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## **POLITENESS AND RUDENESS IN EVERYDAY**

### **SPEECH**

**Abstract:** Although it might seem that politeness and rudeness are simple and ordinary concepts, in the field of linguistics these concepts are very complex. The precise definition and role of politeness or rudeness in discourse is still a controversial, debated topic, but different theories have provided new ways for examination not only how but also why politeness/rudeness is embodied within discourse. This paper outlines some of those theories and theorists who have made contributions to the development of politeness and rudeness and their role in society and everyday discourse.

**Keywords:** Im/politeness, Brown and Levinson, Leech, Watts, Culpeper, Social Im/politeneses

### **INTRODUCTION**

Due to different perspectives, people define politeness and rudeness differently. The most basic idea is that politeness and rudeness are expressions used during a conversation which are

considered to be *'polite'* or *'rude'* to participants of the conversation. One can easily agree that those terms are related to language usage in a form of formulaic utterances like *'please'*, *'thank you'*, *'excuse me'*, etc.

Watts states that when people are asked what they imagine polite behavior to be, there is a surprising amount of disagreement. (Watts, 2003, p. 1) Except having the ability to assess what constitutes polite or impolite behavior, people very often have tendency to give opinion, evaluate and to classify someone's behavior as *'respectful'*, *'courteous'*, *'rude'*, *'disrespectful'*, *'inconsiderate'*, etc. That kind of assessment depends on personal perception of polite or rude behavior and even on social interaction, and in that manner it can vary quite considerably. According to different dictionaries politeness and rudeness are concepts indeed related to behavior more than to language. For example, politeness is defined as *"having or showing good manners or respect for other people"* (Merriam Webster Dictionary, n.d.), while rudeness is *"discourteousness"*, *"lack of manners"* and *"lack of respect for other people and their feelings"*. (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.)

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Many theorists tried to develop a framework of analysis for politeness. "Linguists, psychologists, sociologists, neuroscientists, and philologists, among others have been keen to unlock its secrets, each from their own perspective." (Terkourafi, 2015, p. 8) They focused less on politeness enclosed in utterances and more on politeness as an assumption and cooperation of participants within the conversation.

"Perhaps more than any other area of language study, im/politeness research lies at the intersection of several disciplines." (Terkourafi, 2015, p. 8) According to the same author "this has

been both a blessing and a curse for im/politeness studies.” (Terkoourafi, 2015, p. 8) She presented two reasons why cross-disciplinary interest is a curse: first of them being that cross-disciplinary interest in the topic could easily muddle both definitions and meaning of im/politeness and also the object of investigation, and the second problem is that those studies reach only corresponding audiences and journals, not beyond.

Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, Richard Watts and Geoffrey Leech were some of the earliest linguists to study politeness. Following their work many other theorists have either built on their ideas and principles or tried to disprove them. Jonathan Culpeper is one of those, he built his approach on Brown and Levinson’s theory, but he was concerned with rudeness more than politeness. He considers it, as an area of discourse, much neglected, and to him “in some circumstances impoliteness plays a key role, not a marginal one.” (Culpeper, *Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness*, 1996, p. 366)

The base for this paper are two books, Watts’s *Politeness* and Leech’s *Pragmatics of Politeness*. Latter interprets the way language is used for politeness, while the first one focuses on society and social behavior in relation to politeness. As far as rudeness is concerned, that part of paper is based on few articles written by Jonathan Culpeper. Focus of the paper is just on English language.

### **MODELLING ‘IM/POLITENESS’**

This particular form ‘*im/politeness*’ is used by many theorists and it means ‘*politeness and impoliteness*’. In this paper it is used just as a condensed form. It definitely does not mean that there are only two alternative options or two polar opposites. Culpeper proposes a scale varying from politeness to impoliteness, allowing

a middle range behavior (neither polite nor impolite) differently addressed in the literature, for example: *mock impoliteness*, *non-polite*, etc. (Culpeper, The “How” and the “What” of (Im)politeness, 2015, p. 270)

Politeness is generally considered to be a good thing, but it does not have to be necessarily. It is very often recognized by members of society as a “sense of what is normal”. (Leech, 2014, p. 5) In that way it is expected and it represents how people ‘normally’ should react in a particular occasion. Only participants of specific communities of practice are competent to judge whether a language used around them is polite or not. In order to do so, they should be familiar with the basic characteristics of the matter.

The rest of this chapter introduces the communication process and some of the most important and vital contributions for many researches in this field: Goffman’s concept of *‘face’* and Grice’s Cooperative Principle.

### **The Communication Process**

“Communication can be defined as the process by which humans attempt to share thoughts, attitudes, and feelings with one another.” (Tedford, 1991, p. 56) There are at least seven components that have been identified as important for the process of communication.

According to Tedford the communication process can be briefly described as follows: The (1) *source* of the message is an individual or a group who communicates the (2) *message* (information) to be communicated through the (3) *channel* (sound waves, newspapers, books, telephone, etc.) that carry the message from the source to the (4) *receiver*. Receiver can also be an individual or a group of people. (5) *Feedback* is the response to message and source, and it is made by receiver of the message. (6) *Interference*

is anything that distracts the process of communication. The (7) *situation* is the context in which the communication process occurs. (Tedford, 1991, p. 57)

This process is important for the paper because in order for politeness or rudeness to occur it has to be communicated. The components listed as (1), (4), (5), and (7) will be mentioned later but otherwise called *the speaker, the hearer, interaction and the context*.

### **The concept of ‘FACE’**

Indirect contribution to the research of politeness consists of three significant concepts developed by sociologist Erving Goffman; concept of ‘*face*’, ‘*line*’ and ‘*facework*’. Goffman suggested that sociology of his time overstressed the research of social practices and ignored the role of the individual in those practices. According to him the origin of the ‘*face*’ is in the ‘*line*’ others assume a person has taken. His work focused on micro level of human interaction, specifically on what is said and done by the individuals involved in the social interaction. Watts explains Goffman’s approach as following:

“‘*Face*’, therefore, is precisely the conceptualization each of us makes of our ‘self’ through the construals of others in social interaction and particularly in verbal interaction, i.e. through talk. ‘*Line*’ is defined as ‘a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself’. [...] However, if face is the ‘condition of interaction, not its objective’, it is equally clear that we have an obligation to maintain the faces of the other participants in the interaction. [...] From this we can derive Goffman’s term ‘*facework*’, which is defined by him as ‘the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face. Face work serves to counteract “incidents” – that is, events whose effective symbolic implications threaten face.’ (Watts, 2003, pp. 124-5)

Individual *'face'* and *'the face'* of the others are constructs of the same group or society, and however important it might seem for an individual, it is borrowed from the society just for the duration of the interaction according to the lines that all participants of the interaction adopted. Any disapproval of other participants in the interaction might have face withdrawal as a result.

“Central to many of the classic and postmodern approaches to politeness and impoliteness is the concept of ‘face’. (Bousfield, 2008, p. 33) The notion is the base for Brown and Levinson’s approach to politeness, as well as for Culpeper’s approach to impoliteness (both will be presented in the following chapters).

### **The Cooperative Principle**

Goffman’s approach focused on the role of the speaker in the interaction but for philosopher H. Paul Grice the hearer was in the theoretical focus as very important factor in the process of inducing meaning. Grice offered two levels of meaning in utterances represented by: the semantics of the language in which the utterance is made, and speaker’s intention in making it (intention is very important component of the conversation that gives function to im/politeness). He offered the Cooperative Principle (presented in Table 1) divided into four maxims, as follows:

Grice’s Cooperative Principle	Maxim of Quantity	Keep your contributions as informative as required
		Keep your contributions not more informative than required
	Maxim of Quality	Say what you believe to be true
		Say that for which you have adequate evidence
	Maxim of Relation	Be relevant to the purposes of the conversation
	Maxim of Manner	Avoid obscurity
		Avoid ambiguity
		Avoid unnecessary verbosity
Be orderly		

*Table 1. Grice’s Cooperative Principle for conversation (1975)*

Grice's Cooperative Principle (hereafter shortened to CP) consists of "a limited set of conversational maxims to which, Grice maintains, interactants in a conversational exchange should, but frequently do not adhere." (Watts, 2003, p. 57) Grice's CP is fundamental to many traditional approaches to politeness.

## THEORISING ABOUT POLITENESS

This chapter introduces three different theories of politeness. The chapter consists out of three sections and each is entitled after the author or authors of the theory it represents.

### **Brown and Levinson**

Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson developed a theory of politeness based on Goffman's concept of *'face'* and extended it upon Grice's model of CP. The theory is often referred as *'face-saving theory of politeness'*. They stressed that *'face'* consists of *'wants'* but sometimes they confused it with Goffman's notion of it as *'an image of self'*. Brown and Levinson subdivided *'face'* into two parts, summarized as follows:

1. *Negative face* (the want of every 'competent adult member' that his/her actions are unimpeded by others);
2. *Positive face* (the want of every member that his/her wants are desirable to at least some others). (Bousfield, 2008, p. 34)

The face must be constantly observed during a conversation because it is vulnerable. It can be lost, maintained or enhanced during a conversation. Participants of the conversation should be able to *'save face'* when they are confronted with a *'face-threatening act'* (hereafter shortened to FTA or FTAs for plural). There are four groups of potential FTAs proposed by Brown and Levinson,

they are divided into two groups whether they are threat to the audience (usually the hearer) or to speaker, and each of them is further divided into two groups depending on whether they are threat to positive or negative face of the audience/the hearer (presented in Table 2).

Face Threatening Acts	Threat to Audience	Negative face	Ordering, advising, threatening, warning...
		Positive face	Complaining, criticizing, disagreeing, raising taboo topics...
	Threat to Speaker	Negative face	Accepting an offer, accepting thanks, promising...
		Positive face	Apologizing, accepting compliments and confessing...

*Table 2. Face threatening acts (FTAs) in Brown and Levinson model (1987)*

Politeness is a form of strategic behavior, which the speaker engages in, “weighing up the potential threat to the hearer, the degree of familiarity with the hearer, the power relation between them and modifying the utterance accordingly.” (Mills, 2003, p. 59) Brown and Levinson proposed two possible outcomes, and the second one consists of four strategies that can be used to deal with FTAs:

1. *Do not do the FTA* (withhold);
2. *Do the FTA* (includes following strategies):
  - α) *Bald on record politeness*: the FTA is performed “in the most direct, clear, ambiguous and concise way possible”. (Brown and Levinson (1987) in Culpeper, Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness, 1996, p. 356) This strategy is usually used in situations where people know each other well or in urgent situations. The maintenance of the audiences face is not a priority or main goal of conversation. This strategy does not try to preserve face, but as the most direct the biggest risk is

that it can be used to threaten face if it is taken out of context;

- (1) *Watch out!* (used when someone is in danger);
- (2) *Eat your peas! You're not getting anything else John.* (mother says to a child);
- (3) *Give me a lift to the station.* (what someone in a hurry says to a friend);

β) *Positive politeness*: This strategy tries to minimize the threat to the audience's positive face. Some of the ways for doing that are: interest in the audience's needs, invoking equality and feelings of belonging to the group, avoiding disagreement, using humor, optimism, making offers and promises;

- (4) *Have a drink with me tomorrow, I have to talk to someone.* (offers goods);
- (5) *It would be kind of you to give me a lift to work.* (boosting hearer's positive face);
- (6) *Oh Margaret, you're just the person I wanted to see, I need few minutes with you alone.* (offers interest and sympathy towards hearer);

χ) *Negative politeness*: This strategy tries to minimize threats to the audience's negative face. Some examples of negative politeness would be used when the speaker requires something from the audience, but wants to maintain the audience's options, hearer can accept or refuse the request. This can be done by using questions or hedges, being indirect, minimizing imposition and apologizing;

- (7) *Could you possibly help me with this?* (minimizing imposition);
- (8) *I'm sorry for interrupting but ...* (apologizing);
- (9) *Could you tell me the time, please?* (being indirect);

δ) *Off record politeness*: This strategy is the least threatening. The speaker does not impose on the hearer, and therefore he/she avoids all threats. It is indirect

and it often requires the hearer to interpret what the speaker is actually saying;

- (10) Oh no, I'm late for my meeting again. *Are you driving near my job by any chance?* (hearer is expected to offer a lift);
- (11) You're so good at solving computer problems Mark, *if only someone like you could fix my operating system.* (hearer is expected to offer some help).

Positive and negative politeness break down into a great choice of strategies, from which Brown and Levinson are offering fifteen positive and ten negative (some of them are already mentioned in examples) but undoubtedly it is an open-ended list and there is more to it. This model explains how individuals produce linguistic politeness and in that manner it can be seen as a production model.

### **Geoffrey Leech**

Geoffrey Leech's theory approaches politeness from a more pragmatic perspective. In his work, pragmatics, as the study of language use and its meaning (to the participants in the conversation) is seen in terms of two pragmatic systems: *pragmalinguistics* and *sociopragmatics*. *Pragmalinguistics* lies on the boundary between pragmatic and linguistic form and it accounts for the more linguistics application of politeness. It includes the speakers' intentions and illocutionary acts. *Sociopragmatics* lies between pragmatics and society and refers to how the speaker wants to be perceived socially.

The approach that Leech takes to the study of general pragmatics is "*rhetorical*", and he introduces two systems of rhetoric:

1. *Textual rhetoric* (consists of the following principles: the Processibility Principle, the Clarity Principle, the Economy

Principle and the Expressivity Principle);

2. *Interpersonal rhetoric* (consists of the following principles: the Cooperative Principle, the Politeness Principle and the Irony Principle). (Watts, 2003, p. 64)

The Politeness Principle (hereafter shortened to PP) has a purpose to initiate and preserve feelings of consideration within the social group. It allows participants to believe that their contributions to the conversation are constructive and accepted. “The central concept in Leech’s model is that of cost-benefit scale of politeness related to both the speaker and the hearer.” (Watts, 2003, p. 66) The PP consists out of six maxims related to the notion of cost and benefit to the speaker (self) or to the hearer (other) and is presented in Table 3 below.

	Constraint:	Pos-politeness:	Neg-politeness:
Politeness maxims	The Tact Maxim	Minimize cost to other;	Maximize benefit to other;
	The Generosity Maxim	Minimize benefit to self;	Maximize cost to self;
	The Approbation Maxim	Minimize dispraise of other;	Maximize praise of other;
	The Modesty Maxim	Minimize praise of self;	Maximize dispraise of other;
	The Agreement Maxim	Minimize disagreement between self and other;	Maximize agreement between self and other;
	The Sympathy Maxim	Minimize antipathy between self and other;	Maximize sympathy between self and other.

*Table 3. The Politeness Principle maxims and cost-benefit scale of politeness*

The following part of this section presents examples for all of Leech’s maxims and after every example there is an explanation that states which strategy (minimization or maximization) is used what is the illocutionary function of the utterance:

*(12) You know, I really do think you ought to sell that old car.*

It's costing more and more money on repairs and it uses up far too much fuel.

Example (12) illustrates the Tact Maxim for the illocutionary function of advising. In the first sentence speaker minimizes the cost of other, and in the second one maximizes the benefit of other proposing that the car should be sold. Except advising the Tact maxim covers illocutionary functions of ordering, requesting, commanding, advising, recommending, promising, vowing, offering, etc.

(13) *It's none of my business really*, but you look so much nicer in the green hat than in the pink one. If I were you, I'd buy that one.

Example (13) illustrates the Generosity maxim for the illocutionary function of recommending. In the first part of the sentence speaker minimizes benefit to self. Illocutionary functions for this maxim are the same as in previous.

(14) Dear Aunt Marbel, I want to thank you so much for the superb Christmas present this year. *It was so very thoughtful of you.*

(15) I wonder if you could keep the noise from your Saturday parties down a bit. *I'm finding it very hard to get enough sleep over the weekends.*

Examples (14) and (15) illustrate the illocutionary functions of thanking and complaining. Second sentence of example (14) maximizes the praise of other, while the speaker in example (15) is minimizing the dispraise of other. Except those two functions the Approbation maxim also covers illocutionary functions of congratulating, pardoning, praising, blaming, condoling, boasting, reporting, claiming, etc.

(16) Well done! What a wonderful performance! *I wish I could sing as well as that.*

Example (16) illustrates the Modesty maxim for the illocutionary function of praising. In third sentence speaker minimizes praise of self, while in the first and second sentence speaker clearly maximizes praise of other. Illocutionary functions for this maxim are the same as in previous.

(17) *I know we haven't always agreed in the past and I don't want to claim that the government acted in any other way than we could have done in power, but we believe the affair was essentially mismanaged from the outset.*

Example (17) illustrates the Agreement maxim for the illocutionary function of claiming. In the first part of the sentence the speaker minimizes disagreement with the hearer. Illocutionary functions for this maxim are stating, boasting, complaining, claiming, reporting, etc.

(18) *Despite very serious disagreements with you on a technical level, we have done our best to coordinate our efforts in reaching an agreement, but have so far not been able to find any common ground.*<sup>1</sup>

Example (18) illustrates the Sympathy maxim for the illocutionary function of reporting. In the middle of the sentence speaker minimizes antipathy between self and other. Illocutionary functions for this maxim are the same as in previous.

“It is assumed that we have some illocutionary goals [...] we want to achieve in linguistic communication. We also have social goals, that is, maintaining good communicative relations with people.” (Leech, 2014, p. 89) Illocutionary goals can compete, coincide, be indifferent to and may conflict with social goals, and Leech divided speech events according to the relation between illocutionary and social goal into four categories of function (presented in Table 4.)

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<sup>1</sup> Examples (12) – (18) are taken from Watts, 2003, pp. 66-7.

Categories of illocutionary functions	Competitive function	Illocutionary goal (IG) competes with the social goal (SG)	Ordering, asking, demanding, begging, etc.
	Convivial function	IG coincides with the SG	Offering, inviting, greeting, thanking, congratulating, etc.
	Collaborative function	IG is indifferent to the SG	Asserting, reporting, announcing, instructing, etc.
	Conflictive function	IG conflicts the SG	Threatening, accusing, cursing, reprimanding, etc.

*Table 4. Illocutionary functions of speech events*  
(Leech, 2014, p. 89)

When the goal of being polite is in question, whether the purpose for using it is positive (placing a high value on other's qualities) or negative (intended to avoid offence) Leech calls it *pos-politeness* or *neg-politeness*. Competitive speech events are thus subject to *neg-politeness* while convivial speech acts are subject *pos-politeness* due to identical illocutionary and social goals. The two remaining have no particular reason to involve politeness and normally do not. The importance of *pos-* and *neg-politeness* is evident in cost-benefit scale of politeness (already presented in Table 3).

The focus of this model is on processes of interpretation, and unlike Brown and Levinson's model which was centered on the speaker, Leech's model is centered on the hearer rather than on the speaker.

### **Richard Watts**

Richard Watts's theory of politeness divides politeness into two different senses. *First-order (im)politeness* (or following

Gino Eelen's theory: *Politeness*<sub>1</sub>) refers to our expectations about what polite and impolite behavior involves. It is something that individuals talk about and have everyday understanding of. *Second-order (im)politeness* (or *Politeness*<sub>2</sub>) refers to the universal definitions which are very often inaccurate because politeness is product of social interaction and therefore different for all cultures. *Politeness*<sub>2</sub> is technical or theoretically oriented use of the term, like in models we previously reviewed in this chapter.

Some forms of social interaction have become institutionalized and appropriate in many discursive practices. Watts refers to that as *politic behavior* and whether it is verbal or non-verbal behavior it is seen as being socially appropriate to the interactants and interaction. People might have different expectations of what *politic behavior* should be like, but it is negotiable during the conversation.

*Polite behavior*, on the other hand, is behavior that is seen as being appropriate in a certain social context, while *impolite behavior* is seen as violating that expectation. However, in a social interaction polite and impolite are not necessarily opposites and there are no clear boundaries for what constitutes politeness or impoliteness.

Watts's theory argues that politeness is both a social and cognitive concept. It becomes customary through social interaction and therefore fixed in our cognitive processes. He is of the opinion that politeness is not universal (unlike Brown and Levinson, who consider it universal) but influenced and created by principles of the society and also that behavior ranges on a spectrum of politeness. No one is born polite, we learn to be polite by observing how people interact with others in different social situations and contexts:

“It [Watts's approach] places politeness in the context of social

struggle, seeing it as a tool for maintaining hegemony in the hands of the powerful, in contrast to the views of B&L, Lakoff and Leech, where politeness functions primarily as means of maintaining face and social concord.” (Leech, 2014, p. 43)

Watts suggests that politeness really is a matter of conversational struggle and power negotiation between the participants of the conversation. It is impossible to make definitive statement about politeness when he sees it as a variable according to the context. Whether is some behavior polite or impolite that depends solely on perception of the participants.

## THEORISING ABOUT IMPOLITENESS

Research on social interaction was focused on linguistic expressions and communication of politeness while impoliteness was ignored. It is present in many discourses, but it is rarely described. This chapter introduces one of the impoliteness models, possibly the most comprehensive: Culpeper’s model of impoliteness.

### Jonathan Culpeper

*Impoliteness* and *rudeness* are two labels that are very often used in the field of linguistic pragmatics. Although terms ‘*rude*’ and *rudeness* are more frequent in usage, Jonathan Culpeper adopted the term *impoliteness* because the term relates to the work of politeness, that his model is based on. The meaning and the usage of one are compatible with the other. Culpeper suggests that impoliteness in conversation comes about when:

1. “The speaker communicates face attack intentionally, or
2. The hearer perceives and/or constructs behavior as intentionally face-attacking, or

3. A combination of 1 and 2.” (Culpeper, Impoliteness and entertainment in the television quiz show: The Weakest Link, 2005, p. 38)

This definition makes clear that impoliteness (just like politeness) is a product of interaction between speaker and hearer. It also ties the aspect of intention to the notion of impoliteness. Politeness is not something that is given to individuals. He proposes that two aspects are of great importance for his model. The first one is previously mentioned, *the notion of intention*, which gives impoliteness two layers: “the offensive information being expressed by the utterance and the information that that information is being expressed intentionally.” (Jamet & Jobert , 2013, p. 39) The second aspect is *the notion of the face*, presented in Chapter 1.

Culpeper’s model of impoliteness is based on Brown and Levinson’s face-saving theory of politeness which proposed one strategy of withholding FTAs and four strategies of dealing with FTAs already presented in Chapter 2. In terms of orientation to ‘face’, all these strategies have its opposite impoliteness strategies, which instead of supporting face are there to attack it. Culpeper listed them as follows:

1. *Bald on record impoliteness* – the FTA is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way in circumstances where face is not irrelevant or minimized;  
*(19) You surely can’t do anything right. (face is irrelevant);*  
*(20) You’re nuttier than a fruit cake Mary. (face is minimized);*
2. *Positive impoliteness* – the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee’s positive face wants, some of them being: ignore or snub the other, exclude the other from

the activity, disassociate from the other, use inappropriate identity markers, use obscure language, seek disagreement, make the other feel uncomfortable, use taboo words, call the other names, etc.;

(21) S1: I just wanted to explain.

S2: *I don't care.*

(22) S1: Okay, do what you want.

S2: You can bet I will. *I've got everybody on my side.*

Example (21) shows the strategy of ignoring or snubbing the other as a clear unwillingness from the part of S2 (speaker2) to S1 (speaker1)'s need to explain him/herself. Example (22) represents disassociation of S1 from a group that S2 considers to be part of.

3. *Negative impoliteness* – the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants, some of them being: frighten, condescend, scorn or ridicule, invade the other's space, explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect, etc.;

(23) *You know what the Thorazine does to you? It makes you walk like a mummy, sound like a Frankenstein.* You just kind of shuffle around, all stiff and numb.

(24) *Do me a favor, don't have any children.*<sup>2</sup>

Example (23) and (24) are taken from military discourse. Example (23) is an attack on face of female Private Alves; the speaker

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<sup>2</sup>Examples (23) and (24) are taken from the documentary *Soldier Girls* (Broomfield and Churchill, 1981) used as the source of data in Culpeper, Towards Anatomy of Impoliteness, 1996, pp. 362-3. Data is drawn from one interview; participants are Private Alves and three sergeants. Alves has performed badly in the training program and sergeants are forcing her to improve.

considers her disturbed and tries to frighten her by describing the effects of the drug that they give to disturbed patients. Example

(24) is also an attack on private Alves's face by incurring a debt with "do me a favor" utterance.

4. *Sarcasm or mock politeness* – the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realization. Both sarcasm and banter are otherwise called mock impoliteness and author separates two notions defining them as: mock impoliteness for social disharmony (sarcasm) and mock impoliteness for social harmony (banter);

Example (24) is applicable even for this strategy. Utterance "do me a favor" is clearly insincere and it is used just to create disharmony and to offend the hearer.

*Withhold politeness* – the absence of politeness work where it would be expected. (Culpeper, Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness, 1996, pp. 356-7)

(25) S1: Well, thank you very much for that.

S2: *I don't thank you at all.*

Example (25) represent absence of politeness. Generally speaking, when greeting is given the response is expected almost immediately. S2 here breaks the expectation while refusing to return thanks.

"Politeness is a negative attitude towards specific behaviors occurring in specific contexts. It is sustained by expectations, desires and/or beliefs about social organization, including, in particular, how one person's or group's identities are mediated by others in interaction. *Situated behaviors are viewed negatively-considered "impolite" – when they conflict with*

*how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how one thinks they ought to be.* Such behaviors always have or are presumed to have emotional consequences for at least one participant, that is, they cause or are presumed to cause offence.” (Culpeper, 2011, p. 254 in Jamet & Jobert , 2013, p. 5)

People often perceive very strong connection between behaviors and people. When we judge someone’s behavior we judge person and the social group that the person that we judged is part of. Describing someone’s behavior as impolite is in that way a comment on person and social background. Impoliteness is socially important because it can be very damaging to lives.

Impoliteness is generally assumed to be best avoided but it can be very creative and entertaining, nowadays it is very present in different TV shows. Observe these lines said by Anne Robinson in the show *The Weakest Link* considered to be creative:

(26) *Are you running on empty?* (comparing the hearer to the car):

(27) *He who stumbles should not survive.* (intertextual reference to Bible)

Or following examples by Shakespeare, which are not representative of everyday English, but they are showing impoliteness expressed in very creative way:

(28) *You are as a candle, the better part burnt out.* (from Henry IV)

(29) *You are now sailed into the north of my ladies opinion, where you will hang as an icicle on a Dutchman’s beard.*<sup>3</sup> (from Twelfth Night)

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<sup>3</sup> Examples (26) - (29) are taken from Jamet & Jobert, 2013, p. 10

*Banter* is important part of Culpeper's approach to impoliteness. It is considered to be "impoliteness that remains on the surface, since it is understood that it is not intended to cause offence." (Culpeper, *Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness*, 1996, p. 352) Banter usually reflects social intimacy, the more intimate relationship is the politeness is less needed. Here are some creative banter examples:

(30) S1: How do you feel about women's rights?

S2: *I like either side of them.*

(31) *I have never killed a man, but I have read many obituaries with great pleasure.*

(32) *The trouble with her is that she lacks the power of conversation but not the power of speech.*<sup>4</sup>

However, in practice, impoliteness can cause many reactions, some of them being non-verbal and reflecting emotional state of the hearer. For example, embarrassment is such a behavior and it includes blushing, smiling, avoiding eye-contact, etc. Except embarrassment there are also humiliation and distress. All are symptoms of face-loss, and as such possibly the ultimate result of this face-attacking model of impoliteness.

## **SOCIAL (IM)POLITENESS**

We are all familiar with the fact that in previous centuries politeness was not a kind of refinement in feeling but rather a sophisticated way of not telling truth. For example, in eighteenth-century England politeness was a sign of good upbringing and high social status. As a natural quality of certain individuals and

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<sup>4</sup> Examples (30) – (32) are taken from [www.brandongaille.com/31-witty-banter-examples-and-quotes/](http://www.brandongaille.com/31-witty-banter-examples-and-quotes/)

not the others it was used “to exclude the latter from the ranks of the former”. (Watts, 2003, p. 39)

According to Watts the one thing about politeness, except including polite expressions and language, is certain: it has to be acquired. “Politeness is not something we are born with, but something we have to learn and be socialized into, and no generation has been short of teachers and handbooks on etiquette and ‘correct behavior’ to help us acquire polite skills.” (Watts, 2003, p. 11) That is evident even in the earliest period of life, when children are learning their native language, they discover the importance of saying things like *please* and *thank you*, insisted on by their parents in order to socialize them into great members of society.

“Certain language items which may be classified as polite within the Brown and Levinson model are generally not perceived by interlocutors as polite at all, but simply as a behavior which is demanded by context.” (Mills, 2003, p. 67) Some people might consider impoliteness as very offensive while others can see it as just a loss of control over emotions. The same is with politeness, for some it is very important part of the interaction, while others consider it unnecessary. “While all cultures seem to possess notions of what was appropriate or polite in specific context, there was no universal agreement about which behaviors fell under that rubric.” (Lakoff & Ide, 2005, p. 2)

## CONCLUSION

During interactions individuals are communicating with others and working out their identities and their positions within a society. Politeness and rudeness play a very important role in that process because each can help us to produce and present the type of identity or position we want in the society. Only partici-

pants of specific communities of practice are competent to evaluate whether a language used around them is polite or not. Some words and behaviors are generally expected and accepted in the contexts, and for others (for example: *'oh fuck'* or *'you rotten pig'*) one should work really hard to imagine contexts in which they would not be impolite.

Politeness, by its very nature, is a question of judgment. It is not obligatory but it occurs more often than rudeness in everyday life. Someone will say that the latter is more likely to happen and to be remembered, but in the field of analysis, as much as in the interaction, politeness is investigated and probably applied more. There is a wide range of behavior usually performed just to be polite or for politeness's sake. When they want to achieve some particular goals people can be very manipulative and even creative while using politeness or rudeness.

There is an old saying: *'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me'*. We already saw that impoliteness can leave some emotional consequences on the interactants, consequently it is not true in the eyes of researchers. Although you could be resistant to words, im/politeness is a matter of interaction, and you can hardly know if the other person is as tough as you are. Deciding to be polite or impolite is personal choice and it is very important part of the construction of one's own identity. The saying is just something to bear in mind while deciding whether someone in the future will describe you as *'nice'*, *'considerate'*, *'kind'* or from the other hand *'rude'* or *'inconsiderate'*.

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