Universitat d'Alacant
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Netiquette:

Politeness on the Internet

Subject: Análisis pragmático de la gramática inglesa

Date: 24/01/2013

Group: 1

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1. What is *politeness*?

Nowadays, we usually hear sentences like "your behaviour is not polite" or "you have to be polite with unknown people". However, most of the times, we cannot establish a definition of "polite/politeness" in our mind or what this term refers to. For this reason, we will explain the importance of politeness in society and culture, and how politeness and impoliteness is present on the Internet.

Pragmatics studies the context in which utterances are produced. One of the branches of pragmatics deals with discourse in which we find the concept of *politeness*. Many specialists are still discussing a clear definition of politeness. There are some of them who even question whether politeness has a place within pragmatics or not. For example, J. Thomas discusses that "it is interpreted as a genuine desire to be pleasant to others, or as the underlying motivation for the linguistic behaviour of an individual and it has no place within pragmatics". However, we adopt the common definition shared by Lakoff, Leech as well as Brown and Levinson: politeness operates as a strategy for reducing interpersonal friction and conflict as a device that speech participants use to facilitate smooth, social interaction. Moreover, Escandell Vidal specifies this definition mentioning that politeness is "a group of social rules of behaviour".

Furthermore, if we want to expand the definition of politeness, we can use the summary did by Calsamiglia Blancafort and Tusón Valls (1999) in which there are the most important aspects of politeness:

1) It focuses on verbal interaction and the choice of certain linguistic markers of politeness.

2) It is based upon the acknowledgement that the interpersonal function of language is always present as the essence of human communication.

3) It is used for making social relationships smoother and for channelling and compensating aggressiveness, that is, all those actions that can constitute a virtual threat for the participants in the interaction.

4) It is not considered a number of norms, but rather a number of strategies which determine the choice of certain linguistic elements when building up the utterances that the interlocutors direct to each other.

5) It stresses and shows the current relationships in our social life as influenced by power/solidarity and distance/proximity factors, by feelings, by mutual knowledge, etc.

6) It is a typical object of negotiation in any conversational context.

Brown and Levinson, Lakoff and Leech also suggest that politeness is another level to conversational interaction besides the rules of the cooperative principle. First of all, Lakoff sees Grice's rules as rules of clarity and she distinguishes two main rules of "pragmatic competence": "Make yourself clear" and "Be polite". Referring to Grice's maxims, Lakoff uses them as an approximation to how to conform to the rule "make yourself clear", and then she proposes her own three rules of politeness: the first one is *formality,* which means that you do not have to impose something or you do not have to remain aloof; the second rule is *hesitancy,* which refers to giving the addressee his options; finally, the third rule of politeness is *equality or camaraderie,* which means that the speaker has to act as he or she and the addressee were equal as well as making the addressee feels comfortable. Despite Lakoff's ideas, Leech's view of politeness involves a group of politeness maxims equivalent to Grice's maxims. Some examples of Leech's maxims are the following ones:

The Tact maxim: minimize the interlocutor's effort; maximize the interlocutor's benefit.

The Generosity maxim: minimize personal benefit; maximize personal effort.

The Approbation maxim: minimize criticism of others; maximize praise of others.

The Modesty maxim: minimize self-praise; maximize self-criticism.

The Agreement maxim: minimize disagreement with others; maximize agreement with others.

The Sympathy maxim: maximize sympathy to others.

Moreover, Haverkate distinguishes two different types of politeness that could be expressed using direct or indirect statements or the elements that are used to start, to continue or to finish a conversation: *metalinguistic politeness* and *linguistic politeness*. The first one, *metalinguistic politeness*, has two main purposes: the creation or preservation of sociability and the carry out of the rules of social politeness (obeying imperatives such as "be quiet", "do not disturb me" or "do not smoke"). Furthermore, the second type of politeness, *linguistic politeness*, deals with direct statements in which the speaker's main aim is that the listener executes an action.

In conclusion, politeness is a complex theoretical concept that is still discussed by many specialists and that can have several perspectives and definitions depending on the linguist who analyses it.

1.1. Politeness and society:

Nowadays, social life on the Internet has changed the stereotypical concept of politeness. It started with Messenger, where you could chat with your contacts without Face-to-Face Communication. To have a social network like Facebook or Twitter has become something essential in teenagers and adults' lives. This is why people usually distinguish between their "real life" and their "virtual life".

Hence, digital life is seen as sophisticated. At the beginning of the Internet, everyone was equal: there were no noticeable social differences. However, nowadays, the important people are the ones who have more followers or friends and vice versa: the less friends or followers you have, the less popular you are.

Curiously, the current generation of teenagers were born in the era of technology and they have been in touch with gadgets every day of their lives. Due to this fact, people who are born in a mainly technologic environment are called "finger generation". This name has been given to a group of people who are most receptive to the new technological gadgets (tablets, smartphones, touch screens, etc.) and are also the most wired.

1.1.1. Politeness through history:

From the synchronic point of view of language, we have to take into account politeness change throughout history.

In Spain the change started in the 1960's when the progressive introduction of the industry made people stop working at farms and move from the countryside to the cities. Being able to work at the industry meant the leader of the family, the father, earned money establishing an economic separation from the rest of the family. In relation to the previous idea, we also find the shift from *usted* to *tú* in the domestic area. However, as this is a generational change, parents did not alter the way they treated their own parents. Although the public life did not change that much, (authority was still respected and feared), political parties and labor unions were starting to be organized undercover.

Moreover, the visit of the American president Eisenhower meant the opening of the Spanish borders to the tourists. Therefore, all the pop culture, new trends and clothes from a more progressive Europe appeared in the streets.

It is during this time too that the TV was installed at home. Spain started to broadcast foreign films that, despite the censorship, showed how different things were outside the country. A change could be seen: European women wearing bikinis and mini-skirts, men with long hair,

etc. Spanish people started to copy these styles as a way of rebelling against the established ideas.

The meaning of "authority" started to change as the social behaviors began to have a more open nature. Then a generational conflict occurred when the view of respect and behavior changed from parents to sons. This "visual violence", the economic independence from the parents and tourism, meant a shift in the moral values. Not only this, but also the death of the dictator and the end of the dictatorial years were the breakthrough in social values and ways of addressing.

The end of the 70's were years of opening: political parties, labor unions, expansion of the liberties, etc. the political parties wanted a change in the way of addressing as they supported equality. What was normal at the political life should be normal in real life.

The change from *usted* to *tú* at the streets meant a lot. The acceptance of the equality in all the aspects of life, also at classroom, entailed the progressive disappearance of the physical punishment, the dais, and the equality between teacher and student; therefore they no longer treat each other using *Usted* but using *Tú*.

Nowadays, new forms of addressing are being introduced (from *Profesor* to *Profe*). Moreover, the junk TV (shouts, insults, contempt to the private life), the easy money and the Internet (anonymity, "false" communication) are making this shift from *Usted* to *Tú* more highlighted.

1.1.2. Politeness and culture:

Now that we know the changes that history caused on the concept of politeness, we are going to refer to politeness from the point of view of Pragmatics. Taking into consideration Sapir and Whorf's idea that every language is a different view of the world, we cannot dissociate language from culture as well as from society and vice versa. From this previous idea, it is accepted that behavioural rules are specific of each country and culture. As users, we unconsciously know the social rules of our community to be polite in different contexts (what we have to bring when we are invited to dinner or how we should start a conversation). For this reason, politeness theory constitutes the central dynamics of social interaction.

One of the problems of politeness strategies is that they cannot be easily transferred from one language to another. We can analyse the previous idea in the educational context. In several countries, such as Germany and France, students have to address to their professors using the second person plural pronoun *Sie* or *vous* as a way of showing respect and politeness. However,

if students refer to their professor using the second person singular pronoun *du* or *tu*, it will be considered as a lack of respect or impoliteness. Furthermore, in Spain, people usually refer to their teachers using the second person singular pronoun *tú* because *usted* is associated with aged people. Sometimes, we start a conversation using *usted* but normally the receiver of the pronoun allows us to use *tú*. This situation is shown in the following virtual tutorial in which a foreign student refers to his/her teacher using words like *señora, usted, quiere* or *si me permite* and the teacher corrects the student's way of addressing her by writing the following sentence: *[...]una cuestión cultural: en España no solemos llamar a los profesores "señor" o "señora". Lo normal es llamarles por el nombre. A mí me puedes llamar simplemente "Mar", y no hace falta que me digas de usted.*

Another example so as to show the variety of politeness depending on culture and country is the conversation that English and Spanish people utter when they give, receive and open a present. Normally, a native Spanish speaker will produce a series of expressions unconsciously established by society. In Spain, it is socially accepted to open the present right after getting it and in front of the giver. If you do not open the present, the giver will feel disdain or disappointment. Moreover, Spanish has a kind of accepted ritual for opening a present[1]:

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[1]More examples about politeness and culture in the following research article: MIQUEL, LOURDES (2004). "Lengua y cultura desde una perspectiva pragmática; algunos ejemplos   aplicados al español". *RedELE,* 2.

–Giving a present:

GIVER: Give the present ("This is for you"). Congratulate if necessary.

–Receiving a present:

RECEIVER: To be grateful for the present (Thank you so much! You should not have bothered / It was not necessary/ etc.)

–Starting to unwrap:

R: To ask about the content (What is it? What is it?)

R: To repeat the sentence "It was not necessary".

–During the opening:

G: Not to say what the object is and to encourage the receiver to open the present.

R: To continue speculating about the content of the present.

–If the opening takes time:

R: To comment the process of opening the present: making reference to the quantity of wrapping paper, how the present is perfectly wrapped, etc.

–When you discover the content of the present:

R: To give a positive opinion and to be grateful for the present.

G: To diminish the importance of the present (Really? / if you do not like the present, I can change it/ If you do not like it, I have the bill/ etc.)

R: To insist on your gratitude.

Despite this example from the Spanish culture, if we transfer this previous situation to the United States, we would realise that North Americans open a present in front of the giver and it could be opened at the same time that the present is given or later. Moreover, North Americans do not have the same conversation during the opening of the present; they just smile because there are no standard phrases. The roles of behaviour in England are different from the ones in Spain. Related to the way they react to the giving of presents, when the English are given a present, they do not open it. Despite these ideas, they keep it until the giver has left. The receiver then will open it and some days after will send a "thank you card" to the giver.

In conclusion, the two previous examples show that politeness differs from each culture and society. Every country and culture has its own form of politeness known by its society. Therefore we are able to distinguish foreigners due to their different behaviours towards the rest of no foreigners in specific contexts.

1.2. *Face*: *Negative* and *positive faces*:

Pragmatically, Goffman (1967) coined the term "face", which refers to "positive social value that one can claim during a particular social interaction". Goffman (1982) also defends

that the term *face* is constituted "by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact". Moreover, Brown and Levinson (1987) added some aspects to the first definition of *face*:

[...] *face* is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction. In general, people cooperate [...] in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face. [...]" (1987: 61)[2]

This means that, socially speaking, individuals will try to protect their face in order to maintain a social status.

Furthermore, Brown and Levinson (1987: 62) coined two aspects of *face* values that are opposite, but interconnected: *positive and negative face*.

Positive face (also called 'Involvement') contemplates the human need to be part of a social group, the necessity of being 'involved' and connected with others. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), it concerns "the positive consistent self-image of 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants". One of the aims achieved by this interpersonal relationship is the decrease of social distance.

The aspect of *Negative face* (also called 'Independence'), however, involves "the basic claim to territories, personal preservers, rights to non-distraction…". It refers to the want to interact without being impeded by others, and to the desire for autonomy. To attain the negative aspect of *face*, it is very common to use indirectness, apology, avoidance, and hesitation. Contrary to the *positive face* aspect, the *negative face*'s aim is to maintain social distance.

The speaker, depending on the context of the utterance, will try to pursue either a *positive face* or a *negative* one. The *positive face* want (to be liked and appreciated) is obtained by pursuing a common ground of shared interest, knowledge and agreement between the speakers. While maintaining the *negative face* want is realized by disagreeing, keeping the distance and independence with the interlocutors, and feeling free to act away from imposition. It shows a degree of social distance and maintains personal space and territory.

These politeness strategies can be found either in verbal and non-verbal expressions and behaviors that reflect its usage for shortening (*positive face*) or for maintaining (*negative face*) the distance between speakers.

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[2] More information about the concepts of *face* and *positive/negative faces* can be found in: BROWN, P. and LEVINSON, STEPHEN C. (1987) *Politeness: Some universals in language usage.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

These verbal and non-verbal expressions used to fulfill a *negative* or *positive face* are analyzed and coined by Brown and Levinson (1987: 65). They named these expressions as *Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs).* "[...] Certain kinds of acts intrinsically threaten *face,* namely those acts that by their nature run contrary to the *face* wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker. By "act" [...] what is intended to be done by a verbal or non-verbal communication [...]" So acts like promises, apologies, expressing thanks, even non-verbal acts such as stumbling or falling down are considerer to threaten primarily the speaker's face, whereas warnings, criticisms, orders or requests are viewed to threaten the hearer's *face.* For this reason, Brown and Levinson argue that, since it is conceived of mutual interest to save, maintain or support each other's *face*, FTAs are either avoided and several strategies are employed to counteract of soften the FTAs.

These different strategies are presented in the form of **five superstrategies** for performing FTAs:

Fig. 1. Possible strategies for doing FTAs
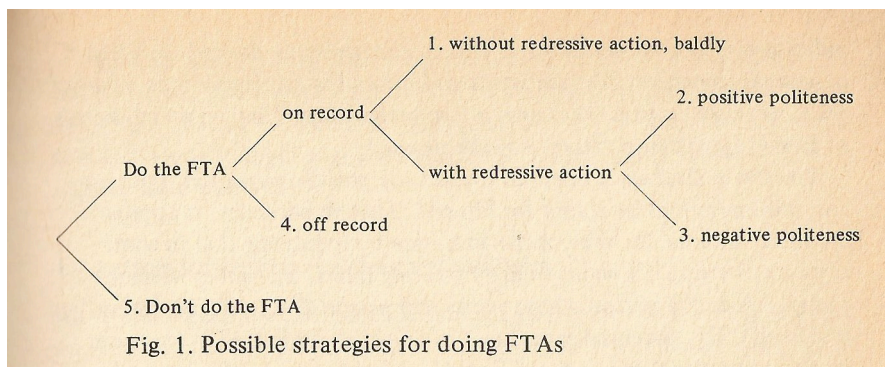
1) *Bald-on record:* FTA performed bald-on-record, in a direct and concise way without redressive action. Someone goes *on record* when he/she is doing or saying something and "there is just one unambiguously attributable intention with which witnesses would concur". This FTA is usually used through promises and imperatives.

In the following example, we read how a cybernaut comments on a sports website and he or she writes *Hablad de futbol de una p..a vez.* This imperative statement is a FTA performed bald-on-record because the writer orders an action directly, concisely and it is unambiguous sentence.

2) *Positive Politeness:* FTA performed with redressive action. Positive politeness "is oriented towards the positive *face* of the reader, the positive self-image that he claims for himself" (Brown and Levinson, 1987:70). For example, the term *my dear* in the sentence *Lay the table, my dear,* softens the imperative by claiming common ground and expressing affection. Other strategies are also used like telling jokes, praising and promising.

In this virtual tutorial we find a student praising the teacher's professional skills using sentences such as *Me alegro mucho por tu conferencia en inglés, seguro que te sale genial, y seguro que lo haces estupendamente bien* or *espero que encuentres a alquien que te haga fotos*

en condiciones. These kinds of utterances help to achieve the positive face of the reader.

3) *Negative Politeness:* FTA performed with redressive action. Negative politeness is "oriented mainly toward partially satisfying readers' negative *face*, his basic want to maintain claims of territory and self-determination". Moreover, negative politeness minimizes the imposition by attempting to soften it. This is usually achieved by indirectness, hedging, etc. For example, the sentence *Lay the table, my dear* could be softened by a more indirect formulation such as *Would you mind laying the table?*

In the following virtual tutorial, we find an Erasmus student asking politely to her or his teacher: *me gustaría saber cuando puedo venir para firmar la hoja de notas*. This sentence is an example of negative politeness because *me gustaría saber* softens the question's imposition which is achieved by the use of an indirect question.

Todas las tutorias 2008-09

Datos de la tutoría   [Pasar a Duda] [Borrar tutoria] [Modificar]

De:
Para: GALINDO MERINO, MARIA DEL MAR
Asignatura: INTRODUCCIÓN A LA LENGUA DE SIGNOS ESPAÑOLA (8168)
Fecha: 10/06/2009 14:55:22
Asunto: FIRMAR LA HOJA

Ficha

Antecedentes
-

Pregunta
Buenas,
me gustaria saber cuando puedo venir para firmar la hoja de notas.
muchissimas gracias

Observaciones
-

Respuesta Fecha y hora de la respuesta: 10/06/2009 16:51:29
El viernes por la mañana estaré toda la mañana en el despacho; puedes venir y te firmo la hoja.

4) *Off-record:* FTA performed off-record refers to strategies that might allow the act to have more than one interpretation. For example, if someone writes *I would like to watch a film*, the writer may be intending that the listener offers him/her going to the cinema. This FTA is usually conveyed by the use of hints, metaphors, tautologies, etc.

In this first example, we identify a play on words. The writer is using white colour writes *Your an idiot* but the green writer answers *you're* implying two meanings: the first one refers to the spelling mistake of using *Your*; but also *you're* can mean that the white writer is being called *an idiot*.

5) *Avoidance:* FTA not performed. It involves acting in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible. In the following example we find the utterance *Shut up your fucking mouth!* In that case, the writer acts directly and states the sentence without paying attention to the FTA.

Comments about a video on YouTube:

justin baby.. he still goes to water parks... how childish he is.. hate him.. but like the song... and justin dont think to come to israel one ore time than ill take you to hammas in gaza and ahmad and saleem well kick ur fuckin ass
fosylak hace 44 minutos
Shut up you fucking mouth!
muslims are not terrorists!.... you're so brainwashed
just go die in a hole!... you racist asshole.

One may think that these verbal and non-verbal expressions are only found in Computer-Mediated Communication due to the anonymity of the net. However, the behavior on the Internet is influenced by the speakers who, in turn, learned the social rules unconsciously by

growing in that particular environment. Consequently, this verbal politeness can be found in Face-to-Face Communication and within the Internet conversations.

2. Technology and its consequence in social communication:

Simultaneous processes of communication eliminates temporal and place barriers as well as allows a synchronic and numerous interaction. Reality is based on a permanent and continuous communication through technology. It has been modified and improved throughout the decades and nowadays we have several ways to transfer information: chats, emails, virtual forums, blogs and social networks. Hence, our social interaction is anchored to the new technological systems of communication, since social networks and technologies have adopted an important role in everyday communication.

Referring to the social interaction, it has to be dynamic, fluent and concise. Speech participants also use linguistic politeness to avoid and reduce social friction and enhance each other's face (public self-image) during social interaction. *Positive face* is seen as a crucial element since it is difficult to interpret feelings, opinions, etc. on online communication and, usually, conversations lead to misunderstandings. Due to this reason, new technologies have conveyed several systems in order to show feelings or gestures in the written communication. Some of the methods used are emoticons such as smileys or symbols, and even cultural expressions and a suitable slang system of language created on the Internet: hastags such as *#IronymodeON* or abbreviations used in written language like *LOL* (laughing out loud/lots of laughs).

Both the characteristics of the written text focused on its durability and stability, as well as the features of speech which are natural and fleetingness, are mixed in the virtual text. This one will be closer to the speech than to the written text.

A conversation is more dynamic thanks to the Internet because the distances do not exist there. The written and oral media have been substituted by a keyboard and a screen which reproduces asynchronic texts because the writer and the receiver usually are not usually on-line at the same time. So it is a delayed interaction in which there are neither interruptions nor overlapping, common features of Face-to-Face Communication.

2.1. From *Face-to-Face Communication* (FtF) to *Computer-Mediated Communication* (CMC)

Politeness, as well as communication, has changed throughout the years. The creation of a new mode of communication and the possibility of being in touch has provoked a revolution in technology and in society's way of talking to people.

Face-to-Face communication is the first manner used to establish a relationship with someone else. It is said that nothing can replace the information value given and received in a Face-to-Face conversation, and that a 90% of how we communicate is through non-verbal cues like gestures and facial expressions. We can affirm that FtF communication has several advantages that are essential in a conversation:

1) *A personal touch:* There is a feeling of community in every human being resulting from people's ability to socialize and interact with one another. We build and set the foundation for trusting in the other person.

2) *Non-verbal communication:* This element is the most important feature in a FtF conversation because we transmit most of the information through gestures. Someone who is frequently checking his/her watch or yawning would tell you that it is time to finish the conversation, to change to a more lively tone of voice, or to skip to a more attractive topic. Furthermore, the opposite situation is also true: if colleagues are smiling, nodding or leaning forward, you know that they are interested in the topic and following your statement. Finally, the fact of looking at the speaker's eyes is also essential. The lack of eye contact between the speaker and the listener provokes, in some cultures, a feeling of detachment between both of them.

3) *Effectiveness of a conversation:* when we are involved in an FtF conversation, it is quicker to reach to a consensus in about a decision than to make a decision using emails or through a chat on the Internet. Moreover, when there are many people participating in a conversation, there is more energy and opportunities to creatively contribute. You can brainstorm more easily and solve problems. Accordingly, FtF communication would be more productive than sending lots of emails.

From these previous aspects we can confirm that FtF communication is important in our professional and everyday conversation. Moreover, we can ask ourselves why we use emoticons on an email in order to show if we are happy, worried, sad, angry, etc. or why we put extra question or exclamation marks as well as extra dots so as to emphasise a sentence or a word. People unconsciously know about the need to overemphasize via Internet because there is an urge urge to communicate what is only possible only through Face-to-Face Communication.

However, nowadays most of our conversations take place through emails, chats, social networks or the mobile phone: Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). The consequence of using technology to transmit a message is that information can be misunderstood due to not being in the same situational context and the sense of personal connection is never established.

"Compared to Face-to-Face communication, Computer-Mediated Communication seems to be more hostile and offensive." discussed Peter J. Moor, Ard Heuvelman and Ria Verleur in their article "Flaming on YouTube" (2010).

One phenomenon of the previous article's statement is *flaming*. We find this element on CMC and it is a discussed term by linguists without a clear definition. The Hacker's Dictionary defines *flaming* as a feature of speaking "rabidly or incessantly on an uninteresting topic or with a patently ridiculous attitude" (p. 158). Hence, early research on CMC adopted the term to refer to different kinds of behaviour, like "expressing oneself more strongly on the computer than one would do in other communication settings" and "the expression of strong and inflammatory opinions", definitions used by Kierler, Siegel and McGuire[3]; other definitions are focused on displaying offensive language such as swearing and insults. Despite all these possible definitions, we are going to use the definition established by Moor in 2007: *flaming* as "displaying hostility by insulting, swearing or using otherwise offensive language". This definition refers only to the behaviour without taking into consideration causes or contexts. While the term *flaming* is used to refer to the behaviour, the messages are often referred to as *flames* and people who flame are called *haters* or *trolls* defined as: "someone who posts inflammatory,[1] extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community, such as a forum, chat room, or blog, with the primary intent of provoking readers into an emotional response[2] or of otherwise disrupting normal on-topic discussion".

The following images are example of a troll flaming about a political issue. We can see that the flames are all written by the same user and all the comments have negative meanings:

1) The first troll's intervention is not aggressive and he/she establishes a personal opinion about

a previous comment as well as he/she is showing that he/she is angry due to the use of capital letters and the repetition of question marks.

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[3] Definitions taken from the following article: MOOR, PETER J., et al (2010). "Flaming on YouTube". *Computers in Human Behaviour,* 26, 1536.

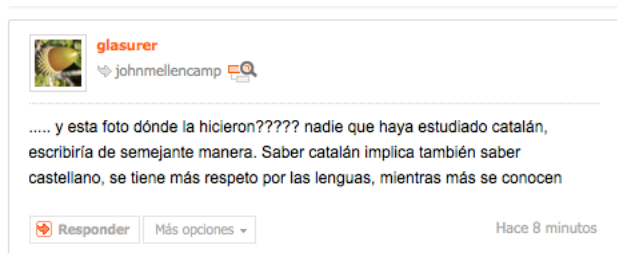2) Later, the hater's figure is still respectful with other's opinions although he writes ....*y esta foto dónde la hicieron???* but it does not transmit the feeling of angriness nor the intention of trying to hurt people's feelings. The troll is just stating his opinion about the topic.

3) In the third comment, the troll is still there. He writes *este tío da asco no???ergrgrgrg* so as to show that the topic cybernauts are writing about makes him feel angry.

4) The last hater's intervention that we find is ruder than the previous one. He uses capital letters in order to show that he is angry and he also uses words like *imbécil, eres cansino* and sentences such as *eres un pobre hombre sin dignidad ni autoestima ninguna*. All these kinds of statements are used to diminish a comment made before and to make people feel badly.

After analysing an example of a troll or a hater, we can confirm that the flaming phenomenon is wide spread on the Internet, especially in websites in which people are allowed to give their personal opinions; for example in YouTube, newspapers or forums. Hence, it is important to point out that the users of the Internet are accustomed to read flames, so sometimes readers do not pay attention to flames because they are common on the Internet. In the case of YouTube, there are haters who "post pointless comments that have nothing or little to do with the video while never having to risk receiving unpleasant criticism themselves", as it is said by Lange [4].

The most relevant fact is that haters and trolls can flame on the Internet because they are anonymous. This quality is essential to be free and to write any kind of text without caring about

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[4] Quotation taken from the same article: MOOR, PETER J., et al (2010). "Flaming on YouTube". *Computers in Human Behaviour,* 26, 1537.

people's feelings. In this context, we can think on the proverb "Do not do unto others as you would not have them do unto you".

2.1.1. Anonymity on the Internet

In today's world, it is easy to publish bad comments or flames on the Internet. Every user is anonymous and they do not draw their attention to the consequences of insults on the reader. From this statement, we can affirm that anonymity is crucial to the Internet's users.

It is easy to find people who have been threaten with death or have a follower who writes bad comments every day: a troll or a hater. Fortunately, law is strict in these previous situations, and policies are allowed to investigate who wrote the humiliating criticism. The problem appears when the information was written in a public place, what makes impossible to find the offender. Curiously, people create special users in order to insult in forums.

Specialists on the Internet and its consequences on users discussed that society is addicted to Internets and we do not realize about how long we spend in front of the computer publishing comments on our social networks or on newspapers. Dr John Suler defined this later situation as *online lack of inhibition*[5] which is favoured by anonymity, invisibility, loss of limits among individuals: "the anonymity provokes that people convinced themselves that their online behaviours are not of their own and, consequently, behaviours are not people's responsibility. Due to this idea, users write and do things without paying attention to them."

Another doctor, Elias Aboujaoude, establishes a relationship between anonymity and a fancy dress. When we sit in front of the computer, we disguise ourselves with a fancy dress which represents our online personality and behaviour. This new character who answers back and with lack of inhibition is dominated by five psychological strengths:

a) *Magnificence:* The feeling that when we are on the Internet, the only limit that we have is the sky. There are not limits on the Internet.

b) *Narcissism:* Users just think on themselves but not on the rest of the people.

c) *Darkness:* The Internet feeds users' dark side; we are transformed into villainous.

d) *Regression:* Users behave as teenagers.

e) *Impulsiveness:* Users are directed by their impulses.

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[5] Definition and information taken from the article: OLIVARES, JAVIER (2012). "Te parto la cara". *El País Semanal,* 61.

In conclusion, anonymity on the Internet is the most powerful tool in order to have a virtual personality and behave without taking politeness into consideration. Users are driven by their virtual transformation and sometimes they cannot control this "dark" side because the Internet absorbs users.
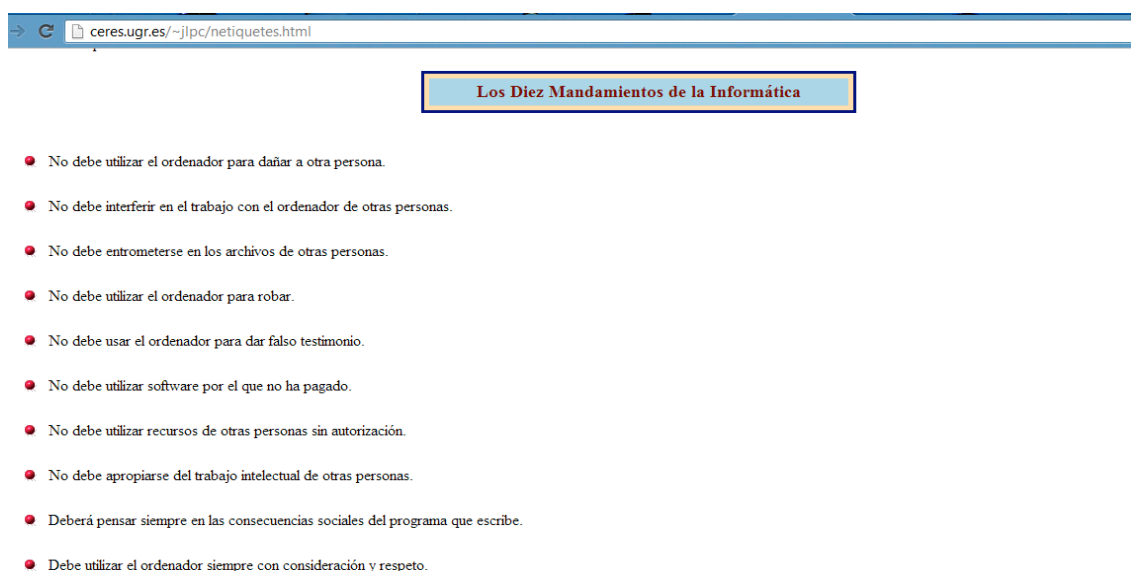
2.2. The *Netiquette* or *Ciberetiquette*:

Nowadays, people usually spend a considerable amount of time in front of their computer writing on their social networks or commenting blogs or articles. Sometimes we think that, since we are writing on the Internet, it does not mind if we are polite or not. However, the relevance of politeness on the net is crucial and we can analyse it through the concept of *Netiquette*.

The *Netiquette* is the adaptation of the rules of behaviour that exist in Face-to-Face Communication, to the ones of the Net. It describes the protocol that must be followed when computer-based communication takes place (e-mails, blogs, forums, chats, etc.)

At the beginning, people used to respect their interlocutors when they were talking on the Internet. However, little by little, this respect began to disappear. The writers took advantage of their anonymity and forgot the rules of decorum, starting to be disrespectful and impolite. To try to solve this problem, in 1995 "Request For Comments 1855" (also found as " RFC 1855") was created. It contained guidelines establishing how users have to behave when they communicate through the Internet. (http://www.rfc-editor.org/rfc/rfc1855.txt)

From this point onwards, many different *Netiquettes* have been released in several languages and on different kinds of websites. For example, in Spain several websites dealing with the importance of *Netiquettes* can be found:

ceres.ugr.es/~jlpc/netiquetes.html

Los Diez Mandamientos de la Informática

- No debe utilizar el ordenador para dañar a otra persona.
- No debe interferir en el trabajo con el ordenador de otras personas.
- No debe entrometerse en los archivos de otras personas.
- No debe utilizar el ordenador para robar.
- No debe usar el ordenador para dar falso testimonio.
- No debe utilizar software por el que no ha pagado.
- No debe utilizar recursos de otras personas sin autorización.
- No debe apropiarse del trabajo intelectual de otras personas.
- Deberá pensar siempre en las consecuencias sociales del programa que escribe.
- Debe utilizar el ordenador siempre con consideración y respeto.

Other examples of *Netiquette* on the Internet are on how to write an email, how to give our opinion in a blog or public forum, as well as on how to show our feelings on the Internet:

Correo electrónico

Éste es el medio de comunicación más utilizado en Internet. Seguidamente se destacan doce (12) normas básicas para su buena utilización:

1. Evitar el texto en mayúsculas, pues es equivalente a gritar.
2. No adjuntar archivos demasiado grandes. A menos que la cuenta de correo del destinatario puede recibirlo sin inconvenientes.
3. No enviar spam.
4. No enviar hoaxes.
5. Responder siempre a los mensajes.
6. Escribir un 'Asunto' adecuado y modificarlo si se cambia el tema en un reenvío.
7. Releer el mensaje antes de enviarlo.
8. Incluir el mensaje original o parte de éste al responder.
9. Identificarse al final.
10. Al enviar mensajes masivos, colocar las direcciones en el apartado "CCO:" (Con Copia Oculta).
11. No abrir archivos adjuntos de remitentes desconocidos, pues los códigos maliciosos afectarán nuestro sistema y el de los contactos de la libreta de direcciones.
12. Escribir de manera resumida. Se debe respetar el tiempo del destinatario.

Listas de distribución, Foros de discusión y Grupos de noticias

En este caso, además de las normas referidas al correo electrónico, hay que contemplar las siguientes:

1. Presentarse en el primer correo.
2. No enviar publicidad o mensajes privados a la lista.
3. Evitar caer en el flaming. Solución: responder mensaje ignorando el tono.
4. Conocer las Políticas de Uso Aceptable – PUA de la lista, foro o grupo de noticias.

Las emociones en la red

Se trata de dibujar caras o emoticones (en realidad, miradas de lado) con unos pocos caracteres de texto que añaden expresividad a la comunicación escrita.

- 😃 Feliz
- :-e Decepcionado
- 🙁 Triste
- :-<>
- 😮 Sorprendido
- 😄 Riendo
- :-@ Gritando
- 😉 Guiño, complicidad
- 😐 Serio, Indiferente
- :-/ Escéptico
- 🙁 Pensativo, preocupado

Another relevant example of *Netiquette* can be taken from the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) which has its own netiquette:

1) Estimado colega

Trate a los demás como a usted le gustaría ser tratado. Participe siempre con educación. Las faltas de respeto repetidas pueden ser causa de expulsión del grupo.

2) Sin ofender

Piense antes de escribir y evite frases que puedan resultar ofensivas desde los puntos de vista de religión, raza, política o sexualidad. Recuerde que Internet es global y diferentes culturas tienen diferentes costumbres.

3) Use emoticones

Tenga en cuenta que en el lenguaje escrito no es posible dar entonación, por lo que frases escuetas pueden llevar a malas interpretaciones. Por ejemplo, si hablando empleásemos cierto tono de complicidad o ironía, podemos "imitarlo" utilizando emoticones.

4) Eres un ...

Tenga paciencia siempre, sobre todo con los principiantes y los que cometen algún error, tarde o temprano lo podría cometer usted también. Las actitudes recriminatorias suelen ser mal recibidas, especialmente si se manifiestan en público. Siempre se acepta mejor y se hace más caso a una indicación expresada correctamente y en tono moderado

5) Indiferencia

Contra las ofensas o los intentos de provocación la medida más efectiva es la indiferencia. Los enfrentamientos personales no conducen a nada especialmente delante de otras personas a las que normalmente no les interesa y les causa mal efecto. En particular el sarcasmo o desprecio hacia otros a causa de errores ortográficos o gramaticales es poco ético, estos errores se deben generalmente al apresuramiento al escribir, en cualquier caso usted también podría cometer alguno.

6) Revisión

Cuando elabore un mensaje reléalo antes de enviarlo y pregúntese cual sería su reacción si lo recibiera. Cualquier tiempo invertido en hacer más clara nuestra comunicación en Internet es tiempo bien empleado.

7) Vurro, que se escribe sin h

Cuide las reglas de ortografía, especialmente en foros donde se habla en castellano. No está de más cuidar las tildes. De otra manera puede hacer el mensaje confuso.

8) NO GRITE

No abuse de las mayúsculas. En la Red se considera "gritar" (a nadie le gusta que le consideren un mal educado por hablar a voces) y además dificulta la lectura. Escribir todo el mensaje en mayúsculas lo hace extremadamente difícil de leer (aunque una pequeña parte del mensaje en mayúsculas podría servir para enfatizar un punto). TamPOcO eS cÓModO LeEr lOs meNsAjES dE eStE tIPo.

9) Ké pasa tronco

Evite el empleo de palabras de "argot", o letras por sonidos (como "k" por "q"), o lenguaje grosero. Cuando quiera expresar una frase coloquial no totalmente correcta, ponerla entre comillas.

10) Bss

Evite el empleo de abreviaturas que no sean de uso normal.

Finally, some websites offer a *Netiquette* guide explaining how users have to write in different contexts on the Internet:
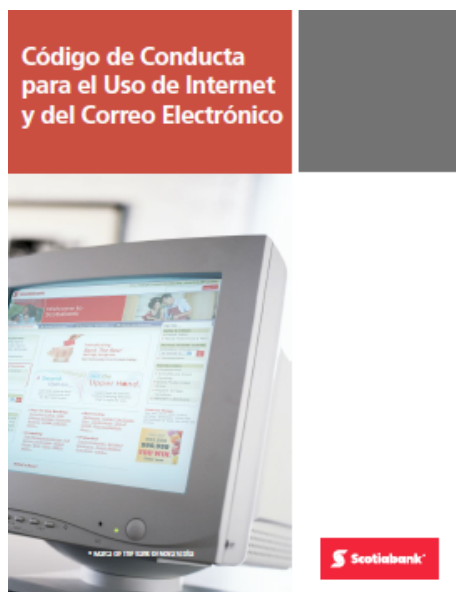
Regarding all the previous examples of *Netiquette* we can confirm that the importance of being polite on the Internet is increasing through the use of social rules in most of the websites. Besides if the users of a specific website do not follow the rules established in the *Netiquette*, the administrators of the place can forbid the participation of the users. Due to this previous idea, although we are anonymous on the Internet, we can conclude that it is advisable to follow the *Netiquette* so as to be polite, and to use the Internet in the proper way.

3. Politeness and impoliteness in a written text:

For all the above mentioned, and taking into account that the *Netiquette* can be applied in almost every CMC context, we are going to analyse the following written texts according to the UNED's *Netiquette*. The way people express themselves on the Internet is the reflection of how they use the language on an FtF communication.

3.1. Visual features:

In this example, the most highlighted visual feature is the usage of capital letters. Nevertheless, capital letters does not mean that the student is addressing the professor shouting. Moreover, the absence of paragraphing (there is no difference between introduction, body and closure) does not help to the clarity of the message. As this is a virtual tutorial between a student and a Professor, there is no usage of emoticons in order to maintain the *negative face*. There is also an absence of exclamation marks, bold letters and suspension points. All these contribute to the idea of keeping the distance between participants.

As can be seen in the next example, cybernaut Celta writes abusing of the ellipsis. He/She highlights proper noun by using capital letters. Cybernaut Marlin's answer is full improperly used suspension points, interrogation marks and capital letters. Moreover, he/she reduplicates letters to emphasize the sentence and to imitate the intonation that speakers usually use in this type of colloquial utterances (*QUEEEEEEEEEEE ME DICESSSSSSSSSS??*)

In the following example, we can observe many visual features, since it is a friendship conversation. We see capital letters that emphasise some parts of the conversation, and a lot of punctuation signs together (*como va todo???*). Visually, the more salient element is the use of smileys, which are very useful to understand the meaning and mood of the participants. There is also a censored insult (JO*#@R), which gives positive face to the communication, since it is not explicit.

Finally, some users write in capital letters so as to point out the important sentences or words of a written text which is seen as an impolite feature. This is because capital letters are associated with angriness or violence. So to avoid this previous problem, some people are starting to use bold words to highlight the important information as it is used normally in formal written texts.


3.2. Vocabulary:

The first speaker 'donjerezano' uses inverted comas when addresses to 'klistosksois' as *Amiguete* in order to express irony. Despite this fact, 'donjerezano' pays attention to the orthographical rules. However, he/she also calques the spoken language (*¡¡Que no sirves "pá" eso, so pelmazo, que desafinas muuuuuuuucho!!*) Taking advantage of anonymity, 'donjerezano' offends 'klistosksois' (*de lo que deberías de arrepentirte toda tu vida es de haber grabado discos. ¡¡Que no sirves "pá" eso, so pelmazo, que desafinas muuuuuuuucho!!*)

This cybernaut does not pay any attention to orthographical rules (*IROS/ AKI/ VERGUENZA/ ME CAGON DIOS*). He/She also insults the other cybernauts (*IROS TODOS A TOMAR POR CULO/ LADRONES*) taking profit of anonymity. There is also misspellings and shortening of words (*PORCULO/ CAGON DIOS*). It is a clear example of negative politeness.

Cybernaut 'FERNAN GARCIA' makes a better use of the grammatical and orthographical rules. The content, however, reflects the spoken language (*si no le gustaba el royo, haberlo*

dejao!!!). There is also a play on words with 'Ramoncín', a Spanish singer, and 'mamón', an insult (*Mamoncín*). To smooth communication, 'FERNAN GARCIA' employs emoticons such as 'XD', which represents a face laughing (X= the eyes; D= an open mouth).

Finally, 'eljuarma' expresses negative politeness through the usage of insults (*al payaso este*) and he/she does not commit any grammatical or orthographical mistake.
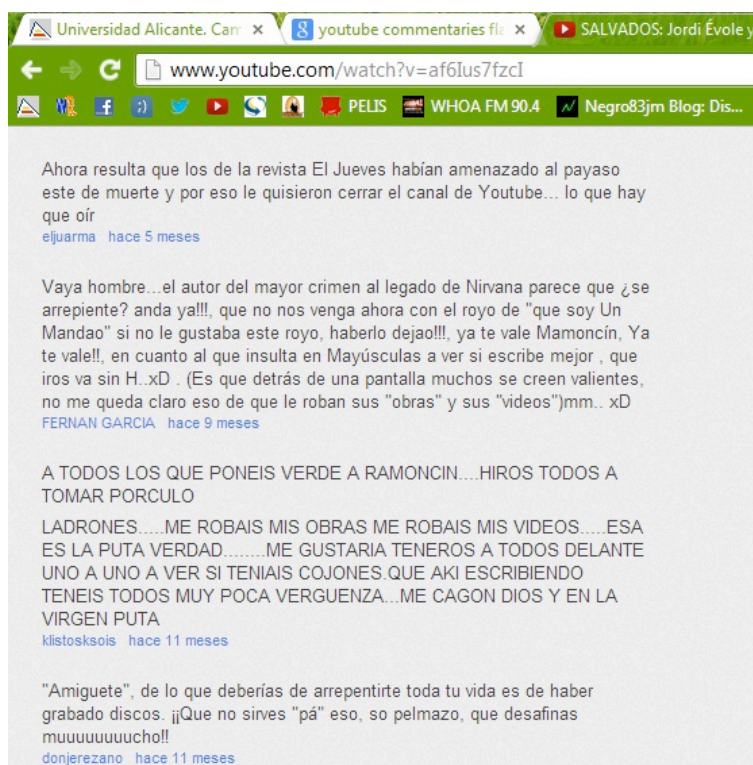
4. Conclusion:

In today's world, technology, and specially the Internet, has changed the way we communicate. It is a device that banishes temporal and place barriers and allows multiple interactions.

Politeness is an essential tool in everyday communication, in both *Face-to-Face* (FtF) and *Computer-Mediated Communication* (CMC). The first one, FtF communication, is based on social and cultural rules of behaviour. At the same time, those rules are reflected in the second kind of communication, CMC, which are called *Netiquette* or *Ciberetiquette*.

Every user has a *Face* that can be saved (*Positive Face*) or lost (*Negative Face*) depending on the usage of the *Netiquette*. Most of the times, people try to maintain their *negative face* when there is a serious conversation. Those users tend to be polite. On the other hand, when a friendly/informal

conversation is going on, cybernauts try to protect their *positive face* using informal language, being consciously impolite, using emoticons and violating grammatical and orthographical rules.

Curiously, critics usually distinguish two different lives taking into account FtF communication and CMC. We have a "real life", which takes place in FtF communication, as well as a "virtual or unreal life", which happens through the usage of technology and the Internet. Moreover, our "virtual life" is characterized by the use of *anonymity* and, consequently, aggressiveness,   and   critical   opinions.

As a result, users do not always follow *Netiquette* as they usually hide behind anonymity, which gives them total freedom. So, taking advantage of anonymity, cybernauts no longer care about protecting their face. Anonymity has an important role in CMC, and allows users to be impolite and to offend the others (flaming, haters and troll).

Finally, we want to point out that although technology and the Internet have changed how society communicates with people, politeness is still present on the Internet and in our everyday life. Hence, we cannot forget the proverb "Do not do unto others as you would not have them do unto you", so if we want people to treat us well and politely, we will have to be polite with the rest of society.

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✓ <u>Virtual tutorials</u>: We are grateful to María del Mar Galindo Merino, assistant professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of Alicante, for allowing us to use some of her anonymous students' virtual tutorials as examples of politeness or impoliteness.