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Linguistic and Cultural Analysis of Politeness Forms Fixed in Language Consciousness and Their Role in Corporate Communication

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ABSTRACT
In modern globalized world where a great number of people work in transnational corporations or their overseas branches to keep up effective communication requires knowledge and understanding of both linguistic and cultural aspects of being polite not to break up corporate communication. The article analyses linguistic means to express politeness in English language and notion of being polite in British culture. We suppose that they are fixed in language consciousness of native speakers and thus the absence of those linguistic means in speech of people from other cultures may lead to misunderstanding or even break in communication. Literature review gave us material to distinguish basic linguistic means of politeness in English language and to identify behavioral and character features that define a polite person in British culture. Empirical material taken from different sources (46 transcripts from talk shows and interviews) and its analysis in terms of chosen forms of politeness allowed us to make a conclusion on most frequently used means to express politeness in Great Britain. The study showed that for British culture to be polite means to be indirect, not to boast (self-deprecation or irony), sometimes to understate. These cultural features of British politeness determine the choice of linguistic means to express it. The study provides frequency analysis of those means in economic discourse (on the example of transcripts from talk shows and interviews). We suppose that results of our study can be applied in cross-cultural communication training for people that are going to work in British companies or make partnerships with British business people.

1.Introduction

The concepts of personality and consciousness were widely covered in the works of leading psychologists, and linguists. Existing points of view on these concepts emphasize their close relationship, since consciousness is considered as a key feature of any personality (S.L. Rubinstein, L.S. Vygotsky, A. A. Ukhtomsky, A.G. Asmolov, etc.). Therefore, according to S.L. Rubenstein, consciousness is a mental activity comprising the reflection of the world and itself (Rubenstein, 1998:280). L.S. Vygotsky emphasized that it is necessary to study consciousness through human behavior, its activity (Vygotsky, 1996:98).

Following these ideas, A.N. Leontief defines consciousness as a special internal movement generated by the movement of human activity and as a reflection of any reality subject, its activities, itself (Leontief A. N., 2005), as the image of the world open to the subject on the one hand and where the subject, its actions, and states are also included on the other hand.

Emphasizing the continuity of the concepts of consciousness and personality, and making a review of the concept of personality in the Russian psychological school, A.N. Leontief points out that personality is a result of a constant self-determination process of a person in the real world, regulating cognitive processes, actions, experiences, etc. It is primary in relation to activity and consciousness (Leontief A. N., 2005). Following ideas of psychologists, linguists also believe that the main signs persona lingua are language consciousness and self-consciousness.

According to L. S. Vygotsky, knowledge formed in cognition of the external, objective world form the existential level of it, and further reflection on them leads to the formation of a reflexive level of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1996). Thus, the image fixed in consciousness includes a whole system of personal values, knowledge of certain global principles, which includes norms of politeness.

If we consider language consciousness in a narrow sense, it can be defined as a reflection of a specific structure in the subconsciousness of a native speaker. This structure includes a set of laws, rules and laws of language at the level of skills, such as ability of a native speaker to choose and use language tools in the communication process, the ability to evaluate any speech as correct or not. In addition, it should be noted that the criterion of correctness will be language consciousness itself.

It has been proved through researches that success and effectiveness of intercultural interaction is predetermined not only by knowledge of the language. Language is only the first condition necessary for communication. Apart from fluent language speech skills, it is important to have knowledge of the culture that people one communicates with belong to, their traditions, values and world perception.

Violation of cultural norms is usually perceived very negatively by its representatives and may lead to serious conflicts. Many researchers note the fact that when communicating with foreigners, people easily forgive their grammatical and lexical errors, as such, errors are explained by the lack of linguistic knowledge, but they are very sensitive to any violation of standards of politeness, since such standards are believed to have been violated intentionally. Thus, politeness plays a crucial role in communication, as it allows us to regulate the behavior of the interlocutors and establish positive relationships. In this research, we will investigate this essential element of communication by analyzing its occurrence in discourse.

Thus, our research is devoted to different approaches to politeness among scholars and study of main politeness forms in English language in business discourse. It will give us opportunity to make some conclusions on how these forms can and should be used for effective corporate communication.

2.Literature review

Let us first dwell upon some of the conceptualizations of politeness in English language described by leading scholars.

The English term politeness is defined in The New Oxford Dictionary of English as “having or showing behavior that is respectful and considerate of other people” (Pearsall, 1998: 1435). The word itself dates back to the XVth century and was derived from Late Medieval Latin word politus ('to smooth'). However, the word became more prominent in the early XVIIIth century England.

The above-mentioned definition of politeness refers to demonstrating 'good manners' or in other words, 'courtesy', which implies showing what one thinks of others. The term courtesy is borrowed from French *courtoisie*, which originates from court life in medieval Europe, where «to set an example of good behavior which was essential for a courteous man, be he a king or lowly squire» (Wildeblood and Brinson, 1965: 44). It seems that politeness itself originated in the upper classes of society using certain behavior, which was named as politeness, to distinguish themselves from those lower in the social hierarchy. However, this behavior spread into wider society later on.

In the past century, politeness started to be used in equal manner, losing to some extent its feature of describing the upper classes. In modern English, the terms 'polished' and 'refined' more often imply modesty than demonstration of a higher class. This transformation into a more egalitarian notion can be noticed in various definitions of politeness that have recently appeared in pragmatics. The definitions fall into four groups:

1.politeness as 'behavior avoiding conflict and promoting smooth communication';

2.politeness as 'socially appropriate behavior';

3.politeness as 'consideration for the feelings of others';

The definition of politeness as 'conflict avoidance' is one of the most common in pragmatic research (Brown P. & Levinson S., 1987; Grice & Leech, 1983 et al).

The definition of politeness as a means to avoid conflict and promote harmony in communication is a common understanding reflected in many studies on politeness nowadays. It is closely related to the original meaning of politeness, which implies that, an interlocutor uses some special linguistic means to make the conversation or a relationship run smoothly. This refers us to theory of Brown and Levinson, which describes politeness as face preservation (Brown P. & Levinson S., 1987). By "Face", the scholars imply a certain social image, in the preservation of which every member of society is interested. In the process of communication, the interlocutors are interested in saving both their own 'face' and the face of their partner thus creating a balanced communication and maintaining harmony.

Among the first scholars who studied the politeness phenomenon from the point of view of pragmatics were Paul Grice and Geoffrey Leech. Grice described politeness as a means of cooperation between the speakers, which helps to create a positive relationship and avoid conflict, whereas Leech accentuated that it is the speaker, who needs to make the best of effort and not the hearer.

The purpose of the principle of cooperation is informative and productive communication. It seems that this principle is most suitable for business communication and formal communication style.

Geoffrey Leech, however, believed that his principle of politeness is more effective in managing the communication process as compared to the principle of cooperation of Grice as it maintains social balance and friendly relations between interlocutors and makes it clear that they are primarily interested in cooperating with each other (Leech G., 1981). The politeness principle proposed by Leech consists of 6 maxims:

*Tact Maxim***:** reduce the cost of the listener and increase the benefit of the listener.

Generosity Maxim: reduce your own benefit; increase the benefit of the listener.

*Approbation Maxim***:** reduce the conviction (reprimand) of the hearer, praise your interlocutor more often.

*Modesty Maxim***:** praise yourself less; blame yourself more.

*Agreement Maxim***:** reduce disagreements between you and the interlocutors to create a balance.

*Sympathy Maxim***:** reduce antipathy between you and your interlocutors, increase sympathy (Leech G., 1983: 16)

Leech admits the possibility of cross-cultural variation in politeness, making the assumption that in different cultures preference may be given to different maxims.

Another meaning of politeness that occurs in some definitions is appropriate or adequate behavior according to social norms. One of the scholars who viewed politeness from such perspective was Fraser. He proposed "…being polite constitutes operating within the current terms and conditions of the conversational contract…" (Fraser B., 1981). The conversational contract is basically, an alternative conceptualization of norms based on which interlocutors can expect a particular behavior from each other in conversations. Some of these norms are established in so-called conventions, while others are negotiable in the course of interaction. In other words, actions that comply with the etiquette standards established in society are regarded as polite, and those that do not correspond to them are considered rude. Politeness standards can be presented by the rules contained, for instance, in books on etiquette. One of these books is The Gentlemen's Book of Laws and the Manual of Politeness by Cecil Hartley, published in 1875. In this book, the author writes about the rules of behavior of a gentleman in an aristocratic society. Despite the fact that the book was written in the XIX century, the rules of gentleman are still relevant even in modern English society. For example, "Avoid boasting. It is a very bad taste. It is quite an illusion to boast of your intimacy with outstanding people" (Hartley C., 1875).

Another approach to the concept of politeness is the definition of politeness as consideration for others' feelings. This is also related to the Brown and Levinson politeness theory, namely on the positive politeness expressed by concern for interactors' social status and their social relationship. This conceptualization is derived from the definition of politeness mentioned at the beginning of this article - as respectful or considerate behavior. In other words, this definition describes best how politeness is commonly perceived by ordinary speakers of English.

Taking into account the basic definitions of politeness presented above, it can be noted that all of them, complementing each other, describe politeness as a behavior that demonstrates the respectful attitude of communicants towards each other in order to effectively interact and form good relationships. It appears that politeness in English involves being both well-mannered and showing consideration to the feelings or position of others, thus ensuring better relationships between people.

We shall later investigate the means used to express politeness in British discourse in depth focusing mostly on Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness.

P. Brown and S. Levinson published their monograph Politeness: Some universals in language usage in 1987. In their work, the scholars associate politeness with the concept of 'face preservation'. The concept of 'face' was borrowed by the authors from the English idiom "to lose face" described by Hoffmann. 'Face', in their understanding, is a kind of public emotional image, which everyone has and tries to preserve. According to Hoffman 'To study face-saving is to study the traffic rules of social interaction' (Hoffman E., 1972).

A 'face' can be negative and positive. By negative face, the authors mean the individuals' intention not to harm the interlocutor by their actions and to protect themselves from such harm. By a positive face, the authors mean the intention of the individual to get approval from the interlocutor.

When communicating, each of the interlocutors, as a rule, is interested in supporting each other and preserving each other's 'face'. The positive and negative politeness help to reach the goal. These two types of politeness reveal the main mechanism of human relationships - rapprochement and distance. In other words, politeness is a balance between the demonstration of close and distant relations.

Positive politeness can also be called cooperative as it serves to mutually preserve the positive images (faces) of the interlocutors. By using it, the speaker expresses his positive attitude towards the addressee. Typically, positive politeness is expressed by attention to the interlocutor, positive comments related to him, compliments, the intention to avoid disagreements between each other etc.

For example: You have such wonderful roses! I wish we had grown the same. This compliment should get the interlocutor on the good side of the speaker. Thus, the interlocutor is pleased that his work was appreciated and caused praise.

Negative politeness serves to preserve the independence of the individual and the need for privacy. It is characterized by formality and restraint and expresses the so-called politeness of distance or reverence. For example: Would you be so kind close the window please? By this sentence, the speaker expresses not only a request, but also a concern for the interlocutor, fearing to disturb him.

P. Braun and S. Levinson believe that negative politeness is the basis of a respectful behavior. It is a well-developed set of conventional strategies designed to demonstrate to the interlocutor the recognition of his independence and personal space, to assure the listener that there are no intentions on the part of the speaker to violate the boundaries existing between them. The fact that negative politeness is the basis of English politeness is not accidental for a culture in which personal privacy is one of the most important cultural values. Among the basic values of English culture, researchers most often single out individualism, rationalism, independence, pragmatism, competitiveness, equality, traditionalism, tolerance.

It should also be mentioned that if the interlocutor uses the wrong communicative strategy, he can 'damage' the interlocutor's 'face'. Such speech acts are called face-threatening (FTA). Thus, as a threat may be considered the lack of concern about the interlocutor's personal space, freedom feelings and needs expressed in orders, requests that put the interlocutor under some sort of pressure, criticism, ridicule, accusation, disrespect, lack of attention etc.

The authors of the monograph consider these strategies of face preservation universal for all cultures, however, they admit that some peculiarities can be observed in each culture: "…while the content of face will differ in different cultures, we are assuming that the mutual knowledge of members' public self-image or face, and the social necessity to orient oneself to it in interaction, are universal" (Brown, Levinson 1987).

2.1. Politeness and culture

Let us consider the difference between the polite communicative behavior of the Russians and the English. According to T.V. Larina, the main differences in the communicative behavior of the British and Russians are in cultural values and in the socio-cultural relations, namely in the horizontal and vertical distances, which do not coincide in the compared cultures (Larina, 2009).

The social distance is directly related to such cultural dimensions as individualism and collectivism. The more individualistic the culture, the greater the distance separating its representatives. A collectivistic culture, on the contrary, is characterized by a close distance of communication. Great Britain refers to an individualistic culture and Russia to the collectivistic one. Thus, to establish a contact with a particular person, the British have to shorten the distance with the help of various communication strategies. For example, with the help of positive politeness (or politeness of rapprochement), which is aimed at demonstrating a positive attitude of the speaker to the interlocutor. This kind of communicative approach is often noticeable in greetings and farewells, which are distinguished by verbosity and verbal demonstration of disposition, goodwill, and attention. British people very often send signs of politeness to others. They are noticed to greet, apologize, thank, and show their sympathy more often than Russian people do. All this is done in order to reduce the distance, to overcome the deeply ingrained restraint of the British and, if necessary, to establish contact with unfamiliar people.

To overcome the distance, the British can start a conversation with the simplest topics, such as the weather. According to Kate Fox, any conversation between the British often begins with the weather. It might seem a rather dull topic. However, the point is not in interest, but rather in the fact that the weather in Britain is very unpredictable, and to start a conversation with remarks on weather is always relevant, since it often changes due to the location of the island between the ocean and the sea, which, of course, affects the variability of weather. Rain can start any day of any season; dry weather can change dramatically by wind and then rain. The weather topic has even become a kind of code that the British use to show their interest, to say hello or just politely start a conversation with a person who is not close enough: “English weather-speak is a form of code, evolved to help us overcome our natural reserve and actually talk to each other. Everyone knows, for example, that ‘Nice day, isn’t it?’, ‘Ooh isn’t it cold?’, ‘Still raining, eh?’ and other variants on the theme are not requests of meteorological data: they are ritual greetings, conversation-starters or default ‘fillers’… In fact, ‘Oh isn’t it cold’ and all the others – is English code for ‘I’d like to talk to you-will you talk to me?’” (Fox K.,2004, p.26). Starting a conversation with the weather is a win-win option, because the interlocutor, according to the well-established rules of etiquette, cannot but agree with the speaker and must answer. Violation of this rule can be perceived as highly impolite: “…another important rule of English weather - speak always agree. Failure to agree in this manner is a serious breach of etiquette”. The topic of weather itself is not at all important in this type of communication. What matters is the form of communication itself, not its content. Its purpose is to demonstrate the interlocutor his attention, sympathy, disposition, good attitude, desire to communicate.

In Russian culture, there is no such significant social distance as in the British, and therefore there is no need for special strategies for its reduction. Russians, unlike the British, value sincerity and naturalness of behavior, as well as the content of the conversation, more. For them, the beginning of a conversation about something insignificant, like the weather, may be considered ridiculous or unnecessary unless it is relevant.

According to T.S. Larina, another important difference between Russian and English communicative behavior is the manifestation of emotionality in communication: in Russian culture, the emotions are expressed freely and naturally, and in English, the expression of emotions is rather strategic, used for communicative purposes. Exaggeration of emotions is a prominent characteristic of the English phatic communication, while Russians prefer emotional restraint and sincerity (Larina: 2009).

The author also notes that there is a tendency in British discourse to be rather verbose when being polite. It is not enough for British people to say "thank you" one single time for expressing gratitude or "goodbye" when leaving. The more words are used in communication, the more polite it is considered. The verbosity in English culture is a sign of

interest in continuing the communication. In Russian culture, wordiness most often does not have such importance, on the contrary, Russians do not like excessive talks.

2.2. Ways to express politeness in British discourse

Most of the UK foreign visitors probably notice the English reserve and they are often impressed by English courtesy. However, after a little investigation it can be clearly noticed that at certain level, the polite behavior noticed in English every-day discourse and non-verbal behavior is a type of negative politeness the notion of which, as we know, was introduced by Brown and Levinson.

The negative politeness in British discourse, stresses the importance of distance, reserve, self-deprecation and is manifested in discourse by such means as indirectness, hints, apologies and a lack of assertiveness. This type of politeness is related to other people's need not to be intruded or imposed upon, unlike 'positive politeness', which is concerned with people's need for social approval and positive relationship. The restraint, contact-avoidance and cautiousness are prominent features of negative politeness and are predominant in British culture.

Thus, many British scholars warn foreigners that British politeness and courtesy has very little to do with friendliness or good nature but is rather a way to express concern for other people and not make both themselves and others feel uncomfortable, abused or at least slightly hurt. Hence, they are often reserved, not frank, clear, direct and assertive enough when interacting with other people.

On the one hand, this behavior may seem like unfriendliness, however, according to Kate Fox, negative politeness is actually a kind of consideration: English people judge others by themselves, and assume that other people share this obsessive need for privacy – so they mind their own business and politely ignore those who surround them (Fox K., 2004).

Indirectness seems to be an essential tool used to express politeness in British culture. By indirectness we mean both verbal and non-verbal implications which representatives of British culture use in order to be polite and comply with the rules of negative politeness by saving both their and the interlocutor's face.

According to Sarah Mills, conventional indirectness implies the usage of various mitigation forms such as 'can you' instead of a direct request. For example: "Can you finish this off soon?' rather than 'Finish this off soon'" (Mills, 2017). ***'Can you'*** is conventionally indirect because it is used as an enquiry about ability which transforms the command into a question. This makes the command indirect and less authoritative.

Among other types of lexis used for being indirect and thus minimizing the imposition on hearers are such words as ***perhaps, probably, maybe, possibly.*** These words act as down-toners and are used to attenuate the strong impact of the negative statement.

The use of modal verbs such as ***could, would, should, may, might*** is also one of the key strategies in negative politeness as it minimizes the imposition of the action verb that follows it. The use of ***"I would…" phrase*** conveys rather a suggestion than an imposition. Thus, by using it, the speaker does not violate the hearer's freedom of decision.

In addition, in order to avoid FTA (face threatening act) speakers often use impersonalized patterns such as ***it or there + a modal verb form.*** For example: ***it may be that…; there may be…; it should be…*** These patterns are often used in order not to criticize directly and to avoid creating an FTA. In other words, in order to be polite, the speaker can tactfully present the possibility of an event instead of being directly assertive. For this purpose, are also used patterns consisting ***of I+ modal lexical verb+ that clause.*** For example: ***I believe that…; I think that…; I hope that….***

Apart from that, there are such patterns as ***let me*** or ***I would like to + action verb***, which are used before expressing an opinion or performing an act. Thus, the speaker does not appear to be inferior to the listeners.

Moreover, criticism is often softened by **pseudo-conditionals** or **apology + but** clauses. For example:

1. "If you forgive my asking, in which world are you living?" [ALASTAIR STEWART, BBC NEWS, Second prime ministerial debate 22 April 2010].

In this example, the hearer could view this question as rude without the pseudo-conditional softening the impact of the message at the end of the clause.

2. I'm sorry, but it's not your business, raising the question about the building trade. [GORDON BROWN, BBC NEWS, Second prime ministerial debate 22 April 2010]

3. “Pardon my asking, but what have you personally done in the last six months to use more environmentally friendly and sustainable forms of transport? (audience member asking the candidates, BBC NEWS, first prime ministerial debate 15April 2010).

The above-mentioned constructions are used to soften the forthcoming part of the sentence. Without the **“sorry + but”** construction the utterance would sound rather rude.

The last but not least means of negative politeness is the use of **euphemisms**, which replace the harsh words possessing negative connotations by less offensive ones. For example:

1. “It also reveals that the future funding mechanism for the new £430 "pupil premium", which will be announced tomorrow, could concentrate the money on disadvantaged pupils in shire schools instead of urban ones” (guardian.co.uk, Sunday 12 December 2011).

In this case, ***disadvantaged*** is a euphemism for poor.

2. “And while we should be sensitive to the fact that 100,000 people a year are expected to lose their jobs in the public sector, we should remember that, in the context of a 30 million-strong workforce, they are a **tiny minority**” (guardian.co.uk, 19 November 2010).

Tiny minority in this case performs an inducing function because the politician’s aim is to convince that 30 million people out of work is a very small number.

Non-conventional indirectness also consists of hints and dubious statements uttered by a speaker, the meaning of which the hearer is supposed to understand. For instance, the question ‘You wouldn’t be around on Sunday, would you?’, might be understood as an invitation or a pre-request by many speakers who are familiar with this type of request strategy (Mills, 2017).

Sara Mills also mentioned in her book that one of the quintessential features of British politeness is not saying what one actually means when the truth might be unpleasant for the hearer. This is usually expressed by hints and implications. In her book she provided an example of a Tweeter feed posted on the 26th of February 2016. It described ways to say ‘please let me leave’ and represented a list of phrases, which an English person could possibly say in a situation when they need to leave, but do not want to offend the host or the one who shares their company:

• Anyway, I won’t keep you.
• I’ll let you get on.
• I should start making a move.
• Right <slap thigh>.

As can be noticed, none of these utterances explicitly says, ‘please let me leave’. However, all of them contain hints which refer to the negative politeness principle. By using such hints, the person shows concern for the interlocutor.

A famous British journalist Robert Temple also provided some interesting examples of hints in his book *Very British Problems* (Temple, R., 2014). According to the author, in office environment, one can indicate their dissatisfaction or anger towards the others implicitly in emails by ‘switching from “kind regards” to just “regards” as a warning that you’re dangerously close to losing your temper’ (Temple, R., 2014: 40).

Another example of implication by Temple is related to non-verbal communication. In the Quiet Coach on a train one can indicate their displeasure at someone who is making noise, not by directly complaining or asking the person to stop, but rather by ‘glowering at the Quiet Coach sign in the hope that it will cause a chatterbox to be ejected through the roof of the train’(Temple.R.,2014).

Thus, it is clear from the above-mentioned examples that hints are widely used as a way of implying rather than stating something unpleasant directly.

The use of ‘sorry’ is perhaps one of the most common ways to express politeness in any language; however, in British culture this word is often used in situation where it is rather unnecessary. For example, when someone steps on one’s foot, it is often the case that both people involved in the accident will apologize unlike in other cultures. Here is how this feature of British politeness is described by a British organization Debrett’s Peerage and Baronetage which deals with giving online advice on etiquette on a professional level. According to Debrett’s, foreign visitors to the UK should

not assume that the use of 'sorry' is always sincere: "For many British people, apologizing is a default reaction to life's little irritants. This response is deeply rooted in the British mentality. If someone bumps into you, steps on your foot, or spills your drink, it is quite normal to utter "sorry" even though it is not your fault. Surely, this is not a real apology. Don't take the apologies seriously; be aware that sometimes the word "sorry" is not an admission of guilt but a hidden accusation. The British apologizing is pretty contagious, and you'll soon find yourself reciprocating. If you find yourself muttering 'sorry' when a boorish drunkard knocks over your glass, you'll realize you have truly assimilated" (Debrett's, 2008).

The Debrett's comment on the use of 'sorry' proves ones again that what is said is not always sincere when it comes to British politeness. It should be noted that Debrett's is not criticizing this cultural feature, the often usage of 'sorry' is not seen as negative but rather as positive because the author mentions that if foreign visitors adopt this type of insincere apology, it will mean that they have 'truly assimilated', which is a good sign.

Rob Temple presents another commentary on the use of 'sorry' in the book "Very British Problems". The author calls British behavior a pathology, among the symptoms of which is the tendency to apologize for something that is not one's fault. According to Temple, British people tend to apologize: "to furniture, when you bump into it . . . to a mystery caller because you think they may have called the wrong number . . . as a way of catching someone's attention . . . when entering a lift . . . for asking a taxi driver if he minds stopping at a cashpoint, as there's a chance he'd prefer it if you didn't pay . . . to tourists for the inclement weather . . . for being late, despite actually being on time and the person you're meeting being early . . . for informing someone that they've dropped their purse .. . because you think someone may be standing on your foot . . . to the paramedics for troubling them over something as a stroke . . . for asking a fellow commuter if you may borrow their bag's seat for a short while . . . for apologizing so much . . . for no reason whatsoever" (Temple R., 2014:147).

In the above-mentioned book, British people are described as apologizing in any awkward situation and often when it is not their fault. Even though the author calls it a 'pathology', it is still seen as a positive feature, which unites all British people.

Both authors being British describe their own nation with criticism and a lot of self-deprecation which is also quite typical for this culture and is also intentionally used for expressing politeness. We shall describe it further in the next subparagraph.

Self-deprecation is deeply ingrained in British mentality just like implications and the use of 'sorry'. It is mostly expressed by belittling oneself, by intentionally underestimating one's own success or by making a serious situation related to one's own wellbeing look like a trifle. Modesty is seen in British society as a virtue in contrast to cultures such as North America, where people are used to speaking about their achievements and possessions openly without being frowned upon.

It should be noted that self-deprecation, just like the previously mentioned means to express politeness, is also closely related to negative politeness which urges the interlocutors to preserve each other's face, be as concerned about each other as possible and put the others in the first place after themselves. By underestimating yourself and your virtues, you appear to be modest and it creates a good impression about yourself and makes you feel less embarrassed and awkward if your virtues are of higher values than of those you communicate with. In addition, if your interlocutor has fewer achievements and is less successful then by underestimating and belittling yourself you make him feel more comfortable in your company.

Some very curious examples of British intentional self-deprecation can be found in the earlier mentioned book by Robert Temple 'Very British Problems': "Saying "It's nothing really" . . . to show you are very close to losing consciousness . . . feeling terrible at your desk and hoping you'll be told to leave earlier, then replying "I'll survive" when asked how you're feeling' . . . (Temple, R., 2014: 35).

Temple also provided a good of example of modesty as a means to express politeness in his book by describing a situation where it is typical for a British person to carry their newest iPad to work and back every single day, but never

once removing it from their bag for fear of looking ostentatious' Temple, R., 2014:48). This is also a prominent example of British ingrained modesty.

Another scholar who describes self-deprecation and modesty as an essential part of English politeness is Cartland. In her book on etiquette she gives an example related to playing sport games: "If you are forced to play but are not very good at it, the fact that you really try will be accepted as compensation for the fact that you are not good at sport. If you are a potential champion hide this fact as cleverly as you can. Don't be too condescending, and at the same time don't blind your opponents with your skill. It is worth mentioning that according to British tradition in most games played for recreation, the playing is the thing and not the winning' (Cartland, 2008:33).

A further example of importance of self-deprecation and understatement in British politeness was given by Mark Price - the managing director of Waitrose. In an article on business etiquette he speaks about the importance of being modest when speaking about virtues and achievements and be more focused on others. In his opinion, one is expected to ask at least five questions while communicating with someone and not just speak about themselves: "There is always a person who talks about their life, work and ambitions at a business dinner, but doesn't bother asking at least a few basic questions. It really is all about them. They don't have the self-confidence to admit their mistake or say sorry, both of which are the height of good manners" (Price, M., 2012:193). Price also mentions the importance of not being boastful but as modest as possible "If you are extremely successful, it doesn't mean your colleagues want to hear about your expansive yacht or car. One of my colleagues once made the mistake of letting us know that he once travelled to a sporting event by helicopter. As a result, at every next meeting the poor chap was teased every time a helicopter flew past with jokes about if that was his pick-up arriving earlier' (Price, M., 2012:194). He further adds: 'Good manners require a person not to boast with their wealth. If asked what car you drive, simply say "a green one" (Price, M., 2012: 195).

A businessperson also mentions that it is quite acceptable to let the person know they are too boastful by using humor, which is also an essential feature of British culture: "At a recent party, a retail multi-millionaire was boasting about his garden, saying it took almost half a day to mow. I couldn't help but quip that I used to have an unreliable old mower too!".

Kate Fox in her book 'Watching the English' also commented on the importance of being modest in British culture. In her opinion, a good way to do this is by using humor. The author argues that humor, penetrates every aspect of English life and culture, playing a central role in it. No special circumstances are required for the use of humor. It can occur in any situation, even in the simplest greeting. Describing English humor, Kate Fox identified several of its integral parts. These include different types of irony, self-deprecation and understatement.

For the British, seriousness plays a special role. They do not welcome excessive seriousness, which implies pomposity, and as a result of such interpretation, they are simply forced to constantly belittle themselves, an unpleasant situation or state they are in or to downplay the importance of any achievements or talents. Let's look at the example: "For the English, it is quite normal to call a serious chronic disease a minor ailment or something incredibly beautiful very nice" (Fox, K., 2004).

The author presented an interesting example of how self-deprecation was used by her fiancé in order not to seem too arrogant when speaking about his career of a brain surgeon. When she first met her fiancé, she asked what prompted him to choose this profession. He replied that he used to read PPE (Philosophy, Politics and Economics) at Oxford, but found it all rather 'beyond him' so he thought he should better do something a 'bit less difficult'.

Kate Fox in her turn laughed and protested that surely brain surgery could not really be described as an easy option. This gave her fiancé another opportunity for self-deprecation: "Oh no, it's nowhere near as clever as it's cracked up to be; to be honest it's actually a bit hit-or-miss. It's just plumbing, really, plumbing with a microscope – except plumbing's rather more accurate" (Fox, K., 2004:69). The author further continues her commentary by mentioning that her fiancé was not truly modest in these particular examples. His humorous and self-deprecating responses were actually deliberate and represented a 'false' modesty. He was simply playing by the rules related to the embarrassment caused by his own success.

The author further adds that self-mockery is actually an ingrained British custom and people do it automatically very often. The author herself speaks self-deprecatingly about her profession as an anthropologist. She claims that she is lucky that many people do not really know what an anthropologist is and those who do know, usually regard anthropologists as "the lowest form of scientific life" and due to this, there is no danger for her to sound boastful when asked about her work. Nevertheless, in cases when someone suspects her in claiming to be something even slightly brainy, she explains that an anthropologist is 'just a fancy word for a nosey parker' (Fox, K., 2004:69].

It is worth mentioning that this system of self-mockery and self-deprecation works perfectly among the British as all of them understand that customary self-deprecation actually means the opposite of what the speaker says, and thus, the listener is secretly impressed by both the achievements and the reluctance to speak about them openly. However, this often doesn't work in a foreign environment where people are unfamiliar with the rules of self-deprecation game and fail to appreciate the irony the English person uses. Most of foreigners take the English 'low estimate of achievements' seriously and are often unimpressed. Kate Fox made a joke in her above-mentioned book that a misunderstood English person in this case feels rather awkward and wishes to explain that it was not what he actually meant but sadly cannot. Let's see the following example: "We cannot very well then turn round and say: 'No, hey, wait a minute, you're supposed to give me a sort of knowingly skeptical smile, showing that you realize I'm being humorously self-deprecating, don't believe a word of it and think even more highly of my abilities and my modesty".

3.Method

3.1. Participants

For our analysis we chose transcripts of interviews made by native speakers of British English some of them are members of Royal family, some of them are members of Parliament and some of them are successful business people, top managers of leading companies. The main criterion was to be native speaker od British English, we didn't pay much attention to age or gender as it is те relevant for the purposes of our research.

3.2. Materials

Above-mentioned transcripts were taken form the following media sources: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdf; http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/jamesbond/10381403/Roger-Moore-interview; http://www.theguardian.com/media; Evening Standard newspaper issues of 2017\2018.

3.3. Procedure

Frequency analysis is based on the fact that, in any given stretch of written language, certain linguistic means occur with varying frequencies. Moreover, there is a characteristic distribution of linguistic means that is roughly the same for almost all samples of that language. Therefore, the procedure of our analysis consisted of the following steps:

1.to study all chosen transcripts and identify all cases with lexical means aimed at demonstrating politeness;

2.to refer them to one of the groups according to classification by House and Kasper.

3.To count all the examples in each group

4.To sum up the results concerning frequency of each group used in studied discourse.

4.Results and Discussions

4.1. Frequency analysis of lexical means to express politeness

In the course of our research, we analyzed frequency of various lexical means to express politeness used by English native speakers based on conversations taken from British talk shows and interviews with some business people taken from such newspapers as Evening Standard, Tatler and some other online sources (46 sources in total). By conducting this analysis, we attempted to emphasize the importance of politeness in any successful communication regardless of its style and register. In our view, neglecting such an important element of communication as politeness may lead to misunderstanding or other unwanted negative outcomes.

In order to sum up the obtained results from the analyzed interviews, we have created a table representing the most and the least frequently used politeness markers in business discourse using the markers classification by House and Kasper.

Table1 ***Results of frequency analysis***

Politeness markers	**Examples of lexical means**	**Overall number of examples found in studied talk shows and interviews**
1 Showing deference toward the addressee to engage him into cooperation	Sorry, If you don't mind	17
2 Play-downs	I was wondering if	9
3 Consultative devices	Could you, Can I, can you	37
4 Hedges	Kind of, sort of, rather	8
5 Understaters	A bit, slightly	5
6 Downtoners	Perhaps, maybe	5
7 Committers	I think, I believe, I would think	28
8 Forewarning	I'm sorry to say that, with respect	16
9 Hesitators	well	31
10 Scope-staters	I'm afraid	6
11 Agent avoiders	One doesn't do X	0

As can be noticed from the above table, overall there have been found 162 politeness markers in the conversations taken from the Andy Marr show. As per the obtained results, the most frequently used means to express politeness are the following:

- consultative devices
- committers
- hesitators
- forewarnings
- play downs (I was wondering if)
- markers showing deference toward the addressee

4.2. Cultural aspects of politeness

Our next step was to analyze the following examples from cultural point. We mentioned above that indirectness, self-deprecation, understatement, self-irony and humor are essential elements of British communication and are widely used in order to shorten the horizontal or vertical distance between the speaker and the hearer, to lower one's status to the level of the interlocutor, to avoid boasting and to show concern towards the interlocutor. It explains the above results of most frequent use of consultative devices instead of direct order or recommendation, committers to soften the opinion and underline that it is just personal opinion that can be argued and discussed, hesitators to show understatement or self-deprecation. Thus, we suppose that English classes that are aimed at training prospective employees of British companies should pay special attention to above-mentioned linguistic forms to express politeness.

Conclusion

The need for linguistic politeness as the steer, which guides social interaction and maintains social equilibrium is no doubt a universal need, which applies for all cultures. However, universality may be too strong a claim for how it is conceptualized and manifested from one culture to another. Many researchers have set as their interest the search for patterns of cross-cultural differences as far as different politeness phenomena are concerned. Brown & Levinson's concept of face has by far been the most investigated aspect.

The purpose of communication is not only delivering messages, but it also means keeping up the social and corporate relationship. Therefore this aspect is very crucial while teaching students to professional foreign language

(Malyuga E.N., Orlova S.N., 2016). To maintain the corporate interaction, it is crucial to understand the co-operative principles and politeness principles. Co-operative principles sometimes need to be conformed to understand the message delivered, but at the same time these principles have to be flouted to maintain the corporate relationship. That is why the study of linguistic and cultural aspects of expressing politeness in different communities is important to provide actual materials for specialists in cross-cultural communication.

Like language consciousness as a whole, the category of politeness, being universal, has national-cultural specificity and can be considered only through a comprehensive approach to this problem: through the type of culture and the structure of social relations to the basic cultural values and accepted norms, rules of communication. This approach has great explanatory power and allows researchers to understand the cause of differences in communicative behavior, to see, to trace a certain logic in the actions of representatives of another culture.

The type of culture determines not only language consciousness but the structure of social relations, the most acceptable for a certain community, life values, dictating norms and rules of interpersonal communicative behavior Sibul V. (2017). It determines the necessity for further studies an this direction and their application for teaching foreign languages and cross-cultural communication.

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