

**Gender Social Behaviour and Cultural Norms of Politeness in
Classrooms
Les Comportements Sociaux et Les Normes Culturelles de Politesse en
Classe**

Zemri Amel ¹

Abou Bekr Belkaid University –Tlemcen, amelzemri@gmail.com

Received on: 27/11/2019

Accepted: 12/22/2019

Abstract:

Theories of politeness are exploited to look into the primary factors that may provide differences between students and teachers verbal and non verbal behaviour. Classroom politeness in the current study is defined depending on a range of strategies and behaviours that the students achieve in dissimilar situations.

The study explores through note taking, observation, questionnaires and a discourse completion test to check the way gender use of politeness strategies. The social variables affect gender use of politeness strategies in interactions depending on the situation. Besides, males are polite more than females in some contexts.

Key words: Classroom interactions, Codes, Gender, Politeness, Social variables

Résumé:

Les théories de la politesse sont exploitées pour examiner les principaux facteurs susceptibles de créer des différences entre les comportements verbaux et non verbaux des élèves et des enseignants.

La politesse en classe dans la présente étude est définie en fonction d'une gamme de stratégies et de comportements que les élèves atteignent dans différentes situations. L'étude explore à travers la prise de notes, d'observation, de questionnaires et d'un test d'achèvement du discours la façon dont les sexes utilisent les stratégies de politesse. Les variables sociales affectent selon le sexe, l'utilisation des stratégies de politesse dans les interactions et ceci en fonction aussi de la situation. En outre, dans certains contextes, les hommes sont plus polis que les femmes.

Mots clés : la politesse, les variables sociales, interactions, discours

¹ Auteur correspondant: Zemri Amel, amelzemri@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Communication forms function in a society regarding the model of politeness. It gathers the mainstream of subjects in human sciences. It discloses social and cultural features inferred as acts switch at the level of communication, social discourse and relationships, mimes, gestures, body language and codes use. Learning languages is a spot of concern for a variety of reasons. For this motive, centres of teaching languages are opened; several are private and others tag along with state control like the Intensif Language Learning Centre(CEIL), which is an institution at some Algerian universities, Tlemcen, Oran, Algiers, Constantine and others. We intend to explore the connection flanked by three chief subject matters, gender, politeness and classroom interaction. One is challenging to clarify the linguistic behaviour of male and female students when they interact in the classroom. The problematic pronouncement raised tries to give details how males and females use politeness strategies in one classroom while interacting. One selected CEIL students as a case in point inspecting gender differences between them and how it affects their linguistic behaviour during class interaction.

2. Gender and Politeness

Politeness is solitary pragmatic aspect. It refers to a structure of communication employed to maintain the addressee's guessing. Common use of the word gender tarted in late 1960s, gradually coming into the view of proficient literature of social sciences. Scholars like Brown , Holmes and others confirm that women convey positive politeness in their language more than men. Therefore, when it gets nearer to politeness principles, men and women have distinguishing norms in special contexts, particularly those women are sensitive and emotional. Besides, they give interest to their face as they tend to utilize supplementary politeness strategies.

Politeness is a dynamic concept and an interpersonal activity related to everyday life. It is defined by Watts et al (2005) as "a set of strategies to achieve social goals with a minimum of social friction" (Karsberg, 2012, p. 6). Lakoff (1975) added that politeness is developed by societies where the friction in personal interaction is decreased.

Politeness varies between different social groups which makes it a moral concept. It is said that politeness can be adapted at any time under various circumstances, moral values and human behaviour can be changed over time. In the 18th century, politeness had been used to distinguish social classes. Thus, it has been regarded as a central concept in the formation of social classes.

Genderlect is a word used to tell the unlike communications between males and females who communicate and accept messages distinctively. The social function played by men and women should not be the same though, nowadays, they may play dual role despite their characteristics are diverse. For example, women like better to talk about their problems and they like proposing solutions to each other whereas men do not, usually, share their problems, they rather sit thinking of the trouble by themselves and try to fix things in their mind. The term 'gender' started to be used by the beginning of the 1970s in literary and social sciences fields. It is a term that explains the different social aspects of everyday life. Attempting to deal with men and women issues, one must distinguish between sex and gender. The former refers to the biological condition and the physical characteristics of a person where the latter is connected to social constructs. 'Gender' is used to describe men and women characteristics that are socially constructed and while speaking about biological features, the term 'sex' is used.

Gender and language choice is related to multilingualism is a phenomenon taking place all over the world. Moreover, shifting from one code to another is a frequent happening, too. As an example, in an Austrian village of Oberwart, people shift from Hungarian to German. In Algeria, people shift most often from Arabic with its different forms to French. Indeed, no significant differences are found in men' and women's code choice though women tend to use more prestigious and standard forms in some particular situations.

Code-switching, as a linguistic phenomenon, accomplishes a wide variety of conversational functions in bilingual settings. CS is a double voicing form that can carry different meanings. Shifting from Algerian dialect to French reflects a casual setting, simple conversation or anger while shifting from MSA to French shows a sort of authority, social status.

3. Sociolinguistic Aspects of Politeness

Lakoff (1973) was among the first who relied on politeness principles to extend grammatical rules and consider the form of sentences (i.e) specific constructions for either to be polite or not. She proposed two rules of pragmatic competence; being clear and polite. In 1990, Lakoff defined politeness as “a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange” (as cited in Abdul-Majeed, 2009, p. 510). Leech (1983) introduced the politeness principle that functions to establish a social balance and friendly relations; which enable people to assume that the interlocutors are cooperative. Then, he proposed six interpersonal maxims: Tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, agreement maxim and sympathy maxim. Besides, Leech made a distinction between politeness in a specific situation, named “relative politeness”, and the degree of politeness associated with the speakers’ actions or “absolute politeness”.

Politeness by Watts (1989) is viewed as “explicitly marked, conventionally interpretable subset of 'politic' responsible for the smooth functioning of socio-communicative interaction and the consequent production of well-formed discourse within open social groups characterized by elaborated speech codes” (p.21). It is, then, an expected linguistic behaviour.

3.1. Notion of Face

In the field of politeness, ‘face’ is a crucial term of Asian origin. It was used, in the ancient time, metaphorically to describe a person’s qualities and characteristics. Yet, each researcher sees it in a personal vision. The purpose of the face to Goffman, for instance, is “to describe the self-image which the speaker or hearer would like” (as cited in Stodůlková, 2013, p. 19). On the other hand, Brown & Levinson claimed that “face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction” (Stodůlková, 2013, p. 19). The notion of face had a metaphorical function across cultures. It reveals individual values and characteristics like honour, respect, nobility and self- esteem. The pioneers of politeness studies set two kinds of face, positive and negative. What persons valued in a public interaction are the *positive face* and the need for the freedom of actions and escaping imposition is the connotation of the *negative face*. Brown and Levinson’s

theory presumes that any given speech act threatens either the speaker's or the listeners' face, hence, it is the task of politeness to lessen such threats. Goffman defines the face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (Vilki, 2009, p. 328). The face can have various forms depending on the occurrence of the verbal and the social interactions leading to negotiating facework within the boundary lines of political and linguistic behaviour.

4. Intercultural Aspect of Politeness

Oral communication is the tool of social interaction to maintain relationships. To determine social and suitable manners, one would better mind the cultural aspects that have a direct influence over language. Culture settles on different social variables that affect language use in one way or another influencing the correlation between participants emphasizing age, power, solidarity and context. Culture is an aspect shared by social members whom they belong to the same speech community; share the same, language, values, beliefs, norms and traditions. Offering services in a centre of learning languages must have a polite surround that tribute to what Sparks (2002) name "quasi – friendship" between the client and the secretary. The same situation was given "HAND" named by Lashley (2002) (i.e) Have A Nice Day culture (Bengsch, 2010, p. 17). Such behaviour may not be accepted in some cultures because it can impose and generate anxiety. On the whole, polite facial expressions like a smile are fancy; employees are required to have a sort of matching polite behaviour. Transferring linguistic significances of greetings, refusals, requests and apologies differ in language structure, lexis and cultures. Essentially, one should avoid non-verbal cues which lead to misunderstandings because simple actions have functions, symbolic values and realities that are not comparable between cultures. The character of the face is present in located interactions which also has several forms across cultures connected with the social standards that afford unlike expectations of politeness.

5. The Role of Interaction in CEIL

The sociocultural aspect of language learning combines language issues with social interactions in a given context. CEIL students attempt to widen their competences in social interactions by taking parts in communications with a group of classmates of different backgrounds and occupations sharing new experiences, knowledge and culture. The teachers make sure

to guide and fulfill the linguistic tasks and language acquisition via interaction. CEIL as a social setting is a small community that unites education and interaction in terms of role, cultures, functions and objectives. Teachers plan a syllabus, methods and materials that shape affective factors for individuals' social identity. Many factors from out of the classes influence the performance in class. So, class interaction is regarded as institutional formal talks based on information exchange in a cooperative manner. Teachers help to transmit the ideas properly; providing feedbacks, correcting mistakes, simplifying and modifying the statements so that the students understand the real meaning.

Providing feedback, setting responses and initiating communications are three main communication patterns needed for language use. Students engaging in CEIL seek to acquire and develop novel language skills they can use in real contexts to increase interactions and establish friendly relationships with native and non-native speakers of the target languages. The languages put into practice in CEIL classes should be the learning target and the intermediate for effective interaction.

6. Gender Politeness in CEIL

Politeness strategies are marked in the polite expressions used for greetings, thanks, apologies and colloquial speech features. Greetings witness slight differences between gender use to the structure. 90 % of Male student in CEIL classes prefer the Islamic greetings structured in different forms: Assalamu alaikum ;salam ; slam alaykum warahmate allah. Non muslim males are affected by their friends and classmates, so, they do even use the same sort of greetings, in addition, to the other forms: salut, hi, hello, hey, good afternoon, etc. such indicators of politeness calls for attention and show good manners, respect of religion (when the greeting version is islamic).

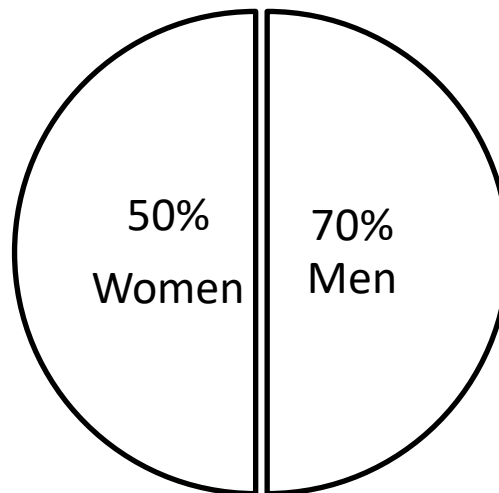
As far as teachers use of politeness strategies is concerned female teachers employ positive politeness as a governing strategy, tagged along with bald on record, negative politeness. More to the point, male teachers make use of bald on record as a main strategy, followed by positive politeness, negative politeness then off record. The variation in politeness strategies are performed by means of several intentions starting by the teachers then the context.

Interrelated contexts or states of the teachers may possibly make use of unlike strategies used by man and woman teachers. The context orientation

goes towards some educational motives that stand on the basis of observation and note taking. Moreover, men and women select dissimilar strategies because that choice reveals the individual's communicative style and influential educational psychology.

Emphasizing the linguistic features that occurred in sample conversations show various responses. Some act classes are somehow the same between males and females like in elicitations as in repetitions, confirmation and reporting.

Generally, marking female teachers; they are more interactive with their learners; they motivate and encourage their students to talk with each other and to the teacher. They usually assign peer/group-work activities to relax the atmosphere and enhance students' autonomy. Female students respond to be more interested in such tasks more than males. Describing the classes managed by male teachers, they are directive more than female teachers.



Graph 6. 1. Directives between CEIL Teachers

Females to show femininity and politeness, they steer clear of directness and requests as much as possible unless the situation requires.

Moreover, male teachers do not often express high regard and they seldom show emotions to their students; which is not the case of female teachers who like sharing compliments to decrease the social distance with the students and show appreciation.

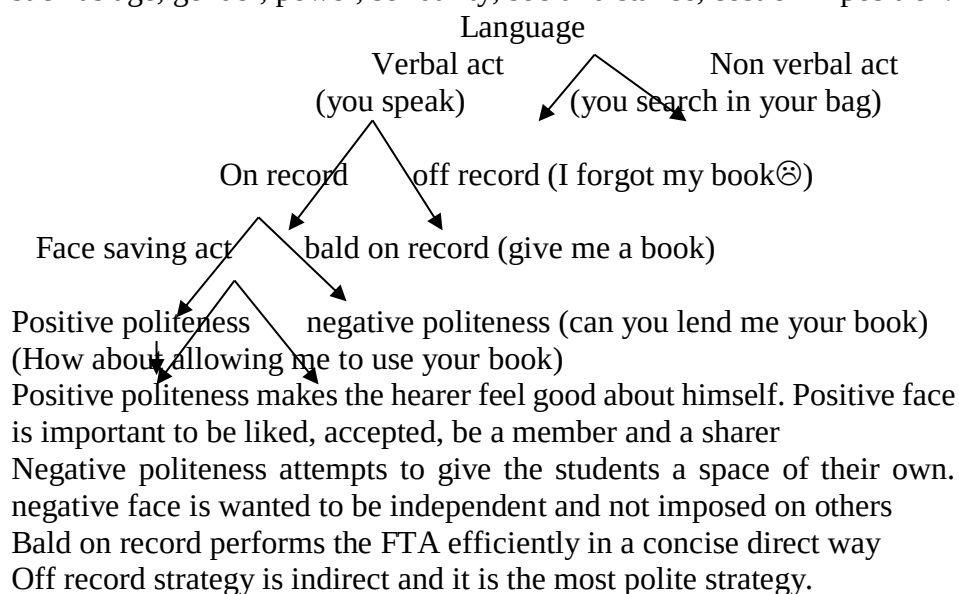
The compliments observed are regarded as positive evaluations and acknowledgments rather than private admirations. Yet, they are, most of the time, women who give positive feedback to their students.

The entire distinction between the use of discourse acts by different gender teachers make the conclusion that the mixed characteristics lead to the divergent patterns of interaction with the students, as the international table confirms some points that explain the CEIL's situation

Regarding individuals' behaviour in mixed gender classes, one come up to the conclusion that male students dominate conversations and task more than their female peers. There were only some descriptive categories where the females are in charge. In CEIL classes, female students start the talks and conversations most of the time and males take it from there and start the interaction. Females express themselves and give their opinion in much comfort in single-gender group/pair works .Males report situations and offer discussions more than girls in mixed-gender classes without getting bothered.

7. Politeness Strategies CEIL Classes

Considering the relationship between the speaker and the listener, one tries to choose the appropriate way to express himself through different ways determined by different factors, which are most often interrelated, such as age, gender, power, solidarity, social distance, cost of imposition.



8. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Active methodologies and collaborative learning consider interaction as a social strategy. CEIL is one of the best learning settings for interaction and communication training where people develop confidence and identity and acquire knowledge.

Student to student interaction is required and pleasant because they are aware that it is hard to learn a foreign language without being engaged in communication; since it is one of the key elements that develops learners' abilities and leads to a successful language learning. Another point that CEIL teachers often emphasize which is '*practice*'. CEIL courses are not enough for perfect language performance unless the students put the rules that govern the language into practice.

It is remarked that students may feel the need to promote language development using the TL, especially in collaborative tasks where the interaction is friendly, besides, the social skills that save face, show politeness and respect.

Another original piece for a well doing learning is motivation. Via classroom interaction, students are given a chance to better their language use and evaluate themselves and their steps forward to raise motivation and feedback.

The above mentioned tips to amplify CEIL class interactions might have a wrong turn somewhere when the teacher attempts to encourage interactions. May be because of students' embarrassments or resistance to work in groups, for example. Mixed abilities or lack of motivation, etc.

Suggesting solutions for such problems, teachers can persist by giving tasks trying to provide some analyses and supportive atmosphere.

Interaction pushes learners to expand language learning and social skills that make best use of interaction in the classroom which is part of the teacher's role.

Pair /group works encourage interactions because the participants have to communicate to each other, do activities or give their points of view, in addition to the social skills.

Outstanding theoretical representations express some essential aspects of teachers- students' interaction that control teachers' instructional behaviour; and such interactions in the class setting are connected to students' motivation, development and performance. CEIL teachers consider class interaction as a section of monitoring, positive

emotional and academic support. In return , students are mature enough maintaining constructive and good relationship with their teachers who try to give polite instructional sustain which helps improving academic abilities and positive behavioural accomplishments . The quality of teachers -students interactions in giving instruction, feedback and support leads to less annoying students' behaviours.

Monitoring is part of classroom interaction which mainly affects the learning process. Teachers' role as monitors occupy managing time, behavior and students' attention in the classroom. Consequently, classroom behaviour problems are avoided thanks to the class managers.

Negative teachers are not loved by the students; they often avoid attending his classes. Non attendance is a risk factor that CEIL students make sure they do not come across; they start from the very first sessions to prevent stress and negative attitudes. Such a situation reveals the lack of support, classroom management, structure and order.

9. Variables Affecting Language Learning in CEIL

The traditional classroom image is to have a teacher speaking and students listening .The teacher practices the authoritative role of a leader; the teacher- students interaction functions as a drill, pushing to practice some structures sand lexical models. Dividing the class into small groups to do some tasks arrange informal talks and encourage students' autonomy through less guided activities.

Pair works is a chance for the students to be functional and use the TL where the teacher's role is simple; consulting, advising the students and interfering in the students' assignments when necessary.

CEIL teachers help the students to interact by asking questions, using gestures, body language and choosing an interesting topic that the students benefit from in real life situations.

Dealing with another variable n technically known as motivational intensity. Motivation is part of CEIL classes' routine adapting the models of the first scholars who dealt with motivation. Motivation was first studied in 1959 by Lambert and Gardner who generated two types from the whole concept:

Integrative motivation: the participants' wants to be part of the TL culture.

Instrumental motivation: is about the need to learn a TL for use and communication.

CEIL students' objectives from learning foreign languages are :

- ❖ To communicate with foreigners when they travel out of the country.
- ❖ To understand foreign languages for work, studies and tourism.
- ❖ To show off and add a positive point to his/her CV.
- ❖ To show a high educational level.

Once the CEIL classes get started, 100% of students claim that they want to be a native-like speakers of the language. Attitudes towards the TL influence motivation since it is, in many cases, up to the students' attitudes to succeed in learning a second language. In fact, it is not an obligation that positive or negative attitudes lead to success or breakdown; but being positive makes the student excited and encouraged to learn a language. CEIL sample had a random source of attitudes; parents, friends, colleges and even personal experiences in the center. One of the negative attitudes repeated among the students when they do not speak or write something in the appropriate way they say: "it's ok, it's not my language anyway"; such negative attitudes lessen the students' confidence and self-esteem.

The socio-psychological aspects and age variable have an effect on learners' abilities .Two more influential effect on language learning are those interrelated with the pedagogical and the psychological factors. Some pedagogical lacks, in the CEIL, influence motivation and language learning as a process such as:

- Crowded classes, for some levels, make the teacher inattentive and tired.
- Unpredictable orientations often stress the students.
- Deficiency of coordination between the teachers .This is common in CEIL because the teachers do not have a syllabus or a manual to use in teaching. Two years ago, they provided some books in French, Turkish and Spanish. The books picked to teach English were not suitable for our students because of the different culture and the different needs.
- Lack of trainings and some educational materials and audiovisual equipments.
- Some themes in the books assumed were not corresponding to the students' needs.

The successful learning is an outcome that reveals the best teaching quality and a sign of the good time being exposed to the TL in the educational setting and even out of it.

CEIL verbal interaction practice starts from the teachers' oral communication in the TL, in addition to eye contact, gestures, facial expressions and non verbal measurements.

Managing unmarked choices and upsetting behaviour; teachers are forced to advise and motivate the learners in pedagogical practices in class interaction. Providing admiring comments and teachers' funny side in the classroom indicate a personal interaction practices. Most teacher believe that CEIL students seek to get better their language proficiency, chiefly production. They aim from teaching foreign languages to give good impression and positive attitudes towards languages.

What researcher care about in class interaction are the verbal, non verbal, pedagogical and personal practices.

10. CONCLUSION:

CEIL classes aim at experiencing real communicative situations that permit them to express themselves and develop their speaking skill. Classroom interaction creates opportunities to develop knowledge and learning skills. Thanks to the importance of communication, difference between men and women use of language is one of the most important issues among sociolinguistic scholars. It is essential to understand the different communication patterns that women and men typically use to better understanding and achieve effective communication. Besides, numerous research works have been deeply managed to conclude that women and men are dissimilar in the way of interacting and communicating in terms of minimal responses, turn taking, changing the topic of conversation and self-disclosure. Learning to communicate involves more than learning grammatical and phonetic rules. Teachers aim at having an effective class interaction avoiding any act that may threat the learner regarding self-image; they should rather make use of strategies to reduce the threat and that is, in simple word, politeness. Communication functions rely on knowledge of social conventions. Furthermore, both men and women need to be polite to reflect good manners and consideration for others. Classroom interaction creates opportunities to develop knowledge and learning skills. Thanks to the importance of communication, difference between men and women use of language is one of the most important issues in sociolinguistics. Upcoming examinations should think to investigate supplementary factors that are expected to have an effect on teacher–student interactions in classrooms, as

they might recommend clarifications of gender divergence in teacher–student interaction prototype.

A number of aspects may possibly be significant to embrace English language proficiency, qualities and the cultural surroundings of the participants. It would be attention-grabbing to perceive how training strategies and character function in relation with the inclination to interact with one gender more than the other.

11. Bibliography List:

1. Abdul-Majeed, K .R .(2009). The Realization of Positive Politeness Strategies in Language: The Politeness Theory of Brown and Levinson Instructor, College of Education for Women vol. 20 (2)
2. Altakhaine, A . (2018). *Introduction to Linguistics*. Al-Ain University of Science and Technology College of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences English Language Teacher Education Department Instructor, Ppt / 1. Muza AE 201320346
3. Balyes, R. (2009). An Investigation into Politeness. *Small Talk and Gender*, 1, 20-90, Nottingham University
4. Bargiela, C .F., & Daniel, Z. K . (2011). Introduction: Politeness Research in and across Culture. In “**Politeness across Cultures**”, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
5. Bellilet, O .(2007). Interactions Verbales en Classe FLE : Interaction de Politesse
6. Benachour , M. (2014). Learning English Vocabulary through Classroom Interaction, Kasdi Merbah University.
7. Bencharef, A .(2016) . A comparative Study of Argumentative Utterances: The Feminine Teenaged Conversational Exchange in Ain temouchent and New York, Tlemcen University of Algeria.
8. Beneke, J. (2001). *Models of Communication: Communicative Competence (Monocultural) & the training of communicative skills*. The Training of Cross-Cultural Competence and Skills Seminar
9. Bengsch, G . (2010). The Influence of Culture on the Perception of Politeness: An Investigation of front-line Staff at a mid-priced Hotel Chain in New Zealand. New Zealand university
10. Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C,(1987). Politeness Some Universals in Language Use,Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press

11. Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of Talk*, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press
12. Karsberg, H. (2012). *Politeness Strategies – a theoretical framework*. Högskolan i Gävle
13. Lakoff, R. (1973). *Language and Woman's Place*. Cambridge University Press Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4166707>
14. Stodůlková, B. (2013). *Gender and Politeness in Discourse*, Tomas Bata university in Zlin
15. Vilkki, L. (2009). *Politeness, Face and Framework: Current Issues*, Festschrift in Honour of Fred Karlsson, pp. 322–332
16. Watts, R. J. (2003). *Politeness*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, xiv + 304 pp. GBP 50 (Hb), 18.99 (Pb).

12. Annexes :

Citations:

1. The Realization of Positive Politeness Strategies in Language: The Politeness Theory of Brown and Levinson Instructor, 2009, Abdelmajeed, R.K. College of Education for Women, volume 20, issue2, 509-525, English <https://www.iasj.net/iasj?func=fulltext&aid=1975>
2. Influence of Culture on the Perception of Politeness: An Investigation of front-line Staff at a mid-priced Hotel Chain in New Zealand, 2010, Bengsch, G, New Zealand university, Master of International Communication, pages 1-100, English <https://unitec.researchbank.ac.nz/handle/10652/1448>
3. *Politeness Strategies – a theoretical framework*, 2012, Högskolan i Gävle, Faculty of Education and Business Studies, Department of Humanities. Karsberg, H, Language: English. pages 1-60 <http://hig.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A565250&dswid=7733>
4. *Gender and Politeness in Discourse*, 2013, Stodůlková, B, Tomas Bata university in Zlin, English, pages 10-50. <https://pingpdf.com/pdf-barbora-stodlkova-bp-2013-gender-and-politeness-in-discourse.html>
5. *Politeness*, 2003, Cambridge University Press, Watts, R. J, Online ISBN: 9780511615184, English DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511615184> <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/politeness/E9FC00C681300A3F22F37CD9AC565C0F>