

On – Off Record in Face Wants

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1. Introduction

In this paper, an attempt to shed light on record in politeness is carried out . This notion of politeness is very common in everyday life situations which plays a respectable part of people's communication. People vary in their use of on – off record depending on some factors that govern this use . One of objectives of this paper is to focus on these factors which enable communicators to interact with each other both directly and indirectly . Most theories of indirect speech acts barely touch on the reasons for which speakers use indirect rather than direct forms , nor do they seek an explanation for which particular indirect forms will be used under which conditions.

2. Record in Politeness

To distinguish between on – off record , let's come across some acts that shed light on them respectively . There is a possibility , depending on how well the speaker knows the hearer , and how much social distance there is between them or (me and my interlocutors) . This strategy is called " on record " or " to go bald on record " as Mey (1993 : 73) call it. Verschueren (1999 : 45) believes that on record are completely open and direct , without any attempt to let the addressee preserve some freedom of action or some sense of equality. The circumstances , sometimes , may force (me) to use this strategy as when (I) discover there is a bomb in the car, and I yell at my passengers :

1. Get out of here , quick .

This may be different when using it in a family situation which are frequently used , as

2. Pass me the salt .

In this respect , Yule (1997: 179) states that we are to follow the rule that reveals ' when the request is to the addressee's benefit , we are more likely to go on record ' , as in :

Have a good morning .

Help yourself to some more cake .

A positive politeness strategy , as Horn and Ward (2006 : 574) state, leads the request to appeal to a common goal, and even friendship, via expressions such as :

3 a. How about letting me use your pen ?

b. Hey, buddy, I'd appreciate it if you'd let me use your pen.

According to Yule (1997 : 64), these on record expressions do represent a greater risk for the speaker of suffering a refusal and may be preceded by some 'getting to know you' talk, designed to establish the necessary common ground for this strategy.

4. Hi: How's it going? Okay if I sit here? We must be interested in the same crazy stuff. You take a lot of notes too, huh? Say, do me a big favor and let me use one of your pens.

However, Van Dijk (1989: 231) adds that in most English- speaking contexts, a face saving act is more commonly performed via a negative politeness strategy. The most typical form used is a question containing a modal verb such as :

5. a. Could you lend me a pen?

b. I'm sorry to bother you, but can I ask you for a pen or something?

c. I know you're busy, but I ask you if_em_if you happen to have an extra pen that I could, you know_eh_may be borrow ?

Leech (1983:134) believes that using this strategy also in forms which contain expressions of apology for the imposition, of the type shown in

(5b). more elaborate negative politeness work can sometimes be heard in extended talk, often with hesitations, similar to that shown in (5c).

Moreover, according to Lyons (1979: 590) bald on-record strategies usually do not attempt to minimize the threat to the hearer's face, although there are ways that bald on-record politeness can be used in trying to minimize face threatening acts implicitly. Often using such a strategy will shock or embarrass the addressee, and so this strategy is most often utilized in situations where the speaker has a close relationship with the audience, such as family or close friends.

Brown and Levinson (1978:145) outline various cases in which one might use the bald on-record strategy, including:

1. Instances in which threat minimizing does not occur
2. Great urgency or desperation
 6. Watch out!
3. Speaking as if great efficiency is necessary
 7. Hear me out:...
6. Task-oriented
 8. Pass me the hammer.
7. Little or no desire to maintain someone's face
 9. Don't forget to clean the blinds.
8. Doing the face threatening act is in the interest of the hearer
 10. Your headlights are on!
9. Instances in which the threat is minimized implicitly
10. Welcomes
 11. Come in.
11. Offers
 12. Leave it, I'll clean up later.

13. Eat!

Additionally, Verschueren (1999: 45) adds that even more relevant for our concern with the pragmatics of language in use, the availability of the bald on record form, as well as off record forms, means that the use of a face-saving on record form represents a significant choice. The choice of a type of expression that is less direct, potentially less clear, generally longer, and with a more complex structure means that the speaker is making a greater effort, in terms of concern for face (i.e. politeness), than is needed simply to get the basic message across efficiently. Verschueren adds that when we say :

14. I should probably get myself one of those silk ties .

It would be uttered casually without being addressed to anyone in particular , to achieve the same effect as the one intended in the following two on record instances:

15. When you are down in Como, buy me a silk tie.

16. I hate to impose on you , but when you are down in Como , could
You buy me a silk tie ?

Mey (1993 : 74) states that if somebody asks me for a favor without really making a formal request , for example , by ' dropping a hint '

17. Gee, that ice-cream looks really good .

Which implies that :

18. Can I have a taste ?

The request is made " off record " as Brown and Levinson (1978) also call it . Hence , I , as the addressee , do not have to go "on record " either , as acknowledging it and reacting to it .An appropriate off-record reply would be :

19. Yes , aren't they clever those ice-cream makers ?

since my face was never officially threatened by this request , I don't have to deal with any implicit ' threat ' to my face : the reply is just as much ' off record ' as the request.

3. Say nothing

One way to see the relevance of the relationship between these politeness concepts and language use is to take a single speech event and map out the different interpretations associated with different possible expressions used within that event. For example, you arrive at an important lecture, pull out your notebook to take notes, but discover that you don't have anything to write with. You think that the person sitting next to you may provide the solution. In this scenario, you are going to be 'Self', and the person next to you is going to be 'Other'(Horn and Ward,1988:173).

Your first choice is whether to say something or not. You can, of course, rummage in your bag, search rather obviously through your pockets, go back into your bag, without uttering a word, but with the vague intention that your problem will be recognized. This 'say nothing' approach may or may not work, but if it does, it's because the other offers and not because the self asks (Ibid) .

20. a. Self: (looks in bag)

b. Other (offers pen) Here, use this.

Many people seem to prefer to have their needs recognized by others without having to express those needs in language. When those needs are recognized, as in (20.a), then clearly more has been communicated than was said.

4. Say something

Even if you decide to say some thing , you don't actually have to ask for any thing .You can (perhaps after you research through your bag)simply produce a statement of the type in {21a.} or {21b} .

21. a. Uh , I forgot my pen .

b. Hmm , I wonder if where I put my pen .

These , as Thomas (1995:87) believes , and other similar types of statement , are not directly addressed to the other .The other can act as if the statements have not been heard. They are technically described as

being off record .In casual descriptions, they might be referred to as "hint" .

Once again, an off record statement may or may not succeed 9as a means of getting a pen) , but if it does , it will be because more has been communicated than was said .

In contrast to such off record statements ,you can directly address the other as a means of expressing you needs .These direct address forms are technically described as being on record .The most direct approach , using imperative forms such as those in (22) , is known as bald on record .The other person is directly asked for something .

- 22. a. Give me a pen.
- b. Lend me your pen .

These bald on record forms may be followed by expressions like 'please ' and 'would you ?' which serve to soften the demand and called mitigating devices (Levinson:1997: 146) .

It is tempting to equate the bald on record approach with all direct command forms (i.e. imperatives). This would be misleading because imperative forms are often used by close familiars without being interpreted as commands. Examples would be a friend offering something to eat, as in (23a.), or trying to help you, as in (23b.).

- 23. a. Have some more cake.
- b. Give me that wet umbrella. (Leech:1989:217)

Emergency situations also occasion the use of direct commands, regardless of who is being addressed, as when ganger prompts use of the expressions in (24).

- 24. a. Don't touch that!
- b. Get out of here!

There are, consequently, some social circumstances where using a direct command as a bald on record expression is considered appropriate among social equals.

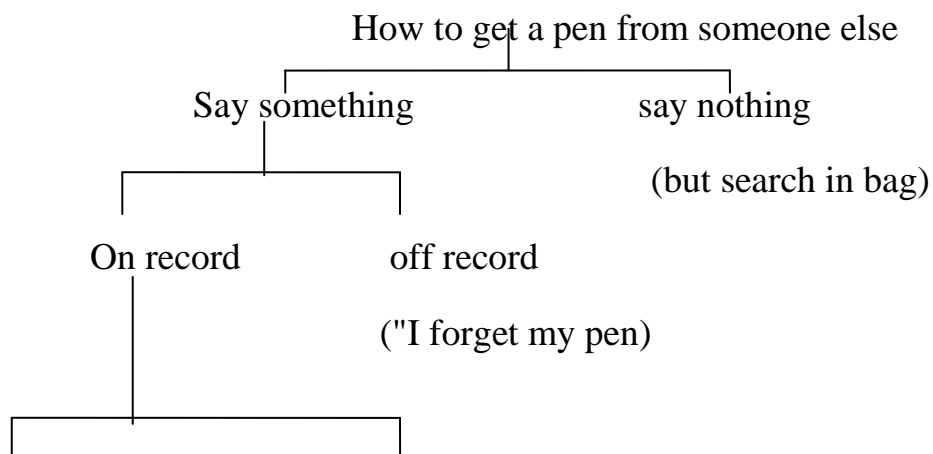
However, generally speaking, bald on record expressions are associated with speech events where the speaker assumes that he or she has power over the other (for example, in military contexts) and can control the other's behavior with words. In everyday interaction between social equals, such bald on record behavior would potentially represent a threat to the other's face and would generally be avoided. Avoiding a face threatening act is accomplished by face saving acts which use positive or negative politeness strategies (Mey,1993:165) .

5. The Model

The relationship between speaker and hearer forces them to use positive politeness forms that emphasize closeness . This may be the rational behind the operating strategies which govern individuals' performance . Linguistically, such strategies will include personal use of nicknames, sometimes even abusive terms (particularly among males), and shared dialect or slang expressions. Frequently, a solidarity strategy will be marked via inclusive terms such as 'we' and 'let's'.

The model (figure 1) adopted by this study is that of Brown and Levinson (1987) which reveals that individuals may follow two strategies when they say something or nothing in everyday life situations .

The model shows that the speaker can give the message even if he does not utter a word . Gestures and any other non-verbal acts can do a big part in the delivery of the message .



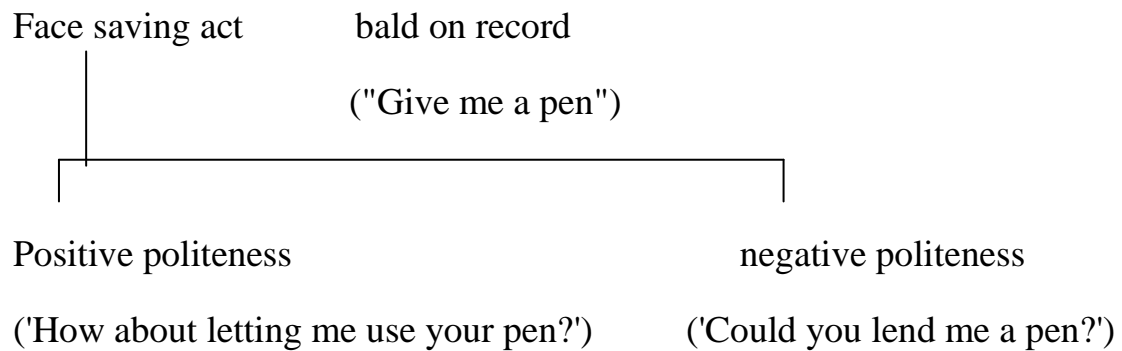


Figure 1

The tendency to use negative politeness forms, as it is viewed by Grundy (2000:121) , emphasizing the hearer's right to freedom, can be seen as a deference strategy. It can be the typical strategy of a whole group or just an option used on a particular occasion. A deference strategy is involved in what is called 'formal politeness'. It is impersonal, as if nothing is shared, and can include expressions that refer to neither the speaker nor the hearer, for example,

25. Customers may not smoke here, sir.

The language associated with a deference strategy emphasizes the speaker's and the hearer's independence, marked via an absence of personal claims, as in the following:

26. There's going to be a party, if you can make it. It will be fun.

These general types of strategies are illustrated here via utterances which are actually central to the speech event (for example, invitation). Face saving behavior, however, is often at work well before such utterances are produced, in the form of pre-sequences (Leech, 1980: 166) .

6. Cultural Implications

According to Levinson (1997: 77) , three sociological factors should desirably be taken into consideration when deciding whether and how to use the various strategies in real life situations. These three factors are :

1. Social distance between parties (symmetric relation)

Distinguish kin or friend from a stranger with whom you may be of the same social status, but who is still separated by social distance , for instance , when we speak with family.

2. Power relations between parties (asymmetric relation)

We are inclined to speak to our social equals differently than those whose status is higher or lower than our own in a given situation , for instance, when we imagine a teacher is teaching his class and people are being very loud and disruptive in the next room, he will go over there and tell them to be quiet but the way he does it will differ depending on who it is . If they are students he will use the bald on-record strategy to make sure there is no confusion in what he is saying:

27. Stop talking so loud !

If they are colleagues or other teacher, he will claim common ground with them using the positive politeness strategy or frame an indirect request for them to stop talking

28. I'm working on a lecture and it's really hard to concentrate with all this noise.

If they are really high status directors of the department, he may end up saying nothing at all or apologize for interrupting them

3. The absolute ranking of the threat of the face threatening acts

Some impositions are greater than others. Highly imposing acts like requests demand more redress to mitigate their increased threat level

7. Conclusions

It can be concluded that what is deemed polite in our culture does not always hold for another . Politeness is a matter of convention and people have to learn what the relevant conventions are. In all cultures , people have to learn how they are expected to speak as male or female participants in the society . And in each society , people have to learn what counts as polite , and adopt prevailing norms for how to reiterate a request. Politeness is an important tool for achieving one's goals .

To make appropriate use of politeness means to have an eye open on the social rules behind choices of polite forms. People must master several different dimensions of use . They need to know the linguistic forms for making different degrees of politeness . They must identify conditions on greetings and requests , for instance , according to the status , age , and sex of their co-participants . And they need to learn what the cost and benefits are of going (or losing) face in relation to others .

For ' say nothing notion ' , gestures and all non-verbal communication tools play the biggest part of having the message well understood on the part of the addressee . When this is the case , participants have to be well experienced with the traditions and conventions of the society they are part of . Moreover , they have to master good contrivance in how to play with words when they want to formulate their requests in different linguistic forms.

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