Original Research Article

Analysis of Politeness Strategies from the Perspective of the Interpersonal Function of Language in Systemic Functional Grammar

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Abstract

Politeness strategies play a crucial role in maintaining social harmony and establishing interpersonal relationships. The interpersonal function of language in Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) provides a framework to analyze how language is used to interact with others. Our research aims to analyze the interpersonal functions of politeness strategies in conversation from the perspective of mood, modality, and person in SFG, with a focus on politeness theory, face theory, and politeness strategies. It shows how language is used to manage social relationships and establish social hierarchies in communication, and how understanding politeness strategies can help communicate more effectively and respectfully in different contexts.

Keywords: Systemic Functional Grammar, Interpersonal Function, Politeness Strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION TO POLITENESS

Politeness is a fundamental aspect of communication that is important in managing social relationships. The way speakers use language to express politeness can vary across cultures, contexts, and individuals. Studying politeness strategies from a linguistic perspective can enhance our understanding of how social meanings are constructed through language use. In this study, we will use Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as a framework to analyze politeness strategies in various types of discourse, aiming to demonstrate how linguistic choices realize politeness and how they relate to the social context of discourse.

Politeness strategies are used to formulate messages in order to save the hearer's positive and negative face when face-threatening acts are inevitable or desired For example, it is considered impolite to express opinions or requests directly in some cultures or societies, while using implicit, vague, or indirect expressions is more appropriate. In some cultures, politeness strategies may involve using honorific titles, such as "Mr." or "Ms.", to show respect for someone's social status. Similarly, in certain contexts, expressing gratitude or apologies can be seen as an important aspect of politeness. When receiving a gift, a person may say "thank you" to show appreciation, or when arriving late for an appointment, a person may say "I'm sorry" to show remorse and respect for the other person's time.

The concept of politeness has been studied extensively in various fields of linguistics, including pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis. Our research adopts the perspective of SFG, for it provides a unique approach to understanding the role of language in interpersonal communication. SFG is a theoretical framework that emphasizes the functional aspect of language, that is, how language is used to perform different communicative functions. The communicative function of language is its ability to convey information and facilitate communication between people. It involves using language to share thoughts, feelings, and intentions with others. By examining how the linguistic features of person, mood, and modality are used to convey different interpersonal meanings, we can gain a deeper understanding of how language is used to negotiate social relation and express politeness in different contexts. For instance, in English, using the first-person pronoun "I" can be seen as impolite or self-centered in certain contexts, and speakers may use the second person pronoun "you" instead to show politeness and respect. Similarly, using a conditional mood, such as "could you please" instead of "can you", can also be seen as more polite and less demanding. In terms of modality, using modal verbs

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such as "would" or "could" can soften a request or suggestion, making it more polite and respectful.

In this paper, we will provide an overview of SFG and its key concepts related to the interpersonal function of language, then analyze different examples of politeness strategies in communication, focusing on how the linguistic features of person, mood, and modality are used to convey different interpersonal meanings, hoping it can enhance the understanding of language role in social interaction and provide insights into how effective communication can be achieved through the appropriate use of politeness strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Politeness has been extensively studied in the fields of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, with Brown and Levinson's politeness theory being one of the most influential frameworks (Brown and Levison, 1987). The theory proposes that politeness is a universal phenomenon that is motivated by the need to maintain face and avoid face-threatening acts. However, politeness theory has been criticized for its overgeneralization and for neglecting the role of social and cultural factors in the use of politeness strategies. In corresponding alternative frameworks, appraisal theory, have been proposed. These frameworks emphasize the importance of context and social norms in the use of language. Appraisal theory proposes that language use involves the expression and evaluation of attitudes, emotions, and judgments, which are shaped by the interpersonal, textual, and ideational functions of language. The interpersonal function is realized through the use of mood and modality, which are grammatical resources for expressing the speaker's attitude towards the proposition, the interlocutor, and the context. (Halliday, 1978, 1994)

Recent some scholars have shown a growing interest in merging politeness theory with appraisal theory, resulting in the development of the Appraisal-Pragmatics Model (APM) by Martin and White (2005). This model combines the three meta functions of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) with the four strategies of politeness theory, offering a more nuanced and contextually sensitive approach to analyzing politeness. The APM emphasizes the expression and evaluation of attitudes, emotions, and judgments in language use, providing a detailed framework that considers the complex layers of meaning and function inherent in language.

Studies have investigated the use of politeness strategies in different languages and cultures, and in different contexts of communication. These studies have shown that politeness is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, which varies according to cultural and social norms, situational factors, and individual differences. Furthermore, they have demonstrated the importance of using authentic data

and context-sensitive analysis to understand the rich and dynamic nature of politeness in communication.

In addition to politeness theory and appraisal theory, other frameworks have been proposed, such as Leech's (1983) politeness principle, which emphasizes the importance of balancing politeness and other communicative goals, and Watts' relational model of politeness, which argues that politeness is not just a matter of individual face, but also of social identity and power relations.

SFG provides a complementary perspective on the analysis of politeness strategies, by focusing on the interpersonal function of language as a means of expressing and negotiating social relations and identities. Halliday's model of interpersonal function includes two parts: interactional mood and attitudinal. The attitudinal metafunction comprises modality and evaluative devices. Within modality, we find both modalization and modulation. The mood metafunction involves the speaker's choices of speech acts and their organization into clauses and sentences. In contrast, the modality metafunction focuses on the speaker's choices of modal verbs and other grammatical resources to express degrees of certainty, obligation, and evaluation. Lastly, the appraisal metafunction concerns the speaker's choices of evaluative language to express attitudes and emotion. Several scholars have applied SFG to the analysis of politeness strategies, with a particular focus on the grammatical features of person, mood, and modality.

In conclusion, politeness is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that involves the negotiation of social roles, identities, and relationships. While politeness theory has been one of the most influential frameworks for the analysis of politeness, alternative frameworks, such as appraisal theory and SFG, provide a more nuanced and context-sensitive approach to the analysis of politeness. Empirical studies have shown the importance of using authentic data and context-sensitive analysis to understand the rich and dynamic nature of politeness in communication.

Empirical studies have investigated the use of politeness strategies in different languages and cultures, and in different contexts of communication. These studies have shown that politeness is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, which varies according to the cultural and social norms, the situational factors, and the individual differences of the speakers. For instance, some studies have shown that politeness strategies are used differently in collectivistic cultures compared to individualistic cultures, and that age, gender, and social status can also affect the choice and interpretation of politeness strategies.

Overall, the study of politeness in language use has been an active area of research for several

decades, and has led to the development of various theoretical frameworks and models for analyzing the complex and dynamic nature of interpersonal communication. While Politeness Theory has been influential, alternative frameworks and models have been proposed that emphasize the importance of context and social norms in the use of politeness strategies. Empirical studies have also demonstrated the importance of using authentic data and context-sensitive analysis to understand the rich and dynamic nature of politeness in communication.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

SFG divides the functions of language into three categories: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The interpersonal function of language is central to the study of politeness, as it involves how language is used to communicate and maintain social relationships. According to Halliday, language is not just a tool for expressing ideas, but also for influencing the attitudes and behaviors of others. This dynamic relationship between speakers and listeners is reflected in the choices speakers make in terms of tone, modality, and person in their language use.

In the context of politeness, the interpersonal function of language in SFG provides a framework for understanding how politeness strategies are used to express social meanings and negotiate social relationships. Positive politeness strategies, such as using expressions of gratitude or compliments, aim to establish a positive relationship with the interlocutor. Negative politeness strategies, on the other hand, are used to mitigate potential face threats, such as making requests or criticisms, to avoid causing offense.

Halliday's SFG also incorporates the concept of face theory, which explains how individuals maintain their positive and negative face needs in social interaction. Positive face refers to the desire to be appreciated and approved of, while negative face refers to the desire to be free from imposition. Politeness strategies can be seen as a way of maintaining these face needs in communication.

Overall, Halliday's SFG provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the role of language in interpersonal communication, including the use of politeness strategies to negotiate social relationships and maintain positive social identities.

4. Politeness Strategies and Interpersonal Function

The SFG framework provides a comprehensive and systematic account of language structure and function, and emphasizes the role of context and culture in the use and interpretation of language. The SFG framework distinguishes between three metafunctions of language: the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. The interpersonal metafunction is concerned with the

negotiation of social roles, identities, and relationships, and is realized through the use of various grammatical and discursive resources, such as mood and modality.

The SFG framework is particularly relevant to the analysis of politeness, as it allows for a detailed and context-sensitive analysis of the linguistic and discursive features of politeness. Mood, for example, is a grammatical resource that allows speakers to express their attitude towards the proposition, and to evaluate the hearer's potential response. Modality, on the other hand, is a grammatical resource that allows speakers to express their degree of certainty, obligation, or possibility, and to negotiate the speaker's and the hearer's social roles and identities.

4.1 Mood in the Interpersonal Function and Politeness Strategies

The definition of mood offered by Thompson is that it expresses the entity that the speaker wants to make responsible for the validity and for the preposition being advanced in the clause. Mood is "the selection by the speaker of a particular role in the speech situation" and his determination of the choice of roles for the addressee. We should make it clear what the speech role is, and in so, doing assigns to the listener a complimentary role, which he wishes him to adopt in his turn. The interpersonal function of mood is strongly linked to the speaker's role in speaking for oneself and the complementary role for the listener.

In interpersonal function, mood is one of the important components. Mood is composed of two parts: subject and finite element, and the order of subject and finite element forms different sentence types and produces different mood. It is used to express speech function, indicating the role of the speaker in the context and his or her endowment the role of the listener. Halliday proposed that generally there are two basic tasks in the role of language: giving and taking. That is, the speaker either gives something to the listener, or asks him for something. Mood is a grammatical resource that allows speakers to express their attitude towards the proposition, and to evaluate the hearer's potential response. Mood can be realized through the use of declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory clauses, as well as through the use of modal verbs, such as "can", "could", "may", "might",, "should", "would", and "must". Mood can be used to convey various degrees of politeness, such as certainty, obligation, permission, suggestion, and request, as shown in the table1.

Table 1: Speech function and mood types

Speech Function	Mood Types
Statement	declarative
Question	interrogative
Command	imperative
Offer	Modulated interrogative

However, mood choices and speech roles do not always coincide with each other. For example, the use of declarative mood with high modality, such as "I must ask you to leave now", can convey a sense of urgency and obligation, and can be used to mitigate the speaker's or the hearer's negative face. The use of interrogative mood, such as "Would it be possible for you to leave now?", can convey a sense of politeness and deference, and can be used to enhance the hearer's positive face.

Mood is the grammatical category that reflects the speaker's attitude towards the situation they are talking about. In SFG, mood is realized through the grammatical system of mood, which includes the indicative, imperative, and subjunctive moods. Politeness strategies can also be seen as a way of realizing mood meanings, such as politeness, impoliteness, or neutrality. For instance, the use of indirect speech acts, such as "Could you please pass me the salt?" instead of "Pass me the salt," can be a polite way of making a request. Using hedges, such as "I was wondering if" or "If it's not too much trouble," can also soften a request and show deference to the addressee. On the other hand, using imperatives without any hedging or politeness markers can be perceived as impolite or rude.

Subjunctive mood can also be used to express politeness in certain situations. As an illustration, using "would" instead of "will" in a request can make it sound more polite and less demanding. Using "may" instead of "can" can also show more deference and respect.

4.2 Modality of Interpersonal Function and Politeness Strategies

Modality refers to the grammatical category that expresses the speaker's degree of certainty, possibility, or obligation. The use of modal verbs, such as "can," "could," "may," "might," "should," and "would," can express politeness in different ways.

Using "could" or "would" instead of "can" or "will" can make a request sound more polite and less demanding. For example, "Could you please pass me the salt?" sounds more polite than "Can you pass me the salt?" Similarly, using "may" instead of "can" can show more deference and respect. For example, "May I ask you a question?" sounds more polite than "Can I ask you a question?"

Modality is a grammatical resource that allows speakers to express their degree of certainty, obligation, or possibility, and to negotiate the speaker's and the hearer's social roles and identities. Modality can be realized through the use of modal verbs, such as "can", "could", "may", "might", "should", "would", and "must", as well as through the use of adverbs and adjectives, such as "possibly", "certainly", and "probably".

Modality can be used to convey various degrees of politeness, such as suggestion, request, permission, and obligation. For example, the use of the modal verb "could" instead of "can" can convey a sense of politeness and deference, as in "Could you please pass me the salt?" The use of the modal verb "would" instead of "will" can convey a sense of suggestion and indirectness, as in "Would you mind closing the window?" The use of adverbs and adjectives can also convey various degrees of politeness, such as the use of "possibly" instead of "definitely" to soften a request, or the use of "apparently" to avoid a direct judgment.

Modality can be mainly realized by different modal means such as modal operator, modal adjunct, modal lexical verb, the combination of modal adjunct and modal operator. Among the many variants of the different modal operators, Halliday just picked out some most familiar and frequently used ones to demonstrate their values in high, median, and low scales as shown in the table2.

Table 2: Values of modal Operators

	Low	Median	High
Positive	May, might, can, could	Will, would, shall, should	Must, ought to, need, has to is to
negative	Dare, needn't, doesn't, didn't, need to have to	is/was to, won't, wouldn't, shouldn't, isn't, wasn't	has/had to, mustn't, oughtn't to, mayn't, mightn't, can't, couldn't, hadn't, hasn't

Additionally, the analysis of politeness strategies can also shed light on the role of power and social status in communication. As mentioned earlier, speakers with higher social status tend to use more positive politeness strategies, while those with lower social status tend to use more negative politeness strategies. Further research in this area could examine the impact of power dynamics on the use of politeness strategies in different social contexts.

4.3 Person of Interpersonal Function and Politeness Strategies

Person refers to the grammatical category that distinguishes between the speaker, the addressee, and other participants in a conversation. In SFG, the grammatical system of person is used to realize interpersonal meanings, such as identity, authority, and distance. Politeness strategies can be seen as a way of realizing these interpersonal meanings. For example, the use of honorifics, such as "Mr." or "Ms.," can show respect and deference to the addressee. In contrast,

using informal pronouns like "you" instead of "Sir/Madam" can indicate a more casual and friendly relationship. The use of first names can also be a sign of intimacy or informality, while titles like "Doctor" or "Professor" can convey authority and status.

In addition to mood and modality, personal pronouns also have the function of realizing discourse interpersonal function of meaning. The choice of person in language use is a crucial aspect of politeness, as it signals the speaker's and the hearer's social roles and identities, and the power and solidarity relations between them. In many cultures, the use of honorifics, such as titles, forms of address, and honorific verbs, is a common way of showing respect and deference towards the interlocutors.

The choice of person also affects the use of politeness strategies. As the use of first person pronouns, for example, can enhance the speaker's positive face. Nonetheless, the use of second person pronouns can enhance the hearer's negative face. The use of third person pronouns, on the other hand, can signal distance and formality, and can be used to mitigate the speaker's or the hearer's negative face.

5. CONCLUSION

Politeness strategies play a crucial role in maintaining social harmony and establishing interpersonal relationships in communication. The interpersonal function of language in SFG provides a framework to analyze how language is used to interact with others. By analyzing the interpersonal functions of politeness strategies in conversation from the perspective of person, mood, and modality, we can gain a better understanding of how language is used to manage social relationships and establish social hierarchies in communication.

Face theory and politeness strategies also influence the use and interpretation of politeness in communication. Understanding these factors can help us communicate more effectively and respectfully in different contexts. Therefore, through the analysis of these examples, we can see how the linguistic features of person, mood, and modality are used to express politeness, respect, and deference in communication. Knowing these features can help individuals navigate social interactions more effectively, promoting positive relationships with others.

The analysis of politeness strategies from the perspective of the interpersonal function of language in SFG provides a valuable contribution to the study of language and social interaction. By highlighting the importance of linguistic features in the analysis of communicative acts, this approach emphasizes the role of language in social relationships and promotes effective communication strategies. Furthermore, from the perspective of person, mood, and modality, we can see how politeness strategies are used to realize interpersonal meanings, such as identity, authority, distance, politeness, impoliteness, certainty, possibility, and obligation.

In conclusion, the analysis of politeness strategies from the perspective of the interpersonal function of language in SFG is a rich and complex field of inquiry that offers valuable insights into the social and cultural dimensions of language use. By examining the ways in which speakers use language to express politeness, scholars can gain a better understanding of the intricate relationship between language and society, and contribute to the development of more effective and appropriate communication strategies in various contexts and situations. Further research is needed to explore the use and interpretation of politeness strategies in different languages, cultures, and social contexts.

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