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THE PRAGMATIC ASPECTS OF THE ENGLISH INTERROGATIVES EXPRESSING POLITENESS

Abstract: *In this article the principles of functioning of interrogative constructions of English has been considered in their pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects. The main focus has been done on the expression of politeness by means of English interrogatives in the dialogical speech. The article also investigates and analyses some types of questions as indirect speech acts on the basis of the approaches and strategies developed by various scientists. Furthermore, the pragmatic politeness phenomenon has been referred to as as strategy focused on achievement of positive result in communication process.*

Key words: *discourse, pragmatics, linguistic pragmatics, politeness, sociolinguistics, speech act, question, communication, markers, proposition.*

Language: *English*

Citation: Kasimova, N. F. (2020). The pragmatic aspects of the English interrogatives expressing politeness. *ISJ Theoretical & Applied Science, 06 (86),* 464-468.

Soi: http://s-o-i.org/1.1/TAS-06-86-88   *Doi*: crossref https://dx.doi.org/10.15863/TAS.2020.06.86.88

Scopus ASCC: 1203.

Introduction

For the linguistics of the end of the 20th – the beginning of the 21st century consideration of any parties of the human reflected in language is extremely important. The modern linguistics deals with communication issues according to the social, psychological, national characteristics, etc. of communicant, how they are connected among themselves. In contemporary linguistics big interest in a communicative and pragmatical component of the language phenomena has been displayed for the last 40-50 years. The article is devoted to a problem of studying of communicative and pragmatic features of the questions conveying politeness in the English informal conversation on the example of the speech of different layers people.

In the center of attention of modern linguists there is not a static language system, but language shows itself in its real functioning. Therefore it is logical to expect emergence of the works devoted to problems of informal conversation, various aspects of studying of a communicative component of language, especially its syntactic level, a role of extralinguistic factors in dialogue, etc. The analysis of communicative, discursive and pragmatic features of interrogatives in informal conversation reveals their ability to reflect information on the relation of the person to speech actions, to distinguish and reveal communicative meanings including implicit, i.e. defines their role in a choice of verbal behaviour, verbal regulation of process of communication. As the communicative and pragmatic features of questions expressing politeness is the focal point of the article, an attempt to analyse the English questions from the point of view of pragmatic adaptation of their grammatical elements for politeness expression has been made.

The anthropocentric orientation having paramount value and relevance in modern works about language is shown within our analysis in a number of aspects. First, the live informal conversation chosen for research with the maximum completeness reflects modern processes in language, and also their extralinguistic features. As known, set of the extralinguistic factors having impact on communication process their interrelation and updating in a colloquial discourse is a starting point of the communicative and pragmatic analysis. On the

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other hand, despite the numerous existing works, the object of the research – questions which opened new communicative opportunities in new foreshortenings of the analysis, within colloquial household dialogue confirms the relevance and a demand. The communicative and pragmatic features of functioning of interrogatives revealed by us define correlation of this aspect of communication process to the actual ideas of anthropocentrism in language.

Verbal communication is not limited to information exchange, and expands a framework of the functioning to formation of the interpersonal relations. In a choice of linguistic means speaking, by all means in view of and this aspect, forges the speech under the communicative purpose that demands from the speaking continuous control of the speech. Using the set of language means in the dialogical speech speaking quite often resort to obvious increase of degree of politeness in the statements that in turn is result of social pressure. The matters of this linguistic-pragmatic phenomenon are investigated in works of such scientists as I. V. Vinantova, I. S. Lebedev, I. S. Shevchenko, P. Grice, F.Koulmas, R.Searel, etc. According to F.Koulmas, socially adequate manners depend on observance of the general principles and specific norms which in a broad sense belong to a category of politeness. The huge number of definitions of concept of politeness is offered, and for the last some decades the huge base of the scientific literature devoted to a concept politeness is created. The description of politeness as linguistic action gives the chance to consider a politeness phenomenon as a positive control of communication. From this point of view politeness is represented not as an element of decency or etiquette, and a basis of social life [7, 84].

Many researches are devoted to a politeness concept, its linguistic and pragmatic features and manifestations. P. Grice, investigating pragmatics of interpersonal communication, emphasizes that the person can show politeness not only in the speech, but also in such actions as opening for somebody a door, than slamming it before someone's person [5, 134]. G. N. Leech offers the general approach to the analysis of politeness based on the principle of reciprocity which according to the philosopher of language Paul Grice, is the basis for any communications. The principle of politeness developed by Leech is similar to the basic principle of all verbal interactions. The author puts forward a number of the principles, such as the principle of tactfulness, the principle of nobility (generosity) and the principle of modesty which are considered according to the principle of politeness [9, 104]. The ratio of semantics and pragmatic force gives the chance to describe the value of the statement in various ways, thus the problem of pragmatics is to explain the relation of these two types of semantics: value which is often defined as literal and illocutionary force.

According to J. Searle's theory, pragmatic force is motivated with the general principles of reasonable adequate social behaviour and indirect speech acts can be interpreted differently. The most known example of pragmatism is the theory of speech acts of Searle where the author generalizes that the theory of language is part of the theory of action. It, providing grammatical acts of various types, theoretically transfers the grammatical system to an embodiment of various speech acts. According to Searle, "… for definite purposes it is possible to break that I call the speech act, on phonetic acts, phonemic acts, morphemic acts, etc. And of course, for the majority of the purposes in a linguistic science there is no need to speak about acts in general. It is only possible to discuss phonemes, morphemes, sentences, etc." [11, 25].

The social structure is often reflected by conventions of speech communications, and traditions of politeness play an important role in the formation of the theory concerning the pragmatic force of statements. It is possible to notice that any theoretical concept or representation of the category of politeness needs to be correlated to that fact that any society functions on the basis of standard concepts of politeness. As human society is constructed on distinctions, it is necessary to distinguish the difference as one of the principles operating polite behaviour.

In the pragmatic plan politeness is considered as strategy or a set of the strategy focused on achievement of positive result in communication. The choice of this or that strategy by communicants depends on external and internal factors, namely on parameters of a situation, moral installations and cultural values. From the point of view of pragmatics for detailed research of the theory of politeness it is necessary to study the mechanisms of a choice of the corresponding speech strategy for registration of communicative intentions of participants of communication, to consider various aspects of discursive activity of the person and the influence of sociocultural norms and rules of speech behaviour on it.

Politeness is an answer to an inequality in human society, a socially unforeseen phenomenon, therefore, the linguistic expression of politeness is an area where the social functions of language are brightly shown. Politeness, being inseparably linked with public differentiation, with an expedient choice of linguistic means which are very various for various interlocutors and situations, leads to a question of, whether that politeness belongs to the language or to the use of language. It, in turn, emphasizes the relevance of consideration of this category from a foreshortening of language and speech, or paradigmatics and syntagmatics. The relationship between a polite speech (question) and an expression of politeness is not identical to all languages and societies.

Difficulties arise when some languages have a huge number of lexical and grammatical means for politeness expression, and the others do not. Such situation refers the verbal politeness to sociolinguistics problems. Because for a choice of adequate speaking it is necessary to combine correctly the linguistic elements and social norms of decency. It is known that grammatical opportunities of questions are limited to information request and providing permission. However, the transformation of this type of syntactic designs expands their field of functioning. So, for example, in the English interrogative *Would you mind if I leave?* which combines unreal past tense (*would mind*) and the present (*leave*) the exception to the rules of sequence of tenses between the main and subordinate clause is observed. Such exception is caused by that pragmatic reason that the sentences of this kind are pragmatically specialized for the use as a polite request. Formal past tense serves in such sentences as a certain formula of polite evasion which settled in the form of the standard model *Would you mind ...?* Consequently, an unexpected verb *leave* is non-conventionally replaced with a grammatically correct form *left*. Though these and other pragmatic influences are defined as an exception to the rules, it will not prevent to refer to them as to rules. Because any new rules entering grammar usually begin the existence as exceptions of other rules. Another example of *Would you mind helping yourself?* is the polite address in value of an imperative. The meaning of the word *mind* in this construction specifies the negative expectation for non-performance of the action. *Would you mind ...* acts as a semantic equivalent of the phrase *Would you dislike ...* or *Would you object to ....* In this regard the construction bears the negative shade which is built in itself, and makes an opposition to the expression *Would you like ...* which is interpreted as an expression of the offer.

In the English language the category of politeness is realized with the help of both semantic, and syntactic means. Markers of gratitude, an apology, modal words and verbs, respectful forms of the address, etc. belong to semantic means. Indirect registration of imperative speech acts: requests, order, council, invitation, offer; indirect registration of interrogative speech acts form the syntactic means. The interrogative statement like *Are you able to repair my phone?* conveys an indirect request and is pragmatically interpreted in the necessary context by the statement which is a valid requests (*I want to know if you can repair my phone, and if so, I want you to do so*). But this sentence is grammatically not adjusted to such a purpose. More traditional form of this request is *Can you repair my phone?* which is grammatically associated more with the elements and structure of imperative statements than interrogative ones. Also the interrogative structures containing *please* (*Can you please repair my phone*?) and the tag-question constructions with *can you* (*Repair my phone, can you?*) may represent the above discussed theory.

Traditional formulas are also available in English oaths and greetings (*How do you do?*) and the word *please* which lost its initial grammatical essence is used as a politeness particle. On the basis of supervision in many languages the ratio between indirection and politeness is established. the expression of the communicative purpose indirectly is considered as a more polite form of communication, than speaking or ordering something directly. In comparison with declarative and imperative sentences the questions are far more politene. For example:

Could you have this finished by 2 o'clock this afternoon?

I need this by 2 o'clock this afternoon.
Finish it by 2 o'clock this afternoon.

The effect of indirection, as shown, reduces the risk and softens the force of order, thereby weakening a duty of the interlocutor, giving the opportunity to continue a conversation, without bringing it to a conflict point. The indirection of interrogation, according to F.Koulmas, reduces the responsibility of the addressee, providing him/her with more choice for the continuation of communication. The scientist considers that the intention of the speaker has to be expressed indirectly, but is not said openly. Many indirect strategies are completely conditioned. For example, in English the expression containing elements of politeness of *could you please ...,* stated by the highest person in rank to the lowest is not a question and does not allow any refusal or denial [7, 98].

It is known that three main types of syntactic constructions – declarative, imperative and interrogative – are conditionally distinguished in terms of semantics and speech categories peculiar to them, and correspond to such terms as "statement", "the order or a request" and "question". From the point of view of semantics the English imperative *Help me with the problem*, being the most direct form of an imposition (imperative), is considered as well the tactless address to the interlocutor that increases the risk of non-obedience of the interlocutor and can become the reason the emergence of a conflict situation. More tactful level of expression of this proposition in the form of a declarative (affirmation) looks as following: *I want you to help me with the problem*. In this statement some degree of tactfulness than in the previous one is observed. Because the statement as the direct answer (reply, response) does not demand any actions, thereby leaving the interlocutor with an option: to fulfil the desire of the addresser or to ignore it. The following, higher level of tactfulness and politeness can be observed in interrogative constructions:

Will you help me with the problem?
Are you willing to help me with the problem?
Can you help me with the problem?

Are you able to help me with the problem?

These questions seem more polite realization a proposition because *yes-no questions* openly provide the freedom of the answer, freedom to tell "yes" or "no". Moreover, the principle of a hint request force is reached and increases. The politeness of these interrogative statements can also be established by presumable answers to them. For example, *Are you willing to help me with the problem? I am willing to do, but I cannot*; *Are you able to help me with the problem? I am able, but I cannot be responsible for its being successful.* As presented, the questions containing the strategy of tactfulness cause the tactful, polite answers.

The following stage of realization of a polite interrogation is the use of unreal forms, such as Would you help me with the problem? Could you help me with the problem? in speech. Replacing *will* and *can* with such elements as *would* and *could* the sender of the message makes concessions before the addressee, thereby providing more free choice of performance or non-performance of the request. And for the more remoteness of the connotative request and for the preliminary care before the interlocutor the sender can include the elements of slight shade of rejection. For example: *Would you mind helping me with the problem? Could you possibly help me with the problem?*

However, such statements are often perceived as serious questions, the exception is made by some rare contexts. Therefore they, being extremely pragmatically adapted and specialized, carry out the function of a polite request. The words *please* and *kindly* serve as other obvious markers of politeness of the speech.

Such negative interrogative statements as *Can't you be quiet?* contain more indirection, than affirmative and direct questions. The exception makes also the question *Must you make all that disorder?* where the indirection allows to interpret this sentence from the point of view of irony. But here the danger and risk of the exposure of the speaker's insincere tactfulness where the irony takes place, and an excessive politeness can accept an impoliteness framework.

G. Lakoff in the work defines the tag-questions as syntactic structures which serve for strengthening of the statement. In spite of the fact that the author comments on the use as polite statements, and researchers of his works draw a clear boundary between the politeness and a modality of these statements [8,45-79]. The author, analysing the tag-questions on the basis of 43 000 word corpora, discovers the use of the tag-questions for uncertainty expression (modal value) from what are originally used proceeding from the principles of politeness (affective value). Further, within the affective function the author distinguishes the forms used in a promoting way, involving the interlocutor in conversation (function of positive politeness) and those, used for mitigation of the effect of negatively affective speech act including the instructions or criticism (function of negative politeness). For example: *John is arriving tonight, isn't he?* (Husband to wife concerning expected guest). *Still working on the letters at the office, are you?* (Husband to wife expecting her to come earlier). *It was quite silly, eh?* (Child to younger brother or sister).

In the first offer the speaker asks for the confirmations of the fact in which the truthfulness itself is somewhat not confident (uncertainty expression). The second statement is more focused on the performance of auxiliary, that is to say, communicative function, providing the addressee an entrance to a dialogical discourse. The third example illustrates the use of the invariant attached form for the mitigation of force of criticism. As seen from these examples, the tag-questions serve as a linguistic and pragmatic manifestation of feelings, feelings and intentions of the person in verbal communication. The use of this type of interrogative structures is caused, mainly, by the desire or intention of the speaker to express the confirmation of the put-forward proposition, to promote a dialogical discourse, promoting participation of the interlocutor in the conversation.

Not less important function of the tag-questions is the pragmaticalized solution by the use of politeness markers. For example, indoors, where the heat is felt and there is a need of turning on of the cooling device, an interrogative statement *Hot in here, isn't it?* as the indirect speech act can carry out the function of an imperative, pushing the interlocutor to the action of solving a problem, in this case a hot weather problem. The actions the performance of which is supposed by means of interrogative constructions pragmatically adapted to politeness strategy can be various depending on the situation at the time of a discourse. The direct expression of such an intension can sound as *Switch on the air-conditioner (please). Give me something cold to drink)*, etc. Here the principle of politeness stated by the indirect speech act serves as a linguistic as well as a pragmatic way of solution.

Proceeding from the interpretation of politeness markers spoken above it is possible to conclude that various factors can affect the degree of politeness of questions. The linguistic markers (elements), in particular, the questions, in general, being pragmatically adapted, can function as the syntactic structures promoting an equal current of a discourse, providing the participants of a discourse with the direct change of roles of the speaker/listener. In another dimension, such constructions serve for the expression of confidence/uncertainty concerning this or that proposition, and also as means of expression of politeness. Questions in this plan are the most flexible elements of language and can reflect various directions. The strategies of politeness are connected

not so much with language, but greatly with the speech in its various conventions. The same language material syntagmatically can be used differently in different speech situations. The special nature of the relations between the linguistic politeness and the social structure for a certain society remains a question for further researches in the field of a linguistic pragmatics. The main objective of the research of the politeness principle in the speech is to open the specific conditions of a choice of expressions with a social indicator, and also to establish how the expression of politeness works for the creation of the social relations.

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