

**PROSODIC MEANS OF POLITENESS AND
IMPOLITENESS REALIZATION AS A REFLECTION
OF THE LINGUOCULTURAL FEATURES OF THE UK
AND THE USA IN ENGLISH CONFLICT DIALOGICAL
DISCOURSE**

Pelivan Oksana

DOI <https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-26-712-3-1-13>

INTRODUCTION

One of the central issues in linguistics is interpersonal communication, an obligatory component of which is politeness. At the present stage of the development of the humanities, scholars unanimously recognize politeness as a social phenomenon that regulates interpersonal interaction, facilitating communicative success and conflict-free communication. Consequently, politeness has recently become the focus of attention for researchers in various fields of knowledge, including sociology, social psychology, anthropology, and, above all, linguistics. The works of both Ukrainian and international scholars encompass a wide range of issues related to the phenomenon of politeness and various approaches to its analysis. In particular, politeness has been examined as social behavior based on adherence to conventional, institutional, and individual rules of communication; from the perspective of conversational maxims; within the framework of Face Theory; as behavior aimed at avoiding conflict and ensuring effective communication; as the communicative background determined by the dynamics of speakers' communicative intentions and the situational context; as an empathy-based factor of communication; and as the addressee's evaluation of the degree of communicative comfort achieved in interaction.

Despite the considerable number of studies devoted to politeness conducted in Ukraine, Western Europe, the United States, and Japan, the issue of politeness realization in conflict dialogical discourse remains insufficiently investigated. This can primarily be attributed to the specific nature of conflict interaction itself, which for a long time remained outside the scope of linguistic research because of its non-normative, unpredictable, and, consequently,

socially inappropriate character. Since conflict dialogue does not conform to the conventional standards of speech behavior, it has traditionally been viewed not as a distinct type of interaction but merely as the result of interlocutors violating established communicative norms and postulates of effective communication. Such an approach has considerably limited the possibilities for its objective linguistic analysis.

The phenomenon of conflict has been extensively examined in psychology and sociology. More recently, it has also become a subject of growing interest in linguistics owing to the increasing attention devoted to interpersonal communication. This has stimulated research into verbal conflict in particular and conflict discourse in general.

Nevertheless, the specific mechanisms underlying politeness and impoliteness realization in conflict dialogical discourse, viewed through the prism of prosodic means as their principal linguistic markers and with due consideration of the degree of communicative formality, remain insufficiently investigated in both Ukrainian and international linguistic scholarship.

The relevance of the present research is determined by the general orientation of contemporary phonetic studies towards identifying new approaches to the investigation of the prosodic organization of dialogical speech, particularly in relation to the complex system of communicative strategies employed by interlocutors. The present research is a comprehensive study to examine the functioning of prosody as a means of realizing politeness and impoliteness in English conflict dialogical discourse with reference to different degrees of communicative formality. In doing so, it contributes to the further development of experimental phonetics, discourse analysis, and linguistic pragmatics, while providing new insights into the interaction between prosody, interpersonal communication, and linguocultural variation.

1. Politeness and impoliteness as linguocultural markers in British and American conflict dialogical communication

1.1. Theoretical foundations of linguistic politeness

Politeness constitutes one of the central categories of pragmatics, interactional sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis because it regulates interpersonal relations and ensures the successful organization of communication. Rather than representing a set of conventional linguistic formulas, politeness is currently understood as a dynamic socio-cognitive process through which interlocutors negotiate social relationships, interpersonal identities, and culturally appropriate behaviour during interaction. Consequently, politeness cannot be reduced to lexical markers such as *please*, *thank you*, or *sorry*; instead, it encompasses the entire communicative system through which

speakers manage social distance, express solidarity, preserve interpersonal harmony, and maintain face.

The study of politeness has undergone substantial theoretical evolution over the last five decades. Early pragmatic models sought to formulate universal principles governing polite behaviour across languages and cultures. More recent approaches, however, argue that politeness is fundamentally interactional, culturally situated, and continuously negotiated by interlocutors in specific communicative contexts. This theoretical shift has transformed politeness research from the description of linguistic forms into the investigation of complex interpersonal practices.

One of the earliest systematic attempts to explain politeness was proposed by Robin Lakoff, who argued that successful communication depends not only on grammatical competence but also on adherence to pragmatic rules regulating interpersonal interaction.¹ Lakoff distinguished between the rule of clarity («Be clear») and the rule of politeness «Be polite»), suggesting that effective communication requires speakers to balance informational efficiency with interpersonal sensitivity. She formulated three fundamental principles of politeness: do not impose, give options, and make the hearer feel good. Although relatively simple, this framework established the foundations for later pragmatic theories by emphasizing that politeness is intrinsically connected with social relationships rather than merely linguistic structure.

The publication of Brown and Levinson's *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (1987) marked a decisive turning point in politeness research². Building upon Erving Goffman's sociological notion of face³, Brown and Levinson conceptualized politeness as a strategic mechanism for mitigating Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs). According to their model, every competent language user possesses two complementary aspects of face: positive face, referring to the desire to be appreciated, approved of, and accepted by others, and negative face, referring to the desire for autonomy, freedom of action, and non-imposition.

Virtually every communicative act has the potential to threaten one or both aspects of face. Requests, orders, criticisms, refusals, disagreements, interruptions, corrections, and even compliments may potentially infringe upon interlocutors' face wants. Consequently, speakers employ various politeness

¹ Lakoff R. The Logic of Politeness; or, Minding Your P's and Q's . *Papers from the Ninth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*. Chicago : Chicago Linguistic Society, 1973. P. 292–305.

² Brown P., Levinson S. C. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1987. 345 p.

³ Goffman E. *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*. New York : Anchor Books, 1967. 270 p.

strategies to minimize interpersonal conflict while achieving communicative goals.

Brown and Levinson distinguish four principal strategic options available to speakers when performing potentially face-threatening acts. Bald-on-record strategies involve direct, unmitigated communication appropriate in situations characterized by urgency, institutional authority, or close interpersonal relationships (e.g., *Close the window.*). Positive politeness strategies seek to minimize social distance by emphasizing shared values, mutual interests, compliments, and expressions of solidarity (e.g., *Let's finish this together.*). Negative politeness strategies focus on respecting the interlocutor's autonomy through indirectness, hedging, apologies, modal verbs, and other mitigating devices (e.g., *I was wondering whether you might possibly help me.*). Finally, off-record strategies maximize indirectness by relying on implication rather than explicit formulation, thereby allowing speakers to avoid direct responsibility for the communicative act.

Despite its enormous influence, Brown and Levinson's framework has generated extensive criticism. One major criticism concerns its assumption of universality. Subsequent cross-cultural research has demonstrated that concepts such as face, politeness, and indirectness are interpreted differently across linguistic communities. Scholars including Richard J. Watts⁴, Gino Eelen⁵, Sara Mills⁶, Miriam Locher⁷, Helen Spencer-Oatey⁸, and Michael Haugh⁹ have argued that politeness cannot be adequately explained through universal strategic models alone because evaluations of polite behaviour depend on culturally specific expectations, interpersonal histories, institutional settings, and local interactional norms.

Richard J. Watts, in particular, distinguishes between first-order politeness (politeness 1) and second-order politeness (politeness 2). The former refers to ordinary speakers' everyday evaluations of behaviour as polite or impolite, whereas the latter denotes the theoretical construct developed by linguists. This distinction highlights that politeness is not an inherent property of linguistic expressions but an evaluative judgement emerging during interaction. Expressions traditionally classified as polite may be interpreted as sarcastic,

⁴ Watts R. J. *Politeness*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2003. 318 p.

⁵ Eelen G. *A Critique of Politeness Theories*. Manchester : St. Jerome Publishing, 2001. 274 p.

⁶ Mills S. *Gender and Politeness*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2003. 282 p.

⁷ Locher M. A. *Power and Politeness in Action: Disagreements in Oral Communication*. Berlin ; New York : Mouton de Gruyter, 2004. 280 p.

⁸ Spencer-Oatey H. (Ed.). *Culturally Speaking: Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory*. 2nd ed. London : Continuum, 2008. 360 p.

⁹ Haugh M. Im/politeness, Social Practice and the Participation Order. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 2013. Vol. 58. P. 52–72.

ironic, or even offensive depending upon context, intonation, interpersonal relations, and shared background knowledge¹⁰.

Similarly, Locher and Watts introduced the notion of relational work, arguing that interpersonal communication consists of continuous negotiation rather than the application of fixed politeness strategies. From this perspective, all interaction contributes to constructing, maintaining, transforming, or challenging social relationships. Politeness therefore represents only one possible outcome of broader interpersonal work rather than an autonomous linguistic phenomenon¹¹.

Another influential development is Helen Spencer-Oatey's *Rapport Management Theory*, which expands Brown and Levinson's notion of face by incorporating not only identity concerns but also sociality rights and interactional obligations. According to this framework, interlocutors expect not merely respect for their public self-image but also equitable treatment, appropriate behavioural expectations, and recognition of socially established rights. Consequently, communicative conflict often arises from violations of interactional expectations rather than direct attacks on face alone¹².

Recent developments within interactional pragmatics further emphasize that politeness is collaboratively constructed by participants during discourse. Rather than existing as predetermined linguistic forms, politeness emerges through sequential organization, turn-taking, repair mechanisms, prosody, gesture, contextual interpretation, and shared sociocultural knowledge. This perspective has shifted scholarly attention from isolated utterances toward naturally occurring conversations, corpus linguistics, ethnographic observation, and multimodal discourse analysis.

Within this contemporary theoretical framework, impoliteness should likewise be understood as an interactionally negotiated phenomenon rather than the simple absence of politeness. Jonathan Culpeper argues that impoliteness involves communicative behaviour evaluated as intentionally face-attacking or conventionally offensive within a particular sociocultural context. Importantly, the same linguistic expression may function as polite, neutral, humorous, or impolite depending upon interlocutors' expectations, interpersonal history, institutional roles, and communicative intentions. Consequently, impoliteness cannot be identified solely through lexical or grammatical analysis; instead, it must be examined as an evaluative process embedded within discourse¹³.

¹⁰ Watts R. J. *Politeness*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2003. 318 p.

¹¹ Locher M. A., Watts R. J. *Politeness Theory and Relational Work*. *Journal of Politeness Research*. 2005. Vol. 1, No. 1. P. 9–33.

¹² Spencer-Oatey H. *Rapport Management: A Framework for Analysis*. Culturally Speaking: *Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory*. 2nd ed. London : Continuum, 2008. P. 11–46.

¹³ Culpeper J. *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2011. 292 p.

These theoretical developments are particularly relevant for comparative analyses of British and American English. Although both national varieties share the same linguistic system, they differ considerably in their preferred interactional styles, cultural conceptualizations of interpersonal distance, conversational involvement, and evaluations of appropriate communicative behaviour. These differences become especially evident in dialogical discourse, where speakers continuously negotiate solidarity, authority, politeness, and interpersonal alignment through linguistic choices. Understanding these linguocultural distinctions requires moving beyond universal theories toward an interactional perspective that recognizes politeness and impoliteness as culturally embedded practices shaped by the communicative traditions of particular speech communities.

1.2. Politeness and impoliteness in conflict dialogical discourse

Conflict dialogical discourse is one of the most complex forms of interpersonal communication because it combines the exchange of information with the negotiation of social relationships, identities, and power. Although conflict is usually associated with disagreement and confrontation, it does not necessarily imply the absence of politeness. On the contrary, participants often alternate between polite and impolite communicative strategies depending on their intentions, interpersonal relationships, institutional roles, and contextual constraints. Consequently, the study of politeness and impoliteness has become an important area of contemporary pragmatics, discourse analysis, and interactional linguistics.

Conflict discourse provides an especially productive context for examining these processes because communicative goals frequently conflict with relational goals. Participants seek not only to defend their opinions but also to influence the social positions of others, establish authority, or challenge existing power relations. As a result, politeness often coexists with confrontation rather than simply preventing it.

The recognition that conflict interaction involves intentional face attacks stimulated the development of impoliteness theory as an independent field of research. J. Culpeper (1996) proposed one of the first systematic classifications of impoliteness strategies by adapting Brown and Levinson's framework. He distinguishes several major types of impoliteness, including bald on-record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, and withholding politeness¹⁴.

¹⁴ Culpeper J. Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 1996. Vol. 25, No. 3. P. 349–367.

Positive impoliteness undermines the interlocutor's need for approval through ridicule, exclusion, ignoring, or expressions of contempt. Negative impoliteness threatens personal autonomy by means of intimidation, coercion, invasion of personal space, or direct accusations. Sarcasm represents a particularly complex strategy because superficially polite forms conceal offensive communicative intentions. Such indirect aggression often produces stronger interpersonal effects than explicit insults because recipients must infer the speaker's negative attitude.

In his later work, J. Culpeper (2011) extends this perspective by emphasizing that impoliteness depends not only on the speaker's intention but also on the recipient's interpretation. An utterance becomes impolite when it is perceived as unnecessarily offensive within a particular interactional context. This approach highlights the importance of contextual interpretation, emotional responses, and shared communicative norms in evaluating linguistic behaviour¹⁵.

D. Bousfield (2008) further demonstrates that impoliteness should not be regarded as random verbal aggression. Instead, it performs identifiable communicative functions, including establishing dominance, resisting authority, expressing emotional frustration, negotiating identity, or excluding opponents from social interaction. Accordingly, impoliteness functions as a strategic communicative resource rather than merely a violation of social etiquette¹⁶.

Conflict dialogical discourse is characterized by incompatible communicative goals, disagreement, competition, or confrontation between interlocutors. Such discourse occurs in numerous communicative settings, including political debates, courtroom interaction, workplace communication, family disputes, media interviews, and digital communication. Unlike ordinary conversation, conflict dialogue is marked by heightened emotional involvement, increased sensitivity to face-threatening acts, and continuous negotiation of interpersonal relationships.

From the perspective of discourse analysis, conflict interaction is inherently sequential. Every utterance influences the interpretation of subsequent responses, making politeness and impoliteness dynamic rather than isolated phenomena. Participants constantly adjust their communicative behaviour according to their interlocutors' reactions. Consequently, polite strategies may de-escalate confrontation, whereas impolite strategies may intensify disagreement or redefine interpersonal power relations.

¹⁵ Culpeper J. *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2011. 292 p.

¹⁶ Bousfield D. *Impoliteness in Interaction*. Amsterdam ; Philadelphia : John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2008. 292 p.

The linguistic realization of politeness and impoliteness encompasses lexical, grammatical, pragmatic, and prosodic resources. Politeness is commonly expressed through mitigation devices, modal verbs, indirect requests, hedging expressions, respectful forms of address, and positive evaluative language. Expressions such as *perhaps*, *I understand your point*, or *would you mind* reduce the force of disagreement while preserving interpersonal harmony.

By contrast, impoliteness is frequently realized through direct accusations, insults, interruptions, dismissive vocabulary, taboo expressions, and explicit disagreement markers. Nevertheless, indirect forms of impoliteness, including irony, sarcasm, rhetorical questions, and strategic ambiguity, often prove equally effective.

1.3. British English politeness as a linguocultural model of interpersonal communication

Among the English-speaking cultures, British communicative behaviour has frequently been regarded as one of the most extensively ritualized systems of interpersonal interaction. While popular stereotypes portray British speakers as inherently polite, contemporary linguistic research demonstrates that what is commonly interpreted as «British politeness» constitutes a complex interactional phenomenon grounded in culturally specific expectations regarding interpersonal distance, self-restraint, emotional moderation, and respect for individual autonomy. Rather than reflecting an innate national characteristic, British politeness represents a socially acquired communicative competence that enables speakers to negotiate social relationships while minimizing interpersonal friction.

From the perspective of interactional pragmatics, British English displays a marked preference for communicative strategies traditionally associated with negative politeness, although contemporary scholarship cautions against reducing British interaction exclusively to Brown and Levinson's taxonomy. Instead, British conversational style reflects a broader cultural orientation toward non-imposition, interactional modesty, and pragmatic ambiguity, whereby speakers deliberately avoid presenting themselves as overly certain, emotionally intrusive, or socially dominant.

One of the most distinctive characteristics of British dialogical discourse is the pervasive use of hedging, understood as the linguistic modulation of epistemic certainty and interpersonal commitment. Hedges enable speakers to weaken the force of assertions, requests, criticisms, and evaluations, thereby reducing the likelihood of threatening the interlocutor's face. Although hedging has often been interpreted merely as a strategy of indirectness, recent pragmatic studies argue that its primary function lies in facilitating interpersonal cooperation by signalling openness to negotiation rather than epistemic uncertainty.

British English possesses an exceptionally rich inventory of hedging devices operating on lexical, grammatical, syntactic, and discourse levels. Modal verbs such as *could*, *might*, and *would* frequently replace their more direct counterparts *can* and *will*. Similarly, epistemic expressions including *perhaps*, *possibly*, *I suppose*, *I imagine*, *I think*, *I rather think*, *it seems*, and *it appears* soften the speaker's commitment to propositional content while simultaneously inviting collaborative interpretation. Let us consider the following naturally occurring interactional pattern:

A: I was wondering whether you might have a moment to look at this report.

B: Of course. I'll have a look in just a minute.

From a purely semantic perspective, the speaker is not genuinely reporting an internal cognitive process of wondering. Rather, the progressive construction functions as an interactional resource that distances the request from the speaker's immediate intentions. Such syntactic complexity decreases the perceived coerciveness of the directive while enhancing interpersonal consideration. Contemporary corpus studies demonstrate that expressions beginning with *I was wondering if...* occur disproportionately frequently in British institutional communication, particularly within academic, professional, and service encounters.

Equally characteristic is the widespread use of downtoners, including *rather*, *quite*, *a bit*, *slightly*, *perhaps*, and *somewhat*. These expressions rarely modify propositional meaning alone; instead, they regulate interpersonal positioning. Let us compare the following examples:

- That might be slightly difficult.
- I'm not entirely convinced.
- It's perhaps not the best solution.

None of these utterances explicitly expresses disagreement. Nevertheless, British interlocutors generally interpret them as conveying considerable criticism. This phenomenon illustrates an important principle of British interaction: communicative meaning frequently resides not in explicit lexical content but in pragmatic implication.

This tendency corresponds to what anthropologists describe as a low-intensity interactional style, where interpersonal harmony is preserved through linguistic moderation rather than emotional expressiveness. Consequently, British speakers often prefer understatements even in situations involving strong emotions.

The phenomenon of understatement occupies a particularly prominent position within British communicative culture. Understatement involves the deliberate presentation of significant events or evaluations in linguistically minimized terms. Unlike mere mitigation, understatement performs important

interpersonal functions: it reduces social tension, demonstrates emotional self-control, and indexes membership within a shared cultural community. Examples include expressions such as:

- Not bad.
- Quite nice.
- A little disappointing.
- Rather interesting.

For many non-native speakers, these evaluations appear surprisingly weak. However, within British communicative conventions they frequently convey much stronger meanings than their literal semantics would suggest. The expression *not bad*, for instance, may communicate genuine enthusiasm, while *quite good* often signifies moderate rather than exceptional approval. Interpretation therefore depends heavily upon shared cultural knowledge and contextual inference.

Closely related to understatement is the culturally significant practice of self-deprecation. British speakers frequently minimize their own achievements, competence, or social status, not because of genuine lack of confidence but because overt self-promotion risks violating expectations of modesty. Compliments are therefore often responded to with mitigating expressions rather than straightforward acceptance. For example:

A: That presentation was excellent.

B: Oh, it wasn't anything special, really.

Such responses perform relational work by reducing potential asymmetries between interlocutors. Rather than rejecting the compliment, the speaker symbolically re-establishes interpersonal equality.

Recent research in interpersonal pragmatics suggests that self-deprecation functions as an important mechanism of face balancing. While compliments enhance positive face, excessive acceptance may threaten interactional equilibrium by implying superiority. Self-deprecating responses therefore maintain solidarity without openly contradicting the interlocutor.

Another defining feature of British dialogical discourse is the extensive use of apologies beyond genuine responsibility. Expressions such as *sorry*, *I'm terribly sorry*, *excuse me*, *sorry about that*, and *I'm afraid...* occur with remarkable frequency across everyday interaction.

Importantly, these apologies often do not indicate admission of guilt. Instead, they operate as interactional lubricants, signalling awareness of potential inconvenience. To illustrate:

- Sorry, could I just interrupt for a second?
- Sorry, is this seat taken?
- Sorry, would you mind repeating that?

Here, *sorry* functions primarily as a discourse marker initiating potentially face-threatening acts. Corpus-based studies have shown that many occurrences of *sorry* in British English precede requests rather than apologies proper, illustrating the multifunctionality of politeness markers within naturally occurring discourse.

Indirectness also characterizes British disagreement. Whereas some communicative cultures tolerate explicit contradiction, British speakers frequently employ pre-disagreement markers designed to preserve interpersonal harmony.

Common formulations include:

- I'm not sure I entirely agree.
- That's an interesting point, although...
- I can see what you mean, but...
- Perhaps another way of looking at it would be...

Such sequences postpone disagreement while acknowledging the interlocutor's perspective. Rather than merely mitigating face threats, they facilitate collaborative negotiation of meaning. Disagreement becomes an interactional process rather than a confrontational event.

Perhaps the most culturally distinctive characteristic of British communication is the pervasive use of irony and humour. Unlike sarcasm, which frequently aims at ridicule, British irony often functions as a mechanism for maintaining interpersonal solidarity during potentially uncomfortable situations.

For instance, after experiencing exceptionally heavy rain, a speaker may remark:

- Lovely weather we're having.

The literal semantic content contradicts observable reality. Successful interpretation depends upon shared contextual knowledge and common cultural assumptions. Such ironic remarks create interpersonal alignment because both interlocutors participate in constructing the intended meaning.

British humour similarly serves important pragmatic functions in institutional contexts. Meetings, interviews, academic discussions, and workplace interactions frequently contain humorous remarks that reduce interpersonal tension while preserving professional relationships. Contemporary discourse analysts argue that humour performs significant relational work, enabling speakers simultaneously to express criticism, negotiate authority, and reinforce group cohesion without overt confrontation.

From the perspective of conversation analysis, British English also demonstrates considerable sensitivity to turn-taking organization. Speakers frequently avoid interrupting one another directly, employ hesitation markers before taking the floor, and produce supportive back-channel signals such as

right, I see, exactly, yes, and quite. These conversational practices contribute to the collaborative management of dialogue and reflect broader cultural expectations regarding respect for conversational rights.

Taken together, these interactional characteristics reveal that British politeness extends far beyond lexical politeness markers. It represents an integrated communicative system in which indirectness, understatement, hedging, self-deprecation, humour, and conversational restraint jointly construct socially appropriate behaviour. Importantly, these strategies should not be interpreted as manifestations of communicative vagueness or indecisiveness. Rather, they constitute culturally conventionalized mechanisms for managing interpersonal relationships, preserving social equilibrium, and maintaining mutual face within dialogue.

Modern discourse-pragmatic research therefore suggests that British politeness is best understood not as a collection of linguistic formulas but as a culturally embedded interactional style in which speakers continuously negotiate social distance, relational identities, and interpersonal expectations through subtle pragmatic choices. This perspective provides the foundation for meaningful comparison with American English, whose communicative norms reflect a substantially different conceptualization of interpersonal involvement, solidarity, and conversational effectiveness.

1.4. American English politeness as a linguocultural model of involvement and solidarity

The analysis of American English politeness requires careful reconsideration of traditional assumptions concerning directness, friendliness, and communicative openness. In contrast to British interactional patterns, which are frequently associated with restraint, indirectness, and distance management, American conversational practices have often been described as oriented toward interpersonal involvement, explicit friendliness, and the rapid establishment of social connection. However, contemporary pragmatic research emphasizes that American politeness cannot simply be equated with directness or positive politeness. Rather, it represents a culturally specific system of relational work in which solidarity, accessibility, individual recognition, and communicative efficiency are continuously negotiated.

The tendency toward greater interpersonal involvement in American English has been discussed extensively within intercultural pragmatics and sociolinguistics. Scholars such as Deborah Tannen,¹⁷ Janet Holmes,¹⁸ Helen

¹⁷ Tannen D. *Conversational Style: Analyzing Talk Among Friends*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2005. 240 p.

¹⁸ Holmes J. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. 4th ed. London ; New York : Routledge, 2013. 489 p.

Spencer-Oatey,¹⁹ and Geoffrey Leech²⁰ argue that communicative styles reflect broader cultural assumptions concerning appropriate relationships between individuals. In the American context, conversational effectiveness is frequently associated with openness, personal engagement, and the reduction of social distance. Speakers are often expected to demonstrate interest, enthusiasm, and accessibility, particularly in informal and semi-formal interactions.

This orientation corresponds partially with Brown and Levinson's concept of positive politeness, which emphasizes the importance of expressing approval, solidarity, and shared identity. However, applying this framework mechanically may lead to oversimplification. Contemporary approaches suggest that American politeness is not merely a preference for positive politeness strategies but rather a broader cultural orientation toward involvement, where interpersonal connection is actively constructed through verbal and non-verbal behaviour.

One of the most visible manifestations of this orientation is the widespread use of informal address practices. Compared with many cultures where titles and surnames continue to regulate social distance, contemporary American English demonstrates a strong preference for first-name usage across numerous social contexts. The frequent use of first names among colleagues, service providers, teachers, and sometimes even individuals meeting for the first time reflects an interactional expectation of accessibility and equality. For example:

Customer: Hi, Sarah, could you help me with this?

Employee: Sure, John, I'd be happy to.

The exchange does not merely convey information. The repeated use of personal names functions as a relational device, reducing institutional distance and creating a cooperative atmosphere. Within American communicative norms, excessive formality may sometimes be interpreted as emotional distance, unnecessary hierarchy, or lack of friendliness.

A particularly significant feature of American interaction is the role of small talk as a mechanism of rapport formation. Unlike some communication cultures where conversations are expected to move quickly toward informational objectives, American English frequently incorporates brief personal exchanges before the main topic is introduced. Typical examples include:

- How are you doing today?
- How's your week going?
- Beautiful weather we're having, isn't it?

Although such questions do not always require detailed personal responses, they perform important pragmatic functions. They signal recognition of

¹⁹ Spencer-Oatey H. (Ed.). *Culturally Speaking: Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory*. 2nd ed. London : Continuum, 2008. 360 p.

²⁰ Leech G. N. *The Pragmatics of Politeness*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2014. 343 p.

the interlocutor as a social individual rather than merely a participant in a transactional exchange. Small talk therefore represents a form of relational work that establishes a cooperative communicative environment.

This phenomenon is particularly visible in American service encounters. Employees in restaurants, shops, hotels, and customer-support contexts are often expected to display friendliness through greetings, personal engagement, and positive emotional expressions. Such behaviour does not necessarily indicate genuine personal intimacy; rather, it reflects a culturally institutionalized expectation that professional communication should include interpersonal warmth.

Another characteristic feature of American English politeness is the acceptance of direct request strategies, especially when accompanied by affiliative markers. Unlike British speakers, who may frequently soften requests through extensive mitigation, American speakers often formulate requests more explicitly while relying on friendliness, appreciation, and informal tone to maintain politeness. Let's compare:

British-oriented formulation:

I was wondering if you might possibly be able to send me the document when you have a chance.

American-oriented formulation:

Hey, could you send me the document when you get a minute? Thanks, I really appreciate it.

The second formulation contains a direct request, yet it is not perceived as impolite within American interaction because several solidarity markers compensate for the reduced indirectness: the informal greeting (*Hey*), the minimizer (*when you get a minute*), and explicit appreciation (*Thanks, I really appreciate it*).

This illustrates an important difference between British and American pragmatic systems. In British English, politeness is frequently achieved by reducing the speaker's imposition on the hearer. In American English, politeness is often achieved by emphasizing positive interpersonal alignment. The speaker acknowledges the hearer as a cooperative partner and assumes a relationship of mutual accessibility.

American conversational style also demonstrates a strong preference for explicit positive evaluation. Compliments are relatively frequent and are often expressed openly in everyday interaction.

Examples include:

- I love your jacket.
- That was a great presentation.
- You did an amazing job.

Such expressions serve multiple functions. They communicate approval, strengthen social bonds, and create a positive emotional atmosphere. Unlike British interaction, where compliments may frequently be minimized through modest responses, American speakers often accept compliments more directly:

A: Your presentation was excellent.

B: Thank you! I worked really hard on it.

This response does not necessarily represent self-promotion. Within American cultural expectations, accepting positive evaluation demonstrates confidence, appreciation, and recognition of the speaker's supportive intention.

The pragmatic significance of compliments has been widely examined in cross-cultural studies. Research by J. Manes and N. Wolfson²¹ demonstrated that complimenting behaviour is highly conventionalized in American English, with recurring patterns involving appearance, possessions, abilities, and achievements. Such compliments function as social strategies for establishing and maintaining solidarity.

Another important characteristic of American communicative behaviour is the preference for explicit expressions of gratitude. Phrases such as *thank you so much*, *I really appreciate it*, *I appreciate your help*, and *I owe you one* are extremely common in American interaction. These expressions reinforce interpersonal connection by openly acknowledging the contribution of another person.

In comparison, British English frequently employs more understated gratitude expressions, including cheers, thanks, or brief acknowledgements, depending on context. Although both cultures value appreciation, they differ in the degree of emotional explicitness through which gratitude is communicated.

The American preference for explicitness is also evident in disagreement management. While disagreement may still threaten interpersonal harmony, American speakers often employ a more openly argumentative style, particularly in professional, academic, and public contexts. Disagreement may be introduced through expressions such as:

- I understand your point, but I see it differently.
- That's an interesting perspective. However, I would argue that...
- I respectfully disagree.

These formulations acknowledge the interlocutor while allowing relatively direct expression of alternative positions. The emphasis is frequently placed on transparency and rational exchange rather than avoidance of disagreement itself.

²¹ Manes J., Wolfson N. The Compliment Formula. *Conversational Routine: Explorations in Standardized Communication Situations and Prepatterned Speech*. The Hague : Mouton, 1981. P. 115–132.

However, directness should not be interpreted as absence of politeness. This represents one of the most significant points in cross-cultural pragmatic analysis. A British listener may occasionally interpret American directness as excessive confidence or intrusion, while an American listener may perceive British indirectness as uncertainty, avoidance, or lack of clarity. Such evaluations result from different cultural expectations regarding how interpersonal respect should be linguistically encoded.

The American orientation toward communicative openness is also connected with broader cultural concepts of individualism and egalitarian social relations. Although cultural explanations must avoid deterministic generalizations, numerous sociolinguistic studies indicate that American interaction often reflects expectations of personal agency, self-expression, and relatively low hierarchical distance.

This can be observed in workplace communication, where employees may address supervisors by first name, openly express opinions during meetings, and engage in informal conversational exchanges. Such practices do not necessarily eliminate institutional hierarchy; rather, they linguistically minimize distance while maintaining professional roles.

Nevertheless, contemporary research warns against viewing American English as uniformly informal or direct. Communicative practices vary significantly according to region, social class, professional environment, age, gender, and interpersonal relationship. Formal institutional settings, legal discourse, academic writing, and diplomatic communication may employ highly elaborate mitigation strategies comparable to those found in British English.

Therefore, the distinction between British and American politeness should be understood as a difference in preferred interactional orientation, not as a rigid opposition. British communication tends to emphasize respect through restraint, non-imposition, and controlled expression, whereas American communication often emphasizes respect through involvement, accessibility, and explicit positive engagement. Both systems represent sophisticated mechanisms for managing interpersonal relationships, but they rely on different culturally preferred resources.

From the perspective of linguocultural pragmatics, American English politeness demonstrates that friendliness and directness are not contradictory. Instead, directness becomes socially acceptable when embedded within a framework of solidarity, appreciation, and interpersonal recognition. The effectiveness of American politeness therefore depends not on avoiding imposition entirely, but on constructing a communicative environment in which interlocutors perceive themselves as cooperative, valued, and socially connected.

2. Methodology and practical results of the research

2.1. Classification of the research material

the research material consists of transcripts and soundtracks of 720 dialogical units forming part of conflict dialogues, selected by means of continuous sampling from five English-language (British and American) films (*Love Story*, *Overboard*, *The Mirror Has Two Faces*, *Catch Me If You Can*, and *Poseidon*). The corpus comprises 202 pages of standard printed text (A4 format, 14-point Times New Roman Cyr font) and 363 minutes of recorded speech.

The material of the research was classified according to two principal criteria: 1) the degree of formality in the relationship between the interlocutors and 2) the presence of politeness or impoliteness. Based on these criteria, the dialogical units under investigation were categorized into four types: formal polite, formal impolite, informal polite, and informal impolite.

In *formal dialogical units* (both polite and impolite), the predominant type of conflict is a *workplace conflict*, realized through three principal interaction patterns: supervisor – subordinate, supervisor – supervisor, and subordinate – subordinate. In *informal dialogical units* (both polite and impolite), the predominant conflict type is a *family conflict*, represented by three principal interaction patterns: parents – children, husband – wife, and siblings.

For example, a polite conflict interaction between a supervisor and a subordinate demonstrates that, despite their differing views on resolving a work-related problem, neither participant resorts to offensive, humiliating, or aggressive speech. Instead of increasing loudness, the interlocutors express emotional intensity primarily by raising the pitch level of their voices.

Fox: Spain? You want to go to Spain?

Carl: Well, eventually, he's got to go back to where the checks were printed. I think that's why he's moving back through Europe. Look at the map, sir. He's making a circle. He's running out of checks. I know it's a... it's a long shot, sir, but if we track him from Madrid, sir, we could still catch him!

Fox: Listen, Carl, if you couldn't catch him here, you're not going to catch him there.

Carl: But, sir, we're not going to let him get away!

Fox: No, Carl, you have already let him get away. You won't do it again.

Carl: But, sir...!

Fox: The case is closed! (Catch Me If You Can)

This example clearly illustrates several recurrent patterns characteristic of the supervisor – subordinate conflict dialogues examined in the study. As a rule, subordinates address their supervisors using the polite form of address *sir*, whereas supervisors generally refer to their subordinates by their first names

(e.g., *Carl*). Supervisor – subordinate interactions are characterized by the absence of colloquial or vulgar language.

In conflict situations where the subordinate attempts to prove that they are right or to persuade the supervisor, exclamatory sentences are frequently employed (*We could still catch him! / We're not going to let him get away!*), together with complex syntactic structures, including both subordinate and coordinate clauses (*Well, eventually, he's got to go back to where the checks were printed. I think that's why he's moving back through Europe. / I know it's a... it's a long shot, sir, but if we track him from Madrid, sir, we could still catch him!*). From a prosodic perspective, such utterances are typically characterized by an accelerated speech rate and moderate loudness.

The supervisor, in turn, insists on their own position by simply prohibiting the subordinate from pursuing the intended course of action (*You won't do it again*). The subordinate's final unsuccessful attempt to object (*But, sir!*) is marked by a high degree of emotional involvement, which at the melodic level is most commonly realized by a high falling nuclear tone. This attempt ultimately proves unsuccessful. The supervisor firmly terminates the interaction (*The case is closed!*), delivering the final utterance quietly yet categorically and in a clipped manner, with pauses after each word, thereby making it clear that any further discussion is pointless.

The most common cause of a workplace conflict is the interlocutors' differing – sometimes diametrically opposed – views on how to resolve a work-related problem. Such conflicts originate within the sphere of professional relationships as a result of objective factors and gradually extend into the emotional domain of the participants. The conflict is typically initiated by a speaker experiencing emotional arousal; in such cases, the interlocutors may resort to the use of verbal aggression. Although this occurs relatively infrequently in the formal dialogical units examined (5% of the cases), this pattern of conflict escalation was nevertheless observed.

Dean: What I mean is... I've already done this out of oak, so I'm gonna have to go. You may have wanted cedar, but you didn't ask for cedar.

Joan: Well, the entire civilized world knows that all closets are made of cedar! The job was not done to my satisfaction.

Dean: I got news for you, lady! No job will ever be done to your satisfaction!

Joan: That's quite enough! Now just get out! (Overboard)

This example illustrates an impolite conflict interaction between an employer and an employee that reaches a critical stage, at which point both interlocutors resort to verbal aggression. The conflict unfolds between the employer, Joan Stayton, and the hired worker, Dean Proffitt. Dialogical units of this type are characterized by a high degree of emotional intensity and are

marked by numerous exclamatory sentences and imperative constructions. The interlocutors' utterances are intended to insult and humiliate one another (*No job will ever be done to your satisfaction! / That's quite enough! Now just get out!*). An accelerated speech rate, maximum loudness, and the combination of a falling head with a high falling nuclear tone constitute the principal prosodic features of such dialogical units.

Thus, both polite and impolite formal conflict dialogues are characterized, at the lexical and syntactic levels, by the absence of colloquial or vulgar vocabulary and, as a rule, by the use of complex syntactic structures, including compound and complex sentences. At the prosodic level, they are typically characterized by a moderate speech rate (sometimes tending toward a slower tempo), moderate loudness, and a medium pitch range. However, when a workplace conflict reaches a critical stage and the interlocutors resort to verbal aggression, their speech becomes maximally rapid and loud; in some cases, they may also employ colloquial or non-standard vocabulary.

Conflicts between members of the same family may develop according to different scenarios depending on the nature of the relationships between the conflicting parties. The most common are conflicts between parents and children and between spouses. The following example illustrates an impolite conflict interaction between Jennifer and her husband, Oliver.

Jennifer: Your father loves you like you'll love Bozo, but you Barretts are so proud that you'll always think you hate each other.

Oliver: If it weren't for you?

Jennifer: Yes.

Oliver: It's out of the question.

Jennifer: Oliver, please talk to him, just say hello.

Oliver: I will never talk to him.

Jennifer: Can't you just do it for me? I've never asked you to do anything in my whole life. Just for me.

Oliver: No.

Jennifer: You're a heartless bastard!

Oliver: Get the hell out of my life! (Love Story)

From the very beginning of the dialogue, it is evident that Oliver is unwilling to engage in the conversation and repeatedly attempts to bring it to an end while remaining relatively calm and resolute. He delivers the phrase *It's out of the question* clearly and categorically. Jennifer, however, insists on continuing the discussion. Initially, she politely asks Oliver to speak to his father (*Oliver, please talk to him, just say hello / Can't you just do it for me? Just for me*). Oliver remains adamant, refusing outright to communicate with his father. His responses are brief and unequivocal (*I will never talk to him. / No.*).

Unable to withstand the emotional tension, Jennifer loses her composure and insults her husband (*You're a heartless bastard!*). At this point, she no longer controls her emotions, just as Oliver, overcome by anger, orders her to leave (*Get the hell out of my life!*). The final utterances of both spouses contain colloquial and offensive vocabulary (*bastard, hell*), which is characteristic of informal interaction, particularly between people in close personal relationships.

Thus, informal conflict dialogue is characterized by the frequent use of verbal aggression (57% of the cases), colloquial and, at times, even taboo vocabulary, simple syntactic constructions, ellipsis, and direct imperative structures. At the prosodic level, such dialogues typically exhibit an accelerated speech rate (occasionally approaching a normal tempo), high loudness, a wide pitch range, a falling head with a broken sequence, and a high falling nuclear tone. The communicative behaviour of the interlocutors during conflict interaction is largely determined by their social status, upbringing, and educational background.

In the study of intonational parameters involved in the realization of the speech strategy of politeness/impoliteness in conflict dialogical units, particular attention is paid to the context-dependent nature of utterance meaning. Therefore, the description of the intonational characteristics of the conflict dialogical units under investigation requires a systematic approach and the application of comprehensive research methods.

2.2. Methodology of the auditory and electroacoustic analysis

The study employed a comprehensive methodology of experimental phonetic analysis of prosody, combining methods for investigating both the subjective perceptual characteristics of intonation and the objective acoustic parameters of speech. The subjective acoustic characteristics include pitch features, loudness, and speech rate, whereas the objective parameters comprise pitch, intensity, phonation duration, and pauses.

The auditory analysis was preceded by a perceptual analysis aimed at identifying conflict dialogical units within the overall corpus of dialogical units.

The preliminary analysis of the research material made it possible to establish the percentage distribution of polite and impolite formal as well as polite and impolite informal dialogical units. Among formal conflict dialogical units, 65% were classified as polite and 35% as impolite, whereas among informal conflict dialogic units, 21% were polite and 79% were impolite. These findings indicate that interlocutors tend to maintain politeness more frequently in formal conflict communication than in informal interaction.

The ratio of formal (25%) to informal (75%) conflict dialogical units suggests that conflicts occur three times more frequently in informal than in formal

communication. This tendency can be explained by the degree of formality governing interpersonal relations. Formal settings require communicative partners to observe the norms of official interaction, including respect for the interlocutor, suppression of personal emotions, and the maintenance of a positive social image. In contrast, informal settings provide greater freedom in the choice of both verbal and non-verbal means of conflict realization. Speakers do not conceal their emotions and are generally unconcerned with creating a favourable impression on their interlocutor. Consequently, impoliteness predominates in informal conflict interaction, accounting for 79% of the cases.

The objectives of the auditory analysis included the identification of the perceived subjective acoustic characteristics of the investigated types of conflict dialogical units, namely melodic features, loudness, and speech tempo.

According to the results of the auditory analysis, the principal prosodic means of expressing politeness in both formal and informal communication are speech tempo, melody, and voice quality (timbre). The realization of impoliteness in formal communication is primarily associated with melody, speech tempo, and phrasal stress, whereas in informal communication it is mainly conveyed through speech tempo, loudness, and phrasal stress.

The prosodic characteristics common to realization of both politeness and impoliteness in formal and informal dialogues are speech tempo and melody. However, their patterns of variation differ depending on the communicative setting. A normal speech tempo predominates in polite formal and informal communication, while formal impolite interaction is also generally characterized by a normal tempo, occasionally (in 5.4% of the cases) showing a tendency toward acceleration. In contrast, accelerated tempo is typical of informal impolite communication. This suggests that impolite interaction, particularly in informal contexts, allows speakers to express their emotions more freely and spontaneously, without the psychological restraints characteristic of formal discourse.

In both polite and impolite formal communication, the descending stepping head is the predominant melodic pattern, whereas in polite and impolite informal communication the broken head occurs most frequently. This difference can be attributed to the communicative behaviour typical of formal conflict situations, in which interlocutors tend to remain restrained, minimize emotional expression, and conceal their personal feelings. At the prosodic level, these communicative characteristics are most effectively conveyed by the descending stepping head, which is traditionally associated with formal speech. According to the auditors' assessments, this head was combined with a low falling nuclear tone in 87% of the cases, lending the utterances greater seriousness and communicative weight.

In formal impolite communication, the combination of the descending stepping head with a low falling nuclear tone expresses irritation and impatience in wh-questions, while in imperative utterances it conveys categoricalness. In polite and impolite informal communication, the broken head predominates (26.3% and 29.4%, respectively), reflecting the emotionality, naturalness, and spontaneity (or, more precisely, quasi-spontaneity) of speech.

The choice of prosodic and lexico-syntactic means, as well as the range of emotions and modal attitudes expressed by interlocutors during communication, is determined primarily by the degree of formality of their interpersonal relations. The degree of formality either broadens or restricts the scope of emotional expression, limits or, conversely, provides greater freedom in the realization of emotions, and either presupposes or precludes spontaneity in communication, adherence to role-based behavioural norms, concealment of personal feelings and attitudes toward the interlocutor, and the creation of a particular self-image.

Thus, in formal communication, interlocutors strive to remain restrained, avoid revealing their personal emotions and feelings, maintain status-role hierarchy, and create a favourable impression of themselves. As a result, they generally speak at a normal tempo, often tending toward a slower rate, and predominantly employ a descending stepping head combined with a low falling nuclear tone. In informal communication, by contrast, emotionality, expressiveness, spontaneity, and naturalness are conveyed prosodically through an accelerated speech tempo, occasionally approaching a normal rate, and the use of a broken head.

At the subsequent stage of the study, an electroacoustic analysis was conducted, comprising both intonographic and oscillographic analyses. The electroacoustic analysis made it possible to identify the pitch-, intensity-, and temporal-based differentiating features of the four types of dialogical units under investigation.

The results of the study, including the data obtained for the pitch, intensity, and temporal parameters, were subsequently generalized through mathematical data processing, specifically by applying statistical methods commonly used in phonetic research.

2.3. Results of the experimental study

The conducted electroacoustic analysis demonstrated that the pitch range in general, and the pitch maximums (pitch peaks) in particular, play an important role in realization of impoliteness and are partially involved in implementation of the speech strategy of politeness. Thus, pitch serves as an informative parameter for differentiating between politeness and

impoliteness. The main differences are observed between polite and impolite formal dialogues, as well as between polite and impolite informal dialogues.

The analysis of pitch range variability revealed a high degree of its fluctuation. Due to tonal variation, the pitch range of impolite formal and informal dialogical units is considerably wider than that of polite formal and informal dialogues. The pitch range reflects the overall atmosphere of conflict interaction and is associated with pitch graduation from low to high. A wide pitch range in impolite dialogical units illustrates their emotionality even in formal conflict communication.

The widening or narrowing of the pitch range also serves as an important criterion for differentiating polite and impolite conflict dialogical units. It was found that in impolite formal and informal dialogues, pitch range widening is primarily achieved through an increase in the upper pitch limit, which indicates a high degree of speech expressiveness. In contrast, in polite formal and informal dialogues, pitch range widening more often occurs due to a lowering of the lower pitch range boundary. This reflects greater emotionality and expressiveness in impolite dialogical units, as semantically salient parts of utterances are prosodically highlighted through pitch elevation.

The method of the generalized tonal contour (GTC) made it possible to obtain a dynamic intonation portrait of the pitch range for each type of dialogical units and to compare the generalized pitch movement patterns across the four types of conflict dialogical units under investigation.

The analysis of pitch peaks indicates that in impolite conflict dialogical units, pitch peaks are significantly higher than in polite ones. This supports the assumption that the emotional intensity of a dialogical unit is directly associated with the pitch peaks; that is, impolite dialogical units are characterized by a higher degree of emotionality than polite ones.

The further study revealed that pitch peaks in most cases coincide with the emphatic centre of the utterance, demonstrating the leading role of the melodic component of intonation in the realization of emphasis in both polite formal and informal, as well as impolite informal conflict dialogical units. It was established that the coincidence of the emphatic centre with pitch peaks in impolite formal conflict dialogical units (97% of cases) tends toward a functional dependency.

Thus, in impolite formal communication, the pitch peaks constitute a mandatory parameter in emphasis realization. This means that conflictogenic elements – words, intentions, actions, or inactions that trigger the emergence of

conflict (M. V. Tsyurupa)²² – are prosodically highlighted through an increase in pitch from a medium to a maximum level.

The results of the analysis of the dynamic structure of conflict dialogical units demonstrate a close relationship between the dynamic organization of speech and its expressive and emotional load. The intensity range reflects the overall loudness level in communication. The study showed that impolite formal and informal dialogical units are characterized by a wider intensity range than polite ones. Accordingly, the overall loudness level in impolite dialogical units is significantly higher than in polite communication.

The electroacoustic data also indicate that intensity range expansion depends primarily on the upper intensity boundary. In impolite formal and informal, as well as polite informal dialogical units, expansion of the intensity range more frequently occurs due to an increase in the upper limit than in polite formal interaction. In impolite informal dialogical units, which are characterized by the widest intensity range, this expansion occurs almost consistently (96% of cases) through elevation of the upper boundary, indicating maximal emotionality and confrontational behaviour in impolite informal interaction. Thus, at the prosodic level, conflictogenic elements are highlighted through an increase in loudness to its maximum level.

The results of the study indicate that the dynamic component of intonation plays an important role in emphasis realization, particularly in informal dialogues – both polite and impolite. However, in impolite informal dialogues, intensity peaks function as a mandatory parameter in emphasis realization, as the coincidence of the emphatic centre with intensity peaks (96% of cases) demonstrates a tendency toward functional dependency. Therefore, intensity, together with pitch range, serves as an informative parameter for differentiating politeness and impoliteness in conflict dialogical discourse.

The analysis of the temporal parameter of intonation indicates that speech rate also plays a significant role in the realization of both politeness and impoliteness in formal and informal dialogical units.

The analysis of the temporal organization of conflict dialogical units involved the study of the average syllable duration within a dialogical unit; the average duration of stimulus and response remarks in relation to the number of syllables they contain; the average duration of the emphatic centre; and the average duration of inter-syntagmatic pauses. In addition, types of pauses between key remarks and the overall extent of pausing were analyzed separately.

²² Цюрупа М. В. Основи конфліктології та теорії переговорів : навчальний посібник. – Київ : Кондор, 2004. – 172 с.

A comparative analysis of average syllable duration in the investigated dialogical units showed that polite formal and informal units are characterized by higher values of this parameter and, consequently, by a slower speech rate than impolite formal and informal dialogical units.

The analysis of inter-syntagmatic pausing also revealed certain differences between polite formal and informal dialogues on the one hand and impolite formal and informal dialogues on the other. These differences are manifested in the use of pauses of varying length, demonstrating that impolite dialogical units are characterized by a faster speech rate than polite ones.

In general, impolite formal and informal dialogical units are characterized by shorter pauses than polite formal and informal ones. This allows us to assert that the average duration of inter-syntagmatic pauses serves as a differentiating parameter for politeness and impoliteness in the studied conflict dialogical units. The results of the analysis of syllable duration and inter-syntagmatic pausing also suggest that polite conflict (both formal and informal) requires a greater degree of self-restraint than impolite interaction, in which speakers may give free rein to their emotions and thus express them more rapidly and without psychological inhibitory filters.

The analysis of the average duration of the emphatic centre revealed significant differences between polite formal and informal and impolite formal and informal dialogical units. Impolite formal and informal units are characterized by higher rates of this parameter, whereas polite formal and informal units show lower values for emphatic-centre duration. In impolite informal dialogues, the duration of both stimulus and response remarks is the shortest, while the emphatic-centre duration ranks second among the investigated types of dialogical units. This indicates that, despite the relative brevity of the remarks and the generally accelerated speech rate, a marked slowing down occurs at the level of emphasis, i.e. temporal highlighting of the emphatic centre through its prolongation.

The extent of inter-syntagmatic pausing also proved to be a differentiating feature. It is minimal in polite formal and impolite informal dialogical units, whereas higher rates are typical of polite informal and impolite formal ones. This can be explained by the fact that in polite formal interaction communication follows a predefined scenario determined by the official setting, status relations, and institutional hierarchy; therefore, interlocutors are relatively laconic, pauses are fewer, and the overall speech rate is slower than in impolite informal interaction, where emotions dominate and significantly accelerate speech production. In impolite formal dialogical units, compound and complex sentences prevail; these are pronounced more slowly, which influences the overall pausing pattern. Polite informal dialogical units are characterized by

a relatively high extent of inter-syntagmatic pausing, as interlocutors, while attempting to remain polite, search for appropriate verbal means of expression.

The types of pauses between key remarks can also be regarded as a differentiating parameter: polite formal and informal dialogues are predominantly characterized by syntactic pauses; impolite formal and informal dialogues by emphatic pauses; while hesitation pauses are more frequently observed in both polite and impolite formal dialogical units.

Experimental data make it possible to describe the intonational profiles of the four types of dialogical units under investigation.

1) Polite formal dialogical units are characterized by: (1) a medium pitch range; (2) expansion of the pitch range due to a lowering of the lower boundary; (3) medium pitch peaks; (4) a narrow intensity range; (5) low intensity peaks; (6) the longest inter-syntagmatic pauses among the four types of dialogical units; (7) a high syllable duration rate; (8) the lowest duration of the emphatic centre.

2) Polite informal dialogical units are characterized by: (1) a medium pitch range; (2) expansion of the pitch range due to a lowering of the lower boundary; (3) medium pitch peaks; (4) a medium intensity range; (5) medium intensity peaks; (6) inter-syntagmatic pauses of medium duration; (7) the highest syllable duration rate; (8) a medium duration of the emphatic centre.

3) Impolite formal dialogical units are characterized by: (1) a wide pitch range; (2) expansion of the pitch range due to an increase in the upper boundary; (3) high pitch peaks; (4) a medium intensity range with a tendency toward widening; (5) medium intensity peaks; (6) relatively short inter-syntagmatic pauses; (7) low syllable duration rates; (8) the highest duration of the emphatic centre.

4) Impolite informal dialogical units are characterized by: (1) the widest pitch range among the four types of dialogical units; (2) widening of the pitch range due to an increase in the upper boundary; (3) high pitch peaks; (4) the widest intensity range; (5) the highest intensity peaks; (6) the shortest inter-syntagmatic pauses; (7) the lowest syllable duration among the four types of dialogical units; (8) a high duration of the emphatic centre.

The obtained results confirm the proposed hypothesis regarding the existence of a set of pitch, intensity, and temporal parameters involved in realization and differentiation of politeness and impoliteness in English-language (both British and American) conflict formal and informal dialogical discourse.

CONCLUSIONS

Over the past decades, the speech strategy of politeness has become an extremely popular object of linguistic research. However, a comprehensive

analysis of the prosodic means used to actualize politeness and its opposite phenomenon – impoliteness – in conflict formal and informal discourse has not yet been conducted, which determines the relevance of the present research topic.

The study analyzes the prosodic features of conflict dialogical discourse depending on the degree of formality in the relationship between interlocutors.

Conflict discourse, as a type of dialogical discourse, is characterized by the realization of anti-ritual communicative goals that contradict the positive orientation of interaction and lead to the destabilization of interpersonal relations.

Politeness, as a socio-pragmatic phenomenon, contributes to the regulation of interpersonal interaction, ensuring its success and non-conflictual nature. Impoliteness is the opposite of politeness; it reflects communicative reactivity and the inability to adhere to politeness norms, resulting in the disruption of communicative harmony. Alongside politeness strategies, there also exist strategies of opposite orientation – impoliteness strategies – which are associated with the addresser's aggressive attitude toward the addressee and may lead to the emergence of conflict.

Intonation is one of the most important mechanisms for the realization and differentiation of politeness and impoliteness in the studied conflict dialogical units. Among the acoustic features that most clearly differentiate the investigated dialogical units are the pitch range and pitch peaks; intensity range; average syllable duration; average duration of the emphatic centre; extent of pausing; and types of pauses between key remarks. Pitch and intensity peaks coinciding with the emphatic centre of the dialogical unit play a particularly important role in the realization of emphasis.

The speech of interlocutors attempting to maintain politeness in formal conflict situations is characterized by a medium speech rate with a tendency toward slowing down, medium loudness, and a medium pitch range. This is conditioned by the formality and official nature of the setting, which requires adherence to status-based hierarchy between interlocutors.

Impolite formal conflict is characterized by a higher degree of emotionality than polite formal interaction, as speakers do not always adhere to communicative norms in official situations and may behave rudely or offensively toward their interlocutor. At the prosodic level, this is manifested in a faster speech rate than in polite formal communication, greater loudness, and a wider pitch range.

Polite informal conflict communication is characterized by greater emotionality and naturalness than polite formal interaction, but less emotional intensity than impolite informal conflict. On the one hand, the informal setting provides full freedom in the expression of emotions; on the other hand, the

desire to remain polite and avoid offending a close interlocutor leads speakers to restrain their negative feelings in polite informal conflict interaction.

Impolite informal conflict is the most emotional and least controlled type of interaction. Its expressiveness and lack of control are conditioned by the informality of the situation, the absence of a need for restraint, and complete freedom in the choice of verbal and non-verbal means of conflict realization. At the prosodic level, this type of interaction is characterized by high loudness, accelerated speech rate, and a wide pitch range.

The results of the study suggest that conflict interpersonal interaction constitutes a specific type of communication with its own prosodic structure.

A promising direction for future research is a comprehensive investigation of lexical, syntactic, and prosodic means of realizing politeness/impoliteness in conflict dialogical discourse, as well as a spectral analysis of the speech of speakers who initiate conflict and those who become involved in it.

SUMMARY

This research presents an experimental phonetic investigation, which deals with a comprehensive analysis of English-language (both British and American) formal and informal conflict dialogues. It focuses on the study of various types of the investigated conflict dialogues intonational structure.

The basic criteria of the practical material classification are: 1) the degree of relations formality between the collocutors and 2) politeness/impoliteness. According to these criteria the investigated conflict dialogues were classified as formal polite, formal impolite, informal polite and informal impolite.

The recorded speech was investigated with the help of computer and statistical analyses which allowed to reveal those elements of prosody which actualize politeness/impoliteness in various types of the investigated conflict dialogues.

The conducted research enabled us to state that conflict dialogical discourse represents a peculiar type of speech with a specific prosodic structure. Intonation is one of the most important mechanisms for the realization and differentiation of politeness and impoliteness in the studied conflict dialogical units.

Bibliography

1. Bousfield D. Impoliteness in Interaction. Amsterdam ; Philadelphia : John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2008. 292 p.
2. Brown P., Levinson S. C. Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1987. 345 p.
3. Culpeper J. Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness. Journal of Pragmatics. 1996. Vol. 25, No. 3. P. 349–367.

4. Culpeper J. Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2011. 292 p.
5. Eelen G. A Critique of Politeness Theories. Manchester : St. Jerome Publishing, 2001. 274 p.
6. Goffman E. Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior. New York : Anchor Books, 1967. 270 p.
7. Haugh M. Im/politeness, Social Practice and the Participation Order. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 2013. Vol. 58. P. 52–72.
8. Haugh M., Kádár D. Z. (Eds.). The Palgrave Handbook of Linguistic (Im)Politeness. London : Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. 670 p.
9. Holmes J. An Introduction to Sociolinguistics. 4th ed. London ; New York : Routledge, 2013. 489 p.
10. Ide S. Formal Forms and Discernment: Two Neglected Aspects of Universals of Linguistic Politeness . *Multilingua*. 1989. Vol. 8, No. 2–3. P. 223–248.
11. Kádár D. Z., Haugh M. Understanding Politeness. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2013. 300 p.
12. Lakoff R. The Logic of Politeness; or, Minding Your P's and Q's . *Papers from the Ninth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*. Chicago : Chicago Linguistic Society, 1973. P. 292–305.
13. Leech G. N. The Pragmatics of Politeness. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2014. 343 p.
14. Locher M. A. Power and Politeness in Action: Disagreements in Oral Communication. Berlin ; New York : Mouton de Gruyter, 2004. 280 p.
15. Locher M. A., Watts R. J. Politeness Theory and Relational Work. *Journal of Politeness Research*. 2005. Vol. 1, No. 1. P. 9–33.
16. Manes J., Wolfson N. The Compliment Formula. *Conversational Routine: Explorations in Standardized Communication Situations and Prepatterned Speech*. The Hague : Mouton, 1981. P. 115–132.
17. Mills S. Gender and Politeness. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2003. 282 p.
18. Spencer-Oatey H. Rapport Management: A Framework for Analysis. *Culturally Speaking: Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory*. 2nd ed. London : Continuum, 2008. P. 11–46.
19. Spencer-Oatey H. (Ed.). Culturally Speaking: Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory. 2nd ed. London : Continuum, 2008. 360 p.
20. Tannen D. Conversational Style: Analyzing Talk Among Friends. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2005. 240 p.
21. Terkourafi M. Beyond the Micro-Level in Politeness Research. *Journal of Politeness Research*. 2005. Vol. 1, No. 2. P. 237–262.

22. Watts R. J. Politeness. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2003. 318 p.

23. Цюрупа М. В. Основи конфліктології та теорії переговорів : навчальний посібник. – Київ : Кондор, 2004. – 172 с.

Information about the author:

Pelivan Oksana,

Candidate of Philological Sciences,

Associate Professor at the Department of Foreign Languages

National University «Odesa Law Academy»

23, Fontanska Road, Odesa, Ukraine