

## Politeness Scales: Cost-Benefit, Optionality, and Indirectness in English Interviews

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### **Abstract:**

The present study attempts to explicate the relations between three scales of politeness, namely: cost-benefit, optionality, and indirectness, along with the six politeness maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy maxim that offered by Geoffrey Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle (PP). Lack of a dedicated and specific study to demonstrate the cruciality of these pragmatic scales and reveal the evident relations between these scales and maxims is noted as a knowledge gap in the area of pragmatic research.

The present study attempts to answer some questions of direct relevance to the field, namely: Are there any relations between the pragmatic scales and politeness maxims? Which politeness scale is mostly used in English interviews? And is only one scale enough to realize the degree of politeness in English interviews? Based on the above questions, it is hypothesized that there is a complementary relationship between the pragmatic scales and politeness maxims. The Cost/ benefit scale is the most dominant scale used in English interviews in relation to other scales. The Indirectness scale is mostly employed by politicians in political interviews. In comparison with other two scales, optionality scale is less utilized in English interviews.

To verify the hypotheses and analyse the selected data, a broad-based model is adopted to analyze five interviews from five different genres, using quantitative and qualitative methods.

The study concludes that there is a complementary relationship between pragmatic scales and politeness maxims. Politeness maxims operate within the pragmatic scale. In addition, the cost-benefit scale is found to be a dominant and widely employed politeness scale in English interviews. Similarly, approbation and tact maxims are the most commonly used politeness maxims in English interviews in the current study; one pragmatic scale would not be enough to realize the degree of politeness in English interviews when more than one scale is employed in an utterance.

**Keywords:** Politeness Principle, Scales, Maxims, Cost-benefit, Optionality, Indirectness.

## المُلْخَصُ:

تحاول الدراسة الحالية شرح العلاقة بين ثلاثة مقاييس لأدب، وهي تكلفة والفائدة، والاختيارية، والتعبير الغير مباشر، جنباً إلى جنب مع مبادئ التأدب الستة: البقاءة، والكرم ، والاستحسان، والتواضع، والاتفاق ، ومبدأ التعاطف التي تم عرضها في مبدأ التأدب لجيفري ليش (1983). إن عدم وجود دراسة مخصصة ومحددة لإثبات أهمية هذه المقاييس العملية وكشف العلاقات بين هذه المقاييس والمبادئ هي أنها فجوة معرفية في مجال البحث العلمي.

تحاول الدراسة الحالية الإجابة على بعض الأسئلة ذات الصلة المباشرة بالمجال ، وهي: هل هناك علاقة بين المقاييس البراغماتية ومبادئ التأدب؟ ما مقاييس التأدب الذي يستعمل في الغالب في المقابلات الإنجليزية؟ وهل يكفي مقاييس واحد فقط لإدراك درجة التأدب في المقابلات باللغة الإنجليزية؟ بناءً على الأسئلة أعلاه ، وضعت الفرضية التالية: هناك علاقة تكاملية بين المقاييس البراغماتية ومبادئ التأدب. مقاييس التكلفة / الفائدة هو المقاييس الأكثر استعمال في المقابلات الإنجليزية فيما يتعلق بمقاييس الآخرين. يتم استعمال مقاييس البقاء في الغالب من قبل السياسيين في المقابلات السياسية. بالمقارنة مع المقاييس الآخرين ، فإن مقاييس الاختيارية أقل استعمال في المقابلات الإنجليزية.

للتتحقق من الفرضيات وتحليل البيانات المختارة ، تم اعتماد نموذج واسع النطاق لتحليل خمس مقابلات من خمسة أنواع مختلفة، باستعمال الأساليب الكمية والنوعية.

خلصت الدراسة إلى أن هناك علاقة تكاملية بين المقاييس البراغماتية وقواعد التأدب. تعمل مبادئ التأدب ضمن نطاق عملها بالإضافة إلى ذلك، وجد أن مقاييس النكفة والفوائد هو مقاييس مهمين ومستخدم على نطاق واسع في المقابلات باللغة الإنجليزية. وبالمثل، فإن مبادئ الاستحسان واللباقة هي قواعد الأدب الأكثر استخداماً في المقابلات باللغة الإنجليزية التي ترتكز عليها في الدراسة الحالية؛ لن يكون مقاييساً واحداً كافياً لإدراك درجة التأدب في المقابلات الإنجليزية عندما يتم استعمال أكثر من مقاييس واحد في الكلام.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** مبدأ التأدب، الموازين، الأصول، التكلفة-المنفعة، الاختيارية، اللياقة.

## پوختہ:

به مذهبستی راستاندی گریمانه کان و شیکردن هوهی داتای هلبزیر دراو، مودیلیکی گشتگیر پشتی پییستراوه بوق شیکردن هوهی پینچ چاپیکه موتی جیاواز له پینچ ژانرای جیاواز، به بهکار هینانی ریگاکانی چهندیتی و چونیتی.

لهم تویزینه و میه گهیشتو و هه ئمو ده ئەنچامه که پیو ھندیه کی تھوا کاری همیه له نیوان پیو ھر کانی پرا گماتیکی و بنھماکانی ریزگرتن. بنھماکانی ریزگرتن کارده کمن له ناو پیو ھر مکانی ریزگرتن. ویزای ئەم، پیو ھر ھی تیچوون و قازانچ دیاریکراوه و مکو پیو ھر یکی زال و زورتین بھکار ھاتووی پیو ھر مکانی ریز له چاوینکومتھکانی ئینگلیزیدا. ھاو شیو، بنھماکانی وریابی و ستایش و پمسندکردن باوترین بنھماکانی ریزگرتن که بھکار ھینانیان همیه له چاوینکومتھکانی ئینگلیزیدا دا لەم تویزینه موی ئیستا دا، یەک

پیوهری پرآگماتیکی بھس نبیه بو درک پنکردن به پلهی ریزگرتن له چاوپیکموتنھکانی ئینگلیزی کاتیک زیاتر له پیوهریک بهکارھاتووه له ئاخاوتتىکدا.

**کلیله و شه:** رئیسای ریزگرتن، پیوهرمکان، بنھماکان، تیچوون و قازانج، ئارمزوومەندانییی، ناراستھو خزبی.

## 1. Introduction

Geoffrey Leech (1983) offered his Politeness Principle (PP) which subsumes six politeness maxims and three politeness scales so as to measure the degree of politeness in an utterance. The scales are, namely, cost-benefit, optionality, and indirectness, along with six maxims: generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy maxim. It has been observed that most researchers have ignored the critical significance of these three scales, as they have rather massively focused on the six maxims to analyze and interpret literary works, films, TV shows, and English interviews.

In other words, rare attempts have been made to demonstrate the cruciality of these pragmatic scales and reveal the evident relations between these scales and maxims. Thus, the lack of a dedicated and specific study about the politeness principle tackling all the three scales with the maxims together is noted to be disregarded in the area of pragmatic research.

The present study attempts to highlight all three scales of the politeness principle together to explicate the relations between these pragmatic scales and the politeness maxims. Even though there have been carried out studies about the politeness principle. There are still some questions of direct relevance to the field to be answered, namely: Are there any relations between the pragmatic scales and politeness maxims? Which politeness scale is mostly used in English interviews? And is only one scale enough to realize the degree of politeness in English interviews?

Based on the above questions, it is hypothesized that there is a relation between the pragmatic scales and politeness maxims, the maxims operate within the scales; that the cost/ benefit scale is the most dominant scale used scale in English interviews in relation to other scales; that tact maxim is utilized more than the other maxims in English interviews; the indirectness is mostly employed in interviews; and that in comparison with other two scales, optionality scale is less utilized in English interviews.

Additionally, the current study applies both qualitative and quantitative research methods. It is qualitative since the data is in the form of sentences, and quantitative research is used to count the frequency and occurrence of the dominant pragmatic scales. Therefore, both methods are required. As a consequence of utilizing both methods, the findings of this study are analyzed, described, and counted. Moreover, the data for this study were taken from a variety of websites and television programs. Descriptive and statistical are the techniques of the data analysis for this research. The descriptive technique is used to explain, examine, and analyze the maxims and pragmatic scales based on Leech's theory. Then, statistical methods are employed to determine the most prevalent maxims and scales.

## 2. Politeness Principle

Leech's (1983) theory of politeness places politeness within the context of interpersonal rhetoric. He claims that the Politeness Principle (PP) serves primarily to create and maintain a sense of comity between the members of a social group. The PP maintains social equilibrium and friendly relations, allowing us to take our words for granted as being cooperative. Leech, like Lakoff, has another purpose for using a PP in addition to a CP, namely to offer an interpretation of conversational data when the CP alone seems to collapse (Moore 2001, p. 10).

There are several maxims regarding polite behavior. Leech offers six maxims, all of which are concerned with the pragmatic scale of cost and benefit. Namely, the maxims are tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy maxim. The tact maxim relates to the idea of minimizing cost and maximizing benefit to the hearer. With this maxim, the hearer's benefit is prioritized above everything else.

The generosity maxim instructs its adherents to place their own interests second to the welfare of the one they are speaking to. That is, minimizing their own benefits while maximizing those of the hearer. The approbation maxim concerns minimizing dispraise of others and maximizing praise of others. The modesty maxim is about minimizing self-praise and maximizing self-dispraise. That is limiting one's self-esteem and enhancing one's self-disesteem. The aim of agreement maxim is to minimize disagreement between self and other.

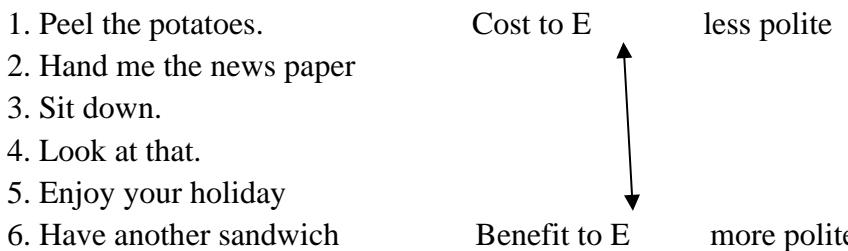
Lastly, the sympathy maxim informs interlocutors to minimize antipathy and maximize sympathy between self and other. When it comes to analyzing human communication, Leech asserts that the six politeness maxims are just as significant as Grice's CP in terms of their ability to explain how people communicate with one another.

### 1. Tact Maxim

The objective of a tact maxim is to minimize the cost to others while maximizing the benefit to others. Leech (1983, p.109) claims that there are two sides to the tact maxim; a negative aspect is "Minimize the benefit to E" and a positive aspect is "Maximize the benefit to E". The following is an instance of the tact maxim:

Won't you put your sweater on? It is cold here.

R makes this statement to request that E put on his sweater. E gets more benefit from wearing his sweater, such as feeling warm, than the cost. There is no cost to the hearer except for wearing his sweater. The way a tact maxim works when E benefits more than it costs is as described above. As seen in the following examples, E's benefits outweigh its cost, as seen in the following examples: Leech (1983, p.107).



It can be noted that the utterances turn more polite when R gives more benefit to E, as shown in the (6) example. It offers benefits to E when he can have another sandwich. The benefit lies in the fact that he can have more sandwiches. It is the opposite case from the (2) example when R asks E to hand over a newspaper for him. Here, the benefit will be for the R himself, not for the E. That is why it is considered less polite than the example (6).

## 2. Generosity Maxim

The difference between tact and generosity maxim is that generosity maxim is focused on the self, whereas tact maxim is focused on other persons. According to Leech (1983, p.133), the rule of generosity maxim is to minimize the benefit to self and maximize the cost to self. The following example is an illustration of the generosity maxim.

You must have dinner with us.

Using this example, one can see that R incurs more costs for himself than benefits. The cost will be the same as if R had to pay for the meal and cook it himself, which would have required a significant amount of his time. Using the following examples, one may better understand how the rule maxim of generosity operates.

1) A: You can lend me your car. (Impolite)

B: I can lend you my car. (Polite)

Because (1) B indicates a benefit to the listener and a cost to the speaker, it is regarded as polite for two reasons: first, because the utterance indicates benefit to the hearer, and second, because it implies cost to the speaker. However, in (1 A), the relationship between them is the exact reverse of that in (1 B). Do not put your own interests ahead of those of others; this is a maxim of generosity. In light of what has been said so far, it may be determined that the generosity maxim involves putting others ahead of one's own interests.

### 3. Approbation Maxim

In the approbation maxim, the focus is on maximizing praise of others. According to Leech (1983, p.135), the rule of approbation maxim is to minimize dispraise of others and maximize praise of others. This maxim encourages us to refrain from uttering hurtful things about others, especially regarding the person we are speaking to. For instance, when a dance is performed by E, then R may say, "Your performance was really fantastic." This is a maxim of approbation. It is not an approbation maxim if R responds, "Well, your performance was fine." As a result, a complement may be necessary from time to time in an address. Based on this maxim, an example like, what a delicious meal you cooked! is seen as more polite than saying, "what an awful meal you cooked!" If it is possible, it is preferred to praise others. This maxim seeks to make others feel good by praising them and showing solidarity as much as possible. Moreover, the idea of maximizing praise for others and minimizing dispraise for others is to ensure that others feel good and comfortable during conversation. Thus, one needs to be aware of maximizing praise of other people if they tend to comply with this maxim.

### 4. Modesty Maxim

According to the modesty maxim, the focus is on "minimizing the expression of praise of self and maximizing the expression of dispraise of self." It is different from the approbation maxim that makes an individual dispraise other, not oneself. Leech (1983, p.136) asserts that the modesty maxim has to do with minimizing the praise of self and maximizing the dispraise of self as in the following example:

"Kindly accept my small gift as a present for your birthday."

"My small gift" in that sentence exhibits the idea of minimizing the praise and maximizing the dispraise of self. If R says "my wonderful gift," then there will be no use of the modesty maxim as he maximizes the praise of himself, not the dispraise. Further illustrations of this maxim can be found in the following utterances:

- 1) A: *They were so kind to us.*  
B: *Yes, they were, weren't they?*
- 2) A: *You were so kind to us.*  
B: *Yes, I was, wasn't I? (Impolite)*
- 3) A: *How stupid of me!*  
B: *How clever of me! (Impolite)*
- 4) A: *How stupid of you. (Impolite)*  
B: *How clever of you.* Leech (1983, p.136)

The utterances above demonstrate that praising others turns the conversation into a polite one. Moreover, a dispraise to self and more praise to others, the utterance is considered less polite than praise to self and more praise to others. In contrast to that, praising or complimenting others is one of the crucial things that plays a great role in having efficient communication. A modesty maxim is regarded as the pair of approbation maxims. The modesty maxim is in line with that of the generosity maxim in that "self-centered" lies at the heart of both maxims. Minimizing self-praise and maximizing

praise of others is the essence of the humility principle. This applies to expressive and assertive actions, such as thanking, congratulating, pardoning, blaming, praising, or condoning; and assertive actions such as stating, boasting, complaining, reporting, etc.

## 5. Agreement Maxim

The goal of agreement maxim is to minimize disagreement between self and other while maximizing agreement between self and other. Consider the impoliteness in the following instances:

1) *A: It was an exhibition, wasn't it?*

*B: No, it was very uninteresting.*

2) *A: A referendum will satisfy everybody.*

*B: Yes, definitely.*

3) *A: English is a difficult language to learn.*

*B: True, but grammar is quite easy.*

4) *A: The book is tremendously well written.*

*B: Yes, well written as a whole, but there are some rather boring patches, don't you think?*

There are two instances in which partial disagreement is more polite than full disagreement. It is polite to offer a reason for one's disagreement with a statement, since an explanation might assist the listener comprehend why the speaker disagrees with the statement. This maxim is found in assertive speech acts, such as asserting, stating, suggesting, boasting, complaining, claiming, and reporting (Leech 1983, p.138).

## 6. Sympathy Maxim

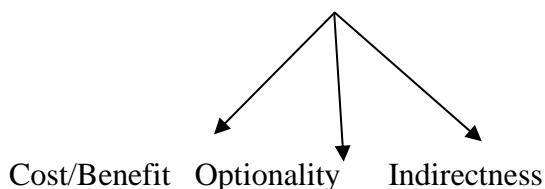
The sympathy maxim focuses on showing sympathy towards others, not antipathy. In other words, "minimize antipathy between self and other; maximize sympathy between self and other." This maxim embraces a group of speech acts like congratulation, commiseration, and expressing condolences. It is more polite to say, "I'm extremely sad to hear that your cat died," rather than "I'm terribly glad to hear that your cat died". However, it is possible that saying "I'm very sorry to hear about your cat" may be more appropriate. The utterance might be interpreted as a condolence by the listener (Leech 1983, p.138).

In a nutshell, the "sympathy maxim" may be discovered when one feels sorry for another's pain, sadness, or sorrow.

### 3. Pragmatic Scales

According to Leech (1983, p. 81), polite and impolite beliefs are accordingly beliefs that are favorable or unfavorable to R or to a third party, where these beliefs are assessed on certain applicable scales of values, which Leech regards as pragmatic scales. Despite the fact that R already applies a politeness strategy, the pragmatic scale may still be utilized to assess the degree of politeness shown in his utterances. Leech (1983, p.123) introduced three pragmatic scales: The cost-benefit scale, the optionality scale, and the indirectness scale.

Moreover, Watts (2003, p.68) claims that Leech goes even farther and proposes three scales of delicacy along with each of the maxims of the PP should operate. In the cost-benefit scale, it is essential for a speaker to be concerned with the weightiness of which a speaker needs to weigh the cost of his utterance to the listener and the benefit of his/her utterance to the hearer. The speaker's illocutions are measured on the optionality scale based on how much freedom of choice they provide the listener. The Indirectness Scale assesses how much effort the listener has to put in to interpret the speaker's speech acts.



**Figure (1) Leech's pragmatic scales**

The current study focuses on the three scales proposed by Leech. It aims at analyzing these three scales in English interviews. These three scales are scrutinized below:

#### 3.1 Cost-Benefit Scale

The cost-benefit scale is concerned with the cost and benefit for E (the listener) or R (the speaker). Leech (1983, p.123) indicates that the cost-benefit scale has to do with assessing the cost or benefit of the proposed action from A to R or E. This scale encourages the speaker to estimate the weight of the cost and benefit for both himself and the listener. In this respect, if the cost of the speaker's utterance is higher than the benefit to the hearer, the utterance is regarded as less polite. Meanwhile, if the benefit of the utterance to the hearer is higher than the cost, the utterance is considered more polite.

Thus, it can be concluded that the higher the cost to the listener is less polite, while the higher benefit to the hearer is more politeness. For instance, R tells E, "Help yourself." This utterance is considered more polite as there is no cost imposed on the hearer. In this case, the speaker benefits the listener. However, an instance like " You must have another sandwich" demonstrates that the cost is higher than the benefit for E. In contrast, if R says, "You may eat my sandwich" or "Have a sandwich and it is on me," in this case, these utterances are considered more polite as there is no cost to the hearer other than accepting R's offer. Thus, the listener gets more benefit than the cost (Leech 1983, p.109).

### 3.2 Indirectness Scale

The indirectness scale measures the amount of work that was done by the hearer in interpreting the illocution of what the speaker said. The Indirectness scale minimizes the cost and maximizes the benefit to the hearer when the speaker speaks indirectly to the hearer. In this respect, the more indirect a person is, the more polite they are. Thus, the greater degree of indirectness here denotes a greater degree of politeness. The following instances can be considered:

7) Could you possibly answer the phone? (More Polite)

8) *Would you mind answering the phone?*

9) *Can you answer the phone?*

10) *Will you answer the phone?*

11) *I want you to answer the phone.*

12) *Answer the phone.*

(Less polite)



As shown from the examples above, it can be concluded that the degree of indirectness affects the degree of politeness. The utterances are more polite when they are more indirect (Leech 1983, p.108).

### 3.3 Optionality Scale

To determine politeness, the optionality scale looks at whether R to E offers an option. As Leech (1988, p.123) outlines, an illocution is evaluated on an optionality scale based on how much freedom of expression is given to the listener. The optionality scale measures the extent to which R permits E to make a choice about the illocution. Here, R provides E with the choice of responding to or ignoring R's utterances. To be more polite, R should offer E a choice in the conversation.

For instance, R may offer, "I'll get you that jacket if you are into it." The speaker here gives an option to the hearer and is more polite by using the word "if," which denotes an option to the hearer. The speaker does not impose on the hearer to have the jacket, and he will buy it if it is approved by the hearer. Thus, an option is given to the hearer, and it is in the hearer's hand to decide whether he wants the speaker to buy him the jacket or not. If, in contrast, the speaker says, "I will get this jacket for you," the hearer will get benefit from this utterance, but he is left with no option to decide whether he wants it or not. Therefore, the hearer's less preferred option results in less politeness from the speaker's side. That is, the more options the hearer has, the more polite the utterance will be.

### 4. Criticism of Leech's Theory

Some linguists criticized Leech's notion of politeness. Fraser (1990, p. 227) asserts that there is no way to determine which maxims should be used, what scales are accessible, how they should be stated, what their dimensions are, and other such hypothetical questions in the Leech principle, which he claims is excessively theoretical. This is also the view of Turner (1996, P.6) and Watts et al. (2005, p.7), who believe that it is too theoretical to be applied in everyday speech. According to Locher (2004, p. 66), the maxims may be used to explain certain aspects of politeness in British and American cultures. As a result, Leech's paradigm has come under criticism for its Western-centric viewpoint. This, according to Ide (1989, p. 224), might be because the examples used are from English language, which stresses the tact maxim that chiefly considers minimizing the imposition on others.

A similar critique may be found in Mey's (1993, p. 207), who says Leech is wrong when he says that "certain illocutions, such as commands, are inherently impolite while others, such as offers, are polite". As Mey points out, the social rank of the speaker or hearer and the context must be considered in order to establish whether an act is polite or impolite in the first place. Fraser and Mey's remarks show that Leech's (1983) theory fails to take cultural and situational context into account. It has been argued by several scholars that Leech's (1983) politeness maxims are flawed because he fails to adequately account for the phenomena of politeness. We shall end up with "an unlimited number of maxims" and "a vacuous" theory of politeness if we have to construct a new maxim for every irregularity in language usage, according to Brown and Levinson (1987, p.4). Thus, rather than approaching politeness as a set of rules, they argue, one should aim to develop a model that depicts the politeness choices made by speakers in interpersonal and cross-cultural interactions.

Furthermore, according to Locher (2004, p. 65), the number of maxims is limitless since any new maxim may be introduced to account for politeness phenomena in each instance of language usage. Furthermore, we do not know which maxims to use at any particular moment. These terminologies were then replaced by the semantic politeness scale and pragmatic politeness scale, respectively, by Leech (2007, p.174), who later rejected these concepts. *Pragmatics of Politeness* (2014, p.88) uses the words "pragmalinguistic politeness scale" (formerly absolute) and "socio-pragmatic politeness scale" to describe the difference between the two (formerly relative). He explains that there are two ways of looking at politeness, not two different kinds of politeness. He accepts the importance of context, but Leech's model still only deals with pragmalinguistic politeness, that is to say, it only analyzes politeness in terms of the utterance. There are still some questions about how the socio-pragmatic politeness scale should be assessed in his model. Aside from this criticism, Leech has also been accused of misinterpreting politeness with indirectness.

The framework of politeness that Leech established in his earlier works is maintained in his most recent work. Since Leech has only modified the terminology and not the concepts, it is asserted that the change in terminology has not shielded him from the criticisms of his previous works.

## 5. Previous Studies

Within the field of pragmatics, one of the most widely researched topics is politeness. Due to its significance and being considered as a universal phenomenon, many studies have been conducted about politeness. More specifically, the Politeness Principle has played a crucial role in people's oral, written, and broadcast communication, as well as political and economic areas. Different approaches to politeness have been used to carry out their studies; researchers utilized the politeness principle to analyze films, literary works, television programs, presidential inaugurations, election campaigning, and interviews. Numerous studies have been conducted about politeness and the analysis of politeness maxims in the abovementioned areas. A few of them are highlighted below.

A study titled "**Stand by Me Doraemon**" was carried out about the politeness principle in 2016 by Mulyono. The study was based on the politeness principle by Leech (1983). The data was collected using a note-taking technique and descriptively analyzed. The outcome demonstrated that there were 25 politeness principles observed in the cartoon movie "Stand by Me Doraemon." The tact and modesty maxims were the least used maxims, in which they were both used once. On the other hand,

the approbation maxim was the most commonly used maxim that occurred more often than other maxims. This could be because the characters in this cartoon sought to avoid conflicts and created an environment that was comfortable with communication.

Another study entitled "**Politeness Principle in Mark Zuckerberg's Interview**" was previously conducted in 2017 by Anandya Kesuma. The research was about the politeness principle. The objectives of the research were to identify the sorts of maxims used by Mark Zuckerberg in his interview with Mathias Döpfner that exemplify the politeness principle. The study was based on the politeness principle by Leech (2014). This research was both descriptive and qualitative. On February 28, 2016, in Berlin, Mark Zuckerberg was interviewed by "Die Welt am Sonntag," a German newspaper, and the interview transcript was used in this study as a source of data. Only five of the ten maxims of the politeness principle were executed by Mark Zuckerberg, according to the findings of this study. Among the six maxims proposed by Leech (1983), the agreement maxim took the lion's share and was dominantly used by him. This could be possibly due to his great attitude and politeness towards the interviewee, with whom he showed his agreement most of the time to establish a friendly environment and comfort the interviewer.

Moreover, another study entitled "**Politeness Principle in Barack Obama's Interview**," was conducted by Conny Elisabeth in 2014. This study focused on the types of politeness principles found in Barack Obama's interview. A descriptive, qualitative design was used in this study. The data analyzed were the transcripts of Barack Obama's interviews, and the findings demonstrated that 31 polite utterances were evident that contained six kinds of politeness maxims. The most dominant type of politeness principle that was used by Barack Obama in his interview was the agreement maxim. It appeared (51.61%) compared to other maxims. This means that Barack Obama minimized disagreement between him and others and maximized agreement between him and others. In other words, Barack Obama worked hard to ensure that he and others had as little disagreement as possible and as much agreement as possible. Using the agreement maxim more, he was able to win the respect of others and be respected in return, since people are more open to those who have deep insights and viewpoints. It could also be a way of reducing conflicts between him and the interview, which, as a matter of fact, is watched by people all over the world.

Leech's works have been adopted by many researchers as a suitable analytical framework for linguistic politeness phenomena within or across different languages and cultures. However, what distinguishes the current study from the other studies is that the current study focuses meticulously on the use of politeness scales proposed by Leech (1983). The purpose of this study is to look into how these scales work in English interviews. In addition, the majority of researchers who have based their studies on Leech's politeness approach mostly analyzed their studies in terms of politeness maxims only. Rare attempts are observed to cooperate with the pragmatic scales along with the politeness maxims. Hence, this study attempts to address such a gap in the literature of politeness studies conducted.

## 6. Methodology

### 6.1 Model of Analysis

The model to be adopted in the present study is based on Geoffrey Leech's (1983) politeness principle. Leech suggests that there are three scales of delicacy: cost/benefit, optionality, and indirectness, as shown in Table (1). The analysed interviews in the tables below offer a visualization of how the application and violation of the politeness scales affect the degree of interview politeness.

**Table (1)** Leech's pragmatic scales (1983)

No	Pragmatic scales	Description
1.	Cost-benefit	It concerns the weightiness in which a speaker has to weight the amount of cost to her/him and the amount of the benefit his/her utterance will bring to the hearer.
2.	Optionality	It assesses the degree to which the illocutions performed by the speaker allow the addressee a degree of choice.
3.	Indirectness	It measures the amount of work incurred by the hearer in interpreting the speech acts produced by the speaker.

### 6.2 Method of Analysis

The current study attempts to analyse a certain number of English interviews as the data source. The researcher thoroughly examines the chosen interviews using both qualitative and quantitative methods. As a first step, the researcher reads the entire transcripts of the selected interviews to observe the employment of the politeness scales in the interviews. The researcher presents the observed politeness scales on a table of analysis in accordance with the model, highlighting the compliance and violation of the politeness scales. The parts of the interview transcripts containing politeness scales are analysed based on the items found in the table of analysis. The employment and violation of politeness scales for each part are marked by an asterisk. The tables of analysis offer a visualization of how the application and violation of the politeness scales affect the degree of interview politeness. A brief explanation is provided to demonstrate the utilization, compliance, and violation of the politeness scales and highlight the politeness status of each interview. The results are presented based on the frequency of politeness scales' employment, compliance, and violation on the tables of analysis for the selected interviews. The compliance and violation range of the politeness scales assist in concluding the politeness status of the interviews.

### 6.3 Data Analysis

The data of the study include five various English interviews from five different genres, such as politics, religion, business, comedy, and sport. All the selected interviews come from different sources, such as TV channels, online websites, podcasts, and radio programmes. All the chosen interviewees were interviewed on different occasions. The reason why the selected interviews were analysed was mainly because the selected interview transcripts contain a broad utilization of politeness scales. After checking some random interviews, the selected interviews were found to apply more politeness scales than other interviews. However, not all the interview transcripts include these politeness scales. Moreover, the interviewees are famous people known by the majority of people and each interview represents a genre.

## 7. Data Analysis

This section presents the analysis of the data in accordance with the model adopted. The analysed data are presented via the tables below.

### 7.1 Political Interview

**Table (2) Analysis of “Barrack Obama’s Interview with Steve Harvey”**

Item no.	Text	Scales of Politeness					
		Cost-Benefit Scale		Optionali-ty Scale		Indirectne-ss Scale	
		C → S	B → S	C → H	B → H	Choice → S	Choice → H
Par.2	<b>It is great to see you see you Steve</b> , I’m doing great.				*		
Par.4	<b>Absolutely yeah</b> been up all night.				*		
Par.7	So, you know we do a lot of shopping there that <b>I think about I should’ve bought some of your books.</b>				*		
Par.9	To give out as gifts <b>so I apologize for that.</b>				*		
Par.13	<b>It looks sharp.</b>				*		

Table 2 demonstrates a positive dominance of the cost-benefit scale for being employed in five utterances in a political interview. All the selected occurrences deliver benefit for the hearer. This shows full compliance with the cost-benefit scale which aims at maximizing benefit for the hearer. This is evident when the speaker shows sympathy, agrees and praises the hearer on different occasions. The interview is considered polite because all the speaker’s responses carry benefits for the listener and no cost is imposed on the hearer.

## 7.2 Religious Interview

Table (3) Analysis of “Tommy Robinson’s Interview with Piers Morgan”

Item no.	Text	Scales of Politeness							
		Cost-Benefit Scale				Optionali-ty Scale		Indirectne-ss Scale	
		C → S	B → S	C → H	B → H	↑ Choice S	↑ Choice H	+ direct - Length	- direct + Length
Par.2	I believe-- I believe <b>we need to protect the British public right now.</b>				*				
Par.6	<b>Yes, I would--I would-- I would temporarily halt Muslim immigration to this country until we get a grip of the problem.</b>				*			*	
Par.11	<b>Islam is an idea... a bad idea that you can change your mind.</b>			*				*	
Par.26	<b>There are a hundred verses in this book about violence and murder against us.</b>			*				*	
Par.28	<b>I should socialize your effects for a book that incites murder against us.</b>			*				*	

Table 3 shows that cost-benefit and indirectness scales were the most utilised politeness scales in the selected interview. The cost-benefit scale is utilised in five cases, while the indirectness scale appears in four cases. Notably, both employed politeness scales were violated in four cases each. This indicates that the speaker’s utterances carry a cost to the hearer or third party. The speaker also violates the indirectness scale by being highly direct without any consideration for the hearer’s feelings and emotions. The cost of the speaker’s responses outweighs the benefit, which leads to an impolite interview.

### 7.3 Business Interview

**Table (4) Analysis of “Elon Musk’s Interview with Joe Rogan”**

Item no.	Text	Scales of Politeness							
		Cost-Benefit Scale				Optionali		Indirectne	
		C → S	B → S	C → H	B → H	Choice → S	Choice → H	+ direct	- direct
Par.2	<b>Thank you.</b>				*				
Par.6	<b>That’s for sure.</b>				*				
Par.12	<b>Yes, exactly.</b>				*				
Par.34	I appreciate it more. <b>Yeah, babies are awesome.</b>				*				
Par.36	<b>They’re awesome. Yeah.</b>				*				

As shown in Table 4, the speaker is fully compliant with the cost-benefit scale for employing it in five instances. The cost-benefit scale is the only politeness scale employed in business interviews that takes the lion’s share. The cost-benefit scale was positively applied, as the speaker’s utterances carry benefits for the hearer or third party. Since no violations were observed and all the responses of the interviewee contained benefit for the hearer or others, this helped create a polite interview environment. Thus, the business interview is considered polite.

### 7.4 Comedian Interview

**Table (5) Analysis of “Jim Jefferies’s Interview with Tim Jeffries”**

Item no.	Text	Scales of Politeness							
		Cost-Benefit Scale				Optionali		Indirectne	
		C → S	B → S	C → H	B → H	Choice → S	Choice → H	+ direct	- direct
Par.2	<b>Thanks for having me</b> , Tim. Tim Farriss. It’s a very good Australian name. I’m sure you get that a lot, right?					*			
Par.10	<b>He’s a very nice man</b> . It was the Farriss brothers					*			
Par.14	Oh, Australian women. Yeah. I know what you’re talking about. <b>Good looking, but the accent is fucking horrendous.</b>							*	
Par.26	Oh, no problem. <b>That’s a very sweet thing of you to say.</b>				*	*			
Par.46	<b>Oh, it’s a beautiful city.</b>					*			

Table 5 depicts that the cost-benefit scale is utilized more than the other two scales due to its appearance in all the utterances. The optionality scale was not employed in any one of the analyzed utterances. The benefit of the speaker's utterances is notably greater than the cost. The cost-benefit scale was complied with in five cases and violated in only one case. However, the indirectness scale was employed only in one instance and violated. It can be observed that the speaker follows the cost-benefit scale to ensure that the benefit of his utterances outweighs the cost. Thus, the interviewee is considered polite.

### 7.5 Sport Interview

**Table (6) Analysis of “Jamie Carragher’s Interview with Sarah Hewson”**

Item no.	Text	Scales of Politeness					
		Cost-Benefit Scale		Optionali-ty Scale		Indirectne-ss Scale	
C → S	B → S	C → H	B → H	Choice → S	Choice → H	+ direct -Length	- direct +Length
Par.2	<b>Exactly the same, really.</b>			*			
Par.6	<b>A moment of madness that really is difficult for me to explain.</b>	*					
Par.10	<b>“No of course, I’m not saying that, I mean that it is a young girl who feels slightly worse.”</b>			*			
Par.12	<b>and I’d like to obviously apologise to them again.</b>			*			
Par.18	<b>What I would say is there’s no doubt what I have done on Saturday after the game is disgusting, I apologise for it.</b>	*		*			

As shown in Table 6, the cost-benefit scale is utilized positively in all the utterances in such a way that all the responses deliver cost to the speaker and benefit to the hearer. This is exactly what the cost-benefit is about. Moreover, the other two scales were not employed at all in sports interview. Since the benefit of the speaker's utterances is greater than the cost, the sports interview is considered polite.

## 8. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the data analysed from the above section. Table 7 illustrates the most employed politeness scales and politeness status of each interview genre.

**Table (7) Total frequency of politeness scales in all the selected interviews**

No	Genre	Most employed politeness scales	Compliance	Violation	Politeness status
1.	Political	Cost-benefit scale	5	0	Polite
2.	Religious	Cost-benefit scale	1	8	impolite
3.	Business	Cost-benefit scale	5	0	Polite
4.	Comedy	Cost-benefit scale	5	2	Polite
5.	Sport	Cost-benefit scale	6	0	Polite
Total compliance		22	Total violation		10

According to table (7), the cost-benefit scale demonstrates to be the leading politeness scale for occurring in 28 utterances. The second-most-used politeness scale is the indirectness scale for appearing in four cases, while the optionality scale was the least employed one. Moreover, on the degree of politeness scale, 22 utterances complied with the politeness scales, and 10 utterances violated them. However, only the religious interview was violated because it contained more cost than benefit to the hearer or others. The rest of the interviews from other genres were all complied as they carried greater benefit than cost to the listener or third party.

On the degree of politeness scale, interviews from four genres out of five complied with the politeness scale requirement and were considered polite. Religious interview contains the highest violation range of eight cases. Sport genre is considered to be the politest and most peaceful interview genre for showing full compliance in six instances and having no violation. The total compliance frequency of politeness scales is observed to be greater than the violation range. Twenty-two occurrences demonstrated compliance, while violation appeared in ten cases only.

## 9. Conclusions

The current study concludes that there is a complementary relationship between pragmatic scales and politeness maxims. Politeness maxims operate within the pragmatic scale. The cost-benefit scale is found to be a dominant and widely employed politeness scale in the selected English interviews in comparison with the other two politeness scales while the indirectness scale is the second most highly utilized politeness scale, and optionality is the least employed scale in the selected English interviews. Moreover, the cost-benefit scale and indirectness scale may occasionally conflict to the extent that an utterance may appear to employ both. This means that when the cost-benefit scale is in operation, the indirectness scale might directly operate too by being obvious and clear to the hearer. This is demonstrated by the tables of analysis. Last but not least, one pragmatic scale would not be enough to realize the degree of politeness in English interviews when more than one scale is employed in an utterance. In other words, an utterance may contain the employment of more than one politeness scale.

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## • Appendices

- Transcript (1) Barrack Obama's interview with Steve Harvey
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMILjFPCO4>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRPbfrkfCdc>
- Transcript (2) Tommy Robinson's interview with Piers Morgan
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hwkhM041ig>
- Transcript (3) Elon Musk's interview with Joe Rogan
- <https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/joe-rogan-elon-musk-podcast-transcript-may-7-2020>
- Transcript (4) Jim Jefferies's interview with Tim Ferris
- <https://tim.blog/2020/05/16/jim-jefferies-transcript/>
- Transcript (5) Jamie Carragher's interview with Sarah Hewson
- <https://www.express.co.uk/sport/football/930618/Jamie-Carragher-spitting-Sky-News-interview>