

### **POLITENESS IN CONVERSATIONS**

In various spheres of human activity the literary language functions in two varieties – the spoken and the written. Writing is more often formal /e.g. report writing/, and speech is more often informal /e.g. conversations with friends/, but informal writing /e.g. letters to one's family/ and formal speech /e.g. business meetings/ are used in some situations.

It is common knowledge that formal language is used when one wishes to be polite – to show respect to important people or strangers. So, politeness is the dominant strategy of formal communication.

Though being informal, everyday conversations do not lack politeness either. It means they include not only typically colloquial words and constructions, but also expressions and structures, which are used to avoid offense and anticipate or deflect possible difficulties. E.g.:

1 – Where on earth are we?

2 – Judging by all the traffic, I'd say we're near the heart of the downtown area.

1 – Well, now the problem is how to get back onto the main highway.

2 – Well, if I may offer a suggestion ... Why don't you stop and ask a policeman?

1 – Yeah, yeah, yeah, I think I see one up there in the next block. /Talking English/

In the given example the first speaker is a driver who takes a wrong turn and gets irritated and puzzled, which is expressed by the phrase “where on earth”. The second speaker supports the conversation, tries to be helpful and give the driver a piece of advice in a tactful way using a wide variety of means of “politeness strategies”:

The suggestion in the form of the interrogative sentence /Why don't you stop and ask a policeman?/ seem less direct, more “distant” from reality and therefore more polite. The softening expressions “ I'd say”, “if I may offer a suggestion”, “I think” are used to make opinion and statement sound less dogmatic – they suggest that the speaker is just giving a personal opinion, with which other people may disagree.

The conversation is based on the “turn-taking” mechanism. It means that one person talks at a time. Yielding the right to speak, the “floor” to the next speaker constitutes a turn. The “turn-taking” mechanisms represent a form of politeness. Giving the “floor” to the listener, the speaker shows that he/she respects the conversational partner's speaking turn.

Considerations of politeness norms and of turn-taking conversations are important for personal negotiation as well as for maintaining social harmony in general.