

Politeness in Computer–Mediated Discourse and Online Communities

Ruzieva Nilufar Xafizovna

Doctor of Philosophy in Philological sciences, PhD

Department of Methodology for teaching foreign languages

Bukhara State Pedagogical Institute

Abstract: Politeness is one of the main topics in the studies of pragmatics. It has been discussed for the last seventy years and yet certain depth can still be added into the body of works. This article is written to connect the classical theories of politeness and the practical applications of politeness in the digital age. Today, we are faced with two kinds of interactions due to technological advancements: face-to-face interaction and cyber interaction.

Both interactions seem to use the same mechanism of semantics and pragmatics. However, in reality, they have gaps. With this in mind, I feel the urge to make those gaps explicit.

Key words: face-to-face interaction, cyber interaction, Computer–mediated discourse, synchronous, asynchronous, Netspeak, Internet language, politeness principles.



This is an open-access article under the [CC-BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license

Introduction. In terms of the evolution of the Internet language, computer–mediated discourse was a logical extension to the already founded computer–mediated communication. Having already defined CMD from a linguistic perception all that is left is to list and explore some of its characteristics. Computer–mediated discourse does in many ways resemble real life discourse.

Those discrepancies between face-to-face and cyber interaction may not be intuitive. Even in some cases, they are counter-intuitive. Humans from all ages plunge in the arena of cyber communication. We may have had the assumption of face-to-face interaction politeness principles and features, transferred to its cyber counterpart and vice versa. Some of those politeness principles and features work well in both worlds. Those are human-made principles and used in the human world anyway. However, it is so often some principles, which work well in a medium, fail to convert comfortably in the other medium.

Like any other discourse it appears when people interact and communication is produced. What makes CMD special, lies in the fact that all interaction takes place by exchanging messages over network linked computers. These messages can be either verbal or written. This is the main reason why CMD researchers speak of electronic medium effects rather than treating CMD as a form of writing or speaking. The CMD also takes place in the previously mentioned Internet situations.

Each type of CMD is specific and unique for each of them just like their language, and each of them has different linguistic structures which resemble their Internet situations.

In resemblance to chat groups CMD can also be either synchronous or asynchronous. Other variables which determine the construct of CMD are those of social character. This indicates that even age, gender, class etc. can affect the course of the discourse. For instance, when talking about gender as a variable in construction of CMD, Herring notes that males on the Internet “are more likely to post longer messages, begin and close discussions in mixed-sex groups, assert opinions strongly as “facts”, use crude language (including insults and profanity)“, while females “tend to post relatively short messages, and are more likely to qualify and justify their assertions, apologize, express support of others, and in general, manifest an “aligned” orientation towards their interlocutors“. CMD will also be different in conversations of different nature (business, casual, flirting...). Herring gives us an example of how synchronous CMD in a workplace would look like. She states that this type of CMD would include such characteristics as deleted subject pronouns, determiners and auxiliaries; the use of abbreviations; non-corrected typos etc. She also states that, while having CMD in which flirting occurs, the increased presence of smileys and informal language would be noted, as well as, textually represented physical actions. Taking into consideration all of these characteristics one can come to a conclusion that CMD cannot be viewed as a single genre.

Like any other discourse, CMD has to take place between two or more participants. CMD allows multiple participants to communicate simultaneously in ways that are difficult if not impossible to achieve in other media, due to cognitive limits on participants’ ability to attend to more than one exchange at a time. A group of such participants on the Internet form online communities among which CMD takes place. When it comes to describing what online discourse communities really are, many problems occur. The main one is that, until now, it was impossible to find a universal explanation or definition which would suit all the linguists. Because of this when researching online discourse communities one will stumble on many different definitions of what they really are.

Main body. To support the creation of good imagery of the users' online identities, SNS users are provided with features that allow them to share their thoughts, photos, or videos on their accounts. Since the contents are shared publicly, they can be seen by their audiences or followers. Besides being seen, the audiences can also react or give feedback by giving a like or comment. People's reactions in the form of comments are varied in meanings. Some show admiration or compliments, and some others exhibit dislikes criticism, disapproval, or even hatred depending on how they perceive the post. Giving comments to compliment the other is very common to be found on social media. It is a form of politeness in SNS because it is less likely to cause conflicts since every human being would love to be praised and appreciated.

People usually found themselves in a dilemma when getting a compliment in person, whether they should accept the compliment but have the risk to sound arrogant, or decline it to avoid arrogance but risk being considered ungrateful. People usually end up with several alternative ways in reacting to compliments such as accepting it by humbly saying “Thank you”, decline it with a “You're just trying to cheer me up”, give credit to someone else “All credit should go to my coach who has helped me a lot”, or say something nice back to the complimenter “It means a lot, coming from such a great artist as yourself.” Cultural norms can influence how people react to compliments. People living in eastern cultures are more likely to decline compliments than those who adopt Western values who are more likely to accept them.

One can conclude that communication over the Internet is not as “rich” with information as is face-to-face interaction, which reveals almost everything about the co-speaker. Nevertheless this handicap does not seem to bother Internet users as the number of online communities is growing exponentially. This would argue that Internet users do enjoy some of the anonymity provided to

them. The important fact is that it does not affect the foundations of computer-mediated communication and discourse and its flow on the Internet.

The influences of the Internet on language and their connections. After reviewing how the language influenced the Internet and the development of its own language, how it helped form discourse and discourse communities as well as linguistic branches, such as Internet linguistics, it is time to explore the vice-versa effect. Although the Internet language or Netspeak is a young and newly formed language it still has a major affect on, both spoken and written, English language.

In these modern times, where people are dependent on technology, which is used in every segment of their lives, this kind of major influence cannot be surprising. Throughout this chapter various ways of this influence will be explored and debated. Why debated? Because, like every other process and phenomenon in the world, the rapid spreading of Internet slang causes, according to experts, both positive and negative feeling amongst people. In addition to this a person will be able to see how the Internet helped spread both English and other native languages, as well as how it can be used to preserve and save dying and endangered ones.

The theory developed by Brown and Levinson has been around for some times and it has been successful to dissect many phenomena in offline interactions. It becomes interesting to see whether those super strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson have the same dissecting ability to respond with cyber interaction.

In one-on-one offline interaction, the “face” can be associated with the face of the speaker and the hearer. However, it might not be easy to apply the same concept with online interaction. If you take a look at Youtube comments or Facebook comments, for example, the level of anonymity is quite striking. Some people who use aliases can behave differently from their real-life because they are protected by their nonymity. Even people who use their real name while interacting online, they also do not present their 'face' directly on the spot. This also has some effects on their linguistic behavior. Again, the door to the novel approach of politeness problems is widely open when cyber setting comes into play. Politeness is also greatly affected by the changing times and changes in technology. Politeness is neither permanent nor stable. Something that is considered impolite in this century might be something that is considered polite in the next century.

However, politeness strategies are not strictly governed since it is a social convention. Public expectations about politeness always change from time to time (Lakoff, 2005).

Inspired from Brown and Levinson's politeness strategy, Ibolya Maricic (2000), as cited in Francisco Yus (2011), elaborates an exquisite list of politeness strategies that is specifically designed for the cyber context.[Linguistic politeness in online communication p.20-21] The linguist list by Maricic can accommodate the politeness strategy that the internet users commonly use in the cyber communication platform, mostly when they are required to make polite requests to mitigate the FTA so that the addressee will feel safe and fulfill the request. To make the interaction to be more intimate, familiar and friendly, positive politeness strategies are used to claim a basis for mutual understanding (such as making the interlocutor as a part of the in-group) and to minimize the imposition (such as making the request in the 1st person plural pronoun so that the addressee will feel like he/she helps not the only individual of the addresser but the whole unit/team where both parties are involved).

Conclusion. Non-verbal communication does not only involve words and symbols, knowledge about the background of both the character and the culture of the other person can also influence communication. The more people are familiar with the character or the cultural background of the person they deal with, the easier it is to understand the message that minimizes misunderstandings. However, when people lack information, they tend to rely on stereotypes to fill in the gaps which raise the chances of emotional misinterpretation.

Used literature:

1. Hendy Pramata. Linguistic politeness in online communication. – Semarang: LPPM Unnes, 2019. – P. 105.
2. Xafizovna, R. N. (2022). On Linguistic Politeness Theory: Robin Lakoff's Theory of Politeness, Brown and Levinson's Theory of Politeness, Geoffrey Leech's Theory of Politeness. *Central Asian Journal of Literature, Philosophy and Culture*, 3(6), 66-74.
3. Nafisa K. Cognition and Communication in the Light of the New Paradigm //European journal of innovation in nonformal education. – 2021. – T. 1. – №. 2. – C. 214-217.
4. Ruziyeva Nilufar Xafizovna, & Xolova Madina Boboqulovna. (2022). Politeness In Literary Works: An Overview. *Eurasian Research Bulletin*, 7, 200–206.
5. Xafizovna, 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.
6. Ruziyeva Nilufar Xafizovna (2021).The category of politeness in different linguocultural traditions. *ACADEMICIA: AN INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH JOURNAL* 11 (2), 1667-1675.
7. Xafizovna, R. N. . (2022). Linguistic Politeness Theory Review: Yueguo Gu, Sachiko Ide, Shoshena Blum Kulka, Bruce Frasher and William Nolen, Hornst Arndt and Richard Janney. *Pindus Journal of Culture, Literature, and ELT*, 2(5), 145–152.
8. Ruziyeva N. (2020). FACE CONCEPT IN THE CATEGORY OF POLITENESS. *European Journal of Humanities and Educational Advancements*, 1(4), 15-20.
9. Ruziyeva Nilufar Xafizovna, & Akhmedova Shahnoza Murodilloyevna. (2022). THE STUDY OF CULTURE IN CULTURAL STUDIES. *Conferencea*, 276–278.