to be thought over carefully by language users and welcomed to others, in addition it can be explained as the style of motivation that hidden in an individual's linguistic choice of language forms and behavior, adding that there is no reach to addresser's intent to be more or less polite than others, stating that there is reach only to what addressers actually utter and how their addressee's react.²

Politeness is not something human beings are born with but it is acquired through a social approach which is a set of social activities that require speaker and hearer choosing polite techniques in order to reach their communicative purposes in conversation. This means that politeness is an ordinary thing that is found in society and in most of the time used unconsciously as part of human's desire to be regarded and respected in verbal exchange. Politeness phenomena is not features existing in the action itself, but it is developed by a communicative relationship, that relationship founded on a model developed by individuals within a social

¹ Mills, (2003). Gender and Politeness. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, p6.

² Crystal, D. (2008). A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics. Oxford. Blackwell, p373.

² Thomas, J. (1995). Meaning in Interaction: An Introduction to Pragmatics. New York: Longman, p 150.

group through their daily social activities.¹

There is a manifestation that theories of politeness have concentrated mostly on polite postures and situations than on impolite ones, because mostly what matters is the positive behavior toward others sense. Human beings aim of communication is to be done peacefully and logically and that requires positivity. This is considered a surprising matter since participants in verbal interaction are more likely to comment on behavior which they realize to be 'impolite', or 'rude' than on 'polite' behavior, and they tend to agree far more readily in their classification of the negative end of the scale than of the positive end.²

There is a close bond between performing politeness and culture, politeness can be considered a culturally dependent notion, culture is a substantial component in using polite forms because people from different cultures perform polite forms in different ways in accordance with their cultural conventions and activities. Individuals always want to show the best image of themselves in verbal communication with each other in specific society. The best image of a person is to accomplish the best character through a set of actions like great attitude, good intentions and aims, observing these actions can lead to a successful and free of conflict communication³.

2.Positive and Negative Strategies

Brown and Levinson model of politeness is divided into two types of strategies, positive and negative and these two strategies are related or dependent on the notion of face. Face can be explained as the social presence of individuals in their social environment pride. Negative answers to requests for instance require some diplomacy in order not to hurt her or his value or pride.

By choosing to perform the face threatening act with reforming action, the speaker gives a reform to the hearer's desire for self-determination and freedom from imposition. The verbal performance involved here is like the verbal behavior between friends; "make A feel good-be friendly"⁴ According to Brown and Levinson that the strategies of positive politeness involve three broad mechanisms⁵:

¹ Marquez-Reiter, R.(2000). Linguistic Politeness in Britain and Uruguay: A Contrastive Study of Requests and Apologies. Philadelphia: John Benjamins,p2.

² Watts, J. (2003). Politeness. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p5.

³ Black, E. (2006). Pragmatics Stylistics. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p72.

⁴ . Lakoff, R and Sachiko Ide. (2005). Broadening the Horizon of Linguistic Politeness. Amsterdam: John Benjamin B.V, p298.

⁵ Brown and Levinson (1987). Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage. Cambridge: University press

- 1.Claim common ground.
- 2.Convey that the speaker and hearer are cooperative.
- 3.Fulfill hearer's wants.

1.Strategies of claim common ground like, notice to the hearer (his interests, wants, needs, goods), exaggeration, intensify interest to hearer, use in-group markers, seek agreement, avoid disagreement, assert common ground (gossip and small talk) and joke.

2.Convey that the speaker and hearer are cooperative is the second major class of positive politeness strategies. It is the want to convey that the speaker and the addressee are cooperatively involved in the relative activity. This strategy consists of many strategies like, offer, promise, be optimistic, including, give reasons, assume reciprocity (Ibid:152).

3.The last mechanism of positive strategy is 'Fulfill hearer's wants'. It involves the strategy of Brown and Levinson says that: Speaker deciding to redress hearer's face directly by fulfilling some hearer's wants, thereby indicating that speaker's wants hearer's wants for hearer, in some particular respect. This mechanism includes the following last strategy which is, 'give gifts to hearers (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation). In 'give gifts' strategy the speaker may satisfy the hearer's positive face by actually satisfying some of hearer's wants.

3.The Notion of Face

Face is the expression that interlocutors make an effort to achieve during social interaction. In other words, it is the presence of interlocutors in social interaction. Face is the identity we wish to present to others during communication with others. Face is the desire to be liked and admired.

There is a close relation between Brown and Levinson principle of politeness and Grice cooperative principle and maxims that rule the conversation, to follow the maxims of cooperation means to be polite and thoughtful of the feelings of others. The central claim of Brown and Levinson principle is the notion of face, which means the social image and value of members of a society. In other words, the social image of a person means its presence and role in activities of the society being part of through a set of social norms and practices like, sharing the same beliefs, culture, language and social activities to achieve different aims in different situations¹

Face or social image means ideas, intentions, communicative styles with others and achievement of a person in an interaction. In addition, every conversation we participate, utterance we make and behavior we do we

¹ Deutschmann, M.(2003). Apologizing in British English. Sweden: University of Ume Press, p 29.

are trying to achieve specific aims that agree with social conventions of the society and also agree with our aims of showing good character of ourselves. Face is an image or in more specific the public image of the person in terms of approved social features, in more clear explanation it is the image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his or her profession or religion by making a good showing of himself or herself.

Brown and Levinson presented a model of politeness which is formed as an attempt to be a complement to Grice's cooperative principle and his four maxims. They noted that polite ways of talking were explained as deviations from rational and efficient communication.

Cooperative principal concept was introduced and developed by British philosopher Grice as a set of rules that adjust conversations. The notion of cooperative principle is to rule our everyday life conversations appropriately, free of any conflict and misunderstanding and in order to do that participants in the conversation have to commit to a set of rules. Grice introduced four maxims of his cooperative principle, these maxims are maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, maxim of relation and maxim of manner. The cooperative principle provides a hearer's perspective on indirectness, that is, offers an explanation of how hearers find out and interpret speaker ways of indirectness, it fails to provide a speaker's perspective, an explanation of why the speaker chooses to be indirect instead of simply saying exactly what they mean. Indirectness is a social and communicative technique speakers opt for when they don't want to say what they mean or they feel distant from hearers in terms of social relation. So expressing something in a direct way would be an obstacle to accomplish ease in the conversation, especially if something like criticism or insult¹

4. Leech's Politeness Principle

Any conversation we do in our daily life is considered as a communicative and social process because we are part of a social group in a specific society. This social process can be identified as a set of activities done by communicators of that society. As individuals part of the society, we are committed to rules to organize the social process to make our interaction achieved clearly, logically and cooperatively.

Pragmatics is the study of how utterance has a meaning in the situation. In pragmatic communication, there are some criteria that should be considered to make pragmatic communication happen. The criteria are the addressee, the context of an utterance and the goods of an utterance. Leech agrees that pragmatics is the science of solving problems. In

¹ Malmkjar.(2002). *The Linguistics Encyclopedia*. London: Routledge, p421.

pragmatics there are two main problems that need to be solved. The first problem is the one faced by the speaker who wants to convey his intention or purpose through a speech, the utterance is always delivered by using indirect speech and is conveyed implicitly. The second problem is the one faced by the hearer. In pragmatic communication, the hearer sometimes finds it difficult to interpret the meanings spoken by the speaker.

Politeness principle in general is known as a method of performance that is recognized by being thoughtfully aware of others especially if the speaker is engaged in formal communication, it is also understood as respecting another person's public image. It is part of our social life, a principle we perform in everyday communication. It encourages the speaker to be very thoughtful in dealing with persons in public and that needs to be done with courtesy and acting in a polite way. As a part of conversation politeness is about what is said and not about what is believed, but the intention is so substantial in making the speaker ready to think well about what he or she will say, it is performing an utterance to convey thoughts. In daily life it means not intruding on others and letting everyone get on with their own business. It is the practical application of good manners, etiquette so as not to offend others and to put them at ease. From the point of view of culture, it is defined as a phenomenon and therefore what is considered polite in one culture can sometimes be quite rude in another culture's context.

Leech developed some motivations as the basis for the politeness model first, as speakers we need to reduce the using of impolite language forms and increase the using of polite ones, so these notions were based on the fact that polite attitudes are desired by the hearer while impolite ones are not desired. To perform politeness, speakers would say "would you mind answering the phone?" instead of saying just answer the phone, because this sentence on its own sounds direct and will make the hearer feel somehow forced or annoyed to accept to do the action. We perform and need politeness in our everyday life, in general politeness maxims encourage language users to behave politely by observing the different maxims in making their utterances, like request and order.

Politeness as "strategic conflict avoidance" which can be shown by the degree of effort put into the approaches of avoiding a misunderstood conflict situation. Leech principle came as an opposite to Grice cooperative principle. Leech states that people don't follow Grice's principle all the time. According to Leech, people follow different maxims in order to be polite. Sometimes speakers unintentionally follow politeness maxims, because of their own principles and morals,

upbringing, culture and social norms. We can call them good guys or good girls because of their own ethics and morals reflected in their use of language and in dealing with others¹.

Politeness can be considered as a personal attitude a speaker shows in society depending on some features, one of these features is the speaker growing up in a well-structured family and society that the main aspects are to be good, respect others, not bother others, or interfere in their own business. So, behaving in a good way leads to using polite forms and that leads to performing politeness.

According to Lakoff ² "politeness is developed by societies to avoid conflict and misunderstanding in personal social interaction". Conflict means facing difficulty in achieving a peaceful interaction, sometimes because of contrasted thoughts or different environments and points of views associated with different social conventions. Politeness is an approach that is used to avoid or get rid of difficulties in daily communicative activities required and some of them are considered necessary in societies. Sometimes a normal daily conversation is hard to be done easily due to several reasons, like intention, misunderstanding, psychological state of speaker or hearer, and attitude of the speaker.

Adds that discourse is shaped by people and associated with observing linguistic politeness, in this technical sense of the term, refers to the ways in which speakers adapt or fail to adapt to the fact that their interlocutors, actual or imagined, have social needs like their own. Politeness is one of the main reasons for which people are often indirect, not saying precisely what they mean but implying it. Indirectness often referred to as the social technique speakers chose to perform to avoid saying hurtful things to others³.

5. Leech's Maxims

Politeness is a part of our social life, a principle of every interaction we encounter everyday consciously or unconsciously. From a linguistic point of view politeness is a process of achieving positivity, peace, and respect in communication through using a set of polite forms.

Leech structured his own model in terms of politeness. He presents a group of strategies that speakers follow willingly or unwillingly. Politeness maxims encourage language users to behave well and be considerate. By observing these maxims, the conversation will be done

¹ Leech, G.(1980). Principles of Pragmatics. London. Longman., p19.

² Lakoff, R and Sackiko Ide. (2005). Broadening the Horizon of Linguistic Politeness. Amsterdam: John Benjamin B.V, p64.

³ 1Johnstone, B. (2008). Discourse Analysis. Oxford: Blackwell publishing, p145.

in a proper way. We need politeness maxims in everyday communication, like requests, orders, and information.

Politeness is a series of attitudes which can be explained in a clear, logical and accepted way. It describes the behavior which is formal and sometimes distancing with the intention of not imposing on others, so it is a non-imposing, excluding and distancing attitude which expresses concern for others. This is shown in expressing respect towards the person being part of the conversation and avoiding offending his or her existence or let say his or her image and desire¹

The main aim of conversations is exchanging and sharing news and ideas between speakers and hearers, but speakers do not always follow the rules of conversation put by Grice. Grice formulates these maxims on the assumption that the purpose of the conversation is a maximally efficient exchange of information, and he notes that speakers, through their need for indirection, tact, politeness and so on, do not always obey these maxims in conversation. Some situations force speakers to not obey rules of conversation due to different social aims and needs.²

Geoffrey Leech structured his own principle of politeness, his principle is not so different from politeness as a universal phenomenon or the principle of Brown and Levinson. Leech set rules to govern his model of politeness recognized from other principles. Leech's politeness model was a helpful model to other fields of linguistics, and he is best known as one of the founders of the field of corpus linguistics which is involved in making study of major data sets of language. He formulated six maxims.

Tact maxim expresses reducing of forms which put effort to other and increasing the forms which cause advantage to others, the first part of this maxim fades in with Brown and Levinson negative strategy of reducing the imposition. The second part reflects the positive strategy of attending to the hearer's benefit. The tact maxim involves the motive to reduce the expressions that put cost on others and increase the expressions of forms which put benefit on others.

Tact maxims can be considered or defined as the way of exposing taste, sense or diplomacy when speaking with others. In general tact maxim is the way of reducing cost to others, and increasing benefit for others. It is the principle that aims to make others feel treated well and feel welcomed and approved. Tact maxim requires speakers to avoid saying things that are unacceptable or offensive to others feelings. It refers to the way of expressing thoughts in sensitive way to the feelings of the

¹ Holmes, J.(1995). *Women, Men, and Politeness*. New York: Longman, p5.

² Simpson, P. and Carter, R.(1995). *Language, Discourse and Literature: An Introductory Reader in Discourse Stylistics*. London: Routledge, p278.

hearer.

The second maxim in Leech's model is, Generosity maxim, It refers to the way of expressing thoughts that show concern for others interest and feelings. This maxim requires speakers to be generous with the way they use utterances and generous with attention to the hearers. To be generous means to give the others our attention and revealing positive intent. This maxim means to be generous in our interpretation of ideas, expressions, attitudes and action. It is the way we give others concern and attempting to show positive intent

Now let's have a look at another maxim that is approbation maxim, it is third on the list of Leech', it is the way of minimizing utterances which dispraise others and maximizing expressions which praise others. It is a technique of using expressions and forms which perform praising others and avoid dispraising them. It is a method of making others feel appreciated and approved. The leading target of this strategy is to mention and admit good qualities and behaviors of others.

Modesty maxim refers to the way that speakers attempt to avoid making exaggerated utterances about themselves or their performance. It refers to the way of expressing thoughts in a more modest way and trying to expose simplicity and unpretentiousness. It is the way that speakers maximize displays of self and minimize praise of self. Modesty maxim refers to the way speakers use expressions of self-dispraise for themselves and praise for others. Moreover, by this maxim speakers make good and proper comments to the others by praising some characteristic, clothes or something they do. In this maxim speakers put cost on self.

Furthermore, agreement maxim refers to the to minimize disagreement and maximize agreement. In a clearer explanation it is the way of showing approval to others and disapproval with self, or to show the hearer agreement on his or her perspective and thoughts. Sometimes we don't agree with the perspectives of others but we give approval, because of courtesy and attempting not to upset the other. This maxim indicates the situation of concord and harmony between speakers and hearers in terms of opinions and attitudes.

At last, comes the sympathy maxim, it refers to the way people feel emotional towards a sad incident or situation. Moreover, in the interpretation of the term, it is the feeling of pity or sorrow for a person's situation or doing. It is the way of being able to understand the feelings, states and attitudes of others. Sympathy maxim refers to the way that speaker's express sympathy and concern for the others feelings. It is the expression of empathy and understanding for the hearer's ideas and

perspectives. To be sympathized with others is to show them approval, compassion and understanding of their perspectives. In my opinion This maxim in some points expresses human's essence as a sensitive and compassionate creature that truly reacts to others sorrowful matters and states. In addition, not just reacting in saying the appropriate words, but also doing the right action to help others through their sad and upsetting situations. According to Leech, politeness is moral, any conversation about virtue should begin with politeness, because it imitates virtue and paves the way for it. If morality is a quality of a soul, politeness can be described as a morality of the body.

Conclusions

The present research has resulted the following observation

1.Politeness is a universal theme needed in every society to make sure that social interaction is accomplished without any sort of misunderstanding.

2.Consciously or unconsciously speakers tend to perform politeness in utterances to expose their intentions in a logical and strong way, especially if they follow agreement maxim that seeks approval with others attitudes

3.The purpose of Leech Maxims is to show respect and consideration. In the case of tact maxim, the speakers tend to avoid using impolite utterances or anything upsetting the others.

The process of talking to someone describes the speaker's social status and relationship with the hearer. People of lower status will talk by using polite strategies with people of a higher status.

This research shows that politeness is an important aspect in society and everyday life because it is used to recognize the socio-cultural part in a society. Furthermore, it can also be considered as a kind of social norm determined strategy by a community. Polite strategies are very important to investigate as they are used by people in their social interaction, and in the specific context, knowing what to say, how to say and when to say and to be with other people.

5.Politeness principle is minimizing the expression of impolite beliefs, and maximizing the expression of polite beliefs.

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مبدأ المداراة: وجهة نظر نظرية حول مبادئ العلقمة

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مستخلص البحث :

التداولية هي فرع من فروع علم اللغة وتعني دراسة اللغة التي لا يتم التحدث بها مباشرة. يقصد بها السلوك اللغوي وغير اللغوي الذي يشير من خلاله الأشخاص إلى أنهم يأخذون مشاعر ونوايا الآخرين في كيفية معاملتهم بعين الاعتبار. يهدف البحث الحالي إلى تسليط الضوء على إحدى النظريات الهامة في التداولية ومفهوم بالغ الأهمية في دراسة وتطبيق علم اللغة الاجتماعي وهي نظرية التادب. مبدأ التادب يركز على كيفية أداء مستخدمي اللغة في المجتمع للتعبير عن انفعالاتهم وتوجهاتهم ونواياهم الأساليب الخاصة بنقل المعلومات. وقد أظهرت الدراسة الحالية كيفية صياغة ليتش لمجموعة من المبادئ التي تنظم الأحاديث وتحكمها هذه المبادئ هي مبدأ اللباقة، مبدأ الكرم، مبدأ الاستحسان، مبدأ الاتفاق، ومبدأ التعاطف. في بعض الأحيان لو تعمقنا أكثر سنجد مبادئ أكثر مثل الشعور وغيره من المبادئ المتعلقة بالأشخاص وكيفية تواصلهم مع الآخرين.

الكلمات المفتاحية : قواعد العلقمة، الأدب، التعبير، الاجتماعي، التواصل