

A Conversation Analysis of Courtroom Interaction

Tilabi Yibifu

Akita International University

Introduction

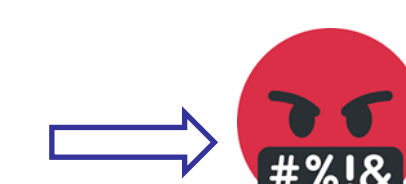
This research presents a conversation analysis (CA) study based on the data from an American reality TV show (Caught in Providence) which aims at solving the following research question:

What type of politeness and impoliteness strategies are applied by the participants in the courtroom?

In this context of courtroom, the interaction is mainly between judge and the person who violates the traffic regulations. The participants use various politeness and impoliteness strategies to save other's/their or threaten other's face intentionally or incidentally. There are three trials in this case. However, in this research, the second and the third trial are analyzed. In the second trial, the participants mainly used impoliteness strategies. In the third trial, on most occasions, the same participants applied politeness strategies.

The second trial:
discrepancy
caused conflict

Impoliteness Strategies



The third trial:
Problem was
solved

Politeness Strategies



Supporting Theories

Culpeper's impoliteness strategies model

Positive impoliteness
(Culpeper, 1996, p.345)

Brown and Levinson's politeness model

Positive Politeness
(Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 69)

Findings

1. Impoliteness Strategies

Positive Impoliteness

(1) Excluding the Other from an Activity

| | | | |
|----|-------|---|--|
| 60 | Glen | → | She MADE payments but [she only made up to 120 dollars] |
| 61 | | | [[showing the look of being wronged]] |
| 62 | | | (0.3) |
| 63 | Judge | → | She alleges that [somebody back] someone back there-.) |
| 64 | Mia | | [Haaa:.....] |
| 65 | Glen | → | She's very ru:de and disrespectful to my clerks at the front window? |

(2) Seeking Disagreement and Selecting a Sensitive Topic

| | | | |
|-----|-------|---|--|
| 122 | Glen | → | Your Honor, I also wanna point out that <because she didn't pay on |
| 123 | | | time, technically the judgment should go back to the original fines> |
| 124 | Judge | ° | I know that° |
| 125 | Glen | | And you're giving her another break |
| 126 | | | (0.3) |
| 127 | Mia | | I'm grateful for that ↓ |
| 128 | Judge | → | ° Administrator (.)Butler is quite accurate, that at the time that I |
| 129 | | | impose this sentence, I indicated if you didn't do it that the fines |
| 130 | | | were go back to the 2,200° |
| 131 | Mia | ° | Yes you did, sir° (.) |

(3) Making the Other Feel Uncomfortable

| | | | |
|----|-------|---|--|
| 69 | Judge | → | Not withstanding your attitude(.) like this ((crossing arms pose)) |
| 70 | | | and <you're [disgusted]> |
| 71 | Mia | | >[I'm sorry]< |
| 72 | | | >because my arms are gonna keep swinging< Your Honor. |
| 73 | Judge | → | An:d a disgusted look= |
| 74 | Mia | | =So this is how I'm controlling myself ((a lump in her throat)) |
| 75 | Judge | → | ° And the disgusted look on your face° = |
| 76 | Mia | | =Because I am disgusted (.) (crying) And the reason why I am |
| 77 | | | disgusted is because every single dollar that I HAD (sobbing) |
| 78 | | | >tried to put it at that above buck 50< That's what I paid ((tremulous |
| 79 | | | breath)) And I apologize if they can't find my payment |

Findings

2. Politeness Strategies

Positive Politeness

(1) Seeking Common Ground

| | | | |
|-----|-------|---|---|
| 163 | Judge | → | ° We're not here to intimidate anybody. We're trying to help you to |
| 164 | | | help yourself° |
| 165 | Mia | | Yes ↓ |
| 166 | Judge | → | ° Okay° But I will say (.) we all have those days (.)You know |
| 167 | Mia | | okay |
| 168 | Judge | | ((clear throat)) so you had a bad day I ↑[understand that]° You |
| 169 | Mia | | [\$ ((nodding head)]\$ |
| 170 | Judge | → | know° (.)We're not perfect |
| 171 | Mia | | \$Yes\$ |

(2) Conveying Cooperation between Speaker and Hearer

| | | | |
|-----|-------|---|---|
| 143 | Judge | ° | Tonya Lay(.) how are you today° |
| 144 | Mia | ° | \$I'm doing good\$ Your Honor. Thank you for asking. Good |
| 145 | | | morning to you° |
| 146 | | | (0.2) |

(3) Fulfilling Hearer's Wants

| | | | |
|-----|-------|---|--|
| 182 | Mia | ° | Thank you, Your Honor° |
| 183 | Judge | → | ° So the case is gonna be dismissed° |
| 184 | Mia | | \$Thank you so much, I appreciate it\$ |
| 185 | Judge | | So good luck. |
| 186 | Mia | | \$Thank you\$ |

Conclusions

These results imply that how the judge keeps the balance between his power and authoritative responsibility by applying both politeness and impoliteness strategies while he is conducting the legal duty.

1. Positive impoliteness and positive politeness strategies are used more frequently.
2. Judge: display of his power/directing the activity/a desire of the judge to facilitate smooth proceedings /cooperative principle
3. Mia: applied less impoliteness strategies and more politeness strategies (her less power status, inadequate evidence for convincing her payment, her intention and on-the-spot emotion)

Implication

1. The findings of the study may provide a relevant reference for the further study of politeness and impoliteness strategy.
2. For English teachers, teaching pragmatic (politeness and impoliteness) in the EFL classroom makes students aware of the social and cultural diversity that includes learning English and are important for them..

References

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