

Principles of Expressing Politeness in Formal Letters

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Abstract

This article analyses the principles of expressing politeness in writing, particularly in formal letters, by native and non-native speakers of English.

Keywords: politeness, principle, native speaker, non-native speaker, written language, formal letters, language units, salutation, stereotype.

Introduction

Politeness can be widely used not only in oral speech, but also in written language. This issue was examined on the example of formal letters

Elahe Goudarzi, Behzad Ghonsooly, Zahra Taghipour have done research on the expression of politeness in English business letters. Business letters written by native and non-native speakers were examined and compared in the study. The linguistic units, applied in 92 letters (46 per group) to express politeness, were analyzed. It is known that formal letters in English are made up of special parts. The authors analyzed business letters on the basis of these special parts, indicating the degree of occurrence of the linguistic means in percent. There was categorized positive and negative politeness on the basis of Brown and Levinson's theory and a statistical analysis of the linguistic units expressing positive and negative politeness. The results of the study showed that there were differences in business letters written by native and non-native speakers of English. First of all, non-native speakers of the language used more negative politeness in many cases in order to save the addressee's respect. Secondly, non-native speakers used more formal greeting models in order to maintain high social distance. There was little difference in the positive politeness used by native and non-native speakers. Thirdly, it was found that both groups tended to apply more positive politeness than negative politeness [3].

The main part

Shaban Abduldjabbar Karim Mahdi analyzed the universal and cultural features of the expression of politeness in business letters in English, Arabic and Russian languages [8].

According to the findings of the study, a universal aspect of politeness was expressed by lexical, morphological and syntactical means in formal letters of request of all three languages. Lexical means of expressing politeness include lexical units with semantic components such as respect, request, gratitude, expression of will, hope, good wish and blessing. The scientist noted that there were similar structure and stereotypes in letters of request of all three languages. The universal case for all three languages was that there was the desire to attain brevity and explicitness to achieve the pragmatic goals of the letter [8].

It is known, there are a number of types of formal letters in English: a letter of request, letter of complaint, letter of invitation, etc. These letters differ in purpose, structure and the application of specific linguistic units. It is required to apply relevant expressions of politeness in all types of letters.

First of all, formal letters in English begin with a formal salutation. The salutation can be different according to the familiarity, gender, position of the addressee. For example, formal letters written to an unfamiliar man must begin with “Dear Sir” and an unfamiliar woman – “Dear Madam”. If neither the name nor gender of the recipient of the letter is known, then a formal letter starts with “Dear Sir or Madam”. The marital status of a recipient woman is also significant. If a woman is unmarried, it is required to apply “miss” for a single woman, “mrs” for married one and “ms” for a woman with no information about civil status. For example, “Dear Miss Johnson”, “Dear Mrs. Robertson”, “Dear Ms. Ratcliffe”. In addition, a recipient may also be addressed by profession or title if they represent a particular one: “Dear Professor Brown”, “Dear Judge Gregson”.

The ending of a letter should correspond to the salutation. If the letter starts with the name of the recipient, for example, “Dear Mr. Jackson”, it should be concluded with “Yours sincerely”. If the author addresses with “Dear Sir” or “Dear Madam”, “Yours faithfully” is used as closing classical expressions. These days “Best regards” is also being used in many formal letters as a closing expression

Examples for the expressions commonly used to express politeness in English formal letters:

We would be grateful if you could...	Biz juda mammun bo'lar edik, agar siz...
Could you please...	Iltimos...
Do not hesitate to...	(Biror narsani so'rashga)ikkilanmang
As requested...	So'ralganidek (talab qilinganidek)...
I look forward to...	... (intizorlik bilan) kutib qolaman
We have pleasure in enclosing...	Biz ...ni xatga biriktirishdan mammunmiz
I am so pleased to inform...	Sizga ...ma'lum qilishdan mammunmanki
I would like to inform...	
I will be very thankful if you let me...	Agar menga ...ga ruxsat bersangiz, g'oyatda mammun bo'lar edim.
We kindly request you...	Sizdan shuni so'raymizki...
Please accept my apology for the late reply	Iltimos, kechikkanim uchun uzrimni qabul qilsangiz.
I am sorry for the delay	Kechikkanim uchun uzr so'rayman.
I apologize for the delay	
It is pleasure for me to hear from you...	Sizdan bu xabarni eshitish menga mammuniyat bag'ishladi.
I am pleased to receive a letter/an email from you	Sizdan xat/email olishdan juda mammunman.

Conclusion

There are a number of expressions in English used appropriately to the type of formal letter. These politeness expressions of formal letters demonstrate respect and social distance between a writer and a recipient.

Dear Mr. Robinson,

As an attorney and a long-time friend of your parents, I am pleased that you would turn to me for legal counsel. I am also pleased to say that you really do not need my services. There is no reason why you cannot handle this in small claims court. If you follow my suggestions below and attend the hearing, you will surely

be able to settle your claim with a minimal filing fee.

First, call or stop by your county court house and pick up an application for a hearing of your claim at the small claims court. Then tell the judge the story you told me about purchasing rugs that were misrepresented as Persian. Show your purchase receipt and the advertisement, along with the rug expert's appraisal, which clearly identifies the rugs as made in India and not Iran.

This direct experience with our judicial system will not only save you attorney fees, but will most likely be decided in your favor. I believe this experience will prove to be a rewarding one.

Yours sincerely,

Ann Johnson.

The following expressions in the letter were used to express politeness: *Dear Mr. Robinson, I am pleased that you would turn to me for legal counsel, I am also pleased to say that you really do not need my services, There is no reason why you cannot handle this, If you follow my suggestions below and attend the hearing, you will surely be able, Yours sincerely.*

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