CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The Politeness Theory

Politeness theory is the theory that accounts for the redressing of the affronts to face posed by face-threatening acts to addressees. First formulated in 1987 by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, politeness theory has since expanded academia’s perception of politeness. Politeness is the expression of the speakers’ intention to mitigate face threats carried by certain face threatening acts toward another (Mills, 2003:6). The goal of politeness is to make all of the parties relaxed and comfortable with one another, these culturally defined standards at times may be manipulated to inflict shame on a designated party. Being polite therefore consists of attempting to save face for another.

There are some techniques to show politeness:

• Expressing uncertainty and ambiguity through hedging and indirectness.
• Polite lying
• Use of euphemism (which make use of ambiguity as well as connotation)
• Preferring tag questions to direct statements, such as "You were at the store, weren't you?"
  • modal tags request information of which the speaker is uncertain.
  "You didn't go to the store yet, did you?"
affective tags indicate concern for the listener. "You haven't been here long, have you?"

- softeners reduce the force of what would be a brusque demand. "Hand me that thing, could you?"
- facilitative tags invite the addressee to comment on the request being made. "You can do that, can't you?"

In a conversation, people can convey their own meaning by cooperating with the addressee. Indeed, misunderstandings happen somehow but most speakers and their interlocutors are able to understand each other. The general principle of using language was formulated by Paul Grice (1975:45) and the term used for the principles is cooperative principle. People who obey the cooperative principle in their language use will make sure that what they say in a conversation furthers the purpose of that conversation.

Grice states the cooperative principle as follow: *Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.* The cooperative principle then can be divided into four maxims, called the Gricean Maxims:

- Maxims of Quantity: 1) Make your information as informative as required (for the current purposes of exchange), 2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required
• Maxims of Quality: 1) Do not say what you believe to be false, 2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

• Maxims of Relevance: Be relevant

• Maxims of Manner: 1) Avoid obscurity of expression, 2) Avoid ambiguity, 3) Be brief, 4) Be orderly

Grice (1975:47) gives the illustrations as follow in order to explain the maxims:

1) Quantity. If you are assisting me to mend me a car, I expect your contribution to be neither more or less than is required; if, for example, at a particular stage I need four screws, I expect you to hand me four, rather than two or six.

2) Quality. I expect your contributions to be genuine and not spurious. If I need sugar as an ingredient in the cake you are asking me to make, I do not expect you to hand me salt; if I need a spoon, I do not expect a trick spoon made of rubber.

3) Relation. I expect a partner’s contribution to be appropriate to immediate needs at each stage of the transaction; if I am mixing ingredients for a cake, I do not expect to be handed a good book, or even an oven cloth (though it might be an appropriate contribution at a later stage.)

4) Manner. I expect a partner to make it clear what contribution he is making, and to execute his performance with reasonable dispatch.

Wijana (1996: 46-52) states that it needs the participants’ cooperation to make the communication process goes well. Maxim of quantity wants every
conversationalist gives contribution as much as needed by interlocutor. Maxim of quality wants every participant says the real things based on adequate evidences. Maxim of relevance wants every participant gives the relevant contribution. Maxim of manner wants every conversationalist speaks directly, not ambiguously and abundantly.

2.2 The Politeness Maxims

As mentioned before, for a successful conversation, the partners must achieve a workable balance of contributions. Speaker and hearer in a rational conversation will cooperate in order to make each of their aims reached. The participants in a talk exchange do not only give deference to cooperative principles as suggested by Grice (1975) but also politeness maxims. According to Leech (1993:3), Grice’s cooperative principle (1975) could not always answer why the participants in a talk exchange are more apt to use indirect way to convey their meaning, so as not to follow maxim suggested in Grice’s cooperative principle.

Leech thinks that politeness has a very important rule in a society, and it is needed to elaborate cooperative principle and also a completion of cooperative principle. To show the relation of politeness principle and the cooperative principle, Leech illustrates as follow (1993:121-122):

(2) A: “We’ll all miss Bill and Agatha, won’t we?”
B: “Well, we’ll all miss Bill.”

In this dialogue, B has broken the rule of Grice’s cooperative principle especially maxim of quantity as B does not mention Agatha in his talk. From this talk, there is an implication that not all people will miss Agatha. Why B does not add “but we will not miss Agatha” in his talk is just for politeness reason, i.e. B wants to avoid impolite act toward third part (Agatha). So, it can be concluded that B hold some information for B merely obeys politeness principle.

According to Geoffrey Leech, there is a politeness principle with conversational maxims besides cooperative principle that is needed in an interaction. He lists six maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. The first and second maxim form a pair, as do the third and the fourth one.

2.2.1 The Tact maxim

The tact maxim states: 'Minimize the expression of beliefs which imply cost to other; maximize the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to other. The first part of this maxim fits in with Brown and Levinson's negative politeness strategy of minimizing the imposition, and the second part reflects the positive politeness strategy of attending to the hearer's interests, wants, and needs:

*Could I interrupt you for a second?*
If I could just clarify this then

2.2.2 The Generosity maxim

Leech's Generosity maxim states: 'Minimize the expression of benefit to self; maximize the expression of cost to self.' Unlike the tact maxim, the maxim of generosity focuses on the speaker, and says that others should be put first instead of the self.

You relax and let me do the dishes
You must come and have dinner with us

2.2.3 The Approbation maxim

The Approbation maxim states: 'Minimize the expression of beliefs which express dispraise of other; maximize the expression of beliefs which express approval of other.' It is preferred to praise others and if this is impossible, to sidestep the issue, to give some sort of minimal response (possibly through the use of euphemisms), or to remain silent. The first part of the maxim avoids disagreement; the second part intends to make other people feel good by showing solidarity.

I heard you singing at the karaoke last night. It was, um... different
John, I know you're a genius - would you know how to solve this math problem here?

2.2.4 The Modesty maxim

The Modesty maxim states: 'Minimize the expression of praise of self; maximize the expression of dispraise of self.'

Oh, I'm so stupid - I didn't make a note of our lecture! Did you?

2.2.5 The Agreement maxim

The Agreement maxim runs as follows: 'Minimize the expression of disagreement between self and other; maximize the expression of agreement between self and other.' It is in line with Brown and Levinson's positive politeness strategies of 'seek agreement' and 'avoid disagreement,' to which they attach great importance. However, it is not being claimed that people totally avoid disagreement. It is simply observed that they are much more direct in expressing agreement, rather than disagreement.

A: I don't want my daughter to do this; I want her to do that

B: Yes, but ma'am, I thought we resolved this already on your last visit
2.2.6 The Sympathy maxim

The sympathy maxim states: 'minimize antipathy between self and other; maximize sympathy between self and other.' This includes a small group of speech acts such as congratulation, commiseration, and expressing condolences - all of which is in accordance with Brown and Levinson's positive politeness strategy of attending to the hearer's interests, wants, and needs.

I was sorry to hear about your father

2.3 Face and Face Threatening Acts

Brown and Levinson (1987:61) define face as follows:

*Face, the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself, consisting in two related aspects: (a) negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non distraction –i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition. (b) Positive face: the positive consistent self-image or personality (crucially including the desire that this self image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants.*

In other words, it can be said that positive face is the desire of every member to be liked, admired, ratified, and related to positively, noting that one would threaten positive face by ignoring someone. While, negative face can be characterized as the want of every member that his actions be unimpeded by others. According to
Brown and Levinson, positive and negative face exist universally in human culture, and naturally there are utterances which can threat the face called Face Threatening Acts (FTA).

A face threatening act is an act that inherently damages the face of the addressee or the speaker by acting in opposition to the wants and desires of the other. Most of these acts are verbal, however, they can also be conveyed in the characteristics of speech (such as tone, inflection, etc) or in non-verbal forms of communication. At minimum, there must be at least one of the face threatening acts associated with an utterance. It is also possible to have multiple acts working within a single utterance.

2.3.1. Positive Face Threatening Acts

Positive face is threatened when the speaker or addressee does not care about their interlocutor’s feelings, wants, or does not want what the other wants. Positive face threatening acts can also cause damage to the speaker or the addressee. When an individual is forced to be separated from others so that their well being is treated less importantly, positive face is threatened.

**Damage to the addressee**

- An act that expresses the speaker’s negative assessment of the addressee’s positive face or an element of his/her positive face. The speaker can display this disapproval in two ways. The first approach is for the speaker to directly or indirectly indicate that he
dislikes some aspect of the addressee’s possessions, desires, or personal attributes. The second approach is for the speaker to express disapproval by stating or implying that the hearer is wrong, irrational, or misguided.

*Examples: expressions of disapproval (e.g. insults, accusations, complaints), contradictions, disagreements, or challenges.*

- An act that expresses the speaker’s indifference toward the addressee’s positive face.

- The addressee might be embarrassed for or fear the speaker.

*Examples: excessively emotional expressions.*

- The speaker indicates that he doesn’t have the same values or fears as the addressee

*Examples: disrespect, mention of topics which are inappropriate in general or in the context.*

- The speaker indicates that he is willing to disregard the emotional well being of the addressee.

*Examples: belittling or boasting.*
• The speaker increases the possibility that a face-threatening act will occur. This situation is created when a topic is brought up by the speaker that is a sensitive societal subject.

Examples: topics that relate to politics, race, religion.

• The speaker indicates that he is indifferent to the positive face wants of the addressee. This is most often expressed in obvious non-cooperative behavior.

Examples: interrupting, non-sequiturs.

• The speaker misidentifies the addressee in an offensive or embarrassing way. This may occur either accidentally or intentionally. Generally, this refers to the misuse of address terms in relation to status, gender, or age.

Example: Addressing a young woman as "ma'am" instead of "miss."

Damage to the Speaker

• An act that shows that the speaker is in some sense wrong, and unable to control himself.

• Apologies: In this act, speaker is damaging his own act by admitting that he regrets one of his previous acts.

• Acceptance of a compliment
• Inability to control one’s physical self
• Inability to control one’s emotional self
• Self-humiliation
• Confessions

2.3.2. Negative Face Threatening Acts

Negative face is threatened when an individual does not avoid or intend to avoid the obstruction of their interlocutor's freedom of action. It can cause damage to either the speaker or the addressee, and makes the one of the interlocutors submit their will to the other. Freedom of choice and action are impeded when negative face is threatened.

**Damage to the addressee**

- An act that affirms or denies a future act of the addressee creates pressure on the addressee to either perform or not perform the act.

*Examples: orders, requests, suggestions, advice, reminding, threats, or warnings.*

- An act that expresses the speaker’s sentiments of the addressee or the addressee’s belongings.

*Examples: compliments, expressions of envy or admiration, or expressions of strong negative emotion toward the hearer (e.g. hatred, anger, lust).*
• An act that expresses some positive future act of the speaker toward the addressee. In doing so, pressure has been put on the addressee to accept or reject the act and possibly incur a debt.

Examples: offers, and promises.

Damage to the Speaker

• An act that shows that the speaker is succumbing to the power of the addressee.

• Expressing thanks
• Accepting a thank you or apology
• Excuses
• Acceptance of offers
• A response to the addressee’s violation of social etiquette
• The speaker commits himself to something he does not want to do

Brown and Levinson (1987:66) explain that some acts could threat both positive and negative face at times, as follow:

Note that there is an overlap in this classification of FTA, because some FTA’s intrinsically threaten both negative and positive face (e.g. complaints, interruptions, threats, strong expressions of emotion, requests for personal information)
In accordance with Brown and Levinson idea (1987) that some acts can at once threat both positive and negative face, Hayashi (1996:230-231) classifies rejection as an act which can threat addressee’s positive and negative face. That is why people need to use the strategy to make rejection sounds more polite.

2.4 Brown and Levinson’s Politeness Strategy

Politeness strategies are used to formulate messages in order to save the addressee’s face when face-threatening acts are inevitable or desired. Brown and Levinson outline four main types of politeness strategies: bald on-record, negative politeness, positive politeness, and off-record (indirect).

2.4.1. Bald On-Record Strategy

Bald on-record strategies usually do not attempt to minimize the threat to the addressee’s face, although there are ways that bald on-record politeness can be used in trying to minimize FTA’s implicitly. Doing an act baldly, without redress, involves doing it in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible. Normally, an FTA will be done in this way only if the speaker does not fear retribution from the addressee, for example, in circumstances where (a) S and H both tacitly agree that the relevance of face demands may be suspended in the interests of urgency or efficiency; (b) where the danger to H’s face is very small, as in offers, requests, suggestions that are clearly in H’s interest and do not require
great sacrifices of S (e.g. “Come in” or “Do sit down”); and (c) where S is vastly superior in power to H, or can enlist audience support to destroy H’s face without losing his own. Often using such a strategy will shock or embarrass the addressee, and so this strategy is most often utilized in situations where the speaker has a close relationship with the audience, such as family or close friends. Brown and Levinson outline various cases, in which one might use the bald on-record strategy, including:

- Instances in which threat minimizing does not occur
  - Great urgency or desperation

*Watch out!*

  - Speaking as if great efficiency is necessary

*Hear me out:...*

  - Task-oriented

*Pass me the hammer.*

  - Little or no desire to maintain someone's face

*Don't forget to clean the blinds!*

  - Doing the FTA is in the interest of the addressee

*Your headlights are on!*
Instances in which the threat is minimized implicitly

- Welcomes

  *Come in.*

- Offers

  *Leave it, I'll clean up later.*

  *Eat!*

2.4.2. Positive Politeness Strategy

Positive politeness strategies seek to minimize the threat to the addressee’s positive face. They are used to make the addressee feel good about himself, his interests or possessions, and are most usually used in situations where the audience knows each other fairly well. In addition to hedging and attempts to avoid conflict, some strategies of positive politeness include statements of friendship, solidarity, compliments, and the following examples from Brown and Levinson:

- Strategy 1: Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods)

  *You look sad. Can I do anything?*

  *Goodness you cut your hair...By the way I came to borrow some flour*

- Strategy 2: Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)

  *What a fantastic garden you have*
That’s a nice haircut you got; where did you get it?

- **Strategy 3: Intensify interest to H**
  
  *You know*
  
  *See what I mean?*
  
- **Strategy 4: Use in-group identity markers**
  
  *Heh, mate, can you lend me a dollar?*
  
  *Help me with this bag, will you son?*
  
- **Strategy 5: Seek agreement**
  
  A: I had a flat tyre on the way home
  
  B: Oh God, a flat tyre!
  
- **Strategy 6: Avoid disagreement**
  
  *Yes, it’s rather long; not short certainly.*
  
  *Yes, yes she is small, not really small but certainly not very big*
  
- **Strategy 7: Presuppose/raise/assert common ground**
  
  A: *Oh, this cut hurts awfully, Mum*
  
  B: *Yes dear, it hurts terribly, I know*
  
- **Strategy 8: Joke**
  
  *OK if I tackle those cookies now?*
  
- **Strategy 9: Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants**
  
  *Look, I know you can’t bear parties, but this one will really be good. Do come!*
  
- **Strategy 10: Offer, promise**
  
  *I’ll drop sometime next week*
**If you wash the dishes, I’ll vacuum the floor**

- Strategy 11: Be optimistic
  
  *You will lend me your lawnmower for the weekend. I hope*
  
  *I’ll just come along, if you don’t mind*

- Strategy 12: Include both S and H in the activity
  
  *If we help each other, I guess, we’ll both sink or swim in this course*
  
  *Give us a break*

- Strategy 13: Give (or ask for) reasons
  
  *Why not lend me your cottage for the weekend?*
  
  *Why I don’t help you with that suitcase?*

- Strategy 14: Assume or assert reciprocity
  
  *I’ll lend you my novel if you lend me your article*

- Strategy 15: Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)
  
  *Please let me know if there is anything I can do for you*

2.4.3. Negative Politeness Strategy

Negative politeness strategies are oriented towards the hearer’s negative face and emphasize avoidance of imposition on the hearer. These strategies presume that the speaker will be imposing on the listener and there is a higher potential for awkwardness or embarrassment than in bald on record strategies and positive politeness strategies. Negative face is the desire to remain autonomous so the speaker is more apt to include an out for the listener, through distancing styles like apologies. Strategies and examples from Brown and Levinson include:
- **Strategy 1: Be conventionally indirect**
  
  Can you shut the door please?

  *Would you know where Oxford Street is?*

- **Strategy 2: Question, hedge**
  
  Perhaps, he might have taken it, maybe

  *Do me a favour, will you?*

- **Strategy 3: Be pessimistic**
  
  You couldn’t find your way to lending me a thousand dollars, could you?

  *Could you jump over that five-foot fence?*

- **Strategy 4: Minimize the imposition**
  
  *I just want to ask you if I can borrow a single sheet of paper*

  *It’s not too much out of your way, just a couple of blocks*

- **Strategy 5: Give deference**
  
  *Excuse me sir, but would you mind if I close the window?*

  *Mr. President if I thought you were trying to protect someone, I would have walked out*

- **Strategy 6: Apologize**
  
  *I’m sorry; it’s a lot to ask, but can you lend me a thousand dollars?*

  *I hope this isn’t going to bother you very much, but can you give this package to Mr. Smith?*

- **Strategy 7: Impersonalize S and H**
  
  *It is expected that you send this letter today*

  *I would go and see the Dean if I were you*
Strategy 8: State the FTA as a general rule

*Passengers will please refrain from flushing toilets on the train*

*International regulations require that the fuselage be sprayed with DDT*

Strategy 9: Nominalize

*Spitting will not be tolerated*

*Your good performance on the examinations impressed us favourably*

Strategy 10: Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H

*I’ll never be able to repay you if you lend me a thousand dollars today*

*I’d be eternally grateful to you if you would tell me the truth*

Favor seeking, or a speaker asking the hearer for a favor, is a common example of negative politeness strategies in use. Held observes three main stages in favor-seeking: the preparatory phase, the focal phase, and the final phase:

1. The preparatory phase is when the favor-seeking is preceded by elaborate precautions against loss of face to both sides. It often involves signals of openings and markers to be used to clarify the situation (e.g. ‘You see,’ or ‘so,’). The request is often softened, made less direct, and imposing (e.g. past continuous ‘I was wondering’; informal tag ‘What d’you reckon?’). The speaker must also reduce his own self-importance in the matter and exaggerate the hearer’s (down-scaling compliments).

2. The focal stage is subdivided into elements such as asker’s reasons or constraints (e.g. ‘I’ve tried everywhere but can’t get one’), the other’s face (e.g. ‘You’re the only person I can turn to’), and more.
3. The third stage is the final stage which consists of anticipatory thanks, promises, and compliments (e.g. ‘I knew you would say yes. You’re an angel.’).

An example that is given by McCarthy and Carter is the following dialogue from the Australian television soap opera, "Neighbours":

Clarrie: So I said to him, forget your books for one night, throw a party next weekend.

Helen: A party at number 30! What will Dorothy say about that?

Clarrie: Well, what she doesn't know won't hurt her. Of course, I'll be keeping my eye on things, and (SIGNAL OF OPENING) that brings me to my next problem. (EXPLAIN PROBLEM) You see, these young people, they don't want an old codger like me poking my nose in, so I'll make myself scarce, but I still need to be closer to hand, you see. So, (ASK FAVOR) I was wondering, would it be all right if I came over here on the night? What d'you reckon?

Helen: Oh, Clarrie, I...

Clarrie: Oh (MINIMIZATION) I'd be no bother. (REINFORCE EXPLANATION) It'd mean a heck of a lot to those kids.

Helen: All right.

Clarrie: (THANK WITH BOOST) I knew you'd say yes. You're an angel, Helen.

Helen: Ha! (laughs)
All of this is done in attempt to avoid a great deal of imposition on the hearer and is concerned with proceeding towards a goal in the smoothest way and with sensitivity to one's interlocutors. An English ('Excuse me, sir, could you please close the window') is associated with the avoidance or downplaying of an imposition; the more we feel we might be imposing, the more deferential we might be. It is clearly a strategy for negative politeness and the redressing of a threat to negative face, through things like favor-seeking.

2.4.4. Off-Record Indirect Strategy

The final politeness strategy outlined by Brown and Levinson is the indirect strategy. This strategy uses indirect language and removes the speaker from the potential to be imposing. For example, a speaker using the indirect strategy might merely say “wow, it’s getting cold in here” insinuating that it would be nice if the listener would get up and turn up the thermostat without directly asking the listener to do so. Other examples of this strategy are:

- Give hints:
  
  *Damn, I’m out of cash, I forget to go to the bank today*

- Be vague:

  *Perhaps someone should have been more responsible*

- Be sarcastic, or joking:

  *Yeah, he's a real rocket scientist!*
Choice of Strategy

Paul Grice argues that all conversationalists are rational beings who are primarily interested in the efficient conveying of messages. Brown and Levinson use this argument in their politeness theory by saying that rational agents will choose the same politeness strategy as any other would under the same circumstances to try to mitigate face. They show the available range of verbal politeness strategies to redress loss of face. FTAs have the ability to mutually threaten face; therefore rational agents seek to avoid FTAs or will try to use certain strategies to minimize the threat.

Speaker (S) will weigh:

1. the want to communicate the content of the FTA in question
2. the want to be efficient or urgent
3. the want to maintain H's face to any degree

In most cooperative circumstances where 3 is greater than 2, S will want to minimize the FTA. The greater potential for loss of face requires greater redressive action. If the potential for loss of face is too great, the speaker may make the decision to abandon the FTA completely and say nothing.

The number next to each strategy corresponds to the danger-level of the particular FTA. The more dangerous the particular FTA is, the more S will tend to use a higher numbered strategy.
1. No redressive action
   o Bald On-Record- leaves no way for H to minimize the FTA

2. Positive Redressive action
   o S satisfies a wide range of H’s desires not necessarily related to the FTA
     ▪ Shows interest in H
     ▪ Claims common ground with H
     ▪ Seeks agreement
     ▪ Gives sympathy

3. Negative Redressive action
   o S satisfies H’s desires to be unimpeded—the want that is directly challenged by the FTA
     ▪ Be conventionally indirect
     ▪ Minimize imposition on H
     ▪ Beg forgiveness
     ▪ Give deference
   o This implies that the matter is important enough for S to disturb H

4. Off-Record
   o S has the opportunity to evade responsibility by claiming that H’s interpretation of the utterance as a FTA is wrong

5. Don't do the FTA
Payoffs Associated with each Strategy

In deciding which strategy to use, the speaker runs through the individual payoffs of each strategy.

- **Bald on record**
  - enlists public pressure
  - S gets credit for honesty, outspokenness which avoids the danger of seeming manipulative
  - S avoids danger of being misunderstood

- **Positive Politeness**
  - minimizes threatening aspect by assuring that S considers to be of the same kind with H
  - criticism may lose much of its sting if done in a way that asserts mutual friendship
  - when S includes himself equally as a participant in the request or offer, it may lessen the potential for FTA debt
  - “Let’s get on with dinner” to a husband in front of the TV

- **Negative Politeness**
  - Helps avoid future debt by keeping social distance and not getting too familiar with the addressee
➢ pays respect or deference by assuming that you may be intruding on the hearer in return for the FTA

➢ "I don't mean to bother you, but can I ask a quick question?"

• Off record

➢ get credit for being tactful, non-coercive

➢ avoid responsibility for the potentially face-damaging interpretation

➢ give the addressee an opportunity to seem to care for S because it tests H's feelings towards S

➢ If S wants H to close the window, he may say "It's cold in here." If H answers Ill go close the window then he is responding to this potentially threatening act by giving a “gift” to the original speaker and therefore S avoids the potential threat of ordering H around and H gets credit for being generous or cooperative

• Don’t Do the FTA

➢ S avoids offending H at all

➢ S also fails to achieve his desired communication

➢ no overt examples exist