

## Culture-Specific Semiotic Politeness Norms in the Multicultural Society of Ethiopia

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### Abstract

This study investigates culture-specific discourse based politeness principles in the multicultural society of Ethiopia. Ethiopia is a land of diversity where many ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural groups of different kinds co-exist. There are many languages spoken in the country. Different cultures are exhibited through ways of dressings, living, eating and day-to-day activities. Politeness rules or principles are seen to be language and culture-specific rather than universal. The study was based on semiotic items not only speech acts but also other larger units. Data were collected from different cultural performances such as rituals, sayings, non-linguistic signs, texts and talks or discourse. This study investigates how politeness norms are explained more by local-cultural rules than by universal theories of politeness and investigates the problematic cases with different traditional values, social structures, and cultural ideologies embodied in language and non-language communication resources. The result of the study reveals politeness is culture-dependent. What is polite to one culture might be embarrassing or upsetting to others. Norms of politeness vary across cultures. Politeness norm assumes that everyone wants to save face. Politeness is not expressed through language only but also through other semiotic resources. Politeness appears on the continuum of negative face - the desire to avoid imposition and positive face - the desire to be appreciated. The Ethiopian speech communities employ both positive and negative politeness norms. There is a slight inclination to negative politeness, but great deals of positive strategies are also used.

**Keywords:** Politeness; Community; Healthy communication; Nicknames

### Background of the Study

Ethiopia is a land of diversity where many ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural groups of different kinds co-exist. There are many languages spoken in the country. Different cultures are exhibited through ways of dressings, living, eating and day-to-day activities. The majority of the people belong to Christianity and Islam in religion, and Oromo and Amhara in language-based ethnic group. There is a lot of cultural and linguistic diffusion among the various groups because of contact. An extended and cherished relationship has been formed among the different ethnic groups of the country through migration, intermarriage and assimilation [1].

This community consists of a large number of Muslims and Christians. There is a thick historical record that this community exhibits a harmonious and peaceful contact and an intense sense of belongingness. The community is far more than mixed. There is cultural diffusion, and a strong sense of togetherness that has been held for generations. Many significant cultural and historical contexts tie the community to a great extent.

The politeness norm of this community reflects the cultural rules. This study focuses on investigating it. An analysis of politeness norms at the level of discourse from corpus of natural talk is presented in this study.

Politeness theory was first formulated in 1978 by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson. Ever since, many scholars have expanded the concept of politeness. Politeness theory is based on face. "Face" refers

to public image, prestige or honor. Speakers attend to politeness strategies to avoid 'face-threatening acts' and maintain honor or public image" [2,3]. Face, idiomatically means dignity or prestige. It is a fundamental concept in the fields of sociology, sociolinguistics, semantics, politeness and other social science disciplines. In these fields, face metaphorically mean prestige, honor and reputation. It is the expression of the speakers' intention to alleviate face threats carried by certain face threatening acts toward another [3,4]. Politeness is about the norms of strategic manipulation of language in order to fulfill our conversational goals by saying what is socially appropriate.

Politeness norms are those communication skills that a community designs to maintain a smooth communication norm and/or maintain a better or autonomous place and avoid some bad consequences that could potentially harm the communication. Politeness norms are designed to safeguard the communication from breaking down and avoid psychological and physical harm to interlocutors to the most and/or create a better position or autonomy in communication to the very most.

According to Mills [4], the kinds of appropriate politeness strategies differ from culture to culture. There is universal politeness norms used commonly in many languages. This study, however, is concerned with the culture-specific politeness norms of the speech group. The culture-specific politeness norms are cultural perceptions of appropriateness in communication.

For the consumption of this study, therefore, face is defined as the overall communication behavior, actions or strategies people use to maintain their relationship. Face threatening acts are taken as actions that can potentially harm the communication and lead to bad consequences for the smooth and healthy communication status. To

safeguard the communication from threatening acts, people employ politeness norms. Some cultures prefer positive and others prefer negative politeness strategies. In this way, politeness is culturally bound. People need to use politeness formulas to maintain their face. Negative politeness is being indirect, uncertain, connotative and ambiguous. Positive politeness employs respecting people's needs to be liked and understood.

## Methodology

Many cultures have their own means of showing politeness, deference, honor, and recognition of the social status of the interactants. Culture-specific politeness norms unfold in the communication behavior of different speech communities. Real communication behavior unpacks in chunks of real events. Data were collected from different cultural events such as rituals, sayings, talks, cultural practices, discourse, non-linguistic signs, and texts.

The kinds of data collected for this study are categorized as casual and non-casual communication behavior of the speech community. Casual communication events are the customary, informal, relaxed, daily and care-free communication events that are performed every now and then with less serious and non-marked linguistic and non-linguistic repertoires. They are uncomplicated acts of communication that do not have serious purpose, and that do not have distinct or predefined settings and participants. They are appropriate for ordinary and routine occasions. The purpose usually emerges in the middle of communication and it changes throughout. The linguistic and non-linguistic behaviors are not predefined and they are loose and open-ended. Non-casual communication behavior are pre-defined with its linguistic and non-linguistic structure, purpose, participants, setting and other social and language attributes. It has a serious and distinct purpose. Not everybody is welcome to participate or lead the communication event. Marked speech events have distinctive features, attributes, or traits of linguistic and non-linguistic kind that are shared by the people. The marked non-casual speech events are formal. They have serious and specific purposes and structures. In this study, genres refer to this type of communication events. The data were coded, categorized and labeled based on themes. The data were analyzed based on positive and negative politeness norms identified by Brown and Levinson [5].

## Politeness Theory

Leech [6] states, "Communication as a form of social interaction requires participants to express themselves clearly and politely." First formulated in 1978 by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, politeness theory has been extensively used by researchers. Politeness is the expression of the speakers' intention to ease face threats directed by certain face threatening acts to others [3,4]. It is a social skill to help people keep communicating. Being polite, therefore, refers to the effort one makes to save one's face.

Politeness is best expressed as the practical application of good manners or norms. It is a culturally defined phenomenon. What is considered polite in one culture might appear rude in another. The British social anthropologists Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson [5] identified two kinds of politeness (positive and negative), deriving from Erving Goffman's concept of face which was adopted from Chinese to express politeness norms.

Politeness studies start from the assumption that nobody wants to lose face. It's useful to differentiate between 'negative face' - the desire

not to be imposed on - and 'positive face' - the desire to be appreciated. 'Positive politeness' is used to emphasize goodwill and friendship and helps preserve the other person's positive face. 'Negative politeness' is non-intrusive, respectful behavior that helps preserve negative face. Face is the public self-image that everyone tries to protect. Regarding this, Alan and Carol [7] said.

In essence, humans are social beings who need both autonomy and belongingness in differing degrees, according to the contexts in which they find themselves. Every utterance in an interaction carries with it the potential to create a threat to either the speaker's or hearer's negative or positive face and as such comprises a face threatening act (FTA).

Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness has been criticized by many scholars in the field. Some claim that it is not universally valid. The Japanese linguists Matsumoto [8] and Ide [9], for example, who worked on East-Asian languages, insist that Brown and Levinson assume that the speaker's use of language can allow his creative use of face-protecting strategies toward the interlocutors.

In East-Asian cultures like Japan, politeness is achieved not by choice but by judgment or request of the prescribed social norms. They felt that since Brown and Levinson's politeness theory disregarded other cultures' politeness norms by considering Western norms only, it could not sufficiently describe other cultures. Matsumoto described the distinctiveness of the Japanese polite language system, and Ide proposed another kind of politeness namely discernment politeness.

After critically reviewing Brown and Levinson's [5] linguistics politeness model, alternative analysis of politeness has been suggested. Politeness is recommended to be analyzed better within particular communities as negotiated norms of communication. Yu (2002) investigates culture-specific speech acts and discourse principles, concentrating on English and Korean politeness and concluded, "Politeness phenomena should be explained by language-specific norms of interaction with specific cultural values." Various data forms from real life conversation are also suggested to be taken to analyze politeness norms with reference to context and other variables such as ethnicity, religion, gender, age and class [4]. "Every language has at its disposal a range of culture-specific routine formula" [10].

Many of the researches about politeness norms were studied at the level of speech act. "In Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, every speech act is potentially face-threatening to an aspect of the hearer's or the speaker's face" [11].

The present study, however, describes the politeness norm at the level of genre and discourse. Brown, and Levinson's (1978/1987) politeness theory is concerned with universal language use when they pinpointed politeness phenomena as a worthwhile area of research in linguistics, "Politeness, Some Universals in Language Usage" [3]. Again, the present study does not discuss the universal politeness strategies that are shared by all languages. This study is particularly concerned with culture-specific politeness norms, that is culture-specific perceptions of what counts as polite and what constitutes impolite in the speech group [12].

## Hierarchy of Politeness Strategies

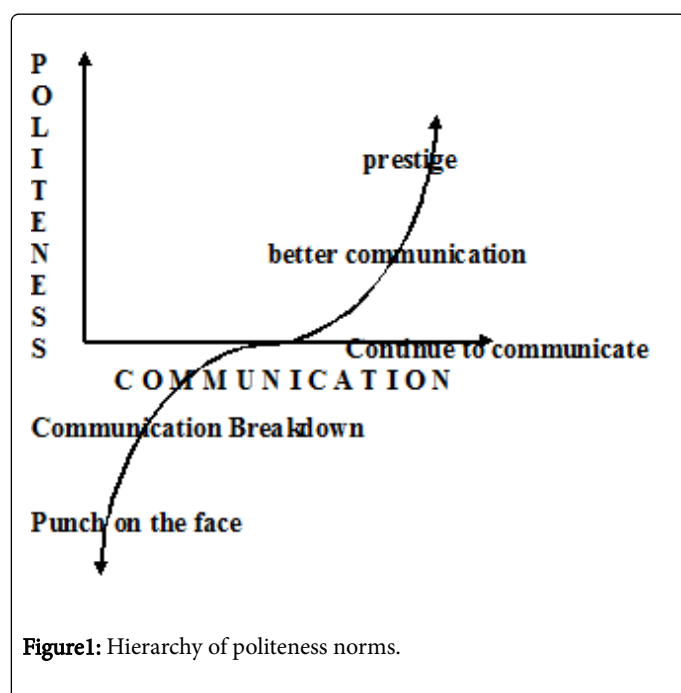
Politeness strategy is employed to accomplish the following functions in communication. Politeness is not always an honest act but a requirement for communication and other functions of language. Therefore, people are polite to:

### Avoid punch on the face

People employ politeness norms to avoid physical or psychological attack, insult and condemnation from the other people. Shame or embarrassment harms not only the relationship but also the physical and psychological being.

### Avoid communication breakdown

Politeness norm is a communication rule which is part of the rule of life. The fittest who can act according to the norm in its prescribed form continues to exist in the communication line. The communication line breaks when people deviate from the norm. This refers to the state when people stop communicative and ignore each other (Figure 1).



### Continue to communicate

This refers to the role of politeness norms in helping interlocutors keep the previous communication status. The interlocutors maintain the status qua of the communication thereby stay in the communication line as shown in Figure 1.

### Establish a better communication

This refers to the function of politeness norms to improve previous communication status.

### Prestige

This is the highest level of communication that can be achieved by conducting the prescribed politeness norms. By using the politeness strategies, the most the interlocutors can gain is honor and respect. To achieve these hierarchies of politeness norms, there are many politeness formulas in the speech community. The politeness norms safeguard the communication. When the politeness norms are violated, the communication breaks down, crakes or the threats have ways out to harm the communication and the participants. There are

many pan-Ethiopian politeness norms which the speech groups also share. The following are some of the unique politeness norms of the speech group.

## Culture-Specific Politeness Norms in Ethiopia

### Yəlundta

Yəlundta is an Amharic word which means modesty, sense of propriety, or concern for others. It is a major politeness strategy of being sensitive to the opinion of others or regard for others' feelings or concern and to what others' think about one's actions and sayings. Yəlundta is particularly focused on what people feel, say or think of one's act or word. The word is used as it is since the researcher could not find equivalent word for it in English.

Yəlundta is one significant cultural practice in Ethiopian community. Because of their sensitivity to what others' say, they are very careful to overtly do or say what they really feel or want. Because of Yəlundta, the people become dependent on each other when they think about what others' feel about it before they say or do it. Many things are made secret, calm and cooperative because of Yəlundta. For example, if one comes to somebody else's house and reaches at the time when the hosts are having lunch or dinner, the guest would definitely be invited to eat. They would do this even if they firmly do not want the person to get part of the food. They will not say 'the food is not enough, sorry' though they know it is not enough. They would go and borrow from neighbor, go get from shop or anywhere and serve the guest.

Whenever somebody goes to somebody else's house, the host offers something to eat or drink even though s/he does not want to do so. When people go to restaurants or cafes to have something to drink or eat, they will fight over paying the bill. Everyone would do it out of yilugnta. The same happens to paying to personal expenses such as transport costs. The driver would have a hard time contemplating from which person he should receive before he gets his money. There is no such thing as everyone is for oneself. Even when the other person did not see one, one would pay for the other also out of Yilugnta. If one wants to get himself what he wants and does not offer others, he would die of Yilugnta - thinking of what others will say, think or feel about his action. To relieve oneself from this threatening feeling, one would just offer. By so doing one is being polite sacrificing one's real wants and responding to Yilugnta. Such is how Yilugnta makes people be polite not out of honest and innocent wish but out of fear of guilt of what others will feel or think of one. This is a negative politeness strategy since it does not come out of the innocent good will of the participants to gain respect and appreciation but it came out of the desire to avoid imposition, to protect own needs and avoid others intrusion.

One may sacrifice his real wants responding to his Yəlundta. Such is how Yəlundta makes people be polite not out of honest and innocent desire but out of fear of guilt of what others would feel or think about him/her. This is a negative politeness strategy since it does not come out of the innocent good will of the participants to gain respect and appreciation but out of the desire to avoid imposition, to protect own needs and avoid others intrusion.

### Paying debts 'bəddər'

When people have special occasions, there is a tradition of giving something in money or in kind. The occasions could be good times like wedding, birthday, graduation and so on or bad times such as mourning, sickness, and the like. At such times, the people have a

tradition of giving things or money to others. On a similar occasion, the person who gave gifts would expect those things to be returned back. The people understood this. Therefore, what they do is they record whatever comes to them. When there is something that calls for a gift, they return exactly the same or slightly better than what were given to them. The other person expects the same. If not, the communication will break down. This politeness norm also extends to going empty handed as well. If someone comes empty handed, the host also goes empty handed. Otherwise, it is considered as insult if he takes something for the person who brought nothing. The same applies if one fails to go to the person on such an occasion. This is a negative politeness strategy of satisfying others' expectations to protect own face. By applying this strategy, interactants avoid imposition, and intrusion in the affairs of others. It does not come out of free will but out of the feeling of protecting one's face.

Some gifts have names in the area of the speech group. For example, 'erensa' is the name of money paid for traditional medical treatment; 'adeger or adeyer' is the name of money or other type of gift on weddings, memorial services or any occasion in Sulula area and 'firag' is the name of a gift for the occasion of mourning.<sup>1</sup> There are many who will not talk anymore because of such debts that were supposed to be paid but were not paid.

These are not honest give away; they are rather debts both parties understand as owe. Because of this, when somebody brought a 'doro wot' "chicken sauce" for a woman who have given birth, the receiver is not totally happy thinking that she will have to do the same or better some day when it could (possibly) be difficult for her to do so. So, when a favor comes, the receivers are as sadder as they are happy. What matters most is that this is the politeness norm-the rule of communication. Hence, the people play the 'pay debt' real life game.

### Offering gifts

Offering gift is a universal politeness norm. The way people do it in Ethiopia could be of interest. People give things or money which is not meant to be returned. When someone in the family dies; the person gets sick; something bad or good happens to the family or any kind of special occasion is arranged in the house, the people who are supposed to be better in economy are supposed to offer something in money or in kind.

People also offer money or things when they come from a foreign country. For example, when females come from Arab countries that they went to work as maids, the norm requires them to offer some gifts to the people at home.

In weddings, the people make this tradition in a form of meal, crops, cattle or money. In rural areas (in Wogdi, for example) close relatives, friends or neighbors prepare feast or locally known as 'mad' such as what is shown in the following picture as part of the wedding. The feast could also be prepared in the following days of the wedding known as 'return', 'milash' as they call it.

Especially if there was no wedding feast, the in-laws would never get together without a feast, a small or huge one.



Figure 2: Feast of wedding.

In weddings, the hosts present huge investment in meat as shown in Figure 2. What is shown in the following pictures is the demonstration that a too much is available.



Figure 3: Meat display 1.



Figure 4: Meat display 2.

They demonstrate the meat in public (Figures 3 and 4). There are also waiters who bring part of the meat to each individual with a knife. The people would cut what they want and take. They eat raw meat and

<sup>1</sup> The idea and the wording were given by one of the readers to whom the researcher is grateful and the researcher has investigated afterwards.

the cooked one until they are full. Too much should be left out after everyone gets full. As shown in the next pictures, too much is given and people leave it without finishing it. The norm requires so (Figures 5 and 6).



Figure 5: Too much meat served.



Figure 6: Serving.

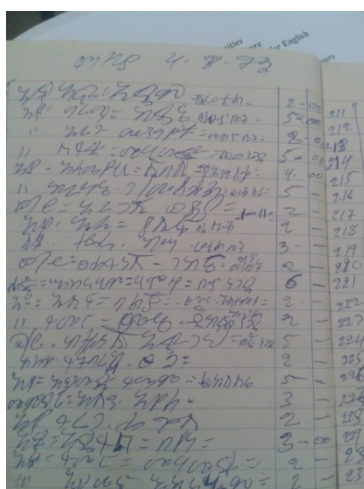


Figure 7: Collecting money.

In wedding and mourning events, there is a tradition of collecting money from the people. In rural areas people accept in money or in kind. In some places, the people collect money as. In urban areas, people record the amount with the name of the person who offers it in wedding or other ceremonies as shown in the picture (Figure 7). By doing this positive politeness strategy, the participants fulfill their desire to be liked and at the same time preserve others' face.

### Deference

#### Lowering gaze

Humility is humbleness or lowering gaze as a sign of respect. The real intent of humility is measured by the explicit actions or words used by those who are humble and of course lowering gaze too. People do this positive politeness out of good will in order to be appreciated and liked.

Saying 'sorry' are not explicitly and directly expressed. Implicitly they show that one's apology is expected but they do not say it aloud. Often times it is expressed with silence or actions not in words. For example, if one steps on the feet of somebody else, s/he would say "I did not see you. Did I hurt you?" and try ransom. They may extend saying, "Oh let me see. Are you hurt?" and find solutions. It is not common to explicitly say apologies like "I am sorry". They also say 'miiitstststs' as a sign of feeling sorry. This is the most common way of expressing their sad emotion.

The politeness norm/rule in this regard is getting involved to solution seeking to repay the harms caused by the person who takes the blame. If the harmed person wants to insult or bite back, it is being polite to receive the blame and say 'I did not mean to'. Saying "I am sorry." and moving away is not just common as a politeness norm as in the other communities. When they do not take the blame and look like guilty, the communication could get as rough as taking physical measures or insult as a payback. This is a negative politeness strategy since the participants are not supposed to directly express their feelings out loud. They express it indirectly. Besides, to avoid apology is rude but to express it in such a way allows the participants avoid imposition and intrusion of others by protecting him/herself.

#### Raising from seat

When somebody respected comes, people are expected to rise from their seats. This is especially expected from younger to elders. When there is a seat, people are just supposed to raise and sit back after the person gets one. Where the seats are all taken, people are supposed to offer their seats. When they do this action, they say 'nor' meaning "Please". The new comer would say, "by God". If the people sat and did not show any sign of getting up when the person comes, s/he would consider it as dishonor or disrespect. By applying this positive politeness norm the interactants express their desire to be appreciated. They would get up and offer their seats to pay respect to the new comers. When the person is honorable (elder or someone with title or status), the practice would be more serious. They would not sit until s/he sat, and they would give him the better place available. When the person is just one of them, they would just say the word 'nor' "Please" without ever trying to rise from their seats.

#### Undressing

To pay honor, there is a tradition of putting off hut and/or any garment on the head. This seems to be a universal culture. The people

put off whatever there is on the head be it head scarf, garment, cap, hut, veil or anything else on the head to pay respect. This is a positive politeness since the participants do it to preserve others' face and to be included and accepted socially.

### Honorific terms

Using honorific title is a positive politeness strategy. There are honorific titles earned from education, age or social status. People expect to be called by their titles they have earned. When they are called without the titles, they consider it as an insult or dishonor. There is this local saying "even a pot has holder". This is to mean even a pot has a thread or rope to be hold. This again means a person cannot be called without his/her titles.

Honorific titles are used when the relationship is formal and distant. When the persons are close, the honorific titles are dropped. However, unlike this there are many who call their mothers and fathers by honorific titles in Ethiopia. For example, sons, daughters, or wives call their fathers, and husbands with honorifics.

When the relationship is intimate not only the titles are dropped the sex labels are also shifted in the speech. For example, females talk of 'änätä' "you (male)" to their female friends and males refer to 'änəč' "you (female)" when talking to their male friends. Also the use of honorifics - the second person pronoun forms is common for paying honor.

### Nick naming

Nick naming are used as a sign of intimacy. We need to discuss this under politeness norms because the absence of it is considered impolite. The presence of nicknaming does not necessarily show politeness. It rather shows closeness or intimacy. Once the nicknaming is adopted, the persons are rather expected to do so consistently. When they want to be impolite, they just drop the nickname and call by the names.

This is a sign of a problem in the communication between the interlocutors. They do not keep calling by the nick names while they have a problem in their communication as they used to do while they were ok. For example, calling her Hawa is being impolite and would disappoint her if the person used to call her Hawye. Nick naming is being positively polite.

People use nicknames in order to be liked by preserving others' face. The politeness norm suggests that one should keep using the nickname once used to be polite. Dropping it is automatically considered being impolite and could potentially harm the communication (at least) until they get back to it or until they get used to it again.

### Kissing hands, knees or feet

Hand kissing (as shown in the pictures) is expression of politeness in the speech group. It is being very polite to show respect by kissing hands and knees to those who give blessings, who are great Sheikhs and Hajes who earn different social status and who are senior.

Often times such people have earned respect because of their age, social status and education expect others to honor them by kissing their knees. Anywhere and everywhere, many would bow to their knees and kiss. Often times, the respected ones try to avoid people from doing this though they consider it impolite when people fail to kiss their knees at all. Likewise, hand kissing happens after blessing.



Figure 8: Hand shaking tradition.



Figure 9: Shaking hand to show respect.

The blessing giver gives his hand to the blessed who then kisses the hand of the blessed. He may tend to kiss the knees but the hand kissing is almost a must after the blessing. This politeness norm is a positive one since people do this out of desire for appreciation (Figures 8 and 9).

### Blessing as thanking

When favors are done to people, they express gratitude in a form of blessing. They do not often use thanking expressions but they use blessing expressions as a sign of showing gratefulness. They do not explicitly say "Thank you for doing such and such things for me." Instead, they would say 'may God do this and that for you as you did this and that for me.'

The politeness norm/rule designed to express thankfulness is in a form of blessing. They would just bless the person who did favor for them. If they do not bless, it is being impolite.

For example, when they give to beggar, the beggar is supposed to give blessings; when they have their hands washed, they give blessings and so on.

Giving blessings are as much thanks giving for favors as "thank you". When a favor is bestowed on one, it is rude to not bless. To bless is a positive politeness strategy since the participants respect peoples' needs of blessing to be liked and accepted socially.

## Hesitating

Doubting is one politeness rule in the speech community. People refuse to receive things, taking offers and doing activities when in fact everybody including themselves knows that they are being polite. They do not say ok at once. As a rule, they have to hesitate and keep the host holding for some time before they accept the offer. They say no before they accept anything to drink or eat, get money, or accept any favor. The politeness norm/rule states that it is not being polite to just grab everything when it is offered even when they desperately want it. The interlocutors hide their true feelings. They are being indirect. This is a negative politeness norm since connotation, indirectness and uncertainty is involved. It is irony that they are supposed to say no as everyone knows they want it. Yet, if they directly say yes at once, it is considered rude. The participants hesitate not innocently to mean it. By being undecided, the interactants respect others need (of giving) to protect their own (receiving).

## Begging

This is a related politeness norm to hesitating. When people bargain over taking or leaving the offer, the hosts who offer the things are supposed to beg them to take. When they offer and the guests doubt to take it, the hosts are not supposed to take it away. If they do so, they are being impolite and considered the offer as a fake intent. Even after they take the food or drink, they should be begged to eat or drink every now and then as many times as possible for the guests to safely feel comfortable to do so. The norm requires the hosts to say "eat; drink; please" as many times as possible. The host's intention is measured by the pressure of imploring s/he makes. This politeness strategy is negative. It is negative politeness strategy since the interlocutors are being indirect, and ambiguous.

## Acting

There are occasions when people act to show politeness. For instance, after the guests made clear that s/he cannot stay for lunch or coffee, the host says, "when I become soil; when I am buried; when I go with two woods; the coffee is ready". The host acts saying these things which s/he does not mean at all. The truth is the coffee is not prepared yet and the host desperately wants the guest to go and s/he knows the guest is determined to go. But then, if the host does not act in such a way, it is being impolite. Even if s/he desperately wants the guest to go away, the host should not look like one. Rather, the host should look like happy because of the presence of the guest and should look like one who welcomes the guest and want to invite coffee and something to eat.

The politeness norm has acting as a rule that people should act looking like one or doing like one when in fact they are not. Otherwise, when the guest wants to leave if the host says 'ok go ahead. I have lots of things to do anyway', it is totally being impolite. Instead, what the politeness norm suggests is to act. The host should say, "Please do not go without eating from outside" and "Please it is not right" as if he meant it when in fact he did not. For example, mourning tradition requires crying out loud with tears and mourning rhymes, saying "My child, my child, my mother my mother, my father my father, my brother, my brother, my sister, my sister".

When people are dead such is expected to neighbors or relatives as if they are gravely sorry even when they truly are not. In mourning times, the visitors go to 'fill attendance'. They make sure the family of the deceased carefully watches those who came to identify those who

did not. Besides, especially at funeral, attendance is taken by calling out names. The participants acting are applying a negative politeness. They respect the others' needs not out of their innocent desire to be liked, appreciated and socially accepted. Rather, they act to avoid imposition of others and to protect their territory.

## Coercion

Coercing or making people do what they do not want is another politeness norm. This is also related to the above two politeness norms. The community does what they firmly do not want for the sake of being polite. This is being positively polite. They respect others' needs to be liked and appreciated. They eat after being full; they eat what they do not want to eat; they do things which they do not want to do which may harm their health and so on. For example, the norm states that there is hand feeding with mouthful of injera (gursha) after having meal for guests. Even if they are full, the guests have to take the hand feeding. The hand feeding is often three big hand feedings. Swearing or anything will not help. They would say "one will make us fight; two will make us disappoint; three..." This is forcing the people to eat. There is a saying, "people are happy when others eat what they have prepared and when others kiss their children". People are happy when the guests eat what they have prepared. Any excuses are not accepted.

For hosts forcing and making people do what they do not want to is politeness. At the expense of the people's wants, others are being polite. It is very common to hear people say 'I ate this and that in such and such places and I got sick.' When they are asked why, they say either 'they forced me' or by Yalunta. The difference between Yalunta and forcing people is that Yalunta is when the people do it thinking what the others feel or say where as forcing is when people do things by a stimulus of verbal or physical force out of love not hatred. People respond to the force almost willingly because of the understanding that the hosts do the action to be polite and not to harm the guests. Forcing people and making them do what they do not want to is a politeness norm/rule in the speech community where hosts do not accept excuses. There is no way out but to respond to the actions required out of innocent feeling of benefiting not harming.

## Hiding

Not displaying personal affairs is a communicative norm. When things are put on people's mouth, it is assumed bad. Therefore, the tradition is to hide it as far from people's awareness as possible. For example, a man (an informant) from this country goes to a foreign country and in the hotel, he asked the waitress to wash his suit. She asked him to put it in the plastic bag in the cupboard. In the cupboard, there were one white and one black bag. He put it in the black bag. He was supposed to put it in the white bag for washing because the black bag was supposed to be garbage. Because of his reserved cultural background, he put it in the black bag that cost him his suit. This reflects the behaviour of uncertainty and ambiguity which is a negative politeness strategy. People hide to avoid others intrusion driven with the intension of avoiding imposition.

## Denying

Assertiveness is not a common norm. If someone insists on having one's opinions and rights recognized, or if one declares or affirms solemnly and formally that s/he can do certain things, or is good at something, s/he is considered to be boasting. The norm is that one denies that s/he is good at something when others affirm that s/he is

good at it. The participants are applying connotation by denying since the real intension is affirming. This is a negative politeness strategy of indirectness.

### Eye contact

In urban areas people consider it polite, and a demonstration of sincerity, to look each other directly in the eye, at least in intervals, when having a conversation. It is considered very rude to avoid eye contact. In rural areas, many people consider it polite to avoid eye contact.

### How to eat

Eating is generally done with bare hands for traditional foods. Use of forks, spoons and knives to eat is not common for local meals that involve 'injera' and sauce. The host or hostess will not be insulted if you refuse or leave uneaten food on your plate. In fact, to eat everything from a plate is impolite in traditional society. People eat together on the same plate. Eating from other's front is impolite. The host keeps adding food before it gets finished. The first to begin eating is the host or the respected person. When someone interrupts eating, people wait for him/her.

### Kiss children

It is considered polite to kiss children when visiting relatives, friends or neighbours. Not doing so is considered impolite.

### Paying at restaurant/bar

People consider it polite to pay for others' in restaurants/bars or transport costs. Since they feel like obliged to pay, people are not often happy to come across others whom they know in such places. After they pay, they make sure the beneficiaries know about it.

### After others

When entering or leaving a building, people consider it good manners to let others pass before. People also wait for elderly to get service before others.

### Space

Social distance or space is not much of a concern in politeness norms in Ethiopian cultures. There are dances as close as touching chick and lips among total stranger and non-intimate individuals.

### Warranty for Politeness Norm

People respect and abide by the politeness norms by two forces. One of the forces which is immediate is the urge to achieve good communication conduct which were discussed above and the other is to protect themselves from bad consequences caused by own conscience or others power. Two of such triggering factors that make people attend to politeness norms are the following.

### Fear of curse

People become polite for fear of being condemned or cursed. They respond to the politeness norms for fear of what they call 'kelb' (heart) of the interlocutors. Violating the politeness norms harms the feelings of the interlocutors besides the communication itself. If one does not

care about the communication, s/he cares for the feelings of the interlocutors because of such things as getting condemned. Not all people have the power to befall such consequences. Respected personalities' feelings are supposed to condemn when their feelings are hurt. The people fear condemning from such personalities. This is one triggering factor that stimulates people to keep track of the politeness norms and act accordingly. This is a negative politeness since the participants' respect others need to protect their own wellbeing (from being cursed). They are being polite, to avoid getting condemned.

### Vow/Oath

People abide by the politeness norms because they swear or make others take oaths by their cause. For example, when people offer hand feeding and say on the name of God, on my death, on my father and so on, the people fear the swearing to say no to the offer. Even if they do not attend to the offer, the offered may get disappointed as they make him/her take oath. Swearing is being positively polite. This politeness strategy is positive since the interlocutors respect each other's needs to preserve others' face at the expense of their need. The interactant is being polite to preserve others' face.

### Conclusion

From the aforementioned politeness norms, it can be seen that politeness is culture-dependent. What is polite to one culture might be embarrassing or upsetting to others. Norms of politeness vary across cultures. Politeness norm assumes that everyone wants to save face. Politeness is not expressed through language only but also through other semiotic resources.

Politeness appears on the continuum of negative face - the desire to avoid imposition and positive face - the desire to be appreciated. need for inclusion and social acceptance to continue to communicate. Positive politeness is used to emphasize goodwill and helps preserve the other person's positive face. Such people seek to establish a positive relationship with others. They respect others' need to be liked and understood. Negative politeness is non-intrusive, respectful behavior that helps preserve negative face.

As explained above, the speech group employs both positive and negative politeness norms. There is a slight inclination to positive politeness, but a great deal of negative strategies is also used. Therefore, the culture cannot be said a positive or negative politeness but both.

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