CHAPTER II  
THEORY

Politeness theory states that some speech acts threaten others’ face needs. The concept of 'face' has come to play an important role in politeness theory. Brown and Levinson, for example, have chosen it as the central notion for their study of universals in language usage and politeness phenomena (1987).

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness strategies are developed to save the hearer’s face. Face refers to the respect that an individual has for him or herself, and maintaining that “self-esteem” in public or in private situations. Their notions of ‘face’ are derived from the English folk term, which is related to notions of being embarrassed or humiliated, or ‘losing face’. Brown and Levinson (1987) stated that there are two types of face in an interaction:

1. Negative face: the want of every ‘competent adult member’ that his actions can be unimpeded by others.

2. Positive face: the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), face-threatening acts may threaten either the speaker's face or the hearer's face, and they also threaten either positive face or negative face. If we do threaten someone’s positive or negative face, we need to
minimize it by applying politeness strategies especially Face Threatening Acts as suggested by Brown and Levinson (1987).

Face Threatening Acts (next will mention as “FTA”) according to Brown and Levinson (1987) are shown below:

1.1. Bald on Record Strategy

In the bald on record strategy, the speaker does nothing to minimize threats to the hearer’s face. The strategy is directly, clearly, and unambiguous in saying. In cases of great urgency or desperation, redress would actually decrease the communicated urgency.

1.2. Positive Politeness Strategy

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the positive politeness strategy is usually seen in groups of friends, or where people in the given social situation know each other fairly well. It usually tries to minimize the distance between them by expressing friendliness and solid interest in the hearer's need to be respected (minimize the FTA). The only feature that distinguishes positive politeness compensation from normal everyday intimate language behavior is an element of exaggeration.

There are fifteen sub-strategies that are used in positive politeness strategies:

1) Notice, attend to H – (H), his interests, wants, needs, goods.

This output suggests that S (speaker) should take notice of aspects of H’s condition. S gives notice and approve of H’s creation
2) Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)

This is often done with exaggerated intonation, stress, when S gives some sympathy to H.

3) Intensify interest to H

Another way for S to communicate to H that he shares some of his wants is to intensify the interest of his own (S’s) contributions to the conversation, by ‘making good story’.

4) Use in-group identity markers

It indicates that the Speaker considers the relative power with the hearer to be small. These include in-group usages of address forms, of language or dialect, of jargon or slang, and of ellipsis.

5) Seek agreement

S stresses his agreement with H and therefore to satisfy H’s desire to be right.

6) Avoid disagreement

Avoiding disagreement is another characteristic of noticing what H speak. This can be shown by several ways below:

a. *Token agreement.* S should pretend to agree with H in order to hide disagreement.

b. *White lies.* Where S, when confronted with the necessity to state an opinion.
c. *Hedging opinions.* Alternatively, S may choose to be vague about his own opinions, so as not to be seen to disagree. This may be done with several phrases such as, *sort of, kind of, in a way, like.*

7) Presuppose/raise/assert common ground

It talks about *Gossip* or *small talk.* This strategy is used to give rise to the strategy of redressing an FTA by talking for a while about unrelated topics.

8) Jokes

Joking is a basic positive politeness technique, for putting H ‘at ease’.

9) Assert or presuppose S’s knowledge of and concern for H’s wants.

One way of indicating that S and H are cooperators, and thus potentially to put pressure on H to cooperate S, is to assert or imply knowledge of H’s wants and willingness to fit one’s own wants in with them.

10) Offer, promise

These strategies demonstrate the speaker’s good intentions in satisfying the hearer’s positive-face wants.

11) Be optimistic

The speaker assumes that the hearer will cooperate with the Speaker. The Speaker may carry an understood commitment to cooperate with the hearer as well.

12) Include both S and H in the activity

By using an inclusive ‘we’ form, when S really means ‘you’ or ‘me’, he can call upon the cooperate assumptions and thereby redress FTAs.
13) Give (or ask for) reasons

S gives reasons as to why he wants what he wants. By including H in his practical reasoning and assuming reflexivity (H wants S’s want), H is thereby led to see the reasonableness of S’s FTA (or so S hopes).

14) Assume or assert reciprocity

The existence of cooperation between S and H may also be claimed or urged by giving evidence of reciprocal rights or obligation obtaining between S and H.

15) Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)

S may satisfy H’s positive face wants (that S want H’s wants, to some degree) by actually satisfying some of H’s wants.

1.3. Negative Politeness Strategy

Negative politeness is defined as “a redressive action addressed to the addressee’s negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unobstructed and his attention unrestricted” (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Negative politeness strategy recognizes the hearer’s face, but it also recognizes that the speaker is in some way forcing on them.

Some of the sub-strategies of negative politeness are:

1) Be conventionally indirect

In this strategy a speaker is faced with opposing tensions: the desire to give H an ‘out’ by being indirect, and the desire to go on record.
2) Question, hedge

   It uses for asking someone to do something and suggest that they can do it, but have not already done it.

3) Be pessimistic

   This strategy gives redress to H's negative face by explicitly expressing doubt that the conditions for the appropriateness of S’s speech act obtain.

4) Give difference

   There are two sides to the coin in the realization of deference: one in which S humbles and abases himself, and another where S raises H (pays him positive face of a particular kind, namely that which satisfy H’s want to be treated as superior).

5) Apologize

   The speaker can indicate the lack of enthusiasm by apologizing for doing FTA.

6) Impersonalize S and H

   One way of indicating that S doesn’t want to impinge to H is to phrase the FTA as if the agent were other that S, or at least possibly not S or not S alone, and the addressee were other than H, or only inclusive on H.

7) State the FTA as general rule

   One way of dissociating S and H from the particular imposition in the FTA, and hence a way of communicating that S doesn’t want to impinge
but is merely forced to by circumstances, is to state the FTA as an instance of some general social rule, regulation, or obligation.

8) Go on record as incurring debt, or as not indebted H.

S can redress an FTA by explicitly claiming his indebtedness to H, or by disclaiming any indebtedness of H.

1.4. Off-the-record Strategy

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), a communicative act is done off-record if it is done in such a way that it is not possible to attribute only one clear communicative intention to the act. Thus, if a speaker wants to do an FTA, but wants to avoid the responsibility for doing it, he can do it off-record and leave it up the addressee to decide how to interpret it.

Some sub-strategies of off-record:

1) Give hint

If S says something that is not explicitly relevant, he invites H by giving hints.

2) Give association clues

A related kind of implicature triggered by relevance violations is provided by mentioning something associated with the act required of H, either by precedent in S-H’s experience or by mutual knowledge irrespective of their interactional experience.
3) Presuppose

An utterance can be almost wholly relevant in context, and yet violate the Relevance Maxim just at the level of its presuppositions.

4) Understate

It is one way generating meaning by saying less than is required.

5) Be ironic

By saying the *opposite* of what he means.

6) Use metaphors

Metaphors are literally false.

7) Be ambiguous

Purposeful ambiguity may be achieved through metaphor, since (as mentioned above) it is not always clear exactly which of the connotations of a metaphor are intended to be invoked.