

## التعريف النظري التداولي لنظرية التآدب

### *A Theoretical Pragmatic Induction of Politeness Theory*

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## الملخص

هذه الورقة البحثية عبارة عن نظرة نظرية عامة لنظرية التأدب، وهي نظرية معروفة في التداولية والتي تتضمن السلوك اللغوي وغير اللغوي خلال الإشارة لاستقبال أحاسيس الناس والأخذ بنظر الاعتبار كيفية التعامل مع هذه الأحاسيس، علاوة على الطرق المتداخلة التي يقوم بها الناس لإنشاء علاقاتهم المشتركة. التأدب يغطي السلوكيات مع الآخرين عقليا. تبدأ الورقة البحثية بخلفية تاريخية، ثم تم عرض تعريفات مختلفة لنظرية التأدب. بعدها، تم وصف نماذج مختلفة من النظرية، وفي النهاية، تم وصف البنية الداخلية لكل نظرية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التأدب، التداولية، سياق اللغة، التفاعل بين الثقافات، حفظ الوجه.

## Abstract

This paper is a theoretical overview of politeness theory which is well known theory in pragmatics which includes linguistics and non-linguistics conduct through which people indicate that they receive others' feelings and put in consideration who to treat these feelings. Moreover, the interactional ways in which people build up their interpersonal relationships. Politeness covers behaviors with others' face needs in mind. The paper starts with a historical background. Then, various definitions of politeness are presented. Later, different models of politeness are considered. Finally, the internal structure of each theory is described.

**Keywords:** Politeness, pragmatics, language context, intercultural interaction, face keeping.

## Introduction

### 1.1 The problem:

This paper sets itself the task of answering the following questions:

1. what is politeness?
2. what are the models of politeness?
3. What are the internal structure of these models?

### 1.2 Aims:

This paper aims at giving a general view about the selected topic so to enrich the growing body of literature.

### **1.3 Procedures:**

Presenting a theoretical part which deals with the concept of politeness and

### **1.4 Limits of the Stud**

The paper is limited to provide a theoretical background about politesses.

### **1.5 Significant of the Study**

This research is conducted to gain benefits to the academic community. The development of scientific research is considered one of the most important goals of countries and societies that aspire to research and scientific research for their children and thus achieve prosperity, progress and excellence in all aspects of life. Without it, we will be forced to rely on intuition only, the authority of others and blind luck. The study may be useful for developing and enhancing a body of knowledge and innovation in language.

#### **Historical Background**

Although the major formulations of politeness derive from sociology and philosophy, it has come to be recognized as an area of pragmatics, and more broadly one of the consequences of functional developments in linguistics, where the focus has shifted from words and sentences to the analysis of language in context.

*(The Politeness Principle, From Grice to Netiquette Dr. Bahaa-Eddin M. Mazid Annals of Arts and Social Sciences (AASS) Academic Publication Council, Kuwait University. 2008, P.5)*

Politeness gains a great deal of interest in the past twenty-five years. Much has been written on politeness principle and theories. The most important theory that almost all the linguists depend on in their writing on politeness was postulated by Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson which was originally published in 1978 and later expanded and republished in 1987 under the title ***Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage***. *(See: J. Of College of Education for Women vol. 20 (2) 2009 509 The Realization of Positive Politeness Strategies in Language: The Politeness Theory of Brown and Levinson Instructor Rufaidah Kamal Abdul-Majeed)*

**Brown and Levinson (1987)** include extensive investigations of how models of politeness can produce answers to these interesting questions. They assume – following **R. Lakoff (1977)** – that a fundamental rule of politeness (deriving from a need to preserve addressee’s “face”) is:

*Don't impose.* Hence Would you pass the salt? or can you pass the salt? are more polite than pass the salt! A rather similar account is offered by **Leech (1976)**. (*The Handbook of Pragmatics Edited by Laurence R. Horn and Gregory Ward p.49*)

### Definition of Politeness and Its Types

Some main definitions of politeness have been provided below:

1. **An illustrated one by Oxford dictionary** that politeness “having or showing good social manners, respect for the feelings of the others, and/or correct social behavior”.
2. **According Lakoff (1975:53) and Yule (1996:60)** politeness is a concept or an idea of “polite social behavior, or etiquette within a culture”, but **Yule** adds another dimension to his definition when he specifies a number of different general principles for being polite in social interaction within particular culture.
3. **Leech (1980:19) defines** it as a “strategic conflict avoidance and the establishment and maintenance of comity, and he suggests that it “can be measured in terms of degree of effort put into the avoidance of a conflict situation. This turns politeness into a set of strategies for conflict avoidance.
4. **Lakoff (1990) defines** politeness is “a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange (1990: 34).
5. **Another group of researchers** sees politeness as a means for regulating and building social interaction like **Held (1992:21)** and **Reisco (2001:1)**.
6. **Aitchison (1999: 105)** admits the role of politeness when **she** says that it is based on two basic social requirements: no criticism no interference.
7. **Kasper (1990:194)** sees politeness as a set of strategies “to defuse the danger and to minimize the antagonism”.
8. **Hill et al (1986: 23)** define politeness as one of constraints on human interaction, whose purpose is to consider others feelings to establish a level of mutual comfort and promote rapport.

### **Theories of Politeness:**

Three main theories concerning politeness are:

1. **Robin Lakoff's theory (1973)**
2. **Leech's Politeness Principle (1983)**
3. **Brown and Levinson's Model (1987)**

#### 1. Robin Lakoff's theory (1973)

Robin Lakoff could be called the **mother** of modern politeness theory, for she was one of the first to examine it from a pragmatic perspective.

**She was (1973: 296)** among the first to adopt Grice's construct of Conversational Principles in an effort to account for politeness. **She** explicitly extends the notion of grammatical rule to the domain of politeness and considers the form of sentences, i.e., specific constructions to be polite or not.

She suggests two rules of Pragmatic Competence: (i) **Be clear**, and (ii) **Be polite**.

Lakoff (1973) reduces Grice's maxims to two: Be clear and be polite. For her these two rules are sufficient to guarantee "Pragmatic Competence". The clarity requirement is accounted for by Grice's four maxims, and so Lakoff concentrates on the Rules of Politeness, of which there are three:

She also (1973:298) suggests **three politeness rules**:

- (1) **Do not impose**
- (2) **Give options**
- (3) **Feel good, be friendly.**

The explanation of Lakoff's Rules of Politeness is as follows:

**The first one is "Don't impose (Distance)".**

Distance here means how close our relationship is with the person we are talking to. This can be in terms of age, family relation, occupation, etc. This rule of politeness is usually applied when there is much social distance between the speaker and the hearer.

We shall not neither ask about her/his personal affairs nor tell her/him about ours.

Besides that, we tend to use formal expressions to convey the message to exclude personal emotion. For example, when a student wants to see her/his lecturer at the office, she/he uses the expression **"I'm sorry to bother you, but may I come in to ask some questions about my paper?"**

This expression is used because it is more formal than “**Can I come in?**”.

Besides, there is a clear apology for imposing. By using this expression, the lecturer will not be offended because she/he perceives the expression as a polite one. **Related to Brown and Levinson’s theory, it meets the principle of Negative Face.**

**The second rule is “Give option (Difference)”**. In order to be polite, we can’t insist on our command, desire, or request to other people. In other words, hesitancy is needed in a conversation. Therefore, we need to give options to our interlocutor in giving response either to refuse or accept. This is usually done by using indirect speech in which we use another language form that actually carries different meaning with its syntax form. For instance, the use of declarative form which actually carries a command: “**I wonder if you could possibly lend me Lakoff’s book from the library because I lost my KTM**”. In this sentence, there is also a clear option for acceptance or refusal which shows the speaker acknowledges the second maxim of Lakoff’s Politeness Principle. **This rule is also equivalent to Negative Face theory by Brown and Levinson.**

**The last one is “Make audience feel good”**. This principle emphasizes closeness between the speaker and the hearer. It is believed that being nice and friendly to our interlocutor is a sign of courtesy. Besides that, in Rule 3 we tend to use informal expression to express feeling of solidarity between the speaker and the hearer. For example, someone asks his/her friend about his/her new **outfit**:

A: Do I look big in this?

B: No, it suits you.

B says that the outfit suits A though actually he/she thinks A look **fatter** in it. However, in order to be polite B says something nice (**in informal way**), so A feels good. By doing so, B acknowledges the **Camaraderie** of Lakoff’s Politeness Principle. **Unlike the two former rules, this one is related to Brown and Levinson’s Positive Face theory.**

## **2. Leech’s (1983) model of politeness**

Leech (1983: 82) introduced the Politeness Principle whose **function** is: To maintain the **social stability** and the **friendly relations** which enable us to assume that our **speakers are being cooperative in the first place.**

He (ibid.: 132) provides a finer differentiation within his Politeness Principles.

**He proposes six interpersonal maxims:**

(*Tact maxim*,  
*generosity maxim*,  
*approbation maxim*,  
*Modesty Maxim*,  
*agreement maxim*, and  
*sympathy maxim*)

He (ibid.) distinguishes between what he calls '*Relative Politeness*' which refers to politeness in a specific situation and '*Absolute Politeness*' which refers to the degree of politeness inherently associated with specific speaker actions.

Thus, he takes some *illocutions* (e.g. **orders**) to be inherently **impolite**, and others (e.g. **offers**) to be inherently **polite**.

Leech (1983: 104-5) explores politeness through his **theory of illocutionary functions**. According to Leech (1983: 22), an illocutionary act is a speech act or more precisely an act that predicts something. As examples of this, an illocutionary act can be a promise, an order or a request.

Leech (1983: 104) classifies illocutionary functions into four different types, "according to how they relate to the social goal of establishing and maintaining comity".

**These four types are described as follows:**

- (a) **COMPETITIVE**: The illocutionary goal **competes with the social goal**; e.g. ordering asking, demanding, begging.
- (b) **CONVIVIAL**: The illocutionary goal **coincides with the social goal**; e.g. offering, inviting, greeting, thanking, congratulating.
- (c) **COLLABORATIVE**: The illocutionary goal is **indifferent to the social goal**; e.g. asserting, reporting, announcing, instructing.
- (d) **CONFLICTIVE**: The illocutionary goal conflicts with the social goal; e.g. threatening, accusing, cursing, reprimanding. (Leech 1983: 104)



Leech (1983: 104-5) then states that **the first two types of functions**, competitive and convivial **in most cases involve politeness**. Competitive goals involve negative politeness and convivial involves positive politeness (ibid).

He adds that competitive goals are **discourteous**, for example, getting someone to do something, and that convivial goals are **courteous**, they are acts that seek opportunities for **civility**.

For **collaborative** goals, politeness is not relevant,

and **conflictive** goals are **offensive**, and therefore, obviously do not involve politeness.

Leech observes that while the CP as conceptualized by Grice enables participants to communicate based on assumption that the interlocutor is cooperative, but it does not explain the degree of politeness expressed during social interaction. Based on the foundation of CP and its cooperative maxims, Leech proposed the '**politeness principle**' (PP) as necessary complement to the CP (Leech,1983:81-2).

The function of Leech's PP is "to maintain the social balance and friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the communication".

Leech proposes a second principle, the '**Irony principle**' which allows the speaker to be **impolite**, though appearing to be polite, by permitting the hearer to arrive at an offensive point of the speaker's remark indirectly, by the way of implicature (Ibid).

Similar to the CP, **PP is comprised of various maxims:**

- 1- Tact Maxim (in impositive and commissive)
  - a-Minimize cost of other.
  - b-Maximize benefit to other.
- 2- Generosity Maxim (in impositive and commissive)
  - a-Minimize the benefit to self.
  - b-Maximize the cost to self.



- 3- Approbation Maxim (in expressive and assertive)
  - a-Minimize dispraise of other.
  - b-Maximize praise of other.
- 4- Modesty Maxim (in expressive and assertive)
  - a-Minimize praise of self.
  - b-Maximize dispraise of self.
- 5- Agreement Maxim (in assertive)
  - a-Minimize disagreement between self and other.
  - b-Maximize agreement between self and other.
- 6- Sympathy Maxim (in assertive)
  - a -Minimize antipathy between self and other.
  - b-Maximize sympathy between self and other.

### **The Tact maxim**

The tact maxim is minimizing cost to other and maximizing benefit to other. This maxim is applied in **Searle's speech act**, commissives and directives called by Leech as impositives.

Commissives is found in utterances that express speaker's intention in the future action.

Then, **Directives/ impositives** are expressions that influence the hearer to do action.

The example of the tact maxim is as follows:

- "Won't you sit down?"

It is the directive/ impositive utterance. This utterance is spoken to ask the hearer sitting down. The speaker uses indirect utterance to be more polite and minimizing cost to the hearer. This utterance implies that sitting down is benefit to the hearer.

## The Generosity Maxim

The generosity maxim states to minimizing benefit to self and maximizing cost to self.

Like tact maxim, the generosity maxim occurs in commissives and directives/ impositives. This maxim is centered to self, while the tact maxim is to other.

The example will be illustrated as follows:

- “You must come and dinner with us”.

It is an advice utterance that is involved in directive illocutionary act. In this case the speaker implies that cost of the utterance is to himself. Meanwhile, the utterance implies that benefit is for the hearer.

## The Approbation Maxim

The approbation maxim requires to minimizing dispraise of other and maximizing praise of other. This maxim instructs to avoid saying unpleasant things about others and especially about the hearer. This maxim occurs in assertives/ representatives and expressives. Assertives/ representatives are utterances that express the true propositional. Meanwhile, expressive are utterances that show the speaker feeling.

The example is sampled below.

A: “The performance was great”!

B: “Yes, wasn’t it”!

In the example, A gives a good comment about the performance. He talks the pleasant thing about other. This expression is a congratulation utterance that maximizes praise of other. Thus, this utterance is included the approbation maxim.

## The Modesty Maxim

In the modesty maxim, the participants must minimize praise of self and maximize dispraise of self. This maxim is applied in assertive/ representatives and expressive like the approbation maxim. Both the approbation maxim and the modesty maxim concern to the degree of good or bad evaluation of other or self that is uttered by the speaker.

The approbation maxim is exemplified by courtesy of congratulation. On other hand, the modesty maxim usually occurs in apologies.

The sample of the modesty maxim is below.

- **“Please accept this small gift as prize of your achievement”.**

In this case, the utterance above is categorized as the modesty maxim because the speaker maximizes dispraise of himself. The speaker notices his utterance by using “small gift.”

### **The Agreement Maxim**

In the agreement maxim, there is tendency to maximize agreement between self and other people and minimize disagreement between self and other. The disagreement, in this maxim, usually is expressed by regret or partial agreement. This maxim occurs in assertive/ representatives illocutionary act. There example will be illustrated below.

**A: “English is a difficult language to learn”.**

**B: “True, but the grammar is quite easy”.**

From the example, B actually does not agree that all part of English language difficult to learn. He does not express his disagreement strongly to be more polite. The polite answer will influence the effect of the hearer. In this case, B’s answer minimizes his disagreement using partial agreement, “true, but.”...

### **The Sympathy Maxim**

The sympathy maxim explains to minimize antipathy between self and other and maximize sympathy between self and other. In this case, the achievement being reached by other must be congratulated. On other hand, the calamity happens to other, must be given sympathy or condolences. This maxim is applicable in assertive/ representatives. The example is as follows.

- **“I’m terribly sorry to hear about your father”.**

It is a condolence expression which is expressed the sympathy for misfortune. This utterance is uttered when the hearer gets calamity of father’s died or sick. This expression shows the solidarity between the speaker and the hearer.

Although Leech’s model of politeness has made an important contribution to politeness theory, his theory and his claim of universality have also been called into question. Numerous scholars observed that the major problem in Leech’s model is that without an empirical description of politeness phenomenon and more constrained theory, the number of maxims could be extended (Cesar-Brasdefer,2008:16).

### 3. Politeness theory by Brown & Levinson (1987)

The most well-known and dominant theory on linguistic politeness is that of Brown and Levinson (1987). According Brown and Levinson (1987: 61-2), **everyone has a face, “the public self-image”** that they want to maintain. The term face is divided into two different categories: **negative** and **positive** face. Negative face is, in essence, the want to preserve one’s own **independence**, and positive face the want to be liked by others and **cooperating** with them.

According Brown and Levinson (1987: 60), speakers want to maintain each other’s face in interaction. However, sometimes the speaker is forced to make **‘face-threatening-acts’ (FTAs)** in order to get what he/she wants (ibid). The speaker then has the choice to minimize the FTA by different strategies shown in the figure below. In the figure **‘estimation of risk of face loss’** means the risk the speaker will take when he or she is asking a question or making a request.

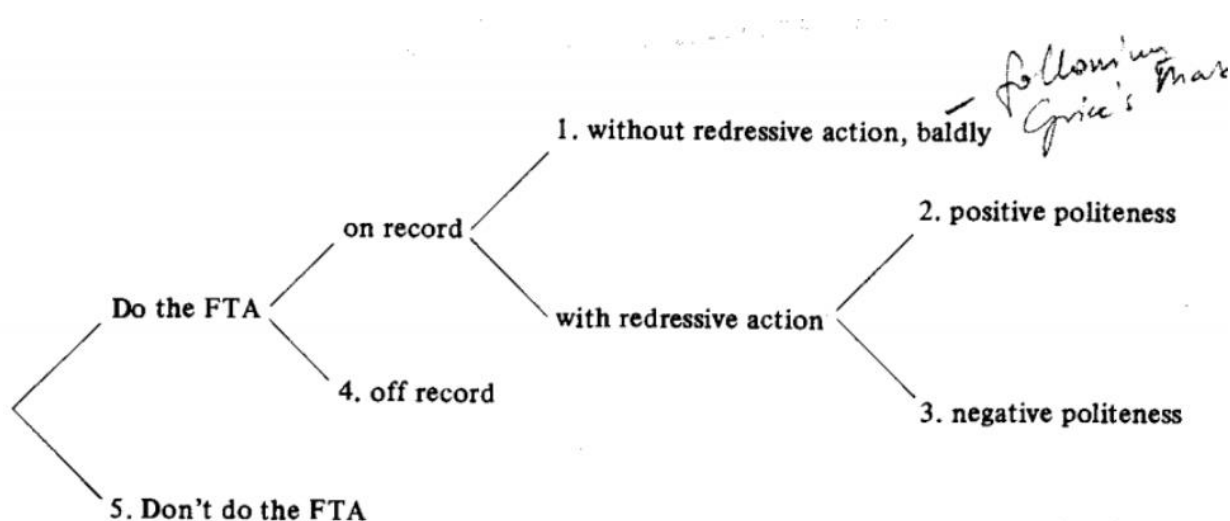


Fig. 1. Possible strategies for doing FTAs

Brown and Levinson (1987: 102) present a list of possible **positive politeness strategies**:

- A. Claim common ground
- B. Convey cooperation with the addressee
- C. Fulfil addressee's wants
- D. Bald on record and Bald off record

**A. Claim common ground**

This strategy softens the impending FTA by creating friendly environment. This can be achieved by noticing H's condition, noticeable changes, remarkable possessions anything which looks as though H would want S to notice and approve of.

- (1) Goodness, you cut your hair! (...) by the way, I came to borrow some flower.
- (2) You must be hungry; it is long time since lunch. How about some breakfast?

**A1. Express that the addressee is admirable, interesting**

- 1. *Notice, attend*
- 2. *Exaggerate interest, approval, sympathy*
- 3. *Intensify interest to the addressee*

**A2. Claim group membership**

- 4. Use in-group identity markers

**A3. Claim common point of view/opinions/attitudes/knowledge/empathy**

- 5. *Seek agreement*
- 6. *Avoid disagreement*
- 7. *Presuppose/raise/assert/ common ground*
- 8. *Joke*

**B. Convey cooperation with the addressee and hearer are Cooperators  
(Convey cooperation with the addressee)**

**B1. Take addressee's wants into consideration**

- 9. *Convey understanding of addressee's wants*

**B2. Claim reflexivity**

- 10. *Offer, promise*
- 11. *Be optimistic*
- 12. *Include the addressee in the activity*
- 13. *Give or ask for reasons*

**B3. Claim reciprocity**

*14. Assume or assert reciprocity*

*15. Give gifts to the addressee – goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation (adapted from Brown and Levinson 1987: 102)*

### **C. Fulfil addressee's wants**

This is the last mechanism of positive-politeness. It involves the strategy of give gifts to H. Brown and Levinson (1987:129) say that “S decides to redress H’s face directly by fulfilling some of H’s wants, thereby indicating that he wants H’s want for H, in some of H’s wants, thereby indicating that he wants H’s want for H, in some particular respects”.

Negative politeness strategy is another choice available to perform FTA. It is essentially based on avoiding or minimizing imposition or redressing the imposition. In other words, S does not interfere with H’s freedom of action and he maintains the social distance between him and H. For performing negative politeness strategy, S has to utilize a number of linguistic strategies.

**D. off record strategy** which means performing the act in an ambiguous way that makes the offend or FTA unintended.

### **E. Bald on Record Strategy**

According to Brown and Levinson (1978: 74), bald on record strategy is a **direct way of saying things**, without any **minimization** to the imposition, **in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way, for example “Do X!”**.

Imperatives are often softened with hedges or conventional politeness markers, e.g., **“Please send us the offers”**. Verb **“do”** is used with imperatives, like in **“Do call us”**. While what BL call bald on record strategies might simply involve the Gricean maxims, politeness strategies, in contrast, would involve violating the maxims in specific way.

**Furthermore, Brown and Levinson (1987: 130-131) present a similar set of negative politeness strategies:**

- A. Be Direct
- B. Don’t presume/ assume (make minimal assumption about addressee’s wants)
- C. Don’t coerce
- D. Communicate that your want is not to harm the addressee

## E. Redress other wants of the addressee

### A. Be Direct

#### 1. Perform the FTA on record

In the formal situation, sometimes the directness is needed to minimize the imposition by saying the point and avoiding the further imposition of prolixity and ambiguity as mentioned by Lakoff (in Goody, 1996). Fortunately, this strategy is rarely used in negative politeness because it is more relevant to be used in bald on-record strategy. For example, "Help me to pick up these boxes!"

In this strategy, S chooses to come rapidly to the point directly when she or he wants something. She does not care about maintaining face of the H but still respects and assure not to disturb the freedom of action of H.

### B. Don't presume/ assume (make minimal assumption about addressee's wants)

#### 2. Question, hedge

#### 3. Be pessimistic

### C. Don't coerce

a. By avoiding coercing H's response means that S gives H the option not to do a certain act.

b. By avoiding coercion of H means that S minimizes the threat by clarifying S view of the P, D and R values.

c. Communicate S want not to impinge on H Indicate that S is aware and he takes account in his decision to communicate the FTA is one of the ways to satisfy H's negative face.

#### C1. Give addressee option not to act

#### C2. Minimize threat

#### 4. Minimize the imposition

#### 5. Give deference

#### 6. Apologize

### D. Communicate that your want is not to harm the addressee

#### D1. Dissociate the addressee from the particular infringement

#### 7. Impersonalize, avoid I and you

#### 8. State the FTA as a general rule

#### 9. Nominalize



### **E. Redress other wants of the addressee**

This is the higher strategy of negative politeness that consists of offering partial compensation for the face threat in FTA. It shows that negative politeness attends to other wants can be derived (H's desire for territorial integrity and self-determination).

10. Go on-record as incurring a debt (adapted from Brown and Levinson 1987: 131)

### **Be Ambiguous**

Ambiguity can be achieved by any speech act that has different connotations and it also involves providing ambiguous clues to the illocutionary act order to make the force of the illocutionary act ambiguous.

Well, someone has been busy! (Either you did a lot of work or the opposite, depending on the intention)

When you have known him as long as we have, you will realize just how trustworthy he is

### **Be Vague**

By using what is technically indirect (ambiguity), the speaker will have given a how-to H's face and therefore minimizes the threats of FTA. Every off-record strategy essentially exploits ambiguity in a sense between the literal meaning of utterance and any of its possible implicatures: **I have a [a previous] engagement. (Commonly used to decline invitations). Perhaps someone did something haughty.**

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