

**Mustafayeva U. A.**

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1112-7865>

Baku Slavic University

## THE CATEGORY OF POLITENESS IN MODERN LINGUISTICS: BASIC APPROACHES AND CONCEPTS

*This article examines the category of politeness as one of the most important communicative-pragmatic categories of the modern English language. It examines the main trends and approaches to its study in modern linguistics, including classical theories of politeness, cognitive, pragmatic, and discursive approaches. It substantiates the relevance of addressing this issue in the context of increasing international contacts, the development of intercultural communication, and the expanding use of the English language in the global information space.*

*It is determined that the category of politeness is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon located at the intersection of linguistics, cultural studies, sociology, psychology, and communication theory. The main functions of politeness in verbal interaction are identified, aimed at maintaining social harmony, regulating interpersonal relationships, and preventing communicative conflicts. Various methods of linguistic representation of politeness at the lexical, grammatical, and discursive levels of the English language are examined. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of speech strategies and tactics used by native speakers to express respect, tact, goodwill, and adherence to speech etiquette.*

*The views of leading researchers on the nature and essence of the category of politeness are analyzed. It is demonstrated that modern research increasingly views politeness not only as a set of linguistic formulas and etiquette expressions, but also as a dynamic system of communicative behavior dependent on social, cultural, and situational context. It is demonstrated that the success of intercultural communication is largely determined by the degree of mastery of polite speech strategies and the ability to consider the national and cultural characteristics of communicants. It is concluded that the category of politeness is an important element of the linguistic worldview and serves as an effective means of organizing constructive communication in modern society.*

**Keywords:** English language, politeness as a linguistic category, cognition, international contacts, speech, etiquette, classical theories, discursive approach, communication strategy.

**Introduction.** Humanity has passed the midpoint of the second decade of the 21st century, and linguistics, in its natural progress, is enriching itself with new information. In fact, it is readily apparent that cognitive linguistics is an extremely broad field of various scientific disciplines. Individual topics have branched off from it. One of these is the “category of politeness”, which serves as one fragment of the overall linguistic picture of the universe. It turns out that the interest of scholars, including Azerbaijani linguists, in this issue remains unabated. The author of this article modestly aims to examine in more depth some of what we believe to be the most significant features, properties, and uses of this category in various types of texts, using modern English as an example.

Only at a cursory glance might it seem that this problem is purely linguistic. Naturally, we plan to

focus on this issue. Nevertheless, it also concerns writers, historians, and cultural scholars. The latter in particular, because politeness is also an ethical issue, therefore affecting human relationships, intercultural aspects of communication, as well as the ways of organizing and conducting intercultural dialogue. This is precisely the case where linguistics intersects with culture.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Many linguists have considered this topic. Among them are authors such as Fraser B. [5], Ide S. [8], Lakoff R. [9], Haugh M. [7] and etcs. We believe that a brief historical overview is essential in analyzing this issue. As far as we can tell, the concept was first introduced into scholarly circulation by R. Lakoff in the 1970s. Some of his fundamental ideas were further developed by S. Levinson [2], M. Locher, R.L. Watts [10] and



others. They were the ones who actively developed the category of politeness, primarily using modern English as an example. However, despite a considerable number of specialized works, there is still no consensus among linguists.

It is natural to assume that, in order to provide evidence, the analysis of this category urgently required the introduction of various approaches and models/schemes for a more thorough study of this topic. The English language objectively provided abundant information for this. It is not surprising that anthropologists, ethnographers, psychologists, sociologists, and others also joined the scholars we mentioned. The reasons for this were sound, as this category was analyzed exclusively at an interdisciplinary level. It is understandable and logical, taking into account the aforementioned sciences.

P. Brown and S. Levinson once proposed identifying certain areas to lend weight and credibility to the concepts they put forward. For example, "The social norm view" in its individual propositions harmoniously reunites with the "Conversational view". Since politeness itself ideally presupposes a subject who is able to "save face" in their etiquette, one of the areas in modern cognitive linguistics has received the corresponding name: "The face-saving view" (and in related terminology, "Face-management view"). Furthermore, politeness as such fundamentally contains elements of communication. Hence the concept of "The conversational view" or "Contract view" [2].

**Task statement.** The purpose of the research is to analyze the category of politeness as one of the most important communicative and pragmatic categories of modern English, as well as to consider the main theoretical approaches and concepts of its study in modern linguistics. Special attention is paid to identifying the linguistic means of implementing politeness, its cognitive, cultural and discursive characteristics, as well as the role of this category in the process of interpersonal and intercultural communication.

**Outline of the main material of the study.** Summarizing the data from these approaches (concepts, approaches), we believe the following picture emerges: virtually each of the listed approaches, according to P. Brown and S. Levinson, has the right to exist independently. At the same time, they demonstrate a certain degree of dynamism, which once again emphasizes their social roots. Ultimately, the reasoning of these scholars, using English as a basis, took shape as a more or less coherent theory of politeness. We did not specify, as coherent (or rigorous) only to a certain extent. The essence of the matter is that P. Brown and S. Levinson persisted in their subjective

views on the universality of the model/scheme they introduced. And such categorical judgments naturally led to complex and sometimes controversial debates in the scientific community. Above all, linguists believed it would be reasonable to introduce additional and simultaneously clarifying formulas or concepts for each of P. Brown and S. Levinson's proposed concepts. And this is fundamentally true, because the "horizons of politeness" in modern English are vast, and it would be unfair to squeeze one (even a general) specific model or schema into a narrow "Procrustean bed".

Furthermore, not everything, of course, should be credited to politeness itself; anything that falls outside the bounds of this etiquette should be attributed to the "other side of the coin", that is, impoliteness, rudeness of interlocutors, abruptness of communicators, and so on. Therefore, the polar semantics of the category of politeness are symptomatically opposed to impoliteness. It was this term that P. Brown and S. Levinson did not consider in their system. Consequently, it is appropriate to point out the rather broad spectrum of the category under study, which varies in its connotations from tact, approval, respect, and deference to rudeness, open aggression, disregard for personality, and arrogance. The range of assessments, as we can see, is colossal.

In line with the manifested idea, the polarity of these assessments acquires considerable significance. They can be used in linguistic texts of various types with both positive and negative connotations. The correct distribution of the category of politeness, of course, depends on this. A valuable thought on this matter is expressed by G. Udalikh, a professor at Baku Slavic University. She, in particular, believes that the lexemes "polite", "kind", or "noble" genetically ascend to elevated vocabulary and therefore potentially possess positive semantics. However, if specific words from this category are used in degraded contexts, they automatically acquire a negative connotation, also becoming a means of emotional expression. Hence, according to G. Udalikh, the following conclusion follows: "The qualifying functions of the category of politeness involuntarily dominate such linguistic means of naming as those directly and immediately belonging to a person, inherent to him, endowed with politeness and nobility, respectively, and simultaneously" [12, pp. 12-13].

In a similar vein, some linguists have also expressed a curious idea. They believe that even the most polite phrase in modern English can, under certain circumstances, be interpreted as mockery, irony, or sarcasm [3; 4]. Let's take this decidedly unconventional idea

further. In a given discourse, politeness, in our view, should be considered in a specific context, taking into account the interlocutor's personal perception of the phrase/sentence. This establishes a kind of unspoken mutual communication. M. Locher and R. Watts have dubbed this interesting effect "relational work", emphasizing the interpersonal connections between people. These connections encompass a wide range of the aforementioned behaviors of interlocutors – from direct and immediate aggression to respect and deference [10].

We've presented theories that are traditionally considered classical in cognitive linguistics. However, there's also an opposing approach, called discourse. Its developers and popularizers, respectively, are scholars from another group. Their numbers are far greater, so we deem it unnecessary to list their names. More important is the essence of both the differences with the "classical" theories and the division based on a different principle (compared to the one outlined). Specifically, two types (or ideologies) of politeness are identified in modern English.

The first group is called "Politeness One". By this, researchers understand the "category of politeness" in the most mundane, everyday sense of the word. For example, common greetings sound like "Hello, sir!" Expressing gratitude and joy, it's "Nice (or glad) to meet (to see) you!" And when wanting to know about health, business, etc., it's "How are you!" It's typical that these kinds of polite expressions are used in so-called "equally social" situations. In contrast (but also within the framework of Politeness One), there are "not equally social" situations. These include such completely common and everyday expressions as "Good morning!", "Good afternoon!", "Good evening!", and finally, "Good night". A common and textbook greeting also sounds like this: "Welcome!"

Along the same lines, the boundaries of "Politeness One" include the distinctions between the pronouns "you" (singular) and "you" (plural). This distinction is so commonplace that it retains its validity in many languages, such as Azerbaijan (sən/siz). However, English has historically had a definition for this in the form of the pronoun "you". True, "thou" is also used to express politeness, but not only linguists but also philologists and cultural scholars have established this fact, primarily in relation to the Bible and poetic texts.

At the very beginning of our article, we noted the connection between the category in question and etiquette. And if we discuss its norms, we will point out the role of address as a factor in communication and the establishment of communicative control between

people. Some foreign linguists point to the dynamics of the category of politeness in the development of communication. According to them, the so-called "etiquette framework" plays a certain role here. It is based on the English form of address, which is used both in a normal greeting and when saying goodbye. Researchers further demonstrate that this category's arsenal includes requests, apologies, regrets, gratitude, and so on.

For example, within the "Politeness One" category, the lexeme "Madam" in Europe and the West denotes the politeness of men toward women. "Sir" is used toward men, but with a certain age gradation. The address "sir" should imply the older age of the interlocutor, as well as rank and social status. It has been proven that in modern Britain, the word "sir" is sometimes used toward soldiers, but most often toward officers. It is less frequently used toward schoolchildren, but teachers, of course, deserve greater respect. The evolution of British attitudes is revealing. Thus, in the 19th century, the vast fraternity of inexpensive buyers or sellers, waitresses, or ordinary customers of cafes and restaurants were treated with a certain degree of disdain. The category of politeness here suffered, to a certain extent, for purely social reasons; political factors prevailed. But by the 20th century, such discrimination naturally disappeared. These segments of the English population began to be treated with consistently greater respect.

For example: – "Good day! I need a double room for two nights.

– Yes, sir. Give me your passport, sir".

An illustrative example can also be found in fiction. For example, in B. Shaw's well-known play "Pygmalion", the main characters – Professor Higgins and his friend (and partner) Colonel Pickering – treat the humble flower girl Eliza Doolittle with irony. Neither of them utters the words "Madam" or "Mademoiselle", as they consider such addressing of "commoners" beneath them in Britain [11]. But as the experiment progresses (Higgins teaches the girl proper speech and chivalrous manners), she is addressed with greater politeness and courtesy.

Additionally, "Sir" or "Madam" were, for a very long time in England, the exclusive forms of address for unknown persons. The norms of English "politeness" require that the postposition of "Mr" and "Mrs" be preceded by a surname. If this term isn't found in either the text or in everyday speech, then there's no "politeness category" to speak of, as the phrase sounds unethical (and, for a conservative and prudish nation, downright vulgar). There's even a clear division of linguistic and cultural functions. In the UK, "Miss"

is always used to address an unmarried woman. As for addressing close relatives, the diminutive form is most often used (again, mostly within the boundaries of “Politeness One”). Thus, in England, grandmothers are typically addressed very politely: “Grandmother”, “Grandma”, “Nanny” (analogous to the Azerbaijani “nənə”), or, even more simply, “Gran”.

It's time to say a few words in our article about the functions of the “politeness category” within “Politeness Two”. Here, a clearer distinction is made between the concepts of “politeness” and “impoliteness”. In classical theory of modern English, this has even received a specific name: “The common-sense notion of politeness two”. This concept encompasses specialized politeness standards designed to evaluate a communicant's speech production not in everyday but in everyday communication, including in official workplaces, such as organizations, enterprises, and so on.

Politeness no 2 is a scientific and theoretically grounded understanding and perception of this category within the field of knowledge that delineates the nature and simultaneously describes the algorithms of politeness. Modern linguists also include here the principles and linguistic tools that help regulate communication in the workplace. It's easy to see that the scope of politeness no 2 is broader and more expansive than no 1, as it interprets the concept we're analyzing not only at the everyday level (where, as we've noted, degraded contexts can also figure, not to mention profanity), but primarily in the theoretical innovations of researchers. We could also say this: Politeness no 2 functions in interpersonal communication, organically expanding the polar poles of this category in English to communicative competence.

Let's clarify. When characterizing politeness no 1, scholars most often limit themselves to assessing the speaker's behavior and words. Figuratively speaking, this aspect is the final point. But let's consider whether linguistic analysis should stop there. Of course not, because the speaker's direct addressee is the listener, who, in turn, also evaluates the speaker's behavior and interprets the speaker's position regarding their polite or impolite address.

Following this approach, we come to the conclusion that this category, number 2, is complicated by both social and cultural factors, as it presupposes a particular communication environment. Values can be varied, constant and stable on the one hand, and fickle and therefore unstable on the other. This determines the listener's degree of politeness.

It should be noted that for the gradation of “politeness no 2”, the English language has historically retained a considerable number of clichés for the

characteristic we need. These are used by both the speaker and the listener as various forms of congratulations, greetings, expressions of gratitude, refusals, reflections, farewell scenes, assessments of fateful decisions, apologies, and so on. Characteristic of “Politeness Two” is that it (the characteristic) combines the main characteristics of both interlocutors. Consequently, English speakers are quite capable of using these individual lexemes or expressions in various speech flows, situations, and circumstances. In fiction, much depends on context.

For example, the listener mentally and associatively grades the degree of politeness in an apology. So, “Sorry”. Most likely thrown out in passing, in passing. The listener might interpret this as a simple dismissal of some action or misdeed. “I am sorry”. It seems like a minor detail, used by a speaker in an extremely limited linguistic space. But the listener may interpret it differently. The addition of a pronoun adds greater politeness to the overall expression. Further down the chain: “Excuse me” and “Forgive me”.

Note this nuance. “Excuse me” is usually preceded by a pause. Ideally, it is intended to interrupt the speaker's words. This expression of polite apology from the speaker contains a hint of a request for help. For example: “Excuse me, would you mind if I wide opened the window? Close to it in meaning “I am sorry”: “... never meant to hurt you”. Or in a more neutral sense: “Sorry that all this happened”. Note that, unlike the two expressions above, “Forgive me” does not contain a request for help, but has a distinctly emotional (or emotive) connotation. This expression is used by the speaker to express sincere regret, and in some cases, perhaps even remorse: “I am really sorry, would you ever forgive me”. We deliberately included the word “really” because, in our opinion, it adds an even deeper politeness to the entire utterance. It is no coincidence that English speakers often add “very” or “so” to this lexeme, which translates as the adverb “really”.

They enhance the degree of politeness within the framework of “Politeness two”. It is clear that these apologies indicate a positive outcome, regardless of whether the speaker is asking for help or not. But if we replace “really”, “so”, or “very” with words like “dreadfully”, “terribly”, or “awfully”, they take on a rather unusual, or rather paradoxical, role as evidence of increased politeness. What is this? These adjectives, by themselves, clearly carry a negative connotation, but when combined with the expression “I am terribly sorry,” they acquire a positive connotation. One of the paradoxes of the politeness category offers food for thought for future research in this linguistic field.

**Conclusions.** To be fair, it should be noted that the chosen topic has previously been the subject of a dedicated study. Our goal was to carefully utilize those words and expressions in this category that have received less attention from modern linguists. To this end, we first classified individual lexemes and, second, selected those most commonly used in modern English. Ultimately, the model's parameters took their natural and logical place. The principles relied on by researchers of various eras were also identified. Several approaches and directions in studying this category in modern English were identified.

We attempted to identify both their clear advantages and shortcomings. This prompted us to compare the opinions of researchers with different perspectives through scholarly debates. The essence of the scholarly debates in our own conclusions and generalizations primarily consisted of introducing certain adjustments, additions, clarifications, and explanations to each concept. All of these are named and subjected to critical analysis. The final part of the article was devoted to the main features that characterize "Politeness one" and "Politeness two".

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#### Мустафаєва У. А. КАТЕГОРІЯ ВВІЧЛИВОСТІ В СУЧАСНІЙ ЛІНГВІСТИЦІ: ОСНОВНІ ПІДХОДИ ТА ПОНЯТТЯ (НА МАТЕРІАЛІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ)

У статті розглядається категорія ввічливості як одна з найважливіших комунікативно-прагматичних категорій сучасної англійської мови. Розглянуто основні тенденції та підходи до її вивчення в сучасній лінгвістиці, включаючи класичні теорії ввічливості, когнітивний, прагматичний та дискурсивний підходи. Обґрунтовано актуальність вирішення цієї проблеми в контексті зростання міжнародних контактів, розвитку міжкультурної комунікації та розширення використання англійської мови в глобальному інформаційному просторі.

Визначено, що категорія ввічливості – це складне, багатогранне явище, що знаходиться на перетині лінгвістики, культурології, соціології, психології та теорії комунікації. Визначено основні функції ввічливості у вербальній взаємодії, спрямовані на підтримку соціальної гармонії, регулювання міжособистісних стосунків та запобігання комунікативним конфліктам. Розглянуто різні способи лінгвістичної репрезентації ввічливості на лексичному, граматичному та дискурсивному рівнях англійської мови. Особлива увага приділяється аналізу мовленнєвих стратегій і тактик, що використовуються носіями мови для вираження поваги, такту, доброзичливості та дотримання мовленнєвого етикету.

Проаналізовано погляди провідних дослідників на природу та сутність категорії ввічливості. Показано, що сучасні дослідження все частіше розглядають ввічливість не лише як сукупність лінгвістичних формул та етикетних виразів, а й як динамічну систему комунікативної поведінки, залежну від соціального, культурного та ситуативного контексту. Показано, що успіх міжкультурної комунікації значною мірою визначається ступенем володіння стратегіями ввічливого мовлення та здатністю враховувати національні та культурні особливості комунікантів. Зроблено висновок, що категорія ввічливості є важливим елементом лінгвістичного світогляду та слугує ефективним засобом організації конструктивної комунікації в сучасному суспільстві.

**Ключові слова:** англійська мова, ввічливість як лінгвістична категорія, пізнання, міжнародні контакти, мовлення, етикет, класичні теорії, дискурсивний підхід, комунікаційна стратегія.

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