

# An Analysis of Negative Politeness Strategies In Eugene Ionesco's *The Lesson*

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## Abstract

A native speaker of a language uses certain strategies in order to maintain norms and principles that form part of social interaction. Speaking in a polite manner involves being aware of the effect a particular illocutionary force has as well as aggravating or mitigating this force by applying a suitable degree of modification. One of these degrees of modification is Politeness .Being polite means to be a considerate conversational partner. In terms of negative politeness, being polite means to choose the right words to express a communicative goal, which might be felt as face-threatening for the addressee such as refusal, disagreement or criticism in order to avoid a potential conflict and hence to maintain harmony in interaction, which is, generally, considered as highly desirable. The aim of this study is to present an analysis and explication of the negative politeness strategies whose main effect is to mitigate feelings of interference and imposition. Certain texts from Eugene Ionesco's *The Lesson* are selected for the sake of the analysis.

## 1.1 The Notions of Politeness and Face

[Politeness has no specific meaning or definition, but it is recognized by its linguistic strategies. Politeness strategies are designed to "maintain or promote harmonious social relations" and "it comes about when one indicates concern to support someone else's face"(Culpeper, 1998: 85). The ultimate aim of politeness is to make all participants in a conversation as relaxed and as comfortable with each other as possible (Hei, 2008:121). Lakoff (1990:34) defines politeness as "a means of minimizing confrontation in discourse". Politeness, on the other hand, plays a part in maintaining order in communication by adhering to the socio-cultural norms of relating communication to social order. This goes hand in hand with "the concept of politeness as governed by socio-culturally specific norms of linguistic behavior"(Pillai, 2008:3) .

Central to the explication of politeness is the concept of 'face', the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact (Goffman,1967:5). In other words, face is "the emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognize" (Yule, 1996a: 134). Thus, everybody has face wants – defined as the expectations a person has that his public self-image will be respected (Yule, 1996b: 130). In this regard, politeness principle has a dual goal: acting efficiently together with other people and creating and maintaining social relationships(Babatunde and Adedimeji ,2000:4).

Brown and Levinson(1987:60) divide this notion into two subcategories of negative face and positive face. They first redefine face as 'the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself , and state that negative face is 'the basic claim to territories, personal preserver sights to non-distraction- i. e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition' and that positive face is 'the positive consistent self-image or "personality"( crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants'.In summary, negative face-wants is 'the want of every "competent adult member" that his actions be unimpeded by others' and positive face-wants is 'the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others'( Roberts,1992:289). These concepts lead to negative politeness and positive politeness, which are employed to satisfy such face wants .

In their universal politeness theory, Brown and Levinson (1987: 69) suggest five possible strategies to alleviate face threatening acts (FTA) and these strategies can be ordered in terms of the extent to which they threaten the hearer's face. Other things being equal, then, the strategies can be ordered from most to least threatening as follows: the riskiest one being 'without redressive action, baldly' and the safest' avoidance':

(1) Without redressive action, baldly:

the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way of conveying the communicative act.

(2) Positive politeness:

strategies that orient towards the hearer's positive face needs.

(3) Negative politeness:

strategies that orient towards the hearer's negative face needs.

(4) Off-record:

strategies that allow more than one justifiable interpretation of the act.

(5) Avoidance:

the act is not performed.

The riskier the speaker perceives the FTA to be, the higher the number of the strategy he/she will want to choose ( Brown and Levinson 1987: 59). Each of the above strategies consists of several subordinate strategies.

According to Brown and Levinson (1978:134), when people think of politeness they usually come up with things that belong to the category of negative politeness strategies. The reason for this is that negative politeness can be described as respectful behaviour and rituals of avoidance. In other words, the speaker acts as if the hearer was more powerful than him and he has to use indirectness and be politely pessimistic.

## **1.2 Negative Politeness Strategies**

Negative politeness strategies are characterized as expressions of restraint, formality, and distancing . Brown and Levinson(1987: 129)

rate negative politeness as more polite (i.e. more face-redressive) than positive politeness and furthermore allow for the possibility of being 'too polite'. Negative politeness is redressive action addressed to the addressee's negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded. It performs the function of minimizing the particular imposition that the FTA unavoidably effects.

Brown and Levinson (ibid.:93) note that the greater a speaker's use of negative politeness strategies, the more effectively s/he communicates a desire to impose minimally on the addressee . To Leech (1983: 83-84) (who offers us a rather circular definition), "negative politeness...consists in minimizing the impoliteness of impolite illocutions".

The superstrategy of negative politeness is marked by a strong tension, which is created by two contradicting wants: that of desiring to go on record and coming rapidly to the point on the one hand, and that of giving negative-face redress on the other. This common situation consists of a balance between different mechanisms that will be next seen ( Cano, Roca and Sorri,2005:22).

Negative politeness strategies which result in mollifying the force of an utterance can be outlined (Brown and Levinson 1987: 129 ) as follows:

### **1.Be indirect**

Strategy 1: Being conventionally indirect

**2. Don't presume/assume**

Strategy 2: Questioning, hedge

**3. Don't coerce the hearer**

Strategy 3: Being pessimistic

Strategy 4: Minimizing the imposition

Strategy 5: Giving deference

**4. Communicate the speaker's want not to impinge on the hearer**

Strategy 6: Apologizing

Strategy 7: Impersonalizing speaker (S) and hearer (H)

Strategy 8: Stating the FTA as a general rule

Strategy 9: Nominalization

**5. Redress other wants of the hearer**

Strategy 10: Going on record and incurring a debt, or as not indebting H

These strategies can be explicated as follows:

**1. Be indirect**

Negative politeness enjoins both on record delivery and redress of an FTA. Normally the situation is saved by agreeing between being direct and not coercing the hearer, there has to be a balance between clarity

and non-coerciveness, a compromise which is reached in the hybrid strategy of conventional indirectness. (Blum-Kulka, 1987:139)

**Strategy 1: Being conventionally indirect**

In this strategy a speaker is faced with the aforementioned opposing tensions. Conventional indirectness resolves the dilemma created by the speaker's desire to go on record and yet to give the hearer an 'out' by being indirect. In everyday discourse, such compromise is expressed by the use of phrases and sentences that "have contextually unambiguous meanings", which means that "the utterance goes on record, and the speaker indicates his desire to have gone off record" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 132). The elemental devices which provide conventional indirectness are indirect speech acts (Lopes, 1998:103). The degree of politeness expressed by indirect speech can be calibrated by the compounding of hedges, indirectness and particles such as 'please', which increase the negative politeness of expressions. Thus, forms such as 'could you pass the salt?', 'would you pass the salt?', an

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'*may I please have the salt?*' mark descending degrees of politeness, culminating with the bald imperative '*pass the salt*', which is the least polite of all (Hobbs,2003:255).

Being indirect in saying what you mean apparently violates maxims of Grice's Cooperative Principle , because speaker's utterance seems to be less informative, less clear, less truthful, and/or less relevant than it could be as a way of conveying speaker's understood intention: e.g. *I wonder if you'd mind carrying this tray?* (This is an indirect request, meaning roughly the same as 'Carry this tray'. Indirectness is by no means always motivated by politeness (i.e. the goal of observing the Politeness Principle) . In this case, a speaker's indirectness is explained as an attempt to offer hearer a more favorable deal: i.e., more freedom of choice regarding the action the speaker is requesting(Leech,2005:8).

It is clear that indirectness is a deliberate attempt to camouflage whatever is unpleasant by mere rhetoric. A very pervasive phenomenon that manifests indirectness is perhaps the question form which is a device developed to express requests and other directives and which cannot be interpreted without knowledge of the conventions of linking the form with the message. The development of the interrogative form in English is reflective of the deep-rooted habit of acknowledging possible difference between individual points of view. The preference for whimperatives over imperatives or the non-offending form over the offending form is an outcome of the desire to be or appears to be polite. Thus what one conversationally implicates depends not only on what one says but also on what one might have said but did not say(Pinker,2007:441).

Indirectness is a distance-building device. Considerations of politeness force people to beat about the bush; not saying what is on one's mind is a communicative device. Indirectness sometimes creates a divided illocution in the sense that one utterance may have the likelihood of being interpreted in two or more different ways by two or more addressees because the relation between the speaker and the addressee and the amounts of shared knowledge between them can never be identical(Patil, 1994:154).

## 2. Don't presume/assume

The main feature of "Don't presume/assume" category is to carefully avoid presuming or assuming anything involving the addressee. Due to this approach, the addresser keeps the necessary distance from the addressee, "avoiding presumptions about the addressee, his

wants, what is relevant or interesting or worthy of his attention" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 144).

### Strategy 2: Hedging

Willamova (2005:80 ) introduces hedging devices, "one of the means through which linguistic politeness can be manifested", as one of the subgroup of pragmatic markers, the function of which is "to soften the propositional content of the message". In other words, hedges are those pragmatic markers which "attenuate (weaken) the strength of an utterance" (ibid.: 81). Good examples are expressions such as **please, kindly, perhaps, maybe , by any chance , by no means and as it were** . Whilst these phrases frequently supply no extra information, they do function as mitigation markers, making more tentative the assumptions and commitments implicit in the FTA(Winardi,2011:90).

Hedges are also achieved through the use of hypothetical modal verbs such as 'could', 'would', 'might' and 'should'. The use of modals denotes tentativeness and lack of commitment. It could be argued that the frequent use of modals in English provides its speakers with a detachment device which enables them to distance themselves from the requestive act by means of the form's inherent pragmatic ambiguity. Other ways of achieving hedges include deliberate mumbling and hesitations, and the use of particles such as 'ahh', 'umm' and 'er', not to mention non-verbal strategies such as averted eyes or a lowered head(Reiter,2008:5).

Hedging is effectively used to hide some negative ideas in the presence of another party without letting the latter suspect anything. Hedges are generally used to produce the effect of interposing the speaker's opinion between the propositional content and the addressee's assessment (Thorat, 2000:73).

Lakoff (1977:28) classifies hedges into two groups: lexical hedges and sentential hedges.

1- It's all *kind of* funny, isn't it?"

2- *I think* everyone knows they are unhappy.

The lexical hedge in 1 mitigates the single adjectival lexical item 'funny' whereas the hedge in 2 mitigates the speech act as a whole.

An important point about hedging is that the more elaborate the hedging and the more hesitant the delivery of the utterance, the politer it will seem:

3- I wonder if he brought it here.

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The speaker may meliorate his imposition by asking whether it is possible for the hearer to do the thing requested:

4- Is it possible to lend him a few books?

The question tag pretends to seek the hearer's permission as in:

5- You are coming with us, aren't you?

The tag indicates that the speaker is conceding to the addressee the option of refusal (Thorat, 2000:73).

But-clauses also function as hedges, they attenuate the propositional content of the utterance by providing an explanation of the speaker's motives for carrying out a face-threatening act (Wilamová, 2005:87) example:

6- I know you don't like it, but I felt it was my duty to inform you.

7- What you are saying is right, but what I say is that he is your friend.

8- Well, you are completely right, but we all make mistakes.

These but-clauses are strategies of verbal defensiveness. The speakers of the utterances have different goals of softening encroachment as in (6) disagreement (7) or advice (8). The but-clause is a strategy for obtaining these goals. People need to guard themselves from appearing rude as they wear clothes to protect them from the cold. Utterances 7 and 8 are prone to be interpreted as criticisms of the addressee. The but-clauses are comments about the speech acts which follow them. They are implicit directions given to the addressee as to how they should interpret the speech. In a sense they admonish the addressee to suspend any negative impressions of the speaker which they might otherwise have made on the basis of the subsequent speech acts. They are clues provided to the addressees about the speaker's intention as to how the speech acts are to be perceived.

Certain usages convey hedged performatives. Hedged performatives are speaker-orientated markers which merely comment on the speech acts that immediately follow. In that respect they can be called 'introductory' such as: *I (just) want to know, I must ask, I'll (just) say one thing, I (just) wanted to apologize, I'm inclined to agree or I'm curious to know.* These markers most frequently hedge face-threatening acts such as requests, suggestions, apologies etc. They contribute towards a higher degree of politeness in several ways. Firstly, using Leech's term (1983), *oratio obliqua* hedges the propositional content of the message, which would otherwise sound too "bare" and hence less polite. Secondly, they serve as a

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linguistic means which signals the speaker's illocutionary goal, giving the hearer time to adjust and shape his/her answer (Wilamová ,2005:89 ).

9. There's something *I must ask* you, *I just want to know how* you manage to reconcile living like a millionaire with being a Marxist.

Cano, Roca and Sorri(2005:25) state that there are certain hedges which are oriented to the conversational maxims. The quality hedge may suggest that the speaker is not taking full responsibility for the truth of his utterance: "I think," "But for all I know", "I am not sure", "I guess", "I suppose", "They say", "It seems to me". Quantity hedges suggest that not as much or not as precise information is provided as might be expected such as "more or less", "to some extent" and "may be":

10- He was blind, wasn't he?

- May be

A topic change might be a kind of imposition on the addressee's face, and hedges such as 'any way' signal the change and soften the imposition by expressing an apologetic tone.

11. Anyway, will you do it for me?

### 3. Don't coerce the hearer

The tension between the want to be direct and to give face to the hearer has given rise to two compromise strategies: (a) be conventionally indirect and (b) avoid presuming what the hearer wishes. Now the third and the fourth strategies derive from the supposition that the hearer will not feel like taking part in the speaker's proposal or desire to accept his offer or promise. In such cases the speaker will have to make it easy for the addressee to opt out (3) being pessimistic or, when it is impossible for the speaker to do so, at least try to (4) minimize the imposition or state that the coercion is minimal by (5) giving deference ( Cano, Roca and Sorri,2005:25).

#### strategy 3: Being pessimistic

This strategy draws attention to the speaker's doubt about the success of an FTA. Such 'polite pessimism' is often encoded in indirect requests with negated probability:

12. I don't suppose I could hand this in on Friday.

13. Perhaps you could take this now.

It is worth noting the superficial indirectness of these forms with respect to the particular task requested. The following example, taken literally, is actually a statement concerning the addressee's inability to lend the goods in question(Barešova ,2008:52)

14. You couldn't possibly lend me your rod and reel for this afternoon.

According to Brown and Levinson (1978: 179), negative-interrogatives encode polite pessimism. The same could be said about conditional constructions. By using the negative and the conditional the speaker makes it easier for the addressee to refuse and thus there is less risk of loss of face.

15. 'I don't suppose there would be any remote chance for a nice quiet date?'

#### Strategy 4: Minimizing the Imposition

By adopting this strategy, speakers suggest that the intrinsic seriousness of the imposition is not great. This can be achieved by a number of expressions, all of which attempt to minimize the potential threat to the addressee. In the following examples, the emphasized items fulfill such a function.

16. Could you *just* extend the thing for a *couple of days*.

17. Could I *borrow* a *tiny wee bit* of paper.

In fact, this particular negative politeness strategy is one often employed by vagrants in their requests for money from strangers. In a recent personal encounter, the (successful) opening gambit goes as follows:

18. Would you...ah...just a couple of pence, sir...

Here the intended imposition is minimized so that the threat to the negative face of the addressee is reduced. Of course, the speaker in this case would have probably been offended to receive the actual amount specified in the request (Cano, Roca and Sorri,2005:25).

#### Strategy 5: Giving Deference

Giving deference means showing respect in the language (Kuntsi, 2012:37). Deference is often communicated by *honorifics*, i.e. terms of address which reflect the relative social status of the participants in interaction ( Fukada and Asato,2004:1994). The use of 'sir' in example (18) above is a good illustration of this. However, deference may also extend to humbling one's self, capacities and possessions:

19. I'm ashamed to have to ask you this favour.

*(Humbling one's self)*

20. It's not much of a meal, but it'll fill our stomachs.

*(Humbling one's capacities)*

21. We could all go in my rust mobile.

Ide (1989: 239) argues that Brown and Levinson categorize honorifics into one of the negative politeness strategies, 'give deference,' and that by doing so they mixed up linguistic forms and verbal strategies, which differ in both their motives and their means.

#### **4. Communicate the speaker's want not to impinge on the hearer**

A way to satisfy the hearer's negative face demands indicates that the speaker is aware of them, that the infringement of his territory is recognized and undertaken unwillingly. There are two basic ways to do so: by (1) apologizing or (2) conveying reluctance to impose on the hearer (Cano, Roca and Sorri, 2005:26). The latter gives way to strategies 7 through 9.

##### **Strategy 6: Apologizing**

An apology is a social act that is aimed at maintaining good relations between the speaker and the addressee. To apologize is to act politely, both in the vernacular sense and in the more technical sense of attending to the addressee's face needs (Holmes, 1990: 156-7). One way of attending to the addressee's face needs is for the speaker to indicate that s/he is aware of them and is taking them into account in communicating the potentially face-threatening act by apologizing for the impingement

(Brown and Levinson, 1987: 187). Brown and Levinson's Politeness Model regards apologies as "negative politeness strategies" in that they convey respect, deference, and distance rather than friendliness and involvement. Negative politeness is an avoidance-based, on-record strategy of self-effacement and restraint (Wagner, 2009:23).

By apologizing for performing an FTA, a speaker can communicate reluctance to impinge on the hearer's negative face, thereby partially redressing that impingement (Ogiermann, 2009:57). In fact, Brown and Levinson (cited in Cano, Roca and Sorri (2005:26)) identify four sub strategies here. These are:

(i) admit the impingement

22. I know this is a bore but... I'd like to ask you a big favour...

(ii) indicate reluctance

23. I don't want to intrude... I hate to have to ask you this...

(iii) give overwhelming reasons

Here, the speaker claims compelling reasons for performing the FTA, implying that he normally would not even consider impinging on the hearer

24. There just wasn't enough time to complete this. I've been very busy lately, so could you help me with this?

(iv) beg forgiveness

25. Please forgive me if... Excuse me, but... Sorry, but...

The negative politeness strategy of 'ritual self-deprecation' (Tannen, 1994: 51) involves taking blame in order to avoid implying that the addressee is at fault.

### Strategy 7: Impersonalizing S and H

Impersonalization is one way to "dissociate S, H from the particular infringement" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 190). Frequently this involves the omission of the pronouns *I* and *you*. For example, the sequence 'It would be desirable...' might be substituted for the more personal 'I want...'. Passive and circumstantial voices are the most usual ways in English to avoid reference of agents involved in an FTA (Lopes, 1998: 103):

26. It is expected (for 'I expect that...')

On the other hand, a plural form might be used to convey impersonalization, as in 'We regret to inform you...'. Replacement of the pronouns 'I' and 'you' by indefinites may well serve the aim of minimizing an FTA (Švarova, 2008: 15):

27. One shouldn't do things like that. (you shouldn't)

### Strategy 8: Stating the FTA as a general rule

A way for the speaker to dissociate himself from an FTA or an impingement is communicating the FTA as a general social rule, regulation or obligation:

28. Soldiers are to wear night dress for tonight's dinner (you must...)

29. Passengers will please refrain from... (you will...)

This way the speaker claims not to be imposing, but reminding the hearer that there is a regulation urging or restraining him to do or from doing something (Cano, Roca and Sorri, 2005: 28).

### Strategy 9: Nominalization

Syntax seems to suggest a continuum from verb to noun rather than separate word categories. Accordingly, Cano, Roca and Sorri (ibid: 29) point to the fact that nouns are associated to the noun end of that continuum. Therefore, as we nominalize subjects, sentences get more 'formal' and FTAs less 'dangerous':

30. I am surprised at *your failure* to reply.

**5.Redress other wants of the hearer**

Another strategy of negative politeness is offering compensation for an FTA redressing other wants of the hearer. In any case, the hearer may well desire to be respected by the speaker, and be more powerful so that the latter falls into his debt(ibid.).

**Strategy 10: Going on record and incurring a debt, or as not indebteding H**

Through this strategy, a speaker can mitigate the FTA by explicitly claiming indebtedness to the hearer. This is manifested in expressions like(Barešova ,2008:55):

31. I'd be eternally grateful if you would...

32. I'll never be able to repay you if you...

The following section will attempt to apply the theoretical framework outlined above to some sequences of dialogue from *The Lesson*.

**1.3 The Analysis**

*The Lesson* is an extraordinary play. It falls in one act and traces those dangers of indoctrination. An eighteen year-old girl-student appears at the Professor's study to be instructed for her total doctorate examination. The Professor gradually loses his timidity, becoming increasingly domineering and aggressive, whereas the student grows more and more passive (Adelizzi ,2008:22) .

The Professor's transition from diffidence to dominance, and the student's decline into passivity, is, during the course of the play, a gradual, almost imperceptible process. The shift in the interactive roles of the two characters is reflected by subtle changes in their linguistic behaviour. Language is shown in the play as a form of power. It contributes to give an indirect power to the person who masters his language well. So the theme of language as a sort of power is applied to the student in the first moments of the lesson, when she appears eager, lively , bright and then gradually shrinks in her position and the Professor who was calm and timid at the beginning and gradually gains assurance and domination. The Professor gets his power from the fact that he is the giver, the interpreter of meanings(Adelizzi ,2008:22).

To account for this, certain extracts have been taken from key stages in the play's development.

Text 1

Professor: Good morning, good morning... You are...er... I suppose you really are...er...the new pupil?

(The Pupil turns round briskly and easily, very much the young lady: she gets up and goes towards the Professor, holding out her hand.)

Pupil: Yes, Sir. Good morning, Sir. You see I came at the right time. I didn't want to be late.

Professor: Good. Yes, that's very good. Thank you. But you shouldn't have hurried too much, you know. I don't know quite how to apologize to you for having kept you waiting... I was just finishing...you understand, I was just...er... I do beg your pardon... I hope you will forgive me...

Pupil: Oh, but you mustn't, Sir. It's perfectly all right, Sir.

Professor: My apologies...(pp. 183-4)

By uttering *I suppose you really are...er...the new pupil?*, the professor mitigates his request by using hedges. In addition to the particle 'er', hedges are achieved by the phrases 'I suppose' and 'really'. The use of 'I suppose' makes more tentative the assumptions in the Professor's request.

The pupil's use of the honorific 'sir' communicates *deference*. The utterance *I don't know quite how to apologize to you for having kept you waiting...* actually realizes two negative politeness strategies. First, the Professor indicates *deference*, by explicitly humbling his own capacities (i.e. 'I don't know quite how...'). Secondly, he draws on the *apologizing* strategy—or rather, claims his inability to apologize. He further supplements this by utilizing a specific substrategy of *apologizing*: he *admits the impingement*, by explicitly referring to the imposition caused to the addressee (i.e. '...for having kept you waiting'). He proceeds with the *apologizing* strategy. In the following sentences, he attempts to state the *overwhelming reasons* *I was just finishing...you understand, I was just...er...* the seriousness of the imposition is downgraded further by the use of the hedging device *just*.

Having abandoned the *give overwhelming reasons* strategy, the Professor then moves on to the *beg forgiveness* strategy *I do beg your pardon...* This is immediately followed by a variation on the same strategy, which also incorporates the *being pessimistic* strategy in its use of 'I hope': *I hope you will forgive me...*

Text 2

Professor: But if you allow me, could you perhaps tell me... Paris, now, is the chief town of...er...?

(The Pupil searches for a moment, then, pleased to know the answer.)

Pupil: Paris is the chief town of... France?...

Professor: It will come in time...take heart, Mademoiselle ... I beg your pardon...little patience...quietly, quietly does it...you'll see, it will come.... Beautiful weather we're

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having...or perhaps not so...er...but after all why not? At least it's not too bad and that's the main thing...er...er ...it's not raining...in fact it's not snowing, either.

Pupil: That would be rather surprising in the summer.

Professor: **Forgive me**, Mademoiselle, I was just going to say that...but you will learn that **one has to be prepared for anything**.

Pupil: Yes, Sir. Naturally.

Professor: In this world of ours, Mademoiselle, **one can never be sure of anything**.

Pupil: Snow falls in the winter. Winter is one of the four seasons. The other three are...er...sp... (pp. 184-5)

The professor uses *being pessimistic* strategy which is manifested here by the conditional construction **if you allow me**. Such construction mollifies the risk of the loss of face. Then the interrogative **could you** incorporated with probability marker **perhaps** encodes also polite pessimism. Another negative politeness strategy is *apologizing* which is specifically realized by *beg forgiveness*; **I beg your pardon**, then the hedging devices **perhaps**, **er** and **but preface** are all used to minimize the imposition. *Beg forgiveness* strategy is highlighted again by the professor's utterance **forgive me**. The strategy of *minimizing the imposition*, which is often used to show tact and modesty towards the hearer, is manifested here by the use of the downgrader **just in I was just going to say that...** But preface, which is a way of indicating verbal defensiveness, is used again to avoid disagreement. The professor indicates his desire not to impose personally on the student by using the indefinite **one** in both **one has to be prepared for anything** and **one can never be sure of anything**. Thus, the strategy of *impersonalizing the speaker* is employed to reduce the imposition.

**Text 3**

Professor: All the Doctorates? ... You are a very courageous young lady. I really must congratulate you most sincerely. Well, we'll try. Mademoiselle, **we'll do our best for you**. Besides, you are most acknowledgeable already. And so young, too.

Professor: ... **If I may be permitted**, Mademoiselle, **if you have no objection**, I will take this one [chair] opposite you?

Pupil : Certainly, Sir. But of course, please do.

Professor: Thank you. Mademoiselle. [They sit down opposite each other at the table, turning their profile to the spectators.] There we are then! You've brought your text books and notebooks with you? [The pupils takes them from her briefcase.]

Pupil : Yes, Sir. Of course, Sir, I've got all we need.

Professor: Excellent. That's excellent, Mademoiselle. Then, **if you really don't mind ... we could ... begin**.

Pupil : Yes, Sir. I'm quite ready for you, Sir.

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Professor: Ready for me? ... [A gleam in the eye, quickly dispelled, a gesture immediately checked] It is I who am ready for you. Mademoiselle, I'm at your service. p. 187

For mitigating the imposition, two negative politeness strategies, *impersonalizing the speaker* and *being pessimistic*, are used in this text. The *impersonalizing* strategy is expressed by pluralizing the pronoun 'I' in: **we'll do our best for you and we could**. The *being pessimistic* strategy is conveyed by the conditional constructions: **If I may be permitted, if you have no objection and if you really don't mind**. The last sentence involves a hedge which is really.

**Text 4**

Professor: How many units are missing between three and four?...or between four and three, **if you'd rather?**

Pupil: There aren't any units, Sir, between three and four. Four comes immediately after three; there is nothing at all between three and four!

Professor: **I can't have made myself understood properly. It's doubtless my own fault. I haven't been clear enough.**

Pupil: Oh, no, Sir. **The fault is entirely mine.**

Professor: Listen. Here are three matches. And here is another one. That makes four. Now, watch carefully...(p. 192)

The Professor initiates the exchange by asking a question mitigating its force by the use of the conditional construction **if you'd rather**, hence *being pessimistic* strategy, in addition to the use of *hedging* devices; the modal verb **would** and the downgrader **rather**. The Professor continues his speech with a display of *deference*: **"I can't have made myself understood properly. It's doubtless my own fault. I haven't been clear enough"**. Here, the Professor indicates *deference* by explicitly humbling himself and his capacities. However, the Pupil immediately counters this with a similar display: **Oh, no, Sir, the fault is entirely mine**.

**1.4 Conclusions**

The purpose of negative politeness strategies is to defend the negative face of hearer or speaker. By adopting negative politeness, the speaker tries to convince the addressee that the latter has the freedom to act how he chooses without the risk of losing his face. Ionesco's elaborate display of negative politeness strategies is evident. The strategies used in *The Lesson*, ordered respectively in terms of their occurrence, are hedges, apologizing, giving deference, being pessimistic and impersonalizing speaker and hearer. Most of them can be

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considered as an attempt made by the professor to convince his pupil that she is free from the imposition.

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### الخلاصة

يستخدم متحدث اللغة استراتيجيات معينة للحفاظ على القواعد و المبادئ التي تشكل جزءاً من التفاعل الاجتماعي. ينطوي التحدث بأسلوب مهذب على بينه من التأثير الذي تحققه قوة خاصة ( illocutionary force ) فضلاً عن تفاقم أو تخفيف اثر هذه القوة من خلال تطبيق درجة مناسبة من التعديل. واحدة من درجات التعديل هذه هي المداراة أو التأدب. ان تكون مؤدب يعني ان تكون متحدث مراعي لمبادئ الكلام . بالنسبة للمداراة السلبية ، ان تكون مؤدب يعني ان تختار الكلمات الصحيحة للتعبير عن هدف تواصل يمكن ان يكون مهدد لوجه المخاطب مثل الرفض أو النقد لتفادي تضارب محتمل، وبالتالي للحفاظ على الانسجام في التفاعل . الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تقديم تحليل وتفسير وفهم لأستراتيجيات المداراة السلبية التي من اهم تأثيراتها تخفيف مشاعر التدخل والرفض . وقد اختيرت عدة نصوص من مسرحية يوجين يونسكو "الدرس" لغرض التحليل.