

CHAPTER - IXMODES OF REQUEST AND EXERCISING AUTHORITY9.1 General

There are different kinds of social positions in the social structure of a society. Because of the existence of different social positions, one can find unequal social positions such as employer - employee, boss - subordinate, old person - young person, rich - poor, high caste - service caste, etc. in the society. When the persons who are in unequal positions interact with each other, the language use between them certainly varies. The variation may be at least in the ways of constructing the sentence pattern or using some linguistic structures, say, attention callers or address terms. In this chapter an attempt has been made to study the different linguistic strategies employed by persons belonging to different social groups while making a request.

- e.g.,
1. to get a newspaper from selected/specified persons and
  2. not to park the bicycle/not to dump garbage in front of their houses.

Thereby an attempt has been made to study the different syntactic patterns employed by individuals belonging to different social groups.

Requesting a newspaper or something else from others will

### 9.1.1 Politeness : Some Definitions

The Random House Dictionary of the English Language describes 'polite' as,

1. having or showing culture or good taste; polished; cultured; refined;

polite society, polite letters

2. having or showing good manners especially courteous, considerate, tactful, etc.

According to Brown and Gilman (1989 : 161) "politeness means putting things in such a way to take account of the feelings of the hearer".

Fraser (1975 : 13) defines politeness as a "property associated with an utterance in which according to the hearer, the speaker has neither exceeded any rights nor failed to fulfill any obligations".

Fraser stresses that politeness is a property of an act. Whatever the intension of the speaker may have been, it is the hearer who assigns politeness to any particular utterance within the situation in which it was heard. This means that politeness is a property of utterances and not of sentences, so that assigning politeness to any particular structure cannot be done out of the context. In other words, politeness can not be directly associated

with linguistic structures without the consideration of context. Politeness according to Franser, is doing what is socially acceptable and expected.

### 9.1.2 Models Available for Politeness Study

#### 9.1.2.1 Brown and Levinson Model

Brown and Levinson (1978 & 1987) have proposed that power (P), Distance (D) and the Ranked extremity (R) of a face threatening act are universal determinants of politeness levels in dyadic discourse. In the Brown and Levinson's theory, the feelings of the hearer are of two kinds.

1. those concerned with positive face
2. those concerned with negative face

Politeness theory holds that the selection of strategies is universally determined by three variables. Two variables concern with the relationship between speaker and hearer: Vertical social distance or power and horizontal social distance or solidarity. These are the two dimensions that Roger Brown and Albert Gilman take into account to describe the semantics of European pronouns of address as like the French tu/vou [T/V] distinction. The third one is, rank order of requiring services or goods. R is a culturally and situationally defined ranking of impositions by the degree to

which they are considered to interfere with an agent in an act of self determination or of approval (his negative face - and positive face wants).

#### 9.1.2.2 Leech Model

Leech (1983) approaches politeness through a theory of general pragmatics. In his approach, he discusses the rhetorics under two topics, viz.,

1. Interpersonal rhetoric
- and
2. Textual rhetoric

In Interpersonal rhetoric, he discusses three principles. They are :

1. Co-operative principle
  2. Politeness principle
- and
3. Irony principle

The politeness principle has six maxims such as (1) Tact, (2) Generosity, (3) Approbation, (4) Modesty, (5) Agreement and (6) Sympathy (1983 : 131 - 139).

#### 9.1.2.3 Hill, Ide, Ikuta and Kawasaki Model

Brown and Levinson, and Leech are concerned with the formulation of theories from the view points of strategies or maxims which speakers utilize in order to be linguistically polite. They

classify types of strategies and maxims to formulate system of functions. Hill et al (1986) are more concerned with the quantification of politeness resulting from specific application of such strategies/maxims. Hill et al have attempted to examine the pattern of the interactions and quantitatively compared them.

They studied the requesting pattern in two different languages namely Japanese and American English and found that q and P factors vary in each language. q is discernment - a recognition of certain fundamental characteristics of addressee and situation and p is volition - the desired degree of politeness i.e., positive politeness and a good part of negative politeness.

Their findings show that for Japanese,

q is obligatory and primary

p is optional and secondary

i.e., for Japanese, the factors of addressee status and general situation relative to speaker's own have been assessed and specific linguistic forms at a conventional level of politeness are also assessed.

For American English, by contrast, the factors of addressee status and typical situation define a very broad range of polite usage. Discernment (q) functions chiefly to prevent gross breaches of politeness and not as in Japanese - to identify specific correct choices. Thus for American English,

q is obligatory but secondary

The American speaker may choose a specific utterance according to the guide [ consciously or otherwise ] whereas the Japanese speaker does not have the same choice to select the utterance. Thus for American English,

p is obligatory and primary.

#### 9.1.2.4 Application of Brown and Levinson Model

Three studies have come out so far with the application of Brown and Levinson's model. They are :

1. The language of requesting in Israeli society  
[ Blum-Kulka, Brenda Danet and Rimona Gheron : 1985 ].
2. Power and Politeness in conversation encoding of face threatening acts at church business meetings [Pearson : 1988]
3. Politeness theory and Shakespeare's four major tragedies  
[ Roger Brown and Albert Gilman : 1989 ].

#### 9.1.2.5 Study of the Language of Israeli Society

The study revealed that Modern Hebrew shares with other languages a rich repertoire of requesting strategies which is fully exploited in actual use. The study showed that the most important predictors of variance are the types of request goal, the