



A Study of Politeness Strategies Used by the National University of Lesotho (NUL) Students

Beatrice Ilongo Ekanjume

National University of Lesotho, Lesotho- Southern Africa

Bekanjume@Yahoo.Fr

ABSTRACT

This paper provides an analysis of politeness strategies used by Students of the National University of Lesotho. The study examines how NUL students respond to, communicate with and address their lecturers. The paper thus illustrates how and when NUL students make use of address forms such as titles, kinship terms, nicknames, personal names, and other strategies like “face principle” in their verbal interactions with their lecturers. The paper equally examines the various moods of greetings employed by NUL students. The paradigm of the study includes that politeness is a required linguistic communicative behavior in the linguistic and cultural ideology of the Basotho people, thus NUL students. As such, impoliteness is penalized with the essence of preserving relationships and being at peace with oneself and others. The analysis reveals that the choices of linguistic strategies by NUL students are guided by the politeness principles in Lesotho and the social relationship that exists in the University setting. This relationship is based on age, social status, and kinship. The paper, however, demonstrates that age is not the dominant feature for expressing politeness between people. Another common feature found as a strategy by NUL students to express politeness is the extension of kinship terms to all lecturers (even non - kins). I finally argue that with urbanization, caused by exodus from cities to rural areas and vice versa, modernization, and adoption of Western way of life, the polite linguistic and cultural behavior of NUL students is gradually drifting away from their cultural expectations.

Key words: Politeness, Strategies, Behavior, Students, Basotho, Culture, Status, Lecturer

INTRODUCTION

Language is a reflection of culture and, accepted cultural norms, polite conduct and interaction is inseparable to culture. Polite interaction takes on many forms in the way people interact, not only by the spoken word but also by the unspoken messages portrayed by behaviour, body language, eye contact and facial expressions. People from the same country speaking the same language and same cultural background have a basic common shared

A Study of Politeness Strategies Used By NUL Students

ideology and value system defining general accepted norms and rules of conduct to be followed. Accepted norms of behaviour and linguistic appropriateness in one culture are not necessarily acceptable in another culture. What is considered polite in one cultural society may be considered impolite in another.

Politeness here refers to those events and activities which target the social and cultural norms of linguistic communicative behaviour crucial to social relationships, among language performing individuals. It consists in those manipulations and negotiations in language use which are aimed at enhancing satisfactory social relations. Within this paradigm, it is possible to show how linguistic communication events demonstrate recognition of a listener in terms of his rights in a situation, in relation to the linguistic ideologies of speech communities. In its view of language as a social entity, and as an intrinsically complex entity, politeness contributes to insights provided by ethno-linguistics, as it coordinates language structures with appropriate cultural contexts.

Politeness in any given society is conducted within a system of acceptable social behaviour and social linguistic cultural norms that govern the way in which citizens interact. Interacting and communicating is a fundamental part of life and is conducted by following social and sociolinguistic accepted norms. Language is the principle means whereby we conduct our social lives. When it is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways' (Kramsch, 1998). The complexities that govern general social conduct and communication within a society are not only due to a shared language but also from shared beliefs and value system derived from a common historical and traditional background echoed in upbringing, educational and surrounding society.

According to Duranti (1997) "one should think of language in culture and not just of language and culture. The linguistic system interpenetrates all other systems of culture". Accepted behavior and politeness within a society and sharing the same value system and cultural understanding is part of societal existence. Rules within a language community guide behaviour and communication within the society with regards to what people do or say as well as what people do not (or should not) do or say.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness strategies are developed in order to save the hearers' "face." Face here refers to the respect that an individual has for him or herself, and maintaining that "self-esteem" in public or in private situations. Usually people try to avoid embarrassing others, or making them feel uncomfortable. Individuals have Face Threatening Acts (FTA's) that infringe on the others' need to maintain self esteem, and be respected. Politeness strategies are developed for the main purpose of dealing with these FTA's. People communicate different socio-cultural aspects through face-to-face encounters, that is, through conversations with others. One such aspect is politeness, which can be expressed using various linguistic as well as non-linguistic strategies.

The concept of politeness is so varied that it becomes not easy to formulate a single definition of it. However, it is only when the attention is focused on the reason for politeness rather than what politeness is that the concept can be understood. Lakoff (1973:298) for instance concentrates on the supportive features of politeness and says that politeness is for “reaffirming and strengthening relationships”. Leech (1977:19) goes for the protective side of politeness and proposes that it is used to “avoid strategic conflict”. Kochman (1984) contends that politeness has a protective mission, which is exercised when a person shows consideration for other people. These definitions portray politeness as a form of behavior which is exercised so that the relationship between individuals can be consolidated or, at least, kept undamaged. In this sense, politeness is taken as a way to avert any damage to the relationship.

Politeness is a fundamental part of culture which shapes human behaviour within a society. Goode et al. (2000) explains this politeness and behaviour as an ‘integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviours of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations.’ This view illustrates the importance of politeness in society.

This paper discusses politeness strategies used by students of NUL with a view to show how they make use of address forms such as titles, kinship terms, nicknames, personal names, and other strategies like “face principle” in their verbal interactions. The paper equally examines the various moods of greetings employed by NUL students. In this study, I adopt Koike’s (1989:189) definition of politeness which states that it is “the communication of respect for the social relationship between speaker and listener through the use of communicative strategies recognized by the society as carrying a particular illocutionary force”. These strategies maybe linguistic or non-linguistic conventions. The degree of politeness to be conveyed is contingent upon the social relationship between the two parties as perceived by the speaker including the variables of power and social distance.

METHODOLOGY

This section seeks to familiarize the reader on how the data used in the study was collected. The corpus for this work was collected from live conversations, questionnaire, short interviews, and personal experience. The live conversations involved instances where students were talking to some lecturers in my presence. Most often the students were seeking information concerning a particular course; coming to apologize for not being present in class; coming to justify the reason for not writing a test; and on very rare

A Study of Politeness Strategies Used By NUL Students

occasions coming to inform a lecturer of their potential absence in the next class.

The questionnaire was administered to students of the Faculty of Humanities (a Faculty made up of students from all other Faculties of NUL), from the 1st to 4th year of the undergraduate. The questionnaire contained ten (10) questions all geared towards obtaining information related to NUL student's politeness conduct towards their lecturers. A sample of twenty (20) students per year (10 male and 10 female respondents) received the questionnaire. Thus a total population of 80 NUL students answered the questionnaire.

In addition to the above instruments employed for data collection, I equally conducted a short interview to twenty other students (10 males and 10 females). The short interviews were done randomly. I simply begged the indulgence of any NUL student I met loitering on Campus and asked him/her three to four short questions. As a lecturer at NUL, I also gathered information based on personal interaction with my students and other students of NUL.

Since student/teacher issues are usually sensitive and students are most often afraid to say certain things about their lecturers for fear of being punished accordingly, informants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of the content of the information they provide, especially for those ones who responded to the questionnaire and those who participated in the interview. Moreover, they were assured that where examples of the data are given in the article, no names would be mentioned for the same reasons of anonymity. They were thus asked to answer the questionnaire without indicating their names. The only thing they were requested to do was to indicate whether they are male or female respondents. This was to ensure that the questionnaire was equitably distributed to both sexes.

Data Analysis

This section discusses the various polite forms utilized by NUL students in their daily interactions with their lecturers (academic staffs). As mentioned earlier, the discussion focuses on the way NUL students address their lecturers, the way to talk and respond to them, the way they greet them and any other politeness strategies employed. Although the paper focuses on politeness, cases of impoliteness will also be highlighted.

The Use of Titles

The use of titles is generally governed by two social considerations: social status or power and solidarity. One person may be said to have power over another in the degree that he is able to control the behaviour of the other. Power is a relationship between at least two persons, and it is non-reciprocal in the sense that both cannot have power in the same area of behavior (Brown

Beatrice Ilongo Ekanjume

& Gilman 1960:255). In this sense, power is an asymmetrical relation because two people may not have power over each other. Power may be demonstrated by social factors like age, status, occupation, or other fixed attributes. Generally, in a situation of communication involving a boss and subordinate member of staff or between a teacher and students, the person who exercises power over the other receives more respect from the addressee, who is supposed to have no power. In the present study, the academic staffs of NUL are considered to exercise more power over the students and are thus expected to receive more respect from them. This is actually the case because the data collected shows that NUL students address the above category of people with their titles plus last names (TLN). For those without titles, the students employ the Sesotho kinship term 'Me and Ntate (mother and father respectively) before the last name. Thus, you could often hear them say:

Professor X; Doctor Y

'Me X; Ntate Y (Mrs X, Mr Y respectively)

Similarly, students at NUL responded that they sometimes make use of titles only to refer to their lecturers. In cases where no titles do exist, they simply resort to the two kinship terms mentioned above as exemplified below:

Good day Professor

Professor, could you please.....

Doctor, can I come for my script?

Good afternoon Doctor

'Me, can I come in?

Ntate, here is the list

Good morning 'me/ntate

This non-reciprocal pattern is generated on the one hand by difference in occupational status (Academic staff versus students), and on the other by age difference. However, the dominant feature here is not age but rather occupational status. This is because at NUL, like most other universities, it is common to find students who are older than some academic staff. Thus, the use of TLN and kinship term plus last name, or just title and kinship term only is purely for the sake of respect. It is worth mentioning that there is not necessarily a correlation between age and higher occupational status; a younger person may have a higher rank than the older addressee. In this case, according to Brown and Ford, occupational status has priority over age as is the case with some of the students and academic staffs of NUL.

Solidarity, by contrast, is an inherently reciprocal relation. It is demonstrated between equals, people who are close or have a certain level of intimacy. Such situations result into reciprocal usage of the same form by two or more people. The solidarity form of address is also referred to as the ordinary form (Das 1968). According to Das, "this form of address is used reciprocally by members of a family between themselves and between friends, and also between kinsmen of the same group. This form of address is

A Study of Politeness Strategies Used By NUL Students

common among NUL students when addressing each other. In addition to the use of the same pronoun when addressing each other, NUL students were seen to have a mutual exchange of first name (FN), teknonyms (for those whit children), last name, personal names and multiple names. Concerning the choice of the pattern, the study reveals that this is governed by social factors such as acquaintance, intimacy, age difference, and social status among the students.

The Use Of Personal Names

Another polite strategy that is used by NUL students towards the academic staff of NUL is the avoidance of personal names. Personal names are reciprocally used among friends, close associates, and members of the same peer or age group. On the other hand, the non-reciprocal use of personal names (PN) is determined by age and institutionalized status like kinship. In this pattern, an older person addresses a younger person by personal name, but the latter dares not reply to the former in the same way. The Basotho culture (like most other African cultures) consider as impolite, rude, and grossly insolent to address an older person by name. Such an act at times evokes a curse or an uncharitable remark about a speaker's own family and is most often punishable. From the foregoing, we can say that, like most people, Basotho orient to multiple concerns during interaction. One concern is to project and sustain desired identities. Hence, they attempt to maintain “face” in nearly all conversations.

In the present study, NUL students can be said to be polite because when asked the question of whether they use personal names to address their lecturers, about 60% of the respondents said they do not because they consider their lecturers as people who are superior to them. Some 20% said they do so but with the use of the Sesotho kinship terms mentioned above coming before the personal names. Thus if a lecturer is called Mary or John, they will address her or him as ‘me Mary or ntate John respectively. According to this group of students, they use the personal names of lecturers whose last names are difficult to pronounce, and the fact that they have used the kinship terms before the personal names signifies that they are respecting the Lecturers. This is true to some extent because the Basotho value their kinship terms. Another group of 20% said they use personal names in the absence of the lecturers. These ones can be considered impolite because respect should not be shown only in the presence of an individual. The possible reasons to explain such insolent behavior from some NUL students can be due to urbanization, caused by exodus from cities to rural areas and vice versa, modernization, and adoption of Western way of life. These factors are somehow affecting the polite linguistic and cultural behavior of NUL students which is expected to be based on the linguistic and cultural ideology of the Basotho people to whom politeness is a required linguistic communicative behavior.

Face Principle

According to Goffman (1972: 5), the term face may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact (quoted in Bayraktaroglu 1991: 6). Based on this, one can conveniently say that a participant's face is his image of himself in terms of approved social attributes. In an encounter, a participant claims a face for himself based on mutual appraisal between him and the other participants. All the participants are responsible for maintaining their own and each other's faces cooperatively in the course of interaction. This responsibility leads to a pair of related rules: the "rule of self respect", wherein a participant must stand guard over his own face, and the "rule of considerateness", wherein he must go to certain length to respect the face of others. Participants cooperate to try to ensure that neither they nor others are defeated, out of face, or in wrong face. In the present study, NUL students can be said to be conscious of the "face" principle because they try as much as possible to please their lecturers during face to face interactions. Even in situations where a lecturer says something which does not favor a student, he/she still tries to maintain face so as to avoid making the lecturer angry. When asked why they do so all the time, NUL students responded that they do not want to get into the "bad books" of any lecturer as this will be synonymous to failing. They however added that immediately they leave the presence of the lecturer, they can even insult him/her depending on the circumstance. Giving that this is done behind the lecturer, the principle of "face which is generally associated with politeness is respected.

Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) argue that social interactions across cultures are closely intertwined with every interlocutor's concern to maintain "face". Face here according to Brown and Levinson (1978: 66) refers to "something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction". This implies that there are two kinds of face: "negative face" or the rights to territories, freedom of action, and freedom from imposition; essentially the desire that one's actions not be impeded by others; and "positive face", that is, the positive consistent self-image that people have and want to be appreciated and approved of by at least some other people. As pointed out by Fasold (1990: 161), "the rational actions people take to preserve both kinds of face for themselves and the people they interact with essentially add up to politeness." Thus, the fact that NUL students try not to impede on the actions of their lecturers and also that they try to maintain a positive consistent self-image (at least in a face-to-face encounter) makes them to be considered as students with politeness conduct.

In a social interaction, whatever an interlocutor says is potentially a face-threatening act (FTA) in that it may cause the addressee to "lose his/her negative or positive face." However, participants adopt "strategies of politeness" in order to avoid face-threatening activities. There are positive strategies through which an addressee will know whether he/she is liked, or

A Study of Politeness Strategies Used By NUL Students

approved of. The use of complement to someone could be considered an example of this claim and such strategies are termed positive politeness. Negative politeness, on the other hand, usually involves a show of deference and an assurance that the speaker does not wish to disturb or interfere with the other's freedom. Sometimes, apologies and other forms of remedial work, as well as such strategies as indirectness in making requests, are examples of negative politeness. Coming to the present case under study, we can conveniently say that NUL students make use of both positive and negative politeness strategies. From the live conversations, the short recorded interviews and personal experience, NUL students for instance have the tendency of complementing their lecturers. While responding to one of the questions in the questionnaire, they admitted that at the end of a very good lesson, they can rush out and tell a lecturer how they enjoyed the lesson. Some of the students said they like lecturers who dress well, and so they do not hesitate to complement such dressing. Students of NUL equally make use of honorifics and hedges when talking to their lecturers. From personal experience and the live conversations I witnessed, the speeches of the students are usually characterized by words such as please, could, would, might, etc. which are all polite linguistic markers that signal respect to the person you are speaking to.

Another positive politeness strategy found to be present among NUL students is the ability to talk to their lecturers without looking straight into their eyes. This is a politeness conduct because in Lesotho (like most other African countries), it is considered impolite and insolent for someone of a lower status (it could be age difference, social class, etc.) to look directly into the eyes of someone with a higher status while talking to that person. They also generally wait for a lecturer to finish talking before they say their view(s).

Requesting Principle

The purpose of a request, as a speech act, is to get the addressee to perform an act to the benefit of the speaker (Searl 1976). Requests, therefore, place an imposition on the addressee. If the speaker does not want to sound pushy, he or she can apply face strategies such as indirectness or polite hedges. The present study reveals that when NUL students are requesting for something from their lecturers, they would use the polite hedges. They would say for instance

“Prof, could you please repeat the question? As opposed to “Prof, I did not get the question” which would threaten the addressee's (lecturer) face. Here, the student is conscious of the fact that asking a question is an imposition. So, they try to make a polite request by using polite speech. A few other examples (amongst others) of NUL students' polite request to their lecturers using honorifics and polite hedges include:

Doctor, could you please do us a favor, and allow our group to present on Monday?

Beatrice Ilongo Ekanjume

'Me (madam), I was just wondering if you could give me one more week. We think that maybe you could readjust the time table to avoid too many "clashes".

These examples and others that were collected during the data collection process, reveal that students of NUL are polite in requesting for whatever from their lecturers.

Accepting and Refusing Principle

There exist sociolinguistic rules for politeness acceptance and refusal which might differ cross-culturally. Generally, in the Basotho culture (like most African cultures), an individual is expected to render a service to another when requested to, especially if the request is coming from an elder person to a younger one or from someone of a higher social status. In a case where the request can not be carried out, the addressee has to decline in an apologetic manner. Being part of the Basotho society, NUL students are expected to respect the existing rules for politeness acceptance and refusal. Thus, if a lecturer requests a service from a student, he/she is expected to render that service. In case a said student is not able to render a particular service, probably because he/she is rushing to attend a class, the refusal will be in such a way that the lecturer will be satisfied that the student is not just being stubborn or otherwise. From the data collected using the various instruments, one can conveniently say that students of NUL are in line with the Basotho rules for politeness acceptance and refusal. From personal experience and also considering the answer to a question on whether or not students are always willing to render services to their lecturers, NUL students usually accept to be of service to their lecturers. Some students however mentioned that there are some lecturers they do not like, and they will render services to those ones only out of fear of failing their courses. They added that if such a lecturer is keen enough, he/she will notice from a student's facial expression or bodily gesture that he/she is not willingly doing what has been requested. When asked whether they do not consider this as being impolite, the students said they do not because this is an attitude based on some factors and expressed towards a particular lecturer, and not all lecturers. They went further to explain that the same student who will reluctantly render a service to one lecturer will happily and willingly render a service to another. So, to them such a student can not be termed impolite.

Although the general picture above presents NUL student as being polite in their manner of acceptance and refusal towards their lecturers, some of them can be considered impolite with respect to the sociolinguistic rules for politeness refusal. This is so because during the short interview, some of the students I approached refused to participate in the exercise without giving any excuse. For instance, when I approached one student who was sitting under a tree reading a magazine, she gave a shocking answer of "I don't have time for that" and went back to her magazine reading exercise. Another said so nonchalantly "I'm rushing some where". Another response I got was that

A Study of Politeness Strategies Used By NUL Students

“you lecturers always trouble us with this type of things”. Basing on these examples and also on the fact that in one of the responses a student said if he knows that a particular teacher will never teach him, he will hardly render a service to such a lecturer because according to him lecturers should not be asking students to “do this or that” giving that some students are older than them; one can say that some NUL students are quite impolite. As mentioned earlier, the possible reasons to explain such insolent behavior from some NUL students can be due to urbanization, caused by exodus from cities to rural areas and vice versa, modernization, and adoption of Western way of life. These factors are again affecting the polite linguistic and cultural behavior of NUL students which is expected to be based on the Basotho cultural norms where an individual is expected to render a service to another when requested to, especially if the request is coming from an elder person to a younger one or from someone of a higher social status like the case between Lecturers and students.

The Use Of Kinship Terms

Generally speaking, one unique feature of the Basotho is revealed in the use of kinship address terms. The Basotho are found to be very dependent on the family relations and this is especially noticeable in their constant use of kinship terms to address non-relatives. For instance, the Basotho kinship term for “mother” and “father” are ‘me and ntate respectively. Giving that these terms refer to mother and father, one expects them to be used by children when addressing their parents. This is however not the case. Basotho are obliged to call any female or male person who is older than the addresser as ‘me or ntate respectively. This is actually the case with students of NUL. In addition to the fact that NUL students make use of titles when addressing their lecturers, the use of the kinship terms ‘me or ntate are quite prevalent in the address forms they use. In most cases, some students prefer to simply refer to their lecturers as ‘me or ntate (depending on the sex) and irrespective of their titles. Due to the much dependency on family relation and the value that the Basotho give to kinship terms, some students even address their lecturers using the above kinship terms together with their titles. Thus, you can hear them frequently addressing lecturers in the following manner:

Ntate Professor, ntate Doctor

‘Me Professor, ‘me Doctor

As mentioned earlier, in a situation where a lecturer is neither a Professor nor a Doctor, the students will use the kinship term ‘me or ntate followed by the Last name of the Lecturer. Thus if the last name of a lecturer is Z, they will address him/her as ntate Z or ‘me Z. The fact that NUL students extend the importance that the Basotho place on their kinship terms to their lecturers, shows how they respect their culture and by implication their lecturers. It is important to note that although the Basotho are obliged to call any female or male person who is older than the addresser as ‘me or ntate respectively, these terms are also used when referring to someone of a higher status.

Beatrice Ilongo Ekanjume

Therefore, it is common to find NUL students addressing lecturers who are younger than them as 'me or nate. This reveals that the choices of linguistic strategies by NUL students are guided by the politeness principles in Lesotho and the social relationship that exists in the University setting which is based on age, social status, and kinship.

The Use of Nicknames

Although age, social status and kinship determine the way NUL students address their lecturers, sometimes students keep aside all these factors and use what we may call nicknames. Previous research on the use of nicknames has shown that they are ambiguous. This is because nicknames can have both positive and negative connotations. This implies that the use of nicknames can be looked at from two perspectives: those with positive communicative connotations and those with negative communicative connotations.

In the present study, students were asked to say whether or not they address their lecturers using nicknames and if so when and why? Responding to this question, some students (40%) said they do not use nick names to address their lecturers. The rest (60%) said they do. As to when, some responded that they do so in the absence of the lecturer so as to avoid having problems with them which may lead to failing their course(s). Others said they can use it in the presence of the lecturer but making sure that he/she does not know they are referring to him/her. Again, their fear is that when a lecturer is aware that he/she is being addressed using a nickname, this may have a negative impact on the students especially with regards to 'marks'. To the question of why they use nicknames to refer to their lecturers, some students said it is because they do not like some lecturers due to certain factors: "they make it difficult for students to pass their courses"; "they are so strict with everything"; "they send students out during classes"; "they refuse to give make up tests". According to them, when they use a nickname, it amuses them and instead of being angry with a lecturer, they mock at him/her and thus feel more relaxed in his/her presence. Others said it is simply for fun. For these students, some lecturers have funny accents, while others dress and even walk "awkwardly". When they hear and see these features, they can not help but laugh at the lecturers concern, and this in turn leads to the coinage of a name that suits the specific circumstance.

From the above information, it is not quite clear whether NUL students can be said to be polite or impolite. While someone can argue that they are impolite because the nicknames they coin for their lecturers have negative connotations, another will think that some of the reasons they have given are justifiable. However, no matter how justifiable their reasons may be, the linguistic and cultural ideology of the Basotho people with regards to linguistic communicative behavior requires that politeness be part and parcel of their daily life. On the basis of this, students are expected to remain respectful to their lecturers no matter the circumstances. Furthermore, the

A Study of Politeness Strategies Used By NUL Students

social relationship that exists in the University setting is based on age, social status, and kinship. This social relationship requires of students to remain polite in their verbal communication to their Lecturers on the basis of the above factors. Violating this leads to impoliteness conduct which as earlier mentioned is punishable. Also, the fact that the students do everything so that lecturers are not aware of the nicknames signifies they know that what they are doing is not right – thus impoliteness conduct.

Greetings

Greetings are another practice through which politeness conduct can be expressed. Generally, people conform to polite greeting practices out of self interest, but more, out of recognition for social cohesion and as a sign of the respect and affection for one's fellow human beings (Rash, 2004). In this regard, languages may make distinctions in terms of the relative social status of interactants in a discourse; and generally, interaction events are coordinated by socio-cultural or extra linguistic rules, in respect to age, authority, status, sex, etc. The system of greetings used by NUL students conform to the Standard English general greetings whereby it typically performs the function of phatic communication (establishing social relationship). By general greetings, I am referring to what Yaw and Koranteng (2008) call temporal greetings which are generally used to mark the three main demarcations of the day – morning, afternoon and the evening. Thus in English, we have the following greetings for the day:

Morning:	Good morning
Afternoon:	Good afternoon
Evening:	Good evening

The level of strictness to SE forms is associated also with the level of formality of the event. Thus, there is likely to be deviations to the SE forms in informal or colloquial contexts. For instance, someone can simply say “morning” without using “good”. This kind of deviations where there is ellipsis of ‘good’ should however come from people who are very familiar with each other, people who are of the same level or from someone of a high status to someone of a low status. Thus, ellipsis of ‘good’ is a characteristic of the use of English general greetings in informal or colloquial contexts in levels of equality or intimacy. If it is from someone of a low status to someone of a high status, like the case of student to teacher, that will obviously be considered as impoliteness conduct, because of inequality and formality.

As far as NUL students are concerned, the study reveals that they usually greet their lecturers using the Standard English general greetings. In addition to this, the greetings are always accompanied by either the title of a

Beatrice Ilongo Ekanjume

lecturer, or kinship term or their English equivalent. Thus, a student can either say:

Good morning Prof /Dr or Good morning 'me/ntate/Sir/Madam

This pattern is equally seen in the NUL students' response to general greetings that come from their lecturers. Thus, when a lecturer says for instance "Good morning" the students replicate the greeting and then add the title of the lecturer, or the relevant kinship term or their English equivalent. Example:

Lecturer: Good morning class
Students: Good morning Prof/Dr/'Me/Ntate/Madam/Sir

This pattern is influenced by the standard greetings in Lesotho which generally reflects the attitude of respect towards age. When greeting an elder in Lesotho, one is expected to always end with ntate or 'me. Thus, a deviation from this norm is considered impolite.

When asked if they make use of enquiry greetings (like - How are you? How's life? How are you doing? How's life treating you?), almost all the Students involved in this study responded that they do not use these forms because they believe that such greetings should only be exchanged among peers. This is true because though "How are you?" and "How are you doing?" are considered quite formal in Standard English greetings, they are generally used from people of high social status to those of low social status or between people who share some familiarity or intimacy. In most classrooms situations for instance, 'How are you?' especially is used from teachers and older visitors to the class or to the pupils, who respond: 'I/we are fine, thank you, and you?' This enquiry is considered impolite when it comes from someone of low social status to someone of high social status except, as Yaw and Koranteng (2008) say, it is prefixed with honorific titles and face-saving techniques, notable of which is the signaling of the fact that one knows in normal circumstances, such an enquiry is considered inappropriate.

However, two students mentioned that they could use enquiry greetings to Lecturers they feel free with and especially in informal settings. To them, this is not being impolite but rather showing concern. They continued by saying that they just "want to know that their lecturer is doing fine" and this concern can only be raised to someone they "love, respect, care about and think of all the time". Such an explanation can be acceptable, giving that these students use it only with specific lecturers. Thus, from the information given, it is clear that the attitude of respect is reflected in the greetings of NUL students.

CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed some of the politeness strategies use by students of the National University of Lesotho in their daily verbal interactions with their lecturers. The study has demonstrated that there exists, at NUL, a moral code which is expressed in the ideal behavior of students of this community, guided by the linguistic and cultural ideology of the Basotho customs. Part of this moral code consists of using the kinship terms of address to non-kin members. In this respect, students were seen to adhere to the importance that the Basotho place on their kinship terms as they made use of these terms in addressing even lecturers with titles. The study equally reveals that NUL students do not make use of personal names when addressing their lecturers, except in a situation where a lecturer's last name is difficult to pronounce. Rather, in addition to the kinship terms "Me" and "Ntate", they make use of titles, and titles and last names. The paper also shows that students of NUL use nicknames when addressing their lecturers and that these nicknames generally have negative connotations.

Furthermore, the paper reveals that NUL students are conscious of the "face" principle because they try as much as possible to please their lecturers during face to face interactions. They try not to impede on the actions of their lecturers and also to maintain a positive consistent self-image during face-to-face encounters with their lecturers. They have the tendency of complementing their lecturers either because a particular lesson was so good and enjoyable or simply because of a lecturer's outfit. The paper equally shows that Students of NUL make use of honorifics and hedges when talking to their lecturers and also while requesting for something from their lecturers. They equally accept to be of service to their lecturers, although some few students are gradually drifting away from their cultural expectations due to the influence of urbanization, caused by exodus from cities to rural areas and vice versa, modernization, and adoption of Western way of life.

Concerning the greetings, the study reveals that NUL students conform to the Standard English general greetings and that the greetings are usually accompanied by either the title of a lecturer, kinship term or their English equivalent. This was also seen to be the case in the NUL students' response to general greetings that come from their lecturers. Another finding concerning greetings is that NUL students do not use enquiry greetings to their lecturers because they believe that such greetings should only be exchanged among peers.

The study has focused on politeness strategies employed by NUL students with respect to their lecturers. It has no doubt provided useful insight into the cultural ideology of politeness, investigating the NUL community in particular, and the Basotho culture in general. It has been shown that relationships at the University setting are formal, and as such norms of politeness in communication are serious and required as part of social roles. It reveals how interestingly politeness constitutes an important part of the norms of linguistic communication which are necessary in building and

maintaining social relationships. The main strategies for this accomplishment include the rich variety of respect forms as well as greetings. They all constitute part of the linguistic negotiations for harmonious living in NUL community. They are required as part of the sociolinguistic and cultural ideology of the Basotho people. In other words, the achievement of these norms is required for linguistic behaviour to be judged appropriate in Lesotho in general and NUL in particular. These strategies are together moderated by the social variables of age, social status, authority and kinship.

REFERENCES

- Bayraktaroglu, Arin. (1991). "Politeness and interactional imbalance". *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 93: 5-34.
- Brown, R. & Gilman, A. (1960). The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity. In *Style in Language*, Eds. Thomas A. Sebeok, pp. 253-276. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Brown, P., & Stephen Levinson, S.C. (1978). Universals in language usage: politeness Phenomena. In *Questions and Politeness*. E. Goody (ed.), 56-311. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Das, Sisir K. (1968). Forms of Address and Terms of Reference in Bengali. *Anthropological Linguistics* 10 (4): 19-31.
- Duranti, A. 1997. *Linguistic Anthropology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Fasold, Roger. (1990). *The Sociolinguistic of Language*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Goffman, E. (1972). *Interactional Ritual*. London: Penguin.
- Goode, T., Sockalingam, S., Brown, M., & Jones, W. (2000) A planner's guide: Infusing principles, content and themes related to cultural and linguistic competence into meetings and conferences. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development, National Center for Cultural Competence. Available at www.georgetown.edu/research/gucdc/nccc/ncccplannersguide.html
- Koike, D. A. (1989). Requests and the Role of Deixis in Politeness. *Journal of Pragmatics* 13:187-202.
- Kochman, T. (1984). The politics of politeness: social warrants in mainstream American Public etiquette. In *Meaning, Form and Use in Context: Linguistic Applications*, (eds.), D. Schiffrin (eds.), 200-9. Washington, D.C: George Town University Press.
- Kramsch, C. 1998. *Language and Culture*. Oxford University Press.
- Lakoff, R. (1973). The Logic of Politeness, or minding your p's and q's. In *Papers from The Ninth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*, 292-305. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society.

A Study of Politeness Strategies Used By NUL Students

- Leech, G.N. (1977). *Language and Tact*. Linguistic Agency, University of Trier Paper 46. Trier.
- Rash, F. (2004). Linguistic Politeness and Greeting Rituals in German-Speaking Switzerland. *Linguistik Online* 20, 3.
- Searl, J. R. (1976). A Classification of illocutionary act. *Language in Society*, 5:1-23.
- Yaw Sekyi-Baidoo & Louisa A. Koranteng (2008). English General Greetings in the Ghanaian Sociolinguistic Context. *The International Journal of Language Society and Culture*, 26: 113-126