

ON CO-CONSTITUTIVE NATURE OF POLITENESS  
IMPLICATURE AND ITS ACTUALIZATION IN  
ENGLISH COURT SESSIONS

Politeness implicature is a comparatively new concept in the field of pragmatics and the ways of its manifestation in court sessions haven't been studied yet. In this paper, different cases of politeness implicature are studied taken from William Jefferson Clinton's trial, the aim of which is to show the co-constitutive nature of politeness implicature, to reveal the lexical and syntactic means which best represent and trigger politeness implicatures, to disclose the situations where different types of politeness implicatures are generated in official settings, as well as to reveal the purpose of using politeness implicatures in court sessions. The method of semantic analysis and text/context analysis methods are employed for the interpretation of the given examples. These methods are employed both on deep and surface structure levels. The analysis is carried in concord with Arundale's Conjoint Co-Constituting Model of Communication (Arundale 1999).

The notion of politeness implicature was mostly studied by Brown, Levinson and Leech at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who suggested that politeness implicature mainly refers to instances, where politeness arises by implying something through the utterance and not simply stating it directly (Brown and Levinson 1987, Leech 1983). Thus, the study of the notion of politeness implicature reveals that by implying something (saying something indirectly) it is possible to give rise to politeness. In general, conversations are considered to be free of conflict. However, in some cases people may fail to understand each other. One may say something that the other doesn't agree with it, or with his utterance the speaker may offend the interlocutor, which consequently may bring to the failure of conversation. Therefore, in order to maintain the flow of conversation and minimize the danger of insult, it is preferable to use implicatures in conversations which will give rise to politeness. Politeness may arise because one of the interlocutors shows he/she thinks well of the other, or because the speaker shows he/she does not think too highly of himself/herself. Hence, politeness implicature is broadly defined as *something implied in addition to what is explicitly said* (Haugh 2003).

The following example taken from W. J. Clinton's trial makes it salient that indirectness really functions as a means of generating politeness. To understand these politeness implicatures certain background information is necessary, namely, it is the beginning of the proceedings and President Clinton's defender, Mr. Bennett, turns to the judge with the following sentences.

(1) "Good morning, Judge. Just a few preliminary matters. *We are hoping* that we can complete the deposition by three-thirtyish. The President has something at four o'clock he really should attend to. Obviously we're not going to ... we're here to do it as long as you require, but that's a long time".

The analysis of the surface structure of paragraph (1) reveals a few politeness implicatures. One of them is generated from the utterance *We are hoping*, where the usage of the pronoun *we*, and the lexical item *hope* give rise to a politeness implicature. Saying *we* instead of *I*, Mr. Bennett shows respect to Mr. Clinton, since he expresses not only his opinion, but also Mr. Clinton's opinion, sharing the latter's views, thus giving rise to a *collectivity politeness implicature* proposed by Tovmasyan (2009), which arises in situations where the speaker minimizes the expression of cost to self and maximizes the expression of cost to others.

By using the lexical item *hope* the defender creates a politeness implicature, showing that he is not self-confident or self-assured and avoids any imposition on the judge from their part. Directly saying what is the reason of their hurry (namely, The President has to attend somewhere at four o'clock), the defender later on chooses an indirect, yet a polite utterance *Obviously we're not going to ... we're here to do it as long as you require*, which carries the politeness implicature that the judge is the most essential body in the court and he has the power to make finite decisions. Thus, this gives rise to a *demeanour politeness implicature*, where Mr. Bennett shows that he does not think too highly of himself, moreover emphasizes his high opinion of the judge.

Clearly, Mr. Bennett uses the modal verb *should* in his utterance, by means of which he evades being forceful and obligatory in making his speech, maintaining the polite manner.

The study of politeness implicature reveals that they are observed in conversations between at least two interlocutors, since politeness implicatures are not just implicit meanings that hearers recognize through speakers, but they are generated from joint, collaborative interaction between speakers and hearers, which proves its being co-constitutive (Grice 1989, Levinson 2000).

Let's consider the following example from President Clinton's trial, which will prove the co-constitutive nature of politeness implicature.

(2) Judge Wright: Now, I agree with you that he needs to have a good faith basis for asking the question.

Mr. Bennett: May we ask what it is, Your Honour?

Judge Wright: And I'm assuming that he does, and I will be willing to review this in camera if he does not want to reveal it to Counsel.

Mr. Bennett: Fine.

Mr. Fisher: I would welcome an opportunity to explain to the Court what our good faith basis is in camera hearing.

Apparently, Mr. Bennett's question to the Judge leaves room for interpretation. Obviously, Mr. Bennett utilizes the modal verb *may* to make a polite request, thus, generating a politeness implicature. The fact that a politeness implicature has indeed arisen is evident also from the next word *we* which confirms Mr. Bennett's being polite, through which he shows concern for the judge. Had he used the personal pronoun *I* it would focus the emphasis on his self and lack to involve in it the addressee, in this particular case the judge. Yet, employing the pronoun *we* he stresses the judge's importance in Court, thus co-constituting a politeness implicature, making use of Leech's *generosity maxim*.

The co-constitutive nature of the politeness implicature is evident first from the judge's response to Mr. Bennett's question, where the judge confirms the need of asking Mr. Fisher about faith basis of his questions, as in the utterance, *I will be willing to review this in camera*, thus showing that he accepts the defender's offer, and second from the usage of the pronoun *we*, which is immediately interpreted by the judge as referring to her, which undoubtedly proves that politeness implicature has been co-constituted.

Another politeness implicature that is co-constituted in example (2) is obvious from Mr. Fisher's utterance *I would welcome an opportunity to explain to the Court what our good faith basis is in camera hearing*, which indicates Mr. Fisher's correct interpretation of the judge's speech and the successful co-constitution of the politeness implicature.

Thus, the observations reveal that indirectness really gives rise to politeness, which facilitates the interaction and minimizes the danger of insult, maintaining the flow of conversation. As well as one more time it was proved that politeness implicature has co-constitutive character and it is generated in collaborative interaction.

The analysis of William Jefferson Clinton's trial reveals that politeness implicatures in court sessions are mainly observed in the following situations.

**1) Politeness implicature can arise in situations, when the speaker shows he/she does not think badly of the interlocutor in spite of some utterance or behavior that could be interpreted as implying the speaker thinks badly of him/her.** In this respect consider (3).

(3) "*The Presidency is an important institution. Your Honour, and it is very important that it not be held in disrespect or it be held up to the laughingstock of the world. What makes me feel that I have to say this is last night on ABC News the very confidential deposition held before Judge Mehrige where he in fact said somebody will go to jail if they leak this was reported, and I'd like to submit to the court the transcript of the Peter Jennings's show*".

In example (3) politeness implicature is generated from the utterance, *What makes me feel that I have to say this*, as instead of saying, *I say this*. Mr. Bennett uses the lexical means *make* and the modal verb *have to*, with the help of which he politely implies that he doesn't say anything in vain, without purpose,

moreover he has serious reasons for expressing that thought. Remarkably, the utterance *the presidency is an important institution and it should not be held in disrespect* is employed to indirectly allude to the high rank of the president and his social standing. So as to show that he does not think badly of the court, since the utterance used could be interpreted as if Mr. Bennett thinks badly of the court, the defender originates a *compensatory politeness implicature*, where *make and have to serve* as triggers for generating a *compensatory politeness implicature*.

2) *Politeness implicature arises also in some situations, when one shows one thinks well of someone in a situation, where not doing so can be interpreted as implying one thinks badly of them.*

(4) "Likewise, I'm sure Defense Counsel would also like to make some objections and that can be done on the record. I'm going to try to be as fair as I can within the rules of discovery."

On surface level the judge's utterance, *I'm sure*, implies that she is of high opinion of Defense Counsel, as she is sure that the members of the Defense Counsel would certainly make some objections, i.e. she expresses confidence in their abilities. Hence, this idea enhances her statement, thus serving as a source for generating an *enhancement politeness implicature*. The usage of the enhancement politeness implicature in example (4) proves the judge's thinking well of the Defense Counsel. So, the syntactic means, *I'm sure*, serves as an enhancement politeness implicature trigger.

Another politeness implicature is created through the usage of the subjunctive form *would like*, which makes the judge's speech less obligatory and imperative. Had she uttered *Defense Counsel must make some objections*, it would certainly convey some implicature, which, however, would lack politeness.

3) *Another situation where politeness implicature may arise is when one shows one does not think too highly of oneself.*

(5) Mr. Bennett: Your Honour, *may* we have the record reflect who is here in the room.

Judge Wright: Yes, sir, the videographer, Mr. Marsh Flournoy, *will I believe* state for the record all the people who are present is that correct? Are you going to go around the room to do that?

Example (5) makes it clear that Mr. Bennett inquires about video recording, using the modal verb *may* which reflects the polite attitude of Mr. Bennett towards the judge. Instead of saying *are we going to have, shall we have or can we have* the defender uses the syntactic means *may we* by means of which he politely implies permission from the judge. Moreover, the modal verb *may* appears to be a trigger for constituting a *demeanour politeness implicature*. Through this politeness implicature Mr. Bennett wants to show he does not think too highly of himself, indicating the judge's high status in the court.

Notably, judge's reply to Mr. Bennett's inquiry also involves politeness implicature, as first of all she turns to Mr. Bennett using the address form *sir* through which she shows respect to the defender and his social status. Going on with her reply, the judge uses the inverted form *will I believe state* instead of *I believe will state* and also the syntactic means *I believe* which generates a politeness implicature aiming to evade self-assurance and imposition.

**4) The next situations where politeness implicature can be generated are when the speaker gives importance not only to his/her self, but also others.**

(6) "Good morning, Judge. Just a few preliminary matters. **We are hoping that we can complete the deposition by three-thirtyish.**  
The President has something at four o'clock he really should attend to.

According to Arundale's Conjoint Co-Constituting Model of Communication, in example (6) a few politeness implicatures can be observed. One of them is generated from the utterance *We are hoping*, where the usage of the pronoun *we*, the continuous form of the verb *to hope* and also the usage of the lexical item *hope* give rise to politeness implicature. Saying *we* instead of *I*, Mr. Bennett shows respect to Mr. Clinton, since he expresses not only his opinion, but also Mr. Clinton's opinion, sharing the latter's views, thus giving rise to a *collectivity politeness implicature*, which arises in situations where the speaker minimizes the expression of cost to self and maximizes the expression of cost to others.

**Politeness implicature can also arise in situations where the interlocutors have different social statuses.**

(7) Mr. Fisher: **Your Honour, this morning, I have a number of deposition exhibits. With the Court's permission and Mr. Bennett's permission, may I hand those directly to the President?**

Analyzing Mr. Fisher's utterance in example (7) it is salient that he turns to the judge using the lexical items *Your Honour* and *Court* as well as the address form *Mr.* when turning to Clinton's defender, Mr. Bennett, which shows that Mr. Fisher takes into consideration such external factors as social status, age and power of the interlocutors when communicating, by means of which he expresses his respect to the interlocutors and their social statuses. It is apparent, that had Mr. Fisher turned to the judge with the utterance, *with your permission*, it would not have the same interpretation and certainly would not give rise to a politeness implicature, whereas the mentioned lexical items *Your Honour, Court and Mr.* serve as triggers for generating politeness implicatures.

**6) Another situation where politeness implicature was observed is when the speaker evades being forceful and obligatory.**

(8) Mr. Fisher: **Good morning, Mr. President.**  
Mr. Clinton: **Good morning.**

Mr. Fisher: **Sir, I'd like to hand you what has been marked Deposition Exhibit 1..... I will inform the Court that the wording**

of this definition is patterned after Federal Rule of Evidence 413. *Would you please take whatever time you need to read this definition...* Mr. Bennett: *Is there a copy for the Court?*

Mr. Fisher: *Would you pass that, please?*

When turning to Mr. Clinton the attorney uses the address forms *Mr. President, Sir* instead of using the President's last name, Clinton, Mr. Fisher emphasizes Mr. Clinton's social status, implicitly showing his concern for the President and his social standing.

A close look at his speech reveals that he makes use of subjunctive forms like *I would like, Would you please, Would you pass that, please*, to be polite and evade imposition. By saying *Would you please take whatever time you need to read this definition ...* Mr. Fisher evades self-imposition and imperativeness. If he said *Read this definition* it would be interpreted as having an imperative force.

Another point that gives rise to politeness implicature and proves Mr. Fisher's not being imposing is the following utterance *take whatever time you need* which shows that he doesn't make any time restriction and gives him the opportunity to read it how long he wants.

Overall, the analysis of W. J. Clinton's trial makes it evident that politeness implicature in court sessions is observed in different situations, where the interlocutors try to show that they have good opinion of each other and don't think too highly of themselves. It's notable to say that by means of politeness implicatures the participants of the trial avoid being imposing or obligatory.

To sum up, the observations reveal that indirectness really functions as a means of generating politeness implicature, i.e. by implying something (indirectly expressing the thoughts) it is possible to give rise to politeness. Likewise, the analysis of the trial makes it evident that politeness implicature arises in the collaborative interaction between at least two interlocutors, which proves its being co-constitutive.

According to the analysis of W. J. Clinton's trial done in concord with Arundale's Conjoint Co-Constituting Model of Communication there are observed some situations where politeness implicatures are generated, namely:

1) one shows one does not think badly of the interlocutor in spite of some utterance or behavior that could be interpreted as implying one thinks badly of the other,

2) one shows one thinks well of someone else,

3) one gives importance not only to his/her self, but also others,

4) one shows one does not think too highly of himself/herself,

5) difference of social status between the interlocutors,

6) the interlocutors evade being forceful and obligatory.

The study shows that in some situations politeness implicatures can give rise to different types of politeness, namely compensatory, enhancement,

demeanour and collectivity. The triggers which constitute these politeness implicatures are expressed by lexical and syntactic means.

Among the lexical means are: *Your Honour, obviously, court, Mr. President, Sir, please, frankly, just, we, I, however, perhaps, though.*

Among syntactic means are: *I'm going to try, with the Court's permission, the court will find, I am hoping, I think, it makes me feel, I believe, you know, I'm sure, disjunctive question, modal verbs (could, may, have to, need, will, maybe), subjunctive mood (I would like, we would ask, would Counsel please announce, would you please take whatever time you need, I would find it difficult, I would be happy, would you pass that).*

The analysis of William Jefferson Clinton's trial reveals that politeness implicature is used mainly for the following purposes and functions:

- a) to avoid being forceful and obligatory
- b) to show concern for the interlocutor
- c) to soften and soothe the situations
- d) to make the utterances less direct
- e) to persuade the interlocutor
- f) to show the high opinion of the interlocutor
- g) to emphasize the social distance between the interlocutors

Overall, the analysis of the speeches of the five court members, reveal that politeness implicature is most frequently found in situations the interlocutors are inclined to express their thoughts in an implicit way, trying not to be forceful and obligatory, "covering" their utterances with politeness.

## References

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**Քաղաքավարության իմպլիկատորայի ծամատեղ կառուցման բնույթի և անգլերեն դատական նիստերում դրա դրսևորման շուրջ**

Քաղաքավարության իմպլիկատորա հասկացությունը գործաբանության նորագույն հասկացություններից է, որի դրսևորումները դատական նիստերում դեռևս ուսումնասիրված չեն: Աշխատանքի նպատակն է ԱՄՆ-ի նախագահ Ուիլյամ Ջեֆերսոն Բիլթոնի 1998 թվականին տեղի ունեցած դատավարության վերլուծության միջոցով պարզաբանել իմպլիկատորա հասկացության եությունը, ցույց տալ քաղաքավարության իմպլիկատորայի ծամատեղ կառուցման հնարավորությունը, ներկայացնել բառային եւ շարահյուսական միջոցները, որոնք խթան են հանդիսանում քաղաքավարության իմպլիկատորայի ձեւավորման համար, լուսաբանել քաղաքավարության իմպլիկատորայի դրսևորման ձեւերն ու օրինաչափությունները դատական նիստերում, ինչպես նաեւ բացահայտել դրանց օգտագործման նպատակներն ու գործառույթները: