The Politeness Principle and Its Maxims:

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Introduction: H. Paul Grice is known for his maxims of conversation.

Geoffrey Leech is known for his politeness principle (PP) and its maxims.

Politeness can be understood as respecting another person’s public self image.

As a part of conversation, politeness is about what is said and not so much about what is thought or believed.
The Politeness Principle and Its Maxims:

• Geoffrey Leech formulates the politeness principle as:
  • ‘Minimize the expression of impolite beliefs’ and
  • ‘Maximize the expression of polite beliefs’.

• Polite beliefs- favourable to the hearer.
• Impolite beliefs- unfavourable to the hearer.

• According to Geoffrey Leech, there is a politeness principle with conversational maxims similar to those formulated by Paul Grice.
The Politeness Principle and Its Maxims:

• Geoffrey Leech lists six maxims:
  • 1) Tact Maxim
  • 2) Generosity Maxim
  • 3) Approbation Maxim
  • 4) Modesty Maxim
  • 5) Agreement Maxim
  • 6) Sympathy Maxim
The Tact Maxim:

- The Tact Maxim states:
- Minimize the expression of beliefs which imply cost to other;
- Maximize the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to other:
  - It is expressed using negative politeness.
- Examples:
  - 1. Could you carry this bag to my house?
  - 2. Carry this bag to my house!
  - 3. I am wondering if you could carry this bag to my house.

Examples:
- In order to be polite, one would say,
- Would you mind answering the phone?
- Instead of saying Answer the phone.
- Enjoy the dinner. (Maximize benefits to hearer)
The Generosity Maxim:

• Leech's Generosity Maxim states:
  • Minimize the expression of beliefs that express or imply benefit to self;
  • Maximize the expression of beliefs that express or imply cost to self.’
• Unlike the tact maxim, the maxim of generosity focuses on the speaker, and says that others should be put first instead of the self.

Examples:
• You relax and let me do the dishes.
• You must come and have dinner with us.
• You can use my computer, if you want.
• Please do come for a party at my house tonight.
• Polite sentences which imply benefit to hearer and imply cost to self.
The Approbation Maxim:

- The Approbation Maxim states:
  - 'Minimize the expression of beliefs which express dispraise of other.
    Maximize the expression of beliefs which express praise of others.

- It can be called “the Flattery Maxims”.

- Examples:
  - What a beautiful dress you wore!
  - What a tasty meal you cooked!
The Modesty Maxim:

The Modesty Maxim states:

• Minimize praise of ‘self’.
• Maximize dispraise of ‘self’.
• Examples:
  • It is polite to say, “How clever of you”! But it is impolite to say, “How stupid of you!”
  • Similarly, it is polite to say, “How stupid of me”! But it is impolite to say, “How clever of me!”
The Agreement Maxim:

The Agreement Maxim states:

• Minimize disagreement between ‘self’ and ‘others’.
• Maximize agreement between ‘self’ and ‘others’.

• (1) Example of rudeness dialogue-
  • A: It was an interesting match, wasn’t it?
  • B: No, it was very boring.

• (2) Example of partial agreement:
  • A: English is difficult language to learn.
  • B: True, but the grammar is quite easy.

Thus, of the above (2) is an example of politeness but (1) is an example of impoliteness.
The Sympathy Maxim:

• The Sympathy Maxim states:
  • Minimize antipathy between ‘self’ and ‘others’.
  • Maximize sympathy between ‘self’ and ‘others’.
• This includes a small group of speech acts such as congratulating, expressing condolences. It is the strategy of attending the hearer’s interest, wants and needs.
• Examples:
  • It is polite to say:
  • I am terribly sorry to hear that your dog died.
  • But it is not polite to say:
  • I am terribly pleased to hear that your dog died.
Thank You