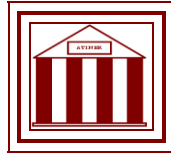


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**A Comparative Study of Politeness Strategies in  
Verbal Communication**

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## **A Comparative Study of Politeness Strategies in Verbal Communication**

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### **Abstract**

The concept of politeness is complex and multi-faceted. Issues of im/politeness are different from culture to culture. The purpose of this study is to collect data by which the conceptualization of positive politeness strategies and negative politeness strategies of Brown and Levinson by Japanese people could be evaluated. Firstly, this study focuses on the results of a questionnaire that sought opinions on positive politeness strategies and negative politeness strategies in verbal communication from Japanese people. Secondly, based on the results, examined the similarities and differences in evaluating the concept of the conceptualizations of positive politeness strategies and negative politeness strategies of Brown and Levinson that exist in English culture and Japanese culture. Thirdly, the results were analyzed from the standpoint of gender. The findings offer insight into cultural and linguistic homogenization and diversification in politeness strategies in order to prevent the obstacle of communication beforehand. This study makes a contribution to research on the concept of politeness strategies in increasing the numbers of various kinds of interactions both traditional and novel among Japanese people in the era of globalization recently.

**Keywords:** politeness; positive politeness strategies; negative politeness strategies; cultural and linguistic diversity; verbal communication.

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## Introduction

Politeness has been an important theme in research since Brown and Levinson proposed their politeness theory in 1978. This theory has inspired concerted and continuous research on the notion of politeness. In the past three decades, politeness phenomena have been widely studied by researchers and scholars of intercultural communication, sociolinguistics, psychology, psycholinguistics, applied linguistics, and pragmatics.

Kasper (1990) summarized the work of Lakoff (1973), Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), and Leech (1983) as follows: Politeness is viewed as a rational, rule-governed, pragmatic aspect of speech that is rooted in the human need to maintain relationships and avoid conflicts. By being mutually supportive and avoiding threats to face, according to the standard argument, speakers maintain smooth relations and sustain successful communication. The underlying rationale, motivation, and functional foundations of politeness are assumed to be, to some extent, universal, and are assumed to influence, and be reflected in, various modes of speech in many different languages and cultures (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

Linguistic politeness, then, reflects cultural values. Correctly identifying polite behavior in a culture involves understanding the society's values (Holmes, 1995), and different cultural and linguistic groups express politeness in different ways. That is, the range of behaviors deemed polite in the American or British society, for example, may be quite different from the behaviors described by the word *teinei* 'politeness' in Japanese.

Politeness is a pragmatic aspect of verbal behavior appropriate for communication in each language (Kasper, 1990). Each language has certain concepts that are used in ordinary, appropriate communication, and these concepts reflect the cultural norm of politeness for its speakers. The elementary concept for smooth communication in Japanese is *teinei*. It is often regarded as synonymous because it translates into English as "politeness".

Up to date, there has been little study on native speaker beliefs about politeness strategies. Thus, we can ask the following important questions:

- Is the corresponding concept of politeness, *teinei*, really synonymous?
- How do people evaluate the concept of politeness in communicative behavior in different cultural contexts?
- How do Japanese people perceive Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies?

Interviews or questionnaires focusing on native speaker beliefs about (im) politeness are another valuable source of insight into emic perspective (Haugh, 2007, p. 661). Lexicological explanations of the words for "politeness" were consulted in representative contemporary dictionaries of each language.

The aim of this study is, as already stated, to provide useful insights into the thoughts and traditional moral values of Japanese people on which politeness behavior is based. However, we also consider the influence of

personal psychology in intercultural communication. An opinion poll was given to Japanese people to collect data for a comparative study of perceived Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies in verbal communication. Furthermore, the results were analyzed from the standpoint of gender. We also discuss the difference between university students and working adults. The specific purpose of this study was to discover how Japanese people differ in evaluating the emic conceptualization of politeness.

## **Methodology**

### *Participants*

The participants in this study were 131 people living in Japan. Among them, data were collected from 150 respondents. Seventy-five Japanese students (40 males, 35 females) were enrolled at universities in Tokyo, Yokohama, Toyama and Kanazawa (November 2014), and 56 working adults (20 males, 36 females) were enrolled at companies and universities in Tokyo, Yokohama, Toyama and Kanazawa (October 2014). The ages of the participants ranged from 17 to 68 years.

### *Material and Procedure*

This study employed written questionnaires. We used Brown and Levinson's positive politeness strategies (15), negative politeness strategies (10) and Off-record Politeness (15) (1987) which are translated by Japanese scholars.

The Japanese questionnaire surveyed Japanese people's current conceptualizations of politeness strategies. The questions were multiple-choice. This paper addresses findings based on the participants' responses. Question: Do you think this is polite language? 1) Yes 2) No

## **Results**

To examine the differences between Japanese males and females, we first separated the questionnaire responses by the participant's gender, university students and working adults. Then, qualitative differences among the responses were identified by grouping them into specific categories Yes and No. This analysis revealed a great variety in the types of responses. Below, we examine the similarities and differences in politeness strategies described by the Japanese people.

**Table 1. Results of Positive Politeness Strategies**

Answers	Yes			
	Male Students	Female Students	Male Working Adults	Female Working Adults
<b>Positive Politeness Strategies</b>				
S1: Notice, attend to H	7 17.5%	13 <b>37.1%</b>	3 15.0%	11 <b>30.6%</b>
S2: Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)	31 <b>77.5%</b>	20 <b>57.1%</b>	11 <b>55.0%</b>	15 <b>41.7%</b>
S3: Intensify interest to H	1 2.6%	3 8.6%	0 0%	1 2.8%
S4: Use in-group identity markers	2 5.0%	2 5.7%	0 0%	1 2.8%
S5: Seek agreement	2 5.0%	2 5.7%	1 5.0%	1 2.8%
S6: Avoid disagreement	21 <b>52.5%</b>	16 <b>45.7%</b>	9 <b>45.0%</b>	15 <b>41.7%</b>
S7: Presuppose/raise/assert common ground	3 7.5%	1 2.9%	1 5.0%	0 0%
S8: Joke	2 5.0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
S9: Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants	28 <b>70.0%</b>	23 <b>65.7%</b>	6 <b>30.0%</b>	16 <b>44.4%</b>
S10: Offer, promise	6 15.0%	2 5.7%	0 0%	0 0%
S11: Be optimistic	1 2.5%	3 8.6%	0 0%	4 11.1%
S12: Include both S and H in the activity	5 12.5%	2 5.7%	0 0%	0 0%
S13: Give (or ask for ) reasons	5 12.5%	5 14.3%	1 5.0%	2 5.6%
S14: Assume or assert reciprocity	2 5.0%	2 5.7%	0 0%	0 0%
S15: Give gift to H (goods, sympathy)	34 <b>85.0%</b>	27 <b>77.1%</b>	16 <b>80.0%</b>	29 <b>80.6%</b>

As can be seen from Table 1, about 80% of Japanese people thought that “Giving a gift to H (goods, sympathy)” is a politeness strategy. About 46% of Japanese people thought that “Avoiding disagreement” is a politeness strategy. About 21% more Japanese students (70% male and 65.7% female) than working adults (30% male, 44.4% female) thought “Asserting or presupposing S’s knowledge of and concern for H’s wants” is a politeness strategy. About 22% more Japanese students (77.5% male and 57.1% female) than working adults (55% male, 41.7% female) thought “Exaggerating (interest, approval, sympathy with H)” is a politeness strategy. Only 25% of Japanese people thought that “Noticing, attending to H” is a politeness strategy.

Table 1 also shows that there are different opinions between the male respondents and the female respondents. 14.4% more female (44.4%) than male (30%) working adults indicated that “Asserting or presupposing S’s knowledge of and concern for H’s wants” is a politeness strategy. More female (37.1%, 30.6%) than male (17.5%, 15%) Japanese people indicated that “Notice, attend to H” is a politeness strategy.

On the contrary, More male (77.5%, 55%) than female (57.1%, 41.7%) Japanese people indicated that “Exaggerating (interest, approval, sympathy with H)” is a politeness strategy. However, the total results for Japanese participants of both genders tell us that Japanese people think most of Brown and Levinson’s positive politeness strategies are not positive strategies.

**Table 2. Results of Negative Politeness Strategies**

Answers	Yes			
	Male Students	Female Students	Male Working Adults	Female Working Adults
Politeness Strategies				
S1: Be conventionally indirect	<b>36</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>33</b>
	<b>90.0%</b>	<b>97.1%</b>	<b>80.0%</b>	<b>91.7%</b>
S2: Question, hedge	2	3	2	2
	5.0%	8.6%	10.0%	5.6%
S3: Be pessimistic	1	1	1	1
	2.5%	2.9%	5.0%	2.8%
S4: Minimize the imposition	9	5	1	9
	<b>22.5%</b>	14.3%	5.0%	<b>25.0%</b>
S5: Give deference	<b>36</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>32</b>
	<b>90.0%</b>	<b>88.6%</b>	<b>90.0%</b>	<b>88.9%</b>
S6: Apologize	<b>38</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>34</b>
	<b>95.0%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>75.0%</b>	<b>94.4%</b>
S7: Impersonalize S and H	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>
	<b>35.0%</b>	<b>45.7%</b>	<b>25.0%</b>	<b>33.3%</b>
S8: State the FTA as a general rule	<b>24</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>22</b>
	<b>60.0%</b>	<b>51.4%</b>	<b>25.0%</b>	<b>61.1%</b>
S9: Nominalize	12	<b>14</b>	6	12
	30.0%	<b>40.0%</b>	30.0%	33.3%
S10: Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H	<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>32</b>
	<b>85.0%</b>	<b>94.3%</b>	<b>90.0%</b>	<b>88.9%</b>

As is clear from Table 2, about 88% of Japanese people thought that “Giving deference” is a politeness strategy. About 80% of Japanese people thought that “Be conventionally indirect” and “Going on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H” are politeness strategies. About 30% of Japanese people thought that “Nominalizing” is a politeness strategy. Furthermore, more Japanese students (95% male and 100% female) than working adults (75% male, 94.4% female) thought “Apologizing” is a politeness strategy. More

Japanese students (35% male, 45.7% female) than working adults (25% male, 33.3% female) thought “Impersonalizing S and H” is a politeness strategy. More Japanese students (60% male, 51.4% female) than working adults (25% male, 61.1% female) thought “Stating the FTA as a general rule” is a politeness strategy.

Table 2 also shows there are different opinions between the male respondents and the female respondents. More female (97.1%, 91.7%) than male (90%, 80%) Japanese people indicated that “Being conventionally indirect” and “Impersonalizing S and H” are politeness strategies. On the one hand, more female (25%, 94.4%, 33.3%, 61.1%) than male (5%, 75%, 25%, 25%) Japanese working adults indicated that “Minimizing the imposition”, “Apologizing”, “Impersonalizing S and H” and “Stating the FTA as a general rule” are politeness strategies. On the other hand, more female (45.7%, 40%, 94.3%) than male (35%, 30%, 85%) Japanese students indicated that “Impersonalizing S and H”, “Nominalizing” and “Going on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H” are politeness strategies. Moreover, slightly more male (22.5%, 60%) than female (14.3%, 51.4%) Japanese students indicated that “Minimizing the imposition” and “Stating the FTA as a general rule” are politeness strategies.

Overall, the results tell us that not only there are different opinions between the male respondents and the female respondents, but also there are different opinions between university students and working adults.

As can be seen from Table 3, the agreement rates about politeness strategies of Japanese people are very low. Especially, the male working adults gave a very low agreement rate. About 20% of Japanese people thought that “Giving association clues” and “Using metaphors” are politeness strategies. About 20% of Japanese students and female working adults indicated that “Giving hints”, “Being ironic” and “Being incomplete, using ellipsis” are politeness strategies. About 30% of Japanese students and female working adults indicated that “Over-generalizing” is a politeness strategies.

Table 3 also shows there are different opinions between the male respondents and the female respondents. More male (40%, 17.5%, 20%, 37%) than female (20%, 8.6%, 0%, 14.3%) Japanese students indicated that “Presupposing”, “Using rhetorical questions”, “Being ambiguous” and “Displacing H” are politeness strategies. On the other hand, more female (45.7%, 45.7%) than male (37.5%, 30%) Japanese working adults indicated that “Presupposing” and “Using tautologies” are politeness strategies. Furthermore, almost agreement rates of female are more than male’s except “Giving association clues” and “Using metaphors”.



**Table 3. Results of Off-record Politeness**

Answers Politeness Strategies	Yes			
	Male Students	Female Students	Male Working Adults	Female Working Adults
S1: Give hints	10 <b>25.0%</b>	7 <b>20.0%</b>	2 10.0%	10 <b>27.8%</b>
S2: Give association clues	9 <b>22.5%</b>	10 <b>28.6%</b>	4 <b>20.0%</b>	7 <b>19.4%</b>
S3: Presuppose	15 <b>37.5%</b>	16 <b>45.7%</b>	2 10.0%	13 <b>36.1%</b>
S4: Understate	16 <b>40.0%</b>	7 <b>20.0%</b>	1 5.0%	14 <b>38.9%</b>
S5: Overstate	5 12.5%	2 5.7%	1 5.0%	5 13.9%
S6: Use tautologies	12 <b>30.0%</b>	16 <b>45.7%</b>	2 10.0%	10 <b>27.8%</b>
S7: Use contradictions	6 15.0%	3 8.6%	0 0%	4 11.1%
S8: Be ironic	11 <b>27.5%</b>	8 <b>22.9%</b>	1 5.0%	9 <b>25.0%</b>
S9: Use metaphors	11 <b>27.5%</b>	9 <b>25.7%</b>	4 <b>20.0%</b>	9 <b>25.0%</b>
S10: Use rhetorical questions	7 <b>17.5%</b>	3 8.6%	1 5.0%	5 <b>13.9%</b>
S11: Be ambiguous	8 <b>20.0%</b>	0 0%	1 5.0%	6 <b>16.7%</b>
S12: Be vague	4 10.0%	4 11.4%	0 0%	4 11.1%
S13: Over-generalize	13 <b>32.5%</b>	11 <b>31.4%</b>	1 5.0%	11 <b>30.6%</b>
S14: Displace H	15 <b>37.5%</b>	5 14.3%	2 10.0%	13 <b>36.1%</b>
S15: Be incomplete, use ellipsis	9 <b>22.5%</b>	7 <b>20.0%</b>	0 0%	8 <b>22.2%</b>

The results indicate cultural and linguistic diversity. Most of the respondents did not agree with Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies. This study shows that there is a gender difference in perceptions of politeness. For example, more Japanese male students than female agree with Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies. On the contrary, most of the female working adults than the male working adults agreed with Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies.

In summary, this reflects the fact that most of the Japanese people do not agree with the opinion of Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies.

## Discussion

This study has elucidated the similarities and differences in the concepts of politeness in Japanese, and English verbal communication. A large amount of information was collected. The results not only reflect the Japanese cultural and behavioral differences in perceived politeness in communicative behavior, but also enabled an objective comparison of the awareness and usage of polite expressions in the language.

What is the emic notion of politeness in Japan? English-Japanese dictionaries typically translate “politeness” as *reigitadashisa*, *teichousa*, *omoiyari*, *teinei(sa)*, or *poraitonesu* (“politeness”). According to Haugh (2007, p. 661),

The emic notion of “politeness” in Japanese can be approached, in the first instance, from the perspective of two key lexemes: *teinei* and *reigi* (*tadashii*). According to the Kojien dictionary, *teinei* is defined as “to be warm and correct in one’s *reigi*” and “to be attentive in what one does (*teatsuku reigi tadashii koto and chui-bukaku koto ro ga yukitodoku koto*)” (Shinmura, 1998, p. 1818), while the main sense of *reigi* relating to “politeness” is “the behavioural forms and patterns that people ought to preserve in order to protect the order of social life, in particular, manners/etiquette which express ‘upward’ respect (*shakaiseikatsu no chitsujo o tamotsu tameni hito ga mamoru beki koto yoshiki, tokuni kei’i o arawasu saho*)” (Shinmura, 1998, p. 2827). An initial analysis of these two lexemes thus indicates that *teinei* involves being warm-hearted (*teatsuku*) and attentive (*chui-bukaku*) (p. 1818), while *reigi tadashii* involves showing upward-looking respect (*kei’i*) towards others (p. 2827).

Language usage plays a large role in Japanese politeness. The use of *keigo* (honorific forms) is a major strategy in demonstrating politeness in Japan (Ogawa & Gudykunst, 1999–2000). The findings presented here confirm this point. Many students mentioned honorific forms as their image of politeness, or *teinei*. Akasu and Asao (1993) explain that “*Keigo* typically is used to show deference to the listener, to some third party, or to some referent related to him/her. That means that the person to whom the *keigo* is directed must be someone worthy in some way of that deference” (p. 98). The more recent conceptualization of politeness in Japanese shifts the focus away from a concern for social position (*mibun*) or status (*chi’i*) to potentially less hierarchical dimensions, such as the dignity and character of others (*jinkaku*).

Using native-speaker judgments, Ide et al. (1992, p. 290) demonstrated that the Japanese concepts of politeness include that one is respectful (*keii no aru*), pleasant (*kazsi yoi*), appropriate (*tekisetuna*), and considerate (*omoiyari no aru*). Ide et al. (1992, p. 290) states:

*Tekisetuna* is the adjective used in Japanese to evaluate behavior in the light of worldly criteria, i.e., *wakimae* (discernment), which is the key concept of linguistic politeness in Japanese (Ide, 1989).

In Japanese, it is crucial for a speaker to perceive the social context, such as the type of situation or setting that he or she is in. It is also called discernment; that is, in contact between Japanese people, the speaker should pay attention to addressing certain factors of the situation, and then selecting an appropriate linguistic form and the appropriate behavior. Obana (1994) reported that her respondents associated politeness with knowing where one stands in social interactions (*wakimae* ‘discernment’), showing upward respect (*kei’i*) towards others and modesty about oneself, and horizontal distance. Interesting additions to the notions of politeness that emerge from ordinary speakers of Japanese, which are not encompassed by dictionary definitions, include showing consideration and relational distance towards others, as well as modesty towards oneself. Different cultural and linguistic groups express politeness in different ways. Politeness in Japanese can also involve showing one’s social standing (*shitsuke* ‘breeding’) and modesty, although this is restricted to certain individuals who use beautification honorifics to show good breeding (Ide, 2005). Politeness thus involves not only showing what one thinks of others, but also what one thinks of oneself (Chen, 2001; Haugh and Hinze, 2003; Ruhi, 2006; Haugh, 2007). However, the findings of this study show that good breeding is not an important part of politeness for some participants. None of them mentioned distance as a factor in politeness.

The result proves that a traditional view notably emphasizes a fundamental cultural difference between Japanese society and the West. Some researchers argue that Japanese politeness, in contrast with politeness in Western cultures, is based on conformity to social conventions. In summary, politeness in Japanese verbal communication is somewhat similar to that in Chinese and Korean. According to Werkhofer (1992), we are beginning “to understand how politeness is actually constituted and used not only in terms of purportedly universal principles, but in both universal and specific terms, thus finally taking into account social realities, be they traditional or modern ones” (p. 158). However, different cultural and linguistic groups express politeness in different ways. More Japanese participants associated politeness with honorification, from which we can conclude that honorific speech has a greater impact on the minds of Japanese speakers.

This study shows that the concept of politeness in communicative behavior is specific to a particular culture, sense of values, and standards. For example, in Japan the use of polite expressions may relate to the Japanese concepts of *tatema* ‘façade’ and *honne* ‘true feelings.’ The traditional aspects of politeness in Japanese society, including upward respect, honorific expressions, beautiful language, and consideration, still remain.

Moreover, it is significant that the idea that politeness should be understood as strategic conflict-avoidance arises, for example, in the view that the basic social role of politeness is in its ability to function as a way of

controlling potential aggression between interactional parties (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 1) or in the views that connect politeness with smooth communication (Ide, 1989, p. 225, 230) or with avoiding disruption and maintaining the social equilibrium and friendly relation (Leech, 1983, p. 17, 82).

## **Conclusion**

This study makes an important contribution to comparative studies of intercultural politeness. Especially, the use of native-speaker judgments in the comparative study of intercultural politeness strategies in Japanese verbal communication is an important theme. The concepts of politeness discussed here validate many opinions of Japanese people regarding cultural awareness and evaluated concepts of the self-concerning politeness. Polite expressions, beautification language, and polite behavior continue to be the key characteristics of the Asian social-perspective tradition of politeness, in the view of today's Japanese people.

It will be necessary to conduct a similar analysis of intercultural politeness in other societies in the future to examine how to improve cooperation through an understanding of communicative behavior. Further research on concepts of politeness in intercultural communication should more fully explore cultural and linguistic differences, and other questions for linguistic and psycholinguistic theory because of variability. We subscribe to the view of Eelen (2001, p. 253–256) and Matsumura et al. (2004) that the notion of politeness is in need of further investigation. Different kinds of research methods should be used to investigate ordinary people's notions of politeness, such as informal interviews or examples of actual politeness evaluations. As Held (1992) states, "the linguistic concern with politeness is a task for the future, not a thing of the past" (p. 151).

**Appendix**

**15 Positive politeness strategies of Brown & Levinson**

1.	Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods) <i>Goodness, you cut your hair! (...) By the way, I came to borrow some flour. (103)</i>
2.	Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H) <i>What a fantastic garden you have! (104)</i>
3.	Intensify interest to H <i>I come down the stairs, and what do you think I see ? a huge mess all over the place, the phone's off the hook and clothes are scattered all over ... (106)</i>
4.	Use in-group identity markers <i>Help me with this bag here, will you pal? (108)</i>
5.	Seek agreement A: <i>I had a flat tire on the way home.</i> B: <i>Oh God, a flat tire! (113)</i>
6.	Avoid disagreement A: <i>That's where you live, Florida?</i> B: <i>That's where I was born. (114)</i>
7.	Presuppose /raise/assert common ground <i>I had a really hard time learning to drive, didn't ? (119)</i>
8.	Joke <i>How about lending me this old heap of junk ? (H's new Cadillac) (124)</i>
9.	Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants <i>I know you love roses but the florist didn't have any more, so I brought you geraniums instead. (offer + apology) (125)</i>
10.	Offer, promise. In order to redress the potential threat of some FTAs, Speaker may choose to stress his cooperation with hearer in another way. Offer, promise are the natural outcome of choosing this strategy; even if they are false ('I'll drop by sometime next week') they demonstrate S's good intentions in satisfying H's positive-face wants. (125)
11.	Be optimistic <i>Look, I'm sure you won't mind if I borrow your typewriter. (126)</i>
12.	Include both S and H in the activity <i>Let's stop for a bite. (I want a bite, so let's stop) (127)</i>
13.	Give (or ask for) reasons <i>Why not lend me your cottage for the weekend?(128)</i>
14.	Assume or assert reciprocity <i>I'll do X for you if you do Y for me', or 'I did X for you last week, so you do Y for me This week. (129)</i>
15.	Give gift to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation) (129) <i>The other day I saw this at the store, and I had to get it. I hope you like it.</i>

**10 Negative Politeness Strategies**

1.	Be conventionally indirect <i>Can you pass me the salt? (133)</i>
2.	Question, hedge <i>As you know. (165)</i>
3.	Be pessimistic <i>I don't imagine (suppose) there'd be any (chance, possibility, hope) of you ... (174)</i>
4.	Minimize the imposition <i>I just dropped by for a minute to ask if you ... (174)</i>
5.	Give deference <i>We Look forward very much to dining/eating with you. (181)</i>
6.	Apologize <i>I don't want to bother you, but ... (188)</i>
7.	Impersonalize S and H <i>It is expected that you will do this job. (194)</i> <i>(We expect ...)</i>
8.	State the FTA as a general rule <i>We don't sit on tables, we sit on chairs, Jonny. (207)</i>
9.	Nominalize <i>Your good performance on the examinations impressed us favorably. (207)</i>
10.	Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H <i>I'd be eternally grateful if you would tell me about it. (210)</i>

**Off-record Politeness**

**Brown and Levinson have 15 strategies about this**

1.	Give hints <i>It's cold in here (e.g. Shut the window.) (215)</i>
2.	Give association clues <i>Are you going to market tomorrow ... There's a market tomorrow, I suppose. (216)</i> <i>(e.g. Give me a ride there.)</i>
3.	Presuppose <i>I washed the car again today. (217)</i>
4.	Understate A: <i>What do you think of Harry?</i> B: <i>Nothing wrong with him. (e.g. I don't think he's very good) (218)</i>
5.	Overstate <i>I tried to call a hundred times but there was never any answer. (219)</i>
6.	Use tautologies <i>War is war. (220)</i>
7.	Use contradictions <i>Well, John is here and he isn't here. (221)</i>
8.	Be ironic <i>Beautiful weather, isn't it! (to a postman drenched in a rainstorm.) (222)</i>
9.	Use metaphors <i>Harry's a real fish. (e.g. He drinks (swims, is slimy, is cold blooded) like a fish) (223)</i>
10	Use rhetorical questions <i>How many times do I have to tell you? (e.g. Too many) (224)</i>
11.	Be ambiguous <i>John's a pretty (sharp, smooth) cookie. (225)</i>
12.	Be vague <i>Looks like someone may have had too much to drink. (226)</i>
13.	Over-generalize <i>Mature people sometimes help do the dishes. (226)</i>
14.	Displace H <i>One secretary in an office ask another-but with negative politeness-to pass the stapler, in circumstance where a professor is much nearer to the stapler than the other secretary. His face is not threatened, and he can choose to do it himself as bonus 'free gift'. (226-227)</i>
15.	Be incomplete, use ellipsis <i>Well, if one leaves one's tea on the wobbly table ... (227)</i>

Do you think this is polite language? 1) Yes 2) No

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