

Gender and Politeness in Discourse

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ABSTRAKT

Bakalářská práce se zabývá vyjadřováním lingvistické zdvořilosti v diskurzu a to v porovnání jejich použití mužů a žen. V teoretické části jsou objasněny pojmy gender a sex, genderová identita, role a stereotypy, souvislost mezi jazykem a genderem. Dále je představen jev zdvořilosti a tváře, následují významné zdvořilostní strategie. Posledním bodem teoretické části je pak studium vztahu mezi zdvořilostí a genderem. Náplní analytické části je korpusová analýza současného diskurzu vytvořeného z Amerických a Britských televizních talk show. Jsou porovnávány lingvistické prostředky vyjadřující zdvořilosti mužů a žen. Nakonec je uvedeno srovnání výsledků mezi Američany a Brity jednotlivých genderů.

Klíčová slova: gender, zdvořilost, diskurz, analýza diskurzu, tvář, jednání ohrožující tvář, zdvořilostní strategie, genderové stereotypy, gender v jazyce

ABSTRACT

The bachelor thesis deals with expressing linguistic politeness in discourse comparing males' and females' usage. The theoretical part describes gender and sex, gender identity, role and stereotypes, relation between language and gender. Moreover, terms such as politeness phenomenon and face are clarified, as well as significant politeness strategies. The last point of theory is politeness linked with gender based on the studied literature. The analytical part consists of current discourse corpus-based analysis of American and British television talk shows. It provides the reader with a comparison of linguistic means expressing politeness used by males and females. Finally, a comparison of results between American and the British speakers of each gender is made.

Keywords: gender, politeness, discourse, discourse analysis, face, face threatening act, politeness strategies, gender stereotypes, gendered language

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INTRODUCTION

“My dear boy, no woman is a genius. Women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly. Women represent the triumph of matter over mind, just as men represent the triumph of mind over morals.”

Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray.

Oscar Wilde, a significant 19th century Irish writer states what is widely considered to be a verity; unlike males, females appear “charming”, in both behavior and speech, and sharing their grace with the world is considered to be their mission. On the other hand, males are regarded as hierarchically higher entities that do the work but do not care much as to what is said and even less how it is said. Or is it not so?

This kind of phenomenon, i.e. gender in relation with language, is an interesting field for many sociolinguists and myself which has resulted in the dedication of my bachelor thesis to such a topic. My main focus will be on gender and politeness.

This bachelor thesis is divided into two parts, theory and an analysis. In the theory I will introduce gender, its determination, gender identities, roles and stereotypes as a basis for understanding other related gender issues, such as gender language differences which are described in relation to previous research. Secondly, the politeness theory is mentioned whereby I will also mention politeness and related “face”, the contrary to politeness, which is impoliteness, following with several significant politeness strategies. Such knowledge of both, genders and politeness, will make it possible to proceed and see how these two issues are linked together. The analysis involves carrying out a corpus-based research on usage of expressions of linguistic politeness between males and females within contemporary discourse. Additionally, I will compare each gender’s results regarding American and British speakers.

The results will consequently answer the question whether females, as Wilde claims, really tend to be politer or whether they break this stereotype.

I. THEORY

1 GENDER

Speaking of gender, it is described simply as “being either male or female” (Macmillan dictionary). But this definition is too shallow and lacking. Terms such as gender and sex should necessarily be explained here. Even though both refer to a male-female distinction, it is widely accepted that *sex* is based on biological conditions, i.e. physical characteristics. Nevertheless, *gender* is a social construct, often discussed in the field of sociolinguistics.

Wardlaugh (2006, 316) mentions that those *biological differences* between sexes are quite unequivocal. The core is in genetics; females are given two X chromosomes while males have only one chromosome X in addition to one Y chromosome. Universally, males have less fat and more muscle than females, are stronger and weigh more. Each sex also has specific voice characteristics. It has been also proved that females live longer which might be based on the fact that females tend to have different socialization practices, status and roles in society and thus a different job. Women averagely earn only 77 percent in comparison to the earnings of men in developed countries, whilst in third world countries this percentage is only 73. That strongly indicates inequality of genders. (Wareing 2004, 76-77)

As far as *gender* is concerned, according to Segal (2004, 3), “gender is taken to refer to a culturally based complex of norms, values, and behaviours that a particular culture assigns to one biological sex or another“. He also introduces the term *sexuality* which is unlike sex and gender lodged to a more individualized notion rather than in an area of culture, principles and norms. Valdová (2006, 6) develops Segal's notion of gender by claiming that it is a social issue; one is influenced by outside factors.

A great influence on gender studies had the feminist movement which started in the last century and was held in several waves. The feminist theory brought about new gender formulations and feminist linguistics. (Mills 2003)

I should remember that gender also has an important place within the field of grammar. In English there are three genders: Feminine, Masculine and Neutral. Animate entities differ according to their sex and therefore this phenomenon is called natural gender. Similarly there is grammatical gender which is based on the variation of noun. (Yule 2006, 76)

1.1 Gender identity

Gender identity demonstrates self-awareness of an individual being either female or male (possibly none or both of them); does not have to be identical to sex identity. Gender

identity is connected to a particular cultural and language context in society and is shaped by degrees, related to one's experiences (Valdrová 2006, 6-7; Shuvo). Shuvo sums up that “gender identity, in nearly all instances, is self-identified, and as a result of combined inherent and extrinsic or environmental factors“.

Although people usually think in a bipolar way, as if there is only male and female gender identity with no exception and in a negative way which means attributing the other gender (being a female because of not being a male and vice versa), the contrary is the case (Valdrová 2006, 7). These “other” genders are often combinations of different gender and sex identities as same as sexuality. Despite the fact that these are not the main interest of this thesis I find it relevant to mention them as subordinates that would deserve own works. Then, it used to be said that homosexuality is a “third gender“. But neither male-female nor homo-hetero distinction was sufficient hand in hand with societal development, while understanding sexuality as an identity rather than biology. There are nine or more discussed sexualities in Euro-American countries: heterosexual male, heterosexual female, homosexual male, homosexual female, bisexual male, bisexual female, transgender FtM (Female to Male, hetero- or homosexual), transgender MtF (Male to Female, hetero- or homosexual), intersexual. Transgender refers to a person who feels captive in a biologically different gender than his/her gender identity; this includes cross-dressers, drag-queens, drag-kings, male femininity, female masculinity, transsexuals. In addition the term Queer is given for the concept of gender and sexual variations in relation to people acting sexually differently. Euro-American culture is said to be quite accepting of those “nonstandard“ genders currently. (Valdrová 2006, 49-56)

1.2 Gender role and stereotypes

Unlike identity, *gender role* is defined as “the outward manifestations of personality that reflect the gender identity... and is manifested within society by observable factors such as behaviour and appearance“ (Shuvo). Jordan (2004, 520) states that it is an unwritten set of appropriate rules for female and male behaviour with relation to certain society or culture. People are taught how to behave since childhood with the assistance of surroundings such as family, school, media etc. These inform children when they act well, as is expected of them, and warn when they are not following the right patterns of conduct. Not following or accepting their gender role is then considered to be bad. One of the tools is language, e.g. saying to children what girls/boys do and do not do (Valdrová 2006, 10-11). Another very conspicuous way is via clothing; to circumscribe own gender, boys often wear hats and

pants whereas girls wear skirts and scarves in most cultures. With females it is usually connected to wearing jewellery. In some societies daughters are taught to do female oriented duties, chores, cleaning and taking care of younger siblings. Sons, on the other hand, are assigned to take care of animals, secure household (Jordan 2004, 520-521). Furthermore, colours that often gender pointers – girls wear pink, boys wear blue, not conversely (Yule 2006, 222).

This leads us to *gender stereotypes*, in other words “beliefs about how men and women differ in their psychological make-up“(Best 2004, 11). Gender roles and stereotypes overlap, so Brannon suggests that “gender roles are defined by behaviours, but gender stereotypes are beliefs and attitudes about masculinity and femininity” (Brannon 1996, 160). Brannon (1996, 169-175) also mentions several studies whereby the conclusion reveals that males are connected with more stereotypes than females who in turn connect them with negative stereotyping. In addition, both males and females apply stereotypes to others, but for themselves they do not hesitate to make exceptions. Below is a list of *stereotypical traits of men and women* matched to descriptions from Rosenkrantz et al. (1968) as provided in Brannon (1996, 1974).

Then, males are:

- Aggressive
- Not uncomfortable about being aggressive
- Adventurous
- Competitive
- Unemotional
- Hide emotions
- Not excitable in a minor crisis
- Able to separate feelings from ideas
- Dominant
- Skilled in business
- Know the ways of the world
- Act as leaders
- Self-confident
- Ambitious
- Worldly
- Never cry

- Not dependent
- Direct
- Think men are superior to women
- Not conceited about appearance

Speaking of females, their traits are:

- Religious
- Aware of feelings of others
- Gentle
- Tactful
- Quiet
- Neat in habits
- Strong need for security
- Do not use harsh language

By and large, also other mentioned sources agree that females are stereotypically considered to be emotional, gentle and nurturing whereas males are seen as aggressive, strong and rational. One of the upward characteristics is related to language to which the next chapter is dedicated.

1.3 Gender and language

Apparently, the relation between gender and language has been the interest of many sociolinguists since the second half of the last century and is still ongoing, with new approaches and research. The main topic is, according to Wardlaugh (2006, 315), “the connection, if any, between the structures, vocabularies, and ways of using particular languages and the social roles of the men and women who speak these languages”.

However, what is agreed upon is that there are more factors that have to be taken into consideration in such studies; namely age, social class, culture and ethic, religion, sexual orientation, education and job.

Contribution that is extremely influential in this field is the work of Robin Lakoff, especially *Language and woman's place* (1975), which is often discussed and at the same time criticised without diminishing its importance. Her approach to gender and language is based on social inequity, i.e. language is sexist. Coates (2012, 91) calls this approach “social constructionist” which is followed probably by most of the researchers. Secondly, there is the “dominance approach” and thirdly “difference approach”.

That females talk more is a mere stereotype, as well as the fact that they abundantly “gossip, chatter, nag, rabbit, yak and natter”, whereas males do not (Wareing 2004, 86). Napoli (2003, 138) broadens this list on six claims she studied in the literature: “1. Men interrupt women more than vice versa, 2. Men ignore the topics that women initiate in conversation, 3. Men do not give verbal recognition of the contributions women make to conversation, 4. Men use more curse words and coarse language than women, 5. Men use more nonstandard forms (such as “ain’t”) than women, 6. Men are more innovative, accepting language changes more readily than women.” But these statements often lack support by reliable researches which are often misled by other speakers’ properties and social background.

However, the claim that females talk too much and more than men has been disproved. In most occasions males actually talk more. Holmes (1998, 42-49) mentions research in the United States by James and Drakich, then in New Zealand by Franken. The first one observed male and female discourse in different situations with clear deference that males spent more time talking than females. Similarly, Franken’s study of interviews confirms that claim. This may be linked with gender identity and thus social status, i.e. males are considered to be hierarchically higher and consequently tend to be given more time for their utterances, especially on formal or business occasions. On the other hand, females spoke more in non-formal relaxed contexts, were relationship-focused and spoke in more supportive ways. This fact is probably connected with the stereotype of gossiping; males gossip too but clearly in a different way, hand in hand with actuality that their target topics are different than females’ in connection with female behaviour for the sake of gender identity and role.

Deborah Tannen discusses, that due to the fact males speak a language of status and independence whereas females focus on connection and intimacy; their communication is cross-culturally similar and thus it is not easy. She presumes that the appropriate way to get on well with other gender members is to have an understanding of their activities, attitudes and language behaviour. (Wardlaugh 2006, 328)

Concentrating on the lexical level, there is a noticeable asymmetry in English. For example, *man* refers to male gender but also *person* in general, including females. Specific kinds of asymmetry consist of marked and unmarked terms, e.g. *waiter* refers to male gender but is used also for females, even though there is feminine expression *waitress*. This may lead to women statuses being disparaged in certain situations. Another case is titling; whereas for males there is only *Mr.*, females are divided into *Miss/Mrs./Ms.*,

depending on their marital status. The choice of a particular one may be difficult, e.g. for divorced women, and signals again the inequality of genders (Wareing 2004, 77-80). Besides that, Lakoff (1973) points out that females use, unlike males, more colourful vocabulary; names of colours such as *mauve*, *aquamarine*, *magenta*, *lavender*, as well as empty adjectives like *sweet*, *adorable*, *charming*, *divine*, etc. (Wardlaugh 2006, 318-319). Yule (2006, 223-224) states that there are fundamental differences in word/sentence-form choice within each social class speaking of gender. Females usually prefer the higher-prestige form, such as *talking* rather than *talkin'* or *I saw it* rather than *I seen it** (grammatically incorrect form).

Sociolinguists also examined differences between *same-gender* and *cross-gender talk*. In a *same-gender talk* females focus on self, relationships, feelings, family and home, whereas men are more likely to discuss sports and practical pursuits, often in an aggressive and competitive manner. In a *cross-gender conversation*, both genders reduced the topics that would be otherwise talked about with same gender (Wardlaugh 2006, 324-325). Zimmerman and West (1975) produced a research on overlapping (“transition errors”) and interrupting (“violations”) and found out that in cross-gender interactions males broadly interrupt females, the percentage in their study was at 96, whereas females interrupted males rarely. In a same-gender conversation the findings were balanced (Zimmerman and West 1975, 115-116). According to Coates (2012, 91-92), this study is an example of *dominance approach*. Another feature is indirect speech which is profusely used in same-gender talk among females while in male same-gender interaction is a quite common direct speech act. Besides that, question tags are more often uttered by females with the intention to express their own opinions. The next cross-gender property is related to “*back-channels*”, such as the usage of “words (*yeah*, *really?*) or sounds (*hmm*, *oh*) by listeners while someone else is speaking” (Yule 2006, 224-225). Males use them less frequently and in the meaning that they are agreeing but females use them more frequently and in the sense that they are listening (Wardlaugh 2006, 327). This back-channel support is often accompanied by “nodding, smiling, frowning and by other body language including gestures and body posture” (Wareing 2004, 88).

Speaking of *politeness* in relation to gender which is inherently one of the discussed properties in this area of language varieties, I will focus on this phenomenon in chapter 4, immediately after providing findings on the politeness theory and strategies in the next two chapters.

I would like to point out that in spite of this research the results are solid, they refer to general truth in society, which, from my view should be taken into consideration when interacting.

2 POLITENESS

Most people understand what is meant by *common politeness*. However, giving a definition or going into details may differ.

Yule (2006, 119) suggests that “we can think of politeness in general terms as having to do with ideas like being tactful, modest and nice to other people”. Furthermore he adds that the term “face”, which is discussed in the next paragraph, is often considered to be essential in linguistic politeness. Therefore, “politeness can be defined as showing awareness of and consideration for another person’s face”. (Yule 2006, 119)

Leech (1989; in Urbanová 2002, 23) offers a simple rule “The more words you use, the more polite you are”. Despite the fact that it is not a sufficient description of politeness, it reflects the real usage of politeness means within pragmatics.

2.1 Notion of face

As mentioned above, “face” for many linguists is a crucial term in the field of politeness. As far as etymology is concerned, the roots of face are in Asia, in ancient China. It was used for as a metaphor which indicated one’s characteristics and qualities, abstract items, e.g. “honour, respect, esteem, the self, etc.” (Watts 2003, 119-120)

Mills (2003, 58) points out that there are some differences in notions of this term according to different authors. On the one hand Goffman’s “face” purpose is “to describe the self-image which the speaker or hearer would like” (Goffman, 1967, 1999/1967; in Mills 2003, 58), while Brown and Levinson claim that “face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction” (Brown and Levinson 1978, 66). To sum up, face is pragmatically one’s self-image that others are expected to recognize. As for an English-speaking context, interactants should identify their relative social distance. (Yule 1996, 60-61)

We think of two subcategories of face: negative and positive. Yule (2006, 119-120) warns that the meaning of “negative” is only the antonym of “positive”, not “bad”. Positive face is characterized as “the individual’s desire that her/his wants be appreciated and approved of in social interaction”, while negative face is “the desire for freedom of action and freedom from imposition”. (Watts 2003, 86)

2.2 Face-relating acts

Yule (1996, 61) states that people simply act so that they are respected, especially their *face wants*, which are their expectation and self-image, to be specific. In addition, there are two face-relating acts differentiable. The first is a *face-threatening act* (FTA), which is by Yule described as a threat uttered by a speaker to other individual's face wants. Other definition says that FTA is considered as "any act, verbal or non-verbal, which threatens the way in which an individual sees her/himself or would like to be seen by others" (Watts 2003, 274). The second one is a *face-saving act* (FSA), thus speaker's lessening any possible threat to another's face (Yule 1996, 61). Consequently, when threatening someone's face appears, it is necessary to do face-work, not primarily carrying about who enforced that (Goffman 1967, 27).

Face-relating acts are the basis for one of the most influential politeness research, by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and will be discussed in the following chapter. They "view politeness as a complex system for softening face-threatening acts" (Brown and Levinson 1978, in Watts 2003, 50).

2.3 Impoliteness

Adjacent to this, I list the term *impoliteness*, which is often discussed in connection with politeness. In contrast to politeness, impoliteness is usually distinguishable more easily.

"Emotions are key to impoliteness" suggests Culpeper (2009, 19). He says, correctly I suppose, that behaviour is really important while thinking of impoliteness and dependent on cultural perception in social context. In different disciplines impolite behaviour is referred to as aggressive, rude, offensive, abusive (Culpeper 2009, 13, 17).

3 POLITENESS STRATEGIES

Apparently, most of the first linguistic theories about politeness were created in the second half of 20th century and are being developed till present. Many of them are based on pragmatics, which studies the meaning of speakers' utterances. These theories are, not surprisingly, closely related to the politeness definition itself, as in the previous chapter.

Paul Grice's works (1957, 1975) were one of the first, based on pragmatics and became greatly influential. His theory was followed by Robin Lakoff's "generative semantics" approach (1973, 1975, 1977, 1979). Simultaneously, Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson's strategies (1978, 1987) are similar to Geoffrey Leech's work (1983) which is essential in linguistic politeness. Other contemporary approaches tend to choose any of these theories and develop them further, usually in the form of criticism.

3.1 Grice's cooperative principle

Herbert Paul Grice was one of the first linguists, who built his theory on the principles of pragmatics and whose work is said to be highly influential. The so called "*Gricean approach*" says that an inferring meaning is nearer the essential one, more crucial than the speaker. His studies generally focus on the meaning in verbal utterance, with respect to semantics of certain language and speakers intention.

Mills (2003, 37) reacts to Grice's assertion that his strategy is the basis of conversations, which interactants should follow so that they can understand each other. This strategy is called *Cooperative Principle* in which Grice describes four *conversational maxims: Maxim of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner*. He proposes that some or more maxims might be added, e.g. Maxim of Politeness, which inspired Robin Lakoff and Geoffrey Leech to formulate them. According to Maxim of Quantity, the speaker should share with the hearer only the necessary information, and nothing more. Maxim of Quality conveys that conversation participants should say only what is believed to be true, with reliable evidence at best. Regarding Maxim of Relation, interactants are supposed to share only relevant information within a particular conversation. The Maxim of Manner, finally, states not to use ambiguous expressions, unnecessary verbosity and to express oneself in an orderly way. (Grice 1975, in Watts 2003, 56-58)

3.2 Lakoff’s conversational-maxim approach

Robin Tolmach Lakoff is another extremely influential sociolinguist. She focused on gendered language differences and characterized the well-known “women’s language”, which I mention in 1.3 and 4. Nonetheless, I would like to focus on her politeness approach.

Urbanová (2002, 40) claims that human behaviour is essential in communication. Such behavioural principles that should be followed are called the cooperative principle and the politeness principle. The cooperative principle was described by Grice (see 3.1) and Lakoff provided the second one, the politeness principle, as you can see in the table below. As a unit, Lakoff calls this integrated set of rules the “Pragmatic Competence”.

Pragmatic Competence (PC)	
Rules of politeness	
<i>Be clear.</i> Rules of conversation (=Grice’s CP)	<i>Be polite.</i> Rules of politeness
R1: Quantity <i>Be as informative as required. Be no more informative than required.</i>	R1: <i>Don’t impose.</i>
R2: Quality <i>Only say what you believe to be true.</i>	R2: <i>Give options.</i>
R3: Relevance <i>Be relevant.</i>	R3: <i>Make a feel good – be friendly.</i>
R4: Manner <i>Be perspicuous. Don’t be ambiguous. Don’t be obscure. Be succinct.</i>	

Table 1: Lakoff’s rules of pragmatic competence (Watts 2003, 60)

Regarding “pragmatic well-formedness” of utterances, rule 1 *Don’t impose* may be formed as formal politeness, consequently by complex grammar structures, often connected with a hidden meaning. Rule 2 *Give options*, on the contrary, might be expressed as informal politeness, short sentences with simple structures, grammar and lexical means. Finally, rule 3 *Make a feel good* is usually formed as intimate politeness. (Urbanova 2002, 43-44; Watts 2003, 60-61)

Watts (2003, 60) points out a weak point of the model, namely that there is a high possibility of violating Grice’s rules of conversation when following rules of politeness.

Lakoff therefore suggests fulfilling the Cooperative principle rather than politeness if a conflict appears.

3.3 Leech's politeness principle

Geoffrey Leech is well-known due to his comprehensive studies about pragmatics, including politeness.

Leech also reacted on Grice's proposal that his Cooperative principle should be broadened by maxims of politeness. But unlike Lakoff, Leech is interested only in the "*principles of interpersonal rhetoric*" (Watts 2003, 64). His politeness principle consists of six maxims, each with two rules related to minimizing the cost and maximizing the benefit to a speaker or an addressee:

1. Tact maxim (in impositives and commissives): minimize cost to *other* & maximize benefit to *other*
2. Generosity maxim (in impositives and commissives): minimize benefit to *self* & maximize cost to *self*
3. Approbation maxim (in expressives and assertives): minimize dispraise of *other* & maximize praise of *other*
4. Modesty maxim (in expressives and assertives): minimize praise of *self* & maximize dispraise of *other*
5. Agreement maxim (in assertives): minimize disagreement between *self* and *other* & maximize agreement between *self* and *other*
6. Sympathy maxim (in assertives): minimize antipathy between *self* and *other* & maximize sympathy between *self* and *other* (Leech 1983, 132)

To quote, "in conversation, *self* will normally be identified with *s*, and *other* will typically be identified with *h*; but speakers also show politeness to third parties, who may or may not be present in the speech situation... The importance of showing politeness to third parties varies". (Leech 1983, 131)

3.4 Brown and Levinson's strategies

It is nearly impossible not to analyze Brown and Levinson's politeness theory further, as it is widely accepted as a milestone. Even though it has garnered much criticism, their work still remains extremely influential in this field.

Their theory is based on the term face and FTA, which is described in the previous chapter. As a result, the theory is often called a "*face-saving*" theory of politeness (Watts

2003, 85). Watts also adds that their face is quite similar to Goffman's. There is a visible likeness to Grice's Cooperative Principle, as well as in Leech's and Lakoff's strategy, even though their approach is different. (Watts 2003, 86)

Brown and Levinson constructed in their essay a "Model Person" who is a speaker or hearer, intentionally fluent, whose language and address is natural. This Model Person is accommodated by two particular properties, which are rationality and face. Rationality is stated to be "the availability to our MP [Model Person] of a precisely definable mode of reasoning from ends to the means that will achieve those ends" (Brown and Levinson 1987, 58). Model Person's face means to be free of action and imposition and respected by others, thus leading to positive and negative face, as in 2.1. Speaking of satisfying face wants; this can be achieved only by other's actions while both MPs want to remain in each other's face. Brown and Levinson claim that the speaker would not maintain the hearer's face in case of no recompense. Some of these acts substantially threaten face, hence FTA. The speaker will also try to reduce a FTA in case that the speaker wants to do the FTA with peak effectiveness that is not stronger than the speaker's want to maintain face of the hearer or speaker. (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 58-60)

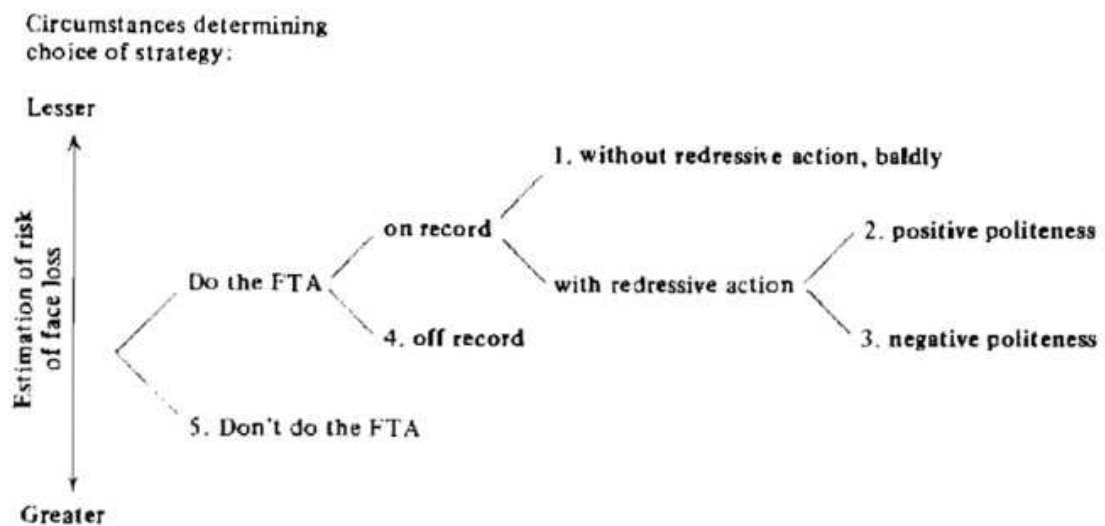


Figure 1: Brown and Levinson Strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987, 60)

Brown and Levinson offer five strategies, as in figure 1 above. With higher threatening of speaker's or addressee's face adjacent to the speaker's choice of strategy grows, meaning a strategy with a higher number in the given list above would be chosen. As a result, we may consider FTA more threatening than it practically is due to the fact that the Model Person would not follow a less risky strategy. (Brown and Levinson 1987, 60)

As far as the choice of a particular strategy is concerned, Brown and Levinson (1987, 71-76) suggest that in the same situation one would choose the same kind of strategy as any other simply because a rational agent is in some conditions able to estimate certain advantages or payoff as well as relevant circumstances after choosing any strategy. One should take into consideration “the social distance”, “the relative power” and “the absolute ranking of impositions” of interactants in many cultures. These factors are part of the weightiness of an FTA.

The following is a personal mediation of how Brown and Levinson (1987, 68-71) describe their super-strategies in figure 1.

3.4.1 Don't do the FTA

This strategy is seen as the most polite one. Brown and Levinson (1987, 68) assert that a wise person tends to evade FTA or at least do their best to minimize the threat.

3.4.2 Off record

Taking into consideration the FTA, firstly a person has to decide whether to go *on record* or *off record*. Going *off record* means not directly expressing actor's intention so, that he/she evades responsibility for doing an FTA. On the other hand, an addressee may not discover the tidings and interpret the speaker's utterance differently to his/her intention. This strategy includes *metaphor and irony, rhetorical questions, understatement, tautologies, hints* done indirectly.

3.4.3 Without redressive action, baldly

Quite the opposite is going *on record*, which refers to a clear expression of the actor's intention. There is again a choice whether to act *with redress* or *without redress*. Brown and Levinson (1987, 69) state that strategy *without redressive action, baldly* means “doing it in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible”. The speaker should not use this FTA strategy if there is a possibility of revenge from the hearer that might seriously be a threat to the speaker. Therefore it is recommended to act baldly only in particular conditions: a) interactants wordlessly agree that doing so is necessary or simply better for the sake of both; b) e.g. in *offers, requests, suggestions* where the speaker's sacrifices and threat to an addressee's face are not significant; c) the addressee is in any hierarchy enormously placed in a lower position.

3.4.4 Positive politeness

On the contrary there are two strategies with *redressive action*: *positive politeness* and *negative politeness*. “Redressive action” is described as “action that gives face to the addressee” and the speaker shows that there is no intention to threaten the hearer’s face and is also aware of the hearer’s wants (Brown and Levinson 1987, 69-70). The difference between them is what kind of face is being emphasized. So *positive politeness* appears in case that addressee demonstrates his/her positive face, “positive self-image”. In this strategy attitude is important, especially the speaker’s. The Speaker should let the hearer know that he/she treats him in a friendly way, as cooperators, having “common ground”, showing respect, assuring interest in fulfilling the hearer’s wants, which minimizes possible face threat as well. For that, Brown and Levinson (1987, -129) offer fifteen sub strategies: “1. Notice, attend to H (her/his interests, wants, needs, goods, etc), 2. Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H), 3. Intensify interest to the hearer in the speaker’s contribution, 4. Use in-group identity markers in speech, 5. Seek agreement in safe topics, 6. Avoid disagreement, 7. Presuppose, raise, assert common ground, 8. Joke to put the hearer at ease, 9. Assert or presuppose knowledge of and concern for hearer’s wants, 10. Offer, promise, 11. Be optimistic that the hearer wants what the speaker wants, i.e. that the FTA is slight, 12. Include both S and H in the activity, 13. Give or ask for reasons, 14. Assert reciprocal exchange or tit for tat, 15. Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation”.

3.4.5 Negative politeness

Finally the last strategy *negative politeness* which is in relation with the hearer’s negative face, its redress. The basis is on avoiding with the goal being to show the addressee speaker’s respect, recognition and assurance that he/she is not the one who will encroach with the addressee’s negative face. The approach may appear quite formal and restrained. While following this strategy, the stratagems often used are “apologies for interfering or transgressing, hedges on the illocutionary force of the act, impersonalizing mechanisms (such as passives)” (Brown and Levinson 1987, 70-71). Also “conventionalized indirectness” is used in order not to be defeated by “natural tension” to go *on record* or *off record*. Furthermore, Brown and Levinson (1987, 129-210) provide an exhaustive list with explanation and examples of ten sub-strategies against the hearer’s negative face: “1. Be conventionally direct, 2. Question, hedge, 3. Be pessimistic, 4. Minimize the imposition,

Rx, 5. Give deference, 6. Apologize, 7. Impersonalize S and H, 8. State the FTA as a general rule, 9. Nominalize, 10. Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not incurring H”.

3.5 Expressions of linguistic politeness

Certain linguistic expressions are connected with politeness. They are widely considered to soften the language or utterance and distancing devices. There are more typologies, however, I would like to introduce House and Kasper’s taxonomy (1981, in: Watts 2003, 182-186). In my opinion, it consists of a broad range of politeness tools and reflects many mentioned approaches and strategies.

In table 2 you can see a list of House and Kasper’s linguistic expressions alongside structural categories with examples. A brief description of each is expanded upon:

Politeness markers are expressions that show the speaker’s respect and the choice of further cooperation on an addressee. *Play-downs* are said to be “syntactic devices” which “tone down the perlocutionary effect an utterance is likely to have on the addressee”. They are divided into subcategories, which you can see in the table above. Next, *consultative devices* are understood as structures that challenge the hearer for further cooperation. Another category of linguistic expression, *hedges*, do not inform about the exact amount or content but gives the addressee choice to keep their own will. Lakoff (1975) adds that they lower the authority of a statement. By *understaters* it confers to the usage of a phrase that is an adverbial modifier or an adverb instead of the utterance’s propositional matter. *Downtoners* soften the utterance and thus have polite effect on addressee. Moving to *committers*, their purpose is to make the degree of the speaker’s commitment lower to the content of certain utterance. Another strategy is *forewarning* which is often implemented by many structures that should invoke a widely accepted principle that the speaker is about to belittle or pay a compliment to. Speaking of semantically empty phonetic material filling pauses, they are suggested to be referred to as *hesitators*. By using *scope-staters* the speaker expresses his/her personal view about the matter that is discussed. To conclude there are agent avoiders, which impersonalize or quell the agent in propositional utterances and consequently divert the hearer’s criticism to a generalized agent, often realized by passive structures. (Watts 1993, 182-184)

Name of Category	Examples	
	Subcategories/Description	
Politeness marker		<i>Please, if you wouldn't/don't mind</i>
	imperative + tag question with modal	<i>Close the door, will you/would you?</i>
Play-downs	past tense	<i>I wondered if.., I thought you might...</i>
	progressive aspect + past tense	<i>I was wondering whether..., I was thinking you might...</i>
	interrogative + modal verb	<i>Would it be a good idea ..., could we...</i>
	negative interrogative + modal verb	<i>Wouldn't it be a good idea if..., couldn't you ...</i>
Consultative devices		<i>Would you mind..., Could you ...</i>
Hedges		<i>Kind of, sort of, somehow, somewhat, more or less, rather, and what have you</i>
Understaters		<i>A bit, a little bit, a second, a moment, briefly</i>
Downtoners		<i>Just, simply, possibly, perhaps, really</i>
Committers		<i>I think, I believe, I guess, in my opinion</i>
Forewarning		<i>Far be it from me to criticize, but..., you may find this a bit boring, but..., you're good at solving computer problems</i>
Hesitators		<i>Er, uhh, ah</i>
Scope-staters		<i>I'm afraid you're in my seat, I'm disappointed that you couldn't..., it was a shame you didn't...</i>
Agent avoiders		<i>People don't do ...</i>

Table 2: House and Kasper's typology of linguistic expressions signaling politeness (1981; in Watts 2003, 183-184)

4 GENDER AND POLITENESS

Now, when both terms gender and politeness are explained and given theory background, I will place them into a common context. Foremost I would like to comment on some linguistic expressions indicating politeness (see 3.5) in relation to gendered language differences. I will then provide integrated research and perceptions on this topic.

Based on gender identity and language differences (see chapter 1), females are often marked for using polite structures and more compliments than males. Females do so while searching to foster solidarity in order to sustain social relationships, whereas males usually move others to drive. Making compliments is included in the *forewarning* strategy. Nevertheless, genders also act vice versa. (Wardlaugh 2006, 324-325). As far as *politeness markers* are concerned, females tend to use phrases like *please* and *thank you* more often than males in conversations (Wardlaugh 2006, 321). Wareing (2004, 88) also mentions epistemic modal forms that “indicate explicitly the speaker’s attitude towards their utterance.” The purpose is again to avoid conflict and disagreement with the outcome of seeming polite. A further category with a similar function are *downtoners*. Studies propose that the female usage of them is higher than males’. In addition, Lakoff (1975) suggests female speech includes many “super-polite forms” like *Would you mind...*, thus *consultative devices*, and also question tags. Wareing (2004, 88) says that in some researches females were proved to use more *hedges*. For example Lakoff’s theory of “women’s language” agrees on this utterance.

Consequently, female language is stereotypically characterized to be more “tentative” and thus connected with usage of tag questions, softeners or hedges, which proved Carli Linda’s research in work-related communication (1990). On the other hand, Steffen and Eagly (1985) “found that high-status persons were assumed to use a more direct and less polite style, and were also thought more likely to gain compliance by using this style.” (in Thimm 2003, 531-532). People in lower positions tend to be concerned more with face-saving and also perceived talks of their super ordinates as more direct and thus less polite. As a result, “the higher the status, the more direct and less polite the style of talk was perceived to be” (Thimm 2003, 531). This finding demonstrates that females can, and actually are, the same or even less polite than males regarding speech style. This claim confirms the research of Thimm (2003, 537) and her colleagues in a work-related environment centered on linguistic expressions, namely hedges, intensifiers, softeners,

vagueness, emotive and technical terms. The findings showed that male and female usage of them was very balanced.

An opponent of such research and results is Sara Mills. She argues that politeness is not easy to understand and is in fact very multilateral. Politeness should be viewed as set of strategies or practices rather than a choice of suitable utterances, from her point of view (Mills 2003, 9). Mills supposes that many people, especially females, actively oppose and decline the discussed prejudices.

I would like to refer to the findings of Zimmerman and West (1975) that males interrupt females in conversations as highly distinctly. Interrupting, in my opinion, can be viewed as impolite. However, this phenomenon was found only in cross-gender interacting and thus probably reflects rather the conception of being hierarchically higher than a proper politeness feature.

To sum up, as politeness perceptions differ, gendered-politeness does so too. Often it is not easy to determine which factors of interactants were the most influential in speech because each individual is a set of certain characteristics and background. Although the premise of prejudice that females are more polite than males is supported by numerous studies, newer research contests this view. According to this research, the crucial condition is one's social status rather than gender. I would support this claim by mentioning the fact that throughout history, higher social status was associated only with males which were the basis for gendered language stereotypes but with the ongoing societal development females were given the chance not to follow traditional gender roles but to enforce themselves and thus become equal or even superior to some males. Speaking of politeness, this would convey that females, equal to males, are not required or expected to act and speak over-politely.

II. ANALYSIS

5 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

This section will focus on a non-fictional discourse, specifically on expressing politeness. The aim is to compare female vs. male ways and the level of expressing politeness. For that I have decided to follow and observe linguistic expressions indicating politeness as provided by House and Kasper (see 3.5), in particular *politeness markers*, *play-downs*, *consultative devices*, *hedges*, *understaters*, *downtoners*, *committers*, *forewarning*, *hesitators*, *scope-staters* and *agent avoiders*.

Moreover, I will compare the results between American and British speakers. Therefore there will be four observed units: M/UK (Males from the United Kingdom), M/US (Males from the United States of America), F/UK (Females from the United Kingdom), F/US (Females from the United States of America).

Owing to numerous previous research in which it was agreed that females tend to use polite devices more than males, I presume that within this research it may be the same, which is my first hypothesis. On the other hand, most of this significant research was held in the 20th century in different social circumstances. Nowadays, with the extension of communication possibilities, especially via the Internet, and trends of preferring quantity to quality of the information exchanged, there is also a possibility that female and male usage of politeness might be more or less equal, which was also proved in an environment where females occupy the same social status as males. Speaking of the cultural-related task, i.e. politeness of Americans vs Britons, I would assume the British speakers use more politeness expressions. This hypothesis is based on the worldwide common perception that inhabitants from the United Kingdom are mostly conservative and dearly polite.

5.1 CORPUS

I have decided to create a corpus of several television talk show transcripts. Furthermore, in order to come to the appropriate results, both same-sex and cross-sex conversations are incorporated in a balanced quantity. As already mentioned in the theoretical part, I am going to work only with two traditional genders, i.e. males and females, other described genders would be worth focusing on in other works. For that reason no homosexual or transgender utterances are included so as not to mislead the findings. The analysis will not focus on jobs or education but on a large corpus material which in turn should give us an overall view. Nevertheless, we should be aware of the fact that people starring on tv shows are usually members of the middle or higher class while working class fellows appear rarely, except reality-shows, documents, reports or fictional broadcasts. As a result, I will

use namely: The late show with David Letterman, Larry King Live, Jimmy Kimmel Live, Showbiz Tonight, The Jonathan Ross Show, Piers Morgan Tonight, GMTV Sunday Programme, The Rachael Ray Show, The Oprah Winfrey Show, Joy Behar Show, Lorraine Kelly GMTV, The Wright Stuff Extra with Gabby Logan. All the samples are dated in the last decade.

To summarize this analysis to come I am studying the usage of politeness expressions within impromptu discourse of the middle and upper class adults who are clearly heterosexuals; the samples consist of 7 M/US, 7 M/UK, 7 F/US, 7 F/UK speeches.

6 MALE VS. FEMALE EXPRESSING OF POLITENESS

Before presenting the results I have to say that I found the whole process of collecting data and observing people's speech behaviour very informative and revealing. What was significantly visible was each speaker's personality and thus their tendency to speak in a different, unique way. Generally speaking, the results confirmed the first hypothesis, i.e. females are more polite in the sense that they use more linguistic expressions signaling politeness of the typology by House and Kasper. In table 3 you can see the exact collected numbers for each category.

Category	Male		Female	
	Number	Percentage %	Number	Percentage %
Politeness markers	14	4	15	3
Play-downs	0	0	2	Minimal
Consultative devices	13	4	20	4
Hedges	33	9	41	8
Understaters	26	7	25	5
Downtoners	126	35	157	32
Committers	68	19	137	28
Forewarning	7	2	8	2
Hesitators	73	20	87	17
Scope-stater	1	Minimal	0	0
Agent avoider	3	Minimal	6	1
Total	364	100	498	100

Table 3: Male vs. female expressing of politeness

Males uttered 364 polite expressions altogether, whereas females 498, which is 37% more. I suppose this difference, on the one hand, is high enough to prove that females in their speeches really tend to be more polite. As indicated earlier, there were few exceptions where males used uncommonly many polite expressions, while few females did not follow the stereotype and spoke very abruptly with minimum polite utterances. Despite this fact, some utterances were used within multiple phrases or combinations of more categories.

The percentage is listed for each males' and females' result separately. Consequently, both genders used mostly downtoners in a similar amount, at 35% and 32%. Second place differs; In males the chart follows the hesitators' category with 20% outcome as their results, but females used committers with 28% score. Other categories that genders

performed in the same way in, was their usage of consultative devices and forewarning. The remainder of the observed phenomena revealed that there were no big differences except committers which females used more with the score of 9%. That is well-visible in figures 2 and 3. I would suggest that the difference in females’ double usage of committers beside males’ usage might be due to the fact that females stereotypically feel that they have to point out that their utterances are simply their opinions which may not be true, but still avoiding any possible attack against them, and do not want to offend anybody but rather keep friendship and good relations.

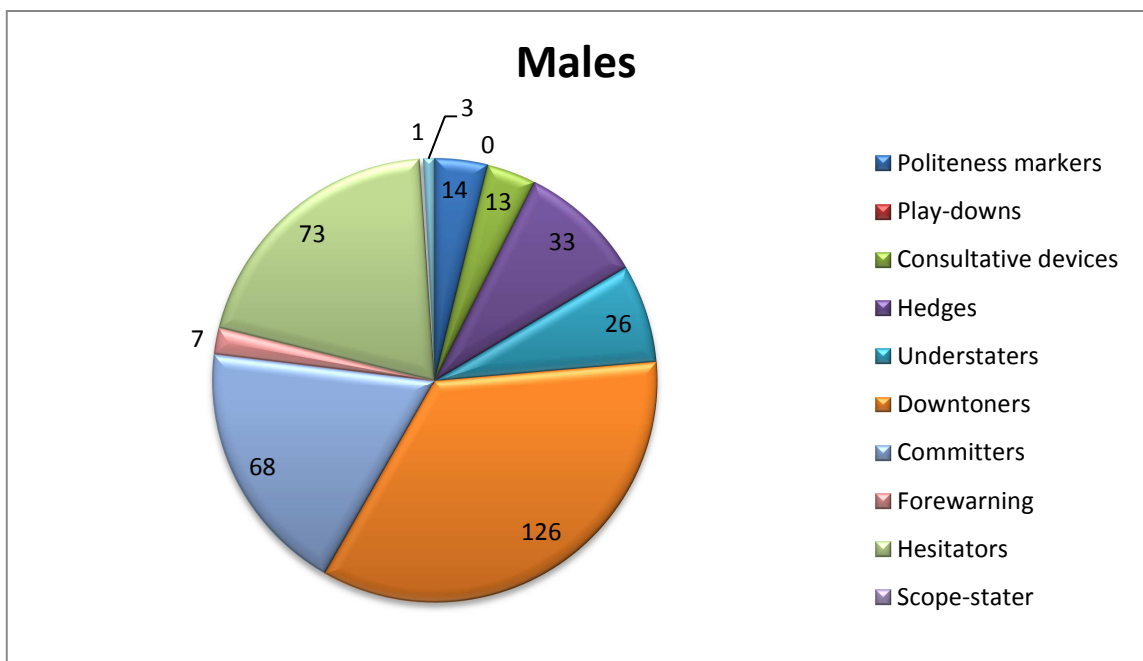


Figure 2: Male expression of politeness

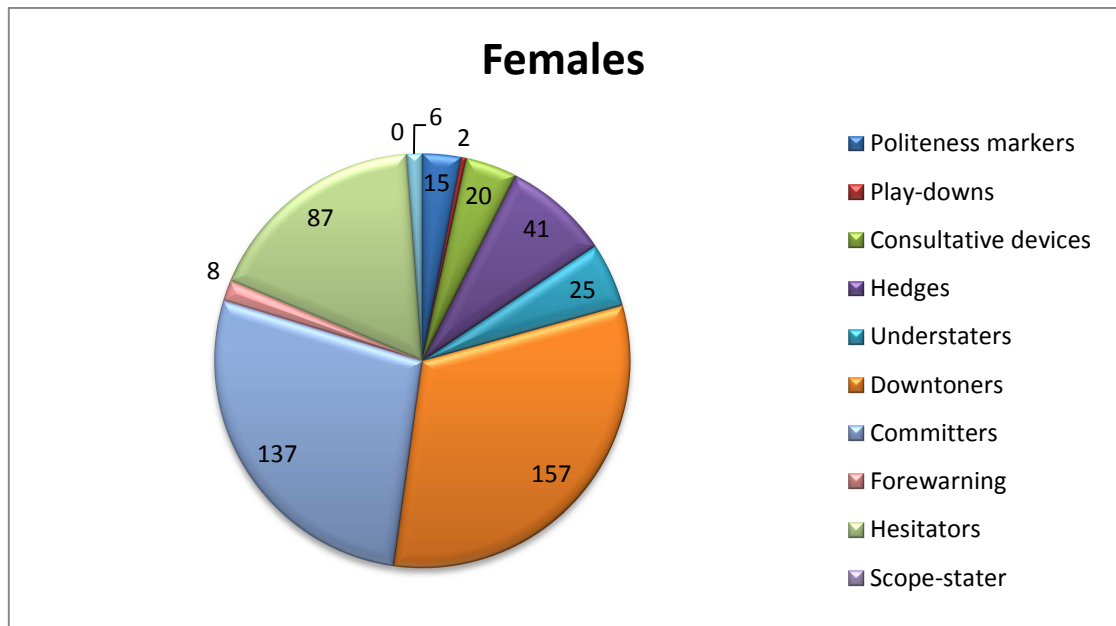


Figure 3: Female expression of politeness

Adjacent to this, I have also noted the usage of some back-channels, *you know*, *well*, *yeah*, respectively. Even though these are not included in House and Kasper's typology, I decided to include them because as already mentioned in the theory, they often signalize understanding, friendly behaviour and signal thus positive politeness. The findings agree with the previous research and show that females use them more, 163 in particular, whereas only 119 males, i.e. 37% less than females. Females used *yeah* sixty nine times, *you know* fifty seven times, *well* thirty seven times. Males uttered mostly *well*, fifty times, then *yeah* thirty five times and *you know* thirty four times.

In the following eleven subchapters I will comment and give a few examples on each observed category.

6.1 Politeness markers

The aim of this tool is to express esteem to the addressee while cooperating and showing interest in the dialogue. Male and female usage was more or less equal, with 4% and 3% in comparison. Precisely in numbers it was fourteen and fifteen respectively. There was only a very slight difference denoting that at this level both genders express politeness similarly. In my opinion, females do not tend to over-use these because this device does not justify them and their utterances.

[M/US] *So when you recognize that, you're right, this is a national security crisis we're talking about.*

Nevertheless, the most frequently used one is *please*.

[F/US] *Please welcome back to our show, from CSI – Marg Helgenberger!*

[M/US] *Please, have a seat!*

I would assume that another politeness marker is *thank you*. I have noticed that when the topic of interactants is personal and hard to talk about, there were multiple heartfelt thank yous, by both males and females. Similarly back-channels signaling understanding increased.

[F/UK] *Thank you both for coming in and talking to us. Erm, like, you know, like everyone else I just hope for a happy ending one day. Thank you very much indeed and we'll be thinking of you. Thank you so much.*

Besides this, I believe that congratulating should appear too. It shows the speaker's enthusiasm of the addressee's success.

[M/UK] *Congratulations on the huge success of House. It's a massive hit, isn't it.*

6.2 Play-downs

I have found only two play-downs as described and divided into categories by House and Kasper. I suppose that the reason might be that these phrases and structures are not used commonly among people with similar status these days. Both were spoken by females.

[F/US] *We've been chatting it up, and we thought that the audience might like to get in on it.*

[F/UK] *I just wondered if you in anyway can have any sort of normal life three years on.*

6.3 Consultative devices

Consultative devices, as I identified them, were used by males and females equally, both of 4% score. Comparing the exact results, male use was less frequent by one third, confirming the claim that females use supra-polite structures. In these examples the addressee is being involved in further cooperation:

[M/UK] *So do you think, with those two wo have been.....?*

[M/US] *Yes, so you would not be a "Vogue" model today, right?*

[M/UK] *Would you mind just taking one off, just one?*

[M/US] *And I have to ask you, how giddy were these expedition leaders to be on the boat with a super model taking these fashion photos?*

[M/UK] *OK. Can I just finally ask you, ... is that something you would support as well?*

By the utterance downwards deference to the addressee and the question expresses interest in the addressee's experiences and his answer is achieved.

[F/UK] *I can't imagine what to equate that to but presumably a whole world opened up for you. What was that like?*

6.4 Hedges

When using hedges, the speaker does not want to host particulars and that leaves the addressee a spare place for their own will. This category was used by males and females similarly regarding the ratio in each gender. Precisely, females' usage was higher by a quarter. Looking at the particular hedging phrases in table 4, it is visible that males used *sort of* mostly, females on the contrary *kind of*. Usage of other phrases is rare. There are a few examples below.

	Male		Female	
	Number	Percentage %	Number	Percentage %
Kind of	14	43	23	56
Sort of	15	45	15	37
Somehow	0	0	2	5
Somewhat	1	3	0	0
Rather	3	9	1	2

Table 4: Male vs. female usage of hedges

[F/UK] *And now I'm kind of a mixture of that really.*

[M/UK] *... I want to know what's going on with these UFO's because the president gets to look at those sort of things.*

[F/UK] *And I don't think people want political positioning, somehow sort of .. occupation of the centre ground...*

[F/US] *I'd rather quit.*

6.5 Understaters

Understaters, which are sometimes regarded as softeners by some other sources, were used more by males, but in only 2%, speaking in exact numbers the difference was only one sample/participant. Both males and females used mostly *a little* or *a little bit*. Provided below is a table elaboration of all observed phrases followed by some examples.

	Male		Female	
	Number	Percentage %	Number	Percentage %
A bit	8	31	10	40
A little (bit)	14	54	14	56
A second	3	11	1	4
A moment	1	4	0	0

Table 5: Male vs. female usage of understaters

[M/UK] *Ye...er...it was a little bit awkward at the beginning but at that time I think..*

[F/UK] *... and the Tory press are giving Cameron a bit of a free ride.*

[M/UK] *Hold on a second.*

6.6 Downtoners

By using downtoners the speaker adjusts the impact on the hearer and provides more place for other considerations. This analysis reveals that this is the category at the top of usage by males and females too. However, female usage exceeded male by a quarter. Table 6 communicates each observed downtoner. At the first glance it is visible that the males' scale is quite larger, no female used *possibly* or *perhaps*. Another difference is that males in majority used *just*, with females using *really*.

	Male		Female	
	Number	Percentage %	Number	Percentage %
just	65	52	72	46
possibly	2	2	0	0
perhaps	4	3	0	0
probably	12	9	6	4
really	43	34	78	50

Table 6: Male vs. female usage of downtoners

I have noticed that downtoners can be used to show interest or surprise in what the addressee has just uttered with an indication of want for additional cooperation as a back-channel. Possibly in question with no need of any other words or syntactic formulating, pragmatically it is clear, as in:

[M/UK] *Really?*

Downtoners may be also a good tool to emphasize compliment.

[M/UK] *Dr. Mehmet Oz is here with a studio audience and questions that only he can really answer.*

Also some expressions are used several times to enhance the effect on addressee even more:

[F/UK] *I just feel really comfortable with myself..*

[F/UK] *I mean, he's really really clever.*

6.7 Committers

Committers are one of the most widely used devices to soften the language and thus make a polite effect on the hearer. Female usage was 9% higher than males' speaking of ratio. The comparison of the exact registered samples, female usage was twice as frequent, which is the biggest difference in this study and a possible explanation is provided at the beginning of this chapter. Focusing on the exact phrases, a rather significant difference is apparent, from my point of view, due to *I mean* which is used very often by females, whereas in males it is significantly less, namely 28%, as in table 7. However, the most used one is *I think*.

	Male		Female	
	Number	Percentage %	Number	Percentage %
I think...	48	71	64	47
I believe...	3	4	1	1
I guess...	5	7	8	6
I mean...	12	18	63	46

Table 7: Male vs. female usage of committers

Here are again listed some examples.

[F/UK] *I mean, there's nothing they could do about it.*

[M/US] *And I guess you're prepared for any temps.*

Sometimes, *I think* is even more stressed by adding operator *do*, in syntactic words

[F/UK] *Well I do think we've got to move forward on this.*

6.8 Forewarning

Compliments are identified by House and Kasper as forewarnings and I have concluded that the percentage of usage in both genders equals 2%. Despite the fact that there is no given pattern for them, it may be difficult to detect them in others if the further background is unknown.

[M/US] ... *you did that great Mercedes-Benz commercial. I loved this commercial.*

[M/US] *Whose idea was it to have your campaign manager Mark Block smoke in that ...that wonderful ad your guys made?*

[F/US] *You look hotter than ever!*

Even though the compliment in the utterance right below is not addressed right to the addressee but his wife, I suggest that it still flatters the addressee.

[M/UK] *You must not have the kind of control you have in the program in your house because she's [addressee's wife] a strong woman, huh?*

In the following example a compliment with a combined committer *I mean*, with an understater *a little bit*. The question tag at the end seems to be a politeness marker.

[M/US] *You didn't complain about one thing. Was he being nice? I mean you had to complain a little bit, no?*

6.9 Hesitators

Hesitators, thus phonetic material with no lexical purport, are in spontaneous, non-prepared speech used quite often; 20% in males and 17% in females. In some situations hesitators provide time for further thinking such as what to say or how to formulate the sentence, while on the other hand, in case of back-channels that shows understanding and support. As provided in the theory, females usually use them to express listening and support, while males rather agree on what other interactants utter. The most commonly used by females was *er(m)* with the amount of fifty eight, followed by *oh* with the amount of ten. Similarly, males preferred *er(m)* thirty five times and *oh* sixteen times. Other examples are *wow*, *mmm*, *ah*, *awww*, *ph*, *huh*, *uh*.

[F/US] *Wow, amazing.*

Multiple usage of this category might be distracting in certain situations, but simply both the speaker and addressee should, or have to, deal with that.

[M/UK] *...and er, er, trying to er think of ...just constantly ways where we could improve things.*

6.10 Scope-staters

I find this linguistic device quite effective, especially, for example, while negotiating. Opinions are expressed clearly, taking the current proposition into account. Nevertheless, it was used only once, by a male. It might be caused by the type of discourse, the analyzed corpus which, was mostly in a free friendly environment.

[M/US] *I know to you it's a distraction but to me it's my life. (reaction: I understand...)*

6.11 Agent avoiders

Agent avoider is a device which impersonalizes the agent and thus does not leave the pressure on an addressee. It is usually fulfilled by passives or using *people, somebody* etc. I have not identified any passive structure with this purpose. Although *people* was used often, occasionally in the sense of meaning human entities with no certain person in mind; this was used several times as an intended avoiding of mentioning agents.

The following utterances may have been mentioned in relation to specific people, but by impersonalizing it is criticism deflected and thus thoughts are expressed in a polite way, without FTA.

[F/UK] *I'm really intrigued by some people's interpretations what I do.*

[M/US] *Although I heard from somebody I spoke with at "Sports Illustrated" just yesterday..*

[F/US] *Well, you know, when I was a fashion model, a high fashion model – this was like 15 years ago – certain designers would bind my breasts down with Ace bandages.*

[M/UK] *Yes, who are you thinking of [people not connected to their emotions]? I'm thinking of a couple of people! ..erm.. never mind!*

7 US VS. UK EXPRESSING OF POLITENESS

Although focusing on differences in speech of Americans and Britons is not the subject of this thesis, I have decided additionally to compare the findings of males from the United States versus males from the United Kingdom, then findings of females from the United States versus females from the United Kingdom, as stated earlier. The reason is not only that I find it interesting, but also to determine whether the commonly perceived statement that the British are far more polite than Americans is true or not. Consequently, I will provide the findings of each observed category and briefly compare overall the results in two following subchapters.

I would like to mention a “myth”, as Algeo (1998, 176) calls it, that Americans ruin English. The British claim it and the Americans admit it. But based on cultural and development differences, further changes in language should not be surprising. Certain changes are confirmed, e.g. in spelling, vocabulary, syntax, pronunciation. Calling these changes to be really ruining English or not is then on each one’s perception (Algeo 1998, 176). Nevertheless, I would prefer calling such differences to be simply different and not bad or ruining. Then, politeness is likely to be one of those phenomena.

7.1 Males comparison

At the first glance the difference is significant. The number of politeness expressions used by males from the United Kingdom is 71% higher. I have to admit that I was expecting that my hypothesis will be approved, but not by such a big difference. However, both of these groups uttered downtoners the most and secondly hesitators, and thirdly committers. Then, certain preferences for choosing a particular strategy remains, as you can see in table 8, figure 4 and 5.

	Male/US		Male/UK	
	Number	Percentage %	Number	Percentage %
Politeness markers	12	9	2	1
Play-downs	0	0	0	0
Consultative devices	6	4	7	3
Hedges	9	6	24	11
Understaters	9	6	17	8
Downtoners	47	35	79	35
Committers	24	17	44	20

Forewarning	5	4	2	1
Hesitators	25	18	48	21
Scope-staters	1	Minimal	0	0
Agent avoiders	2	1	1	Minimal
Total	131	100	224	100

Table 8: Males from US vs. UK expressing of politeness

There is quite a significant difference in the usage of politeness markers. M/UK used more politeness expressions; this category was used by American males six times more. Similarly, also forewarning was uttered once more by Americans. What came to my mind as possible reason is that these categories can be affected by one’s want, e.g. one would not thank or please anybody as same as to give a compliment if they do not want to. These create friendly environments and it is, as far as I know, usually said that Americans are open and friendly, whereas the British are conservative and do not “open” themselves so easy.

On the contrary, hedges, understaters, downtoners, and hesitators were used once more by the British, which in my opinion, it again confirms my hypothesis. By these devices they distance which is natural in their cultural background. Americans act far more masterful, believe in themselves and do not feel the need to lower their utterances in effect, but rather confidently share their truth.

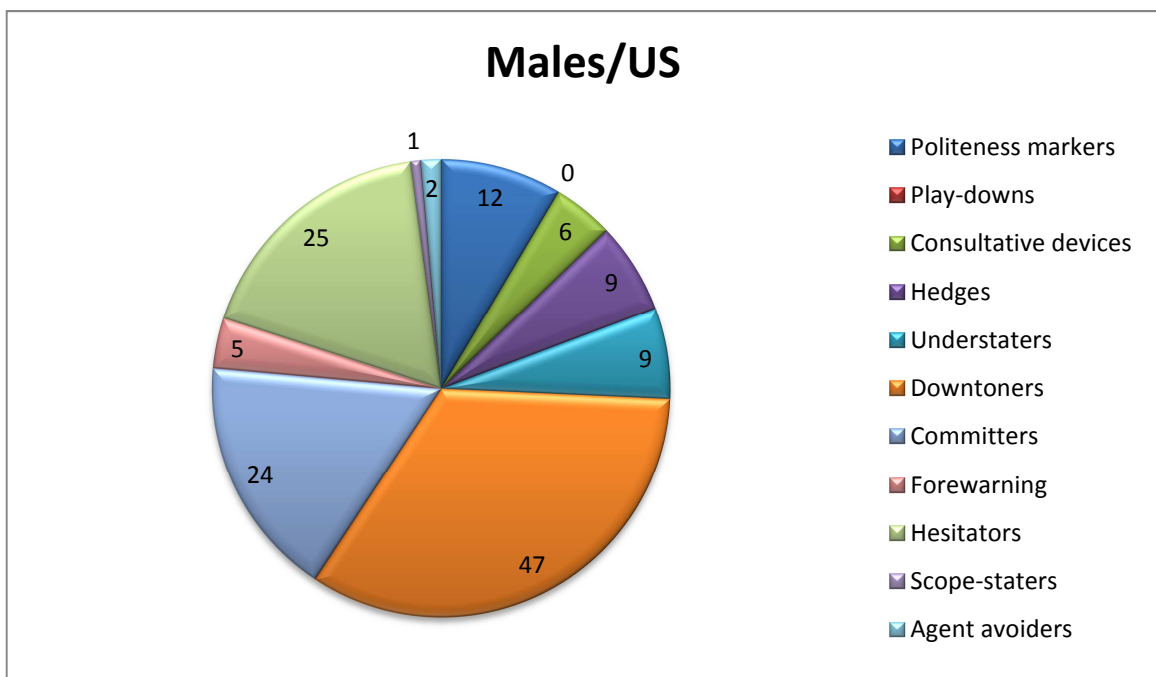


Figure 4: Males from US expressing of politeness

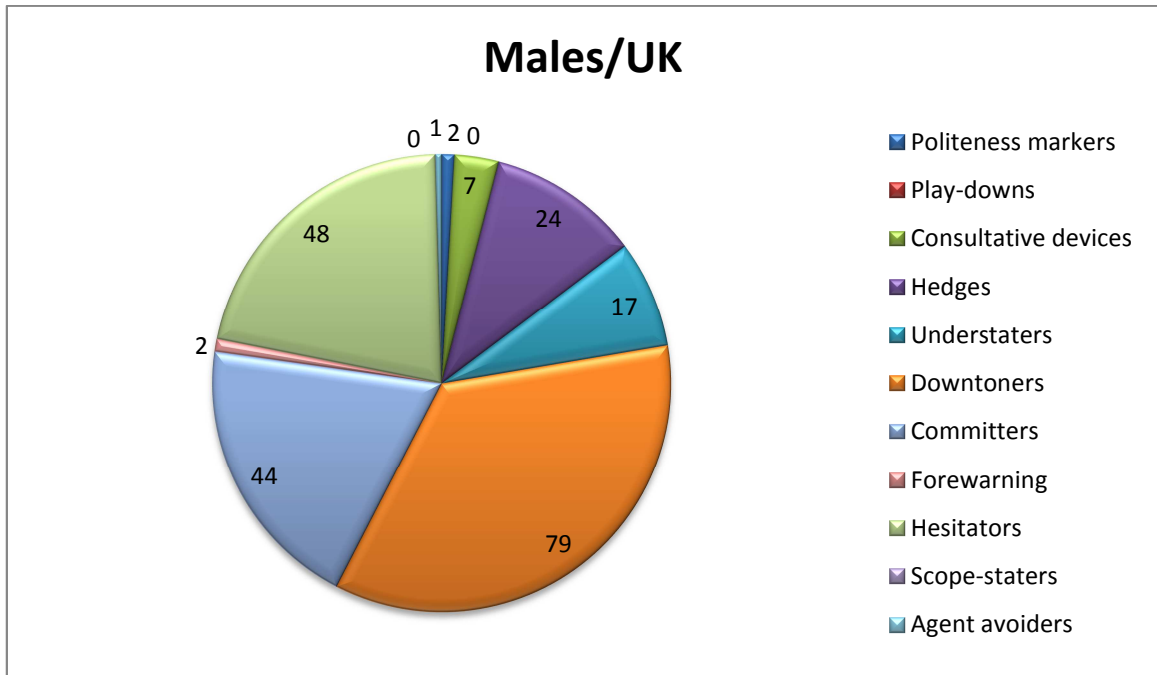


Figure 5: Males from UK expressing of politeness

7.2 Females comparison

Female comparison of used linguistic expressions signaling politeness that is similar to males in comparison, thus British females used more politeness expressions than American females with a 49% difference, as table 9 reveals, figures 6 and 7. All females used downtoners, followed by committers and finally hesitators. That is why I would again suggest that females have the same preference for choice of certain strategies, differs only the amount which may be cultural-based.

	Female/US		Female/UK	
	Number	Percentage %	Number	Percentage %
Politeness markers	8	4	7	2
Play-downs	1	Minimal	1	Minimal
Consultative devices	9	5	11	4
Hedges	15	8	26	9
Understaters	6	3	19	7
Downtoners	60	30	96	32
Committers	50	25	87	29
Forewarning	3	1	5	2
Hesitators	45	23	42	14

Scope-staters	0	0	0	0
Agent avoiders	3	1	3	1
Total	200	100	297	100

Table 9: Females from US vs. UK expressing of politeness

Some features are similar to the findings as in 7.1, such as categories which develop relationships tend to be used more by American females. Regardless, the difference of usage concerning politeness markers was very slight. Other devices were more or less similar, except understaters, downtoners, and committers. In my view the reason is the same as in males comparison, thus cultural and personal based.

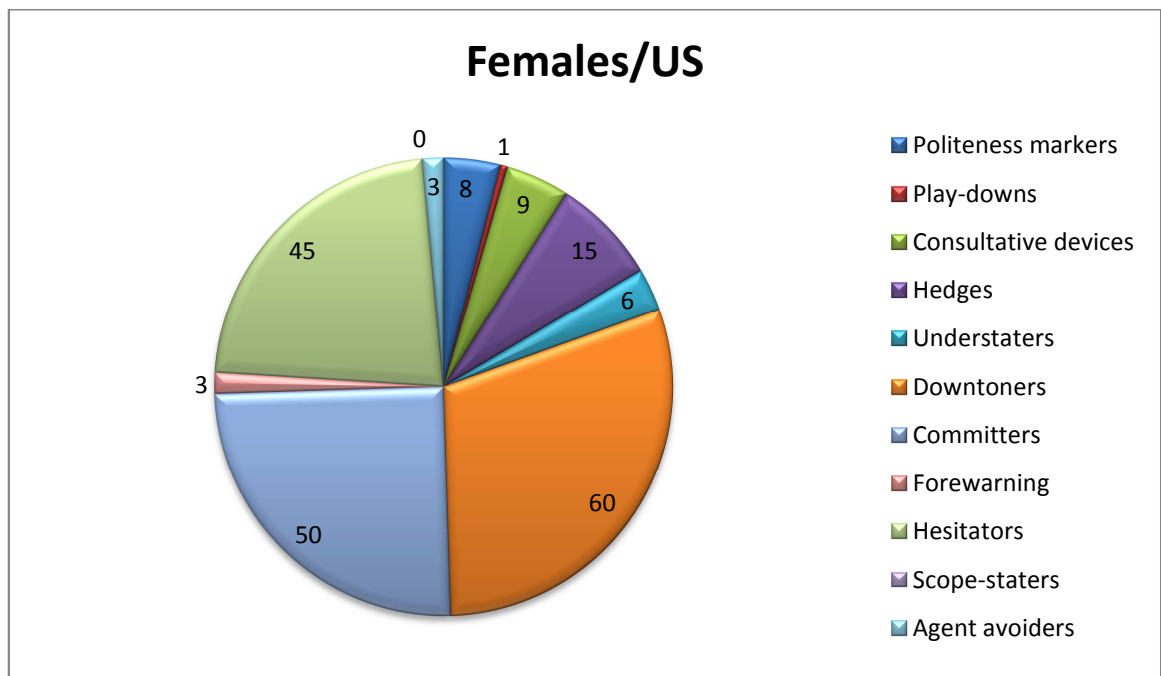


Figure 6: Females from US expressing of politeness

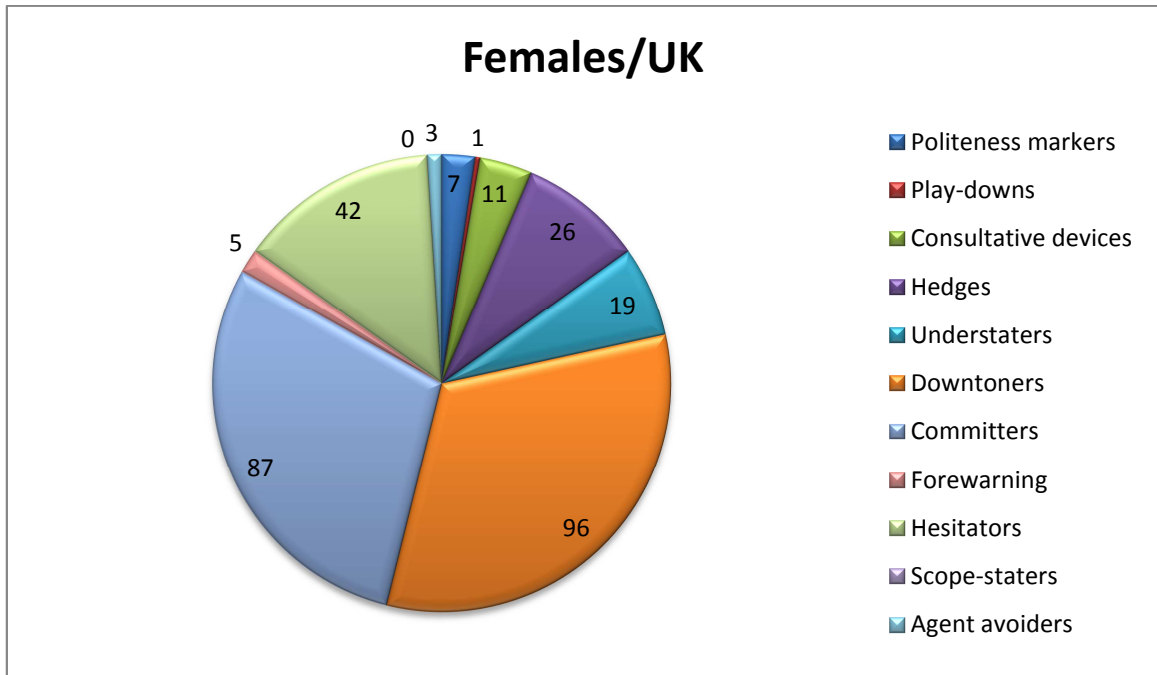


Figure 7: Females from UK expressing of politeness

These results lead me to a question why the difference between males in comparison to females is bigger. I think that even though the United States is a nation of inhabitants who are friendly, proud, masterful and confident, they do not use distancing devices so much, whereby female inhabitants unlike males still have the inner tendency to do so due to their gender role. On the contrary, the British speakers have different values, culture, education in conservative spirit. Based on this cultural background and gender-related findings, it makes sense that F/UK is the most polite one of the observed categories.

CONCLUSION

The core of this bachelor thesis is a study of gender and politeness in discourse. In order to create an analysis it is necessary to be aware of the theoretical background. Consequently, the list of studied literature is provided within the theoretical part. After gender and politeness are described each on their own, precedent studies of both in relation is given, which is actually based the hypotheses for the following analysis in this thesis.

As a result, the analysis focuses on discourse among adults of middle and upper class from the United Kingdom and the United States. The corpus consists of television talk show transcripts and linguistic expressions signaling politeness as defined in theory. The results agree with the most, traditional, researches, thus females discourse is more polite than males'. On the basis that the second hypothesis that either gender's style of speech is more or less equal in certain circumstances was not proved in this research but I dare claim that even in such a developed society, gender roles are still far from equal in daily life. If gender roles were on an identical level, females would not tend to use more polite expressions. However, not considering the amount of uttered polite phrases, males' and females' choice and preferences of the described categories also differ.

The additional comparisons between American and British males or females confirm the hypothesis of the general perception that the British are considerably more polite than Americans. Then, both UK genders are more polite compared to United State speaker. Whereas American males are one half less polite than their British counterparts, the difference in female comparison was lower. In addition, the tendency to prefer a certain category of polite expressions remains the same.

As far as the usual non-professional environment is concerned, Oscar Wilde was right and as he mentioned over hundred years ago, females unlike males speak really charmingly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While writing this thesis and collecting data I found other interesting facts and related topics that I unfortunately could not include due to the limited extent of this bachelor theses. I would however like to mention them as recommendations for further potential research and academic works.

As stated earlier, I focused on the two traditional genders, i.e. males, females, heterosexuals with other common feminine or masculine features as stereotypically expected. Nevertheless, I think it may be rather challenging to study any language phenomenon of other genders, such as those of gay and lesbian identities or transgender. I would suggest comparing their speech to one another and contrasting it with average male and female speech, while analyzing common features and differences and whether each gay and lesbian speech is more feminine or masculine in the stereotypical sense of the word.

While studying the impoliteness phenomena, I found a possible interesting further study regarding taboo words. What might be studied is both uttering and perceiving, possibly in relation to aspects such as gender, culture or age.

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