Politeness strategies *via* speech acts and conversational implicatures

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Abstract. The way to be polite is directly connected with assignment of one's face and in a broader sense with identity's construction. Politeness strategies and Speech acts are both the tools and results of our socialization and the study of their multifacet correlation will undoubtedly contribute to the issues of maintenance the face and identity. The scope of interface between the speech acts and politeness is far from being finally established. This paper examines the politeness strategies' from viewpoint of illocutionary acts' criteria, triggers and felicity conditions. There are three points to be discussed in this paper. First, to find out the correlation between politeness strategies and speech acts' mostly appropriate for their manifestations. Second, to reveal the directness / indirectness correlations with forms of face threat, face saving and face-redress. Third, to prove that the face-redressing strategies rely on primary illocutionary meaning of indirect acts worked out by the rules of the conversational implicature.

Keywords: speech acts, politeness strategies, directness / indirectness, conversational implicatures.

Introduction. According to Yule [11, p. 60] politeness is a concept of polite social behavior related to the concept of face as a kind of public self-image, i.e. an image of self-delineation in terms of approved social attributes [2, p. 61]. Speech acts in line with scientific tradition are actions performed via utterances by saying that one is doing so, i.e. requests, warnings, invitations, promises, apologies, predictions, promising, asserting, asking, explanation, orders, gratitude, complaints, compliments, etc.. Some speech acts threaten the Hearer's face and might require compensating actions intended to restore the latter. Such restorative actions might be put under a general umbrella notion of Politeness as a set of strategies that aim to mitigate face threats in achieving conflict-free communication and "face saving" balance between proximity (positive politeness) and distance (negative politeness).

A correlation between speech acts and politeness has attracted the interest of many linguists over the years. In respect to interrelation between indirectness and politeness some convincing results were obtained by Leech [6]; and Brown and Levinson [2], having shown that politeness is the chief motivation for indirectness, and developed in further pragmatic studies [4; 5; 7; 10; 11]. Geoffrey Leech conclusively proved the correspondences between the politeness principle with its seven maxims and particular speech acts' types in [6]. Few studies have investigated the speech acts that threat negative face and positive face.

However, the scope of interdependencies between speech acts and politeness is far from being finally established. In particular, the relation between politeness strategies, speech acts' illocutionary points and felicity conditions is still left unexplored and thus require clarification. This paper aims to outline the 'politeness *via* speech acts' interface in a framework of illocutionary acts, their constitutive rules, triggers and felicity conditions. We will also address the question of directness / indirectness correlations with forms of face threat, face saving and face-redress.

Research methodology. In doing our studies we will apply descriptive qualitative approach together with speech acts' theory [8], Brown and Levinson's politeness theory [2] and Grice's concept of conversational implicature [3]. The use of qualitative research is justified by the paper's subject, database and purpose since it focuses on phenomenon dealing with multiple realities [7] which is difficult to covey with quantitative methods [10; 4]). Apriori obvious is the fact that politeness expressions, especially those manifested by indirect speech acts often implicate multiple meanings and, therefore, belong to 'multiple realities'.

The collected data are analyzed by several process:

1. The data are classified according to the four kinds of politeness strategies,

2. Then the utterances that contain politeness strategies and sub-strategies are described from the viewpoint of the particular speech acts with consideration for their illocutionary acts' criteria, triggers and felicity conditions,

3. The next step is establishing the particular speech acts' appropriateness as means of the defined politeness strategies,

4. The last step is outlining the directness / indirectness correlations with forms of face threat, face saving and face-redress.

To explicate the interrelation between politeness strategies and their indexing speech acts we will briefly refer to the foundations of the Searle's theories.

Back to the foundations of speech acts' theory and the theory of politeness.

A taxonomy of illocutionary acts developed by Searle [8], relies on the criteria of :

(a) *Illocutionary point* as the characteristic aim of each speech act's type;

(b) *The direction of fit outlining* the relation between words and their corresponding world, e.g. in commissives a speaker becomes committed to make the world fit his / her words / promise while assertions have the words to fit the world;

(c) *Differences in expressed psychological state* necessary for the Speaker act' accomplishment.

In addition, the latter parameter constitutes one of the speech acts' felicity conditions [11, p. 50] alongside with:

a) general conditions (the knowledge of the language code);

b) preparatory conditions, i.e. Ability conditions as the Speaker's or Hearer's ability to perform an action intended by an act, and Benefit condition as the acts' performance in the Hearer's interest;

c) non-expectancy condition (the act is not expected to be performed in the ordinary course of affairs);

d) propositional content conditions as the illocution's

consistency with the propositional content of the act, e.g. commissives refer to future actions of the Speaker, directives – to the Hearer' future acts.

Based on illocutionary acts' criteria and conditions of their appropriateness Searle [8] suggested his famous five membered taxonomy of illocutionary acts (also cited in [5, p. 240; 11, p. 53-54] including:

a) *assertives* intended to describe a state of affairs as in statement, description;

b) *directives* intended to get Hearer to perform some actions as in requests, orders, advices, etc.;

c) *commissives* containing the Speaker's commitment to perform some actions as in promises, oaths, etc.;

d) *expressives* intended to express the Speaker's attitudes and emotions as in greetings, thanks, sorrows, etc.;

e) *declaratives* intended to establish new status of the Hearer as in pronouncement of sentence, adjudication in bankruptcy or assignment to a position.

According to P. Brown and S. Levinson, there are four types of politeness strategies, i.e. bald on-record, negative politeness, positive politeness, and off-record (indirect).

The analysis of the data has shown that there are distinct correspondences between the type of politeness strategies and particular speech acts both from viewpoint of the latter functions and situational constraints.

Speech acts from viewpoint of Bald on-record and Off-record strategies.

1. **Directness and Bald on-record strategy.** According to G. P. Grice, Bald on-record strategies is direct, non-mitigated way of saying something by means of explicit directives which pay no 'attention to face' [2, p. 95] though are not perceived as face-threatening since they are applied in situations of a close relationship as in (1) and (2).

(1)   *"You ought to get back to your scholarly work"* [1, p. 242].

(2)   *A. "Are you with me?"*

B. "I'm listening, go on", said Herzog [1, p. 189].

In (1) the act of advice (directive) usually creating pressure on the hearer to either perform or not perform the act, does not require the face-redress since it addresses to the **significant other**. For the same reason, the unmitigated question in (1), despite its imposing 'direct question' form together with the negative assessment connotation toward the hearer's behavior, are not perceived as damaging, which is proved by the normal further cause of the dialogue.

According to Brown and Levinson [2, p. 94], bald on record strategy deals with Grice's Maxims [3] which reveals that to get the maximum advantage in communication, people should consider a general principle of rationality known as the cooperative principle [3, p. 45] governed by particular general rules or Maxims, grouped in four categories: Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner.

Besides the familiar environment, *Bald on-record strategy* might be influenced by an institutional constraints as in (…).

(3)   *Tell us why you decided to change your job?*

(4)   *Do you feel happy with your current salary?* [1, p. 67]

Asymmetrical relationships between social superior (boss) and inferiors (employee or an applicant for the position) determine the use of explicit directives and requests that by their definition threaten the hearer's negative face by restricting her or his freedom of action [2]. However, such acts are not perceived as threats to the face of a subordinate since he or she expect the appropriate patterns of communicative behavior, in a framework of institutional discourse (together with genres of instructions, orders, etc. which are also structured by Bald on-record directives).

Similar to explicit directives, requests and direct questions, Bald on-record strategy is realized by Declaratives. From the one hand, they establish a new status of the Hearer, thus restricting his / her freedom of choice. From the other hand, they are not appreciated as threats to Hearer's face having nothing 'personal' and being uttered by the authoritative subject on behalf of the institution embodied by him / her. Formulated in a socially / institutionally appropriate way Declaratives do not damage the Hearer's face and stand therefore for means of Bald on-record strategy.

Therefore, in institutional framework the *bald on-record* use of explicit directives, requests, declaratives and other speech acts expected to be face-threatening in other settings, correlate with these acts preparatory (Ability) condition, i.e. the Speaker's authority (his social status and roles) and speech's circumstances (institutional behavior rules) are appropriate for both the acts' successful performance and the lack of face-redress necessity.

The bald on-record strategy relies on different types of direct speech acts, which comply with the Maxims of cooperation due to their unmitigated directness, involving the clarity of expression, relevancy and unambiguity. Despite of their inherent face-damaging properties, directs speech acts lose these face-threatening potential and do not require face redressing actions in a framework of familiar or institutional settings where value of face is measured according to exaggerated proximity or constrained institutional distance.

2. **Indirectness and Bald off-record strategy.** In contract to the on-record strategy, the off-record strategy always focuses on face-redress when a hearer must infer an illocution implied by a speaker who thus avoids a direct imposition. When Searle [5] stated that ordinary conversational requirements of politeness prompt us to find indirect means to our illocutionary ends, he most probably meant off-record strategy as the strategy of conventional indirectness, triggered by indirect speech acts as in (5-6), in which the speaker intends to perform one speech act by means of performing another one. John Searle distinguishes between a primary illocutionary act (what the speaker means to communicate) and a secondary illocutionary act as the literal meaning of the utterance [9, p. 178].

(5)   *I've never tried sushi*

(6)   *Mature people sometimes help do the dishes*

In (5) a primary illocutionary act of directive (buy me suchi) is an off-record act intended to avoid a direct imposition on the speaker. In (6) over-generalization is used as a means of irony to implicate two possible primary illocutionary forces: (a) "you're not mature" and/or (b) "you should help me" – both of them realizing off-record strategy.

Based on Brown and Levinson [2, p. 211-227], off record might violate the whole maxims of Grice resulted in conversational implicatures as an implied or additional meaning caused by deliberate flouting a maxim in order to guide the addressee to recognize the speaker's intention. A process of inferring a conversational implicature involves its calculability based on the maxim' flouting with considering the cooperative principle, shared conventional (language) code, background knowledge and the linguistic context of usage (co-text) [3, p. 50].

Searle though not mentioning the flouting of maxims suggests the interpretation of illocution within Grician inferential model: "In indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and nonlinguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer" [9, p. 31-32].

Therefore, bald off-record strategy is primarily manifested by indirect speech acts which flout the Maxims of cooperation triggering the conversational implicatures. It follows that this politeness strategy relies on an implicit primary illocutionary meaning worked out by the rules of calculating the conversational implicature.

3. **Speech acts vis-a-vis Positive and Negative politeness.** Face-redressive actions or Face Saving Acts consist of positive politeness and negative politeness. Based on Brown and Levinson [2, p. 101-129], Positive Politeness is intended to satisfy hearer's positive face. It is a politeness of friendliness and proximity embodied by the concept of "interest" since it is connected with the manifestation of attention and interest to the Hearer. Positive politeness strategies, i.e. "Notice, attend to Hearer's interests, wants, needs, goods", 'Exaggerate interest, approval, sympathy with Hearer", "Intensify interest to Hearer", "Give gifts to Hearer: goods, under-standing, cooperation", etc. are undoubtedly beneficial to the Hearer thus bearing similarities to speech acts' beneficial conditions.

If compare the concepts of positive politeness and benefit felicity condition, we can see that expressives and commissives appear to be the most appropriate means of positive politeness because they are performed in Hearer's interest as in (1-2) (otherwise the speaker's emotions or commitment would not be valid):

(7)   *"I am very sorry about your grandfather's illness"*

(8)   *"I promise to talk about appointment to this position"*.

Assertives (Representatives) can be described in terms of both positive and negative politeness as in (7) which deals with satisfying the Hearer's negative face [2, p. 129-211] and the Speaker's concerns with respect behavior. It often refers to as the politeness of distancing, embodied by the concept of 'deference' whose pragmatic potential involves minimizing coercion and achieving distance between a speaker and a listener.

(9)   *My dear Luke, I really believe that brotherhood is what makes a man human"* [1, p. 333].

In (7) personal names, informal appeals, emphatic 'really' and transposed possessive noun (devoid of any grammatical meaning of possession and therefore loaded with positive evaluative connotations) are used as positive politeness markers while generalization and bookish words relate to negative politeness.

There is an evident correspondence between the markers of *psychological state (Sincerity conditions)* and positive or negative politeness means. The less *sincere speech act is* the more formal and, consequently, more "negatively" polite than in (8)

(10)   *I've got a short list of questions if you don't mind*.

And *vice versa,* the more *sincere speech act is* the less formal and, consequently, more 'positively' polite than in (7)

(11)   «*I'm glad to see you, pal*» [1, p. 112].

Here a colloquial word *pal* as positive politeness in-group identity marker intensifies the degree of the greeting' sincerity pertaining to positive politeness.

If a propositional content of any speech act explicates the threat to the Hearer's face it will stand for a face-threatening act and require mitigating negative politeness markers. For example, instead of explicitly directive *"Don't do it"* (addressed to a particular child) we often prefer to use *"Good children do not do that"* that involves generalization and impersonalization to establish coercion as the general rule. Because of such transformation, we obtain an indirect speech act. Its literal sentence meaning or in terms of pragmatics, secondary illocutionary meaning is an assertion about the norms of Good *children's behavior* while the primary illocutionary meaning (which is a speaker's utterance meaning) is deduced as directive (order).

Negative politeness may also be achieved by direct speech acts complicated with mitigation means. An explicit commissive *"I promise to punish you"* will with great probability be transformed either into (a) *"You will be punished"* or into (b) *"If you continue to behave this way, I promise to punish you"*. In both cases, it will implement negative politeness restoring the Hearer's face. In (a) negative politeness relies on passive voice to impersonalize statements, i. e, to remove the speaker 'outside' the utterance, mitigating the degree of his / her 'threat'. In (b) threat mitigation is achieved by intro-ducing the complex sentence with conditional clause, which explains and thus minimizes coercion providing the listener the opportunity of alternate reactions.

Conclusion. The main goal of the paper has been to reveal multifacet relations between politeness strategies and speech acts in a framework of directness / indi-rectness correlations with face threat, face saving and face-redress.

To achieve the objective, we relied on speech acts' theory, Brown & Levinson's politeness theory and Grice's concept of conversational implicature while applying descriptive qualitative approach consisting of the data classifying, describing, comparing and consolidating. We analyzed speech acts from *viewpoint of Bald on-record, Bald Off-record, positive and negative politeness strategies and,* vise versa, *the aforementioned strategies* have been identified in the light of illocutionary acts, their constitutive rules, triggers and felicity conditions.

We argued that bald on-record strategy relies explicit directives; requests, declaratives and other speech potentially face threatening acts that are perceived as such in familiar or institutional settings where value of face is adopted to exaggerated proximity or constrained

institutional distance. Bald on-record strategy complies with preparatory (Ability) condition of its manifesting speech acts justifying the lack of face-redress necessity as well as with the Maxims of cooperation.

As distinct from the bald on-record strategy, bald off-record strategy relies on indirect speech acts. Such acts' primary illocutionary meanings may coincide with conversational implicatures since both of them are triggered by the flouting of the cooperation Maxims.

We identified specific correlations between the positive politeness based on manifestation of attention and interest to the Hearer, and speech acts expressives and commissives, which distinguished to be the most appropriate means of such politeness due to their benefit felicity condition, focused on the acts' performance in the Hearer's interest.

Negative politeness as the politeness of distancing embodied by the concept of "deference" is achieved by both indirect and direct speech acts – the latters mitigated by generalization, passivation, conditionals and other means of impersonalization to minimize coercion and achieve distance between a speaker and a listener.

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Стратегии вежливости в ракурсе теории речевых актов и конверсационных импликатур
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Аннотация. Вежливость используется коммуникантами с целью сохранения «лица» или, в широком смысле, для конструирования собственной идентичности. Стратегии вежливости и речевые акты являются средством и, одновременно, результатом социализации индивидов, поэтому изучение их многоаспектных корреляций вносит определенный вклад как в теорию сохранения лица, так и в теории формирования идентичностей. Вместе с тем, весь спектр взаимосвязей между речевыми актами и вежливостью установлен далеко не в полной мере. Данная статья исследует стратегии вежливости в ракурсе критериев, триггеров и условий успешности иллокутивных актов. В статье решаются три главные задачи: во-первых, определяются корреляции между стратегиями вежливости и типами речевых актов, наиболее характерными для их реализации; во-вторых, выявляется корреляция между видами угрозы лицу, сохранения и восстановления лица и категориями «прямолинейность / косвенность»; в-третьих, доказывается, что стратегии, восстанавливающие лицо, реализуются посредством непрямых актов, первичный иллокутивный смысл которых, восстанавливается по правилам извлечения конверсационной импликатуры.

Ключевые слова: речевые акты, стратегии вежливости, прямолинейность / косвенность, конверсационные импликатуры.