

CONVERGENCE IN THE SEMANTICS OF POLITE AND NON POLITE FORMS IN INDIAN LANGUAGES AT PRAGMATIC LEVEL

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Abstract: In any given language Polite and non polite forms are distinguished at the descriptive level. Certain lexical items, Pronouns and Verbs are categorised as polite forms and certain others as non polite. But it cannot be stated that always the meaning of these linguistic forms remain the same. The meaning of the polite and non polite forms change based on the social context in which they are used. An attempt is made in this paper to observe the convergence in the semantics of polite and non polite forms at pragmatic level drawing data from some Dravidian languages and some Indo Aryan Languages spoken in India.

Keywords: illocutionary effect, indirect speech acts, negative face, positive face, facetthreatening, politeness strategies.

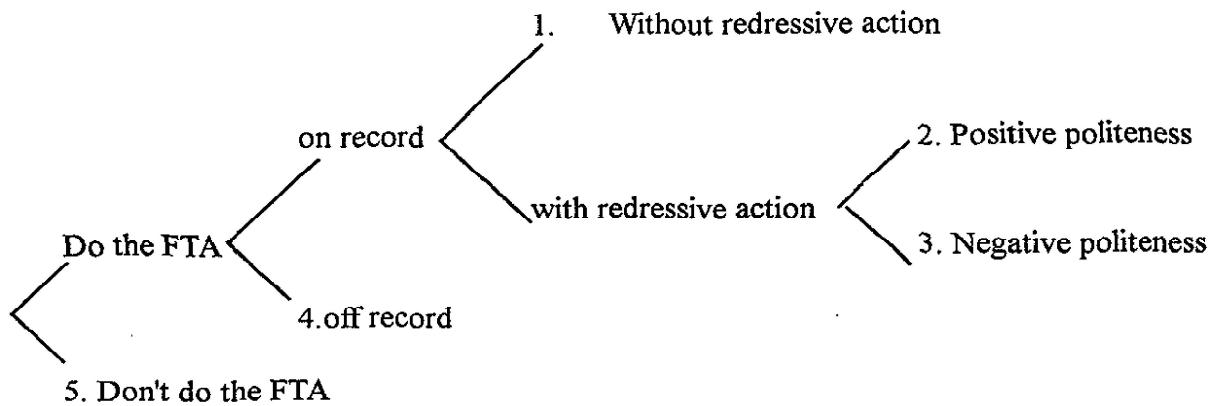
1. INTRODUCTION:

When philosophers raised the question about the adequacy of the natural languages in explaining the truth conditions of meaning in a given sentence, Paul Grice (1975) has explained that the natural languages are as adequate as any other logical system but the divergencies or 'extra' meanings that seem to crop up when some statements are made in natural languages are not due to syntactic and semantic rules of the language but due to rules and principles of conversation. Searle (1979) points out that the simplest cases of meaning are those in which the speaker utters a sentence and means exactly and literally what he says. In such cases the speaker intends to produce certain illocutionary effect in the hearer and he intends to produce this effect by getting

the hearer to recognise his intention to produce it, but in the case of hints, insinuations, irony and metaphor, to mention a few examples, the speaker's utterance meaning and the sentence meaning differ in various ways. For example, a speaker may utter the sentence 'I want you to do it' by way of requesting the hearer to do something. The utterance is incidentally meant as a statement, but it is also meant primarily as a request, a request made by way of making a statement. Such cases in which the utterance has two illocutionary forces are described as indirect speech acts. In order to explain the fact how it is possible for the speaker to say one thing and mean that and also to mean something else, one has to look to the theory of speech acts, certain general principles of cooperative conversation and mutually shared factual background information of the speaker and the hearer, together with an ability on the part of the hearer to make inferences. In some cases convention plays most peculiar role. The chief motivation though not the only motivation for using these indirect forms is politeness. For instance, it is observable that in many languages, when formulating a small request one will tend to use language that stresses in group membership and social similarity as in the inclusive we of 'let us have another cookie'. When making a request that it is somewhat bigger one, the speaker uses the language of formal politeness (the conventionalized indirect speech acts, hedges, apologies for intrusion). Finally when making the sort of request that it is doubtful one should make at all, one tends to use indirect expression. The same holds for criticisms, offers complaints and many other types of verbal act. Different languages may use different linguistic strategies. In indirect speech acts found in Dravidian Telugu (Te) Kannada (Ka) Tamil (Ta) and Indo-Aryan languages, Marathi (Ma), Hindi (Hi) spoken in India in which both polite and non-polite forms converge semantically at pragmatic level though they are differentiated descriptively. The analysis of the indirect speech acts is based on Brown and Levinson(1978) model of politeness strategies.

1.1. Brown and Levinson's Model of Politeness Strategies:

Brown and Levinson (1978) have set out to develop an explicit model of politeness which will have validity across cultures. The general idea is to understand various strategies for interactional behaviour based on the idea that people engage in rational behavior to achieve satisfaction of certain wants. the wants related to politeness are the wants of face. 'Something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction (Brown and Levinson, 1978). There are two kinds of face. One is 'negative face' or the rights to territories, freedom of action and freedom from imposition. Essentially they want that actions be not impeded by others. The other is 'positive face', the positive consistent self image that people have and want to be appreciated and approved of by other people. The rational actions people take to preserve both the kinds of face for themselves and of the people they interact with essentially add up to Politeness. Face wants become a problem if we assume that certain kinds of action are intrinsically face threatening. Such acts may threaten the hearer's negative face like a request which as an attempt to get someone else to do something that you want means that the recipient of the request is being impeded in pursuing what he or she wants to do. In these cases, the rational person will look for ways of doing the act while minimizing the threat to face in one way or another. the possible sets of strategies may be schematized exhaustively(Brown and Levinson, 1978).



Possible strategies for doing FTAs

2. LINGUISTIC STRATEGIES TO EXPRESS SARCASM IN A POLITE WAY:

If an actor goes off record in doing the act A, there is more than one unambiguously attributable intentions so that the actor cannot be held to have committed himself to one particular intent. following data shows how the actor goes off record to express sarcasm about the actions of the hearer where hearer belongs to a lower social strata compared to the speaker.

(a)	Te. tamaru 2nd person (hon)	vaccindi coming	ippuDaa? now ques.
a.	Are you coming now? Ka. tama 2nd person (hon)	aagamana coming	iigaayite? now happened?
	Ma. tumhi you (hon)	atta now	alatka? coming ques.
b.	Te. miiru 2nd person (hon)	pedavaaLLu big persons	uttaraalu letters
	Ta. niin you	periya big	karidam letter
	Hi. aap	baDee loog	ezida writing
		hai,	maatingi don't do.
c.	Te. mahaa great	tallii addressing term to ladies	inka still
	great lady, you stop it now.		aapu stop
	Ka. mahaa great	taayii lady	allige there
	Ma. thoor great	stree lady	aali came
			nillisu stop

d.	Te. daya please	ceeyaNDi come(in a formal situation)	daya	ceeyaNDi
	Ka. daya	maDi	daya	maaDi
	Ma. Yaa	wee	yaa	wee

In the first sentence (a) usage of second person honorific is used with a person who is considered to be of lower status compared to the speaker. In the second sentence (b) again the honorific second person is used to the intimate people where honorifics are not expected. Similarly the idiomatic expression PeddavaaLLu (Te) and its corresponding words in other languages are used in the sense of 'big people' which the speaker does not actually intend to mean. These linguistic strategies have become conventionalised in such type of social situations to express sarcasm. It cannot therefore be treated as off record FTA.

In the sentence (c) the lexical items used either for addressing the hearer or referring to a person stands for 'a lady of noble qualities'. But in this context when S did not like H's action it is used sarcastically and the verb is found in the singular form. Otherwise if it is used in the literary sense plural verb which stands for the honorific is invariably used.

Ma. thor great	stree lady	ne	he this	kary work	keelee did
Te. aaviDa she	mahaatalli great lady	tsaalaa plenty	mandiki persons dat		sahaayam - ceesEEru help did 3rd per.

She is a great lady. She has helped plenty of people.

In the sentence (d) verbs which are generally used in a highly formal context are found. Repetition of these verbs carry sarcasm which the speaker intends. The hearer also gets the message because the knowledge of the factual background is shared by the hearer and the speaker.

3. LINGUISTIC STRATEGIES TO EXPRESS POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE POLITENESS:

Positive politeness is oriented towards the positive face of H, the positive self image that he claims for himself. S wants (by treating him as member of an ingroup, a friend, a person whose wants and personality traits are known and liked). The potential face threat of an act is minimized in this case by the assurance that in general S wants atleast some of H's wants.

a.	Te. manam we (incl)	ceeddaam do	ii this	pani work
	Ma. Taym Teebil timetable	karuu do	yaat us	
	Let us do the time table			
	Hi. apan	karenge	yah	kaam

	we (incl)	do	this	work	
b.	Te. mana we (incl)	keemi nothing	caatagaadu cannot do		
	Hi. apan to	kuch	nahi	kar	sakte

Negative politeness, on the otherhand is oriented mainly towards partially satisfying (redressing) H's negative face. Negative politeness strategies consist in assurances that the speaker recognizes and respects the addressee's negative face wants and will not interfere with the addressee's freedom of action. Face threatening acts are redressed with apologies for interfering or transgressing with hedges on the illocutionary force of the act, with impersonalising mechanisms such as passives that distance S and H from the act and with other softening mechanisms that give the addressee a face saving line of escape permitting him to feel that his response is not coerced. There is a natural tension in negative politeness however between a. the desire to go on records as a prerequisite to being seen to payface. eg. orders and b. the desire to go off record to avoid imposing.

A compromise is reached in conventionalised indirectness for whatever the indirect mechanism used to do an FTA. Once fully conventionalised as a way of doing that FTA, it is no longer off record. Following data shows some of the conventionalised linguistic strategies used in indirect requests.

Te.	a.	koncem a little	ii this	pani work	ceesipeTTu do(imp)
	b.	koncem	ii	pani	ceesi peDtaavaa?
Ma.	a.	zaraa a little	ee this	kaam work	kar do (imp)
	b.	tumhi you will you do this	hee this	kar aalka? do ques	
Hi.	a.	thoraa a little	ee this	kaam work	karoo do (imp)
	b.	thora a little	ee this	kaam work	karte do kyaa? ques

Two strategies are used here. In sentences (a), the diminutive form 'a little' is used instead of 'plenty' in order to partially satisfy H's negative face, though the verb forms used do not leave any option to the hearer. In sentences (b) besides using diminutive form 'a little' questions forms are used leaving option to the hearer. In the scale of politeness the latter one is graded high. However, such types of constructions are conventionalised by which the hearer knows that the speaker wants him to do particular actions.

The usage of diminutives by the speaker tend to threaten the positive face of the hearer in the following sentence when the hearer is very hungry and starts eating.

Te.	koncem a little	tinaNDi eat Hon. 2nd persons.
Hi.	thoora	khaayiee

The speaker in these sentences does not want the hearer to eat more. But the same diminutive is used to lessen the face threatening in indirect requests when the hearer wants to go away without eating. The meaning of the diminutive form koncem has thus undergone a change at the pragmatic level.

3.1. Usage of negative imperative as a Polite Strategy:

The negative imperatives of the following type threaten the negative face of the hearer.

Te.	miiru You You	ii this	pani work	ceeya do	kuuDadu neg.imp
Hi.	aap You	yah this	kaam work	nahi neg.	karna do (imp)

You should not do this work.

The same negative imperative form is being used with raised intonation while requesting the hearer.

Te.	mirru you	ii this	pani work	ceeya do	kuuDaduu↑ neg.imp
	mirru you	ii this	pani work	ceeyaruu↑ don't do	
		Won't you do this work?			
Hi.	aap you	yah this	kaam work	nahi neg	kaareega↑ do (fut)
	aap	yah	kaam	nahi	kartee↑
	aap	yah	kaam	nahi	karna kya?

4. CONCLUSIONS:

Based on the above discussion it can be inferred that though differentiation is made between polite and non polite forms at descriptive level, these forms converge with each other at the pragmatic level with changes in the intonation. The speakers of different linguistic communities tend to use different types of linguistic strategies to communicate their expressions in different social contexts. From the analysis of the data from different Indian languages, it can be stated that the speakers of both Dravidian and Indo Aryan languages use the same kind of linguistic strategies.

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