III. NUOMONĖ / OPINIE I POGLĄDY

Jacek Szajewski

Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce
Department of Foreign Languages
ul. Kościuszki 13, 25-310 Kielce, Poland
E-mail: jacszaj@wp.pl

Research interests: discourse analysis, cross-cultural politeness, pragmatics, corpus linguistics

ON "POLITENESS" AND "POLITE LIES"
IN EVERYDAY DISCOURSE

This article primarily contains a threefold presentation of the notion of politeness. The universality of the phenomenon of politeness and its wide recognisability inspired the choice of methodology adopted herein. The article aims to produce some observations with regard to both similarities and possible divergences amongst the following angles of the concept in question:
  a) *dictionary definitions,*
  b) *definitions proposed by linguists, and*
  c) *the perception of this concept by members of society.*

The paper further aims to shape an initial vision of the category of "politeness" in order to classify it and specify its means of verbalization, with a special focus on the territory of polite lies. The article begins by presenting the dictionary definitions of the concept in question and attempts to show the complexity of the phenomenon, which directly results from the definitions under scrutiny. These are then contrasted with some common definitions proposed by linguists; the key concepts, the operationalization of politeness, and the author's comments can be found in this section. Subsequently, these definitions are contrasted with the ways lay members of society perceive the concept of politeness. Afterwards, the paper briefly outlines the two fundamental theories of linguistic politeness, namely Brown and Levinson's Theory of Politeness and Leechs's Politeness Principle. This is done especially with a view to settling the notion of the polite lie within the frames of the aforementioned theories. Consequently, the phenomenon of the polite lie is defined and the ways in which it typically operates are shown. This is done by means of Brown and Levinson's positive politeness theory and Leech's maxims of politeness. Ultimately, the article attempts to contrast language users' perceptions of polite lies with the two theories of politeness.

The dictionary database was collected from the OED2 dictionary and the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, as well as from two questionnaires presented to eight informants of different ages and occupations.

The paper includes summing-up definitions of linguistic politeness and polite lies, as well as a table with the final results of the questionnaire studies.

KEY WORDS: politeness, face, polite lies, discourse analysis.

Towards a definition of politeness: a dictionary study

In order to arrive at an adequate definition of the term **politeness** (which is, undoubtedly, a difficult endeavour) one has to make a distinction between "politeness" which is seen as "**polite behaviour in general**" and politeness as "**polite language use**." This natural dichotomy seems to be supported by the very dictionary definitions of the word in question, e.g.:

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED2 on CD-ROM) gives the following definitions and diachronic usage of the word "politeness."

1. lit. Polish, smoothness of surface.

2. Mental or intellectual culture; polish, refinement, elegance, good taste (of writings, authors, etc.). Now rare.

3. Polished manners, courtesy.

1702 Eng. Theophrast. *Politeness may be defined a dextrous management of our Words and Actions whereby we make other people have better Opinion of us and themselves.*

1802 M. Edgeworth Moral T. (1816) I. vii. 45 *Real politeness only teaches us to save others from unnecessary pain.*

1856 Emerson Eng. Traits, Aristocr. Wks. (Bohn) II. 83 *Politeness is the ritual of society, as prayers are of the church.*

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary provides the following definitions:

1   **a :** of, relating to, or having the characteristics of advanced culture

      b : marked by refined cultural interests and pursuits especially in arts and belles lettres

2   **a :** showing or characterized by correct social usage

      b : marked by an appearance of consideration, tact, deference, or courtesy

      c : marked by a lack of roughness or crudities <polite literature>

Thus, according to the above dictionary definitions, the perception of politeness appears to be at least threefold:

1) <u>Behavioural dimension</u> (*polished manners*, *dextrous management of words and actions*)
2) <u>Cultural dimension</u> (*the ritual of society; marked by a lack of roughness or crudities*)
3) <u>Social dimension</u> (*saving others from unnecessary pain; showing or characterized by correct social usage; an appearance of consideration, tact, deference, or courtesy*)

The above-quoted dictionary definitions directly cast some light on the complexity and heterogeneity of this phenomenon.

Let us narrow down the examination of the phenomenon to its <u>linguistic dimension</u> exclusively. Thus, so called "linguistic politeness" will be our main concern. As a matter of fact, to some people the term "linguistic politeness" appears tautologous, since most of the behaviour which is considered "polite" is rendered through language (Lakoff 2005). Seen from this perspective, there is very little "politeness" which can be described as "non-linguistic."

Towards a definition of politeness: the linguists' perspective

Now let us examine some of the perspectives that linguists adopt while talking about the phenomenon of linguistic politeness.

Watts (2003) approaches polite language usage from the following angle:

To characterise polite language usage, we might resort to expressions like "the language a person uses to avoid being too direct," or "language which displays respect towards or consideration for others…." [W] e might give examples such as "language which con-

tains respectful forms of address like *sir* or *madam*," "language that displays certain 'polite' formulaic utterances like *please*, *thank you*, *excuse me* or *sorry*…." And again we would encounter people who consider the polite use of language as "hypocritical," "dishonest," "distant," "unfeeling," etc.

As can be seen from Watts's definition, there is a certain amount of hesitancy and uncertainty in establishing this concept within a clear-cut frame. This seems to be due to the fact that the concept of politeness pervades various aspects of human activity, both verbal and non-. Its nature appears to be multi-layered, and heavily dependent on the pragmatic context of an utterance.

In the literature, there have been some other attempts to define politeness. Let me present and comment upon the most fundamental ones.

1. Lakoff (1975, p. 64): "…politeness is developed by societies in order to reduce friction in personal interaction." Such friction is undesirable, and societies develop strategies, politeness being one of them, to reduce that friction (Watts 2003).

2. Leech (1980, p. 19) defines it as "strategic conflict avoidance," which "can be measured in terms of the degree of effort put into the avoidance of a conflict situation," and the establishment and maintenance of comity. The avoidance of conflict is viewed as an intentional effort, as it is "strategic." What is more, if politeness is behaviour whose aim is to establish and maintain comity, this must mean that people evaluate other forms of behaviour as undermining those aims.

3. Brown and Levinson (1978) "view politeness as a complex system for softening face-threatening acts."[1]

4. Kasper (1990, p. 194) builds her work on Brown and Levinson's approach to politeness and claims that "communication is seen as a fundamentally dangerous and antagonistic endeavor." "Politeness is therefore a term to refer to the strategies available to interactants to defuse the danger and to minimalise the antagonism" (Watts 2003, p. 51).

5. Hill et al. (1986, p. 349) characterize politeness as "one of the constraints on human interaction, whose purpose is to consider others' feelings, establish levels of mutual comfort, and promote rapport."

6. Ide (1989, p. 225) sees it as "language usage associated with smooth communication." As Sifianou (1992, pp. 82–3) puts it, this "is achieved through the speaker's use of intentional strategies and of expressions conforming to prescribed norms."

7. Sifianou (1992, p. 86) defines it as "the set of social values which instructs interactants to consider each other by satisfying shared expectations." This definition seems to be normative and prescriptive in nature, as the idea of harmony in interaction and the idea of instructing language users are prevalent.

The above definitions can be summarized in Tables 1–3.

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[1] Brown and Levinson's politeness theory will be discussed below. Face-threatening acts (FTAs) are acts either verbal or non-verbal, which threaten "the way in which an individual sees her/himself or would like to be seen by others (taken from the metaphorical expression 'face', as in 'to lose face,' 'face-saving,' etc.)" (Watts 2003, p. 274).

Table 1. **Summary of linguists' definitions of politeness.**

No.	Source	Key concepts	Comments	Operationaliza-tion of politeness
1.	Lakoff (1975)	friction reduction in personal interaction	politeness is viewed as a set of norms for cooperative behaviour; certain types of behaviour are socially undesirable	Behavioural, evaluative
2.	Leech (1980)	avoidance of a conflict situation; maintenance of comity	some forms of behaviour threaten comity and those should be avoided strategically	Behavioural (strategic), attitudinal
3.	Brown and Levinson (1978)	softening face-threatening acts	the notion of the hearer's "face" is emphasized	Behavioural, attitudinal
4.	Kasper (1990)	fundamentally dangerous and antagonistic endeavour, defusing danger and minimalizing antagonism	Brown and Levinson's negative politeness is emphasized	Behavioural, attitudinal
5.	Hill et al. (1986)	consideration for others' feelings establishing levels of mutual comfort and promoting rapport	the notion of positive politeness is emphasized	Behavioural, attitudinal
6.	Ide (1989)	smooth communication conforming to prescribed norms	politeness is normative	Behavioural, attitudinal
7.	Sifianou (1992)	social values consideration for each other	politeness is normative	Evaluative

Table 2. **Approaches to politeness**

Categories	Lakoff	Leech	Brown and Levinson	Kasper
SOCIAL DIMENSION	politeness is developed by society	some forms of behaviour threaten comity and should be avoided	the notion of the hearer's "face" is emphasized	-
INTERPERSONAL LEVEL	reduces friction in personal interaction	-	softening of face-threatening acts (Negative Politeness)	softening of face-threatening acts (Negative Politeness)
STRATEGIC BEHAVIOUR	-	strategic conflict avoidance, intentional effort	complex system	strategic behaviour to minimize antagonism between interactants

Table 3. **Approaches to politeness (cont'd)**

Categories	Hill *et al.*	Ide	Sifianou
SOCIAL DIMENSION	mutual comfort and rapport (Positive Politeness)	smooth communication	pursuing shared expectations
INTERPERSONAL LEVEL	consideration for others' feelings	smooth communication	consideration for others
STRATEGIC BEHAVIOUR	one of the constraints on human interaction	intentional strategies conforming to prescribed norms	set of social values

Towards a definition of politeness: as viewed by language users

For some linguists, an investigation of the ways in which polite or impolite behaviour is evaluated and commented upon by lay members of a social group is "the only valid means of developing a social theory of politeness" (Watts 2003, p. 9). Indeed, the conceptualisation of this term by language users may constitute some solid ground for the presentation of what some people call Politeness Theory, that is, a theoretical concept of our polite (or impolite) linguistic behaviour. Hence, the methodology which has been employed in this paper.

For this reason, I thought it useful to have a rough idea of what polite or impolite behaviour denotes in our society. What is more, I was truly curious about the way people around me perceive this social phenomenon. I intended to discover whether it is true or not that "lay conceptualisations of politeness are frequently rather vague, since we tend to take forms of politeness for granted" (Watts 2003, p. 30). On the other hand, I anticipated that speakers can tell intuitively whether an utterance is polite, rude, or in between, so I expected them to bring their intuitive rule-governed politeness competence[2] into consciousness

and present their understanding of this phenomenon.

Hence, a simple questionnaire was constructed in which my informants were asked the following question:

What does the word "politeness" mean to you?

The data gathered are presented in Table 4.

As can be seen from the above lay definitions, there exists a certain amount of overlap between those definitions and the ones proposed by the linguists studying the field.

Let us compare the two types of definitions in Table 5.

Interestingly, *mutual comfort and promotion of rapport* in the linguists' definition can be matched with *kindness, well-bred manners* and *tactful behaviour* in the informants' definitions. Similarly, *consideration for others* has its rough counterpart in the form of *respect towards others*. The notion of a *situational context* is prevalent in both categories of the definitions.

Sifianou (1992) conducted a similar experiment among the English and Greek members of society. Her observations of the English conceptualization of the word politeness included: *consideration for others*, *formality*, *discrete maintenance of distance*, but also expressions of "altruism, generosity, morality and self-abnegation" (Sifianou 1992, p. 88).

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2 Lakoff (2006, p. 9) argues that the system of politeness is systematically rule-governed.

Table 4. **Summary of lay responses to the politeness survey.**

The perception of politeness by MALE POLISH INFORMANTS of different ages and occupations.				
	No.1	No.2	No.3	No.4
Informant's occupation	school manager	regular soldier	teacher of biology	porter/janitor
	Showing **respect** towards others. Ability to listen to and **understand others**. It can make life easier.	Behaving towards other people in a **cultured way**.	**Ability to behave properly** (i.e., in a way which is not troublesome to anybody or **hurting anybody's feelings**, habits or traditions) in any situation, including unexpected ones.	Respect for other people and also a sign of our **good manners** and kindness.
The perception of politeness by FEMALE POLISH INFORMANTS of different ages and occupations				
	No.1	No.2	No.3	No.4
Informant's occupation	client consultant	teacher of Russian	consultant	teacher of arts
	Kindness; one's ability to do somebody a favour if needed.	A particular kind of interpersonal behaviour characterized by using words and expressions which **agree with specific situations or people.**	Kindliness, being nice, a smile on one's face, well-bred manners, **tactful behaviour** in a particular situation.	A well-bred gesture towards another person.

Table 5. **Comparison of linguists' and lay speakers' definitions of politeness.**

	LINGUISTS' DEFINITION	SPEAKERS' DEFINITION
SOCIAL DIMENSION	mutual comfort and promotion of rapport	kindness, well-bred manners, tactful behaviour
INTERPERSONAL LEVEL	consideration for others' feelings	respect towards others; ability to understand others
STRATEGIC BEHAVIOUR	intentional strategies conforming to prescribed norms; set of social values	expressions which agree with specific situations or people

A polite lie and its definition

Not only politeness itself, but also the territory of a lie are within my field of attention and study. In this part of the paper I will attempt to examine some areas of linguistic behaviour in which a lie fulfils the criteria of "polite linguistic behaviour," and therefore can be referred to as a *polite lie*.

At the very onset, I will very briefly present the two fundamental theories of politeness, namely Brown and Levinson's Theory of Politeness and Leech's Politeness Principle. Subsequently, I will illustrate how the notion of a lie operates within these two theories.

One of the crucial concepts in politeness theory is the idea of *face*. Its sense

is closely related to the common phrase *to lose face* meaning "to be humiliated" or "to lose credit/reputation."[3] Brown and Levinson (1987) claim that every human being possesses "face," something that is threatened in most encounters. They say that *face* exists in two varieties: *positive face* and *negative face*.

A person's positive face is "a *person's desire to be well thought of*," accepted and understood by others, even liked, treated as a friend and confidant, as a member of the same group, to be appreciated and approved of. Positive face involves the need to be connected. Thus, a complaint about the quality of someone's work threatens his/her positive face.

A person's negative face can be defined as "*a wish not to be imposed on by others and be allowed to go about our business unimpeded with our rights to free and self-determined action*" (Grundy 1995, p. 133). Negative face involves the need to be independent. In other words, it can be viewed as freedom from imposition and freedom of action.

An utterance may by oriented either to the positive or to the negative face of the interactants. Hence, one can distinguish so-called *face-threatening acts*, which are those acts that endanger the hearer's *negative face*, since they frequently impose some action on the hearer, intrude on the addressee's territory, and limit his or her freedom of action (Sifianou 1992). On the other hand, an example of reference (and threat) to the addressee's positive face can be our dissatisfaction with the quality of their service or work.

What Brown and Levinson (1987) call *positive politeness* and *negative politeness* is an action of *redress* (an indication that no "face threat is intended or desired" (ibid, p. 70)) which is oriented either to the hearer's positive or negative face respectively. What is more, they formulate superordinate strategies from which we can choose when we have a face-threatening act to perform:

1. To do the act *on-record* (explicitly, without attempting to hide what we are conveying).

   The on-record strategy can be further subdivided into three subordinate strategies:

   a. to do the act on-record baldly *without redress*

   b. to do the act on-record with *positive politeness*

   c. to do the act on-record with *negative politeness*

2. To do the act *off-record* (implicitly, attempting to hide what we are conveying).

3. Not to do the act at all.

Which strategy we choose is a question of how polite we wish to be. The strategies presented above rank from the least polite (1), in which there is no compensation for the face-threat, to (3) where "the face threat is too great to be compensated for by any language formula so that the most appropriate politeness strategy is not to do the act" (Grundy 1995, p. 135).

How does a verbal lie function within Brown and Levinson's Theory of Politeness? I deliberately avoided using the term *act* since a lie cannot be treated as a speech act in the sense Austin (1965) understood it.

Let me, by way of digression, explain the "non-performative" nature of a lie. A

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[3] According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*.

lie does not possess any direct (explicit) or indirect (implicit) formula that would be capable of rendering such an act. Drawing on Austin's Speech Act Theory, a lie is not a performative act of the following form:

$$\text{I hereby} + V_{gp}$$

We cannot say: *I hereby lie to you*. Similarly, we cannot say *I hereby threaten you*. As Sebeok (1978, p. 126) phrased it: "Nothing is a lie in itself , but any utterance can be a lie."

Lies and Positive Politeness

To Brown and Levinson, a lie operates within the Theory of Politeness in the latter's positive domain (Positive Politeness) exclusively. The need to be polite frequently leads us to resort to the strategy of lying, particularly when there is a risk of threatening our own or the interlocutor's positive face.

Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 115) treat "white lies" as examples of *positive politeness*, that is, a strategy that we frequently employ when we wish to avoid threatening the hearer's *positive face*. White lies can be treated as conventional, habitual and automatically fabricated excuses exploited in situations involving an awkward request or an awkward question (Antas 2008). *False excuses* are, thus, a fairly common strategy within a polite lie, e.g.:

I can't lend you my iPod as the batteries are run-down.

I'd love to go out with you tonight, but I have to stay longer at work.

Leech's Politeness Principle

Leech (1983) puts forward his own theory of politeness, chiefly by introducing the Politeness Principle which maintains "the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assure that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place" (1983, p. 82). The Principle works in two ways: it can "minimize (other things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs," which is its *negative form*. In its *positive form* it can "maximize (other things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs." Polite and impolite beliefs are the ones which are favourable or unfavourable to the hearer.
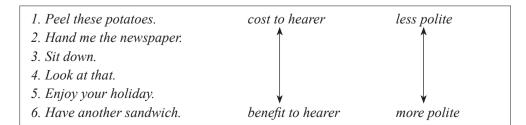
- TACT MAXIM
  a) Minimize cost to *other*
  b) (Maximize benefit to *other*)

Leech considers the Tact Maxim as "perhaps the most important kind of politeness in English-speaking society."

There are two sides to the Tact Maxim: a NEGATIVE one (a), and a POSITIVE one (b), the second being less important, but still "a natural corollary of the first."

The degree of tact can be measured by means of THE COST-BENEFIT SCALE. It estimates the *cost* or *benefit* to the speaker or to the hearer of a certain action *A*. Leech (1983, p. 107) gives the following example:

1. *Peel these potatoes.*	*cost to hearer*	*less polite*
2. *Hand me the newspaper.*	↑	↑
3. *Sit down.*		
4. *Look at that.*		
5. *Enjoy your holiday.*		
6. *Have another sandwich.*	*benefit to hearer*	*more polite*

Antas (2008) considers a lie to be a tactful, desirable and strategic behaviour in a particular pragmatic situation. Utterances like *Enjoy your holiday* or *Have another sandwich* can be examples of lies with the speaker not necessarily **genuinely meaning** what he or she conveys, instead simply obeying the Tact Maxim.

- **GENEROSITY MAXIM**
  a) Minimize benefit to *self*
  b) (Maximize cost to *self*)

For example, when we consider the following sentences: *Could I have some more X?* and *Is there any more X?*, Leech notices that greater politeness is achieved in the second one, because reference to the speaker as beneficiary is omitted (minimization of benefit to *self*).

We very often employ this strategy while producing conventional **false assurances** of the following sort:

Doesn't really matter. (Pol.: *nie ma sprawy*)
That's OK. (Pol.: *nic się nie stało*)
No problem. (Pol.: *to nic*)

Clearly, in the above examples the speaker is "generous" towards the hearer in order to save his/her **positive** face in an awkward situation.

Let us consider two more examples:
I can lend you my car, no problem. (cost to self)
You must come and visit us. (cost to self)

In these examples the speaker (whether genuinely or not) commits to performing some action which could imply benefit to the hearer and cost to the speaker.

- **APPROBATION MAXIM**
  a) Minimize dispraise of *other*
  b) (Maximize praise of *other*)

"In its more important negative aspect, this maxim says 'avoid saying unpleasant things about others, and more particularly, about *h*'" (1983, p. 135). Leech exemplifies: the compliment *What a wonderful meal you cooked!* is highly valued, whereas *What an awful meal you cooked!* is not. As dispraise of *h* or of a third party is impolite, various strategies of indirectness can be applied to diminish the effect of criticism, for instance "institutionalized forms of understatement" or, as Leech puts it, lack of praise which implicates dispraise:

You could be more careful.
Her performance was not as good as it might have been.
A: Do you like these plums? B: I've tasted better.

Interestingly, Leech initially suggests, but eventually abandons, as he puts it, an unflattering subtitle for the Approbation Maxim, namely "the Flattery Maxim." He observes that "the term 'flattery' is generally reserved for *insincere* approbation" (1983, p. 135). Here we encounter the word *insincere*, which is vital for our understanding of the polite lie strategy operating within this maxim. We do, in fact, often praise others in a hyperbolic way or alternatively use **litotes** or **understatement** in order to minimize our dispraise of others. Let us consider the following examples:

I'm very happy to see you!	*hyperbole*
That's a great present!	
I'm infinitely grateful!	
It's not quite like that.	*litotes/understatement*
You could have been more thoughtful.	
Your work leaves a lot to be desired.	

- **MODESTY MAXIM**
  a) Minimize praise of *self*
  b) (Maximize dispraise of *self*)

Leech (1983) gives the following examples (the dagger † indicates that the utterance is less acceptable in terms of absolute politeness):

How stupid of me!   †How clever of me!
Please accept this small gift as a token of our esteem.
†Please accept this large gift as a token of our esteem.

The above examples show that self--dispraise is considered to be quite modest, even when exaggerated for some comic effect. Similarly, the understatement of one's generosity or **false disagreement** is normal and conventional, in contrast to the exaggeration of one's generosity. "To break the first submaxim of Modesty is to commit the social transgression of boasting" (1983, p. 136). Hence, we often resort to **lying** and produce utterances of the following kind:

My contribution was really small. (in fact it wasn't, mine was the lion's share)

No, you're exaggerating. (false disagreement)

In my humble opinion…
If I could say something…

- **AGREEMENT MAXIM**
  a) Minimize disagreement between *self* and *other*
  b) (Maximize agreement between *self* and *other*)

Leech notes that "there is a tendency to exaggerate agreement with other people, and to mitigate disagreement by expressing regret, partial agreement, etc." (1983, p. 138). He gives the following examples:

A: It was an interesting exhibition, wasn't it?

*B: †No, it was very **un**interesting.* [Maxim of Agreement disobeyed]

A: English is a difficult language to learn.

B: True, but the grammar is quite easy.

The latter example shows that partial disagreement is more preferable to complete disagreement.

Some more examples of conventional lies include:

It's not quite like that. (Pol.: *To niezupełnie tak.*)

I don't fully agree. (Pol.: *Nie całkiem się zgadzam*)

It doesn't suit me very well. (Pol.: *Nie bardzo mi to odpowiada*) – in the case when we completely disagree with something.

I'll have to consider this. (Pol.: *Muszę*

się jeszcze nad tym zastanowić) – in the case when we know that something does not satisfy us.

- **SYMPATHY MAXIM**
    a) Minimize antipathy between *self* and *other*
    b) (Maximize sympathy between *self* and *other*)

This maxim "explains why congratulations and condolences are courteous speech acts, even though… [they] express beliefs which are negative with regard to the hearer" (1983, p. 138). Example:

I'm terribly sorry to hear that your dog died.

in contrast to: †*I'm terribly pleased to hear that your dog died.*

Leech (1983) points out that condolences are usually expressed with some reticence since they convey an impolite belief which is unfavourable to *h*. Therefore it might be preferable to say:

I'm terribly sorry to hear about your dog.

The power of the Sympathy Maxim enables the hearer to interpret the above utterances as an expression of sympathy for misfortune.

Antas (2008) produces her own additional maxim to Leech's maxims, which she labels as *Maksyma Wspólnego Narzekania* (Maxim of Shared Complaining [translation mine]). The application of this maxim is prevalent among Polish language users. She regards complaining as a typically Polish verbal behaviour employed in a particular situation that can be fortunate or not for the speaker. She compares this strategy to "picking holes in something" and finally treats it as a derivative of Leech's Modesty Maxim.

I think everyone is familiar with typically Polish responses to the question *How's life?* We are likely to say:

Pol.: Stara bieda. ≈ En: Same as ever.
Pol.: Jakoś leci. ≈ En: Can't complain.

Adhering to Leech's Modesty Maxim and seeking positive politeness between us and the third party is the main incentive for employing this strategy.

Polite lies from the perspective of language users

Curiosity as to how language users understand the phenomenon of *polite lies* inspired me to conduct yet another questionnaire. I asked my informants the following question:

What does "a polite lie" mean to you?

The answers are presented in Table 6.

It seems to me that for both male and female informants, the most important underlying reason for employing the strategy of a polite lie is his or her interlocutor's **positive face**. Indeed, Brown and Levinson's positive face notion seems to be prevailing in all the answers given. Consider the following:

- *he/she avoids hurting the addressee of the message*
- *in order not to hurt them*
- *avoidance of embarrassing situations in interpersonal relations*
- *one can avoid a clumsy situation or hurting somebody*

Table 6. **Lay speakers' understanding of "polite lies."**

The perception of politeness by MALE POLISH INFORMANTS of different ages and occupations				
	No.1	No.2	No.3	No.4
Informant's occupation	school manager	regular soldier	teacher of biology	porter/janitor
	The least harmful of all lies, frequently resulting in the better mental state of the "perpetrator" as he/she **avoids hurting the addressee of the message**.	Saying something which is not true to somebody **in order not to hurt them**.	Concealment of something or a harmless lie over an unimportant matter, thanks to which **one can avoid a clumsy situation or hurting somebody**.	The choice of a "lesser evil;" a sign of our kindness and **reluctance to distress others**.
The perception of politeness by FEMALE POLISH INFORMANTS of different ages and occupations				
	No.1	No.2	No.3	No.4
Informant's occupation	client consultant	teacher of Russian	consultant	teacher of arts
	It is like saying to somebody: "You look nice today," without really meaning it.	**Avoidance of embarrassing situations in interpersonal relations**. A situation in which it is more advisable to say an untruth or a half-truth in order **not to undermine social relations**.	A lie for somebody's own good; concealment of truth/ understatement in order to **convey unpleasant information more subtly**.	It is a way of **saving** somebody (our interlocutor) **from distress**, sadness, etc.

- *not to undermine social relations*
- *convey unpleasant information more subtly*

Conclusions

To sum up, the primary purpose of this paper was to present, compare and contrast the notion of politeness from a threefold perspective:

- the dictionary definitions

- linguists' descriptions
- language users' conceptualizations

What is more, I have attempted to locate the concept of a polite lie within the two fundamental theories of "politeness," i.e., Brown and Levinson's Theory of Politeness and Leech's Politeness Principle. In addition, I have endeavoured to contrast the perception of polite lies by language users with the two theories mentioned above.

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Jacek Szajewski

Uniwersytet Jana Kochanowskiego w Kielcach, Polska

Zainteresowania naukowe: analiza dyskursu, grzeczność międzykulturowa, pragmatyka językowa, językoznawstwo korpusowe

Jacek Szajewski

Jano Kochanovskio universitetas Kielcuose, Lenkija

Moksliniai interesai: diskurso analizė, tarpkultūrinis mandagumas, pragmatika, tekstynų lingvistika

KILKA SŁÓW O GRZECZNOŚCI I KŁAMSTWACH GRZECZNOŚCIOWYCH W CODZIENNYM DYSKURSIE

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł ukazuje zjawisko grzeczności językowej z trzech perspektyw: definicji słownikowych, definicji zaproponowanych przez językoznawców oraz sposobów pojmowania tego zjawiska przez użytkowników języka. Podstawowym celem artykułu było ukazanie zbieżności i różnic występujących pomiędzy wyżej wymienionymi sposobami definiowania tego zjawiska, jak również określenie jego występowania w obszarze kłamstwa grzecznościowego. Przedstawiono definicje słownikowe grzeczności i ukazano złożoność

ŠIS TAS APIE „MANDAGUMĄ" IR „MANDAGŲ MELĄ" KASDIENIAME DISKURSE

Santrauka

Straipsnyje kalbama apie trejopą mandagumo sąvoką. Šio straipsnio metodologijos pasirinkimą lėmė mandagumo reiškinio universalumas ir jo platus pripažinimas. Straipsnyje siekiama pateikti keletą pastebėjimų apie panašumus ir galimus skirtumus, kurie atsiranda nagrinėjant sąvokas šiais aspektais: žodyno apibrėžimų, kalbininkų siūlomų apibrėžimų, visuomenės narių supratimas. Be to, siekiama suformuluoti pradinę „mandagumo" kategorijos viziją, kad būtų galima ją klasifikuoti ir detalizuoti jos verbalizavimą kreipiant ypatingą dėmesį mandagiam melui. Straipsnio pradžioje

tego zjawiska. Następnie przedstawiono główne definicje zjawiska grzeczności, zaproponowane przez językoznawców. Omówiono także kluczowe pojęcia i obszary występowania zjawiska grzeczności, dodano komentarze autorskie. Następnie dokonano analizy porównawczej definicji uzyskanych od użytkowników języka i skontrastowano je z definicjami podanymi przez badaczy języka. W dalszej części artykułu pokrótce scharakteryzowano dwie fundamentalne teorie dotyczące grzeczności językowej: teorię grzeczności Penelope Brown i Stephena Levinsona oraz zasadę grzeczności Geoffreya Leecha. Dokonano próby osadzenia zjawiska kłamstwa grzecznościowego w ramach wyżej wymienionych teorii. Pomocne okazały się kategorie grzeczności pozytywnej, jak też Leechowskie maksymy grzeczności. W zakończeniu autor skonfrontował sposób postrzegania zjawiska kłamstwa grzecznościowego przez użytkowników języka z teoriami grzeczności zaproponowanymi przez Brown i Levinsona oraz Leecha.

pateikiama sąvokos definicija, aptariamas reiškinio sudėtingumas, pastebėtas kruopščiai išanalizavus sąvokos apibrėžimus. Toliau pristatomi bendrieji lingvistų apibrėžimai ir gretinamoji analizė. Pateikiamos pagrindinės mandagumo ir autoriaus komentarų sąvokos. Vėliau šie apibrėžimai lyginami su visuomenės narių mandagumo sąvokos supratimo būdais.

Siekiant tiksliai apibrėžti mandagaus melo sąvoką, straipsnyje trumpai apibūdinamos dvi fundamentalios lingvistinio mandagumo teorijos. Pasitelkus Browno ir Levinsono teigiamo mandagumo teoriją bei Leecho mandagumo maksimas, apibrėžiamas mandagaus melo reiškinys, parodomi jo veikos būdai. Stengiamasi palyginti kalbos vartotojų mandagaus melo suvokimą su dviem mandagumo teorijomis.

Žodyno duomenų bazė buvo surinkta iš OED2 žodyno, Merriam-Webster *Online Dictionary,* taip pat dviejų klausimynų, pateiktų aštuoniems įvairaus amžiaus ir profesijų informantams.