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विद्येविना मति गेली, मतीविना नीति गेली  
नीतिविना गति गेली, गतिविना वित्त गेले  
वित्तविना शूद्र खचले, इतके अनर्थ एका अविद्येने केले

-महात्मा ज्योतीराव फुले

❖ विद्यावार्ता या आंतरविद्याशाखीय बहुभाषिक त्रैमासिकात व्यक्त झालेल्या मतांशी मालक, प्रकाशक, मुद्रक, संपादक सहमत असतीलच असे नाही. न्यायक्षेत्र:बीड

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❖ विद्यावार्ता: Interdisciplinary Multilingual Refereed Journal Impact Factor 4.014 (IIJIF)

14) The Impact of Sports on School Students <b>Sheetal B. Jadhav</b>	61
15) Politeness Strategies and Business Letters <b>Dr. Manoj Zade &amp; Nadia Mohammed Nasser Abubaker, Naldurg</b>	64
16) VACCINATION AGAINST MEASLES IN UTTAR PRADESH <b>Dr.Amit Kumar Chauhan, Vivek kumar singh, Dr. P.C.Yadav</b>	68
17) Bhagat Singh: Revolutionising Philosophy through Praxis <b>Sunil Kumar. PM, Changanacherry</b>	73
18) Problems of Consumer Cooperative Societies <b>Dr.Sunil Zagade, Prof. Sambhaji Sudam Tayade, Pune</b>	77
19) CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN WORKERS IN INDIA <b>Smt. Wanjari Manisha Pandurang, Aurangabad</b>	79
20) FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT POLICY IN INDIA <b>Dr.B.S.Wankhede, Beed</b>	85
21) Euproctis subnotana (Walker), a new record on Lantana camara flower in ..... <b>Mahima Tripathi, Nitin Kulkarni, Vinod Kumar Mishra, M.P.</b>	87
22) विज्ञान साहित्य मराठी लेखकांचे योगदान <b>प्रा डाँ. तुषार चांदवडकर, जि. नासिक</b>	91
23) जि.प.शाळा अंबड येथील राष्ट्रीय आरोग्य अभियान महाराष्ट्र अंतर्गत राष्ट्रीय बालस्वास्थ्य ..... <b>डाँ. दादाराव रामजी चव्हाण, जि. जालना</b>	93
24) स्त्री-मुक्ती आंदोलनाच्या आद्य प्रणेत्या: सावित्रीबाई फुले <b>प्रा. मेघमाला अं. मेश्राम, चंद्रपूर</b>	95
25) लोकशाहीर अण्णाभाऊ साठे यांच्या साहित्यातील शेतकरी <b>कृष्णराव बी. पाचकोरे, डाँ. उज्वला के. सदावर्ते (कसबेकर)</b>	98
26) न्यायमूर्ती महादेव गोविंद रानडे यांचा सामाजिक आणि राजकीय विचारांचा अभ्यास <b>डाँ. संभाजी संतोष पाटील, जि. धुळे</b>	100



## Politeness Strategies and Business Letters

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As it is best known, business letters are formal written text in which the writer, beside the main purpose of the letter, concerns much in politeness principles in order to maintain and develop business relationships. This section presents some background to a number of theories and concepts relating to politeness strategies adopted by researchers for their analyses of written business discourse.

In the last decade, politeness theories have received a considerable attention in pragmatic field and several studies have been conducted. Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory has taken the lion's share in investigating politeness strategies, though some studies challenge and criticize the universality of Brown & Levinson's face model.

However, as the analysis in the present study concerns with letters written in English and Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory was based on English-speaking communities, the arguments over the universality of this theory would not affect the result, because the theory will assist to study the linguistic means that help maintain the interactants' faces in the business correspondence of English-speaking culture. Therefore, the review will exclude the studies that questioned Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory.

Based on earlier work on 'face' by Goffman (1955) who viewed face as an image of self-delineation in terms of approbation of social attributes, the notion of 'politeness' was constructed by Brown & Levinson (1978, 1987) as a formal theory. According to them, Face refers to "public self-image that every member (of a society) wants to claim for himself (66)". 'Face' is a set of wants, roughly "the want to be unimpeded" and a person's desire to act without imposition, and "the want to be approved in certain respect" (ibid: 63). This notion of 'face' involves both a positive and a negative face. By a positive face is meant the presumption harboured by this model person that his/her wants are desirable to some others (ibid: 62). A positive face also involves the desire to establish a positive self-image that the person wishes others to appreciate or approve. This means that each person has to be protective of others' face. The former refers to negative face, and the latter refers to positive face. Negative face is threatened, when an individual does not intend to avoid the obstruction of his interlocutor's freedom of action. Positive politeness is used to satisfy the speaker's need for approval and belonging, while the main goal of negative politeness is to minimize the imposition of a face-threatening act.

An indispensable term associated with the notion of 'face' is Face Threatening Act (FTA) which can be defined as acts that inherently damage the face of the addressee or the speaker by acting in opposition to the wants and desires of the other (Brown & Levinson 1987).

Brown & Levinson (1987) identified five possible strategies for doing FTAs that people resort to in their politeness behavior to manage face: Act baldly, Going off-record-indirect, Do not perform the act, Positive politeness, Negative politeness. People vary their request strategies based on three factors: the social distance of (D) of speaker and hearer, the relative

power (P) between them, and the absolute ranking (R) of impositions in the particular culture (ibid: 79). 'Social distance' here refers to the evaluation of how frequently the sender and hearer interact and the types of exchanges taking place. 'Power' refers to how FTA is assessed in relation to the hearers' imposition of his wants at the expense of sender's. The absolute ranking is the degree of seriousness of the imposition which is measured against the level of interference with the interactant's face. According to Brown & Levinson (ibid: 15, 17, 76, 84), both the factors of power and imposition of FTA are also culturally-bound.

Levinson (1987) and Lee (2004) state that politeness is universal because all cultures share norms of linguistic politeness, yet it is also culturally variable since what is polite in one culture may not be judged polite in another. Hawisher & Selfe, (2000) also confirm that politeness strategies may differ and vary from one culture to another and all cultures communicate politeness in terms of linguistic or non- linguistic perspectives (Brown & Levinson 1987).

Numbers of studies in notion of politeness of business written discourse have used face-saving perspective. Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory is adopted by researchers in the field of business correspondence.

Based on Brown & Levinson (1987), Maier (1992) conducted a comparative study investigating the similarities and the differences of using the politeness strategies in business letters writing by native and non-native English speakers. His study includes eight letters written by native speakers and ten by non-native speakers to the personnel manager of the company explaining why they had unavoidably missed an interview (apology) and to persuade the personnel manager to give him/her another interview at a later date (request). His results reveal differences in use of politeness strategies

by the both groups. While letters by non-native speakers are less formal and more direct, native speakers used more negative strategies to preserve the addressee's face. They mitigate their apologies more, they expressed thanks more often, and they were more pessimistic and less direct. The non- native speakers used more "potentially risky positive politeness strategies, and were more informal and direct than were native speakers" (Maier 1992: 203).

Pilegaard (1997) explores the negative and positive politeness strategies in a corpus of request letters. She investigates 323 of different type of authentic British business letters: making contact, negotiating, and in conflict. Pilegaard (1997: 227) formulates the dynamics of an interaction as constituting the degree of the imposition which varies with the nature of the request. She reports that politeness strategies are used to prepare the ground for the target of the core request, to redress the potentially face-threatening act of requesting something from the client and to close the letter. Her finding also reveals that "positive and negative politeness is equally frequent in the early stages of business contact but once negotiation has started, negative politeness dominates" (ibid: 241). Furthermore, Pilegaard (1997) found that positive face-work occurs in sellers act than in the buyers, and that more clearly defines the power relationship between the buyer and the seller since the buyer has less need to engage in positive face-work.

Based on the three factors in Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, Yeung (1997) examines the use of polite requests in English and Chinese business correspondence and reports that the ranking of the imposition, rather than the social power and social distance between the sender and the addressee, explains politeness behavior. He reports that "The Brown & Levinson's (1987) frame work does not seem to work for the Chinese data in the study" (520).

He attributes that to the variety of Chinese style of letters: Classical Chinese and Modern Standard Chinese. Furthermore, the different system for the choice of politeness strategies that Chinese have and not accurately reflected by the factors postulated by Brown & Levinson (1987). Yeung (1997) states that there are factors have to be taken into consideration to apply face-saving aspect for the expression of politeness in Chinese business correspondence, for instance, the Chinese principle of reciprocity, the two different style of their letters mentioned above.

In her article of 'Building Knowledge Structures in Teaching Cross-cultural Sales Genres' Zhu (2000a) reports that in respect of uses politeness strategies, unlike English, Chinese used to "show respect through appropriate linguistic forms such as honorifics, which can be related to helping achieve the positive and collaborative public image sought in high-context cultures" (53). She relates this to the variation of culture in China, where power and status are important values.

Following-up study on Maier's (1992) study of cross-cultural politeness strategies, Upton & Connor (2001) carry out a study to examine a learner corpus of job application letters written by non native speakers of English (Finns and Belgians) and native speakers (Americans). They examined the politeness strategies of requesting an interview 'move' 4, and giving thanks for consideration 'move' 5. Their result shows that American writers used many formulaic expressions for communicating both positive and negative politeness, whereas the Belgians, showed more individuality and diversity in their style, with Finnish writers falling somewhere in between.

Al-Khatib (2001) explored the problem of using politeness in personal letters written in English by Jordanian university students of English. He found that Arab people in general

and Jordanians in particular tend to use politeness strategies different from those utilized by the British. Jordanians as non-native speakers are more direct and their sentences are characterized by having a lot of expressions of optimism.

Lee (2004) analyzed written requests in emails sent by adult Chinese learners of English to their Chinese-speaking English teachers and monolingual English-speaking teachers in order to investigate cross-cultural influences on linguistic choice and request strategies. She investigated the politeness strategies of the learners and found that they used higher frequency rate of politeness markers (e.g. "please") with their monolingual English-speaking teachers, which may be due to Chinese culture where politeness is a normative value in teacher-student hierarchical situations. In Chinese culture, polite letters should have a standard format and content so that only the personal information will vary from one letter to another.

Chakon (2006) analyses 80 authentic letters of request written in English by Thai speakers and native English speakers. 38 Thai letters and 42 English native speakers' letters. She examines the politeness strategies in those letters. She concludes that request in native English, letters are more direct, while Thais use more negative politeness in that they include more indirect, deferential and self-effacing strategies. Her finding also reveals differences in introducing the main request. Native speakers of English tend to introduce the main request at the initial stages of the letter. On the other hand Thais introduce it in the middle or penultimate part of the letter. In addition, expressions of gratitude/ appreciation are found more in Thais letters. Furthermore, Chakon's (2006) aim of the study is not for the purpose of producing English-language teaching materials, but to increase the awareness and direction of Thais and others to

write business correspondence in English for external and internal communication both locally and abroad.

Al-Ali (2006) carried out a genre analysis of a job application letter written by 90 applicants of Jordanian Arabic English bilingual origin using the structure analysis proposed by Bhatia (1993) and the framework of Brown & Levinson's (1987) model of politeness. Concerning politeness, the results reveal failures using of these strategies by the applicants. In contrast with the negative politeness and indirectness orientation found by Maier (1992) to characterize the business English, Al-Ali (2006) reports that the bilingual participants avoid negative politeness, but make frequent use of positive strategies. In addition, they did not show variation in the use of formulaic linguistic realization of these strategies. He attributes the unsuccessful utilization of these politeness strategies "to ignorance on the part of the bilingual writers of the pragmatic strategies and the sociocultural constraints governing the choice of these strategies, or because of lack of proficiency in the target language (ibid: 135).

Similar result is found in the business letters under the present study, which reveals students' unconcern of the importance of these.

Politeness strategies are as important move as the main body in a business letter. Maier (1992: 189) suggests that "business writing by non-native speakers, even that which is grammatically flawless, may be perceived negatively by the reader because of the inappropriate use of politeness strategies". Most of the studies that concern with cross-culture use of politeness strategies reveal that non-native speakers of English use fewer modals as negative politeness strategies and they ignore using various patterns of politeness. Thus, such strategy should not be neglected by teachers, whither in teaching or in evaluating students'

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