

Course 11

Politeness Strategies

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Introduction

This course explores various politeness strategies used in communication across different cultures and contexts. Students will learn how to navigate social interactions effectively by understanding the principles of politeness.

Course Objectives

1.

Understand the concept of politeness and its significance in communication.

2.

Analyze different politeness strategies in various cultural contexts.

3.

Explore dealing strategies with rudeness and impoliteness

01.

Introduction to Politeness

A. Defining Politeness

Politeness: Is a practical application of good manners that facilitates communication, encompassing behaviors and linguistic strategies to nurture positive relationships and respect societal norms. It requires a nuanced approach, balancing self-expression with sensitivity to others' feelings and expectations. Beyond words and gestures, it involves understanding and adapting to the cultural and situational context.

B. Importance of Politeness in Communication:

Politeness plays a crucial role in facilitating smooth and harmonious interactions among individuals and groups. It helps to establish rapport, build trust, and foster positive relationships. It contributes to the creation of a supportive and inclusive atmosphere where individuals feel valued and respected, minimize misunderstandings, and promote cooperation and collaboration. It reflects cultural values and norms. Politeness contributes to the maintenance of social order and cohesion by regulating social interactions and reinforcing social bonds.

C. Cultural Differences in Politeness Norms:

Politeness norms vary significantly across different cultures, reflecting the unique values, traditions, and social dynamics of each society. What may be considered polite behavior in one cultural context could be considered quite differently in another. These variations highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity and understanding in effective cross-cultural communication.

High-Context vs. Low-Context Cultures:

In some cultures, politeness may be expressed through indirectness, such as using softening language to convey messages without causing offense. Conversely, in other cultures, directness and honesty may be valued more highly.

In high-context cultures, such as many Asian and Middle Eastern societies, communication relies heavily on implicit signals, shared understandings, and context-specific information.

Politeness in these cultures often involves precision, reading between the lines, and preserving harmony within the group.

High-Context vs. Low-Context Cultures:

On the other hand, low-context cultures, such as those found in many Western countries, prioritize explicit communication, clarity, and directness. Politeness in these cultures may involve clear and straightforward expression of thoughts and feelings, with less reliance on implicit cues or context. In cultures with high levels of individualism, such as the United States, politeness may be expressed through respect for personal autonomy and the use of assertive communication styles. In collectivist cultures, such as Japan, politeness may prioritize maintaining group harmony and deference to authority figures.

02.

Speech Acts and Politeness

A. Request Strategy

Request strategy involve skillfully balancing one's needs or desires with the potential imposition on the other person. Politeness strategies in making requests often aim to minimize the imposition and preserve the other person's autonomy and goodwill.

Polite Request:

"Excuse me, could I please have a glass of water?"

Impolite Request:

"Hey, I need a glass of water, now!"

Polite Request Structure

- 1. Polite Address or Greeting:** Begin by addressing the person politely, such as using "excuse me" or "hello," followed by their name or a polite pronoun like "sir" or "madam."
 - 2. Expression of Politeness:** Use polite language to convey respect and consideration. This often involves using words like "please" and "thank you."
 - 3. The Request Itself:** Clearly state what you're requesting. Be direct and specific about what you need or want.
 - 4. Optional Explanation or Justification:** Sometimes, it's helpful to provide a brief explanation or justification for your request, especially if it's not immediately obvious why you're asking.
- Closing:** End the request with another expression of appreciation or politeness, such as "thank you for your help" or "I appreciate your assistance."

B. Apology Strategy:

Apologizing is a fundamental aspect of politeness when one has caused offense, or harm to another person. Effective apology strategies acknowledge responsibility, express regret, and seek forgiveness while preserving the dignity and face of both parties involved.

Examples:

- **Direct apology:** "I'm sorry for being late to our meeting."
- **Indirect apology:** "I apologize for any inconvenience my tardiness may have caused."
- **Offering reparations:** "I'm sorry I spilled coffee on your shirt. Let me buy you a new one."
- **Promising improvement:** "I apologize for my mistake. I'll make sure it doesn't happen again."
- **Expressing empathy:** "I'm sorry to hear about your loss. My thoughts are with you."

Structure for Crafting an Apology

- 1. Acknowledgment of the Offense:** Start by acknowledging what you did wrong. Be specific about the offense to show that you understand the situation.
- 2. Express Remorse:** Show remorse for your actions. Use words that convey your regret and for any harm caused.
- 3. Accept Responsibility:** Take ownership of your actions without making excuses or shifting blame onto others. This demonstrates accountability.
- 4. Explanation (if necessary):** If there's a valid reason behind your actions, you can briefly explain it. However, be careful not to make excuses or downplay the offense.
- 5. Promise of Improvement:** Assure the person that you will take steps to prevent the same mistake from happening again. This shows your commitment to growth and change.
- 6. Request for Forgiveness:** Humbly ask for forgiveness, understanding that it's ultimately up to the other person to decide whether to forgive you.
- 7. Follow-up (if appropriate):** Depending on the severity of the offense, you may want to follow up with the person later to check on their feelings and reassure them of your sincerity.

C. Compliment Responses:

When someone compliments you, it's important to accept it gracefully without seeming arrogant or ungrateful. Politeness when responding to compliments usually means being humble, thanking the person, and recognizing their kindness..

Examples:

- **Accepting the compliment:** "Thank you! That's very kind of you to say."
- **Downplaying the compliment:** "Oh, it was nothing, really."
- **Deflecting the compliment:** "I couldn't have done it without your help."
- **Returning the compliment:** "That means a lot, especially coming from someone as talented as you."
- **Expressing gratitude:** "I appreciate your kind words."

Important Note!

Being polite doesn't always mean saying "yes" to everything. In fact, sometimes saying "no" is not only appropriate but also necessary for maintaining **healthy boundaries, self-respect, and honesty** in relationships.

D. Refusal Strategies:

Refusing a request or an offer while maintaining goodwill and avoiding offense is a delicate task. Politeness strategies in refusing typically involve expressing regret, providing a reason or excuse, and offering alternative solutions when possible.

Examples:

- **Expressing regret:** "I'm really sorry, but I won't be able to attend the party."
- **Providing a reason:** "I have a prior commitment that evening."
- **Offering alternatives:** "I can't join you for dinner tonight, but how about we meet up for lunch tomorrow instead?"
- **Softening the refusal:** "I wish I could help, but unfortunately, I'm not available."
- **Expressing appreciation:** "Thank you for thinking of me, but I'll have to decline this time."

03.

Politeness in Different Contexts

A. Politeness in workplace communication:

1. Use respectful language and tone when communicating with colleagues, supervisors, and subordinates.
2. Address others with appropriate titles and greetings, such as "Mr.," "Ms.," or "Dr.," unless instructed otherwise.
3. Practice active listening and show empathy towards others' perspectives and concerns.
4. Avoid interrupting or talking over others during meetings or discussions.
5. Give credit where it's due and acknowledge the contributions of your coworkers.

B. Email etiquette and politeness:

1. Begin emails with a polite greeting, such as "Dear [Name]" or "Hello [Name],"
2. Use courteous language throughout the email, including "please" and "thank you."
3. Keep emails concise and to the point, respecting the recipient's time.
4. Avoid using all caps, excessive exclamation marks, or overly informal language.
5. Respond promptly to emails, even if it's just to acknowledge receipt or indicate when you'll provide a full response.

C. Politeness in Digital Communication

- 1. Respect for others:** Treat others online with the same respect and courtesy as you would in face-to-face interactions. Avoid offensive language, personal attacks, or disrespectful behavior.
- 2. Clarity and brevity:** Use clear and concise language in your online communication to ensure your message is understood. Avoid rambling or excessive use of emojis or abbreviations.
- 3. Privacy and security:** Respect others' privacy by refraining from sharing sensitive or confidential information without their consent. Take precautions to protect your own privacy and security online.
- 4. Citing sources:** When sharing information or content from others, give credit to the original source to avoid plagiarism and show respect for intellectual property rights.
- 5. Consideration for timing:** Be mindful of the timing of your messages, especially in group chats or forums where others may be in different time zones. Avoid sending messages late at night or early in the morning unless necessary.

04.

Dealing with Rudeness and Impoliteness

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- 1. Maintain calmness:** Stay calm and composed when faced with rudeness. Reacting headily may escalate the situation further.
- 2. Assess the situation:** Determine if the rudeness was intentional or unintentional. Sometimes, people may not realize they're being rude.
- 3. Choose your response:** Decide whether it's worth addressing the rudeness or if it's best to ignore it. Consider the context and the relationship with the person involved.
- 4. Set boundaries:** If the rudeness persists or crosses a line, assertively communicate your boundaries. Let the person know their behavior is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- 5. Use assertive communication:** Respond assertively but calmly. State your feelings or concerns clearly and directly, without resorting to aggression or defensiveness.

Dealing with Rudeness and Impoliteness

- 6. Redirect the conversation:** If possible, steer the conversation towards a more positive or constructive topic. This can help diffuse tension and refocus the interaction.
- 7. Seek support:** If the rudeness is affecting you emotionally or professionally, don't hesitate to seek support from friends, colleagues, or a trusted authority figure.
- 8. Practice empathy:** Try to understand the underlying reasons behind the person's rude behavior. They may be dealing with stress, insecurity, or other personal issues.
- 9. Lead by example:** Model polite and respectful behavior in your own interactions. Sometimes, showing kindness and understanding can encourage others to do the same.
- 10. Know when to disengage:** If attempts to address the rudeness are futile or if the situation becomes toxic, it may be best to disengage entirely. Focus your energy on more positive interactions and relationships.



THANK YOU!

Do you have any questions?