


# Chapter 4

## The Pragmatics of Politeness in Higher Educational Settings: Professors, Students, and Power Relations

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter analyzes the pragmatics of politeness in higher educational contexts, concentrating primarily on the dynamic interactions between professors and students. The study dives into the importance of politeness techniques and how they impact communication patterns, power relations, and social hierarchies within academic institutions. Through an investigation of classroom discourse, this chapter illustrates how politeness operates not only as a communication tool but also as a mechanism for sustaining social order and authority in higher education. The research underlines the significance of pragmatic awareness in both students and professors to negotiate the complicated landscape of classroom interaction, ensuring that power relations do not hamper the learning process. By shining light on the relevance of politeness techniques, this chapter contributes to a greater understanding of how social norms and power dynamics interweave with communication in higher education.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The study of politeness within higher educational settings has attracted substantial interest in recent years, particularly as instructors and students increasingly participate in complex, diverse, and dynamic relationships that reach beyond conventional academic instruction (Symonds, 2021). At the center of these encounters lies a multidimensional concept: politeness. In academia, where relationships are shaped by power dynamics, authority, and social expectations, the understanding and practice of politeness are far more than social niceties; they become an integral part of how knowledge is communicated, how authority is exercised, and how individuals navigate their roles in learning environments. This chapter tries to study the pragmatics of politeness in higher educational contexts, concentrating on how politeness is enacted between professors and students, the effect of cultural and social norms, and the function of politeness in power interactions. In colleges across the world, professors, as the principal figures of authority, frequently assume a job that requires not just conveying knowledge but also regulating the classroom atmosphere, moderating conversations, and nurturing intellectual progress (Tull et al, 2023). Politeness plays a crucial part in all of these activities. Whether it is by the tone of voice, the choice of words, or non-verbal clues, academics transmit authority, empathy, and professionalism. At the same time, students, who are typically in lower positions in the academic hierarchy, connect with their professors in ways that are impacted by their cultural backgrounds, individual personalities, and opinions of the academic system. The interaction of these forces generates a rich, complicated web of communication that is defined by the standards of politeness and authority.

The relevance of courtesy within academic relationships is sometimes downplayed or taken for granted (Donglong, 2020). However, courtesy is far from being only a cosmetic gesture. It is a tool for managing relationships, a method for sustaining social peace, and a medium through which individuals negotiate their responsibilities in the educational system. Politeness tactics are vital in managing the delicate balance between expressing authority and maintaining a courteous, inclusive, and supportive atmosphere for learning. These strategies, which range from indirectness and hedging to mitigation and face-saving, not only serve the purpose of ensuring that communication is effective and respectful, but they also facilitate the negotiation of power dynamics, reinforcing or challenging the established order of the classroom. In the context of higher education, courtesy is not a universal idea. It is strongly impacted by the cultural, social, and institutional frameworks that control the relationships between academics and students. Cultural standards regarding politeness vary substantially across different areas and countries, and these differences have a dramatic influence on the way politeness is expressed and understood in academic environments (Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021). For example, in certain

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